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## Identity, Culture and Stories: Empathy and the War on Terrorism

William D. Casebeer\*

According to the current National Security Strategy, the global war on terror is a specific focus for national security.<sup>1</sup> While billions have been spent prosecuting some aspects of this war (for example, by attacking state sponsors of terrorism), other aspects have been neglected. Here, I argue that grand counter-terrorism strategy would benefit from a comprehensive consideration of the stories terrorists tell. Understanding the narratives that influence the genesis, growth, maturation, and transformation of terrorist organizations will enable us to better fashion a strategy for undermining the efficacy of those narratives to deter, disrupt, and defeat terrorist groups. Such a "counter-narrative strategy" will have multiple components with layered asynchronous effects. While effective counter-stories will be difficult to coordinate and will involve multiple agents of action, their formulation is a necessary part of any comprehensive counter-terrorism effort. Indeed, a failure on our part to come to grips with the narrative dimensions of the war on terrorism, and with the larger concept of culture of which it is a part, is a weakness already exploited by groups such as Al Qaeda. We can fully expect any adaptive adversary to act quickly to fill story gaps and exploit weaknesses in our narrative to ensure continued survival. More than giving us another tool with which to confront terrorism, narrative considerations also allow us to deal better in general with the emerging security threat of violent non-state actors and armed groups. A critical portion of the system responsible for the production and replication of socially transmitted behaviors will be that which deals with narratives and stories.

Justifying the need for and exploring the components of a counter-narrative strategy is a task for a book; this Article

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<sup>1</sup> . THE WHITE HOUSE, THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 1 (2006), available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>.

briefly sketches only the basics, discussing the psychological aspects of counter-terrorism and why stories will play a critical role in the ecosystem of violence, the essential components of a story, a typology of narratives offered by nascent terrorist groups throughout their development, a simple Aristotelian rhetorical model for evaluating story success, principles to guide the formulation of counter-narratives, and complications and provisos, as well as a consideration of the institutional implications of my position. This summary intends to provoke thought about new counter-terrorism tools.

Why think that storytelling has anything to do with terrorism and counter-terrorism? Consider the ineliminable psychological aspects of terrorism: People choose to form or join organizations that use indiscriminant violence as a tactic to achieve their political objectives for multiple reasons—all of them dealing at some point with human psychology. People feel alienated from their surroundings; they are denied political opportunity by the state; the state fails to provide basic necessities; they identify with those who advocate the use of violence; they are angered by excessive state force against political opponents; their essential needs are not being met; they feel deprived relative to peer groups elsewhere. These have been offered as “root causes” of contentious politics in general and terrorism in particular. My purpose is not to defend any particular position about root causes, but merely to point out that these causes have a proximate psychological mechanism. They exert influence by affecting the human mind and brain. If stories are part and parcel of human cognition, we would also consequently expect that stories might affect how these causes play out to germinate, grow, and sustain terrorism.

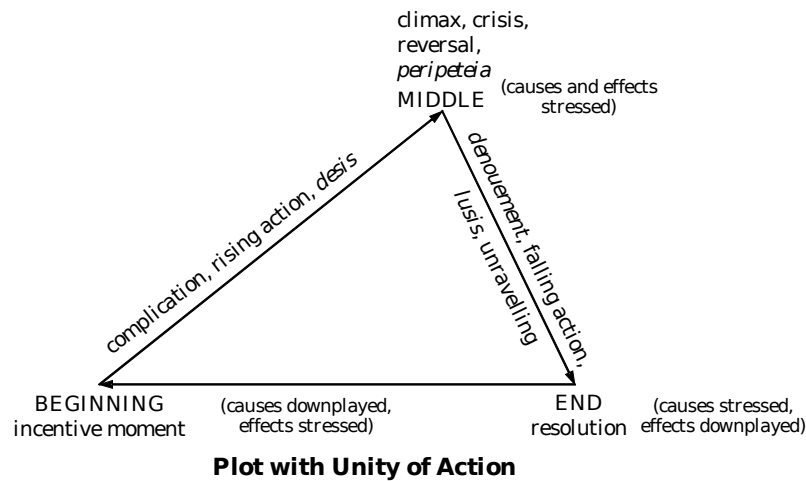
#### 1. WHAT IS IN A STORY?

The lack of any widely accepted definition for “story” hampers discussion of stories and narratives. Indeed, an entire school of thought in literary criticism (“post modernism”) is predicated on the fact that no necessary and sufficient list exists of conditions a piece of text must meet to be a story. We can agree with the postmodernists that defining “story” is difficult without thinking, however, that the concept plays no useful purpose. In that sense, the

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concept "story" is like the concept "game." No list of necessary and sufficient conditions exists for a game, but that does not mean the concept is useless or that no "family resemblances" exist between games that are useful to consider.

A good beginning at a theory of stories comes from the nineteenth-century German writer Gustav Freytag. Freytag believed that narratives followed a general pattern: a beginning, a problem that leads to a climax, and a resolution of the problem as an ending. A coherent unified story could thus be as short as three sentences consisting of setup, climax, and resolution: "John was hungry. He went to the store and bought a sandwich. It was delicious." This particular story is not very interesting or compelling, but it nonetheless is a coherent narrative. This "Freytag Triangle," depicted below, captures the general structure of a story:<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1. The Freytag Triangle (1863)<sup>3</sup>



Contemporary literary theorist Patrick Hogan amplifies the basic Freytag structure, pointing out that most plots involve an agent (normally, a hero or protagonist) striving to

<sup>2</sup> . See generally ELIAS J. MACÉWAN, FREYTAG'S TECHNIQUE OF THE DRAMA: AN EXPOSITION OF DRAMATIC COMPOSITION AND ART BY GUSTAV FREYTAG (Benjamin Blom, Inc. 1968) (1863).

<sup>3</sup> . Barbara McManus, Freytag's Triangle, <http://www.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/freytag.html> (last visited Mar. 17, 2008). I am indebted to Dr. McManus for allowing me to make use her Freytag Triangle graphic.

achieve some goal, usually despite the machinations of an antagonist, or villain. The structure includes a person, or group of persons, and a series of events driven by their attempts to achieve some objective.<sup>4</sup> The study of mythology and consideration of most forms of storytelling, whether oral, written, traditional, or contemporary, support this familiar analysis.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. STORIES AND HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

Using this working "theory of story," we can gain insight into why stories are so important for structuring human thought. First, stories often are rich in metaphors and analogies; metaphors, in turn, affect our most basic attitudes toward the world. For example, suppose we think of "Islamic fundamentalism" as a disease. A simple narrative about fundamentalist Islam might be this: "We want world communities to respect human rights. Fundamentalist Muslims disrespect some of those rights. We can prevent them from doing more harm by taking action now." This implies a series of actions that *ought* to be done in reaction to fundamentalism (e.g., combat its spread, focus on this "public health problem" by inoculating people against it, consider those who try to spread it as "evil agents up to no good" or at the very least as modern day "Typhoid Marys").<sup>6</sup>

Reasoning by metaphor and analogy, a research program explored by Mark Johnson, George Lakoff, Giles Fauconnier, and Mark Turner argues that our most complex mental tasks are usually carried out not by the "classical mechanics" of rational actor theory (where stories really have no place, or are, at least relegated to the background),

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<sup>4</sup> . See PATRICK COLM HOGAN, *THE MIND AND ITS STORIES: NARRATIVE UNIVERSALS AND HUMAN EMOTION* 205-12, 221-27 (2003).

<sup>5</sup> . See RAPHAEL PATAI, *THE ARAB MIND* 43-77 (Charles Scribner's Sons 1983) (1976) for an interesting and extremely controversial take on the role of narrative in the "Arab mind." Recall Joseph Campbell's analysis of the structure of most famous legends from antiquity, which involve striving on the part of a hero, a test of some kind, and a return to the point of departure with new knowledge and greater self-understanding. JOSEPH CAMPBELL, *THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES* 30 (Pantheon Books 1961) (1949).

<sup>6</sup> . Again, I do not think the contagion metaphor is necessarily appropriate, even for morally objectionable forms of fundamentalist Islam. But compare some of the rhetoric from Daniel Pipes, <http://www.danielpipes.org> (last visited Mar. 17, 2008). For interesting responses to this rhetoric, see any of the articles from *THE NEW CRUSADES: CONSTRUCTING THE MUSLIM ENEMY* (Emran Qureshi & Michal A. Sells eds., 2003).

