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AFFECTIVE DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE PYRAMID OF TERROR

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to find a link between factors serving as catalysts for voluntary disengagement and positions held by members of terrorist organizations, with the objective of improving counter narratives for terrorist ideology and counter-radicalization programs. Using terrorist positions identified in Gruen's *Pyramid of Terror* as an independent variable and disengagement factors identified in Horgan's *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of disengagement from radical and extremist movements* and Jacobson's *Terrorist dropouts: Learning from those who have left* as a dependent variable, I analyze the possibility of differences in affective physical disengagement among terrorist positions. Chi-square analyses yield unsupportive results. The study fails to support the hypothesis that there is a relationship between positions and reasons for disengagement, finding no differences among leaders and operatives disengaging from: disillusionment with terrorism as a lifestyle, disillusionment with the tactical and operational output of terrorism, disillusionment with the ideology and legitimacy of terrorism as a strategy, personal disagreements with personnel, an inability or fear to carry out attacks, and a 'pull' factor through family ties and obligations. The study concludes by emphasizing the need to understand terrorists as individual consumers of counter narratives, offering a number of recommendations to academics, law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review	5
Previous Research Examining Terrorist Disengagement	5
Previous Research Examining Terrorist Typologies	9
Conclusion	12
Chapter 3 Method	14
Participants	14
Methodology	15
Chapter 4 Data Analysis	16
Position and Lifestyle	16
Position and Tactics	17
Position and Ideology of Strategy	18
Position and Personnel Disagreements	20
Position and Attacks	21
Position and Families	21
Chapter 5 Discussion	23
Chapter 6 Conclusion	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY	26

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Pyramid of Terror (Bowen, 2006)	11
Figure 2. Comparison of Factor Allocation	19
Figure 3. Breakdown of Factors by Position.....	20

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Factors facilitating terrorist disengagement (Altier et al., 2014)	9
Table 2. Practical and Statistical Analysis	16

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Perhaps the defining feature of the early 21st century is the shift in foreign affairs from traditional nation-state conflict to one of asymmetric warfare against non-state actors. While WWI, WWII and the Cold War dictated international security in the 20th century, modern security emphasizes facing threats to the homeland posed by terrorism, foreign fighters and insurgencies. However, although we can assert that terrorism is the chief concern for security professionals, terrorism as an academic study remains controversial and incomplete (LaFree & Dugan, 2009). This is due, in part, to a lack of clear consensus regarding an appropriate definition. Most definitions agree that in its aim of ‘terror’, the intended effect of terrorism is to cause psychological damage to those who view the acts, rather than physical damage to those immediately effected by them (Jenkins, 1987). However, difficulties in the academic pursuit of terrorism arise when the label of terrorism is applied to nation states engaging in clandestine activity. Academics have avoided this politicization of research by stipulating that nation-states are exempt from terroristic labels due the presumed legitimate authority of states (Crenshaw, 2011). For the purpose of this study, terrorism shall be defined as symbolic violence against noncombatants, carried out by non-state actors for political purposes (Cronin, 2009).

The study of terrorism is not only constrained by an inability to adequately define and characterize its composition, but also by lack of its understanding as a holistic process. In particular, while a number of studies attempt to address the root causes and conditions for terrorism in order to establish preventative techniques, there has been a relative disregard for academic

research into how terrorism ends, especially at the individual level (Horgan, 2014). This is not surprising. There are considerable challenges to researching terrorism after the fact: terrorists die, and those who manage to break away from terrorism are typically reluctant to come forth for inquiry. Nevertheless, there has been notable, and significant, contributions to the literature in the past decade, potentially allowing for systematic study of former terrorists.

Horgan (2009) argues that the best model for viewing an individual's association with terrorism is by using the IED (involvement, engagement, disengagement) model. The IED model stipulates that individuals first become involved in some terrorist organization, sustain their involvement and begin actually engaging in violent terrorist activity and events, then finally end their affiliation through disengagement (Horgan, 2014). This final phase, disengagement, is perhaps the most radical element to Horgan's theory, as it constitutes a direct challenge to one of the most popular theories in terrorism literature: radicalization and de-radicalization. According to his theory, terrorists do not commit nor stop committing terrorist acts because they are radicalized or de-radicalized, rather, they engage and disengage from terrorism independent of any extreme ideology or indoctrination (Horgan, 2014). While radicalization can play a role in this process, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for explaining terrorism. This is particularly problematic, as researchers have argued that the growth in homegrown terrorism now warrants the need for U.S. based de-radicalization programs to mitigate terrorism (Stern, 2010).

The first de-radicalization program began in 1997 in Egypt (Plessner, 2015). Today, there are as many as 40 de-radicalization programs throughout the world, with the majority being located in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Europe (Jordan & Audi, 2015). The programs are designed to re-orient the ideology of extremists until they are safe to re-enter society. Yet, despite their enormous costs (one Saudi de-radicalization program is estimated to cost \$26 million in a three-

year period), these programs have had unsatisfactory results in terms of desistance from terrorism or cessations of violence (Berger, 2013). Programs developed for gang intervention yield similar results (Klein & Maxson, 2006). Horgan, nonetheless, concedes that de-radicalization programs serve a purpose. He argues that the success of de-radicalization programs is contingent upon the provision of vocational training to prevent recidivism through long-term employment (Horgan, 2015). Furthermore, the programs must be informed by a deeper understanding of the disengagement process that initially allowed individuals to participate (Horgan & Altier, 2012). With an annual counter-terrorism budget of \$17 billion, the U.S. can ill afford to spend money on misinformed and illegitimate counter-terrorism initiatives (DeSilver, 2013).

