



YOUTH AND TERRORISM:

A Selection of Articles

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SEARCCT
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FOR COUNTER-TERRORISM

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YOUTH AND TERRORISM: A SELECTION OF ARTICLES

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VISION

**TO BE A REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN
RESEARCH AND TRAINING ON COUNTER-TERRORISM**

FOREWORD

The writing is on the wall – terrorist organisations today are recruiting and influencing youths to carry out their dastardly acts in the name of God and in the name of twisted ideologies. Sadly, many youths, irrespective of race, religion, educational background or economic status have fallen prey to the rhetoric propagated by these groups. The presence of young suicide bombers and the proliferation of leaders of extremist groups is a serious indicator of a growing gap between youths and the need for non-violence in achieving their objectives.

It is also pertinent to note that efforts in countering terrorism in the region have focused on the tactical and operational aspects of counter terrorism that emphasises the use of force. Unfortunately, examining the factors that push youths into terrorism, and strategies to counter the ‘attractiveness’ of the terrorists is lacking.

What then must and can be done?

How do we ensure that our youths never set foot onto this path of wanton mayhem and destruction?

What can we do to reclaim those that have already been trapped in this vicious cycle of despair, destruction and ruin?

Difficult questions indeed.

It is in this context that SEARCCT, in collaboration with the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), and facilitated by the ASEAN Secretariat, initiated a project that was designed to study the issue of youths getting involved in terrorism. Secondly, it will conduct a capacity building programme for officials involved with youth and social programmes in ASEAN Member Countries.

As part of the research component, SEARCCT decided to invite experts in the field of terrorism and youth to pen their thoughts and

to conceptualise their ideas on the subject of youth and terrorism. I am delighted therefore to note that this collection of articles is the result of the cooperation and collaboration that has crossed boundaries in gathering expertise and experiences. Hence, we have in this volume some excellent analyses on the unholy alliance between media, youth and terrorism; the role that the Communist Party of the Philippines played in youth recruitment; youth and their connection with terrorism in Indonesia; the concept of religious radicalisation; the radicalisation of Pakistani youth; the terrorist pull on youth in the Philippines; the youth's voice and dynamic, the concept of self-radicalisation and the narrative of the terrorist from the perspective of the youth.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the dedicated writers who not only shared their knowledge and experience but also their 'hearts and minds' with the Centre, the Research and Publications Division of SEARCCT who tirelessly saw to the compilation of the monograph and Ms Thangam K Ramnath who did an excellent work editing the drafts.

My deepest appreciation also goes to The Honourable Dato' Sri Anifah Hj. Aman, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, and Tan Sri Mohd. Radzi Abdul Rahman, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their never failing support and enthusiasm for the project.

Lastly, I would like to put on record the generous support and assistance of the Government of Japan, through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) in financially supporting this project.

We may be judged for writing on terrorism in an academic, dispassionate and rationale manner, but, it is our duty to logically analyse and dispassionately scrutinise the subject-matter. However, let us not forget that behind those statistics and studies are stories of lives shattered, families broken and hope lost. It is in this environment that we are placed and the stakes are simply too high for us to fail.

I would like to end with a quote from the 18th century Irish philosopher Edmund Burk: *‘the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing’.*

It is my hope and desire that through this compilation you now hold in your hands, we have done something!

Thank you.

DATIN PADUKA RASHIDAH RAMLI

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FROM VIRTUAL TO VIOLENT: PRELIMINARY CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATIONS OF RELIGIOUS RADICALISATION IN YOUTH

Kumar Ramakrishna

It has been said that the world is currently experiencing a wave of terrorism¹ that is religiously motivated in its origins.² The September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City and Washington D.C., the 7 July 2005 London Underground attacks as well as the various bombings in Indonesia since the first Bali attacks in October 2002 were all perpetrated by religiously motivated terrorist networks. In this respect, radicalisation is an important related subject for study. As the authors of a well-known New York Police Department (NYPD) study of religiously-motivated radicalisation in the West suggest, terrorism is the ultimate consequence of the radicalisation process.³ Against this wider backdrop, it has been clear for years that youth⁴ are prone to violent radicalisation processes that lead to such religiously-motivated terrorist acts.

This brief essay seeks to make some preliminary observations on why this may be the case, drawing upon insights from several disciplines such as social psychology and cross-cultural psychology. Two key themes run through this essay. First, in essence, the politics of identity – in particular, the perceived need to defend one’s religious “Group Tent” – sheds important light on why young people could become violently radicalised to a point at which they could commit terrorist atrocities in the name of religion. Second, a mental or cognitive radicalisation in the minds of affected youth necessarily precedes the shift to violence. In short, to fully understand violent religious radicalisation, one must understand how a young person goes from being a “Virtual” to a “Violent Radical”.

¹ The various controversies attending the term “terrorism” are well beyond the scope of this short essay. For a good discussion of possible meanings see Walter Laqueur, *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum, 2003).

² David Rapoport, “The Fourth Wave: September 11 in the History of Terrorism”, *Current History*, Vol. 100 (2001), pp. 419-424.

³ Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007).

⁴ While the definition of “youth” varies between countries, a useful United Nations definition is that the term covers young people aged between 15 and 24. See social.un.org/index/Youth/FAQ.aspx (accessed 11 May 2011).

Violent Religious Radicalisation: A Brief Survey

While there have been many definitions of the term “violent radicalization”, a common broad definition is that it “means the process of adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change.”⁵ More specifically, *individual religious radicalisation* occurs when a young person is exposed to a “radical religious services provider or charismatic person espousing radical ideas” and becomes a “lone-wolf” terrorist pursuing violent action on his own, though later he may seek out a supporting like-minded violent network.⁶ In addition, there is also *organised religious radicalisation*, which is a “process supported by external groups who seek to influence” vulnerable youth. Groups like Al Qaeda or Jemaah Islamiyah “create opportunities for radical religious services providers to supply individuals with reading materials that include non-traditional or extremist interpretations” of holy texts. They also direct youths to supportive groups that espouse violence, such as radical mosques. Organised radicalisation is in effect a process of top-down recruiting in which promising youth with valuable skills are scouted and “recruited to carry out specific actions in support of the group’s agenda.”⁷ The aforementioned NYPD Report also points out that there are roughly four phases of radicalisation: a “pre-radicalization” stage; a “self-identification” stage, where youth first become attracted to violent religious ideologies through a “cognitive opening caused by some personal, socio-economic or political crisis; an “indoctrination” stage, in which there occurs a gradual intensification of violent beliefs principally through contact with a “spiritual sanctioner” and a small group of “like-minded” individuals; and finally the action-oriented jihadisation stage, where the youth reframes his self-identity as a religious combatant willing to engage in violent terrorist acts.⁸ In short, “the progression of searching, finding, adopting, nurturing, and developing” this extreme religious belief system “to the point where it acts as a catalyst for a terrorist act” characterises the process of violent religious radicalisation.⁹

⁵ See “The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act 2007”, available online at www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-1955&tab=summary (accessed 11 May 2011).

⁶ Frank Cilluffo and Gregory Saathoff, *Out of the Shadows: Getting Ahead of Prisoner Radicalization* (Washington D.C.: George Washington University/Homeland Security Policy Institute, 2007).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Digging Deeper: The Sources of Violent Religious Radicalisation in Youth

In recent years, a Social Identity theory has emerged as one useful social psychological paradigm for understanding religiously-motivated violence.¹⁰ Briefly and broadly, the theory starts off from the basic premise that all human beings need positive self-esteem for emotional and psychological health. However, our individual esteem is always tied to that of a wider group, whether nationalistic, ethnic or religious. In short there can be no individual authenticity without collective authenticity. Following Moghaddam, we could say that all youth seek to belong to a high-status and secure group with a positive and distinct group identity. This is to ensure that they would enjoy dignity, distinctiveness and self-respect – something essential to identity formation.¹¹ From a complementary psychoanalytic perspective, the respected conflict scholar Vamik Volkan draws attention to the importance of the so-called “Group Tent”, arguing that we “all wear, from childhood on, two layers of clothing”, the first snugly-fitting garment, representing personal identity, and the second set of looser outer clothes representing “the fabric of the large group’s ethnic (or religious or ideological) tent.” Volkan argues that “each member of the large group is cloaked by a piece of the same cloth, and it protects the person like a parent or caregiver”. Importantly, Volkan warns that when the “shared identity” of members of “large ethnic or religious groups” is “threatened,” and the “canvas of the tent is shaken or torn” during periods of “shared helplessness and humiliation” caused by “others”, then “ethnic or religious group members would quite willingly “humiliate, cripple, burn, and kill ‘others’” in response even “when our own physical survival is not threatened.”¹² To put it another way, the perception that their religious group is being subjected to systematic political, social and economic marginalisation by some dominant group can be a powerful driver of radicalisation. More than that, the perception that their group is being threatened by physical annihilation leading to, possibly, *group extinction* – as

¹⁰ For instance, see F. Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration”, *American Psychologist*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (2005), pp. 161-169; David Berreby, *Us and Them: The Science of Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Peter Herrfjort, *Religious Fundamentalism and Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2007).

¹¹ Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism”. The idea that youth seek meaning, status and esteem is well-founded in the developmental psychology literature as well. Goh Chee Leong, “How, What and Why: Understanding Them: A Psychological Overview of Youth”, presentation at the Symposium on the Dynamics of Youth and Terrorism, 8-11 May 2011, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, organised by Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

¹² Vamik D. Volkan, *Killing in the Name of Identity: A Study of Bloody Conflicts* (Pitchstone Publishing, 2006).

illustrated by the horrific ethnic cleansing campaigns in Rwanda and the Balkans in the 1990s – can be a catalyst for violent radicalisation in perceived defense of the endangered Group Tent. Interestingly, this perception that the so-called Group Tent is under metaphysical or physical threat does not have to be directly experienced by youth. Reading or hearing about the acute marginalisation and suffering, or worse, watching DVDs of the physical slaughter of co-religionists in far-away places – what has been termed “secondary trauma” – can also ultimately trigger violent religious radicalisation leading to terrorism against the perceived enemies of the Group Tent.¹³

The Reality of “Cognitive” Radicalisation

In a mental or cognitive sense, when youth perceive that their Group Tent is under attack, especially physical attack, a drastic *identity simplification dynamic* kicks in. In normal situations, as the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen memorably puts it:¹⁴

The same person can, for example, be a British citizen, of Malaysian origin, with Chinese racial characteristics, a stockbroker, a non-vegetarian, an asthmatic, a linguist, a bodybuilder, a poet, an opponent of abortion, a bird-watcher, an astrologer, and one who believes that God created Darwin to test the gullible.

However, when the young people of a particular religious community perceive that they are being attacked by a powerful enemy – “Them” – all these various social identities get thrown out the window in favor of *one single dimension of collective identification*. The writer Slavenka Drakulic talks about this in her poignant description of the psychological and cognitive impact on Croats of brutal Serbian attacks in the early 1990s:¹⁵

¹³ See also Thomas Koruth Samuel, “The Lure of Youth into Terrorism”, *SEARCCT’s Selection of Articles*, Vol. 2, (2011), pp. 111-112.

¹⁴ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

¹⁵ See Kumar Ramakrishna, *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalization in Indonesia* (Westport and London: Praeger Security International, 2009), p. 34.

Along with millions of other Croats, I was pinned to the wall of nationhood – not only by outside pressure from Serbia and the Federal Army but by national homogenization within Croatia itself. That is what the war is doing to us, reducing us to one dimension: the Nation. The trouble with this nationhood, however, is that whereas before, I was defined by my education, my job, my ideas, my character – and yes, my nationality too - now I feel stripped of all that.

In like vein, Lord Alderdice, a trained psychiatrist and politician who was involved in brokering the Good Friday peace deal between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland in 1998, pointed out that during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, “the community had regressed from a myriad of individual differences maintained in a broad mosaic of relationships, *to a narrower frame of reference where the single difference between Protestant Unionist and Catholic Nationalist assumed pre-eminence*” (my emphasis).¹⁶ In short, both communities in Ulster had been, what we may call, “cognitively radicalized”.

In a state of cognitive radicalisation, the multiple identities in a community are reduced to a single overarching in-group: “Us.” Similarly the multiple affiliations and self-identifications in the other community are reduced to a single overarching, adversarial: “Them,” the out-group. In short, existential identity anxiety over the fate of one’s Group Tent prompts defensive, dualistic and paranoid thinking where everything tends to be simplified to “Us and Them”. Hence, whether we are talking about young Irish Catholics and Protestants in Ulster of the Troubles; young Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims in rapidly dissolving Yugoslavia, young Tamils and Sinhalese in conflict-torn Sri Lanka; young Shia and Sunni in post-Saddam Iraq, and closer to home, young Christians and Muslims in conflict-prone Poso and Maluku – what ties them together despite their different circumstances is the fact that these are *cognitive radicalised* communities. More to the point, it is from such communities of mental haters that the violent haters emerge. Or to put it more technically, it is from such *cognitively radicalised communities* that the *violently radicalised terrorists* emerge. The upshot of this discussion is that

¹⁶ Alderdice cited in Ramakrishna, *Radical Pathways*, pp. 33-34.

radicalisation occurs in the mind long before an extremist belief system justifying violence in pursuit of anti-social, subversive political aims is consciously adopted and violence is even resorted to in the real world. This suggests that perhaps in understanding the process of violent religious radicalisation amongst youth, one must move one's analytical lens further upstream ... to understand how one becomes a *Virtual Religious Radical first* ... before one ever becomes a Violent Religious Radical.

Three Key Factors That Influence How a Virtual Radical Becomes a Violent Radical: Culture, Ideology and Small Group Dynamics

It is suggested tentatively that three key factors mediate the transition of the young Virtual Religious Radical to the Violent Religious Radical: culture, ideology and small group dynamics.

Culture. Following the seminal work of the eminent Dutch social psychologist Hofstede, we define culture as learned ways of thinking, feeling and acting.¹⁷ It is suggested that a certain type of cultural landscape is conducive to the transmutation of the Virtual Radical to the Violent Radical, namely, a *collectivist, large power-distance, and uncertainty-intolerant culture.* But first, an elaboration is in order. Collectivism refers to the organising principle of societies in which “people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.”¹⁸ Power distance on the other hand refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of social collectivities within a society “expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.”¹⁹ Finally, uncertainty avoidance refers to “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” – such as the cultural and moral dislocations brought about by globalisation and urbanisation – and seek leaders and groups that can offer them existential and religious certainty.²⁰

¹⁷ Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival*, rev. and expanded 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), pp. 2-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Societies can be considered as collectivist in orientation if the children in these societies grow up learning to conceive of themselves as part of a “we” group – that is, a “relationship that is not voluntary but is given by nature.” In collectivist societies, the individual grows up deeply enmeshed within social networks built around respected elders who provide cues in terms of appropriate attitudes, beliefs and values and who insist on the preservation of harmony. In the collectivist society, therefore, personal opinions are subordinated to the collective will of the group and its senior elders and leaders.²¹ Collectivist societies also tend to be large power-distance societies in which the lower classes rely on the power elites for preserving social security, harmony and public order; Parents teach children obedience; respect for parents and older relatives is a lifelong basic virtue, and teachers are respected as “gurus who transfer personal wisdom” and who actively shape students’ “intellectual paths.”

In large power-distance societies, moreover, there “is a pattern of dependence on seniors that pervades all human contacts, and the mental software that people carry contains a strong *need* for such dependence.”²² Finally in strong uncertainty-avoidance societies – that is, societies which are relatively uncomfortable with, and fear, uncertainty and ambiguity – children are socialised into *firm rules* of what is dirty and taboo; at school, students prefer structured learning situations and seek “the right answers” which teachers are expected to have; in the workplace there is an emphasis on *precision and formalisation* while experts and technical solutions are sought after and society as a whole prefers numerous, precise rules for regulating social behavior. In fact, there is an emotional need for rules and regulations.²³

The importance of uncertainty-avoidance as a cultural dimension cannot be overemphasised. It arguably creates fallow psychological ground for religious extremism and radicalisation to fester. For example, as Hofstede argues, sentiments of dirt and danger can also be held *about people*, and racism is bred in families. Children learn that persons from a particular category are dirty and dangerous. They thus learn to avoid children from other *social, ethnic, religious, or political out-groups as playmates*.²⁴ In addition,

²¹ Ibid., pp. 75-114.

²² Ibid., pp. 51-72.

²³ Ibid., pp. 163-189.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 174-175.

children in these families learn that some ideas are good and others taboo. Insightfully, Hofstede argues that in some cultures the distinction between “good” and “evil” ideas is sharp. There is a concern “about Truth with a capital T” and ideas that differ from this Truth are “dangerous and polluting”. In short, doubt or relativism is frowned upon.²⁵ This is precisely why strong uncertainty-avoidance cultures tend to display xenophobic tendencies, greater levels of ethnic prejudice, the conviction that in “religion, there is only one Truth and we have it,” and that this Truth should be imposed on others. Thus it is the strong uncertainty-avoidance cultures that produce disproportionately, “religious, political, and ideological intolerance and fundamentalisms,” seeking to remake entire societies according to some preferred vision of a religiously prescribed moral and sociopolitical order.²⁶ In effect, countries that are home to diverse “ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups” whose respective outlooks are characterised by *collectivism and strong uncertainty avoidance* tend to be prone to “violent intergroup strife.”²⁷ In a nutshell, culture – as “learned ways of thinking feeling and acting” – can help transform cognitive radicalisation into full-blown violent religious radicalisation.

Ideology. However, as Hofstede points out, culture consists of the “unwritten rules of the social game”.²⁸ In a similar vein, Ervin Staub argues that culture consists of beliefs, meanings, values, valuation, symbols, myths, and perspectives that are shared largely without awareness.²⁹ Hence the inchoate and free-floating beliefs, myths and perhaps prejudices of the wider culture by themselves need to be *intensified and focused into an action-oriented ideology in order to generate terrorist action*. In this respect, while Staub considers ideology as primarily a consciously-held set of beliefs and values,³⁰ C.J.M. Drake defines ideology to mean those “beliefs, values, principles and objectives” by which a group “defines itself and justifies its course of action”.³¹ In short ideology is action-oriented: while it draws upon

²⁵ Ibid. p. 174.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 197-202.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 196-197.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁹ Staub cited in Ramakrishna, *Radical Pathways*, p. 85.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Drake cited in Jeffrey B. Cozzens, “Identifying Entry Points of Action in Counter-Radicalization: Countering Salafi-Jihadi Ideology through Development Initiatives – Strategic Openings”, Working Paper 2006/6 (Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Studies, 2006), p. 1.

its content and authenticity from the wider culture, it deliberately intensifies and focuses the random and unstructured emotional and cultural sentiments of targeted youth by diagnosing the problem they are purportedly facing, identifies the “enemies” of their religious Group Tent, and finally suggests courses of action, namely armed struggle to “defend” the Group Tent against those “evil” enemies.³²

Small Group Dynamics. Finally, the process by which certain elements of the wider culture become intensified and focused into an action-oriented ideology – and cognitive radicalisation turns violent – cannot but occur within a small group context. It is within the small group that individual psychology interacts with wider cultural and social psychological forces. Individual psychology cannot be excluded from any examination of how youth become religiously-motivated terrorists.³³ Individually, studies have shown that it does not matter who a person is, or how outwardly independent, a child’s wish for a powerful, protective parent waits in the depths of the psyche and seeks expression. In fact such an unconscious longing to belong persists into adulthood and results in the cult behavior that pervades normal society. The dynamics of cult behavior and thinking are so pervasive in normal society that we do not realise we are all likely members of invisible cults. As psychiatrist and cult expert Arthur Deikman suggests, there is a lot of hidden cult thinking operating unnoticed daily in our lives.³⁴ It is suggested here that in extreme situations – such as a widely perceived existential threat to one’s religious Group Tent – violent extremist cults can form that are *dangerous mutations* of the informal cults (or more conventionally, social networks) that pre-exist in society. A small group functioning as *a religious cult* in essence possesses four distinguishing characteristics that generate powerful social psychological pressures on its young members: dependence on a leader; compliance with the group; suppression of dissent; and finally, devaluation of outsiders.³⁵ Under the sheer “power of the situational context” of immersion in such a cult-like environment in which dissent is suppressed and there is total dependence on a charismatic leader – or “spiritual

³² Kumar Ramakrishna, “It’s the *Story*, Stupid: Developing a Counter-Strategy for Neutralizing Radical Islamism in Southeast Asia” CSRC Discussion Paper 05/48 (September 2005).

