



HOMEGROWN TERRORISTS IN THE U.S. AND U.K.

*An Empirical Examination of the
Radicalization Process*

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross
Laura Grossman



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OUTSIDE EXPERT'S VIEW

BRIAN MICHAEL JENKINS

SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE RAND CORPORATION

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Laura Grossman have produced an important study that adds to our knowledge of terrorist radicalization. It draws on empirical data drawn from an examination of 117 “jihadist” terrorists in the United States and the United Kingdom to trace the initial arc of their trajectory into terrorism. It concludes that religious beliefs play a role in radicalization, a finding which itself is not surprising but is likely to be controversial.

Terrorists do not fall from the sky. They emerge from a set of strongly held beliefs. They are radicalized. Then they become terrorists.

The analysis offered by Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman does not enter the definitional swamp of whether the beliefs that propelled these individuals into terrorism should be regarded as an extreme—and many would add, perverted—form of religious faith, or as a political ideology that justifies violence with selected tenets of religious faith.

The observation that religious belief plays a role in the initial radicalization process should not be interpreted as an indictment of faith. It does not suggest that a particular religion is more terrorist-prone than another. This is not a discussion about how one views God. It is an analysis of the attributes of radicalization.

The term “radical” applies to one who carries his theories or convictions to their furthest application. It implies not only extreme beliefs, but extreme action. Radicalization refers to the process of adopting for oneself or inculcating in others a commitment not only to a system of beliefs, but to their imposition on the rest of society. Radicalization, therefore, is at least partially observable.

Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman identify six indicators of jihadist radicalization. The first three of these have to do with how rigidly (or legalistically) one may

interpret one's religion, who he comes to trust or not trust, and how he views the relationship between the West and Islam. These indicators are observable only through the statements made by subjects themselves or what they have related to others. The second three indicators, which comprise manifesting a low tolerance for religious deviance, attempting to impose one's beliefs on others, and expressing radical views, are more easily observable.

Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman find evidence among their subjects of all six indicators, some more powerful than others. Interestingly, the sixth indicator—the expression of radical political views—was found in most of the terrorists in the study, regardless of whether the other indicators were present. This suggests that religious faith alone does not propel one into terrorism—radical political views are prerequisite. We still need to know more about how radicalized persons ultimately are recruited or recruit themselves into terrorism—the second part of the arc. Is it a matter of heightened anger or of whom they happen to encounter, a natural leader committed to violence or someone who steers them to a terrorist recruiter?

The reader should be reminded that the researchers are looking at the radicalization process through a rearview mirror. The subjects of the study were selected because they were terrorists, not because of their beliefs. The researchers asked how the terrorists got there, and they discovered clusters of indicators that recur sufficiently to suggest a shared trajectory of radicalization.

In other words, the indicators do not necessarily make a terrorist, but they help to explain how terrorists are radicalized. Radicalization is a prerequisite to terrorism—there are no moderate bombers—but radicalization does not automatically and inexorably propel one all the way to violence. As previous studies have shown, and the authors of this research would agree, some individuals appear to start down the path of radicalization, then they halt or abandon the process before they are recruited into violence. It would be useful to know why. We must also accept the fact that one could hold the most extreme beliefs and could even attempt to impose these beliefs on others, yet remain non-violent.

The indicators identified by Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman would be observable to family and close acquaintances but would be hard for authorities to detect. They have value, nonetheless, in deciding whether to initiate a closer look or to not waste limited resources where it is not warranted. They also have value in developing policy and setting strategy.

As we have seen, the issue of radicalization and recruitment to violence is treacherous territory. Those already suspicious of Islam embrace any study that shows a connection between faith and violence. Defenders of faith stand ready to denounce any inquiry as discrimination. Civil libertarians shoot on suspicion.

Academics sharpen their blades. Conclusions seem to be determined in advance by point of view—reading any report is unnecessary.

An earlier, careful study of radicalization by the New York City Police Department raised concerns about domestic intelligence collection. A proposal to create a national commission to look at radicalization and recruitment to terrorism provoked paroxysms of protest in the civil liberties community.

Any such inquiries, critics argue, will inexorably lead to the equivalent of the Spanish Inquisition or the Gestapo, or will reproduce the contemporary equivalent of the Communist witch hunts of the 1950s. Given recent revelations of abuses in the name of the war on terrorism, it is easy to understand suspicion. Vigilance is important, criticism necessary, although in this debate the protestors sometimes ironically display the very behavior they warn against: that to even think about something equals guilt of imagined possibilities.

Why is understanding radicalization and recruitment important? Since 9/11, unknown numbers of informants and intelligence agents have been deployed to thwart terrorist plots. We have, at great cost, maintained a vast military effort to disperse terrorist training camps, pursue terrorist leaders wherever they are, and prevent terrorists from establishing new sanctuaries. Significant resources have been devoted to security against terrorist attacks—our last line of defense.

It is an unequal exchange. To deal with hundreds of fanatics, it is necessary to employ hundreds of thousands of military, law enforcement, and security personnel at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars to our economy. And all agree it will be a long war.

Unless we can find ways to blunt the narrative of our terrorist foes, impede their recruiting, and discourage young men (and women) from destructive and self-destructive trajectories, terrorism will drain our resources, drag on our economy, and, yes, ultimately imperil our democracy. But in order to formulate intelligence and appropriate strategies to prevent this, we must understand better the process of radicalization and recruitment to terrorism. With this research, Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman significantly further that understanding.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Intelligence services and experts are increasingly paying attention to the threat of “homegrown terrorism,” terrorist attacks perpetrated by individuals who were either born or raised in the West. Homegrown terrorists pose a particular concern due to the increasing number of Westerners joining militant Islamic movements, and the operatives’ familiarity with the societies they are targeting. In recent years, over two hundred men and women born or raised in the West have participated in, or provided support for Islamic terrorist plots and attacks.

Several studies have examined the demographics of homegrown Islamic terrorists, and a lesser number of studies have examined their social affiliations. But to date, no study has empirically examined the process through which these terrorists are radicalizing, which constitutes a substantial gap in the literature. This study addresses the present gap through an empirical examination of behavioral manifestations of the radicalization process in 117 homegrown “jihadist” terrorists from the United States and United Kingdom.

The individuals considered “homegrown” in this study either spent a significant portion of their formative years in the West, or else their radicalization bears a significant connection to the West. Individuals were included in the study if, in addition to being “homegrown,” they participated in, or provided illegal support for, jihadist terrorist plots. In evaluating the behavioral changes that the homegrown terrorists went through, this study relies wherever possible on their own words: some have kept blogs, posted on online newsgroups, or issued communiqués. Others were caught on tape by government informants. The research for this study also draws on court cases (which often include exhibits and testimony that provide insight into the radicalization process) and credible open-source information that would be accepted in the professional and academic worlds.

CONCRETE MANIFESTATIONS OF RADICALIZATION

This study examines six manifestations of the radicalization process that can be observed in homegrown terrorists. Though the six steps differ in prevalence, we found that all of them occurred frequently enough among the sample to be considered significant.

Adopting a Legalistic Interpretation of Islam

A legalistic interpretation of Islam refers to how believers interpret their rights and obligations in relation to Islam's holy texts. An individual who has a legalistic interpretation has adopted a rules-based approach in which the Qur'an and sunnah provide strict guidelines—not just for the practice of the faith, but also for virtually every aspect of one's daily life. This legalistic interpretation will be manifested externally.

A person exhibiting a legalistic interpretation is not necessarily radical, or radicalizing: it may simply be indicative of a conservative practice of the faith. However, for some homegrown terrorists, this legalistic understanding blends naturally into the rest of their radicalization. This was the case for al-Qaeda spokesman Adam Gadahn, and also for the Lackawanna Six. In the latter case, a spiritual mentor created "an uncompromising religious atmosphere" rooted in a legalistic understanding of the faith designed to make members of the Lackawanna Six feel ashamed for being "too American." After introducing the men to legalistic standards in which they constantly fell short, the spiritual mentor brought in a "closer"—a young imam who built off their feelings of religious failure, arguing that undertaking jihad was their only chance at salvation.

Trusting Only Select Religious Authorities

Another significant manifestation of the radicalization process is coming to trust only the interpretations of a select and ideologically rigid set of religious authorities. One example of this can be seen within the Wahhabi movement, where more conservative (and frequently, militant) scholars are often seen as teaching the only "authentic" interpretation of Islam. Conversely, more moderate scholars are perceived as offering a watered-down and inauthentic version of the faith.

Sometimes the select religious authorities whom radicalizing individuals believe they can trust will be contemporary hardline religious leaders, and other times they will be luminaries of the past—such as Ahmad ibn Abdal-Halim ibn Taymiyya, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi.

Perceived Schism Between Islam and the West

As homegrown terrorists radicalize, they often come to perceive an inherent schism between Islam and the West—believing that the two are at odds, and perhaps even incapable of coexistence. This perception can be expressed in a number of ways. In some cases, individuals attempt to isolate themselves from Western society physically. In others, these individuals will explain the perceived schism between Islam and the West to friends, family, or conspirators.

Frequently the concept of loyalty is critical to this stage: the idea that the individual has obligations to Islam alone, and cannot have any kind of duty or loyalty to a non-Muslim state. A second, more extreme idea may derive from this principle: that even *participation* in democracy violates Islamic religious principles. Also, this aspect of the radicalization process is sometimes manifested by individuals separating themselves from, or even coming to hate, non-Muslims who had previously been an important part of their lives.

Low Tolerance for Perceived Theological Deviance

As homegrown terrorists internalize rigid interpretations of Islam, many come to view alternate interpretations and practices as not just incorrect theologically, but as personal affronts. In this way, any disagreement about religion may be personalized, and met with a great amount of vitriol. This intolerance of perceived deviance is usually expressed verbally, through the chastisement of other Muslims—but there have also been instances where this intolerance manifests in violence.

Attempts to Impose Religious Beliefs on Others

Another significant step is when individuals attempt to impose their religious beliefs on others. This step is often a natural extension of individuals' low tolerance for perceived theological deviance: since religious transgressions are regarded as personal affronts, radicalizing individuals try to enforce their own religious values and customs on others. Family members and close friends often bear the brunt of these attempts, but they are by no means the only ones affected.

Political Radicalization

The homegrown terrorists in this study also evince a considerable amount of political radicalization. While there is no single political ideology that all jihadists embrace, the contemporary jihadist political narrative can be broadly outlined: Western powers have conspired against Islam to subjugate it, both physically and morally. At the same time, Muslims worldwide have lost their faith, and lack the strength that they possessed during Muhammad's time. The only proper response to the present situation is military action.

FINDINGS

This study's empirical examination of the radicalization of homegrown terrorists yields several insights into the radicalization process.

The Role of Religious Ideology

Five of the six factors that this study identifies (all of them except for political radicalization) can provide insight into how the individuals in this study understand their faiths. These five factors were found present in the sample frequently enough that it is clearly premature to rule out homegrown terrorists' religious understanding as an important factor in radicalization. Indeed, it seems that the individuals' theological understanding was a relatively strong factor in their radicalization. Underscoring this finding, around 20% of the homegrown terrorists examined had a *spiritual mentor*, a more experienced Muslim who gave specific instruction and direction during the radicalization process. 25.6% of the homegrown terrorists studied had a spiritual sanctioner in their plot (an individual with perceived religious authority who provided specific theological approval for the violent activity), while just under 40% of the sample explicitly claimed a religious motivation for their illegal actions.

Demographics

This study's findings reinforce those of previous studies that suggest there is no general "terrorist profile." However, the study also found that the demographics of homegrown terrorists in the U.S. and U.K. differed in some important respects from those found in previous studies of the global terrorist movement (for example, Marc Sageman's research on the matter). Terrorists in this study were less frequently married, of a less privileged socioeconomic upbringing, and had both a weaker educational background and weaker professional prospects than previous studies suggest is typical of the global terrorist movement as a whole.

International Connections

This study's data suggests the relative importance of overseas training for jihadist terrorists. Over 40% of the sample traveled abroad for training or to fight jihad. Also, around 12% of the terrorists studied (and 22.2% of those for whom information is available) traveled overseas to receive religious instruction independent of terrorist training.

Prisons

The data in this study suggests that the terrorism threat within prisons is smaller than many analysts fear. Out of the 117 individuals studied, in only seven cases was there any kind of connection between time spent in prison and the terrorists' conversion, radicalization, or the plot in which they participated. The low

importance of prisons in this statistical analysis suggests that, when counterterrorism resources are being allocated, prisons should be of relatively low priority. While commonsense measures in federal and state prisons such as screening for extremist literature and measuring and mitigating overall levels of radicalization are justified, prison radicalization should not be seen as a top national security priority at this time.

Muslim Engagement

This study's statistical analysis suggests that the perception of a schism between Islam and the West is an important aspect of the radicalization process, both quantitatively and qualitatively. One important countermeasure is Muslim civic engagement efforts. Such engagement efforts seem most effective at countering radicalism when they come from the Muslim community itself.

INTRODUCTION

The four men hugged each other around 8:30 a.m., appearing almost euphoric. Today's events would be their crowning achievement—yet the final feat of their lives. They split up, each heading toward a different section of London's Underground. Their work was finished by 9:47 a.m., July 7, 2005.

Explosions on the eastbound and westbound Circle Lines, the Piccadilly Line, and a number 30 bus in Tavistock Square killed fifty-two passengers and the four young men. They appeared unlikely terrorists: all four were born and raised in the U.K., and seemed perfectly adjusted to British society. Ringleader Mohammad Siddique Khan had tried to shake off his Pakistani identity as a teenager by presenting himself as a Westernized kid known as “Sid.” He had worked as a teacher's assistant, where he was popular with his young students; his wife was a women's rights advocate and a proponent of religious moderation. Shehzad Tanweer, born into a wealthy family, was an accomplished athlete who drove an expensive Mercedes. “He wore brand-name clothes, worked out regularly, and studied sports science at Leeds Metropolitan University,” one commentator wrote. “Friends described him as infinitely likeable, more apt to talk about sports and cars than anything else.”¹ Nineteen-year-old Germaine Lindsay was a convert to Islam who was described as “a bright child, successful at school and good at sport.”²

How did these young men come to decide to kill their fellow countrymen? This is far from an academic question. Intelligence services and experts see in-

1. Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), p. 3.

