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Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School

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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**STRIKING AT THE UNDERBELLY:  
INFLUENCING WOULD-BE TERRORISTS**

by

Waseem Uddin  
Vural Dizdaroglu

December 2013

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Michael E. Freeman  
George W. Lober

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2013	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> STRIKING AT THE UNDERBELLY: INFLUENCING WOULD-BE TERRORISTS			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Waseem Uddin and Vural Dizdaroglu				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT</b>  Modern states are approaching the issue of terrorism from both kinetic and non-kinetic perspectives; however, the focus of the international community has largely been on terrorist organizations, their leadership and their active and passive members, in whom the terrorist ideology is already deeply ingrained, and thus, they are difficult to turn toward a peaceful path. However, this thesis focuses on would-be terrorists, who may be relatively easier to influence. It identifies the possible causes that lead candidates toward the path of terrorism.  According to Kahneman and Tversky's Prospect Theory, people in the losses frame are more risk acceptant and therefore more prone to join terrorists' causes. To counter this risk-acceptant behavior, the answer lies not only in identifying possible causes for their placement in the losses frame, but in finding ways to transfer the would-be terrorists to a gains frame, thereby preventing them from joining the terrorist organizations. By adopting this strategy, there will be an indirect influence on the current wave of terrorism in the long-term, as well as a benefit in the short term by partially choking the inputs to the terrorists' organizations.				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Terrorism, deterrence, influence, would-be terrorists, Prospect Theory, losses and gains frame.			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 125	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

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**STRIKING AT THE UNDERBELLY:  
INFLUENCING WOULD-BE TERRORISTS**

Waseem Uddin  
Lieutenant Colonel, Pakistan Army  
B.S., Pakistan Military Academy, 1991  
M.S., Balochistan University, 2003

Vural Dizdaroglu  
Captain, Turkish Army  
B.S., Turkish Military Academy, 2005

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
December 2013**

Author: Waseem Uddin  
Vural Dizdaroglu

Approved by: Michael E. Freeman  
Thesis Advisor

George W. Lober  
Second Reader

Dr. John Arquilla  
Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

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## **ABSTRACT**

Modern states are approaching the issue of terrorism from both kinetic and non-kinetic perspectives; however, the focus of the international community has largely been on terrorist organizations, their leadership and their active and passive members, in whom the terrorist ideology is already deeply ingrained, and thus, they are difficult to turn toward a peaceful path. However, this thesis focuses on would-be terrorists, who may be relatively easier to influence. It identifies the possible causes that lead candidates toward the path of terrorism.

According to Kahneman and Tversky's Prospect Theory, people in the losses frame are more risk acceptant and therefore more prone to join terrorists' causes. To counter this risk-acceptant behavior, the answer lies not only in identifying possible causes for their placement in the losses frame, but in finding ways to transfer the would-be terrorists to a gains frame, thereby preventing them from joining the terrorist organizations. By adopting this strategy, there will be an indirect influence on the current wave of terrorism in the long-term, as well as a benefit in the short term by partially choking the inputs to the terrorists' organizations.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANM	Arab Nationalist Movement
DEV-SOL	Revolutionary Left
DHKP/C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front
ELF	Earth Liberation Front
GUPS	General Union of Palestinian Students
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
RAF	Red Army Faction
SSBU	Norway's center for child and youth psychiatry



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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First of all, we are truly proud to be a part of the elite NPS alumni and are indebted to this fine institution for providing the most conducive environment for learning and enhancing our educational skills. We are also grateful to the NPS Defense Analysis Department's faculty that helped us in honing our critical analysis skills, thereby lighting a path towards understanding the problems the world is facing today. But above all, we are enormously grateful to our thesis advisor, Professor Michael Freeman, and second reader, Professor George Lober, in facilitating and guiding us to write on a topic that has complex dimensions. We are deeply indebted to them, since their help, encouraging suggestions, knowledge and experience helped us at all times in completing our thesis. We would also like to thank Professor Siamak Naficy for his inputs on our thesis from the anthropological perspective.

We would like to acknowledge and extend our heartfelt gratitude to our families, who endured our busy schedules and facilitated the completion of our thesis in the most rewarding way. Our thesis would simply not have been possible without their support. Their patience and understanding were a constant support and motivation that inspired us to finish our thesis well within our set timelines.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Wars are truly won when enemies become friends. Then let's talk to the stranger before we shoot, or at least before we shoot again. On some things, we'll find, we won't change minds, and on some of these things we shouldn't. But who knows what a world could be made if we listen and learn at the camps of fallen angels?

–*Scott Atran*

In the post-Cold War era, terrorism has emerged as a leading security challenge for the entire world; however, terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Its new form is due to new employment tactics and the inclusion of technological enablers, which have enhanced its effects at the global level. Terrorism has mostly been associated with individuals or groups acting as terrorists, thereby demanding that any counterterrorism efforts focus on these individuals and groups as targets. This targeting approach has been successful in the shorter term; however, in the long term, it has failed to counter the changing face of terrorism and the tactics used by the terrorists themselves. Overall, while current counterterrorism efforts have been successful at some levels, terrorism as a whole still persists. This thesis asserts that to counter the current wave of terrorism, the most suitable targets are the inputs; i.e. the would-be terrorist candidates, who are most vulnerable not only to terrorist recruitment, but to counterterrorism pursuits.

Looking at terrorism from a quantitative approach (poverty and unemployment, lack of education, discrimination, crime statistics, etc.), there are various reasons for a person to join a terrorist's cause. This research focuses on the underlying qualitative factors (loss of identity, religious beliefs, sacred values, cultural differences, life experiences, etc.) as well as quantitative factors that put a would-be terrorist in the "losses frame" of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Nathan Tversky's Prospect Theory.<sup>1</sup> The research asserts that applying measures which

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Kahneman, and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica* 47, no. 2 (1979): 263.

will bring people from a losses frame to a gains frame will influence the current wave of terrorism by choking the inputs mechanism of terrorists' organizations and, thus, decreasing terrorism in the end.

## **A. SIGNIFICANCE**

The current security environment with integrated global counterterrorism actions has compelled terrorists to become adaptive, use networks and increasingly utilize virtual domains (compared to the physical domain) to attain their objectives, thereby making them hardened and less susceptible to counterterrorism actions. Therefore, all things being equal, it is comparatively easier to influence would-be terrorists (inputs) as open, clear and more specified targets, rather than endeavoring to identify cell-structured groups without any geographical affinity and then change the hearts and minds of hardened terrorists. For any terrorist organization, inputs are extremely important, since it is people, guns and money<sup>2</sup> that provide the means, opportunities and motivations towards the outputs. Of these inputs, though, the most critical are the people, who, if prevented from directly joining the cause of terrorism, would also affect the indirect support of it by denying food, material, shelter and information. The new approach recommended in this thesis would focus on the wound, instead of the bandage, and lead toward measures that will answer the question: How can the wound of terrorism be avoided in the first place?

Many counterterrorism actions, based on the Expected Utility Theory, have focused on individuals and societies; however, this thesis will focus on individuals and societies from the perspective of Prospect Theory. It will highlight why people perceive themselves to be in a losses frame, even without going into the requisite cost and benefit analysis, and it will offer a means by which to bring them from a losses into a gains frame. By asserting this, however, the authors do

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon H. McCormick, "Leaders, Followers and Organizations" (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, August 8, 2012).

not claim that this is the only way to counter the current wave of terrorism, but rather another alternative choice in that effort.

## **B. THESIS OVERVIEW**

The thesis will start by explaining the Prospect Theory of losses and gains, and how it can be applied to would-be terrorists. Prospect Theory is based on economic preferences of individuals as expressed in a lab environment; these preferences are then converted into a mathematical data set. However, in real life, there are other subjective aspects of decision making. Therefore, this research will analyze the memoirs of different terrorists from past and present, to include jihadi, religious, nationalistic, environmental and criminal terrorists. It will then apply Prospect Theory in a qualitative manner to the expressed motivations of those individuals. This research will focus on two types of terrorists: those who went all the way, and those who climbed only a few stairs on the “staircase” of Moghaddam<sup>3</sup> before turning back to the ground floor. Identifying the underlying factors that put people in a losses frame will reveal possible means for transferring them into a gains frame by suggesting a way forward for the counterterrorism pursuits. By adopting this suggestion, an indirect, long-term influence on the current wave of terrorism may be achieved.

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

On deterring and influencing terrorism and terrorists, there are two schools of thought: the first, held by such authorities as Leites and Wolf, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, states that terrorists cannot be deterred; hence, the best strategy against them should focus on prevention, destruction and offensive action in order to eradicate them. The second school of thought, advocated by Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, Daniel Whiteneck, Shmuel Bar, Alex Wilner and Andreas Wenger states

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<sup>3</sup> Fathali M. Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration,” *American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (2005): 162.

that rather than abandoning deterrence, it should be redefined and developed into a new framework for deterring terrorism.<sup>4</sup>

Within the framework of deterring terrorism, Davis and Jenkins highlight the importance of the influence component of a deterrence strategy that has both a broader range of coercive elements and a range of plausible positives for long-term success.<sup>5</sup> Davis emphasizes two points with regard to classic deterrence theory against terrorism: decomposition through offensive actions and influence through positive inducements. Going beyond individual terrorists and their groups or organizations, Whiteneck emphasizes extending deterrence to the societal elements and communities that support terrorism.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Shmuel Bar emphasizes the use of tactical deterrence at regular intervals to show the resolve of counterterrorism actions, but with the inducement of positive gestures as well.<sup>7</sup> Overall, this school of thought primarily focuses on the functional aspects of a counterterrorism strategy possessing a completely opposite, albeit mutually reinforcing, two-fold policy: decomposition through kinetic actions, along with influence components applied through non-kinetic means such as positive inducements.

In the realm of counterterrorism, James J. F. Forest and Raymond H. Hamden assert that, since there are different types of terrorists and they have different characteristics, different measures should be taken against them.<sup>8</sup> According to Wenger and Wilner, by desegregating a group engaged in terrorism, we have to identify which actors and processes are most susceptible to

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<sup>4</sup> Andreas Wenger and Alex Wilner, "Deterring Terrorism: Moving Forward," in *Deterring Terrorism*, ed. Andreas Wenger and Alex Wilner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 302.

<sup>5</sup> Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, *Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on al-Qaeda* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), xviii.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Whiteneck, "Deterring Terrorists: Thoughts on a Framework," *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2005): 189.

<sup>7</sup> Shmuel Bar, "Deterring Terrorists: What Israel has learned," *Policy Review* 149 (2008): 42.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond H. Hamden, "Unresolved Trauma and Thirst for Revenge: The Retributional terrorists," in *The Making of a Terrorist, Volume I: Recruitment*, ed. James Forest (Westport, CN: Praeger Security International, 2006), 170.

deterrence.<sup>9</sup> This thesis asserts that the current research on deterring terrorism has, through both decomposition and influence components, so far been focused mainly on the different functional parts of terrorism, such as terrorist leaders, foot soldiers, sponsors, financiers, etc. Therefore, targeting the inputs mechanism, i.e., would-be terrorists, is a field that requires more research and focus, since these individuals are the most susceptible elements of a terrorist organization. Audrey Kurth Cronin addresses the role of individuals as sources of contemporary terrorism, focusing on innate as well as external factors;<sup>10</sup> however, there is a gap in the analyses of different psychologies, motivations and behaviors of potential pools of recruits, living under the same environment, but behaving differently.

According to the Prospect Theory, decision makers (would-be terrorists) do not maximize their choices. They are risk averse when confronted with choices between gains (preferring lower sure gains over probable higher gains) and risk acceptant when confronted with losses (preferring probable bigger losses than sure lesser losses).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, they are more inclined towards losses with respect to comparable gains. According to Jeffrey D. Berejikian, the principal distinction between the choices identified in Prospect Theory and rational choice lies in the asymmetrical relationship between gains and losses. He further writes that “losses hurt more than a gain feels good.”<sup>12</sup> Consequently, an individual who is already in the losses frame is a potential recruit for terrorist organizations because he is more risk acceptant. But why is an individual in the losses frame? To answer this, the best approach would lead to an understanding of the mindset of a possible terrorist in the losses frame or would highlight the

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<sup>9</sup> Wenger and Wilner, “Deterring Terrorism: Moving Forward,” 307.

<sup>10</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Sources of Contemporary Terrorism,” in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, edited by Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes (Washington, DC.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 24.

<sup>11</sup> Kahneman, and Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” 263.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey D. Berejikian, “A Cognitive Theory of Deterrence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 2 (2002): 170.



reasons why a person falls into in the losses frame, in order to account somewhat for this risk acceptant behavior.

According to a study by the National Security Institute, there are two kinds of factors leading to the radicalization of a would-be terrorist: internal factors such as personality, habits, skills and values; and external factors such as family, friends, group norms, narratives, opportunities, intergroup conflicts, violence and culture.<sup>13</sup> In this regard, this thesis asserts that radicalization is a consequence of being in the losses frame, rather than a cause, and, therefore, though factors leading to a losses frame, as well as radicalization, may seem common, the transformation of a would-be terrorist from a losses frame to a gains frame would make him more risk averse and less radicalized by default.

#### **D. HYPOTHESIS AND THEORY**

To influence a would-be terrorist through the application of Prospect Theory is a demanding task; however, it is not impossible, since the gap between the losses and gains frames is not large, and thus it is possible to bring an individual from the losses frame to a gains frame. It is understandable to common people that by joining the cause of terrorism, they have much to lose immediately, compared to some foreseeable gains. According to the Prospect Theory, people react more positively to immediate certainty than to any futuristic probability of gains; however, in the current case of terrorism, this seems not to be the case. Terrorist organizations are able to convince would-be terrorists to join their cause, despite having a farfetched and utopian end state. Why are people led towards this path? This point has partially been addressed by Cronin, who writes that there are external factors and “innate characteristics that give some people more or less proclivity to become terrorists;”<sup>14</sup> however, this thesis asserts it is the losses frame which leads people to become more risk acceptant.

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<sup>13</sup> Sarah Canna, Carley St. Clair and Abigail Desjardins, *Neuroscience Insights on Radicalization and Mobilization to Violence: A Review* (Medway, MA: National Security Institute, 2012), 8.

<sup>14</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Sources of Contemporary Terrorism,” 23.

In understanding the decision-making process of an individual who chooses to become a terrorist, Prospect Theory also provides us with the necessary tools to understand the basic framework, as well as the bigger picture. Although the choice between good and bad is easy and, in most cases, naturally arrived at in favor of good, individual perceptions under the influence of the losses frame may lead a would-be terrorist to join a terrorist cause, irrespective of being good or bad. To explain this phenomenon, it is generally apparent that killing a human being is bad; however, if an individual is in the losses frame due to personal, societal or peer pressures, he may be willing to take innocent lives. Moreover, beyond perceptions, it is an individual's expectations that place him in the losses frame, irrespective of personal cost and benefits.

The causes of being in the losses frame may vary from individual to individual and from case to case, and these causes range from the ideological to the religious, political, cultural, personal and psychological spheres; however, these seem to be mostly in the field of intangible and abstract patterns. Being in the losses frame is not always about material costs and benefits, it is also about cultures and identities. Moreover, both tangible and intangible causes may have different meanings for different people, depending upon their geography, as well as social, political and cultural moorings.

## **E. EVIDENCE AND METHODOLOGY**

In order to understand why people are in the losses frame, this thesis will focus on terrorists' memoirs to understand the dilemma a would-be terrorist faces while making a decision. Each individual has a different psychological profile, motivations and decision making structures; therefore, the decision to become a terrorist is not a homogenous process, and that is why the mind of a would-be terrorist may be understood only through reading the memoirs of hardened terrorists, as well as the memoirs of individuals who, though inclined towards the path of terrorism, did not go all the way and returned en-route. The findings within these memoirs will help to confirm the reasons why a would-be terrorist

finds himself in the losses frame and, consequently, offer a means by which that individual may be transferred towards the gains frame.

The principal focus of this research is to understand whether there is a main determinant for why a would-be terrorist arrives in the losses frame, such as a network of friendships, cultural or environment influences, uncertainty, and the complexity of situational and generational dynamics, etc., or whether all these factors contribute collectively to the losses frame. The process of bringing people from a losses frame to a gains frame may be synthesized from terrorists' different backgrounds: individuals from Western societies, immigrant communities in Europe and the U.S., people from areas of conflict, youngsters lacking any promising future, and outcasts rejected by mainstream society.

By analyzing the reasons why would-be terrorists from various backgrounds join the path of terrorism, it will become easier to identify the common causes that place a would-be terrorist in the losses frame. There will always be specific causes present in the context of activities or circumstances which put people in the losses frame. Consequently, this thesis asserts that every individual will probably require a different approach to bring him into the gains frame. At one end of the spectrum, this approach may demand the removal of social injustices and the installation of equal opportunities to include a respectable future for a potential terrorist recruit and his family; whereas, the other end may demand respect for his religious, ethnic or cultural values, the removal of discrimination due to his native background, physical appearance, and religious beliefs.

Theory helps us understand and predict the past, present and future events in simplistic terms, and, therefore, this thesis attempts to prove that it is possible to influence a would-be terrorist by understanding the causes of being in the losses frame relative to Prospect Theory. In the next chapter, Prospect Theory will be explained through the lens of a social sciences' perspective and will be pitted against the menace of terrorism.

## II. PROSPECT THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO TERRORISM

### A. PROSPECT THEORY

In 1979, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky came up with Prospect Theory—a descriptive theory of decision making under risk as an alternative to Expected Utility Theory, which “had dominated the analyses of decision making under risk”<sup>15</sup> until that time. Through Prospect Theory, they argued that individuals make choices with regard to gains and losses, and their subsequent risk aversion or risk acceptant behavior follows accordingly. These behavior patterns showed them that

people underweight outcomes that are merely probable in comparison with outcomes that are obtained with certainty. This tendency, called the certainty effect, contributes to risk aversion in choices involving sure gains and to risk seeking in choices involving sure losses.<sup>16</sup>

To illustrate this phenomenon, the authors gave the example<sup>17</sup> that if a person has two choices: a sure gain of \$3000 or a 80% probability of gaining \$4000, 80% of the subjects chose the first option; however, once there was a 20% probability of gaining \$4000 and only a 25% probability of gaining \$3000, 65% people chose the first option, though the overall expected value of this option was less compared to the second option. This experiment highlights that in the case of having a different probability of two outcomes, people have gone for more payoffs, rather than logically going for higher probability of gains. On the other side of the spectrum, if the gains are replaced by the losses, people’s decisions are entirely opposite of what they do in the case of gains. Accordingly, if the above mentioned experiment is altered to losses, i.e., once people were told to choose between a sure loss of \$3000 or 80% probability of losing \$4000,

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<sup>15</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” 263.

<sup>16</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” 263.

<sup>17</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” 268.

92% of people chose the second. In the case of probability options, once people were told to choose between a 25% chance of losing of \$3000 or a 20% chance of losing \$4000, 58% chose the first option. This tendency shows that people become more risk acceptant once the payoffs are in the shape of losses rather than gains. The same has been summed up by Kahneman and Tversky:

In the positive domain, the certainty effect contributes to a risk averse preference for a sure gain over a larger gain that is merely probable. In the negative domain, the same effect leads to a risk seeking preference for a [bigger] loss that is merely probable over a smaller loss that is certain. The same psychological principle—the overweighing of certainty—favors risk aversion in the domains of gains and risk seeking in the domain of losses.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to Prospect Theory, it can be argued that Expected Utility Theory is a better model to understand the decision making process, since Expected Utility Theory focuses on the principle of rationality and explains that reasonable people will try to maximize their gains and minimize their losses, thereby showing economic behavior most of the time. However, this only focuses on material costs and benefits of the decision making process, without taking into account the psychological aspects that influence people's decision making under risk. These psychological aspects could be certainty, probability and possibility.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Prospect Theory also differentiates between decision making in the gains and losses frame of mind, where an individual is either more risk averse or risk acceptant, respectively, regardless of the final positive material (economic) outcome.

Furthermore, it is normally perceived that interpretation of the information influences the judgments and decisions people make; however, other implicit components should also be taken into account before arriving at a decision. According to Kahneman and Tversky, this tendency is called the “isolation

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<sup>18</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” 268.

<sup>19</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” 265.

effect,”<sup>20</sup> because it “leads to inconsistent preferences when the same choice is presented in different forms.”<sup>21</sup> In the experiment explained before, to highlight the concepts of certainty and probability, if the outcomes are dissected, it is interesting to note that people made decisions on the framing of the prospects, rather than rationally arriving at either maximizing their gains or minimizing their losses. In the gains frame, people choose \$3000, instead of choosing \$3200 (gaining \$4000 with 80 % probability), because of the certainty effects; however, in the losses frame, people chose the higher loss of \$3200 (losing \$4000 with 80 % probability), rather than minimizing their losses to the sure sum of \$3000. This experiment explains why people’s preferences violate the principles of Expected Utility Theory, i.e., “maximizing utility in decision making,” and shows that Prospect Theory is a better way to analyze the individual’s patterns of choices and illustrate common attitudes towards risk or chance that cannot be captured by Expected Utility Theory.

According to Expected Utility Theory, people should choose a course of action where costs are less than benefits, as shown in the graph in Figure 1. If the same principle is applied to a would-be terrorist, any decision on or above the blue line in the Figure 1 suggests that individual should be deterred from joining terrorism’s path because the costs become higher than the benefits. However, in the case of Prospect Theory, the outcome is different, depending on whether an individual is in a gains or losses frame. Here, an individual’s choices are not based on the expected outcome; therefore, his or her decision position is different from the outcome shown in Figure 1. This phenomenon has been shown in Figure 2, where a would-be terrorist, if in the gains frame, has a bigger window of deterrence, compared to a reduced deterrence window in the losses frame.

