Countering Violent Extremism: Insights and Evidence from the Field

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✓ Understanding the time-dependent social pathways to violent extremism,
✓ and Intervening at appropriate junctures to turn would-be militants away
✓ Understanding the sacred values that fuse and motivate devoted militants to extreme actions,
✓ and reframing or leveraging them to defuse the violence
Devoted Actor - Sacred Values
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Intractable Conflicts, Revolutions, Terrorism

Our multidisciplinary team working in conflict zones around the world has been exploring why people decide to refuse political compromise, go to war, attempt revolution or resort to terrorism.

Field Sites:

Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Syria, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco, Spain, France, N. Ireland, Guatemala, Mexico, Chile
Devoted Actors & Sacred Values

The General Framework:

• Uncompromising wars, revolutions and terrorism are driven by Devoted Actors who adhere to sacred or transcendent values that drive actions independently, or all out of proportion, from rationally expected outcomes, calculated costs and consequences, or likely risks and rewards.

• **Devoted Actor Hypothesis**: *When sacred values become embedded in fused social groups, then members of these value-driven groups become willing to collectively defend or advance those values through costly sacrifices and extreme actions, in ways resistant to material tradeoffs and normative social influence.*
How we proceed:

1. Interviews with political & military leaders, supporters and would-be warriors to generate hypotheses,

2. followed by lab experiments to test plausibility,

3. then experimentally designed surveys to test real-word reliability.
Importance of Field Studies

A main problem in studies of violent religious and political extremism is that most “experts” have little field experience and otherwise lack the required level of details that statistical and trend analyses could properly mine.

There are many millions of people who express sympathy with forms of violent political expression that support terrorism. There are, however, only some thousands who show willingness to actually commit violence.

They almost invariably self-select and go on to violence in small groups of volunteers consisting mostly of friends and some kin within specific "scenes": neighborhoods, schools (classes, dorms), workplaces, common leisure activities (soccer, mosque, barbershop café) and, increasingly, online chat-rooms.

We have to get into these scenes to know how to stop them.
Who are the most active terrorists?

- Global AQ is a viral, social movement and political ideology, not a well-organized operational structure with command and control.
- At this point, the most active and dynamic terrorists belong to spontaneously self-generated, self-organized networks of friends and kin, who are radicalized collectively and collectively decide to carry out terrorist operations.
- For the most part, surviving remnants of Al Qaeda don’t know who the new terrorists are and can’t reliably communicate with those they do know.
- These loose networks have attempted to carry out operations across the globe - in Africa, Europe, Asia and North America - on behalf of AQ, but they are not AQ.
- Retrospectively, AQ has accepted them into its spiritual fold.
- The global jihad’s principal enlistees today are youth in transitional stages in their lives: students, immigrants, between jobs or girlfriends, having left their genetic family and searching for a new “brotherhood,” petty criminals who don’t want to be criminals, etc.
Decentralized Jihad

- Under a decentralized regime, small groups engage in resistance or violent activity independently without central coordination. Leadership figures provide inspiration to members and affiliated organizations - however, jihadis enlist and engage in terrorist activity without necessarily consulting leadership.

- International success at stopping large transfers of money to terrorist organizations have compelled the new wave of terrorists to seek financing where they can, and so many operations nowadays ride piggy-back on available petty criminal networks. (9/11 cost > 400,000, followed by Bali and Madrid bombings at about $50,000 a piece; all others less).

- Most significantly: marginalized Muslim youth who become petty criminals because of « opportunity costs », who then get involved in aiding jihadis, often enlist into violent jihad because of the promise of achieving a great sense of personal significance in a glorious cause – and it is these young people, even more than the ‘ideological’ students and others, who prove themselves most ready to kill and die.
Bureaucratic Mirroring

• Notions of COMMAND & CONTROL via “cells,” “recruiters,” “hierarchy,” and “brainwashing”

• thus reflect more the psychology and organization of people analyzing terrorist groups than terrorist groups themselves.
Radicalization: From Political Protest to Violent Extremism

Stage 1. The Protest SCENE (perceived political and social injustice resonates with personal experiences, channeling personal frustrations into moral outrage)

Stage 2. Call to MILITANCY and DEFENSE of SACRED VALUES that define Collective Identity.

