

# DEPROGRAMMING AN IDEOLOGY: THOUGHT CONTROL AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM

**Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan B. French**  
United States Air Force

The events of 11 September 2001 ushered in a new era for U.S. national security, although warning signs long existed. As early as 1946, a U.S. Intelligence Review noted the Muslim world, "...is full of discontent and frustration, yet alive with consciousness of its inferiority and with determination to achieve some kind of general betterment."<sup>1</sup> The intervening years changed little as the Muslim world stagnated due to authoritarian and corrupt governments weighed down by stifling bureaucracies, extended disengagement from the world economy, regional unemployment averaging 25%,<sup>2</sup> and repeated success for the Muslim's primary antagonist, Israel. It is not surprising then that Osama bin Ladin's 1996 "ruling" to, "...kill the Americans and their allies – civilian and military" as a religious duty for all Muslims was acted upon by a select few.<sup>3</sup> These vanguards, drawn from a broader group of those with uncompromising and absolute beliefs (puritans),<sup>4</sup> embrace extreme violence (violent puritans). Unfortunately, they receive tacit and overt support from many Muslims, and a key determinant for many is their faith. This link to Islam raises the specter of religious war,<sup>5</sup> and if either the U.S. (the West) or Muslim world accepts this notion, then the current global system is at risk.<sup>6</sup>

The U.S. must meet this ideological challenge with the same vigor with which it confronted fascism and communism. However, the moniker "Global War on Terrorism" undermines this reality as it mires the U.S. in the tactical thinking of force-on-force, or physical warfare. Military success, while an important component, simply cannot defeat this ideology. Strategy must go beyond engaging the enemy, or even his beliefs, and address factors leading to those beliefs. Secretary Rumsfeld identified this gap in his 2003 "War on Terrorism" memorandum:

*...Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us? ...Does the U.S. need to fashion a broad, integrated plan to stop the next generation of terrorists? The U.S. is putting relatively little effort into a long-range plan, but we are putting a great deal of effort into trying to stop terrorists...<sup>7</sup>*

Precepts of the effects-based approach to joint military operations provide a vector to address this concern. At its core, an effects-based approach “is about the mind perceptions and the cognitive dimensions of an adversary’s reality, regardless of any physical or military inferiority or superiority.”<sup>8</sup> Going beyond knowing the enemy or even their motivations, strategy development should assess psychological factors impacting puritan behavior. One little discussed subject to consider is thought control, which provides an opportunity to indirectly alter behavior versus directly subduing the believer. While this proposal is controversial, it may provide key insight to a successful effects-based strategy.

This paper offers methodologies behind thought control as one avenue to defeat the violence of many puritan ideologues. To present this case, thought control theory is described with particular emphasis on its psychological underpinnings and use in promoting ideological extremism. Next, puritan use of thought control, from taking advantage of environmental factors through indoctrination of recruits, is provided. These elements establish a baseline for the paper’s final section where countering the puritan’s ability to perpetrate thought control, as part of a broader persuasion-based strategic influence effort, is offered. Importantly, this paper is not a psychological or sociological study, and the information presented, while fair, is selective. The intent is to open a window to new policy considerations in the war against violent puritans.

## Thought Control

***The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.***

— Steve Biko, South African political leader

<b>Education</b>	<b>Advertising</b>	<b>Propaganda</b>	<b>Indoctrination</b>	<b>Thought Reform</b>
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Table 1. Continuum of influence and persuasion.<sup>10</sup>

Thought control methodologies provide a means to better understand and counter puritan ideology. This proposition may seem extreme but it is not, and to make it more palatable consider the following. First, thought control is simply a social process designed to influence and persuade, like other techniques listed on the continuum at Table 1. It is subtle, involves little or no overt physical abuse, and results in a new “internalized” self. Brainwashing, on the other hand, generates a rationalized self of coercion and self-preservation,<sup>11</sup> and the source of influence is perceived as “the enemy.”<sup>12</sup> Second, review the following statements which, intended or not, relate to thought control.

- “Western leaders can no longer afford to overlook the cult characteristics of Islam.” – Pentagon briefing paper, 2005.<sup>13</sup>
- “The term cult and New Religious Movement (NRM) are used interchangeably<sup>14</sup> ...NRMs can be found [in] Islam, including Al Qaeda,<sup>15</sup> – RAND Study, 2005.
- “...NRMs have two defining characteristics – a high degree of tension between the group and its surrounding society and a high degree of control exercised by leaders over their members...”<sup>16</sup> – RAND Study, 2005.
- “Once they have joined the ranks of the jihadists [violent puritans], recruits undergo an intense blend of religious indoctrination...”<sup>17</sup> – Palmer in “At the Heart of Terror,” 2004.

