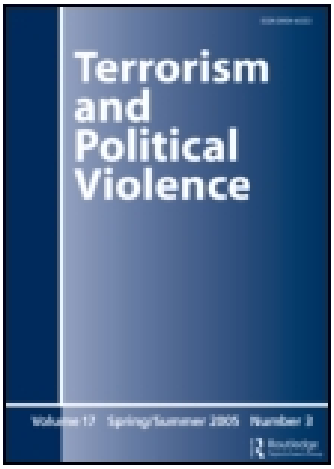

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Resisting Violent Extremism: A Conceptual Model for Non-Radicalization

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Although much has been written about how and why individuals become terrorists, very little research has focused on why individuals choose not to become involved in political violence. Some assume that these non-radicalized individuals simply have not had the same life experiences as terrorists. Yet one only has to explore areas of conflict, such as the Gaza Strip, northwest Pakistan, or the southern Philippines, to wonder why more individuals have not joined local militant groups. This article presents a conceptual model ofnon-radicalization in an attempt to move the discussion forward on this topic. It argues that it is impossible to understand radicalization pathways, or design policies to preempt them, without a complementary knowledge ofwhy individuals resist the influence ofviolent extremism.

Keywords Al Qaeda, motivations, radicalization, terrorism

Why don't more individuals turn to political violence? It is a question seldom asked within Western academic or policy circles. Over the past decade, research has expanded on the topics of why and how individuals become terrorists.[1] Although the topic of radicalization is by no means new amongst terrorism scholars,[2] this surge has been driven, in part, by the discovery of Western jihadists, such as David Headley, who pled guilty in 2011 to terrorism charges for his role in conducting reconnaissance for the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, India.[3] Similarly, some authors have begun to address disengagement, or why people leave militant groups.[4] This research on disengagement, in turn, has emerged more recently in response efforts to address radicalization as well as the development of rehabilitation programs for arrested terrorists.[5]

Yet very little research has been conducted on the question of why individuals do not join terrorist or insurgent groups. This lapse is troubling, if only because the answers are critical to a thorough understanding of either radicalization or disengagement. After all, so many of the factors attributed to motivating individuals to join terrorist groups are evident in wider populations. Relatively few individuals ultimately become involved in political violence.

The present article attempts to bridge this divide by presenting a conceptual model on non-radicalization. That is, it posits the likely factors that influence individuals not to become involved in political violence, referred to as "resistance to violent extremism." In doing so, this article tests the assertion put forth in a report

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entitled, *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together* that resistance to terrorism requires more than the simple absence of key radicalizing factors.[6] It also compares resistance factors to those that affect disengagement. The findings—and conceptual model—are based on a review of academic literatures, journalistic narratives. and primary source materials on this subject. This present article concludes by arguing enough difference exists between resistance, radicalization, and disengagement that they should be treated separately by intelligence, law enforcement, and other government agencies.

Conceptualizing Radicalization

In January 2009, Bryant Neal Vinas pled guilty to conspiracy to murder United States (U.S.) citizens and providing material support to Al Qaeda.[7] A convert to Islam, Vinas travelled to Pakistan in the fall of 2007 to take part in an Al Qaeda training camp. Vinas' training reportedly included an introduction to assault rifles, a fifteen-day course on how to make suicide belts, as well as how to operate rocket-propelled grenades.[8] Vinas also confessed to firing a rocket-propelled grenade at a U.S. military camp in Afghanistan as part of this training.[9] He was arrested in Peshawar, Pakistan, in November 2008.[10]

This present article is not about how Bryant Neal Vinas became involved in political violence. But much has been written about Vinas and others like him in the media, including his life story and possible motivations for joining Al Qaeda. He was scarred by his parent's divorce. He failed in his attempts to join the U.S. Army. He was a convert to Islam.[11] Furthermore, consensus has begun to emerge on what exactly constitutes "radicalization." Most assume that radicalizing individuals have unique experiences that push them towards violence.[12] While logical, very little empirical evidence exists to support this consensus, especially since most studies lack control groups or counterfactuals to substantiate their findings. Since this article, in its essence, is about those control groups, it is worthwhile to begin with a brief discussion of radicalization and violent extremism before continuing on to explore non-radicalization more thoroughly.

Individual Radicalization

In his September 2010 article entitled, "The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion," Mark Sedgwick observes that the term *radicalization* often is used to identify "what goes on before the bomb goes off."[13] Sedgwick continues on to argue that this concept is more obscure than it initially appears because some authors use it to refer to a state of mind, while others focus on behavior.[14] Part of the challenge with this topic—and the tension between mindset and behavior—is that it is difficult to pinpoint when an individual becomes radicalized. That is, most experts understand radicalization as a process through which individuals become persuaded that violent activity is justified and eventually determine to engage in violence themselves.[15] Radicalization, in this sense, encompasses both mindset and action.