Stage 3. Breakaway with friends and fellow travelers into a PARALLEL UNIVERSE (withdrawal into a mental and physical cocoon, whose members hype one another up).

Stage 4. Linking Up to a VIOLENT MOVEMENT.

Stage 5. Planning and Executing Violent ACTION.
A Probable Pathway to Stage 2 Radicalization: Evidence from Morocco (Tetuan & Casablanca, 2014, N=260)

- Self-reported *religiosity* increased support for violent extremism (*militant jihad and martyrdom*) and *anti-democratic* attitudes (postponing elections for implementing Sharia) via *religious fundamentalism* (i.e., Salafist, literalist, Islam only true religion, etc., $\alpha = .83$)

- The relationship between *religiosity* and *religious fundamentalism* is amplified by Sharia’s sacredness, while the relationships between *religious fundamentalism* on one hand, and violent extremist attitudes and anti-democratic attitudes on the other, are amplified by *group exceptionalism* (i.e., my group is special, better, unappreciated, etc., $\alpha = .82$)
The Nuanced Role of Education in Radicalization

Education intervenes in two different places in the pathway to extremism.

1. First, it dampens the link between religiosity and religious fundamentalism. This finding is in line with the salutary conception of education in the context of political conflict.

2. However, education also may be exacerbating the link between religious fundamentalism and anti-democratic attitude, as people may become even more anti-democratic when also highly educated (e.g., the doctors and engineers of Al Qaeda).
How to Deal with Radicalizing Youth?

- in transitional stages in their lives,
- who are increasingly less educated,
- less economically well-off,
- and less socially stable
The New Wave of Terrorism is about “Youth Culture,” *JIHADI COOL*, not the Koran

- You don’t influence youth culture by asking community elders to spout off messages about the Koran (negative messages by adults have a negative impact on youth attitudes)
  - for example, cigarette consumption among youth increases in anti-tobacco campaigns that emphasize bad things

- The Koran is almost irrelevant (though it’s cool if someone in the peer group or an elder brother can read Arabic and spout it off).

- How you change youth culture is a difficult and fickle affair. But role models or small changes often have big effects on attitudes and fashions (gangsta culture, skateboarding, post-Madonna belly-button exposure, hush puppies fad).

- The key, however, is providing alternate social pathways and networks that will allow young people to achieve a sense of personal significance in a glorious cause that they can share with an “imagined family” – a Brotherhood of friends and fellow travelers
Defusing Small-Scale Social Networks

Preliminary research indicates that pulling people out of their fused networks devoted actors and companions is most likely to allow desacralization of ideological values for individuals.

- New York City police refer to “PRISLAM” as the phenomena whereby people become radicalized to Islam in prison (often to better form trusted groups to fend off threats from other gangs); but when radicalized prisoners are released they go back to communities that hold little support for radical Islam and so the radical ideas fade.

- In Europe, however, where the prison population can be overwhelming Muslim and where marginal Muslim immigrant communities, petty criminal networks are increasingly involved with, and influenced by, radical Islamist teachings as a way of:

  - De-marginalizing through action in a glorious collective cause that provides personal significance through collective commitment
Wrong-Headed “Common Sense” & Cost-Benefit Approaches to Fully Radicalized Jihadis

• Classic Military and Counterterrorism strategies. For example:
  – Quadrennial Defense Review: “Minimize” U.S. costs in lives & treasure, while imposing unsustainable costs on the enemy

• To a significant degree, Jihadis don’t respond to a utilitarian cost-benefit strategies (airport plotters knowingly chose the targets most watched; Ulm plotters in Germany knew they were being watched and flaunted this knowledge; European volunteers for Syria are up front about readiness to die).

• They respond to moral values, and are more than willing to die for the cause.

• Each death inspires many more young Muslims to join the cause.

• Utilitarian perspectives (offers of jobs, housing money) often play into the hands of terrorists: U.S. and allies try reduce peoples to material matter rather than moral beings.

• Tsunami relief a good example of what works (but intermittent, not sustained). USAID programs too spotty, short-term for “Long War.”
A New Wave of “Rejectionist”, or *Takfiri*, Terrorism

• After 9/11, a newer wave of *Takfiri* terrorism has emerged (for the most part *opposed* by strict Salafi schools)

• Proponents are generally less educated, economically and socially more marginal, and even younger than those of the earlier wave.