If the West can overcome tendencies towards religious relativism, especially regarding Islam, the principles of thought control can broaden “counter-puritan” efforts.

A product of social psychology, thought control is “a system of influences that disrupts an individual’s identity and replaces it with a new identity.”<sup>18</sup> Fundamental to this suggestion is change, which is inherently benign. It becomes “negative” when an individual’s ability to think and act independently is undermined.<sup>19</sup> A myriad

of controlling techniques exist, and they are rooted in Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT). Basically, individuals seek consistency across behaviors, thoughts and emotions, and when one changes, the others adjust to reduce cognitive dissonance.<sup>20</sup> Social psychology has shown that manipulation of these elements by outside actors can result in thought control because "...everybody is deeply influenced by their environment. It is human nature to adapt to what is perceived to be 'correct' behavior."<sup>21</sup>

Controlling the environment then is central to thought control, which, at the most basic level, means influencing behavior, information, thoughts and emotions (BITE).<sup>22</sup> Efforts include endless machinations, and range from controlling one variable to an assault across an individual's physical reality, thought processes, information sources and emotions. Importantly, while controlling one variable can alter behavior, the impact increases exponentially when all are adjusted.<sup>23</sup> The intent of course is to control, to some extent, an individual's autonomy. Methods can be applied in a focused manner, such as brainwashing, or more broadly through nuanced thought control. Like the great engines of change (education, psychology, religion, politics), thought control uses the "approaches to change" in Table 2, although it relies primarily on coercion and exhortation.<sup>24</sup> In all cases, the influencing agent provides the goal of change.

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Approach</b>
Coercion	You <u>must</u> change under threat, or actual use, of force
Exhortation	You <u>should</u> change to maintain moral standing
Therapy	You <u>can</u> change and find relief
Realization	You <u>can</u> change and reach your potential

Table 2. Approaches to change people.<sup>25</sup>

Successfully applying the above techniques is complicated and rooted in psychology, and while a detailed psychological analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to identify psychological themes inherent in thought control. Listed in Table 3, these apply regardless of ideology (religious, political, destructive) and exist to varying degrees. When taken to extremes, through convergence of ambitious ideology (messianic for example) and "immoderate" personal character traits, totalism can result.

Themes	Description
Milieu Control	Control of environment and communication - both external and internal. Control what subject hears, reads, writes, experiences and expresses.
Mystical Manipulation	Build "mystique" around the organization - creates a "mystical imperative." Subjects are the "chosen" - higher calling eliminates questions from "below."
Demand for Purity	Everything is black and white - creates sharp divide between good and evil. Anything not in accord with "approved" doctrine must be eliminated.
Cult of Confession	Personal confession to the organization - symbolic surrender to the group. Confession opens door to approved "cures" which are manipulated.
Sacred Science	Basic dogma is considered sacred - the ultimate moral vision for existence. Doctrine, and those presenting the doctrine, are beyond questioning.
Loading the Language	Thought terminating cliché - <b>provides start and finish</b> of doctrinal analysis. Promotes unity and doctrine - constricts language, thinking and experience.
Doctrine over Person	Elevates doctrine over human experience - chosen ideology replaces truth. Requires subjects to change and meet doctrinal mold.
Dispensing of Existence	Decides who has the right to exist - clearly identifies those who do not. Justifies death penalty - creates world of "being versus nothingness."

Table 3. Psychological themes common to thought control environments.<sup>26</sup>

This merging of people and ideas, with its emotional penchant for "all or nothing" (totalism), results in extreme behavior and potentially devastating consequences such as religious war, extreme political upheaval and cults of death, and its warning signs are listed at Table 4.<sup>27</sup>

Exaggerated control and manipulation of the individual.
Blanketing of the environment with guilt or shame.
Emphasis on man's hopelessness and depravity.
Need for man to submit to a vengeful deity.
Closed system of faith promoting the ultimate truth.

Table 4. Criteria to evaluate religious totalism.<sup>26</sup>

Even a cursory review of the psychological themes highlights an obvious link between thought control and religion, and suggests psychological vulnerabilities exist. At its core, religion promotes spiritual and real doctrines of moral, ethical and spiritual behavior, and “influence” is expected. According to thought control methodology, this influence can be positive or negative, and the dividing line is loss of independent thought. Across religions there are examples of healthy and destructive influences, with the latter most common during searches for heresy or attempts to increase enthusiasm among the faithful.<sup>29</sup> Whether religious-based or not, certain personality traits, centered on insecurity and low self-identity, increase susceptibility to thought control. Listed in Tables 5 and 6, these traits combine with situational vulnerabilities and lack of awareness concerning thought control to decrease internal defenses. For purposes of this paper, situational vulnerabilities include significant emotional events of short duration, such as divorce, death in the family and loss of job,<sup>30</sup> or long term frustration, such as discontent and loss of hope. Importantly, the natural changes of late adolescence and early adulthood increase the impact of these factors, making this group particularly susceptible to thought control.

