

# UC Berkeley

## Berkeley Undergraduate Journal

### Title

Why Do Terrorists Betray Their Own Religious Cause?

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/13p1x2f5>

### Journal

Berkeley Undergraduate Journal, 24(1)

### Author

Pearlson, Michael A

### Publication Date

2011

### DOI

10.5070/B3241007689

### Copyright Information

Copyright 2011 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed|Undergraduate

# Why Do Terrorists Betray Their Own Religious Cause?

Michael A. Pearlson

**Abstract:**

Why do Islamic terrorist groups betray their own religious cause? In this paper, I assert that when Islamic terrorist organizations perceive a threat, their goals are likely to change from fulfilling their original mission and religious ideology to simply perpetuating their own organization. In other words, Islamic terrorist organizations emerge with a fixed mission (often this involves serving a particular population) and religious ideology (a religious cause central to the group's mission) and over time betray these aspirations because they feel threatened by entities outside the organization. Organizations can betray their original religious causes in two ways: by disregarding their ideology or by abandoning the original population or territory they wished to serve and protect. After this point, organizations focus on self-perpetuation. The evolution of the Islamic terrorist organization reaches its terminus, in which it primarily serves its own interest, through three stages: (1) the organization is initiated with a fixed mission and religious ideology, (2) it perceives a threat to its survival and consequently abandons its original cause, and (3) it then perpetrates and takes actions that are, for the most part, for the financial benefit of the organization itself rather than the original cause.

Islamic militants who devote their lives to a terrorist organization and pledge to die for its cause often become disillusioned with the movement. A member of a terrorist organization in Kashmir stated, "Initially I was of the view that [the militants] are doing jihad, but now I believe that it is a business and people are earning wealth through it...the public posture is that we are doing jihad in Kashmir, while the real thing is that it is a business empire." Regarding the leaders of his organization, the same member said: "I thought they were true Muslims, but now I believe that they are fraud, they are selling Islam as a product...First I was there for jihad, now I am there for my financial reasons" (Stern, "Name of God" 216). Similarly, a leader of another group fighting in Kashmir stated, regarding the organization, "At first I thought that they are serving a religious cause, but now I feel they are running a business. They are suppliers of human beings. They use poor and illiterate boys for their own private cause and call it jihad. This 'jihad' has nothing to do with religion" (Stern, "Name of God" 215). The initial mission of the organizations these militants were part of consisted of fighting solely for Kashmir and its Muslim identity, in addition to serving the population of Muslims in that region. As described above, many of these organizations seemed to shift their goals from this mission to more self-interested objectives. This phenomenon spawns many questions. Are Islamic terrorist organizations instigated solely for financial reasons? If not, what mechanisms cause Islamic terrorist organizations to change their original mission? How do they justify their actions with their religious ideology?

This brings us to the main question driving the current research: Why do Islamic terrorist organizations betray their original mission and religious ideology? In this paper, I assert that when Islamic terrorist organizations perceive a threat, their goals are likely to change from fulfilling their original mission and religious ideology to simply perpetuating their own organization. In other words, Islamic terrorist groups emerge with a fixed mission (often this involves serving a particular population, as in the Kashmiri case) and religious ideology (a religious cause central to the group's mission) and over time betray these aspirations because they feel threatened by entities outside the organization. These organizations can betray their original cause (hereafter, "cause" will refer to both mission and religious ideology) in two ways: by disregarding their religious ideology or by abandoning the original population or territory they wished to serve and protect. After this point, organizations focus on self-perpetuation. The evolution of the Islamic terrorist organization reaches its terminus, in which it primarily serves its own interest, through three stages: (1) the organization is initiated with a fixed mission and religious ideology, (2) it perceives a threat to its survival and consequently abandons its original cause, and (3) it then perpetrates and takes actions that are, for the most part, for the financial benefit of the organization itself rather than the original cause.

I limit my research to Islamic terrorist groups given the broad amount of data available on these particular terrorist organizations, not because of any belief that there is an inherent dysfunction with regard to Islam. Given the evolution of the Islamic terrorist organizations described above, there seem to be in many cases lax military and police efforts (or in some cases encouragement of terrorism) within their areas of operation that allow them to reach the final stage in their development, in which their goal is simply to perpetuate themselves. Research has shown that terrorist groups operating in wealthier countries tend to be smaller as opposed to those that operate in less affluent countries. In addition, more of these groups tend to end than do those in less developed nations with fewer resources to eradicate Islamic terrorist organizations. In many cases, Islamic terrorist organizations are considered assets when the state has few resources to draw from. Thus, many terrorist groups of different religious ideologies that are located in more affluent regions are killed, arrested, or fragment before they can reach their final

stage. Policing is often implicated when a terrorist group reaches its terminus in upper-income countries (Jones and Libicki 19).