• They became sensitized - through videos, cable television, internet - to belonging to a world underclass of true Muslims, oppressed by a godless or immoral ruling class.

• They have begun trying their own hand at emulating their media heroes who had « brought down » the Soviets and « inflicted pain » on America.
Al Qaeda’s 3 Waves: increasingly younger, less skilled, less educated (data from our Southeast Asia database)
Of the three waves, our data shows that the first has the highest percentage of professionals involved in the organization. The first wave also has significantly more professional members over skilled or unskilled laborers. The opposite trend exists in the second and third waves – where the highest percentage of members are unskilled laborers.
Al Qaeda’s 3 Waves -- Education
The Saudi Experience of Countering Terrorism
Background - Takfiri Ideology

- Al-Jammah al-Islamiyah
- Al-Jihad group
- Pakistan
- Afghanistan
- Arabian peninsula
- Egypt
- Global
Our efforts to successfully counter terrorism focus on three key issues:-

1- The men.
2- The money.
3- The mindset.
Recruitment and Radicalization process

Places of recruitment

Identification of targets

Persuasion process

1. Mosques
   2. Schools and universities
   3. Neighborhood
   4. Social activities (religious lectures, etc.)

1. Dialogue
   2. Friendship
   3. Gain his trust by fulfilling his needs and desires

1. Isolation
   2. Glorifications of violent jihad
   3. Justifications

Involvement in terrorist activities

Means of persuasion

1. Audio and video tapes.
   2. Books about politics and jihad.

1. Training
   2. Fundraising
   3. Facilitation
   4. Active participation

1. Extremist preacher.
   2. Lectures.
   3. Websites, etc.
The Mindset

How radicals use the internet

- Data collection.
- Recruitment.
- Propaganda/psychological war.
- Fundraising.
- Operations (planning, executing, communicating, training…etc.).
Response - Strategic

- Restructuring command, control, and communications.
- Allocating more resources to combat terrorism.
- Launching campaign to counter the takfiri ideology.
- Monitoring financial transactions.
- Rehabilitation program for detainees and families.
Our rehabilitation program targets detainees (2779) in the following areas:-

1- Religious:
   • religious study sessions
   • one on one dialogue

2- Psychological and social:
   • psychological evaluations
   • Support family financially and morally

3- Media:
   • provide information to the public
   • production of media programs

4- Security
The Mindset De-radicalization

Follow up phase:

- Staying in touch.
- Supporting released detainees (to adapt).
- Assisting with employment and marriage.
- Involving families in the rehabilitation process.
• **Radicalization processes are most often friendship based,** but the dynamics are different from society to society

- For example, in UK universities Muslim students fell uncomfortable with liberal drinking and sex

- They may be invited to a social mixer or barbecue where young Muslims can meet and discuss their personal experiences and problems

- After a few meetings the talk may be steered to grievances at home and abroad that jihadis seek to address

- Most present will ignore these feelers, or fall out from the informal group, but one or a few might stay

And then...
De-Radicalization Programs

- **Saudi**: partly successful, very expensive and labor intensive, involves strong pressure on families – programs not readily exportable to other countries.

- **Indonesia**: Counterterrorism intelligence and police treat the problem as a public health issue more than simply a criminal issue and turning militants and their family networks into deradicalizers by offering clemency and family support -- incompatible with current reliance on criminal justice in American, European, Russian and Chinese contexts. (Note: Gen Doug Stone used this approach to successfully depopulate Abu Ghraib prison).

- **Turkey**: National police also treat problem as public health issue; Don’t ask where people with known contact to jihadis in Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc. been and who they know as long as no act committed on Turkish soil, but let families know that police are watching close, yet will provide family support (jobs, favors, etc.) if the families monitor and take care of their own – very successful with potential jihadis, less so with Kurds (because less directly engaged at community level).

- **UK**: Metropolitan police are bringing in people from immigrant communities at risk as police agents, including former troubled youth with petty criminal records; good cooperation with NYPD, which has provided a role model for successful at community-based policing of potential jihadis and plots (despite the recent negative publicity suggesting otherwise).

- **Guatemala**: Law enforcement and gov’t readily corrupted by narco payoffs, and communities pacified by large-scale infusions of narco funds; Zetas and other gang-like groups also control prisons -- narco competition mitigates any incentive to move away from violence, if such incentives existed (they don’t) – Us counterterrorism (anti-narc) strategy here is largely ineffective.
“Knowledge of the interconnected networks of Afghan Alumni, friendship, kinship and marriage groups was very crucial to uncovering the inner circle of Noordin.”