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but rather by a set of analogy making and metaphor mapping abilities that form the core of human cognition.<sup>7</sup> Exploration into the "story-telling mind" is a research program that combines metaphor and analogy into an examination of the powerful grip narrative has on human cognition. Narratives can restructure our mental spaces in ways that profoundly affect our reasoning ability and, ultimately, what we make of the world. Think of the grip that the "Jihad versus McWorld"<sup>8</sup> narrative has on Al Qaeda and how this affects the way they think about the future.<sup>9</sup> As Mark Turner notes, "Story is a basic principle of mind. Most of our experience, our knowledge, and our thinking is organized as stories."<sup>10</sup>

If making stories foundational to thought seems a stretch, ample evidence supports the proposition that stories influence our ability to recall events, motivate people to act, modulate our emotional reactions to events, cue certain heuristics and biases, structure our problem-solving capabilities, and ultimately perhaps even constitute our very identity.<sup>11</sup> Stories probably play a role in developing and

<sup>7</sup> . Classic works include GILLES FAUCONNIER & MARK TURNER, *THE WAY WE THINK: CONCEPTUAL BLENDING AND THE MIND'S HIDDEN COMPLEXITIES* (2002); DEDRE GENTNER, KEITH HOLYOAK, & BOICHO KOKINOV, *THE ANALOGICAL MIND: PERSPECTIVES FROM COGNITIVE SCIENCE* (2001); GEORGE LAKOFF & MARK JOHNSON, *METAPHORS WE LIVE BY* (1980).

<sup>8</sup> . This is the structuring metaphor of Benjamin Barber's "clash of the world views" book, BENJAMIN R. BARBER, *JIHAD vs. McWORLD: HOW GLOBALISM AND TRIBALISM ARE RESHAPING THE WORLD* (1995). See generally SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON, *THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS AND THE REMAKING OF WORLD ORDER* (Touchstone 1998) (1997).

<sup>9</sup> . See FAUCONNIER & TURNER, *supra* note 7, at 249-53; MARK TURNER, *THE LITERARY MIND* 20 (1996).

<sup>10</sup> . TURNER, *supra* 9, at v. See generally Anthony Patton, *The World as Story* (2002) (unpublished manuscript, on file with author).

<sup>11</sup> . See, e.g., Mabel Chau-ping Wong, *The Effects of Story Schemata on Narrative Recall*, in *THINKING LANGUAGE*, 147, 147-70 (Kitty P. Y. Wong & Christopher F. Green eds., 1995), available at <http://repository.ust.hk/dspace/bitstream/1783.1/1337/1/thinklang10.pdf>; Daniel Dennett, *The Self as Center of Narrative Gravity*, in *SELF AND CONSCIOUSNESS: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES* 103-15 (Frank S. Kessel et al., eds., 1992), available at <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/selfctr.htm>; Arthur C. Graesser & Glenn V. Nakamura, *The Impact of a Schema on Comprehension and Memory*, in *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LEARNING AND MOTIVATION* 59 (H. Bower ed. 1982); ALICIA JUARRERO, *DYNAMICS IN ACTION* 217-44 (1999); TROY S. THOMAS & WILLIAM D. CASEBEER, USAF INSTITUTE FOR NAT'L SECURITY STUDIES, OCCASIONAL PAPER No. 52, *VIOLENT SYSTEMS: DEFEATING TERRORISTS, INSURGENTS, AND OTHER NON-STATE ADVERSARIES* 69, 75 (2004), available at <http://www.usafa.af.mil/df/inss/occasion.cfm> [hereinafter *VIOLENT SYSTEMS*]; TROY S. THOMAS, STEPHEN D. KISER & WILLIAM D. CASEBEER, *WARLORDS RISING: CONFRONTING VIOLENT NON-STATE ACTORS* 190-91 (2005).

cuing empathy for other members of your salient group. Any of these aspects of the narrative would be fascinating and important to examine in detail.

Now that we have a basic understanding of what narratives are, and have reason to believe they are influential in acts of human cognition salient to terrorist group formation, we can examine the role stories play across the life cycle of terrorist organizations.

### 3. NARRATIVES AND TERRORIST ORGANIZATION LIFE CYCLES

Terrorist organizations have life cycles. They have a genesis point, they grow, reach maturity, and eventually transform by, among other things, dying, being co-opted by the state, or morphing into a peaceful non-state actor. As Thomas and Casebeer have pointed out, different organizational structures develop during this life cycle, some more important than others depending on the organization's degree of development.<sup>12</sup> During maturity, terrorist organizations will develop survival as a goal, and this organizational consideration can help us understand why they take some of the actions they do.<sup>13</sup> The life cycle concept follows naturally from thinking of the conditions that give rise to terrorism as an environment conducive to the formation of violent non-state actors (VNSA). These environments are typified by failures in governance, pre-existing identity cleavages, resource scarcity and deprivation, and lack of political opportunity. When these "push" factors (i.e., active causes that spur the formation of a violent non-state actor) produce a potential VNSA (usually at the behest of a foundational "identity entrepreneur"), the stage is set for the growth and maturation of a nascent organization. At maturity, a VNSA will have developed a suite of functions it must implement if it is to maintain its

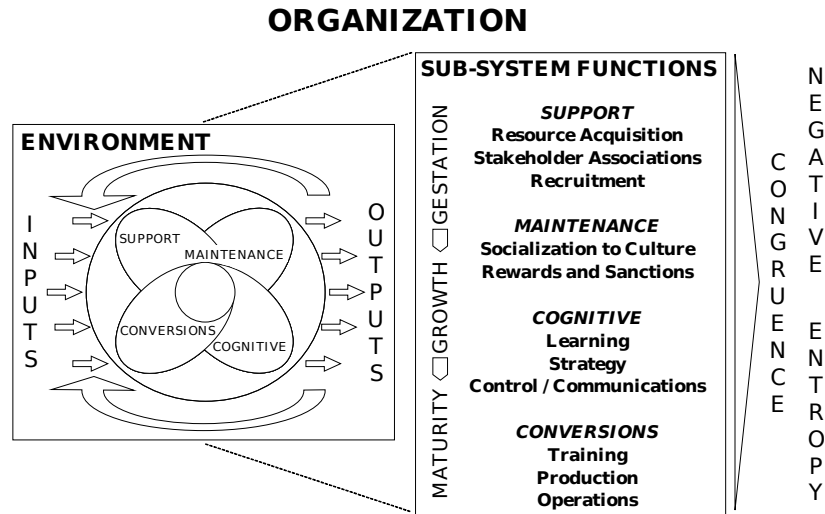
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<sup>12</sup> . See Troy S. Thomas & William D. Casebeer, *Deterring Violent Non-State Actors in the New Millenium* [sic], STRATEGIC INSIGHTS, Dec. 2002, at 1-2, <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/dec02/terrorism2.pdf>; Troy S. Thomas & William D. Casebeer, *Violent Non-State Actors: Countering Dynamic Systems*, STRATEGIC INSIGHTS, Mar. 2004, at 2-4, <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2004/mar/casebeerMar04.pdf>; see also VIOLENT SYSTEMS, *supra* note 11, at 47-51.

<sup>13</sup> . Martha Crenshaw, *Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches*, in INSIDE TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS 13, 19-26 (David C. Rapoport ed., 1988).

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 existence as an organization. These processes include support (e.g., get resources, cultivate stakeholder relations), maintenance (e.g., sanction defectors from the organization, reward loyal service), cognition (e.g., plan, learn and control) and conversion (e.g., produce terrorist acts, provide social services to the community). A mature organization that is functioning well has a smooth fit between these processes (called "congruence") and also has reserves in case the inputs from the environment turn sour or can no longer support the organization (these reserves constitute what is called "negative entropy," a term of art that refers to stores of organized inputs such as money or ready recruits that can help insulate systems against environmental change or disruption of critical needs). The following schematic summarizes this understanding:

Figure 2. Sub-System Functions in a Terrorist Organization.<sup>14</sup>



Note the multiple critical roles narratives play throughout the life cycle. During genesis, stories (1) provide incentives for recruitment, particularly by providing justice frames (simple narratives which frame discontent using terms of justice, such as insisting that territory was wrongly taken by others from you or your in-group in the past) that serve to mobilize discontent, (2) help justify the need for an

<sup>14</sup> . Graphic adopted from Troy S. Thomas.