In the first section of the paper, I will conduct a brief literature review of competing hypotheses by Robert Pape and Max Abrahms. In the second section, I will conduct a case study of the terrorist organization Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) to investigate the mechanism—perception of threat—that causes Islamic organizations to betray their original goals. In the third section, I will present the two different forms of this mechanism evident in the case study. In the fourth section, I will present two examples of the ways in which Islamic terrorist organizations continue to operate for their own gain in the third and final stage of their development. In the fifth section, I will conclude by acknowledging any weaknesses of the argument and possible directions for future research.

## **Existing Theories on Terrorism**

In the literature review that follows I have included Robert Pape, who asserts that terrorist organizations are rational and have specific political goals they seek to achieve (to drive occupying forces out of a homeland or other valued territory), and Max Abrahms, who asserts that terrorist organizations lack a rational strategy that seeks to achieve political goals because they take actions that are inconsistent with any political goals.

### *Resistance to Occupation*

Robert Pape's "strategic model" asserts that terrorist organizations are principally driven to satisfy one strategic goal: to drive a democratic state to withdraw forces from territory that the terrorists value (Pape 1). Pape argues that liberal democracies are vulnerable to the extent that they can be coerced into withdrawing forces if sufficient violence is used and the expectation of future violence is anticipated.

There are several problems with Pape's hypothesis. First, it fails to take into account domestic political dynamics and organizational competition. For example, during the first intifada in the West Bank and Gaza, many Palestinian terrorist organizations were attempting to destroy one another, not a common foreign enemy (Schanzer 27). Second, many terrorist attacks are perpetrated by those who are not directly affected by any occupation. Numerous *mujahedeen* (Muslim guerilla fighters) who fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan turned to fight other enemies in Kashmir and Egypt, and are likely to look for new conflicts elsewhere (Stern, "Jihad Culture" 121).

Third, Pape asserts that terrorist organizations have specific goals and fight a specific enemy; however, many terrorist organizations broaden their goals to generally resist secularism or to resist other faiths. Some political scientists, like Martha Crenshaw, have asserted their disagreement with Pape's assertion that only liberal democracies are the targets of terrorism, by taking into account post September 11<sup>th</sup> data on Islamic terrorist organizations. In a review on the literature of suicide terrorism, Crenshaw quoted Ami Pedahzur: "reviewing events in Indonesia, the Philippines, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, Pedahzur concludes that 'for the most part, suicide actions performed under the flag of jihad and attributed to Al-Qaeda were, in effect, local initiatives stemming from Islamic organizational interests . . . whose aspirations typically amounted to a change of rule'" (144). In this instance, Pedahzur refers to suicide bombing; however, it is evident that terrorist attacks in general are aimed at undemocratic governments—as opposed to Pape's assertion—in an effort to depose those governments. Many terrorist organizations fight secularism in their home countries, with the goal of establishing an

Islamic regime. However, given the fact that the organizations attribute their actions to al Qaeda, they may want to broaden their goals and gain access to resources in order to perpetuate and ensure their own survival. Ensuring survival against a perceived threat is indeed the goal of many of the organizations mentioned in this paper that attribute their actions to al Qaeda.

#### *Lack of Strategy*

In the article, “What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy,” Max Abrahms rejects the strategic model and opts for the “natural systems model,” which emphasizes the goal of individual terrorists to form a social unit over any political agenda. The strategic model, as applied to terrorist organizations, assumes that terrorists are motivated by relatively consistent political goals and terrorism is decided to be the most effective method for achieving those goals. Abrahms states, “I contend that the strategic model misspecifies terrorists’ incentive structure; the preponderance of empirical and theoretical evidence reveals that terrorists are rational people who use terrorism primarily to develop strong affective ties with fellow terrorists” (80). Abrahms posits seven “puzzles” challenging the strategic model: terrorism is ineffective because terrorist organizations rarely achieve their political goals; terrorism is not used as a last resort; terrorists do not compromise; terrorist organizations often have protean political platforms; terrorists often fail to take credit for an attack; terrorists often fight each other rather than their mutually declared enemy; and terrorists continue to operate after their goals are reached or become obsolete.