~ Gen. Tito Karnavian, head of Indonesian police strike team that tracked down Noordin Mohammed Top (personal communication, December 10, 2009)
Noordin’s Networks, June-September 2009

LEGEND

REGIONAL GROUPINGS:
- Weak Tie
- Medium Tie
- Family Tie
- Dead
- Free
- Arrested
- Whereabouts Unknown

GROUPINGS:
- Weak Tie
- Medium Tie
- Family Tie
- Dead
- Free
- Arrested
- Whereabouts Unknown

Networks:
- Bekasi
- Temanggung
- Cilacap

Suicide Bombers:
- Dani Dwi Permana
- Nana Ikwan Maulana
- As-Surur
- Maulana As-Surur

People:
- Ismail
- Paranto (Urwah)
- Baradin Latif
- Rahayu Dwi Astuti
- Ariana Rahman
- Ibrohim
- Suryana
- Sarjono
- Amir Ibrahim
- Jaelani
- Mohamad Sjahir
- Eri Kadawarti
- Widodo
- Utami
- Sulistioni
- Moh. Zuhri
- Tataq
- Daroni
- Utomo
- Noordin Top
- Noordin
- Latif
- Rahayu Dwi Astuti
- Paranto (Urwah)
- Ismail

Networks:
- Bekasi Network
- Temanggung Network
- Cilacap Network
Hamas al-Jihad Soccer team (family and friends):
Most sustained suicide attack campaign of 2nd Intifada and Beyond
Hamas poster of Dimona (Feb. 08) suicide bombers: “Martyrs” Mohammed Herbawi (left) and Shadi Zgyaer (and “the enemy,” Russian immigrant Lyubov Razdolskaya
The Madrid Bombing and its Aftermath:
« Organized Anarchy »

• The Madrid bombing, by a bunch of radical students and hangers on, drug traffickers, small-time dealers in stolen goods and other sorts of petty criminals, improbably succeeded precisely because it was most improbable.

• There was no ingenious cell structure, no hierarchy, no recruitment, no brainwashing, no coherent organization.

• Yet this half-baked plot, concocted in a few months, with a target (probably) suggested over the internet, was the proximate cause of regime change in a democratic society.
The Jamaa Mezuak Connection:

After the Madrid plotters from Mezuak blew themselves up (April 3, 2004), friends in the neighborhood began contemplating their own “matyrdom actions” in Iraq (beginning in summer 2006).
Scene below Al Rohbane Mosque where kids play soccer and « Jihad » (the way we used to play « war » with sticks and stones)
It is important to provide alternative dreams (of significance and glory) and heroes in primary & secondary schools (e. g, sports)

[Below: Children from the elementary school in the Jemaa Mezuak Neighborhood of Tetuan, Morocco, attended by 5 of the 7 Madrid bomb-plotters who blew themselves up]
Choice of Role Models for Youth in Palestine, 2012
(Positive role model = max +3, Negative role model = max -3)
Top-Down Networks (Hierarchies) vs. Bottom-Up Networks

• **Top-down networks** – including hierarchies as in most government, military and law enforcement organizations - are more efficient in targeted planning and execution of particular tasks.
  
  – They are also more amenable to legal and moral control in terms of accountability and responsibility.

• **Bottom-up networks** are more efficient at rapid adaptation to ever changing conditions.
  
  – They are more able to innovate, but also more susceptible to infiltration and disruption.

• **Criminal networks** (like Mafia or some drug “cartels”) overcome this limitation by establishing reliable relations of trust mostly through kinship, friendship, apprenticeship.
Terrorist Networks Motivated by Moral Cause

- Some Terrorist Networks have the added incentive of commitment to a moral cause, which allows for greater sacrifice than is usually possible with typical reward structures based on material incentives (regular police, army).