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organization to the community in which it will be embedded, and to first-round stakeholders (those people and organizations who, at least initially, provide critical support to the organization), (3) reinforce pre-existing identities friendly to the nascent organization, (4) create necessary identities where none exist, (5) set the stage for further growth of the organization, (6) solidify founding members into leadership roles, and (7) define the possible space of actions as the organization matures.

During growth, narratives do all of the above and also (1) reinforce role-specific obligations to ensure group members continue to accomplish their functions, (2) provide "firewalls" against attempts to discredit foundational myths, (3) articulate ideological niches for the organization, and (4) make salient to organization members the environmental conditions conducive to organizational growth.

During maturity, stories (1) link into the command and control system of the organization for tweaking and updating, (2) serve as insulation against environmental change, (3) actively support operations by motivating organizational members and channeling organizational thought down pre-set canals useful for the group, (4) are used as "top cover" to allow the organization to adapt, change goals, or otherwise modify structure and function to ensure continued survival.

During transformation, narratives (1) smooth the transition to new organizational forms, (2) help ease the organization into a different set of stakeholder relationships, (3) provide the foundation for the revived identities which will be used in whatever new form the organization adopts, and (4) serve to demobilize those portions of the organization that served their purpose or are no longer needed.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. A NARRATIVE TYPOLOGY

While the diversity of purposes served by stories in terrorist organizations makes a typology of stories difficult, stories can still be grouped into useful camps. For instance, foundational myths can be transactional or transcendental.

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<sup>15</sup> . These purposes deserve elaboration. No doubt empirical examples come to mind for many of them. A thorough defense would require inductive justification, but for now intuitive plausibility must do.

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Transactional, or pragmatic, foundational myths emphasize transactional or instrumental considerations: if you join our terrorist organization, our use of violence will enable you to achieve certain materially realizable individual and collective goals. For example, together we will make money, together we will found a new state, or together we will change an unjust practice. Transcendental foundational myths emphasize otherworldly goals that are implausible to expect to see realized or that reject worldly manifestation altogether. For example, together we will find paradise in God's bosom, together we will convert every soul in the world to Scientology. Both can be used in concert. Al Qaeda's foundational myth involves elements of both: transactional pragmatic goals and transcendental religious goals.

What is the basic structure of some of these stories and narratives? In his paper *Terror's Mask: Insurgency Within Islam*, political scientist Michael Vlahos identifies four elements of Al Qaeda-style narrative tropes: (1) a heroic journey and a mythic figure, (2) the rhythm of history captured as epic struggle and story, (3) the commanded charge of renewal, and (4) history revealed and enjoined through mystic literary form.<sup>16</sup>

According to Vlahos, the foundational mythic figure for Islam is Muhammad. Bin Laden taps into this theme when he portrays himself as following in the footsteps of Muhammad. He too is making a heroic journey, struggling against great odds, in a way that makes him almost as mythic in stature, and hence all the posters and stickers praising him in places like Pakistan or Afghanistan. Part of the reason why he is mythic is because of the second element: bin Laden argues that he is part of a grand struggle against Western imperialism and decadence. His actions are part of a story that is linked to the very fabric of Muslim history (and given the fact that this history was in fact laced with Orientalism and colonialism, it is no surprise that charges of *neo-Orientalism* and *neo-colonialism* stick so easily). The third aspect of the story is important: only by struggling against these dark forces can one be renewed. To fail to struggle is

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<sup>16</sup> . MICHAEL VLAHOS, JOINT WARFARE ANALYSIS DEP'T, *TERROR'S MASK: INSURGENCY WITHIN ISLAM* 8 (2002), available at [http://www.jhuapl.edu/POW/library/Terror\\_Islamsm.pdf](http://www.jhuapl.edu/POW/library/Terror_Islamsm.pdf). Again, note the similarity to parts of Campbell's corpus. See generally CAMPBELL, *supra* note 5.

to fail to play your part in a narrative that ends with Islam triumphing over the infidel West. Finally, owing to the fourth element, the story contains built in "insulation" from temporary tactical successes on the part of occupying forces: the mystical element of the narrative, especially its otherworldly component involving rewards in the afterlife's paradise, means that temporal success will not necessarily defuse the logic of the story. Resistance can and should continue even if the security situation improves in the short term, although brute facts about human psychology may undermine the effectiveness of that story in the long run in the face of improvements in the procurement of basic needs.

Closely related to Vlahos's ideas about the essential elements of the Islamic fundamentalist narrative is sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer's theory of "cosmic war."<sup>17</sup> Juergensmeyer suggests that religious tropes are more likely to play a narrative role if the confrontation between two groups can be characterized as a cosmic struggle or battle. This is most likely in the following circumstances:

- (1) The struggle is perceived as a defense of basic identity and dignity.
- (2) Losing the struggle would be unthinkable.
- (3) If the struggle is blocked and cannot be won in real time or in real terms.<sup>18</sup>

To amplify, in cases where the struggle is over extremely basic questions of identity and where basic human rights are at stake; if losing the struggle seems Armageddon-like (e.g., you would tell a very bad story if your resistance failed); and if the struggle is perceived as being hopeless in concrete terms (e.g., it is impossible to see how we could beat the occupiers using traditional "force-on-force" confrontations), then it is very likely that the struggle can more easily be framed in religious and metaphysical terms as a cosmic struggle, in which case recruitment into organizations becomes easier for certain target populations (e.g., those predisposed to accept transcendental foundational myths).

Certainly, multiple narrative structures are at play in

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<sup>17</sup> . Critically, this is one of the characterizations of Islam that Qureshi and Sells object to in the first article in their edited collection. Qureshi & Sells, *Introduction: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, in *THE NEW CRUSADES: CONSTRUCTING THE MUSLIM ENEMY*, *supra* note 6, at 4.

<sup>18</sup> . See MARK JUERGENSMEYER, *TERROR IN THE MIND OF GOD: THE GLOBAL RISE OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE* 164-65 (3d ed. 2003).

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terrorism, but hopefully this brief survey has shown that categorizing them into different types can help us better understand how to render inert the role they play in terrorist organizational growth. How do we go about countering these stories?

## 5. COUNTER-NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

To address this practical question, we will first discuss counter-narrative strategies in generic terms, and then offer guidance that is more specific. Important generic principles for counter-narrative strategy include competing myth creation, foundational myth deconstruction, alternative exemplar creation, metaphor shifts, identity gerrymandering, and structural disruption.

Myth creation involves the weaving together of the narrative elements of a story with facts about past and present situations to create an emotionally compelling background that very often directly influences the susceptibility of a population to manipulation by "myth mongers." The fanatical devotion shown by al Qaeda operatives stems in large part from the success Osama bin Laden and others have had in fashioning a coherent and appealing foundational myth, not from any rational deliberative process. The events of September 11 can be thought of as the punch line of a chapter in an epic that sets "the warriors of God" against an "infidel West." This myth did not propagate itself via rational actor channels, but instead was indoctrinated through a multi-pronged effort on the part of fundamentalist strains of Islam (such as Saudi Arabia's Wahhabis).<sup>19</sup> Successful myth creation may very well leverage heuristics and biases cognitive scientists tell us are present in human cognition; they certainly take advantage of the availability heuristic, as this heuristic probably undergirds human propensity to form stereotypes.<sup>20</sup>

Myth creation usually involves the effective use of

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<sup>19</sup> . TROY S. THOMAS ET AL., *WARLORDS RISING: CONFRONTING VIOLENT NON-STATE ACTORS* 139-40 (2005).