The pressure to gain a more nuanced understanding of the pathway towards radicalization stems from more than academic curiosity. Intelligence and law enforcement officials increasingly are being asked to intervene before the bomb goes off. For example, the 2008 counterterrorism strategy published by the United

Kingdom's (UK) Home Office observes that despite success at disrupting terrorist plots since July 2005, the only way to truly reduce the risk of terrorism is to address the "radicalization that leads to violent extremism."[16] Similarly, the New York Police Department issued its own report on this topic in 2007, stating,

> Understanding … the radicalization process in the West that drives unremarkable people to become terrorists is vital for developing effective counterstrategies. This realization has special importance for the NYPD and the City of New York. As one of the country's iconic symbols and the target of numerous terrorist plots since the 1990's, New York City continues to be one of the top targets of terrorists worldwide. Consequently, the NYPD places a priority on understanding what drives and defines the radicalization process.[17]

Yet identifying the factors that define pathways towards violence is not easy. To illustrate this difficulty, consider the story of Abdullah Al Gilani, a young man from Saudi Arabia, as told by Ken Ballen in his book entitled, *Terrorists in Love: The Real Lives of Islamic Radicals.* Al Gilani was raised by his paternal grandfather and mother because his father died when he was still a baby. At the age of seventeen, Al Gilani met and fell in love with a young girl named Maryam. He tried to gather the required funds for a dowry, but was not able to earn enough before Maryam's family arranged to have her marry a man in the Saudi military. Distraught, Al Gilani used the funds that he had saved to travel to Dubai, Lebanon, and eventually Syria in an effort to join foreign fighters in Iraq. While in Iraq, however, Al Gilani came to believe that Al Qaeda was killing more Iraqis than Americans and so, with the help of a friend, departed Iraq and turned himself in to Syrian authorities.[18]

At what point could Al Gilani be considered "radicalized," if any? He hardly fits the stereotype of a hardened Al Qaeda fighter. He may have felt some animosity towards the United States and its allies for their presence in Iraq, but his radicalized mindset appears to have been influenced more by the loss of Maryam than any political motivation. Further, with respect to his behavior, Al Gilani clearly travelled to Iraq to fight. So perhaps once Al Gilani crossed the Syrian border, it would be fair to call him radicalized. What about Al Gilani's decision to leave Iraq and turn himself in to authorities? According to John Horgan, psychological disengagement often occurs due to disillusionment, burn out, or a change in individual priorities.[19] Al Gilani's story reflects that disillusionment played an important role in his decision to forsake Al Qaeda even before he engaged in violence directly. Indeed, Al Gilani arguably experienced the full cycle of radicalization, beginning with an initial step of thinking that violence was a viable choice, transitioning towards acting on that mindset, and then becoming disillusioned with the prospects of political violence. All this occurred, according to Ballen, without Al Gilani having engaged in any form of violent activity. This example, therefore, illustrates the challenge of identifying factors that influence radicalization pathways: the most important factors can be both mindset and behavior.

Despite this difficulty, *Social Science for Counterterrorism*, mentioned above, summarizes four categories of factors identified in academic research that influence individuals to become involved in political violence. The following paragraphs utilize these four categories as a basis and structure for providing a basic foundational understanding of radicalization. The subsequent paragraphs also present examples

of how specific factors have influenced individual terrorists over time. These four categories of factors also represent the structure for a more thorough discussion of non-radicalization in this present article.

The first set of factors constitutes "radicalizing social groups" or interactions that reinforce individual mindsets and behaviors.[20] For many experts, social interactions are key to the initial recruitment and further retention of young fighters. Donatella Della Porta, for example, has noted that many members of the Italian Red Brigades joined under the influence of peers and family.[21] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko also emphasize the importance of small groups to radicali-zation pathways in their more recent article entitled, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization."[22] It is worth noting, however, that a debate has emerged in the academic community on whether individuals radicalize independently or in response to recruitment by a terrorist group. Evidence exists for each type—bottom-up and top-down—of radicalization. So this debate really revolves around the extent to which individuals fall within one or another category. Marc Sageman and his book, *Understanding Terrorist Networks*, represent those who believe that radicalization is much more of a bottom-up process. Other authors, such as Joseph Felter at Stanford University, have observed more structured, top-down, recruitment within Al Qaeda and its affiliates.[23] Either way, the example of Bryant Neal Vinas, who travelled to Pakistan on his own, appears to be the exception rather than the rule. Whether individuals radicalize through a bottom-up or top-down process, most do so as part of a social group.[24]

Importantly, the presence of a social group does not preclude top-down recruitment. For example, the so-called Lackawanna Six was a collection of individuals who radicalized as a group, but also with the guidance of an Al Qaeda recruiter. According to a *New York Times* report, Kamal Derwish moved his family to Lackawanna, New York, in 1998. He began to hold informal talks at the local mosque and study groups at his apartment, eventually gathering a core group of followers.[25] In early 2001, seven of these men joined Derwish in an Al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan. Four of them returned to the United States without having participated in violent activities.[26] Derwish was killed in a Predator strike in Yemen in November 2002.[27] The Lackawanna Six example is interesting because it occurred prior to the September 2001 attacks. As such, it illustrates a social group that made the decision to travel to Afghanistan to join a training camp without the context of a struggle between the United States and Al Qaeda. And, yet, this group was influenced in that collective decision by an Al Qaeda recruiter.

