"JIHAD IS THE WAY AND DEATH FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH IS OUR HIGHEST ASPIRATION": A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF SAYYID QUTB'S *MILESTONES*

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Communication

May 2013

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

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Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank you:

To Dr. Rogan, R2, without whose guidance, insight, and relentless patience this project would have been impossible.

To Dr. Llewellyn, whose words of wisdom and wisdom with words have been invaluable.

To Dr. Williams, whose infectious passion for rhetoric (and Burke) inspired me on this path.

To Dr. Louden, who is a ray of sunshine, and has taught me more than he knows.

To my parents, whose unwavering support has been a blessing and a constant source of strength.

To Kristy, who slogged through this process alongside me and without whom grad school might have been a total drag.

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Abstract

The volatile dynamic between radical Islamists and Western society is well established, often revealing itself through violent acts of terrorism. This ongoing conflict has prompted a spike of critical interest in the communication between extremists and the outsiders they perceive as enemies, generating a fuller understanding of extremist ideology critical to counter-terrorism efforts. While this intergroup communication has remained a focus among scholars, the *intragroup* communication within these radical groups is also of significant importance and has remained widely unexamined.

This intragroup discourse allows group members to develop shared perceptions of identity and the nature of their conflict with the outside world; it is this process of sensemaking that justifies and enables the often-violent action of extremist groups. This project takes an important step toward an understanding of radical Islamism with a comprehensive analysis of a text widely cited and regarded as instrumental in developing the ideology of today's radical Islam: Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*. A close rhetorical critique of the text will illuminate how Qutb's work creates meaning through a narrative that defines the worldview of his adherents. The aim of this analysis is to inform a counter-narrative strategy to challenge and prevent the continued spread of radical ideology.

INTRODUCTION

September 11, 2012. Eleven years after the morning that made this date infamous, the American flag that hung at half-mast in remembrance of 9/11's victims was torn down and reduced to shreds. Amid angry shouts of anti-American sentiment, a mob of protestors armed with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades attacked the United States Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, setting it on fire and killing four Americans, including the U.S. Ambassador.[1] As fires blazed in Benghazi, thousands of Egyptian dissenters stormed over the walls of the United States Embassy compound in Cairo. The impassioned crowd destroyed a second American flag that hung outside, replacing it with a black flag emblematic of Islamist radicals including Al Qaeda.[2]

Consensus among initial news reports suggested the violence was sparked by indignation from the Muslim community at an American-made video depicting unflattering representations of the prophet Muhammad.[3] However, the video in question had been posted online months prior and the day's events were not isolated incidents, having been preceded in recent months by several acts of violence and vandalism against Western diplomatic missions in the region. As details surrounding the events continued to unfold, it became evident that the source of the conflict was more deep-rooted.

The demonstrations that began in Cairo on that Tuesday intensified throughout the week with violent protests in nearly 20 countries across the eastern hemisphere.

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[1] CNN Wire Staff , "U.S. vows to hunt down perpetrators of Benghazi attack," *CNN.com*, September 12, 2012. http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/12/world/africa/libya-us-ambassador-killed/index.html.
[2] David D. Kirkpatrick, "Anger Over a Film Fuels Anti-American Attacks in Libya and Egypt," *New York Times*, September 11, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/12/world/middleeast/anger-over-film-fuels-anti-american-attacks-in-libya-and-egypt.html.
[3] Ibid.

Eastern Afghanistan saw demonstrators burning an effigy of President Obama, while American embassies in Tunisia and Sudan were invaded by more angry demonstrators, leaving at least three dead and 28 injured. In all, the U.S. State Department documented emergency reports of violence from 65 American embassies. [4] The hostility continued for days, with pointed anti-American sentiment.

In Iraq, thousands of dissenters took to the streets throughout the country with banners emblazoned with Islamic slogans pointedly disparaging the United States and Israel and demanded the expulsion of American diplomats from the country. An American school in Tunisia was ransacked and set on fire by demonstrators while news reports described hundreds of protestors in Syria chanting anti-American slogans outside a defunct American Embassy in Damascus. [5] As the *New York Times* reported, "the broadening of the protests appeared to reflect a pent-up resentment of Western powers in general." Deaths and injuries were reported in Cairo, Lebanon, and Egyptian Sinai as protests continued in Gaza, Yemen, Bangladesh, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nigeria, and even Sydney, Australia. [6]

The intensity and scope of these events illustrate a violent and increasingly relevant clash of worldviews that has become central to international politics. Osama bin Laden may be dead, but the militant, anti-Western ideology he espoused is thriving. As this radical worldview continues to spread and strengthen, so does the need to understand it. However, anti-Western sentiment in the U.S. is commonly dismissed as unpatriotic

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[4] Rick Gladstone, "Anti-American Protests Flare Beyond the Mideast," *New York Times*, September 14, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/15/world/middleeast/anti-american-protests-over-film-enter-4th-day.html.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

drivel, hardly fodder for intellectual consideration. This reticence to engage critically with the extremist ideologies that justify and endorse radical behavior is prevalent in American popular culture and ensures the continuation of a fundamental misunderstanding of a formidable adversary.

The predominant political impulse is to relegate acts of anti-Americanism to the realm of psychological illness, providing "an immediate, scientific, and ultimately comforting explanation at a time when straight-forward explanations are in great demand."[7] However, as literary theorist Kenneth Burke warns, these reactions contribute "more to our gratification than our enlightenment."[8] In contrast, a critical examination of radical Islamist ideology yields insight that is critical to informed action, a must in the high-stakes war on terror.

Bruce Hoffman, terrorism authority and former director at the RAND Research Institute, asserts, "although many reasons are often cited for the current stasis in America's war on terrorism . . . the real cause is at once as basic as it is prosaic: we still don't know, much less, understand our enemy."[9] Academic analysis of terrorist communication has progressed considerably since September 11, 2001. As scholars have recognized the critical importance of understanding our country's opponents, research has advanced across disciplines, including communication. The work of these scholars has substantially enhanced domestic understanding of Islamist adversaries and continues

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[7] Christina Hellmich, "Creating the Ideology of Al Qaeda: From Hypocrites to Salafi-Jihadists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (2008): 113.
[8] Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941), 191.
[9] Hellmich, 112.

to inform counter-terrorism efforts. However, there remains a significant need to investigate more thoroughly the fundamental ideology that motivates radical groups.

Communication scholarship has begun to uncover these motivations with analysis of contemporary terrorist communiqués and manifestoes.[10] What remains lacking is a shift of focus to gain an understanding of "the organization's inner logic"[11] through examination of texts from early radical Islamist thinkers whose words were foundational in the development of the ideology that motivates today's radicals. Fundamental Islam is a past-oriented culture.[12] While the belief system of Western nations tends to be forward-focused, valuing the present and future over the past, the ideology of radical Islam is defined by historical values and traditions. This fact indicates the relevance of a fuller understanding of primary, foundational texts to informed counter-terrorism efforts.

Extremist organizations such as al Qaeda have powerful historical antecedents at their core. Al Qaeda is grounded in the conviction that contemporary Muslim leadership has caused the downfall of today's Muslim community by permitting itself to become sullied by Western values. The group advocates a return to the pure, original tenets of the Islamic faith to rescue the Muslim world from certain demise from continued toxic Western influence. This defining traditional focus of extremist Islamist groups reinforces the critical need for a systematic investigation of primary, historical texts to illuminate

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[10] Randall G. Rogan, "Jihad Against Infidels and Democracy: A Frame Analysis of Jihadist Ideology and Jurisprudence for Martyrdom and Violent Jihad," *Communication Monographs* 77 (2010); Robert C. Rowland and Kirsten Theye, "The Symbolic DNA of Terrorism," *Communication Monographs* 75 (2008), among others.

[11] Hellmich, 119.

[12] A facet of an intercultural concept known as chronemics, as discussed by Myron Q. Lustig and Jolene Koester, *Intercultural Competence*, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 192.

"the view from 'within'"[13] to better understand the ideologues who shape these radical

worldviews

Additionally, while the well-established conflict between radical Islamist

extremists and Western society has prompted a spike of critical interest in the

communication between them, the study of the *intragroup* communication within these

groups is of considerable importance. The vast majority of research focuses on extremist

manifestoes and communiqués, illuminating the dynamic between radical groups and the

outsiders they consider enemies.[14] A significant deficiency in existing scholarship lies in

a lethargic treatment of the communication that occurs *within* radical groups themselves.

This intragroup discourse, as communication scholar Bonnie Johnson highlights,

is a necessary process that defines and develops group members' perceptions of their

relationship with the outside world. This process is essential for group members to

develop "equivalent images of the nature of the enemy, the nature of the conflict, and

appropriate actions to be taken to carry on or resolve the conflict."[15] In other words, it is

intragroup discourse that makes unified action possible by allowing group members to

align themselves with one another ideologically. It is critical, therefore, to examine the

substance of extremist groups' intragroup communication processes to gain a thorough

understanding of the way their members justify radical action.

This project takes an important step toward such an understanding with a

comprehensive analysis of a text widely cited and regarded as instrumental in developing

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[13] Hellmich, 119.

[14] Rogan; Rowland & Theye, and others.

[15] Bonnie McD. Johnson, "Images of the Enemy in Intergroup Conflict," *Central States Speech Journal* 26 (1975): 85.

the ideology of today's radical Islam: Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*. Qutb envisions an

"active, harmonious, and cooperative group" [16] to carry out the ideological imperatives he

presents in *Milestones*. In order to achieve this seamlessly functioning unit, he must

create and develop a comprehensive image of reality powerful enough to compel would-

be believers and incite adherents to action. Despite its pervasive influence throughout

radical Islam, this project represents the first comprehensive examination of *Milestones*

within the field of communication. A close rhetorical critique of his text will illuminate

how Qutb's work creates meaning through narratives that define the worldview of his

audience.

Qutb's foundational narratives continue to permeate the thought structures of

radical Islamist groups such as those behind the widespread violence of September 11,

2012, and the mass casualties of September 11, 2001, which continue to flourish across

the globe. However, the implications of the swelling membership of these extremist

organizations are evident not only in isolated terrorist acts. As they continue to gain

political power, the radical ideology of these groups manifests itself in ways that

influence populations in malicious and deliberate, if less overtly violent, ways.

On March 14, 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood publicly and forcefully denounced

the UN's recent declaration to prevent violence against women. The declaration called

for women's basic equal rights, access to birth control, divorce rights, ability to travel,

and the right to sue her husband in the case of rape.[17] In a formal response, the

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[16] Sayyid Qutb. *Milestones*, 2nd ed. Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Ilm, 48.

[17] Charlene Gubash, "Analysis: Will UN declaration on violence against women change Egypt?" *NBCNews.com*, March 16, 2013. http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/03/16/17339633-analysis-will-un-declaration-on-violence-against-women-change-egypt

Brotherhood decried the UN declaration, asserting that its title is "euphemistic," that its

principles "undermine Islamic ethics" and, if ratified, would "lead to complete

disintegration of society" and "destroy the family."[18] The Brotherhood's statement is

telling; its fierce and immediate rejection of such basic provisions indicates a defining

ideology primitive and discriminatory enough to deny these rights to women, raising

questions concerning other broader potential objectives.

Even more concerning is the real and growing power of the Muslim Brotherhood,

particularly in Egypt. The organization's statements were not refuted by Egypt's

presidency, suggesting its tacit agreement. Meanwhile, Hamas, another militant Islamist

organization deemed a terrorist group by the US, EU, and Israel, has recently mandated

gender separation in middle and high schools in Gaza, and continues to enforce

discriminatory legislation against women.[19] Authoritarian moves like this one and those

of the Muslim Brotherhood continue to alarm and raise concern regarding the groups'

intentions to ultimately establish fundamentalist sharia law as their political power

strengthens. As the influence of radical Islamist groups continues to grow, so must

critical scholarship of its workings. The ideology of the Brotherhood and other radical

groups will be discussed further in the following section which will contextualize this

project historically, politically, and theoretically.

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[18] IkhwanWeb. "Muslim Brotherhood Statement Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principles," *IkhwanWeb: The Muslim Brotherhood's Official English Website*, March 14, 2013. http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30731.

[19] "Who are Hamas?" *BBC.co.uk*, January 4, 2009. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1654510.stm; Ibrahim Barzak and Dalia Nammari, ""Gender Segregation Now Mandatory in Gaza Schools," *Associated Press*, April 2, 2013. http://bigstory.ap.org/article/womens-group-slams-gaza-law-gender-segregation.

CHAPTER I: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sayyid Qutb: The Man, the Martyr

An Egyptian scholar, thinker, and prolific writer, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) was outspoken and commanding in his view of Islam as the unequivocal solution to the ills of humanity. In his most famous work, *Ma'alim fi-l-Tariq*, known in English as *Milestones*, Qutb articulates the radical Islamic worldview that undergirds militant organizations including the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Qaeda.[20] One of Islamism's most influential ideologues, his writing has shaped the principles and the vision of today's extremist Islam, a militant ideology substantiates its controversial and often violent actions. At its heart is a profound hatred for Western modernity and traditional values.

Qutb became the first Islamist to declare a cultural war against the insidious influence of the United States and Western civilization, a sentiment that developed in his political writings into the early 1960's. Qutb long believed the sanctity of Egypt's culture, a culture very much shaped by the influence of Islam, had been sullied by its citizens' eager acceptance of Western values and practices. He believed this move toward foreign culture caused "imbalance and disharmony" in his native society and was particularly concerned with the "dehumanizing" influence of materialism.[21] Qutb's response to this shift toward materialism and modernity was a philosophy of "moral rearmament," a theme strongly inspired by the ideology of Hassan al-Banna, founder of

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[20] The *Al Qaeda Manual* cites Qutb as a source of inspiration.
[21] John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 90-91.

the Muslim Brotherhood.[22] As Qutb's political career and influence progressed, these early themes became central tropes in his work.

Qutb's socio-political perspective was shaped strongly by a concern for cultural identity. He believed that civilizations were comprised of a mix of cultures that can interact fruitfully with one another while maintaining their core identities.[23] Qutb's concern for the compromise of Egypt's culture at the hands of the profoundly morally flawed Western character fueled his notions of nationalism.[24] His concern with social justice was fueled by the belief that "only projects suited to the worldview of the people . . . could deliver Egyptians from the curse of poverty."[25] Qutb sought an ideological solution to the ills he perceived to be plaguing his native country, an ideology that addressed his concern for its cultural identity while shielding it from the destructive, modernizing influence of the West.[26]

Qutb developed this ideology through Islam, finding in the Islamic vocabulary an ideological autonomy, a language untouched by Western influence. Most importantly, Qutb believed Islam's tenets provided the social justice he believed so crucial and fulfilled spiritual needs while satisfying political ones.[27] Qutb's biographer, John Calvert, believes this duality had profound appeal to Qutb personally, that Islam fulfilled Qutb's own spiritual cravings: "Since boyhood, Qutb had displayed a spiritual temper and a relentless desire for self-transcendence. Islamism captured and disciplined his native disposition, enabling him to indulge his nature in ways that were politically

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[22] Calvert, 92.
[23] Calvert, 96.
[24] Calvert, 118.
[25] Calvert, 125.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Calvert, 128.

creative and authentic to the person he was."[28] This duality of social and spiritual

fulfillment became central to Qutb's later writings and to his view of Islam as humanity's

saving grace.

True of many writers, Qutb's personal experience shaped the development of his

ideology and was reflected in his writing. A two-year sojourn in the United States and an

extended prison sentence in Egypt were two of these influences. While many believe

Qutb's time in America drastically influenced and fueled his anti-Western resentment and

distrust, these sentiments were firmly in place before Qutb's journey. He took the trip

alone, however, experiencing America as a lone Muslim surrounded by non-Muslim

strangers, a dynamic which did make an important contribution to the development of

Qutb's worldview. The marked contrast between his culture and America's "[sharpened]

the vertical line of distinction that separated his authentic moral self from its corruption

from Western otherness."[29] This disparity became central to the ideology he espoused

throughout his political career.

This line was further sharpened during his decade-long sentence as an inmate in

an Egyptian prison, a period during which Qutb's political views intensified from

relatively moderate nationalism to brazen Islamic extremism. Incarcerated for the vague

charge of "anti-government activity," Qutb's sentence became a test of will and faith in

Islamic identity, one the prison guards relentlessly endeavored to break.[30] The struggle

resulted in a metamorphosis of faith for Qutb. Estranged from the outside world and kept

company by his fellow Muslim Brothers and a copy of the Qur'an, he continued to write.

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Calvert, 142.
[30] Calvert, 194, 197.

Milestones was the seminal product of this time period and a shift toward the radical from his more moderate previous works.[31]

During a conflict one day, prison guards opened fire on the inmates, killing and injuring dozens of Muslim Brothers. The event was startling for Qutb and left him deeply anguished, a sentiment that quickly turned to intense bitterness and anger. He came to believe the guards, agents of Nasser's regime, had conspired to instigate the conflict to justify the massacre.[32] Qutb framed the ordeal as evidence of the regime's true nature, manipulated by the pernicious influence of Zionists and Western "crusaders," particularly the United States.[33] The murders became the last straw for Qutb; his indignation and outrage fueled an ideological shift toward concern for the whole of humanity. Qutb had long believed in the notion of Islamic identity and that it "should trump all other articulations of belonging," but this belief became permeated with a distinct urgency.[34] The killings of his comrades reinforced Qutb's perception of a lack of humanity in other belief systems; he believed Islam alone provided that humanity and thus was the salvation of the human race.