<b>Hassan</b>
Poor critical thinking
Insecurity and/or low self-esteem
Those seeking altered states of consciousness
Learning disorders, drug/alcohol problems
Sexual identity issues
Phobias of any kind

Table 5. Personality traits linked to thought control.<sup>31</sup>

<b>Lifton</b>
Early lack of trust
Extreme environmental chaos
Total domination by parent
Intolerable guilt
Severe identity crisis

Table 6. Personality traits linked to thought control.<sup>32</sup>

## Violent Puritan Ideology, Terror and Suicide Bombers

*When hopes and dreams are loose on the streets, it is well for the timid to lock doors, shutter windows and lie low until the wrath has passed.*

— Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer*<sup>33</sup>

Puritan organizations in the Muslim world are many, and those engaging in violence rely on thought control when unleashing their most potent weapon – the suicide-bomber. Despite disparate causes, groups like al-Qaeda, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and many splinter organizations seek total submission of their enemies through the psychology of terror. By wantonly killing themselves, suicide-bombers are sanctified while spreading death and destruction and feeding puritan propaganda. This ultimate personal sacrifice however is not made by puritan leaders or decision-makers. They reserve these acts of finality for recruits seeking economic, social, religious and personal rewards. It is here that thought control plays a pivotal role in the totalism of violent puritan ideology. Despite the apparent willingness of many Muslims to martyr themselves, it is clear their personal autonomy has been guided, and then corrupted, by a variety of psychological, environmental and recruitment strategies.

Many in the Muslim world seek change, making them psychologically vulnerable to thought control. For a multitude of reasons, many self-induced, the Muslim world has suffered at least 200 years of scientific, cultural, political, economic, academic and social stagnation, colonialism, destructive independent rule and numerous military defeats at the hands of “outsiders.” Considering the Muslim world is largely comprised of “shame-honor cultures,” these failures must either be covered up or revenged to restore honor.<sup>34</sup> Since globalization raises both the impact and awareness of these failures, hiding them is impossible and, given the depth of malaise, restoring honor is exceedingly problematic. The resulting frustration promotes a tendency towards an inferiority complex, which is a primary personality trait increasing susceptibility to thought control. (See Tables 5 and 6) In extreme cases it leads to fanaticism, where in the ultimate self-renunciation, fanatics reject

traditional self-advancement and instead seek to acquire pride, confidence and hope, through affiliation with a holy cause. For those who give themselves completely to the cause, a “new” and clean life is produced.<sup>35</sup> The goal for all is to restore self-esteem, which they gain in varying degrees by pursuing a selfless versus self-centered life.<sup>36</sup> Converts to this quest for faith and pride<sup>37</sup> include the poor, misfits, selfish, ambitious, minorities, bored and sinners.<sup>38</sup> This of course spans the strata of Muslim life revealing the risk that this malignancy could metastasize from disparate individuals to the collective Muslim world. From this fodder, Muslim leaders, both secular and religious, have historically manipulated cultural proclivities and BITE to promote their “cause de jour” at the expense of personal autonomy. Today, Islamic puritans follow suit and their primary tool is religion.

While psychological factors lay important groundwork for the creation of puritan groups and their suicide-bombers, more is needed when considering those that target the U.S.. According to a RAND study, anti-Americanism, radical Islam and a willingness to use violence for political purposes constitute environmental factors essential to violent puritan groups,<sup>39</sup> and all are enabled through thought control.

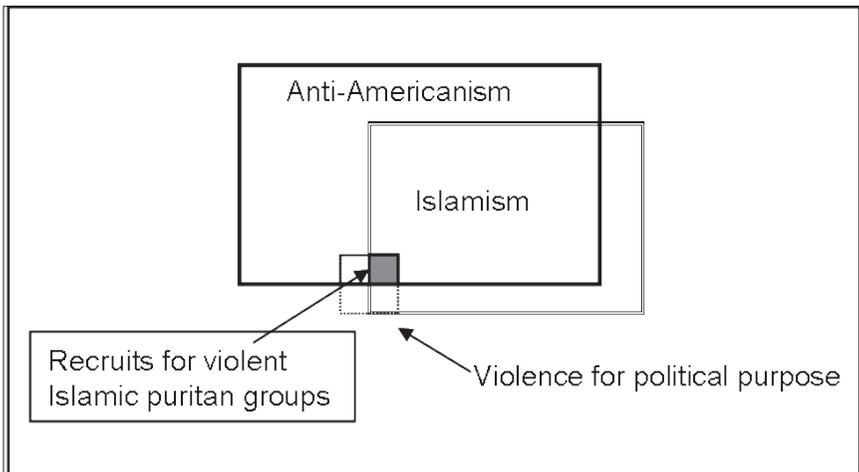


Figure 1. Convergence of anti-Americanism, radical Islam and political violence.