Returning to *Social Science for Counterterrorism*, a desire for political, economic, social, or religious change constitutes the second set of factors that academics have identified as promoting radicalization.[28] And, to a certain extent, recruits have to believe that violence will enable this change to occur. These factors are fairly straightforward and have been explored extensively in the terrorism literature.[29] For a more recent example, in his biography of Ayman Al Zawahiri, the current leader of Al Qaeda, Montasser Al Zayyat has written about what motivated him to become involved in political violence.[30] Al Zawahiri comes from a well-to-do family in Egypt and is highly educated. According to Al Zayyat's account, Al Zawahiri became convinced of the need for political violence to topple Egypt's regime at the age of sixteen. He was motivated through ideology as well as a series of events, including the execution of Sayyd Qutb in 1965.[31] Al Zayyat tells the story of Al

Zawahiri's radicalization, using Al Zawahiri's own words from a 1981 interrogation by Egyptian security forces, included below. It illustrates a confluence of desired political and religious change in Al Zawahiri's own mind that, together, necessitated a violent response:

> When I was in high school in 1965 or 1966, when I started reading religious books and following the Muslim Brothers' incident of 1965 [Qutb assassination]. Some people started talking to me about why it was necessary for Muslim youths to get together. They said that the incident was directed solely against Islam. I was convinced.[32]

The third set of factors that influence individual radicalization is the need to respond to grievances, either personal (e.g., death of a loved one at the hands of security forces) or collective.[33] For example, in their work on political violence in Chechnya, Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova note that all of the "Black Widows" in the sample had experienced personal trauma and many of them had witnessed family members beaten by security forces.[34] Indeed, grievances have been cited the most often by terrorism experts over the years for motivating radicalization. So much so that, in his groundbreaking book, *Terrorism*, first published in 1977, Walter Laqueur felt the need to respond to a general perception that grievances cause terrorism by debunking the argument that addressing grievances would, on its own, remove the threat of terrorism.[35] Yet Laqueur also stipulated that the existence of these grievances cannot be disputed.[36]

Finally, individuals also appear to be influenced by perceived rewards, such as financial, social, and religious rewards, or even the expectation of excitement.[37] This last set of factors is exemplified in the radicalization of Leila Khaled. Born in Haifa, but raised in a refugee camp in Lebanon, Khaled tells of her rise through the ranks of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in her autobiography entitled, *My People Shall Live.* According to this book, Khaled initially joined Fatah at the age of fifteen because it sponsored many of the youth activist groups in the Palestinian refugee camps.[38] She became disillusioned with Fatah, however, because they limited women's role to fundraising.[39] Khaled wanted to be a fighter. Leaving Fatah for the PFLP, Khaled became the first woman terrorist to hijack a plane in 1969 at the age of twenty-one.[40] She was arrested by the Syrian government in 1969 and released. She was arrested by the British government in 1970 and released. Thirty-one years later, well after Khaled ceased conducting hijackings, she gave an interview to the *Guardian.* When asked if she would still be willing to die for Palestinian statehood, Khaled replied, "of course."[41]

Based on Leila Khaled's autobiography, it is arguable that she adopted a radicalized mindset at the age of fifteen and never lost it. Khaled's radicalized mindset did not lead to violent behavior, however, until she was twenty-one. Khaled's life history evidences a desire for change, a need to respond to collective grievances, radicalizing social groups, and perceived excitement. It is, therefore, possible to imagine how these factors might work together to reinforce individual choices as he or she moves along a pathway towards violence. And, thus, as stated above, these four categories of factors represent the starting point for the analysis herein. That is, this article examines whether or not non-radicalization is the absence of these four sets of factors in any given individual's life, or if something else is required to hold back or reverse the influence of violent extremism.

