

What Factors Cause Youth to Reject Violent Extremism?

Results of an Exploratory Analysis in the West Bank

Kim Cragin, Melissa A. Bradley, Eric Robinson, Paul S. Steinberg

Key findings

- Rejecting violent extremism, for residents of the West Bank, is a process with multiple stages and choices within each stage.
- Family plays a greater role than friends in shaping attitudes toward nonviolence.
- Demographics do not have a significant impact on attitudes toward nonviolence.
- Fear only goes so far in suppressing violent behavior.
- Nonviolent political activism does not contribute to nonradicalization in the West Bank.
- Opposing violence in theory is distinct from choosing not to engage in violence.

Building on past efforts, al-Qa'ida sympathizers and recruits have continued to plot attacks against the United States and Europe. For example, in May 2014, Mehdi Nemmouche shot and killed three individuals at the Jewish Museum of Belgium, in Brussels.¹ A Bangladeshi student attempted to bomb the New York City Federal Reserve Building in October 2012.² And, in April 2013, two Chechen brothers detonated pressure-cooker bombs along the Boston Marathon route, killing three and injuring approximately 300 participants and spectators.³ Beyond these attacks, an estimated 4,000 individuals from Western Europe and North America have joined either the al-Qa'ida affiliate al-Nusrah Front or al-Qa'ida's main competitor, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, in either Iraq or Syria.⁴ It is possible to imagine that some of these so-called foreign fighters might turn their attention toward their home countries in the near future.

These continued attacks and the involvement of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq have prompted a surge of interest among policymakers, law enforcement, journalists, and academics on both sides of the Atlantic on the topic of terrorist

radicalization. Generally speaking, terrorist radicalization can be understood as a process whereby individuals are persuaded that violent activity is justified in pursuit of some political aim, and then they decide to become involved in that violence.⁵ However, many of the factors that push or pull individuals toward radicalization are in dispute within the expert community.⁶ This disagreement can be partly attributed to the complex relationship between structural factors and individual experiences.⁷ In terms of structural factors, does historical oppression make a community vulnerable to radical ideologies, as Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahmendova argue in their work on suicide bombers in Chechnya?⁸ Or is Lorenzo Vidino more accurate in arguing for individual factors in his article on an al-Qa'ida cell in Italy, where he emphasizes personal hardships?⁹ Both or neither might be correct. At present, resolving the topic of what factors lead to radicalization and the commission of terrorist acts is impossible, because we do not know why others, with similar experiences and under the same circumstances, choose not to become terrorists—that is, reject violent extremism.

This report is the first to empirically address the topic of why individuals reject violent extremism.¹⁰ To do so, we focus on the Palestinian West Bank. The report begins with a theoretical model and then tests

this model with data gathered through structured interviews and a survey. The overarching findings from this effort demonstrate that (1) rejecting violent extremism, for residents of the West Bank, is a process with multiple stages and choices within each stage; (2) family plays a greater role than friends in shaping attitudes toward nonviolence; (3) demographics do not have a significant impact on attitudes toward nonviolence; and (4) opposing violence in theory is distinct from choosing not to engage in violence.

The West Bank is an area well suited to a proof-of-concept study about why people remain nonradicalized. Populations are accessible, and residents have ample opportunity to become involved in violence. Most of the factors attributed to radicalization—both structural factors and individual experiences—exist there, leading naturally to the question, “why aren’t more people involved in political violence?” For this study, ten semistructured interviews were conducted with politicians from Hamas and Fatah in 2012. Israeli security forces had arrested seven of ten interviewees for political activism, and three had been involved in violence. Along with these interviews, we also conducted a survey among youth (ages 18–30) who lived in Hebron, Jenin, and Ramallah. Six hundred participated in face-to-face surveys. Of these, Israeli forces had arrested 8 percent on terrorism-related charges, representing a smaller percentage than our interviewees, but a larger proportion than the West Bank population as a whole.¹¹

The West Bank is an area well suited to a proof-of-concept study about why people remain nonradicalized. Populations are accessible, and residents have ample opportunity to become involved in violence.

This report proceeds in four main sections. The first section summarizes what scholars generally know about radicalization, both inside and outside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The second provides details of the methods used to explore why individuals reject violent extremism. The third section tests and validates the model. Finally, the report concludes with a discussion of the implications for future research and broader U.S. counterterrorism policy.

UNDERSTANDING RADICALIZATION

More than a decade after the September 11 attacks by al-Qa’ida operatives on the World Trade Center in New York City and on the Pentagon, it is difficult to recall a time when political violence inside the United States was conducted primarily by antigovernment activists, abortion clinic bombers, white supremacists, and ecoterrorists. Yet, according to the RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, 54 terrorist attacks occurred in the United States between January 1990 and December 2000, and more than half were attributed to one of these categories.¹² Despite these small numbers, a relatively substantial amount of research by American scholars has been devoted to the study of radicalization. Beyond the United States, this literature is also expansive. This section provides a brief review of what is known, and not known, about terrorist radicalization, both inside and outside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Individual Radicalization Beyond the Palestinian Territories

Much of the early work relevant to radicalization focused on structural or environmental factors that facilitate violence. For example, Ted Robert Gurr, in his oft-cited and oft-criticized book, *Why Men Rebel* (1970), posited that political, economic, and social deprivation influenced social unrest and political violence.¹³ By comparison, in 1977, Walter Laqueur introduced his work on political terrorism by refuting what he believed to be a general perception that addressing these grievances would, on its own, eliminate violence.¹⁴ In subsequent years, terrorism scholars, such as Ehud Sprinzak and Mark Juergensmeyer, added the element of religious ideology to the mix in their attempts to understand radicalization.¹⁵ But most of these past analyses struggled to link broad structural factors—such as poverty, oppression, or religious

Beyond peer groups, personal grievances, and benefits, it seems clear that some terrorist recruits join because they believe that violence can induce a political, economic, social, or religious revolution.

extremism—to individual motivations to either join a terrorist group or engage in violence.

While some prior attention was given to individual beliefs, relationships, and behaviors, this level of research has gained more traction since 2001. Donatella Della Porta laid the foundation for individual-level analysis with her study of the Italian Red Brigades in the 1990s, finding that most operatives had joined because of the influence of peers or family members.¹⁶ These findings have been confirmed and expanded on in more-recent studies on al-Qa’ida and other terrorist networks in Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.¹⁷

A key strength of these more recent studies has been access to new data sources. In his article on an al-Qa’ida cell in Italy, for example, Vidino reviewed “thousands of pages” of interrogations.¹⁸ Similarly, Ken Ballen built on his past experience as a U.S. federal prosecutor in writing *Terrorists in Love*, which presented the results of interviews with six al-Qa’ida fighters.¹⁹ Beyond interviews or interrogation reports, a number of al-Qa’ida fighters have published autobiographies either in hard copy or electronically.²⁰ Some of these autobiographical accounts address personal motivations directly, such as “The Birth of the Afghan Arabs,” which was written by Abdullah Anas about his time fighting the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, and *Aku Melawan Teroris (Fight Terrorists)* by Imam Samudra, a member of Indonesia’s Jemaah Islamiyya who was subsequently executed for his role in the 2002 Bali bombings.²¹ Finally, the New York Police Department (NYPD) and the Singapore government have released detailed reports about radicalization, based on intelligence gathered locally.²² Taken together, these materials provide a general picture of how and why individuals have become involved in political violence in a post–September 11 world.