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<sup>20</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” 271.

<sup>21</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” 271.

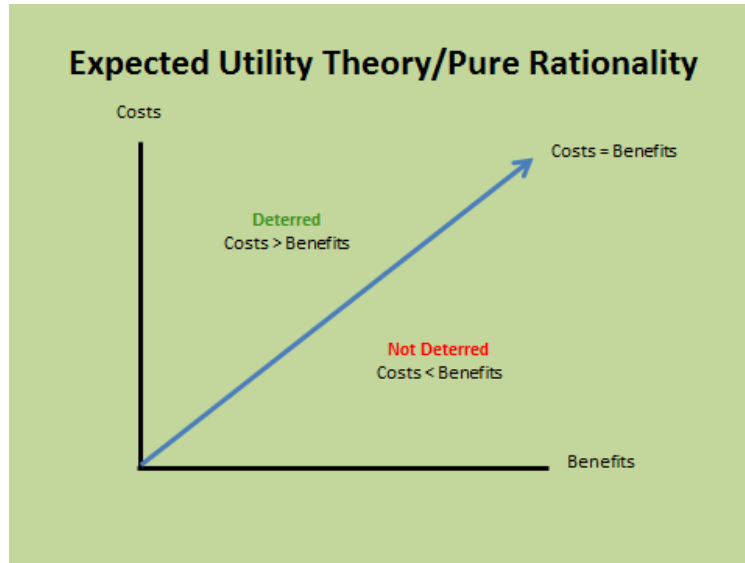


Figure 1. The Expected Utility Theory Model

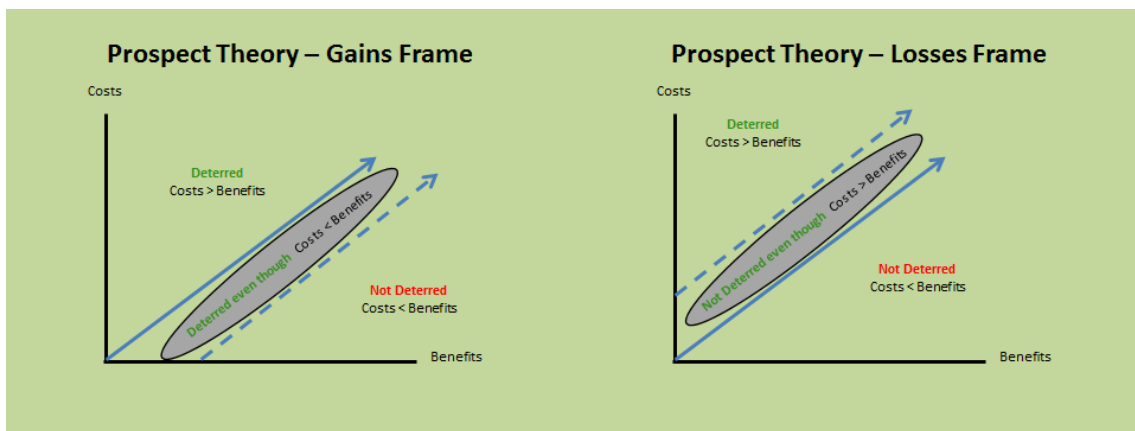


Figure 2. The Prospect Theory – Comparison of the Gains and the Losses Frames

This raises an important question as to why an individual is not deterred when his costs are higher than benefits. The answer may be found in the losses frame, which shows that there is a gap between the expected levels of costs and benefits, and this is where a would-be terrorist is vulnerable to joining the terrorist cause. Being in the losses frame increases the level of accepted costs and ultimately leads him to terrorism's fold. This dilemma has been captured in Figure 3, where Expected Utility Theory's decision making has been pitched against the decision making in the losses frame. In Figure 3, it can clearly be discerned that

there is a gap or a grey area, as well as a window of opportunity, which should be tapped to bring people from the losses frame to the gains frame.

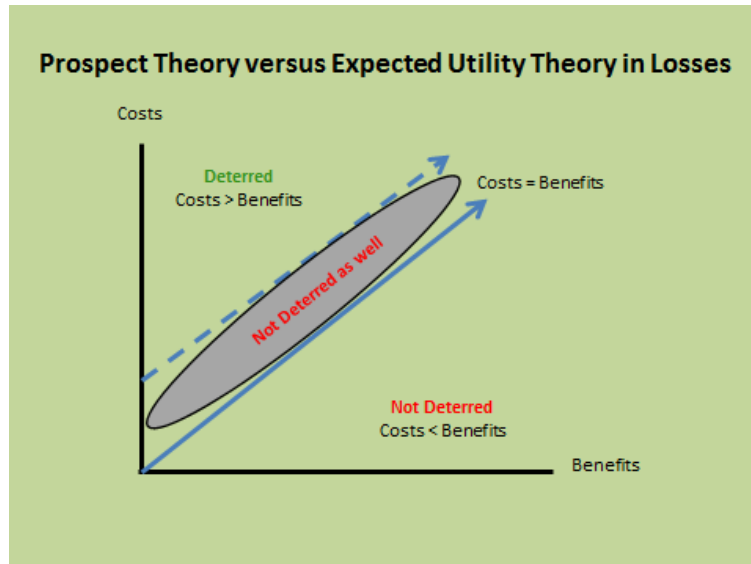


Figure 3. Comparison of the Prospect and Expected Utility Theories

How do people either place or perceive themselves in the losses or gains frame? To answer this, it will be important to apply Prospect Theory to the social sciences field because the outcome of this application may, or may not, coincide with the strict economic behavior experienced by the authors of Prospect Theory. In hindsight, it can be said that people who are satisfied with their lives both psychologically and physically will always be in the gains frame; whereas, people who are dissatisfied will always be in the losses frame. However, this may not be the case, since people even in the losses frame may not always show a risk acceptant behavior, and people in the gains frame may opt for the risky path of terrorism. Therefore, it will not always be the case that all the people in the losses or gains frame, respectively, will turn to, or avoid, the terrorist path, which seems to suggest that there are certain shortfalls to Prospect Theory or to the application of it beyond the lab environment.



## **B. SHORTFALLS OF PROSPECT THEORY**

In simple terms, studying the human decision making process in laboratory experiments is different from studying it in real life, which is more complex and involves the effects of diversified circumstances. Thus, applying Prospect Theory to a social science problem, instead of a mathematical or economics problem, is likely to produce different outcomes, as explained in the concluding paragraphs of the previous section. This assertion has also been supported by Jonathan Mercer, who writes that some aspects not being addressed objectively in Prospect Theory, two of which are most problematic: “First, prospect theory provides no insight on how actors locate themselves in a domain of gain or loss. ... Second, assessing risk acceptance or risk aversion is easy in the lab but hard in the field.”<sup>22</sup>

After identifying the shortfalls of Prospect Theory in the context of the social sciences field, it seems difficult to identify the reasons why a would-be terrorist would perceive himself, or herself, in the losses frame. However, this shortfall will be addressed in the next section of this chapter in which Prospect Theory will be applied to the issue of terrorism, specifically focusing on would-be terrorists. By doing so, this thesis attempts to address the shortfalls of Prospect Theory, i.e., why people are, or perceive themselves to be, in the losses frame and, thus, are more risk acceptant.

## **C. APPLICATION OF PROSPECT THEORY TO TERRORISM**

Defining the reasons why an individual perceives himself or herself in the losses frame, or a would-be terrorist faces certain losses, may vary according to a person’s psychology (personality, emotions, attitudes, motivations, personal inadequacies, plight of others), environment (geography, sociology, culture, politics, economy, easy access to information), ideology (beliefs, identity, narratives, historical contexts) and biology (adolescence, mental vulnerability of

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<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Mercer, “Prospect Theory and Political Science,” *Annual Review Political Science* 8, no.1 (2005): 3, doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.8.082103.104911.

the young, copying elders, criminality for excitement). This potential variance would mean that for a nationalist, the reason which puts him in the losses frame may be loss of identity; whereas, for an environmentalist, the reason may be the destruction or overuse of natural resources. To overcome one of the shortfalls of Prospect Theory, one must accept that such underlying reasons are relative to different perspectives; the perception of being in the losses or gains frame varies from individual to individual, or from group to group. However, it can be argued that there are certain individuals or groups who do not have any nationalistic or environmental cause behind their drift into the losses frame; yet for such individuals and groups, the answer may lie in their psychological, biological or environmental domains.

In the realm of the decision-making process of a would-be terrorist, does his decision making involve reason? To answer this, it can be expected that in the losses frame, a rational would-be terrorist perceives himself to have fewer alternatives. According to Allison and Zelikow, “the rationality in the decision making changes in two ways: [the] first is comprehensive rationality, and [the] second, bounded rationality.”<sup>23</sup> In comprehensive rationality, the would-be terrorist is assumed to have a utility function that consistently ranks all the alternatives an individual faces and chooses the alternative that achieves the highest utility. Against the backdrop of this, it would not be wrong to conclude that comprehensive rationality works best with Expected Utility Theory, which is based on a final outcome in the shape of maximizing benefits.

On the other hand, bounded rationality recognizes the inescapable limitations of knowledge and the computational ability of the agent. According to Simon’s conclusion, “to understand and predict human behavior, we have to deal with the realities of human rationality, that is, with bounded rationality,”<sup>24</sup> and thus human behavior can be linked with Prospect Theory, which differentiates

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<sup>23</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decisions: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Addison Wesley Educational Publishers, 1999), 20.

<sup>24</sup> Herbert A. Simon, “Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science, *The American Political Science Review* 79, no. 2. (1985): 297.

between the decision making process of an individual in either the gains or losses frame. In light of previous analysis, a would-be terrorist, though aware of adopting a risky path, goes for it; since despite being rational, he is in the losses frame and risk acceptant.

To overcome one of the shortfalls of Prospect Theory, i.e., to assess how people locate themselves either in the losses or gains frame, may require an initial reference point. According to Mercer, such reference points can be status quo, aspirations, heuristics, analogies and emotions.<sup>25</sup> Essentially, for a person to be in the losses or gains frame, he may measure himself in relation to a reference point. For status quo, Mercer explains, “When we are satisfied with the status quo, we tend to be in domain of gain; when we are dissatisfied, we tend to be in domain of loss. Because, satisfaction is subjective and because no general theory of satisfaction exists.”<sup>26</sup> With regard to aspirations, they give meaning to the individual’s perceived place in the future. If he falls short of his objective in life, and ultimately loses hope, then he lands himself in the losses frame.

For analogies, Mercer quotes McDermott, who suggests that “historical analogies can provide powerful references for the development of frames;”<sup>27</sup> therefore, if an individual is affected or cares for past negative experiences, either personal or communal, he will perceive himself to be in the losses frame. Emotions (greed, self-interest, fear, anger, regret, pride, panic, desperation, trust)<sup>28</sup> may explain why an individual is in the losses frame. A would-be terrorist’s feelings can cause him to reprioritize his choices, which may change according to his emotions. Therefore, as Mercer writes, “Emotion is not merely a consequence of a frame but can be a source of framing.”<sup>29</sup> Heuristics explain how people interpret their environment and locate themselves in the domain of

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<sup>25</sup> Mercer, “Prospect Theory and Political Science,” 4.

<sup>26</sup> Mercer, “Prospect Theory and Political Science,” 4.

<sup>27</sup> Mercer, “Prospect Theory and Political Science,” 9.

<sup>28</sup> Mercer, “Prospect Theory and Political Science,” 10.

<sup>29</sup> Mercer, “Prospect Theory and Political Science,” 10.

losses or gains; thus, an individual's preference will change with the changing circumstances. New options or conditions may put a would-be terrorist in either the losses or gains frame, but more importantly, will also help in transferring him from the losses to the gains frame.

According to Jonathan Mercer, "we hate to lose more than we love to win, and so [we] will take more risk to avoid a loss than we will to secure an equivalent gain, is [sic] the basis for prospect theory."<sup>30</sup> According to Prospect Theory, there is a phenomenon of mirror image effects on the decision making process of an individual, which highlights the importance of narrative and the communication mechanism. The mirror image as explained by Kahneman and Tversky demonstrates how people in the gains frame prefer even sure smaller profits, compared to people in the losses frame, who instead of avoiding or minimizing the losses, opt for a more risky venture and decide on making a choice which leads towards potentially higher losses. This observation leads to a question: Is it the losses frame which affects this decision, or is it the framing or communication which explains the risky behavior? The answer to this can be "both," since the losses frame precipitates taking more risk; whereas, the narrative helps in framing the decision making process in such a manner that it puts an individual in the losses frame right from the start.

But, is it possible that a would-be terrorist will be in the losses frame despite the absence of a narrative? In this regard, individual perceptions play an important part because even when an individual only perceives himself to be in the losses frame, he may become risk acceptant. Therefore, it can be said that there will be certain kinds of would-be terrorists who, despite the absence of a narrative and communication, adopt the path of terrorism because they are in a losses frame due to personal circumstances, which could be completely removed from their mainstream narratives. This thesis will explain through examples that narrative is not the only variable that places people in the losses frame; however,

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<sup>30</sup> Mercer, "Prospect Theory and Political Science," 17.

it has major significance. The same point was stressed by Ayman al-Zawahiri in a letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2005. He writes “that we are in a battle, and that more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media.”<sup>31</sup> Also, in the words of John Arquilla, “The battle of the story is more than half of the battle.”<sup>32</sup>

In the field of social sciences, Prospect Theory until now has been applied to decision making by state leaders in international affairs, focusing on exploring the individual aspects of the decision making processes under risk. This seems to be the application of Prospect Theory in the strategic decision making processes; whereas, this thesis applies it at the most basic level, i.e., individual decision making under the influence of losses and risk. Personal decision making highlights the internal as well as external factors associated with decision making under risk. In the case of terrorism, a would-be terrorist might be under the influence of his peers, his society, his religious or nationalistic values. Certainly there are external, as well as internal, factors that put an individual in the losses frame, causing him to adopt a more dangerous path. In order to validate this theory, the next chapter deals with terrorists’ memoirs and comes up with causes for being in the losses frame in more practical terms.

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<sup>31</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, “English Translation of Ayman al-Zawahiri’s Letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” *The Weekly Standard*, (2005), accessed November 26, 2013, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/006/203gpuul.asp>.

<sup>32</sup> John Arquilla, “Terrorist Information Operations and Networking” (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, October 16, 2012).

### III. CAUSES OF BEING IN THE LOSSES FRAME

While nothing is easier than to denounce the evildoer; nothing is more difficult than to understand him.

–*Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky*

Loss is both a subjective as well as objective phenomenon, and it will differ from individual to individual. For some people, losing material things may not be as important as losing intangible and incomprehensible things like ideology or identity, and, therefore, defining loss in particular terms is not an easy task. Its meanings will differ based on circumstances, narratives and communications. Religion, sacred values and spiritual beliefs affect how people value and interpret loss, and the same has been explained by Christopher G. Davis and Susan Nolen-Hoeksema who quote Dull and Skokan, “One important function played by religion is to provide a comforting explanation for events that cannot otherwise be explained.”<sup>33</sup>

Davis and Nolen-Hoeksema write, “Coping with loss is a dynamic process that evolves overtime;”<sup>34</sup> therefore, religion will not always be the only factor aiding in coping with the loss. Different individuals from different societies and cultures deal with loss in various ways. Sometimes the idea of being in the losses frame may divert people towards either a right or wrong path. For example, in the realm of the negative side, the process of adjusting to the loss of a loved one may turn one into a social loner, or cause a violent person to react against those whom he feels did not provide good medical care to the loved one. In the positive domain, one might choose to become a teacher, social worker, or a philanthropist.

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<sup>33</sup> Christopher G. Davis and Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, “Loss and meaning: How do people make sense of loss?,” *The American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no.5 (2001): 731.

<sup>34</sup> Davis and Nolen-Hoeksema, “Loss and meaning: How do people make sense of loss?” 726.

The emergence of different types of terrorism and different types of individuals as terrorists has also introduced different factors and reasons why individuals may resort to terrorism. In order to speculate about an individual in the losses frame, this thesis will focus on four specific categories: psychology, environment, ideology and biology. The psychological category will focus solely on the reasons which can be attributed to the personality traits of an individual: emotions, personality type, idealistic or realistic viewpoint, childhood traumas, etc. The environmental category will encompass the physical environment and circumstances that place people in the losses frame; the ideological category will look into the issues related to identity, both political as well as religious, personal beliefs, ethnic diversification and sacred values. In the final category of biology, the focus will be on issues related to adolescence, proving one's worth in a society, even through violence, and imitating elders, regardless of whether they are right or wrong. These four categories and their related fields have been summarized in Table 1.

<b>Reasons for Being in the Losses Frame</b>	
<b>Psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotions, trauma</li> <li>• Personal inadequacies</li> <li>• Personality</li> <li>• Idealism</li> <li>• Plight of others</li> </ul>	<b>Ideology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of identity</li> <li>• Orientalism</li> <li>• Narratives &amp; Historical context</li> <li>• Analogies</li> <li>• Elite's interests</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Immigrant's dilemma</li> <li>• Culture, norms, and values</li> <li>• Prevalent trends</li> <li>• Saturation of information</li> <li>• Economic deprivation</li> </ul>	<b>Biology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manhood through violence</li> <li>• Mental vulnerability of young</li> <li>• Adolescence</li> <li>• Criminality</li> <li>• Imitating elders</li> </ul>

Table 1. Reasons for Being in the Losses Frame

The human decision-making process is under the influence of internal as well as external factors, and both internal and external factors weigh differently from individual to individual. Therefore, by analyzing the four categories in Table 1, this thesis will attempt to answer the important questions: why do people in the losses frame behave differently, or, specifically, why do some join the path of terrorism and others do not? The answer to this question lies in the fact that people may be in the losses frame purely due to an actual reason, or due to some perceived grievances. These reasons could be due to some reference points<sup>35</sup> such as grievances in the context of status quo, lack of equal opportunities in the category of aspirations, life experiences in the category of emotions, and historical enmity due wrong analogies. However, young people, motivated by a chic trend or promotion of a narrative by the elites, are more likely to assert their losses frame through actual risk acceptant behavior because of adolescence and its related high testosterone levels.

## **A. PSYCHOLOGY**

Human psychology affects mental functions and behaviors, so understanding an individual's psychology lead us towards understanding the reasons for being in a losses frame. The losses frame is related to an individual's perception of events, cognition of environment, emotions towards others, motivation for actions, personality in general and behavior as a consequence of interpersonal relationships. James Forest mentions, "In many cases, acts of terrorism carried out by individuals are the results of hatred towards others, along with a willingness and ability to kill without remorse."<sup>36</sup> This hatred and willingness may be because those individuals have a perception of being exploited by others, be they corrupt governments, Western society or elites, and

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<sup>35</sup> Mercer, "Prospect Theory and Political Science," 4.

<sup>36</sup> James J. F. Forest, "Exploring Root Causes of Terrorism: An Introduction," in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes Volume One*, ed. James J. F. Forest (London: Praeger Security International, 2006), 3.



ultimately this perception may lead those individuals to look for other solutions, including adopting terrorism to address their grievances.

Strong emotions like anger, rage, grief, hate, emptiness, etc., may cause a would-be terrorist to behave out of character. The causes of such strong emotions could be triggered by childhood trauma, absence of a father figure in early life, or frequent life transitions. In this regard, Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn, an American and a senior al-Qaeda operative, is a case in point. While explaining his early childhood reflections, he writes that one of the causes for his moving towards radical Islam was a “yawning emptiness” in his life and a “strained relationship” with his parents.<sup>37</sup> In another case, specifically with regard to criminals, the famous Indian Bandit Queen Phoolan Devi offers that she was put into the losses frame due to her early life traumas in the form of rape, torture and subsequent humiliation, suffered at the hands of an elite class in a male-dominated, class conscious society.<sup>38</sup>

Early childhood trauma may be the reason for a person to feel hate, anger, revenge, anxiety or emptiness, and he may express those feelings outwardly in the shape of risk acceptant behavior in the future. Consider the early life trauma faced by Mosab Hassan Yousef. He had to face the embarrassment of looking for food from dumpsters, once his uncle ridiculed him for selling homemade food in the market. He writes, “Tears came into my mother’s eyes. ... I was angry. I didn’t understand why our neighbors and family would not help us. And on top of that, they had the nerve to judge us for trying to help ourselves.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn, “Yahiyeh Adam Gadahn’s Conversion Story,” *Islamic Network* (January 1, 2006), accessed Jul 28, 2013, [http://www.islamicnetwork.com/index.php/weblog/comments/yahiyeh\\_adam\\_gadahns\\_conversion\\_story/](http://www.islamicnetwork.com/index.php/weblog/comments/yahiyeh_adam_gadahns_conversion_story/).

<sup>38</sup> John Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits: How Masters of Irregular Warfare have Shaped Our World* (Landam, MD, The Rowman and Littlefield Publication Group, 2011), 241–252.

<sup>39</sup> Mosab Hassan Yousef, with Ron Brackin, *Son of Hamas: A Gripping Account of Terror, Betrayal, Political Intrigue, and Unthinkable Choices* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers., 2010), 37.

If an individual is singled out by society as a consequence of failures in his life, he may look for other means or reasons for apportioning the blame of his own inadequacies. According to Jerrold Post, "Unable to face his own inadequacies, the individual with his personality style needs a target to blame and attack for his own inner weakness and inadequacies."<sup>40</sup> Such inadequacies, if blown out of proportion, may result in putting people into a losses frame. The intriguing case of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik is a case in point, where apart from being an alienated individual and experiencing a turbulent early life without the supervision of his father, he had not been successful in his early education, in relationships, in business or in his efforts to inspire people politically.<sup>41</sup> These failures once applied collectively were enough to put him into the losses frame and bring about the resultant risky behavior revealed in the shape of terrorist attacks.