Numerous examples from across the Muslim world highlight pervasive anti-American sentiment. While overt “reasons” for this hatred are many, it is important to remember the following two assertions. First, a common hatred is at least as important as a common faith in generating unified action, and the “ideal devil is a foreigner,”<sup>40</sup> or for most Islamic puritan groups, “infidel.” Importantly, a derivative of this unity is self-sacrifice, clearly a prerequisite for suicide bombers.<sup>41</sup> Second, Muslim views of Americans are often emotional perceptions rather than rationale assessments,<sup>42</sup> and while their accuracy is often questionable, it is their emotional appeal that is important. Through a variety of thought control techniques anti-American sentiment is fomented in the region. The most obvious method is through control of information, which is often filtered through religious or state-run entities. It is not surprising then that prolonged exposure to anti-American “information” impacts other BITE elements. Supplementing this effort are group dynamics inherent in Muslim society where conformity to family, clan, tribe and society is not only expected, but valued. It is with these methods that religious and secular leaders have repeatedly relied on social contagion theory to spread and solidify emotions and behaviors<sup>43</sup> that are decidedly anti-American. If doubt exists, one needs only to consider “spontaneous demonstrations” in the region targeting U.S. interests. This “group dynamic” and desire to conform provides a lever for manipulation that crosses into religion as well.

The role of radical Islam in puritan ideology is critical and steeped in thought control methodology. First, Islam, like all organized religions, influences BITE. This is accomplished through many methods to include standards of behavior, recurring rituals, group dynamics, shame, punishment, religious education and more. Accordingly, it is central to identity formation, both individual and collective,<sup>44</sup> and is critical to three of the four internal methods of social control in Muslim society (Table 7). This control, without submerging into Islam’s tenets and competing interpretations, lays important groundwork for radical Islam and provides a linking element for Muslims from moderate to fanatic. For puritan ideology, control is extended through radicalized versions of Islam. Promoting a pan-Islamic worldview, these Muslims embrace religious unity over nationalism and support the implementation of Islamic law.<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, due to splintered religious authority within Islam,<sup>46</sup> radical Islam has spread through state sponsorship in Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, popular movements within Iran, Sudan and Afghanistan, and threatens the existing order in several countries today (Egypt and Algeria).<sup>47</sup> Also a product of Islam's fractured jurist system, and critical enabler for puritan groups, is the ability of those with power to exercise religious clout. This dispersion of Koran interpretation authority plays into the hands of puritan leaders and empowers their ability to control followers. Importantly, it should be apparent that radical Islam is simply a means to an end versus a true belief system, and its real value to puritan leaders is the pathway it provides to totalism. (Tables 3 and 4) The resulting religious imperative, fostered through arcane interpretations of the Koran, justifies holy terror.

4	"Islamic identity" as marker to counter the "West"
3	Religious elites in symbiotic relationship with "established power"
2	Religious elites
1	Parents socializing children

Table 7. Levels of social control within Muslim communities.<sup>48</sup>

Many puritans use violence for political purposes, which is a problematic practice common in the Muslim world. In many areas, long held traditions embrace violence (including terrorism) as a means to attain power.<sup>49</sup> When justified by Islam, the result is religious terrorism that is unconstrained by conventional political, moral or practical boundaries. In fact, the opposite is true as the quest for fundamental change is assumed to justify, on religious grounds, even greater acts of violence.<sup>50</sup> Considering the goal of puritan violence is overwhelmingly psychological<sup>51</sup> and symbolic, versus the "possibility" of heroic death in traditional combat, violent puritan groups call for the ultimate self-sacrifice via the suicide bomber. It is here, specifically through recruitment strategies, that these groups exercise their most direct forms of thought control.

Potential recruits for suicide bombing, whether targeting the U.S. or not, come from across the Islamic world and beyond, and are predisposed to support the puritans for a variety of reasons. Importantly, while they cross all socio-economic classes, the common

theme is frustration and desire for change. This disaffection is then focused by exposure to the environmental factors described above, and the result for many is burgeoning support for the puritans. Accordingly, many are willing participants in the subsequent thought control they endure.