³³ James W. Jones, *Blood that Cries Out from the Earth: the Psychology of Religious Terrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 117-119.

³⁴ Deikman cited in Ramakrishna, *Radical Pathways*, p. 123.

³⁵ Ramakrishna, *Radical Pathways*, p. 145.

sanctioner,” as the aforementioned NYPD Report puts it – impressionable young minds can well be manipulated to hurt others. It is within the cult-like milieu of the charismatic and dominant Imam Samudra’s small Team Lima group, for instance, that the young and impressionable Javanese Arnasan was transformed into one of the suicide bombers that struck Bali in October 2002.³⁶ It is thus within the small cult-like group that the free-floating, inchoate prejudices of the wider culture are intensified and focused into a consciously held violent ideology – and *cognitive radicalisation becomes transformed into violent religious radicalisation*.

Taking Stock – and a Policy Question

In this essay we have discussed how young people may become violently radicalised to the point of committing terrorist atrocities in the name of religion. We have argued that young people seek dignity, distinctiveness and self-respect and a major pathway to attain this is one’s Group Tent, which could be for example one’s religion. We have surveyed research that suggests that when young people perceive that their religious Group Tent is under threat, especially physical threat, there is an automatic psychological tendency to rally around that Group Tent to such an extent that the other social identities that one possesses in normal times are drastically overshadowed. The point at which the only social identity that matters is one’s religion – in the face of the perceived threat from another “evil” religious community – is the point at which cognitive radicalisation sets in. Cognitive radicalisation, in which the world is divided into a “Good Us” and an “Evil Them” then paves the way for the adoption of extremist belief systems that legitimate violence for religio-political goals and ultimately, the turn to violence, including terrorism. We also identified the ways in which xenophobic sentiments and beliefs encouraged by the cultural dimensions of collectivism, large power distance, and strong uncertainty avoidance, could become intensified and focused within a cult-like small group into an action-oriented and violent ideology that – in the hearts and minds of impressionable young people – religiously legitimates the killing of the perceived enemies of one’s religious Group Tent.

³⁶ Ibid., Chapter Four.

If we accept the preceding analysis then a key policy question arises: should governments and civil societies worry only about Violent Radicals? Or should more attention be focused also on Virtual – that is physically non-violent but *rhetorically aggressive* individuals and groups? In this connection it is worth noting that an allegedly non-violent (but certainly rhetorically aggressive) Indonesian cleric once called upon young Muslims in Indonesia to beat up non-Muslim tourists in Bali as they were “snakes, worms and maggots”.³⁷ In addition, a journalist recalled his consternation when on seeing violent terrorism-glorifying graffiti in and around the confines of a religious boarding school in Central Java associated with the Jemaah Islamiyah network, he was assured about the school’s students: “They are radicals in their heads only, not in action”. Should we not however be concerned that at some point the cognitively radicalised young Virtual Radicals in that school will become – through perhaps some of the processes described in this essay – Violent Radicals? That some of the graduates of that school have indeed gone from Virtual to Violent suggests that more thought should be put into this issue.

³⁷ Natasha Robinson, “Bashir Urges Attacks on ‘Infidel’ Australians,” *The Australian*, 24 March 2008.

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RADICALISATION IN PAKISTANI YOUTH

Muhammad Amir Rana

It might come as a surprise to those concerned about a growing militancy in Pakistan that most of the people in the country believe that the Taliban and Al Qaeda are not doing any service to Islam. According to the findings of a recent survey by Pew Research Center,ⁱ support for terrorism among Pakistanis is much lower compared to that in other Muslim states. The people of Pakistan are concerned about a rise in extremism linked to religion.

But radicalisation is not a simple phenomenon that may be measured simply through support for or disapproval of violent actions. After all, despite the low support for Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the country, Pakistan has been faced with an unprecedented and devastating wave of terrorism, which far exceeds anything confronting countries with a decidedly higher level of radicalisation. And that begs the question: what are the factors contributing to such a violent landscape in Pakistan, despite popular opposition to terrorism amongst the Pakistani people.

There is no single answer to the question. Firstly, society may be against violence, but not necessarily against the agenda of extremists. The second, and the most important, factor is the presence of militant networks in Pakistan. Over 100 militant and Taliban groups and foreign terrorist networks operating in and from the tribal areas of Pakistan present the key difference between Pakistan and other Muslim states affected by radicalisation. Radicalisation and terrorism have a cause-and-effect relationship in Pakistan. The challenge of terrorism cannot be overcome without weakening this bond.

Trends of Radicalisation

In this perspective, Pakistani youths have the same tendencies and seem confused on issues related to radicalisation, extremism and terrorism, as

ⁱ Public Opinion in Pakistan: Concerns about Extremist Threat Slips, Pew Research Center Publications, available at <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1683/pakistan-opinion-less-concern-extremists-america-image-poor-india-threat-support-harsh-laws>, last accessed on April 17, 2011.

a few recent studies suggest. A study by Brookings Institution in 2008, based on approximately 350 responses from Swat and Malakand, hinted that the increasing cases of radicalisation among young people in Pakistan is due to multiple factors.ⁱⁱ A report by the British High Commission, based on a survey applied to over 1,000 youth from all over the country in 2009 highlighted the dissatisfaction and frustration of youth over the lack of systems in the country.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, a survey by the Centre for Civic Education in 2009 said a vast majority of youth (69.6 per cent) believe that extremism is on the rise among youth, while an overwhelming majority of 85.4 per cent believes that the youth of Pakistan can play a constructive role in combating growing extremism in the society.^{iv}

The findings of these studies indicate that the average Pakistani takes his religion seriously. However, unlike the Taliban, he does not want to make it claustrophobic for other people. The average Pakistani thus wants to be progressive in a conservative framework. He is caught between two competing narratives: the first one, which is primarily grounded in religion and is now championed by militant groups, makes him want to see his religion triumph; the other, usually trotted out by the government and the media, is mainly based on information and rational analysis, making him realise the significance of progressing in the world.

For instance, one of such studies, conducted by Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), an Islamabad-based research think tank, asserts that there are some traces of cultural and religious radicalisation among rural youths who also share some economic and social-based grievances. The urban youths, on the other hand, although seemingly liberal in their socio-political outlook, are confused about the direction of the change in society, and secondly, their global political views almost resemble those of religious and also to some extent extremist ideologues.^v

Similarly a team of eight PIPS researchers visited 16 public and private universities and post-graduate public colleges across the country

ⁱⁱ Moeed Yusuf, "Prospects of Youth Radicalisation in Pakistan: Implications for US Policy," Brookings Institution, October 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Pakistan: The Next Generation Report*, available at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/pakistan-next-generation-report-download.htm>. Last accessed on April 17, 2011.

^{iv} *Civic Health of Pakistani Youth* (Islamabad: Centre for Civic Education, 2009), available at <http://www.civiceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Civichealth.pdf>.

^v The PIPS and Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, jointly conducted an empirical quantitative research study to identify the trends and gauge the extent of radicalisation among educated Pakistani youth in last quarter of 2008.

from February to April 2010,^{vi} and findings of their study suggested that there was a widespread perception among the youth that democracy will not help Pakistan deal with its problems. The study also found that there was extensive frustration among the youth over the current state of affairs in the country, which they feel needs to be changed. Equally important among the social and religious variables that influence young individuals is the resistance to ethnic and religious diversity among a large section of Pakistani youth, necessitating urgent efforts to counter this distrust.^{vii}

Thinking Patterns of Youth

According to the PIPS youth study, 79.4 per cent of the respondents thought that the Pakistani Taliban were not serving Islam. Most of the respondents (85.6 per cent) believed that suicide bombings were prohibited in Islam. The majority of the respondents (61.7 per cent) supported military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. At the same time, the youth overwhelmingly considered religion an important factor in their life (92.4 per cent), but said that they do not offer prayers regularly. (51.7 per cent). The majority of the respondents (51.3 per cent) endorsed the country's hybrid legal system in which Shariah is not the only source of law.

The respondents were almost equally divided on the question whether religious-political parties should get a chance to rule the country, with 42.6 per cent endorsing the idea and 42 per cent opposing it. A positive indication noted in the survey was that 77.8 per cent of the male respondents agreed that women had the same rights as men, while 95.9 per cent stated that women should get an education and 75.7 per cent that they should have the opportunity to work. But most of the respondents' linked women's freedom with the observance of *Pardah* as 65.5 per cent thought that women should wear the veil in public.

^{vi} The selection of universities reflected the population of the four provinces, the federal capital, Azad Kashmir, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Gilgit-Baltistan, the region formerly known as Northern Areas. As many as 345 university students, 40 per cent of them girls, participated in the survey.

^{vii} "Radicalization: Perceptions of Educated Youth in Pakistan," a survey report by Pak Institute for Peace Studies published in PIPS quarterly research journal *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Volume 3, Number 3.

Most importantly, the study noted that influences by parents, the media and religious books contribute more to shaping the socio-cultural, religious and political views as well as the worldview of the youth of Pakistan. Contrary to the common perception of the dominance of the clergy in imparting religious education, 38 per cent of the respondents said that they received their basic religious education from their parents and not from a mosque or a madrassa. Another 38 per cent relied upon religious books. Booksellers have confirmed a spike in the sale of religious books in the last few years. For nine per cent of the respondents, the official curriculum was the preferred mode of acquiring Islamic knowledge, again contrary to the common perception.

The impact of the media on youth awareness was very visible as the youth relied upon the various forms of the media, included the television, newspapers and the Internet, to keep themselves abreast of latest developments. The survey results also revealed the desire of the majority of the respondents to stay significantly informed. Around 93 per cent owned television sets. Nearly half of the survey population (50.2 per cent) relied on Geo News, a private Urdu news channel, for information and only four per cent said they watched QTV, a channel that focuses on religious education. Nearly 86 per cent of the students said they read newspapers. Most of them named mainstream Urdu broadsheets such as *Jang* (38.8 per cent), *Express* (19.9 per cent) and *Nawa-e-Waqt* (9 per cent) as papers they read.

Only a few of the respondents were interested in militant media publications such as the daily *Islam* (2.5 per cent) or *Zarb-e-Momin* (0.6 per cent). This despite claims by the groups printing these newspapers that they have greater outreach and circulation than some of the leading newspapers in the country. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to mention that some strands of militant discourse can also be seen in the conservative segments of Pakistani media. Hence, young people remain exposed to radical ideas whether they read militant media publications or not.

The survey noted growing religiosity and political awareness among the educated youth. Religion is an issue of identity for them but they seemed confused about whether it can provide solutions to their problems as seen from the large proportion of the respondents who supported the country's hybrid legal system in which Shariah is not the only source of law. But a fairly large percentage (19.5) also thought that democracy would not make

a difference. The same confusion could be seen in society overall. The key drivers identified for the prevailing confusion were parents, media and religious publications and these could prove instrumental in reversing the thinking patterns.

That is not to say that it would be an easy job. It would involve reversing the whole socio-cultural, religious and political thinking discourse. Injustice, inequality, identity crisis, state delivery systems, and a sense of marginalisation as individuals or as a society could be discerned as the undercurrents in the prevailing thinking patterns. The role of the state, especially in the perspective of state-society relations, and relations with other states, would also merit a closer look in this perspective.

Counter-Radicalisation Strategies

But counter-radicalisation measures in Pakistan, both at state and civil society levels have focused almost exclusively on the nexus of radicalisation, violence and terrorism and little attention has been paid to factors behind non-violent manifestations of radicalisation, particularly in the youth. Moreover the typology, content and direction of civil society interventions to engage youths have also remained general in their focus and not focused exclusively on countering and/or preventing radicalisation and extremism in youth.

There are in fact some fundamental problems associated with these interventions. First, they do not target the representative class of youth from across the country and their outreach is very limited; geographical outreach hardly touches the grass-roots level. Secondly, most of such interventions are confined to one or another particular class of youth – engagement of one segment remains isolated from the other(s). Thirdly, these interventions are seemingly short-lived, direct and instantaneous, and thus lack sustainability and long-term impact. Fourthly, being based on common perceptions, these interventions also lack the support base of empirical research, which is imperative to strategise a proper framework for youth engagement, and which can provide the fundamental context, typology, nature and content for any programme meant to engage the youth for the said purpose.

The paucity of governmental budget allocations for education notwithstanding, there are also few investment programs at state and societal

levels which prioritise youth for their informal education and training, which is the dire need of the hour owing to the increasing youth bulge (an excess in especially young adult male population) in Pakistan. According to the UN's definition of youth more than 36 million in Pakistan are within the age group of between 15-24 years.^{viii} Being a significant demographic feature in the country, the youth thus form a considerable social entity to be engaged and targeted in any effort meant to promote peace, tolerance and religious harmony in youth itself and also in the society.

^{viii} <http://www.undp.org.pk/undp-and-the-youth.html>. Retrieved April 16, 2011.

TERRORISM, MEDIA AND YOUTH

Ranga Kalansooriya

ABSTRACT

If it is claimed that the world has become a safer place after the killing of a terrorist leader, there is a fundamental contradiction in understanding the issue of terrorism. Terrorism differs from other crimes due to the element of politics involved in it. Thousands of terrorists could be killed on the battle field, but how do we kill the political ideology being followed by innumerable non-combatants or silent comrades who could potentially fill the gap? The media plays a key role in this ideological battle by creating a platform for engagement, discourse and deliberations. But has the media itself identified its role in this ideological battle – that is mainly to defuse the tension and conflicts? Has it identified the root causes why the youth take up arms, and struggle against existing systems? In a nutshell, does it play its due role as the Fourth Estate in democracies?

Keywords: Terrorism, Democracy, Media and Conflict, Capacity, Understanding

Introduction

Democracy is impossible without a free press (Baker, 1998) but protracted conflicts around the world have challenged the various components of democracy, and its traditions and institutions, to a large extent – the media is not spared.

Media activists usually blame successive regimes for curtailing press freedom, but it is pertinent to shed light on the media itself, to ascertain whether it has performed its due role in such democracies which have been threatened and challenged by politically driven, ethnically or religiously designed and militarily ruthless conflicts. Many believe the, media should bear a considerable share of the responsibility for these conflicts that have ravaged the world for over decades.

It is an undeniable fact that the media plays an extremely vital role in defusing tension, managing conflicts and establishing democracy. As Kurspahic (2003) argues, the independence of the media is an important

part of future peace agreements and one of the crucial requirements for international acceptance of states in transition. But the real challenge is in convincing the media to adopt this independence the commercial side of which is necessarily a blending of two separate disciplines: business and journalism (Herrick, 2003). Apart from the commercial side, there is of course a strong political agenda as well.

The media is often accused of being biased or polarised. The perceived root causes for this phenomenon range from aspects such as market forces, the political alignment of the ownership, readership influence, and lack of professional standards among journalists and editors.

Terrorism is largely defined as ‘politically motivated violence against civilian targets.’¹ Thus, there is a clearly demarcated political element within the term of ‘terrorism.’ The political element could be derived from religious, ethnic or other forms of ideology – in other words, different ideologies such as religious, ethnic or commercial at converging into one specific element – politics.

The media plays a key role in democracies, that is, in bringing together different schools of thought and being the voice for the voiceless. But the question remains whether the media is playing this role or whether it has even understood its responsibilities. Does the media provide the required platform for the deprived youth who agitate to highlight their grievances? If not what are the reasons behind this failure?

Media and Conflict of Interests

Information, education and entertainment are the cardinal aspects of the media of which information, as in the formation of ‘news,’ reaches the public. Some would argue that news and information are two different components of the media – based on the public response, but there exists a thin margin demarcating the two.²

An independent media is the pillar of true democracy; no other institution does what journalism does, namely “inform, monitor, and

¹ In the absence of a globally accepted UN definition on Terrorism, this definition is largely being used in academia, though it has its own limitations.

² Information is something that would generate an immediate response of an individual. One can receive information through news which is more colourful, creative and attractive, according to Prof. Shrivastava of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (personal interview).

critique” public affairs (Stepp, 1996). To the extent that papers and stations try to “fix government through journalism” or “substitute journalism for government” they depart from their unique duties to provide checks on governments that are critically important to democracy, argues Stepp.³ Though he, in his academic commentary, does not deeply engage with the concept of news in the field of media, many scholars have argued that the impact of news is the cardinal element in shaping public opinion at large.

News, one of the most important forms of information imparted by the mass media (Roy, 2005), is considered one of the most important components that shapes public opinion (Shrivastava, 2003). It also makes people feel they are part of a bigger network of people or a larger community, which could be derived through a formula where people and their actions are conjoined with the reader’s interest that generate news⁴ (Roy, 2005).

However, according to Dzur (2002), news is more than the information that the public wants. According to him, the mandate of news goes beyond mere reporting to generating public discourse. More controversial than the re-conceptualisation of what is newsworthy, so that it includes non-elite stories and purposeful news, is the belief that to promote public deliberation, journalists must do more than report the news, and should broaden their role to include helping the public convene and deliberate about public affairs, Dzur says. He added that news journalists should play the role of the neutral referee in such public deliberations derived from the news they have relayed to the public. Of course, the metaphor is not entirely apt, since referees do not influence the rules of the game and seldom urge the players onto the field. Like referees, though, journalists would immediately lose their particular role-based authority if they were to actively root for one side, Dzur argues.

But it is seldom that the journalist himself or herself takes the decision to be one-sided. In the corporate business of the news media, and also in the Asian context where the media is a value-added commodity in gaining political power, the concept of objective news reporting has different variations and interpretations. In this context, several writers argue about different agendas in news reporting, especially market interest, business models, corporate influence and political agendas.

³ Carl Stepp, “Public Journalism : Balancing the Scales,” *American Journalism Review* 18 (1996), p. 40.

⁴ Roy Barun in his formula [People + Action + Reader’s Interest = News] argues that all these three added components are equally important in creating news.

Do Journalists Understand the Conflicts?

Beyond these above mentioned issues, the most salient point is the capacity of the journalist to understand the conflicts. Many media critiques and media development experts believe journalists – whether local or international – have little understanding of the conflicts which they report on.

If the journalist has no proper understanding of the conflict, he or she could hardly be expected to explain all aspects of the conflict to the audience. Thus, reporting on the conflicts is limited to mere documenting of events or day-to-day incidents without proper analysis or a historical background.

This phenomenon limits the level of engagement of the public, including the deprived segments of society, in the media platform. Due to vested interests and unprofessional conduct, the media has largely abandoned its role of giving a voice to the voiceless, and that of creating a common platform for open deliberations on issues of public interest.

It is possible for the media to play a decisive role in defusing tension and educating the masses despite the influence of vested interests, but modern media corporations seem far more interested in profits than they are in news dissemination (Herrick, 2003). Journalism today could be categorised as ‘market-driven journalism’ which is driven in turn by geographic cluster ownership with coordination of news and advertising staffs on marketing.

