Chapter 14
Developing Discourse and Tools for Alternative Content to Prevent Terror

Marina Shorer-Zeltser
Institute of Identity Research IDmap, Israel

Galit Margalit Ben-Israel
Beit-Berl Academic College, Israel

ABSTRACT

Within context of multiculturalism and openness in Western countries, the work of terrorist activity recruiters can become easier and simple. In this framework, it’s important to analyze techniques used by terrorists to manipulate support and good intentions of people inclined to sustain justice and peace into the radicalization and terrorist actions using interpersonal communication and Internet content. This article provides an overview on the Muslim minority in Western Europe, religious discourse and radicalization techniques used to incline religious content into terms of actions. It also suggests usage of inclusive cultural and religious policy to start an intra-community dialog and broaden de-radicalization.

INTRODUCTION

The inclination of certain parts of Muslim European population towards devastating terror rhetoric propagated by Al-Qaeda and ISIS and its affiliates requires a close look as to the origins of the inclination and the ways this rhetoric can be dismissed or at least put into contest with more balanced explanations of the reality. As Bernard Lewis states in his fundamental analysis regarding Muslim-Western cataclysm, “Most Muslims are not fundamentalists, and most fundamentalists are not terrorists, but most present-day terrorists are Muslims and proudly identify themselves as such” (Louis, 2003, p. 117).

The origins of the 20th and 21st Century religious-ethnic tension between House of Islam and Christianity clearly stem from the daily confrontation between ways of life and traditions of both groups living side by side in Europe and other Western countries. Indeed, Europe enjoyed decades of economic revival after the WWII inviting millions of Muslims to the European countries in an attempt to rebuild its infra-
Developing Discourse and Tools for Alternative Content to Prevent Terror

structures. The idea was that after several years of work the singles would return back to their families in the source countries. The history showed that the idea was wrong. Most of the gastarbeiters would definitely prefer to stay in the new countries, striving to copy their home lifestyle in the new state house.

Being a minority, most of the first, second and third-generation European Muslims proudly keep their religious affiliation and adhere to the laws of the countries of residence, including those of public appearance and clothing. It is a small minority; mainly of people who have a psychological inclination to non-conformist and abnormal behavior, which would actually look for terrorist activity, while some will just sympathize it. Lewis goes forward and says that,

the response of many Arabs and Muslims to the attack of the World Trade Center was one of shock and horror at the terrible destruction and carnage, together with shame and anger that this was being done in their name and in the name of their faith. This was the response of many – but not all. There were reports and even pictures of rejoicing in the streets in Arab and other Muslim cities at the news from New York. In part, the reaction was one of envy – a sentiment that was also widespread, in a more muted form, in Europe. Among the poor and wretched there was a measure of satisfaction – for some indeed of delight – in seeing the rich and self-indulgent Americans being taught a lesson. (Ibid, p.132)

First generations of immigrants generally experienced life conditions improvements compared with previous standards, which supposedly determined the choice of migrating to wealthier social contexts like EU area and North America. Contrarily, following younger generations could impact social exclusion and/or other hard disadvantages not benefiting from new privileges. As such, the most important factor in Muslim Diaspora communities ‘radicalization [is] the failure of successful Muslim integration and absence of institutionalization of Islam in many European countries (Anspaha 2008).

Furthermore, Neuman & Rogers suggest that the radicalization became possible and comes into expression into religious discourse because,

one of the most powerful triggers in the European context are experiences of exclusion and discrimination in Western society. European Muslims, especially the second and third generation, often feel that – despite governments inclusive rhetoric – Western societies have not offered them the full respect and equality they believe they deserve. Violent extremists have long realized that this sense of alienation and social frustration can be capitalized upon in order to attract recruits. (Neuman & Rogers, 2007)

Determining which factors have been influencing the most the religious radicalization can be a result of large-scale statistic multi-variate analysis. All the more, since most part of the Muslim immigrant population is concentrated in big cities, municipalities and local institutions are in a favorable position to observe and examine some factors bolstering radicalization and leading to violent behaviors. Most of the effective policies for de-radicalization were implemented on street-neighborhood level. As Peter Neuman has argued: the process of joining the jihad is more of a bottom-up than a top-down activity, with individuals actively seeking out opportunities to be recruited rather than being ‘brainwashed’ or ‘manipulated’ into joining up (Neumann 2008, 7). Therefore, the identification of stressful and critical situation of a person can be done in a better plausibility at the local intimate level, while successful treatment can prevent joining extremist lines.