The individual personality also plays an important role in defining the domain of a person, i.e. if a person is an introvert like Anders Breivik, he is likely to end up in the losses frame; whereas, an extroverted person may have external reasons for being in the losses frame, like needing to prove one's worth in the eyes of his peers or elders. The early life of Osama bin Laden is an example. In order to gain the attention of his father, bin Laden had to go beyond established norms, and this behavior later in his life led him to challenge the established international norms as well.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, no single type of personality can be associated with the losses frame; rather an individual personality may be dependent on the external variable(s) to transform it into a perceived losses or gains frames.

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<sup>40</sup> Jerrold M. Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behavior* (London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 129.

<sup>41</sup> Alexandra Bech Gjørsv et al. *Rapport fra 22. juli-kommisjonen* (Oslo: Departementenes servicesenter Informasjonsforvaltning, 2012), Chapter 15.4, accessed September 30, 2013, <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/37994796/PDFS/NOU201220120014000DDDPDFS.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 84.

The idealism of an individual correlates to a tendency whereby a person “follows no path besides his own. He trusts himself and his opinions regardless of what society believes.”<sup>43</sup> This suggests that if an individual is in direct confrontation with society, he may be in the losses frame. The best examples of this concept are eco-terrorists who, despite knowing that society does not support their stance, resort to violence to further their viewpoint. Here, it does not mean that society explicitly is in favor of destroying the environment; however, society is giving implicit permission to do so by not overtly opposing such actions.

Another psychological condition relates to the plight of others. In this instance, an individual blames himself for not helping others, or at least not raising his voice against the aggressors. This gains added importance once that individual not only juxtaposes the plight of the others against his own privileged life, but also compares it with the lives of the people from the society of the aggressors. In this regard, narratives, communications and the role of media gain prominence, as can be witnessed by the Palestinian video of Muhammad and Jamal<sup>44</sup> seen cowering behind a concrete block, where they were caught between the firefight. This amplifies the adage, “a picture speaks a thousand words.” According to Harriet Sherwood, “It [the video] was reproduced on posters, stamps, and murals across the Arab world and cited by al-Qaeda in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> “Idealism in Individualism,” *School Bytes*, accessed Aug 2, 2013, <http://www.schoolbytes.com/papers/summary.php?disp=term&id=141>.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Dura. “The Birth of An Icon,” *YouTube* video, accessed July 7, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzsCBFhCsyY>.

<sup>45</sup> Harriet Sherwood, “Father of Muhammad al-Dura rebukes Israeli report on son’s death,” *The Guardian*, May 23, 2013, accessed July 7, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/23/israeli-report-denies-death-al-dura>.

## B. ENVIRONMENT

At times we are victims of our own milieu.

*–Ed Husain*

The Reasons category of Environment in Table 1 gives a broad overview of geographical, environmental, cultural, social and visual effects related to individuals' or would-be terrorists' life conditions vis-à-vis their surroundings. However, if an individual is living in an environment of conflict with a lack of both physical and mental security, or without any hope for his or her future, that individual will not always show risky behavior. This variance may be attributed to the external costs of the environmental conditions on the decision making processes. If an individual considers himself in a losses frame, he will look for other solutions, which may be beyond the established norms, in order to acquire a sense of purpose and belonging. These solutions may offer him more security and economic benefits, in addition to the fulfillment of his psychological need for a sense of self-worth and respect from his family and peers.

Geography can also play an important role in affecting the decision-making process of whether an individual places himself or herself in either the losses or gains frame. This phenomenon holds true both for the physical aspects of geography like type of terrain and location, as well as the geographical aspects of psychology like nationhood, culture and religion. According to John Rock, "a geographic ontology—would include things such as mountains, rivers, and streams, or perhaps cities, buildings and more abstract things like nations and their boundaries."<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the mere presence of an individual in an area full of conflicts on territorial, ethnic, religious or cultural grounds, coupled with the rugged terrain, may preordain an individual in the losses frame. In this regard, Afghanistan is a classic case in point where both the physical as well as the

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<sup>46</sup> John C. Rock, "The Geographic Nature of Terrorism," University of Buffalo, accessed Jul 10, 2013, [www.ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/courses01/papers/Rock\(Geo\).pdf](http://www.ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/courses01/papers/Rock(Geo).pdf).

mental geographical traits that place people in the losses frame are in abundance.

In the case of Palestine, an area already in the clutches of regional conflicts, the introduction of Jewish immigrants, who migrated to the Palestinian territories in the nineteenth century, further disturbed the balance of power. The creation of a state of Israel without creating a comparable state for the Palestinians further exacerbated the problem. This point has also been raised by Mosab Hassan Yousef, who writes:

Israel became a state in 1948. However, the Palestinian territories remained just that—non sovereign territories. Without a constitution to maintain some semblance of order, religious law becomes the highest authority. And when everyone is free to interpret and enforce the law as he sees fit, chaos ensues.<sup>47</sup>

The ensuing chaos was fully utilized by the power brokers, who in order to achieve their own interests, used religion to reap profits out of this chaos.

Apart from forced settlements or migrations, the risk acceptant behavior problem can also be observed amongst migrant communities which have moved from the developing to the developed world. The negative behavior of such communities could be attributed both to the marginalization of immigrant populations as consequences of the socio-economic nature of Western societies, as well as the deep entrenchment in their erstwhile home cultures. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman emphasizes that “migrants’ moving to countries where modernity was born and has become established, often find themselves in a paradoxical situation with no way out.”<sup>48</sup> Ed Husain fully explains this paradox in his memoirs, “My parents were strong believers in single sex education,”<sup>49</sup> and once he started to attend an all-male school, he noticed that “looking around me,

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<sup>47</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, xv.

<sup>48</sup> Armando Spataro, “Why do People become Terrorists?,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 6 no.3 (2008).

<sup>49</sup> Ed Husain, *The Islamist: Why I Became an Islamic Fundamentalist, What I Saw Inside, and Why I Left* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 5.

I wished I was back at Sir William's. At Sir William's my classmates included Jane, Lisa, Andrew, Mark, Alia, Zak. Here everyone was Bangladeshi, Muslim and male."<sup>50</sup>

The dilemma explained in the previous paragraph not only highlights the physical geography, but also crosses into the more abstract social, cultural and religious domains. While parents from the developing world have their native country's mindset, the new generation raised in the developed world is more open to modern and futuristic trends, thereby putting them in two frames of mind at the same time. This problem starts in early childhood as Western education institutions try to steer a child in one direction, while at home, the same child's parents pull him or her in an altogether different direction. This paradox is probably one of the leading causes why immigrants perceive themselves in the losses frame and can be clearly seen in the life of Ed Husain. If immigrant families refuse to accept the new culture, they will be alienated from the mainstream society; on the other hand, if they accept the new norms, they will be seen as the traitors to their own cultures.

Moreover, immigrants are also subject to racial and ethnic slurs by the native population. This becomes a significant concern for immigrants who, according to Armando Spataro, are trying "to search for a feeling of belonging to a community."<sup>51</sup> Consequently, this racism puts people in the losses frame where, in order to gain respect not only amongst their native community but also amongst their adopted one, they become susceptible to taking unnecessary risks. This paradox also leads a would-be terrorist into the folds of his perceived friends, who are only interested in taking advantage of the situation for their own cause. Armando Spataro quotes a collaborating terrorist talking about his recruiter, "He would call me brother, and everyone understood that I was his friend and that I too had to be respected."<sup>52</sup> According to Jerrold Post, "The

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<sup>50</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Spataro, "Why do People become Terrorists?"

<sup>52</sup> Spataro, "Why do People become Terrorists?"

network of friendships was the main determinant of whether the youth ended up in a terrorist group, a youth gang, or the drug culture;<sup>53</sup> therefore, by being an outcast, the individual is already in the losses frame and an ideal recruit for both terrorist and criminal organizations.

Culture and its associated norms and values play an important role in putting people in the losses frame. According to U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual 3-24, “Social structures comprise relationship among groups, institutions, and individuals within a society; in contrast, culture (ideas, norms, rituals, codes of behavior) provides meaning to individual within societies.”<sup>54</sup> Even in the modern nation-state, it is difficult to accept that there is only one culture other than the dominant one. Ideally, there should be some tolerance to different cultural norms, ideas, and values; however, once the situation becomes contrary, this lack of tolerance may put people into the losses frame. Such prejudices are not common to Western societies only, but exist also in the Muslim countries like Pakistan, where Madrassah graduates are discriminated against due to their appearance and dress, making them an outcast from the mainstream society, and thus ideal recruits for terrorist organizations.

Prevailing trends also impact people, as individuals naturally are more inclined to join the caravan of winners, even if only by riding the bandwagon. During the 1980s, the Jihadi culture was romanticized through heroic tales of the Mujahideen, who wreaked havoc upon a superpower, the USSR. Despite the end of the Afghan Jihad, this trend continued either due to the apathy of the world in general, or the rise of more pressing issues than the one of Jihad in particular. Left unattended, the trend gained momentum, especially in the conflict areas where people thought it to be the most profitable profession, offering both power and mystique, and ultimately led them to think of it in terms of gains, rather than

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<sup>53</sup> Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World*, 130.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual 3–24, chapter 3, “Intelligence in Counterinsurgency” (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 3–6.

losses. This explanation highlights why people even in the gains frame can be drawn towards a wrong path.

Eventually, the world realized the dangers of this trend; the quick-fix solution was to forcefully suppress these extremist and violent ideas, which automatically transferred those people from a gains frame into a losses frame. The temporary gains frame may have been a result of acceptable norms and trends of the time; however, once the physical as well ideological circumstances changed, individuals who had thought themselves to be in the gains frame moved into the losses frame by default. Such individuals lost hope in their ability or perceived ability to shape a future, thought themselves to be at the mercy of the merciless, unable to choose independently, and without their freedom. A PKK terrorist mentions the need for freedom by saying, “Freedom is the reason I live really, and freedom to me is living my culture, speaking my native language and sharing it with others, openly. Until now I thought I was devoid of this freedom and with this perception, I joined the PKK.”<sup>55</sup>

Because of the saturation of information from technological advances, newer generations in the developing world are more aware of global trends, which has led them to start comparing their lives with those living in the most advanced and developed countries. Consequently, living in an inferior environment places them into the losses frame. Moreover, today’s generation is more focused on the future, seeking the best in their lives, and once they feel that these opportunities are either not available or denied to them, the end result is the losses frame. This lack of opportunity for a better future, once combined with an environment charged with anti-West and anti-U.S. sentiments, leads such individuals towards the risky path of terrorism.

Economic deprivation is yet another factor which puts people in a losses frame, and, therefore, economic openness is essential. Yet one school of thought argues that terrorism is not caused by poverty. As Alan B. Krueger and Jitka

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<sup>55</sup> Serdar Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim: ‘Intihar Eylemcisinin Eve Donusu’ [Mommy I’m Home: ‘Homecoming of a Suicide Bomber’]* (Eminonu, Istanbul: Karakutu, 2007), 34.



Maleckova posit, “There is little direct connection between poverty, education, and participation in or support for terrorism.”<sup>56</sup> Indeed, many terrorists come from relatively well-off families, but simply rejecting the idea that economic deprivation plays no role in putting people in the losses frame may not be prudent. A Turkish leftist, DHKP/C (Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front) terrorist highlights this phenomenon of economic disparity when he writes, “my weakest point was that my economic circumstances were not good. They ... exploited it. ... They approached me with warmth that I later understood to be false.”<sup>57</sup>

### C. IDEOLOGY

Ideology is an abstract thought process, concept or an idea, which can be normative or descriptive, as well as political, national or religious. When it comes to terrorism, ideology deeply matters because it is the main component of terrorist acts and thus may become the leading cause of putting people in the losses frame. Ideology provides individuals with the necessary tools to align their personal grievances with a greater cause, lets them identify the enemy and find a solution. If looked at through the lens of economic preference, ideology may not make any sense, as has been asserted by Alan Kruger who writes that “we tend to see the world through materialistic Western eyes, viewing economic circumstances as powerful motivators for belief and action.”<sup>58</sup> The current wave of terrorism is not always about material losses or gains, or geo-political grievances; there are other ideological factors that put people in the losses frame.

In the realm of ideology, the problem may be political, as in the case of ethnic, religious or economic terrorism, or possibly environmental as can be seen in eco-terrorism. The economic factor can be witnessed in the leftist class

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<sup>56</sup> Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, “Does Poverty Cause Terrorism?” *The New Republic* (Jun 24, 2002): 32.

<sup>57</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim: ‘Intihar Eylemcisinin Eve Donusu’ [Mommy I’m Home: ‘Homecoming of a Suicide Bomber’]*, 124–125.

<sup>58</sup> Alan B. Kruger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 50.

struggle between socialism and capitalism; whereas, when it comes to eco terrorism, Stefan H. Leader and Peter Probst list two causes as the grievances of eco-terrorists: biocentrism and deep ecology. According to them:

Biocentrism is the belief that all organisms on earth are equal and deserving of moral rights and considerations ... [Whereas] believers in deep ecology favor a rollback of industrialization/civilization ... [for] preservation of the environment.<sup>59</sup>

Consequently, if an individual sees the environment in danger, through the extinction of species and other reasons such as industrialization or urbanization, these factors may put him in the losses frame if he feels that by doing nothing, he is harming the environment himself. A spokesman for the eco-terrorist organization Earth Liberation Front (ELF), Craig Rosebraugh, says, "All power to the people. Long live the earth liberation front. Long live the animal liberation front. Long live all the sparks attempting to ignite the revolution. Sooner or later the sparks will turn to flame!"<sup>60</sup> According to Jennifer Horton:

The Earth Liberation Front, or ELF, was formed when some members of the group Earth First! became frustrated ... and began a group that would engage in more violent, direct action. Like the members of ELF, eco-terrorists are radical environmentalists who believe traditional ways of bringing about change are not adequate.<sup>61</sup>

In ideology, religious language and ideas play an important part. Different reasons such as loss of identity, culture or some territory may be transformed by religion, as in the case of Palestine, where the territorial issue adopted the color of religious confrontation between the Muslims and the Jews. With regard to the loss of culture, the example of Syed Qutb, one of the founding fathers of al-Qaeda, is a classic case in point. He thought that the West was trying to impose

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<sup>59</sup> Stefan H. Leader and Peter Probst, "The Earth Liberation Front and Environmental Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2003, 39–40.

<sup>60</sup> Leader and Probst, "The Earth Liberation Front and Environmental Terrorism," 40.

<sup>61</sup> Jennifer Horton, "How Eco-terrorism Works," *How Stuff Works?*  
<http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-science/eco-terror.htm>.

their materialistic culture upon Egypt in order to corrupt it, and thus it was the duty of every true believer to resist that in earnest.<sup>62</sup> In the end, that duty adopted a religious color as well. Against this backdrop, Robert A. Pape describes this trend as, “a defense of territory or culture that is perceived to be under [threat or] control of an outside power.”<sup>63</sup> The frustration and desperation of being under the occupation of an outside power, leading to loss of identity, may put an individual in the losses frame.

The next factor which puts people into a losses frame may be loss of identity, be it ethnic, religious, cultural or political identity. According to Ivan Sijakovic, “An individual ... go[es] through the process of identifying with an idea, value, attitudes, or acts. That is how the process of acquiring and preserving collective identity begins.”<sup>64</sup> This assertion by Sijakovic suggests that identities can be personal as well as communal. With regards to religious identity, Anna Simons writes that it serves in “joining people together across lineages, tribes, and all sorts of boundaries that otherwise still fracture the non-west.”<sup>65</sup> Ideas like Us against Them, East versus West, Clash of Civilizations or Holy War and Crusade, will place those individuals who see themselves losing their identities in a losses frame. According to Ivan Sijakovic, “The process of acquiring collective identity (collective formation of identity) begins through the attitudes, “we” and “they.”<sup>66</sup>

For ethnic identity, Daniel Byman writes, “Perceived discrimination along economic, political, or cultural lines can trigger tremendous resentment and

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<sup>62</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 15.

<sup>63</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, “Does Religion Cause Terrorism?” *National Policy Forum on Terrorism, Security and America’s Purpose*, September 6–7, 2005, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Ivan Sijakovic, “Terrorism and the Problem of Identity,” *English Corner*, March 9, 2008, <http://www.sijakovic.com/03/terrorism-and-the-problem-of-identity/>.

<sup>65</sup> Anna Simons, “Making Enemies: An Anthropology of Islamist Terror,” *The American Interest* 11 (2006): 39.

<sup>66</sup> Sijakovic, “Terrorism and the Problem of Identity.”

cause ethnic terrorism.<sup>67</sup> This is why ethnic terrorist groups begin the struggle by strengthening ethnic identity. By saying that one has a different identity, because he or she is from a different region, tribe, sect, family or even a state, ethnic or terrorist group tries to place individuals into the losses frame through their perceived identities. To solve such a problem, Amish people in the U.S. isolate themselves physically from the larger society and purposefully and carefully forego most modern conveniences. They assiduously avoid or control threats to their communal identity.<sup>68</sup>

This dilemma of identity becomes even more critical for immigrant communities living in the West, who either by trying to preserve their identity, or to avoid discrimination, hoard themselves into immigrants' pockets or islands in big metropolises. By isolating themselves, they are already in the losses frame, since they perceive the larger society as an outsider, and the same trends are then exploited by terrorist organizations in order to recruit people from such pockets. A classic case in point is the famous Hamburg Cell, which played a critical role in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. According to John Miller, "They lived together, worshipped at the same mosque, and discussed topics like bombmaking [sic] and chemical weapons."<sup>69</sup>

There could also be a loss of political identity which may put people in the losses frame: examples include leftist and rightist movements in which people have resorted to violence as a means of raising their voices. In this regard, rightist groups may include people like Anders Breivik, who based upon his on the opposition to immigrants, perceived himself to be in a losses frame and ultimately took risks by conducting terrorist attacks. On the other side of political divide, there are leftists who view the governments they oppose as authoritarian, exploitive and corrupt, and emphasize idealism and anti-imperialism. Their

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<sup>67</sup> Daniel Byman, "The Logic of Ethnic Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 21 (1998): 156.

<sup>68</sup> Simons, "Making Enemies: An Anthropology of Islamist Terror," 36.

<sup>69</sup> John Miller, "A Look Inside a Suspected Terror Cell," ABC News, October 31, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=123999&page=1>.

ideology is heavily influenced by Marxist and other communist and socialist thought. The Red Brigade, Red Army Faction (RAF) in Europe, Shining Path and The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia are examples of such ideology-based groups. According to Assaf Moghadam, RAF's ideology saw the Federal Republic of Germany as "fascist," and a continuation of the former Nazi rule.<sup>70</sup>

There can be two aspects with regard to loss of identity: self-revelation by the individual stemming from his upbringing, or external influence in the shape of some motivation, either due to group or peer pressure, some grievance, or the plight of others. Ed Husain quotes a friend who observed that "Partial Muslims like our parents will never understand what we are trying to do. Be patient, brother. You are from among the true Muslims."<sup>71</sup> This reflects both the internal as well as external impact of being in the losses frame, since Ed Husain, due to pressure from his parents, had to find a way out, which ultimately led him into the folds of extremist organization, "Hizb ut-Tahrir." This point has also been raised by Scott Atran, who writes, "It's no accident that nearly all religious and political movements express allegiance through the idiom of family—brothers and sisters, children of God, fatherland, motherland, homeland."<sup>72</sup>

There is a constant competition going on between the West and the East on the superiority of their origins and cultures. This phenomenon was fully showcased by Edward Said, who, while discussing Orientalism, explained it in full detail. According to him, "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient [East] as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."<sup>73</sup> He further explains that "Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a ... relatively

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<sup>70</sup> Assaf Moghadam, "Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35, no. 2 (2012): 160.

<sup>71</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 41.

<sup>72</sup> Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Faith, Brotherhood, and The Unmaking of Terrorists* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 13.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 3.

upper hand.”<sup>74</sup> The same concept is still present, though to a lesser degree, and is being exploited by terrorist organizations in furthering their agendas against the West. The same concept has been highlighted by Anna Simons, who writes that “This issue of submission and moral superiority represents the crux of the struggle between Islamists and the west.”<sup>75</sup> If the individual thinks of himself as being inferior and coerced to accept Western values, he will already be in the losses frame, because irrespective of reality, nobody wants to see himself or herself as inferior to others.

Narratives, especially ones involving a historical context, play a crucial role in putting people in the losses frame, since they are always present at the subconscious level of mind. Such narratives, whether fabricated or established, after continuous repetition over a period of time are likely to become the only truth. Ed Husain cites a Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflet, which states that “The only meeting place between a Muslim and a Jew is the battlefield.”<sup>76</sup> He also mentions a sticker quoting Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt that reads, “Allah is Our Lord. Muhammad is Our Leader. The Koran is Our Constitution. Jihad is Our Way. Martyrdom is Our Desire.”<sup>77</sup> These narratives, once played by both sides in a historical context similar to the Crusades or Jihad, are sufficient enablers to put an ordinary individual in the losses frame.

Analogies from texts which are sacred for an individual can also put him in a losses frame. During the first Gulf War, the narrative used by Osama bin Laden with reference to Saudi Arabia was that “It was the Saudi government that had invited the kafir U.S. soldiers to the Holy Land,”<sup>78</sup> and in this regard, an analogy is drawn from the Quranic edict that states, “O ye who believe! surely, the idolaters are unclean. So they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this

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<sup>74</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Simons, “Making Enemies: An Anthropology of Islamist Terror,” 38.

<sup>76</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 129.

<sup>77</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 52.