Media owners are not the only stake holders that attempt to influence the media, in particular news journalism. Politicians, statesmen, business people (advertisers), and wealthy and influential people throughout the world try to change the face of journalism and what it publishes.

However, amidst all these developments, news still gets twisted, slanted and spun due to many factors – mainly political or economic circumstances or both. Bennett (1988) explains four characteristics of biased news reporting as follows:

- Personalising news into human interest accounts, limiting the public’s ability to see the ‘big picture’, and causing a focus on the trivial aspects of important news events, like personality flaws and behavioral gaffes;
- Dramatising news to present stories that stem from events, leaving no professional convention for addressing many of the more serious problems confronting contemporary societies, like hunger, racism, resource waste and depletion;

- Information fragmentation, making it difficult to see the larger picture;
- A source bias, where news media seeks out authoritative voices of officials who offer views that “normalise” the news for average members of the public.

Media and Terrorism

The contemporary form of terrorism is highly media-savvy and mostly media-focused. In fact one could easily argue that the main focus of any terrorist attack is to seek maximum publicity through maximum damage. Newsrooms will provide prominence to the news of a bomb explosion if the death toll and the damages are high. If not the story will end up in the obituary pages or does not get published at all. In Pakistan some argue that most the recent Taliban attacks were timed specifically to coincide with prime time news bulletins, thus receiving maximum media mileage.⁵

Propaganda is the most important tool in any battle. Not only terrorists, but State actors too are looking forward to reaping maximum benefits through media outreach. As far as propaganda is concerned, there is no major difference between state and non-state actors, but terrorists need the media to publicise their goals and ideologies.

Almost all the leading terrorist groups handle the media in a professional manner. They have dedicated media units, spokespersons, and websites that frequently update and feed the news desks with statements and media releases – far ahead of any governmental structure in most cases. During the peak of the Northern Ireland conflict, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) appointed Pat Rice who was capable of speaking 16 languages fluently as its international spokesman. Though Al-Qaeda took some time to understand the importance of the media,⁶ it started media propaganda by dropping videotaped statements at the doorsteps of major media stations. Now it has a fully fledged propaganda operation which attracts all major media stations.

On the other hand the media struggles to fill their news pages and bulletins with news that matter to the day-to-day life of the audience.

⁵ Personal interviews with Adnan Rehmat, Director of Intermedia, Pakistan.

⁶ Prominent Pakistani journalist Rahimulla Yousuf Zai in Peshawar, who interviewed Bin Laden would explain how difficult it was for him to convince the Al-Qaeda leader for a media interview.

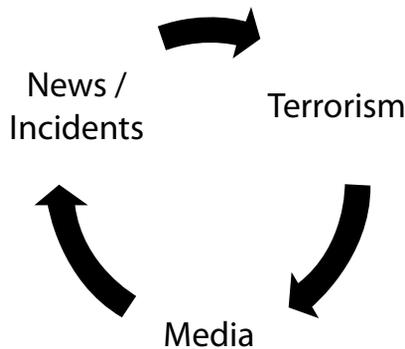
Terrorist attacks provide the media with good, marketable material, complete with fantastic visuals and images. After a major terrorist attack, newspaper circulation increases and viewership ratings go up. News pages and bulletins get easily filled up.

There are ten elements that determine the newsworthiness of a story to journalists and news editors:

1. Immediacy and event-orientation;
2. Drama and conflict;
3. Negativity (bad news is always good news);
4. Human interest;
5. Photographability / Good visuals;
6. Simple story lines;
7. Topicality (current news frames);
8. Exclusivity;
9. Status of information source; and
10. Local interest.

News that derive from terrorist activities fit well into these ten elements. Thus, there exists a vicious cycle between terrorism and the media in providing and manufacturing news, and a strong co-existence between media and terrorism that serves each others' objectives – political and commercial goals.

The Vicious Cycle



In that context, one can blame the media for providing the terrorists a platform by reporting on terrorism related incidents, because as argued

above, publicity and propaganda are exactly what terrorists are looking for in media coverage of its events – whether its terrorist attacks or their media releases.

On the other hand, from the media's point of view there are two reasons for reporting terrorist related events. One is keeping the public informed on developments, and the other is defending basic democratic norms by providing a voice for groups whose grievances should be heard by the authorities.

The absence of a globally accepted definition for terrorism is a major obstacle in this regard. The media generally feels that the term “terrorist” is largely driven by political interests and in-house policies within media houses have various different approaches in dealing with the term. Most stylebooks⁷ of media houses do not use the word terrorist, but would rather stick to terms such as militants, combatants, guerillas, etc. This situation leads to confrontations between state actors and the media.

But the media would argue that while reporting on terrorism-related incidents or carrying terrorist organisations' statements may be deemed an anti-social practice, in doing so the media is practicing its due role in a vibrant democracy.

Youth and Media vs Terrorism

It is commonly believed that the youth today are the most vulnerable sector of society and are susceptible to radicalisation. Politically, economically or socially deprived youth can easily be exploited by interested parties. Terrorists are not born but produced or derived by society itself. Due to the co-relationship between terrorism and politics, the media has a greater role in a pluralistic, societal democracy to bring socio-political grievances to the larger platform of discourse. Hence, the media's shoulders a mammoth social responsibility in educating the masses on social vulnerabilities and also bringing various interested and deprived groups onto a common platform for wider social deliberation. Youth should be included a considerable portion of these deliberations which will ultimately defuse their internal tensions and frustrations.

⁷ Style-book is the in-house guide lines within a newsroom which defines terms according to the in-house policies of the respective media organisation.

Historically, world-wide it has been seen youth would resort to violence if their voices are not heard or they are not provided with due space to air their grievances. Therefore, the media could be better tools as well as a platform in the de-radicalisation of youth. This is a paramount component of long term counter-terrorism strategies.

But the current argument is whether the media is practicing its due role. A basic study of the percentage of allocation in media space for youth issues and their voices would answer this pertinent question. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that it is the same old names that dominate the larger media landscape particularly local media.

Conclusion

The terrorist is a political animal who uses violence as a tool to achieve his goals. The best way to silence a terrorist is by changing his perceptions and ideologies through wider engagement on different levels, rather than killing him. This argument does not seek to undermine the role of the military in counter-terrorism activities. The media has a greater role to play in strengthening democracy by providing a platform for wider discourse to help ease the tension among different stake-holders and ultimately silence the guns and bombs.

The media is not playing this role in many democracies in creating this platform for social discourse but rather merely carries out ad-hoc reporting of incidents. Vested commercial or political interests and influences, competition, a lack of understanding of situations and journalists of poor calibre are among the various reasons for this situation. While it is acknowledged that the media is a commercial entity that seeks to make profits by selling news and various other products it has nevertheless a social responsibility; this social responsibility has become a topic for a greater debate.

Also there exists between terrorism and the media a vicious cycle and co-relationship in producing and selling news. Breaking or removing this cycle is a myth rather than a reality. The best solution to this is to make a clear distinction between news reporting and opinion discourse.

Providing the necessary space for the youth in this media platform is paramount in preventing them from taking up arms against established systems. Grievances of the deprived youth should be brought to the platform of political discourse, not to the terrorist battle ground.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE PHILIPPINES AND YOUTH RECRUITMENT: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Amparo Pamela H. Fabe

ABSTRACT

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), is a violent terrorist group founded by Jose Maria Sison. It has fought against the Filipino government for more than 45 years. In the early days of the organisation, much of its support came from the youth sector. The CPP formed the Kabataang Makabayan (KM), the youth sector which focused on staging peaceful protests. However, in later years, the tactics of the youth sector changed to that of terrorist activities. The KM is deemed a major source of new membership for the CPP-NPA. The CPP's politico-diplomatic arm is the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Overview

In the period from 1970s up to the 1990s, the trend towards youth recruitment by the CPP accelerated. Most of the educated young members of the CPP were recruited from the country's top universities. Many of the CPP ideologues became faculty members of prestigious state universities and colleges all over the country. Marxism, Leninism and Maoism were taught openly in schools and colleges. The CPP ideologues, who became excellent professors, recruited actively on campus. For example, the University of the Philippines Diliman, the University of the Philippines Los Banos, Ateneo de Manila University and Central Luzon State University became the seedbeds of youth recruitment for the CPP.

During that time, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were not able to implement a counter-strategy to disrupt or limit the campaign for the recruitment of the youth. The AFP was focused on military strategies to handle the armed rebellion of the farmers in the rural areas. It was only

in the early 1980s that the AFP set up a counter-strategy, through the Civil Military Operations office.

In addition, CPP members infiltrated the various trade unions of the Philippines and transformed them into recruitment centres for the NPA. The strategic thrust of the CPP was to unite the struggle of the youth, the young professionals and the workers. Due to its successful recruitments of thousands of supporters, the CPP terrorist organisation gained preliminary success in the form of public recognition. Mr. Jose Maria Sison and his colleagues then started to setup a specific Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology that could be assimilated by the members, through regular indoctrination classes given in the universities, workplaces and in different public venues commonly known as “sit-ins.”

Youth Recruitment Campaign of the CPP-NPA

In addition, reports from various international organisations have revealed that the CPP has been recruiting child soldiers. For instance, a report by The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers in 2008 stated that approximately three to 20 per cent of the NPA forces were made up of children under the age of 18 (Global Report, 2008). The children who joined were predominately from large, impoverished, rural families, in areas where economic opportunities were limited and government delivery of social services weak. According to one estimate, around one-fifth of the NPA’s 7,500-strong force was under 18. Another estimate pegged the youth battalion as consisting of three per cent of the NPA’s 9,500-strong force. The executive committee of the CPP central committee noted in a public statement in November 2005 that “units are confronted on a daily basis by youthful volunteers who wish to join the people’s army but fail to meet the minimum age requirements”. This interest of the young people resulted in them being drafted by the NPA military squads (*News Today*, December 23, 2010).

For example, 33 per cent of the children who were involved in the armed conflict from January 2005 to 2007 admitted that they were recruited by the NPA. The Department of Social Welfare and Development handled their rehabilitation. Then in 2004 and 2005, the Abu Sayyaf Group recruited the youth as young as 15 years of age and gave them heavy types of weapons (Child Soldiers Global Report, 2008).

Marxist Indoctrination of Filipino Youth Recruited by the CPP-NPA

The theories of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought (or Maoism) became the main references for the continued indoctrination of the youth members. These theories encompass dialectical materialism, political economy opposing capitalism to socialist construction, the social science of class struggle and the class dictatorship of the proletariat, party building and rectification movement, people's war and the theory of continuing the revolution under proletarian dictatorship through cultural revolution. The youth recruits were required to study the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. This mastery of the theoretical knowledge enabled the communist members to possess the necessary hindsight, acuity and foresight to advance the armed struggle. The CPP's revolutionary commitment was strengthened for long-term struggle by the profundity and appropriateness of the theory. The party developed a scientific and pro-worker perspective, outlook and methodology (Speech of Jose Maria Sison, December 2010).

The CPP is faithful to the teaching of Mao that says correct ideas do not fall from the sky but come from the social practices of production, the class struggle and scientific experiment. The CPP regards the revolutionary armed struggle as the highest form of struggle as it is focused on the question of political power. The members believe that the social revolution by workers and peasants and those from the middle of the social strata will succeed if these people have the political power to do so. The development of the people's war of the Party advances via three stages: strategic defensive, strategic stalemate and strategic offensive. The Party aims to influence the balance of forces at every stage by pursuing various tactical offensives and increasing its armed and political strength in the process. The CPP works closely with the NPA to integrate the revolutionary armed struggle, the intermittent agrarian revolution and the expansion of the mass base through the establishment of mass organisations and local organs of political power.

Criminal Activities carried out by the CPP-NPA

The Philippine Army estimated that the CPP/NPA raised almost one billion pesos in 2008 from "revolutionary taxation, small-scale mining and marijuana cultivation," according to Armed Forces public affairs chief Lt. Col.

Arnulfo Burgos Jr. Burgos. He noted that young farmers are vulnerable to the recruitment activities of the NPA. Being in the hinterlands and interior areas, they are the first ones to come into contact with the rebels. He stated that more than half of the around 4,100 insurgents are young farmers. (*The Philippine Star*, January 11, 2011).

The Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts

The increasing number of children involved in armed conflict can be traced to these reasons: (1) psychological reasons such as the excitement of being empowered; (2) social tension (i.e., peer pressure); (3) propaganda; and (4) forced recruitment or abduction. Armed groups target the emotional, psychological, mental, or physical vulnerabilities of the children, as well as the situations in their families or communities (Makinano, 2005). The Human Rights Watch stated that child soldiers who will be most likely to be recruited are: (1) poor; (2) separated from their families; (3) displaced from their homes; (4) living in a combat zone; and (5) with limited access to education. They also come from communities, which have inadequate social services (Human Rights Watch Report, 2008).

The recruitment of child soldiers takes place in areas where there is less or no government presence at all. The adolescents are usual targets for recruitment as soldiers. The youth soldiers are trusting and innocent and they have the strength and stamina of adults. Once they join an armed group, the child soldiers become impulsive and aggressive especially when their families have become victims of NPA liquidations or military aggressions. According to the Philippine military, an estimated 2,000 minors fight in the NPA and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Child Soldiers in other Philippine Terrorist Organisations

There were reports that children had joined the MILF in Maguindanao, Shariff Kabunsuan and Lanao del Sur. According to one estimate, in 2005 up to 13 per cent of MILF's 10,000 members were children. Martha Burham, the author of the bestseller, *In the Presence of My Enemies*, which is an account of the kidnapping of her and her husband by

Abu Sayyaf terrorists, wrote that the terrorists who stood guard over them were young boys who were barely in their teens (Burnham, 2009).

When the MILF established Camp Abubakar in Maguindanao in 1982, they recruited children to undergo comprehensive training on military preparedness. However, recruitment of child soldiers was being carried out during the American colonisation, even earlier than the Moro uprising in the 1960s, General Leonard Wood, the Governor of the Moro Province during the American Occupation wrote that the children were being used as human shields while the American troops charged. The Moro children fought the Americans in the battles of “BudDajo” in 1906 and “BudBagsak” in 1913 (Makinano, 2005).

Main Thrusts of the CPP-NPA

The Kabataang Makabayan (Patriotic Youth) was founded as a radical leftist student organisation by Jose Maria Sison in 1964. The KM was the group’s main student organisation. The KM was organised and supervised by educated youth and peasants who were in their mid-20s. In 1969, Sison founded the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA. In the 1970s, some CPP members established the New/National Democratic Front (NDF), a legitimate political party, which serves as the legal face of the CPP-NPA. The strength of the CPP-NPA stems from its young members, recruited from the top state colleges and universities. The CPP-NPA is the most active and violent terrorist organisation in the Philippines. The KM further evolved into a reliable protest group by becoming an active participant during the student protests between January and March 1970, known as the “First Quarter Storm.” These protests resulted in violence and radicalised many youth, thus sustaining membership within the organisation.

The Important Role of Youth Recruits in the CPP-NPA

Jose Maria Sison was only twenty-one years old when he began to do revolutionary work at the University of the Philippines (UP) in 1959. He led the Student Cultural Association of the University of the Philippines (SCAUP) running it as a patriotic organisation in direct opposition to the

UP Student Catholic Action (UPSCA) an anti-communist organisation of the Catholic Church. His close colleagues who collaborated to form this organisation, were mostly University of the Philippines students, also in their early 20's. The SCAUP changed the debate at the university level between the Left and the Right on social issues concerning the national and social liberation of the Filipino people. They formed alliances with the bourgeois liberals in preserving academic freedom and secularism in the university. The group conducted study circles to promote national independence and democracy against US domination. The SCAUP also held secret study circles on Marxism. The Anti-Subversion Law of 1957 at that time penalised officers of communist organisations with the death sentence. The Congressional Committee on Anti-Filipino Activities (CAFA) identified faculty members and students who were deemed as Marxists (Speech of Jose Maria Sison, December 2010).

Jose Maria Sison stated that he and his colleagues started the KM in 1964 by bringing together the young workers and young peasants and the students and young professionals. Sison was twenty-five years old when he started the KM. The KM assisted the working class in carrying forward the national democratic movement. This youth group became known for protest actions against the oppressive policies of the government and US interests in the Philippines. It campaigned against the US-Vietnam War (Speech of Jose Maria Sison, December 2010).

Sison spearheaded the publication of the rectification documents, "Rectify Errors" and "Rebuild the Party and the Constitution and Program for People's Democratic Revolution" with the motive of re-establishing the Communist Party of the Philippines under the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought on December 26, 1968. The CPP transformed itself into an advanced off-shoot of the working class in terms of ideology, politics and organisation. The CPP pushed for the revolutionary armed struggle and the united front as weapons to destroy the Philippine state and install the people's democratic state (Speech of Jose Maria Sison, December 2010).

Transnational Connections of CPP with the Maoist Movement of the Naxalbaris

The Communist Party of the Philippines established initial contact with the Naxalbaris of India in the late 1980s. The young members of the

CPP went to West Bengal, India to assist the Naxalbaris launch the so-called “people’s war”. Filipino CPP members helped recruit young Indian students, workers, farmers and indigenous peoples known as the “adivasis” from different parts of India. Some of the young Naxalbari recruits went to the Philippines to undergo military and ordnance training under the CPP-NPA group. The Naxalbaris and the CPP members shared the same goal and five common features. The highest goal of both terrorist groups is the overthrow of the existing political system and social conditions through an agrarian revolution – the uprising of poor peasants who inhabit the Philippines and Indian countryside. These two groups share six common features.

First, both revolutionary groups are inspired by Maoist writings. Mao’s writings are known by heart by each and every comrade.

Second, these groups are expert in handling ordinance and explosives and setting up landmines. These groups render precise bombing tactics that can negatively affect government counter-insurgency efforts. In West Bengal, a landmine exploded in 2008 prior to the uprising of the tribal “adivasis”, in an area developed by Jintal Steel.

Third, both revolutionary groups derive their primary income from criminal activities such as kidnap-for-ransom, business extortion and weapons smuggling. According to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the CPP generated US\$ 20 million in revenue for the “permit to campaign” fees from the political candidates of the 2010 Presidential elections in the Philippines. Moreover, the CPP is able to collect millions of pesos as “revolutionary tax” for foreign businesses operating in CPP-NPA controlled areas. For instance, in Southern Luzon alone, the CPP collected 36 million pesos in “revolutionary taxes” in 2010, up by 11 million pesos from 2009 (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Dec 30, 2010).

Fourth, both groups maintain a Party Central Committee, a political bureau and a military wing. The political (Polit) bureau of the Naxalbari is the international liaison officer who is in charge of international fund-raising from known communist sympathisers. The political bureau of the CPP is handled by the Communist Internationale section. The military wing of the Naxalbari is in charge of the recruitment, selection and training of young comrades for the military campaign. The CPP New People’s Army conducts training operations for young cadres in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Fifth, both groups place a heavy emphasis on political training as part of the genuine parliamentary struggle that is part and parcel of the

“people’s war”. Proof of this excellent strategy is the election into office of many CPP members in the Philippine House of Representatives for 2010. In the case of India, the Naxalbaris were unlucky in as they were decimated in the 2010 polls. However, there is a possibility for the Naxalbaris of West Bengal State to gain political power with the support of the “adivasis”.

Sixth, the communist cadres share a strong faith, hope and love for the Communist Party. This personal dedication of the cadres is what makes them formidable as a group (Roy, 2010).