Most authors have concluded that individuals do not determine to become involved in political violence overnight; rather, they progress through multiple stages.²³ Terrorist radicalization, in this sense, can be viewed as similar to other processes

through which individuals are persuaded to join small, clandestine groups, such as cults or gangs. In 1985, Philip Zimbardo and Cynthia Hartley presented the findings of their analysis of cults in U.S. high schools in “Cults Go to High School: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of the Initial Stage in the Recruitment Process.”²⁴ Based on Zimbardo and Hartley’s research, it is possible to understand the recruitment of American youth into cults as having four basic stages: (1) precontact, (2) initial contact, (3) developed contact, and (4) committed member.²⁵

These four stages reflect similar findings from studies of terrorism. The NYPD report, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, also divided radicalization into four stages: (1) preradicalization, (2) self-identification, (3) indoctrination, and (4) jihadization.²⁶ Individuals were found to progress from being sympathetic and open to the ideas espoused by an extremist group, to becoming closely associated with its members, to joining it themselves. The primary distinction between Zimbardo and Hartley’s work and the NYPD report is that the former articulates human interaction, whereas the NYPD emphasizes self-radicalization.

While identifying these stages is a step toward a more nuanced understanding of radicalization, trying to isolate factors that push or pull individuals through them is a greater challenge. Some consensus, albeit limited, has emerged on this topic. Multiple studies have reinforced the conclusion that individuals are influenced in their decisions to become involved in political violence by their peers—for example, friends and family.²⁷ Personal grievances (e.g., the death of a loved one at the hands of security forces) also continue to emerge as significant in studies of motivations.²⁸ Some studies also suggest that individuals are motivated to become involved in political violence because doing so confers some personal benefit. These benefits could be financial, such as a salary; social, such as the prestige derived from being part of a revolutionary organization; or even simply a desire for excitement.²⁹ Beyond peer groups, personal

grievances, and benefits, it seems clear that some terrorist recruits join because they believe that violence can induce a political, economic, social, or religious revolution.³⁰

Of course, within these broad categories, disagreement exists. Juergensmeyer, for example, has argued that violence can take on sacred meaning for militants in a perceived religious revolution.³¹ Alternatively, in their study of support for militancy in Pakistan, Jacob Shapiro and Christine Fair concluded that religiosity itself (or fervor of religious beliefs) could not explain support for militancy.³² Many other subfactors also are under dispute, as experts continue to debate how much of an influence subfactors truly have on individual radicalization. Much of the problem is that these factors apply to many more people than those who eventually become involved in political violence. Thus, greater nuance is needed to understand why some people, under specific circumstances, become involved in political violence and others do not.

Individual Radicalization Within the Palestinian Territories

Fortunately, in the case of Palestinian fighters, researchers have been able to delve more deeply into personal motivations for a number of reasons, such as the duration of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the efforts of investigative journalists, and the ability of Israeli and Palestinian academics to collect and analyze data. Here we briefly discuss recent findings regarding radicalization, specifically as it relates to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In 2003, *Terrorism and Political Violence* published an article by Jerrold Post, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita Denny that presented their results from interviews with 35 individuals incarcerated on terrorism charges.³³ These individuals represented Palestinian groups, such as Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad, as well as the Lebanese Hizballah. This study is interesting because of the nature and access the authors were granted to their subjects. It also both confirmed and called into question some of the key factors thought to be significant in terrorist radicalization. Primarily, the authors found that friends had the greatest influence on participants' decision to join their respective terrorist groups.³⁴ In this context, Post, Sprinzak, and Denny also concluded that family had less influence than anticipated on participants. This conclusion was driven by the observation that a majority of the participants did not have family members in the terrorist group they joined.³⁵

Indeed, the influence of family, or lack thereof, on radicalization inside the Palestinian Territories remains an open question. It is not uncommon for observers to point out that mothers and fathers often speak proudly of their sons, the martyrs. Yet scholars also have found family ties to be a moderating influence on radicalization. Ami Pedhazur, Arlie Perliger, and Leonard Weinberg, for example, found that, in a sample of 819 terrorists (70 suicide bombers and 749 fighters), suicide bombers had fewer family ties than other terrorist operatives.³⁶ Thus, one could conclude that family ties discouraged individuals from becoming suicide bombers, if not terrorists. In his 2007 study of Palestinian militants, Claude Berrebi also found that married individuals were less likely to participate in any type of terrorist activity.³⁷ So the question of family influence remains open to further analysis.

Studies of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip also tend to emphasize hopelessness as a motivating factor in individual radicalization. That is, observers sometimes note that residents exist under difficult circumstances because of Israeli military presence in and among Palestinian villages and the economic blockade of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip.³⁸ Thus, some individuals might be motivated to join a terrorist group to overcome feelings of despair for their own personal quality of life and for the Palestinian community more generally. In their book, *The Road to Martyrs' Square*, Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg presented the findings from interviews with several prospective and arrested suicide bombers in the Gaza Strip. Most articulated both despair at their circumstances and an anticipation of death.³⁹

But recent studies suggest that despair is not as simple as it might initially seem. The aforementioned study by Berrebi found that poverty was inversely related and education positively associated with becoming a suicide bomber.⁴⁰ Assaf Moghadam posited that the glorification of death and courage, when it exists in contrast to despair, presented a significant factor in his study of terrorism in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.⁴¹ And Post, Sprinzak, and Denny concluded that feelings of despair had caused interviewees to “merge their identi[ties] with that of their respective group.”⁴² These studies suggest that despair might be a factor for radicalization, but only insofar as it causes individuals to subjugate their self-interest. The study by Pedhazur, Perliger, and Weinberg is useful in this context, because the authors explored how much terrorists were motivated by altruism. Using Emile Durkheim's typology of suicide behavior, their article compared suicide terrorists with others in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. They found that altruism—

suicide acts defined as a duty—influenced individuals involved in suicide attacks more than the other terrorists.⁴³

In summary, if general studies of radicalization have yielded five motivating factors—peer groups, personal grievances, revolutionary objectives, personal benefits, and sacred meaning—then a focus on the Palestinian Territories can both expand this list and add greater specificity. For Palestinians, past studies would suggest that the influence of friends (as a subset of peer groups) contributes to radicalization, but family ties do not. Despair might reinforce revolutionary objectives, but only insofar as it causes individuals to subjugate their identity to that of the group. And, finally, militants in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip might also be motivated by feelings of altruism.

However, even given the greater specificity that comes from considering radicalization in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, these factors are relevant to many more people than those who actually become involved in violence. Such limitations are more than academic, because they make it difficult for policymakers to design interventions. These limitations lead to programs aimed at manipulating broad structural factors—for example, education—so that they affect small subsets of populations of people who might or might not decide to become terrorists. One alternative is to instead focus policies on encouraging individuals to reject violent extremism.⁴⁴ This approach opens the possibility of more-targeted programs designed to strengthen factors that moderate radicalization. At the very least, a better understanding of the rejection of extremism can help policymakers better manage their counterradicalization efforts.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The remaining sections are structured according to a theoretical model of why individuals reject extremism. Here we discuss the model; we subsequently discuss the data sources used in our exploratory analysis of nonradicalization in the Palestinian West Bank.