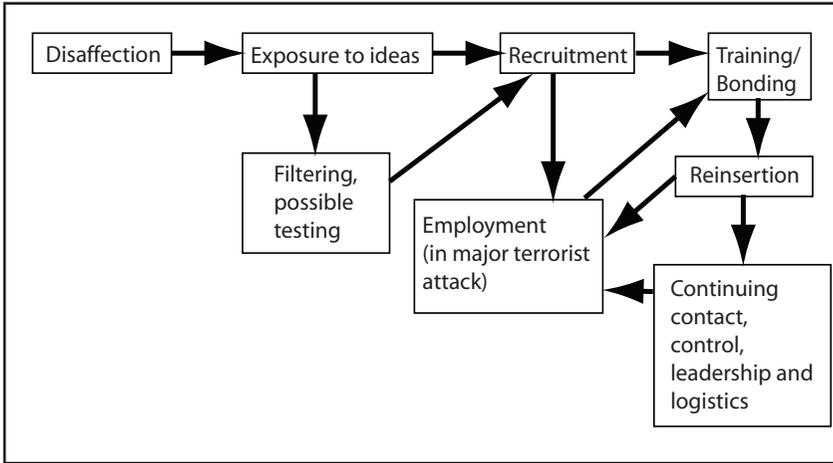


Figure 2. The Life Cycle of Individual Terrorists.<sup>52</sup>

The Life Cycle of Terrorists at Figure 2 highlights the importance of recruitment as the last link before training or employment. Recruits come from mosques, Islamic study circles, schools, universities, youth, health and welfare organizations, charities and other social clusters.<sup>53</sup> They either self-identify, or are targeted by teachers or community and religious leaders, based on perceived zeal, for terror and suicide operations. Techniques are sophisticated and are often long-term efforts heavily dependent on the individual recruit.<sup>54</sup> According to Palmer, "...recruiters are superb psychologists who spend hours ministering to the psychological needs of their recruits and assessing their psychological vulnerabilities."<sup>55</sup> The poor are provided means, the lonely a sense of belonging, the sinners the hope of redemption, and the angry with a target for their wrath.<sup>56</sup> Thus, earthly and religious vulnerabilities are equally useful to puritan leadership. Over time, recruits are folded into the organization through religious indoctrination, training events and participation in low-level operations. For those that progress, the reward of Martyrdom is possible, a concept at the heart of puritan thought control.

In accordance with thought control methodology, violent puritans must influence recruits to the extent they internalize, at least for the duration of martyr operations, a willingness to kill innocent people and commit the ultimate sacrifice. To overcome these hurdles, they manipulate the psychological themes described in Table 3, primarily through radical Islam, to create totalism. It begins with recruits being isolated from family and friends, where violent puritan groups control both environment and communication. This milieu control provides immersion where the following broad methods of coercion and exhortation are applied to impact BITE: brutalization, meaning an increased divestiture of self essential to self-sacrificing action; classical conditioning, defined as positive feedback following knowledge of, or participation in, acts of violence; operant conditioning, the repeated stimulus-response common in repetitive training; and role models, which is the elevation of preceding martyrs to deity status.<sup>57</sup> Importantly, many of these measures are evident in daily Muslim life. Through intense “religious indoctrination,” recruits are provided extreme interpretations of concepts such as infidel (heathen), jihad (struggle in the name of Islam), takfir (declaring “former” Muslims apostates, and shahid (martyr), ultimately convincing them they have the right, and duty, to “dispense with existence.” These techniques are particularly effective on 18-27 year olds due to their natural receptiveness to change,<sup>58</sup> and the tendency for strong group cohesiveness to promote self-sacrificing action. To be fair, many recruits are also motivated by less lofty goals such as financial gain for family members, revenge and personal gain through rewards in the after-life. In the end however, violent puritan leaders rely on the “ticket to paradise” they generate within their recruits to carry out suicide bombing. As one failed martyr claimed, “I didn’t want revenge for anything. I just wanted to be a martyr.”<sup>59</sup>

As a reminder, it is the manipulation of individuals through thought control that is the problem, not the religious imperative itself. In other words, some puritan ideologues use violence to perpetuate their beliefs and Islam is a useful tool, not the other way around. Regardless, the threat is real and three data points bear this out. First, consider the level of frustration in much of the Muslim world. Second, consider that there are approximately 52 million Muslim

fanatics and 120,000 “fighters” world-wide, and suicide bombers now include women, children and even state-sponsorship.<sup>60</sup> Third, consider that many violent puritan organizations are aggressively seeking WMD, and that “Those committed to dying in the cause of God can hardly be concerned with the sacrifice of others.”<sup>61</sup>

## Decomposing Suicide Bombers, Terror and Puritan Ideology

***Synergy is the driver. There are two levels of synergy: there are operating synergies, which, you know, you'd have to be stupid not to try to take advantage of, and then there are strategic synergies.***

—John Malone, Businessman

All the elements of national power are required to defeat the violence of some puritan ideologues, and their potentially catastrophic use of suicide bombers. An outstanding template for success, which includes traditional and non-traditional means, is the Center of Gravity (COG) Analysis at Figure 3. Drafted in 2001, and revised in 2003, it accurately identified the COG as a violent ideology and proposed innovative countermeasures across all elements of power. The violent ideology COG is operationalized by two critical capabilities: conduct violent acts of terrorism and; promote ideology leading to several critical requirements. This strategic plan is both reinforced and expanded upon by thought control methodology. While a variety of direct and indirect means are required to both defend against and attack puritan organizations and capabilities, one important subset is to undermine their ability to exercise thought control, because without it, their ideology is constrained. This can be accomplished through a persuasion-based strategic influence campaign, which provides the framework to cause extensive debilitation to puritan ideology.