- Devotion to a moral cause is not a network property, but in some Terrorist Networks, as with revolutionary movements generally, this allows resource-deficient movements to survive, and eventually triumph, against much stronger material forces.
Sacred Values

KEY ISSUES:

– When do sacred values instigate or sustain violence?
– To what degree?
– How can SVs be leveraged to stop or reduce intergroup violence?
Much more is known about economic decision making than morally-motivated behavior. But here are some empirical features of SVs that we have been testing:

• Insensitive to quantity
• Immune to material tradeoffs
• Insensitive to Framing Effects
• Privileged link to emotions
• Generate actions independent of prospects for success
• Have distinct neural processing signatures (fMRI)
Sacred Values & The “Backfire Effect”

Studies with Palestinians, Israeli settlers, Indonesians, Indians, Afghans and Iranians show that:

offering people material incentives to compromise sacred values (large amounts of money, promise of a life free of political violence) can backfire, increasing violent opposition to compromise.

Backfire effects occur both for sacred values with clear religious investment (Jerusalem, Sharia law) and those with initially none (Palestinian refugees’ right of return, Iran’s right to nuclear capability).
The backfire effect.
Offering material incentives to compromise sacred values increases anger and violence toward a deal (Atran & Ginges, *Science*, 2012)

### Palestinian Refugees

#### Iranian Nuclear Program

In a 2010 study among Iranians, those who regarded Iran's right to a nuclear program as a sacred value were more angrily opposed to sacrificing Iran's nuclear program for conflict-resolution deals involving significant economic aid, or relaxation of sanctions, than to the same deals without aid or sanctions.

#### Israeli Settlers

In a 2005 study in the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian refugees who held their "Right of Return" to former homes in Israel as a sacred value were more violently opposed to abandoning this right for a Palestinian state plus significant economic aid than to the same peace deal without aid.

In a 2005 study among Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, those who regarded *Eretz Israel* (God-given "Land of Israel") as a sacred value more violently opposed withdrawing from settlements for peace plus significant economic aid than for peace without aid.
In a 2008 experiment with Indian Hindus, those for whom rebuilding a Hindu temple over the destroyed Babri Mosque was a sacred value more angrily opposed including a monument to the Mosque on the site when offered economic incentives to do so.

In a 2008 experiment with Indonesian students in four madrassas (Muslim religious schools), those who regarded rule by Sharia (Muslim religious law) as a sacred value were more violently opposed to compromising Sharia rule in return for Western recognition of the Muslim Brotherhood plus significant economic aid than without aid.
Palestinian Refugee predictions of % of population ready to use violence to oppose:
a peace deal perceived to violate a collective moral value (“taboo” condition),
the taboo deal plus an instrumental incentive (“taboo+”), or the taboo deal plus a
collective moral concession without instrumental value from the adversary (“tragic”)

(linear trend: $F [1, 195] = 5.698, P = .018$)

Refugees reporting ‘joy’ at hearing of suicide bombing
relative to overall mean estimate
(linear trend, $F [1, 418] = 7.48, P = .007$)

Brain regions identified in which sacred items resulted in greater activation than non-sacred items (N= 36, P<0.005). These included the left ventrolateral prefrontal cortex (L VLPFC) and the right amygdala. The statements that resulted in more amygdala activation represent the most repugnant items to the individual, which is consistent with the idea that when sacred values are violated they induce outrage (Berns et al., in Berns & Atran, Phil. Trans. Royal Soc – B, 2012).
You chose:

I Believe in God.
I am an Apple person.

Scale indicates percentage of people that agree with you seen by subjects in fMRI

Results: people who hold sacred values won’t accept money to renounce them, and don’t alter commitment to them in response to what others may think, but will accept money and alter commitment to non-sacred values
Additional Directions & Experiments on Sacred Values and Devoted Actors

Insensitivity to:
• Social Influence
• Temporal & Spatial Discounting
• Exit Strategies

Bound to notions of personal and collective identity, of “Who you are & whom you trust,” especially under conditions of perceived outside threat.
• Often have a strong communitarian component
  • For example the role of religious rhetoric and ritual in the sacralization of Iran’s nuclear program (Dehghani, Atran, Iliev, Sachdeva & Ginges, *J. Judgment & Decision Making*, 2010)
Devoted Actors are Resistant to Social Influence: *Experimental Conditions*

- **Control:** “Please think about the conflict between Palestine and Israel today.”

- **Ingroup Support:** “As you know, Palestinians feel very strongly about [securing the refugees right to return to their original lands, towns, and villages / reclaiming Palestinian sovereignty over their own airspace and borders].”