A Theoretical Model

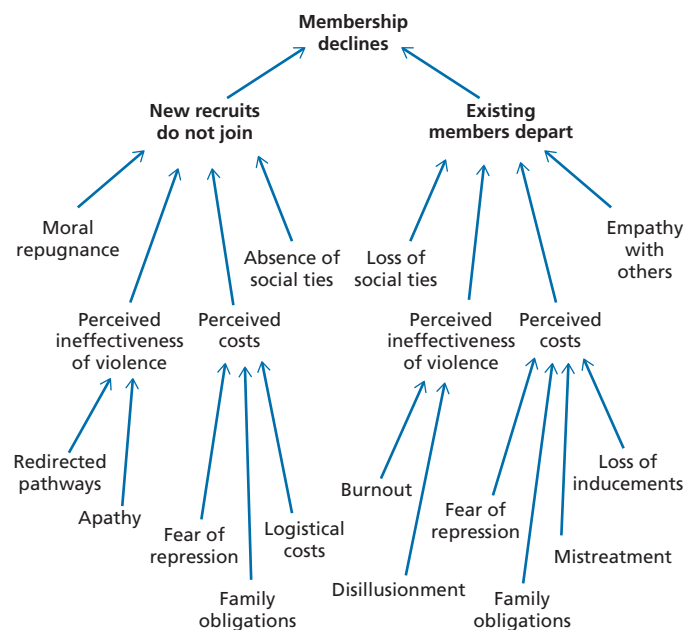
The theoretical model presented in Figure 1 was published in the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence* in 2013.⁴⁵ It was derived from a literature review of studies that held some insight into why individuals reject violent extremism. That is, the reviewed studies primarily examined radicalization or

support for terrorist groups in and among communities. But the studies also included limited interviews with individuals who did not join local terrorists when presented with the option. The resulting model represents a starting point for our analysis.

The easiest way to interpret the theoretical model is to start at the top and work down. It supposes that for membership to decline, new recruits do not join and existing members depart or defect from any given terrorist group. This report addresses the former—new recruits do not join.⁴⁶ That is, the model assumes that militant leaders or recruiters would like specific recruits to join, but they choose not to do so.⁴⁷ Four factors are hypothesized as contributing to this reluctance: (1) moral repugnance of violence in a particular recruit, (2) perceived ineffectiveness of violence, (3) perceived costs, and (4) an absence of social ties to the terrorist group. Importantly, the model presupposes that the motivations for rejecting violent extremism represent more than the simple dearth of motivations for radicalization. In other words, not all the nonviolent factors are mirror opposites of those discussed in the previous sections for radicalization.

Continuing down along the branches of this theoretical model on the left side, factor 2, perceived ineffectiveness of violence, has two subfactors: redirected pathways and apathy.

Figure 1. A Preliminary Model for Understanding Why Individuals Reject Violent Extremism



SOURCE: Kim Cragin, "Resisting Violent Extremism: A Conceptual Model for Non-Radicalization," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, December 2013, p. 347. Used with permission.

RAND RR1118-1

In this sense, the model suggests that two different subfactors could strengthen nonradicalization, either a perception that other nonviolent avenues will be more effective or a general apathy that nothing will work. Factor 3, perceived costs, has three subfactors: fear of repression, family obligations, and the simple logistical costs of joining any given terrorist group.⁴⁸

Data Sources

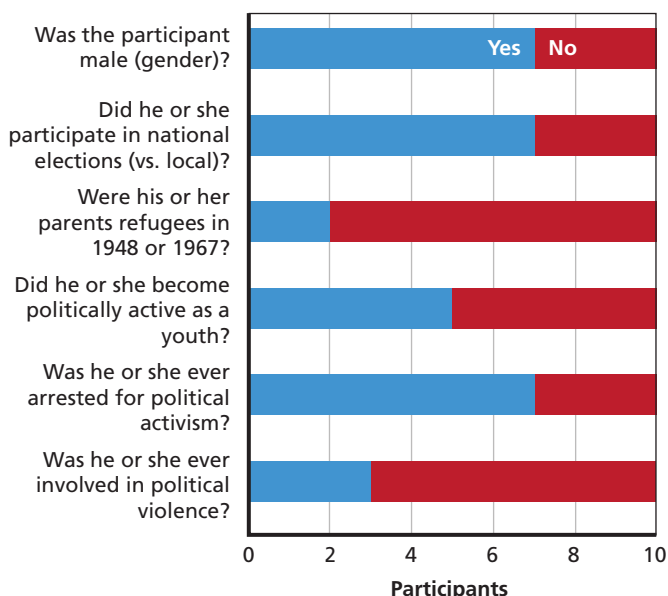
This theoretical model represented the starting point for our exploratory analysis, which aimed to determine whether the factors displayed in this model are relevant for determining why individuals reject violent extremism and, if so, to what degree. We used the results of semistructured interviews and a survey conducted during the fall of 2012 in the West Bank to test the model.

Semistructured Interviews

We used semistructured interviews to gain a better qualitative understanding of why certain individuals who publicly identify with groups that pursue a violent agenda choose not to engage in violence. Ten individuals were chosen from among Palestinian politicians: Four were members of Hamas's Change and Reform party, four were associated with Fatah, and two were nonaffiliated. Beyond political party, a number of criteria were used to choose participants, including gender, background, and degree of political activism. The participants included elected and appointed officials, national political leaders, and local mayors. A West Bank research institute conducted the interviews and provided both Arabic and English transcripts. Figure 2 provides a summary of the characteristics of our interviewees.

Readers should note that, as illustrated in Figure 2, only three interviewees stated that they had been involved directly in political violence, despite their affiliation with Hamas or Fatah. The following quotation was taken from one of our interviewees associated with Hamas's political party, Change and Reform. This individual was active in the Hamas movement and had suffered for his activism, but he had not engaged personally in violence. As such, the quotation illustrates the basic rationale of many of the interviewees: "Comprehensive confrontation with Israel will fail. We do not have enough power and neither do the Arabs. This is something wrong, and its negatives outweigh its positives. But there must be something." This quotation highlights the complexity of support,

Figure 2. Participants for the Semistructured Interviews



RAND RR1118-2

or lack thereof, for terrorism in the West Bank. Clearly, this interviewee was not morally opposed to violence, or he would not have been a member of the Change and Reform party. But he also realized its limitations and had not chosen to become involved in violence himself. Indeed, although only three of the interviewees had been involved in political violence, seven agreed that it was legitimate under certain circumstances. If seven interviewees articulated support for political violence, why had only three engaged in violent activities? In many ways, this represents the central question for our study. One could suppose that the interviewees who were involved in the leadership of Hamas or Fatah were able to advance the objectives of their organizations through other means. Or, in the terms of our model, they had redirected pathways available to them for political activism. However, questions remain about whether this or other factors truly played a distinguishing role. And, equally important, questions also remain about how much the attitudes conveyed by our interviewees translate to West Bank residents generally.

Survey

To answer these questions more thoroughly, we contracted a local research firm to administer a survey of approximately 600 Palestinian youth (ages 18–30) who live in the West Bank municipalities of Hebron, Jenin, and Ramallah.⁴⁹ Fifty-one percent of our respondents were from Hebron; 26 percent,

Ramallah; and 23 percent, Jenin. The sample included residents of urban and rural households and refugee camps in these municipalities. The questionnaire was administered face-to-face in the respondent's household. The survey had a 88-percent response rate: 679 individuals were contacted, 617 agreed to be interviewed, and 62 refused; 17 interviews were interrupted prior to completion.⁵⁰ Table 1 provides a brief overview of the respondents.

Beyond demographics, respondents were asked a range of questions about their personal histories, beliefs, expectations for the future, families, friends, views of violence, encounters with Israeli security forces, and thoughts about the Arab-Israeli conflict. The following subsections provide greater detail about how we attempted to structure and analyze the data.