The two groups share a similar flag (the Maoist Party’s hammer and sickle), military training and formation, ordnance (landmines), weapons training and guerilla style of warfare. The two groups also share a similar strategy with respect to the indigenous peoples (IPs) or tribal peoples. In the Philippines, the CPP leaders and committed members are active in skills-focused activities, and educational training related to the empowerment of the indigenous peoples (IPs) of all tribal groups. In West Bengal, the Naxalbaris gained political and popular support from the “adivasis.”

The Filipino CPP members were instrumental in the establishment of sustainable Maoist indoctrination among the Naxalbaris. The Filipino CPP members in India were the ones who conceptualised and organised the Young Communists Mobile School which teaches basic communist principles to groups of ten Indian kids (Shell, 2009). This early engagement or indoctrination with kids was essential for keeping the communist spirit alive among the younger members of the tribal groups of the Indian state.

Conclusion

The KM, the youth sector of the CPP-NPA, effectively helped the CPP-NPA to make it nationwide in scale during the first ten years of the group’s armed revolution. The positive characteristics of youthful idealism, braggadocio, love for the Motherland, the capacity to offer physical and mental sacrifices, and the promotion of various energetic initiatives all contributed to the attainment of the CPP-NPA’s aims and objectives. The Kabataang Makabayan recruited thousands of Filipino youth resulting in a widespread organisation, ably surpassing the workers’ trade unions and the peasants’ associations.

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THE PULL OF TERRORISM: A PHILIPPINE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

There are many explanations on why young persons join terrorist organisations. One focuses on pull factors that strongly draw the youth to enter organisations that promote political violence and terrorism. These pull factors maybe ideational or material and are utilised by a terrorist organisation through an effective recruitment strategy. Examining the Abu Sayyaf Group, a terrorist organisation operating in the Philippines, this study argues that a nuanced understanding of these pull factors are essential for a comprehensive grasp of terrorist threats emanating from this group and for the formulation of an effective counterterrorism policy.

Introduction

All terrorist organisations have many ways in which they manage to draw people to their side. They have “magnets” to attract members, especially young recruits, to join their groups.

But the processes by which young persons are pulled to join terrorist organisations are not yet widely understood in the academe, policy-making world, the media and the broader public. Though existing scholarly literature on terrorism have already identified several pull factors of terrorism (Sobek and Braithwaite, 2005), none of these, however, may be applied generally to all terrorist organisations because the behaviors of terrorist groups vary from country to country (Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 2002). Some terrorist groups may have shared common experiences that cut across national boundaries. But vigorous social science investigations indicate that behaviors of terrorist organisations differ in historical context, socio-cultural milieu, politico-economic setting, specific intentions, exact targets, and even particular tactics (Davis and Cragin 2009; Cordes, et. al., 1985). Thus, grappling with the pull of terrorist is better understood on a case-to-case basis.

This paper is an attempt to describe the processes by which young persons are pulled to join terrorist groups, using the Philippines as a case study; this paper examines the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a terrorist organisation operating largely in the Southern Philippines, concentrating on ASG's recruitment methods and strategies in pulling the youth to become involved in terrorist activities.

This paper contends that there are ideational and material factors that pull the youth to join the ASG. A nuanced understanding of these ideational and material pull factors are essential for a comprehensive grasp of the ASG threat and for the formulation of a policy to counter the threat posed by this terrorist group.

The Pull Factors of Terrorism

There are many factors that pull young people to terrorist groups. These pull factors can be ideational and material, that are mutually reinforcing. Ideational factors may be in the form of ideology endorsed by a certain religious belief, philosophical perspective or cultural outlook. Material factors, on the hand, may be in the form of monetary inducements, logistical assistance, perks and other financial benefits. These pull factors are best utilised with an effective recruitment strategy by a terrorist group to increase its membership and to keep the organisation alive.

Ideational Pull

A particular study on terrorism has shown that the major pull factor that draws young persons towards terrorist acts is ideology (Ginges, 1997). Ideology is deemed to be the main ideational pull mechanism "that makes possible the translation of discontent into specific political goals" of young individuals being lured to join terrorist groups (Ibid). It is posited that ideologies are "important organizers of experience and act as moral codes and motivations for actions" of young recruits (Ibid). It is further argued that in the assessment of the perceived benefits of, and motivations for, terrorist acts of the youth, deeply understanding the virulent ideology of terrorist groups is essential (Ibid). Ideology provides meaning to the emptiness felt

by young people and defines their “reasons for existence”. One study even asserts ideology is a great pull of terrorist in attracting young people, to with:

The young people don't know why they exist...they suffer from an emptiness of meaning...[hu]man is more than (an) ensemble of material needs, that he is in truth a spiritual being, which means he has essential spiritual needs, which are even not approximately recognized nor understood, let alone satisfied...the atmosphere in which today's terrorists have grown up...they feel powerless (Quoted in Ibid. See Billig, 1985).

The profile of youths joining terrorist organisations through ideological motivations is that of mostly students, young professionals and learned individuals recruited from schools, universities and working places. Ideology is a pull factor in the radicalisation of a small but significant minority of young persons dissatisfied with the society in which they find themselves (European Commission's Experts Group on Violent Radicalisation, 2008). Radical ideology introduces the youth to violent ideas that eventually lead them to enter terrorist groups and commit acts of terrorism.

Material Pull

While ideology is indeed a pull factor in terrorism, there are young recruits who are induced to join terrorist groups not because of ideology but largely due to material considerations. Young persons succumbing to this pull are mostly out-of-school youth in depressed areas or communities where poverty is pervasive and the rate of illiteracy is high. These types of young persons are induced to join terrorist groups and commit acts of terrorism through the lure of money, arms, and material needs of their families and loved ones. Terrorist groups buy the loyalties of their young recruits through tangible inducements in the form of money, perks, arms and other concrete benefits. These young members are made to work as combatants, bombers, lookouts, mules, or to be simply errant persons (Homeland Security Institute, 2009).

The Pull of Recruitment

Though a terrorist organisation has an ideology and material resources with which to entice young people to join, a well-planned recruitment strategy is also a crucial pull factor. Without a systematic recruitment strategy, a terrorist group cannot efficiently or automatically pull the youth to its side.

Recruitment strategies of terrorist groups can be classified into two: benign strategy and coercive strategy.

A benign strategy utilises persuasive tools to entice recruits to join a terrorist group. This kind of recruitment strategy allows terrorist organizations to actively reach out to the youth by visiting them in schools, youth camps, refugee areas, boarding houses and even amusement places (Homeland Security Institute 2009). Terrorist organisations deliberately spot young persons and radicalise them through the convincing power of ideology or, in most cases, through material inducements, if the ideological indoctrination fails.

A coercive strategy, on the other hand, uses “threat” and “fear” factors to get young persons to join terrorist groups. In such cases a terrorist organisation forces young persons into membership by threatening to kill them and their families if they do not join. There are cases where young persons are kidnapped and forced to commit terrorist acts against their will (Ibid). There are also cases where young sisters of persons associated with terrorist groups who are forced to marry young male members and thus becoming new members. Terrorist groups resort to this coercive recruitment strategy as a desperate measure to keep the organisation alive, particularly in the context of dwindling membership.

The Abu Sayyaf Case

The ASG is an excellent case, in the Philippines, to examine the processes by which young persons are pulled to enter terrorist organisations. The ASG is listed as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the United States (US) and an active International Terrorist Organization (ITO) by the United Nations (UN). Because of its involvements in kidnap-for-ransom activities, Philippine law enforcement authorities regard the ASG as a mere bandit group (Banlaoi, 2006).

There are conflicting narratives on the origin of ASG (Santos and Dinampo, 2010, Banlaoi, 2009, Manalo, 2004, Gunaratna, 2001, Tan, 2000, Turner, 1995). It is even argued that the ASG had a very nebulous beginning (Gloria, 2000).

But a more nuanced analysis of the evolution of the ASG indicates that the group started as an Islamic propagation group organised by Ustad Abdurajak Janjalani who earned popularity in Basilan, Sulo and Zamboanga City in the 1980s for his very charismatic preaching. This Islamic propagation group was known as *Jamaa Tableegh*, a local version of Tabligh Jammaat that originated in Pakistan where Abdurajak Janjalani received most of his religious training. In 1989, the military and the media described this group as Abu Sayyaf's group because Janjalani used the *nom de guerre* Abu Sayyaf in honor of Abdul Rasul Sayyaf of Afghanistan.

ASG's Ideological Pull

Abdurajak Janjalani recruited many followers in Zamboanga City, Basilan, Sulo and Tawi-Tawi (ZAMBASULTA) because of his powerful sermons or *Khutbahs* that expressed his mastery of Salafi faith or Wahhabi ideology. Janjalani used Salafism and Wahhabism to analyse the state of Islam in Mindanao and the situation of Muslim people in the Southern Philippines. Janjalani was able to pull young Muslims in Mindanao to join him through the power of Wahhabi ideology that he preached in various mosques.

From initial followers of almost 100 in Basilan in 1989, the group grew to almost 300 in 1990 when disgruntled members of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Sulo and Tawi-Tawi joined him. Janjalani, who was once a member of the MNLF, also convinced young MNLF followers to join him, until his group reached a membership of almost 1,000 in 1991. It was during this year that Janjalani's group mounted its first terrorist attack: the 1991 bombing of *M/V Doulos*, a Christian-owned ship propagating Christian faith (Banlaoi, 2007). Janjalani using the name of his "Abu Sayyaf Group claimed responsibility for this bombing". This earned the ire of the Philippines military and police that erroneously described the group as Mujahideen Commando Freedom Fighters (MCFF) in several intelligence reports.

Janjalani was able to win the hearts and minds of former MNLF fighters and other young Moros because he offered an alternative ideology that effectively touched the sentiments and aspirations of Muslims in Mindanao. In his inner-circle, he recruited younger and more passionate Muslim leaders who studied Islamic theology in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Pakistan and Egypt. These young Muslim leaders had a common reproach of the MNLF, which had entered into a peace agreement with the Philippine government in 1996. These leaders also shared common anger against the so-called Christian-dominated Philippine government based in what they called “Imperial Manila”.

Because he had garnered a significant number of followers, in 1993 Janjalani named his group *Al-Harakatul Al-Islamiyyah* (AHAI) or the Islamic Movement. Within this movement, Janjalani formed a consultative group called *Majilis Shura*, which officially proclaimed the foundation of AHAI in 1994 during its First Assembly.

On 18 November 1994, amidst heavy speculation that the ASG was created by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Abu Abdu Said, then spokesman of the group, issued a document called *Surat Kasabunnal* or “A Voice of Truth” (Tan, 2003). This document vehemently denounced the view that the AFP or the CIA created the ASG. It argued that the ASG started as a movement called *Juma’a Abu Sayyaf*.

By 1998, the ASG reached a membership of around 1,300. But the momentum of increasing membership was cut short when Abdurajak Janjalani was killed in a firefight with the police in Lamitan, Basilan in December 1998. But before he died, Janjalani delivered eight radical ideological discourses called *Khutbahs*, which may be considered as primary sources of Janjalani’s radical Islamic ideology (Banlaoi, 2009). These discourses explained Janjalani’s Quranic perspective of *Jihad Fi-Sabil-lillah*, which he lamented was misinterpreted by many Muslims. He even denounced the *ulama* (Muslim scholars) for their limited knowledge of the Quran and lamented that most Muslims in the Philippines, calling themselves Moros, were not really practicing Islam in its true form compared to Muslims in West Asia. These eight discourses also revealed Janjalani’s deep grasp of Wahabi Islam, which considered non-Wahabi Muslims heretical. The Islamic theology of Wahabism greatly informed Janjalani’s radical ideology, and that attracted young Moros to join him (Ibid).

ASG's Material Pull

The death of Abdurajak Janjalani, however, marked the waning of the ideological luster of the ASG. With no ideological beacon to unify the group, the ASG became factionalised. Some factions degenerated into bandit groups engaged in predatory activities like kidnap-for-ransom activities (KRA), smuggling operations of arms and drugs, and extortion activities. Lacking the ideology to win the hearts and minds of members, ASG leaders in the post-Janjalani period resorted to material inducements to buy loyalties and recruit new members.

Khadaffy Janjalani, the younger brother who replaced the founder, did not have the ideological zeal of the older brother. Being young and gullible, Khadaffy was even manipulated by more criminally-minded ASG commanders like Galib Andang (Commander Robot) and Abu Sabaya. The bandit factions of the ASG led by Commander Robot and Abu Sabaya thus ruled the ASG. Though Khadaffy attempted to revive the Islamist agenda of the ASG by concentrating on ideological propagation, his death in 2006 thwarted this goal.

During the leadership of Khadaffy, the ASG went into a KRA spree. In 2000-2001 alone, the ASG was involved in 140 KRA incidents that resulted in the death of 16 victims (Abuza, 2005). The biggest KRA project of the ASG was the Sipadan kidnapping incident of 2000, led by Commander Robot, which involved a ransom of US\$25 million, offered by Libyan President Muammar Khadaffy as “development aid”. With such huge money being involved, young impoverished Moros lined-up for membership in the ASG. Some parents even offered their sons as volunteers for the ASG with the expectation of financial payment.

In 2000, the ASG reached a membership of more than 1,500 according to military estimates. But insiders claimed that ASG followers during this period had grown so large that the group could not account for them anymore. In fact, the ASG acted like “Robin Hood” distributing part of its loot to local communities. Thus, the ASG was in turn able to get support from local communities that gave the group “early warning signals” and even barricades during military offensives. New younger members were even paid to work for ASG makeshift camps as second and third layers of security (Banlaoi, 2008). Parents of young ASG members were issued a monthly supply of rice and offered monthly financial honorariums ranging

from US\$100 to US\$500. Thus through material inducements, the ASG was able pull in members despite the lack of ideological agitation or religious propaganda.

ASG's Recruitment Pull

While its benign recruitment method of ideological propaganda through Islamic propagation was effective during the time of Abdurajak Janjalani to keep the organisation alive, the ASG had to implement a combination of benign and coercive recruitment strategy. After Janjalani's death, the ASG continued its benign recruitment scheme through the material inducements discussed above.

However, intensified military operations caused the membership of the ASG to decline sharply. From more than 1,500 members in 2000, the ASG membership was reduced to less than 500 in 2005. To recover, the ASG resorted to coercive methods of recruitment. ASG commanders resorted to scare tactics like threatening to kill those who refuse to join and their families. Some ASG commanders even used deception to recruit members, e.g. making young Muslims carry firearms, taking pictures of them, and then using the pictures to blackmail the kids into joining the group (Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, undated). Though there are anecdotal stories of young persons being kidnapped to force them to join the ASG, these cases have not been properly documented nor vigorously studied.

Conclusion

Like other terrorist groups around the world, the ASG is a very adaptive organisation and it is also a very resilient one, whose life depends on the use of many survival methods in order to replenish its membership (Banlaoi, 2010). In other words, the ASG is an adaptive adversary. As further explained by the Homeland Security Institute (2009):

Terrorist groups are adaptive adversaries who use a variety of tools and tactics to reach potential recruits and supporters, which too

often include young persons. Groups systematically prey upon the vulnerabilities of youth in various contexts, offering a range of incentives that are intended to make membership in the group attractive. In some cases, young persons have also been forcibly recruited or deceived into participating in terrorist activities.

To sum up, terrorist organisations operate through utilising ideational and material pull factors together with an effective recruitment strategy that is either benign or coercive. In the case of the ASG, the employment of different pull factors is context bound. During its earlier period under the leadership of Janjalani, the power of ideology convinced members to join the group. But in the post-Janjalani period, particularly under Khadaffy, the ASG resorted to material inducement to attract members.

At present, there is an attempt to revive the ideological appeal of the ASG under Yassir Igasan who is currently the Head of ASG's Sharia Court. But the majority of ASG commanders at present have degenerated into bandits. Under this current situation, the pull factors of ASG will largely emanate from the use of money to attract followers. Therefore the crafting of a counter-terrorism policy must be informed by this present reality.

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UNDERSTANDING THE NARRATIVE OF THE TERRORIST FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Terrorists have been very successful in capturing the hearts and minds of the young people. They have done so by developing and disseminating a rhetoric that depicts their cause as both righteous and heroic against an adversary both evil and cruel. In this particular aspect, the terrorists have seized the narrative by being able to articulate and express their thoughts in a way that is far more appealing and dynamic than that of the authorities. This calculated and deliberate move has brought about great dividends in the form of a growing pool of recruits, mainly consisting of young people. The terrorist's deceptive and creative ability to factor the premise of violence into their ideology needs to be taken into account seriously when formulating counter terrorism strategies.

Introduction

A very perceptive John F. Kennedy once remarked that *'A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on. Ideas have endurance without death'*. Ironically, this is the strategic reasoning that defines the thinking of the terrorist. Not only have they understood the potential importance and significance of an idea but they have also identified the best potential carrier of this message: the youth.

In any conflict, there is an assumption that there are two sides: two opposing parties, who battle, either literally or figuratively, to inflict defeat on the other, and subsequently gain dominance at the physical, mental or emotional sphere. The arena of terrorism is no different. Hence, the authorities, mainly governments, have identified their adversaries and have focused on deterring, denying, disrupting and destroying the activities of the terrorists. The terrorists on the other hand, have similar objectives but with one significant difference. I would argue that unlike the authorities whose main focus is solely the terrorist, the focal points of the terrorists are two-

pronged: i.e. their adversary (the government) and also their audience (the people). Hence, while the authorities are concentrating mainly on identifying and stopping the terrorists, the terrorists are focused both on countering the authorities and gaining the control of the population (either through force or deception).

The Way of the Terrorist

While much has been written on the use of coercion by the terrorists to bend the will of the people, little has been said on the use of deception on the part of the terrorists to target and win the support of the people, in this case, the young people.

In this context, the terrorists have been most successful in glamorising their struggle and painting their cause as a righteous one, against tyranny and injustice. This has purposely and deliberately been carried out to capture the 'hearts and minds' of the young people. Indeed, idealistic notions of a 'just cause' against the 'cruel and dictatorial aggressors' usually find resonance with the psyche of the young. After having captured their hearts, these terrorist groups subsequently seek to indoctrinate their young minds with the rhetoric of their struggle. This could perhaps explain why young people in areas of conflict seem to have a very thorough knowledge of the ideology of the often small and ill-equipped radical groups. Indeed, it is ironic that the authorities, who in most cases control the media and dictate the national agenda, are often well behind the fringe extremist groups in capturing the emotions and feelings of the young. Thus, while the authorities may have the necessary hardware, it is the terrorists that have proven to be more adept in engaging, and responding to, the young people.

Exactly how have they been able to do this?

How have the weaker, and violent party i.e. the extremist/terrorist group been able to trump the stronger, supposedly organised authorities in winning the loyalty and sympathy of the young people?

They have been able to do so simply because they have gone to great lengths to seize the discourse and the narrative, and to engage young people at the mental and emotional levels. This paper hopes to take a preliminary look at the possible narrative that has been designed, developed and employed by the terrorists to target, recruit and gain the support of the young people.

The Best Lie Always Contains an Element of Truth

The terrorists have mastered the art of deception and have done so by mixing in elements of both truth and lies into their rhetoric and ideological arguments. They have ensured that areas which are discernible to the youth in terms of comprehension and substantiation are in most cases, truthful. For example, terrorists go to great lengths to research, document and disseminate the many forms of injustices, perceived and real, happening across the world. Hence, conflicts in areas such as Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines, Palestine, Sri Lanka and Chechnya are all carefully and methodically studied, and the research compiled, designed with addition of images, both photographic and videotaped, and finally disseminated. This is done to showcase the perception that injustices, discrimination and prejudices are very real and are causing needless pain, suffering and misery to numerous groups of people whose only fault was to belong to a particular ethnicity, religion or culture.