2. “Profile: Germaine Lindsey,” *BBC News*, May 11, 2006.

cidents of “homegrown terrorism”³ such as the 7/7 attacks as a growing threat due to the increasing number of Westerners joining militant Islamic movements, and the operatives’ familiarity with the societies they are targeting. In late 2006, for example, then-MI5 director general Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller warned that “[m]ore and more people” in the U.K. were “moving from passive sympathy towards active terrorism through being radicalised or indoctrinated by friends, families, in organised training events here and overseas, by images on television, through chat rooms and websites on the internet.”⁴

In recent years, over two hundred men and women born or raised in the West have participated in, or provided support for Islamic terrorist plots and attacks.

In recent years, over two hundred men and women born or raised in the West have participated in, or provided support for Islamic terrorist plots and attacks. Of course, there are many different kinds of terrorists in Western societies, driven to violence by diverse motivations: one of America’s most notorious homegrown terrorists is Timothy McVeigh, a white man from a Christian background. But transnational Islamic terrorism—due to the size and capabilities of the movement, among other factors—is likely “the most threatening one to western values, interests and societies.”⁵

Several studies have examined the demographics of homegrown Islamic terrorists: their socioeconomic status, education level, professional prospects, and possible mental illnesses. A lesser number of studies have examined the social affiliations of homegrown terrorists. To date, no study has empirically examined the process through which these terrorists are radicalizing,⁶ which constitutes

3. Tomas Precht has provided one definition of homegrown terrorism, describing it as “acts of violence” targeting “Western countries in which the terrorists themselves have been born or raised. The purpose of such terrorism is to advance political, ideological or religious objectives.” Tomas Precht, *Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalisation in Europe* (research report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice, Dec. 2007), p. 15.

4. Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, “The International Terrorist Threat to the UK,” Speech at Queen Mary’s College, London, Nov. 9, 2006.

5. Edwin Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe: Their Characteristics and the Circumstances in Which They Joined the Jihad* (Clingendael, The Netherlands: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2006), § 1.1.

6. The New York City Police Department (NYPD) has released a major study examining the process of radicalization in the West, which is discussed in this paper’s literature review section. See

a substantial gap in the literature. After all, without sound empirical research documenting the radicalization process, counter-radicalization efforts will be far more difficult.⁷ Researchers have reached diametrically opposed views on how people are radicalizing. Some believe that religious ideology is a major factor; others think that homegrown terrorists radicalize for political or social reasons, and that religion provides only a thin veneer of justification. Careful empirical examination can help researchers and practitioners evaluate these two divergent views, among other things.

This study seeks to address the present gap in the literature through an empirical examination of 117 homegrown “jihadist” terrorists from the U.S. and United Kingdom.⁸ It focuses on six specific behavioral manifestations of the radicalization process: the adoption of a legalistic interpretation of Islam, coming to trust only a select and ideologically rigid group of religious authorities, viewing the West and Islam as irreconcilably opposed, manifesting a low tolerance for perceived religious deviance, attempting to impose religious beliefs on others, and the expression of radical political views. As we will explain in greater detail, we believe that these six steps are relevant external manifestations of the radicalization process.

Our research leads to several specific conclusions about homegrown terrorists’ radicalization. First, it appears that homegrown terrorists’ understanding of their religion was a relatively significant factor in their radicalization. Second, consistent with previous studies on terrorist demographics, we find that there is no single “terrorist profile.” However, homegrown terrorists in the U.S. and U.K. differ in some demographic respects from the global jihadist movement, includ-

Mitchell D. Silber & Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York City: NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007). However, the NYPD study’s methodology is based on case studies rather than empirical analysis. Ibid., p. 15. Similarly, Tomas Precht’s study of homegrown terrorism in Europe does not attempt an empirical analysis of the radicalization process. Precht, *Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalisation in Europe*, p. 13.

7. See Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, § 7.1. Bakker’s view that even enhancing the socioeconomic prospects of European Muslim communities could prove counterproductive without a better understanding of the radicalization process is discussed in this paper’s literature review section.

8. There has been much debate about what labels to use when referring to Islamic terrorists. In this paper, we refer to them as “radicals” and “extremists” because their theological views do not represent the majority of Islamic thought, and result in actions that are properly regarded as extreme. We also use the term “jihadist,” which has the advantage of being organic: it is how participants in this violent movement refer to themselves. Brian Michael Jenkins, senior advisor to the president of the RAND Corporation, writes: “Jihadists’ may be the most appropriate term for the adherents of the ideology. These are individuals for whom jihad has become the sole reason for existence.” Brian Michael Jenkins, *Unconquerable Nation: Knowing Our Enemy, Strengthening Ourselves* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), p. 74. Use of the term does not imply endorsement of their understanding of the Islamic theological concept of jihad.

ing a lower rate of marriage, a less privileged socioeconomic upbringing, and a more limited educational background and narrower professional prospects. Third, our research underscores the importance of international connections—such as terrorist training camps in foreign countries—to jihadist activity. Fourth, prisons have not been as important a factor in international terrorism as some analysts fear. While commonsense measures such as screening for extremist literature and measuring and mitigating prison radicalization are justified, the prisons should not be seen as a top priority for addressing the threat of terrorism. Fifth, our research reinforces the importance of Muslim engagement efforts. Attempts to promote civic engagement by the Muslim community are not just beneficial for reasons of integration and social cohesion, but such efforts may also play an important role in addressing the threat of homegrown terrorism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Though there has not been a previous empirical study of the specific steps that homegrown terrorists go through as they radicalize, several previous contributions are worth mentioning. The most notable area of disagreement in these studies has been the role that religious ideology plays in the radicalization process.

Presenting one view of this issue is Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt of the New York City Police Department (NYPD), who released a 2007 report finding that the adoption of a Salafi-jihadist ideology is at the heart of the radicalization process.⁹ Tomas Precht also published a research report in December 2007 focusing on homegrown terrorism in Europe that presented a similar course toward radicalism. Marc Sageman offers a different view in two books he has written on international terrorism that focus on the importance of social networking. And in 2006, Edwin Bakker released a study that built off Sageman's research into social networking.

The NYPD Study

Silber and Bhatt's study, entitled *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, identifies four distinct phases through which the authors believe home-

9. A term derived from the Arabic word for predecessors or early generations, Salafism is an austere Islamic movement that seeks a return to what it sees as the pure Islam practiced by Prophet Muhammad and the first generation of Muslims. Parts of the Salafi movement have been so intertwined with international terrorist networks that Marc Sageman refers to the transnational jihadist movement as the "global Salafi jihad." Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 1. For a competent history of the "global Salafi jihad" and an explanation of its ideology, see *ibid.*, pp. 1-24.

grown terrorists progress on their way to undertaking violence. Their study is based on a comparative case study method in which the NYPD “dispatched detectives and analysts to meet with law enforcement, intelligence officials and academics” at five locations where prominent homegrown terrorist plots occurred.¹⁰ After identifying pathways toward radicalism that members of these disparate plots had in common, the researchers checked their findings against “three post-September 11 U.S. homegrown terrorism cases ... as well as two New York City cases,” along with “the Hamburg cluster of individuals who led the September 11 hijackers.”¹¹

The first phase in the radicalization process that the study identifies is “pre-radicalization,” the period before individuals begin their journey to extremism. This phase is generally marked by apparent normalcy: the majority of individuals in the case studies that Silber and Bhatt examined “had ‘ordinary’ jobs, had lived ‘ordinary’ lives and had little, if any criminal history.”¹²

The study’s second phase is “self-identification,” where individuals begin exploring Salafi Islam “while slowly migrating away from their former identity—an identity that now is re-defined by Salafi philosophy, ideology, and values.”¹³ Frequently a cognitive event—such as the loss of a job, alienation or discrimination, or death in the family—produces an identity crisis that shakes previously held beliefs, and readies individuals to accept a new identity and new beliefs.

The third phase in the study is “indoctrination,” where the individuals’ newly-adopted Salafi beliefs progressively intensify. A person going through this stage “wholly adopts jihadi-Salafi ideology and concludes, without question, that the conditions and circumstances exist where action is required to support and further the Salafist cause. That action is militant jihad.”¹⁴ Silber and Bhatt note the worldview that characterizes this phase:

The key aspect of this stage is the acceptance of a religious-political worldview that justifies, legitimizes, encourages, or supports violence against anything *kufir*, or un-Islamic, including the West, its citizens, its allies, or other Muslims whose opinions are contrary to the extremist agenda.... [R]ather than seeking and striving for the more mainstream goals of getting a good job, earning money, and raising a family, the indoctrinated radical’s goals are non-personal and focused on achieving “the greater good.” The individual’s sole objec-

10. Silber & Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, p. 15.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 6.

13. Ibid., p. 30.

14. Ibid., p. 36.

tive centers around the Salafi aim of creating a pure fundamentalist Muslim community worldwide.¹⁵

The fourth and final phase is called “jihadization,” where individuals “accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and self-designate themselves as holy warriors or mujahideen.” Ultimately, they “will begin operational planning for the jihad or a terrorist attack.”¹⁶ The progression of the four phases is, in the authors’ estimation, similar to a funnel: many people enter the first stage, but few progress through all the stages to actually undertake violent action.

Tomas Precht

In his December 2007 study *Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalisation in Europe*, Tomas Precht plots a similar course of radicalization. He divides the radicalization process into four stages that are almost identical to those of Silber and Bhatt: pre-radicalization, conversion and identification, conviction and indoctrination, and action. Precht notes that he builds off of the NYPD’s analysis.¹⁷

Precht notes that there “is no single cause or catalyst for radicalisation,” as the road to extremism is influenced by a variety of “motivational factors.”¹⁸ However, he focuses on three broad sets of causes: background factors, trigger factors, and opportunity factors. Background factors are those aspects of individuals’ history that make them susceptible to the lure of radicalism. These include a Muslim identity crisis where many young Muslims in the West find that they are not understood at school, by their parents, or by local imams; the experience of discrimination, alienation, and perceived injustices; a living environment that may be characterized by other individuals radicalizing, or even the formation of a “parallel societies”; and the relative lack of Muslim debate about Islamic terrorism in Europe. Trigger factors influence individuals’ “transition from pre-radicalisation to

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 43.

17. Precht cites to the NYPD study five times when outlining this radicalization process. Precht, *Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalisation in Europe*, pp. 32-39. There are, however, a few minor differences between Precht’s model and the NYPD’s. For example, in Precht’s “conversion and identification” phase, he does not focus on the individual’s identification with Salafi Islam, but rather with the far broader “cause of extremism.” Ibid., p. 34.

According to Senate testimony delivered by FBI assistant director John Miller, the Bureau’s understanding of the radicalization process is similar to that outlined in the NYPD study. See John Miller, “Violent Islamist Extremism: Government Efforts to Defeat It,” Testimony Before the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, May 10, 2007, p. 3 (“The FBI recognizes four steps in the radicalization process: pre-radicalization, identification, indoctrination, and action.”).

18. Precht, *Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalisation in Europe*, p. 11.

actual radicalisation.”¹⁹ Precht cites three major groups of trigger factors: Western foreign policy and provocative events, the presence of a charismatic leader or spiritual advisor, and the glorification of jihad. Finally, opportunity factors are those “venues or locations” that “provide a setting for radicalization by offering an opportunity to meet likeminded people, by giving inspiration or serving as a recruiting ground.”²⁰ These settings include the Internet, prisons, mosques, schools and universities, and sports activities.

During the radicalization process, Precht claims that religion “plays an important role, but for some it probably rather serves as a vehicle for fulfilling other goals.”²¹ He suggests four counter-radicalization measures: societal measures (promoting integration and combating hostility toward Muslims), counter-ideology strategies, public diplomacy, and policing and community intelligence efforts.

Both the NYPD study and Precht’s study offer a concise model for tracing a person’s journey into radicalism. However, the case study method that Silber and Bhatt employ has left them open to criticism over how representative their case studies are. One clear implication of their model is the importance of Salafi-jihadi ideology in drawing Westerners toward the embrace of terrorism. But if another researcher contends that this ideology is relatively *unimportant*, how can one decide between the two? Marc Sageman’s work forces one to confront this question.

Marc Sageman

A forensic psychiatrist and former CIA case officer, Marc Sageman has written two books examining international terrorism: the 2004 volume *Understanding Terror Networks*, and his 2008 follow-up *Leaderless Jihad*. Sageman emphasizes the necessity of bringing the scientific method to the study of terrorism. Criticizing other authors for overreliance on case studies, Sageman writes that “basing conclusions on a single event or individual often leads them astray.”²² In contrast, Sageman writes, “[a] scientific approach should encompass all the available data.”²³ There were 172 individuals in Sageman’s initial sample, but by the time of *Leaderless Jihad*, he had studied over 500 terrorists.

Sageman’s demographic analysis of international terrorists challenges some of the popular “conventional wisdom” about terrorism. For example, he found

19. Ibid., p. 50.

20. Ibid., p. 56.

21. Ibid., p. 71.

22. Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 13.

23. Ibid., p. 14.

that terrorists in the “global Salafi jihad” were largely middle class rather than poor; generally had modern educations and developed “their religious beliefs through self-instruction” rather than at madrassas; were in most instances married (a remarkable 75% of the time); and generally were neither hardened criminals nor suffering from psychiatric pathologies.²⁴

The importance of social networking to the international jihadist movement is also a focus of Sageman’s work. He concludes that “social bonds play a more important role in the emergence of the global Salafi jihad than ideology.”²⁵ Cliques, Sageman writes, “are the social mechanism that puts pressure on prospective participants to join, defines a certain social reality for the ever more intimate friends, and facilitates the development of a shared collective social identity and strong emotional feelings for the in-group.”²⁶

Sageman’s emphasis on social networks leads him to a different conclusion than the NYPD study and Tomas Precht about the role of religion in the radicalization process.