Dependent Variables

Questions about openness to political violence represent the central distinguishing elements in this survey. Other scholars, primarily from the fields of psychology (cognitive openness) and sociology (social movement theory), also have used the concept of openness to identify willingness to engage in violence.⁵¹ Theoretically, not everyone who is willing to engage in violence, or is "radicalized," will actually do so. Others factors might inhibit their participation in violence. But when dealing with this exploratory topic of rejecting extremism, we nonetheless found it useful to start with the question of why some are not open to participation in violent activities and others are more so.

We used two different dependent variables to measure openness: attitudes toward suicide attacks against civilians and willingness to engage in violent protests. First, we chose a series of questions about the merits of suicide attacks against a range of targets. This topic has been used repeatedly by academics, journalists, and other opinion monitors in the West Bank to gauge radicalization. While virtually all (98 percent) of survey respondents articulated at least some level of support for suicide attacks against Israeli soldiers, differences were seen for support for suicide attacks against Israeli civilians (see Table 2). Specifically, individuals who somewhat or strongly opposed suicide attacks against civilians (bolded rows) are distinguished as *nonviolent* individuals in this report.

We also included questions about the likelihood that respondents would ever engage in violent protests. This formed the basis for our second dependent variable. The purpose was to go one step beyond support for suicide terrorism in under-

Table 1. Demographics of Survey Respondents

Attribute	Percentage
Gender	
Male	51.2
Female	48.8
Marital status	
Married	30.5
Divorced, widowed, or never married	69.5
Education	
Below secondary	75.0
Secondary or above	25.0
Employment	
Employed	49.2
Not employed, housewife, or student	50.8

Table 2. Survey Questions About Openness to Violence

Question	Percentage
Do you support or oppose suicide attacks against Israeli civilians?	
Strongly support	5.8
Somewhat support	31.8
Somewhat oppose	37.3
Strongly oppose	25.1
Is it likely or unlikely that you would ever engage in violent protests?	
Very likely	38.8
Somewhat likely	27.3
Somewhat unlikely	24.9
Very unlikely	9.0

NOTE: The bold rows represent those designated as nonviolent.

standing what might inhibit violent behavior. Readers might be surprised at the inclusion of this question, wondering why some individuals would admit being likely to engage in *violent protest*. But this term, specifically in the context of the West Bank, encompasses anything from throwing stones to suicide attacks, so it is not as threatening as one might expect. Respondents who were very unlikely or somewhat unlikely to engage in violent protests were designated as nonviolent.

Independent Variables

Having defined the dependent variables, we turn back to the factors, based on the theoretical model, that hypotheti-

cally contribute to a lack of radicalization. These factors are (1) perceived ineffectiveness of violence, (2) perceived costs of violence, (3) absence of social ties, and (4) other factors. Readers will note the absence of *moral repugnance* in this list of independent variables. This topic was removed from the list of independent variables. As we designed and tested the survey instrument, we became concerned that it would conflate with attitudes toward suicide bombings, and so we removed it. We also did not examine the logistical costs of joining any given militant organization, because logistical costs are relatively low in the West Bank, as compared with, for example, foreign fighters in Syria. We recommend that any future studies on rejecting violent extremism incorporate these factors.

First, to examine the concept of *perceived ineffectiveness of violence*, a series of questions were used to gauge the degree of respondents' activism (redirected pathways) and apathy. Table 3 summarizes some of these questions and the responses. For example, only 2 percent of respondents indicated that they were very satisfied with their current quality of life, compared with the 26 percent who answered they were very dissatisfied. Questions about personal quality of life paralleled general feelings of pessimism toward life in the Palestinian Authority (74 percent were "rather" or "very" pessimistic) and the prospects for change.

The survey also asked a series of questions to measure how much the *perceived costs of violence* might distinguish radicalized from nonradicalized individuals (see Table 4). These questions addressed the issue of fear of repression or reprisal by Israeli security forces, both against respondents themselves and against friends or family members. Interestingly, while only 8 percent of the survey respondents reported having been arrested by Israeli security forces, 14 percent had been detained and 25 percent physically assaulted. An even greater number—47 percent of respondents—were very concerned about being arrested in the future.

To identify the impact of social ties on attitudes toward violence, our survey questions gauged the strength of social bonds, including the absence of ties to terrorist groups, as well as the influence of friends and family. The purpose was to determine whether respondents with close ties to neighbors, friends, and family articulated a reluctance to engage in violence. Table 5 summarizes the results from selected questions about *social ties and influence*.

Finally, we examined some additional factors not included in our theoretical model but often mentioned in conjunction

Table 3. Select Questions About the Ineffectiveness of Violence

Question	Percentage
Do you describe yourself as very, fairly, not very, or not at all politically active?	
Very politically active	7.1
Fairly politically active	33.7
Not very politically active	45.6
Not at all politically active	13.6
To what extent are you active in the Fatah movement?	
Very active	17.7
Fairly active	10.5
Not very active	28.3
Not at all active	43.5
To what extent are you active in the Change and Reform (Hamas) party?	
Very active	15.5
Fairly active	14.7
Not very active	26.0
Not at all active	43.8
How satisfied are you with the current quality of your life?	
Very satisfied	2.2
Somewhat satisfied	21.8
Somewhat dissatisfied	49.8
Very dissatisfied	26.3

NOTE: Sums in this and subsequent tables do not always sum to 100 because of rounding.

Table 4. Select Questions About the Perceived Costs of Violence

Question	Percentage
Have you:	
Been arrested by Israeli police?	8.3 (yes)
Been detained by Israeli police?	14.3
Been threatened by Israeli police?	19.5
Been physically assaulted by Israeli police?	24.8
Been verbally assaulted by Israeli police?	57.8
How concerned are you about being arrested in the future?	
Very concerned	46.9
Somewhat concerned	30.2
A little concerned	16.2
Not at all concerned	6.7

Table 5. Select Questions About Social Ties and Influence

Question	Percentage
How often do you get together with friends or neighbors in your or their homes?	
Once a month or more	9.8
Less than once a month	90.2
Thinking of major life decisions, how much influence do your parents have?	
A great deal of influence	45.0
A fair amount of influence	36.2
Only a little influence	15.3
No influence at all	3.5

with the topic of radicalization. Other researchers have posited a correlation between (1) religiosity and economic conditions and (2) radicalization. Using data from the survey, we examined these factors against our dependent variables. Table 6 provides the variables we included in this examination.

Preparing the Survey Results for Final Analysis

We undertook multiple steps to prepare the survey results for final analysis. First, several Likert-like scales (for example, multiple-scaled responses to a single question, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) were collapsed into dichotomous variables. We did this primarily to simplify our analysis, but also to better distinguish extreme responses from moderate ones. Second, we were concerned about potential multicollinearity. That is, several questions in the survey instrument informed interrelated attributes (e.g., attitudes toward one's economic situation). To address these concerns, we excluded correlated variables from the final model. The results presented in this report are robust to alternative specifications of derived variables and substitution of alternative collinear variables.