The impact of this suffering and pain has been further reinforced through the calculated use of visual images either through still photography or videos. Given the advent of the YouTube and social media such as Facebook, these images have the potential to be disseminated far and wide with the express purpose of creating outrage and anger. Also it is significant to note that the main audience of the new media, which has been heavily utilised by terrorist groups, remains the young people. In this regard, let us consider some of the thoughts that have been advanced by the terrorists in their quest to captivate and capture this target group.

Violence as a Form of Revenge

Realising that the conventional approach of winning the support of the people through elections and persuasion would be difficult or time consuming; terrorists rely heavily on the use of violence to achieve their objectives. Violence is in most cases however, unpalatable to the majority of the people; unless some form of justification is attached to its use. It is in this context, that the terrorists have proven to be tremendously creative and deceptive.

The tactic to justify the use of violence is expounded at three levels. Firstly, the conclusion is made that the innocent have suffered tremendous

pain and misery at the hands of the enemy and retribution is but the only way to teach the ‘aggressors’ a lesson. Osama bin Laden captured this thought when he argued, ‘But when the victim start to take revenge for those innocent children in Palestine, Iraq, Southern Sudan, Somalia, Kashmir and the Philippines, the ruler’s *lama* and the hypocrites come to defend the clear blasphemy’.¹

This primal urge for revenge is further reinforced through the extensive use of images capturing the suffering, misery and pain of the perceived innocent people. Given this environment, anything short of violence against the enemy is seen as treacherous and an insult to the memory of those that have suffered and died under the hands of the ‘oppressor’. Hence, violence becomes acceptable both to retract revenge and also to teach the enemy a lesson in an environment that emphasizes the dictum of ‘an eye for an eye’. This could explain why a captive on the hijacked TWA flight 847, could not understand when a hijacker kept running up and down the aisle of the plane with a grenade and shouting the name of her home state, “New Jersey! New Jersey!” The terrorist was doing so because it was the USS New Jersey which had fired on Shiite sites in Lebanon.²

In the context of young people, when they are presented with ‘insurmountable evidence’ on the atrocities allegedly perpetrated by the authorities, together with detailed pictures and images of pain and suffering, the affinity to violent conduct, which in normal circumstances would be considered anathema, now becomes both plausible and possible. This situation is also exacerbated when the individual concerned sees the authorities or people in power act in a perceived cruel or despotic manner by. For example, the German militant Michael ‘Bommi’ Baumann in his book *How it All Began* states that it was the unprovoked killing, by the German police, of a student protesting against the Shah of Iran that turned him into a terrorist³. The desire for revenge also explains the reason why attacks take place on the anniversaries of earlier violent actions. The Oklahoma City bombing, for example occurred on the anniversary of the storming of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas.⁴

¹ Osama bin Laden, statement broadcast on Al Jazeera, November 3, 2001.

<http://home.honolulu.hawaii.edu/~pine/Phil100/binlaudin2.htm>.

² Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, John Murray Publishers, 2006.

³ Michael Baumann, *How it All Began*, Vancouver: Pulp Press, 1997 as quoted by Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, John Murray Publishers, 2006.

⁴ Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, John Murray Publishers, 2006.

Further compounding the problem is the natural susceptibility that comes from being a young man or woman. Emotional instability that is prevalent in some young people could mean that they are easily controlled and manipulated. Weak impulse control and an idealistic sense of how the world should be, could mean that they are more prone to extremes and perceive the world from a binary viewpoint i.e. 'us versus them mentality'. Challenges of developing an identity and issues with self-esteem and self-worth could lead to an excessive need to feel strong, powerful and in control, which in turn induces young people to take risks which could lead them to violent action. The environment in which the youth comes from also plays an important role in determining his or her choices. Kevin Toolis in his book *Rebel Hearts* provides a compelling insight on the culture that made joining a terrorist movement in Northern Ireland the most natural thing in the world for a young man to do.⁵

It is sad to note that while issues involving the dynamics of the youth and their susceptibility towards terrorism have been researched and studied extensively, it often times seems that it is the terrorists who have fully grasped the significance of this particular stage of development in young people and been able to exploit it far better.

Violence on Behalf of the People

Besides making the point that they are using violence as a tool of retribution, the terrorists are also attempting to vindicate their violent actions by declaring they are doing it for the people they claim to be fighting for. They have portrayed themselves as defenders of the innocent against the 'oppressors'. Hence, following their rhetoric, violence is not carried out as a tactic of the terrorist group but rather it is the natural response on behalf of marginalised people against an unjust authority. The late Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran captured this thought when he said, 'It is the plight of the Tamil people that compelled me to take up arms. I felt outrage at the inhuman atrocities perpetrated against an innocent people. The ruthless manner, in which our people were murdered, massacred, maimed...'⁶ Hence, while in actual fact, violence and terror are

⁵ Kevin Toolis, *Rebel Hearts: Journeys within the IRA's Soul*, St. Martin's Griffin, April 1997.

⁶ 'Tamil National Leader Hon. V. Pirapaharan's Interview', *The Week (India)* March 23, 1986 as quoted by Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, John Murray Publishers, 2006.

well calculated tactics used in asymmetrical warfare, as in the case of terrorism, the terrorists have been able to shift attention from their insidious use of violence to the justifiable need for self-defence against a cruel, authoritarian regime. To do this, the terrorists take great pains to document the plight and conditions of the people they claim to be fighting for.

The spotlight on the suffering of the people at the hands of the unjust authorities, have two main consequences: it shifts emphasis from the acts of violence conducted by the terrorist groups themselves to the oppression and cruelty faced by the perceived innocent victims. Hence, instead of focusing on the tactics of violence employed by the terrorist organisation against the authorities, people will be drawn into looking at the suffering of the oppressed. This creative rhetoric enables them to continue using violence as a tactic while continuously maintaining their stand that violence is merely the justified response on behalf of the innocent people they claim to be fighting for. Dr. Abdul Aziz Rantisi, one of the founders of Hamas, encapsulates this thought when he stated in an interview, ‘You think we are the aggressors. That is the number-one misunderstanding. We are not: we are the victims.’⁷

Also, there is the distinct possibility of the terrorist act opening up another avenue – that of inflicting ‘secondary trauma’ on external parties who are watching the struggle, with the hope of gaining their sympathy or even active participation. This phenomenon of ‘secondary trauma’ is defined as a set of symptoms that parallel those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)⁸ which include hyper-arousal symptoms such as feeling tense and/or having angry outbursts.⁹ These sets of emotions could happen when an individual associates himself with victims of violence and as a result, over a period of time, identifies with and feels the suffering and pain of the victim as if it is his own. The Fort Hood incident, in which a US Army psychiatrist, Major Nidal Malik Hasan killed 12 people was said to have been possibly caused by secondary trauma.¹⁰ Identification with others, and as earlier mentioned, the desire for revenge is a potent combination that drives terrorism.¹¹ Secondary trauma is now a significant factor given the advent of the internet which as mentioned earlier, allows boundaries between time and space to be crossed

⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000, p. 74.

⁸ Ted Bober and Cheryl Regehr, *Strategies for Reducing Secondary or Vicarious Trauma: Do They Work?* Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention Advance Access originally published online on December 30, 2005, Oxford University Press.

⁹ *What are the symptoms of PTSD?* National Institute of Mental Health, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/what-are-the-symptoms-of-ptsd.shtml>.

¹⁰ Tim McGirk, *Hasan's Therapy: Could 'Secondary Trauma' Have Driven Him To Shooting*, www.time.com, 7 November 2009.

¹¹ Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, John Murray Publishers, 2006.

with ease. Hence, the misery and suffering of any group anywhere in this world has the distinct possibility of being transported into our living rooms via the internet or the television. This has given the terrorists opportunities to highlight their cause, gain a sympathetic following and at times receive direct support via either monetary means or recruitment.

Violence as the Only Alternative Available

Finally, terrorists, who in most cases have been the first to use the tactic of violence in their struggle, have justified the use of violence by arguing strenuously that they have done so simply because there are simply no other alternatives left. This ties in with their justification that when dealing with this particular adversary, violence is the only possible response. Hence, the statement, 'we have no choice' is often used to give the impression that the situation has reached this stage not due to the actions of the terrorists but because of the actions of the authorities. The late LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran stated, 'The Tamil people have been expressing their grievances in parliament for more than three decades. Their voices went unheard like cries in the wilderness. In Sri Lanka there is no parliamentary democracy where our people could effectively represent their aspirations. What passes as parliament in Sri Lanka is an authoritarian rule founded on the tyranny of the majority.'¹²

To support this reasoning, the terrorists go to great lengths to portray the enemy as one that does not understand any language but the language of violence. Simply put, according to the terrorist, brute force is the only way of dealing with the adversary as nothing else will be accepted. They do this to ensure any plan of negotiating or compromising with the enemy is simply a non-starter. This line of reasoning is extremely significant for the terrorists simply because violence is very much their primary currency. Should any other forms of dealings with the adversary be considered, either in the form of compromise or negotiation, it would be extremely difficult for them to continue with the use of violence, their primary activity.

The terrorists therefore have ingeniously portrayed themselves as victims of circumstances, whose resort to violence is not intentional but simply due to the absence of any other alternative.

¹² 'Tamil National Leader Hon. V. Pirapaharan's Interview', *The Week* (India) March 23, 1986.

Victory – A Question of When and Not If

Besides the emphasis on violence, terrorists are also adept at giving the impression that it is simply a matter of time before they attain victory for their struggles. While the reality on the ground may be far different, the terrorists' seek to convince the potential youth that it is just a matter of time before they are victorious. They do so through for two distinct purposes. *Firstly*, to showcase and exaggerate the strength and advantages they have over the enemy, be it in terms of the dedication and skill of their recruits, their brilliant and courageous leaders, divine assistance, or the sheer potency of their tactical, operational and strategic plans. They seek to convince the young people that though they may appear to be the weaker party, they are in actual fact going to emerge victorious.

Hence, the terrorists place great emphasis upon the dissemination of rhetoric on the quality of their recruits. This not only seeks to balance the equation when dealing with a numerically superior adversary but also seeks to inspire potential recruits. God, as the force behind the terrorist organisation, is also prominently highlighted. Divine intervention not only gives credence and legitimacy to their struggle, but also provides reassurance to the youth and instills perseverance when things are not going well for the terrorist organisation. Terrorists are also very well aware that including the divine equation to young people not only increases their hope but ensures loyalty, as the young individual is no longer fighting for just any group, but for a group that is perceived to be carrying out the will of God. The leaders of terrorist groups are also often highlighted as beacons of hope and inspiration. Terrorist organisations constantly work on the image of such leaders making them appear heroic and courageous legendary figures, so as to bring about awe and devotion on the part of the followers, sympathy on the part of the population and even fear on the part of the enemy. Stories are circulated on the brilliance of the leadership in inflicting crushing defeats on the enemy and the sheer fear on the part of the adversary when dealing with these leaders. All these efforts are carefully designed to give the impression that despite what is being said by the media or regardless of the situation on the ground, the terrorist organisation is on the path to victory.

Secondly, terrorists often seek to discredit the authorities by painting them as being incompetent, corrupt and lacking the mandate and goodwill

of the population. Hence, while possibly acknowledging the superiority of the enemy in terms of strength of numbers and military might, terrorist organisations constantly portray the enemy as being on the brink of collapse due to the intrinsic and extrinsic problems that it is facing. Any positive development on the part of the adversary is simply seen as mere propaganda to shore up support for a dying regime and any setback on the part of the terrorist group is seen as a temporary setback that would have little effect on the final outcome of the conflict. This unrealistic assessment of the proceedings of war is often uncritically accepted by the young people.

Understanding and Challenging the Myths of the Terrorists

It is pertinent to note that the terrorist rhetoric mentioned earlier, particularly their justification for the use of violence, finds tremendous traction with young people. In this regard, I would argue that authorities, in their counter-terrorism strategies have not paid sufficient attention to debunking and developing a counter narrative to that of the terrorists. Therefore, while great attention is paid to countering the terrorists mainly via hard power and kinetic force, scant attention is given to the fact that much ground has been lost, particularly in tackling the youth at the mental, emotional and intellectual planes.

In this regard, hard and searching questions need to be asked, among them being:

- ▶ When a youth is confronted with the terrorists' rhetoric and propaganda, does he possess the ability to analyse critically the assumptions and presuppositions of the terrorists and is he equipped to offer a counter to the narrative of violence subscribed to by the terrorists?;
- ▶ Should not the authorities have a more active role in challenging the myths of the terrorists?; and
- ▶ Do the current counter-terrorism efforts take into account the need for developing a counter narrative to the terrorists?

The Premise of the Terrorist

The main rhetoric of terrorists comprises of a simple three-step progression, as follows:

- I. There are injustices occurring in many parts of the world;
- II. There is a need to act; and
- III. Violence is the only possible response.

These straightforward assumptions appeal to idealistic and simplistic youths and have the added advantage of being partially true. Firstly, it is reiterated and reinforced that there are tremendous acts of injustice, cruelty and discrimination, causing incredible misery, suffering and anguish to numerous innocent people all around the world. Reports, images and life-witness accounts all bear witness to this and it is conveyed by the terrorists to any interested individual through any available means.

Secondly, the gauntlet is thrown in the form of a question:

- What are you going to do about this?
- What is your response to this tragedy?

Given the volatility, the need for action and the high sense of idealism among the young people, the need to act upon this grave injustice will naturally be very great. Indeed, young people often wonder, how it was possible for this terrible injustice to have lasted all this time without anyone doing something about it. Then regardless, of what has happened in the past, the youth is motivated to act and correct this terrible injustice.

It is significant to note that the terrorist has not strayed far from the truth with the first premise: there are numerous cases of wrongdoing happening all around the world causing great pain and misery to the innocent. Also, acting to correct these flagrant abuses is not only morally correct, it is also the right thing to do.

Young people not only are able to both identify with and comprehend these two premises but they are also drawn by idealism and altruism to wholeheartedly support these ideas.

It is however here that the terrorists slip in the third premise, innocuously, as the most natural progression from the initial two premises: Violence is the only possible response.

Thus, first the young people are shown graphic evidence of the first premise – that injustice is thriving and causing tremendous misery. Once their conscience is seared and their idealism evoked they are subsequently confronted with the second premise – that they now have to act. In this excited state, where emotions are stirred and passions are running high, the third premise of violence being the sole alternative is offered and often, blindly accepted, with little critical evaluation or thinking on the part of the young person.

Hence, it is significant to note that in the hand of the terrorists, the youth do not simply arrive at the conclusion that violence is a possible alternative but they are instead carefully, methodically and systematically led through various stages, involving their mental and emotional faculties, passing from intellectual analysis to a stirred conscience and finally to a perceived undeniable conclusion that violence is the sole alternative.

Conclusion

Countering terrorism without taking into account the message of the terrorist and the nature of their potential audience is both counter-productive and dangerous. It is significant to note that while terrorists have developed a simple yet comprehensive three-step model that i) describes the problem, ii) calls for action and iii) provides the solution, i.e. violence, the counter narrative by the authorities remains vague and the response to the concerns of the youth feeble. Given this, it is imperative that the authorities rectify this concern regarding susceptible youth by designing, developing and disseminating a counter narrative with specific focus on the youth as the audience.

YOUTH AND JIHADI TERRORISM IN THE INDONESIAN PUBLIC ATTENTION (1999-2011)

Jamhari Makruf and Mutiara Pratiwi

There is a growing awareness in Indonesia that terrorist cells tend to target the youth in recruitments. This alert has been particularly obvious since Indonesian television broadcasted a video of an 18-year old teenager being prepared to be blasted together with the Marriott Hotel on 17 July 2009.¹ The video unfolded with his calm narration about sacrificing life in the name of religion. The Indonesian media had revealed to the nation a hard and ironical truth: that for some of their youth, it was their obligation to do *jihad* in the form of terrorist acts. It was an irony to acknowledge.

However, this interest in youth and jihadi terrorism did not exist a decade ago. This essay is an effort to understand how this concern has been evolving across time in public discourses. It will reveal that the Indonesian public firstly refused to believe in any potential correlation between its youth and jihadi terrorism. This denial stage then transformed into the “discovery stage” when public took the issue seriously and tried to craft solutions for it. In advancing the analysis, this essay also elaborates on the reasons why Indonesian youth are vulnerable to radical tenets. The framework of “ontological insecurity” reveals that the growing up process from childhood into adulthood some people may get caught in an identity crises, in which he/she may be persuaded into radical activism.

As there is a lack of consensus on the definition of youth, this essay defines it as that stage of human development between the ages of 15 and 30, according to the definitions of youth in the United Nations’ and Indonesian legislation. The United Nations defines youth as those who are between the ages of 15 and 24, while in Indonesia youth is classified as persons between the ages of 16 and 30.² Further, this essay chose to limit its

¹ “Isi Laptop Nurdin: Rekaman Dani dan Nana Survei Lokasi” (The Contents of Nurdin’s Laptop: Recordings of Dani and Nana’s Site Survey), *Metrotvnews.com*, 29 November 2009. Accessed at <<http://www.metrotvnews.com/index.php/metro/main/newsvideo/2009/09/29/91269/Isi-Laptop-Noordin-Ada-Dani-dan-Nana-Survei-Lokasi/82>> on 1 May 2011.

² There are different range definitions of youth age in the world. The above range is chosen to be able to incorporate both national and international versions of youth age. This is for the purpose of reducing the potential misunderstandings among domestic and international readers. For reference of youth definition please consult: UU No. 40 2009 tentang Kepemudaan (Law No. 40 2009 on Youth) accessed at <http://www.indolawcenter.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=576:uu-no-40-tahun-2009-tentang-kepemudaan&catid=265:tahun-2009&Itemid=243>; and Youth and the United Nations accessed at <<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/uyin/qanda.htm>> on 1 May 2011.

study to the period of the post-Soeharto presidential era, from 1999 to April 2011. In many literatures, terror-related activism in this period had different nature than before. Terrorism in Indonesia during this period had more than national or local range and interests.³

The first part of this essay focuses on understanding the increased attention paid by the Indonesian public to youth jihadi terrorism since 1999, followed by an elaboration on the alternative reasoning behind it.

Public Discovery: The Vulnerabilities of Youth Against Jihadi Terrorism

In 2011 the youth population in Indonesia is more than 62 million.⁴ Just like in many other countries, the youth in Indonesian society are perceived as the source of hope and energy for the nation to progress.⁵ Investing in the youth is a good cause to as it will help build a better future for the nation. Furthermore, Indonesian history acknowledges youth as the builders of nationalism.⁶ The revolution for independence against colonialism, the promotion of civil societies and nationalism were all engineered by the youth. The rights of the youth to opportunities and development is even being ruled under UU No. 40 2009.⁷ This law declares the youth to be assets for states and that they should be protected, respected, and included in national development.

Unfortunately, the involvement of some young Indonesians in jihadi terrorism betrays this trust in the youth. The elaboration below identifies how this concern over youth terrorism developed in Indonesian society. It explains the three different stages – ranging from denial, to curiosity, and finally to “discovery,”⁸ that transformed the Indonesian public’s awareness of youth jihadi terrorism.

³ M. Zaki Mubarak. (2005). *Genealogi Radikal Islam Indonesia (The Genealogy of Indonesian Radical Islam)* Jakarta, LP3ES, Hal. 2; Andrew T.H. Tan (2007) in Andrew T.H. Tan (ed.), *A Handbook of Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia*, UK, Edward Elgar, p. 54.; Bruce Hoffman (2006), *Inside Terrorism*, NY: Columbia University Press, p. 18.; Indonesia, Violence, and Radical Muslims, *Asia Briefing*, International Crisis Group, No. 10, 10 October 2001, accessed at <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/B010-indonesia-violence-and-radical-muslims.aspx>> on 2 May 2011.