Throughout his incarceration, Qutb lived the values he preached, displaying "a capacity to live an essentially moral life in an environment of immoral and inhumane conditions. In ordinary gestures of dignity and care for others, he evinced an ability inwardly to transcend the dismal conditions of his incarceration."[35] His presence became regarded by Muslim Brothers inside and outside prison walls with high esteem. When, in

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[31] Calvert, 202-203.
[32] Calvert, 202.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Calvert, 161.
[35] Calvert, 201.

1964, he was released from prison only to be arrested again and sentenced to death, the stage had been set for Qutb's martyrdom. His followers throughout the Muslim world protested the sentence and Nasser soon realized the destabilizing implications of Qutb's impending execution.

Qutb's sister was sent to him to deliver the message that Nasser was willing to show mercy if her brother would pen a confession. Qutb refused. "My words will be stronger if they kill me," he said.[36] It would appear that his prophecy was accurate. He was executed after refusing the deal and, since his death, his influence has been pervasive, evident throughout today's radical Islam. Qutb's ideological consequence has been compared to that of Hitler and he has been deemed "as significant [to Islamism] as Lenin was to Communism."[37] The sweeping influence of Qutb's work has earned him the designation of "[the radical Islamic] Karl Marx" and, unequivocally, "the Arab world's first important theoretician of the Islamist cause."[38] However, despite the seeming consensus regarding the significance of Qutb's work, there is a dearth of critical communication scholarship that provides a thorough analysis of the *Milestones* manuscript. The aim of this project is to perform that critical analysis, contributing insight into the way Qutb's historic work informs the prevailing contemporary radical Islamic ideology. The immediate relevance of this investigation must be considered in

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[36] Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (First Vintage Books: New York, 2007), 31.

[37] Malise Ruthven, "Righteous and Wrong," *The New York Review of Books*, August 19, 2010, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/aug/19/righteous-wrong/;
Malise Ruthven, *A Fury For God: the Islamist Attack on America* (London: Granta Books, 2004), 84.

[38] Paul Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," *New York Times Magazine*, March 23, 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/magazine/the-philosopher-of-islamic-terror.html;
Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (W. W. Norton and Co.: New York, 2003), 62.

the context of radical Islam's political progression in the Middle East, a force advanced

largely by the growing Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood

Widely considered the world's most influential Islamist organization, the Muslim

Brotherhood is "the mother of all Islamist movements," currently recognized as the "most

well-organized political force in Europe." [39] It is also one of the three armed factions

which formed what is now known as al Qaeda.[40] Though the Brotherhood touts itself as

a pragmatic organization in its current political endeavors, its idealistic ideological claims

are met with skepticism by outsiders in light of the group's radical roots.

The organization's militant motto has persisted since the group's inception:

"Allah is our objective, the prophet [Mohammed] is our leader, the Qur'an is our law,

jihad is our way, death for the sake of Allah is our most exalted aspiration,"[41] a sharp

contrast to its professed ideology of social justice, education, and health. The group has

historically espoused a mission of radical Islamism and anti-Western ideology and is

perceived "as an authentic response to the hegemony of 'Western occupation,'"[42]

furthering American concern as the group continues to expand its influence throughout

the Middle East and Europe.

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[39] Jayshree Bajoria, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 25, 2012,
http://www.cfr.org/africa/egypts-muslim-brotherhood/p23991;
The Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center. *The Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab World and Islamic Communities in Western Europe,* January, 2012. Accessed October 21, 2012.
http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/17806, p. 2.
[40] Paul Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," p. 1.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," p. 3.

The Brotherhood has continued its quest for political power by securing relative majority status in the parliaments of Tunisia and Morocco.[43] In countries like Syria and Jordan where it does not yet boast formal influence, the group has joined political opposition groups with the aim of revolutionizing or overthrowing existing governments. The Brotherhood has also strengthened ties with Hamas, its counterpart in Palestine which has governed the region of Gaza since 2007, and has continued to spread its Islamist influence into European countries including Britain, Germany, and France.[44] Though the organization is expanding worldwide, of most immediate relevance to American foreign policy lies in its recent rise to power in Egypt.

The second-largest recipient of American foreign aid after Israel, Egypt has historically been a strategic political ally to the U.S. Especially given its peace treaty with Israel, Egypt's political instability is of particular diplomatic interest.[45] Although the Brotherhood did not incite the protests that led to the toppling of former President Mubarak's regime, it gained credence and significant political status in the transition, emerging from the conflict as "the best organized [political power] in the country."[46] This fact was illustrated in the results of Egypt's recent parliamentary elections in November and December of 2011 and January 2012: the first round left the Muslim

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[43] Also called a plurality, in an election with more than two options, this term indicates the candidate or party receiving the greatest number (though less than half) of the votes. In this case, the Muslim Brotherhood's relative majority status makes it the dominant political power.

[44] "Who are Hamas?" *BBC.co.*uk; The Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center, p. 57.

[45] Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, "Egypt May Be Bigger Concern than Libya for White House," *New York Times*, September 13, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/14/world/middleeast/egypt-not-libya-may-be-bigger-challenge-for-white-house.html.

[46] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center, p. 5.

Brotherhood's political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party, with 40% of the votes, increasing to 47% in the second round.[47]

Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi's controversial election in June 2012 marked the first democratic election of an "Islamist" to the office in history.[48] An avowed member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Morsi publicly renounced his membership upon election, but the president's continued allegiance to the group remains widely assumed. Later that year on November 22, Morsi made an unprecedented constitutional decree that granted him essentially unchecked political authority. This move granted Morsi the right to legislate without judicial oversight and intensified concern over the political direction of the country.[49]

A report on the Brotherhood by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (MAITI) articulates the fundamental tension that has influenced the organization's actions: [its] ultimate goal of establishing a state run according to Islamic law (Sharia'h) interferes with its need to exhibit a degree of pragmatism and flexibility necessary as the movement adapts itself to the social and political conditions in the country.[50] September's violent demonstrations in Egypt brought these conflicting interests to light. As the violence in his country intensified, Morsi was forced to choose between domestic loyalties and international obligations. The protests served as an unfortunate litmus test of the newly-elected regime's loyalty to American interests; many

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[47] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center, p. 12-13.
[48] David D. Kirkpatrick, "Named Egypt's Winner, Islamist Makes History," *New York Times*, June 24, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/25/world/middleeast/mohamed-morsi-of-muslim-brotherhood-declared-as-egypts-president.html.
[49] "English text of Morsi's Constitutional Declaration," *AhramOnline*, November 22, 2012. http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/58947.aspx.
[50] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center, p. 2.

would argue that Morsi's government failed that test by faltering in its response, raising questions regarding its true allegiances.

As the violence intensified, the president initially issued only a mild rebuke of the rioters—and on Facebook—while the Brotherhood called for more protests.[51] Not until President Obama explicitly warned Morsi that failure to protect American diplomats and denounce the anti-American violence would threaten diplomatic relations between the nations did Morsi and the Brotherhood respond with formal apologies.[52] Immediately following the violence, President Obama expressed doubt and concern regarding Egypt's status as an American ally. As ambiguity continues to surround the Brotherhood's legislative objectives, and in light of the organization's recent rise to power in Egypt and throughout the Middle East, the U.S. remains wary.

It is important to note that the Brotherhood has not gained such sweeping influence by force or political manipulation. As this project aims to illuminate, the group's ideology is one that resonates with the population of the region. Though some of Morsi's more radical moves since ascending to the presidency have met with opposition from his constituents, he was Egypt's first democratically-elected president and the Brotherhood's rise to power in surrounding countries has been legitimate.[53] The Brotherhood professes to address "the problems of the ordinary man on the street" through social welfare initiatives including education and health care as well as religious

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[51] "Mohamed Morsi," *New York Times*, September 26, 2012. http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/m/mohamed_morsi/index.

[52] David D. Kirkpatrick, Helene Cooper, and Mark Landler, "Egypt, Hearing From Obama, Moves to Heal Rift From Protests," *New York Times*, September 13, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/14/world/middleeast/egypt-hearing-from-obama-moves-to-heal-rift-from-protests.

[53] "New president: Egypt turns page to new era," *CNN.com*, June 30, 2012. http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/30/world/africa/egypt-morsi/index.html.

guidance in its network of mosques.[54] It is important, then, to understand the mindset of

the man on the street; an investigation into the ideology of the group must carefully

consider its audience.

In a telephone interview from Tripoli, Libya, shortly after the riots on September

11 of last year, Rob Malley, the Middle East-North African program director for the

International Crisis Group[55] described the region's population: "We have, throughout the

Arab world, a young, unemployed, alienated and radicalized group of people . . . who

have found a vehicle to express themselves."[56] Malley's comment brings to light a

crucial issue. In order to make sense of the region's violent uprisings, one must begin

with a sense of the turbulent socio-economic state of the Muslim world and an

understanding of the ways in which this troubled environment influences the region's

residents.

It is important to note that, although Arab Muslims comprise the dominant

demographic group in the Middle East, the region is also home to members of other faith

groups including Jews and Christians. The focus of this project, however, is on the

ideology of radical Islamism, a belief system whose influence has swelled considerably

throughout the region. What follows is a discussion of the troubled social, political, and

economic state of the region with specific regard to the way these issues contribute to the

growth of a movement.

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[54] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center, p. 3.
[55] The organizations website defines the group as "an independent, non-profit, non-governmental
organization committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict." The ICG focuses its efforts on
research and high-level advocacy to end conflict in troubled regions. http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/about.
[56] Rick Gladstone, "Anti-American Protests Flare Beyond the Mideast."

Situational Influences

The Middle East faces a multi-dimensional crisis with far-reaching implications. At its root is the region's failure to assimilate into the global economy.[57] The devastating reality of its faltering economy is aggravated by several significant social, demographic, and political factors unique to the region. Each of these factors contributes to an environment ripe for the growth of radical Islam as a movement, a phenomenon which must be understood from the perspective of the region's citizens.

As described by Alan Richards in a policy brief by the Center for Global International & Regional Studies (CGIRS), "the utopian fanaticism of al-Qaeda and other groups is nourished by the deep despair of huge numbers of young Middle Easterners, two-thirds of whom are below the age of 30, half of whom are younger than 20, and 40% of whom have yet to reach their fifteenth birthday."[58] A phenomenon described as the "youth bulge," it is "the first major social element in the noxious cocktail of religious radicalism in the region."[59] Additionally, in recent years and for the first time in history, school enrollment and literacy rates in the region have risen dramatically, meaning that much of this young population has received some education. This combination of youth and education has several significant implications.

To begin, Islam has experienced a "crisis of authority," a function of widespread education and a lack of hierarchical religious controls. The resulting "religious anarchy"

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[57] Alan Richards, "Global Policy Brief: Explaining the Appeal of Islamic Radicals," *Center for Global International & Regional Studies* 1 (2003): 2.
[58] Ibid, 3.
[59] Ibid.

creates the rhetorical space for radicals to reach prospective followers.[60] Another factor is widespread job dissatisfaction, a consequence of a weak economy and meager education system, producing citizens just educated enough to be dissatisfied with the menial labor that comprises much of the available work. Finally, as available jobs dwindle and the population continues to swell, the region's labor force is expanding at an alarming rate: four times as quickly as America's labor force and eight times as rapidly as that of Europe.[61] In short, the region is characterized by a somewhat educated, young, and increasingly dissatisfied labor force.

Intensifying this discontentment is the fact that unemployment levels are rising along with poverty levels while wages remain stagnant. Additional elements are at work as well. Rapid urbanization is one of these aggravating factors: "the basic profile for the rank-and-file of today's violent radical Islamic groups is a young person with some education, who may also have recently moved to the city."[62] Drawn by illusions of prosperity, many of the region's residents migrate to cities from surrounding impoverished rural areas. The resulting overpopulation exposes the weaknesses of a strained urban infrastructure, undermining the legitimacy of a struggling government by exposing its inefficiencies. These failures of government function to decrease nationalism while breeding distrust in the existing power structure.

Growth of a Movement

This combination of an inadequate education system, failing economy and infrastructure, and an overwhelmingly young demographic growing increasingly

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[60] Richards, 6.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Richards, 8.

distrustful of its government has powerful influence on the appeal of a movement, like

radical Islam, framed as a vehicle for change. As Eric Hoffer suggests in *The True*

Believer, an examination of the social psychological elements necessary for the creation

of a mass movement, the desire for change is perhaps the most powerful of these

precipitating factors. In order to be susceptible to the ideology of a movement, a

population must desire a shift from its current reality. Conditions in the Middle East are

ripe for its inhabitants to embrace an ideology that promises a positive change.

Hoffer adds that in order for people to embrace the tenets of such a movement,

they must be intensely discontented with their current state of affairs, yet not destitute.

The distinction is an important one; people in destitution are concerned with achieving

only the basic needs essential to survival, a state which renders them relatively

invulnerable to the idealistic promises of silver-tongued ideologues. In contrast, though

also poor, discontented populations have established those fundamental necessities,

leaving awareness to aspire for more. In Hoffer's words, such a population "must have

the feeling that by the possession of some potent doctrine, infallible leader or some new

technique they have access to a source of irresistible power."[63] Like the young,

somewhat educated populace in much of the Middle East, a people's desire to improve its

meager surroundings intensifies its susceptibility to an ideology that promises just that.

As a whole, the Middle Eastern population is poor but without the hopelessness of

destitution, a key fact as the region's citizens' hope for progress fuels their reception of

radical Islamist ideology which promises the return of the past glory of Islam. With its

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[63] Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (Harper & Row: New York, 1951), 11.

ineptitude resulting in the miserable reality of many, the overwhelming perception is that that the government has failed them; radical Islam is, in contrast, a doctrine the people believe they can trust. As Richards of CGIRS describes, "The one place in the slums which is cool while the outside is hot, the one place which is clean while the outside is filthy, the one place which is calm where the outside is only chaos—is the mosque."[64] Thus, both physically and figuratively, Islam provides a sanctuary for a region that struggles economically and socio-politically.

Salafism

In order fully to understand the function of radical Islam in the region's society, it is important to consider the substance of radical Islamism, specifically the growing Salafi movement. Salafists believe in a society defined by a purified Islam, a return to the Islam practiced and preached by the prophet Mohammed and his companions in the early 7th century A.D., which would bring with it the divine blessings these early believers enjoyed.

Karen Armstrong argues that this fundamental view of Islam in response to the Middle East's current socio-economic crisis is consistent with a pattern of ideological reactions to historical crises that have afflicted the region. Historically, citizens have credited the prosperity of their empire to the goodwill of a supreme deity; therefore when the empire falters, its people conclude that they are no longer in the deity's favor. At this juncture, religious extremists arise and appeal to followers, urging them back to "the

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[64] Richards, 9.

golden age," to the purity of the faith's original vision and teachings of its founders, thereby ostensibly restoring honor and prosperity to the region.[65]

This pattern has transpired multiple times throughout the history of Islam, most recently with the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century, and it appears the same nostalgic elements are at work in response to the region's current socio-economic crisis. Ideologues "obscure the past with an idealistic remembrance of the Golden Age, and they separate the pure from the impure."[66] This rhetorical move, shifting focus from a crumbling empire to a previous age of religious purity, is an important ideological shift, and illustrates the transformational promise of radical Islamism in Middle Eastern society. With its focus on utopian visions of a religiously pure and economically comfortable historical period, the ideology of fundamental Islam becomes a rhetorical salve for millions of increasingly discontented citizens of the region.

This discontentment also finds expression in the fierce anti-Americanism that characterizes radical Islamism. The relationship between the West and the Middle East has been one of intense friction and conflict as far back as the Crusades; the current tide of anti-Westernism that pervades Islamism is a complex yet powerful relationship fueled by hundreds of years of discord. As discussed by Reuven Paz in the *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (MERIA), the roots of the region's anti-American sentiment are deep, having been influenced historically by the anti-Western atmosphere of a series of secular Arab regimes. True for generations, millions of Arabs were raised in a culture

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[65] Jonathan R. White, "Background to the Middle East," in *Terrorism and Homeland Security*, 6th ed., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing), 191.
[66] White, 191.

permeated with anti-American sentiment and slogans, indoctrinated with the perception of the United States as an enemy that conspired against them.[67]

In short, anti-Americanism is endemic in Middle Eastern culture, and finds significant expression in radical Islamist ideology. Of particular significance in understanding contemporary Islamist anti-Americanism is the sense of confronting a conspiracy, a pivotal notion in the development of Islamist ideology, providing its primary justification and motive for the illustration of the "American enemy."[68] This justification serves a crucial rhetorical function and, as Hoffer suggests, is a vital element in the development of a movement: "Mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a God, but never without belief in a devil."[69]

So significant is the focus on a "devil" to a movement's ideology that, as Hoffer suggests "the strength of a mass movement is proportionate to the vividness and tangibility of its devil."[70] The notion of a common enemy serves a formidable motive force; Hoffer asserts that hatred, the emotion that accompanies the identification of a devil, "is the most accessible and comprehensive of all unifying agents."[71] This unparalleled power of hatred to unite otherwise disparate groups of people was articulated very simply by Kenneth Burke who echoed Hoffer's assertion: "Men who can unite on nothing else can unite on the basis of a foe shared by all."[72]

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[67] Reuven Paz, "Islamists and Anti-Americanism," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 7 (2003): 53.
[68] Paz, 53.
[69] Hoffer, 91
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Kenneth Burke*, The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941), 193.