- **Outgroup Opposition:** “As you know, Israelis feel very strongly [about Palestinians’ right of return and have rejected it since the creation of Israel / that they need to deny Palestinian control over the airspace and borders of Palestine].”
Resistance to Social Influence

Palestine: Right of return v. Sovereignty
(Sheikh, Ginges & Atran, J. Judgment Decision Making, 2013)

- emerging Sacred Value of Sovereignty over airspace and borders was immune to social influence only for devoted actors

- established Sacred Value of Right of Return was immune for everyone

- interesting also because Israeli opposition to Right of Return is associated with higher costs for Palestinians
Resistance to Social Influence

Sovereignty

![Graph showing the comparison of relative importance between Sacred and Not Sacred conditions across different scenarios: Control, Palestinian Support, Israeli Opposition.](image-url)
Resistance to Social Influence

Right of Return

![Graph showing relative importance across different conditions.](image-url)
Devoted Actors are Resistant to Temporal Discounting

- negative events (e.g., painful defeats) in the past will be more motivating (for continued struggle) when felt to be temporally closer

- similar for positive events (e.g., expected victory)
- devoted actors may perceive such events to be closer
Temporal Discounting

Approximately 50 percent of Kurds judged on a scale of 1 to 10 that Salah ed-Din (the 12th century Kurdish war chief and founder of the Ayyubid dynasty who recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders) felt closer in time than WWI, the founding of modern Turkey and Iraq, and other major events 19th and 20th centuries.

Accuracy for recent historical events, was high (e.g., nearly all informants correctly estimated WWI as > 90 but < 100 years. By contrast estimates of Salah ed-Din’s ranged from >100 to > 1000 years.

Hypothesis: for defining events in cultural history, there is no discounting based on actual distance in time, and actual distance in time may be irrelevant.
Temporal Distance as a function of Sacred Values

Years Until Return of Palestinians to Homes in Israel
Devoted Actors are Resistant to Spatial Discounting

- Interviews with mujahedin groups in Sulawesi (Indonesia)
- Overwhelming preference to fight and die in Palestine
- How do indigenous people, from a culture emerging from the Stone Age less than 100 years ago and separated from Palestinian and Arab peoples and history for close to 50,000 years, suddenly and sincerely want to kill and die for Palestinians?
Blindness to Exit Strategies

- Devoted actors may feel that their choices are constrained by their duty to a SV, for good or ill

- They may be more likely to reject individual exit strategies (e.g., Thermopylae, Masada, “Give Me Liberty or Death!,” The Alamo, Waffen SS “Death Squads” in Soviet siege of Budapest, Kamikazi, jihadi suicide bombers)

- Devoted actors are more likely to refuse individual opportunities to exit the conflict even when these opportunities would morally serve God or country
Devoted Actors are Blind to Exit Strategies

Palestine Study:
participants were presented two scenarios allowing them to escape violent conflict
- imagine an invasion by "Israeli invasion forces and a resistance is being organized."
- Scenario 1: "make a Hajj to Mecca instead of staying to resist."
- Scenario 2: go "overseas to participate in a training program so that you can come back and serve your country."

Those who considered armed resistance a sacred value refused the tradeoffs, some becoming angry at the offers
How do **Devoted Actors** convert the **General Population** to their SVs?


Through these processes, the general population begins to incorporate SVs as norms, and then internalize them.
In our survey of values, greater attendance in religious services corresponded with more values held sacred (measured by refusal to forsake them in an economic game).

In a longitudinal study of Palestinian adolescents, when they perceived threat to their people, those more involved in religious ritual (frequent prayer, mosque attendance) were likelier to see political issues central to conflict as absolute moral imperatives forbidding Palestinian leaders to compromise, whatever benefits or costs to their people.

Group interests, especially when threatened, may become sacralized through alliance to religious rituals and rhetoric, as with Iran’s nuclear program and disputes over Persian Gulf Islands. (Sheikh, Ginges, Coman & Atran, J. Judgment & Decision Making, 2012)
What is special about sacred (religious) frames?

People will not consent to explicitly abandon such a frame or adopt a new one because moral / religious frames are bound up with personal and social identity.