Persuasion-based strategic influence, rooted in persuasion and indoctrination theories as well as social and cognitive psychology, offers methods to affect influence at the strategic level. It goes beyond Information Operations and uses planned operations:

CENTER OF GRAVITY - VIOLENT IDEOLOGY			
Conduct Violent Acts Critical Requirements	Critical Vulnerability	Promote Ideology Critical Requirements	Critical Vulnerability
	DIME/MID (P)LIFE **		DIME/MID (P)LIFE **
Pool of zealots - Disaffected young men	Job options, education - Alternate escape and/or survival	Oppressive Islamic regime/ ineffective central government - Chaos, abject poverty	Effective government and functioning infrastructure - Mid-class market economy
Targets - Vulnerable, soft	Force protection measures, Protect critical infrastructure	Illiteracy - Sufi mysticism	Literacy program - Global actions of all clergy
Media coverage	Media blackouts, control counter information	"Bad" charismatic leaders - Ayatollahs, Imams, Mullahs	Discredit, capture, remove
Access to ordance	Disarmament, disposal	Repression of women	Gender equality
Bomb-making skills	Kill/capture skilled zealots	Xenophobia	Promote acceptance of others
Command and Control	Requirement to communicate	Islamic Law	Constitutional revision
Finances	Public scrutiny/interdict - Eliminate halawas	Tribal and "Mob" culture	Promote individualism
Mobility	Travel restrictions/inspections - Enforce border/INS policy	"Educational" sanctuaries - Mosques, madrassas	Public/international scrutiny - reveal "politics" and remove
Sanctuary (training, etc.)	Supporting regime removal		
Brainwashed population - Hides/facilitates	"Deprogram"		

**Coalition Concept:** Simultaneous parallel engagement against ALL critical vulnerabilities – globally, w/regional focus – two regions at a time (minimum)  
**Major GWOT Regions:** Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Eurasia  
**Decisive Points:** Capture/prosecute ideologues; Saudi Arabia; Iranian government; Jakarta; De-Nuclearize Israel; remove Palestinian Authority regime; solve Palestinian displacement issue.  
 - Look for military contribution. Coordinate non-military and non U.S. contribution. Reverse plan by phase.  
 - Add implied tasks; refine specific actions. Define Measures of Effectiveness. Build Synchronization Matrix. "Sell" planning in Washington and w/Coalition.  
 - Tailor and task organize forces/participants. Execute – Assess – Adjust – Execute some more!  
 \*\* DIME = Elements of national power: D–Diplomatic, I–Information, M–Military, E–Economic  
 \*\* MID(P)LIFE = Tools of national security policy: M–Military, I–Information, D–Diplomatic, P–Political, L–Law Enforcement, I–Intelligence, F–Finance, E–Economic

Figure 3. Enemy Center of Gravity (COG) Analysis (David L. Connors)<sup>62</sup>

*covert and/or overt to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences....to influence the perceptions, cognitions, and behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals. The purpose...is to induce or reinforce foreign behavior favorable to the originator's overall political and strategic objectives.*<sup>63</sup>

Accordingly, at its core these are psychological operations attempting to produce behaviors by altering “attitudes, opinions, reasoning and/or emotions.”<sup>64</sup> The parallels to BITE in thought control theory are obvious and important. In effect, the goal is to exercise thought control on a mass scale, and it is not coincidental that the most common method of persuasion is informational (radio, television, movies and newspapers).<sup>65</sup> This mimics thought control’s “deprogramming” and “exit counseling” theory, where information-based content provides the key to restoring personal autonomy.<sup>66</sup> The trick is matching psychological objectives with desired behavior.<sup>67</sup>