In the case of radical Islamism, the notion of the West as "devil" is more complex than sheer hatred. The relationship between the Middle East and the West has substantial historical significance. Additionally, while many Arabs and Muslims were indoctrinated with hatred of America, the feeling was mixed with admiration for its political, social, and economic successes, a stark contrast to the troubles of the Middle East. This sentiment, an "undercurrent of admiration in hatred" as described by Hoffer, "manifests itself in the inclination to imitate those we hate."[73] This nuanced conception has been effectively manipulated by radical Islamist philosophers who make a rhetorical move fundamental to extremist ideology: the shift from admiration of the West and its achievements to a powerful resentment and hatred of the West for its immorality, to the creation of the West as the conspiratorial enemy in a defining radical Islamic narrative.

Equally critical to the development of a movement are those who draw the rhetorical map for that transformation, what Hoffer calls "men of words." He argues, "Words are an essential instrument in preparing the ground for a mass movement."[74] Words and the ideologies they describe are the substance of any movement. A movement is nothing without members, and in order for any thinking person to become a member of a movement, he or she must be rhetorically compelled to join. True movements cannot coerce members into participation; followers must make the rational choice to join themselves. Through this exercise of human agency, followers embrace the movement's belief system as their own; therein lies its strength. This unifying process is a fundamentally rhetorical one and its success relies upon the strength and appeal of the movement's defining ideology.

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[73] Ibid, 96.
[74] Hoffer, 106.

Sensemaking Equipment

      This intragroup communication process defines the ideology of a movement, encompassing the relationship among its members as well as the dynamic of the group's relationship with the outside world and those they perceive as the enemy. This process can be conceptualized as one of sensemaking, a concept introduced by organizational theorist Karl Weick. A term which can be understood literally, "sensemaking" is the process through which people use words to interpret their circumstances and make things rationally accountable to themselves and others. As members of a group co-construct these images, ideas, and perceptions, their shared realities are "talked into existence."[75] Sensemaking is a vital group communication process, driving behavior by shaping perceptions, a prerequisite for or "springboard into" action.[76]

      In Weick's words, "when action is the central focus, interpretation, not choice, is the core phenomenon."[77] This relationship between behavior and perception becomes increasingly significant with regard to group behavior. Sensemaking strategies create shared realities through which group members see the world and their role in it; this element of identity is critical. In order for the coordinated action of a movement to occur, members must consensually construct individual notions of their relationship to that action.[78] This level of identity with the group and its behavior is critical for the smooth functioning of any movement, and the creating and defining of that relationship occurs

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[75] Karl E. Weick, Kathleen M. Sutcliffe, and David Obstfeld, "Organizing and the Process of Sensemaking," *Organization Science* 16, no. 4 (2005), 409.

[76] Karl E. Weick, "The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (1993), 628.

[77] Ibid, 409.

[78] James R. Taylor and Elizabeth J. Van Every, *The Emergent Organization: Communication as Its Site and Surface* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 275.

within a sensemaking process, "the primary site where meanings materialize that inform and constrain identity and action."[79] The strength of this sensemaking mechanism is at the heart of any group; it allows individuals to derive personal meaning from these co-constructed realities.[80]

In his explication of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Burke set out to elucidate the sensemaking structure Hitler depicted to frame the Nazi movement. He aimed to "discover what kind of 'medicine' this medicine-man has concocted," in other words, to know what made Hitler's ideology as remarkably effective as it was.[81] This medicinal metaphor is fitting, also animating Burke's fundamental concept of literature as "equipment for living" [82] in which he suggests that words and messages function as "linguistic medicine," equipping humans with strategies for dealing with the situations that arise within our unique social structures.[83] Hitler's words, his ideology, resonated with his audience members so deeply that it became their equipment for living; they internalized the sensemaking strategy he illustrated.

Burke's notion of "equipment" is consistent with the function of sensemaking, both comprised of words and functioning to construct the realities of author and auditor as they interact in the rhetorical process. In short, Hitler's followers readily took his "medicine," and therein lies the strength of the Nazi movement. Burke identified Hitler as the ideological mastermind behind the development of the Nazi worldview, the roots of which are presented in his manuscript. Sayyid Qutb achieved a similar status as an

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[79] Weick et al., 409.
[80] Gareth Morgan, Peter J. Frost, and Louis R. Pondy, "Organizational Symbolism," in *Organizational Symbolism*, ed. Louis R. Pondy, et al. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1983), 24.
[81] Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 293.
[82] Ibid, 293.
[83] Ibid, 297.

Islamist ideologue or "man of words," articulating a worldview in *Milestones* that is attractive and thus pervasive throughout radical Islamist ideology.

Burke's work is a seminal piece of communication scholarship, an exemplar of rhetorical criticism, widely cited and considered required reading for students of the discipline. At the time of its publication, however, it received remarkably little attention. The piece was written in 1939, the year World War II began, a noteworthy fact that emphasizes the prescience of his analysis and the significance of Burke's conclusions; they were developed without the benefit of post-WWII hindsight that exposed the extent of the Nazi regime's startling power and brutality. With a careful analysis of Hitler's words and the context in which Hitler and his message existed, Burke was able to predict, at the war's outset, with a certainty matched only by its eerie accuracy, the harmful potential for a powerful and dangerous movement.

With this conception of the works of words, the significance of critically analyzing ideological testaments such as *Mein Kampf* and *Milestones* becomes clear; gaining insight into the philosophy, the worldview, of one's adversary is crucial to informed action. Though radical Islamsim no longer needs a prediction of its significance, the understanding gleaned from analysis of its ideology is all the more relevant as the movement increases momentum. It is with this understanding in mind that this project undertakes the examination of Qutb's *Milestones*.

Notably relevant to the current atmosphere surrounding the discussion of radical Islamist terrorism, Burke warned against the temptation to simply condemn and dismiss a text like *Mein Kampf*, maintaining that such inattention was thoroughly "vandalistic," a

disservice by a potential reviewer to his/her readers.[84] Despite the widespread scornful and dismissive treatment at the time of Hitler's work, Burke set out to understand the appeal of Hitler's ideology in the same way this project seeks to elucidate the mechanisms of influence within Qutb's manifesto. This sensemaking process, like most, happens primarily in the form of narrative.

Burke emphasized the stock storytelling devices Hitler employed in the creation of the Nazi narrative: isolation of a common enemy, the depiction of which was illustrated through his use of personal experience. The combination of these elements allowed Hitler to achieve identification with his readers. Qutb's approach in *Milestones* is similar. Hitler also reinforced the notion that Germans are innately superior and argued for the creation of a utopian society established on the principles that define this unique group. Qutb argues for a similar ideal world governed by Islamic principles; his aim in *Milestones* is to define for his readers: a situation, an ideology, a mission, and a relationship with the outside world.

Much of counter-terrorism scholarship in terrorism communication focuses on intergroup communication, centering on the analysis of terrorist manifestoes and communiqués released publicly, messages from terrorist groups to those they perceive as the enemy. In other words, communication scholarship has necessarily focused on only one side of the intergroup communication process because the other side of that conversation has been relatively silent. This project aims to elucidate the workings of this *intragroup* communication to inform that response, a counter-narrative strategy to

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[84] Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 191.

challenge existing extremist communiqués and create a discourse for the other side of the dialogue.

Narrative

This project will focus on the way Qutb's *Milestones* shaped the ideological narrative of the radical Islamic worldview. Several theorists have discussed the notion that humans are innately predisposed toward sensemaking narratives, but the notion that human beings are natural storytellers was formally introduced by rhetorician Walter Fisher. He proposed the notion of humans as "*homo narrans*" to depict the intrinsic nature of storytelling to the human experience, a notion echoed by Burke who asserted that stories too are "equipment for living."[85] Harold Lloyd Goodall, Jr. introduced a notion he termed "narrative seduction," to illustrate the inherent narrative nature of human beings, the notion that humans naturally think and communicate in stories. He cites poet and political activist Muriel Rukeyser who said, "The universe is made of stories, not atoms," and author Robert McKee who notes, "Stories are the creative conversion of life itself into a more powerful, clearer, more meaningful experience. They are the currency of human contact."[86]

These scholars share the notion of narrative as embodiment that holds together and forms an ideology, serving a fundamental function in motivating human action. Communication and terrorism scholars Halverson, Goodall, and Corman put it this way:

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[85] Harold Lloyd Goodall, Jr., "Writing Like a Guy in Textville: A Personal Reflection on Narrative Seduction," *International Review of Qualitative Research* 2 (2009), 75.

[86] Ibid.

Narratives and stories are important because without them language is just a sequence of sounds, little more useful than crude grunts and gestures were to the first *homo sapiens*. Our ability to make language meaningful is the work of storytelling, an ability that allows us to recognize and make meaningful patterns of words, phrases, and inflections; to make and recognize common story forms and archetypes; and to be responsive to those patterns when they are communicated to us in fragments.[87]

In other words, the fundamental process of sensemaking or meaning making occurs through narratives. Narratives animate; they give life to our linguistic structures, creating and defining meaning with great rhetorical power. This project aims to discover the way Sayyid Qutb's work shapes the narratives of radical Islamist groups, creating meaning powerful enough to motivate its adherents to violent action. Burke's analysis of Hitler's work and its context is a model for this investigation which aims to uncover the makings of Qutb's sensemaking narratives: how his message functions, what its chief elements are, and how they work together to create the worldview he so fiercely advocates.

In the case of groups in conflict, identities and behavior are negotiated collectively through intragroup communication which generates "consensually validated conceptions which underlie conflict."[88] Qutb advocates for what will inevitably be, for himself and his followers, a lifelong battle. Thus, the obligation is his to create a sensemaking narrative that will create cohesion among and compel his followers to action in the name of Islam. Because of their potency, such extreme messages, advocating

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[87] Jeffrey R. Halverson, Harold Lloyd Goodall, Jr., and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, (New York: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2011), 12.
[88] Johnson, 86.

revolution and the reconstitution of society, are dangerous; their potential to manifest is real.[89] The sensemaking structures Qutb presents have informed radical Islamist groups that continue to thrive worldwide. Accordingly, an examination of his work will yield understanding that transcends the time and place of the text.

Ideology

The ultimate goal of this examination is to inform the construction of a counter-narrative strategy to combat extremist messages. This imperative is emphasized by Heather S. Gregg of the Defense Analysis Department of the Naval Postgraduate School, who asserts the countering the messages of Islamist extremists is requires, first, a thorough understanding of their workings. Narratives comprise ideologies which are enacted within societies, shaping the perceptions of its citizens by naturalizing its implicit tenets. Ideologies are composed of three essential and interconnected elements: "a set of beliefs for how the world ought to be, a critique of how the world currently is, and a course of action for realizing that world."[90]

The ideology Qutb outlines in *Milestones* very clearly fulfills each of these ideological elements, creating a powerful worldview. Intervening in its dissemination requires examinations like this one to illuminate the makings of each of these elements; the only way to interfere with an ideological narrative is with informed counter-narratives. The theoretical foundations of this project, namely the concepts of narrative, counter-narrative, and ideology, will be defined and further discussed in the following

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[89] Goodall, *Counter-Narrative*, 36.
[90] Heather S. Gregg, "Fighting the Jihad of the Pen: Countering Revolutionary Islam's Ideology," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 2 (2010), 293.

section with regard to the way they will animate the analysis of Qutb's work and the

implications of its findings.

CHAPTER II: METHOD

This project will involve a comprehensive analysis of Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*

to gain an understanding of the way its language creates motive and meaning for today's

radical Islamists. The text was selected because of its ideological magnitude within

radical Islamist circles. Qutb himself was a martyr among followers, and his words have

been imbued with divine significance in the years following his death as his work

continues to influence adherents. Scholar Jonathan Fine reinforces the importance of

critically engaging such texts: "In order to better understand the political mindset of the

Islamist terrorist organizations, the formative texts of the radical Sunni and Shi'a leaders

should receive as much, if not more, attention than the strategies and tactics they

apply."[91] This project is a step toward this shift of scholarly focus in order to build an

understanding of the radical Islamic worldview through examination of foundational

historic texts.

This textual analysis will be guided by a grounded theory approach, described by

Strauss and Corbin as a way of examining qualitative data inductively: as research

progresses, data are continually examined until the development of theory reaches an

equilibrium.[92] In this way, an examination of the variables in a text leads to a theoretical

understanding of their interrelationships unique to that artifact. In other words, in

contrast to other research methods where a theory is selected and applied to a dataset, a

grounded theory approach is intentionally open-ended, allowing the theory to be

developed directly from the analysis of the data. The author has referenced both a printed

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[91] Jonathan Fine, "Contrasting Secular and Religious Terrorism," *Middle Eastern Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (2008), 67.

[92] Anslem Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Sage Publications: Newbury Park, California, 1990.

manuscript as well as an electronic copy of the text to verify consistency of the translation. All citations are from the second revised edition of the text by Dar al-Ilm.

The aim of this analysis is a nuanced rhetorical understanding of Qutb's work, uncovering themes including the norms he reinforces, implicit assumptions in the metaphors he employs, the fundamental purpose of human beings in the narrative he creates, and the implications of these themes in creating an all-encompassing sensemaking framework for his readers. The combination of these elements results in an organizational narrative that wholly defines the worldview of Qutb's adherents—many of whom, today, embrace the radical ideology he espoused. In short, the project seeks to answer a question posed by distinguished communication scholar Michael J. Hyde when describing the art of rhetorical criticism: "*How* does the text mean?"[93] While a literal examination of a text might elicit an understanding of *what* a text means, rhetorical critics seek to illustrate the linguistic mechanisms that create this meaning.

The results of this analysis will then be discussed with regard to the way its insight can shape the creation of a counter-narrative strategy to combat radical discourse and prevent the implementation of this extremist worldview within a society. The aim of this project is to advance the insight gleaned from the analysis of Qutb's work in a way that will inform the creation of rhetorical antidotes to extremist ideologies. As Roderick Hart suggests, "if the critic is perceptive, speeches can provide an understanding of the intellectual resources of their makers."[94]

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[93] Michael J. Hyde, *The Call of Conscience: Heidegger and Levinas, Rhetoric and the Euthanasia Debate* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 122.

[94] Roderick P. Hart, Suzanne Daughton, *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, 2005), 255.

It is with this understanding that this project will attempt to illuminate the workings of Qutb's resources. By examining his foundational text, it aims to illuminate the ways in which his work defined the narrative of radical Islam and how that narrative fulfilled the four critical communicative functions of the movement's ideology. What follows is a comprehensive description of the key terms that will guide this examination: narrative, counter-narrative, and ideology. Grounded in the inherently story-telling nature of human communication, this project aims to inform the construction of a counter-terrorism strategy of counter-narratives in order to prevent the reifying of radical ideologies within the world's societies.

Narrative

Narrative will be discussed according to the definitions presented in Halverson, Goodall, and Corman's *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*. As the authors recount, narrative theory can be delineated by three central and interlocking structures: story, narrative, and master narrative. While the concept of "story" is often conflated with the notion of narrative, the distinction is an important one. A story is "a particular sequence of related events that are situated in the past and recounted for rhetorical/ideological purposes."[95] Simply put, a story is the most basic element of a narrative.

Narratives, in contrast, are broader in scope and are comprised of interrelated and thematically similar stories that function systematically with a shared "rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations" in specific and deliberate ways

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[95] Halverson et al., 13.

by the design of their creators.[96] Finally, a master narrative is still broader, spanning across historical eras but specific to and with unique meaning for a specific culture.[97] Broadest in scope, master narratives have most significant cultural implications as they exist entrenched within cultures' ideologies.

Fisher's notion of narratives as intrinsic to the communication patterns of human beings, became known as the "narrative paradigm." This construct was presented in contrast to the established "rational world paradigm" which posits that human beings are essentially rational beings and, as such, fulfill their human agency through logical argument. [98] Fisher's assertion is that, rather than motivation by pragmatics, humans are naturally compelled instead by stories. Furthermore, he emphasized that, in order to function successfully, a narrative must achieve two things: probability (a story must be coherent in itself), and fidelity (it must "ring true" to its audience).[99] This project seeks to elucidate the ways in which Qutb's work effectively accomplishes these functions.

Counter-Narratives

A thorough understanding of radical Islamist narratives with particular focus on how they achieve narrative probability and fidelity is critical for the construction of effective counter-narratives and it is with this aim that this project undertakes the analysis of Qutb's manuscript. If these elements are in fact the "cornerstones of narrative power,"[100] this can have several implications for the creation of counter-narratives. First,

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[96] Halverson et al., 14.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Walter Fisher, "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument," *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984), 4.
[99] Ibid, 8.
[100] Goodall, 31.

a prudent place to begin a counter-narrative may be at the place where its extremist counterpart fails to meet these conditions, exposing the narrative flaw in the original storyline. Finally, in order to carry weight in public discourse and effectively challenge extremist ideology, an effective counter-narrative must achieve these functions as well.

While Kenneth Burke undertook the rhetorical analysis of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in hopes that his insight would "forestall the concocting of similar medicine in America,"[101] radical Islamism has been created and is being widely dispensed throughout the world. Additionally, these extremist views have proliferated without equally robust messages to challenge them, and this lapse is central to the deficiencies in America's war on terror.