Violent Extremism

The term *violent extremism* also is used throughout this present article. It has been adopted from the current lexicon of counterterrorism in the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. But, like with the term *radicalization, violent extremism* tends to take on multiple meanings. For example, in May 2010 *The Atlantic* magazine published an article entitled, "The New Term for the War on Terror," which observed that the Obama Administration had rebranded the global war on terrorism with the term "countering violent extremism."[42] One year later, in June 2011, the White House issued its new U.S. National Strategy for Counterterrorism. While this twenty-six-page document only refers to violent extremists once, it seems to be used as a general term for terrorists, especially those associated with Al Qaeda.[43] Similarly, based on the previously-cited Home Office memorandum entitled, *Working to Protect the Public*, the UK government seems to perceive radicalization as leading to violent extremism aka terrorism.[44] Its Prevent strategy also links Al Qaeda and violent extremism more explicitly than the U.S strategy, stating, "the most significant international terrorism threat to the UK remains violent extremism associated with and influenced by Al Qaeda."[45]

In contrast, policy documents released by Australia and Canada use the term somewhat differently. Australia's Countering Violent Extremism strategy paper states the following:

> The Australian Government's countering violent extremism strategy supports Australia's broader counter-terrorism efforts by addressing factors that make people vulnerable to extremist influences and recruitment by terrorists. The emphasis is on intervening early—before a law enforcement response might be needed.[46]

Based on this document, it appears that Australia uses the term *violent extremism* to mean radical mindsets, not necessarily behavior. The Australian government also goes beyond Al Qaeda in its interpretation of violent extremism. Canadian documents, by comparison, use the term "violent ideologies" synonymously with violent extremism. And, again, Canada's terminology appears to extend beyond Al Qaeda.[47]

For the sake of clarity, this present article uses the phrase "resistance to violent extremism" to designate those individuals who have been exposed to radical ideologies and even flirted with radical mindsets, but ultimately have rejected violence. The term *non-radicalization* is used synonymously with the phrase *resistance to violent extremism.* It does not consider individuals who have never been exposed to, or considered, radical ideologies or violence. This article also goes beyond a discussion of Al Qaeda, drawing on studies from other militants, such as the Shining Path in Peru, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka (LTTE), the Italian Red Brigades, and the Palestinian Hamas. In doing so, it attempts to develop a widely applicable conceptual model for non-radicalization that can be tested further.

Resisting Violent Extremism

> How often we approach an individual with whom, in reality, we can never work, and how often do we avoid individuals who are suitable to work with

> and are open to change? They were before our eyes and at our fingertips, but we assumed that God did not wish them well. For that reason, we present this modest handbook in support of our brothers and out of concern for their safety, as well as sharing [the burden] with the strangers [those who fight for Islam] and offering friendship to the lonely and treasure to the mujahidin.[48]

This quotation was taken from an Al Qaeda handbook entitled, *A Course in the Art of Recruitment*, which was released on September 7, 2009. The handbook provides basic guidelines to Al Qaeda members on how to persuade individuals to participate in violent jihad. That is, it urges recruiters to look beyond those individuals who volunteer and, instead, seek out those recruits who are likely to be the most suitable for Al Qaeda.[49] This practice is not uncommon in terrorist groups. The Real Irish Republican Army, for example, recruited teenage boys, referred to as "lilywhites" or "cleanskins," because they were unknown to the security services.[50] But, the Al Qaeda handbook goes one step further and forewarns recruiters of mistakes to avoid as they attempt to persuade others to join Al Qaeda as well as the characteristics of individuals unsuitable for recruitment. The handbook, therefore, presents insight into non-radicalization from the point of view of a terrorist. Equally interesting, some of his advice parallels findings from academic research on this topic.

To start, the handbook warns recruiters not to push individuals to separate from their families at the initial stages of radicalization, but rather to continue to reinforce the recruit's radical mindset over time until he takes the initiative to separate from his family and prepares to engage in violence.[51] In this context, the centrality of family and family obligations also emerge in academic studies that touch on non-radicalization. For example, in his book entitled *The Missing Martyrs*, Charles Kurzman asserts that family obligations hold significant sway over individuals who choose not to become involved in suicide attacks. To reinforce this assertion, Kurzman cites *New York Times* reporter Andrea Elliott, who interviewed young men with family members who had travelled to Iraq and Afghanistan to fight against U.S. military forces in those countries. Many of Elliot's interviewees were considering the possibility of joining Al Qaeda themselves, but could not because "If I go, who will support my family?"[52]

The importance of family obligations also emerges in studies of non-Muslim terrorist and insurgent groups, such as the *Sendero Luminoso* or the Shining Path in Peru. In her article on schoolteachers in Peru—key recruits for the Shining Path—Fiona Wilson observes that some who resisted the lure of the Shining Path did so because of concern over family obligations.[53] Lewis Taylor, in his book entitled *Shining Path: Guerrilla War in Peru's Northern Highlands, 1980–1997*, cites interviews with teachers in Peru who made the same argument.[54] Portions of one interview have been reproduced below:

> [I was] visited by an old friend from my college days who I had not seen for quite some time, so it was something of a surprise. We had fought side by side on the streets during the strikes against the military regime. … He told me about his militancy in *Sendero* and that armed struggle was planned to begin shortly. He urged me to join up. … I had recently got married and become a father—with these new responsibilities I couldn't just disappear up into the mountains.[55]