In *Leaderless Jihad*, Sageman writes:

I have traveled to several trials of terrorists in Western Europe, spoken to people who knew them as children and as young men, and read the open-source literature about them, including shreds of conversations attributed to them when they surfaced in the press or in trials. I have come to the conclusion that the terrorists in Western Europe and North America were not intellectuals or ideologues, much less religious scholars. It is not about how they think, but how they feel.²⁷

Thus, Sageman believes that “over-intellectualizing” the fight against jihadists’ religious ideology would be a mistake. “It is indeed a contest for the hearts and minds of potential terrorists,” he writes, “not an intellectual debate about the legitimacy of an extreme interpretation of a religious message.”²⁸ He believes less

24. Ibid., pp. 47-70.

25. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 178.

26. Ibid., p. 154.

27. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, pp. 156-57.

28. Ibid., p. 157. In line with Sageman’s analysis is a classified “operational briefing note” circulated by MI5 in June 2008. Research for the document, which was conducted by MI5’s behavioral science unit, was “based on in-depth case studies on ‘several hundred individuals known to be involved in, or closely associated with, violent extremist activity’ ranging from fundraising to planning suicide bombings in Britain.” Alan Travis, “MI5 Report Challenges Views on Terrorism in Britain,” *Guardian* (London), Aug. 20, 2008. Though the document is not publicly available, the *Guardian* has seen a copy and reported on its findings:

Far from being religious zealots, a large number of those involved in terrorism

focus should be placed on religion and ideology.

One striking aspect of Sageman's conclusion about the role of religion is its decidedly non-empirical nature. In contrast to his plea for an approach that examines "all the available data" (and in contrast also to his painstaking demographic research), Sageman presents no concrete data on this point, and offers no reason to believe that the trials he studied are representative. The fact that this conclusion is not empirically based does not, of course, make it wrong. But it raises the question whether there is a more objective way to test whether religious ideology is, in fact, important to the radicalization process.

Edwin Bakker

Edwin Bakker produced a study for the Netherlands Institute of International Relations in December 2006 that examines the role of social networking among jihadist terrorists in Europe. Largely building from Sageman's work, Bakker explores the characteristics of networks that have been involved in jihadist terrorism in Europe, the characteristics of individual terrorists, and the circumstances in which these individuals became involved in jihadist activities. Bakker's study included 242 terrorists: all of them took part in plots in Europe, and while the vast majority were born or raised there,²⁹ this is not true of all of them.

Bakker's study finds that European jihadists look somewhat different demographically than Sageman's global sample. While the terrorists who Sageman examined were largely middle-class, mostly married, and did not have a particular predisposition to criminality, Bakker's group was comprised of "mostly single males that are born and raised in Europe; they are not particularly young; they are often from the lower strata of society; and many of them have a criminal record."³⁰

However, like Sageman, Bakker concludes that there is "no standard jihadi

do not practise their faith regularly. Many lack religious literacy and could actually be regarded as religious novices. Very few have been brought up in strongly religious households, and there is a higher than average proportion of converts. Some are involved in drug-taking, drinking alcohol and visiting prostitutes. MI5 says there is evidence that a well-established religious identity actually protects against violent radicalisation.

Ibid. Though the MI5 study's findings are interesting, they are basically impossible to take into account for the purposes of this study because only the conclusions—and not the underlying data—have been made available.

29. "[M]ore than 40 percent of them were born in Europe and an additional 55 percent have been raised in European countries or are long-term residents." Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, § 7.

30. Ibid.

terrorist.”³¹ This, in his view, means that terrorist profiling holds little promise for law enforcement. Bakker even expresses skepticism about the prospects of socioeconomic policies aimed at increasing education and employment opportunities for immigrant and Muslim communities in Europe, because “socioeconomic policies may seem to make sense, but might just as well make no difference at all.”³² Worse still, such policies could have a negative effect “by stereotyping immigrant and Muslim communities as possible jihadi terrorists,” thus contributing “to polarization between Muslims and non-Muslims.”

With respect to religion, Bakker’s evidence shows “that all networks have experienced an increased devotion of its members before and during their creation. Members have demonstrated a tendency to become more religious in comparison to their (earlier) childhood.”³³

Thus, there are areas where scholars writing about homegrown terrorism have found common ground. There are also areas of great disagreement, particularly with respect to the question of what role religious ideology plays in the radicalization process. Moreover, if this ideology is a significant factor in radicalization, as Silber and Bhatt contend, how do the steps in their study manifest externally? What clues might there be that an individual is self-identifying with, or being indoctrinated into, jihadist ideology? In our view, an examination of the literature shows the need for empirical study of specific steps that homegrown terrorists go through as they radicalize.

31. *Ibid.*, § 7.1.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, § 4.3.

METHODOLOGY

This study's data is comprised of every known Islamic homegrown terrorist in the U.S. and U.K. who perpetrated an attack, attempted to do so, or illegally supported Islamic terrorism through the end of October 2008. A total of 117 individuals were included in the study.

Individuals Studied

The individuals whom we consider “homegrown” either spent a significant portion of their formative years in the West, or else their radicalization bears a significant connection to the West. In this way, we sought to ensure that the individuals included in this study had a commonality of experience. Inclusion of individuals whose upbringing and radicalization was largely unrelated to the West would distract from our research agenda of attaining a better understanding of the radicalization process as it occurs in Western societies. For example, Abdulrahman Farhane was a Brooklyn bookstore owner who in November 2006 pleaded guilty to conspiring to launder money in a terrorist financing case. He is not included in this study because he did not move to the U.S. until 1987, when he was about 32 years old.³⁴ Farhane did not spend his formative years in America, and there is no record of him radicalizing there, as opposed to developing extremist views while growing up in Morocco. In contrast, Maher “Mike” Hawash, a member of the Portland Seven plot, was born and raised in the Middle East, but is included in the study because his radicalization clearly began in the U.S. Hawash's radicalization process began in 2000, around the age of 35, after his father passed away. It was only then that Hawash became more overtly religious, and was ultimately

34. Edith Honan, “NY Man Sentenced to 13 Years in Terrorism Case,” *Reuters*, Apr. 16, 2007.

drawn into the Portland Seven plot by Habis al-Saoub, a charismatic veteran of the Afghan-Soviet war.³⁵

This study employs the definition of terrorism provided by the Council of the European Union, which categorizes it as violent, intentional acts intended to seriously intimidate a population, compel a government or international organization to act in a certain way, or seriously destabilize or destroy “the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization.”³⁶ Individuals are included in this study if, in addition to being “homegrown,” they participated in, or provided illegal support for, jihadist terrorist plots. Thus, this study encompasses not just operatives, but also recruiters and those who illegally provided logistical or financial support.

The best proof that an individual has illegally participated in such plots is generally a court verdict or guilty plea, or some other clear indication that they have done so. For example, although the four British 7/7 bombers were never convicted by a court of law (since they died in those attacks), their actions and intentions were made clear in subsequent investigations. Likewise, though he has not returned to the U.S. to face trial, Adam Gadahn’s role as an al-Qaeda propagandist is unmistakable in the videos in which he appears on the terrorist group’s behalf. Though we prefer to include individuals who have either been found guilty in a court of law or for whom there is some other clear indication of complicity, we have also included in this study a few clusters of alleged plotters who are still awaiting a verdict. We have done this for major plots where a significant amount of information has been made public. Individuals who were thus included despite the lack of a verdict include the seven transatlantic air plotters currently facing a retrial.³⁷

The U.S. government is known to prosecute some individuals on lesser charges when they are suspected of terrorist activity, a practice sometimes referred to as “pretextual prosecutions.”³⁸ This study does not include these cases because

35. See Deborah Howlett, “The Two Sides of One Law, the Two Lives of One Man,” *New Jersey Star-Ledger*, July 24, 2005.

36. Council of the European Union Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism, June 13, 2002, art. 1.1.

37. This study does not include the “Liberty City Seven plotters,” whose prosecution has resulted in two mistrials to date. Among other reasons, their Moorish Science Temple-influenced theology is so deviant from an Islamic perspective that the comparison between them and more traditional jihadist terrorists would be strained.

38. See Daniel C. Richman & William J. Stuntz, “Al Capone’s Revenge: An Essay on the Political Economy of Pretextual Prosecution,” *Columbia Law Review* (2005). For a defense of this practice, see Attorney General John Ashcroft, “Prepared Remarks for the US Mayors Conference,” Oct. 25, 2001 (comparing terrorism prosecutions to mob prosecutions, for which Robert F. Kennedy’s Justice Department was “aggressive, using obscure statutes to arrest and detain suspected mobsters”); see also Daveed Gartenstein-Ross & Kyle Dabruzzi, *The Convergence of Crime and Terror*:

the fact that terrorism charges were not actually brought makes it difficult for researchers to determine if there was a genuine terrorism nexus.

Behavioral Changes

This study primarily focuses on specific behavioral changes that homegrown terrorists went through as they radicalized. It examines six manifestations of the radicalization process: the adoption of a legalistic interpretation of Islam, coming to trust only a select and ideologically rigid group of religious authorities, viewing the West and Islam as irreconcilably opposed, manifesting a low tolerance for perceived religious deviance, attempting to impose religious beliefs on others, and the expression of radical political views. To examine whether an individual displayed these external manifestations, we examined their background, overt acts, and statements that the terrorists made.

Generally, we can obtain the best possible understanding of these individuals through their own words. Daniel Joseph Maldonado kept a blog prior to his arrest, John Walker Lindh frequently posted on online newsgroups after his conversion, and Adam Gadahn has released a number of communiqués. In the Fort Dix terrorism case, covert recordings taken by two separate informants provide a window into the accused in their own words. Individuals' actions and statements as they are radicalizing have greater probative value than interviews or confessions given after the fact. As Sageman notes, there is a "tendency to distort the past to make it consistent with one's present self-concept."³⁹

But many of the individuals in this study were more secretive than others—and even those who have been relatively open about their involvement in jihadist terrorism seldom explain all aspects of their radicalization. Thus, our research also relies on two other bodies of information. First, court cases often include exhibits and testimony that provide insight into the process of radicalization. Second, we draw on credible and reliable open-source information that would be accepted in the professional and academic worlds.

For all of the homegrown terrorists in this study, each of the six behavioral steps were categorized as present or not present, or else we determined that there was not enough information to make a judgment. We required affirmative proof before determining that an individual displayed a specific behavioral manifestation. Sometimes background factors made it likely that one of these manifestations was present: for example, an individual might have attended a mosque in which a legalistic interpretation of Islam was prevalent. Tempting as

Law Enforcement Opportunities and Perils (Manhattan Institute Policing Terrorism Report No. 1, June 2007).

39. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 65.

it might have been to make an inferential leap in such cases, we refused to do so unless there was independent evidence that they had gone through that step.

Because we imposed a reasonably high evidentiary standard, and because very particular actions were required to find that some of the steps we studied had affirmatively occurred, in many cases we assessed that there was not enough information to determine whether or not an individual went through a behavioral step. This was acceptable to us: we would rather be certain that our data accurately reflected the individuals we studied than force conclusions unwarranted by the available evidence.

Demographic Information

In addition to the six behavioral manifestations, we compiled demographic information on the homegrown terrorists studied, including their religious background, whether they were married, education level, occupation level, socioeconomic background, and whether they spent time in prison. Additionally, we examined peripheral information related to their radicalization and activities, including whether their radicalization involved a spiritual mentor, whether the plot included a spiritual sanctioner, and whether the individuals traveled abroad for religious instruction, militant training, or to take part in combat.

CASE STUDY:

ADAM GADAHN

Adam Gadahn's transformation from a countercultural upbringing in rural Southern California to al-Qaeda spokesman is exceedingly well-documented. Though many readers will doubtless be familiar with Gadahn, we include him as a case study before examining the results of our empirical research for two reasons. First, Gadahn's intriguing journey helps to illustrate the steps covered in this study. Second, his story also shows how these steps are related to the broader process of radicalization.

Gadahn grew up on a Southern California farm. His parents, products of the 1960s counterculture, decided to eschew America's consumerist lifestyle in favor of austere isolation and self-sufficiency. A *New Yorker* profile of Gadahn written by Raffi Khatchadourian explains that his family "had no running water in their home and produced their own electricity, from solar panels. For years, they did not own a telephone."⁴⁰ Nor did they have a mailing address.

As a teenager, Gadahn developed an obsession with death metal, a rather extreme subgenre of heavy metal. In a testimony that he posted on the Internet about his conversion to Islam, Gadahn provided a scathing account of this period in his life. "My entire life was focused on expanding my music collection," he wrote. "I eschewed personal cleanliness and let my room reach an unbelievable state of disarray. My relationship with my parents became strained."⁴¹ His religious conversion occurred after he moved in with his grandparents in Santa Ana in 1995, at the age of 16. Gadahn explored various religions on the Internet at

40. Raffi Khatchadourian, "Azzam the American," *New Yorker*, Jan. 22, 2007. Khatchadourian's article on Gadahn is, by far, the most well-researched and best-written account about him.

41. Adam Yahye Gadahn, "Becoming Muslim," posted on the University of Southern California Muslim Students Association web site.

his grandparents' home. Intrigued by discussions about Islam, he began visiting a mosque in the fall of 1995, and ultimately converted to Islam on November 17 in a small ceremony at the Islamic Society of Orange County.

Gadahh spent increasing amounts of time at the mosque, performing his five daily prayers there. He soon fell in with a small group of men who held evening discussion groups in the mosque. These men "wore turbans, long robes and long beards, and they spent a lot of time criticizing other members of the mosque."⁴² They had a profoundly legalistic interpretation of Islam, which was reflected in their discussions. Zena Zeitoun, a convert to Islam, told the *New Yorker* that "[e]verything was haram," or prohibited by Islamic law, "to them in the United States." She said, "If they saw a girl walking down the street in a short skirt, that's haram. If they saw you with a beer bottle in your hand, that's haram. If they saw a man and a woman holding each other, that's haram."⁴³ Gadahn began to adopt this legalistic outlook early on, as he grew out his beard and started wearing Saudi-style robes.

Gadahh's legalistic understanding of Islam intensified when he moved into a small apartment a block from the mosque with about a half-dozen other Muslims. During this period, Gadahn became close to Hisham Diab and Khalil Deek—two discussion group members with extremist views



Adam Yahye Gadahn. Image from As-Sahab.

and connections to international militancy who would serve as spiritual mentors to Gadahn. To Saraah Olson, Diab's ex-wife, Gadahn's blind obedience stood out. "He took everything they said as the Holy Grail," she recalled.⁴⁴ After Diab and Deek told Gadahn to stop wearing jeans, he complied. Olson provided another example: "At first, [Gadahh] would come into the house, and if I would be making tea he would say, 'Thank you, sister,' very loudly into the kitchen. But he never, ever said anything again to me after Hisham told him, 'You never thank them. That's their duty.'"⁴⁵ Gadahn also gave up his music collection, in accordance with his increasingly strict interpretation of Islam.

