

Organized by the *Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society* (TSAS), this one-day workshop was held in Ottawa following *Public Safety Canada's* two-day Kanishka Project Opening Conference. The purpose of the workshop was to examine different approaches and methodologies for studying the social conditions and processes of terrorist radicalization. A parallel goal was to foster connections both across disciplinary silos within academia as well as between academic researchers and policy professionals. After brief introductory comments, the first half of the workshop explored insights from experimental social psychology into the process of radicalization. The second half of the workshop addressed the social conditions most favourable to radicalization, and the role of religion in the radicalization process. The workshop closed with a brief open discussion. This report will provide a general summary of the workshop's proceedings.

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1.1 **Lorne Dawson** (TSAS Executive Committee; University of Waterloo) welcomed participants to the workshop, framing the day's activities in the context of larger objectives: to advance inter- and multi-disciplinary perspectives on terrorism and counterterrorism in the Canadian context. To foster this objective, Dr. Dawson encouraged participants to establish connections between presentations and topics covered.

1.2 Dr. Dawson also informed participants of TSAS's second workshop, which will be held in Ottawa over two days in May 2013, and will emphasize TSAS's "security" stream. Later in the day, Dr. Dawson also reminded participants to access the TSAS website, www.tsas.ca, for forms to apply for TSAS affiliate status, to register for the TSAS mailing list, and to view the present call for research proposals and accompanying list of government-defined research priorities. In addition, he presented details of the first annual TSAS Summer Academy for graduate students and junior policy professionals, to be held July 21-26, 2013 at the University of British Columbia.

2. INSIGHTS FROM EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY INTO THE PROCESS OF RADICALIZATION

2.1 The Social Psychology of Destructive Intergroup Behaviour by Disadvantaged Groups

2.1.1 In the first presentation of the day, **Stephen Wright** (Simon Fraser University) presented work conducted in collaboration with Dr. Sven Waldzus and Dr. Carla Sophia Esteves (ISCTE-Lisbon University Institute) on the topic of destructive (i.e. harmful or violent) intergroup behaviour (DIB). This research seeks to explain how a general understanding of intergroup relations can emerge among members of a disadvantaged group that renders the choice of DIB legitimate and appropriate. The fundamental principle underlying this approach is that intergroup behaviour results from self-stereotypic knowledge—dependent on group membership—that shapes and informs individuals' actions—as members of a group—toward members of other groups, based on their group membership. Intergroup behaviour is destructive when the proximal intention of such action is to harm the other group.

2.1.2 In his presentation, Dr. Wright outlined the psychological determinants of DIB. First, group members must have strong sense of collective, dual identity. That is, they must identify strongly not only with their sub-group, but also with a superordinate category in which this more local identity, as well as that of the dominant group, is nested. Second, the group members must recognize some collective injustice, and identify an out-group as the cause of this disadvantage. Third, the disadvantaged group must perceive a violation of some minimal (as opposed to maximal, or gradual) standard, perpetrated by the advantaged group against them. Such a violation inspires contempt and moral indignation among members of the disadvantaged group, which leads its members to seek

obligatory punishment of the transgressor. In other words, the combination of these factors lead to the endorsement of DIB.

2.1.3 Dr. Wright and his collaborators have tested and confirmed this model with various group types (Cape-Verdean Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, smokers, and lab-created groups of undergraduate students), employing varying degrees of experimental control. Their findings suggest that it is essential to understand the others' psychology if we are to understand their willingness to engage in DIB; and to understand that it is moral engagement—not moral disengagement—that underlies their activity.

2.1.4 In the question period following Dr. Wright's presentation, it was suggested that DIB could alternatively be motivated by moral breakdown within the superordinate category. Dr. Wright acknowledged that such a tit-for-tat action might be possible, but that his research indicates moral engagement to be more common than the moral disengagement that such a motivation would imply. In response to a question regarding why seemingly insignificant events may become triggering events, Dr. Wright stressed that such events are usually prototypical violations of related minimal standards, and reflect the progression of perceived collective injustices over time. Concerns were raised regarding the utility of these findings in public administration, where a lack of transparency in security-related policies may lead people to interpret actions as group-based injustices even when they are not intended as such.

2.2 The Human Need for Order and Control and the Allure of Extreme Political and Religious Ideologies

2.2.1 Presenting on behalf of **Aaron Kay** (Duke University), **Justin Friesen** presented a compensatory control model to explain the psychological motivations for why people hold certain religious or political beliefs. Individuals feel a need to perceive some degree of control over outcomes that affect them; chance and randomness, as causes for such outcomes, are psychologically stressful. Accordingly, Mr. Friesen presented the hypothesis that lower levels of personal control would produce an increased endorsement of external sources of control, such as organizations, governments, ideologies, institutions and religions.

