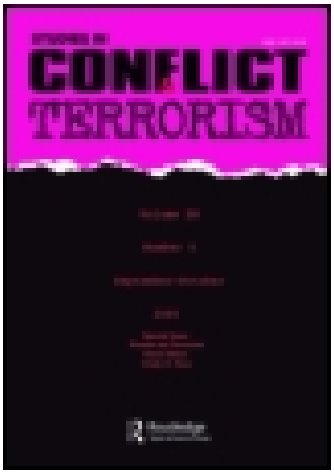

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Winning the Battle of Ideas: Propaganda, Ideology, and Terror

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Propaganda is at the heart of the struggle between Al Qaeda's strain of militant Islamism and the governments of the United States and United Kingdom. In an ideological struggle, propaganda is critical in shaping outcomes. Both Al Qaeda and the U.S. and U.K. governments recognize this, and have devised propaganda strategies to construct and disseminate messages for key audiences. This article considers the key elements in the Al Qaeda propaganda narrative, and the means through which it is disseminated. On the other side, it assesses the U.S. and U.K. governments' response, focusing particularly on the British effort to define and propagate a narrative centered on British values.

The Propaganda Battle

There is an ideological struggle underway between secular governments in the West, most notably the United Kingdom and United States, and the militant *jihadis* of Al Qaeda. It is a struggle, as Gordon Brown puts it, for the "hearts and minds" of moderate Muslims, living in the West and in the wider Muslim world.

Tony Blair characterized the struggle as a battle of ideas. "What we are confronting is an evil ideology," he declared shortly after the 7/7 London bombings. "It is a global struggle, and it is a battle of ideas and hearts and minds both within Islam and outside it. This is the battle that must be won."[1]

The terminology of ideological battle caught on, as did the idea that propaganda held the key to victory. In 2007, Gordon Brown described the situation as a "battle of hearts and minds" reminiscent to him of "the same cultural war that had to be fought against communism from the 1940s and 50s onwards."[2]

In a later television interview, Brown developed the idea. Repeatedly invoking the term "propaganda," he again drew comparison with the Cold War, "when we had to mount a propaganda effort, if you like, to explain to people that our values represented the best of commitments to individual dignity, to liberty and to human life being taken seriously."[3]

Al Qaeda's leadership are likewise clear that they too are engaged in an ideological struggle in which propaganda is critical. It is, wrote Ayman al Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's deputy, "a battle of ideologies, a struggle for survival, and a war with no truce."[4] On propaganda,

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Osama bin Laden told listeners to a February 2003 audiotape that "it has become clear to us during our defensive *jihad* against the American enemy and its enormous propaganda machine, that it depends for the most part on psychological warfare."[5] And so, wrote Zawahiri, Al Qaeda "must get our message across to the masses of the *ummah* [the global community of Muslims] and break the media siege imposed on the *jihad* movement. This is an independent battle that we must launch side by side with the military battle."[6]

The media, both men agreed, would be essential in the propaganda struggle. As bin Laden noted in a letter to Mullah Omar, spiritual leader of the Taliban, "it is obvious that the media war in this century is one of the strongest methods; in fact, its ratio may reach 90% of the total preparation for the battles."[7] Zawahiri, similarly, sought to "remind our brothers who work in Islamic media of their crucial, critical role in the Muslim *Ummah's* battle against the Zionist Crusade."[8]

Propaganda is central to any ideological struggle, where the goal is to persuade the uncommitted that you have the better ideology, and to reinforce the beliefs of your adherents. In so doing you hope to isolate the committed ideological enemies. The propagandist is a storyteller, who must craft credible and compelling narratives for his audiences.

This article assesses the narrative Al Qaeda has developed, how Al Qaeda has propagated it, and how it coheres with a broad body of Muslim opinion, much of it markedly more moderate than Al Qaeda, in the Middle East and the West. And it traces the evolution of the Western counternarratives, particularly in the United Kingdom, before arriving at some understanding of the opportunities and limitations for skilled propagandists of both ideologies.

Propaganda and Ideology

The term "propaganda" is indelibly sullied by its association with morally dubious practices and with the great twentieth-century propagandists of communist and fascist ideologies. After a few outings, Gordon Brown dropped it from his speeches and interviews, perhaps intuiting that it is not best for credibility with the audience to admit that you are a propagandist. Propaganda conjures images of deception, manipulation, and outright lying. The bigger the lie, the more likely it is to be believed, as Adolf Hitler famously put it.

But propaganda can certainly be truthful, and in most circumstances, the best propaganda *is* truthful, because falsehoods are more vulnerable to exposure, with attendant loss of credibility for the messenger.

"The most precious propaganda asset of the government," wrote Robert Thompson, architect of Britain's successful counterinsurgency in Malaya, "is its credit in the eyes of the people. That credit can only be preserved by strict adherence to the truth."[9] Richard Crossman, propaganda veteran of the Second World War, likewise favored adherence to the truth. "The art of propaganda is not telling lies," he wrote, "but rather seeking the truth you require and giving it mixed up with some truths the audience wants to hear."[10]

The propagandist then, if she or he is to learn from Thompson and Crossman, should strive to be factually accurate. But that is only the beginning. More properly, she or he should strive to construct a factually accurate *narrative*. As the psychologist Jerome Bruner, notes, "facts do not become probative [. . .] until they can be shown to be relevant to some sort of theory or story dealing with something more general."[11]

This is where the propagandist comes in. Propaganda is a conscious act of construction, bringing the discipline within the ambit of psychology and anthropology. The successful propagandist has grounded their message in the narrative elements most likely to resonate with the target groups.

Propaganda, then, is the deliberate attempt to persuade the public, through the communication of narrative, that your particular idea is right. It differs from normal communication only inasmuch as the propagandist takes special care to craft her or his narrative to sway opinion, rather than to objectively present fact. Facts are important, but perception and memory are more so.

Which is a good point to turn to the propaganda narrative on offer from Al Qaeda.

The Al Qaeda Narrative

In the decade since he rose to prominence by declaring war on the Zionist–Crusader alliance led by the United States, Osama bin Laden has had ample opportunity to set out the Al Qaeda narrative. The simplicity and coherence of that story has become increasingly important as the Al Qaeda movement has shifted from being a centralized group with stable senior membership to being effectively a brand that can appropriate any act of *jihadi* terror by groups and individuals around the world.

Al Qaeda's ideological narrative has at its heart the desire for a return to Islamic purity, and the division of the world into two distinct groupings, an "us" and a "them." On the "us" side of the equation are a vanguard of virtuous Muslims, conscious of the true Islam. The "them" is an unholy alliance of Crusader–Zionists, with a centuries-long record of scheming to do down Islam, allied with the corrupt and degenerate political leadership of the Muslim world, who are thwarting the desire of Muslims to return to their true faith. Here then is a Manichean struggle between good and evil; civilizational in dimension and utopian in aspiration.

An Islamist Utopia

Osama bin Laden declared in 1998 that Al Qaeda's goal was "to liberate the lands of Islam from unbelief and to apply the law of God Almighty in it until we meet Him and He is pleased with us."[12] This is the core of the Al Qaeda ideology, from which everything else follows.