<sup>20</sup> . Amos Tversky & Daniel Kahneman, *Availability: A Heuristic for Judging Frequency and Probability*, 5 *COGNITIVE PSYCHOL.* 207, 207 (1973); Denise R. Beike & Steven J. Sherman, *Social Inference: Inductions, Seductions, and Analogies*, in 1 *HANDBOOK OF SOCIAL COGNITION* 209, 214 (Robert S. Wyer, Jr. & Thomas K Srull eds., 1994).

narrative. As we formulate an "affective strategy," we should keep the elements of a narrative in mind, for it is only by disrupting the story that you can interfere with myth creation. At the very least, good stories need protagonists, antagonists, tests for the protagonist, a promise of redemption, and a supporting cast of characters. Disrupting al Qaeda's foundational myth may involve undermining the belief that we are the antagonists in the narrative bin Laden is constructing. Therefore, either we can undermine the foundational myth being used to drive VNSA development, or we can construct an alternative myth that is a "better story" than the one being offered by the myth mongers. Examples of myth creation in fiction include the stories told by the rulers of Plato's ideal city (the Republic) that were designed to motivate members of the different classes<sup>21</sup> and the foundational myths that supported the violent actions of *both* the Hutus and the Tutsis during the Rwandan massacres of 1994.<sup>22</sup>

For a more benign example, consider the conscious mythmaking that has taken place in Israel, such as the "transformation of the 1920 defense of a new Jewish settlement in Tel Hai into a national myth," turning a defeat into a symbol of national revival.<sup>23</sup>

Closely related to myth making is the strategy of creating alternative exemplars. Members of an at-risk population often become at risk because of a failure to identify with a member of a *non-violent* non-state actor or a member of the government or occupying power. VNSA

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<sup>21</sup> . See PLATO, *REPUBLIC*, at bk. 4 (Robin Waterfield trans., 1993).

<sup>22</sup> . For more about these myths, see RYSZARD KAPUSCINSKI, *THE SHADOW OF THE SUN: MY AFRICAN LIFE* 165-82 (2001). Owing to the mostly fabricated early history of the region, the Tutsis were viewed as being pastoral patrons (i.e., rulers) who preside over their clients (i.e., slaves), the Hutu agriculturalists. Under colonial rule by both the Germans and the Belgians, this foundational myth was reinforced, with separate identity cards being issued for both peoples. The Belgians even went so far as to argue that the Tutsi were, racially speaking, more closely related to white people, and were hence a superior race, putting in place a quite different but nonetheless related foundational myth. Needless to say, these myths played a large part in the violence that erupted in 1994. See CHRIS LOWE, *AFRICA ACTION, TALKING ABOUT "TRIBE": MOVING FROM STEREOTYPES TO ANALYSIS* 2 (2008), available at, [http://www.africaaction.org/bp/documents/TalkingaboutTribeFeb2008Update\\_001.pdf](http://www.africaaction.org/bp/documents/TalkingaboutTribeFeb2008Update_001.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> . YAEL ZERUBAVEL, *RECOVERED ROOTS: COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND THE MAKING OF ISRAELI NATIONAL TRADITION*, at back cover (1995).

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"identity entrepreneurs" can exploit existing ethnic, racial, economic, or social political differences by elevating someone who shares the same characteristics as the exploited class to a position of prestige or power. Members of the at-risk group then come to identify with that exemplar and may feel compelled to adopt the violent strategies advocated by the exemplar's VNSA. Creating alternative exemplars that share the salient characteristics of the exemplar but who do not advocate violence or who can show the way towards a non-violent solution to the issues that are fueling VNSA emergence help interrupt the VNSA life cycle. Alternative exemplar creation may involve symbolic acts on the part of the government that tap those elements of "hot" emotion-laden cognition and heuristics and biases mentioned earlier. An example of the alternative exemplar creation strategy in action is the praise and warm endorsement heaped upon John Garang, the leader of the Sudanese guerrilla faction of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), during his visit to Washington just before Christmas of 1995. Such endorsement was critical for the recruitment and logistics boost the SPLA received that enabled Garang's forces to recapture crucial cities in southern Sudan soon thereafter.<sup>24</sup> In this case, we encouraged the growth of a VNSA by cultivating an exemplar saliently different from the leaders of the Sudanese regime.

An alternate affective strategy includes fomenting a metaphor shift that affects the way in which at-risk populations or members of a VNSA frame their actions. Given the power of metaphor to shape human thought, it should come as no surprise that the shifting metaphors people use to frame worldviews and guide decisions could cause a change in their reasoning. For example, to convince someone that "cluster of cells" is a more appropriate metaphor for an unborn embryo than "young human" may very well change their stand on the issue of abortion.<sup>25</sup> Shifting metaphors requires making connections between the way people presently view a situation or issue and the

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<sup>24</sup> . BILL BERKELEY, *THE GRAVES ARE NOT YET FULL: RACE, TRIBE AND POWER IN THE HEART OF AFRICA* 224-25 (2001).

<sup>25</sup> . See Paul Churchland, *Toward a Cognitive Neurobiology of the Moral Virtues*, in *THE FOUNDATIONS OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE* 77, 85-86 (João Branquinho ed., 2001); William D. Casebeer, *Moral Cognition and its Neural Constituents*, 4 *NATURE REVS. NEUROSCIENCE* 840, 840-46 (2003); WILLIAM D. CASEBEER, *NATURAL ETHICAL FACTS: EVOLUTION, CONNECTIONISM, AND MORAL COGNITION* 101-25 (2003).

way you would like them to frame the situation or issue.<sup>26</sup> The common refrain, "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter," is a simple example of metaphor shift; if you can make the charge of "you are not a freedom fighter," or "you are not actually crusading on behalf of true Muslims," stick, you go a long way toward defusing certain narratives.<sup>27</sup> Even the patriotic revolutionaries participating in the Boston Tea Party were viewed as criminals and dangerous insurrectionists by many of their fellow colonialists. Manipulation of existing identities (e.g., national, tribal, ethnic) is yet another affective strategy.<sup>28</sup> This does not necessarily require creating new foundational myths or alternate exemplars; instead, skillful use of existing cleavages can decrease a VNSA's stock of negative entropy. This is the "flip side" of the identity entrepreneur's efforts that are often part of the genesis and growth of VNSA. For example, the Masaai warriors in Tanzania have skillfully manipulated existing identity cleavages to elevate the warrior aspect of Masaai culture over other aspects such as pastoral herder or Tanzanian citizen. This involved the creation of camps for young Masaai males, where they learn compelling stories, foundational myths about ancient Masaai warriors, and hunting and combat skills. The Tanzanian government, if it wished, could exploit other aspects of Masaai history, including the fact that their lineage includes an important pastoral element, to de-emphasize the violent aspects of Masaai culture to ensure they remain a peaceful non-state actor.<sup>29</sup>

For an Islamic example, consider Bassam Tibi's position that moderate members of the Islamic faith (especially Sufis) could best confront malignant forms of fundamentalism by emphasizing strands in Islamic narrative history that

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<sup>26</sup> . See FAUCONNIER & TURNER, *supra* note 7, at 337-38 (discussing how to enable "frame shifts").

<sup>27</sup> . Consider, for instance, the conceptual shift that occurs in members of the Israeli army when they start thinking about Palestinian teenagers as being an enemy rather than a peer. See EYAL BEN-ARI, *MASTERING SOLDIERS: CONFLICT, EMOTIONS, AND THE ENEMY IN AN ISRAELI MILITARY UNIT* 76-78 (1998).

<sup>28</sup> . For an excellent discussion of this process, see DANIEL BYMAN, *KEEPING THE PEACE: LASTING SOLUTIONS TO ETHNIC CONFLICTS* 100-24 (2002).

<sup>29</sup> . Interview with Masaai nationals in Tanzania (June 2002). For more background on Tanzania's history, as well as detail on the Rwandan situation, see CIVIL WARS IN AFRICA: ROOTS AND RESOLUTION 238-43, 246-48 (Tanzania), 53-86 (Rwanda) (Taisier Ali & Robert Matthews eds., 1999).