2.2.2 His presentation outlined various tests of this hypothesis performed by Dr. Kay. First, Mr. Friesen presented correlational tests in the context of religious beliefs (in which levels of perceived personal control were effectively manipulated by alternate framings of God as controller versus as creator) and attitudes toward secular political systems (in which individuals sought higher degrees of external government control when the government was framed as benevolent, as opposed to corrupt). Second, he described experimental tests of the substitutability between religious and secular systems (which demonstrated a hydraulic relationship between religion and government as external systems of control). Finally, he presented the findings of a longitudinal, quasi-field test of this system substitutability in Malaysia, which confirmed in a natural context the previously-established hydraulic relationship. Mr. Friesen also discussed tests which demonstrated that, when governments “piggyback” on religious symbolism (i.e. when the relationship between government and God is fused), there may not be a trade-off between government and God as providers of external order. Ultimately, these findings suggest that individuals do not need both government and God as sources of external order, and that cognitions about the self appear substitutable with cognitions about one's external world.

2.2.3 In the question period, connections were drawn between the compensatory control model and *Public Safety Canada's* 72 hours emergency preparedness campaign and other resilience-promoting efforts, which might be interpreted as advocating a shift from government control toward personal responsibility. The discussion addressed a potential gap between having individuals believe that they are personally responsible in times of emergency and actually inducing them to take action to that effect. Connections were also drawn with Dr. Wright's earlier presentation, with participants noting the role of crisis framing in relation to a possible “othering” effect in public reactions toward events like terrorism or industrial failure, where officials deemed responsible for the security failure can be clearly identified. Suggestions for future study included: tracking beliefs over longer periods of time to test for temporal effects; conducting experimental tests on groups of participants other than undergraduate students to improve generalizability; and assessing the interchangeability of external systems where sources of control are mutually exclusive.

2.3 Protection of Women and Children as Propaganda within Extremist Movements

2.3.1 **Richard Eibach** (University of Waterloo) presented a social psychological assessment of how extremist propaganda functions to override the moral conscience of individuals targeted for radicalization. His approach is informed by Albert Bandura's model of moral disengagement, in which moral standards play a crucial role in individuals' moral self-regulation (that is, how individuals seek consistency between their moral standards and their actions or behaviours). Since individuals experience anticipatory guilt when they contemplate actions that would violate their moral standards, mechanisms that disengage these standards will facilitate immoral action by removing the barrier of anticipatory guilt. Moral disengagement processes can be implemented at various stages of the construal of reprehensible conduct.

2.3.2 Dr. Eibach presented both historical and experimental evidence for moral disengagement in extremist propaganda. He introduced this notion with respect to dehumanizing discourses, emphasizing, in particular, the ape analogy in contemporary examples of state violence against African Americans. Dr. Eibach then introduced a form of extremist propaganda that relies on the moral justification of a duty to protect women and children as a pretext for violating the rights of those who pose threats to women and children. He presented the methodology and findings of a study in which he tested the hypothesis that, when individuals are primed with the protective paternalist notion of protecting women and children, they will express more racially oppressive attitudes. The study's findings supported this hypothesis. Accordingly, the study implies that it is necessary to challenge protective paternalistic discourse when it is used as the justification for action. However, while this discourse often provides moral justification for negative action, Dr. Eibach recognized that it might equally be employed for positive ends, such as to highlight the harms of racial oppression.

2.3.3 In the discussion period, it was acknowledged that Bandura has already been cited within the literature on terrorism, but that his work has been utilized ineffectively thus far. Links were drawn between Dr. Eibach's work and the literature on counter-narratives, as well as that regarding the use of child soldiers. Regarding the latter, comments suggested that it may be issues surrounding consent, rather than the vulnerability implied by the paternalistic narrative, that shape reactions. When questioned about the role of gender in responses to the paternalistic narrative, Dr. Eibach reported that there was no gender difference in experimental effects, but that we might expect gender differences if the test involved an expression of agency (that is, actually joining an anti-immigration group as opposed to simply expressing support for it). The discussion also addressed euphemistic dehumanizing discourse in the War on Terror context, where it is often employed to justify certain counter-terrorism responses in the name of freedom and democracy.