The themes that define Qutb's work are significant throughout contemporary Islamism. The master narrative of jahiliyyah[102] is a central one of 13 described by Halverson et al. as the most pervasive in radical Islamist discourse. The authors cite Qutb as the most distinctive voice in this radical depiction of the jahiliyyah/Islam dynamic; his framing of jahili society has been instrumental in the development of subsequent radical ideology. These master narratives function strategically in extremist discourse and the authors argue for the importance of understanding them, emphasizing the consequence of such an investigation: "The 'war of ideas' is a communication struggle. It cannot be won militarily on the battlefield but must be won rhetorically and narratively in the hearts and in the minds of those on all sides of this ideological front."[103]

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[101] Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 293.
[102] Literally, "state of ignorance," a central theme in radical Islamist ideology and Qutb's work, to be discussed at length in subsequent chapters.
[103] Steven R. Corman, Angela Trethewey, and H. Lloyd. Goodall, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Strategic Communication to Combat Violent Extremism*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), x.

In order to win this rhetorical war, a thorough examination of existing radical ideology is necessary to equip authors with the armament necessary to construct effective counter-narratives. Interestingly, Qutb suggests a similar approach to the examination of jahiliyyah:

> A Muslim can study all the opinions and thoughts of jahili writers, not from the point of view of constructing his own beliefs and concepts, but for the purpose of knowing the deviations adopted by Jahiliyyah, so that he may know how to correct those man-made deviations in the light of the true Islamic belief and rebut them according to the sound principles of the Islamic teachings.[104]

Qutb himself, it seems, was well aware of the rhetorical war for hearts and minds, and the information necessary to wage it successfully. It seems only fitting that rhetors on the other side, who aim to challenge the radical ideology he describes, be equally well prepared.

Ideology

Closely related to the notion of narrative is the concept of ideology, which Trethewey, Corman, and Goodall of the Center for Strategic Communication at Arizona State University suggest is often ignored in critical scholarship despite its fundamental function in human communication. Its workings are so elementary as to be almost imperceptible, instead being commonly understood as the facts of reality. The authors define ideology as a "taken-for-granted system of ideas about how society should

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[104] Qutb, *Milestones*, 110.

work."[105] The construct can also be conceptualized as "the network of interconnected

convictions that functions in [people] epistemically and that shapes [their identities] by

determining how [they] views the world."[106] In this way, ideology enables power and

control as it becomes integrated into its adherents' meaning structures. Trethewey et al.

propose a critical approach to ideology as a communicative act that both creates, and is

rooted in, meaning through narrative, creating and defining a worldview in four primary

ways.[107]

     The first of these functions is termed *naturalizing* and is defined as the way

ideologies "turn socially constructed, politically-motivated, fluid ideas into taken-for-

granted assumptions, beliefs and meanings."[108] In this way, an ideology's tenets are

established and accepted in a way that makes them seem as though they are the result of a

natural order. The role of the second function, *obscuring*, reinforces the work of the first

function by ensuring the ideology's smooth operation, its importance grounded in the

notion that ideologies work most effectively when perceived as "seamless, coherent,

unified worldviews."[109] Thus, potential threats to an ideology's meaning structure are

addressed and incorporated within the ideology itself.

     Because linguistic structures are ambiguous by nature and therefore require

interpretation to establish unified perceptions among audiences, the need for naturalizing

and obscuring has its source and solution in the fluid nature of meaning and is critical for

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[105] Angela Trethewey, Steven R. Corman, and Bud Goodall, "Out of Their Heads and Into Their Conversation: Countering Extremist Ideology," *Consortium for Strategic Communication*, September 14, 2009, 3. http://csc.asu.edu/2009/09/14/out-of-their-heads-and-into-their-conversation-countering-extremist-ideology.
[106] Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (1970), 112.
[107] Trethewey, et al., 2.
[108] Ibid, 4.
[109] Trethewey, et al., 5.

the smooth functioning of any ideology and is continuously at work. Both of these

functions are achieved through the rhetorical work of Qutb's sensemaking narrative,

shaping a precise system of meaning while "smoothing over [inherent] tensions,

contradictions, and paradoxes."[110]

While the initial two elements of ideology allow for its fluid functioning as a

belief system, the final two, *universalizing* and *structuring*, allow for the incorporation

and maintenance of the ideology within a society. Defined as the way the ideology

"works to present the interests or concerns of those in power as the interests of all group

members," the universalizing function reinforces the ideology's power structure by

incorporating it as part of the belief system.[111] The first three elements function together

to enable the fourth: "Structuring involves creating rules and resources in an organization

(or broader system) that preserve the ideology."[112] This notion of universalizing explains

why radical Islamist groups are so intent on establishing Shari'a law, a societal

manifestation of its tenets; it is an essential system for perpetuating radical Islamist

ideology. Such social structures concretely establish their defining ideologies within

societies, preserving and perpetuating them for future generations.

Qutb's foundational text directly achieves the first two functions of ideology by

describing, defining, and framing the radical Islamist worldview he advocates. The final

two ideological functions preserve this radical Islamist worldview within a society. This

critical analysis seeks to prevent the ideology's further universalizing and structuring by

informing the creation of strategic counter-narratives. The critical examination of Qutb's

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid, 7.
[112] Ibid, 7.

work will account in part for the lack of understanding surrounding the development of

Islamism and illuminate the way his message influences prevailing radical Islamic

narratives:

> In the end, the reason the narratives of al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremists
>
> carry such potency is because they possess an internal coherence in their intended
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> audiences that connects them to grand, deeply culturally embedded, views of
>
> history—to master narratives—that Muslim audiences, in broad terms, readily
>
> understand, identify with, or feel little need to question. . . . those narratives, and
>
> their connection to master narratives, contain powerful persuasive messages that
>
> not only resonate or "ring true," but also compel a certain level of ideological
>
> identification, behavior, and actions.[113]

Rhetorical interference with radical ideologies through counter-narrative

strategies is critical. Communication scholar Heather Gregg describes the notion of a

"marketplace of ideas" where such counter-narratives can be disseminated into public

discourse.[114] Such a place would require two elements: a culture of intellectual curiosity

and engagement, as well as a civic forum in which these ideas can be discussed and

deliberated.[115] In such a space, counter-narratives can be shaped and disseminated to

trouble the as-yet-largely-uncontested ideologies of radical Islam. Gregg reinforces the

notion that ideology "contains valuable insights into the mental landscape of its creators

and those who embrace them; it offers a glimpse into the dreams and aspirations of how

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[113] Halverson, et al., 13.
[114] Gregg, 308.
[115] Ibid.

they believe the world ought to be and their paths for realizing that new world."[116] Such

resources are invaluable to the authors of counter-narratives.

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[116] Gregg, 294.

CHAPTER III: FINDINGS

The title of Qutb's work is a reference to its predominant metaphor: *Milestones* is

a handbook, a roadmap for a select group of warriors who embrace the values of Islam

and fight to establish them throughout the world. Qutb calls this group the "vanguard"

and presents the insights in his work as "milestones on the road"[117] to the ultimate goal of

worldwide leadership beginning with the revival of true Islam. In his opening words,

Qutb frames this effort with urgency, warning "mankind today is on the brink of a

precipice . . . because humanity is devoid of those vital values which are necessary not

only for its healthy development but also for its real progress."[118]

For Qutb, these vital values exist only in Islam. Having identified the problem, he

presents Islam as the only viable solution and his vision of the proud, almighty army who

will establish its tenets, motivated with the exigence to save the world. The following

passage illustrates the crux of Qutb's narrative: the virtuous Islamic character, its ill-

intentioned opposition, and the vital mission of Islam. He envisions:

> An active, harmonious and cooperative group, distinct by itself, whose different
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> elements, like the limbs of a human body, work together for its formation, its
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> strengthening, its expansion, and for its defense against all those elements which
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> attack its system, working under a leadership which is independent…which
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> organizes its various efforts into one harmonious purpose, and which prepares for

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[117] Qutb, *Milestones*, 13.
[118] Qutb, *Milestones*, 7.

the strengthening and widening of their Islamic character and directs them to

abolish the influences of their opponent.[119]

In order to establish this seamlessly functioning group, Qutb must weave a robust and

compelling rhetorical narrative to persuade readers to adopt the mission of the vanguard.

Qutb's rhetorical strength lies in three fundamental elements which, taken together,

justify action and serve as the foundation of the ideological narratives that define the

Islamist worldview. The first of these is his characterization of the enemy, in sharp

contrast to and often juxtaposed with the second element, his characterization of Islam.

The final element, a framing of the battle known as jihad, is created largely by the

contrast and conflict inherent between Islam and jahiliyyah, and is a cause to which

adherents must be willing to sacrifice their lives.

These themes are consistent with the components of Gregg's definition of

ideology: Qutb describes a very specific view of how the world ought to be (Islam,

shariah law), provides a critique of how the world currently is (jahiliyyah), and advocates

a course of action for realizing that world (jihad).[120] In this way, his work establishes a

comprehensive foundation for the operation of a potent radical worldview. The analysis

that follows explicates each of these elements to uncover how they function together.

I. Image of the Enemy: Jahiliyyah

Central to *Milestones* is Qutb's characterization of the enemy, a powerfully

illustrated demonization and element of conspiracy that are foundational to radical Islam.

One of the most central themes of Qutb's work is a stark contrast between the pure truth

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[119] Qutb, *Milestones*, 48.
[120] Gregg, 293.

of Islam and a debased, evil society known as *jahiliyyah* from which stem all the world's ills. Qutb presents a distinct dichotomy between the two; he asserts: "Islam knows only two kinds of societies, the Islamic and the jahili."[121] The term "jahiliyyah" denotes "pre-Islamic ignorance" within the realm of Islam and is used by Qutb to describe the enemy of Islam, all societies that do not strictly follow the teachings of Islam.[122]

Qutb's characterization of jahiliyyah is as extensive and as central to *Milestones* as it is sweeping; he explicitly indicts *all* non-Islamic societies as jahili, a fact which means "the whole world is steeped in Jahiliyyah" and the vanguard is faced with a "vast ocean of corruption." [123] A significant inspiration for his vilification of jahiliyyah was Egypt's Nasser government which kept him imprisoned for most of his final decade and of which his daily torment was a constant reminder. During his incarceration, Qutb endured abysmal living conditions, mistreatment, and torture daily.

Qutb also witnessed the gruesome murders of his fellow Muslim Brothers at the hands of prison guards, whom he saw as representatives of the corrupt regime. He wrote profusely throughout his time behind bars; the ordeal marked a deepening of his faith and the experience permeated his writings. His grim surroundings were an immediate reference point for Qutb and his intense hatred of his captors pervaded his characterization of jahiliyyah:

> In the absence of God's sovereignty . . . on earth, the most deviant and barbaric qualities of humanity emerged and shaped entire societies. The result was a self-indulgent, individualistic, crime-infested, and oppressive social order ruled by

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[121] Qutb, *Milestones*, 93.
[122] Walid Phares, *Future Jihad* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 23.
[123] Qutb, *Milestones*, 10-11; Qutb, *Milestones*, 37.

tyrants who brutally abuse their subjects and unjustly govern according to their

own whims and self-interests.[124]

This deeply disparaging characterization is pervasive in Qutb's work; Nasser's regime

and the anguish he experienced at the hands of its representatives fueled his vilification of

jahiliyyah. He explicitly includes in this grouping, with particular disdain, societies like

Nasser's that are "Muslim" in name only, inauthentically claiming affiliation with the

faith without observing its principles.

At the heart of Qutb's portrayal of jahiliyyah is a defining element of immorality.

He contends that "the meaning of 'morality' is limited to such an extent that all those

aspects which distinguish man from animal are considered beyond its sphere" and that all

allegedly "human" progress is backward because of the society's inability to control base

animalistic desires. [125] Materialism is a central element of jahiliyyah. Qutb asserts,

"because material production is considered to be more important, more valuable and

more honorable than the development of human character," genuine human progress is

impossible.[126] These inherent flaws infect the ethical grounding, sexual relationships,

and family values of a society such that, within jahiliyyah, "the humanity of man can

hardly find a place to develop."[127] These concerns cannot be remedied save through the

intervention of Islam. Qutb contends, "only Islamic values and morals, Islamic teachings

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[124] Halverson, Goodall, and Corman, 42-43.
[125] Qutb, *Milestones*, 98.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Qutb, *Milestones*, 98-99.

and safeguards, are worthy of mankind, and from this unchanging and true measure of human progress, Islam is the real civilization and Islamic society is truly civilized."[128]

It is the duty of the vanguard, those devout Islamic adherents to whom Qutb directs his message, to fight against the malevolent jahiliyyah, a duty which takes on a distinct sense of urgency. Beyond characterizing jahiliyyah as multi-faceted evil, Qutb also depicts the force as having malicious intentions toward true Muslims, creating a fundamental tension which defines the perpetual conflict between the two worlds. This notion of jahili intention is also central to Qutb's portrayal of the mission of jihad, and pervades the widespread contemporary conception of radical Islam as battling a universal conspiracy. The tendency of Qutb's work toward a paranoid style has been noted by other scholars. His early political concerns stressed the victimization of Muslims by foreigners or "imperialist agents" and he believed that western nations were attempting to undermine the project of Islamic empowerment by deliberately infecting key segments of the native population with "devious and seditious" methods.[129]

This proclivity to see circumstances "through the lens of conspiracies and collusions" is evident throughout *Milestones* and permeates current radical Islamist discourse. [130] Qutb illustrates this notion of evil-intentioned conspiracy largely through the metaphor of slavery, asserting that the ill-intentioned jahiliyyah aspires to enslave mankind. The image also further illustrates the contrast between his innocent readership and the jahili society in which it exists. His warning is explicit: by remaining a part of jahili society, they will certainly become slaves. Qutb cautions:

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[128] Qutb, *Milestones*, 99.
[129] Calvert, 165.
[130] Calvert, 169.

Jahiliyyah wants to find an excuse to reject the Divine system and to perpetuate

slavery of one man over another. It desires to turn away the power of Muslims

from the work of establishing the Divinely-ordained way of life in order that they

may not go beyond the stage of belief to the stage of a dynamic movement. It

wants to distort the very nature of this method . . . .[131]

In other words, not only is slavery inevitable, but it is the active intention of jahiliyyah to

perpetuate it. Thus, though they may resist, Qutb cautions his readers that they live in

real and constant danger of becoming slaves themselves.

In fact, according to his depiction of slavery, many of his readers are already

living in enslavement. Qutb asserts that no man who lives in a society that requires

submission to manmade laws can be truly free as this makes men slaves to other men. He

asserts, "In a society in which some people are lords who legislate and some others are

slaves who obey them, then there is no freedom in the real sense, nor dignity for each

other and every individual."[132] Accordingly, most of his readers are already slaves and

will remain subjugated as long as they continue to live in the ignorance of jahili society.

In this way, Qutb's message becomes one of freedom; he affirms that Islam's benevolent

purpose is "to free those people who wish to be freed from enslavement to men . . . ."[133]

In short, Qutb's illustration reframes the concept of slavery, thus challenging his

readers' existing notions of freedom. Very simply, the only chance to escape

enslavement and experience true freedom is within an authentic Islamic society for

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[131] Ibid, 42.
[132] Qutb, *Milestones*, 94-95.
[133] Qutb, *Milestones*, 56.

"among Arabs all are equal and no one is slave to another."[134] While Qutb's

conspiratorial depiction of jahili society is persistent throughout the text, just as pervasive

is his divine personification of Islam; what jahiliyyah robs from humans, Islam delivers

in multitudes. The crux of this contrast is the concept of human agency. While the

intention of jahiliyyah is to enslave, "Islam, because of its very nature," says Qutb, "loves

to appear personified in human beings . . . . Its method is to grow through the agency of

living persons and through a dynamic movement . . . ."[135] In other words, Qutb asserts

that Islam honors the sovereignty of the individual, a fact he claims is untrue of any other

social construct.[136]

Qutb reinforces throughout the text that Islam is the only religion to honor the

agency of the individual human; "only Islam" allows man to "[cut] off his chains of

servitude to other human beings."[137] In other words, while his readers may perceive

themselves to be free in their current circumstances, they do not possess the liberty and

autonomy they may believe they have. This appeal to the humanity of his readership is a

theme throughout Qutb's characterization of Islam.

II. Characterization of Islam

Islam is broadly recognized, by its own adherents and those of other faiths, as a

religion. However the Arabic word for "religion" translates most precisely as "din," and

the Qur'an states multiple times that Islam is "the" din, suggesting an exclusive view of

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[134] Qutb, *Milestones*, 144.

[135] Qutb, *Milestones*, 39.

[136] Ironically, the etymology of "Muslim" and "Islam" have identical Arabic roots, denoting a subservience (to God) not unlike the concept of enslavement. http://www.danielpipes.org/comments/120556.

[137] Qutb, *Milestones*, 95.

the faith.[138] A second widely-accepted definition of Islam contains three elements: faith, correct behavior, and submission, which illustrate its relevance in realms beyond the spiritual. Commonly, Islam is seen as worldview both religious and with relation to the world that is grounded in reason.[139] In short, the word has both spiritual and secular connotations.

Qutb's powerful personification of jahiliyyah is presented in sharp contrast to the divine way of Islam, a juxtaposition which creates a culture by exclusion: only those who choose to accept the tenets of Islam in their entirety will escape the debased culture of jahiliyyah. Says Qutb, "the Islamic society is, by its very nature, the only civilized society, and the jahili societies, in all their various forms, are backward societies."[140] He adds, "only Islamic values and morals, Islamic teachings and safeguards, are worthy of mankind, and from this unchanging and true measure of human progress, Islam is the real civilization and Islamic society is truly civilized."[141] The mission of the vanguard is to battle the malicious influence of jahiliyyah in the name of Islam, to instill its morals and values within society for the sake of humanity.