⁴ “Data Informasi Kebudayaan, Pariwisata, Kepemudaan dan Olahragaa” (2009) (Information of Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sport), *State Ministry for National Development Planning, Jakarta*. Accessed on 1 May 2011.

⁵ UU No. 40 2009, op.cit.

⁶ Keith Foulcher, (2000), “Sumpah Pemuda: The Making and Meaning of a Symbol of Indonesian Nationhood” *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 24, Issue 3, p. 377-410, DOI: 10.1080/10357820008713281.

⁷ UU No. 40 2009, op.cit.

⁸ This classification is taken from Downs (1972) as quoted by Newman. He offers five stages in “public attention cycle”: (1) “preproblem stage” when most people do not understand that a particular problem exists; (2) “discovery stage” when people started to be alert of the problem and find the right responses to it; (3) “plateau stage” when more “complexity” arised and people tended to be less realistic in solving the problem; (4) “the decline” when people started to feel hopeless; and “the postproblem” when people’s attentions were distracted into another problem, while the previous problem was still prolonged. Explained in W. Russel Neuman (1990), “The Treshold of Public Attentions” *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 2, p. 164.

The first stage is public denial of the idea that Indonesia has the potential for youth terrorism. In other words, there was no awareness yet that the youth were vulnerable to radical doctrine. This stage was during the period from 1999 to 2003, when Indonesia first acknowledged the emergence of jihadi terror cells in the country after experiencing a range of bombings in the name of Islamic solidarity.⁹ At that time, there were only few concerns about youth jihadi terrorism in public discourses. Rather than looking at what had gone wrong in Indonesian society, the public blamed external, radical agent provocateurs and to deny that there was a possibility of a terrorist nest in the country.¹⁰ Indeed, counterterrorism then was far less sophisticated than it is these days. The Indonesian government took years to finally catch the actors responsible for the series of bombings and to reveal their identity to the public. Most terror suspects who became prominent were discovered at the age of 30s and 40s. Some of them are; the perpetrators of the Jakarta Stock Exchange bombing in 2000, Tengku Ismuhadi (30) and Nuryadin (29); and the perpetrators of the Bali Bombing, Imam Samudera (38), Amrozi (46), and Muklas (48). During this period, the public did not pay much attention to the fact that there were a group of youths among the convicted adults. Among them were Agus Hidayat (21) and Andri Octavianus (22), who had helped Imam Samudera fund the Bali bombing through committing robbery in the Serang-Banten Province.¹¹

Secondly, there was the stage of curiosity about youth involvement in the radical Islam agenda. In the period between 2004 and 2008, more findings emerged about the radicalisation, of the youth, alarming the Indonesian public. The important contributors to this discourse were mostly scholars and researchers. They released investigation reports revealing that jihadi terrorism indeed not only had local cells, but also youth bases in some student Islamic organisations in campuses in Indonesia. Examples, Salman in Bandung Technological Institute (ITB); Jamaah Salahuddin in Gajah Mada University (UGM); and *usrab* in Bogor Agricultural University (IPB).¹² These educated radicals want an Islamic state of Indonesia. While they may not

⁹ To name few of the terrorist attacks were: Bali bombing (2002), Jakarta Stock Exchange bombing, Marriott Hotel bombing (2003).

¹⁰ Senia Febrica, (2010), "Securitizing Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Accounting for the Varying Responses of Singapore and Indonesia" *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 569-590. Accessible on <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2010.50.3.569> on 1 May 2011.

¹¹ "Mengurai Gerombolan Abdul Azis", *Tempo Interaktif*, 8 Desember 2002. Accessed at <http://majalah.tempointeraktif.com/id/arsip/2002/12/08/LU/mbm.20021208.LU83149.id.html> on 2 May 2011.

¹² M. Zaki Mubarak (2005), op.cit., p. 350; Afadlal, Endang Turmudi, M. Riza Sihbudi (eds.), (2005), "*Islam dan Radikalisme di Indonesia*" (Islam and Radicalism in Indonesia) Jakarta, Yayasan Obor, p. 161.

systematically engage in terrorism, they are sympathisers of jihadi terrorism. Further, the rise of radical Islamic groups such as Islamic Defender Front (FPI), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, and Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunah Wal Jamaah, which many youth were affiliated to, also contributed to alerting the public.¹³ These groups tended to challenge moderate Islamic clerics and to be intolerant towards non-Muslims. In addition to this, the attendance of hundreds of sympathisers in Amrozi's and Muklas' funerals at the end of 2008 was another caution to the public.¹⁴ At this stage, the public had begun to see the potential for Islamic radicalism in some youth, but they were not yet sure whether these followers of radical ideology would really turn from being sympathisers to perpetrators of terror.

The third stage was of "discovery" that the youth were vulnerable to the persuasion jihadi terror. This stage was reached in the aftermath of the second Marriott Hotel bombing in 2009, when Indonesian television audiences watched the testimony of Dani Dwi Permana (18) and Nana Ihwa Maulana (28) before they blasted themselves.¹⁵ There was extra public attention on Dani who was a fresh high school graduate and a helper in the mosque near his house. Despite being from a broken family, Dani was a sociable person, active in sports and in a youth non-religious organisation (Karang Taruna). He was influenced by a radical young scholar, Saefudin Jaelani (32), who had offered to counsel Dani on the latter's personal problems. Both Dani and Saefudin Jaelani went missing from their neighborhood one month before the second Marriott bombing. Soon after the media broadcasted this story, another perpetrator of the Marriott bombing, Air Setiawan, was killed in police raid.¹⁶ He was only 28 years old. In addition to this, more facts on youth terrorism were revealed this year when two groups of young terrorists from Klaten's and Pepi's networks, were arrested. Six of the seven members of Klaten's network were still students of vocational high schools, while eight members out of 17 of Pepi's network were at the age of 20s to 30s.¹⁷ In this

¹³ M. Zaki Mubarak (2005) op.cit. p. 313.

¹⁴ Budi Sugiharto, "Pemakaman Amrozi dan Muklas Tanpa Gemerlap Kamera Wartawan" (No Camera Flahlights in Amrozi's and Muklas' Funerals), *detik.com*, accessed at <http://www.detiknews.com/read/2008/11/09/161646/1033981/10/pemakaman-amrozi-muklas-tanpa-gemerlap-kamera-wartawan> on 1 May 2011.

¹⁵ "Dani Dwi Permana Menghilang Sejak Awal Juni", *Tempo Interaktif*, 8 August 2009, accessed at <http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/kriminal/2009/08/08/brk,20090808-191538.id.html> on 1 May 2011.

¹⁶ "Makam Air dan Eko Tanpa Bunga dan Nisan" (There was Neither Flowers nor Tobstones on Air's and Eko's Graves), *Harian Sepuar Indonesia*, 14 August 2009. Accessed at <http://www.seputar-indonesia.com/edisisetak/content/view/262473/> on 1 May 2011.

¹⁷ "Enam Terduga Teroris Klaten dari Satu Sekolah" (Six Klaten Terrorist Suspects Went to the Same High School), *Tempo Interaktif*, 27 January 2011, accessed at <http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/hukum/2011/01/27/brk,20110127-309390.id.html> on 1 May 2011.; "Ini Peran 17 Anggota Jaringan Pepi Fernando" (This is Job Descriptions Within Pepi Fernando's Terror Link), *Viva News*, 27 April 2011. Accessed at <http://nasional.vivanews.com/news/read/217088-ini-peran-anggota-jaringan-pepi-fernando> on 1 May 2011.

latter network, the youngest member was Mugianto (18). The latest terrorist attack in Indonesia, at the time of writing of this essay, was launched in a suicide attack on 15 April 2011 by 27 year old Syarif in Cirebon.

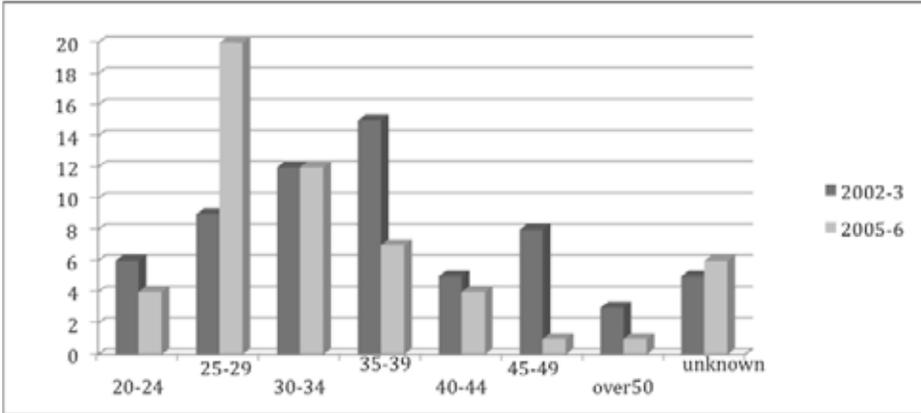


Figure 1: Comparison of Ages of Terrorism Prisoners between those arrested from October 2002-March 2003 (n=67) and May 2005-January 2006 (n=54).¹⁸

Following these developments, the Indonesian public paid more attention to the discourse on youth radicalisation. Indonesian president, Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono, advised the public to protect the youth from falling prey to terrorism soon after the broadcasting of Dani’s testimonial video in July 2009.¹⁹ This was followed by the government exhorting deradicalisation and the establishment of a National Body for Counterterrorism (BAKN).²⁰ The Indonesian media have also raised similar concerns in the form of increasing coverage of the potential of radicalism. In addition to these, non-governmental groups such as International Crisis Group (ICG), Institute for Islam and Peace (LAKIP), Indonesian *Ulama Forum* (MUI) and Anshor Youth Movement (GP Anshor) launched deradicalisation campaigns and promoted research in identifying new potentials of youth terrorists cells and evaluating counterterrorism efforts.

¹⁸ ICG Report, March 2006.

¹⁹ “Deden Gunawan, Bom Masjid Polres Cirebon” (The Bombing of Polres Cirebon Mosque), *Detik.com*, Senin, 18 April 2011. Accessed at <<http://www.detiknews.com/read/2011/04/18/141148/1619757/159/pengantin-itu-mengkafirkan-sang-ortu?nd992203605>> on 1 May 2011.

²⁰ “Upaya Deradikalisasi Baru Ada Setahun Terakhir” (Deradicalisation Projects is Just One Year Old), *Tempo Interaktif*, 27 April 2011. Accessed at <<http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/politik/2011/04/27/brk,20110427-330462,id.html>> on 1 May 2011; “Pemerintah Terbitkan Perpres Tentang BNPT” (The Government Issues a Regulation on BNPT), *Antara*, 30 July 2010. Accessed at <<http://www.antaraneews.com/berita/1280492000/pemerintah-terbitkan-perpres-pembentukan-bnpt>> on 1 May 2011.

The three stages above explain that it took almost a decade for the Indonesian public to be aware of their youth's vulnerability to radical ideas. As we have now arrived at the "discovery" stage, this is the best time to work towards answering the challenge before the issue starts to decline and disappear. Quoting a public communications expert, Anthony Downs, wide audiences could be blind to the really urgent problem in society.²¹ Unfortunately, at the end of the day, once they arrive at the right sense of crisis, they tend to escape rather than solve the problem. Hopefully this is not the case for youth deradicalisation.

Indeed, the challenge in finding the right deradicalisation strategy is enormous. The recently released survey by LAKIP unfolds that 48 per cent of high school students in Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, Bekasi, and Depok are willing to be involved in violence in the name of religion.²² The survey found that these potential radical students were being persuaded by radical websites on the internet. In addition to this survey, the ICG also released a report in April 2011 highlighting the transformation of Jihadi terrorism from being group-based into individual-based.²³ This rings another alarm bell for Indonesia on how expansive, accessible and flexible is radical activism in persuading the youth. The Indonesian society should anticipate this and invest more resources immediately to protect future generations from such inhuman activism.

Indonesian Youth and Jihadi Terrorism: An Ontological Explanation of Insecurity

This part considers the question of what went wrong in the country to cause some Indonesian youths to become radicals. Some researchers have already shown that neither economic background, education levels, nor family lines could provide reliable explanations to this question. Youth terrorist members came from varied backgrounds. Many came from poor families, but some also came from middle class families. Some of them

²¹ Downs as quoted in W. Russel Neuman (1990), op.cit.

²² "Survey: Rohis di Sekolah Tak Picu Radikalisme" (Survey Result: School Religious Activities do Not Trigger Radicalism), *Tempo Interaktif*, 29 April 2011, Accessed at <<http://www.tempointeraktif.com/share/?act=TimV3cw=&ctype=UHJpbnQ=&media=bnV3cw=&y=JEdMT0JBTFNbeV0=&m=JEdMT0JBTFNbbV0=&d=JEdMT0JBTFNbZF0=&id=MzMwOTlw>> on 1 May 2011.

²³ "Indonesian Small Groups, Big Plans", *Asia Report* No. 204, 19 April 2011, International Crisis Group. Accessed at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/204-indonesian-jihadism-small-groups-big-plans.aspx?alt_lang=id> on 2 May 2011.

were elementary school graduates, but many were educated in the most prestigious universities in Indonesia. The familial connection may work in explaining some cases such as that of Pepi and his wife, but most youth terrorist members do not have this connection.

In seeking a more convincing explanation, this essay chose to use a constructivist explanation, particularly employing the concept of “ontological insecurity.”²⁴ Katarina Kinnvall argues that in the globalisation age, the issue of identity has become more important than before. “Modernity and inequality” could cause unbearable emotional and psychological pressures. At this point, people will seek security at “ontological and existential dimension.” Kinnvall elaborates the importance of the comfort zone for every individual. This place serves personal needs of solid narrations about self, truth, and the world in order “to sustain hope” and move on.²⁵ Once an individual faced this, he/she tended to redefine the meaning of self by approaching the most approachable “collective that is perceived as being able to reduce insecurity and existential anxiety.”²⁶

To put this into context, the above concept suggests that the current world carries certain risks for the identity of Indonesia’s youth. There are at least three reasons to support this position. Firstly, the prolonged competing discourse between religion and nationalism. Since the fall of Soeharto’s government in 1999, Indonesia has been working on democratisation through reforming law, order and governance. This was a new hope for civil society to establish a more accountable Indonesian government with greater respect for human rights. Yet, at the weak side, this transition was done in exchange to states’ excessive controls on radicalism and subversive groups. Some analysts argue that the early post-Soeharto era was quite problematic because the old order was considered illegitimate, and the new one was not there yet. One of the negative sides of this was that the religious radicals finally found their way back to the Indonesian public discourse after more than three decades of being underground, under the restrictions of Soeharto’s regime. Some of the Islamic radical movements during the Soeharto era were: H. Ismail Pranoto’ Komando Jihad in 1976; Front Pembebasan Muslim Indonesia in 1977; Abdul Qadir Djaelani in 1978; Warman’s

²⁴ Katarina Kinnvall (2004), *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, *International Society of Political Psychology*, Vol. 25, No. 5, p. 746.

²⁵ Giddens (1991) as quoted in Katarina Kinnvall (2004), *ibid.*, p. 745.

²⁶ Katarina Kinnvall (2004), *ibid.*, p. 741.

Group in 1978-1980; and Imran's Revolusi Islam Indonesia in 1980-1981. Many followers of these radical groups keep reproducing narratives to glorify their ideologies, seeking supporting channels, and trying to find new recruits.

Secondly, the availability of multiple information channels to multiple discourses. We live in the age of rapid communication, with less barriers and controls than before. The Internet, particularly, has the ability to connect people in the most sophisticated ways. However, this could be a double-edged sword for most of those Indonesian youths who have not received the benefit of parental guidance and other "firewalls" to filter the massive amount of information they are faced with. The Indonesian Ministry of Telecommunications and Information claims that 75 per cent of Internet users in Indonesia are teenagers.²⁷ Other statistics released by the Norton Cybercrime Report suggests that 86 per cent of Indonesian Internet users have been cyber crime victims.²⁸ This lack of protection, particularly for young internet users, provides room for purveyors of radical discourses to maneuver and find potential audiences seeking alternative ontological security. Radical websites are designed attractively usually posing critical questions, broaching sensitive topics, or displaying heartbreaking images that invite curious youths to browse.

Thirdly, there is deteriorating trust in the current national and international order. The post-Soeharto era was launched at the time of the economic crisis. In fact, this country is still in the process of recovery. There are at least 31 million people living under the poverty line, while Indonesia still scores low (2.8 out of 10) in the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International.²⁹ This gives room for radicals to claim that all this social political degradation came about due to the refusal to implement an Islamic state, and due to the alliance with Western countries.

The three elaborations above suggest to us that youths may turn into radicals when they do not see alternative ways to reduce their ontological

²⁷ "2/3 Pengguna Internet Indonesia adalah Remaja" (2/3 Internet Users in Indonesia are Teenagers), *Viva News*, 27 August 2007. Accessed at <<http://teknologi.vivanews.com/news/read/173638-2-3-pengguna-internet-indonesia-adalah-remaja>> on 1 May 2011.

²⁸ "Sebanyak 86% Orang Indonesia Korban Kejahatan Internet" (At Least 86% Indonesians were Cyber Crime Victims), *Tempo Interaktif*, 28 September 2010. Accessed at <<http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/it/2010/09/28/brk.20100928-281159.id.html>> on 1 May 2011.

²⁹ "Menko Kesra: Angka Kemiskinan Harus Turun Pada 2011", *Kementerian Koordinator Kesejahteraan Rakyat*, 1 Juli 2010. Accessed at <www.menkokesra.go.id/.../maret-2010-angka-kemiskinan-3102-juta> on 1 May 2011; Argha Desafit Hapsari, "RI sees no improvement in corruption index", *The Jakarta Post*, 27 October 2010. Accessed at <<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/10/27/ri-sees-no-improvement-corruption-index.html>> on 1 May 2011.

insecurity. Therefore, youth deradicalisation should pay attention to some of the following points:

1. There should be accessible and open sources for youth to obtain healthy counsel and accurate information;
2. There should be wide campaigns revealing the negative impacts of radicalism;
3. There should be better protection by the law, social services and forums for youth development;
4. There should be more counselling support for parents in providing warm and healthy family environments that could provide reliable counsel for adolescences;
5. There should be an appropriate rehabilitation program for convicted terrorists; and
6. There should be more research to improve understanding of youth and terrorism and better frameworks of youth deradicalisation should be constructed.

Concluding Remarks

This essay has explained how the Indonesian public finally became aware of youth's vulnerability against jihadi terrorism. After almost a decade of witnessing numbers of young adults and even teenagers turning into radicals, Indonesia finally reached this "discovery" stage. Beginning last year, a range of efforts were launched by different actors to promote youth deradicalisation. It is now considered as one of the most essential approaches in counterterrorism in Indonesia.

Yet, recent facts reveal that this youth deradicalisation project will be complex and challenging. As elaborated in the second part of this essay, an alternative explanation of why youths turn to jihadi terrorism is the problem of ontological crisis – a situation in which youths try to find the most reasonable explanation of their identity in the midst of competing discourses. Jihadi terrorism could be compelling for some youths who could not find adequate healthy counsel in their closest communities. Thus, constructing a framework of youth deradicalisation requires transformations in Indonesian policies, societies and families. Further research on this issue is certainly recommended.