It is then the job of the researcher to accurately inform counter-terrorism professionals and policy makers on the process of disengagement. Horgan (2014) offers a number of potential research questions for academics to investigate. Among them, he speculates that attrition rates among various roles, positions and functions in terrorist groups may vary in their psychological underpinnings or affective reasons for voluntary disengagement. For example, it may be the case that leaders are more likely to disengage due to burn-out whereas operatives disengage due to disillusionment with terrorism as a clandestine lifestyle. Horgan (2009) offers five factors that might facilitate voluntary disengagement from terrorism: disillusionment (mismatch between fantasy and reality); internal disagreement over tactical issues; internal strategic, political or ideological differences; becoming 'burned out'; or changing and conflicting personal priorities (e.g. getting married, having children, growing older). These disengagement facilitators can be applied to extremists across Gruen's (2006) *Pyramid of Terror* terrorist typology: leaders, operatives (cell members, operational support, etc.) and supporters (social leaders, fundraisers, front charities, etc.). The various perspectives held by each type of position invariably clash,

possibly resulting in varying factors leading to disengagement. Researchers note that the operatives' views on how and when to use violence typically deviate from that of their leaders (Shapiro, 2013). By examining disengagement factors as a dependent variable and terrorist positions as an independent variable, we can more easily ascertain what may facilitate a voluntary exit from terrorism for specific terrorists. As a hypothesis, I predict that individuals higher on the *Pyramid of Terror* will be more likely to voluntarily disengage for reasons related to ideological and political differences. Correspondingly, those individuals on lower levels of the Pyramid of Terror will be more likely to voluntarily disengage for reasons related to tactical and operational differences. These predications are based on previous research discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This section of the study is intended to provide a more in-depth review of the literature on terrorism as it pertains to the analysis. In particular, the section will examine previous literature on terrorist disengagement and typologies of terrorist positions. Terrorist disengagement has been analyzed from several different perspectives in the last few decades. Much of the literature exists on collective organization-wide disengagement. The field was greatly improved after a number of contributions to the field by various sociological, criminological and psychological theories, allowing for analysis and debate over disengagement at the level of the individual. Literature on terrorist typology is likewise studied from both the macro and individual level of analysis. Academics have presented several competing typologies representing various terrorist groups. The study of command and control networks has provided particularly useful data onto the structure and hierarchy within various terrorist groups. This section will proceed by examining the various contributions made to these fields of terrorism.

Previous Research Examining Terrorist Disengagement

Terrorist disengagement refers to the process of ending involvement and activity in terrorism (Horgan, 2014). Disengagement can be either psychological or physical. Psychological disengagement involves an attitudinal change: the underlying beliefs about one's involvement in terrorism comes into question. It is similar to deradicalization, which is defined as the

delegitimization of the ideology which underpins the use of violence (Hwang, Panggabean, & Fauzi, 2013). Nevertheless, psychological disengagement is unique insofar as not being constrained to ideology, but rather terrorism as an activity. By contrast, physical disengagement can be described in terms of behavior: one ceases to be physically involved in terrorism (Horgan, 2014). In other words, the individual breaks with the group with or without breaking with the ideology (Bjorgo, 2008). Physical disengagement can be further divided into two additional categories: voluntary (choosing to disengage) and involuntary (being dismissed, apprehended or even killed). For the purposes of this study, only those individuals who underwent a voluntary physical disengagement will be included in the analysis.

At the macro level, terrorist disengagement refers to a terrorist group ending its campaign of terrorism. Crenshaw (2011) has found that terrorist campaigns end under a specific set of circumstances: they had accomplished some objective, an imbalance of utility had arose (i.e. the costs of terrorism rose and/or its benefits had declined), or when alternative mechanisms for achieving the campaign's objects had become available. Similarly, members of a group considering a terrorist campaign can reject the strategy for any of four reasons: if the strategy is deemed elitist and does not incorporate the mass public; if the costs of terrorism are too high from the onset; if the leaders are uncertain they can retain control; or if it is deemed morally wrong (Crenshaw, 2011). These findings provide a glimpse into some of the more common generalities of the context in which terrorist campaigns end, but they do not provide a mutually exclusive nor exhaustible list of possible outcomes of the terrorist campaigns themselves.

A more comprehensive list is offer by Cronin. Cronin (2009) argues that the end of individual terrorists groups come about through five different avenues or pathways: catching or killing the leader (decapitation); a transition toward a legitimate political process (negotiations),

achieving the objectives (success); imploding, provoking a backlash, or becoming marginalized (failure); being crushed through force (repression); or transitioning to another modus operandi (reorientation). However, according to additional analyses, the majority of groups have ended because they either joined the political process or key members of the group were arrested or killed by the police and intelligence agencies (Jones & Libicki, 2008). Nevertheless, there are notable examples of collective disengagement among other categories. For example, academics argue that the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA) was able to end its campaign through role transition, in which it ended in a vanguard role for the broader Official republican movement (Rekawek, 2008).