<sup>78</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 105.

year of theirs.”<sup>79</sup> Although this Quranic verse relates to the Holy Mosque of Kaaba, this concept was applied generally to all of Saudi Arabia and was raised to entice Muslims Ummah to gain sympathy for the terrorist cause. In such circumstances, the elites, furthering their own agendas, utilize and exploit these narratives loaded with history and analogy, give meaning to the grievances of the masses and thereby place even the society in the losses frame. In his book, *Mommy I’m Home: Homecoming of a Suicide Bomber*, Serdar Bayraktutan quotes a leading PKK recruiter saying:

I believe PKK is not there for the Kurdish people, but they are for some external powers who want to reign in the Middle East. Weapon traders and drug smugglers want to continue with terrorism, because they do not want their trade to stop.<sup>80</sup>

The role of elites could be explicit as well as implicit, and the elites category can be extended to personal relations like father, mother or some elder in the family—a phenomenon more pronounced in the Eastern cultures. Although Ed Husain was 16 years old, his father’s and Grandpa’s interest in current affairs affected his ways of thinking and his behaviors towards the global geo-political environment. He writes, “Before my sixteenth birthday my father’s interest in current affairs and Grandpa’s delegation of news monitoring to me meant that I had become politicized.”<sup>81</sup> This was an implicit if not explicit influence of elites from their religious perspectives, because after this period, Ed Husain started to look at current events through a religious prism.

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<sup>79</sup> Al-Quran, 9:28, <https://www.alislam.org/quran/search2/showChapter.php?ch=9&verse=21>.

<sup>80</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim: ‘Intihar Eylemcisinin Eve Donusu’ [Mommy I’m Home: Homecoming of a Suicide Bomber]*, 72.

<sup>81</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 16.

## D. BIOLOGY

A young boy's company determines his destiny.

–*Eastern proverb*

The biology category will specifically focus on the factors related to childhood, the pressures of adolescence and related problems of boredom, inquisitiveness to be part of some group, making a mark on the society in general and family elders in particular, i.e., proving one's worth, and following the prevalent trends in a society. This section will explore the impact of these factors in putting individuals in a losses frame both from a personal as well as a group perspective. The personal side will focus more on the psychological aspects of early childhood, whereas, the group perspective focuses on the external factors leading people to place themselves in the losses frame.

The personal aspect includes a loss of pride resulting from a violent past, either due to group discrimination or domestic violence that may put youngsters in the losses frame. In order to alleviate their miseries, such individuals are more likely to resort to violence themselves as an expression of their hatred towards others. The example of the Indian Bandit Queen Phoolan Devi fully personifies this phenomenon. During her early childhood, she was subjected to physical as well as mental torture: she was raped as well as beaten for raising her voice against the atrocities of her paternal male cousin.<sup>82</sup> This dilemma has been captured by Mark Juergensmeyer who writes that “men ... who experienced this loss of pride and identity would lash out in violence—the way that men often do when they are frustrated. Such expressions of power are meant to at least symbolically regain their sense of manhood.”<sup>83</sup>

However, this raises a question: Is this phenomenon only common in youngsters, or could it occur in later life as well? The answer to this could be

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<sup>82</sup> Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 241–252.

<sup>83</sup> Juergensmeyer, “Does Religion Cause Terrorism?,” 6.



“both.” It may occur in youngsters as well as adults who experience a trauma and who use violence to express their frustration and anger, as was the case with Ayman al Zawahiri, who became fully radicalized after being subjected to physical torture during his prison term.<sup>84</sup> Ed Husain also highlights an early childhood trauma of racial discrimination. As a six-year-old, Ed Husain was taunted by cries of “Pakis! Pakis! F— off back home!”<sup>85</sup> After which Ed Husain began to question his identity and where he belonged. He recounts facing religiously offensive language from his teacher, who based the charges of missing an obligation, tried to ridicule him by asking, “Where is your Allah now then, eh? Where is he? Can’t he help you?”<sup>86</sup> He further writes that “This mixed heritage of being British by birth, Asian by descent, and Muslim by conviction was set to tear me apart in later life.”<sup>87</sup>

Youngsters are most vulnerable to outside influence, whether from their elders, teachers or even peers. This becomes a grave problem once they are away from their loved ones. A youngster has psychological needs: he needs to be loved, given appropriate respect and trust, and if he does not get either, owing to being neglected by parents or being away from the family, he is likely to put himself in a losses frame. It then will become easier to influence such an individual towards hate, revenge and violence. A PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) terrorist tells in his memoirs that:

I started to attend the university. I was very happy but I was away from my home town and family. I wanted to finish my education ... During the university, I met with new friends who were from my home town and were my seniors. Because of their influence, I started to become somebody else, filled with revenge and hate, and separatist ideas. I had no power to say stop, I was afraid, I was alone in the big city: Istanbul.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 60.

<sup>85</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 2.

<sup>86</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 3.

<sup>88</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 28.

Adolescence is a time when youngsters start to question the goals of their lives, and anything new, trendy or dangerous may seem attractive. Ed Husain comments, “I was sixteen years old and I had no white friends ... This was my Britain. Against this backdrop, the writings of Sarwar’s guru, Mawdudi, took me to a radically new level.”<sup>89</sup> Moreover high testosterone levels also influence an individual’s behavior during his teen years, and he will show resistance to the established norms, thereby making him more aggressive and action hungry. With this idea in mind, the youngster will be more inclined to accept the fact that it is always better to stand and do something, whether right or wrong, than to remain passive. Ed Husain reminisces over his younger years, “We were taught never defend, always offend.”<sup>90</sup>

Such biological tendencies can also be influenced by external circumstances, such as the plight of others, economic or social grievances, etc. Ed Husain explains this dilemma by citing the example of the Balkan Crisis in the 1990s. He writes, “The Balkan crisis truly radicalized many Muslims in Britain. I desperately wanted to help, to do something to stop the killing. And we were young; we believed we could change the world.”<sup>91</sup> Another example is from Palestine, where after stoning Israel Defense Forces (IDF) vehicles, Hassan Yousef mentions that, “my friends and I had challenged the might of the Israeli arm and come out unscathed. The rush was addictive, making us even bolder.”<sup>92</sup>

Another implied element leading from the biological factor is that once youngsters become involved in criminal activity for different reasons, they likely end up in prison. These prisons, according to a left wing Turkish terrorist from DEV-SOL (Revolutionary Left), are the main breeding grounds of terrorism. He says, “It was like the terrorist organizations owned the prison. The dormitories were shared among the different organizations ... In such an environment, they

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<sup>89</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 35.

<sup>90</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 100.

<sup>91</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 75,

<sup>92</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 23.

were doing what they wanted. The prison was like an education center of [terrorist] organizations.”<sup>93</sup> Under such circumstances, a youngster who is already in a miserable condition as a consequence of landing on the negative side of society is more prone to such advances, thereby putting him in the losses frame and making him further risk acceptant.

Another psychological trait which may put people in the losses frame is the tendency of the young to imitate their elders, irrespective of right or wrong. This aspect is also related to cultural trends in a particular society, and thus has more significance in the Eastern as well as Muslim cultures, where as a rule, youngsters are encouraged to follow in the footsteps of their elders. In this regard, Mosab Hassan Yousef writes in his memoirs, “I desperately wanted to be like my father, just as he had wanted to be like his father.”<sup>94</sup> Therefore, just the psychological urge of copying one’s parents or elders may put an individual in a losses frame. By contrast, individualism may also cause people to perceive themselves in the losses frame.

In this chapter, by analyzing the reasons which put people in the losses frame under the four categories: psychology, environment, ideology and biology, the stage is set to move towards those measures which may move such individuals from the losses frame to a gains frame. However, it would be prudent to link these categories with empirics in the shape of memoirs, interrogation reports and governmental data on terrorist cross culturally, as well as from different economic and political backgrounds. This will help in quelling the impression that by giving a few examples in support of the theory, the same cannot be applied uniformly at the global level. Therefore, the next chapter focuses separately on each cause of being in the losses frame, and supports it with real life examples from different social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds.

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<sup>93</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 163.

<sup>94</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 15.

## IV. EMPIRICS FOR THE LOSSES FRAME

We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience.”

—*John Dewey*

This thesis has argued that some people in a losses frame become more risk acceptant and may ultimately end up with terrorist organizations; however, to understand the human decision making process and why an individual adopts such a risky path, it will be important to examine examples from the pool of data on terrorists. The causes for being in the losses frame are different from individual to individual, as described in Chapter III; however, it can be argued that supporting examples for each reason could have been cherry-picked to support the theory adopted for this thesis. Therefore, in this chapter, all the aforementioned causes will be being pitted against terrorists’ memoirs, interrogation reports, and experts’ opinions to apply the losses frame component of Prospect Theory across the globe. The fact remains, it is extremely difficult to understand the complexities of the losses frame, especially at the lower levels. Even so, analyzing individuals from different social, economic and political backgrounds will demonstrate explicitly that there are certain causes which will drive would-be terrorists towards terrorism’s risky path.

To study terrorists from varied backgrounds, all four categories—psychology, environment, ideology, and biology—will be supported separately. In each category, examples will be given in support of Subcategories and at the end of the chapter, a conclusion will be drawn graphically, pointing towards certain causes for placement in the losses frame as more critical or important than the others. However, this thesis does not claim that these reasons or the data set of the terrorists are exhaustive, and the conclusions drawn at the end are solely be based on the reasons and data set of terrorists considered for this thesis.

## A. PSYCHOLOGY

This is the story of my journey from the inside, in the fullest sense of the word: inside today's Islam, inside Britain's Muslim communities, inside my own heart.

–Ed Husain

### 1. Emotions and Trauma

The impact of emotions and trauma in either early or later life compel some people, out of anger and frustration, to resort to the use of violence. These psychological outbursts can be observed in examples from the battlegrounds of Palestine to the most stable societies such as Norway and the U.S.; from the migrant communities in the West to the separatist multi-ethnic groups in the developing world. These examples also cover different time periods: from the leftist and fascist movements in post-World War II Europe, to the Islamic renaissance in the Middle East in the early and mid-twentieth century, to the present.

From the Palestinian hotbed of violence, Mosab Hassan Yousef, son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef, one of the seven founders of the Hamas, writes about his childhood years: “When the Intifada started, everything changed at our cemetery-playground. Every day, more bodies were arriving than ever before. Anger and rage stalked hand in hand with grief.”<sup>95</sup> During his teen years, he further writes that after being caught for stoning vehicles, “The soldiers took my shoes and made me sit on the ground. I thought they were going to shoot me and leave my body in a field somewhere.”<sup>96</sup>

As a result of this trauma, the only outcome for him, he believed, was to vent his frustrations through the use of violence against the perpetrators. Mosab writes, “I could think of nothing else except joining the military wing of Hamas and taking revenge on Israel. ... Filled with anger and desire for revenge, I started

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<sup>95</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 21.

<sup>96</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 25.

hunting for guns.”<sup>97</sup> After being arrested and beaten by the Israelis, Mosab writes, “The fires of hatred burned inside me. I wanted revenge on the soldier who had beaten me so badly. I wanted revenge on Israel. I didn’t care about the cost, even if it cost me my life.”<sup>98</sup> He further says, “I had never felt such pain. But worse than the physical pain was the horror of being at the mercy of something merciless, something raw and inhuman ... I understood fighting and killing out of hatred, rage, revenge or even necessity.”<sup>99</sup>

Another example from Palestine is of Leila Khaled, from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), who epitomizes the dilemma a youngster faces. Rex Hudson recounts her trauma by writing, “At age four ... her family fled the Israeli occupation and lived in impoverished exile in a ... refugee camp in Sour, Lebanon. By age eight, she had become politically aware of the Palestinian plight.”<sup>100</sup> Since her youth was filled with traumas, ultimately she resorted to the use of violence to vent and avenge her anger on the Israelis, whom she thought were the prime reason for her losses.

From the immigrant communities in Europe, Ed Husain explains his school years when he had to go to an all-boys school due to his parents’ insistence. He says, “Uncommitted, I continued to be loner at school, occasionally bullied, frequently sworn at, and regularly ignored in most classes. How I yearned to be back at Sir William Burroughs.”<sup>101</sup> This forced change created a trauma for a young boy, who felt a misfit in the new environment and was guided eventually toward the wrong direction as a consequence of his immigrant status in a Western society.

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<sup>97</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 63.

<sup>98</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 83.

<sup>99</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Rex A. Hudson, *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, September, 1999), 73.

<sup>101</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 8.

In referencing the influence of early childhood trauma at home, Serdar Bayraktutan quotes Mustafa Duyar, a DHKP/C terrorist who, due to problems and violence at home, was also not able to adjust in his school. He mentions that “in school and in work life, I always saw myself as different from others, and I felt as a loser.”<sup>102</sup> He further mentions that his mother was ultimately killed by his stepfather, and in order to avoid the pity of the people and be strong, he opted for risky behavior to prove his worth in the society.<sup>103</sup>

Renato Curcio, imprisoned leader of the Italian Red Brigades, had very difficult times during his early years. His mother was a housemaid, and her “itinerant positions with families required long separations. In April 1945, Curcio’s beloved uncle, Armando ... was murdered in a fascist ambush. A poor student, Curcio failed several subjects in his first year of high school and had to repeat the year.”<sup>104</sup> In this case the disturbed childhood years led to bad educational performance in the school years, and the final straw proved to be the murder of his uncle, which made his trauma more acute, and led him into the folds of violence.

Another curious case is that of Anders Behring Breivik, who despite living in a highly developed and stable society, resorted to the use of violence, in part because his childhood and adolescence were troubled. A year after his birth, his parents separated and were formally divorced four years later. SSBU, Norway’s Center for Child and Youth Psychiatry pointed out that caring for Breivik was failing to such a degree that he was in danger of developing more serious psychopathology. In addition, there was a suspicion of sexual harassment/abuse by his mother,<sup>105</sup> which even if not completely true, could have produced a

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<sup>102</sup> Bayraktutan, Anne Ben Geldim, 113.

<sup>103</sup> Bayraktutan, Anne Ben Geldim, 113.

<sup>104</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 72.

<sup>105</sup> Aage Storm Borchrevink, *En Norsk Tragedie – Anders Behring Breivik og Veiene til Utøya* (Oslo: Gyldendahl 2012), 332–349.

lasting impact on him psychologically, leading him to take revenge on all of society for not protecting him.

Another case of emotional trauma is that of the Oklahoma bomber, Timothy McVeigh, who was a child of a broken family. His parents separated when he was ten years old. While his sisters preferred to live with their mother, he stayed with his father. This seclusion from his mother and sisters molded his personality into that of a shy loner “who did not socialize much.”<sup>106</sup> The experiences of early life led him to look for confidence in other things such as guns, which became a passion for him, and led him to use violence as a means to express himself.

Aside from early life trauma, people facing traumatic situations in their adulthood can also be affected. Two cases which have come to prominence are those of Sayyid Qutb and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Although an argument can be made that Sayyid Qutb was already radicalized even before his arrests upon returning from the U.S., the torture during his prison time hardened his stance towards his fellow Muslims. Lawrence Wright writes that:

Qutb had a high fever when he was arrested; nonetheless, the state-security officers handcuffed him and forced him to walk to prison. He fainted several times along the way. For hours he was held in a cell with vicious dogs, and then during long periods of interrogation, he was beaten.<sup>107</sup>

Just like Sayyid Qutb, Ayman al-Zawahiri was also subjected to torture in the prison. “Because of his status, Zawahiri was subjected to frequent beatings and other ingenious and sadistic forms of punishment.”<sup>108</sup> These traumatic events in his life, coupled with his religious and political leanings which had already matured, put him in the losses frame, and led him towards the path of violence. This also elevated his status and made him a leader who, with

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<sup>106</sup> BBC News, “Profile: Timothy McVeigh,” *BBC News*, May 11, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1321244.stm>.

<sup>107</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 33.

<sup>108</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 60.



complete disregard for his personal safety, would raise his voice for the oppressed people of his country.

## 2. Personal Inadequacies

Dissatisfaction with current circumstances may be the result of personal failures in an individual's life. Instead of looking inward, some individuals may try to blame others for their inadequacies. In this regard, one of the Madrid train bombers, Serhane Fakhret, a Tunisian, was a perceived failure in his life, though his father and mother were both successful in their lives and respected figures in society. He was truly dubbed "the dreamer."<sup>109</sup> According to Scott Atran:

... at first, he wanted to promote Muslim-European relations ..., but the other Arab students weren't all that interested. He tried setting up a radio station, which also fell through. Then he tried selling imported clothes from Tunisia, which didn't work out. He tried importing candies, and that failed too.<sup>110</sup>

These failures placed him in a losses frame, and the place where he ultimately found solace was religion, but from there he was driven towards violence to prove his worth in society.

Similarly, the Times Square bomber, Faisal Shehzad, was an educated individual who once lost his job, had to abandon his home to the bank, and seemed estranged from his wife, before finding solace in a militant religious rebirth.<sup>111</sup> Aum Shinrikyo's leader, Shoko Asahara, was blind in one eye and had diminished vision in the other. He was sent to a boarding school for the blind; however, he soon developed influence over the blind students, and according to Alex Hudson, "exhibited a strong tendency to dominate people."<sup>112</sup>

Sayyid Qutb, one of the founders of modern day al-Qaeda, was a mid-level government clerk in Egypt. Although he liked to be called a great writer and

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<sup>109</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 177.

<sup>110</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 177.

<sup>111</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 269.

<sup>112</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 134.

a vehement opponent of King Farouk's regime, "he had never gotten to the front rank of the contemporary Arab literary scene, a fact that galled him throughout his career."<sup>113</sup> Another example is Anders Breivik, who despite trying his hand at everything, failed to succeed in anything, and ultimately resorted to using violence in order for his ideas to be taken seriously.

All the above examples support the idea that people with personal inadequacies may find themselves in a losses frame and thus be more inclined to the use of violence to prove their worth to the world in general and to their societies in particular. These inadequacies are sufficient cause for them to look for more non-traditional means to define themselves and achieve satisfaction for their inner self. This same dilemma can be found in a military commander who, unable to convince his subordinates through reasoning, may resort to the use of coercion, both physical and mental, to enforce his point of view.

### **3. Personality**

Some individuals' behavior towards the losses frame, and thus violence, is a result of their personality, be it introverted, extroverted, or violent. The underwear bomber, Umar Abdulmutallab, possessed an introverted personality. Despite being a gifted student from a well-off family, he felt lonely and out of place in a foreign school. According to Scott Atran, "On Facebook, he frequently mused about loneliness and love, his sexual frustrations, and his need to marry soon because 'the hair of a woman can easily arouse a man.'"<sup>114</sup>

In contrast, Velupillai Prabhakaran, leader of LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), possessed a violent personality. Rex Hudson observes the following in a Library of Congress report:

During his childhood ... [he] spent his days killing birds and squirrels with a slingshot. An average student, he preferred historical novels on the glories of ancient Tamil conquerors to his

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<sup>113</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 10.

<sup>114</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 275.

text books. As a youth, he became swept up in the growing militancy. ... After dropping out of school at age 16, he began to associate with Tamil 'activist gangs.'<sup>115</sup>

Due to his personality, which was cocooned in mistrust, "he murdered many of his trusted commanders for suspected treason."<sup>116</sup>

Abu Nidal of The Abu Nidal Organization, leader of a splinter terrorist organization from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), has been termed an "introvert and stubborn," by Alex Hudson.<sup>117</sup> The high school reputation of Aum Shinrikyo's Shoko Asahara as a "violence prone, judo-proficient con artist and avaricious bully had earned him the fear of his classmates, as well as \$3000, by the time he graduated from high school in 1975."<sup>118</sup> These two individuals so far apart geographically behaved in the same manner because of their personalities, be they introverted or violent.

According to Wright, Sayyid Qutb, who remained single throughout his life, belonged to that category of persons who simply despise the opposite sex. According to the author, "sexuality threatened him, and he had withdrawn into a shell of disapproval, seeing sex as the main enemy of salvation."<sup>119</sup> During his stay in the U.S., Sayyid Qutb stayed mostly at home. As Qutb himself mentions, "Here in this strange place, this huge workshop they call 'the new world,' I feel as though my spirit, thoughts, and body live in loneliness."<sup>120</sup> Sayyid Qutb despised Western values and norms, the notion of freedom, especially for females, and the West's materialistic culture. He thought of these collectively as immoral values and practices, which were trying to corrupt him as well as his country through foreign influence. While living in the U.S., Sayyid Qutb never criticized the materialistic ways which he so despised, probably due to his shy and introverted

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<sup>115</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 96.

<sup>116</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 97.

<sup>117</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 100.

<sup>118</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 134.

<sup>119</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 11.

<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 14.

personality. However, Wright speculates that “perhaps he kept the slights to himself until he could safely broadcast them at home.”<sup>121</sup>

Regarding Ayman al-Zawahiri, Wright writes that he was fearless, self-righteous, and had total conviction in his own beliefs which produced “head-strong qualities that would invariably be associated with him in the future and that would propel him into conflict with nearly everyone.”<sup>122</sup> After being rounded up for alleged charges of assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, Ayman al-Zawahiri, once slapped by the Chief of Police, slapped him back. According to Wright, “until that moment, he [Ayman] had never ... resorted to violence. Zawahiri immediately became known among the other prisoners as the man who struck back.”<sup>123</sup>

Daniel McGowan, an ELF member, is described by his sister, as having an “Obsession with recycling.”<sup>124</sup> Another member of ELF, Jake Ferguson was introverted and not fond of talking to people; however, he was a junkie and an outlaw as well, who has been termed “a pirate having a bad boy image, which he really was.”<sup>125</sup> Both of these ELF members, though belonging to the two very opposite social poles, joined together for a cause dear to them.