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highlight very different exemplars. As he says:

I am a Sufi, but in my mind I subscribe to *aql*/reason, and in this I follow the Islamic rationalism of Ibn Rushd/Averroës. Moreover, I read Islamic scripture, as any other, in the light of history, a practice I learned from the work of the great Islamic philosopher of history Ibn Khaldun. The Islamic source most pertinent to [my] intellectual framework . . . is the ideal of *al-madina al-fadila*/the perfect state, as outlined in the great thought of the Islamic political philosopher al-Farabi. Al-Farabi's "perfect state" has a rational, that is, secular order and is best administered by a reason-oriented philosopher. . . . A combination of these Islamic sources, the Sufi love of Ibn 'Arabi, the reason-based orientation of Ibn Rushd, the historicizing thought of Ibn Khaldun, and al-Farabi's secular concept of order, seem to me the best combination of cornerstones for an Islamic enlightenment.<sup>30</sup>

To get yet more concrete, consider the elements of typical narratives offered by Islamic insurgents. For Vlahos, those included a heroic journey and mythic figure, an epic historical struggle, a charge of renewal, and a mystic interpretation of history.<sup>31</sup> Any action<sup>32</sup> we can take that would decrease the probability that bin Laden could be interpreted as a hero, that diminishes the likelihood that we could be cast as the antagonist in a historical struggle, that makes it seem less likely "resisting" us would lead to Islamic renewal, or that diminishes bin Laden's ability to sell a mythical interpretation of the struggle, would be effective at defusing the power of the story. For example, part of the reason why Brigadier General David Petraeus' 101st Airborne has been so successful in northern Iraq has to do with the careful manner in which they have carried out police raids, going so far as to rebuild house doors busted down even when those doors were on houses that did in fact contain insurgent weapons. This has done much to disarm the justice frames at play in the story-sphere there.<sup>33</sup>

Or consider Juergensmeyer's list:<sup>34</sup> Is the struggle over basic identity? Is losing the struggle unthinkable? Can the struggle not be won in real terms? Are there actions we can take or speech acts we can engage in, that lessen the threat

30 . BASSAM TIBI, *THE CHALLENGE OF FUNDAMENTALISM*, at xv (1998).

31 . VLAHOS, *supra* note 16, at 8.

32 . Any action includes a speech act. Merely saying things differently might be enough in many cases.

33 . Phone interview with Brigadier Gen. David Petraeus, 101st Airborne Div. (2005).

34 . JUERGENSMEYER, *supra* note 18, at 164-66.



our presence poses to Islamic identity? Can we assure the populations of a country or region we are occupying that successful occupation would not imply the destruction of cherished values? Can we engage in "cultural confidence building measures" that assure target populations they can achieve many of their goals even within the context of occupation or reconstruction? These actions may be as simple as avoiding certain terms in our speech (e.g., "crusade"), while other actions required to see a story through may be quite complicated.

In many cases the tactical success achieved by taking action we know may feed a malignant narrative may nonetheless justify them. Even then, we should be aware of the impact our actions are having on the "telling of stories" in the backstreets and communities of at-risk populations so that we can, where possible, mitigate any negative upshot.

#### 6. A SIMPLE EVALUATIVE MECHANISM: ARISTOTLE'S RHETORICAL MODEL

In practice, effective counter-narrative strategy requires understanding the components and content of the story being told to predict how they influence the action of a target audience. In other words, we need a sophisticated understanding of strategic rhetoric. This is difficult to come by. Nonetheless, even well-worn and simple models of this process, such as that offered by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, can be very useful for structuring our thinking. Aristotle would have us evaluate three components of a narrative relative to a target audience: (1) What is the *ethos* of the speaker or deliverer? (2) What is the *logos* of the message being delivered? (3) Does the message contain appropriate appeals to *pathos*?<sup>35</sup> Consideration of *ethos* would emphasize the need to establish credible channels of communication, conveyed by actors who have the character and reputation required to ensure receipt and belief of the message. "You have bad *ethos*" is merely another way of saying "You will not be believed by the target audience because they do not think you are believable." Consideration of *logos* involves the rational elements of the narrative: Is it logical? Is it

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<sup>35</sup> . Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, in *THE RHETORIC AND THE POETICS OF ARISTOTLE* 24-25 § 1356a (W. Rhys Roberts & Ingram Bywater trans., 1954).

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consistent enough to be believed? Does it contain (from the target's perspective) non-sequiturs and forms of reasoning not normally used? Finally, pathos deals with the emotional content of the story. Does the story cue appropriate affective and emotive systems in the human brain? Does it appeal to emotion in a way that engages the whole person and that increases the chances the story will actually motivate action?

Thomas Coakley summarizes the Aristotelian model in his paper on the Peruvian counter-terrorism experience:

Ethos: these are appeals the speaker makes to the audience to establish credibility. Essentially, ethos is what a speaker uses—implicitly or explicitly—to ensure that the audience can trust him or her. An example in advertising is an athlete endorsing an athletic product. In war, examples include a history of adherence to LOAC [Laws of Armed Conflict] and an assertiveness of willpower.

Pathos: these are appeals the speaker makes to the audience's emotions. An example of this would be an advertisement for tires that emphasizes safety by portraying an infant cradled within the circle of the tire. In war, pathos might be displayed by showing the "average" guy on the adversary's side that the US position is better.

Logos: these are appeals to facts. More doctors recommend toothpaste X than any other brand. In war, there is no greater logic than firepower, but as insurgencies demonstrated throughout the twentieth century, firepower (logos) alone will not win wars, and will win very few arguments.<sup>36</sup>

Some of these Aristotelian considerations will be affected by structural elements of the story<sup>37</sup>; others will be affected

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<sup>36</sup> . William D. Casebeer, *The Stories Markets Tell: Affordances for Ethical Behavior in Free Exchange*, in *MORAL MARKETS: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF VALUES IN THE ECONOMY* 1, 8 (Paul J. Zak ed., 2008) (quoting THOMAS COAKLEY, INST. FOR NAT'L SECURITY STUD. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST TERROR: THE PERUVIAN EXPERIENCE, GLOBALIZATION, AND US POLICY (2003)), available at <http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s8657.html>.

<sup>37</sup> . Structural elements include whether the story is coherent, simple enough to be processed, can it be remembered, is it easy to transmit, and if believed, will it motivate appropriate action? Indeed, some structure and content of stories may cause narratives to act as primary reinforcers—that is, just like food, drugs, or sex. A fascinating neurobiological exploration of this process of successful "cultural messaging" is being carried out by the author and neuroscientists such as Read Montague, head of the Baylor College of Medicine's Human Neuroimaging Laboratory. Innovative new techniques such as "hyperscanning" allow social cognition to be studied *in vitro* at the neural level using functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging. See generally Baylor College of Medicine, Human Neuroimaging Laboratory, <http://www.hnl.bcm.tmc.edu/hyperScan.html> (last visited May 19, 2008).

by content.<sup>38</sup>

Ascertaining how these issues interact to ensure success in counter-narrative efforts is a complex process. In general, though, consideration of these ideas leads to this non-exhaustive list of basic strategic principles for the formulation and application of counter-narrative strategy, some of which we have already briefly discussed.

#### 7. NARRATIVE "STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES," AND SOME COMPLICATIONS

Effective counter-narrative strategy will be guided by the following strategic principles:

(1) Target audience characteristics are critical. Formulating a narrative without understanding the culture of the population you wish to influence is at best a recipe for ineffectiveness and at worst can backfire.

(2) Darwinian competitiveness counts. Stories will be more likely to be received and understood if they are fit for the environment in which they are expected to flourish. Some basic considerations include whether or not stories take advantage of heuristics and biases (e.g., since memorable events are easier for a target audience to recall, memorable events should form the skeleton of a story).

(3) Aristotle is better than nothing. Considerations of ethos, logos, and pathos (E/L/P) are simplistic. But they are better than not bothering to evaluate the storyline at all. Relative to a target population, an E/L/P analysis can provide a baseline for predicting and controlling narrative flow over the course of a conflict.

(4) There are two important story sets: the ones our adversary is telling, and the one being told implicitly and explicitly by us. Terrorist organizations have instrumental incentives to "get out the story" that form a necessary part of their continued survival and enables their goal achievement. We need to consider not only whether our

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<sup>38</sup> . Content elements include: does the narrative resonate with target audiences, is the protagonist of the story a member of the target audience's in-group, and is the antagonist of the story a member of a hated out-group? It may very well be that some aspects of narrative are evaluated in exactly the same way that theories in the sciences are evaluated: according to their simplicity, output power, explanatory power, justificatory power, coherence, breadth, clarity and psychological plausibility.

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story is being told well, but also how both our actions and storytelling affect the plausibility of the stories they are introducing into the environment. To do this well requires getting inside the "narrative OODA-loop" of our adversary (where OODA is an acronym which stands for Observe-Orient-Decide-Act, a description of the basic decision-cycle for organizations first postulated by US Air Force Colonel John Boyd).