Central to the vision is the awakening of the Muslim *ummah,* the worldwide community of believers, owing solidarity not to clan, race, or state, but solely to their faith. As bin Laden explained:

> Our concern is that our *ummah* unites either under the Words of the Book of God or His Prophet, and that this nations should establish the righteous caliphate of our *ummah*, which has been prophesised by our Prophet in his authentic *hadith*: that the righteous caliph will return with the permission of God.[13]

In their speeches, bin Laden and Zawahiri spend comparatively little time on their idealized end-state, preferring instead to focus on the conflict with enemies of the true faith. The concept is more fully developed elsewhere in the writings of other political Islamists, including Abul Ala Maududi and most notably for Al Qaeda's ideologue Sayyid Qutb.[14] Theirs is, as Olivier Roy and others have argued, an inauthentic vision, "not drawn from *sharia* or the political traditions of the Muslim world, but [one that] represents, in fact, an Islamic reading of modern political concepts (state, revolution, ideology, society)."[15]

Inauthentic or not, the myth of an Islamic political space forms the bedrock of a broad spread of political Islam, in which *ummah* serves as a substitute for the nation, but shares

many of its characteristics, not least its basis in a collective mythology, and its notions of belonging, identity, and exclusion.

They are Attacking Us

The second key element in the Al Qaeda narrative is that rapacious Westerners, particularly America, in alliance with degenerate Muslim leaders have blocked the creation of this idealized Islamic state.

"It is no secret to you, my brothers," bin Laden announced in 1996, in his now famous declaration of *jihad* against America, "that the people of Islam have been afflicted with oppression, hostility, and injustice by the Judeo-Christian alliance and its supporters. This shows our enemies' belief that Muslims' blood is the cheapest and that their property and wealth is merely loot."[16]

This has been a consistent theme in bin Laden's messages. In December 1998, he again identified "two sides in the struggle: one side is the global Crusader alliance with the Zionist Jews, led by American, Britain and Israel, and the other side is the Islamic world." And what's more, "the Crusader world has agreed to devour us."[17]

Victimhood works well as a propaganda narrative. In the 1990s, Slobodan Milosevic successfully exploited a deep Serbian sense of long-running injustice at the hands of malign foreigners.[18] Grievance at an unfair peace settlement, and a sense of betrayal by its own wartime leaders provided the popular basis for National Socialism's pledge to restore Germany's rightful place in the world.

And for Al Qaeda, the sense of victimhood in the Muslim world is fertile soil. A Pew poll in 2006, for example, found that 66 percent of Jordanians and 59 percent of Egyptians thought U.S. and Western policies were primarily to blame for the lack of economic prosperity in the Muslim world. In the same two countries, of those who thought that relations were bad between the West and the Muslim world, 61 and 56 percent, respectively, blamed the West.[19] Holding back prosperity and souring relations are some distance from seeking to "devour" the Muslim world, but within these groups there exists a smaller subset of people with harder views, including those convinced of malicious intentions of the West.

Jihad is the Only just Response

For bin Laden, the years of terrorist violence directed against the West are part of a defensive *jihad,* legitimate in Islamic jurisprudence. "We believe that it is our legal duty to resist this occupation with all our might and punish it in the same way as it punishes us," bin Laden declared.[20]

"Why are we fighting and opposing you?" he mused in a letter to Americans, "The answer is very simple: Because you attacked and continue to attack us". [. . .] It is commanded by our religion and intellect that the oppressed have a right to respond to aggression. Do not expect anything from us but *jihad*, resistance and revenge."[21]

The call to arms as part of what Qutb called the "vanguard" is actionable propaganda—the audience moves beyond being a passive recipient and chooses to respond, or not.[22] Action, for Jacques Ellul, a perceptive scholar of propaganda, is the real point of propaganda. A man absorbing the sociological message of the propagandist is one thing, but the real purpose of propaganda is to drive him to act.[23]

Action is key to the formation of the Islamist religious nation. "National self-determination," as Elie Kedourie wrote, "is in the final analysis, a determination of the will."[24] Answering the call to *jihad* is the manifestation of that will. Al Qaeda militants

are not, in the final analysis, fighting to diminish Western influence in the region, or to encourage reform of corrupt local regimes, although these will undoubtedly be side-products. Rather, they are fighting to establish an Islamic nation.[25]

The entire purpose of Al Qaeda propaganda is to inculcate this will to act. Ancillary virtues, common to otherwise dissimilar cultures, of honor, purity, and status are also offered as additional incentives to action in the speeches of bin Laden.

Terrorism is a Legitimate Tactic in Jihad

And for those that do respond, there are two additional messages to consider: Al Qaeda's legitimization of terror, and its exaltation in martyrdom.

Bin Laden has no qualms about killing civilians. "Whoever kills our civilians, then we have the right to kill theirs," he wrote in 2002.[26] Was it really as simple as an eye for an eye, an Al-Jazeera reporter asked him in 2001. "Yes," replied bin Laden, "We treat others like they treat us. Those who kill our women and our innocent, we kill their women and innocent, until they stop doing so." It is, he added, "valid both religiously and logically."[27]

In passing, bin Laden acknowledges that the Prophet forbade the killing of women and children, but cites in rebuttal some Koranic support for the concept of an eye-for-an-eye. He also derides his Islamic opponents as sell-outs, and even offers the, by now threadbare, defense that Al Qaeda does not deliberately target women and children.

Even dressed in theological trappings, the message appeals to deep human emotions beyond Islam—vengeance and justice. And it has some resonance with Muslim audiences, the flip side of that sense of grievance and victimhood. A 2005 Pew poll found very high levels of public support in some Muslim countries for violence directed against civilians—57 percent of Jordanian Muslims responding thought that such violence was often or sometimes justified, 39 percent in the Lebanon, and 25 percent in Pakistan.[28]

From a propaganda perspective, the essential point of terrorism is that it is itself a powerful form of propaganda. "The 'information' side of al-Qaida's operation is primary," wrote David Kilcullen, a counterinsurgency specialist, "the physical is merely the tool to achieve a propaganda result."[29] For terrorism is, as Maurice Tugwell noted, "propaganda by deed."[30] It breaks through the fragmentation of modern audiences, allowing massive reach; and it gives undeniable credibility to Al Qaeda's uncompromising message—leaving the perception that these people really do mean what they say.

This message is targeted as much at the perpetrators' constituent audience as at the enemy, in an effort to overcome mobilization problems. The returns from joining Al Qaeda are likely low, the expected costs high—so why join? Successful outrages help demonstrate that Al Qaeda poses a real challenge to the existing order.[31] Bin Laden knew that too—after the 9/11 attacks, he wrote, "the spirit of brotherhood in faith amongst Muslims was strengthened, which can be considered a great step towards unification of the Muslims under the word of God."[32]

The Glory of Martyrdom

The final theme in the Al Qaeda narrative is its glorification of death. Bin Laden's speeches resonate with praise for the young men who have answered his call to battle. The 9/11 hijackers, bin Laden declared, were "heroes, these true men, these great giants who erased the shame from the forehead of our *ummah*."[33]

This exaltation in death, strongly evocative of Nazi fascism, urges the subsumation of the individual within the totality of the nation.[34] To volunteer as a suicide *jihadi* requires

accepting that the value of your life is low, relative to the socioreligious objective of the renewed Caliphate.