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YOUTH AND THEIR VOICES

Wendy Yee Mei Tien

ABSTRACT

Youth are commonly defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Nevertheless, the functional definition varies from country to country. The youth represent a significant portion of the world's population. It is therefore necessary to understand the voices of the youth and to take youth issues seriously. In addition, it is essential to understand that young people are not a homogeneous group, for they have a diverse range of needs and interests. As youth go through the transition stage from childhood to adulthood, they face many new psycho-social experiences as well as emotional turbulence. They are often confused about their identity, and they long for a sense of belonging and acceptance. Many feel very unsure and undecided about their future. At the other end of the spectrum, the youth have a tremendous potential for growth. They are often highly motivated in developing and seeking opportunities to explore new ideas and relationships, within the context of the society as a whole. Therefore, positive development is not only determined by the youth themselves but also by the environment. The approach to youth development should also encompass opportunities and experiences for young people to contribute in a meaningful way to their communities and to believe that their contributions are respected and valued.

Keywords: Youth, Youth Identity, Positive Youth Development, Voices of the Youth

Who are the Youth?

The United Nations defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. This working definition was adopted for practical statistical reasons, making it possible to compare data across time and countries. However, the operational definition of the term 'youth' often varies from country to country, depending on specific socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factors¹. For example, even among the 10 ASEAN member countries, youth are defined differently (Table 1).

¹ United Nations. *Youth and the United Nations: Frequently Asked Questions*. Available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/qanda.htm>

Table 1: Definition of the Youth Population in ASEAN Member Countries

| Countries | Definition (years) |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Malaysia | 15 – 40 |
| Brunei Darussalam | 15 – 40 |
| Viet Nam | 15 – 35 |
| Philippines | 15 – 30 |
| Cambodia | 15 – 30 |
| Laos | 15 – 30 |
| Singapore | 15 – 29 |
| Indonesia | 15 – 29 |
| Myanmar | 15 - 24 |
| Thailand | 15 - 24 |

Youth represent a significant portion of the world's population. There are approximately one billion youth living in the world today; which means approximately one person in five is between the age of 15 and 24 years, or 18 per cent of the world's populations are "youth" (Table 2).

Table 2: Global Youth Population

| Year | Youth Population | Percentage of Total Global Population |
|------|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1985 | 941 million | 19.4% |
| 1995 | 1.019 billion | 18.0% |
| 2025 | 1.222 billion | 15.4% |

Almost 85 per cent of the world's youth, live in developing countries, with approximately 60 per cent in Asia alone. A remaining 23 per cent live in the developing regions of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. It is estimated that by 2025, the number of youth living in developing countries will grow to 89.5 per cent.² With such significant youth representation in the population, it is necessary for society to understand the voices of the youth and to take youth issues into consideration in developing programs or agenda for them.

² United Nations. *Youth and the United Nations: Frequently Asked Questions*. Available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/qanda.htm>

Understanding Youth in the Real Sense

Youth is a very important phase in the human life cycle, as distinguished from other phases such as childhood, adulthood and old age. While it is possible to define “youth” based on the categories of age, stake holders working with the youth should also be aware of the tremendous difficulties in defining “youth” qualitatively as the sociological, psychological and health problems they face may differ. There has to be awareness that young people are not a homogeneous group; they have a diverse range of needs and interests. Hence, different scholars have provided definitions of youth. Curtain (2002), defines it as a phase when a person moves from a time of dependence (childhood) to independence (adulthood). Dr. Daisaku Ikeda (2004) (who recently received an honorary doctorate from the University of Malaya for his contributions to peace, culture and education) defines youth as a time of rapid change, from day to day and moment to moment. It can also be a time of confusion. Ikeda further elaborated that youth may sometimes think that they can’t trust anyone, that no one loves them and there is no reason to live. In addition, youth have a lot to worry about: grades at school, problems at home, problems with money or health, with how they feel about their looks, with members of the opposite sex or with friends. Their feelings are like a roller coaster: they can go from feeling confident and upbeat one moment and to becoming overwhelmed with insecurity, frustration or apathy the next. Youth often have fundamental questions about themselves and their identity: Who am I? What should I do with my life? They feel very unsure about the best way to proceed and are often undecided on their future course.

In trying to define youth, Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory (1964) explains about the different stages of youth development. According to him, at this stage (12 to 18 years old), youth are usually disturbed and confused by new social conflicts and demands. He believes that their primary task is establishing a new sense of ego identity. Their identity became a social matter and is overwhelmed by the countless options and alternatives. They are so uncertain about whom they are; so they anxiously tend to identify with the ‘in groups.’ They can ‘become remarkably clannish, intolerant and cruel in their exclusion of others who are different’ (Erikson, 1959, p. 92). In their hurry to find some identity, they stereotype ‘themselves, their ideals, and their enemies’ (Erikson, 1959, p. 92). Therefore, unless the youth has

developed their competencies, they will end up having problems identifying with themselves as well as with other people in the society. In a nutshell, mostly, youth is the stage of personality formation and self-realisation.

Despite the turmoil they undergo in their youth in searching for their identity and independence youth is also a time filled with energy, passion, hope: a whole life lies ahead brimming with infinite possibilities. Young people have a tremendous potential for development. Humans, especially children and youth are highly motivated to develop. They have natural dispositions to learn and to grow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The youth often seek opportunities to explore new ideas, relationships with others, and meaning within the context of the society as a whole. They seek to develop their knowledge, skills and competence in preparing for life. The youth also need opportunities to fail, a framework for development that will provide challenges of increasing complexity as well as support. In summary, youth require opportunities that enable them to progressively develop their abilities so as to function successfully in society. Edginton and Jiang (2000, p. 143) has stated that youth are "... capable of learning, growing and perfecting themselves." Therefore, the reason people in youth development sometimes add the word "positive" to development is to emphasize the goal of mobilizing these natural processes in youth (Larson, 2000). The concept of positive youth development is one that suggests that attention should be paid to the broader developmental needs of youth rather than focusing on youth at risk, or what is defined as a deficit-based model. However, this growth needs to be moderated. The positive influence of parents in the life of the young Thomas Edison is a good example. As a child, Thomas was curious about everything. Before he had fully grasped the scientific principles learnt at school, he wanted to create a human balloon. So, he asked one of his friends to drink a liquid mixture of tartaric acid and bicarbonate of soda, thinking that his body would be filled with gas and he would float off like a balloon. Instead, of course, his friend got sick and Thomas's usually patient parents scolded him severely for testing his experiments on a human being. Later, Thomas said it was his parent's disappointment at that time that made him decide to invent only things that would be genuinely useful to humanity. Thomas' mother later bought him a science book so he could learn how to experiment safely. He was dismissed for being a slow learner after only three months at school, but his mother did not scold him; she taught him every day at home and soon people were calling him a genius. His brilliant inventiveness was nurtured by his parent's deep love (Ikeda,

2004). What is important is not to give up on youth for in every youth lies enormous potential; how this potential can be realised really depends on all the responsible adults in the life of the youth, whether it is, family members, his community and society at large.

Voices of the Youth

Youth is a time in life when most people go through dramatic changes as they move from childhood into adulthood. At this age, they require social, economic and political support to realise their full potential. Integrated views of youth suggest that there is a reciprocal influence between the social environment and the individual. Not only do individuals shape their own development, but they are also influenced by the social environment within which they exist. In war-torn countries for example, youth are often a targeted group. According to the World Youth Report, 2003, during a war, as the situation in the war torn country turns catastrophic, civilians are left to fend for themselves without sufficient state or international assistance. This places the youth population in a very vulnerable position, as they become the target group for recruitment and abductions. The lack of opportunities in their communities, often leads them to turn to black markets for survival and to use armed conflict as a way to give vent to their anger, thus further gravitating towards violent conflict and acts of terrorism. The increased stress and feelings of hopelessness and humiliation that are indirectly linked to poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment and poor governance constitute part of a global pattern in areas of armed conflict. As victims and witnesses, youth cannot help but be affected by the grim realities surrounding them. Hence, many are successfully mobilised through the ideologies of war because for them survival takes precedence over education, environmental protection and other developmental issues.

The World Youth Report 2003 also reported,

“Historically, those who have become rebel leaders felt victimized and humiliated during an earlier period of their lives. They may have experienced repression, human rights violations, deprivation of needed resources and/or alienation. Their aggression appears to be a form of retaliation deriving from past feelings of indignity and degradation. A theory

that closely examines the notion of humiliation underlying structural violence contends that one contributing factor is the absence of recognition and respect, which creates divisions between “masters” and “underlings” and feelings of humiliation. As the “underlings” rise to power, they engage in extreme acts, inflicting tremendous indignities and perpetuating the cycle of humiliation.”

Studies have also indicated that uneducated youth and school dropouts are more likely to engage in violence and other behaviors that are detrimental to their emotional health. This is perhaps because they feel insecure, inferior or less capable than their educated peers or other members of the community. These social realities are a good indication of the often silent voices of the youth. Unless these “negative behaviors” are taken as markers of the silenced voices, youth will always be labeled ‘problematic.’

To understand the youth, one needs to understand them both emotionally and psychologically. The youth respond to recognition of their needs. They want to be respected and to be treated as individuals. They want to be given opportunities, to be heard, to be involved (to fulfill their sense of belonging) and to be recognised. Failing to understand and address these fundamental needs of the youth may drive them towards ‘negative influences’ and they may be successfully instrumentalised with notions of avenging humiliation, where there may simply be only frustration.

To support this, four successful youth interventions were listed in a recent World Bank Review. These interventions also reflect the unvoiced needs of the youth.

Firstly, it is of paramount importance to have a responsible adult or a role model in a young person’s life. Having a relationship with a positive role is remarkably effective in reducing the presence of risky behavior in young people. Studies have shown that in Latin America and West Africa, young perpetrators of violent acts look up to gunfighters as their role models and mimic the latter’s behavior because they can relate to their convictions and the portrayed emotions of an outcast (World Youth Report, 2003). Young people are therefore, especially vulnerable because they lack the necessary experience to differentiate right from wrong and are more susceptible to ideological messages placed within emotional, religious, cultural and political contexts.

Secondly, the youth has more in common with adults than with children. Many of the challenges the youth face such as unemployment and risky sexual behavior are more closely related to adults than children. The youth want to be respected and to be treated as adults, but they are often marginalised in decision-making processes. They have little say in the formulation and implementation of policies that are meant to protect their interests and well-being. To respect the youth and treat them like adults means to involve the youth in the planning process so that the youth's needs will remain at the core of the policy formulation processes.

Thirdly, it was identified that a problem-based approach is less effective than a comprehensive approach. Youth development approaches should aim to promote and prevent, not to treat or remediate. Youth development that aims to help young people develop their inner resources and skills will help them to cope better with the pressure they may face that might lead them into unhealthy and antisocial behaviors (Politz, 1996). Hence, it is necessary to address youth issues in a more holistic manner; such as positive youth development which addresses the broader developmental needs of the youth. Such approaches see the youth as assets and not liabilities (Aubrun and Grady, 2000).

Lastly, a sophisticated understanding of the heterogeneity of youth is important. While the youth are their own 'group', they are comprised of many subgroups, each requiring sophisticated understanding. In essence, a youth is an individual with a distinct personality and therefore, he or she want to be understood and be heard individually.

Conclusion

To surmise, youth is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. For most, the period represents the merger of a number of developmental milestones and challenges directly connected to adult life. There is no rigid boundary line that denotes the end of childhood and the beginning of youth; it is a period that varies from culture to culture, and is a time when individuals learn to be socially responsible for themselves and for their actions. It also comprises of a set of transitions which touch upon many aspects of the individual's behavior, development and relationships. These transitions are biological, cognitive, social and emotional. Hence it is essential to hear the voices of the youth and to understand them.

Ikeda (2004) once said, “I firmly believe every young person has the power within him or her to change the world. It is the role of those who teach to believe in that power, to encourage and release it.” Therefore while youth are often considered one of the most vulnerable groups in society, they are also regarded as the greatest source of hope for the future. The development of the youth is not only shaped by themselves but by their environments too, and the youth in turn influence their environments. The approach to youth development also encompasses opportunities and experiences for young people to contribute in a meaningful way to their communities and to believe that their contributions are respected and valued. This suggests that it is important to view and respect young people as subjects and not objects in every respect, both at the personal level, and in society as a whole. Lastly, as Gambone and Arbreton (1997) once said, “When supports and opportunities are plentiful, young people can and do thrive; when their environments are deficient or depleted, youth tend not to grow and progress.”

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YOUTH SELF-RADICALISATION: LESSONS FROM THE SINGAPORE NARRATIVE

Bilveer Singh

ABSTRACT

The threat posed by radicalism and terrorism is not new. However, with the end of the Cold War, while terrorism and extremism anywhere and associated with any religion is a major concern, what has come to dominate the security radar screen of Southeast Asian countries (and elsewhere) is the extremism and terrorism associated with Islam. This is particularly of concern in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. While agent-inspired and induced radicalisation has long dominated the phenomenon, a relatively new concern is what is described as 'self-radicalisation'. This is brought about by self-learning, mainly of published materials and of increasingly growing importance, through the Internet. This study will examine the following issues: What is self-radicalisation, why is it increasingly important, the Singapore narrative and more important, what to do.

Introduction

Some have argued that the next major challenge in terrorism and radicalisation will emanate from self-radicalisation. Strictly speaking, self-radicalisation refers to the manner an individual teaches himself about religion, in this case, about Islam but through the adoption of a radical interpretation of the discourse. While the main security issue regarding terrorism since 2001 was the manner the *Al Jemaah Al Islamiyyah* (AJAI) was driving its supporters in the region, this changed fundamentally from 2007, when the first self-radicalised individual was detained in Singapore. Essentially, self-radicalisation involves self-learning, mainly from published materials and the Internet. While the norm in Islam has been to learn from a teacher, that is, someone who has superior knowledge and wisdom about the religion and the debates associated with various issues, once someone decides to access published materials and the Internet as the source of knowledge

on Islam, the situation opens up to all kinds of possibilities, including misrepresentation of the religion, which can have dangerous consequences. Even if someone garners knowledge and information from the Internet, it is still imperative that the information be counter-checked with an expert.

Understanding the Self-Radicalisation Discourse

In many ways, the discourse on terrorism is analogous to ‘an argument’ that is won or lost through action and persuasion (Aly, 2007). This requires comprehending the underlying roots of terrorism generated from violent religious extremism. What the United States did following the 9/11 attacks was to *externalise* its response to the threat by ignoring the potential danger that could be posed by the rising radicalisation of unsuspecting ‘residents’ *from within* the US and other Western states. This, in turn, posed the critical question of how effective the counter-terrorism strategy was at the national, regional and global levels as the resort to hard power alone was unlikely to eradicate terrorism (Bush, 1 April 2001). This is because any extremism and terrorism, including that which is Islamist in orientation, was premised on the battle for the hearts and minds. The emergent trend of self-radicalisation across global capitals highlighted the ‘home-grown’ source of religious extremism and terrorism. While this trend has come under the focus of the international media, in reality, it is not really a new phenomenon. Rather, it is symptomatic of the “cancer” of the radical Islamist discourse and *jihadist* social milieu that transcends physical and territorial borders in an age of globalisation, especially the revolution in information technology.

In general, there is an assumption that the home-grown threat of Islamist radicalisation has emerged alongside the external threat posed by terrorist organisations such as *Al Qaeda*, and in the case of Southeast Asia, the AJAI. This phenomenon was highlighted by the New York City Police Department (NYPD) report titled *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*. The report referred to the “terrorist attacks or thwarted plots against cities in Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States” which “have been conceptualized and planned by local residents/citizens who sought to attack their country of residence” (Mitchell and Bhatt, 2007, p. 2). The phenomenon of self-radicalisation fundamentally altered a state’s defense against a terrorist threat which had until then assumed that the danger would emanate from outside.

The NYPD report and other reports released by authorities in Singapore and Australia greatly added to the discourse on terrorism with serious implications for national security and the counter-terrorism agencies. Still, the concepts of ‘home-grown’ terrorism and the ‘external threat’ posed by *jihadist* organisations are not mutually exclusive. Research on self-radicalisation has demonstrated that the ‘resident’ or ‘citizen’ can be ‘radicalized’ either through exposure to the militant *jihadist* discourse online or through recruitment by domestic or foreign operatives from regional or global terrorist organisations (Wu, 2008, pp. 2-3). This has called into question the existing referents about terrorism and states’ approaches to terrorism. It has also opened a policy window for alternative approaches to more effectively mitigate the terrorist threat.

For long, self-radicalisation by individuals, though not new, eluded the radar screens of security agencies. This was because such individuals only came to the notice of the security agencies when a crime was committed. Or, as in the Singapore case, they made contact with a terrorist group/cell but such contact may have not been tantamount to a crime per se. But otherwise, radicalisation or self-radicalisation remained ‘invisible’. Thus far, the complex and unconventional phenomenon of terrorism has required comprehensive approaches that do not rely solely on statist approaches in international relations, nor on the instinctive use of force to counter security threats.

If anything, the “intellectual front” rather than the “jungles or hideaways of terrorists” needs addressing as ‘in the end, it is the battle of ideas that will win this war’ (Singh, 2007, p. 156). This requires exploring alternative approaches that can adequately dissuade, not merely prevent, the ideological, socio-psychological transformation of the ‘unsuspecting’ resident into a religious extremist and terrorist (Posner, 2006, p. 203). Learning the grammar of the militant *Islamists* but ultimately refuting the narrow logic of militancy is vital in winning the ‘battle of the hearts and minds’ (Singh, 2007, p. 156).

The evolving trends illustrate the importance of addressing the deep-seated causes of religious extremism and terrorism. This would require expanding the analytical lens beyond homeland defense and adopting alternative referents that locate the militant *jihadist* milieu at the nexus between religion and politics at the global-regional and sub-state levels of

analysis. Here, the analytical concept of *Talibanization* can assist in capturing the ideational discourse of militant *jihad* and the socio-psychological linkages between radicalised individuals within the *jihadist* social milieu. *Talibanization* establishes the importance of immaterial structures which sustain the transnational violent *jihadist* milieu (Singh, 2007, p. 16). A related imperative is to analyse the socio-psychological situation of terrorists and how this influences their real or perceived position of weakness. From this perspective, the 'global war on terror' approach reflects an unconventional guerrilla insurgency by non-state actors against conventional powers within the existing world order. It also brings home the responsibility of governments to act to mitigate real injustices or dispel what radical Islamists perceive is inflicted on them, in undermining the incentive of resorting to terrorism – the latter a potent weapon of the weak.

Today, the educated individual with a curious mind can gain easy access to the radical Islamist discourse, enabled via the dynamic virtual communications medium in the existing age of globalisation and complex interdependence. This infrastructure facilitates the emergence of a radical Islamist virtual community (Ryan, 2007, p. 995). Its ubiquity allows communication amongst widely dispersed ethno-religious groups that transcend the barriers of distance and time (Weimann, 2006, pp. 23-24), facilitating the virtual convergence of radical Islamists.

The communicative and instrumental functions of the Internet facilitate the sustenance of a radical Islamist virtual community, stemming from the distribution of propaganda by terrorists with the intent of canvassing support and mobilising material capabilities for armed *jihad* that targets current and potential supporters, the international community and enemies online (Weimann, 2006, p. 61). There are critical implications from the virtual congregation of like-minded individuals and groups (Weimann, 2006, p. 24). In particular, the proliferation of radical Islamist websites reflects their expanding reach. For example, *Al Qaeda* has expanded from one website (*www.alneda.com*) established in the late 1990s to over 50 today (Weimann, 2006, p. 67).