But the content of sacred frames (including religious texts) is open-textured: that is, the meaning of sacred frames (and the texts upon which they rely) is subject to reinterpretation.
Re-Prioritizing & Re-Framing Sacred Values

Reprioritizing SVs, Reframing SVs, and willingness to Delay Imposition of some SVs allows leaders to deal instrumentally with otherwise value-laden issues (women’s & minority rights, *Sharia law*, taking int’l loans on interest), and gives leaders time to push for fundamental change will trying to meet the responsibilities of governance. (e.g., providing physical and economic security for their people).

These strategies are also key to negotiating intractable conflicts based on seemingly opposing SVs (e.g., *reframing the Emperor of Japan as a constant gardener after WW2*; Hamas use of *Hudna*).
Heightened perception of intergroup conflict, combined with emotionally charged rituals, enhances *identity fusion*, fosters the sacralization of issues related to the conflict, and heightens willingness to make costly sacrifices and engage in extreme actions.
The Devoted Actor: Sacred Values, Social Fusion, and Costly Sacrifice in Intractable Intergroup Conflicts

- These studies were designed to assess aspects of the *Devoted Actor*, focusing on the relationships sacred values, identity fusion with groups and values, costly sacrifices, and immunity or resistance to material tradeoffs and normative social influence.

- Although the methods used here permit only correlational assessments, the correlational patterns reveal possible causal pathways for further testing.
FUSION MEASURES
To the extent that you feel yourself to be at one or at odds with the group(s) labeled here, slide the small circle towards or away from the big circle.
Distributions of Fusion with Group
(essentially dichotomous: totally fused vs. all others)
To the extent that you feel the issue(s) below essential to who you are or not, slide the small circle towards or away from the big circle.
Distributions of Fusion with Values
(essentially dichotomous: totally fused vs. all others)
Aspects of Parochial Altruism: Group Fusion, Parochial Morality, and Support for Costly Sacrifices in Lebanon

• N = 60 adults from Beirut and Byblos (Jbeil)
• Sunni, Shia, and Christian
• 47 % Males / 53 % Females
• University educated
• Average age: 24 years (16 to 57)
• < 10% rejection rate for younger people,
• > 50% rejection rate for older people
• Preliminary findings: larger studies in the works
Fusion and Support for Costly Sacrifices
Following a statistical analysis that strongly warranted segregating a tight set ($\alpha = .80$) of "parochial" values

- patriotism, purity, divinity, sacrifice for your group, fighting for your group, modesty, selling land to outgroup, worship, and loyalty

from an equally tight set ($\alpha = .80$) of "universal" values

- emotional harm, discrimination, caring for others, individual rights, tolerance, democracy, free speech, theft, respecting parents, and murder

we found that:

1. People who were fused with their religion, believed that their group was superior, and moralized parochial over universal values, were most likely to support costly sacrifices for the group ($\alpha = .85$ for combined costly sacrifices).

2. By contrast, people who were fused with religion, moralized universal over parochial values, and believed that their group was not superior, were least likely to support costly sacrifices and extreme actions for the group.
Belief in Group Superiority

Costly Sacrifices

- Fused (Religion)
- Not Fused

Belief in Group Superiority

Low

High
Following a statistical analysis that strongly warranted segregating a tight set ($\alpha = .80$) of "parochial" values

- patriotism, purity, divinity, sacrifice for your group, fighting for your group, modesty, selling land to outgroup, worship, and loyalty

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- emotional harm, discrimination, caring for others, individual rights, tolerance, democracy, free speech, theft, respecting parents, and murder

we found that:

1. People who were fused with their religion, believed their group was superior, and moralized parochial over universal values, were most likely to support costly sacrifices for the group ($\alpha = .85$, combined costly sacrifices).

2. By contrast, people who were not fused with religion, believed that their group was not superior, and moralized universal over parochial values, were least likely to support costly sacrifices and extreme actions for the group.
Moralization of Parochial Values

- Fused (Religion)
- Not Fused

Costly Sacrifices

Moralization of Parochial Values

Low

High
Fusion and Parochialism
(Composite of Parochial Morality, Group Superiority)
The Nuanced Roles of Religion and Fusion in Radicalization to Extreme Actions

These results have interesting implications for:

- The Impact of Religion
  (as both moderator and booster of costly sacrifices)

- The Impact of Fusion

- Fusion theory argues that fused actors are most prone to extreme actions,
- whereas we also find that fused actors are least prone to extreme actions under certain conditions:
- for example, in groups that do not feel superior, and which favor universal values over parochial values -- such as some religious liberal and civil and human rights groups.
Sacred Values Measures = Immunity or Resistance to:

- Monetary Tradeoffs
- Greater Social Benefits
- Normative Social Influence
  +
- Fusion with Values

(Proactive Spanish Liberal vs. Conservative Groups)
Spanish Subjects
(February – March, 2014; similar study currently being run with supporters of Pakistani Mujahedin)

- N = 1332
- 58% Females
- Average age: 37 years (18 to 78)
- University educated
- 73% Proactive Liberal, 27% Proactive Conservative
Aspects of Devoted Actors
(Conditional Probabilities)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value Fusion</th>
<th>Social Immunity</th>
<th>Immunity to Societal Benefits</th>
<th>Resistance to Monetary Rewards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value Fusion</td>
<td>0% ➔ 100%</td>
<td>60% ➔ 95%</td>
<td>28% ➔ 74%</td>
<td>36% ➔ 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Immunity</td>
<td>26% ➔ 75%</td>
<td>0% ➔ 100%</td>
<td>7% ➔ 78%</td>
<td>8% ➔ 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunity to Societal Benefits</td>
<td>37% ➔ 82%</td>
<td>59% ➔ 99%</td>
<td>0% ➔ 100%</td>
<td>11% ➔ 96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to Monetary Rewards</td>
<td>39% ➔ 78%</td>
<td>48% ➔ 98%</td>
<td>12% ➔ 88%</td>
<td>0% ➔ 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, the 2nd row of the 4th column shows that when people were immune to social influence there was an 84% chance they would refuse monetary rewards, as compared to just an 8% chance when they were not immune to social influence.
Proactive Conservatives: Costly Sacrifices

Willingness to Sacrifice

- Job
- Jail
- Violence
- Children
- Life

Fused with Position
Not Fused
Proactive Liberals: Costly Sacrifices

- Job: Fused with Position > Not Fused
- Jail: Fused with Position > Not Fused
- Violence: Fused with Position > Not Fused
- Children: Fused with Position < Not Fused
- Life: Fused with Position < Not Fused
Emotional Response Towards Pro-Outgroup Events

- Fused with Position
- Not Fused

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Fused with Position</th>
<th>Not Fused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sacred Values and Fusion

- Fused with Position
- Not Fused

% participants

Not SV

SV
The Devoted Actor Hypothesis

When sacred values become embedded in fused groups, then members of these value-driven groups become willing to collectively defend or advance those values through costly sacrifices and extreme actions, in ways resistant to material tradeoffs and normative social influence.
De-Radicalization Strategies: Bottom Lines (1)

- Understand the Social Networks and how they have formed over time, otherwise even complete disruption of the current network, and neutralization of all involved in carrying out or planning violence, will fail to sufficiently disrupt.

- Understand which values are truly sacred and not subject to material incentives or disincentives, or to appeals to any greater good.
  - Such sacred values are generally immune or resistant to “Carrots and Sticks” approaches most common (besides police and military action) to current counterterrorism efforts.

- Provide alternate social pathways and heroic ideals that appeal to the idealism, energy, and passion of youth in the search for significance.
  - Appeals to moderation and material rewards or punishments don’t work once people are fused into value-driven groups.
De-Radicalization Strategies: Bottom Lines (2)

✓ Undertake longitudinal studies of the potential pathways to and from violence in hotspots around the world, and establish reliable, testable and replicable criteria for evaluating the factors involved and the relative success or failure of de-radicalization programs in leveraging those factors.

– To-date there are very few such reliable evaluation measures (Gen. Doug Stone’s monitoring measures for prisoners released from Abu Ghraib under his de-radicalization program comprise an exception, in part because the research and action environment was well-controlled – a luxury not readily available elsewhere).

✓ Get researchers and evaluators into the field, and don’t be hidebound by convenience or institutional precedent.

– While commonsense approaches to de-radicalization that stress material rewards and sanctions are often insufficient, or even backfire, current efforts to harness Big Data are also not likely to help much unless informed in sustained ways by focused cultural knowledge from the field; indeed, greater reliance on Big Data has come less reliance on actual cultural knowledge.

– Unfortunately, there is little sustained, scientific fieldwork or reliable, culturally-informed evaluation metrics; and attempts to introduce these are undermined by legal restrictions placed by DoD. This needs to change.