42. Amy Argetsinger, "Muslim Teen Made Conversion to Fury," *Washington Post*, Dec. 2, 2004.

43. Khatchadourian, "Azzam the American."

44. Quoted in Peggy Lowe, "Radical Conversion, Part 3," *Orange County Register*, Sept. 26, 2006.

45. Quoted in Khatchadourian, "Azzam the American."

Gadahh also began to adopt radical political views during this period. The legalistic interpretation of Islam that Gadahn was coming to accept almost blended naturally into his political radicalization, as his companions lectured to him just as naturally about global politics as they would about the need to stop wearing jeans. Olson and her son Ryan described a cult-like atmosphere in which Gadahn was not even allowed to speak with his own family, and was told that “if you’re a good believer, you’ll kill them.”⁴⁶ Although Gadahn had some Jewish blood, he reportedly joined “heartily” in discussions focusing on the evils of the West and Israel. Ryan Olson recalled that the culprit “always came down to being described as ‘Jews.’ ‘Jews who are running America. Jews who are running Israel.’ Jews this and Jews that.”⁴⁷

Similarly, Gadahn’s increasingly legalistic interpretation of Islam blended naturally into his low tolerance for other Muslims whom he thought had a deviant interpretation of the faith. Compared to his rigid standards, many of his coreligionists fell short—and Gadahn took this as a personal affront. A particular subject of his companions’ vitriol was Haitham “Danny” Bundakji, then the president of the mosque. “They criticized him for wearing Western clothes,” the *Washington Post* reported, “for not wearing a beard, for trying to reach out to local Jewish communities.”⁴⁸ The men in Gadahn’s group circulated fliers derisively referring to Bundakji as “Danny the Jew.” Gadahn, following the other discussion group members’ cue, grew increasingly hostile toward Bundakji. His simmering hostility eventually reached a boil in May 1997, when Bundakji mildly reprimanded Gadahn for showing insufficient respect for the mosque’s imam. In response, Gadahn “punched Bundakji in the face, just above the eye.”⁴⁹ This wild overreaction shows just how personally Gadahn took what he saw as Bundakji’s deviation from authentic Islamic principles.

As he radicalized, Gadahn came to see Islam and the West as irreconcilably opposed. He isolated himself from non-Muslim family members, and tried to block out the Western world. Gadahn’s small apartment near the mosque was symbolic of this change. Described as a “dungeon” by Zena Zeitoun, the apartment’s only decorations “were Islamic sayings of the Prophet” on the walls, “and a timetable for salat.”⁵⁰ Zeitoun commented that Gadahn and his housemates “walked to the mosque” for the five daily prayers, and would return home afterward. “They did little else,” the *New Yorker* notes.⁵¹ Gadahn later expressed the idea of a fundamental schism between Islam and the West in his first video

46. Quoted in Lowe, “Radical Conversion, Part 3.”

47. Quoted in *ibid.*

48. Argetsinger, “Muslim Teen Made Conversion to Fury.”

49. Khatchadourian, “Azzam the American.”

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

for al-Qaeda, in which he stated that “the allegiance and loyalty of a Muslim is to Allah, his Messenger, his religion and his fellow believers before anyone and anything else.” Thus, Gadahn said, “if there is a conflict between his religion and his nation and family, then he must choose the religion every time. In fact, to side with the unbelievers against Islam and Muslims is one of the acts that nullifies one’s Islamic faith.”⁵²

One can see how the behavioral changes that this study examines interacted to push Gadahn in the direction of support for terrorism. As Gadahn adopted a legalistic interpretation of Islam, his more experienced instructors in the faith lectured to him also about the evils of the United States and Western society. He developed a violent disdain for all who propounded a more moderate vision of Islam, such as Bundakji, and came to believe that Islam and modern society were irreconcilably opposed.

But how typical is Gadahn’s journey? We now turn to the results of our empirical study.

52. Video of Gadahn’s speech can be found on the FBI’s web site, at <http://www.fbi.gov/page2/oct04/seekinfo103004.htm> (last visited Dec. 15, 2008). See also Gretchen Peters, “‘American’ Voice on New Terror Video,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Oct. 29, 2004.

CONCRETE MANIFESTATIONS OF RADICALIZATION

This section examines the prevalence of six specific behavioral manifestations of the radicalization process: the adoption of a legalistic interpretation of Islam, coming to trust only a select and ideologically rigid group of religious authorities, viewing the West and Islam as irreconcilably opposed, manifesting a low tolerance for perceived religious deviance, attempting to impose religious beliefs on others, and the expression of radical political views. We explore each of these sets of changes in turn.

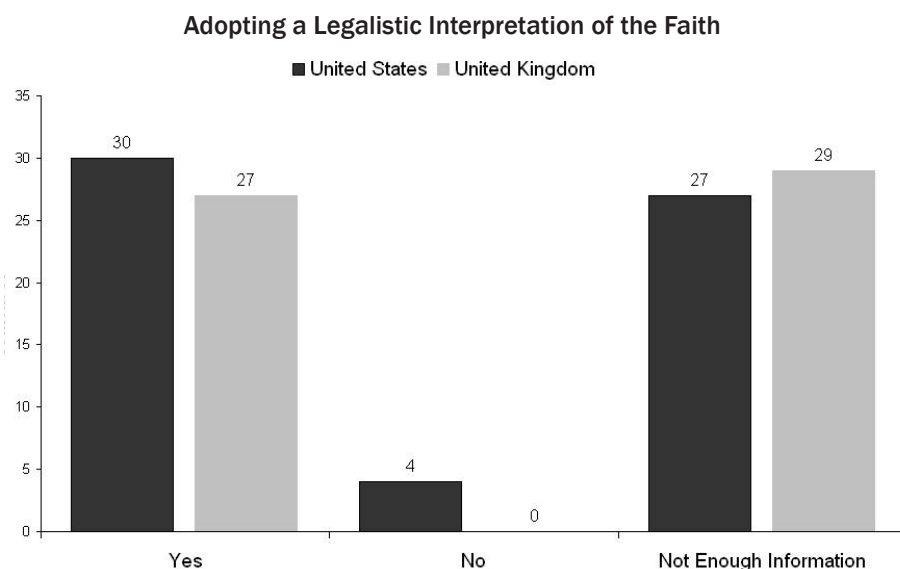
Adopting a Legalistic Interpretation of the Faith

A legalistic interpretation of Islam refers to how believers interpret their rights and obligations in relation to Islam's holy texts. An individual who has a legalistic interpretation of the faith has adopted a rules-based approach to the religion, in which the Qur'an and sunnah provide strict guidelines—not just for the practice of the faith, but also for virtually every aspect of one's daily life. This legalistic interpretation will be manifested externally. For individuals to be regarded as having a legalistic interpretation for the purposes of this study, they had to go far beyond following the basic rules that most or all Muslims agree upon, such as prayer five times a day or refusing to eat pork. We were looking for individuals who followed even seemingly obscure religious rules and practices.

It is worth noting that a person exhibiting a legalistic interpretation of Islam is not necessarily radical, or radicalizing: it may simply be indicative of a conservative practice of the faith. A large number of Muslims who could in no way be considered dangerous have adopted a legalistic understanding of Islam. However, one can see how for Gadahn a legalistic understanding blended into the rest of his radicalization. Some literature that has been distributed in the United States

reinforces this connection. In Muhammad bin Jamil Zino's *Islamic Guidelines for Individual and Social Reform*, for example, the author outlines many legalistic rules for religious life: warning the reader against the sinfulness of music, photographs, and women who laugh in the streets.⁵³ Interspersed with these injunctions are exhortations to violence, such as the statement that "*Jihad* is obligatory on every Muslim in two ways: by spending one's wealth or offering oneself for fighting in the cause of Allah."⁵⁴ As it was for Gadahn, Zino's text naturally blends the rules that one is supposed to follow into the supposed religious obligation to undertake violence to advance the faith.

About half of the homegrown terrorists examined in this study exhibited this aspect of the radicalization process: of the 117 individuals surveyed, 57 (48.7%) had adopted a legalistic interpretation. The rates of adopting a legalistic interpretation are similar in the U.S. and U.K. We could only determine that individuals had not embraced a legalistic interpretation in four cases.



Similar to Zino's approach, Kamel Derwish—who served as a spiritual mentor to the Lackawanna Six, and persuaded them to attend an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan—first introduced the Lackawanna Six to increasingly legalistic principles before pushing the idea that their religion required violent action. He created "an uncompromising religious atmosphere" that highlighted all of his followers' religious inadequacies.⁵⁵ Feeling ashamed for being "too American," members of

53. Muhammad bin Jamil Zino, *Islamic Guidelines for Individual and Social Reform* (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers & Distributors, 1996), pp. 127, 144-46, 154-58.

54. Ibid., p. 130.

55. Dina Temple-Raston, *The Jihad Next Door: The Lackawanna Six and Rough Justice in the Age of Terror* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), p. 62.

the Lackawanna Six soon grew “harshly critical of their wives’ American habits.”⁵⁶ After introducing the men to legalistic standards in which they constantly fell short, Derwish brought in a “closer”—a young imam named Juma al-Dosari who built off their feelings of religious failure, arguing that undertaking jihad was their only chance at salvation:

He told the assembled that Derwish had told him all about them, and he had bad news. He didn’t think making a pilgrimage to Mecca would be enough to save their souls. They must also train for jihad. He was like a doctor providing a second opinion, but in this case his diagnosis was about their relationship with God.... Here was yet another learned Muslim telling them what they already felt to be true: if they wanted to be good Muslims they needed to do more. They needed to be men of action.⁵⁷

Another example of a group that came to embrace a legalistic interpretation of Islam is the Duka brothers—Shain, Eljvir, and Dritan—who were arrested with three others in May 2007 for plotting to attack the military base in Fort Dix, New Jersey. The three Albanian brothers, who were originally from Macedonia, spent some of their formative years attending high school in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.⁵⁸ Though the Duka brothers were “not strictly observant” in their religious upbringing, they began to adopt a stricter and more legalistic interpretation of Islam two or three years before their plot began, “in part due to the influence of an uncle who has since been deported.”⁵⁹ A cousin, Ramiz Duka, told reporters that the brothers’ relations with the extended family became strained as they adopted a more legalistic understanding. “They were praying different,” he said, “they were talking different, they were telling people what to believe.”⁶⁰ Ramiz Duka in fact refused to attend Eljvir Duka’s wedding when he learned that “[t]he playing of music—a centuries-old tradition at Albanian weddings—had been banned.”⁶¹

Conversations that an informant recorded for the FBI further reveal the legalistic interpretation that the Duka brothers had adopted. They spend an extended conversation dwelling on their beards:

Dritan Duka: That’s not really the way it [the beard] should be kept, it should be kept trimmed.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., p. 88.

58. Kareem Fahim & Andrea Elliot, “Religion Guided 3 Held in Fort Dix Plot,” *New York Times*, May 10, 2007.

59. Amanda Ripley, “The Fort Dix Conspiracy,” *Time*, Dec. 6, 2007.

60. Quoted in Ethan Wilensky-Lanford & David Rohde, “In Fort Dix Plot, Relatives Saw Attitude Change,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2007.

61. Ibid.

Unidentified male: It's supposed to be neat, not, right trimmed but not over your lip.

Dritan Duka: Not shaved off completely.⁶²

Shain Duka then tells a story about how a man in a Popeyes Chicken restaurant, after staring at them for a short time, asks why young men like them have such large beards. Shain recounts that "then we explained to him listen all the prophets wore beards and were Muslim so we wear the beards because all prophets wore beards."⁶³ The Duka brothers' behavioral changes—changing the way they prayed, banning music at Eljvir's wedding, dwelling on the minutiae of their beards—reflect their increasingly legalistic interpretation of Islam.

"They were praying different, they were talking different, they were telling people what to believe."

Another homegrown terrorist whose legalistic interpretation was reflected in his external appearance is American Daniel Joseph Maldonado, who pleaded guilty in April 2007 to undergoing military training with al-Qaeda elements in Somalia.⁶⁴ An acquaintance recalls that upon his conversion, Maldonado "dressed in T-shirts and jeans and didn't hide any of his tattoos," and even had dreadlocks.⁶⁵ However, over the course of his radicalization, Maldonado adopted an increasingly legalistic interpretation of his faith. The *Boston Herald* reports that he "began wearing traditional Arab clothing, including the galabeyah, an ankle-length gown with long sleeves that covered the tattoos on his arms." He tried to grow a beard; when he failed, "he blamed his Puerto Rican heritage and began chastising fellow Muslims who could grow a full beard and chose not to."⁶⁶

Maldonado's wife also began dressing in a full burka, with only her eyes showing. Their daughter—then a toddler—"wore the hijab headcovering, though under most interpretations of Muslim law this practice is required only after a girl reaches puberty."⁶⁷ Maldonado eventually moved his family out of the U.S., first to Egypt and then Somalia. After his arrest, he submitted handwritten notes to

62. Government Exhibit 851-D, *United States v. Shnewer*, CR 07-45 (D. N.J., 2008), p. 2.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

64. U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas, "U.S. Citizen Pleads Guilty to Training to Fight Jihad," Apr. 19, 2007.