Furthermore, the online presence of global *jihadists* eludes censorship. The removal of a site cannot prevent its re-emergence on alternative servers (Weimann, 2006, p. 67). More importantly, the burgeoning virtual presence of radical Islamists suggests regular maintenance of the site and forums by

members and supporters of the organisations (Weimann, 2006, p. 67). This demonstrates the symbiosis of virtual radical *jihadist* presence with a real following, not least in developed secular societies. The increasing radicalisation of individuals across developed capitals more fundamentally reflects the infiltration strategy employed by radical Islamists, manifested in three ways: the propagation of the global *jihadist* discourse via the English-language media; recruitment of Western *jihadist* spokesmen and; the employment of deceptive organisational facades.

The radicalisation process comprises of stages, ranging from the ‘gradual adoption of an extremist religious/political ideology hostile to the West and their allies, by local residents or citizens’ (Mitchell and Bhatt, p. 16). It entails ‘the progression of searching, finding, adopting, nurturing, and developing this extreme belief system to the point where it acts as a catalyst for a terrorist act’ (Mitchell and Bhatt, p. 16). According to this study, there are four stages in the radicalisation process that models progress from pre-radicalisation, and self-identification and indoctrination, before culminating in *jihadisation* (Mitchell and Bhatt, p.19).

It is pertinent to establish a conceptual framework that can adequately capture the complex process of self-radicalisation. Adoption of soft counter ‘values’ and counter ‘ideology’ approaches to treat and de-radicalise the ideational and cognitive-emotional bases of the militant *jihadists* necessitates deconstructing the appeal of fighting *jihad* globally. This requires integrating the ideological and socio-psychological dimensions of analysing the soft power of the militant *jihadist* discourse.

First, content analysis on the ideological discourse of militant *jihad* is pertinent as ‘ideas have consequences.’ Moreover, the beliefs and ideological orientation of terrorists reveal the political dimension of the radical discourse (Lia, 2005, pp. 13-15). Second, on a cognitive and socio-psychological level, it is important to consider the basis of individuals’ real and perceived sense of injustices or weakness that propels them to the resort to violent acts of terrorism. Third, critical and objective analysis of the situational context of susceptible individuals on social, economic and political levels is important in order for policy-makers to take immediate measures to undermine the basis for violent *jihadists* superimposing their radical worldview of an individual’s situation within the largely multiethnic and culturally heterogeneous societies of the Western developed capitals. Last but not least, it is important to incorporate a social network analysis

in order to capture the critical transnational linkages that induct radicalised individuals and religious extremists into the realm of violent operations across global cities (Max, 2008, pp. 78-105).

Youth, Terrorism and Self-Radicalisation

By definition, youths are an impressionable lot. There is also a great of sense of idealism and of fair play, morality and the championing of causes that are outside the personal domain. These very characteristics have made them susceptible to self-radicalisation. This has led entrepreneurs peddling the business of terrorism and extremism to prey on them, in turn, raising the potential of new threats to one's homeland following the subversion of unsuspecting individual 'residents' or 'citizens' in distant homelands. To manage this threat, there is a need to consolidate and encompass 'soft' strategies to counter ideational and political discourses on religious extremism and terrorism in cyberspace.

While the phenomenon of self-radicalisation is not new, what is of concern is its severity and its potential to undermine national security. In view of this, nation-building efforts would need to be undertaken as part of counter-terrorism, with the aim of building trust and confidence horizontally between the members of a heterogeneous society and vertically between the government and its people. Clearly, this is going to be the next lap in national security building and will be long-term in nature.

However, it cannot be denied that circumstances differ from society to society. For some conservative Asian societies, there may be serious problems with governance, which can be further aggravated by a lack of entertainment opportunities. This is primarily due to the prevalence and promotion of conservatism of one sort or another. In such an environment, where the only opportunity to break out of conservatism and boredom is the Internet, then the Internet as a platform can become a very powerful tool for radicals to reach what is essentially a captive audience. If for some reason or another, an individual accesses the Internet and happens upon radical websites, then trouble is likely to brew.

This is because the lack of entertainment and general conservatism on the one hand and the repeated 'blasts' of '*jihad, jihad, jihad*' in cyber space, the continuous drumming of manipulated and negative information

on Islam and more important, what one must do to be a ‘good, pious Muslim’ on the other can greatly influence the ‘client’ inducing him or her to become radicalised. Cyber space also has the potential to link like-minded people together, creating in turn, a ‘virtual family’ that is comfortable with each other. This is a major reason for the popularity of Internet radicalisers such as pro-*Al Qaeda* preacher Anwar Al Awlaki (Ramakrishna, 7 July 2010). Also, as the Internet does not require one to reveal one’s identity, one is able to ‘upload’ or ‘offload’ whatever is in one’s heart and mind, thereby providing a useful platform for the unrestrained vending of data as well as the its exaggeration when necessary. All these allow some people to gain tremendous satisfaction in accessing and ‘buying’ into ideas and ideology that would not be popularised or discussed by the mainstream community or media, leading to a link-up and coalescing of like-minded individuals, in this case, radicals, who have their ideas germinated, fertilised and eventually matured through the Internet.

It is conventionally believed that of all the different age groups, the youths are the most susceptible to online and non-online radicalisation, including through self-radicalisation. Why is this so? The age factor is critical as this is the generation that is increasingly Internet and Short Message Service (SMS) savvy. The easy accessibility of the cyberspace platform has also greatly facilitated this process, with an individual having his ‘mind washed’ in the privacy of his home and more importantly, on his personal computer, following his decision to lock into a particular website, without pressure from anyone else. In a sense, such youths have targeted themselves, resulting in them adopting particular views, often jaundiced and one-sided, about various tenets and practices of the religion.

The Internet is also very appealing to youth as many terror websites are flashy, well-designed with visually arresting graphic content. Many also offer chat-rooms, music videos and other features that target the computer-savvy, media-saturated youths (Mohamed, 7 February 2008, *The Straits Times*). At the same time, the Internet, emerging as a virtual echo chamber, has become a key radicalisation accelerant. Three factors have drawn youths to radical Internet web sites: “they may come across radical content while exploring the Internet for entertainment (such as videos sites); they may be seeking, out of curiosity, information on ideologies, traditions, or heritage-

related matters associated with the radical groups; or, they may be looking for a community with which they can identify” (*White Paper*, 24 April 2009).

Equally important, youths are defined and characterised by idealism. They aspire to answer calls that are beyond them. While many may have personal and other difficulties, they feel they will find self-worth by articulating, supporting and undertaking causes that appear just, moral and right. They believe in making the world a better place and also tend to be action-oriented. Often, they despise the status quo, especially one that is riddled with injustices. This, by definition, makes them attracted to larger causes. Psychologically, the ‘I and Me’ becomes less important, and the ‘Other’ and ‘Community’ becomes somewhat more critical, leading to a greater willingness to make sacrifices, especially if these are religiously sanctioned.

In some ways, the idealism of the youths makes them more vulnerable in supporting causes even if these appear radical and violent in nature. Also, with their access to quick information, as well as, through radical sites, ready-made solutions on actions to take, there is a greater chance that this group of people will be more prone to radicalisation via this medium. Even though only a minority of the minority will be touched by this radicalism, the fact that this potential and avenue exists is something that security planners need to be cognisant of. There is also a small group that is hyper-religious and action-prone, partly due to their personal experiences and setbacks, and these individuals can be easily ‘mined’ for radical causes through the process of self-radicalisation, be it online or through radical publications.

Why is Religious Self-learning Dangerous?

The publication business, be it books, magazines or pamphlets, or for that matter, the Internet, CDs, and DVDs, is not neutral. This is aggravated by the existence of nearly 6000 radical sites that preach Islam in a militant manner that can endanger governments and more specifically, multiracial societies, by championing causes that are hard-line and highly religion-centric, at the expense of other societal values. For a lack of a better term, the promotion of extremist and violent *salafi jihadist* discourses has emerged as one of the main security concerns. If anything, the Internet

and cyberspace in general, including Facebook, email, Twitter, SMS, etc. have become easily accessible and utilised, but difficult to police, so that all kinds of information is uploaded that can greatly influence an individual. The increasing number of radical sites, the 'cool' manner they are produced making them attractive and fun to access as well as the fact that they 'talk the language' that is understood by the 'client' has made cyberspace a very powerful tool for delivering powerful and potent messages that can easily influence not only one's cognition but also possibly, influence one to behave and act in a particular manner. In short, it potentially serves not only to elicit sympathy to one's causes, but also to get funds, be a source of recruitment, guide groups to undertake action almost through remote control such as bomb making and attacking a target as well as to influence one to become a convert towards a radical cause in the name of *jihad*.

For Southeast Asians, what has increasingly become disconcerting is the increasing number of radical websites that are not only in Arabic but also in English, *Bahasa Indonesia* and *Bahasa Melayu*. There are more than 200 *Bahasa Indonesia* and *Bahasa Melayu* radical sites that can be easily accessed by citizens in the Nusantara, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines. Aggravating the challenge for the national security agencies is the emergence of multiple social networks that appear harmless and innocuous but on further probing, can reveal different levels of radicalisation that can influence the readers as the messages are about how to view a particular problem and issue, often laced with religious justifications and theories, including quotes from the Koran or practices undertaken by the Prophet and his Companions.

The very phenomenon of information technology, especially the Internet, from the operational point of view, makes it almost impossible to identify them unless they are specifically targeted by the relevant authorities. The fact that the Internet is essentially a private space and not a public one, makes policing it very challenging. The private nature of the platform, the difficulties of detection, the ability to access and transmit information quickly, even information that can be highly damaging and dangerous, such as on how to make a bomb or improvised explosive device (IED) or how to bomb a particular target, has made the domain a highly challenging one. True, most of the Internet users are peaceful in intent and would like to use it for various positive uses. However, this very accessible and powerful

instrument also avails itself to others who may have malicious intentions and this is what make cyberspace so challenging. As for radicalisation over the Internet, it began more with information highlighting the plight of Muslims the world over, especially in places such as the Middle East where the Palestinians were being persecuted. Increasingly, the Internet was used for political rhetoric, highlighting the sufferings of the Muslims, partly to garner support for Muslim-oriented causes and partly to counter-balance the biased reporting of the Western-controlled media that rarely publicised the tragedies that befell Muslims, especially in the Middle East. However, over time, while the importance of political rhetoric remained, there has been a qualitative shift, with the information over the Internet becoming more action-oriented, showing users so inclined how to 'fight back' and 'defend' themselves, including through the use of violence where this was said to be justified as a 'defence of the Ummah', for 'self-defence' or for *jihad* against infidels and the enemies of Islam, with both Muslims and non-Muslims being targeted. In short, there has been a definitive shift with greater injection of radicalised discourses being uploaded on the Internet which in turn, possessed the potential to influence readers, not just cognitively but also as a 'call to action' to defend the *Ummah* and religion.

The Singapore Case Study

In order to understand the phenomenon of self-radicalisation, a number of cautionary provisos are worth noting. First, the demographic constituents susceptible to self-radicalisation are the minority Muslim and immigrant communities within multi-ethnic or predominantly Western societies. Second, this phenomenon has fundamentally shifted the focus to the search for potential structural factors that underlie the broader phenomenon of religious extremism within these societies. Third, because of the susceptibility of the Muslim minority communities, by birth or conversion, any study of the radicalisation process would require analysis of the secular state's management of these communities across the West and elsewhere. This in particular applies to cases of home-grown terrorists and self-radicalised individuals who have emerged in the US, Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Holland, and Spain as well as Singapore and Bangalore

(India), developed capitals with socio-cultural values and social trends similar to the West as a consequence of the phenomenon of globalisation. Last but not least, incidences of radicalisation among converts of citizens residing across these capitals should be more closely analysed for their socio-psychological state of mind that renders them susceptible to the radical Islamist discourse and violent *jihadist* social milieu (kinship networks).

In Singapore, three cases of self-radicalisation emerged between February 2007 and July 2010. The Singapore government detained a 28 year-old 'self-radicalised' law lecturer, Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader in February 2007 for his plan to wage 'militant *jihad*' in Afghanistan (Singapore Government Media Release, 8 June 2007). In January 2008, three self-radicalised Singaporeans were arrested (Vasu and Chin, 2008). Twenty seven year-old Singaporean, Rijal Yadri Jumari, was earmarked as a future AJAI leader (Jeremy, 24 March 2008). Muhammad Zamri Abdullah who tried to join a '*mujahidin* network' to wage armed *jihad* influenced Maksham Mohd Shah and Mohammad Taufik Andjah Asmara (Vasu and Chin, 2008). In July 2010, a serving National Serviceman, Mohd Fadil Abdul Hamid was also arrested.

What can be done to counter the Threat of Self-Radicalisation?

From the onset, it must be made clear that online radicalisation is not synonymous with self-radicalisation. Online radicalisation can be part of self-radicalisation but there are also other sources that can radicalise an individual, including books, magazines, pamphlets and even CDs and DVDs. With greater resources being pumped into counter-terrorism agencies and different kinds of 'wars on terror' taking place at the national, regional and global levels, there has been a shift in the arena of operations, especially as far as promoting the radical agenda and ideology is concerned. As the traditional avenues such as mosques, religious schools and institutions, that are being policed by security personnel, are becoming inhospitable for radicalisation, and with these institutions being manned by individuals who are unsympathetic to the radical discourse, alternative avenues have to be found; these are found in cyberspace and in published materials which are becoming increasingly important in winning the 'battles of hearts and

minds,' in order to win over adherents, both in Muslim minority and majority states. Thus, when one posits strategies to counter, manage and contain self-radicalisation, these are important aspects that need to be understood. Otherwise, it would be tantamount to 'boxing in the dark' or 'looking for a black cat in a dark room'.

First and foremost, education will continue to play a critical role in ensuring that self-radicalisation does not succeed. The authorities need to undertake out-reach programmes in order to educate and inform society of what is right and wrong, and more importantly, of the dangers that lurk over the horizon, in this case, cyberspace and elsewhere, if the logic of misinterpreted religion is bought in by individuals, and more important, acted upon. In the Singapore case, the authorities have, through *Majlis Ulama Islam Singapura* (MUIS), instituted the *Azatizah Recognition Scheme* to ensure that religious teachers are correctly accredited so that only qualified ones are tasked to teach and interpret the *Koranic* text as well as all aspects of the religion, especially in a multi-ethnic setting.

Here, the role of key religious and social organisations, such as MUIS, Association of Muslim Professionals, the Religious Rehabilitation Group, as well as mosques, is vitally important in ensuring that the virus of radicalism is somewhat managed and contained. It is not sufficient just to reach out to community leaders but also to the society's rank and file, especially the students in national schools and even the madrassahs. Various avenues and forums such as the Inter-Religious Confidence Circles, Community Engagement Programmes, Safety and Security Watch Group, Inter-faith Dialogue and Presidential Council of Religious Harmony are utilised to sensitise people to the dangers of radicalism, including self-radicalisation. Interestingly, national religious bodies such as MUIS have also produced outreach programmes and information to counter the rising radicalisation in cyber space through the production of easily accessible data such as "Questions and Answers on Jihad" and "Don't Be Extreme in Your Religion."

While there is a serious need to 'inoculate', 'immunise', 'vaccinate' and build a 'firewall' for the vulnerable community, through various educational and outreach programmes, at the same time, there is a dire need to target radical and proxy websites, and individuals who have been won over by these sites. In this context, Singapore created Singapore Infocomm Technology Security Authority (SITSA), an agency in the Ministry of Home

Affairs under the Internal Security Department to monitor radical websites, and if necessary, to take action against them. Otherwise, through rigorous monitoring, the authorities have taken action, including using the Internal Security Act (ISA) against individuals who have been self- or other-radicalised as they are viewed a threat to society.

At a more general level, there are many things that governments and state agencies can do to counter the threat of self-radicalisation. Among others, these include:

1. Study and understand the phenomenon of radicalisation and self-radicalisation;
2. Be able to understand how youths can be reached through different formal and informal channels and means;
3. Utilise the latest technologies to contain and counter radical websites from disseminating their 'trade';
4. Adopt measures to police and intrusively regulate the use of the Internet;
5. Fund and develop counter-radicalisation websites to counterbalance the websites that spurt religious misinterpretations and hate;
6. Adopt aggressive counter-ideology programmes to address fallacies, and distortions of Islamic teachings, that are propagated by various radical sites, by mobilising credible moderate Islamist scholars and preachers; and
7. If all fail, have strong laws that criminalise the spreading of as well as 'consumption' of radical ideologies even though these laws must be applied and implemented prudently.

General Observations, Lessons and the Way Forward

The escalation of radicalisation occurring from within societies in general, especially developed ones, directly impinges on existing policy instruments that have been adopted to mitigate the threat of religious extremism and terrorism. In particular, it underscores the domestic sources of Islamist radicalisation within states and hence, has consequences for a state's counter-terrorism strategy and policies. This phenomenon also demonstrates the lacuna in the development of 'comprehensive theories and

computation tools to explain, hierarchically decompose, map terrorism's root causes and generate hypotheses to resolve them' (Sinai, 2007, pp. 36-37). More importantly, it points to the need to analyze the socio-psychological motivations driving the radicalisation of unsuspecting individuals and their induction into the global *jihadist* milieu. This requires, fundamentally, a relaxation of the top-down statist assumptions about the nature of the terrorist threat since September 11 which have dominated the discourse on terrorism and extremism and the processes that sustains it (Sinai, 2007, p. 40).

Governments and their policies can, unwittingly, fuel terrorism and extremism. For instance, the documentary "Dangerous Ground" broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation highlighted the Australian Muslim community's strong perceived alienation from mainstream society. Waleed Aly's research demonstrates that at the local level, the Australian counter-terror approach had exacerbated this sense of alienation through the injudicious use of hard power; this may unwittingly feed the radicalisation process by entrenching Australian Muslims' disengagement from society (Aly, 2007).

In view of these blowbacks, what can one learn and unlearn about managing the threat of terrorism, especially as far as self-radicalisation is concerned?

The first case pertains to the immediate response measures of the homeland defence in maintaining social resilience on a local level through fair and professional treatment of minorities as they will face intense social scrutiny or suspicion in the aftermath of terrorist attacks involving jihadists. The second hones the longer term national policy imperatives that require the government to manage responsibly the real and perceived vulnerabilities of the minorities, and their structural disadvantage and alienation within mainstream society. This can involve the government's measured and responsible use of inter-racial and religious dialogues with the minority communities, to build up their trust and confidence in national efforts to sustain a state's multicultural fabric.

Related to this is the foreign policy domain, especially since the September 11 incident and the US's subsequent counter-actions that have compounded radical Islamists' depiction of the West's unjust policies towards Muslim globally. This was not helped by the maintenance of the Guantanamo

detention facility, the treatment of Muslim prisoners at Abu Ghraib and the US's policy of transferring terror suspects 'from US control into the control of foreign governments, so that interrogation methods that are not permitted under US law may be applied to the suspects' (Cohen, 18 February 2005). While the US counter-terrorism grand strategy represented a strong exercise of coercion through hard power almost amounting to the practice of state terrorism, it had the effect of engendering further hatred towards the US and its allies, as values relating to democracy, human rights and human dignity were conveniently abandoned. As was argued by Tariq Ali, what eventually developed was nothing short of a 'clash of fundamentalism' (Ali, 2002).

In view of the increasing sophistication of cyberspace and the difficulties in policing it, security planners and agencies cannot afford to let down their guard; vigilance is absolutely vital in ensuring that self-radicalised individuals do not pose a threat, at home or abroad. At the same time, as more information is acquired, together with a better understanding of the process of radicalisation and self-radicalisation, including the type of individuals who are more likely to fall prey, the challenge will always remain. To that extent, understanding and managing youths and the challenge of self-radicalisation will, for some time, remain a work-in-progress.

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