Other observers note that collective disengagement can be difficult since terror groups compete with each other, occasionally causing a ‘splintering’ effect from within the community (Shapiro, 2013). This has been the case among various Palestinian terrorist groups, and the same can be argued about ISIS and al-Qaeda, in which each group tries to establish itself as the soul representative of the cause at hand. Nevertheless, academics argue that a domino effect of disengagement can occur among splintered groups. This was the case for the IRA, in which senior militants had the opportunity to create a network facilitating the disengagement of other campaigns (Clubb, 2014).

The case for individual disengagement is based in part on Ebaugh’s exit theory. Ebaugh (1988) argues that individual’s leave criminal organizations in a four-step process: (1) developing initial doubts about their role; (2) seeking and weighting alternative roles; (3) reaching a turning point where they decide to leave the organization; and (4) entering a post-exit phase where they begin to construct a new identity as an ex. Despite the theory being proposed for gang organizations, academics argue that the factors and processes involved in disengaging from

terrorist organizations, religious cults, extremist groups and criminal youth gangs appear strikingly similar despite their great differences in ideological content, background and aspirations (Bjorgo, 2009). Furthermore, academics charge that there are sufficient similarities across terrorist organizations themselves, allowing for transferable analyses and findings (Disley, Weed, Reding, Clutterback, & Warnes, 2012). Indeed, Ebaugh's theory has a number of implications for terrorist disengagement. It fits nicely into Horgan's (2009) expanded IED seven-phased model of an individual's lifecycle in terrorism: pre-radicalization, radicalization, pre-involvement searching, violent radicalization, remaining involved and engaged, disengagement, and de-radicalization. The question arises as to what changes from remaining involved and engaged to disengagement.

In a study of the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), Reinares (2011) argues that individual members' disengagement was based on one of three categories: structural reasons (political and social changes taking place), organizational factors (internal functions or operations ordered by the leadership) or personal factors (changes in life priorities). While these are broad categories, it is a useful starting point for typologies of disengagement types. After performing a number of interviews with ex-terrorists, Horgan (2009) expands this list: disillusionment arising from a mismatch between the fantasy of involvement and the realities of the experience; disagreement over tactical issues; differences with internal strategic, political or ideological differences; becoming 'burned out'; or changing and conflicting personal priorities (e.g. getting married, having children, growing older). While these factors are attributed to psychological disengagement, Horgan argues that psychological disengagement often occurs as a catalyst for voluntary physical disengagement (2009).

There is a wide variety of factors which may contribute to an individual's decision to disengage from an organization. These can be organized into two categories: push factors, in which

aspects of an organization serve to ‘push’ an individual out, and pull factors, in which an individual is drawn to aspects of life outside of the organization (Altier, Thoroughgood & Horgan, 2014). These various factors (summarized in **Table 1** below) are balanced against factors which inhibit disengagement from terrorist organizations. In a study of right wing extremists, Bjorgo (2008) argues that disengagement is inhibited by: the positive characteristics of the group, loss of protection, negative sanctions from the criminal justice system, a lack of alternative opportunities (nowhere to go), and a fear that career prospect are ruined. This study seeks to understand whether specific disengagement facilitating factors are relevant to certain terrorists but not to others (Altier et al., 2014).

Table 1. Factors facilitating terrorist disengagement (Altier et al., 2014)

Table 1: Factors facilitating terrorist disengagement (Altier et al., 2014)	
<i>Push Factors:</i>	<i>Pull Factors:</i>
▪ Unmet expectations	▪ Competing loyalties
▪ Disillusionment with strategy/actions of the terrorist group	▪ Positive interaction with moderates
▪ Disillusionment with personnel	▪ Employment/educational demand or opportunities
▪ Difficulty adapting to clandestine lifestyle	▪ Desire to marry/establish a family or family demands
▪ Inability to cope with the physiological or psychological effects of violence	▪ Financial incentives
▪ Loss of faith in the ideology	▪ Amnesty
▪ Burnout	

Previous Research Examining Terrorist Typologies

Academic research into terrorist typologies and command and control structures has provided the basis for a number of assumptions surrounding the internal hierarchy of terrorist organizations. Most research on terrorist typology has been at the macro-level. A significant amount of typological literature focuses on how terrorist groups compare and contrast with each other in terms of objectives ideology. Vasilenki (2004) argues that there are essentially five

classifications of terrorist groups: political, separatist, nationalist, religious and criminal. Each type has a variety of nuances factoring into the success of the organization. For example, Hoffman (1998) observes that separatist and nationalist terrorist groups have been the most successful due to an ease in drawing support from an existing constituency (members of the ethnic-nationalist group) and a relative clarity in the objective (establishment of a national homeland). Other observers note that religious groups typically take longer to eliminate and are generally unsuccessful at achieving their aims (no religious group that has ended achieved victory since 1968) (Jones & Libicki, 2008).