Readers should also note that we have some marginal rates of item nonresponse (i.e., unanswered questions) for our variables. For example, out of the 600 survey respondents, 11 individuals did not answer the question about support for suicide attacks against civilians, and ten individuals did not answer the question about the likelihood of participating in violent protests. We also found very little correlation between the rates of item nonresponse, or missingness, across variables. So although any one variable had very little missing data, using listwise

Table 6. Select Questions About Economic Conditions and Religiosity

Question	Percentage
How would you describe your household's economic conditions?	
Very good	3.8
Fairly good	38.5
Rather poor	35.3
Very poor	22.5
To what extent do you agree that a government based on shariah alone is the best system for Palestine?	
Strongly agree	14.0
Agree	35.4
Disagree	36.4
Strongly disagree	14.3
Women and men should not work together in the workplace.	
Strongly agree	47.3
Somewhat agree	20.4
Somewhat disagree	25.0
Strongly disagree	7.4

deletion—removing any respondent from the survey who did not answer every question—would have resulted in a significant number of cases dropped from our analyses.⁵² We therefore elected to do multivariable imputation by chained equations (MICE) to impute missingness within each of the variables in our nonradicalization model.⁵³ Final analysis of the model was estimated iteratively over each set of ten imputed values, and these MICE-corrected regressions produced one final set of coefficients and standard errors robust to variation in the imputation. All regressions in this study used this approach.

RESULTS

This section begins by exploring the evidence for or against some of the more prevalent ideas surrounding the topic of why individuals reject violent extremism. We examine the factors currently included in our conceptual model (perceived ineffectiveness, perceived costs, absence of social ties) and two not in our model (economic conditions and religiosity), against the dependent variables and then as a part of a larger model.

Individuals who self-identified as *not* politically active were also less radicalized: They were less likely to participate in violent protests.

Perceived Ineffectiveness of Violence

Our conceptual model posits that two different factors could lead individuals to believe that violence would not be an effective means to achieve political, social, economic, or religious change. The first factor is redirected pathways. Individuals might conclude that nonviolent pathways are more likely to produce the desired outcome and, therefore, choose to become involved in nonviolent forms of activism. Specifically, in the context of the Palestinian West Bank, the desired outcome is a Palestinian state. But Palestinians continue to debate whether violence represents the best way to achieve this objective. As one interviewee described it: “We are a people who have the right to do everything in our capacity to resist the occupation. I believe that peaceful protest is one form of resistance.”

However, contrary to our initial hypothesis, we found that redirected pathways do not contribute to nonviolence in the Palestinian West Bank. Individuals who self-identified as *not* politically active were also less radicalized: They were less likely to participate in violent protests. Further, activism did not correlate with opposition to suicide bombings against civilians. These findings can be found in Table 7. In many ways, the findings are logical. Political activism is often tied directly or indirectly to Hamas and Fatah. Individuals not associated with these organizations, in this context, might also be more likely to eschew any form of activism, violent or otherwise.

To further explore this logic, we examined respondents’ association with either Hamas or Fatah: Does active participation in either group affect attitudes toward violence? Indeed, while the first series of questions asked about activism more generally, the questionnaire also contained a set of follow-on questions about Hamas and Fatah specifically. We found that any association with Hamas significantly increased the possibility that individuals would participate in violent protest *and* support suicide bombings against civilians.

Beyond redirected pathways, our model also hypothesized that apathy might contribute to the perceived ineffectiveness of violence. Some individuals might believe that *nothing will work* and that no pathway exists to an independent Palestinian state. These individuals might also view their own situation as unsatisfactory and choose not to participate in any form of activism. When asked about the greatest challenges to Palestinian society, one interviewee replied along these lines: “The problem is that we must care. Hamas appeared in 1986. They think that

Table 7. Perceived Ineffectiveness of Violence

	Opposed to Suicide Attacks	Unlikely to Engage in Violence
Not very politically active (general)	0.578 (0.345)	0.200 (0.385)
Not at all politically active (general)	0.145 (0.415)	0.828* (0.456)
Only active in Change and Reform (Hamas)	-1.161*** (0.315)	-0.819*** (0.312)
Active in both Hamas and Fatah	-0.574** (0.261)	-0.667*** (0.237)
Somewhat dissatisfied with quality of life	1.299** (0.625)	-0.865 (0.573)
Very dissatisfied with quality of life	1.500** (0.640)	-0.545 (0.587)

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Hamas made the Islamist leaderships, but this is incorrect; it is Islamist figures concerned with politics who made Hamas.”

To explore the idea of apathy further, we analyzed the responses to our survey questions about individual quality of life and the situation in the West Bank generally. We found that those who expressed dissatisfaction with their current quality of life were also significantly less likely to support suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. This finding appears to reinforce conclusions by Pedhazur and others about the role altruism plays for suicide bombers. This finding also confirms the model: *Apathy* plays an important role in moderation, at least as measured by attitudes toward suicide bombings.

That said, our findings also suggest limited to no correlation between apathy and willingness to engage (or not engage) in violent protests. This result represents one of many clear divergences in our data between attitudes toward violence and willingness to engage in violence. In fact, similar attitudinal distinctions emerged throughout our models. This suggests that more needs to be done to explore how individuals weigh their various options or choices between violent and nonviolent pathways. It also suggests that just as the radicalization process represents a series of stages with multiple choices along the way, so too does nonradicalization.

Perceived Costs

The next category of factors in our conceptual model of non-radicalization relates to perceived costs. The model supposes that certain costs might influence individual attitudes toward

violence: fear of repression (by security forces) against individuals, family, and friends, as well as family obligations. The results of our model suggest a general tendency of family members’ circumstances and attitudes to affect individuals’ views toward nonviolence, more than their peers. These findings contradict prior work on radicalization, both inside and outside the West Bank. Thus, we explore these findings more fully throughout this and subsequent sections.

Palestinian residents of the West Bank encounter Israeli security forces regularly. Public transportation often must work through and around “flying (random) checkpoints.” Long lines form at established checkpoints. Israeli forces often enter West Bank towns in the midst of a security operation. It is therefore logical that fear would affect individual attitudes toward nonviolence. The following quote from one of our interviewees illustrates this reality: “Not a single Palestinian, even Abu Mazen, in spite of the VIP card he holds, feels truly safe because Israel can withhold the VIP status at any moment, just as they did with Ahmad Majdalani. If they did that to a minister, how can an ordinary Palestinian feel safe as long as there is occupation, and as long as there is no security for the money, the self, properties, the family and the children.” Generally speaking, the data revealed that individuals who were concerned about being arrested by Israeli security forces in the future were significantly less likely to support suicide bombings (see Table 8). The same can be said of family members; those individuals whose family members had been arrested in the past were less likely to support suicide bombings. The arrest of friends is not statistically significant.

Table 8. Perceived Costs

	Opposed to Suicide Attacks	Unlikely to Engage in Violence
Very concerned about future arrest (general)	0.674*** (0.186)	-0.390** (0.184)
Family has been arrested	0.905*** (0.213)	-0.539*** (0.206)
Family has been detained	-0.528*** (0.186)	-0.326* (0.189)
Friends have been arrested	0.176 (0.221)	0.0849 (0.213)
Friends have been detained	-0.449** (0.206)	-0.142 (0.208)

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses
 *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Individuals with family members who had been detained by Israeli security forces were more likely to participate in violent protest, although to a lesser degree than with arrests.

But, somewhat surprisingly, the data suggest that the opposite is true for our second dependent variable: willingness to engage in violent protest. That is, individuals whose family members have been arrested or who fear arrest were more likely to engage in violent protest. And, once again, the arrest of friends is not statistically significant. Upon further reflection, a readily apparent explanation exists for this pattern in the data. Quite simply, Palestinians often and actively protest the arrest of family members. It is part of the political culture in the West Bank. One interviewee explained her feelings in this way: “As Palestinians, we eat, drink, and breath politics. Being politically affiliated is not a condition. We live politics. Politics is an indivisible part of our life. For us, when a child carries a stone, he expresses a political affiliation.”