65. Quoted in Charles A. Radin, "From N.H. to Somalia: Recalling a Suspect's Zeal," *Boston Herald*, Feb. 17, 2007.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

the court explaining his actions. The notes spoke of his increasing devotion to Islam's dictates, and his difficulties reconciling them with life in the West: "I wished to live as a Muslim without a problem with the way I or my family practice our religion (beard, veil, going to mosk [sic] much, wearing Islamic garb and so on)."⁶⁸

Portland Seven plotter Maher "Mike" Hawash became notably more religious after his father's death. The legalistic understanding of Islam that came with his newfound religiosity saw Hawash change his appearance, refuse old nicknames, and begin complying with Islamic legal rules that he had previously ignored. Soon after he became more religious, Hawash "paid off the mortgage on his house, because Islam forbids paying interest on loans."⁶⁹ As to Hawash's changing appearance, he "grew a beard and covered his head with a prayer cap. He asked those who had known him for years as Mike to, please, call him Maher."⁷⁰ The criminal complaint against Hawash notes that one of his neighbors told the FBI that Hawash had "changed his attire from 'western' clothing to 'eastern' clothing, grew a beard, and distanced himself from his neighbors."⁷¹

In addition to changing their appearance, individuals' adoption of a legalistic interpretation may be reflected in their daily activities, behaviors, and habits. When Somali-born 7/21 bomber Ramzi Mohammed first arrived in London in 1998, he "drank, went clubbing and chased girls without ever thinking much about his religion."⁷² He became more interested in Islam around 2003; the following year he was regularly attending London's radical Finsbury Park Mosque, and listening to the sermons of infamous preacher Abu Hamza al-Masri. The effect of Ramzi's legalistic understanding could be seen in his daily life. He quit his job at Waterloo's Reef bar, "because as a strict Muslim he did not want to be near alcohol."⁷³ He then became the assistant manager of an American Bagel Factory branch, but "had to give up that job as well, because it involved working with bacon."⁷⁴

There are numerous instances of homegrown terrorists dramatically altering their tastes as they adopted a legalistic interpretation. Similar to Adam Gadahn, John Walker Lindh had been captivated by music prior to his conversion, particularly hip hop. He even posed as a black rapper online, declaring himself "Hip Hop's Christ" in one chat room.⁷⁵ After he converted, he took the strictures of his new faith very seriously. In July 1996, he asked in the alt.religion.islam discussion

68. Defendant's handwritten notes, *United States v. Maldonado*, CR H-07-125M (S.D. Tex., Feb. 21, 2007), p. 1.

69. Howlett, "The Two Sides of One Law, the Two Lives of One Man."

70. Ibid.

71. Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Hawash*, 03-M-481 (D. Ore., 2003), ¶ 149.

72. "Profile: Ramzi Mohammed," *BBC News*, July 9, 2007.

73. Sandra Laville, "Four Who Turned on Home That Gave Them Refuge," *Guardian* (London), July 10, 2007.

74. "Profile: Ramzi Mohammed," *BBC News*.

75. Timothy Roche et al., "The Making of John Walker Lindh," *Time*, Oct. 7, 2002.

forum if musical instruments were actually haram.⁷⁶ By July 1997, he had offered to sell his entire music collection.⁷⁷ Lindh's legalistic interests also extended beyond music. At one point he asked: "Is it alright to have clothing with pictures resembling living things? What about books, records, magazines, etc.? Is it alright to watch cartoons on TV or in movies?"⁷⁸ With each response he received, Lindh willingly complied with the instructions he was given.

A large percentage of the homegrown terrorists studied adopted a legalistic interpretation of their faith. A theological understanding that diminishes the role of individuals' moral decision-making can be manipulated, so that believers adopt attitudes or undertake actions that they may have previously considered unthinkable (as Juma al-Dosari apparently did to the Lackawanna Six). A legalistic understanding of Islam can also serve as a gateway to other steps that this study identifies.

Trusting Only Select Religious Authorities

Another significant manifestation of the radicalization process is coming to trust only the interpretations of a select and ideologically rigid set of religious authorities. One example of this can be seen within the Wahhabi movement, where more conservative (and frequently, militant) scholars are often seen as teaching the only "authentic" interpretation of Islam. Conversely, more moderate scholars are perceived as offering a watered-down and inauthentic version of the faith.

Of course, the key influencers for radicalizing individuals may not be scholars at all. The Portland Seven group members were heavily influenced by Habis al-Saoub—who, rather than a scholar, was a Jordanian veteran of the Afghan-Soviet war.⁷⁹ A criminal complaint in the Portland Seven case describes how cell member Jeffrey Leon Battle "stated that he trusted Al Saoub as Al Saoub had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Army and was a former Mujahideen fighter."⁸⁰

But often, even when a homegrown terrorist's key influencer is not a scholar, that influencer will push the individual in the direction of seeing only a small group of Islamic scholars as advancing an authentic vision of Islam. Sometimes these trusted scholars will be contemporary hardline religious leaders, and other times they will be luminaries of the past—such as Ahmad ibn Abdal-Halim ibn Taymiyya, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and

76. John Walker Lindh, "Question: Musical Instruments & Islam," alt.religion.islam, July 29, 1996.

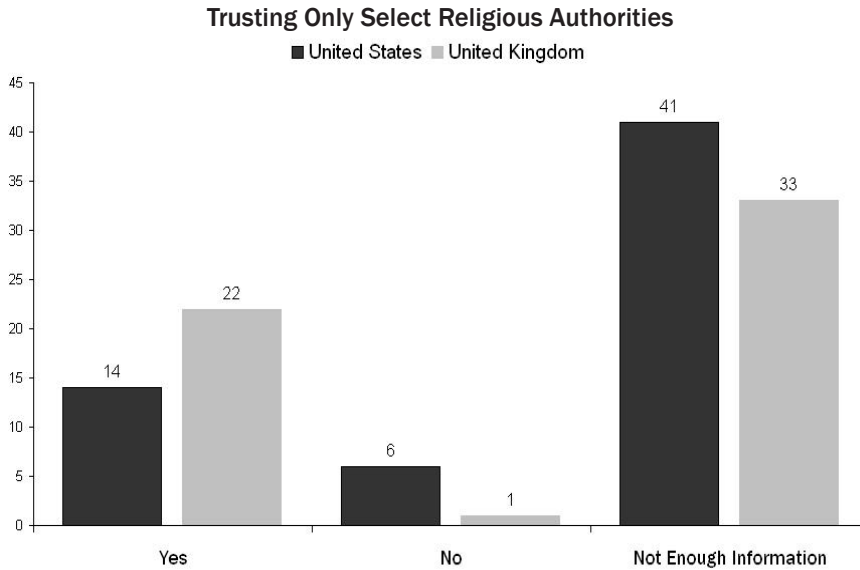
77. John Walker Lindh, "FS: 200+ Hip-Hop, Funk, Jazz, Misc—LPs, CDs, Tapes, Videos," alt.rap, July 21, 1997.

78. John Walker Lindh, "Drawings of Living Things," alt.religion.islam, May 8, 1997.

79. See, e.g., Ben Jacklet, "Hawash Regrets 'Worst Decision,'" *Portland Tribune* (Portland, Ore.), Feb. 10, 2004.

80. Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Hawash*, 03-M-481 (D. Ore., 2003), ¶ 71.

Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi.⁸¹ This study has found evidence of this manifestation of the radicalization process in nearly one-third of the homegrown terrorists surveyed here (30.8%), with only seven instances where it was clearly not present. The rate at which we found this phase is noticeably higher in Britain than in the United States: nearly 40% of British homegrown terrorists exhibited it, while in the U.S. the rate was just 23%. This difference in rates may be due in part to the fact that some networks and groups in Britain, such as al-Muhajiroun, make it easier to give expression to this manifestation.⁸²



7/21 bomb plotter Hussein Osman shows how this manifestation may occur. Osman, who was born in Ethiopia and arrived in the U.K. at age 18, was best friends with the aforementioned Ramzi Mohammed. Both men originally had the same hedonistic Western lifestyle of “parties, clubs and girlfriends.”⁸³ But this changed as Osman became a follower of Abu Hamza al-Masri, who had been the imam of the Finsbury Park Mosque until his early 2003 dismissal. Osman’s devotion to Abu Hamza, and his rejection of more moderate scholars, can be seen through his participation in “a group of up to 50 extremists that attempted to wrest control of the Stockwell mosque in south London in mid-2003” in search of a new home for Abu Hamza.⁸⁴ When the police later searched Osman’s home, they came across a sizeable cache of material showing the type of Islam Osman subscribed to, includ-

81. For an excellent discussion of the writings of these authors, among others, see Mary Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

82. See, e.g., Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005).

83. Laville, “Four Who Turned on Home That Gave Them Refuge.”

84. Paul Tumelty, “Reassessing the July 21 London Bombings,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Sept. 8, 2005.

ing “radical lectures by Abu Hamza, Osama Bin Laden and others, together with home-made compilations of graphic visual images showing the beheading and mutilation of a succession of western hostages and a lengthy video film showing how to construct and detonate a ball-bearing suicide vest.”⁸⁵

The effect of the network of hardline British ideologues can also be seen in Omar Khan Sharif, who along with his friend Asif Muhammad Hanif attempted a suicide bombing at the entrance of a Tel Aviv nightclub in April 2003. Though Hanif succeeded, Sharif fled the scene when his device failed to detonate. Three weeks later, Israeli officials identified a decomposed body found in the sea near Tel Aviv as Sharif.⁸⁶ Born and raised in Derby, England, Sharif “was seen as thoroughly Westernized by those who knew him and his family.”⁸⁷ However, this changed when he attended King’s College in London, and began to frequent meetings organized by Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). An acquaintance from this period, Zaheer Khan, described Sharif as a second-generation Muslim with little knowledge of his faith, for whom HT’s message would resonate:

“The HT idea is that there is a political angle to all this, that there’s actually a way of looking at the Prophet’s life in a political way and that will give the direction. It’s something that we all must do, so it’s not just enough to pray.” Since second-generation Muslim youths rarely knew much about Islam, Khan says, they were easily drawn in. “Stick in a few out-of-context *aiyas* [verses] from the Koran and from the Hadith [traditions of Muhammad] to back themselves up, and people with that vulnerability will buy in ... Omar Sharif was that type,” he says.⁸⁸

Khan said that Sharif “never missed” a HT meeting while at King’s College, and that he ended up “squarely” with the group.⁸⁹ Sharif even met his wife through HT circles. When Omar Bakri Mohammed had a falling out with HT’s international leadership and left to form al-Muhajiroun, Sharif “appears to have followed Bakri into the new, more radical organization.”⁹⁰ As Sharif spent time with group members—seeing the Islam propagated by Omar Bakri Mohammed as the only true understanding of the faith—he was transformed in his appearance, his habits, his outlook.⁹¹

85. *Between R and Ibrahim, Omar, Osman, Mohamed*, Case No. 2007/04146/B5 (England and Wales Court of Appeal, Criminal Division, 2008), ¶ 158(iii).

86. Ohad Gozani et al., “British Suicide Bomber Identified,” *Telegraph* (London), May 20, 2003.

87. Greg Myre, “Body from Sea is Identified as Figure in Attack at Club,” *New York Times*, May 20, 2003.

88. Shiv Malik, “NS Profile—Omar Sharif,” *New Statesman*, Apr. 24, 2006.

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*

91. See Sarah Lyall, “What Drove 2 Britons to Bomb a Club in Tel Aviv?” *New York Times*, May 12, 2003.

During his radicalization process, Daniel Joseph Maldonado looked to the ideologues of the past. As mentioned earlier, Maldonado pleaded guilty in 2007 to undergoing military training with al-Qaeda elements in Somalia. While he was in Egypt, and before he entered Somalia, Maldonado kept a personal blog discussing the scholars who influenced his religious thinking. In May 2006, he wrote:

Seeing that I have always been a lover of the books and writings of Sheikhul Islam Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab(r) I would start with his books. After getting a few I some what [sic] became obsessed and went on a rampage trying to buy anything and everything he or his grandsons wrote. Even if it is a book about him I have went out of my way to save mony [sic] to get it.⁹²

Maldonado then lists the titles of a large number of volumes by and about Abdul Wahhab that he had recently purchased. Following his guilty plea, he released a written account of his experiences in Africa and the U.S. entitled “My Imprisonment in Kenya and America.” Underscoring his devotion to a select and rigid group of scholars, Maldonado ends his account with a quotation from Ibn Taymiyya:

What can my enemies do to me? My Paradise is in my heart; it goes with me wherever I am. If they kill me, it is martyrdom. If they exile me from my land, it is a vacation in the Path of Allah. If they imprison me, it is to allow me a private devotion with Allah.⁹³

In some cases, cells have come under the influence of a spiritual leader. The group may have a relationship with a spiritual leader from the outset, or they may seek out a particular scholar as the group dynamic evolves. In the U.S., the “Virginia Jihad Network” illustrates this. A group of men in the Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. area came to place their theological trust in Ali al-Timimi, a Washington, D.C.-born imam who was heavily influenced by a core group of Salafi scholars during his studies in Saudi Arabia. He had moved to Saudi Arabia with his family at age fifteen, where he learned about Islam from a Jamaican-Canadian convert named Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips.⁹⁴ One Islamic publication posted a hagiography of Timimi that notes that the encounter with Bilal Philips marked a “turning point in Ali’s life.”⁹⁵ He also became close with a number of other promi-

92. “Die Hard Wahhabi,” *Daniel al-Jughafi* (personal blog of Daniel Maldonado), May 19, 2006.

93. Daniel Joseph Maldonado, *My Imprisonment* (Birmingham, UK: Maktabah Booksellers & Publishers, no date), p. 13.

94. For an example of Bilal Philips’s controversial statements, see Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed* (London: Dar al-Tawheed, 1990), in which he states that “un-Islamic government must be sincerely hated and despised for the pleasure of God.”