Al Qaeda did not invent suicide bombing: in its Islamic guise, it comes from a much broader Islamist context of resistance to Israel, supported theologically, popularly, and financially from around the region. The veneration of martyrdom is firmly within this tradition; the only real novelty has been to extend the battle-front globally, toward the far enemy.

Together with additional societal, small group, and individual psychological factors, the mythology of martyrdom plays a part in motivating Al Qaeda terrorists to action.[35] Bin Laden knows this well, declaring that the 9/11 hijackers "have done this because of our words—we have previously incited and roused them to action."[36]

In sum, Al Qaeda is propagating a bleak ideology, glorifying death and advancing a wholly utopian ideal. To do so, it employs a simple, powerful narrative of revolution and resistance, good versus evil, honor and retribution; all grounded in a particular interpretation of Islam. This message is allied to a powerful brand that has allowed Al Qaeda to control its ideology even as its organizational structure has fragmented and flattened under American attack.

How is it Disseminated?

Al Qaeda's single greatest achievement has been to grasp the potential of the modern media. Partly, that success was a matter of timing—Al Qaeda has come to prominence at a time when two key trends in modern media have assisted the propagation of its ideological narrative.

First, satellite television itself has emerged as the dominant form of mass-communication in the Muslim world, reaching audiences that were hitherto subjected to state censorship of print and visual media. Since it started broadcasting in 1996, the Qatar-based station Al-Jazeera, in particular, has become closely associated with the dissemination of Al Qaeda messages. The channel has reached out to a large audience hungry for news and comment, and has garnered a reputation for exploring controversial topics that hitherto would have excited the interest of the censors throughout the Middle East. Together with its small band of imitators, Al-Jazeera has become the mainline through which Al Qaeda propaganda reaches the Muslim world.[37]

Paralleling the growth of satellite TV is that of the Internet, particularly in the Middle East. At about 17 percent of the population, Internet penetration in the region is slightly lower than the global average. But there has been a rapid growth in users of some 900 percent since 2000.[38] And the Internet has been a global asset for Al Qaeda, particularly in propagating its message to Muslim minorities in Western Europe.

The evolution of the net into a multimedia distribution network, capable of handling video and audio communications, is an important subsequent development. To exploit this, Al Qaeda has developed its own video production capabilities, with its own media arm, *As Shahab Media*, dispatching combat camera teams on operations, and disseminating professionally polished, if bloody, films over the Internet; often mixing terrorism, combat footage, and ideological exposition.[39] The films, which are also disseminated on DVD, allow Al Qaeda to exert a high degree of editorial control over their message.

Together, these developments, which emphasize the power of the image, have lent themselves hugely to Al Qaeda's propaganda tactic of violent terrorism.

Another trend in modern media that has aided the distribution of the Al Qaeda narrative is the gradual supplanting of mass-communication with online social networks.[40] A

distributed network is at once a powerful communication medium and a virtual sanctuary for Al Qaeda militants.[41] It allows for recruitment, ideological development, and operational planning. And it is difficult for opponents to map and suppress.

The Internet has, as Feisal Mohamed argues, comprehensively disconnected ideology from geography. "If we were still shackled to print," he writes, "the cost of delivering al Qa'eda propaganda to East London would be prohibitive, the lack of broad demand would make it a hopeless venture."[42]

In this sense, the Internet provides a new twist on the time-honored distribution of ideology through face-to-face contacts. These too have played an important a part in the propagation of Al Qaeda ideology; it is an ideology that has flourished in the traditional clan culture of tribal Pakistan as much as it has among Internet savvy *jihadis* in western Europe. The resolutely low-tech propagation of Al Qaeda ideology through the mosques, seminaries, and jails of the Muslim world and the West are as much a feature of Islamist success now, as they were in the 1960s when Sayyid Qutb was writing *Milestones* in an Egyptian prison cell.

Does it Work?

Tony Blair is persuaded that the Islamists are skilled propagandists, noting after the London bombings of July 2005 that, "they aren't unsophisticated in their propaganda. They recruit however and whoever they can and with success."[43] He returned to the theme in an article for *Foreign Affairs*, writing that "many in Western countries listen to the propaganda of the extremists and accept it. (And to give credit where it is due, the extremists play our own media with a shrewdness that would be the envy of many a political party.)"[44]

The world knows what Al Qaeda wants, and what it proposes to do about getting it. But has its propaganda actually worked? Certainly Al Qaeda has succeeded in generating a steady stream of recruits willing to fight for its cause. To see the propaganda in action, consider the videoed suicide testimony of Mohammad Sidique Khan, itself now part of the canon of Al Qaeda propaganda.[45] In just a few sentences, Khan touches all the key points in the Al Qaeda narrative.

First, *jus ad bellum*: Al Qaeda's war against its enemies is justified as a defensive *jihad* to resist Crusader aggression: "Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world."

Then Khan echoes bin Laden's take on *jus in bello*; targeting civilians is legitimate—an eye for an eye: "And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets."

Khan is also acutely aware of his role in an ideological struggle fought by propagandists as much as by force of arms: "I'm sure by now the media's painted a suitable picture of me, this predictable propaganda machine will naturally try to put a spin on things to suit the government and to scare the masses into conforming to their power and wealth-obsessed agendas."

And finally, Khan offers an acute understanding of terrorism as propaganda, coupled with Al Qaeda's macabre veneration of death. "Our words," he says, "are dead until we give them life with our blood."

Al Qaeda's propaganda propelled Khan into action, as it has the hundreds of other suicide bombers who have killed themselves for the cause during the last decade, starting in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Hundreds are active combatants in the militant struggle against

Al Qaeda's enemies, and thousands more are active sympathizers, providing support and sanctuary.

Why these violent few are more susceptible to the militant propaganda of Al Qaeda remains unclear, despite the efforts of numerous social scientists, sociologists and psychologists to find an explanation. As Marc Sageman argues, "Experts on terrorism have tried in vain for three decades to identify a common predisposition for terrorism. [. . .] These studies concluded that there was no psychological profile for terrorism."[46] There is, he discovered, no particular type of Al Qaeda terrorist either, and about the only thing that can be said of Al Qaeda adherents with any degree of confidence is that there are not very many of them.

In this critical respect, Al Qaeda's propaganda has had only very limited success. Worldwide, it has failed to mobilize the masses, or to control any significant territory. Its increasingly brutal Iraqi campaign, where it enjoyed more than four years of relative success in Iraq before suffering a rapid decline in fortunes during 2007, was undermined by the excesses of its fighters against fellow coreligionists. Its austere vision of an Islamist utopia proved attractive only to a hardcore of dedicated ideologues, while the bulk of the Sunni insurgency appeared motivated by other forces; sectarian, nationalist, and tribal.