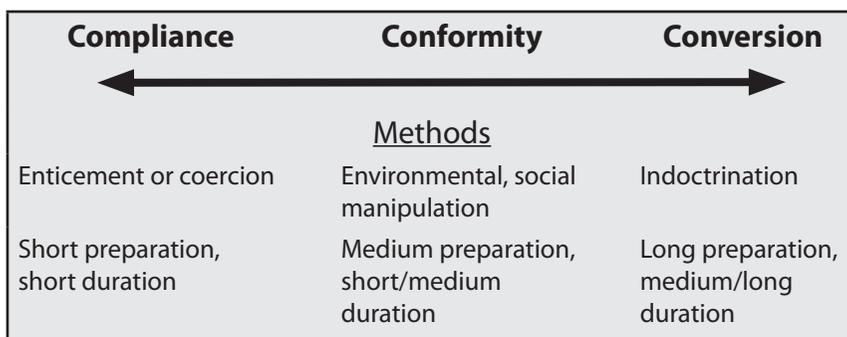


Figure 4: The spectrum of psychological operations.<sup>68</sup>

At the broadest level, psychological objectives describe the desired impact of persuasion operations on target audiences. Displayed in Figure 4, they range from simple coercion to indoctrination (thought control), and all are required to counter violent puritans. Importantly, while the range of influencing methods is limitless, they must be sequenced and timed appropriately, as presented in Figure 5, and there are many potential hazards: unintended second and third order effects, blowback if discovered, uncertainty of impact, and objectives working at crossed purposes. Accordingly, integration of a persuasion-based strategic influence campaign into traditional

operations is a daunting task.<sup>69</sup> Despite this difficulty, if persuasion is sequenced correctly and applied to the right audience, puritan organizations will be defeated.

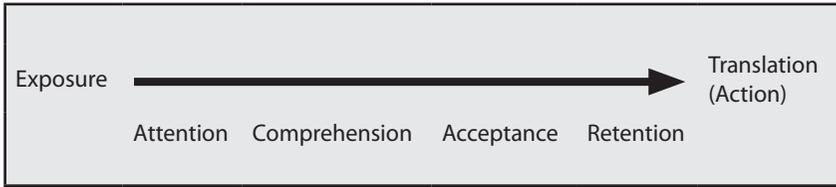


Figure 5. Sequence of events in persuasive communication.<sup>70</sup>

One important subset of a persuasion-based strategic influence campaign is to undermine puritan thought control capabilities. If successful, the ability of violent puritans to conduct their most violent acts is diminished and the spread of their ideology is curtailed.<sup>71</sup> Based on puritan manipulation of psychological and environmental factors, and their highly developed recruitment strategies, the following proposals are offered to deflate their ability to “make” violent terrorists and suicide bombers. If these are applied in conjunction with the actions identified in the center-of-gravity analysis in Figure 3, puritan ideology will atrophy. This attempt to enter the cognitive realm, where decision-making takes place, is deeply psychological and exceedingly complicated. Accordingly, these proposals do not constitute a comprehensive list nor are implementation details provided. They do offer a general view of strategic persuasion operations linked to puritan thought control capabilities, and all must be tailored to specific audiences. Broad interagency and international organization support is required and will often be covert.

1. Establish an Office of Strategic Influence: To facilitate and synchronize influencing efforts, create an Office of Strategic Influence attached to the National Security Council. A political, this cell should enhance interagency direction and cooperation, and must incorporate broad expertise to include the following fields; policy, legal, cultural, military, sociology and psychology. Organized regionally, it should focus long-range (10-30 years) and have the ability to harmonize shorter term influencing efforts. Even as a U.S.-only initiative, this concept forces proactive consideration of national policy and desired

ends (objectives), and it should be exported to willing partners. The intent is to deconflict and maximize limited means (resources) while increasing potential ways (concepts) to achieve national, and even international, interests.

2. Thought Control Study and Training: Train personnel in the DOD, DOS, CIA, FBI and U.S. Intelligence agencies on thought control methodologies. Areas of interest should include the identification and eradication of organizations utilizing destructive thought control. Civilian cult and thought control experts can provide the initial cadre.

3. Undermine the link between suicide bombing and martyrdom: The violent puritan's call to martyrdom is the single most important factor enabling their acts of terror, and also constitutes their most effective thought control mechanism. To deny them this lever, the U.S. must promote "moderate Islam" to both inoculate potential recruits and possibly "deprogram" active puritans. The psychological objective is conversion, and this is accomplished by aligning (or realigning) BITE with the concept that suicide bombing is unacceptable behavior. To be credible, this message must come from Muslim religious leaders who can effectively traverse, and compress, the sequence of events for persuasion operations. (Figure 5) When appropriate fatwas and religious teachings are discovered, the U.S. must offer support via all available means, to include through reliable surrogates to avoid the perception (and reality) of U.S. complicity. Increasing the intensity and range of these messages is critical. Several "moderate" messages that should be reinforced include:

- "Suicide bombing" is unequivocally suicide resulting in rejection from heaven.
- Islam is not at war with the west, making puritan calls to jihad illegitimate.
- Intentional killing of innocents, whether Muslim or not, results in rejection from heaven.