The internal structure of these various types of terrorist groups are dependent on a number of factors. In particular, Shapiro (2013) argues that the post-9/11 counterterrorism efforts have forced terrorist organizations to trade command and control for the sake of security. This has caused a number of organizations – in particular al-Qaeda – to transform from bureaucratic organization to those of decentralization. Others argue that this shift has turned al-Qaeda into a ‘dune’ organization that emphasizes disappearing into the de-territorialization of the globalized world (Mishal & Rosenthal, 2005). This example highlights an interesting dilemma to the analysis of terror groups. Due to the operational nature of terrorist organizations, most descriptions of individual terror organizations are network or chain-link oriented rather than hierarchical position or role oriented (United State Army, 2007). This makes it extremely difficult to study individual terrorist’s roles empirically.

Nevertheless, generalities among organizations allows for comparisons among actors at at least the conceptual level. Observers note, rather simplistically, that in a terrorist organization, a group of leaders or commanders occupy the top of an organizational pyramid, while lieutenants and rank-and-file members inhabit lower level (Nacos, 2006). One particular taxonomy proposed

by Gruen (2006), and later modified by Bowen (2006), suggests that there are essentially five level to the *Pyramid of Terror*: leadership, operatives, supporters, sympathizers and the general population (see **Figure 1** below). By utilizing this structure, we can analyze how perspectives among each layer of the pyramid may vary based on operational awareness and ideological competence. Furthermore, comparison among specific roles may not be necessary because of role migration. Involvement in terrorism does not entail staying one specific role or position because responsibilities are largely dynamic, resting on specific operations and circumstances (Horgan, 2009). For the purposes of this study, the analysis will be only on members of the top two levels of the pyramid.

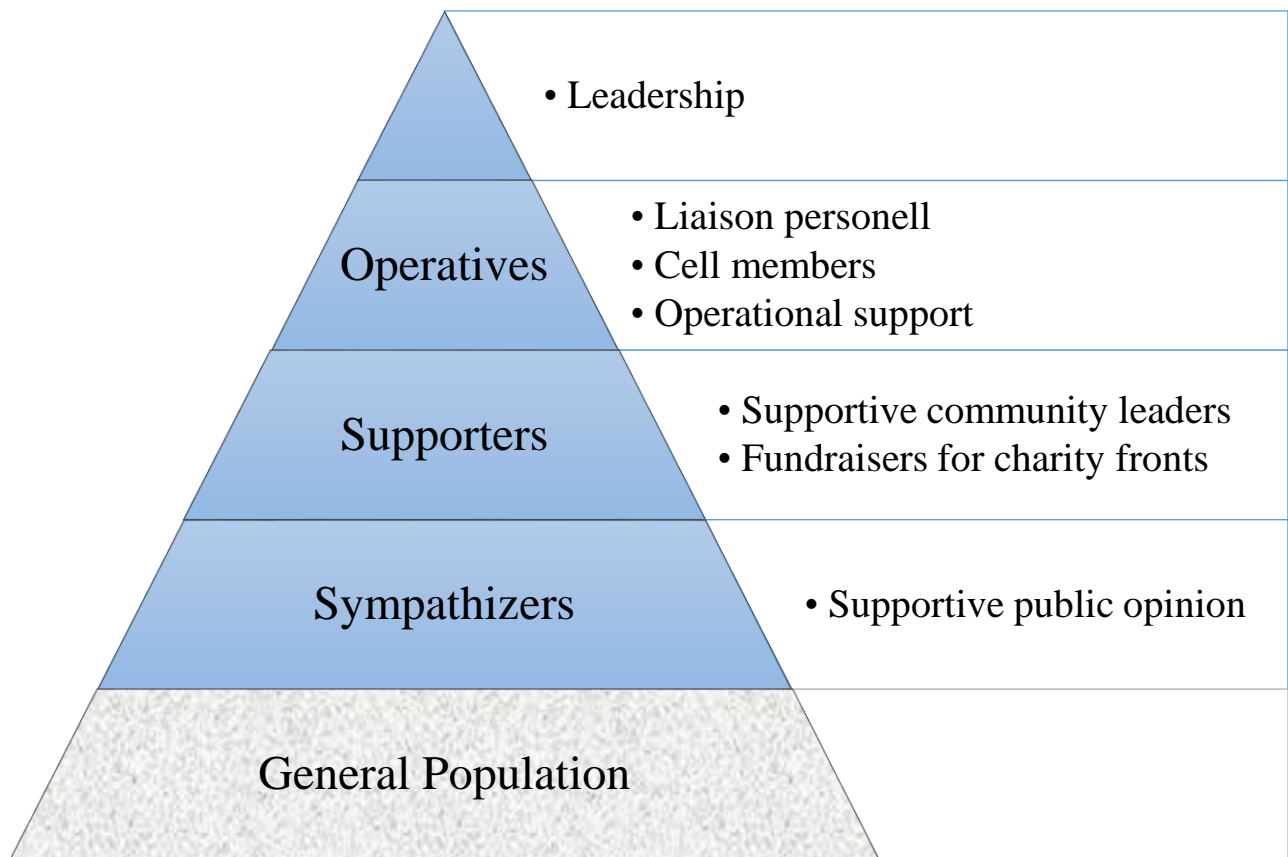


Figure 1. The Pyramid of Terror (Bowen, 2006)

Conclusion

Based on previous literature relating to disengagement and terrorist classifications, we are able to flesh out differences in perspectives among various positions, leading to several assumptions regarding the relationship between voluntary physical disengagement and position. One argument has theorized that the probability of an individual disengaging is inversely related to the degree of commitment to the group or movement (Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez, & Boucek, 2010). However, further analyses shows that the true relationship may be more nuanced.