At the core of Qutb's ideology is a powerful existential appeal that stems from a professed emphasis on human nature and human agency, a concern for the importance of "free moral choice," and a framing of Islamist ideology as a stark contrast to, and a welcome departure from, the troubled thought systems of modern society. Qutb asserts

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[138] Massimo Campanini, *The Qur'an: The Basics*, trans. Oliver Leaman (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 3.

[139] Campanini, 4, 104. The Qur'an argues in a meticulously deductive manner, is full of scientific observations on humanity and the universe. "Islam is the only religion that seeks to argue by rational proofs and can be used as the basis to further knowledge."

[140] Qutb, *Milestones*, 94.

[141] Qutb, *Milestones*, 99.

that only Islam provides the opportunity for genuine spiritual fulfillment. As columnist Paul Berman asserts, "In writing about modern life, [Qutb] put his finger on something that every thinking person can recognize . . . the feeling that human nature and modern life are somehow at odds."[142] This inherent division is grounded in the separation of humans' spiritual and physical worlds in contemporary life and results in an affliction Qutb calls a "hideous schizophrenia," from which he believes all of jahili society suffers.[143]

Qutb declares that Islam promises to solve the fundamental tension between humanity and modernity by offering its adherents a way of life that is "completely harmonious with human nature and satisfies all human needs."[144] His most significant criticism of modern society is its separation of religious and intellectual inquiry. He maintains that this split pits two intrinsic human desires against one another: the desire to understand our physical realm and the desire for self-actualization.

The historical roots of Islam and its scientific endeavors, informed by its superior knowledge of the unity between physical and spiritual realms, according to Qutb, avoid this intrinsic problem that befalls all modern societies. In fact, Islamism offers the best of both worlds: it is "a way of life which on the one hand conserves the benefits of modern science and technology, and on the other fulfills the basic human needs on the same level of excellence as technology has fulfilled them in the sphere of material comfort."[145] Because Islamic ideology reinforces the link between the physical and the spiritual and

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[142] Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror."
[143] Sayyid Qutb, *Islam: The Religion of the Future* (Kuwait: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1984), 33.
[144] Qutb, *Milestones*, 85.
[145] Qutb. *Milestones*, 10.

fulfills both needs wholly. In short, Islam offers its adherents what no other belief system can: spiritual fulfillment.

Throughout *Milestones*, Qutb asserts that radical jihad offers a "humanity" that is lacking in other symbol systems. Fundamental to this focus on "humanity" is an insistence upon "free moral choice" which Qutb asserts is "the quintessential activity whereby man distinguishes himself from all other animals."[146] In short, he maintains the significance of Islam's concern for human agency and both physical and spiritual fulfillment: "the objective of the message of Islam is a decisive declaration of man's freedom, not merely on the philosophical plane but also in the actual conditions of life."[147]

Qutb depicts Islam's humanity largely through a second dichotomy, further reinforcing the contrast between Islam and other societies: that of man vs. animal. He asserts that jahili society addresses the lowest of human qualities, those base impulses humans share with animals. In addition to these "these low animalistic traits," says Qutb, "man possesses certain other characteristics which distinguish him and make him a unique creation."[148] Of Islamic society, Qutb contends that, in contrast, "instead of stressing those traits which are common to both man and animal, it promotes man's human qualities, nurtured them and made them the dominant factor."[149] It is these

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[146] Jenna Reinbold, "The 'Humanity' of Radical Jihad," *ISIM Review* 18, Autumn 2006.
[147] Qutb, *Milestones*, 63.
[148] Qutb, *Milestones*, 49.
[149] Ibid.

superior qualities which Islam addresses, bringing out "the noblest human characteristics," a fact which makes Islam "unique . . . to this day."[150]

For Qutb, "Human values and human morals are not something mysterious and undefinable . . . . They are the values and the morals which develop those characteristics in a human being which distinguish him from the animals and which emphasize those aspects of his personality which raise him above the animals. . . ."[151] This dichotomy makes the disparity between jahiliyyah and Islam unmistakable:

> When the question is viewed in this manner, a fixed and well-defined line of separation is obtained which cannot be erased by the incessant attempt of the "progressives" and the scientific societies to erase it. According to this view, moral standards are not determined by the environment and changing conditions; rather they are fixed criteria above and beyond the difference in environment. . . . Beyond all these [other values], we arrive at "human" values and morals and at "animalistic" values and morals, this being the correct separation or, in Islamic terminology, "Islamic" values and morals and "jahili" values and morals.[152]

Qutb contends that, in jahili societies, "the basic needs of human beings are considered identical with those of animals, this is food and drink, clothing, shelter and sex. It deprives people of their spiritual needs, which differentiate human beings from animals."[153] Further, by entertaining these base desires, jahili societies deprive its members "of their freedom to express individuality" thus reducing humans "to the level

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[150] Qutb, *Milestones*, 51.
[151] Qutb, *Milestones*, 96.
[152] Qutb, *Milestones*, 97.
[153] Qutb, *Milestones*, 80.

of an animal or even to the level of a machine."[154] In this way, the oppressive ideology

of all modern societies dehumanizes its members, robbing them of their agency and

therefore the possibility of genuine fulfillment.

Qutb's repeated references to human nature imply that what follows is the way

things were meant to be. He asserts the following with regard to the wisdom in the

Qur'an: "It liberates human nature from superstitions, polishes man's native intelligence

to the utmost degree, and opens up windows to the world and makes man appreciate the

intricate processes of God's nature."[155] Qutb is clear that the holy book is the source

from which Islam draws its tenets; they are "seen through the windows of our Qur'an."[156]

The central holy book of the Muslim faith, the Qur'an, literally means "recitation." It

was originally composed in Arabic in the seventh century and is believed to be a series of

revelations from the Prophet Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel. By aligning itself with

the Qu'ran and its principles, Qutb's characterization of Islam is imbued with its divine

essence and historical significance.[157]

Qutb reinforces that Islam establishes and defends those needs most crucial to the

authentic human experience; sharia law is the societal manifestation of the personal

liberation his philosophy promises. The term "sharia" is understood as the moral as well

as legal code of Islam. Living in sharia is the ultimate goal for a true Muslim, a utopian

society that promises to honor "the complete and true freedom of every person and the

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[154] Qutb, *Milestones*, 81.
[155] Qutb, *Milestones*, 37.
[156] Qutb, *Milestones*, 134.
[157] *Milestones*' first two chapter titles directly reference the Qur'an: "The unique Qur'anic generation" and "The nature of the Qur'anic method."

full dignity of every individual."[158] This societal perfection is impossible in modern societies where humans live in the servitude of other humans, robbed of their capacity to realize their divine potential.

The contrast of sharia then represents a freedom of conscience that is, seemingly, societal perfection. Qutb asserts that in order to understand the "dynamism" of Islam, one must remember that it is "a way of life prescribed by god . . . . not a man-made system."[159] With this reminder, Qutb implies that a man-made system would translate the inherent imperfections of humans; a way of life outlined by God does not fall prey to such worldly flaws. Thus, his readers cannot hope to aspire to anything greater than the world of Islam.

Qutb's extensive characterization of the Islamic worldview is not exclusive to its experience on earth. In fact, the most potent rhetorical appeal of the Islamic narrative he presents is a promise of what awaits his adherents beyond the confines of earth:

> This world and the next world are not two separate entities, but are stages complementary to each other. The law given by God not only harmonizes these two stages but also harmonizes human life with the general law of the universe. Thus, when harmony between human life and the universe ensues, its results are not postponed for the next world but are operative even in this world. However, they will reach perfection in the Hereafter.[160]

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[158] Qutb, *Milestones*, 94.
[159] Qutb, *Milestones*, 74.
[160] Qutb, *Milestones*, 91.

In this way, Qutb establishes a causal link between humans' experience on earth with what awaits them in the next life. The unknown of death, a primal concern of all humans, is demystified by embracing Islamic tenets. A life that embodies the teachings of the Qu'ran is the nearest manifestation of perfection in the earthly plane, and will lead to a harmony with and ultimate perfection in the hereafter.

No other way of life can boast such a powerful transcendental guarantee. Qutb's provisions for his followers' freedom and continued being after their earthly death are vast. Chief among these is everlasting life for, according to Qutb, followers of Islam never truly die:

> The death of those who are killed for the cause of God gives more impetus to the cause, which continues to thrive on their blood. Their influence on those they leave behind also grows and spreads. Thus after their death they remain an active force in shaping the life of their community and giving it direction. It is in this sense that such people, having sacrificed their lives for the sake of God, retain their active existence in everyday life. . . . There is no real sense of loss in their death, since they continue to live.[161]

Thus, Qutb's ideology gives people the rationale to avoid a fundamental human fear: the fear of death. Qutb essentially reframes the concept of death within Islam—once they devote themselves to his cause, adherents should not fear death because they will never truly die. Though they may cease to live and breathe in the earthly realm, they will live on for eternity within the world of Islam.

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[161] Qutb, *Milestones*, x.

Within this reframing, Qutb's adherents can pursue Islam without reservation, for death has not only been demystified but glorified, becoming something to desire rather than to fear. The struggle for jihad then retains essentially no risk as the consideration of death is no longer a true hazard. In the words of Qutb: "Mankind was uplifted . . . in its morals, in all of its life, to a zenith of perfection which has never been attained before and which cannot be attained afterwards except through Islam."[162] For Qutb and his followers, Islam is not merely a belief system, thus it must be honored more comprehensively than mere preaching: "Islam, which is a way of life, takes practical steps to organize a movement for freeing man. [163] This is the mission of the vanguard: jihad.

III. Framing of Jihad

Qutb's depiction of jihad is colored largely by the stark juxtaposition of divine Islam with malevolent jahiliyyah. Jahiliyyah is portrayed as a prolific evil force with vigorous evil objectives in stark contrast to the immaculate goodness of Islam. Jihad's root word, "jihd" means "effort;" jihad itself means literally "a state of permanent efforts." The notion is commonly conceived of as an instrument of Islam for the spread and defense of its ideology.[164]

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[162] Qutb, *Milestones*, 30. In the final tenets of his "definition of man," Kenneth Burke suggests that humankind is "goaded by the spirit of hierarchy . . . and rotten with perfection." In elaborating on this notion of perfection, Burke draws upon Aristotle's concept of entelechy, "the notion that each being aims at the perfection natural to its kind." In other words, a stone aims to fulfill the expectations of being a stone, a tree a tree, and a human too is "marked by a 'possession of telos within'" and aims for fulfillment as a human being. As Burke describes, humans are innately goaded toward a sense of hierarchy and tend toward perfection. This framing of sharia then has powerful appeal.
Kenneth Burke, *Language As Symbolic Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 16-17.
[163] Qutb, *Milestones*, 75.
[164] Phares, 20-21.

The term has varying interpretations including offensive and defensive, but is broadly understood as an obligation to action.[165] It is Islam's concern for humanity which inspires Qutb to propose a redefinition of the word "defense" in order to effectively conceptualize the philosophy he asserts: "If we insist on calling Islamic Jihad a defensive movement, then we must change the meaning of the word 'defense' and mean by it 'the defense of man' against all those elements which limit his freedom."[166]

Qutb and his followers view their enemies as conspiracies. Conflict with the enemy, for them, is conflict between absolute good and absolute evil. This understanding presents jihad as a mission that becomes a moral imperative, both personally and universally as it provides for the common good of humanity as well as that of the individual. Such altruistic significance instills the vanguard with tremendous power: "the right to destroy all obstacles in the form of institutions and traditions which limit man's freedom of choice" and universal freedom.[167]

Qutb qualifies this prescription by noting that Islam "does not attack individuals nor does it force them to accept its beliefs." Instead, "it attacks institutions and traditions to release human beings from their poisonous influences, which distort human nature and which curtail human freedom."[168] The battle of jihad, then, is not a battle against individual members of jahili society, who could well be Qutb's readers themselves, but rather against the jahili institutions which perpetrate the corrupt slavery of man.

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[165] Phares, 22-23.
[166] Qutb, *Milestones*, 62.
[167] Qutb, *Milestones*, 75.
[168] Qutb, *Milestones*, 75.

With the *Milestones* manuscript, Qutb aspires to recruit members to the vanguard's mission of jihad. Notably however, while he is explicit about the purpose of his book, to serve as a guide to this select group, Qutb does not explicitly recruit members to the cause. Instead, the juxtaposition of Islam with jahiliyyah as opposing forces and the thorough "good vs. evil" characterization of each acts as an implicit invitation to readers to join forces with the benevolent Islam. This either/or framing of the two worlds has two important implications. It implies to the reader that he or she must make a choice; not doing so would find him/her swept along with the dark tide of jahiliyyah, a bleak alternative which increases the urgency of the dilemma. Additionally, by presenting Islam as the clear alternative to profound evil and moral corruption, this black and white juxtaposition makes the correct option clear.

This rhetorical move however, while powerful, carries with it the risk of alienating potential followers: by clearly characterizing all non-Islamic societies as ignorant and suggesting that all current societies are jahili, potential readers would be implicated by association. However, Qutb evades this issue by vindicating all would-be recruits. Rather than suggest they are implicit in the evil of jahili society, Qutb asserts that its members are merely uninformed. With this notion, he undertakes the duty of educating the ignorant masses by conveying the divine truth of Islam. In this way, Qutb's message becomes one of salvation, a perception which heightens the urgency of his call.

This sense of urgency drives the vanguard's battle of jihad, a struggle Qutb himself embraced during his life. When Qutb received his death sentence, he did so gratefully. Having achieved leadership status in his community, inspiring followers to

pursue the divine cause of Islam that was so dear to him, he was at peace with the prospect of his death. According to his lawyer at the trial, Mahfouz Azzam, upon hearing the news, Qutb declared, "Thank God I performed jihad for fifteen years until I earned this martyrdom."[169] In other words, Qutb had embodied the very cause he advocated; his own life had portrayed the concept of jihad.

The final chapter of *Milestones* is entitled "This is the Road" and, in it, Qub relates a story from the Qu'ran known as the "Makers of the Pit," advising readers that the piece depicts "profound moral truths concerning the nature of the Call toward God, the reaction of the people to this Call, and the consequences which are possible in the vast scope of this Call."[170] Scholars believe that Qutb was aware of his impending death and subsequent martyrdom when he penned these last pages of *Milestones* and that he believed in martyrdom as a central part and ultimate price of jihad.[171]

The original story is a Qu'ranic verse, from Surah Al-Buruj (85: 4-8)[172]:

Cursed be the makers of the pit,

Of the fire (kept burning) with fuel,

When they sat by it,

And they were witnesses of what they did with the believers.

And they did not take vengeance on them for aught except that they believed in

Allah, the Mighty, the Praised,

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[169] Lawrence Wright, 31.

[170] Qutb, *Milestones*, 149.

[171] David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 138.

[172] The Al-Buruj chapter of the Qur'an translates to "The Constellations."

Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is a Witness of all things.

Surely (as for) those who persecute the believing men and the believing women, then do not repent, they shall have chastisement of hell, and they shall have the chastisement of burning. [173]

This original verse is a straightforward conveying of the story with little elaboration; it is cited in its entirety above. Qutb's depiction, in contrast, bears his interpretation, which is most distinct in his portrayals of the opposing parties. Qutb's account has the effect of a culmination of his preceding characterizations of jahiliyyah and Islam in a powerful narrative, an allegory meant to depict the fortitude necessary to undertake the mission of jihad.

He begins by setting the scene: "This is the story of a group of people who believed in God and openly proclaimed their belief. They encountered tyrannical and oppressive enemies" determined to deprive them of their fundamental human dignity and torture them so that they might be entertained by their cries of agony.[174] However, despite these startling conditions, "the faith in the hearts of the Believers raised them above all persecution. Belief triumphed over life." The believers were not shaken by the threat of torture; instead, they persisted in their faith and burned in the fire until death.[175] The story unfolds, illustrating the meeting of "believing, righteous, sublime and honorable souls" pitted against "arrogant, mischievous, criminal and degraded people" who took perverse pleasure in their torment:

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[173] *Holy Qur'an*, M.H. Shakir, trans., (Elmhurst, New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc. 1983), 613.
[174] Qutb, *Milestones*, 149-150.
[175] Qutb, *Milestones*, 150.

And when some young man or woman, some child or old man from among these righteous Believers was thrown into the fire, their diabolical pleasure would reach a new height, and shouts of mad joy would escape their lips at the sight of blood and pieces of flesh.[176]

As Qutb describes, the narrative simultaneously shows the startling levels of depravity in jahiliyyah, "seeking pleasure through torturing others, which are not even reached by any wild beast" in contrast to "the height to which the spirit of a Believer can soar, liberated and free."[177]

Qutb's recounting of the story is telling. While the plot itself is shocking, his portrayal intensifies the effect. The unadulterated evil of the nonbelievers is striking, and indicative of Qutb's aversion to the ruling members of jahili society. The anguish of the story's victims illustrates the tremendous sacrifice members of the vanguard must be willing to make for the cause of jihad. Qutb's relating of the story is a strong rhetorical move, and he follows it with something of a rhetorical critique that is just as significant.

At the close of his version of the story, Qutb discloses that the Qur'an never reveals whether God punished the malevolent nonbelievers in the story; "thus, from an earthly point of view, the end was pitiful and tragic."[178] However, this "earthly view" is incomplete. The believers may have died in physical anguish, but this pain was only temporary. As Qutb emphasizes, because the earthly life of man is adjoined with the divine, "the field of struggle . . . is not limited to this earth." In other words, "This matter

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[176] Ibid.

[177] Qutb, *Milestones*, 150. Qutb adds: "A wild beast kills its prey for food, never to derive pleasure through tormenting it."