On the positive side of its ledger, Al Qaeda has become the dominant global Islamist brand, particularly among non-Muslims. Largely as a result of its successful use of terrorism, it has been able to appropriate the goals of disparate Islamist groups, typically with more localized concerns, and place them within its global narrative.

That terrorism has killed Westerners in the low thousands, and Muslims in far greater numbers. It has been somewhat disruptive of daily life for citizens in the West, much more so for Muslims in Iraq and (to a lesser extent) Afghanistan, where in significantly undermining U.S. efforts, it has damaged U.S. prestige worldwide, and imposed a heavy financial cost. And it has severely strained relations between confessional communities within Western states. These are not nugatory achievements in the space of a decade, and as bin Laden is often keen to observe, the war will be long.

Meanwhile, the broader movements of political Islam provide a large reserve of potential manpower and talent. Pew's polling shows healthy public support for political Islam within the Muslim world, and though some groups like the Muslim Brotherhood have soured their patch with Al Qaeda's ideologues by indulging in electoral politics, there are plenty of militant Islamists whose actions can be brought into the Al Qaeda framework and, beyond them, plenty of public sympathy for Al Qaeda's narrative.

This large group of politicised Muslims remains the focus of Al Qaeda's propaganda, the fertile territory within which their ideas are competing with those of the secular western governments.

Propaganda and Liberalism

Western governments choosing to engage in a "battle of ideas" have two related goals—one is narrow: stop the terrorists; the other much broader, seeks to contest the ideological space with Islamism—both Al Qaeda's brand and other strains. Propaganda, as Gordon Brown confirmed, is an important part of that contest, but should it be?

Truthful or not, propaganda is a troubling concept for a democracy, whose political elites must negotiate the difficult terrain between message control and liberalism.

Tony Blair, speaking after 7/7, suggested that Al Qaeda's extremism could be defeated by "the power of argument [and] debate."[47] But the propagandist seeks to persuade, not debate; to create a mental landscape in which certain ideas lie beyond the imagination

of indoctrinated minds. It is, as David Welch notes, "distinct [. . .] from education, which hopes to open its students' minds. The aim of propaganda is the opposite: to persuade its subject or public of one point of view; and to close off other options."[48]

This tension between propaganda and democracy is exemplified in the history of the Cold War propaganda that so appealed to Gordon Brown. Before making the comparison, the prime minister had read a somewhat dark history of the CIA's cultural Cold War, *Who Paid the Piper?* Its author, Frances Stonor Sanuders, took a markedly less sunny view than Brown, arguing that the reality of cultural propaganda was deeply troubling: "Pursuing an absolutist idea of freedom," she wrote, the cultural Cold Warriors "ended up by offering another ideology, a 'freedomism', or a narcissism of freedom, which elevated doctrine over tolerance for heretical views."[49] Her book leaves a vivid impression of distorted ideals and sounds a cautionary note to liberals contemplating a propaganda campaign.

Propaganda in government hands can prompt (often accurate) images of a secretive effort in which (less accurately) public opinion is ruthlessly bent to the propagandist's will. Edward Bernays, sometimes seen as the father of modern PR, is illustrative: "the sincere and gifted politician is able, by the instrument of propaganda, to mold and form the will of the people," he wrote bluntly in his 1928 manual, *Propaganda*.[50]

To an extent, however, a liberal propaganda campaign targeted at Al Qaeda is both inevitable and likely to be less damaging to liberal ideals than might popularly be anticipated. In recent decades, information control has become a staple of democratic practice in the West, particularly in Britain and the United States. Spin doctors and assorted other communications specialists have proliferated in party politics and in the management of government business—sometimes to the detriment of substantial debate on policy issues.[51]

But at the same time, an expansion of media sources, coupled with established traditions of free speech and open debate, have established a degree of public immunity to manipulation—the classic illustration being enduring public hostility in Britain to an invasion of Iraq, despite considerable government effort to market the policy. In Western democracy, the public has become accustomed to efforts at media control, so that scepticism and cynicism are often rather more evident than ideological suggestibility.

As information media proliferate still further, in response to technological and economic changes, the difficulty of changing opinions through a concerted propaganda effort ought to increase. Entrenched views, buttressed by readily available confirmatory information, will not be easily shifted, even by a skilled propagandist in possession of a powerful means of communication.

Nonetheless, propaganda must still be effective at some level, otherwise, why would government engage in media control at all? Public opinion, although sticky, does shift through time, even on fundamental issues. The goal for Western propagandists waging a battle of ideas, in this limited view, is to offer support to those already predisposed to their narrative; and where the audience is unsympathetic to their view, to seek messages that diminish the likelihood of crossover from mistrust to outright hostility.

A propagandist can work away even the unfertile ground where the audience is already hostile, introducing a level of uncertainty and ambiguity in supporting beliefs where they run against the narrative thrust; while seeking messages that reinforce existing beliefs where they complement it. The task here is to itch away at the cognitive dissonance that allows someone, say, to hold that the Mossad really carried out 9/11, while simultaneously believing that bin Laden is a great man for taking the fight to America.[52]

The Counternarrative

The propaganda strategy got off to a shaky start after the 9/11 attacks, when the United States memorably embarked on a "War on Terror." The language used by American political elites was often divisive, mirroring Al Qaeda's split between an "us" and a "them"—you were either "with us, or with the terrorists," Bush told his global audience.[53] In propaganda terms, the rousing clarity of the message appealed to the shaken American heartland, and sent a clear signal of intent to allies and enemies. But Bush's further identification of the Afghan campaign as a Crusade provided more talking points for bin Laden,[54] and his invitation to Al Qaeda in Iraq to "bring them on" was lamentable machismo.[55]

The botched occupation of Iraq lent further credence to the Al Qaeda narrative that the Crusaders really were interested only in pillaging the Muslim world for its oil and humiliating Muslims everywhere. Then came the Abu Ghraib scandal, offering a stark demonstration of the power of the image in mass communication.

In parallel with its bellicose rhetoric, the United States launched a revamped public diplomacy effort, hiring an advertising executive to provide the soft sell on U.S. values. She and her successor engaged in public diplomacy, producing marketing material and touring the region, touting the essential decency of American values. The polls, however, remained resolutely poor: American actions and presidential rhetoric were doing little to disabuse Muslims of the idea that the West was ill-disposed toward the Muslim world.

And the terror attacks kept coming, by the dozen in Iraq and, less frequently, but to startling effect, around the world. In the 1950s, Paul Linebarger, an American soldier, scholar, and propaganda specialist, argued that "advertising succeeds in peacetime precisely because it does not matter," whereas "allegiance in war is a matter of ideology, not of opinion."[56] U.S. officials after 9/11 were discovering that Al Qaeda's ideology rested on deeper foundations than could be reached through marketing techniques.