There are of course many areas where religious direction can impact puritan activities, but these three most directly undermine the violent

puritan's use of martyrdom as a control mechanism. To varying degrees these are happening today. For example, 58 Pakistani religious scholars issued a fatwa forbidding suicide attacks against Muslims or the "killing of any non-Muslim citizen or foreigner visiting the country," asserting that those committing such attacks in public venues or places of worship would cease to be Muslims.<sup>72</sup>

4. Jurist System: Islamic "authenticity" is dispersed due to a malfunctioning jurist system<sup>73</sup> and puritan organizations operate in this vacuum to garner "religious authority." The resulting power, based largely on popularity, provides puritan leaders a control lever via fatwas. While relatively unimportant outside of puritan groups, these fatwas are controlling over members. The U.S. should help project the message of moderate Muslims. The goal is to deepen the wedge between the puritan's use of Islam and Islam itself, which in the process will shift the Muslim world's critical-mass, which is dangerously close to the puritans, towards moderation.

5. Education Reform: Many in the Muslim world value "blind imitation" over critical thinking<sup>74</sup> raising their susceptibility to thought control. This tendency is reinforced by authoritarian regimes and social structures promoting extreme conformity, or, dependent thought. By establishing independent thought, or the ability to see beyond self-centered views (defined by "the group"), puritan thought control is undermined. Individuals can avoid the loaded language, prophetic ideology and uncompromising black-and-white world views that lead to totalism. The psychological objective is conversion, in this case creating the internal ability to critically think. Accomplishing this is a difficult and long-term task requiring diplomatic, economic and information elements. Broadly, the U.S., with coalition partners and international organizations, should promote education reform. Transformation should stress education pedagogy conducive to critical thinking while simultaneously reducing rote learning common to madrassas. These efforts require "acceptance" by participating countries, which allows the imposition of "measures of accomplishment." Important second and third order effects, beyond increased ability to stave off the lure of puritan ideology, include preparation for a globalized world and potentially reduced frustration. At the broadest level, this initiative may, in the

long term, tip the scales in the proverbial balance between reason and faith. When the former encroaches, moderation results,<sup>75</sup> and controversial or not, puritan ideology is fundamentalist in nature. It all begins with reflective criticism

6. Support “Deprogramming” Efforts: While controversial, the U.S. must overcome political correctness and support aggressive deprogramming efforts. These are currently occurring in Saudi Arabia,<sup>76</sup> Indonesia, Pakistan and the United Kingdom, and Australia is considering a policy change to allow domestic deprogramming when Islamic terrorists are involved.<sup>77</sup> The psychological goal is conversion and there are benefits on several levels – intelligence, exploitation through propaganda, and most importantly, greater insight into the psychology of why individuals join puritan groups and how they are manipulated to commit terrorist acts.

These are but a few options to include in a persuasion-based influence campaign to achieve strategic effect. Other alternatives include the following; reduce wide-spread frustration (reducing the desire for change), promote factors leading to a shift from a shame to guilt-based society (self criticism enables self-correction), raise Muslim self-identity (reduces susceptibility to thought control and undermines the lure of “pride through messianic causes”), and there are countless more. Importantly, while many of these proposals obviously support other objectives, they are listed here specifically for their utility in undermining puritan thought control efforts. Another way to view this is synergy. How to implement these proposals is a difficult task requiring thought control and psychological expertise, but if successful, violent puritans may be constrained to conventional and insurgent operations, which while significant, are more manageable.

## **Conclusion**

The information presented clearly supports the contention that thought control methodology constitutes not only a new perspective with which to view violent puritan ideology, but offers innovative options to counter its effectiveness. In the ultimate effects-based strategy, denying puritans the ability to commit their most violent acts undermines their ideology, because without it, their actions are

devoid of meaning. This is no simple task however, and countering puritan thought control as a way to erode their ideology is a long-term proposition at best. Unfortunately, the overwhelmingly direct nature of current efforts affords ample time to refine strategies for countering puritan ideology.

This paper offers the fundamentals of thought control as one foundation upon which to develop a persuasion-based strategic influence campaign designed to dissolve puritan ideology. Based on an understanding of thought control methodology and appreciation that many puritans manipulate psychological and environmental factors to perpetrate extreme violence, countering puritan thought control is offered as an important facet of a persuasion-based strategic influence campaign. Importantly, it is not a silver bullet or complete answer. It is however, a portal into possible methods of operating in the cognitive realm where battles are ultimately won or lost. Thought control methodology is a vehicle to enter this dimension at a truly strategic level. Although only one aspect of a grand strategy, it is an important one that requires further study. Accordingly, while the proposals offered in this paper are substantial, they provide only a glimpse of the possibilities.