One of the most general differences between the positions is the fact that leaders tend to have a greater understanding of the relationship between violence and impact. This rift causes leaders to constantly prevent operatives from engaging in higher levels of violence, leading to substantial divergences in preferences (Shapiro, 2013). Furthermore, academics have argued the skills terrorist operatives have actually have very little to do with the ideology of the terrorist group (Crenshaw, 2011). In this respect, it is likely that factors prompting voluntary disengagement for operatives will emphasize tactical and operational disagreements.

By comparison, factors prompting voluntary disengagement for leaders will emphasize disagreements over ideological and political differences. Studies on gang membership demonstrate that one of the biggest factors predicting disengagement is gang embeddedness - referring to an individual's immersion in deviant social networks (Sweeten, Pyrooz, & Piquero, 2013). Disengagement from a leadership position will require additional psychological justification (i.e. changes in ideology and political disposition). Furthermore, leaders operate with a different set of information than operatives (Shapiro, 2013). They are not only frequently evaluating the effectiveness of terrorist campaigns and responding to the public's reaction of terrorism, but they also evaluate and reinterpret the groups motivating doctrine. While little research on command

and control offers information on individual's on the 'support' level of the pyramid, we can assume that they operate in a similar fashion to leaders in the terrorist organizations, insofar as they have similar perspectives on the impact of violence and ideology. These assumptions will be tested in the data analysis provided in the subsequent chapters (Chapters 3 & 4).

Chapter 3

Method

Due to the abundance of terrorist groups and the recent observation of a ‘dropout phenomenon’, several researchers have been able to collect data through interviews, autobiographies and other open source publications on disengaged terrorists (Jacobson, 2010). By collecting available data on 35 former terrorists, the relationship between position and factors leading to voluntary disengagement can be analyzed. This section of the paper highlights available data on publicized disengaged terrorists used for this study and explains the methodology used to compute the analyses between variables.

Participants

The participants involved in this study consist of 35 former terrorists who disengaged from their organization. These terrorists come from a variety of different terror groups, including both religious and separatist groups. Data on these participants come primarily from two sources: Horgan’s *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of disengagement from radical and extremist movements* and Jacobson’s *Terrorist dropouts: Learning from those who have left*. These sources contain a variety of data on former terrorists, occasionally overlapping. The data sources combine to form an aggregate of online publications as well as unique personal interviews performed by the researchers themselves. Additional information was found through public information to ensure that all participants had disengaged voluntarily. This resulted in a large reduction in terms

of participants. 15 accounts were excluded from this study due to involuntary disengagement through imprisonment and dismissal. In one instance, an individual has disengaged due to suffering damage from an attack, only to join ISIS 10 years later (Beaumont, 2014).

Methodology

The backbone of the data was provided by the works by Horgan and Jacobson stated above. This data typically contained the name of the terrorist (occasionally as an alias), their affiliated organization, position, and reason for disengaging. However, Jacobson was less explicit when describing the nature of the disengagement – whether it was voluntary or involuntary and whether it was psychological or physical. In those cases, additional information was provided through numerous online publications. After the data was compiled, it was analyzed using SPSS. The terrorist's position was recorded as either part of the leadership or as an operative. Their reasons prompting disengagement was summarized into one of six categories: disillusionment with lifestyle / desire to start a new life, disagreements with the tactical implementation of strategy, disagreements with the ideology of the strategy (i.e. terrorism), personal problems with personnel, an inability to carry out violent acts, or a pull from family ties and obligations.

The independent variable in this analysis is the position held by the terrorist: leader or operative. The dependent variable was the factors leading to disengagement stated above. To analyze the data, I performed a two-factor chi-square test on each dependent variable. The results of the tests are described in the subsequent chapter (Chapter 4).

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

This section of the paper articulates the findings from the data analysis for each factor. Using an alpha level of 0.05, the data analysis showed no statistical relationship between position and factors leading to voluntary disengagement. Furthermore, all analyses showed a Cramer's value of under 0.5, indicating no practical significance. Several variables were found to have a Cramer's value between 0.1 and 0.3 indicating a weak practical significance. A summary of these findings are provided in **Table 2** below. These findings will be addressed in each section below and in the discussion in the subsequent chapter (Chapter 5).