2.4 Anxious Roots of Worldview Extremes

2.4.1 **Ian McGregor** (York University) opened his presentation with an introduction to social psychology's epistemological approach—an understanding of what *is*—and the field's corresponding “fetish” for experimental design, which he justified by conducting various tests that engaged workshop participants as subjects. In the body of his presentation, Dr. McGregor relied on Reactive Approach Motivation (RAM) theory and neuro-scientific evidence to demonstrate that introducing anxiety-related sentiments (such as frustration, uncertainty, exclusion, injustice, insecurity, and powerlessness) to individuals causes explosive outcomes (including hostility, retribution, jingoism, hate, conviction, idealism, resolve, devotion, risk-taking, and religious zeal). These outcomes are approach-motivated states, which feel good to individuals and inhibit uncomfortable anxiety.

2.4.2 Dr. McGregor described a study in which he found that individuals with high levels of eager approach-motivated traits (self-esteem, behavioural approach sensitivity, action-control, and promotion-focus) are more likely than others to exhibit religious zeal when faced with personal uncertainty. Following a series of anxious-uncertainty manipulations, the study found a significant negative correlation between religious zeal and the amplitude of the anxiety-related response of the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC). In other words, zealous religious views act as a form of approach motivation, functioning almost like religious rapture. Dr. McGregor also presented

the findings of a study that demonstrates—through individuals’ tendency to prefer God to chocolate, when faced with anxiety—that individuals prefer transcendent sources of RAM.

2.4.3 Despite these findings, Dr. McGregor emphasized that RAM is malleable: one can redirect the religious extremism that results from RAM if the salience of benign domains can be manipulated. Dr. McGregor presented three studies that provide evidence for this capacity to shift the eager approach’s focus. These studies measured confidence in personal projects, personal need for structure, and the championing of religious beliefs. Collectively, their findings suggest that if policy can promote the temporal efficacy of groups, positive group inclusion, and pro-social religious ideals, groups may be less inclined to seek transcendent radicalization.

2.4.4 After the presentation, participants discussed the contexts in which multiculturalism policy—given Dr. McGregor’s findings—might further or counteract counter-radicalization efforts. In response to a question regarding links between type of anxiety and RAM strategy sought, Dr. McGregor drew links with Dr. Kay’s research to demonstrate that anxiety-relief will likely be initially sought from the same domain as the anxiety source. Methodological concerns were also raised, suggesting that individualized social psychological experiments exclude peer effects and social contexts that may be key to understanding radicalization.

3. SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND RADICALIZATION

3.1 From “Ordinary” Violence to Terrorism: The Case of Insurgent-like Conflicts

3.1.1 In her presentation, **Aurélie Campana** (Laval University) addressed the meso- and macro-level social conditions most favourable to insurgent-like conflict (as a specific type of terrorism) in the Chechen case. This case is of particular relevance, given that it is representative of two important trends: the Islamisation of separatist movements, and tensions between local and global dynamics (that is, between strategies and techniques for achieving political, social, or criminal goals, and global jihad). The collaborative research she presented responds to the question: how did terrorism become a routinized strategy and tactic during the Second Chechen War? Dr. Campana’s central argument is that normative shifts which occurred before the First Chechen War continued to shape Chechen insurgents’ repertoire of violence, resulting in both transformed local forms of violence (or “ordinary violence,” to use Ebner’s term) and imported patterns of violence.

3.1.2 After presenting a brief literature review and demonstrating how existing models—in their lack of addressing the cases of violence that occurred prior to the First War—fail to address the social conditions conducive to terrorism, Dr. Campana presented the “space of radicalization” model. This model emphasizes the relational processes that drive radicalization, and recognizes terrorism as a social practice embedded in a political, social, and cultural context. She identified three moments that shaped the Chechen “space of radicalization”: 1) the pre-First War period (pre-1994); 2) the First Chechen War (1994-1996); and 3) the period between the two Chechen Wars (1996-1999). These moments capture the shift in dominant norms and “rules of the game” in Chechnya, reflecting a progressive de-institutionalization, privatization, and routinization of violence, which set the stage for the use of violence in the Second War. It was in this context that brokerage and competing agendas (and associated outbidding) combined to make violence a legitimate mode of dialogue in daily relations during the Second War.

3.1.3 The question period first addressed whether or not a greater acceptance of violence leads to a crowding-out of more mainstream approaches. Dr. Campana stressed that, once violence entered the movement’s repertoire before the First War, it closed all opportunities for moderate approaches, and even sparked violence among Chechen groups; anyone opposed to the use of violence simply fled the region. The discussion also addressed the Russian response to the violence in Chechnya, including the post-9/11 shift in Russia’s position toward Chechen groups, although Dr. Campana emphasized that Russian strategy is not within the scope of this study. Questions regarding the current state of the Chechen movement, and the role of gender within the movement were also raised.