Due to his introverted nature, Timothy McVeigh developed a strange personality. According to Nathan Springer:

He was scrawny, uncoordinated, and small for his size, which made him an easy mark. McVeigh dealt with the escalating problem in the only way he knew how, by secluding himself from others. [He] became more of a loner, where he would escape into a world of fantasy and make believe. Like heroes from his comic books, he

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<sup>121</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 28.

<sup>122</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 44.

<sup>123</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 60.

<sup>124</sup> *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*, directed by Marshall Curry (New York: Oscill Scope Laboratories, 2011), DVD.

<sup>125</sup> *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*.

would create scenarios of revenge to atone for past moments of weakness and to defeat his enemies.<sup>126</sup>

According to his BBC News profile, “McVeigh embarked on a flirtation with the militia movement, which believes that ordinary Americans are under imminent threat of attack from nuclear war, Communists or central government. He began to stockpile food, water and guns, and in 1988 he and a friend bought ten acres of woodland where they practiced shooting and planned to build a bunker.”<sup>127</sup>

Another case is that of Hakimullah Mehsud of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), who according to the BBC News crew:

Has a wild streak which borders on the reckless. When they met in 2007, he took the BBC crew for a drive, handling the vehicle like a man possessed, manoeuvring [sic] around razor sharp bends at barely possible speeds. He finished the demonstration by braking inches short of a several hundred-foot drop. While the BBC crew sat in stunned silence, he just laughed chillingly and stuck the car in reverse to smoothly continue the journey.<sup>128</sup>

#### **4. Idealism**

The urge to do everything in the best possible and just way may move an individual towards idealism. Mosab writes, “I was scared, but I also felt a bit important, as though I was becoming dangerous to Israel.”<sup>129</sup> Mustafa Duyar, a DHKP/C terrorist, recalls a magazine article in which “they were talking about a free and just world without any abuse. A world that nobody is subjected to injustice and everyone is equal. I said to myself that this is the world worth fighting for, and I was ready to pay any price for that.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Nathan R. Springer, “Patterns of Radicalization: Identifying The Markers And Warning Signs Of Domestic Lone Wolf Terrorists In Our Midst” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, December 2009).

<sup>127</sup> BBC News, “Profile: Timothy McVeigh.”

<sup>128</sup> “Profile: Hakimullah Mehsud,” *BBC News*, May 3, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8219223.stm>.

<sup>129</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 66.

<sup>130</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 114.

Bassam Abu Sharif remembers his dialogue with his father, who tried to stop him from joining the armed Palestinian struggle. He writes:

Though I could see his point of view, deep down inside I knew: a human being whose people have no future is himself without value unless he fights for what is right. ... I did not want to be an eternal foreigner, a displaced person, a landless, homeless, stateless, shamed, despised Palestinian refugee. A Ph.D. What is that, I asked my father, when we have no country?<sup>131</sup>

On further insistence by his father, Abu Sharif replies, "I would rather be in prison in my own country than be a free man in exile. I would rather be dead."<sup>132</sup>

In a letter to his mother, Renato Curcio, a Red Army Brigades terrorist, explains why he chose the path of violence and cannot leave it. He writes, "My enemies are the enemies of humanity and of intelligence, those who have built and build their accursed fortunes on the material and intellectual misery of the people. Theirs is the hand that has banged shut the door of my cell."<sup>133</sup> Sayyid Qutb, due to his religious inclination, was an idealist, and materialism was an anathema to him. He says, "The fact remained that materialism was the real American god. The soul has no value to Americans."<sup>134</sup>

Daniel McGowan's sister highlights his idealism by recalling that "he had different ways of doing things ... never used a machine which might hurt the environment."<sup>135</sup> McGowan himself says, "I couldn't believe that people accepted what was going on. Why are we being so gentle in our activism, when they are butchering the forests? What years of letter writing and picketing had never been able to do, a single arson had accomplished."<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Bassam Abu-Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies: The Memoirs of Bassam Abu-Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 53.

<sup>132</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 53.

<sup>133</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 73.

<sup>134</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 27.

<sup>135</sup> *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*.

<sup>136</sup> *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*.

## 5. Plight of Others

Abu Sharif of the PLO mentions the conditions of other Palestinians in a refugee camp in Jordan as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, “Suweileh camp was misery piled on catastrophe: a few tents pitched crazily in the deserts, abandoned possessions scattered across the sand, thousands and thousands of people, no food, very little water, no facilities, nothing ... this was the nation of Palestine.”<sup>137</sup> He further writes about a young girl, who came up to him and said:

Do you want to sleep with me? She asked. Give me five dinars ... I sat down heavily on the hot sand. So Palestinian girls had to prostitute themselves now, did they? It had come to that. They had to sell themselves, dishonor themselves just to survive? Anger took hold of me as I stared out across the desert. ... I understood now what I had to do. There was no going back. My own fight began here, now. ... I would regain our country, or die for it.<sup>138</sup>

Similarly, the love of the near and dear ones can also motivate people to adopt risky behavior, though it may not be the plight of others, but to seek a better future for family and friends. An Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade member, Nabeel Masood, who exploded himself in March 2004 near an Israeli port of Ashdod, is a case in point. According to his father, he sacrificed his life out of his love of others. His father explains, “My son didn’t die just for the sake of a cause; he died also for his cousins and friends. He died for the people he loved.”<sup>139</sup>

Osama Bin Laden’s mother remembers how after his religious and political awakening, he “sometimes would sit in front of the television and weep over the news from Palestine. ... He was more concerned, sad, and frustrated about the situation in Palestine in particular, and the Arab and Muslim world in general.”<sup>140</sup> The same was the case with the activists and sympathizers of ELF, who became radicalized during a demonstration in Eugene, Oregon, where the brutal use of

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<sup>137</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 49–50.

<sup>138</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 50.

<sup>139</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 27.

<sup>140</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 87.

force by law enforcement agencies against the peaceful activists protesting the cutting of trees in the downtown traumatized them and ultimately moved them to violence.<sup>141</sup> It was both the plight of others in the shape of people, as well as plight of the planet itself in the shape of cutting of trees or killing of fish in the oceans that radicalized the members of the ELF.

Similarly concerned for the plight of others, Timothy McVeigh, “was distressed by the 1992 catastrophe at Ruby Ridge - a siege and shootout where federal officials shot and killed the wife of survivalist Randy Weaver and their 14-year-old son. But it was the storming of the Branch Davidian compound at Waco the following year that provoked him into acting on his frustrations.”<sup>142</sup> McVeigh traveled to Waco to see the effects of the actions by law enforcement agencies and was traumatized by the evident use of aggressive force. In the letter entitled “Why I bombed the Murray building,” McVeigh explains that he lost patience after waiting for the government to apologize for Waco. “I reached the decision to go on the offensive—to put a check on government abuse of power, where others had failed in stopping the federal juggernaut running amok.”<sup>143</sup>

## **B. ENVIRONMENT**

### **1. Geography**

Both a geographical location and the external physical environment may affect an individual’s perception of himself or herself, as well as the perception of others. If an individual is living in an area filled with conflict, or one with no economic or educational opportunities, or one filled with injustices and inequality, these features, alone or combined, may be enough to put him in the losses frame. According to Mosab Hassan Yousef, “three-quarters of a million Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes in the territories that

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<sup>141</sup> *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front.*

<sup>142</sup> Springer. “Patterns of Radicalization.”

<sup>143</sup> BBC News, “Profile: Timothy McVeigh.”



became the State of Israel,”<sup>144</sup> and they had to live in the refugee camps. As a result of living in the difficult environment of these camps, “most of the impatient young Hamas activists were from the Refugee camps.”<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Ed Husain’s high school environment in Britain was nothing close to normal. He writes about burning down a classroom in the school: “All the boys knew who had burnt [ it ] ... but no one dared to speak. The local youth gangs in Stepney would ‘knife us’... A tabloid newspaper ... dubbed Stepney Green the ‘worst school in Britain.’ Teachers were embarrassed to say they worked there.”<sup>146</sup>

Two arch-rivals in the Palestine-Israel conflict, who ultimately became friends, Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi, exemplify this dilemma. Regarding their joint memoirs, Peter David says, “Men do not make history on a clean slate. They are all in some way the prisoners of the circumstances they inherit from their fathers and grandfathers.”<sup>147</sup> After U.S. President Truman endorsed the transfer of a hundred thousand Jewish refugees into Palestine, Sayyid Qutb wrote, “I hate those Westerners and despise them.”<sup>148</sup>

Geography in this context also includes the social environment prevalent in a particular area. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan are a case in point, where the old legal system has given rise to desperation on the part of youngsters, who do not find a hopeful way for their future. According to Naveed Shinwari:

Local administration in each agency [in FATA] is managed by a Political Agent (PA), who is a federal civil servant; ... The Political Agents perform several functions at the same time – they act as an executive, judge and revenue collector. In facilitating their role they are assisted by the former-colonial Malik system (a local leader appointed by the government to represent their community). As

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<sup>144</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 10.

<sup>145</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 48.

<sup>146</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 7.

<sup>147</sup> Peter David, “Foreword,” in *Best of Enemies: The Memoirs of Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), vii.

<sup>148</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 11.

Maliks are appointed by the PA their independence and loyalty can be questionable: with some acting in accordance with the wishes of the PA rather than the interests of the people they are supposed to be representing. Generally, the local people feel that they have been marginalized and inequitably treated.<sup>149</sup>

Also, the lack of mainstream educational institutions compels the local people to look towards the only available alternative: the Madrassah. However, if the madrassah is teaching true Islamic ideology which is non-violent, its students may not be able to find jobs other than as mosque clerics, and if the madrassah is teaching violence, its students are already destined to be the fuel of global extremist violence.

According to BBC News, “Hakimullah Mehsud's only schooling was at a small village madrassah (religious school) in Hangu district,”<sup>150</sup> and even that he did not complete. This also highlights the environment within these madrassahs, which typically is filled with violence perpetrated by violent clerics against young children, and this environment then leads the youngsters to despise their religious education. However, the introduction of physical violence at such a young age in such madrassahs already puts individuals in the losses frame and leads them to adopt risky behavior.

## **2. Immigrant’s Dilemma**

Ed Husain writes, “Growing up in Britain in the 1980s was not easy. ... We grew up oblivious of the fact that large numbers of us were somehow different – we were ‘Asians.’”<sup>151</sup> Although he mentions that his teachers were not biased towards people with different ethnicities, British society as a whole was full of hostility towards non-white people. He writes also about the religious teachings in his home, which were, “rooted not in Britain but in the eastern Muslim tradition of

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<sup>149</sup> Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, *Understanding FATA: 2011, Attitudes towards Governance, Religion and Society in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas*, (Islamabad, Pakistan: Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme, 2012), xi.

<sup>150</sup> BBC News, “Profile: Hakimullah Mehsud.”

<sup>151</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 2.

seeking guidance and religious advice from an elderly sage.”<sup>152</sup> Subjected to this external aggression and the paradoxical situation of prioritizing between his internal and external environment, Ed Husain was placed in a losses frame right from his childhood.

Abu Sharif explains the dilemma he faced from forced displacement. He writes:

Our family had been driven from their lands, their homes, by force. Injustice had been piled upon violent theft. How could we Palestinian have allowed it to happen? There was now a Palestinian Diaspora, just like the Jewish one before it. Our people were scattered to the four winds.”<sup>153</sup>

The Muslim immigrant communities in Europe are also a flash point and have already become a nuisance for law enforcement agencies, and the trend is likely to continue into the foreseeable future. Political authorities, by banning traditional attire of the Muslims such as the scarf, are alienating immigrant Muslims from mainstream society and forcing them to fall back to the islands of their respective communities, which in the end will further isolate them. The most prudent option would have been to regard the scarves or other clothing issues as dress items, rather than focusing on them as religious identity outfits.

### **3. Cultural Norms and Values**

Ed Husain’s parents chose to send him to a boy’s only school. This was mostly to keep him from distractions. His parents thought a single sex institution would provide a more favorable environment for education.<sup>154</sup> He writes, “I think my parents eventually realized that choosing Stepney Green had been a mistake. And they were keen to compensate.”<sup>155</sup> But the compensation was not in the shape of changing Ed Husain’s environment; instead they tried to

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<sup>152</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 15.

<sup>153</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 29.

<sup>154</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 5.

<sup>155</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 8.

compensate in a manner in line with their cultural and traditional norms. Rather than removing problem A, they tried to incentivize him with benefit B, which had nothing to do with the original problem. They were trying to cure the wound with a medicine, albeit a wrong one. Instead of lavishing non-related benefits, like taking him on trips to London, Manchester or Birmingham, it likely would have been more appropriate to change his school, thereby removing him from the environment which ultimately put him in a losses frame.<sup>156</sup>

Correspondingly, Sayyid Qutb and his companion were not admitted into a theater in the U.S. once because they were dark colored. Later, upon realizing that they were not black but Egyptians, the theater owner apologized, but Sayyid Qutb at that point refused to enter. He was “galled by the fact that black Egyptians could be admitted but black Americans could not.”<sup>157</sup> This refusal was indicative of both Eastern and religious values inculcated in Sayyid Qutb, which led him to adopt such a behavior. Despite being apologized to by the theater owner, he aligned himself with the downtrodden strata of the society.

#### **4. Prevalent Trends**

Before the start of the first Intifada, the prevalent mood inside the Palestinian territories was one of despair, and the only outlet seemed to be to resist the Israelis through all possible means. Mosab describes this despair, “They were not terrorists by nature. They were just people who had run out of hope and options. Their backs were to the wall. They had nothing left and nothing to lose. They cared nothing for the world’s opinion or even their own lives.”<sup>158</sup> Along similar lines, Ed Husain explains the trends prevalent in Britain for the Muslim community. He writes, “I had tried to be Muslim and felt as though I

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<sup>156</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 8.

<sup>157</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 23.

<sup>158</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 31.

had failed. At that time, being a young Muslim could only mean being an Islamist. ... Grandpa's Islam was for elderly people."<sup>159</sup>

According to Scot Atran, people behind most of the terrorist attacks in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines were "Afghan Alumni,"<sup>160</sup> which clearly reflects a prevailing trend in the aftermath of the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s. These alumni of mythical fighters who had defeated one of the world's superpowers created a trend for the use of violence to achieve political objectives, and the same trend is being followed now by those adopting the way of Jihad. In their eyes even the world's superpower, the U.S., can be coerced.

Leila Khaled of the PFLP was a victim of her environment, as well as the prevalent trend in the American University of Beirut, where the Arab Cultural Club, Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) and the General Union of Palestinian Students were very active on campus. In 1963, she was admitted into the "ANM's first paramilitary contingent of university students and was active in ANM underground activities."<sup>161</sup> The same trend can be observed in universities the world over in the 1960s, when the only chic thing was to align oneself with socialist movement and, thus, oppose the sitting governments.

In Egypt, due to Sadat's acquiescent government, the general trend in the universities became more radicalized. "Young Islamic activists were appearing on campuses."<sup>162</sup> They were provided with arms by Sadat's government in order to defend themselves against the Marxists and Nasserites, which ultimately resulted in the radicalization of most of Egypt's universities.<sup>163</sup> However, in the end, these same weapons were used against the very government that had provided them.

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<sup>159</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 177.

<sup>160</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 12 and 157.

<sup>161</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 74.

<sup>162</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 48.

<sup>163</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 48.

During the times when ELF was agitating to save the earth, the trend of displaying the placards to protest had been very common; however, since the members were unable to influence the authorities through that trend, they resorted to violence. Tim Lewis says, “Since the hippy-like trend of holding placards and posters was not working, thus people turned to more aggressive protests. People called it sabotage and monkey wrenching, they would glue locks, put sugar in gas tanks of bulldozers. Dug trenches to stop movement of machinery.”<sup>164</sup>

## 5. Saturation of Information

Daniel McGowan of ELF says that after his first encounter with environmental activists in a conference where people were shown a movie about destruction of both the earth and ocean life by corporate entities, his reaction was, “What the hell are we doing? I got pretty much involved instantly. I protested constantly.”<sup>165</sup> However, he truly became radicalized after watching the Eugene, Oregon incident in which brutal methods were used by police against the unarmed protestors, and he realized that simple protests were not going to work. Though this reaction may also fit under the category of plight of others, in the case of McGowan, the availability of information on the Internet and television made him aware of such happenings in a faraway place like Eugene.

Ed Husain writes about the accessibility of videos depicting the brutalities perpetrated against Muslims in Bosnia: “In early 1993, a thirty-minute video was handed to me about the war in Bosnia, the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in the Balkans. I watched it in horror and then decided that it must be shown to our students to raise money for Bosnian Muslims.”<sup>166</sup> The burning of the U.S. embassy in Benghazi can also be correlated to the accessibility of information by the masses, which resulted in mass protests, and the issue of a blasphemous

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<sup>164</sup> *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front.*

<sup>165</sup> *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front.*

<sup>166</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 74.

movie about Prophet Muhammad was utilized by the terrorists to further their own aims.

## 6. Economic Deprivation

With regard to economic conditions as enablers for the losses frame, the 9/11 Commission Report mentions, “When people lose hope, when societies breakdown ... the breeding grounds for terrorism are created. Backward economic policies and repressive political regimes slip hopelessness into the societies, where ambitions and passions have no constructive outlet.”<sup>167</sup> Mosab writes about his family’s economic difficulties where nobody was ready to help him. He writes, “Apart from trying to keep me in line, no one helped our family while my father was in prison.”<sup>168</sup> A DHKP/C terrorist mentions that the terrorists found my economic weakness and offered me warm friendships, free education, equality, and a way to find justice, and by exploiting these, made me part of their organization.”<sup>169</sup>

With regard to LTTE terrorists, Hudson writes, “The majority of the rank-and-file membership belongs to the lower middle class. Almost all LTTE cadres have been recruited from the lower-caste strata of Jaffna society.”<sup>170</sup> According to a Library of Congress report, “The [Irish] terrorist is invariably from a working class background, not because of some Marxist doctrine but because the loyalist and republican areas of Northern Ireland are primarily working class. Quite likely, he is unemployed. ... His education is probably limited, because he probably left school at age 15 or 16 without formal qualifications.”<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> U.S. National Commission on the Terrorist Attacks on the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, by Philip Zelikow et al. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 2004), 378.

<sup>168</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 35.

<sup>169</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 124.

<sup>170</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 91.

<sup>171</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 83.

## C. IDEOLOGY

You have your ideology and I have mine.

–Khalil Gibran

### 1. Loss of Identity

A loss of identity does not relate to the physical loss of a material item, but to a perception of the loss of specific values, norms related to religious, political, social and cultural spheres, any one of which may put people into a losses frame. Besides the perceived loss of intangible values, the importance of identity also correlates to a physical identity, especially to one different from the mainstream or prevalent societal identity. The dilemma of losing one's identity can also be described as living in two worlds at the same time, especially when they are far apart individually and collectively.

Ed Husain writes, "Cut off from Britain, isolated from the Eastern culture of our parents, Islamism provided us with a purpose and place in life. More importantly, we felt as though we were the pioneers, at the cutting edge of this new global development of confronting the West in its own backyard." He further explains his dilemma of studying at an all-boys school by recalling a classmate who was a loner like him:

Like me, he prayed regularly. Like me, he was a misfit at school. Together, we started to assert a new identity: we were young, Muslim, studious, and London born. We were not immigrants and neither understood the mentality of peers who reminisced about their villages in Bangladesh.<sup>172</sup>

In the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the humiliating defeat of the Arab armies not only affected the Arab identity, but also gave rise to Islamic fundamentalism. As Wright observes, "The profound appeal of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt and elsewhere was born in this shocking debacle. A newly strident voice was heard in the mosques; the voice said that they had been defeated by a force far larger than the tiny country of Israel. God had turned

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<sup>172</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 23.



against the Muslims. The only way back to Him was to return to pure religion. The voice answered despair with a simple formulation: Islam is the solution.”<sup>173</sup>

One of the consequences of the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict probably was the weakening of Arab nationalism, which gave rise to militant organization. Abu Sharif writes, “In Arabic, the humiliation of 1967 is called al-Nakbah: ‘the catastrophe’ ... However small they were to begin with, groups like the PFLP found in this catastrophe an opportunity. They rushed headlong into the vacuum. The people, who had lost faith completely in Arab nationalism, turned to these groups in huge numbers.”<sup>174</sup> Mosab writes, “Palestinians were imprisoning other Palestinians. ... Now my hatred had multiple focal points. I hated the Palestinian Authority and Yasser Arafat, I hated Israel, and I hated secular Palestinians.”<sup>175</sup> This dilemma highlights a lack of an identity with which Mosab could align himself.

In 1974, Abdullah Ocalan, leader of PKK, formed the “university association whose initial focus was on gaining official recognition for Kurdish language and cultural rights.”<sup>176</sup> Similarly, A 30-year terrorist member of the DHKP/C mentions his dilemma of choosing between right and wrong, “In those times, we were facing the difficulty of finding our own identity in an environment filled with rightists and leftists conflicts.”<sup>177</sup>

For members of Aum Shinrikyo, “The first young Japanese to be free of financial pressures, the Aum Shinrikyo recruits were wondering if there was more to life than job security and social conformity.”<sup>178</sup> This wondering probably rests in the concept of Occidentalism, which though dissipated in the post-World War II period, once the Japanese adopted the Western values of modernization and

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<sup>173</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 45.

<sup>174</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 56.

<sup>175</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 62.

<sup>176</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 84.

<sup>177</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 136.

<sup>178</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 135.

enlightenment, was accomplished by crushing the indigenous traditions and old Japanese values. Once a society accepts outside influence, it likely loses its own identity in the process, and afterwards, its people start to question who they really are. For some the answer to this question lies in movements like Aum Shinrikyo, which provide an ideal platform for taking people back towards their roots.