Based on these examples, as well as the Al Qaeda handbook, it would be easy to conclude that family obligations represent an important factor in non-radicalization. That said, family obligations do not appear to be a determining factor for non-radicalization on their own. Numerous stories exist of men and women who chose to engage in political violence despite family obligations. Elena Gonzalez, for example, represents a female commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) who was married and had children, yet still participated in guerrilla warfare. She joined FARC in the 1970s at the age of eighteen and had a husband and a young daughter at the time that she joined. In fact, Gonzalez remained a guerrilla fighter for over thirty years, even after paramilitaries assassinated her son.[56]

Additionally, Usama bin Laden reportedly had three wives staying with him at the compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where U.S. Special Operations Forces eventually found and killed him in spring 2011. One of those wives, Amal Ahmed Abdul Fateh, originally from Yemen, told Pakistani and U.S. authorities about her life with Osama bin Laden.[57] Not only did she live with bin Laden while he was evading security forces, but she also gave birth to four children in Pakistan.[58] Further, Al Qaeda documents captured in Afghanistan suggest that it welcomes men with families into the organization: married men are allowed to take one week vacation every third week.[59] These examples suggest that family obligations alone are not sufficient barriers to radicalization.

Beyond family obligations, some authors have observed that logistical costs pose somewhat of a barrier to potential recruits, especially if they are required to travel beyond their immediate residence. Charles Kurzman, for example, observes that significant barriers exist for potential recruits into Al Qaeda and its affiliated militant groups. In his book, Kurzman notes that approximately one percent of all postings on the online Al Qaeda discussion board *al-Firdaws* (Paradise) in 2006 conveyed questions of how exactly the poster might engage in jihad on a true battlefield.[60] These postings suggest that the logistics of trying to get to a conflict zone might represent an important barrier to radicalization.

Equally interesting, the author of the aforementioned Al Qaeda handbook identifies misers as unsuitable for recruitment, stating "miserliness certainly varies, but you must learn, my beloved brother, that this character flaw is also fatal. Money is the backbone of jihad, and we are looking for a brother who will submit himself for the pleasure of God, not only his wealth."[61] Of course, this guideline takes recruiters one step beyond what might be considered logistical costs to the actual financing of fighters while they are on the battlefield. One might imagine that fighters need to provide money for food, shelter, weapons, and transportation, amongst other costs. Thus, the Al Qaeda handbook suggests that financing itself, beyond logistical hassles, poses somewhat of a barrier for individuals who want to join and sustain their participation in political violence.

Although logistical costs and financing appear to represent important barriers for foreign fighters attempting to join global or local terrorist groups, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are less of an issue for other terrorist recruits. It is well-known, for example, that the families of Hamas suicide bombers receive payments after an attack. The German newspaper *der Spiegel* reported in 2007 that the family of Bassam Takruri received monthly payments of $200 each month for more than a year after this eighteen-year-old detonated a suicide belt on a bus in Jerusalem. After Israeli security forces bulldozed the Takruri house, moreover, they moved

into an apartment owned by the Organization of Martyr Families.[62] Similarly, some reports indicate that Hizballah has paid its new recruits a salary, especially local recruits used for intelligence-gathering purposes.[63] Equally important, some militant groups, such as the LTTE and FARC, have been known to forcibly recruit some members.[64] Thus, logistical costs appear to be a less significant barrier for recruits in areas experiencing ongoing conflict than for foreign fighters seeking to join global or local terrorists.

The fourth factor sometimes mentioned as an important barrier to violent extremism is fear. Fear, in this sense, primarily means fear of security forces. In her 1991 work on women in the Basque terrorist group, *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), for example, Eileen MacDonald wrote that every new recruit into the organization believed that if he or she was caught by Spanish security forces they would be tortured.[65] Fear of security forces also receives some mention as a relevant barrier to violent extremism in studies of the Shining Path in Peru.[66] And, Al Qaeda's recruitment handbook warns that dangerous qualities in a recruit include cowardice.[67] The author of this handbook continues on to suggests that recruiters provide their young contacts with Al Zawahiri's books as persuasive devices, since they discuss the purported injustices that Muslims face at the hands of their own governments. But, at the same time, recruiters are warned that the descriptions of torture found in Al Zawahiri's books have been known to discourage recruits from joining.[68]

Returning to the current understanding of radicalization, it is important to note that these four factors—family obligations, logistical costs, financing, and fear—represent wholly new categories. That is, they are not simply the absence of key factors described as contributing to radicalization. In some sense, one could argue that they represent the inverse of radicalization factors as opposed to the absence of such factors. Fear, for example, could be viewed as the inverse of excitement or perceived rewards. Logistical costs could be viewed as the inverse of financial rewards and so on. So it is possible that for some factors, their inverse must be present, while for others non-radicalization requires their absence. Indeed, the four non-radicalization factors listed above do not appear to be sufficient in and of themselves to ensure that individuals resist violent extremism. And, studies suggest that the absence of certain other radicalization factors is equally important. We discuss these factors below.