Donald Rumsfeld, then Defense Secretary, offered a characteristically blunt assessment in 2006: "If I were grading I would say we probably deserve a 'D' or a 'D-plus' as a country as to how well we're doing in the battle of ideas that's taking place in the world today."[57]

The recent redefinition of the "War on Terror" as a battle of ideas is part of an attempted renaissance of the U.S. and U.K. propaganda effort. Message management, rhetoric, spin—these are all prized attributes in modern political discourse. Could the British and American governments not apply these skills to the ideological struggle with the violent *jihadis?* Perhaps those skills, often derided for relegating the substance of contemporary politics to a distant second place, could offer just as much as the Cold War parallels that struck the prime minister.

The British Approach

The British government has started on the home front, spurred by the domestic origins of the 7/7 bombers. Work began that summer under the direction of the Permanent Secretary for Government Communications, on a narrative to tackle extremist violence. Early themes were evident in Prime Minister Blair's speech responding to the attacks that month. Within Whitehall, the task of honing the government communication effort subsequently devolved to a team in the Home Office called the Research and Information Communication Unit [RICU].

The London blasts undoubtedly heightened tensions between Muslim communities and wider British society. But the British multicultural model was already showing signs of strain, evident, for example, in increasing self-segregation in schools and communities,

and in race riots in several northern towns during 2001. The British government has been feeling its way forward in this complex and sensitive operational environment.

Some key themes are now emerging clearly in its counter–Al Qaeda narrative, although there is still a clear sense of the government feeling its way forward. The propaganda effort is twofold: to undermine the Al Qaeda narrative, and to replace it with a credible and wholesome alternative narrative about Britain. To help achieve this, it has developed a series of messages. The aim is to build community cohesion—a broadly based consensus around ideas that challenge extremism. Consistent and clear communication is a key part of that effort, and RICU has played a role in shaping that communication effort by drafting guidance for ministers and other spokespersons addressing the issues of terrorism and militant Islamism.

Undermining Al Qaeda

The first set of messages directly targets the Al Qaeda narrative. Al Qaeda is portrayed as extremist, heretical, and morally repugnant. Its imputation of malign Western intention in the Muslim world is refuted, as is the notion that this terrorism is authentically Islamic. And Al Qaeda's portrayal of the conflict—violent defensive *jihad* against violent Western offense—is reworked into a struggle about ideas: a battle primarily of the intellect, of reason, rationality, and tolerance pitted against their antonyms.

There are three key messages. The starting point has been to shift the ideological terms of engagement away from those proffered by Al Qaeda. For Brown, the ideological fault-line is not between Muslims and the rest: it's extremists versus the moderates.

"We've got to separate those great moderate members of our community from a few extremists who wish to practice both violence and inflict maximum loss of life in the interest of the perversion of, of their religion," Brown told viewers of a July 2007 BBC interview.[58] He returned to the theme in a January 2008 newspaper interview, saying, "the more we can convince people that the ideas they have if they're in support of extremist and violent activity are ones that are condemned by every religion in the world, the more we can make progress."[59]

This message consciously de-links Al Qaeda from Islam. RICU, for example, wants to drive the point home by shifting the focus from "radicalisation," which hints at a foundational basis in Islam, to talk instead about "brainwashing" or "indoctrination," which both strips out the Islamic context and introduces a pejorative tone: the brainwashed are somehow weak-minded, not fervent believers; they are foolish, rather than glamorous. Terms like "Muslim extremist," *jihadi*, fundamentalist, are likewise rejected by RICU, in favor of non-denominational terms like "criminal," "violent extremist," "thug," and "murderer."[60]

The theme is hardly new—it was a basic premise of Tony Blair and George Bush in the weeks and months following 9/11 that they were not engaged in a war on Islam *per se*, but against a narrow and perverted ideology.

Not far below the surface of the Blair message, however, lurked a broader desire to reform the Muslim world, where it was intolerant, undemocratic, and sexist. "I do not mean just telling them that terrorist activity is wrong," Blair wrote. "I mean telling them that their attitude toward the United States is absurd, that their concept of governance is prefeudal, that their positions on women and other faiths are reactionary."[61]

The Bush/Blair message fared poorly alongside the bellicose rhetoric and foreign policy decisions of the time. And so, while foreign policy in the Muslim world remains essentially unchanged, the British government is stripping out that martial language. Its second key

message is that the "battle of ideas" is no such thing. Central to the Al Qaeda narrative is the idea of being engaged in war with the West. The British government—military deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan notwithstanding—is resolved to employ more pacific language.

The divisive language of the "War on Terror" never really caught on in British government circles. Such language, in the government view, reinforces the notion of conflict and lends the terrorist opponent an undue legitimacy. But there has, nonetheless, been something of a martial tone to some government speeches about the Al Qaeda threat. Tony Blair was at the forefront, calling for a "battle of ideas" after 7/7. In January 2007, he revisited the theme in an article for *Foreign Affairs* called "The battle for global values."[62]

Brown has also talked about ideological conflict, but his tone has since softened, in line with government advice that this sends a message of clashing civilizations. In January 2007, Brown was talking about "cultural war" and a "battle" for hearts and minds. By midsummer, this war had become a "cultural effort"[63] and by January 2008, the battle for hearts and minds had softened into a less bellicose "hearts and minds argument."[64] Manifestly there is an ideological struggle going on in the world, and it is violent. Those are facts, but the role of propaganda is not to hold a mirror to the world; and the government's communications specialists want to avoid bellicose language that reinforces and mirrors the terrorists' worldview.

And last, the third message—that terrorist violence is illegitimate. Brown and Blair have both been at pains to highlight the immorality of deliberately targeting civilians with terrorist violence. For Brown, "terrorism can never be justified as an act of faith. It is an act of evil in all circumstances."[65] It is admirably clear as a message, but it brought the government into conflict with its second theme—of common British values.

Britishness

The concept of "Britishness" is central to the second thrust of government communication strategy: to build an attractive alternative to the Al Qaeda worldview. The idea is that prevention of terrorism ultimately depends on building "resilience" and "community cohesion"—strong communities will be better able to detect and deter individuals from succumbing to the Al Qaeda narrative. Individuals with a greater sense of Britishness will themselves be less susceptible.

This is done by playing on the theme of British nationalism, although "nationalism" comes with ethnic baggage, and so is not the term of choice. The British government, in common—as it happens—with Al Qaeda's pan-Islamic agenda, is seeking to build a deracinated nationalism, capable of reconciling diversity with commonality.

"We have to be clearer now about how diverse cultures which inevitably contain differences can find the essential common purpose also without which no society can flourish," as Gordon Brown put it in his January 2006 keynote speech on Britishness.[66] It is a tough propaganda pitch in a country that is somewhat sceptical of social theorizing, and among communities anxious to retain their cultural heritage and religious integrity.

The "Britishness" narrative contends that underneath all the cultural variety in Britain, there are some fundamental values, shared by all. What are they?