Given this fairly active political culture, it is logical that those individuals who have family members in prison or expect to be imprisoned some time in the future would also anticipate being involved in some form of violent protest. This suggests that *fear of repression* factors into the decision calculus up to a certain point, but then it can be overridden by feelings of obligation, particularly to family members. In fact, when looking at family obligations further, we found no evidence that demographic factors—being married or having children—contributed to nonviolence. Instead, our findings suggest something of the opposite: Under certain circumstances, family obligations prompt individuals to undertake more-risky behavior.

To further explore these findings, we examined how respondents felt about the detention of friends and family members. The pattern held true: Individuals with family members who had been detained by Israeli security forces were more likely to participate in violent protest, although to a lesser degree than with arrests. The detention of friends is not statistically significant when it comes to attitudes toward or willingness to participate in violent protest. This reaffirmed our supposition that fear of repression has a significant impact on rejecting violent extremism, but only to a degree. This

finding regarding the role and limits of fear requires further research.

Social Ties

Social ties often are cited as one of the key factors affecting attitudes toward violence and a willingness to engage in political violence. This perspective is illustrated in two quotes from our interviewees:

My husband is a martyr for Palestine. He died in 2007 and was considered a martyr. He was a political activist. He was arrested and his work place was demolished twice, . . . and he was barred from rebuilding it after it was demolished.

Frankly, my husband was known to be from Hamas, so whoever sees me says I am from Hamas [as well]. . . . I lived the life of Hamas one moment after another since its founding, until my husband’s assassination.

Both interviewees were wives of martyrs from their respective political parties, Fatah and Hamas, and both were drawn into political activism by their spouses. But questions remain about how much influence these and other social ties have on non-radicalization.

To measure social ties, we asked a series of questions about how much survey respondents interacted with neighbors or friends inside their homes, a common practice among residents of the West Bank. We also asked questions about how much respondents socialized outside their homes. And, beyond socialization, we had respondents characterize the influence that parents, friends, siblings, and other family members had on major life decisions and on the respondent’s support for a political party. Finally, we included a series of questions to indicate how much respondents’ friends or family members had engaged in violent protests.

Generally speaking, we found that the degree of social interactions—inside or outside the home—did not affect

attitudes toward nonviolence, as shown in Table 9. This suggests that abnormal social behavior is not a good indicator. By comparison, the data suggest that individuals whose friends and family were unlikely to participate in violent protests were similarly nonradicalized. That is, they too anticipated not participating in violent protests to a significant degree. These findings confirmed the importance of family and peer influence on rejecting extremism. But they also raised questions about the significance of friends versus family.

We next attempted to disaggregate family influence from friends. We found that respondents who claimed a strong peer influence did not evidence different views toward violence from those with weak peer influence. *Parental influence*, however, emerged as significant. Those who claimed that their parents had minimal impact on their major decisions were also statistically more likely to engage in violent protest. This finding is fascinating. It suggests, again, that family can have an important dampening influence on radicalization.

Religiosity and Demographics

Finally, as discussed previously, religiosity and demographics are often discussed in studies of radicalization. Scholars increasingly have concluded that education, economic status, religion, gender, and age might be associated with radicalization, but not significantly.⁵⁴ So we included gender, education, and marital

status in our models, as well as various measures of religiosity. We found that women, generally speaking, were more likely to support suicide attacks against civilians than men and were less likely to participate in violent protests. But among men, no demographic factors emerged as significant: not education, not employment, not age. As for religiosity, our data suggest that those who disagreed that shariah law alone should be applied throughout Palestine were also less likely to support suicide bombings.

Combined Model

The previous sections identified the impact that various factors have on rejecting extremism in isolation. But, in reality, these factors interact with each other to some degree as individuals choose to participate or not participate in violent activities. And, indeed, our initial conceptual model assumed some degree of interaction between the various factors and subfactors. We, therefore, decided to take the next step and explore a combined model of nonradicalization, based on our survey data. The findings are discussed below.

In almost all cases, the findings from the combined model confirmed the ones we presented earlier. Specifically, even when controlling for the entire complement of variables, individuals who self-identified as not politically active remained statistically less likely to participate in violent protests (see Table 10).⁵⁵

Table 9. Social Ties

	Opposed to Suicide Attacks	Unlikely to Engage in Violence
Minimal social interaction with friends or neighbors	0.0268 (0.290)	-0.0394 (0.311)
Family or friends very unlikely to engage in forms of violent protest	-0.386** (0.185)	1.484*** (0.220)
Parents have a fair amount of influence on major decisions	0.086 (0.195)	-0.171 (0.207)
Parents have little influence on major decisions	0.291 (0.269)	-0.980*** (0.336)
Parents have no influence on major decisions	0.898 (0.582)	-2.057* (1.054)
Friends have a fair amount of influence on major decisions	-0.308 (0.201)	-0.078 (0.219)
Friends have little influence on major decisions	-0.347 (0.252)	0.312 (0.270)
Friends have no influence on major decisions	-0.176 (0.406)	-0.142 (0.208)

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table 10. A Combined Model of Why Individuals Reject Violent Extremism

	Opposed to Suicide Attacks	Unlikely to Engage in Violence
Perceived ineffectiveness of violence		
Not very politically active (general)	0.309 (0.391)	0.568 (0.419)
Not at all politically active (general)	-0.117 (0.458)	0.939* (0.501)
Only active in Change and Reform (Hamas)	-1.077*** (0.413)	-0.956** (0.312)
Active in both Hamas and Fatah	-0.308 (0.306)	-0.605** (0.291)
Somewhat dissatisfied with quality of life	1.016 (0.695)	-0.074 (0.627)
Very dissatisfied with quality of life	1.358* (0.703)	-0.004 (0.630)
Perceived costs		
Very concerned about future arrest (general)	0.664*** (0.202)	-0.211 (0.209)
Family has been arrested	0.957*** (0.233)	-0.184 (0.241)
Family has been detained	-0.506** (0.200)	-0.314 (0.214)
Friends have been arrested	0.125 (0.238)	0.273 (0.248)
Friends have been detained	-0.523** (0.221)	-0.009 (0.240)
Social ties		
Minimal social interaction with friends or neighbors (general)	-0.121 (0.320)	0.0359 (0.328)
Family or friends very unlikely to engage in forms of violent protest	-0.113** (0.216)	1.437** (0.220)
Parents have a fair amount of influence on major decisions	0.173 (0.220)	-0.257 (0.225)
Parents have little influence on major decisions	0.264 (0.319)	-0.902** (0.370)
Parents have no influence on major decisions	0.244 (0.632)	-10894* (1.070)
Friends have a fair amount of influence on major decisions	-0.271 (0.222)	-0.096 (0.231)
Friends have little influence on major decisions	-0.332 (0.279)	0.398 (0.285)
Friends have no influence on major decisions	-0.224 (0.434)	-0.518 (0.476)

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Policies aimed at undermining radicalization should emphasize family members—especially parents—more than friends.

Our findings also continue to suggest limited to no correlation between apathy and willingness to engage (or not engage) in violent protests. And, furthermore, those who expressed dissatisfaction with their current quality of life still remained significantly less likely to support suicide bombings against Israeli civilians.

The combined-model findings also confirm that individuals who were concerned about being arrested by Israeli security forces were significantly less likely to support suicide bombings and remained significantly more likely to participate in violent protests. The contrast between fear of arrest and fear of detention also held true within the combined model. This reinforces our conclusion that fear is scalable—fear of arrest contributes to nonradicalization, and detention contributes to radicalization. Finally, our data continue to suggest that those who disagreed that shariah law alone should be applied throughout Palestine were also less likely to support suicide bombings.

