Applying pressure to a radical Islamist VEO with 'no clear charismatic leader' will lead to fractures in the group; subsequently some groups will de-radicalize while others will not.

118

General Description of the Literature:

Targeting the leadership of a terrorist organization is an important part of any counterterrorism strategy. However, the literature shows that the success of such a tactic depends on the type of leadership (charismatic or not), as well as other organizational factors. The literature also draws on social network analysis to analyze the effects that applying pressure to the leadership will have, which is based on the idea that social ties are the primary functions that should be studied when trying to understand how an organization functions (Jordan 2009). Max Weber wrote that charismatic leadership is "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (Bromley and Melton 2002). Ashour argues that a charismatic leader of a VEO, who is seen as credible in the eyes of his/her followers, could legitimize a de-radicalization process, such as was the case with the IG in Egypt. However, without such leadership involvement, "armed Islamist movements tend to fragment under state repression" (Ashour 2007, 604). This fragmentation will often lead to either further radicalization by smaller loosely structured organizations or will actually facilitate a de-radicalization process. Cole writes that the removal of a charismatic leader, when the conflict has yet to be resolved, will not change the course of the conflict. The followers will seek solutions and replace old leaders with new leaders and the fighting will continue (Cole 2005).

Detailed Analyses

118: *Applying pressure to a radical Islamist VEO with 'no clear charismatic leader' will lead to fractures in the group; subsequently some groups will de-radicalize while others will not.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: The literature is mixed when discussing the effects that pressure on VEO leadership can have. In terms of its effects on radicalization, Langdon et al. (2004) find that there is little or no change in the radicalization of a group if its leader is killed, while Ashour (2007) gives an example of the opposite scenario. Looking at numerous examples, Langdon et al. (2004) find that only one out of thirty-one groups became more radical in the absence of leadership. Although the text does not mention whether these groups were pressured to disband, the evidence still clearly shows that in the absence of a leader, VEOs do not seem to radicalize. In only one case do they support the claim that the absence of charismatic leader could perhaps cause further radicalization, and that was the case of the Propaganda Movement in the Philippines between 1881-1893. After the arrest of their leader, his followers decided to radicalize further and "revive the spirit of Rizal" (Langdon et al. 2004, 68). (It should be kept in mind there is a difference between a group that never had a charismatic leader and one that lost such a leader. The Propaganda case is an example of the latter.) Similarly to the Propaganda case, Ashour (2007) shows how further radicalization can occur in the absence of a charismatic leader, using the case of the GIA in Algeria in the mid-1990s, which fragmented and then further radicalized when faced with a leadership vacuum. In support of this, Gordon (2006) offers evidence that targeting the leadership can be effective in limiting VEO activities. He cites that, while the selective targeting of Palestinian terrorist leadership by Israel, beginning in 2002, may have initially increased recruitment, over time the tactic stopped 80% of planned suicide attacks. However, Jordan (2009) best illustrates the

ambiguity of results that pressure on charismatic leadership can have. Targeting the leadership of ideological organizations, as opposed to religious extremist ones, is more likely to result in a group's fracture and collapse (Jordan 2009). However, she is careful to note that decapitation does not necessarily correlate with the increased probability of a group's collapse. She states that organizations with charismatic leadership can be "more volatile and unstable," and that charisma alone is not enough to explain when decapitation is likely to result in the collapse of a group (Jordan 2009: 727). In fact, citing Freeman, she states that "over time charismatic leadership can become more institutionalized and more resilient to leadership attacks" (Jordan 2009: 727). She states that the size and age of the group are just some of the factors that can explain whether or not targeting leadership will result in fracture or collapse; larger and older groups are less likely to suffer catastrophic blows (Jordan 2009). She cites at least three instances where decapitation did not cause a group to collapse, and notes that, while some groups carried out fewer attacks after losing their leader, some greatly increased their attacks and made them more lethal (Jordan 2009).

Empirical Support Score: 3 = Multiple qualitative and/or quantitative studies with mixed results (i.e. some in favor, some against the hypothesis), but more positive than negative findings.

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: The literature offers a mixed review of the effects of targeting leadership on the fracturing of the group and whether or not the group radicalizes, based on numerous organizational variables. However, the literature shows that a charismatic leader can often assist with the de-radicalization process, and it could be inferred that his/her death may cause followers of the group, who are emotionally attached to their charismatic leader, to strive to continue his/her legacy.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs.

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