Abrahms and the research in this paper eventually come to the same conclusion regarding the strategic model: it does not consistently or accurately explain the behavior of terrorist organizations. However, I reach that conclusion differently. Abrahms argues that members of Islamic terrorist organizations join these organizations primarily because they seek to make social connections with other terrorists. He asserts that this social networking is the goal of terrorist organizations from their inception. In contrast, I assert that Islamic terrorist organizations change their goals after being threatened, transitioning from fulfilling their original cause to simply perpetuating the organization itself. While Abrahms asserts that terrorist organizations never change, I argue that they do. Thus, the strategic model may be applied accurately in stage one, yet fails to explain the behavior of organizations in stages two and three. Although these groups may have begun with fixed goals, these do not last once they perceive a threat.

Furthermore, Abrahms’ natural systems model may be an appropriate explanation for the behavior of individual terrorists, but it does not adequately explain terrorist behavior at an organizational level. It concerns only the individual’s incentives for joining a group and does not describe what motivates the terrorist organization itself, how ideology is utilized, or how the organization is affected by the outside world. Thus, the model may be inadequate when applied to the organization as a whole.

#### **Case Study: Lashkar-e-Taiba**

The case study of the Islamic terrorist organization Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is meant to illustrate the three stages of terrorist groups’ development through LeT’s history: (1) LeT originally began with a fixed religious ideology and mission (it sought to serve the Islamic Kashmiri population), (2) it perceived a threat to its survival and consequently betrayed its original cause, and (3) it now perpetrates and takes actions that, for the most part, are for the financial benefit of the organization rather than the cause that was the basis of the organization’s

conception. I will also use this case study to identify the perceived threats mentioned in stage two that act as the mechanism that leads the organization to change its goals. After identifying these threats, I will explain how LeT betrayed its original cause.

Lashkar-e-Taiba, which translates to “Army of the Righteous” or “Army of the Pure,” was originally formed under the auspices of Markas-al-Dawa-wal-Irshad (MDI), a service organization founded at Muridke near Lahore in the early 1980s. MDI created a militant wing, which marked the inception of LeT in 1990. It was alleged at a U.S. congressional hearing that LeT was originally created to provide Pakistan’s military with a proxy force of recruited fighters to supplement the Islamic insurgency in Kashmir (“Bad Company” 3). Specifically, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) is purported to have financed and instructed LeT to fight Hindus in Kashmir and train other Islamic extremists in India during the 1990s (“Bad Company” 3). In response to these allegations, Pakistan’s government has repeated that it does not support terrorism. In any case, it is evident that LeT’s original ideology and mission for itself consisted of fighting for Kashmir’s Islamic identity and serving the population of Muslims in Kashmir.

LeT has claimed responsibility for many attacks, including an attack on Delhi’s Red Fort in 2000 and a January 2001 attack on Srinagar airport. It has been suspected of perpetrating the November 2008 attack in Mumbai, the July 2006 attack on the Mumbai commuter rail, and the December 2001 attack on the Indian parliament in New Dehli, although it has denied these allegations. India blamed LeT for the attack on the Indian Parliament and threatened war against Pakistan unless Islamabad put a concerted effort into ending militant infiltration at the border. This, in turn, prompted mobilization of the Pakistani military. The U.S. helped defuse hostilities by formally recognizing the connections among Islamic terrorist organizations operating in Kashmir and the Pakistani government. The U.S. also added LeT to its Foreign Terrorist Organizations List in 2002, which forced former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to ban the group inside Pakistan. The U.N. also declared the group a terrorist organization in 2005. Furthermore, without the previous permissiveness of the Pakistani government and the same level of support from the ISI, LeT became more vulnerable to competition with other Kashmiri extremist groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) and Harakat ul-Mujahideen (HUM). In response to these threats, the organization went underground, splintered, stopped claiming responsibility for attacks, and changed its tactics (Bajoria 1). LeT changed its goals from serving the Muslim population of Kashmir and adhering to strict religious ideology to surviving as an organization.