95. “Ali al-Timimi: A Life of Learning,” *Muslim Link*, as quoted on the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jammah Association of Australia web site (accessed Oct. 1, 2007).

nent scholars associated with the Wahhabi movement, including Abdul Aziz bin Baz.⁹⁶

Around the time of 9/11, Timimi was highly regarded by Muslims in the Washington, D.C. area—“like a rock star,” as one prosecutor put it.⁹⁷ Lecturing at the Dar al-Arqam mosque in Northern Virginia, Timimi met the members of the Virginia Jihad Network. He lectured to this group in a secretive evening meeting five days after the 9/11 attacks. Writing in *Slate*, Rod Smolla summarizes some of the key evidence in the case:

There was testimony that as the meeting began, al-Timimi told the attendees that the gathering was an “*amana*,” meaning that it was ensconced in an obligation of secrecy. To enforce the *amana*, al-Timimi allegedly had the window blinds drawn and the phones disconnected from the walls. Al-Timimi reportedly stated that the Sept. 11 attacks were justified. America was at war with Islam, he proclaimed. His listeners should heed the call of Taliban leader Mullah Omar to defend Muslims in Afghanistan by fighting against the American troops scheduled to invade the country in pursuit of al-Qa-ida. Al-Timimi drew support from *fatwas*, or religious rulings. When one of the men at the meeting asked to review a *fatwa*, al-Timimi allegedly gave it to him to read but advised him to burn the copy after he had read it. Al-Timimi also advised participants on how to travel without drawing attention to themselves.⁹⁸ The following month, Timimi advised some of the conspirators that “fighting Americans in Afghanistan was a valid violent jihad for Muslims,” cited “historical examples from Islamic history justifying attacks on civilians,” and told them “that mujahideen killed while fighting Americans in Afghanistan would die as martyrs.”⁹⁹ After these instructions, members of the Virginia Jihad Network traveled to Pakistan and received paramilitary training from Lashkar-e-Taiba as they prepared for this spiritually sanctioned jihad.

As individuals’ understanding of Islam develops, the role models and scholars they look to as guides will have a significant impact on how they interpret the faith’s relevance to their life and worldview. The select and ideologically rigid set of religious authorities that guided many homegrown terrorists left an indelible imprint on their understanding of their faith.

96. Milton Viorst, “The Education of Ali al-Timimi,” *Atlantic*, June 2006.

97. Debra Erdley, “Scholar ‘Rock Star’ to Young,” *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, Apr. 5, 2005 (quoting Gordon Kromberg).

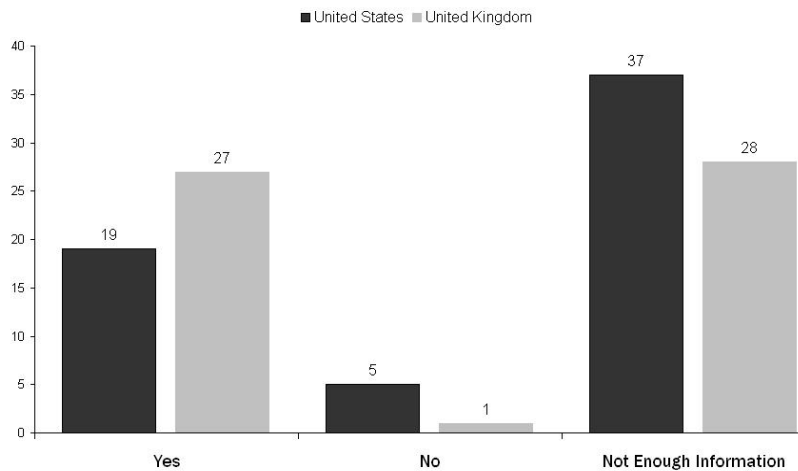
98. Rod Smolla, “Prosecuted, Not Persecuted,” *Slate*, July 27, 2005; see also *United States v. al-Timimi*, Superseding Indictment, Case No. 1:04CR385 (E.D. Va., Feb. 2005).

99. *United States v. al-Timimi*, Superseding Indictment, ¶¶ 18-19.

Perceived Schism between Islam and the West

As homegrown terrorists radicalize, they often come to perceive an inherent schism between Islam and the West—believing that the two are at odds, and perhaps even incapable of coexistence. This perception can be expressed in a number of ways. In some cases, individuals attempt to isolate themselves from Western society physically. In others, the individual will explain the perceived schism between Islam and the West to friends, family, or conspirators. This is an important step, both qualitatively and quantitatively. 39.3% of the sample, and almost 50% of the U.K. group, viewed Islam and the West as existentially incompatible. Only six individuals were found not to have gone through this stage.

Perceived Schism between Islam and the West



Frequently the concept of loyalty is critical to this stage: the idea that the individual has obligations to Islam alone, and cannot have any kind of duty or loyalty to a non-Muslim state. A second, more extreme idea may derive from this principle: that even *participation* in democracy violates Islamic religious principles. One example of this outlook can be seen in British-born Trevor Brooks, who converted to Islam at seventeen and took on the Arabic name Abu Izzadeen. In April 2008, Brooks was convicted of terrorist fundraising and inciting terrorism overseas.¹⁰⁰ He had been a follower of Omar Bakri Mohammed, as well as a leader in his own right: he was a key member of Ahl us-Sunnah Wal al-Jamma'ah, the successor organization to al-Muhajiroun. In a 2006 interview with the BBC, Brooks clearly expressed his perception of a schism between Islam and the West:

Abu Izzadeen: As a Muslim I believe Allah ... created whole universe; he created the UK. It doesn't belong to you, it doesn't belong to the

100. "Six Guilty of Terrorism Support," *BBC News*, Apr. 17, 2008.

Queen, it doesn't belong to the Anglo-Saxons.... Allah has put us on the planet earth to live wherever we want and implement the Sharia rules.

John Humphrys [interviewer]: You want Sharia law in this country? ... If you want to change the way this country functions, why can you not do it in a democratic way?

Abu Izzadeen: Democracy means sovereignty for man; and as a Muslim, we believe sovereignty for the Sharia, therefore I would never take part in democratic principles. Rather I will work to change society in accordance with Islamic methodology.

John Humphrys: You will not observe the democratic process?

Abu Izzadeen: We observe Islamic rules wherever we are.

John Humphrys: The Islamic process but not the democratic process?

Abu Izzadeen: That's right, yes.¹⁰¹

The perception of a schism between Islam and the West could also be seen in Mohammed Junaid Babar, who was raised in Queens, New York, and admitted to assisting al-Qaeda by smuggling money and military supplies to a senior member. He would later become a "supergrass," testifying on behalf of the prosecution in several terrorism cases.¹⁰² However, when Babar was involved in the jihadist movement, he clearly saw Islam and the West as irreconcilable foes. In a November 2001 interview, Babar said, "I did grow up there [in the U.S.]. But that doesn't mean my loyalty is with the Americans. My loyalty will, has always been, is, and forever will be with the Muslims."¹⁰³ Babar testified in the Canadian government's case against Mohammad Momin Khawaja, and the court described Babar's background and beliefs. "He had come to believe in a 'Jihad,'" the court noted, "that meant physical fighting to remove occupiers and existing governments by force throughout the Middle East in order to establish fundamental Islamic governments throughout."¹⁰⁴ Thus, Babar not only believed in the incompatibility of Islam and secular government, but also thought that violence was necessary to replace secular rule with religious rule.

101. "Transcript: BBC Interview with Abu Izzadeen," *Times* (London), Sept. 22, 2006.

102. Jon Gilbert, "The Supergrass I Helped to Create," *Times* (London), May 3, 2007.

103. Quoted in Pete Williams, "Unraveling the Threads of Terrorism; American-Born al-Qaida Suspect in Custody Helps Investigators," *NBC News*, Aug. 11, 2004.

104. Reasons for Judgment, *Her Majesty the Queen v. Khawaja*, No. 04-G30282 (Ontario Supreme Court of Justice, Oct. 29, 2008), ¶ 10.

Sometimes this aspect of the radicalization process is manifested by individuals separating themselves from, or even coming to hate, non-Muslims who had previously been an important part of their lives. One example is mentally ill Nicky Reilly, who tried to detonate a homemade bomb in an Exeter restaurant in May 2008, but only succeeded in injuring himself. Reilly was a practicing Muslim for over five years at the time of his attack; as he accepted radical ideas, his family could see Reilly turning against them. “He started to hate us,” stepfather Phil Din-ner told the *Observer*. “He went on about how he’d die and find Allah and lasting paradise.”¹⁰⁵

“He started to hate us, he went on about how he’d die and find Allah and lasting paradise.”

Germaine Lindsay, one of London’s 7/7 bombers, also pulled back from his family and those who had been close to him. Growing up, he was known as a “quiet, nice, bright” boy who was “keen on athletics.”¹⁰⁶ He “played soccer, ran and did the long jump,” and even “took up boxing.”¹⁰⁷ After his conversion, Lindsay quit playing soccer, stopped listening to music, and rejected some of his old friends. As one acquaintance recalled, he “shut himself away.”¹⁰⁸ Chris John, a childhood friend and high school classmate, echoed that observation. “He became more extreme than anybody else,” John said. “When he converted, he stopped hanging out with his normal friends.”¹⁰⁹ Lindsay’s widow, Samantha Lewthwaite, recalled that “he began disappearing for days at a time, visiting mosques around the country.”¹¹⁰

The belief in an inherent schism between Islam and the West is both quantitatively and qualitatively significant. When individuals believe that their faith places them in an inherently adversarial position toward Western society, this outlook may set the stage for later acts of violence. As we later discuss in our findings, recognition of the significance of this step can help to bolster counter-radicalization efforts.

105. Jamie Doward, “Inside Bizarre World of the Big Friendly Giant,” *Observer* (London), May 25, 2008.

106. David Sapsted & Duncan Gardham, “Lost Years of the ‘Nice Boy’ Who Killed 25,” *Telegraph* (London), July 16, 2005.

107. Lizette Alvarez, “New Muslim at 15, a Bombing Suspect at 19,” *International Herald Tribune*, July 19, 2005.

108. Ibid.

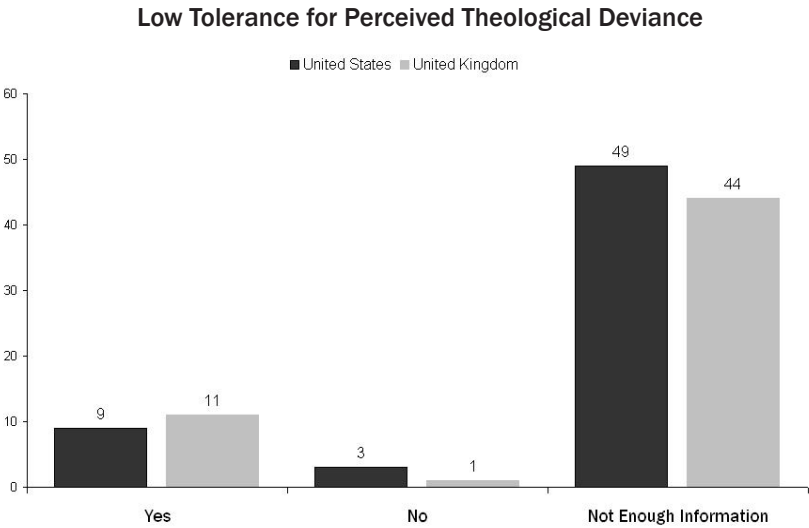
109. Farah Stockman, “For Jamaican Native, Life Path Led From Success to Extremism,” *Boston Herald*, July 22, 2005.

110. “Widow of Bomber ‘Abhors’ Attack,” *BBC News*, Sept. 23, 2005.

Low Tolerance for Perceived Theological Deviance

As homegrown terrorists internalize rigid interpretations of Islam, many come to view any alternate interpretations and practices as not just incorrect theologically, but as a personal affront. In this way, any disagreement about religion is personalized, and may be met with a great amount of vitriol. This intolerance of perceived deviance is usually expressed verbally, through the chastisement of other Muslims—but there have also been instances where this intolerance manifests in violence, as when Adam Gadahn punched Haitham Bundakji in the face.

Because the evidentiary bar for this step is rather high (there had to be an outward manifestation, such as the berating of other Muslims), the percentage of individuals in whom it was identified is comparatively low: just 17.1% definitively went through this step. But since the evidentiary bar was high, we think that the fact it manifested in more than one out of six of the individuals studied is significant. There were only four cases in which we could determine that this step was not present.



This step could be seen in Bilal Talal Samad Abdullah, the passenger in the Jeep that rammed into the Glasgow Airport on June 30, 2007. His religious views were strident even from a young age: the *Telegraph* has claimed (perhaps with the British press’s characteristic exaggeration?) that “reportedly his mother would not dare remove her headscarf in his presence when he was a schoolboy.”¹¹¹ He would also lash out at fellow Muslims who were, in his mind, committing transgressions. Shiraz Maher, a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, recalled that another Muslim who lived in Abdullah’s flat played the guitar, and did not pray five times a day.

111. Andrew Pierce, “Ties that Bind Terror Car Bomb Suspects,” *Telegraph* (London), July 5, 2007.

"Bilal said, 'Look, you'd better start praying and stop playing,'" Maher said. "He was adamant about it and put on this DVD of [Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi beheading a hostage. He said 'If you don't change, this is what we do. We slaughter'."¹¹²

This step could also be seen in Yassin Hassan Omar, a member of the 7/21 terrorist group that plotted to bomb London's mass transit system after the 7/7 attacks. A few months earlier, Omar angrily confronted an imam outside a London mosque who had said that suicide bombings are contrary to Islam. "I want to talk to you," Omar said to Sayed Bukhari. When Bukhari refused to stop, Omar shouted, "Stop misleading the people, Imam."¹¹³ He would not hesitate to chastise someone who did not share his religious views. A local shopkeeper reported that Omar "would complain about me selling alcohol, telling me I was not a good Muslim."¹¹⁴ Another shopkeeper told the press that Omar said that "Turkish people were not proper Muslims."¹¹⁵

Zacarias Moussaoui was sentenced to life in prison for helping al-Qaeda to carry out the 9/11 attacks.¹¹⁶ After he moved from France to London, Moussaoui attended the Finsbury Park Mosque from 1998 to 2000.¹¹⁷ As his beliefs hardened, Moussaoui came to see those who did not share his interpretation of Islam as disbelievers. In a piece written for the *Guardian*, his brother Abd Samad Moussaoui recalled:

[I]n 1996, I'd seen my sister Jamila, who had let me in on a secret: the year before, Zacarias had been to see her and said: 'Abd Samad and Fouzia are doing tawassul, they're heathens. Be on your guard with them, but whatever else happens don't say anything to them.' (For Sunni Muslims, tawassul is an invocalational formula whereby a person asks Allah to grant him a favour by citing the name of a prophet or saint. Wahhabis reject tawassul and use it as a pretext for declaring that all other Muslims are heathens and idolaters....) When Jamila told me what my brother had said, I was taken aback. It made me feel sick. I'd never suspected that my bright, well-educated brother could possibly be taken in by the Wahhabi ideology; and the fact that he had insisted that Jamila say nothing about it showed he was wary of me.¹¹⁸

112. Stephen Moyes & Emily Miller, "He Wanted Revenge," *Mirror* (London), Apr. 7, 2007.

113. Laville, "Four Who Turned on Home That Gave Them Refuge."

114. Duncan Gardham & Catriona Davies, "Bomb Suspect 'Berated Shopkeeper for Not Being Proper Muslim,'" *Telegraph* (London), July 28, 2005.

