

Building Bridges

TO STRENGTHEN AMERICA

FORGING AN EFFECTIVE COUNTERTERRORISM ENTERPRISE
BETWEEN MUSLIM AMERICANS & LAW ENFORCEMENT

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PART 5
TERRORISM AND THE "MARKET FOR MARTYRS"



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Terrorism as Business Firm Activity and the “Market for Martyrs”

We sum up the “hybrid theory” presented earlier by conceiving of a terrorist group as a business firm, as proposed by the Yale University School of Management.¹ This firm uses grievance-themed advertisements to tap into and/or create a market of people experiencing identity crises. Such individuals constitute the recruiting pool or “market for martyrs,” that terrorist firms seek to recruit from.

Three types of advertisements are primarily used: 1) events like handing out flyers and public demonstrations 2) media marketing in the form of TV interviews and Internet-based material (such as texts and videos); and 3) word-of-mouth (i.e. “social networks”). Based on field research, it appears demonstrations and media marketing tend to generate initial interest in extremist ideology and reinforce belief in the ideology after joining a group. However, it is word-of-mouth advertisement that tends to most effectively convince a person to sign up for membership with a terrorist business firm.²

Competition in the “Market for Martyrs”

Using the analytical framework of terrorist groups as business firms, it is important to note that terrorists also face strong competition from two other “business firms”: mainstream Muslim communities and law enforcement. As noted earlier, the vast majority of Muslims turn to their faith to deal with identity crises from a sense of disenfranchisement without becoming radical. As a result, extremist groups face stiff competition in the “market for martyrs”³ from various mainstream mosques, imams (clerics), and faith-based civil society institutions. The mainstream’s presence pushes out terrorists from the extremists’ labor market.⁴

Terrorist firms must first tap into the “market for martyrs” to have the necessary quantity and quality of people to run the firm’s various operations. However, they do more than recruit people to their cause. Their danger lies in their additional “entrepreneurial activities” that distinguish them from extremist, but lawful non-violent entities. They seek to challenge the government’s monopoly on the use of force by engaging in unlawful violent activities and other material support. This automatically puts them in conflict – or market “competition” – with law enforcement authorities.

In order to dry up the “market for martyrs” and successfully compete against (i.e. defeat) terrorist organizations, a new partnership between law enforcement and Muslim communities is needed. To improve law enforcement-community relations, and ultimately counterterrorism policy, we suggest forming stronger partnerships through community-oriented policing.

Endnotes

¹ For instance, see: Aaron Zelinsky and Martin Shubik, “Terrorist Groups as Business Firms: A New Typological Framework.” *Yale University School of Management*, (2006). Available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm/SSRN_ID959610_code734227.pdf?abstractid=959258&mirid=1.

² Neumann and Rogers, *Recruitment and Mobilisation*, P. 33-47; 62; Stevens and Neumann, “Countering Online Radicalisation,” P. 13.

³ Laurence R. Iannacone, “The Market for Martyrs.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, Vol. 2, No. 4, (2006).

⁴ This includes groups on the far conservative edge of the spectrum of mainstream Muslim organizations. According to a report by the *Combating Terrorism Center* on Ayman Al-Zawahiri’s statements Al-Qaeda sees the conservative Muslim Brotherhood as a long-term strategic threat to its existence because of its non-violent activism. As the report notes:

“Hard-line Jihadist organizations like Al-Qai’da both fear and despise the Islamist political movement called the Muslim Brotherhood, in large part because the Brotherhood effectively garners support from the same constituencies that Jihadists are desperate to court. Because the Muslim Brotherhood and Jihadists share a similar ideological lineage, Jihadists tends to focus their criticism on the Brotherhood’s willingness to participate in secular politics as a vehicle for attacking their Islamic credentials.”

See: Jarret Brachman, Brian Fishman, and Joseph Felter, “The Power of Truth? Questions for Ayman Al-Zawahiri.” *Combating Terrorism Center*, (April 21, 2008), P. 7. Available at: http://ctc.usma.edu/questions/CTC-Power_of_Truth_4-21-2008.pdf. Also see: Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke, “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood.” *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2007), P. 112-13. Available at: <http://www.nixoncenter.org/publications/LeikenBrookeMB.pdf>.



Founded in 1988, MPAC is an American institution which informs and shapes public opinion and policy by serving as a trusted resource to decision makers in government, media and policy institutions. MPAC is also committed to developing leaders with the purpose of enhancing the political and civic participation of Muslim Americans.

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