LeT has ostensibly changed its original mission by moving its focus from Kashmir to “global jihad,” given that this rhetoric would protect the group from demise by opening another channel of funding. In contrast to its original mission, LeT’s leaders presently view the organization as part of a global movement that seeks not only to undermine India but also to attack any countries it views as threatening to Muslim populations. LeT inherited this new ideology after joining al Qaeda’s network known as the International Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders, and inherited its global mission in the period after the organization was banned and identified as a terrorist group. It has also been suggested that LeT is actively facilitating and assisting the movement of al Qaeda members in Pakistan (“Bad Company” 4). The change in mission gave LeT access to al Qaeda as an additional source of funding. This shift in goals has left the original focus on Kashmir less significant, and the organization is now determined to expand its reach beyond the region. LeT is attempting to play a similar role to al Qaeda on a smaller scale in that it is funding other terrorist groups in Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf and incorporating these groups into its fold.

In the third stage of its evolution, LeT has now shifted its focus increasingly to profit and expansion. LeT has become focused on funding to the extent that the group may no longer perceive a threat but continues to betray its original cause for its own benefit. By stage three, Islamic terrorist organizations are so concerned with financing and resources that their original cause is only important for its utility in fetching greater resources. LeT has ramped up its rhetoric and dehumanized the enemy in order to attract recruits, donors, and support. In reference to terrorist organizations in general, Stern states, “terrorist groups have to raise money by ‘selling’ their mission to supporters—including donors, personnel (both managers and followers), and the broader public. Selecting and advertising a mission that will attract donations—of time, talent, money, and for suicide operations, lives—is thus critically important to the group’s survival” (“Name of God” 264). This selling and advertising of mission is significantly more pronounced in the third stage of the group’s existence and is used to appropriate greater resources. In 2001, LeT’s public-affairs director stated he felt “happy” about the growth of the Hindu extremist group Bajrang Dal, the top adversary of the Pakistani terrorist organizations; the enemy’s success provides a justification for his organization’s existence (Stern, “Name of God” 263). As Stern asserted, the growth of the enemy provides a tool for recruitment and greater resources for the organization. It seems that once LeT changed its mission and began to focus on its own survival, its new goals became increasingly distant from its original cause. Through this process, self-perpetuation and self-protection of the organization itself becomes the main goal of the group.

In stage three, LeT has also betrayed its original cause with regard to its operations. LeT receives funding from multiple sources, including drugs and smuggling, which conflict with the group’s Islamic ideology and the ideology leaders impose upon lower level operatives (“Bad Company” 3). Terrorism, guns, and drugs have become some of the most important businesses in Pakistan and Kashmir. Finances from drugs and smuggling have reached a point at which some assert that the mid-level and upper-level managers in the organization have become profiteers. For example, terrorism expert Jessica Stern states, “One mid-level manager of Lashkar told me he earns 15,000 rupees a month—more than seven times what the average Pakistani makes, according to the World Bank. Top leaders of [Pakistani] militant groups earn much more; one leader took me to see his mansion, which was staged by servants and filled with expensive furniture” (“Jihad Culture” 120). While LeT’s leaders impose strict religious guidelines that require Spartan living conditions for their operatives, they hardly seem to abide by this ideology themselves.

LeT fits the general pattern of Islamic terrorist organizations in that over time it has evolved through the three stages mentioned above and has changed its goals from selflessly serving Kashmiri Muslims and fighting for the Kashmir territory to perpetuating itself and fulfilling its own organizational needs. LeT’s mission to fight for the Kashmir territory and serve the people of Kashmir characterized its existence in stage one, as the reason for LeT’s conception and the motivation for its actions. In stage two, LeT perceived the response to the Indian parliament bombing in 2001 as a threat to its survival. The banning of the organization in Pakistan and its recognition as a terrorist group by the U.S. in 2002 and the U.N. in 2005 further heightened this perceived threat. A secondary threat was competition with other terrorist organizations in the region. In response to these threats, LeT went underground and adopted tactics that would maximize its survival, including a change in mission. In its third stage, LeT has manipulated its original cause for its utility in securing resources and has continued to profit from drugs and smuggling, contradicting its original cause.

## The Mechanism Leading to Betrayal

I will now expand on the mechanism that causes a terrorist organizations to betray its original cause—a perceived threat to its existence—and the different forms this can take as evidenced in the case study. As illustrated by LeT, when an Islamic terrorist organization perceive a threat to their existence, it compensates for its vulnerability; the organization makes a cost-benefit analysis and generally determines it is better to betray its original cause rather than let the organization die. Different perceived threats include pressure from outside entities like states, as well as competition among organizations.