## 2. Orientalism

Abu Sharif of the PLO mentions the environment that motivated him towards the violent path he adopted, but ultimately left. He writes, “To most Arab youths growing up in the 1950s, Nasser represented a dream and a symbol: a symbol of Arab nationalism, a dream of Arab unity, of Arab liberation, and of Arab progress. ... I was seventeen, and spoiling for a fight. I had no need to rebel – I had cause. Nasser-led Arab nationalism was going to save my people: and I was going to be in there at the kill.”<sup>179</sup> This rise of Arab nationalism possibly stemmed from a sense of being at the mercy of the West which, through the prism of Orientalism, possessed a biased view of the Arabs and other Eastern societies.

Concerning the danger that the Muslim Brotherhood posed to modernization, British Orientalist, James Heyworth-Dunne once wrote, “If the Brothers succeed in coming to power, Egypt will never progress and will stand as an obstacle to civilization.”<sup>180</sup> Yet after being personally confronted by Heyworth-Dunne, Sayyid Qutb writes, “I decided to enter the Brotherhood even before I left the [Heyworth-Dunne’s] house.”<sup>181</sup> This suggests that despite a change of religion, an orientalist mentality—which still thought that a religious organization a misfit to run the affairs of a country—could not be changed. After Sayyid Qutb’s experiences in America, Wright notes:

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<sup>179</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 30.

<sup>180</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 19–20.

<sup>181</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 20.

instead of being liberalized ... , he returned even more radicalized ... The white man in Europe or America is our number one enemy. The white man crushes us underfoot while we teach our children about his civilization, his universal principles and noble objectives. ... We are endowing our children with amazement and respect for the master who tramples our honor and enslaves us.<sup>182</sup>

### 3. Narratives and Historical Context

My words will be stronger if they kill me.

–Sayyid Qutb

Mosab Hassan Yousef writes, “Many people in the West who stereotype all Muslims as terrorists don’t know about the side of Islam that reflects love and mercy. ... It facilitates education and welfare. It unites and strengthens.”<sup>183</sup> Mosab writes about Hamas that it was an idea revolving around a narrative which, according to him, suggested that “[Hamas] was a ghost. An idea. You can’t destroy an idea; you can only stimulate it.”<sup>184</sup>

At the start of the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, Abu Sharif showed his jubilation. He writes, “When I heard the news that the war had started, a thousand birds started singing in my heart. Nasser had acted! At last the Israelis would learn about Arab strength. We would avenge the humiliations of 1948; we would regain the lands, property and freedom that were rightfully ours. We would have justice.”<sup>185</sup>

Ed Husain became estranged from his parents due to the effects of the narrative which said his parents were not good Muslims. As a result of this, he started drifting away from them. He writes, “As time passed, my parents and I were hardly on speaking terms.”<sup>186</sup> Remembering a discussion with his friend about the democratic system, Ed Husain writes, “Democracy is haram! Forbidden

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<sup>182</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 27.

<sup>183</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 9.

<sup>184</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 58.

<sup>185</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 40.

<sup>186</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 41.

in Islam. Don't you know that? Democracy is a Greek concept, rooted in demos and kratos – people's rule. In Islam, we don't rule; Allah rules."<sup>187</sup>

According to Sayyid Qutb, "Islam ... is a complete system with laws, social codes, economic rules, and its own method of government. Only Islam offered the formula for creating a just and godly society. ... It was not a battle between capitalism and communism; it was between Islam and materialism."<sup>188</sup> After talking to the detainees in a prison in Saudi Arabia who had volunteered for Iraq, Scot Atran says that the reason people volunteered lay in the narrative or context of "stories of women raped, the killing of innocents, and desecration of the Koran; all mentioned Abu Ghraib."<sup>189</sup>

In contrast, Wright attributes the radicalization of prisoners inside Cairo who were tortured and suffered humiliation at the hands of fellow Muslims. However, according to Wright, the blame is not laid on the Egyptian government alone, but also on the West, which was responsible for enabling the repressive regimes. He writes, "They held the West responsible for corrupting and humiliating Islamic society. Indeed, the theme of humiliation, which is the essence of torture, is important to understanding the radical Islamists' rage. Egypt's prisons became a factory for producing militants whose need for retribution—they called it justice—was all consuming."<sup>190</sup>

Daniel McGowan, in an interview, states that ELF's tactics of using of arson should not be taken as an outburst of young crazy individuals. He defends his actions by saying that such tactics is not simple, and it is hideous to label them as terrorist activities, since no one was injured in any of their arsons. This narrative, which clearly aims at avoiding collateral damage, especially against human beings, is possibly what convinced many others to join the movement.

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<sup>187</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 78.

<sup>188</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 17.

<sup>189</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 115.

<sup>190</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 61,

#### **4. Analogies**

Historical comparisons with today's circumstances may lead people to incorrect evaluations and ultimately wrong conclusions. In support of the ideology of Hizb-Ut-Tahrir, Ed Husain quotes one of its founders, Omar Bakri, in response to the need for jihad to support the Bosnian Muslims, "Where others cited UN resolutions, Omar Bakri cited history. He spoke about the power of the Abbasid and Ottoman caliphs to protect Muslims against non-Muslim aggression."<sup>191</sup>

At some point an external threat or invader, like the British forces in Afghanistan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, served only to unite the most polarized and fractured tribes. They not only became united in face of a common enemy, but also defeated it, or to put it simply, created an environment in which that enemy could not win. The same analogy is used by the Afghans for the current U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, which receives further credence from the defeat of one of the world's superpowers, the USSR, and has provided the Afghans with a sense of moral invincibility and resilience.

Environmental activists typically draw an analogy between the workings of nature and those of human actions, between the cutting of trees or catching of fish from the ocean and the killing of innocent living beings. This analogy places the activists in a camp which basically cares for the interests of the less fortunate, who cannot fight their own case, and ultimately puts them in a losses frame.

#### **5. Elite's Interests**

As discussed in Chapter III, there are two kinds of elites who may influence an individual: the culturally embedded elites like parents, teachers, or other elderly figures in the family; and the political or politically motivated religious elites. These elites, though acting differently—in the name of tradition, customs or culture, or for their personal power or glory—provide enough reasons

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<sup>191</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 81.

to place an individual in the losses frame. Ed Husain fits in the first category, since he was influenced by his parents, elders, and others, whereas Mosab fits into the second category, having been influenced by Palestinian leaders championing the cause of an independent Palestinian state.

Mosab realized that the Palestinian struggle was accomplishing nothing but serving the elite's interests. He writes, "From Yasser Arafat's perspective, the uprising seemed to be all about politics, money, and holding onto the power. He was a grand manipulator, the Palestinian master. On camera, he condemned Hamas for its attacks against civilians inside Israel. ... But he did little to interfere, content to let Hamas do his dirty work and take the heat from the international community."<sup>192</sup>

A leading DHKP/C terrorist who served more than 30 years in the organization writes, "The leaders of the terror organizations were separated from the society, and they were exploiting the others in order to maintain a luxurious life in foreign countries. At one time, once I refused to go back to Turkey because of my persecution, they prisoned me in a home for one month, where I waited for my death."<sup>193</sup>

Wright mentions the role of a Syrian gym teacher, who was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, in the religious and political awakening of Osama Bin Laden. When he was 14 years old, "Osama stopped watching cowboy shows ... he refused to wear Western dress."<sup>194</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri was also influenced by his uncle Mahfouz Azzam, a disciple of Sayyid Qutb, and the uncle instilled in young Zawahiri the ideology of Sayyid Qutb, which ultimately put him in the losses frame. Like Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama Bin Laden was influenced by the writings of Sayyid Qutb. Bin Laden's friend mentions that "We were trying to

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<sup>192</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 136.

<sup>193</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 139.

<sup>194</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 87,

understand what Islam has to say about how we eat, who we marry, how we talk. We read Sayyid Qutb. He was the one who most affected our generation.”<sup>195</sup>

## **D. BIOLOGY**

For young men, mortal combat in a great cause provides the ultimate adventure and glory to gain maximum esteem in the eyes of many and, most dearly, in the hearts of their peers.

–Scott Atran

### **1. Manhood through Violence**

In keeping with globalization, youngsters generally are becoming more independent and want to be left alone in the name of freedom. However, they are only interested in freedom of choice without the burden of sharing the responsibility. A search for respect and a meaning in life may end up placing such individuals in a losses frame, if their dreams remain unfulfilled. Two such examples are Anders Behring Breivik and Shoko Asahara, both of whom turned to violence due to their inability to find a respectable place in their respective societies. Breivik and Asahara are both members of civilized societies; however, in order to prove their worth, both resorted to the use of violence. Asahara’s visual disability and his desire for respect and acceptance in society pushed him towards a more effective and noticeable method in the shape of violence.

Serdar Bayraktutan identifies two certain contradictions of the individuals who are under police custody for terrorism-related crimes: first, a lack of communication with their families and the absence of love, and second, mutinous and reactive behaviors associated with their tender ages.<sup>196</sup> Individuals learn and form their basic character, including an understanding of love, respect and trust, through their life experiences in the family. Devoid of the relations with their parents, some individuals look for other means to satisfy their need for love and respect.

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<sup>195</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 91.

<sup>196</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 31.

In this regard, Timothy McVeigh is a case in point, reflecting the dilemma previously explained. After McVeigh's parents went their separate ways, the most influential person in his life quickly became his grandfather who introduced him to what would become the greatest passion of his life: guns. At the age of 13, McVeigh received his first gun from his grandfather. According to the Nathan Springer, "Under Edward's [grandfather] watchful eye, McVeigh seemed to bloom with the gun, an excitement unmatched in other activities he attempted."<sup>197</sup> This turns out to be Timothy's hobby and passion. Springer further writes that "For McVeigh, the gun was nourishment for his self-esteem. Guns seemed to be the great equalizer in his life, the more proficient he made himself with guns, the more confident he felt."<sup>198</sup>

Ayman al-Zawahiri is another individual who, due to the influence of his uncle Mahfouz Azzam early in life, developed both a religious and political awakening. The same can be discerned from his behavior at the age of fifteen, when he "helped to form an underground cell devoted to overthrow the government and establish an Islamist state."<sup>199</sup> Though this aspect of Zawahiri's life does not explicitly contain the element of violence, the idea of forming an underground cell at such a tender age clearly reflects his leanings towards the same direction.

## **2. Mental Vulnerability of the Young**

As youngsters, individuals are more susceptible to the influences of violent terrorist activities because they generally do not make decisions by fully analyzing the ramifications of their actions. Mosab explains his dilemma by writing that "at fifteen years of age, I saw everything in stark black and white. There were good guys and bad guys. And the bad guys deserved everything

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<sup>197</sup> Springer. "Patterns of Radicalization."

<sup>198</sup> Springer. "Patterns of Radicalization."

<sup>199</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 44.



they got.”<sup>200</sup> In his perception the Palestinians were good, and the Israelis were bad. In the summer of 1996, while in prison, he says that, “Though I was only eighteen, I felt as if I had lived several lifetimes in just a few months.”<sup>201</sup>

Ed Husain also was exploited due to his youth; he mentions a moment with a friend who declared, “You must choose between family and God’s work. The Islamic movement is more important to us than our families.”<sup>202</sup> At such a young age, he could not think of balancing between the two authorities in his life: his parents and his religion. However, he made his decision and “one night late in the summer ... left home for the Islamic movement without a penny in my pocket and with only the clothes I was wearing.”<sup>203</sup> He further writes, “The Hizb’s mental barriers were not easily broken down, and only slowly did I become conscious of how deeply the Hizb had penetrated both my life and teenage mind.”<sup>204</sup> His young age and inexperience drove him to the ranks of an extremist organization where he thought he would find the answers to the pursuit of his life.

Farhin, a Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist from Indonesia, highlights the importance of being part of a group of youngsters. He writes, “We played soccer and remained brothers—in Malaysia, when I worked on the chicken farm ... then back in Java.”<sup>205</sup> Besides actual kinship, Atran mentions, “Imagined kinship—the rhetoric and ritual of brotherhood, motherland, family, or friends, and the like—is also a critical ingredient of nearly all religious and political success, and another example of trick and tweak.”<sup>206</sup>

Abu Sharif also mentions his thoughts at a very young age, which reflected his bent towards obtaining justice at any cost. He writes:

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<sup>200</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 54.

<sup>201</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 92.

<sup>202</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 44.

<sup>203</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 45.

<sup>204</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 157.

<sup>205</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 13.

<sup>206</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 39.

The older I grew, the more I talked with members of my family, the more I read, the more I understood the word injustice. We must have justice, I thought; only justice. But how we were going to get this justice? That is a question to vex the thoughts of a sixteen year old boy.<sup>207</sup>

### 3. Adolescence

Adolescence is a time when youngsters look for ways, both positive and negative, to assert themselves. The internal struggle personifies the psychological need to satisfy one's inner self; whereas, the external outburst exemplifies the need to prove one's worth in society. This period also highlights the importance of doing something just to counter boredom. Mosab explains his personal dilemma of living in a volatile environment, but becoming bored even in the absence of violence. He writes, "There was so much violence that I actually became bored during those rare seasons when things were quiet. My friends and I started throwing stones too—to stir things up and to be respected as fighters in the resistance."<sup>208</sup>

This same point has been rightly captured by journalist Abul Taher, who observes that the "mean age at which a Muslim is radicalized is 21.6 years."<sup>209</sup> This age-related dilemma has been raised again by a Turkish left wing terrorist from DEV-SOL, who writes:

[Eighteen] years old is the time period which is most dynamic emotionally, relations with the environment is [sic] always conflicted with ups and downs, and it's the time full of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction without reasoning. With those conditions, I was kind of in a search, I was not pleased with the environment that I lived in, but I was not sure why?<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 29.

<sup>208</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 22.

<sup>209</sup> Abul Taher, "The middle class terrorists," *Daily Mail*, October 15, 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2049646/The-middle-class-terrorists-More-60pc-suspects-educated-comfortable-backgrounds-says-secret-M15-file.html>.

<sup>210</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 159.

And this age-related violent behavior is not restricted to the Muslims, as Rona M. Fields noted in 1976 about the terrorists in the Anglo-Irish struggle, "Terrorists are most often adolescent youths from working class families."<sup>211</sup>

One of the friends of Osama bin Laden comments on bin Laden's risky and reckless behavior; "We were riding horses in the desert, and we were really going very fast. I saw fine sand in front of us, and I told Osama this is dangerous, better stay away. He said no, and he continued. His horse turned over and he fell down. He got up laughing. Another time, we were riding in a jeep. Whenever he saw a hill, he would drive very fast and go over it, even though we didn't know what was on the other side."<sup>212</sup> Although such trends could be categorized as the urges of the young, if left unchecked, the same trend may shape an individual's behavior towards violence in the future.

In a Library of Congress report, Hudson writes, "By 1980 a majority of LTTE combatants were reportedly between 18 and 25 years of age. ... In 1990 approximately 75 percent of second-generation LTTE membership was below 30 years of age, with about 50 percent between the ages of 15 and 21 and about 25 percent between the ages of 25 and 29. Highly motivated and disciplined, most LTTE fighters are subteenagers [sic], according to an Indian authority."<sup>213</sup>

#### **4. Criminality**

Although it is difficult to establish a direct correlation between criminality and terrorism, it has been observed that criminals inside the prisons have been exploited for new recruitment by the terrorist organizations. Mosab describes the environment inside the prison, "At Megiddo, Hamas was in total control inside the prison. Hamas was the largest and strongest organization there. Hamas made the rules, and everybody else played their game."<sup>214</sup> Therefore, if petty criminals

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<sup>211</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 83.

<sup>212</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 91.

<sup>213</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 91.

<sup>214</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 85.

are left at the mercy of the terrorist organizations, controlling the prisons, such individuals, already in a losses frame due to their criminal behavior and the consequent general shunning from society, may become ideal recruits for terrorist activities.

In 1982 Shoko Asahara, “was arrested and convicted for peddling fake Chinese cures and his business collapsed as a result. Bankrupted, Asahara reportedly earned nearly \$200,000 from a hotel scam that year.”<sup>215</sup> This behavior could be the result of not performing well through established norms of Japanese society, but this trend led him towards the use of violence in asserting his authority.

The fact that from an early age Jake Ferguson of ELF was a criminal may be attributed to his father already being in jail during those years. Jake was a junkie, always in conflict with law enforcement agencies. This trend led him to use violence in furthering the campaign of the ELF, which until that time had been mostly restricted to the use of peaceful means.<sup>216</sup>

## **5. Imitating Elders**

The phenomenon of imitating elders is more pronounced in Eastern cultures, but the West is not immune to this trend. Irrespective of the part of the world, a youngster always looks towards his elders—parents, teachers, authority figures, etc.—to imitate successful people. However, these successful people may only be successful in the eyes of the youngsters, because success may be defined through the prism of the environment in which they are interacting. Also, this imitation typically occurs without any cost and benefit analysis, because in the eyes of many youngsters, their elders are always right. However, this does not mean that anyone who imitates his elder will always be in the losses frame; rather, it may apply only to those who imitate their elders in the negative domain

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<sup>215</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 134.

<sup>216</sup> *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*.

exclusively. For example, after the arrest of his father, Mosab admired his father for his courage and steadfastness. He writes:

He was handcuffed and hung from the ceiling. They used electric shocks on him until he passed out. When that failed, they beat him some more. But my father was strong. He remained silent, never giving the Israelis any information that could hurt Hamas or his Palestinian brothers.”<sup>217</sup>

For Mosab, his role model was his father, who challenged the might of the Israelis, but did not budge, and by following in the footsteps of his father, he positioned himself in the losses frame at a young age.

Leila Khaled of the PFLP was inspired by a Palestinian revolutionary of the 1930s, Izz Edeen Kassam, and in her words, she decided to become a revolutionary in order to liberate her people and herself.<sup>218</sup> Ayman al-Zawahiri, current al-Qaeda leader grew up under the influence of his uncle Mahfouz Azzam, who was a true disciple of Sayyid Qutb. This indirect linkage between Ayman al-Zawahiri and Sayyid Qutb paved the way for Ayman’s radicalization at an early age, since he heard again and again from his uncle “about the purity of Qutb’s character and the torment he had endured in prison.”<sup>219</sup> The effects of this indoctrination can be observed from an incident when Ayman refused a car ride, an exciting proposition at that time to a young person, since the car belonged to the judge who had “participated in the courts that killed Muslims.”<sup>220</sup>

Given the empirics, it is possible to observe the most repeated trends in each category of placement in the losses frame. With this information we can prioritize the importance of certain reasons over others. To arrive at this conclusion, each category will be presented separately in graphic form; however, the complete data set showing all the categories together is also included as an appendix for reference. Besides including the individual terrorists, certain general

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<sup>217</sup> Yousef with Brackin, *Son of Hamas*, 29.

<sup>218</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 73.

<sup>219</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 43.

<sup>220</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 43.

trends in prominent terrorist organizations have also been mentioned in the chart, and accordingly accounted for in each graph.

From figures 4, 5, 6 and 7, it can be observed that there is an equal distribution in three categories, while psychology seems to be the most important element with a total of 50 counts, which is understandable because the psychological element impacts equally across borders, cultures and religions. Also with a total count of 24, the environment seems to be the least potent cause for being in a losses frame; however, all the other three categories are intertwined with the environment and may not be sufficient without it.