(5) Tactical success may require overriding strategic story considerations. While grand counter-terrorism strategy will require counter-narrative considerations for success, it may very well be that strategic story considerations will be overridden in many circumstances by demands for tactical or short-term success. Understanding this tension will enable us to build stories that will be only minimally affected by such reversals.

(6) Stories with firewalls are better than stories without defenses. Narratives need to come equipped with an immune system. Some stories are more resilient than others to changes in the environment; the best of stories make sense—to use Karl Popper's language,<sup>39</sup> it will fail to be falsified. We should think about how to firewall stories to prevent their destruction or cooption.

(7) Adaptability and flexibility are important. The story environment is fluid, and stories should be too. While it would undermine our ethos to change stories often, our logos may demand that we do so at times. Anticipating this, we should create grand narratives that have some built-in adaptability and flexibility. Protagonists and antagonists change. Basic plot lines shift. Culmination points move. Critical identities are fluid. This environmental uncertainty makes adaptability in stories even more important.

Application of these strategic principles for story formulation is difficult. At any given time, there are myriad target audiences. We can expect their reactions to be shaped dynamically. For example, a grand narrative that was perfectly plausible before Abu Ghraib may be rendered perfectly inert afterwards. A few critical slips by key public representatives may entrench an antagonistic narrative, leaving no choice but to abandon a counter-narrative put in

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<sup>39</sup> . KARL R. POPPER, *THE LOGIC OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY* 40-42 (Basic Books, Inc. 1961) (1959); KARL R. POPPER, *CONJECTURES AND REFUTATIONS: THE GROWTH OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE* 256 (1962).



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Operations responsibilities to include DoD support for public diplomacy. The Department should triple current resources (personnel & funding) available to combatant commanders for DoD support to public diplomacy and reallocate Information Operations funding within U.S. STRATCOM for expanded support for strategic communication programs.<sup>42</sup>

## 9. THE IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVES

Having in place effective counter-narrative strategies will not be a panacea. Nonetheless, if military force is to play the appropriate role in our national security strategy and the "Global War on Terror," we need a more comprehensive understanding of how a failure to tell good stories can lead to an increased risk of insurgencies, violent social movements, and terrorist action. While this Article has been far too brief to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between stories, identity, and violent action, I hope it has at least made plausible the case that we need to think much more carefully about the relationship between this rhetorical Clausewitzian trinity<sup>43</sup> and state power. A grand counter-terrorism strategy that actually produces the results we desire rides on such a subtle psychologically informed understanding of narratives and terror.

Narratives also play a critical role in several other cultural phenomena relevant to the study of terrorism and insurgency, including cultivation of shared group identities and surrogate consciousness. This exploration is the subject for the final section of this Article.

## 10. FRAMING AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

There is little doubt that framing processes—those processes responsible for influencing how an actor views the world, such as the narratives discussed earlier—play an important role in creating and sustaining social mobilization

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<sup>42</sup> . DEFENSE SCI. BD., REPORT OF THE DEFENSE SCIENCE BOARD TASK FORCE ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION 9 (2004), available at [http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2004-09-Strategic\\_Communication.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2004-09-Strategic_Communication.pdf). The report is well worth reading in its entirety.

<sup>43</sup> . CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ, ON WAR 89 (Michael Howard & Peter Paret eds. & trans., 1984) (1976) ("As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity—composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability with which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.").

processes in the Middle East. More controversially, framing processes are also critical for sustaining organizational efficiency. When movements spawn formal organizations, those organizations will take advantage of some of the same processes used by mobilization leaders so as to shore up support from actors interested in seeing the organization achieve its goals. Moreover, when organizations find themselves in turbulent and problematic environments, they may shift their framing processes so as to cultivate new stakeholder relationships and broaden the base of those willing to provide material and moral support. Often, this will involve expanding the goals of the organization, providing existing members reason to support these new goals by developing a sense of shared responsibility for the fate of those affected by these new objectives—in short, by cultivating “surrogate consciousness” in their traditional membership.

Such, I argue, has been the fate of Lebanon’s Hizballah. Here I argue for a series of linked hypotheses, all germane to the concept of strategically important culture. First, I distinguish the concept of surrogate consciousness from related psychological processes involved in framing. Surrogate consciousness arises from the conjunction of empathetic responses with a “thin” sense of shared identity (especially identities that arise from a recognition of common fate) even in the face of obvious and self-acknowledged out-group distinctions. This is different from the activation of either empathy or identity alone, and may deserve to be recognized as a significant category (akin to oppositional consciousness) in the mobilization literature, as it can play a critical role in broadening an organization’s base of support. Development of surrogate consciousness is enhanced by consideration of the narrative elements of the framing process. Second, by analyzing official documents of Hizballah and the rhetoric of Hizballah leaders such as Sheikh Hussein Nasrallah and Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah—focusing in particular on how this verbiage has changed over time—the section provides evidence that the Party of God has broadened its goals; this in turn has led to narrative efforts designed to boost surrogate consciousness in the Shi’a of Lebanon for the plight of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Third, and only very briefly, I argue that whether this is a positive

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development remains an open question; on the one hand, these developments increase the chances Hizballah will continue to develop a bona fide constituency and moderate its goals so they become irredentist rather than millenarian, making it all the more likely those goals can be achieved by peaceful political means. This may have the pleasant upshot of marginalizing the militant wing of Hizballah. On the other hand, if Palestinians are unable to reach accommodation with Israel through non-violent means (such as the peace process), the surrogate consciousness could retrench Hizballah's militant elements, which would not be a favorable development. This is an ambitious set of hypotheses to develop and defend in part of one article. This Article's aim is to provide enough explanation and evidence to at least make them plausible so as to motivate a more rigorous research agenda.

## 11. SURROGATE CONSCIOUSNESS

In general, mobilization—be it for peaceful or violent collective action—is thought to happen at the intersections of political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes.<sup>44</sup> There must be some form of *political opportunity* (or lack thereof)—for instance, a state crackdown on a spontaneous protest might open the political door for a full-fledged movement. *Mobilizing structures* provide resources for movements to grow and expand—for example, pre-existing social networks may serve as funnels for financial support for a nascent movement. Finally, *framing processes* can (among many other things) motivate individuals to join nascent movements, groups and organizations, and may reinforce certain identities so as to make mobilization easier.<sup>45</sup> Critical to the importance of

<sup>44</sup> . See, e.g., COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES, MOBILIZING STRUCTURES, AND CULTURAL FRAMINGS, (Doug McAdam et al. eds., 1996); Doug McAdam et al., *Toward an Integrated Perspective on Social Movements and Revolution*, in COMPARATIVE POLITICS: RATIONALITY, CULTURE AND STRUCTURE 142 (Mark Irving Lichback & Alan S. Zuckerman eds., 1997).

<sup>45</sup> . "Framing" probably really serves as a placeholder for *all non-rational psychological processes* involved in mobilization (the sociology and political science literature tends to call these "subjective processes," though this is a bit limiting as the psychological processes undergirding these phenomena need have no experiential or phenomenological component, and are in many cases richly social). I suspect that there are more psychological processes worthy of consideration than those identified in the extant literature.



frames is the notion that they can *resonate* to greater or lesser degrees with target audiences.<sup>46</sup>

Generally, social psychological facts (such as the development of group identity or awareness of one's self as a part of a larger collective) are most likely to intervene upon the mobilization process via framing effects. Consider the idea of oppositional consciousness.<sup>47</sup> Oppositional consciousness is one process whereby members of a persecuted or oppressed group become aware of themselves *as group members* for the purposes of spurring action. Oppositional consciousness—"an empowering mental state that prepares members of an oppressed group to act to undermine, reform or overthrow a system of human domination"—involves, according to Jane Mansbridge, "identifying with members of a subordinate group, identifying injustices done to that group, opposing these injustices, and seeing the group as having a shared interest in ending or diminishing those injustices."<sup>48</sup> Framing will affect all these facets of oppositional consciousness. Justice frames, for example, will make salient to a group the injustices being done to them, while motivational frames will increase the likelihood a member of the affected group will take action to end the injustice.