### *Pressure from Government and Police*

Terror organizations change their goals in response to pressure from outside entities, which include governments and police. One illustrative case is Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The original mission of Egyptian Islamic Jihad was to turn Egypt into an Islamic state. By the late 1990s, the organization's leaders, including Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, were forced to flee abroad or were killed. Rahman was incarcerated in the U.S. for his involvement in a conspiracy to plant bombs in New York City in 1993. Another leader of the organization, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was arrested and released in 1997 for travelling illegally, in the process of moving the organization to Chechnya. After these threats to the health of the organization in the second stage of development, Zawahiri decided to move the organization's focus from the secular government of Egypt to the West. By switching goals the organization came under the wing of al Qaeda, securing a larger inflow of cash from Osama bin Laden, which the group greatly needed to survive. One of Zawahiri's chief assistants testified that Zawahiri had confided to him that "joining with bin Laden [was] the only solution to keeping the jihad organization alive" (Stern, "Name of God" 266).

Thus, the threat to the organization caused it to change its goals and abandon its original mission in Egypt. Survival of the organization took precedence over the original mission and the perpetuation of the organization itself became the most significant factor in the group's calculation of its goals. Only after these events did Zawahiri describe the organization's mission as a global war that "cannot be fought on a region level" (Stern, "Name of God" 266). Al Qaeda itself has changed its objectives several times, from fighting the USSR in Afghanistan to waging local struggles in Bosnia, the Philippines, Russia, Spain, and several Muslim countries to targeting the United States in the late 1990s. Frustrated al Qaeda members have remarked that the organization's goals "shift with the wind" (Abrahms 88).

Another example of a terrorist group that changed its mission over time is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Its original mission was to fight the authoritarian leader of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov. The organization was forced underground after it advocated an uprising within the Uzbekistan that involved a demand for social justice. Shortly after this event, a large-scale government crackdown on Muslims ensued. After this threat to the health of the organization in the second stage of development, it was forced into hiding. IMU's members traveled to Afghanistan where they made contacts with al Qaeda. Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, a Uzbek scholar, explains that the group found that by adopting extremist rhetoric they could "make more money and get weapons . . . but as they did these things, they made themselves out of touch with the people at home" (Chivers 1). The IMU changed its original mission from fighting oppression in Uzbekistan to committing itself to Islamic extremism and consequently gained access to financial supporters in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Iran. This new extremism arguably saved the organization from demise; however, it left the organization less



focused on Uzbekistan, and alienated its original supporters. The organization eventually distributed as much anti-Western and anti-Jewish material as it did information about social injustice in Uzbekistan. Its leaders ranted against Israel and America in particular, and also against music, smoking, sex, and drinking, none of which it opposed before receiving funding from Islamic extremist groups.

#### *Competition Among Organizations*

Another form of perceived threat among Islamic terrorist organizations that lead them to betray their original causes is competition with other terrorist groups. Competition among terrorist organizations usually occurs after a given terrorist group grows and matures to the point that it becomes a powerful force within its region. In the case of LeT, the organization was made more vulnerable to competition after the Pakistani government reduced its protection and support of the group. However, in other cases competition naturally arises when any given organization grows to the point that two or more organizations are competing for resources. Islamic terrorist organizations perceive one another as threats because they each seek to gain the greatest market share of recruits, financial donors, and media attention, and begin to focus solely on self-preservation rather than maintaining their religious cause.

To raise finances, terrorist organizations often depend on the broader local population. Organizations that extract financing from the broader local community will also have to secure public support for their actions. Whereas before competition with other groups organizations were not threatened and the populace did not circumscribe their actions, during and after competition they carry out what is prescribed by the public even if it means abandoning their original cause. Terrorism expert Mia Bloom asserts that collecting finances from the local community will circumscribe “what can and cannot be done and who can and cannot be killed” (78). In this sense, religious ideology remains fluid and depends on the will of those that are financing the organization, which often does not include the population the organization originally sought to serve. This population often does not have enough money to support themselves, let alone to provide funding. In addition, the original population often becomes inadequate for the needs of the organization as it grows, in which case, organizations are forced to broaden the reach of their funding beyond the parameters of the original population or target specific donors that are sympathetic to their cause. For example, the Kashmiri Muslim population the LeT originally sought to serve was ill-equipped to provide the funding the organization needed to survive, and the organizations was forced to seek elsewhere for sources. As a result, LeT not only changed its original mission to receive support from Al Qaeda as mentioned above, but also sought funds from expatriate Pakistani and Kashmiri businessmen outside the original population. More generally, the ideology and mission of the group becomes a function of the funding. Although terrorist organizations may be able to find funding from outside the community, it follows that they will have to abide by the will of these outside donors.