Most importantly, the government message in Britain is a free liberal society, inclusive, tolerant, and open. Gordon Brown's Britain has "led the world as a country that moved from the arbitrary treatment of individuals with both tolerance and with a guarantee of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom to express different views and participate in political activities."[67] The goal for Brown, is "to defend the freedom of the individual, the liberty of the individual citizen to, to do as they make their choices to do, within the rule of law."[68]

There are other British values in the government narrative too— stoicism, for example, the idea that terrorism, although a serious threat, will not succeed in undermining the values that British people hold dear. And the idea that Britain is a force for progress in the world, such that, as Brown says, "the image that some terrorists have of Britain is the opposite of that when that is actually what we want to do as a country."[69]

The determination to de-link Islam from terrorism is also part of this Britishness narrative. The Muslim communities of Britain are with us, they share our values; it is the extremists that do not—that is the fundamental message behind the government's approach.

To that end, government communications should, as RICU says in its communications guidance, "avoid implying that specific communities are to blame."[70] The risk is that such communities will be less receptive to government communication. Muslim communities, so the argument goes, must be drawn into an inclusive narrative of a society pulling together against extremism, rather than pushed into a ghetto of grievance.

And so the government has set out to craft messages that foster inclusiveness and avoid exacerbating feelings of alienation within Britain's Muslim communities. The hope is a reinforced British identity that will underpin "community cohesion"—a key government term—and will perhaps serve as a counterpoint to two Al Qaeda themes: that Britain is a malign agent in the world, particularly when it comes to Muslims, and that Muslims should prize *ummah* above the state.

Does "Britishness" Work?

It is here at the relationship between values and culture that the government propaganda strategy enters choppy waters. The problem for the government is that the baseline of shared values it is seeking to propagate manifestly clashes with the values held by some Muslims in the United Kingdom.

On the illegitimacy of terrorism, for example, there is tension between Gordon Brown's clear prohibition and Muslim opinion on terrorism. A 2006 poll by the Pew organization found that 15 percent of British Muslims thought that violence against civilians could sometimes be justified to defend Islam, with a further 9 percent saying it could be justified, but rarely.[71] In the same poll, 14 percent of British Muslims expressed confidence in bin Laden himself to do the right thing in world affairs.

On freedom of speech, the Rushdie affair remains a litmus test. His *Satanic Verses* "should have been pulped," said the leader of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), one of the largest representative bodies, as recently as November 2007.[72] The echoes of Rushdie are still apparent in the controversy over the publications of satirical cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed.

Add in cultural differences between some Muslim communities and the mainstream population, including those relating to issues like arranged marriage and homosexuality, and it is not at all clear that the common values espoused in the government's "Britishness" narrative apply to some of Britain's Muslim communities. In the aftermath of 7/7, media reports have highlighted the attitude of intolerant *imams* in British mosques[73] and the reluctance of some Muslim leaders, particularly the MCB, to address extremism.[74] The problem, on this view, is far broader and deeper than a few fanatics engaged in terrorism.

Was it this cultural background that made the young terrorists attack their own countrymen? Are the home-grown violent *jihadi* extremists, numbering in Security Service estimates around 2,000 individuals,[75] just the harder end of a politicized Islamic culture that is markedly intolerant of secularism, cynical about British government motives, and alienated from wider British society? If so, where does that leave the government's

propaganda narrative, which stresses common values? And the one that seeks to separate a handful of extremists from the Islamic mainstream?

The government can take solace in two arguments. First, there are credible arguments that Al Qaeda terrorism is not solely a reflection of the illiberal values inherent in parts of British Muslim society. There is clearly a link between Al Qaeda adherents and Britain's Muslim communities—the extremists grew up within those communities, and are shaped in part by the cultural and religious framework they found there.

But that link is shrouded in ambiguity and complexity. In its desire to return to an idealized Islamic polity, Al Qaeda's ideology rejects many cultural tenets of Islam as practiced in the Muslim world, and borrows ideological themes from the Western lexicon. In some respects the home-grown terrorists have become cultural orphans, throwing off, as Ian Buruma and others suggest, one culture, only to find themselves marginalized by the other and left rootless, isolated, and suggestible. The resultant "sense of being 'disappeared' can lead to aggression as well as self-hatred," writes Buruma in his outstanding account of the killing of the Dutch filmmaker, Theo van Gogh. "Dreams of omnipotence blend with the desire for self-destruction."[76]

The second point is that propaganda is about building a reality, rather than reflecting what is already there. Many Muslims might not share the values of "Britishness" now, and to counter terrorism it might be important that they should, but, runs the government argument, they will not be drawn into it by cajoling.

In October 2006, Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, called for a "fundamental rebalancing" of government relations with representative Muslim groups, in a thinly veiled criticism of the MCB. She pledged to gear government funding toward groups that take "proactive leadership role in tackling extremism and defending our shared values."[77] It was a rare public criticism, out of kilter with a government propaganda strategy that now seeks to sell its values without alienating Muslim communities.

Disseminating Government Propaganda

Jacques Ellul offered a salient tip for the civil servants crafting the British narrative: "Propaganda," he declared, "must be total. [. . .] There is no propaganda as long as one makes use, in sporadic fashion at random, of a newspaper article here, a poster or a radio program there, organizes a few meetings and lectures, writes a few slogans on walls, that is not propaganda."[78]

But, of course, in a modern democratic society and, moreover, one in which the media sector is large, free, and diverse, there are limits to how "totalitarian" propaganda can (leave alone should) be. As media proliferates and the barriers-to-entry diminish, the plurality of views widens. Crowding out dissent is more difficult in the blogosphere and message boards of the Internet than it was when a quiet word in an sympathetic editor's ear could sideline a promising writer.

But if it cannot achieve total information domination, and if it must reconcile the desire for control with the values it is propagating, the British government can still deploy a powerful array of communication strategies to get its message out.

Propaganda is about more than a prime ministerial interview, important though that is in setting tone and direction. A savvy propagandist would certainly, for example, spend much time thinking about education. Teaching the virtues of British citizenship to children is one way though which those common values might become more deeply entrenched in Muslim communities.

"It is the task of education," noted Rousseau, an early advocate of nationalist indoctrination, "to give each human being a national form."[79] The British government now agrees, introducing in 2007 a scheme to make "understanding core British values" part of the school curriculum.[80] The Children's Department now has its own small Community Cohesion Unit, engaged partly in countering radicalization, alongside a larger team in the Communities Department. This latter department is the focus of the countering radicalization effort, and has recently begun to roll out initiatives, including voluntary training and curriculum programs for some of the British-based *imams* who teach many thousands of Muslim children in after-school *madrasas*.[81]

This brings to mind another factor—the messenger. Bin Laden is the authentic voice of Al Qaeda's narrative, and although Gordon Brown may be the authentic voice of Britishness, some messages might nonetheless be more persuasive coming from credible Muslim speakers—a fact of which the government is keenly aware.