Surrogate consciousness is similar to, but separate from, oppositional consciousness.<sup>49</sup> Like oppositional consciousness, surrogate consciousness will be affected by framing. It will involve some of the same processes as oppositional consciousness, and in many regards functions just as it does—to prepare members of a group for action. But *unlike* oppositional consciousness, surrogate

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<sup>46</sup> . See generally D. A. Snow & R. Benford, *Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization*, in 1 FROM STRUCTURE TO ACTION 197, 197-217 (B. Klattermans, H. Kriesi & S. Tarrow eds., 1988).

<sup>47</sup> . See Aldon Morris & Naomi Braine, *Social Movements and Oppositional Consciousness*, in OPPOSITIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THE SUBJECTIVE ROOTS OF SOCIAL PROTEST 20 (J. Mansbridge & A. Morris eds., 2001).

<sup>48</sup> . Jane Mansbridge, *The Making of Oppositional Consciousness*, in OPPOSITIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THE SUBJECTIVE ROOTS OF SOCIAL PROTEST 4-5 (J. Mansbridge & A. Morris eds., 2001).

<sup>49</sup> . In order to confirm that surrogate consciousness was not already a commonly used concept in the mobilization literature, I skimmed multiple seminal articles from the framing and identity bodies of work. Also, a Google search turned up no academic uses of the phrase, nor did a JSTOR search turn up any salient references. My apologies to the original discoverer if the phrase turns out to exist in the prior art.

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consciousness involves action by members of an out-group *on behalf of* another group that is being persecuted. Oppositional consciousness involves the development of empathy, but such empathy is shared only with in-group members (indeed, this is what makes it oppositional rather than merely generally empathetic). In the case of surrogate consciousness, however, empathy is developed for another group *even when one recognizes that one is not in fact a member of that group.*

To summarize, according to our nascent theory, surrogate consciousness arises from the conjunction of empathetic responses with a very shallow sense of shared identity (especially identities that arise from recognition of common fate, which is probably the identity generating mechanism which generates the thinnest, most violable sense of identity<sup>50</sup>) whilst nonetheless recognizing the existence of obvious out-group distinctions.<sup>51</sup> Some empirical

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<sup>50</sup> . See generally Leonie Huddy, *Group Identity and Political Cohesion*, in OXFORD HANDBOOK OF POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY (David Sears et al. eds., 2003) (reviewing major theories of the development of group identity). On the whole, social context is critically important for racial and ethnic acculturation vis-à-vis group identity. This is no surprise, as there is an entire theory (called "social learning theory") dedicated to the role that social and group interaction plays in the development of attitudes and skills. Social learning theory was most comprehensively articulated by Albert Bandura in the 1960s and 1970s. Bandura placed special emphasis on how new behavior is acquired through observational learning via cognitive processes. Social learning did not require that there be rewards and punishments for learned behavior to occur (as in the neo-behaviorist paradigm that dominated cognitive science in the early twentieth century); rather, all that was required were "the minimal components of attention to a behavioral sequence, retention of its form, and the ability to reproduce the behavioral sequence." Shelly E. Taylor, *The Social Being in Social Psychology*, in 1 THE HANDBOOK OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 66 (Daniel T. Gilbert et al. eds., 4th ed. 1998). The core components of personal *cum* group identity are learned, on this picture, and such behavior as prejudice or discrimination (or even a willingness to resort to violence to solve problems) is transmitted through various social groups—primarily via story telling—because children hear and see such attitudes in action in their peers, parents, and authority figures. It is easy to see how the development of prejudice, which may be a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for organized violence to be committed against out-groups, is contingent upon cultural and social factors themselves tightly related to narratives.

<sup>51</sup> . Huddy points out that the four major theoretical approaches regarding the construction of group identity (which consist of the cognitive approach, realistic interest approaches, social identity theory, and social constructivist theory) all make somewhat different predictions regarding sources of commonality and critical issues around which members may

examples may help. Steve notices that homosexuals are being subtly discriminated against in my neighborhood; despite the fact that Steve is a heterosexual, he nonetheless acts on the behalf of the gay community by attending gay pride parades and donating money to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, perhaps in part because he fears that he—as a member of a minority religion (let's stipulate that Steve is a Christian Scientist)—may eventually face the same persecution. This would be a classic case of acting out of surrogate consciousness.

## 12. HIZBALLAH: A POTTED HISTORY

The task for this section will be to demonstrate that Hizballah has used different framing devices in their rhetoric in an attempt to develop surrogate consciousness in their traditional constituency for the purposes of expanding their base. Perhaps they hope to eventually be able to appeal to the members of the group on whose behalf they have

mobilize. Huddy, *supra* note 50, at 518-21. A thumbnail sketch of these approaches will help us understand her conclusion. The *cognitive approach* to formation of group identity emphasizes the importance of self-perception in the development of cohesive groups: individuals become group members because they identify with the group and wish to emulate typical group members. *Id.* *Realistic interest approaches* stress the common interests that groups share and advance; common fate is thus especially critical. If all of Islam is threatened, and we are Muslims, then it is more likely that we will become cohesive so as to achieve the common objective of protecting the shared interests of our group. *Id.* *Social identity theorists* emphasize the importance of symbolic interactions between groups and potential members; group members endorse group memberships because of a need to achieve a positive sense of social identity that will differentiate their own group from others. *Id.* *Social constructivism* takes social identity one step further: concepts derive their meaning from social practices; this theory stresses how social identities form even among strangers so long as enough shared interactions can occur to generate the construction of the group as a group. Huddy rightly notes that

The cognitive approach predicts cohesion among the members of any salient group; realistic interest theory confines cohesion to groups whose members share a common fate; social identity theory points to unity among widely stigmatized groups, such as low-status ethnic or racial groups, religious sects (etc.), whose members cannot easily pass as belonging to a higher status group; and a social constructivist perspective predicts cohesion among members who share a common understanding of group membership.

*Id.* at 521. I'll briefly discuss these approaches later in the main text. Resolving the tensions between these various theories of group identification is beyond the scope of this article.

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developed surrogacy. The group in whom surrogate consciousness is being developed includes the traditional subjects of Hizballah: the people of occupied southern Lebanon, especially Shi'a. The group on whose behalf the consciousness is being developed includes Palestinians living in the occupied territories. Part of the reason why Hizballah is taking this action was to prepare the way for being acknowledged as a legitimate actor, not just in the Lebanese political scene but also in the larger Southwest Asian political arena, and not just for Shi'a, but for all groups that have faced injustice in the region—or so I hope to demonstrate in the next section.

Some background on Hizballah is in order. Hizballah is Arabic for "Party of God."<sup>52</sup> It is a Shi'a political organization that has a militant and sometimes terrorist wing.<sup>53</sup> Aboriginally, it articulated three main objectives: establishing a Shi'a state in Lebanon modeled directly upon the Islamic Republic of Iran, causing the destruction of Israel, and neutralizing U.S. influence in the region.<sup>54</sup>

In the realm of violent militant action, Hizballah's activities have included several high profile terrorist incidents. In addition to multiple kidnappings in the 1980s, the infamous Beirut truck bombing of U.S. Marines, the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847, and attacks on Jewish community centers and buildings in Argentina in 1992 and 1994, Hizballah launched a series of suicide bombings in the occupied territories.<sup>55</sup> A pre-9/11 chart contained in an article by Ehud Sprinzak demonstrates how successfully Hizballah executed suicide bombings, being the second largest group in terms of aggregate attacks<sup>56</sup> (though it is critical to note that Hizballah has since denounced the use of suicide bombings following their involvement with them in the mid-1980s).

In order to carry out these attacks, Lebanese Hizballah

<sup>52</sup> . CFR.org, Hezbollah (a.k.a. Hizbollah, Hizbu'llah), [http://www.cfr.org/publication/9155/hezbollah\\_aka\\_hizbollah\\_hizbullah.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9155/hezbollah_aka_hizbollah_hizbullah.html) (last visited Mar. 12, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> . *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> . *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> . See generally BRUCE HOFFMAN, RAND, REPORT NO. R-378-USDP, RECENT TRENDS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF IRANIAN SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM 15-34 (1990), available at <http://rand.org/pubs/reports/2005/R3783.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> . Ehud Sprinzak, *Rational Fanatics*, FOREIGN POL'Y, Sept.-Oct. 2000, at 66, 69.

has developed a large and robust organization. It consists of thousands of supporters and members, and hundreds of terrorist operatives.<sup>57</sup>

This infrastructure developed in part owing to the group's ties to the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>58</sup> In addition to the obvious ideological commonalities given the group's revolutionary goals, Hizballah receives substantial financial support from Iran. Also, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps has been extensively involved in training and organizing Hizballah (their foundational involvement in the early 1980s was critical during the group's initial organization). Via a series of Syrian airfields, Iran has air supply connections to the group.