In competition, organizations will adopt a fluid religious ideology to secure additional funding. In order to win over resources and avoid falling by the wayside, the organizations will fight to eradicate one another or will resort to outbidding. Outbidding is the process whereby a terrorist organization will resort to more drastic violence, like suicide bombing, in order to establish a popular base in the community (Bloom 92). Bloom states, “under conditions of group competition, there are incentives for further groups to jump on the ‘suicide bandwagon’ and ramp up the violence in order to distinguish themselves from other organizations” (94). The number of organizations in competition for the support of the populace will affect the means and amount of violence utilized; more organizations involved will usually result in increased

violence. For example, Palestinian terrorist organizations often turn to violence to bolster recruitment among a public that is sympathetic to the organization's cause. Martyrdom in particular has become a major source of honor, and is perceived as a public good in several Palestinian communities. Many young men are compelled to devote themselves to the terrorist organization's cause given the honor it bestows on them in the community and the financial resources it may secure for their family (many of these families receive financial support from the organizations, which may come in the form of paying off loans, helping with housing, or charitable donations). Increased violence, particularly suicide attacks, are often perceived by the population as an unwavering commitment to a religious cause, which increases the group's legitimacy among the public, inspiring more recruits and funding (Bloom 30). Organizations will also adopt more extremist religious stances to "outshine" their competition by attracting attention, gaining credibility, and distinguishing themselves. In the case of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the organization's leader, George Habash, refused to engage in suicide terror until domestic support for the organization declined in competition with other organizations. When this decline was seen in 2001, the PFLP began to engage in suicide terrorism and used the rhetoric of Jihad and martyrdom to increase support. When the next public opinion poll was taken (within three months), the popularity of the PFLP had resurged (Bloom 95).

As a result of competition for public support and outside donors, terrorist organizations that share similar religious ideologies will often contradict them by asserting competing claims of responsibility for an attack. In August 2001, a suicide bomber left 15 people dead and injured over a hundred others in a pizzeria in Jerusalem. Afterward, the terrorist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad issued competing claims that they were responsible for the attack, both saying that it was their operative who carried it out (Bloom 29). In another instance in July 2002, a bus was ambushed in the West Bank, killing seven and wounding 15 ("Palestinian Gunmen" 1). Following the attack, rival Palestinian organizations once again rushed to claim responsibility for it, including the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Hamas.

In more aggressive circumstances, these organizations will often resort to attacking one another. This is seen in the case of Palestinian groups during the first intifada, a Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories from 1987 to 1993. Another example is southern Iraq in 2007, when Shiite militants with comparable ideologies were killing one another instead of their shared enemy, the Sunnis (Cordesman 2). One would assume that these groups would want to work together, given their similar political objectives. As Abrahms points out, "Terrorist organizations with the same political platform routinely undercut it in wars of annihilation against each other. Particularly in the early stages of their existence, terrorist organizations purporting to fight for a common cause frequently attack each other more than their mutually declared enemy" (90). Thus, because of the competition, groups betray their shared religious ideology in favor of perpetuating their own organization.

### **The Third Stage of Islamic Terrorist Organizations**

In the third stage of development, profit induces organizations to continue to betray their original cause. The original cause becomes increasingly secondary and insignificant. In reference to organizations in Kashmir like LeT, Stern states, "These groups represent jihad in an advanced stage, in which the original, purported motivation—to help the Kashmiri people—

has become less important than the organizations themselves and the political or financial interests of their leaders” (“Name of God” 108). Islamic terrorist organizations in the third stage continue to betray their original cause regardless of whether or not a threat persists. However, organizations continue to “sell” their original cause long after they have disregarded it, and use religious ideology solely to attract donors. The main goal of terrorist organizations becomes profit, and they not only betray their original cause in the third stage by “selling” the original cause, but also do so in their active operations. Below, I offer examples of terrorist organizations’ use of drugs and crime to finance themselves. Drug trafficking was a significant factor in the case of LeT; however, I have found in my research that several organizations also have ties to criminal networks, which similarly contradict religious ideology. Organizations will often benefit greatly from drugs and crime while still purporting to adhere to their religious ideology.