Primarily, some evidence exists that the absence of reinforcing social ties can inhibit individuals from becoming terrorists. That is, individuals might be attracted to radical mindsets but without friends or family around them who encourage violent behavior, they channel that mindset elsewhere. In a book on the Irish Republican Army (IRA) entitled, *Only the Rivers Run Free*, for example, authors tell of a young woman named Cathleen who sympathized with the IRA but did not join it until she moved neighborhoods. Cathleen was surrounded by IRA members in her new neighborhood, including extended family members. And, thus, Cathleen interacted more with individuals who fought for or provided material support to the IRA. These interactions, combined with personal sympathies and experiences of harassment at the hands of British forces, convinced her to join this terrorist group.[69] Similarly, Umar Hassan recently published an interview with an unknown American Muslim about his flirtation with the Muslim Brotherhood and political violence. Titled *The Reluctant Jihadist*, this book explores why the interviewee initially became attracted to radical ideologies, but turned away after a period of time. Part of the explanation was limited interaction with other hardened terrorists.[70]

Other authors on the issue of radicalization and de-radicalization argue for programs that re-direct individuals with radical mindsets towards non-violent activities as preemptive measures. In this respect, an individual's perceived rewards—another set of factors for radicalization—are achieved through means other than violence. Froukje Demant and Beatrice de Graff observe that this approach has been relatively successful in the Netherlands in their article entitled, "How to Counter Radical Narratives."[71] That is, programs have been designed to help youths with a more radical mindset focus that energy elsewhere and yet still achieve political, social, economic, or religious fulfillment. The British government also has attempted to work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Muslim communities to re-direct youths that evidence radical mindsets.[72] Other examples exist outside of Europe. In Indonesia, for example, NGOs have partnered with locally-run religious schools called *pesantren* to introduce programs that provide faith-based mechanisms for activism beyond violence.[73] Interestingly, the Al Qaeda handbook on recruitment does not address these types of programs. Either the author had not encountered them or they were not perceived as a potential threat or pitfall to his efforts.

Additionally, one of the most common factors in stories told by authors of individuals who have flirted with political violence but ultimately rejected it is the perceived ineffectiveness of this instrument.[74] That is, in contrast to radicalization's desire for change, many of those who resisted violent extremism did so because they did not think that it would work. In the book entitled *The Reluctant Jihadist*, for example, the interviewee recounted that "when I matured, I was able to see honestly how violent revolts led to other violent revolts and the end result was always a reign of terror and suffering of the people who were less able to protect themselves."[75] This perceived ineffectiveness of violence also was striking in Lewis Taylor's work on the Shining Path in Peru. Taylor travelled to communities in Peru's highlands that had rejected the Shining Path in the 1980s and 1990s to learn "why?" In his interviews, one resident told Taylor the following:

> How were they ever going to beat the army?… OK, the *terrucos* were tough and possessed the advantage of surprise, so they could give the police the run-around and take them on. But I've been in the army and know the score. We knew that the army would eventually have to come in and that they would have *serrano* (highland) conscripts and better arms. Then *Sendero* would have a real fight on its hands and be at a disadvantage.[76]

In this quote, it is easy to see how one potential recruit into the Shining Path weighed his options and decided against joining the guerrillas, in part, because he did not believe that they could succeed. This could not have been an easy choice, as the Shining Path was known for its brutal reprisals against dissidents. According to Taylor, however, this point of view was fairly indicative of those he interviewed in communities that rejected and fought against the Shining Path.

Finally, one step beyond perceived ineffectiveness, it is arguable that some individuals might not become involved in political violence because they disagree with violence itself. They find killing morally repugnant. Interestingly, this moral argument tends to be used more with respect to a rationale for why individuals leave terrorist groups than why they do not join in the first place.[77] Or, alternatively, moral repugnance also has been used to explain a drop in popular support for

terrorist groups. Perhaps the most recent examples are the letters written to al-Qa'ida in Iraq leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, by al-Qa'ida leadership in Pakistan during the latter half of 2005. The letters' author, "Atiyah," directs al-Zarqawi to stop killing popular Sunni leaders in Iraq, because the killings are alienating the local populations. Atiyah also observes, in the November 2005 letter, that al-Zarqawi's operation against hotels in Amman negatively affected popular support for al-Qa'ida worldwide.[78] When it comes to resisting violent extremism, some evidence suggests that moral repugnance might also play a role. Authors, such as Albert Bandura, have long argued that individuals who engage in political violence often experience psychological processes that allow them to disassociate morally from the act itself. Bandura, for example, observes that militants often dehumanize their targets or displace responsibility for the violence onto others to overcome a natural reluctance to kill other human beings.[79] It is therefore arguable that the inverse is true for non-radicalization: those who do not experience moral disengagement also resist violent extremism.