3.2 The Process of Extremization: Macro Social Relations and the Case of the “Toronto 18”

3.2.1 Introducing insights from the geopolitics and the broader human geographical tradition, **Jeremy Kowalski** (York University) used the case of the “Toronto 18” to elucidate how it was possible for domestic Islamist extremism to develop in the Canadian context. Mr. Kowalski’s assessment of the case emphasized three distinct, but mutually reinforcing, macro-structures which made possible the conditions of radicalization for this group: the transnational, state, and group spheres of influence. Within the transnational sphere, there was an imagined sense of “virtual density” in which the “Toronto 18” had access to the information flows and connectivity that led them to a certain interpretation of Quranic doctrine and to be inspired by Al Qaeda. The state sphere involves respective governments and the apparatuses which operate on their behalf, as well as the policies they pursue in the interest of counter-terrorism. There is concrete evidence in the case of the “Toronto 18” to demonstrate that the group’s activities were organically linked to Canada’s actions in Afghanistan, and the resulting perception that Canada was involved in a war against Islam and thus complicit in injustices toward the Muslim populations of both Afghanistan and Canada. In the group sphere, extremism represents a systemic breakdown of communication, with violence replacing voice as the preferred mode of expression. In this case, the “Toronto 18” formed as an outlet for grievances, but it was a shift from discursive to material approaches that ultimately led to their pursuit of violence and resulting arrest.

3.2.2 Mr. Kowalski’s concluding remarks emphasized that researchers engaged in the study of micro-social relations contributing to radicalization and those engaged at the macro-social level must partake in more interdisciplinary collaboration, focusing on the dialectical relationship between micro- and macro-social relations and the role of spheres of influence. If this research programme is taken seriously, Mr. Kowalski suggested that it could contribute to developing a de-escalation program: a mechanism that would deepen democracy and thus mitigate extremization.

3.2.3 In the question period, concern was raised regarding the purported link between violent extremism’s organic link to a country’s foreign policy, and the related challenges of generalizing from the experience of a single—and limited—case to such broad policy prescriptions. In discussing possible differences between democratic and non-democratic systems, it was emphasized that the members of the “Toronto 18” were completely representative of the Canadian multicultural mosaic, and so we must draw prescriptions from the perspective that they opted for a violent outlet despite being integrated in a fully participatory democratic system. There was also debate regarding the nature of connections (material and/or ideological) across terrorism cells worldwide. In addition, Mr. Kowalski was asked about the particular influence of Anwar al Awlaki in the case of the “Toronto 18;” and to elaborate specific forms in which the field of human geography has attempted to bring together the micro- and macro-spheres of influence.

4. RELIGION AND RADICALIZATION

4.1 The Missing Link: Religion and the Social Ecology of Homegrown Terrorist Radicalization

4.1.1 In this presentation, **Lorne Dawson** (University of Waterloo) explored why the role of religion in jihadist (and other) forms of terrorism is acknowledged but subsequently discounted as a motivation for radicalization. His research demonstrates that viewing religion as a true motivator for radicalization can help close the explanatory gap between why only a small sample of a wide group of people actually turn to violent radicalization. Dr. Dawson presented three conceptual arguments—naïve essentialism (that religion is inherently peaceful, so terrorism must represent a distortion of religion); strategic (that religion is irrational and terrorism must be strategic or rational); and postcolonial (that religion is an invented Western category, and so “religious violence” is meaningless)—and two substantive arguments—that religion is a post-hoc rationalization for terrorism rather than a primary motivator, and that homegrown terrorists’ religiosity is only superficial—that are commonly used to justify the discounting of religion. This widespread dismissal of religion as a primary motivator of radicalization leading to violence is particularly questionable given the readiness of other fields of research—new religious movements and violence, and violent anti-abortionists—to take the role of religion seriously.

4.1.2 Dr. Dawson presented his reading of the treatment of religion in works by three influential psychologists and psychiatrists in the field of terrorism: Marc Sageman's (2004) *Understanding Terror Networks*; Andrew Silke's (2008) "Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization"; and Clark McCauley's (2011) *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us*. Dr. Dawson's analysis emphasized that even excellent researchers—along with their reviewers and readers—are quick to dismiss the role of religion in terrorist radicalization because, as secular Westerners, they implicitly identify strongly with the two substantive arguments presented above. However, if we are to truly assess individuals' religiosity, we require actual data from their lives; and we cannot rely on the longevity of their religiosity as a measure of its significance, since it is often recent converts that are the most sincere and committed in their religious beliefs.