### *Drugs and Organized Crime*

Drugs have come to play an essential role in financing the operations of several terrorist organizations. Steven Casteel, Assistant DEA Administrator for Intelligence, explained, “Through the taxation of illicit opium production the Taliban were able to fund an infrastructure capable of supporting and protecting Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda organization” (“Drugs and Terrorism” 1). The Taliban relied on poppy production as a major source of profit; they levied a ten percent tax on growers and an Islamic tax of 20 percent on opium traders and transporters. The Taliban collected an estimated \$40 to \$50 million every year until Taliban chief Mullah Muhammad Omar banned poppy cultivation in June 2000 in the name of the Koran. Al Qaeda appears to have provided protection for the Taliban’s processing plants that converted opium into heroin, as well as for smugglers that carried drugs into neighboring countries. The money from these operations was used to finance training camps and support terrorist organizations in neighboring countries (Meier 1). Al Qaeda members have also allegedly smuggled drugs themselves. Three men alleged to be al Qaeda members were charged in December 2009 with conspiring to smuggle cocaine through Africa, and the organization has made its way into the cocaine smuggling routes of the Sahara (Rotella 1). Organizations and their leaders often profit beyond their needs from the sizable returns they receive in the drug trade. LeT had such a large income supported by its illicit operations that it was planning to open a bank in 2000. Drug profiteering usually occurs in the third stage, after a threat to the group has occurred. As in the case of LeT, the leaders of the organizations involved usually use the finances to support a lavish lifestyle. This use of drug money is inimical to the ideology the leadership imposes on lower-level operatives that usually live in impoverished conditions.

Many organizations find that they can also meet their financial needs by consorting with criminals. In one case, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, a member of Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), made contact in jail with Aftab Ansari, an Indian gangster. Ansari’s deputy Asif Reza Khan stated, “[Ansari] was trying to use the militants’ networks for underworld operations” (Stern, “Name of God” 197). Ansari would identify sources of funding and provide hideouts, and Sheikh would send terrorists and weapons to perpetrate underworld operations. Stern states, “According to the interrogation report, the two sides agreed to share personnel and to combine forces for the purpose of raising cash” (“Name of God” 197). Ansari also donated \$100,000 to Sheikh, which was eventually wired to Mohammad Atta, lead hijacker in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Organized criminals have expertise in money laundering, forgery, abduction, and killing

that they can use to barter with terrorist organizations which have access to training camps and relationships with intelligence agencies. The relationship is thus mutually beneficial. Islamic terrorist organizations that make business deals with criminals seem to have completely disregarded their religious ideology in order to continue receiving profits. While Islamic terrorist groups attempt to morally justify violence, they rarely attempt to justify association with criminals. A terrorist organization generally feels the need to hide its relationship with drug money and criminals from the outside world. Stern states, "While much of the group's money may actually come from criminal activities, business operations, or government assistance, charitable donations are important as a 'defining source of revenue'" ("Name of God" 274). The leaders of the organization, cognizant of the negative public-relations consequences of these sources of finances, will often fabricate that they get most of their money from charitable donations. This implies that they know that their profiteering comes in conflict with their religious ideology; because they cannot justify their actions, their only recourse is to obfuscate these sources of funding.

## Conclusion

This paper seeks to explain the phenomenon of the changing goals of terrorist organizations. I assert that the mechanism that leads Islamic terrorist organizations to betray their original cause is a perceived threat from outside entities, be they the state or other organizations. This mechanism forces the organizations to make a cost-benefit analysis that leads them to abandon their original cause.