Taken together, the factors described above can be used to inform a conceptual model of non-radicalization or resistance to violent extremism. This conceptual model has been produced in Figure 1. The left-hand branch of the conceptual model is titled "new recruits do not join" and, thus, illustrates non-radicalization. Importantly, this conceptual model does not apply to lone wolf bombers or individuals who decide to take action completely independent of a terrorist group. And, of course, the model should only be viewed as a starting point for further research on this topic. That said, the following paragraph provides a brief explanation of the model.

Four categories of mid-level factors can be hypothesized as leading to the absence of new recruits for a terrorist group: a) moral repugnance, b) perceived costs, c) perceived ineffectiveness of violence and the d) absence of reinforcing social ties. That is, the conceptual model suggests that at least one or perhaps all three must be evident for an individual to choose non-radicalization over radicalization.

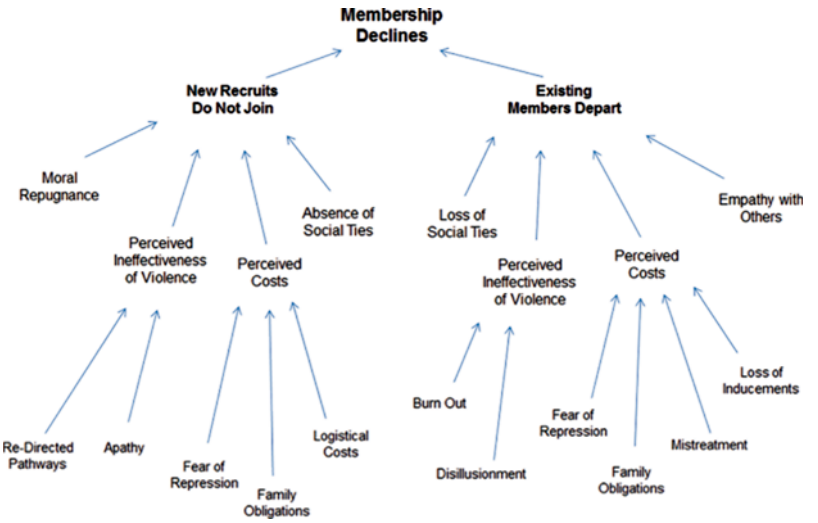

Figure 1. Factors that influence resistance to and desistance from violent extremism (color figure available online).

With respect to perceived costs, they could come in multiple forms. This model identifies four possible costs that individuals face in joining a terrorist group, including logistical costs, financing, family obligations, and fear of repression. The mid-level factor titled "perceived ineffectiveness" has two sub-factors in this conceptual model: apathy and re-directed pathways. Apathy, in this context, suggests that individuals have no desire to act as change agents or do not see a need for change. In contrast, re-directed pathways indicates that individuals want to see political, social, economic, or religious reforms and work towards those reforms in ways other than through violence. Finally, the model does not present sub-factors for the absence of reinforcing social ties, as they did not emerge in our research, but one could imagine that they might include family, friends, and mentors. In this sense, "family" would fall under two different branches, one representing the possible costs and another branch, social ties.

Figure 1 represents an initial hypothesis of the many factors that are likely to influence an individual to resist the influence of violent extremism. This present article argues that, as such, it is a first step towards establishing a "control group" of non-radicalization that can be compared with theories of radicalization. And, if policymakers are interested in preempting radicalization, logic would suggest that they focus on strengthening non-radicalization factors. Questions remain, however, on how these non-radicalization factors relate to disengagement or why individuals leave terrorist groups. The subsequent section, therefore, provides a summary of the existing academic literature on disengagement or desistance from violent extremism. These key disengagement factors have been added to the right-hand branch of our conceptual model, Figure 1.

Desistance From Violent Extremism

While very little has been published on the topic of non-radicalization, desistance from violent extremism has received greater attention since the September 11, 2001 attacks. The process of desistance from terrorist groups appears to take two forms: a) a sudden disassociation with the group and its members or b) gradual diminishing of role, which could include non-violent activities or advocating that the group shift to non-violent activism. Using the examples discussed previously, Abdullah Al Gilani, the youth who travelled to Iraq based on lost love, would indicate a sudden disassociation with his respective terrorist group, or in this case Al Qaeda. Leila Khaled, in contrast, gradually became involved in non-violent activities for the PFLP over time. Either is relevant for this present article and, thus, both are explored in the sections below.