[178] Qutb, *Milestones*, 151.

does not finish here, nor is the decision made in this world. This life and all its pleasures and pains, achievements and frustrations, do not weigh much in the scale."[179] The believers could have chosen to save their lives by relinquishing their faith, but chose to die instead. In that moment, they rose above, in the ultimate victory over the nonbelievers.

Holding fast to their faith, they retained the most valuable element of life: for "life without belief is worthless." Qutb adds, "the highest form of triumph is the victory of soul over matter, the victory of belief over pain, and the victory of faith over persecution."[180] With this, Qutb elevates an earthly conflict by instilling it with heavenly implications. What gives life its true meaning is the divine. Thus, had the believers relinquished their faith to save their lives, this would have been their true tragedy. Instead, by clinging to their faith, the souls of the believers achieved genuine triumph. Everyone dies, but only a select few reach this spiritual height: "honor among the nobles angels, nay, even among all mankind, if we measure them by the standards of the total history of generations of men."[181]

Qutb's recounting of the allegory of the Pit not only reinforces his characterizations of jahiliyyah and Islam, but also illustrates his perception of the battle of jihad. It is evident throughout Qutb's portrayal of jihad that he believes it to be a moral obligation for all true Muslims. By choosing to accept it, jihadists are guaranteed martyrdom: "The honor of martyrdom is achieved only when one is fighting in the cause

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[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.

of God, and if one is killed for any other purpose this honor will not be attained."[182] The

fortitude displayed by the victims in the allegory of the pit is the same he expects in all

members of the vanguard, in return for which they will receive eternal glory.

The predominant metaphor of Qutb's text, the road to which his writings serve as

a guide, implies a destination for those who choose to undertake the mission he defines.

Says Qutb: "The Qur'an through this story, points out to the Believers the road which lies

before them and prepares them to accept with fortitude whatever comes their way . . .

."[183] Referenced in the title of the manuscript itself as well as in its final chapter, "This is

the Road," which features the story of the Pit, the reader can safely assume that the road

to which he refers culminates, not on earth, but in the hereafter, in the most glorious ways

imaginable.

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[182] Qutb, *Milestones*, 125.
[183] Qutb, *Milestones*, 149.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

Qutb's writings are passionate. They are also paranoid, and they are fanatical. The extremists who embrace the radical Islamist ideology he advocates are often violent. Terrorists are calculating, sadistic, cold-blooded killers responsible for heinous acts against innocent civilians. Yes. But the satisfaction that comes with decrying terrorism and its perpetrators with colorful adjectives reaches the extent of its utility. Flinging pejoratives into public discourse creates a critical dead-end. It is only human to be appalled at the injuries and deaths of innocents at the hands of zealous radicals, and those responsible should most certainly be prosecuted and punished. But the conversation must not end with retaliation.

The average citizen is moved to act based on a narrative understanding of he or she believes is right; the narratives to which extremists subscribe, espoused by radical groups across the globe, are compelling enough to inspire violent acts of terror. It is important for counter-terrorism efforts to be armed with counter-narratives that are equally compelling. The war on terror is an ideological one; it is a battle of narratives, a consequence of the fundamental storytelling nature of human beings. The inherent human proclivity toward stories suggests their potential rhetorical power when manipulated for nefarious ends:

> Some of history's monsters were legendary storytellers. Some of today's most egregious violators of our narrative trust are themselves honey-tongued manipulators, talking heads, politicians, and terrorist leaders or spokespersons. And some of these narratives, such as the call to martyrdom used to recruit

children to the cause of jihad, strap lethal bombs on themselves in exchange for

the promise of seventy-two virgins, and detonate those bombs on their bodies in

crowded public spaces because they are told this is what Allah demands, are

evidence enough of the enduring lure of powerful narratives and their very real

danger.[184]

Before commencing a counter-narrative strategy to combat terrorism, it is important to

establish an understanding of Islamism as a revolutionary ideology as opposed to a

religion. The two have been conflated in popular discourse, a fundamental

misunderstanding that halts productive dialogue. Though grounded on the teachings of

the Qur'an and the tenets of Islam, radical Islamism is not a religion; it is an extremist

ideology, a "politicized mutation of a religion."[185] Thus, a counter-narrative strategy is

not an attack on Islam, but on the extremist ideology perpetuated by Islamist radicals.

Another pivotal consideration is the forum through which these counter-narratives

can be disseminated. The United States government is a substantial presence in public

discourse and should play a role in cultivating the civic space for engaging these ideas in

discussion and debate.[186] However, the American government as the voice of strategic

counter-narratives is problematic on several levels. Not only does it lack credibility in

the Muslim world which would comprise the bulk of the target audience, but its policies

of public diplomacy are unfit for the sort of dialogue necessary to disseminate an efficient

counter-narrative strategy. While essential for building long-term perceptions and

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[184] H.L. Goodall, Jr., *Counter-Narrative*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010), 27-28.
[185] J. Michael Waller, *Fighting the War of Ideas Like a Real War*, (Washington, D.C.: The Institute of World Politics Press, 2007), 22.
[186] Gregg, 309.

developing international relations, these strategies are discordant with the rapidly-shifting international communication environment:

> Advances in information technology and the proliferation of electronic media outlets have leveled the battlespace between the U.S. and the world's small powers and non-governmental organizations. Even individuals can undermine Washington's carefully crafted messages rapidly and constantly, attacking in swarms and refuting, distorting and drowning out U.S. messages, and agitating increasingly shrill and influential position.[187]

This concept of the altered communication landscape in which the most truly influential narratives and counter-narratives exist must be a pivotal element of any counter-narrative strategy. Any message, no matter how strategically-crafted, will be impotent if not aptly disseminated.

Finally, it is essential to undertake any counter-narrative strategy with a clear understanding of what its authors aim to accomplish. In the case of this project, the objective is to inform the creation of counter-narratives with the insight gained from analysis of the fundamental narrative elements in Qutb's work. Because of the prominence of the principal narratives in *Milestones* within radical Islamist ideology, counter-narratives that challenge them will play a key role in undercutting its functions.

Qutb's Influence on Ideology

At the core of radical Islamism, as in every movement, is an ideology, a concept which has been defined in various ways but can be understood simply as an established,

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[187] Waller, 19.

presumed idea of the way the world is supposed to work. These ideologies are comprised of key strategic narratives like Qutb's which persuade by linking common sense to ideology. They provide the linkage between common sense notions and the ideology espoused by the narrative's authors, illustrating the relationship in a way that resonates with the audience's existing attitudes, values, and beliefs. In *Milestones*, Qutb is explicit about the goal he aims to achieve: world dominance of Islam. He advances this notion by framing the choice to accept Islam as the natural choice for readers who want the best for themselves and their fellow humans, a matter of common sense or, in Qutb's words, "completely harmonious with human nature."[188]

These master narratives serve a broader rhetorical vision, becoming "resources for strategic rhetorical efforts to convince audience members to align their personal narratives in ways that serve the goals of Islamist extremism."[189] In other words, the rhetorical narratives Qutb puts forth continue to inform the ideology of extremists who appropriate and employ them in contemporary communiqués. The characterization and values Qutb presents in *Milestones* are meant to resonate with his readers. As these narratives continue to influence extremist communication, the same identification established by Qutb is at work.

Master narratives function together by "providing a stock of story forms, archetypes, and emotional responses from which new narratives might be constructed."[190] For example, Qutb's presentations of jahiliyyah and jihad are replete with emotional associations and comprehensive characterizations that become reified for readers with

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[188] Qutb, *Milestones*, 85.
[189] Halverson et al., 179.
[190] Ibid.

every reference. In this way, future mentions of the terms (by Qutb or other ideologues) are already colored by Qutb's depiction and can function enthymematically by presuming the intended emotional response of the audience.

Qutb's work in *Milestones* then, is foundational in several respects; it establishes radical Islamist ideological narratives by framing them in specific ways, providing fundamental characterizations of jahiliyyah, of Islam, and of the ongoing conflict between them known to Islamists as jihad. Qutb depicts Islam as a sanctuary for human fulfillment and divine realization impossible elsewhere, an appeal which, as evidenced by the current thriving of radical Islamist ideology and the fervor of its adherents, is potent. A thorough understanding of this radical extremist ideology is critical to the creation of effective counter-narratives. The aim of this analysis is to incorporate the insight gained from the examination of Qutb's foundational work into a counter-narrative strategy to effectively interfere with the functioning of radical Islamist ideology. First it is necessary to establish an understanding of an ideology's functions, with particular focus on the way Qutb's work accomplishes these funcitons.

Several scholars have addressed the concept of ideology, proposing varying definitions. Gregg's description outlines its three core components: a specific view of how the world ought to be, a critique of how the world currently is, and a course of action for realizing that world.[191] Each of these elements is comprehensively addressed by Qutb's work: his vision of the utopian society described as sharia, which incorporates the tenets of Islam is unequivocally his design for the way the world should be. Finally, this ideal realm can only be realized through the battle known as jihad in order to eradicate

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[191] Gregg, 293.

the world's unfortunate state of affairs due to a lack of Islamic values, or jahiliyyah. Trethewey et al. further contend that an ideology establishes four key functions: naturalizing, obscuring, universalizing, and structuring. Qutb's work in *Milestones* is instrumental in accomplishing each of these functions within radical Islam.

The naturalizing element of an ideology is its most basic function: it presents its tenets straightforwardly as the way things ought to be. Essentially, all of Qutb's work in *Milestones* accomplishes this. However, one of the primary elements of his characterization of Islam, the notion of "humanity" and Islam's concern for human nature is framed in a way that is very much consistent with this concept of naturalizing. In short, Qutb asserts that genuine human experience is only possible through Islam because only Islam honors the divine way of things--the way they "ought" to be: "It is therefore desirable that [man] should also follow Islam in those aspects of his life in which he is given a choice and should make the Divine Law the arbiter in all matters of life so that there may be harmony between man and the rest of the universe."[192] In other words, within Islam, things are the way nature intended.

The second, obscuring function, of ideology glosses away flaws and potential inconsistencies much like a carpenter sands a wooden sculpture to smooth away imperfections. This element allows an ideology to be presented in the same way, with a coat of varnish: perfect, a function that can be key to the development of counter-narratives that expose an ideology's rational flaws. In Qutb's work, this occurs largely through the stark black/white characterization of Islam and jahiliyyah; by framing the conflict as one between absolutes--good vs. evil, Qutb obscures the potential of any

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[192] Qutb, *Milestones*, 46.

intervening factors and sets the stage for a self-fulfilling, conspiratorial prophecy. This dualistic relationship between Islam and jahiliyyah fuels the conspiracy Qutb presents, "a narrative construction of the world in which binary oppositions are defined by a righteous conflict," pitting a genuine member of the cause against the enemy,[193] a distinct and mutually-reinforcing binarism which will be addressed as a key feature of a potential counter-narrative.

Halting the Spread of Ideology

Sayyid Qutb's ideological influence has been compared to that of another eminent ideologue, Karl Marx. The outcome of Marx's writings persists in a worldview still active today. His work is regarded as foundational to the development and endurance of Marxism, which has continued to thrive long beyond the death its conceptual father. This endurance prompts questions regarding the ways in which an ideology is sustained over time.[194]

The final two elements of Trethewey et al.'s ideological functions, universalizing and structuring, speak to an ideology's persistence and duration; they work to establish the worldview within a society, ensuring its continued functioning while preserving the status of those in power. The universalizing function, as the term implies, demonstrates the comprehensive functioning of that ideology—the ways in which it can be applied to all aspects of life, reinforcing the worldview by presenting it and the interests of its ruling powers as the interests of all group members.

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[193] Goodall, *Counter-Narrative*, 68.

[194] Hendrik Hansen and Peter Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: a Comparison of Sayyid Qutb's Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 1 (2007), 55-76.

The final element, structuring, also universalizes the ideology, but incorporates it within a social structure by applying its tenets as essential ways of life, thus ensuring continued operation. Qutb's work in *Milestones* provides the narrative justification for the implementation of these functions through his treatment of the comprehensive nature and significance of sharia law. Qutb asserts that Islam is a creed which "includes the whole of life," affirming that its beauty "cannot be appreciated unless it takes concrete form."[195]

He details this notion with a thorough description of shariah, adding, "by 'the Shari'ah of God' is meant everything legislated by God for ordering man's life; it includes the principles of belief, principles of administration and justice, principles of morality and human relationships, and principles of knowledge."[196] In other words, Islam, and its societal manifestation, sharia, provide an all-encompassing structure that addresses all aspects of life; as Rogan suggests, there is "no other 'ism' but Islamism."[197] Sharia law addresses all aspects of life: social, personal, political, religious, and economic. Unlike other social constructs, within Islam, there is no separation of church and state; mosque and state are one and the same. It is the manifestation of totalitarianism.

One final characteristic of ideology is its self-reflexive nature. As they endure, ideologies reinforce and reflect upon themselves for sustenance, a fact which explains why leaders often look to historical narratives in their rhetoric. Reincorporating these narratives fortifies and sustains the ideology, and reformation is critical to prevent its

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[195] Qutb, *Milestones*, 48, 11.
[196] Qutb, *Milestones*, 107.
[197] Rogan, 409.

preservation. Counter-narratives must be introduced at this juncture to break the self-reflexive, self-perpetuating cycle. An investigation of foundational historical narratives like this one then is well-suited to trigger that interruption.

By understanding the function of an ideology, beginning with the narrative elements that comprise it, authors of counter-narrative strategies are uniquely equipped to interfere with its functions. Qutb's work and the contemporary radical Islamist ideology grounded in it are rhetorically formidable, but not impervious. Though a detailed draft of a counter-narrative is beyond the scope of this project, what follows is a discussion of the salient elements of Qutb's work as illuminated in the analysis, their rhetorical significance, and the ways in which this information can shape an informed counter-narrative strategy to challenge the tenets of current radical Islamist narratives. The discussion is divided into three primary counter-narrative strategies: I. Coloring the light/dark framing of jihad, II. Employing identification, III. Exposing ironies.

I. Coloring the light/dark framing of jihad

A distinct theme of antithesis is evident throughout *Milestones*, a remarkably effective rhetorical device, as Aristotle suggested in *Rhetoric*: the use of antithesis defines an issue in distinct terms and adds an element of dramatic significance while also functioning to obscure alternative perceptions.[198] An antithesis precludes the possibility of other options or interpretations and is thus central to the obscuring function of an ideology. The continuous depiction of the opposing worlds of Islam and jahiliyyah is consistent with the light/dark archetypal metaphor discussed by Michael Osborn and has

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[198] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, W. Rhys Roberts, trans., W.D. Ross, ed., (New York: Cosimo Classics Inc.: 2010), 134.

powerful rhetorical potential: "Because of their strong positive and negative associations with survival and developmental motives, such metaphors express intense value judgments and may thus be expected to elicit significant value responses from an audience."[199]

This particular brand of figurative language conveys a sense of inevitability which can have significant functional value in messages concerning the future.[200] The light/dark metaphor is ideally suited for assertive contentions like Qutb's because light and dark are more than just contrasting hues:

> They are rooted in a fixed chronological process, the movement of day into night and night into day. Therefore, symbolic conceptions of the past as dark and the present as light or the present as dark and the future as light always carry with them a latent element of determinism.[201]

This dynamic can suggest causation between a current state of affairs and an inevitable consequence: the present situation may be dark like the night, but the speaker's professed solutions will bring the dawn.

The use of the archetypal metaphor has a powerful, primitive, and universal appeal as the subject of the metaphor becomes rooted in a fundamental human experience. In short, this archetype, "simplifies complex situations and facilitates choice, at the same time lending a certain dramatic significance to the rhetorical situation."[202]

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[199] Michael Osborn, "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53, no. 2 (1967), 117.
[200] Osborn, 117-118.
[201] Osborn, 118.
[202] Ibid.

A fundamental argument structure in Qutb's work is that Muslims are in the midst of a cosmic battle with the forces of darkness. The light/dark metaphor is central to the way he characterizes the struggle of radical Islam, reinforcing the good vs. evil portrayal of their inherent conflict: "Whereas Mohammed mandated tolerance of those who would not embrace Islam, Qutb called for the destruction of all enemies. The forces of darkness could not be tolerated . . . ."[203]

Paralleling the juxtaposition of light and darkness is Qutb's use of contrasting god and devil terms, concepts described by Burke which represent extremes in language usage.[204] America and its culture of jahiliyyah, "the state of ignorance of the guidance from God"[205] are the clear devils in the context of this ideology, in stark opposition to the purity of Islam and holy jihad, under the divine guidance of Allah. God terms are "ultimate" terms representing "names for the ultimates of motivation" or simply "rhetorical absolutes."[206] Regarding their powerful rhetorical significance and motive force, Richard Weaver writes, their "capacity to demand sacrifice is probably the surest indicator of the 'god term,'" a sentiment with direct relevance in the nature of radical Islamism.[207] In short, all other terms are subordinate to a god term.