The examples of Ed Husain and Shiraz Maher stand out. Both are young British Muslims who became involved with radical Islamist politics with *Hizb ut-Tahrir* before renouncing their affiliation and speaking out publicly about the dangers of intolerant Islamism.[82] They were in Brown's mind when he urged newspaper readers to "look at all the people that have written about their experiences being part of extreme factions and you know there's been a lot of that in the last few months in the media, to see what they're saying."[83]

Husain though balanced the benefits of authenticity with the loss of message discipline when he proceeded to criticize the government's conscious separation of terrorism from its religious roots. "Yes," he wrote, "do let's get away from the language of a 'war on terror', but let us not fool ourselves by calling this 'al-Qaida inspired terrorism'. Or make elusive references to 'The Ideology'. What ideology?" It is, he explained, "Qutbite Islamism, combined with extreme Wahhabism that produced jihadism. Al-Qaida is only one symptom of this deadly combination."[84]

Husain, Maher, and others have been making their (and, for the most part, the government's) case in books, articles, on television documentaries, and in face-to-face meetings around the country. Other Muslims seek to combat extremism in prisons and on university campuses. The thrust of the government's communication effort has been domestic, but the distinction between foreign and domestic propaganda has eroded in the age of global Internet communications and satellite television. And so officials, including Tony Blair, have also taken to the studios of Arab language news channels favored by Al Qaeda.

Elsewhere, the Foreign Office, which sets the strategy of the BBC World Service and provides its grant, has directed funding toward a new BBC Arabic television channel, at the expense of some of the central European language radio services that were the front line of the cultural Cold War. A leaked government memo discusses the idea of participating in chat room discussions where Islamists from around the world congregate.[85] And on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. and British military alike have been experimenting with the use of psychologists and anthropologists to tailor their message to local audiences.[86]

If not total propaganda, this is certainly a multifaceted, well-resourced, and carefully crafted approach. But can it win Brown's battle for hearts and minds?

Stalemate in the Battle of Ideas?

The experience of the last few years has demonstrated the limitations of propaganda at least as clearly as its strengths. For the two Western governments considered here, the United Kingdom and the United States, it is proving extremely difficult to shift public opinion

among Muslims publics that are sceptical of their approach to world affairs. Moreover, it remains incredibly difficult to counter the effectiveness of Al Qaeda propaganda in motivating terrorism. At best, the U.K. government can be said to have started to deconstruct the ideological narrative of Al Qaeda and construct an alternative.

In its favor, the narrative that the British government is assembling is essentially one of Enlightenment values that have proved their worth against more organized and dangerous totalitarian ideologies, and spread far beyond their original cultural boundaries. Military resolve, economic muscle, and statesmanship all featured in the twentieth-century struggle with communism and fascism, but ideas, and the propagation of ideas, whether to the elite readership of *Encounter* magazine, or to the mass audiences of the World Service and the Voice of America, were also part of the Cold War dynamic.

Also in its favor, the proliferation of media sources and distribution networks has greatly opened access to these ideas for audiences around the world, and particularly in those parts of the Muslim Middle East hitherto subject to censorship. The marketplace of ideas is becoming more free and competitive, although that does not necessarily equate to the triumph of liberal ideas: the media, to bowdlerize Marshall McLuhan, is only part of the message—and a greater media freedom, as exemplified by Al Qaeda's intelligent use of Al-Jazeera, does not necessarily equate to the inescapable triumph of liberalism.

Arrayed against the Western narrative are some uncomfortable realities—the economic and social stagnancy of the Muslim Middle East, government by non-representative and corrupt elites, the injustices of the Palestinian conflict, and the botched occupation of Iraq. These do not fit easily within an appealing Western narrative.

The British government can offer a somewhat competitive counternarrative in Britain, but its latitude is curtailed (both at home and, more severely, in the wider Muslim world where notions of "Britishness" are peripheral), by its own policy choices, and by a lack of leverage in places like the Palestinian territories and Saudi Arabia. It is proving difficult to propagate values of freedom and tolerance while being at the same time compromised by the realities of international politics.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States and United Kingdom do have something tangible to offer those prepared to entertain their narrative. Communication with sometime Al Qaeda allies has produced tangible results, particularly in Iraq. But it is a fragile bargain, predicated on local perceptions of the U.S./U.K. commitment to engage in the difficult task of state building.

On the other side, however, Al Qaeda is finding it equally difficult to move the masses. In the near term, its propaganda has been very effective in mobilizing Qutb's tiny vanguard to violent brutality. But its ideology demands more, and without the injection of ever more dramatic terrorist acts, it loses dynamism. As Gilles Kepel notes, "the sheer audacity and violence" of Al Qaeda terrorism was specifically intended to overcome the evident failure of the Islamist ideologies to achieve mass crossover.[87] That effort must be judged a failure.

And so, if the secular West lacks the propaganda to stop violent *jihadi* attacks, or to unpick Islamism and wider Muslim antipathy, Al Qaeda lacks propaganda that can take it beyond its rootless sanctuaries in cyberspace and the Hindu Kush. Victory in the battle of ideas will depend on moving beyond this impasse.

Notes

1. Tony Blair, speech to the Labour Party National Conference, 16 July 2005, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4689363.stm

2. Gordon Brown, interviewed on the *Sunday AM* program, BBC Television, 7 January 2007, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/sunday_am/6238645.stmw

3. Gordon Brown, BBC *Sunday AM* program, 1 July 2007, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/sunday_am/6258416.stm

4. Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner* (2001), in *His Own Words: The Writings of Dr Ayman Zawahiri*, translated by Laura Mansfield (Old Tappan, NJ: TLG Publications, 2006), p. 111

5. Osama bin Laden, audiotaped message to the people of Iraq, 11 February 2003, in Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 180.

6. al-Zawahiri, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, in Mansfield, p. 225.

7. The letter, initially obtained and published by the Pentagon's Harmony Project, is available at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bin_Laden's_letter_to_Mullah_Mohammed_Omar

8. Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Realities of the Conflict Between Islam and Unbelief," As-Sahab Media, December 2006, Transcript by U.S. Central Command, available at http://www.centcom.mil/sites/uscentcom1/What%20Extremists%20Say/ZawahiriVideoDecember2006.aspx

9. Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), p. 102.

10. Richard Crossman, quoted in Scott Macdonald, *Propaganda and Information Warfare in the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), pp. 35–36.

11. Jerome Bruner, "What is a Narrative Fact?" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 560, The Future of Fact (November 1998), pp. 17–27, at p. 18.

12. Osama bin Laden, first interview with Al-Jazeera, recorded December 1998, in *Messages to the World,* p. 91.

13. Osama bin Laden, interview with Al-Jazeera, recorded 20 October 2001, in *Messages to the World*, p. 121.

14. See especially, Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Delhi: Ishaat-e-Islam Trust Publications, 1981), and for analysis Gilles Keppel, *The Roots of Radical Islam* (London: Saqi, 2005). Zawahiri wrote that "Sayyid Qutb's call for loyalty to God's oneness and to acknowledge God's sole authority and sovereignty was the spark that ignited the Islamic revolution against the enemies of Islam at home and abroad. The bloody chapters of this revolution continue to unfold day after day." Zawahiri, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, in Mansfield, p. 48.

15. Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 63. See also Fred Halliday, for whom Islamism is "a mixture, a hybrid of modernity and anti-modernity," in Halliday, "The Politics of 'Islam': A Second Look," *British Journal of Political Science* 25(3) (July 1995), pp. 399–417, at p. 416.

16. Osama bin Laden, Declaration of *jihad* against America, 23 August 1996, in *Messages to the World*, p. 25.

17. Osama bin Laden, first interview with Al-Jazeera, recorded December 1998, in *Messages to the World,* at p. 73 and p. 93.

18. See especially, Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 1–30.

19. Pew Global Attitudes Project, "The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other," 22 July 2006, available at http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?PageID=830

20. Osama bin Laden, first interview with Al-Jazeera, recorded December 1998, in *Messages to the World,* p. 73.

21. Osama bin Laden, Letter to the American people, 6 October 2002, published online, in *Messages to the World,* p. 162.

22. Qutb dedicated *Milestones* to this "vanguard," who would start the task of reviving Islam, "marching through the vast ocean of *jihiliyyah* [non-belief, including among nominal Muslims] which has encompassed the entire world." *Milestones*, pp. 16–17.

23. Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), see especially pp. 25–32.

24. Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 76.

25. An argument convincingly made in Assaf Moghadam's critique of Robert Pape's book, *Dying to Win*; see Moghadam, "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of *Dying to Win*," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29(8), pp. 707–729.

26. Osama bin Laden, Letter to the American people, 6 October 2002, published online, in *Messages to the World,* p. 165.

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28. Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics," 14 July 2005, available at http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?PageID=814

29. David Kilcullen, "New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict," posting on the blog of the *Small Wars Journal*, June 2007, available at http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/06/new-paradigms-for-21st-century/

30. Maurice Tugwell, "Terrorism and Propaganda: Problem and Response," *Conflict Quarterly* VI(2) (1986), pp. 5–15. Bruce Hoffman makes a similar point, writing that terrorist violence "is conceived specifically to attract attention and then, through the publicity it generates to communicate a message. The terrorist must parlay this illumination (e.g., publicity) into a more effective vehicle of elucidation (propaganda)." Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 198.

31. On which, see Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27(4) (2004), pp. 243–281, at p. 247.

32. Osama bin Laden, audiotape circulated on the Internet, 14 February 2003, in *Messages to the World,* p. 194.

33. Osama bin Laden, statement for Al-Jazeera, 26 December 2001, in *Messages to the World,* p. 155.

34. The secular totalitarian roots of Al Qaeda's ideology are explored in Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (London: W.W. Norton, 2003).

35. On motivations for suicide terrorism, see Assaf Moghadam, "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26(2) (2003), pp. 65–92.

36. Osama bin Laden, interview with Al-Jazeera, recorded 20 October 2001, in *Messages to the World*, p. 107.

37. See especially, Hugh Miles, *Al-Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World* (London: Abacus, 2005).

38. The data here are taken from Internet World Stat, an commercial data provider and aggregator: available at http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm

39. Many of the films are archived here online at the Internet Archive, available at www.archive.org

40. On this, see Johnny Ryan, *Countering Militant Islamist Radicalisation on the internet: A User Driven Strategy to Recover the Web* (Dublin: Institute of European Affairs, 2007), pp. 31–40.

41. See Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) and David Kilcullen, "Counter-insurgency Redux," *Survival* 48(4) (2006), pp. 111–130.

42. Feisal G. Mohamed, "The Globe of Villages: Digital Media and the Rise of Home-Grown Terrorism," *Dissent* 54(1) (Winter 2007), pp. 61–64, at pp. 62–63.

43. Tony Blair, speech to the Labour Party National Conference, 16 July 2005, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4689363.stm

44. Tony Blair, "A Battle for Global Values," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2007), available at http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070101faessay86106/tony-blair/a-battle-for-global-values.html

45. A transcript is available on the BBC website at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm

46. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 91.

47. Tony Blair, speech to the Labour Party National Conference, 16 July 2005, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4689363.stm

48. David Welch, "Power of Persuasion," *History Today* 49(8) (August 1999), pp. 24–26.

49. Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper* (London: Granta Books, 1999), pp. 415–416.

50. Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (Brooklyn: Ig Publishing, 2005), p. 109.

51. For a lively account of the malign effects of message management in politics, see Peter Oborne, *The Rise of Political Lying* (London: Free, 2005).

52. Of British Muslims polled by Pew in 2006, 56% thought that Arabs did not carry out the 9/11 attacks. See Pew Global Attitudes Project, "The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other," 22 June 2006, available at http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?PageID=836

53. George Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, 20 September 2001, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920–8.html

54. In remarks to the press on 16 September 2001, Bush said that "This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while." Available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916–2.html

55. George Bush, remarks to the press, 2 July 2003, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/07/20030702–3.html

56. Paul M. A. Linebarger, "The Function of Psychological Warfare," in Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, eds., *Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays* (London: SAGE, 2006), p. 197.

57. Donald Rumsfeld, remarks at the U.S. Army War College, 27 March 2006, available at www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/03/27/terror/main1442811.shtml

58. Brown, interview on BBC *Sunday AM* program, 1 July 2007.

59. Gordon Brown, interview with the *Observer*, 6 January 2008, available at http://observer.guardian.co.uk/politics/story/0,,2236175,00.html

60. The quotes are taken from RICU's "Counter Terrorism Communications Guidance" for government officials, published in part by the *Guardian* and *Times* newspapers. See Alan Travis, "Whitehall Draws Up New Rules on Language of Terror," *The Guardian*, 4 February 2008, with accompanying language table (not online), available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/feb/04/uk.terrorism, and Stephanie Condron, "Terrorism Phrasebook to Put Officials on Guard," *The Times,* 4 February 2008, available at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article3301164.ece

61. Tony Blair, "A Battle for Global Values," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2007), available at http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070101faessay86106/tony-blair/a-battle-for-global-values.html

62. Ibid.

63. Brown said, "And that's why the **cultural effort**, almost similar to what happened during the Cold War in the nineteen forties, fifties and sixties when we had to mount a propaganda effort, if you like, to explain to people that our values represented the best of commitments to individual dignity, to, to liberty and to, to human life being taken seriously. And I think that's what we are going to have to talk about in the next few years." Gordon Brown, interview on BBC *Sunday AM* program, 1 July 2007.

64. Brown said, "And so this **hearts and minds argument**: you know if you look at all the people that have written about their experiences being part of extreme factions and you know there's been a lot of that in the last few months in the media, to see what they're saying. I mean obviously we've got to win that debate." Brown, interview in *The Observer*, 6 January 2008.

65. Brown, interview on BBC *Sunday AM* program, 1 July 2007.

66. Brown, "The Future of Britishness," speech to the Fabian Society, 14 January 2006, available at http://fabians.org.uk/events/new-year-conference-06/brown-britishness/speech

67. Brown, interview in *The Observer*, 6 January 2008.

68. Brown, interview on BBC *Sunday AM* program, 1 July 2007.

69. Brown, interview in *The Observer*, 6 January 2008.

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