However, we did see one difference between the earlier results and the combined-model results. Divergences between family and friends started to converge in the combined model. Family still appears to have a slightly greater impact, but the impact is not as strong in the combined model. Specifically, individuals concerned about the arrest of family members were still less likely to support suicide bombings and more likely to engage in political protest, but not to a statistically significant degree.

CONCLUSION

This study represents the first empirical analysis of why individuals do not become terrorists. It only focuses on residents of the Palestinian West Bank; as such, the findings are exploratory in nature. Nonetheless, during the course of our analysis, we discovered some significant findings. This conclusion summarizes these findings and their policy implications, as well as recommended next steps for future research.

First, while peer groups might have an effect on radicalizing individuals, family influence appears more likely to dampen a propensity toward violence. This divergence between friends and family on the radicalization spectrum has implications for U.S. policy to counter violent extremism. The divergence suggests that policies aimed at undermining radicalization should emphasize family members—especially parents—more than friends. These policies should work through civil society leaders to teach parents how to discuss the detrimental messages present on social media, whether or not these messages are linked to political violence. It is also important to build on other social programs designed to strengthen families' influence on youth and ties to local communities.

Some might argue that these ideas are not unlike policy prescriptions to address—for example, underage drinking, truancy, and gang recruitment. This observation is correct. Some countries, such as Singapore and Saudi Arabia, have already attempted to work with families in vulnerable communities to counter radicalization.⁵⁶ Our findings suggest that they likely are on the correct path. Questions remain, however, regarding the extent to which these findings from the West Bank—and the lessons learned by Singapore or Saudi Arabia—can be translated to the very different social structures evident in North America or Western Europe. This underscores the need for more-thorough research and analysis regarding why individuals reject violent extremism in these regions.

Second, the results of this study contravene conventional wisdom when it comes to redirected pathways. That is, one might assume that if youth could channel their dissatisfaction and anger into another, nonviolent, form of activism, they might be dissuaded from becoming terrorists. But our analysis suggests otherwise: Nonviolent political activism does not contribute to nonradicalization in the context of the West Bank. Interestingly, these findings echo a 2015 report issued by the Mercy Corps, titled *Youth and Consequences*.⁵⁷ The results from our study of the West Bank went one step further and revealed that apathy—a view that nothing will work—had a greater

A strong attitudinal distinction exists between opposing violence in theory and choosing not to engage in violence. . . . [P]olls designed to measure the extent of support for political violence, or lack thereof, will not accurately reflect radicalization or a willingness to engage in violence.

positive impact on nonviolence than activism. Of course, it is hard to imagine a counterradicalization policy designed to encourage apathy. But policymakers should be wary of relying on other forms of activism as a means of redirecting individuals away from terrorism.

Third, fear is scalable. It is logical to assume that fear of arrest or personal safety would dissuade some individuals from becoming involved in any risky behavior, much less terrorism. Our findings yielded the same conclusion. Nonetheless, our results revealed a divergence in attitudes toward detention and arrest. We also found that family obligations can drive individuals toward more-risky behavior. These findings suggests that fear only goes so far in suppressing violent behavior, which should be viewed as a caution to policymakers.

Fourth, and finally, our results reinforce the general belief that a strong attitudinal distinction exists between opposing violence in theory and choosing not to engage in violence. This distinction is particularly important. From an analytical perspective, it means that polls designed to measure the extent of support for political violence, or lack thereof, will not accurately reflect radicalization or a willingness to engage in violence. The same is true for other studies that use social-media feeds—for

example, blogs, Facebook, or Twitter—to examine this topic. Moreover, policies shaped by these types of studies might lead policymakers in the wrong direction when it comes to counterradicalization programs. Future studies on radicalization—or rejecting extremism—should be careful not to equate measures of support for political violence with a willingness to engage in violence. This distinction is much more complex than we expected and should be explored more thoroughly in subsequent studies.

In conclusion, these results underscore how little we know about why some individuals choose to become terrorists and others do not. Filling these gaps in our knowledge is critical. Without this knowledge, policymakers are forced to design counterradicalization programs based on anecdotal evidence, or worse. And, quite frankly, we need counterradicalization programs to succeed. The sheer numbers of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria today indicate that al-Qa'ida and its associates retain appeal, not to mention those who might be inspired by this conflict to act elsewhere. These circumstances suggest the need for a new approach to counterradicalization—why not focus on strengthening the factors that motivate individuals to reject violent extremism?

Notes

¹ Scott Sayare, “Suspect Held in Jewish Museum Killings,” *The New York Times*, June 1, 2014.

² Tom Hays and Colleen Long, “Man Arrested in Plot to Attack the Federal Reserve Considered Targeting Obama,” *The Chicago Sun-Times*, October 17, 2012.

³ “Boston Marathon Terror Attack Fast Facts,” CNN.com, October 24, 2013.

⁴ Brian Bennett and Richard A. Serrano, “More Western Fighters Joining Militants in Iraq and Syria,” *The Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 2014; and Aaron Zeilin, “ICSR Insight: Up to 11,000 Foreign Fighters in Syria; Steep Rise in Western Europeans,” *ICSR News*, December 17, 2013.

⁵ Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley, “Measuring Political Mobilization: The Distinction Between Activism and Radicalism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 21, No. 2, March 2009, pp. 239–242; Michael D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, New York: New York City Police Department, 2007; and Andrew Silke, ed., *Terrorists, Victims and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and Its Consequences*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

⁶ Joseph Felner and Brian Fishman have observed that al-Qa’ida uses recruiters. Sageman has argued that radicalization takes place in social groups. Joseph Felner and Brian Fishman, *Al-Qa’ida’s Foreign Fighters: A First Look at the Sinjar Records*, New York: West Point Counter Terrorism Center, 2006; and Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, p. 68.

⁷ Lorenzo Vidino, “The Buccinasco Pentiti: A Unique Case Study of Radicalization,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2011, pp. 404–405; and Mark Sedgwick, “The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 22, No. 4, September 2010, p. 479.

⁸ Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahmendova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechan Suicide Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 5, 2006, pp. 445–446.

⁹ Vidino, “The Buccinasco Pentiti,” pp. 405–407.

¹⁰ Charles Kurzman, a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, addressed this topic in Charles Kurzman, *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

¹¹ One of the difficulties with this type of study, of course, is the inherent possibility that respondents might be deceptive. That said, we were encouraged by the fact that a higher percentage of our respondents admitted to being arrested on terrorism-related charges than estimated for the general population. This response rate suggests an openness to our questions. B’tselem tracks Palestinians imprisoned by Israeli security forces for political activism and violence; see B’tselem, “Statistics on Palestinians in the Custody of the Israeli Security Forces,” updated August 3, 2015, www.btselem.org/statistics/detainees_and_prisoners.

¹² The RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents is available at www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents.html.

¹³ Ted Gurr’s work has fallen under criticism by those who study collective action. Among terrorism scholars, the criticism has been less specific. Walter Laqueur was one voice. Others, such as David Rapoport, have emphasized internal organizational dynamics. Still others emphasize what Sidney Tarrow would call “consensus mobilization” by looking at radical ideologies. See Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970; Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Social Movements: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998; David Rapoport, ed., *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

¹⁴ Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987, pp. 5–10.

¹⁵ Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics*, New York: Free Press, 1999; and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

¹⁶ Donatella Della Porta, “Leftwing Terrorism in Italy,” in Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, pp. 105–159.