Though god and devil terms in any text may retain their established denotations, they function in non-traditional ways, often enthymematically, a move which can have powerful rhetorical impact. Thus, the rhetorical construction of the text's god and devil terms, in context with Hoffer's notion of a movement's "devil" and its powerful

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[203] White, 195.
[204] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 74.
[205] Qutb, *Milestones*, 19.
[206] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 74; Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1953), 212.
[207] Ibid.

incitement value are worth exploring in the context of Qutb's work. God terms can be extremely persuasive, but often, their counterparts, devil terms, have even greater rhetorical influence[208]:

> One may find himself hard put to define a policy purely in its own terms, but one can advocate it persuasively by an urgent assurance that it is decidedly *against* such-and-such other policy with which people may be disgruntled. For this reason also, the use of antithesis helps deflect embarrassing criticism. . . . And in this way, of course, antithesis helps reinforce unification by scapegoat.[209]

Qutb characterizes jahili society and its leaders as thoroughly malevolent and depraved and, in so doing, rhetorically envelops all of society's ills with this characterization. In this way, readers are not only invited to take part in the heavenly portrayal of Islam, but can begin the process of accepting Qutb's ideology by simply accepting the characterization of jahili society as the scapegoat for a current unsatisfactory state of affairs. While gaining adherents for a cause can involve a complicated rational process, unification *against* a cause, an antithesis, is far more straightforward and simpler to establish.

Qutb's portrayal of Islam, is the "god-term" to jahiliyyah's "devil," a distinct dichotomy he states explicitly: "There is nothing beyond faith except unbelief, nothing beyond Islam except Jahiliyyah, nothing beyond the truth except falsehood."[210] This juxtaposition establishes a distinct antithesis, a pivotal aim in extremist messages which

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[208] Hoffer, 91.

[209] Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 19.

[210] Qutb, *Milestones*, 127.

unify against a particular group or authority, a function Qutb accomplishes with his contrast of Islam and jahili society. This pervasive characterization of jahiliyyah as opposed to Islam is a stark black-and-white contrast can be countered by adding shades of color to the narrative.

Researchers at the Consortium for Strategic Communication studies in counter-terrorism have shown, "when the global war on terror is reduced to a battle of binary opposites, hatred deepens and recruitment to extremist groups flourishes."[211] Narratively altering this binary framing emphasized by Qutb must be pivotal to the construction of effective counter-narratives. Islamist distortion of this dualism is manifest in the contrasting notions of dar el Islam, literally meaning "house of Islam" and dar el Harb, which translates to "house of War." Dar el Islam also denotes "house of Peace" but rather than promoting peace, the concept suggests that there is no peace outside of Islam.[212]

This dichotomy is further reinforced by the concept known as kuffar. The term's etymological root denotes "aggression against the right path," and is used to describe those who have not accepted Allah, or non-Muslims.[213] Kafir are perceived as enemies of the state, an understanding used to justify violent action against them.[214] These concepts and their implications figure prominently in a more recent artifact of Islamist extremism, a treatise entitled, "Jihad, Martyrdom, and the Killing of Innocents" by Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Zawahiri, Al Qaeda'a chief ideologue and presiding leader of the

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[211] Goodall, *Counter-Narrative*, 51.
[212] Phares, 26.
[213] Phares, 33.
[214] Plural for "kuffar" is "kafir."

organization, details in this piece the guidelines of acceptable killings in the name of jihad.[215]

In a counter-narrative aimed at challenging these binary, black and white divisions of radical Islamism, the rhetor must challenge the fundamental characterizations of jahiliyyah and Islam. As Qutb's binary portrayal stands, accepting one or the other depiction precludes the existence of anything outside the confines of the light/dark rhetorical boundaries. In other words, accepting the black characterization of jahiliyyah leaves only the white Islam, and accepting the immaculate divinity of Islam leaves only the evil darkness of jahiliyyah. However, this also means that challenging one of these portrayals automatically skews the rhetorical balance of the mutually-defined black/white dynamic, and an effective counter-narrative strategy should pursue both avenues.

Incorporating narratives that involve violent deeds done in the name of Islam may be a one way to begin a counter-narrative. Examples might include violent terrorist acts that have resulted in deaths of innocents, perhaps particularly Muslim innocents, thus challenging the notion that Islam is truly pure and benevolent. For example, it has been asserted that Al Qaeda and other radical groups have been responsible for the deaths of more Muslims than any other foreign imperial power in the world.[216] Such a fact may prove polarizing, lacking narrative fidelity for audience members, and should be incorporated into a counter-narrative very cautiously if at all, however it serves as an example of the way a counter-narrative can color popular discourse.

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[215] Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 141.
[216] Christiane Amanpour, *ABC's This Week*, 2012.

Given the profound historical significance of the association, challenging the evil characterization of the U.S. as jahiliyyah may be more difficult than darkening the divine portrayal of Islam, but it may be possible. Emphasizing altruistic elements of U.S. foreign policy may seem the natural route in shading the portrayal of America in a more positive light. However, a more realistic strategy may involve emphasizing the inherent similarities between American and Islamic belief systems: "Despite profound differences and antipathies, the U.S. and most of the Islamic world do share common interests and causes, which, it must be remembered, includes worshiping the one God, a core issue that we ignore at our peril."[217] A counter-narrative establishing a mutual concern for humanity between the traditional Muslim faith and Western values may prove effective in countering the "devil" depiction of the West.

II. Identification

This notion of shared interests is central to the concept of identification. The primary appeal of Islam in Qutb's work occurs as a function of this pervasive rhetorical concept; first defined by Kenneth Burke, identification can function in a variety of ways with significant transformational power. More traditionally, it is achieved through "a direct associative process when one presents oneself as strikingly similar to the extent that one could 'represent' another's interests."[218] In other words, the rhetor affirms that his/her concerns correspond with those of the reader, in this case, much like Qutb affirms and reaffirms that he has the best interest of humanity in mind when he frames the mission of Islam.

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[217] Waller, 21.

[218] George Cheney, "The Rhetoric of Identification and the Study of Organizational Communication," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69, no. 2 (1983), 147.

Described by Burke as "consubstantiality," identification is the rhetorical representation of joined interests between two parties.[219] For example, Qutb makes an explicit appeal to identification when he states: "When the relationship of the belief is established, whether there be any relationship of blood or not, the Believers become like brothers," suggesting a profound bond between adherents that transcends ideology.[220] Identification may also be established by the converse, through the dual functioning of congregation and segregation, a concept with clear application to Qutb's juxtaposition of Islam with jahiliyyah and the rhetorical creation of antithesis.[221]

Identification compensates for the inherent divisions within humans' social structures. To offset these, "a person *acts* to identify with some target(s) i.e., persons, families, groups," etc., resulting in what Burke terms corporate identities or "corporate we's."[222] These corporate identities are vital because they confer personal meaning: "Our corporate identities serve to enhance the 'self,' granting us status and even more prestige . . . and by profuse praise of this unit he praises himself. For he 'owns shares' in the corporate unit."[223] This concept parallels a similar theory regarding the effect of social

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[219] Kenneth Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 20.

[220] Qutb, *Milestones*, 120.

[221] Dissociation "indirectly establishes new associations; one implicitly forms other association as one forms the dissociation . . . ." This form of identification is achieved through the notion of common ground, which the speaker establishes with an audience in an appeal to fundamental human desires. Lester C. Olson, "Kenneth Burke's Usage for Identification in His Major Works and the Implications for Rhetorical Critics," unpublished Master's Thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, 1980, p. 44.

[222] Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetorical Situation," in *Communication: Ethical and Moral Issues*, ed. Lee Thayer (London: Gordon and Breach, 1973), 268; Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 140.

[223] Cheney, 146.

categorization on intergroup behavior as discussed by Henri Tajfel, and has immediate

relevance to the rhetorical function of Qutb's appeal[224]

In this way, Qutb's utopian presentation of Islam as the ultimate truth functions to

entice would-be followers to align themselves with the movement's desirable

characteristics, benefitting by association with this altruistic motive. Burke suggests that

"one's participation in a collective, social role cannot be obtained [without

identification]."[225] In other words, the process of persuasion occurs as the recipient of a

message internalizes its ideological foundations, a step impossible without identification.

The construct also has an important social function as "one's material and mental ways of

placing oneself as a person in the groups and movements; one's way of sharing

vicariously in the role of leader or spokesman."[226] It is the aim, then, of a rhetor like

Qutb to present this reflection as attractively as possible. Throughout *Milestones*, Islam

is framed as a divine faith with the power to save humanity from all the world's ills. In

this way, participants in the mission become instrumental in something greater than

themselves, connecting with the noblest of all causes.

Another essential component of the persuasion process, particularly with regard to

converting auditors into members of a particular in-group, is Edwin Black's concept of

second persona, the implied auditor in a text. A text's ideology and the second persona

implicit within it are mutually reinforcing and this relationship is a central element in the

rhetorical process. The second persona represents "what the rhetor would have his real

auditor become" by accepting his or her argument and functions as a rhetorical strategy in

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[224] Henri Tajfel, M.G. Billig, R.P. Bundy, Claude Flament, "Social Categorization and Intergroup Behavior," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 1, no. 2 (1971).
[225] Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 144.
[226] Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 227.

two ways:[227] first, as an implicit invitation to the auditor. The ideology's defining values are presented in a way that entices the auditor to participation by framing these values, the characterization of the second persona, in a way that positively influences the auditor. In other words, as in Qutb's work, the rhetor suggests that the auditor who accepts his/her inducement possesses certain positive traits. The second persona may also function as a representation of a value system that resonates with that of the true auditor. In each case, the persuasive process is characterized by Burke's process of identification.

In the case of membership to a group, if the auditor "'completes' the inducement process by accepting . . . the values and goals of the organization, the socialization can be termed 'successful.'"[228] In other words, paralleling the fundamental function of identification, a message must be framed to present the group's ideology in a way that the auditor accepts it as his or her own.

Burke illustrates the concept of socially-constructed "corporate identities" as a way of "seeing one's reflection in the social mirror."[229] An approach, then, to countering the utopian second persona Qutb presents for all would-be followers of Islam might involve shattering that reflection. Counter narratives could elaborate upon narratives that challenge the utopian vision of Islam by suggesting that adherents would not become participants of the idealistic group culture they perceive, rather they would become complicit in all the immoral and violent acts committed in the name of Islam by joining the ranks of the extremists who perpetrate them.

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[227] Black, 111, 113.
[228] Cheney, 147.
[229] Kenneth Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 227.

Another straightforward application of identification is the use of personal

narratives, which can be potent rhetorical tools. Qutb employs several of his own

throughout *Milestones* and the strategy is prevalent in radical Islam as extremists share

personal anecdotes of fulfillment through their participation in radical groups.[230]

Counter-narratives may likewise make use of personal narratives from those who found

fulfillment elsewhere or, perhaps more effectively, from narrators who experienced and

became disillusioned with extremism. Such personal anecdotes may effectively

challenge the characterizations of Islam and jahiliyyah Qutb describes with his own,

while identifying with the values of potential adherents.

Counter-narratives might also employ their own brand of second persona, by

emphasizing the inherently moral nature of its audience, prospective radicals, and

suggesting that such honorable, ethical individuals would not engage in x reprehensible

behavior. Positive characterizations may be grounded in tenets of the very Islam

extremists distort to create their militant ideologies. For example, a counter-narrative

may elaborate on the notion that the Prophet Muhammad, as cited in the Holy Qur'an,

preached tolerance and mercy.[231] The holy book also advocates peace toward non-

believers, including members of other faiths.[232]

These positive associations can color existing radical narratives in a way that

eliminates the risk of overt negative characterizations. Though both tactics can be

incorporated into a successful counter-narrative strategy, negative characterization risks

demonization of the enemy which often has a "shelf-life" that expires as the conflict

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[230] This tactic has notably been employed by Samir Khan in a piece entitled "I Am Proud to be a Traitor to America" in Issue 2 (Fall 2010) of Al Qaeda's *Inspire* propaganda magazine.

[231] Qur'an, Surah 3: 18-19, Surah 2: 109.

[232] Qur'an, Surah 25: 63; Surah 5:69, 82.

continues. These pejorative remarks may also result in a potential backlash as the name-calling perpetuators of the negative representations.[233] As Waller describes, "Too much demonization can also help brand the enemy in ways contrary to U.S. interests. Appearing to call 'wolf' too often can also cause cynicism at home and distrust abroad."[234] In other words, no matter how rhetorically eloquent or well-intentioned, name-calling eventually grows tiresome for all parties. Thus, employing a brand of identification that emphasizes positive characterizations of would-be adherents may prove effective to a counter-narrative strategy by avoiding this problem while maintaining rhetorical appeal.

III. Exposing Ironies: Challenging the "humanity" of Islam

Like all symbol systems, the Islamist ideology Qutb describes in *Milestones* defines the worldview of its adherents. Qutb's Islam professes to satisfy a fundamental "humanity" in its consideration of free moral choice, human agency, the connection between spiritual and physical realms, and the need to maintain that link to achieve a fulfillment in the realm of human experience. To reinforce the significance of this reward, Qutb problematizes the lack of choice and the neglect of human spirituality in modern society--and when, with each discussion, Qutb offers Islam as the unequivocal solution to the conflicts he describes, his philosophy achieves a fundamental existential appeal, offering its adherents the promise of a genuine human experience unavailable elsewhere.

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[233] Waller, 93.
[234] Ibid.

Upon further inspection however, it becomes apparent that Qutb's professed solutions to the fundamental human conflicts he describes are only superficial; the reality becomes a series of fundamental ironies in his philosophy. Qutb's promises are beguiling but fail to deliver the transcendent human self-actualization he promises. These inherent inconsistencies may be exposed to great effect in a counter-narrative strategy aimed at challenging Qutb's assertions.

The first is an irony surrounding the notion of choice. While Qutb claims to allow the free exercise of individual choice, the acceptance of Islam brings with it a ready-made framework from which to live one's life. In other words, the only freedom of individual choice and the exercise of fundamental human agency is the choice to accept the ideology of Islam. Adherents relinquish the oppressiveness of modern society for the structure of ideological Islam; after this, individual choice vanishes as the ideology overcomes any subsequent need for choice by defining the adherent's entire worldview.

This irony is further reinforced by Qutb's argument for the inherent slavery in jahili society. He claims that no member of jahiliyyah could ever hope to experience freedom, that autonomy is only possible within the world of Islam. However, the etymology of the words "Muslim" and "Islam," both derive from an identical three-letter Arabic root (s, l, and m) and their definitions both indicate a relationship akin to slavery. The meaning of "Islam" is a surrender or submission to God, and "Muslim" indicates a person who surrenders.[235] In both cases, the relationship is one of subservience, a construct Qutb claims must be avoided.

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[235] "What does the word Muslim mean?" *Daniel Pipes: Middle East Forum,* Feb. 19, 2008. http://www.danielpipes.org/comments/120556.

Finally, the ultimate reason Qutb cites for the slavery inherent in jahili society is that it perpetuates the unnatural relationship of human leaders governing other men, a society guided by unnatural man-made laws. A fundamental irony in this notion is that Islam, the religion Qutb so fiercely advocates, just like all religions, is ultimately a man-made construct itself.

This phenomenon of human agency precludes another central element of Qutb's ideology: the notion of action. Because adherents to Qutb's Islamist worldview are essentially relinquishing one defining ideology for another, they surrender the capacity for genuine action. This radical ideology is so fundamentally all-encompassing, it bears the danger Burke warns of in his discussion of terministic screens: when a thought system is taken to its furthest logical conclusion, conscious action becomes autonomous motion.

As Burke describes, genuine action is made possible through the uniquely human symbolic interaction with our realities.[236] Inherent in this fact, however, is the danger of allowing our symbol systems to overtake genuine action by relinquishing conscious thought to those ideologies. Qutb's all-encompassing Islamic ideology is perfectly framed for such a shift.[237] This phenomenon is addressed by Hoffer as well, who suggests that mass movements "employ direct means to effect an enduring estrangement from self," a notion which relates to the third inconsistency in Qutb's ideology.

Qutb's Islam consistently professes a focus on the individual and agency, a claim which immediately conflicts with the goal of his work: to cultivate a "vanguard," a group of Muslims dedicated to re-establishing the tenets of fundamental Islam so that it may

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[236] Kenneth Burke, *On Symbols and Society*, 261.
[237] Hoffer, 84.

grow and prosper as the one true religion.[238] The focus on the individual then is only superficial—in practice; the individual's needs immediately become subsumed by those of the group.

The logical inconsistencies in radical ideology can be described and employed in various ways within counter-narratives; one of the most potentially effective of these strategies is through the use of humor. Burke suggests that in the face of conflict, we tend to frame it either as comedy or tragedy, "and only comedy offers hope."[239] This notion may have relevant application to the cause of counter-terrorism. A research study by counter-terrorism scholar, J. Michael Waller, concluded that the combination of ridicule and humiliation is "the secret weapon that's worse than death."[240]

Ridicule and satire employ the positive persuasion of humor to: raise (domestic) morale, strip the enemy of its mystique and prestige, deprive the enemy of its ability to terrorize, and eliminate the enemy's image of invincibility.[241] Additionally, ridicule cannot be rationally refuted; it tends to spread and multiply with each re-telling, and damages enemy morale while boosting morale at home.[242] Ridicule finds its own way to its target, and results in an enemy losing followers while also losing their respect, a potentially devastating combination.[243]

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[238] Qutb, *Milestones*, 8.
[239] Goodall, *Counter-Narrative*, 63.
[240] Waller, 93.
[241] Waller, 94.
[242] Goodall, 63.
[243] Ibid.

Trethewey et al. assert, "The way to resist ideology is to interfere with its functions,"[244] and it could well be that an incorporation of the paradoxes in Qutb's writings can inform counterterrorism efforts by disrupting the smooth functioning of his ideology. The continuing effort against terrorism will be won "by the power of our narrative to disrupt the everyday circulations and easy cultural acceptance of extremist ideology."[245] Rhetorical examinations like this one may be a significant first step toward the development of that narrative strategy. While the creation and propagation of counter narratives may not halt Islamist extremists in their tracks and prevent any further adherents from joining their ranks, it is a step forward that is far more desirable than permitting extremist narratives to remain unchallenged in public discourse.