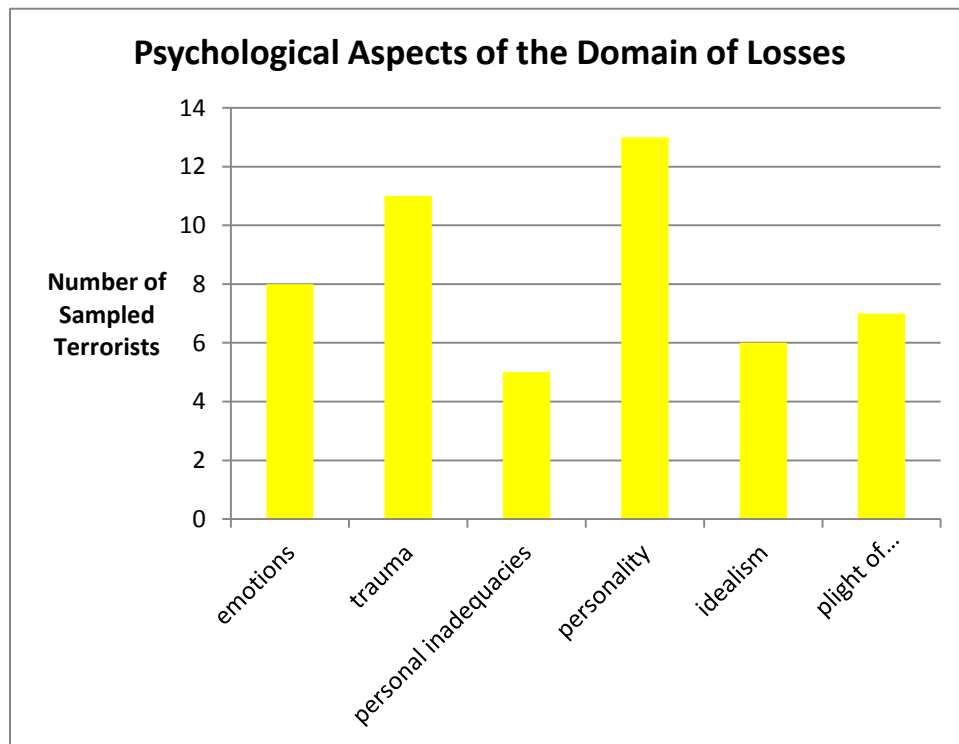


Figure 4. Comparison of Subcategories in Psychology

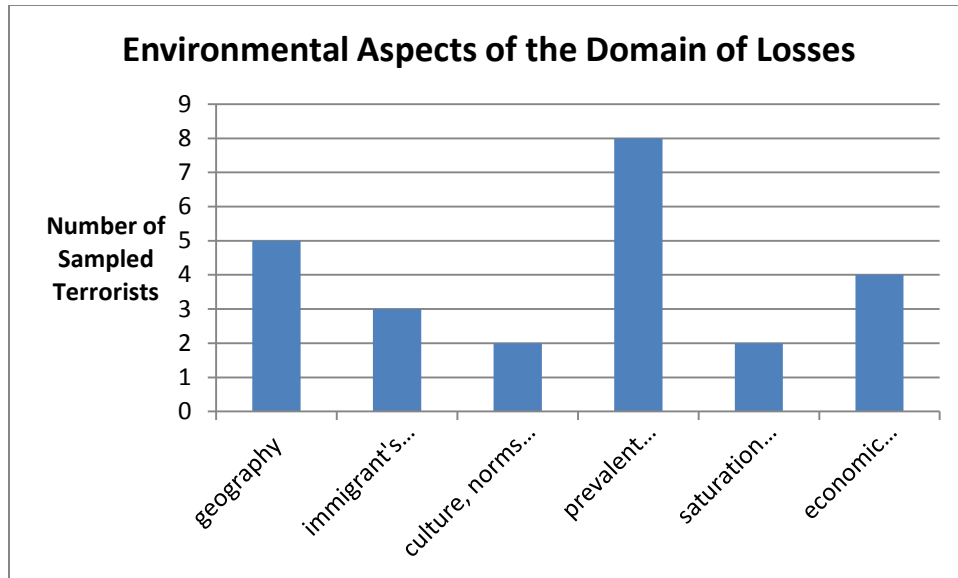


Figure 5. Comparison of Subcategories in Environment

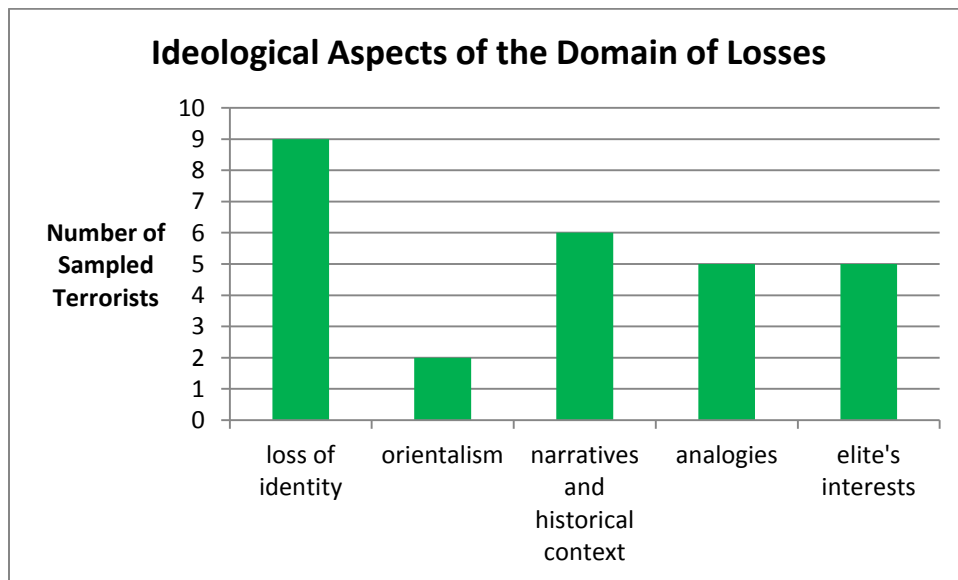


Figure 6. Comparison of Subcategories in Ideology

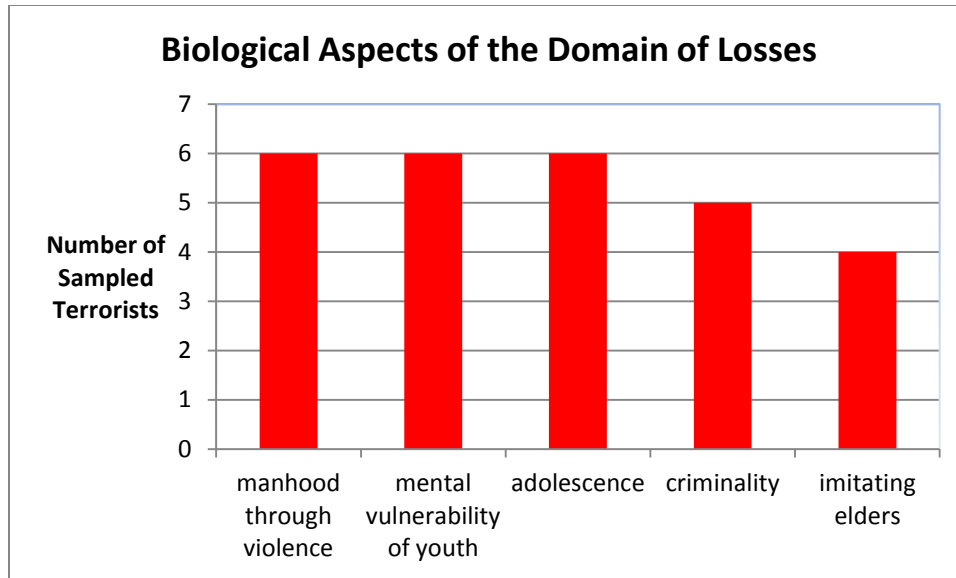


Figure 7. Comparison of Subcategories in Biology

From Figure 8, it is evident that trauma during young and later ages, coupled with the personality of the individual, emerges as the leading cause of placement in the losses frame. On the other hand, cultures, norms and values, Orientalism, and information saturation emerge as the least important ones. However, as has been already asserted in this thesis, many reasons that place a person in the losses frame cross categories. Some of these causes may be dependent on, or emanating from, another. The same assertion can also support the main data set, which shows that some individuals require more reasons for being in the losses frame than others, while for some only two or three reasons were enough for them to adopt terrorism's risky path.



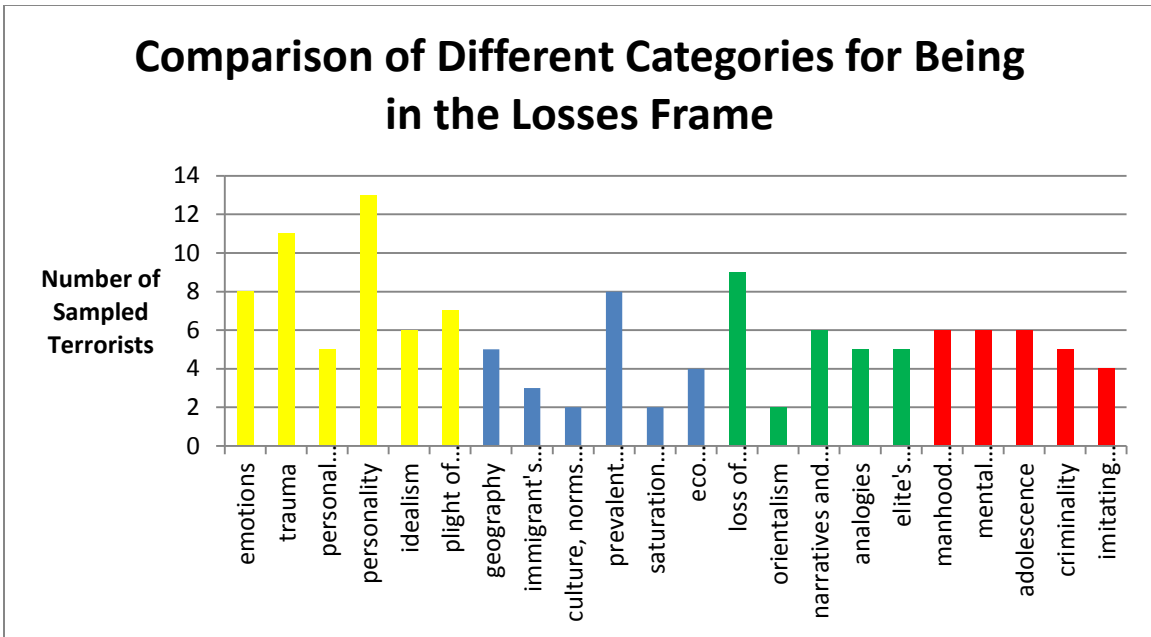


Figure 8. Comparison of all the Categories for being in the Losses Frame

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS: TRANSFERRING PEOPLE FROM THE LOSSES TO GAINS FRAME**

Always remember others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them. And then you destroy yourself.

*–Richard M. Nixon*

In the realm of counterterrorism pursuits, positive things may start with changing human thought, so transferring individuals from a losses frame to a gains frame involves changing their perceptions, ideas and understanding of the world in general and the immediate environment in particular. Besides influencing individuals positively, there will always be a need to influence through coercion and intimidation, thereby making such approaches a part of normative behavior. The application of both positive and negative influences is the same as applying societal norms through motivation and enforcements. It is important to instill in an individual's mind that if he involves himself in any violent activities, not only are law enforcement agencies capable of catching and prosecuting him, but the judiciary is also capable of punishing him for his transgressions. Nevertheless, removing the idea of terror and violent activities from the minds of people who are in a losses frame is more important, and that removal is accomplished only through changing the ideological and environmental circumstances, which would also impact the psychological as well as biological reasons for being in a losses frame.

As explained in Chapter IV, the causes of putting people in the losses frame are interlinked; therefore, the counter measures may also be interconnected. By changing the environmental circumstances such as providing better educational opportunities and, thus, a better future, society may influence an individual to not imitate his elders and follow a path of criminality. The measures for transferring people from the losses to gains frame will be more generalized in nature; however, the ultimate aim would remain to identify actions which will make people more risk averse. Therefore, putting people in the gains

frame will be analyzed through changing the prevailing narratives and adjusting the contexts that affect people's ideology and psychology, as well as improving their physical environment, all of which, if left unchanged, predisposes them to the losses frame.

**A. THE NARRATIVES: INNOVATE AS WELL AS COMPROMISE**

Whoever kills an innocent person, it is as though he has killed all of humanity.

*–The Quran*

Labeling an ethnic or religious group or a country as terrorist may serve in the short term to garner world support; however, in the long term, this labeling will unite the most disparate people into a bond, which will cross religious, ethnic, tribal, cultural and even territorial boundaries. In the post-9/11 period, the discrimination that people faced based on their skin color, appearance and apparel, especially in Western airports, is a case in point. This discrimination, without producing any tangible, positive outcome towards counterterrorism actions, only served to put more people in the losses frame. In light of this situation, there is a need to have narratives which are innovative, vis-à-vis the opponent's narrative, as well as conciliatory in their content to cater to the sensitivities of the target audience. Therefore, by either changing existing narrative or issuing new ones, more people will be brought into the gains frame; this may be accomplished by affecting the Subcategories of emotions, idealism, immigrant perceptions, cultural sensitivities, effects of information saturation, issues of identity, Orientalism and mental vulnerability of the young from the conflict areas.

The narratives not only affect individuals, but may also put societies in the losses frame. The U.S. approach to providing material support for being part of Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) is a case in point, where without a cogent supplementary narrative, the material support does not translate into positively influencing the general populace. The solution lies in avoiding the confrontational

narratives or changing them according to the cultural and temporal dictates, thereby driving a wedge between the general population and the extremists. In the narrative of the GWOT, both terms “War” and “Global,” were literally used by the terrorists as a global war against Islam. In the past, these and similar metaphors have been used for societal control; however, these must be used craftily, so that the opponent is unable to devise a counter-term like “Jihad.”

In the wake of 9/11, the world joined the U.S. in condemning Islam as the originator of the violence. However, this narrative provided a useful tool for terrorist organizations that cashed in on this trend and launched a global jihad, a term again misunderstood by most. As Atran writes:

Like Crusade, the word Jihad has many nuanced and even contrary connotations. Thinkers I respect tell me that I shouldn't use the word jihad because it's a notion that, in the sense of an inner struggle for rightness and truth, applies to a vastly greater number of peaceful people than to terrorists, and that is true.<sup>221</sup>

Consequently, blaming Islam and Muslims did not work; therefore, this thesis suggests that the counterterrorism efforts should stop labeling through the prism of religion, culture and ethnicity. An end to such labeling will not only stop people from moving towards the losses frame, but will also highlight a way to transfer them back towards the gains frame.

The narrative surrounding the U.S. attack on Afghanistan to target and punish al-Qaeda elements and their sympathizers for 9/11 could have been more accurately portrayed to the Afghan populace in order to avoid the perception of American actions as an invasion and occupation of their lands. After toppling the Taliban regime, the U.S. narrative was molded to characterize the U.S. as a country which had come to Afghanistan as liberators and freedom providers, especially to the downtrodden female class; however, the acceptance of this narrative by the Afghan masses is still questionable. The best approach would have been to identify the perpetrators of 9/11, gain the sympathy of the general

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<sup>221</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 35.

public, and seek their help not only in exposing such elements in Afghan society, but also targeting them.

In the GWOT, the narratives broadcast abroad have had a direct bearing on the immigrant populations from the Muslim countries who are living in the U.S. or in the West. Such confrontational narratives had far reaching effects on immigrants who have started to feel alienated in their new societies. This feeling was amplified by the native people's aggression, who blatantly blamed the immigrants for the violent terrorist acts. In the aftermath of 9/11, America's anger towards the Muslim immigrants residing in the U.S. was a natural outcome of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. mainland; however, the narrative of Crusade adopted by U.S. President George W. Bush added more fuel to the fire, and the general public took it upon themselves to persecute innocent immigrants for the atrocities that occurred on 9/11. This process made Muslim immigrants question their true identity, and the only fallback position available to them was to look inwardly towards their ancestral identity.

In hindsight, the best way to fight a tank division is with another tank division; therefore, the best way to fight against the terrorists' narratives is to come up with prudent counter-narratives. In the absence of a genuine narrative, terrorists are clever enough to create their own, which may be completely divorced from reality. Martha Crenshaw writes, "The actions of terrorist organizations are based on a subjective interpretation of the world, rather than objective reality."<sup>222</sup> There could be two logics behind this: first, in the absence of a genuine narrative, it is easier to manipulate general perceptions through subjective interpretation, and second, even if a narrative is available, it is easier to propagate one's own agenda through a juggernaut of words. Thus, counter narratives should not only identify such loopholes, but also exploit such gaps to alienate their sympathizers.

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<sup>222</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 41.

Although the jihadi terrorist organizations claim that they are fighting for a noble cause in the name of Allah, there are always elements, especially among the elites, who fight for their personal gains in the shape of unrestricted power, status and even money. In the same context, Ed Husain highlights the dichotomy between the religious rhetoric and actual religious practice by writing that “My qualm was about fairness: if we believed in segregation for Muslims and no private meetings between the sexes, then it ought to apply to us too.”<sup>223</sup> Therefore, one of the counter-narrative focuses should be to expose the true face of extremist terrorist organizations.

For narratives to be authentic and acceptable to the target audience without prejudice, former terrorists and sympathizers who have denounced violent practices should be utilized to communicate counterterrorism narratives. However, to adopt this route, a normative change will be required by convincing the decision making echelons of the necessity to explore new possibilities, which may come at the cost of listening to, rather than finishing, the enemy. The biggest hurdle to this approach may be the existing institutional culture or unwritten code of not talking to the enemy. Institutional norms are basically ingrained in the assertion that there is no need to talk if military diplomacy is succeeding, or if talking to the enemy might portray weakness. Atran captures this predicament by quoting a de-radicalized Jemaah Islamiyah member, Farhin; “He is willing to come to America to explain how he sees things and to try to understand what others see.”<sup>224</sup> But once Atran made this proposal to the major decision makers in the U.S., the response was that “some people laughed, others seemed bemused, and most rolled their eyes. It seemed that the idea of talking to our enemies to find out why they are our enemies could only come from Planet Fruitcake.”<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 134.

<sup>224</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 133.

<sup>225</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 133.

For the Israel-Palestine problem, a need exists to introduce a new narrative: for the Palestinians, that it is not possible to defeat Israel militarily; and for Israelis, that the Palestinians cannot be coerced through use of force. Therefore, they must negotiate. The Palestinian perspective has been endorsed by one of the PLO spokesmen, Abu-Sharif, who writes, “Why pretend we could defeat Israel by force of arms? If that wasn’t possible, why not face reality and deal?” Atran quotes Sheikh Hassan Yusef of Hamas on suicide bombers, “God created people to live, not to die ... we have to find an exit.”<sup>226</sup> He also quotes former Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, “We need a dialogue of civilizations, not a clash of civilizations.”<sup>227</sup> Those visions may serve as windows of opportunities to solve the problems by issuing new narratives.

According to Hy Rothstein, “Narrative should always convey the justice of your cause, and the injustice of your opponent’s cause,”<sup>228</sup> and until the time these basics are addressed, no narrative, however strong or convincing it may be, will achieve the desired results. As for initiating such narratives, understanding your opponent is a must, and patience will be the key that will unlock the most complicated minds. Admiral Michael G. Mullen concurs, adding:

The Muslim community is a subtle world we don’t fully—and don’t always attempt to understand. Only through a shared appreciation of the people’s culture, needs, and hopes for the future can we hope ourselves to supplant the extremist narrative. We cannot capture hearts and minds. We must engage them; we must listen to them, one heart and one mind at a time—over time.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod, “Reframing Sacred Values,” *Negotiation Journal* (July 2008, 14), [http://www-personal.umich.edu/~axe/research/Reframing\\_Sacred\\_Values.pdf](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~axe/research/Reframing_Sacred_Values.pdf).

<sup>227</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 368.

<sup>228</sup> Hy Rothstein, “Public Diplomacy, the Media and Psychological Warfare” (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, September 30, 2013).

<sup>229</sup> Admiral Michael G. Mullen, “Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 55 (2009), accessed September 30, 2013, <http://www.jcs.mil/newsarticle.aspx?ID=142>.

Therefore besides the narrative, the context of understanding the cultural and tribal sensitivities is also important, because narratives should not remain only words.

## **B. THE CONTEXT: UNDERSTAND AS WELL AS MODIFY**

Context is about past experiences, historical confrontations and even the present environment, which taken together basically shape individual and societal behavior. A context can be a cause as well as an enabler towards an end. According to John Arquilla, “A just cause for the conflict is both sword and shield,”<sup>230</sup> highlighting the importance of the correct context and explaining the reasons for fighting. By understanding and, if required, by modifying the context, people who are in a losses frame due to historical baggage, geography, prevalent trends, vested interest of the elite and consequent shaping of a personality can be brought back into a gains frame.

The context utilized by the U.S. forces for the invasion of Iraq was the presence of weapons of mass destruction; however, once that context proved to be false, things started to fall apart not only in Iraq, but also at home in the U.S. Admiral Michael G. Mullen writes, “More important than any particular tool, we must know the context within which our actions will be received and understood. We hurt ourselves and the message we try to send when it appears we are doing something merely for the credit.”<sup>231</sup>

In the presence of such historical baggage, it will be extremely difficult to modify the existing contexts; people seldom forget the wrongs done to them, especially the deliberate ones. However, does this mean that in the presence of old enmity, new contexts cannot evolve? The answer to this can be a “No,” because had this been the case, there would not have been any European Union or a peaceful Europe in the aftermath of World War II. This was made possible

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<sup>230</sup> John Arquilla, “Introduction: The Landscape of Conflict” (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, October 2, 2012).

<sup>231</sup> Mullen, “Strategic Communication.”



by changing the context from confrontation to cooperation, from coercion to support, and from hatred to acceptance. But this cooperation, support and acceptance came through understanding the other side, thinking of them just like yourself and understanding their problems as your own.

Ed Husain writes, “During the course of our lives we all change our views and direction; some of us do so more radically than others. ... Yet, with time and experience, I evolved.”<sup>232</sup> Though the change towards a more positive side will be slow, it will ultimately come, if the contexts are used prudently. At the individual level, this change will come through changing individual behavior patterns and affecting the thought processes, which will occur only after affecting “hearts and minds.” Without the correct context, even a good action may not achieve the desired results and can be hijacked by the elites for their own personal or political interests. In Afghanistan, despite having good intentions like offering freedom from the oppression of the Taliban, the emancipation of women, and the introduction of democracy, the fact remains that even concrete actions in the shape of institution building, women’s education and economic benefits did not produce any long lasting positive impressions. This negative outcome was due to the original context of the invader or occupier, which resonated with the public either directly or was exploited by elites such as religious clerics who downplayed the effects of all the positives.

In the era of globalization and diminishing boundaries, double standards, such as promoting freedom and democracy on one hand and supporting the authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes on the other, do not go unnoticed. From the pages of history, the U.S.-sponsored 1953 coup in Iran is a case in point. Trust, honesty and openness are important for all humanity; however, the context in which it is perceived in Eastern cultures is different. An action in isolation is not likely to increase or decrease the level of trust, but the context in which an action is taken will become more important. If the U.S. forces are to bring freedom to

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<sup>232</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, preface.

the Iraqi people, the value of freedom to an Iraqi is also important. Therefore, to bring people from the losses frame to a gains frame may require understanding, as well as believing in, the prevalent norms amongst the target audience.