¹⁷ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*; Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Towards Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 20, No. 3, July 2008, pp. 415–433; Thomas Hegghammer, “Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia,” *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2006, p. 50.

¹⁸ Vidino, “The Buccinasco Pentiti,” p. 399.

¹⁹ Ken Ballen, *Terrorists in Love: The Real Lives of Islamic Radicals*, New York: Free Press, 2011.

²⁰ It is not unusual for terrorists to publish their autobiographies. Perhaps the most famous was written by Leila Khaled about her time as a fighter for the Palestinian cause. Leila Khaled, *My People Shall Live: An Autobiography of a Revolutionary*, trans. George Hajjar, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973.

²¹ Abdullah Anas, “The Birth of the Afghani Arabs: A Biography of Abdullah Anas with Mas’oud and Abdullah Azzam,” trans. Nadia Masid, unpublished manuscript, 2002; and Imam Samundra, *Aku Melawan Teroris [Fight Terrorists]*, ed. Bambang Sukirno, released online by Al Jazeera in October 2004, translated into English in July 2006.

²² Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 2007; and *White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism*, Singapore: Ministry of Home Affairs, January 2003.

²³ One exception is Boaz Ganor, at the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Israel. Ganor has observed that most Palestinian suicide bombers have not gone through a long period of socialization. Boaz Ganor, “Overview,” in *Countering Suicide Terrorism, Herzliya*, Israel: International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2000, pp. 134–145.

²⁴ Philip Zimbardo and Cynthia Hartley, “Cults Go to High School: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of the Initial Stage in the Recruitment Process,” *Cultic Studies Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1985, pp. 91–147.

²⁵ Zimbardo and Hartley, “Cults Go to High School.”

²⁶ Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, pp. 22–43.

²⁷ Sageman, in his work on al-Qa’ida radicalization and recruitment, refers to this as a “bunch of guys.” Marc Sageman, “The Normality of Global Jihadi Terrorism,” *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, No. 8, Spring 2005; McCauley and Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization”; and Todd Helmus, “How and Why Some People Become Terrorists,” in Paul K. Davis and Kim Cragin, eds., *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2009, pp. 90–94.

²⁸ Speckhard and Ahmendova, “The Making of a Martyr.”

²⁹ Khaled, in her biography, emphasizes a desire for greater excitement as part of her motivation to seek out membership in a Palestinian terrorist group. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*; see also Edwin Bakker, *Jihadists in Europe—Their Characteristics and the Circumstances in Which They Joined the Jihad: An Exploratory Study*, Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2006; and Helmus, “How and Why Some People Become Terrorists.”

³⁰ Anas, *The Birth of the Afghani Arabs*; Samundra, *Fight Terrorists*; Eileen Fairweather, Roisin McDonough, and Melanie McFadyean, *Only the Rivers Run Free: Northern Ireland, The Women’s War*, London: Pluto Press, 1984; and Ehud Sprinzak, “Process of Delegitimation: Towards a Linkage Theory of Political Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1991, pp. 50–68. In his work for the RAND Corporation, Helmus combined these factors, plus several others that have achieved less of a consensus, into a conceptual model. See Helmus, “How and Why Some People Become Terrorists.”

³¹ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*.

³² Jacob N. Shapiro and C. Christine Fair, “Understanding Support for Islamist Militancy in Pakistan,” *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2009–2010, p. 101

³³ Jerrold Post, Ehud Sprinzak, Laurita Denny, “Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 2003, pp. 171–184.

³⁴ Post, Sprinzak, Denny, “Terrorists in Their Own Words,” p. 173.

³⁵ Post, Sprinzak, Denny, “Terrorists in Their Own Words,” p. 172.

³⁶ Ami Pedhazur, Arlie Perliger, and Leonard Weinberg, “Altruism and Fatalism: The Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorism,” *Deviant Behavior*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2003, p. 418.

³⁷ Claude Berrebi, “Evidence About the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism Amongst Palestinians,” *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2007, p. 28.

³⁸ Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 113–181.

³⁹ Oliver and Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs Square*.

⁴⁰ Berrebi, “Evidence About the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism Amongst Palestinians,” p. 23.

⁴¹ Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2003, p. 71.

⁴² Post, Sprinzak, and Denny, “Terrorists in Their Own Words,” p. 174.

⁴³ Pedhazur, Perliger, and Weinberg, 2003, p. 417.

⁴⁴ For more information on this general argument, see Kim Cragin, “Resisting Violent Extremism: A Conceptual Model for Non-Radicalization,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, December 2013, pp. 1–17.

⁴⁵ Cragin, “Resisting Violent Extremism.”

⁴⁶ A number of studies, in recent years, have addressed why individuals do or do not depart. See, for example, John Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism*, New York: Routledge, 2009; and Eli Berman, *Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009.

⁴⁷ Notably, it is not necessarily true that any resident of the West Bank who wants to join a specific terrorist group will be able to do so, as terrorist groups both recruit and filter volunteers.

⁴⁸ For more information on the rationale behind this model, see Cragin, “Resisting Violent Extremism.”

⁴⁹ The survey used a multistage probability household sample, based on population data and maps.

⁵⁰ A small amount of item nonresponse was also present in the data. Imputation methods used to fill items are described later.

⁵¹ Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2011, pp. 7–36; and Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.

⁵² Rates of item nonresponse did not exceed 3–4 percent; however, the combined reduction in sample size in the fully specified model was 10–13 percent, depending on specification.

⁵³ For further discussion of MICE, see Ira R. White, Patrick Royston, and Angela M. Wood, “Multiple Imputation Using Chained Equations: Issues and Guidance for Practice,” *Statistics in Medicine*, No. 30, 2011, pp. 377–399.

⁵⁴ Post, Sprinzak, and Denny, “Terrorists in Their Own Words”; Jacob N. Shapiro and C. Christine Fair, “Understanding Support for Islamist Militancy in Pakistan,” *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Winter 2009/2010, pp. 79–118.

⁵⁵ Any association with Hamas still significantly increased the possibility that individuals would participate in violent protest and support suicide bombings against civilians.

⁵⁶ Tore Bjorgo and John Horgan, eds., *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement*, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 200–202.

⁵⁷ *Youth and Consequences: Unemployment, Youth and Violence*, Portland, Ore.: Mercy Corps, 2015.

About This Report

Continued terrorist attacks and the involvement of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq have prompted a surge of interest among policymakers, law enforcement, journalists, and academics on both sides of the Atlantic on the topic of terrorist radicalization. Many of the factors that push or pull individuals toward radicalization are in dispute within the expert community. Instead of examining the factors that lead to radicalization and the commission of terrorist acts, this report empirically addresses the topic of why individuals reject violent extremism. The authors develop a theoretical model and then test that model with data gathered through ten structured interviews with politicians and a survey of 600 Palestinian youth.

The authors would like to thank Rami Nasrallah in East Jerusalem, Daniel Byman at Georgetown University, and Barbara Sude at RAND Corporation for their assistance and guidance with this report.

This research was supported through philanthropic contributions and conducted within the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy (CMEPP), part of International Programs at the RAND Corporation. CMEPP brings together analytic excellence and regional expertise from across the RAND Corporation to address the most critical political, social, and economic challenges facing the Middle East today. For more information about the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy, visit www.rand.org/cmepp or contact the director (contact information is provided on the web page).

Limited Print and Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law. This representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited. Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.html. For more information on this publication, visit www.rand.org/t/RR1118.

© Copyright 2015 RAND Corporation

www.rand.org



The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. **RAND**® is a registered trademark.