These counter-narratives do face disadvantage and, in some cases, a potentially insurmountable obstacle in being heeded by Islamist auditors. By the very nature of the ideology Qutb presents and to which many extremists subscribe, any message with origins in the Western world will be instinctively deemed "jahili" and disregarded. The implications of this eventuality do not suggest the impotence of such messages, however. Rather, this fact reinforces the need for a "marketplace of ideas" with diverse sources and contexts for debate and dialogue where numerous voices can participate in the conversation.[246]

Furthermore, counter-narratives will reach the ears of *potential* adherents, who do not yet embrace Islamism, creating dissonance in the sender-receiver interaction that may interfere with the acceptance of extremist ideologies. Additionally, the creation and

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[244] Trethewey et al., 2.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Gregg, 293.

propagation of such countermeasures will become a part of the discourse, if nothing else, casting a shadow of doubt upon the otherwise unchallenged messages of radical Islamists.

Implications of Qutb's Ideology

The pervasiveness of Qutb's ideology is evident throughout radical Islam. The allegory of the pit, also known as the story of the "trench," is widely cited by bin Laden, particularly in a statement recorded for release to al-Jazeera in December 2001. At this point, several months after 9/11, bin Laden was a fugitive from American forces; he intended the message to be broadcast on or near Christmas Day.[247] The allegory is also cited by bin Laden's colleague and prominent Al Qaeda ideologue Ayman Al-Zawahiri in his statement entitled "Jihad, Martyrdom, and the Killing of Innocents."[248]

Another example is a manifesto entitled "Jihad is the Way," by Mustafa Mashur, the official leader of the Muslim Brotherhood from 1996-2002.[249] The piece details the organization's religious beliefs and aspirations in a way that is closely reminiscent of Qutb's characterizations of equivalent concepts. Like Qutb, Mashur established jihad as a moral obligation, calling it "a religious public duty" for every Muslim and an "inevitable necessity" suggesting, also like Qutb, that jihad will solve current societal problems and defend the Islamic nation (ummah) from attack from outsiders.[250] Mashur emphasizes that jihad is not only for the defensive purpose of countering assaults against

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[247] Bruce Lawrence, ed., James Howarth, transl., *Messages to the World: the Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, (London: Verso, 2005), 145, 152.

[248] Ibrahim, 146.

[249] PMW: Palestinian Media Watch, an Israeli research institute, undertook the translation of the piece.

[250] Mustafa Mashur, *Jihad is the Way*, trans. Itamar Marcus and Nan Jacques Zilberdik (Palestinian Media Watch: 2011), 5. http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=4603.

Muslims by "Allah's enemies," but also "for the purpose of realizing the great task of establishing an Islamic state, strengthening the religion and spreading it around the world."[251]

Mashur vowed that the cause will continue "until every inch of the land of Islam will be liberated, the State of Islam will be established, and Allah's Da'wa (Islamic missionary activity) will reach all mankind," reinforcing the fortitude with which his fellow Brothers approach the battle of jihad. The battle is also depicted in a familiar light/dark contrast; Mashur acknowledges a "responsibility to guide mankind and take it out of the darkness and heresy and error, into the light of Islam."[252]

Finally, as Qutb promises, Mashur's manifesto reinforces the notion of approaching death without fear, emphasizing guaranteed martyr status for all jihadi warriors:

> Oh, young Islamic Mujahidun [Jihad warriors], go forward in the lines of the fighters for Allah, filled with trust that you are about to meet one of the two greatest destinies, victory or Shahada [Martyrdom] – victory that believers around the world will rejoice in, or Shahada [Martyrdom] that will grant you the status of the Shuhada [Martyrs in Islam] and their rewards.[253]

In short, Qutb's narrative themes are evident from communiqués of the most radical of extremist groups, to that of an organization that currently rules a country considered a

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[251] Mashur, 8.
[252] Mashur, 9.
[253] Mashur, 10-11.

U.S. ally. This fact further reinforces the importance of a counter-narrative strategy informed by the foundational ideology he articulates.

An indication of the potency of such a strategy is evidenced by the Muslim Brotherhood's concern over current counter-narratives by its constituents. On March 20, 2013, Egypt's public prosecutor ordered the arrest of a popular television personality, Bassem Youssef, on charges of denigrating Islam and insulting President Morsi. Youssef, a political pundit often compared to Comedy Central's Jon Stewart of *The Daily Show*, is the host of a similarly satirical program in Egypt.[254] The previous week, Talaat Ibrahim, the country's public prosecutor, ordered the arrests of five pro-democracy, anti-Islamist activists charged with using social media to incite violence against the Muslim Brotherhood "in what the opposition has characterized as a widening campaign of dissent."[255]

This widely-publicized legal action is telling. It is evident that Morsi and his government are alarmed about the potential effects of the counter-narratives these activists were disseminating. Their charges of "corrupting morals" and "violating religious principles" are legal code for "countering the ideology of the ruling power." In the end, Youssef and the activists were guilty of nothing more grave than public satire, however it would appear that Egypt's powers-that-be are uncomfortable with the ideological tension this discourse creates.

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[254] Kareem Fahim and Mayy El Sheikh, "Egypt Orders Arrest of Satirist Over Skits on Islam and Morsi," *New York Times*, March 30, 2013. http://www.newyorktimes.com/2013/03/31/world/middleeast/egypt-orders-arrest-of-satirist-for-skits-on-islam-and-morsi.html.

[255] Sarah El Deeb, "Arrest Warrant Issued for Bassem Youssef, TV Satirist Known As 'Egypt's Jon Stewart,'" *Huffington Post*, March 30, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/30/bassem-youssef-arrest-warrant-egypt-jon-stewart_n_2985235.html.

Qutb himself indicates a similar fear of ideological infection in *Milestones*, warning his readers that Muslim members of the vanguard may learn from jahili experts about scientific topics, however, "as far as the interpretation of human endeavor is concerned . . . . These indirectly affect man's beliefs; it is therefore not permissible for a Muslim to learn them from anyone other than a God-fearing and pious Muslim."[256] This mindset parallels that of Morsi and his government, indicating a perceived vulnerability to narrative challenges that should encourage the construction and dissemination of a counter-narrative strategy to challenge the militant ideology of these leaders.

Further inspiring the creation of a systematic response to extremist ideology is the unmistakable spread of radical Islamism across the globe. In Iran, a country in which militant, authoritarian views already prevail, a senior cleric has publicly blamed women not dressed modestly for causing local earthquakes.[257] Cleric Hojatoleslam Kazem Sedighi of Islam, a country that still practices the grotesque, primeval punishment of stoning, a penalty suffered disproportionately by women,[258] seemed to believe these women had created a desperate situation adding, "What can we do to avoid being buried under the rubble? There is no other solution but to take refuge in religion and to adapt our lives to Islam's moral codes."[259] Sedighi's comment illustrates the foundation for radical Islamist views: a rationale that exists entirely within the framework of fundamental Islam.

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[256] Qutb, *Milestones*, 109.
[257] Associated Press, "Women to blame for earthquakes, says Iran cleric," *The Guardian*, April 19, 2010. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/apr/19/women-blame-earthquakes-iran-cleric.
[258] Elahe Amani, "We must stop an inhuman penalty against women: Iran's execution by stoning," *Women's News Network*, April 16, 2013. http://womennewsnetwork.net/2013/04/16/irans-execution-by-stoning.
[259] Associated Press.

The Muslim Brotherhood has continued to increase its militant influence in Egypt since Morsi's election, and the group's recent response to the UN's declaration to prevent violence against women indicates fundamental Islam holds ultimate priority: "These are destructive tools meant to undermine the family as an important institution; they would subvert the entire society, and drag it to pre-Islamic ignorance."[260] The Brotherhood's statement went on to urge the leaders of other Muslim countries and their UN representatives to pressure the UN to "rise to the high morals and principles of family values prescribed by Islam."[261]

Another cause for concern is the political reality of Saudi Arabia, a country officially considered an ally to the United States, which has practiced Wahhabism, the most puritanical form of Islamism, since its founding in 1932.[262] Illustrations of radical Islamist ideology gaining power abound, further illustrating that Islamism is a pervasive worldview that will continue to spread if allowed to prosper unchallenged.

One of the most basic tenets of communication theory is that a message can never be un-said. Once disseminated, a message exists; it can never be taken back. These radical ideologies exist and continue to be disseminated, influencing would-be Islamists throughout the world. They cannot be erased, but by disseminating informed counter-narratives into the same public discourse these extremist ideologies inhabit, they can be effectively challenged.

Suggestions for Future Research

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[260] IkhwanWeb.
[261] Ibid.
[262] M.D. Nalapat, "Saudi Arabia Awakens to the Dangers of Wahhabism," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, April 30, 2013.
http://www.rferl.org/content/Saudi_Arabia_Awakens_To_The_Dangers_Of_Wahhabism/2017767.html.

Islamist extremism is not exclusive to the Middle East region. The ideology of these radical groups has reached well into the United States, inspiring homegrown terrorists within our country's borders. Boston bombing suspects, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev learned how to build the home-made explosives that were responsible for the deaths and injuries at the Boston Marathon this year from an online propaganda magazine called *Inspire*.[263] The periodical is published in English by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and overtly aimed at a western audience with the objective of gaining supporters and participants in jihad. Edited by Samir Khan and Anwar Al-Awlaki until their recent deaths, the ten current issues are dated between summer 2010 and March 2013.

Inspire has recently gained nationwide attention as the news of its use by the Tsarnev brothers hit the airwaves. News coverage has emphasized the ready availability of the bomb instructions, citing an article in the first issue entitled "How to Build a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom" and the notion that the step-by-step guide detailed the process of creating the explosives, including how best to fill them with shrapnel to maximize carnage on impact.[264] However, this conversation obviously avoids the larger issue: that the Tsarnev brothers felt compelled to create the bombs in the first place. Whether the two were regular readers of the magazine remains to be discovered, but the texts remain a powerful propaganda tool with the potential to incite would-be radicals within the U.S.

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[263] All issues of *Inspire* can be found online at http://publicintelligence.net/tag/inspire-magazine.
[264] The AQ Chef, "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom," *Inspire*, (Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula: Summer 2010), 33.

The founders and editors of *Inspire*, Samir Khan and Anwar Al-Awlaki, were both, notably, American citizens. Thus, fluent in English and acquainted with nuances of western societal values and customs, they are equipped as insiders to manipulate this intelligence to the benefit of their own objectives. An analysis of these texts has rich potential for scholarly work, particularly with regard to the identity issues inherent in an extremist propaganda text aimed at a western audience.

This project has established the significance of understanding foundational historical texts to understand more completely the radical ideology that fuels today's Islamist radicals. Future research could further explore the link between the work of Qutb and other ideologues and contemporary leaders of radical groups like Al Qaeda, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as Egyptian and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. One particular example is that of Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's chief ideologue who took command of the organization after bin Laden's assassination in 2011. Zawahiri was an admirer of Qutb, citing him as an inspiration for his militant ideas.[265] This link prompts the potential for future research to explore the way Qutb's ideology has influenced Zawahiri's work and, consequently, the current ideology of Al Qaeda.

Though *Milestones* is Qutb's most prominent volume, he was a prolific writer, and future research could also explore his other works. One of these might include a piece entitled "The America that I Have Seen," which detailed his perceptions of his experience in America, to illuminate the way Qutb's encounter shaped his disdain for Western culture. Another piece that warrants scholarly attention is known as "Fi Zilal al-

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[265] Jayshree Bajoria and Lee Hudson Teslik, "Profile: Ayman Al-Zawahiri," *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 14, 2011. http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-leaders/profile-ayman-al-zawahiri/p9750.

Qur'an," (In the Shade of the Qur'an), Qutb's magnum opus over 30 volumes long in which he undertakes a comprehensive literary criticism of the Qur'an in its entirety. This work has been influential in the way other extremists have interpreted the Qur'an and may therefore be a rich resource for future counter-terrorism research and potentially significant in counter-narrative efforts aimed at the link between the Qur'an and its radical interpretations.

Finally, one element of radical Islamism that is notably absent from this analysis is that of the inherent gender inequality in its ideology. Qutb's references to women in *Milestones* are few, a telling fact itself. One mention discusses types of marriages in jahiliyyah, including issues of paternity in the case of women as prostitutes. Qutb's only other mention of women in his text strictly reinforces traditional gender roles and suggests that when women deviate from their biological responsibility of raising children, they initiate they downfall of society:

> If woman is freed from her basic responsibility of bringing up children; and if, on her own or under social demand, she prefers to become a hostess or a stewardess in a hotel or ship or air company, thus spending her ability for material productivity rather than in the training of human beings, because material production is considered to be more important, more valuable, and more honorable than the development of human character, then such a civilization is 'backward' from the human point of view, or 'jahili' in Islamic terminology.[266]

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[266] Qutb, *Milestones*, 98.

These primitive views are remarkably similar to those of Iranian cleric Sedighi who held women culpable for his country's earthquakes, and the Muslim Brotherhood's assertion that the UN's declaration to prevent violence against women would "subvert the entire society, and drag it to pre-Islamic ignorance."[267]

As evidenced by the discrimination and violence suffered by women in countries governed by extremists, these issues of misogyny are of tremendous, destructive impact. The seeds of these ideas are evident in *Milestones* and pervasive in institutionalized Islam. Understanding the unmistakable relationship between this inherently misogynistic ideology and its societal manifestations is paramount for preventing further gender-based injustice.

Strategic counter-narratives aimed at women can be a powerful source of resistance to radicalism. Women represent a significant portion of the population and are therefore a critical part of the resistance process. Nevertheless, a strategy aimed at this population must be approached with care and consideration, as women affected by these extremist ideologies can face severe consequences for indicating defiance. However, it is likely this target audience is becoming increasingly receptive to challenging narratives. In light of statements like those of the Muslim Brotherhood against the basic provisions of the UN's recent declaration, female citizens throughout the region are quickly becoming aware that these leaders do not have their best interests at heart.

It would appear that the Brotherhood's profession of concern for the "ordinary man on the street" does not extend to the ordinary woman.[268] The subject of inherent

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[267] IkhwanWeb.
[268] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Information Center, p. 3.

misogyny within radical Islam and its implications are increasingly relevant and could easily have become another project entirely. They are worth far more than a mere mention, and it is my hope that the future finds scholars and decision makers thoughtfully addressing these issues.

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EDUCATION

Master of Arts, Communication, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC   May, 2013

William Randolph Hearst Endowed Fellowship recipient for academic excellence   2011-2013

Bachelor of Business Administration, Management and Marketing
Bachelor of Arts, Public Communication
Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida   August, 2008

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Department of Communication, Wake Forest University   2011-2013
- Conduct various terrorism-related research projects under mentorship of Dr. Randall Rogan, specialist in conflict communication and communication & terrorism
- Researched and translated (Spanish to English) several manifestoes published by Mexican terrorist group, ITS (Individuales Tendiendo a lo Salvaje)
- Completed extensive research and analysis on Western-aimed *Inspire* propaganda publications published by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
- Completed a thesis project involving analysis of radical Islamist fundamentalist writings to inform a counter-narrative strategy

Teaching Assistant, Department of Communication, Wake Forest University   2011-2013
- Lead undergraduate-level classes on various communication-related topics including: Interpersonal Communication, Public Speaking, Introduction to Rhetorical Studies

Mentor, Ben Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship Institute, Wake Forest   Summer 2012, 2013
- Involved with state department initiative aimed at building international relationships and fostering awareness of shared values, democracy, and globalization
- Served as 24-hour teacher, counselor, advisor, and nurse to over 60 international fellows

Public Relations Intern, March of Dimes, West Palm Beach, FL   2011
- Created press releases, print advertisements, and various marketing materials to promote the organization and its yearly "March for Babies" fundraiser

Ocean Lifeguard, Boca Raton Ocean Rescue, Boca Raton, FL   2005-2011
- Guarded approximately 250 yards of beachfront recreational area, up to 300 beach patrons
- Trained to think quickly and keep focused, responding with appropriate skills in emergency situations

Freelance Editor and Writer, Boca Raton, FL   2003-2011
- Wrote and edited variety of manuscripts for clients with careful attention to detail, remaining faithful to authors' ideas and creating a polished finished product

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, SKILLS, MEMBERSHIPS

- **Selected presenter: 2013 Popular/American Culture Association,** Washington, D.C. "The Rhetorical Construction of Face: Tragic Framing in the Trayvon Martin Case"

- **Selected presenter: 2012 Rhetoric Society of America Conference**, Philadelphia, PA "Rhetoric of Terrorism: Motivation and the Role of Identity in the World's Most Contentious Rhetoric"

- **Selected presenter: 2011 Kenneth Burke Society Conference**, Clemson University, SC "Restoring Honor and Sanity: An Analysis of Glenn Beck's 'Rally to Restore Honor' and Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert's 'Rally to Restore Sanity'" **Top Student Paper**

- Member: National Communication Association (NCA), Rhetoric Society of America (RSA), International Association for Conflict Management, (IACM), Toastmasters International

- Bilingual: expert English language skills, native Spanish speaker

- Experienced in the use of content analysis software including *AntConc* and *Diction 5.0*

- Director, South Florida Undergraduate Communication Honors Conference

- Toastmasters International: 2011 Contest Master, 1st Place, Humorous Speech Contest, 2nd Place, Impromptu Evaluation Contest.