4.1.3 Dr. Dawson closed with a discussion of the policy implications for his argument that religion is a primary and sincere motivator of radicalization. First, counter-radicalization strategies must recognize that these individuals operate in a highly symbolic world that transcends purely political strategy. Second, those with a religious worldview do not distinguish between religion and politics, and so are likely to galvanize any or all grievances in efforts to drive their agenda. Third, unless we recognize that immigrants' interpretive framework may be religious, we will not make headway in closing the explanatory gap that would define why some individuals turn to violent radicalization while most do not.

To save time, as the workshop was approaching the end of the afternoon it was decided that questions and answers would be postponed and combined with those posed to then last presenter. **4.2 Spiritual Rewards, Afterlives, Hells and Punishments: Religious Doctrines and Beliefs as Factors in the Turn to Violence**

4.2.1 **Ian Reader's** (Lancaster University) presentation addressed Aum Shinrikyo's path to violence as a case of homegrown terrorism in the Japanese context. While Dr. Reader acknowledged a multiplicity of factors that contributed to the group's use of violence, his presentation addressed only its religious motivations. His findings were derived from interviews with current and former Aum members, in addition to an in-depth analysis of the group and its leader's publications and teachings.

4.2.2 In his presentation, Dr. Reader traced the evolution of Aum Shinrikyo's apocalyptic worldview and corresponding mission to save the world from the forces of evil. What began as an optimistic view of saving the world through peaceful means, later adopted a punitive dimension, fuelled by indignation, as group members increasingly perceived their mission to be failing. Those who ignored their message—the "dissidents" or "opponents"—created so much bad karma in the material world that Aum members believed they would fall into hell unless there were "saved." Thus, the group managed to transcend morality: killing these opponents—that is, punishing transgressors of the truth—could be justified in order to save them from their own fate, and to pursue salvation by eradicating the forces that represented evil. Essentially, as Aum became increasingly convinced of the righteousness of its cause, the more it viewed itself as justified in the use of violence to enhance its members' own spiritual standing.

4.2.3 Dr. Reader emphasized that the theme of punishment linked to spiritual practice is not unique to Aum Shinrikyo. For instance, David Cooke's research on Muslim apocalypticism, applies similar notions of punishment and spiritual reward to the perpetrators of 9/11. Dr. Reader also addressed the case of the Waco massacre involving the Branch Davidians, in which police similarly—and fatally—underestimated a theological motivation. When drawing conclusions for policy, Dr. Reader emphasized that it is essential to recognize that individuals who view the world in binary, good versus evil, terms do not view non-believers as "innocent," and so indiscriminate violence can be easily justified. While it is difficult for policymakers and law-enforcers to accept unconventional and even strange or peculiar beliefs and doctrine, Dr. Reader maintains that policy must be willing to suspend disbelief and accept these views, if ever it is to understand the true motivation of believers who resort to violence. However, he maintains that such a perspective is more useful as a retrospective tool than a predictive one, since the latter would pose grave challenges to civil liberties in a policy context.

4.3 Questions on Religion and Radicalization

4.3.1 In the combined discussion period, connections were drawn between the presenters' argument (that the role of religion not be discounted when assessing the sources of radicalization) and the debate surrounding the motive requirement under Canadian terrorism law. Commentators suggested that the definitional requirement that terrorists be motivated by a desire to kill may be unfairly exploited to target minorities, and curtail freedom of expression and association. Concerns about defining terrorism in terms of "political" motivation were similarly raised.

4.3.2 In addition, the presenters were asked to comment on the role that a charismatic leader may play in shaping discourse and pushing a group toward violence; the degree to which higher education may affect individuals' willingness to accept magical beliefs; and whether secular apocalyptic movements may rely on justifications similar to those of religious groups in their use of violence. The presenters maintain that charismatic leadership may play a role in formulating doctrine, and that neither level of education nor supposed "secularity" inherently poses impediments to belief in these doctrines.

5. OPEN DISCUSSION

5.1 The day's concluding discussion was short. While there was disappointment that linkages across presentations were not a salient point of discussion—likely a result of the workshop's proceedings being fit into only one day—the group expressed optimism that interdisciplinary and policy-academia connections seem to be working. Future TSAS workshops will likely occur over two days, which would give participants more time to interact with the material. The discussion briefly addressed the advantages of TSAS being an independent academic organization, in terms of serving as a platform for communication between affiliates and interested individuals.

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at the request of TSAS.*