The Prophet Mohammad once said, “Beware of extremism in religion; for it was extremism in religion that destroyed those who went before you.”<sup>233</sup> A religion based on peace and denunciation of extremism has been hijacked by a few, and the world accepted their version as the true representation of the Muslim world. What comes to mind when you say that you are a Muslim in the West or in the U.S., is no different than when you say you are a Kurd in Turkey, an Irish Catholic in Britain, a Basque in Spain, or a Tamil in Sri Lanka. This generalization alone probably places more people in the losses frame than any other material cause, as putting the blame of few upon the masses does not prove helpful. This is the context which is successfully being exploited by terrorist organizations in order to motivate new recruits. Ed Husain echoes this view when he writes, “I have observed British Muslims being browbeaten ..., demanding ‘integration’ and an end to ‘parallel lives.’ The implied accusation, of course, is that Muslims are guilty of terrorism and that an undefined ‘integration’ will put a stop to it.”<sup>234</sup>

To further change or modify the context, stop the dehumanization of the opponent. By being more humane towards one’s opponent, the other side may also be compelled to change their context of dehumanizing the enemy. If side A does not call side B “Satan,” then side B will also not call side A an “Axis of Evil.” If the opponent is called Satan, common people have no other option but to acquiesce; otherwise, they will be labeled as blasphemous. Serdar Bayraktutan explains a three way process: approach them on an equal playing field, communicate and keep talking, and do not dehumanize.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, title pages.

<sup>234</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 283–284.

<sup>235</sup> Serdar Bayraktutan, Anne Ben Geldim, 43.

Another approach is never to stop engaging with even your worst enemies. Abu Sharif writes about keeping people engaged by not letting them cross their point of no return, and not pushing them to the wall.<sup>236</sup> He adds:

By the end of 1988, the Israeli government had a very big problem ... They had tried force, and it hadn't worked ... the IDF soldiers ... [by] shooting dead, on average, one Palestinian demonstrator a day ... kept the pot of hatred boiling. This was what their Iron Fist policy [amounted to] ... day after day after day, the Israelis were sticking their bayonets into a hornets' nest.<sup>237</sup>

The asymmetry of force is also not helping in formulating the correct contexts because the force advantage the U.S. enjoys inhibits both a psychological as well as material sense of superiority, probably restricting adoption of a more malleable approach. This superiority instills an impulse for quick results not actually feasible given the current threat scenarios faced by the world in general and the U.S. in particular. Former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates says:

These [asymmetric] conflicts will be fundamentally political in nature, and require the application of all elements of national power. Success will be less a matter of imposing one's will and more a function of shaping behavior of friends, adversaries, and most importantly, the people in between.<sup>238</sup>

Another step towards modifying the context relates to romanticizing the reckless heroes of the past. The Afghan Mujahideen of first Afghan War are a case in point, having now evolved into a class of their own "Afghan alumni."<sup>239</sup> According to Atran, "the most important counterterrorism measure of all is to provide alternative heroes and hopes that are more enticing and empowering."<sup>240</sup> On the issue of clearing the confusion, Atran quotes a senior Saudi official:

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<sup>236</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 235.

<sup>237</sup> Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi, *Best of Enemies*, 143.

<sup>238</sup> Robert M. Gates, "Landon Lecture" (Speech, Kansas State University, November 26, 2007) U.S. Department of Defense, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>.

<sup>239</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 126.

<sup>240</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 290.

During the Afghanistan war [with the Soviets] we daily praised the mujahedin and Bin Laden in our newspaper. He was the leader of the Arab heroes. Mujahedin entered our vocabulary in a positive frame. Then we said he was bad. The people were confused. Before a hero and overnight a bad man. We had to reframe jihad to distinguish ‘moral Jihad’ from the Takfiri ideology. The mujahedin had been heroes for us and for you [America] in Afghanistan, and now they were terrorists.<sup>241</sup>

For some, the change of context may only relate to the physical improvements, though according to Atran, “People’s identity often trumps other values, particularly economic ones.”<sup>242</sup> Therefore, certain physical contextual improvements may also have a positive impact on a people in the losses frame, and to support this assertion, Atran writes:

In ... [European countries] ... second- and third-generation children of immigrants feel personal rage at the police who are hostile to them, at the majority culture that is suspicious of them, and at their inability to find decent jobs even if they have a good education. They witness the day-to-day humiliation of their elders by bureaucrats who treat them like idiot children too slow to complete the forms.<sup>243</sup>

This clearly links both tangible and intangible aspects related to context, which may have to be changed to bring people into the gains frame.

### **C. THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS: CHANGE AS WELL AS IMPROVE**

If successfully altered, a physical environment previously filled with suffering, pain, and death may transfer people into the gains frame. In the same context, a generation which has suffered due to conflicts and instabilities in a society or a region is likely to be a ready-made, would-be talent pool for both terrorist and criminal organizations. However, if a generation is brought up enjoying modern education and the freedom to choose their destiny, and they are not sidelined due to their religious or political leanings, such an upbringing may

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<sup>241</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 384.

<sup>242</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, xiv.

<sup>243</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 55.

prevent the emergence of would-be terrorists. Ultimately the talent pool of potential recruits would dry up, as would the terrorist organizations.

To support the view that the physical environment also shapes the behavior and practices of people, Atran quotes the alleged leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, about the environmental effects on individuals. According to Abu Bakar Ba'asyir:

Environment can change people's fitrah—nature ... If a person is raised in a Jewish environment, he will be Jewish. But if he is raised in an Islamic environment, he'll follow his fitrah—nature ... the only things that can change a child into becoming Jewish or Christian are his parents or his environment.<sup>244</sup>

This assertion also helps in supporting the idea that the environment will always have both positive and negative impacts on a person's decision making processes, since it is the environment which puts people in either a gains frame or losses frame.

In order to change or improve the physical environment, the first step could be the much needed political transitions from despotic authoritarian governance to more open and free democratic systems, and the starting point for this transition may involve confronting the allies. The U.S. needs to abandon its support of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, which though they may serve the West's short-term purposes, in the end will prove counterproductive. The current U.S. stance on the Arab Spring is proving to be a new dawn on its Middle Eastern horizon, but the setbacks should not deter the U.S. from changing its strategic direction. Comparatively freer societies and systems will provide people the opportunity to express their frustrations and compel the regimes to address them, and in the long-term this will deter people from moving in the direction of the losses frame.

By supporting more open and free systems, there will be an implicit change in the norms, cultures and practices. Hudson writes, "Because terrorism

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<sup>244</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 14.

is politically or religiously motivated, a counterterrorist policy, to be effective, should be designed to take into account political or religious factors. For example ... the transition from military rule to democratic government in Chile proved to be the most effective counterterrorist strategy."<sup>245</sup> In the realm of political transition, the political elites and societal leaders play an important role, and their influence may move people either towards the losses or the gains frame. The examples in this regard are the tribal or family elders in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, who though they have no prestigious positions can, nonetheless, mold opinions.

Besides political transitions, the world's powers should focus on bringing world conflicts to a just end. The current hotbeds like Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Kashmir, if resolved peacefully, probably will have positive impacts on the people of those regions and help in preventing them from transferring themselves into the losses frame. With regard to internal conflicts prevalent in Columbia, Philippines, Pakistan, Turkey and other parts of the world, the world's great powers can support the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" of South Africa,<sup>246</sup> and thus help end historical enmities. The current sectarian problems in Iraq, Syria and Bahrain, or the Kurd problem in Turkey can be good starting points.

Economic aspects play a large role in improving the living standards of individuals, resulting in the long-term change of the societal behavior. Ed Husain quotes his teacher, "If you want to change the world, then you must get an education first,"<sup>247</sup> which leads to the importance of having an equal opportunity through education, which ultimately will help in improving economic situations as well. According to a PKK terrorist:

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<sup>245</sup> *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?*, 67.

<sup>246</sup> Martha Minow, "Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Negotiation Journal* 14, no.4 (1998): 319–355.

<sup>247</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 143.

The residents are not comfortable with terrorism. If you rescue them from the claws of poverty, give them good education; this will be a permanent solution to violence and terror. If the southeastern part of Turkey gets developed, the terror will not be accepted. Once the welfare and level of education increase, the humans will start to know themselves and will be able to control violence in them.<sup>248</sup>

If education is to be a part of the solution, it is crucial to take into consideration the assets (physical environment) and ingredients (context) of that education. Thus, support for quality public education could be one means of attacking the reasons people are placed in a losses frame. According to Karin Von Hippel, some tentative steps have already begun in this direction; “the European Union has been exploring innovative approaches to working with the Pakistani Madrasa system.”<sup>249</sup> But those efforts need to be substantial and well-financed by the international community because such efforts go against the prevalent norms. George Packer explains, “Spending 20 million dollars on schools in Afghanistan is a harder sell than spending four hundred billion on defense; fear is more compelling than foresight.”<sup>250</sup>

Persuasion is yet another important aspect, and for this, the media is a great influential tool. It can be argued that terrorism as a tactic was employed before the media age, but now, due to unrestricted access, the media has become a tool in the hands of the terrorists who, through its clever manipulation, influence more people towards the losses frame. According to Atran, “Publicity is the oxygen that fires modern terrorism,”<sup>251</sup> and thus media needs to be more responsible by at least ceasing to telecast violent pictures from the conflict areas. This exploitation of media is also referenced by Ed Husain who writes, “Boosted by intense media interest, we went from strength to strength. Nothing gave us greater motivation than to hear our ideas being amplified in the national media,

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<sup>248</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 28.

<sup>249</sup> Karin Von Hippel, “Dealing with the Roots of Terror,” in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes Volume Three*, ed. James J. F. Forest (London: Praeger Security International, 2006), 269.

<sup>250</sup> Von Hippel, “Dealing with the Roots of Terror,” 269–270.

<sup>251</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 274.

reaching new audiences of millions. To us it did not matter whether the coverage was favorable or otherwise.”<sup>252</sup>

Currently, the media is able to reach the far away corners of the world in seconds; whatever comes on the television, radio, or is published in a newspaper or magazine, is seen, heard or read by huge numbers of people. Responsible media may serve as a training tool for the masses by influencing the positive domains. Bayraktutan writes, “Having a presence in the media has benefits for the [terrorist] organization as well as the individuals. The organization benefits by becoming widely known; whereas, for individuals, the media gives an opportunity to become a hero.”<sup>253</sup> Thus, there is a need for strict implementation of a code of conduct, which will not be violated in order simply to be the first to air an event or make significant profits.

In the physical domain, the most profitable route will be adopting the societal approach by making terrorism socially unacceptable. Western liberal societies need to draw a red line on too much civil liberty and consequently unbridled recruitment campaigns or open propaganda efforts by the terrorist organizations. Even in terms of cultural tolerance, there has to be a limit; it is always good to talk about freedom of speech, actions or religion, but there needs to be boundaries as well. Consequently, following the established norms may at times become dangerous, as freedom of speech was exploited by the Hizb in Britain, where Islamists were not stopped from spreading their hate filled messages. Ed Husain writes, “My warnings to university authorities and student union officials where I saw the Hizb and other groups recruiting in Britain ... were repeatedly met with arguments defending the right to freedom of speech.”<sup>254</sup>

However, to achieve the above approach, a delicate balance would have to be struck, and thus cultural sensitivity cannot altogether be abandoned. The

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<sup>252</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 103.

<sup>253</sup> Bayraktutan, *Anne Ben Geldim*, 148.

<sup>254</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 278–279.



hijab issue is a case in point; instead of being simple apparel, it has now become a Muslim identity item. Ed Husain writes, “Hijab is losing its spiritual significance and is instead becoming a marker of separatist identity politics.”<sup>255</sup> Thus, showing a degree of cultural sensitivity will probably remain a valid concern, at least in the near future, for the U.S. and the West while operating in the conflict areas. According to Atran:

Outsiders who do not understand local cultural and group dynamics tend to ride roughshod ... As we find again and again—in our research in Morocco, Palestine, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Indonesia—helping to materially improve lives will not reduce support for violence, and can even increase it, if people feel such help compromises their most cherished values.<sup>256</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The Cold War lasted until one side melted, not militarily, but economically, and paved the way for a unipolar world. The emergence of the U.S. as the sole super power, though, provided America a position of esteem, but probably also, injected a sense of complacency regarding its enemies. There had been an understanding in the U.S. that after the demise of USSR, no other power in the world could challenge the U.S.’s might, both militarily and economically. However, a single terrorist incident seriously questioned that assumption, and after 9/11, the new threat scenario created many challenges, unprecedented and more complex in nature, which demanded more innovative, out-of-the-box approaches. But the application of a military instrument, as an accepted norm, though creating quick results in the short-term could not successfully conclude the conflict.

Through this thesis, an effort has been made to identify the causes which both implicitly and explicitly direct people towards the risky and violent path of terrorism and, ultimately, into the folds of the terrorist organizations. These causes range from tangible material insufficiencies to more abstract and

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<sup>255</sup> Husain, *The Islamist*, 282.

<sup>256</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 260.

intangible reasons, deeply etched in the psychological, cultural, and religious domains. Fortunately, these subtle reasons identified in this thesis are also finding their mark in the decision making circles of the U.S. administration. The former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates accepted the previously explained reasons of current conflicts by saying:

One of the most important lessons of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that military success is not sufficient to win: economic development, institution-building and the rule of law, promoting internal reconciliation, good governance, providing basic services to the people, training and equipping indigenous military and police forces, strategic communications, and more [of] these, along with security, are essential ingredients for long-term success.”<sup>257</sup>

Out of all these reasons, this thesis has focused on the issue of strategic communication, or the public diplomacy domain, by identifying two important areas: narratives and contexts, both of which need to be improved or changed altogether. In addition, the importance of physical improvements have also been considered, because all three areas of influence are interrelated and may only function in collaboration. However, it is important to realize that financial or material support, without a cogent narrative and enabling context, may not be sufficient to bring people from the losses frame to a gains frame.

In the same context, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Michael Mullen, highlights the importance of the strategic communication domain by saying, “We have allowed strategic communication to become a thing instead of a process, an abstract thought instead of a way of thinking.”<sup>258</sup> He further writes with regard to Afghanistan, that “Our biggest problem isn’t caves; it’s credibility. Our messages lack credibility because we haven’t invested enough in building trust and relationships, and we haven’t always delivered on promises.”<sup>259</sup> Had the narratives and contexts used in Afghanistan been related to just the targeting of

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<sup>257</sup> Gates. “Landon Lecture: Kansas State University.”

<sup>258</sup> Mullen, “Strategic Communication.”

<sup>259</sup> Mullen, “Strategic Communication.”

al-Qaeda elements, the Afghan masses would have been more receptive towards the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan.

Through this thesis, the voices of the other side have been highlighted without prejudice and in their own words. Accordingly, the answers have also been derived from the problems communicated by the people who were more risk acceptant and in the losses frame at one time, but were brought into the gains frame. These suggestions are only words, and they may not have any impact unless transformed into actions. In the words of Admiral Michael Mullen, "To put it simply, we need to worry a lot less about how to communicate our actions and much more about what our actions communicate."<sup>260</sup> According to Rudyard Kipling, "Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind," and thus the journey towards peace and compromise may start with the right words at the right time.

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<sup>260</sup> Mullen, "Strategic Communication."

## APPENDIX: DATA ON EMPIRICS FOR THE LOSSES FRAME

Individual	psychology					
	emotions	trauma	personal inadequacies	personality	idealism	plight of others
Abdullah Ocalan - PKK						Y
Abu Nidal - ANO (PLO)				Y		
Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn - al-Qaeda	Y					
Anders Behring Breivik - Lone Wolf	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Anonymous Terrorist		Y				
Ayman al-Zawahiri - al-Qaeda		Y		Y		
Bassam Abu Sharif - PLO					Y	Y
Daniel McGowan - ELF				Y	Y	Y
DEV-SOL Terrorist						
DHKP/C terrorist						Y
Ed Husain - Hizb-Ut-Tahrir	Y	Y				
Faisal Shehzad - Lone Wolf			Y			
FARC Terrorists						
Farhin - Jemaah Islamiyah						
Jake Ferguson - ELF				Y		
Irish Terrorists						Y
Leila Khaled - PFLP	Y	Y				
Milan Terror Cell						
Mosab Hassan Yousef - HAMAS	Y	Y			Y	
Mustafa Duyar - DHKP/C		Y			Y	
Nabeel Masood - Al-Aqsa Brigade						Y
Osama Bin Laden - al-Qaeda				Y		Y
Phoolan Devi	Y	Y				
PKK Recruiter						
PKK Terrorist				Y		
RAF Terrorists						
Renato Curcio - Red Brigades	Y	Y			Y	
Sayyid Qutb - Muslim Brotherhood		Y	Y	Y	Y	
Serhane Fakhret - Madrid Bomber			Y			
Shoko Asahara - Aum Shinrikyo			Y	Y		
Timothy McVeigh - Lone Wolf	Y	Y		Y		Y
Umar Abdulmutallab - al-Qaeda				Y		
Velupillai Prabhakaran - LTTE				Y		
Hakimullah Mesud - TTP				Y		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

Individual	environment					
	geography	immigrant's dilemma	culture, norms and values	prevalent trends	saturation of info	economic deprivation
Abdullah Ocalan - PKK						Y
Abu Nidal - ANO (PLO)						
Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn - al-Qaeda						
Anders Behring Breivik - Lone Wolf						
Anonymous Terrorist		Y				
Ayman al-Zawahiri - al-Qaeda				Y		
Bassam Abu Sharif - PLO	Y	Y				
Daniel McGowan - ELF				Y	Y	
DEV-SOL Terrorist						
DHKP/C terrorist						Y
Ed Husain - Hizb-Ut-Tahrir	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Faisal Shehzad - Lone Wolf						
FARC Terrorists						
Farhin - Jemaah Islamiyah						
Jake Ferguson - ELF						
Irish Terrorists						Y
Leila Khaled - PFLP				Y		
Milan Terror Cell						
Mosab Hassan Yousef - HAMAS	Y			Y		Y
Mustafa Duyar - DHKP/C						
Nabeel Masood - Al-Aqsa Brigade						
Osama Bin Laden - al-Qaeda						
Phoolan Devi						
PKK Recruiter						
PKK Terrorist				Y		
RAF Terrorists						
Renato Curcio - Red Brigades				Y		
Sayyid Qutb - Muslim Brotherhood	Y		Y	Y		
Serhane Fakhet - Madrid Bomber						
Shoko Asahara - Aum Shinrikyo						
Timothy McVeigh - Lone Wolf						
Umar Abdulmutallab - al-Qaeda						
Velupillai Prabhakaran - LTTE						Y
Hakimullah Mesud - TTP	Y					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

Individual	ideology				
	loss of identity	orientalism	narratives and historical context	analogies	elite's interests
Abdullah Ocalan - PKK	Y				
Abu Nidal - ANO (PLO)					
Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn - al-Qaeda					
Anders Behring Breivik - Lone Wolf	Y				
Anonymous Terrorist					
Ayman al-Zawahiri - al-Qaeda			Y	Y	Y
Bassam Abu Sharif - PLO	Y	Y	Y		
Daniel McGowan - ELF			Y	Y	
DEV-SOL Terrorist					
DHKP/C terrorist					Y
Ed Husain - Hizb-Ut-Tahrir	Y		Y	Y	Y
Faisal Shehzad - Lone Wolf					
FARC Terrorists	Y				
Farhin - Jemaah Islamiyah					
Jake Ferguson - ELF					
Irish Terrorists					
Leila Khaled - PFLP					
Milan Terror Cell	Y				
Mosab Hassan Yousef - HAMAS	Y		Y		Y
Mustafa Duyar - DHKP/C					
Nabeel Masood - Al-Aqsa Brigade					
Osama Bin Laden - al-Qaeda				Y	Y
Phoolan Devi					
PKK Recruiter				Y	
PKK Terrorist					
RAF Terrorists	Y				
Renato Curcio - Red Brigades					
Sayyid Qutb - Muslim Brotherhood	Y	Y	Y		
Serhane Fakhed - Madrid Bomber					
Shoko Asahara - Aum Shinrikyo	Y				
Timothy McVeigh - Lone Wolf					
Umar Abdulmutallab - al-Qaeda					
Velupillai Prabhakaran - LTTE					
Hakimullah Mesud - TTP					
<b>TOTAL</b>	9	2	6	5	5

Individual	biology				
	manhood through violence	mental vulnerability of youngs	adolescence	criminality	imitating elders
Abdullah Ocalan - PKK					
Abu Nidal - ANO (PLO)					
Adam Yahiyeh Gadahn - al-Qaeda					Y
Anders Behring Breivik - Lone Wolf	Y				
Anonymous Terrorist					
Ayman al-Zawahiri - al-Qaeda	Y	Y			Y
Bassam Abu Sharif - PLO		Y			
Daniel McGowan - ELF					
DEV-SOL Terrorist			Y	Y	
DHKP/C terrorist					
Ed Husain - Hizb-Ut-Tahrir		Y	Y		
Faisal Shehzad - Lone Wolf					
FARC Terrorists					
Farhin - Jemaah Islamiyah		Y			
Jake Ferguson - ELF				Y	
Irish Terrorists			Y		
Leila Khaled - PFLP					Y
Milan Terror Cell					
Mosab Hassan Yousef - HAMAS	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mustafa Duyar - DHKP/C					
Nabeel Masood - Al-Aqsa Brigade					
Osama Bin Laden - al-Qaeda			Y		
Phoolan Devi				Y	
PKK Recruiter					
PKK Terrorist		Y			
RAF Terrorists					
Renato Curcio - Red Brigades					
Sayyid Qutb - Muslim Brotherhood					
Serhane Fakhret - Madrid Bomber					
Shoko Asahara - Aum Shinrikyo	Y			Y	
Timothy McVeigh - Lone Wolf	Y				
Umar Abdulmutallab - al-Qaeda					
Velupillai Prabhakaran - LTTE	Y		Y		
Hakimullah Mesud - TTP					
<b>TOTAL</b>	6	6	6	5	4

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