Table 2. Practical and Statistical Analysis

<i>Table 2: Practical and Statistical Analysis</i>						
Variable:	Leadership	Operatives	P-Value	Cramer's Value	Totals:	
Lifestyle	1	2	0.891	0.031	3	
Tactics	2	2	0.329	0.218	4	
Ideology/Strategy	3	3	0.201	0.286	6	
Personnel	0	2	0.329	0.218	2	
Unable to Attack	0	2	0.329	0.218	2	
Family Pull	0	3	0.219	0.275	3	
Totals:	6	14			20	

Position and Lifestyle

Three participants were identified as voluntarily disengaging because of disillusionment with the lifestyle of terrorism: Hanif Qadir, Kuldip Singh and an IRA leader known as 'Michael'

(alias). Hanif Qadir traveled from the UK to Afghanistan to join Al-Qaeda in the early 2000's, but left almost immediately after seeing the conditions the operatives were fighting in (Horgan, 2009). Kuldip Singh was an operative for the Khalistan Liberation Force, however, he surrendered to the police force in 2000, stating his desire to start a new life (Horgan, 2009). 'Michael' had rose to a leadership position in the IRA after engaging in a number of operations, only to leave the organization after growing disenchanted with the realities of the lifestyle (Horgan, 2009). From these accounts we can infer that disenchantment with the lifestyle of a terrorist can effect both operatives and leaders. With a p-value of 0.891 and a Cramer's value of 0.031, we can conclude that there is no statistical nor practical relationship between position and voluntarily disengaging due to the lifestyle difficulties of terrorism.

Position and Tactics

Four participants were identified as voluntarily disengaging because of disagreements with the tactical and operational output of terrorism: an operative of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) known as 'Alan' (alias), Nelly Avila Moreno, Noman Benotman, and Omar bin Laden. 'Alan' had joined the UVF in the late 1960's and participated in a number of terroristic attacks only to conclude that they were ineffective for reaching the UVF's objectives (Horgan, 2009). Nelly Avila Moreno was formally among the leadership of the FARC, until surrendering to the police after a series of tactical failures (Kraul, 2008). Noman Benotman, who was the former head of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), disengaged after becoming frustrated over terrorism calling for global, rather than local, jihad (Jacobson, 2010). Omar bin Laden, the son of Osama bin Laden, became disenchanted with terrorism following the destruction in the middle east in aftermath of

9/11 (Jacobson, 2010). These accounts also indicate that tactical disagreements can prompt voluntary disengagement for both operatives and leaders. Statistically, there is no relationship between the variables as the p-value is 0.329. Similarly, with a Cramer's value of 0.218, there is only a weak practical significance between these variables.

Position and Ideology of Strategy

Disillusionment with the ideology of terrorism as a legitimate strategy was the most common factor prompting voluntary disengagement (see **Figure 2** below). Six participants were identified as voluntarily disengaging because of disillusionment with ideology of terrorism as a legitimate and justifiable strategy: Sayyid Imam al-Shaif (also known as Dr. Fadl), Abu Hadhifa, Hassan Hattab, Ed Husain, Usama Husan and Muhammed Robert Heft.

Dr. Fadl, Hadhifa and Hattab can be all considered in leadership positions within their organizations. Dr. Fadl held a leadership position within the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and was the former mentor of the current leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri. He eventually defected and went on to write a book titled *The Rationalization of Jihad*, criticizing al-Qaeda's ideology (Horgan, 2009). Abu Hadhifi was the former leader of the eastern Algeria forces of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). He eventually surrendered to the authorities after reasoning that the jihad in Algeria was illegitimate (Jacobson, 2010). Similarly, Hassan Hattab, the founder of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), left the organization after concluding that jihadist attacks had no basis in law or moral code (Jacobson, 2010).

The remaining participants can all be considered operatives in their organizations. Ed Husain, a former member of Hizt ut-Tahir (HT), become suspicious of HT ideology after observing

that other aspects of Islamic life were not being practiced by the group, eventually realizing that jihad was an illegitimate practice. Likewise, Muhammed Robert Heft, a Canadian who went to fight against the United States in Iraq, left after realizing that the Iraqi government was not religiously educated, concluding that jihad was just a tool they were using to fight a war (Jacobson, 2010). Usama Husan originally joined al-Qaeda during the 1980's, but officially turned away from the organization after growing frustrated with Islam becoming equated to terrorism in the public eye (Jacobson, 2010).

These accounts indicate that disagreements with the ideology of terrorism as a strategy can facilitate voluntary disengagement for both operatives and leaders. Statistically, there is no relationship between the variables as the p-value is 0.201, and practically, there is only a weak significance between the variables as the Cramer's value is only 0.286.