115. Ibid.

116. Although he was born and raised in France, Moussaoui was included in the U.K. sample for this study because he radicalized there.

117. "The Finsbury Park Network," *Independent* (London), Feb. 8, 2006.

118. Abd Samad Moussaoui, "My Brother Zac," *Guardian* (London), Apr. 19, 2003; see also Abd Samad Moussaoui & Florence Bouquillat, *Zacarias, My Brother: The Making of a Terrorist* (New

Sometimes this phase is manifested in the radicalizing individual chastising others. As previously mentioned, John Walker Lindh used to post in hip hop chat rooms online. In his final post on [rec.music.hip-hop](#), Lindh lashed out at a Five Percenter (a member of a Nation of Islam offshoot that teaches that the black man is God), who wrote that the rapper Nas “acknowledges himself as a true and living God” who “doesn’t fall prey to spookisms.” Lindh responded with great vitriol:

Is Nas indeed a “god”? If this is so, then why is he susceptible [sic] to sin and wrongdoing? Why does he smoke blunts, drink moët, fornicate, and make dukey music? Why is it if he is a “god” that one day he will die? That’s a rather pathetic “god” if you ask me.¹¹⁹

This overreaction is indicative of Lindh’s strong feelings about the Five Percenters’ deviant theology. Like other homegrown terrorists who went through this stage, he saw interpretations of Islam that contravened his own rigid understanding as an affront—and he responded accordingly. There is a strong connection between this phase and attempts to impose one’s religious beliefs on others: since religious transgressions are regarded as personal affronts, radicalizing individuals may try to enforce their own religious values and customs on others.

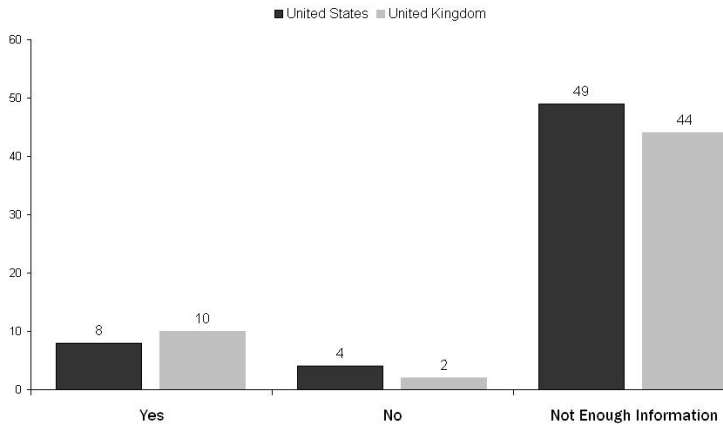
Attempts to Impose Religious Beliefs on Others

This brings us to the next step, attempts to impose one’s religious beliefs on others. Family members and close friends often bear the brunt of these attempts, but they are by no means the only ones affected. As with the low tolerance for perceived deviance step, the high evidentiary bar for finding attempts to impose one’s religious beliefs on others kept the percentage of homegrown terrorists found to go through this step relatively low: 15.4%. But as with low tolerance for perceived deviance, the high evidentiary bar also makes the fact this step manifested in about one in six of the individuals studied significant. We could only determine that the step was not present in six cases.

York: Seven Stories Press, Simon Pleasance trans., 2003).

119. John Walker Lindh, “Re IS NAS MUSLIM?,” [rec.music.hip-hop](#), May 20, 1997.

Attempts to Impose Religious Beliefs on Others



Attempts to impose his religious beliefs on his closest family members was one of the most notable changes in 7/21 conspirator Ramzi Mohammed's personality as he radicalized. He had two children by his wife Azeb, a Swedish Christian, and was under the sway of extremists around the time his second child was born. The *Guardian* reports that Mohammed "ordered Azeb to convert to Islam and wear a veil and took away his son's computer games. 'He went from a sweet man to a man who was totally ruled by his religion,' Azeb said later."¹²⁰ Similarly, U.K. fertilizer bomb plot ringleader Omar Khyam imposed his puritanical religious rules on his younger brother, Shujah Mahmood. The BBC reports that Khyam "would forbid Shujah from going to the swimming pool for fear that he would see girls in bikinis. He banned him from watching TV programmes."¹²¹

Both D.C. sniper John Allen Muhammad and Isa Abdullah Ali, who fought illegally in several international conflicts, tried to force non-Muslim family members to follow Islamic rules. Carol Williams, Muhammad's ex-wife, told CNN, "After he changed his religion, he called and told me what not to feed [the couple's] child. I told him as long as he [their son] lived with me, it was up to me."¹²² Similarly, Ali's non-Muslims sisters reported that "he berates them for the non-Islamic way they raise their children."¹²³

Sometimes the individuals being hectored for falling short of austere Islamic principles are not family members, but rather mere acquaintances—either Muslim or non-Muslim. For example, when John Walker Lindh went to Yemen to study Arabic, he constantly complained about the lack of a religious element in

120. Laville, "Four Who Turned on Home That Gave Them Refuge."

121. "Profile: Omar Khyam," *BBC News*, Apr. 30, 2007.

122. "Muhammad a Gulf War Vet, Islam Convert," *CNN.com*, Jan. 26, 2004.

123. Tod Robberson, "The Unfinished Journey of Isa Abdullah Ali," *Washington Post Magazine*, Dec. 16, 1990.

his rather relaxed language school, and complained even about the presence of female students. In his chronicle of Lindh's spiritual odyssey, Mark Kukis describes how Lindh attempted to impose Islamic rules on other students in the language school:

[Yemen Language Center headmaster Sabri] Saleem heard one rumor that Lindh would try to wake Muslim students for the early and late calls to prayer, chastising anyone unwilling to go to the mosque when the azzans sounded well after midnight and shortly before dawn. "He was trying to interfere with the other students, telling them what to do," Saleem said. "He did not get along with anyone."¹²⁴

Similarly, the *International Herald Tribune* reported that 7/7 bomber Germaine Lindsay, after his conversion to Islam, "had confrontations with others, though not actual fights, as he tried to persuade them to reject Western vices and amusements."¹²⁵ He also "condemned those who drank alcohol."¹²⁶

Individuals going through this step are taking the legalistic understanding of their faith toward one of its extremes: far from just changing their own habits and behaviors, they are also trying to impose these new norms on others. As previously noted, attempting to impose one's religious beliefs on others is often an extension as well of an individual's low tolerance for perceived theological deviance. Indeed, 65% of the individuals who manifested a low tolerance for deviance also attempted to impose their religious beliefs on others.

Political Radicalization

The homegrown terrorists in this study also evince a considerable amount of political radicalization. While there is no single political ideology that all jihadists embrace, the contemporary jihadist political narrative can be broadly outlined: Western powers have conspired against Islam to subjugate it, both physically and morally. At the same time, Muslims worldwide have lost their faith, and lack the strength that they possessed during Muhammad's time. The only proper response to the present situation is military action.

The political grievances that Osama bin Laden outlined in his 1996 "Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries" are emblematic of those that were commonly held by jihadists at the time: the U.S.'s military presence in Saudi Arabia, its support for Israel, and American-led sanctions against Iraq. (Though the U.S. no longer imposes sanctions on Iraq, the

124. Mark Kukis, *"My Heart Became Attached": The Strange Odyssey of John Walker Lindh* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2003), p. 17; see also Timothy Roche et al., "The Making of John Walker Lindh," *Time*, Oct. 7, 2002.

125. Alvarez, "New Muslim at 15, a Bombing Suspect at 19."

126. Paul Tumelty, "An In-Depth Look at the London Bombers," *Terrorism Monitor*, July 28, 2005.

Iraq war certainly poses a greater grievance now than sanctions did back in 1996.) Another grievance is the perceived perversity and moral backwardness of the West. The U.S. is seen as forcing values of secularism, feminism, and gay rights, to name a few, on the rest of the world. And there are, of course, many more jihadist grievances beyond these. A letter bin Laden addressed to the American people in October 2002 notes American foreign policy misdeeds not only in Palestine and Iraq, but also in Afghanistan, Somalia, Chechnya, Kashmir, and Lebanon.¹²⁷ The letter also rebukes the U.S. for permitting interest-bearing loans and gambling, and even for refusing to ratify the Kyoto protocol on climate change.

To jihadists, these grievances combine to form a compelling portrait of a Western-dominated world that keeps Islam from rediscovering its past glory. Where a caliphate once united the Muslim world and ruled according to Allah's dictates, Islamic states are now divided according to lines drawn by European colonialists. While jihadists are not the only people who are disturbed by this state of affairs, they think these grievances form a *casus belli* that legitimizes violence against civilians.

Frequently, political radicalization begins when an individual learns about injustices inflicted upon Muslims in a far-flung corner of the world. For example, Ahmed Omer Saeed Sheikh has said that the events "in Bosnia propelled him from being a moderate Muslim to a radical Islamist."¹²⁸ Others have direct experiences that influence their political radicalization. Bilal Talal Samad Abdullah's political awakening was largely a result of his experiences during the American-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Following the U.S. invasion, the Mahdi army forced Abdullah's father to abandon his private medical practice in Baghdad and flee to the northern city of Erbil; a close friend of Abdullah's was also killed by them.¹²⁹

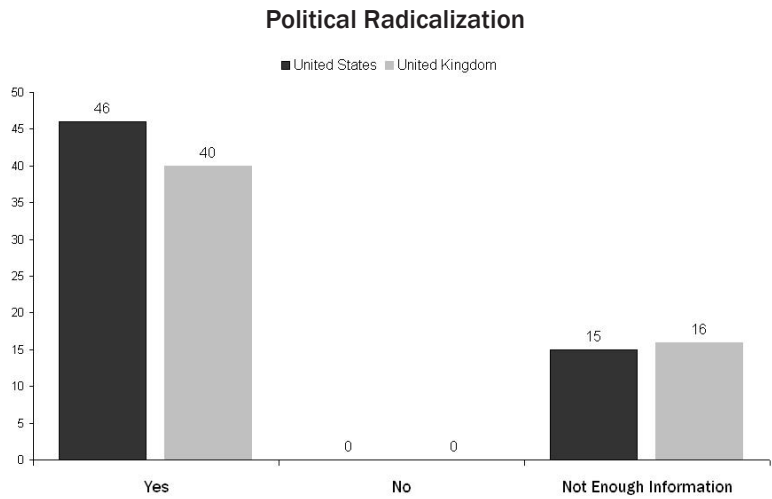
Political radicalization is the factor that was found most frequently in this study: there was evidence of it occurring in 73.5% of the homegrown terrorists studied. While a crude analysis might conclude that therefore political radicalization is more important than religious ideology (and perhaps that these theological views are pretextual, and not honestly held), it is necessary to analyze this finding a bit more critically. For one, when individuals are committed to a physical fight against the West, it is natural that they will try to justify this on multiple levels. A political critique can fill out any religious critique of the West: the great twentieth century jihadist ideologues Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi all had elaborate religious justifications for making war on the West,

127. See "Full Text: Bin Laden's 'Letter to America,'" *Observer* (London), Nov. 24, 2002.

128. "Omer Sheikh Dangerous and Charismatic: Prison Officials," *Daily Times* (Pakistan), July 25, 2005.

129. Kim Sengupta & Cahal Milmo, "Police Link Suspects Held Over Failed Attacks," *Independent* (London), July 5, 2007.

and all three interwove those religious arguments with analysis of the political situation that they faced.



To that extent, one relevant question is whether individuals’ religious awakening *preceded* or followed their political awakening. For the homegrown terrorists who exhibited signs of political radicalization, the religious awakening preceded the political awakening 40.7% of the time. In contrast, we found that political radicalization preceded any kind of religious radicalization 11.6% of the time. (In the other 47.7% of cases, it is unclear whether political or religious ideology came first.) Thus, in our view, a nuanced look at the role of religious ideology in homegrown terrorists’ radicalization should find that religion likely plays an important role.

FINDINGS

Designed to fill a gap in the current literature, this study presents an empirical examination of the radicalization of homegrown terrorists. Our research yields several insights into the radicalization process—including suggesting the role that religious ideology plays in the radicalization process, highlighting demographic differences between homegrown terrorists in the U.S. and U.K. and the broader jihadist movement, and underscoring the importance of international connections for terrorist plots. Our research also suggests that prisons have been relatively insignificant to the terrorist movement in these two countries, while community engagement can play an important role in counter-radicalization strategy.

The Role of Religious Ideology

Researchers have provided diametrically opposed views about the role of theology in the radicalization of homegrown Islamic terrorists. Five of the six factors that this study identifies can provide insight into how the individuals in this study understand their faiths (adoption of a legalistic interpretation of Islam, coming to trust only a select and ideologically rigid group of religious authorities, viewing a schism between Islam and Western society, displaying a low tolerance for theological deviance, and attempting to impose religious beliefs on others). These five factors were found present in the sample frequently enough that it is clearly premature to rule out homegrown terrorists' religious understanding as an important factor in radicalization. Indeed, while our data cannot be considered conclusive, it seems to us that the individuals' theological understanding was a relatively strong factor in their radicalization.

Beyond the factors already outlined in this study, one further indication of the role that theology might play is the relationships that individuals develop with religious leaders as they radicalize. In 20.5% of the cases studied, we found that the

radicalizing individual had a *spiritual mentor*—a more experienced Muslim who gave specific instruction and direction during the radicalization process, and thus helped move the individual toward the embrace of terrorism. In many cases, the spiritual mentor was a religious scholar, but this was not universally true: for the Portland Seven, for example, Afghan war veteran Habis al-Saoub served as a spiritual mentor. We also looked for the presence of *spiritual sanctioners*, individuals with perceived religious authority who provided specific theological approval for the violent activity that the terrorists planned. For 25.6% of the homegrown terrorists studied, there was a spiritual sanctioner in their plot.