Interestingly, family obligations appear to play an important role in desistance from violent extremism, like they do with resistance. For example, in his book entitled, *Walking Away from Terrorism*, John Horgan argues that changes in personal priorities, such as marriage or having a child, often result in desistance or disengagement.[80] Jannie Lilja also stresses the importance of family obligations in her study of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam.[81] Indeed, Indonesia, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia have all acknowledged the importance of family obligations in their rehabilitation programs for arrested terrorists. Most authors agree that some of the most successful elements of these programs are those that reinforce former terrorists' family obligations.[82]

On the flip side, individuals who experience a loss of social or personal ties with other members of terrorist or insurgent groups also exhibit a proclivity to depart. Donatella della Porta, in her work on the Italian Red Brigades, has noted that fractures within the group caused individuals to walk away.[83] Similarly, Omar Ashour, in his study of the Egyptian *Al Gamaat Islamiyya*, found that many who disengaged from that group were persuaded to do so by their colleagues who had also left.[84] These factors suggest that, again like with resistance, both positive and negative social networks can have an impact on desistance from violent activities.

Beyond social ties, it appears that some members of terrorist and insurgent groups simply become disillusioned with their organization and, thus, depart. This disillusionment could be a result of ideological, strategic, or tactical disagreements. For example, Horgan cites a member of the Irish Republican Army as departing due to his horror at an escalation in the violence utilized by this group to achieve its objectives.[85] Fiona Wilson similarly interviewed a former member of the Shining Path who left after his community had suffered at the hands of violent Shining Path cadre, stating:

> He had been recruited by *Sendero* while attending secondary school in Tarma. He had imbibed the ideological message, but now wanted to distance himself from invaders who were bent on destroying the order, livelihood and way of life in his home community.[86]

Perhaps less consistently than either social ties or disillusionment, some have argued that individuals leave terrorist groups due to fear. Omar Ashour, in his study of *Al Gamaat Islamiyya*, for example, mentions fear of government repression as a motivation for disengagement.[87] Ashour observes that the Egyptian government applied repressive measures to both *Al Gamaat Islamiyya* members and their families. These measures reportedly included long detentions and poor conditions in prison, such as poor ventilation, malnutrition, and beating.[88] According to Ashour's interviews with former *Al Gamaat* members, this repression influenced the disengagement of militants resident in Egypt as well as those who had fled abroad.[89]

John Horgan, in contrast to Omar Ashour, believes that mistreatment at the hands of terrorists, as opposed to government repression, induces desistance.[90] And, like mistreatment, several other factors are mentioned by one or two authors as causes for desistance, but emerge less consistently. These factors include socio-economic opportunities, which were cited by Zeki Sarigil in his study of Kurdish militants in Turkey.[91] And, finally, burn out. Burn out was particularly observed by Donatella della Porta in her studies of desistance in the Italian Red Brigades.[92]

Interestingly, some parallels exist between the factors that influence resistance to violent extremism and disengagement. These parallels can be found in Figure 1. Comparing the left-hand and right-hand branches, "perceived costs" are mid-level factors for both non-radicalization and disengagement. And, family obligations and fear appear to be sub-factors for perceived costs in both branches of the conceptual model. That said, disengagement appears to have two other sub-factors: mistreatment at the hands of terrorist groups and the loss of positive inducements. Of course, it is possible that these two sub-factors would emerge in further study of non-radicalization. But, at this point, they appear to be divergences.

Additionally, "perceived ineffectiveness of violence" applies to both disengagement and non-radicalization, but, again, the sub-factors differentiate these two

branches in our conceptual model. Burn out, for example, only applies to disengagement, as does disillusionment with the terrorist group's ideology, strategy, or tactics. And, finally, in an inverse of non-radicalization, the "loss of social ties" contributes to disengagement. That is, studies suggest that broken relationships within a particular clandestine group can cause members to depart entirely, just as close friendships or family members can influence an individual to join in the first place.

Conclusion

It is possible to develop a preliminary hypothesis about why individuals do not become terrorists, based on a handful of studies that discuss this issue somewhat indirectly. It is clear that some parallels exist between joining and not joining terrorist groups. Specifically, social networks appear to both encourage individual membership, as well as discourage it. Perceived costs (the inverse of rewards), as one might expect, also appear to create barriers. Thus, while ideological rewards, financial rewards, social rewards, or excitement each contribute to an individual's decision to join a terrorist or insurgent group, logistical costs or mistreatment at the hands of militants create disincentives. And, in parallel, positive inducements offered by governments appear to counteract these rewards.

Differences emerge more starkly with the two high-level factors—"need to respond to grievances" and "passion for change." This present article suggests that it is not really the absence of these factors that discourages individuals from joining terrorist groups, nor causes them to depart. Instead, factors such as fear, disillusionment with a particular militant group, and perceived ineffectiveness stand out as more significant. These preliminary findings do not necessarily contradict past studies on radicalization, but they underscore the merit of understanding resistance and desistance as separate processes. Equally important, the conceptual model presented in this article suggests that policymakers ought to re-consider their emphasis on pre-empting radicalization. It might be more effective to instead encourage non-radicalization. At the very least, further empirical research is required to obtain a better understanding of non-radicalization and disengagement.

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18. Ballen (see note 1 above), 45–71.

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