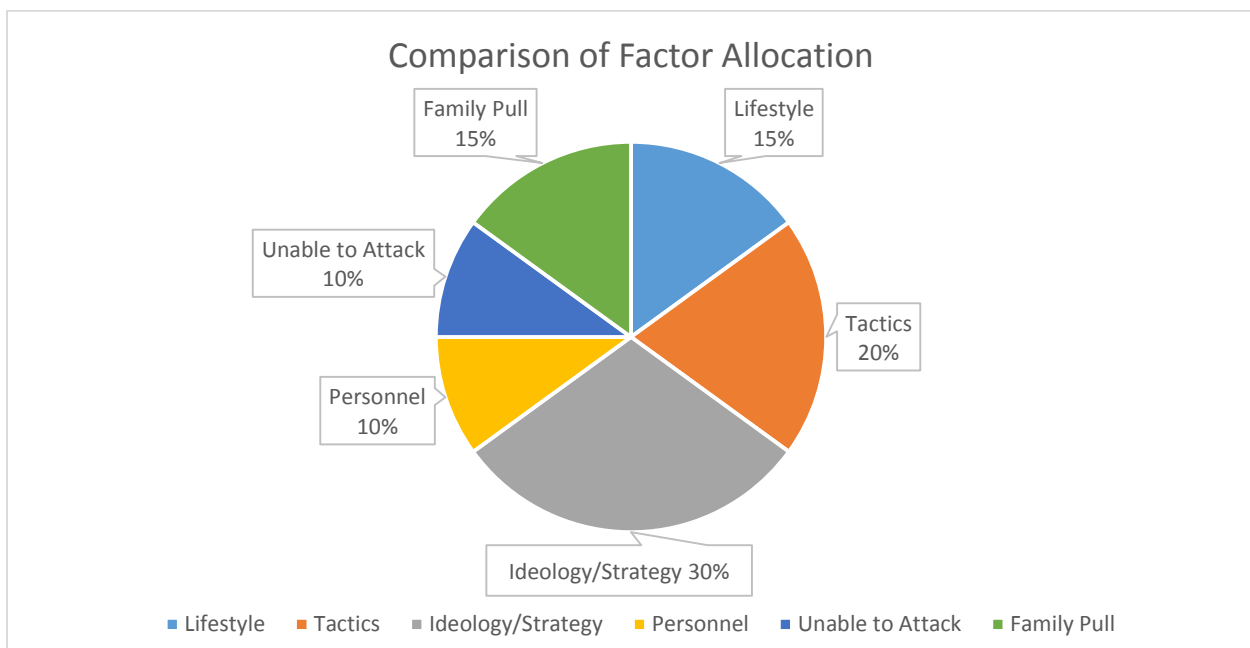


Figure 2. Comparison of Factor Allocation

Position and Personnel Disagreements

The last factors were only found among operatives in terrorist organizations (see **Figure 3** below). Two participants were identified as voluntarily disengaging because of disagreements with personnel: al-Qaeda operatives L’Houssaine Kherchtou and Essam al-Ridi. Kerchtou was trained to be a pilot for Osama bin Laden, but defected after they got into a finical argument over al-Qaeda refusal to pay for a cesarean section for Kherchtou’s wife (Horgan, 2009). Al-Ridi, who provided operational support to al-Qaeda, defected from the organization because he was unable to get along with bin Laden, who he believed was incompetent (Jacobson, 2010). While this particular factor only occurred in operatives, it is likely only due to chance. With a p-value of 0.329 and a Cramer’s value of 0.218, we can conclude that there is no statistical nor practical relationship between position and voluntarily disengaging due to disagreements with personnel.