Moreover, we found that just under 40% of the sample (38.5%) explicitly claimed a religious motivation for their illegal actions—either in communiqués that they issued, in conversations with others, or through other means. The martyrdom statements that terrorists left behind frequently contained religious justifications for their acts. (As previously noted, there is no conflict between claiming religious and political motivations: most martyrdom announcements contain both.)

Demographics

Our findings reinforce those of previous studies that suggest there is no general “terrorist profile.” We examined four aspects of homegrown terrorist demographics: marital status, socioeconomic upbringing, education level, and occupation level. Similar to Edwin Bakker, we found that the demographics of homegrown terrorists in the U.S. and U.K. differed in some important respects from Sageman’s study of global terrorist demographics.¹³⁰

In Sageman’s original study, 73% of the terrorists examined were married, while Bakker’s study of Europe claims that the continent’s homegrown terrorists “are mostly single males.”¹³¹ Marital status was not available for all the homegrown terrorists included in this study: for the 87 for whom information was available, 56.3% were married. It should be noted that we examined the marital status of individuals in the sample at the time they “joined the jihad”: subsequent marriages were not deemed to fulfill this category.

In examining the homegrown terrorists’ socioeconomic upbringing, we found that they were less privileged than the global terrorists whom Sageman studied. 54.8% of those for whom information was available came from lower-class backgrounds, 28.6% from middle-class backgrounds, and just 16.7% from upper-class backgrounds.

130. See Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, § 7.

131. See Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 79; Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, § 7.

The homegrown terrorists in our study also had a weaker educational background and weaker professional prospects than those in Sageman's study of global terrorists. Of the 99 terrorists for whom educational data was available, 23.2% had not graduated from high school, while 16.2% earned a high school diploma as the top level of education that they achieved. 36.4% of the sample had attended some college, but there was no record of them graduating. 16.2% had earned B.A./B.S. equivalent college diplomas, with around 5% earning M.A./M.S. equivalents, and around 3% earning doctorates.

We employed the same metrics that Sageman did in *Understanding Terror Networks* for classifying occupation level. Occupations like physicians, architects, preachers, and teachers were considered professional; semiskilled occupations included "police, military, mechanics, civil service, small business, and students."¹³² Of the individuals in the sample for whom occupational data was available, 7.6% were professional and 31.4% were semiskilled. The majority, 61%, were unskilled.

International Connections

There is a debate among observers about the importance of international connections—such as terrorist training camps in foreign countries—to jihadist activity. Some analysts argue that when terrorists attempt "do-it-yourself" instruction rather than training in a physical sanctuary, their overall level of performance significantly suffers.¹³³ Our data suggests the relative importance of overseas training. Over 40% of the sample traveled abroad for training or to fight jihad.

Also, around 12% of the terrorists studied (and 22.2% of those for whom information is available) traveled overseas to receive religious instruction independent of terrorist training. Ali al-Timimi is obviously one example of this: it was during his time in Saudi Arabia that he came to ally with such thinkers as Bilal Philips and bin Baz. British homegrown terrorist Sajid Badat took "several trips to Pakistan during which he studied in madrassas—Islamic schools—possibly in Peshawar, a city with strong fundamentalist and al-Qa'ida links."¹³⁴ Travel abroad for religious instruction also proved to be an important step in the development of Americans John Walker Lindh and Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, among others.

Converts

Of the homegrown terrorists we examined whose original religion is known, 29.8% converted to Islam. However, the percentage varied significantly from one side of the Atlantic to the other. In the U.S., the conversion rate among homegrown terrorists was 42.9%, while in the U.K. 18.2% of homegrown terrorists converted.

132. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 78.

133. See, e.g., Emily Hunt, "Virtual Incompetence," *Daily Standard*, Aug. 18, 2006.

134. Jason Bennetto et al., "Sajid Badat: 'I Believe He is Innocent. He is a Walking Angel,'" *Independent* (London), Nov. 29, 2003.

Of these converts, the vast majority were Christian prior to their conversion to Islam.

Prisons

There is currently much discussion among terrorism analysts about the threat of radicalization in prisons. For example, a major report released in 2006 by George Washington University's Homeland Security Policy Institute and the University of Virginia's Critical Incident Analysis Group warns:

Prison provides an ideal environment for radicalization of young men and women. Research on the characteristics of terrorist recruits abroad has identified youth, unemployment, alienation, a need for a sense of self-importance and a need to belong to a group as common factors, all of which are present among U.S. prison populations.¹³⁵

These concerns are bolstered by instances like the Kevin James case. While imprisoned in 1997, James created a group called Jam'iyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh (JIS) to promote his hardline interpretation of Islam.¹³⁶ James taught his followers that jihad was "the only true 'anti-terrorist action'[,], a defensive battle against the aggression of theological impostors led by Zionism," and that the Muslims "are commanded by Allah to battle against disbelievers ... utilizing most strenuous effort."¹³⁷ From his jail cell in California's New Folsom Prison, James recruited a team to carry out terrorist attacks against U.S. military and Jewish targets in the Los Angeles area. James provided them with instructions, as well as spiritual and tactical guidance. The plot was only unraveled after one of the plotters dropped his mobile phone during a July 2005 gas station robbery. Los Angeles Police Department deputy chief Michael Downing, the commanding officer in the Counter-Terrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau, said that "this cell was closer to going operational than any we have seen post-911."¹³⁸

Though instances like this give rise to fears that prisoners could take part in future acts of terrorism in the West, the data in this study suggests that the terrorism threat within prisons is smaller than is often perceived. Out of the 117

135. Frank Cilluffo et al., *Out of the Shadows: Getting Ahead of Prisoner Radicalization* (2006), p. 1. It is worth noting that one of us was asked to testify about this issue before the U.S. Senate in 2006. See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Prison Radicalization: Are Terrorist Cells Forming in U.S. Cell Blocks?," testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Sept. 19, 2006.

136. For more information on JIS's ideology, see "Al-Musawwada Al-Isliyya," Exhibit 1, *United States v. James*, No. 8:05-CR-00214 (C.D. Cal., Dec. 14, 2007).

137. Attachment A, Document 259, *United States v. James*, No. 8:05-CR-00214 (C.D. Cal., Dec. 14, 2007).

138. "Two Plead Guilty to Domestic Terrorism Charges of Conspiring to Attack Military Facilities, Jewish Targets," U.S. Department of Justice Press Release, Dec. 14, 2007.

individuals studied, in only seven cases was there any kind of connection between time spent in prison and the terrorists' conversion, radicalization, or the plot in which they participated. Though our empirical study of other Western countries beyond the U.S. and U.K. is not yet complete, the research we have done suggests that the prisons are similarly a minor factor in terrorist plots elsewhere in the West. One significant exception is France, where the interior minister has justifiably concluded that "French prisons are a favoured recruiting ground for radical Islamists."¹³⁹

The low importance of prisons in this statistical analysis suggests that, when counterterrorism resources are being allocated, prisons should be of relatively low priority. This is not to suggest that prison radicalization should be ignored. Indeed, we support simple, commonsense measures in federal and state prisons such as screening for extremist literature and measuring and mitigating overall levels of radicalization. However, funding for counterterrorism measures is not unlimited, particularly during hard financial times such as these. Thus, an increasingly important aspect of counterterrorism policy will be setting budgetary priorities. From a national security perspective, prison radicalization need not be seen as one of the top priorities at this time.

Muslim Engagement

Our statistical analysis suggests that the perception of a schism between Islam and the West is an important aspect of the radicalization process, both quantitatively and qualitatively. One important countermeasure is Muslim civic engagement efforts. The importance of these measures has been acknowledged at official levels. In 2007 testimony delivered to the U.S. Senate's Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, FBI assistant director John Miller said:

In this environment, we cannot just show up at the door and say: "we are from the government and we are here to help." Instead, the government must earn the trust and respect of such groups. Overcoming distrust and suspicion, especially in the Muslim community, will not, however, be achieved quickly. And we must recognize that developing metrics or statistics to measure the success of the mission is nearly impossible.¹⁴⁰

Similarly, Michael Chertoff, who served as President Bush's Homeland Security secretary, has testified about the importance of "[e]ngaging with key com-

139. "France Has Arrested 55 Militant Islamists This Year," *Reuters*, Sept. 11, 2008 (quoting French interior minister Michele Alliot-Marie).

140. Miller, "Violent Islamist Extremism," p. 4.

munities to promote civic engagement.”¹⁴¹ He stated that “[a]n effective strategy to prevent and counter domestic radicalization requires that we not only engage these communities, but also take proactive steps to build trust and respond to issues of concern to Americans of different ethnicities, cultures, and faiths.”¹⁴²

While such governmental policies are laudable if pursued wisely, engagement efforts seem most effective at countering radicalism when they come from the Muslim community itself. One such example could be seen in early 2007 when al-Husein Madhany, who is now the executive vice president of One Nation, approached officials in American Muslim organizations with the idea of focusing a major American Muslim organization’s conference on the theme of civic engagement:

The conference’s speeches would center on this theme, and at the end the organization would announce a contest for excellence in sermon writing that engages the issue of “how North American Muslims, individually or collectively, can take leadership roles in long-term civic engagement efforts.” Using theological sermons to spread this theme would be an important step because those who hold the pulpit are seen as authority figures in the Muslim community. There will be an immediate on-the-ground impact if the pulpit is used not to condemn those who participate in American democracy, but to encourage such participation. Civic engagement, according to Mr. Madhany, occurs at many levels. Volunteerism, starting at a young age, is central. “We should promote children entering the Cub Scouts, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America,” Mr. Madhany says. “It’s also not dismissing your Muslim children’s career goals if they include becoming fire chiefs, first responders, public servants within government, or policemen.” Mr. Madhany explains that aspects of this project would include involvement in education boards, parent-teacher associations, county boards and tax boards. What is critical is involvement in issues of importance to the community—not through advocacy organizations (of which there are plenty within the American Muslim community), but through groups focused on social services and the social good.¹⁴³

This study helps to demonstrate why such efforts are important: civic engagement projects directly tackle the perception of a schism between Islam and the West, which is one of the key aspects of the radicalization that we have observed in homegrown terrorists in the U.S. and U.K.

141. Michael Chertoff, written testimony on radicalization before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Mar. 14, 2007, p. 2.

142. Ibid., p. 4.

143. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “Changing Minds,” *Washington Times*, Feb. 22, 2007.

In this new era of more limited resources, it is essential to attain the best possible understanding of how homegrown terrorists radicalize. This study attempts to address an existing gap in the literature by empirically examining this process. Our research suggests that six different steps have been of particular significance as homegrown terrorists radicalize: the adoption of a legalistic interpretation of Islam, coming to trust only a select and ideologically rigid group of religious authorities, viewing the West and Islam as irreconcilably opposed, manifesting a low tolerance for perceived religious deviance, attempting to impose religious beliefs on others, and the expression of radical political views. These steps have recurred frequently among homegrown terrorists as they radicalized, and they help to provide insight into these individuals' state of mind as they hurtle toward the embrace of violent force against innocents.

We hope that our research can contribute to more effective, and efficient, counterterrorism efforts.

APPENDIX

HOMEGROWN TERRORISTS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

UNITED STATES

Hammad Abdur-Raheem

Syed Haris Ahmed

Hasan Karim Akbar

Jibreel al-Amreekee

Mukhtar al-Bakri

Ahmed Omar Abu Ali

Isa Abdullah Ali

Abdul Tawala Ibn Ali Alishtari

Ali al-Timimi

Sahim Alwan

Ryan Anderson

Mohammed Junaid Babar

Jeffrey Leon Battle

Mohamed Bayazid

David Belfield

Ahmed Ibrahim Bilal

Muhammad Ibrahim Bilal

Mahmud Faruq Brent

Seifullah Chapman

Dritan Duka

Eljvir Duka

Shain Duka

Patrice Lumumba Ford

Adam Gadahn

Faysal Galab

Yahya Goba

Paul R. Hall

Clement Rodney Hampton-el

Naveed Haq

Syed Hashmi

Mike Hawash

Hamid Hayat

Raed Hijazi

Kevin Lamar James

Masoud Ahmad Khan

Yong Ki Kwon

October Martinique Lewis

John Walker Lindh

Daniel Joseph Maldonado

Lee Boyd Malvo

Yousef Megahed

Shafel Mosed

John Allen Muhammad

Jose Padilla

Gregory Patterson

Christopher Paul

Randall Todd Royer

Rafiq Sabir

Ehsanul Islam Sadequee

Tarik Shah

Derrick Shareef

Mohamad Ibrahim Shnewer
Ruben Luis Shumpert
Donald Thomas Surratt
Yasein Taher
Mohammed Reza Taheri-azar

Serdar Tatar
Hiram Torres
Earnest James Ujaama
Levar Washington
Kobie Williams

UNITED KINGDOM

Feroz Ali Abassi
Bilal Talal Samad Abdullah
Babar Ahmad
Atilla Ahmet
Syed Ahsan
Jawad Akbar
Tariq al-Daour
Ahmed Abdullah Ali
Muhedin Ali
Siraj Yassin Abdullah Ali
Waheed Ali
Salahuddin Amin
Saajid Badat
Dhiren Barot
Mohammed Naveed Bhatti
Mohammed Bilal
Trevor Brooks
Hassan Butt
Junade Feroze
Anthony Garcia
Asif Mohammed Hanif
Zia ul Haq
Tanvir Hussain
Hasib Hussein
Mukhtar Said Ibrahim
Abdul Aziz Jalil
Simon Keeler
Aabid Khan

Mohammed Ajmal Khan
Mohammed Sidique Khan
Omar Khyam
Germaine Lindsey
Waheed Mahmood
Ramzi Mohammed
Wahbi Mohammed
Zacarias Moussaoui
Waseem Mughal
Sultan Muhammad
Hammaad Munshi
Yasin Hassan Omar
Hussein Osman
Omar Abdul Rehman
Richard Reid
Nicky Reilly
Andrew Rowe
Assad Sarwar
Oliver Savant
Quaisar Shaffi
Omar Khan Sharif
Ahmed Omar Sayyid Sheikh
Abdul Waxid Sherif
Shehzad Tanweer
Nadeem Tarmohammed
Don Stewart White
Adel Yahya
Brian Young



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