One example that could be viewed as a counter to the argument presented in this paper is LeT's charitable work through Jamaat-ud-Dawa. After state governments and competition from other groups threatened LeT, it established a front for itself known as Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which is known for its charitable functions. LeT directs a network of social services and institutions through Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which include *madrasahs*, secondary schools, blood banks, and ambulance services. After the massive earthquake in the Kashmir region in 2005, Jamaat-ud-Dawa contributed to relief efforts. It would seem that these services and relief efforts serve the organization's original cause; however, these actions prove to be essential for the organization's survival in response to threats from outside. Through Jamaat-ud-Dawa, LeT was able to collect funds and donations openly, and the Pakistani government did not molest its bank accounts. These activities also allow the organization to win the support of the local populace, which supplies it with a steady stream of donations and recruits in the face of competition with other groups. Another advantage of winning the support of the local populace is that the local population will act as a buffer of support between the Pakistani government and LeT. In this sense, LeT compensates for the threat of the Pakistani government; the government would like to eradicate the organization, but might face a popular backlash if it did so. Thus, LeT's charitable efforts are not carried out for sake of serving the original cause, but to compensate for the perceived threats against the organization.

I would also like to note that the focus of this paper was on Islamic terrorist organizations; however, there is not particular reason why the argument presented cannot be applied to numerous other religious terrorist groups. These other groups could be addressed as an area of further research. Organizations to which this argument could be applied include the Gush Emunim Underground, Terror Against Terror, Balrang Dal, and Babbar Khalsa, only to name very few. However, as mentioned, data and research on groups of other faiths can be hard to

find, while the research on Islamic terrorism is ubiquitous. Furthermore, many terrorist groups of other faiths do not seem to reach their final stage in which their main goal is to perpetuate themselves. Often Islamic terrorist organizations operate in areas that lack the resources to stop them. Terrorist groups that operate in upper-income countries tend to be smaller than those that operate in less affluent countries and, due to policing, more of them tend to end than do organizations in less developed nations (Jones and Libicki 19). However, there are still several organizations—though they may not be as numerous as Islamic groups—that exist and progress through the same stages of development mentioned in this paper.

Another direction for future research could consist of attempting to identify other perceived threats to terrorist organizations that lead them to betray their original cause. In this paper, I focused on pressure from governments and police and competition among organizations; however, I have been unable to explore all the potential threats that may motivate organizations to change their goals.

## Bibliography

- Abrahms, Max. "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy." *International Security*. Spring 2008: 78-105. Print.
- "Bad Company: Lashkar E-Tayyiba and the Growing Ambition of Islamist Militancy in Pakistan." Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the House of Representatives. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 11 March 2010. Print.
- Bajoria, Jayshree. "Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure) (aka Lashkar e-Tayyiba, Lashkar e-Toiba; Lashkar-i-Taiba)." *Council on Foreign Relations*. 14 January 2010: 1-4.
- Bloom, Mia. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Print.
- Chivers, C.J. "Uzbek Militants' Decline Provides Clues to U.S." *New York Times* 8 Oct. 2002: 1-2. Print.
- Cordesman, Anthony H. "Still Losing? The June 2007 Edition of 'Measuring Stability in Iraq.'" *Center for Strategic and International Studies* 20 June 2007: 1-13.
- Crenshaw, Martha. "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay." *Security Studies*. Jan. – March 2007: 133-162. Print.
- "Drugs and Terrorism a Dangerous Mixture, DEA Official tells Senate Judiciary Committee." [http://www.justice.gov/dea/ongoing/narco-terrorism\\_story052003.html](http://www.justice.gov/dea/ongoing/narco-terrorism_story052003.html), n.d., n.,p.
- Jones, Seth G. and Martin C. Libicki. "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida." *Rand*. 2008: 1-251
- Meier, Barry. "Super' Heroin Was Planned by bin Laden, Reports Say." *New York Times*. 4 October 2001: B3. Print.

“Palestinian Gunmen Kill at Least 7 in Bus Attack.” *CNN World* 16 July 2002: 1-2. Print.

1 Nov. 2006: 1-12. Print.

Pape, Robert A. “Suicide Terrorism and Democracy: What We’ve Learned Since 9/11.” *Policy Analysis*.

Rotella, Sebastian. “U.S. Prosecution Links Drugs to Terrorism.” *Los Angeles Times* 19 Dec. 2009: 1-3. Print.

Schanzer, Jonathan. “Palestinian Uprisings Compared.” *Middle East Quarterly*. Summer 2002: 27-38. Print.

Stern, Jessica. “Pakistan’s Jihad Culture.” *Foreign Affairs*. November – December 2000: 115-126. Print.

Stern, Jessica. *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2003. Print.

Stern, Jessica. “The Protean Enemy.” *Foreign Affairs*. July - August 2003: 27-40. Print.