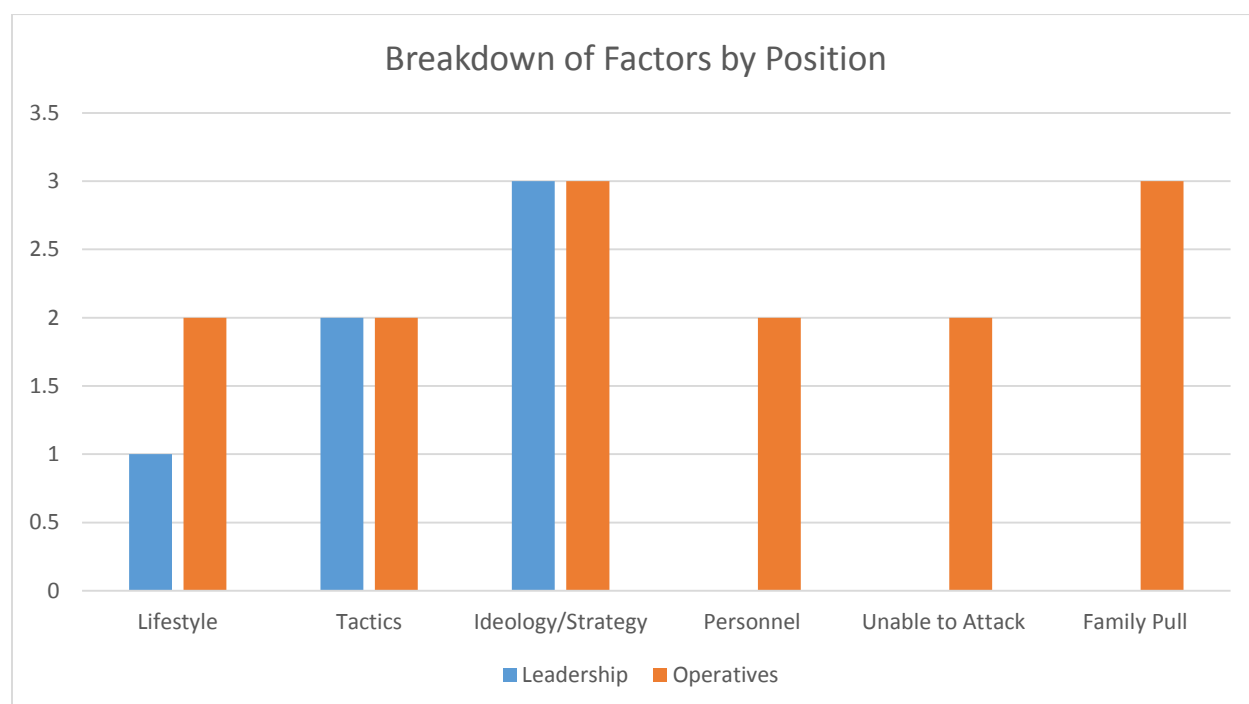


Figure 3. Breakdown of Factors by Position

Position and Attacks

Two participants were identified as voluntarily disengaging because of an inability to carry out attacks: Tawfik Hamid and Manfo Kwaku Asiedu. Hamid was a member of EIJ and was tasked with kidnapping and murdering an Egyptian police officer. He was unable to carry out the task due to a personal inability to carry out violence and soon left the organization (Jacobson, 2010). Asiedu was convicted of assisting the 21 July 2005 London bombings, however, he had not carried out his attack. Reportedly, he abandoned his end of the plot and turned himself into the police, evidently fearful of carrying out the attack (Jacobson, 2010). As stated to above, the factor was likely only found in operatives due to chance. With a p-value of 0.329 and a Cramer's value of 0.218, we can conclude that there is no statistical nor practical relationship between position and voluntarily disengaging due to an inability to carry out attacks.

Position and Families

Three participants were identified as voluntarily disengaging because of the pull factor of family ties and obligations: al-Qaeda operatives Mushabib al-Hamlan, Saud al-Rashid and Sajid Badat. Mushabib al-Hamlan and Saud al-Rashid were operatives who were to participate in the 9/11 attack on the United States. Both individuals reportedly left al-Qaeda after returning home to their families. Evidently, their families had convinced them not to engage in terrorism (Jacobson, 2010). Sajid Badat was a co-conspirator to a shoe bombing attack against an aircraft. Reports indicate that he cut ties with his handler after returning home to his family, who were able to convince him not to continue his life in terrorism (Jacobson, 2010). These factors were likely also only identified in operatives due to chance. With a p-value of 0.219 and a Cramer's value of 0.275,

we can conclude that there is no statistical nor practical relationship between position and voluntarily disengaging due a family pull. The reasons for these findings and takeaways from the analysis will be discussed in the subsequent chapter (Chapter 5).

Chapter 5

Discussion

According to the analysis, a link between a terrorist's position and factors prompting disengagement remain unsupported. All factors failed to show practical or statistical significance. While some variables showed a Cramer's value of between 0.1 and 0.3, the practical significance remains weak. This may be due to the fact that factors prompting disengagement have a 'creeping' effect (Horgan, 2009). For example, take the case of the IRA leader 'Michael', who became disenchanted with the lifestyle of terrorism. This factor likely began as he was an operative and happened to cross a threshold while he was at a leadership position. On the other hand, he may have been under the impression that being in a leadership position would offer the lifestyle he had initially envisioned prior to becoming an operative. This is supported by findings on gang disengagement. One study demonstrated that disengagement is not necessarily a linear process, but instead a series of 'zigzags' overtime (Decker, Pyrooz & Moule, 2010).

The largest drawback of this study is the lack of available data. While several accounts of former terrorists exist in the literature, only a fraction of accounts contain terrorists who had voluntarily disengaged at an individual level. Researchers should continue reaching out to former terrorists and encourage ex-terrorists to speak out on their experiences. This issue can also be potentially rectified by providing analyses with data on disengaged gang members.

A second drawback of the study is the possibility that terrorists do not disengage due to one single factor. Researches note that disengagement is a complex phenomenon often comprising several reinforcing factors (Hwang et al., 2013). This study attempted to single out the factor which

was the deciding factor facilitating disengagement. It is possible that these factors were only straws, the last of which prompted the disengagement process. In this view, perhaps these participants experienced multiple factors, yet a threshold was crossed at some point, resulting in disengagement. Additional studies can focus on qualitative, rather than quantitative, narratives which seek to describe the process among the various positions held by terrorists.

A further drawback to the study is a lack of detailed literature regarding positions held by terrorists. As noted in the literature review, terrorists often hold a variety of roles and responsibilities, limiting the ability for detailed analysis on the topic. Nonetheless, analysis on positions in an individual terror groups may prove fruitful, as homogeneity is likely another large factor preventing this sort of analysis across terrorism as an academic topic. These findings are summarized with the literature on the purpose of the study in the subsequent concluding chapter (Chapter 6).

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study was based on the need to understand terrorists as individual consumers of counter narratives (Horgan, 2009). To further that goal, the study attempted to differentiate among individual terrorists to better construct narratives that might lead to disengagement. This study failed to provide any support to the idea that terrorists position types may disengage for different reasons. Nevertheless, a number of recommendations have been developed as general guidelines to encourage disengagement among individuals in terrorist organizations. Jacobson (2010) argues that public messaging should undermine the leadership, demonstrate hypocrisy in terror groups, challenge ideology, and focus on the reality of life as a terrorist. Furthermore, he argues that stronger partnerships involving families and non-law enforcement mechanisms can facilitate disengagement. Finally, he argues that the development of disengagement programs involve a counter-radicalization forum targeted on prisons and susceptible cell members. Academics emphasize that the programs need to be tailor-made and customized to the culture and society they will be directed towards (Rabasa et al., 2010). Most importantly, they need to offer training to provide employment opportunities in post-terrorist life. Academics, law enforcement and intelligence agencies should collaborate to create initiatives aimed at facilitating disengagement of vulnerable terrorist cell members.

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- Analyzed the cybersecurity governance oversight structure of a client working in international development
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