Social movement theory provides us with insight into how the conditions for Hizballah's genesis developed (in large part, as a reaction to the Shah's program of Westernization). "Identity entrepreneurs," such as the group's spiritual leader Sheikh Fadlallah, were instrumental in establishing the organization and moving it through the growth phase. During maturity, the organization carried out militant action; however, as some of its realizable political goals were achieved, and as it gained a larger constituency via the provision of social services such as education and health care, the organization broadened in terms of goals and functions. Eventually, Hizballah came to have a political face, and today the Secretary General of Hizballah is Sheik Nasrallah. Hizballah is an active participant in the political life and processes of Lebanon, and its scope of operation is far beyond its initial militant one.<sup>59</sup> In 1992, it participated in elections for the first time, winning twelve out of 128 seats in parliament.<sup>60</sup> It won ten seats in 1996, and now holds eight.<sup>61</sup>

A stakeholder analysis reveals traceability between developments in Hizballah capacities and patronage from one of the major stakeholders—Iran. For instance, Imad

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<sup>57</sup> . UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE, COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM 251 (2006), available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/29722.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> . The Wikipedia entry on Hizballah is excellent and provides a good table of organization, background, and historical review. Hezbollah, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hizballah> (last visited Mar. 13, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> . *Id.*

<sup>60</sup> . *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> . *Id.* Hizballah won fourteen seats in the 2005 election. CFR.org, *supra* note 52.

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Munniyah came to dominate the security apparatus of Hizballah, and with his ties to Iranian intelligence, he almost certainly used organizational methods from Iran to radically increase Hizballah's effectiveness in the 1980s. Solid organizational techniques and good traceability between activities led to Hizballah's increasing effectiveness as a militant organization, but it also led to their broadening into an organization with a legitimate political face as well.

Classic reinforcing actions were also taken by Hizballah as they eventually became the largest single provider of social services in southern Lebanon, displacing competitors such as the government of Lebanon (though in many cases the government welcomed Hizballah's assumption of these responsibilities). "Niche construction" activities like the delivery of health care and food aid are critically important, as they can lead to the development of a stable constituency, which in turn may help moderate an organization's more militant tendencies,<sup>62</sup> as I will briefly discuss later.

This potted and all-too-brief summary of Hizballah is intended to establish two main points: first, that the organization's goals have broadened as time has passed, becoming more politically realistic; and second, that Hizballah has developed a bona fide political constituency, whom they represent both in the Lebanese parliament and regionally. These modifications have required Hizballah to broaden its base, which in time has led to the articulation of a new narrative designed to generate surrogate consciousness. Before providing textual evidence for this last point, a detour into narrative theory will help provide foundations for understanding tropes and themes emphasized in Hizballah's media presence.<sup>63</sup>

Any of these aspects of narrative would be fascinating and important to examine in detail. The next few paragraphs, however, focus on the relationship between stories and identity mobilization, as this aspect is critical to

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<sup>62</sup> . See THOMAS ET AL., *supra* note 19, at 80-83.

<sup>63</sup> . Several of the following paragraphs are taken from portions of an article I co-authored with James Russell. William D. Casebeer & James A. Russell, *Storytelling and Terrorism: Towards a Comprehensive 'Counter-Narrative Strategy'*, STRATEGIC INSIGHTS, Mar. 2005, <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Mar/casebeerMar05.asp>. Portions used in the next few pages were written by me. My thanks to Troy Thomas for multiple insights related to this section.

### 13. THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY AND SHIFTS IN HIZBALLAH RHETORIC

In order to understand how and why individuals in places like Lebanon eventually become members of Hizballah, we need to better grasp both how individual identities are formed and how they interact with groups and cultures to shape a sense of collective identity. The literature on both identity formation and identity interaction is voluminous; however, some key points from it can usefully inform our analysis.

Groups of individuals that feel they share a common fate, possess a common identity, face a common threat, or have communal needs, are abundant in most environments. In conditions of violence, where governments are failing to provide basic safety/security needs (think of Lebanon in the aftermath of the civil war), these sometimes latent or "weakly felt" identities are prone to even greater mobilization, with the individual increasingly identifying with the competing identity group *rather than* the political state. That is, in the right kinds of environments, it is relatively easy for identity entrepreneurs—the tellers of stories that speak to questions of fundamental identity—to make headway in motivating people to act in defense of a group, or play a critical role in a plot that includes the group as protagonist and some other power as antagonist. This is especially the case when we are told certain stories throughout the formative periods of our lives that can easily be recast to provoke a backlash to things like government failure, occupation, or reconstruction.<sup>64</sup>

The brief review of Hizballah's history from a few pages ago gives us *a priori* reason to think the narratives they use to do things like shore up stakeholder support have evolved over the years. There is also textual and other media-based evidence for this conclusion, and some of the narratives seem to have the purpose of creating surrogate consciousness. Consider first an interview with Fadlallah (the spiritual leader for Hizballah) from a 1987 issue of the

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<sup>64</sup> . See *generally* TROY THOMAS, ET AL., *WARLORDS RISING: CONFRONTING VIOLENT NON-STATE ACTORS* (2005) (providing literature review). Of note, in the right circumstances, most any belief system can be radicalized (Christian, Jewish, secular, etc.).

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*Journal of Palestine Studies*. In the interview, Fadlallah discusses the tensions between Palestinians and Shi'a in Southern Lebanon in the early 1980s, openly acknowledging that "there was political, material and spiritual weariness; and chaos dominated the south as a result of the disorderly Palestinian political expansion which interfered both in the internal struggle between political parties and in family matters."<sup>65</sup> This assertion was in response to a question from the *Journal* regarding why it was that some Shi'a in the south apparently viewed the Israel arrival in a positive light. While disputing that all Shi'a felt this way, Fadlallah nonetheless acknowledges that the "Palestinians were expanding in a disturbing way"<sup>66</sup> and that it is in the nature of some regional actors to "score points"<sup>67</sup> against rivals in Palestinian-Arab political disputes by turning a blind eye to actions they would otherwise condemn (e.g., the Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon).

Later, Fadlallah is even more explicit that he believes "that the Arab political scene, and particularly the Lebanese scene, is moving to free itself from the burden of the Palestine problem."<sup>68</sup> While Fadlallah discusses in this interview that Hizballah has goals that include the essential elimination of Israel as a political force, and uses this to distinguish Hizballah from Amal (which had more limited goals of freeing Southern Lebanon from Israeli occupation), he nonetheless is careful to disentangle Hizballah from direct connection to the Palestinian cause as such.

Considerations like this place Hizballah in a bind. On the one hand, the fact that Israel actually completed their withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 gave Hizballah enormous prestige, as Hizballah's resistance had arguably led to the first successful case of resistance against Israeli territorial aggression in the region. On the other hand, this development also meant that Hizballah had to find other goals to justify its continued existence as a regional political actor; this was complicated by the fact that their provision of social services, education, and medical care had broadened Hizballah's base and contributed to their emergence as a

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<sup>65</sup> . Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, *The Palestinians, the Shi'a, and South Lebanon*, J. PALESTINE STUD., Winter 1987, at 3, 4.

<sup>66</sup> . *Id.* at 3.

<sup>67</sup> . *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> . *Id.* at 6.



political force in Lebanon replete with explicit representative duties.

In 1991, Hizballah founded their television station, al-Manar ("the Lighthouse"). Al-Manar is extremely popular regionally, ranking second only to Al-Jazeera in popularity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>69</sup> Al-Manar broadcasts numerous motivational videos with stirring slogans and professionally produced graphics and music. These polemical videos serve several purposes, one of which, I contend, is the facilitation of surrogate consciousness for the Palestinian plight in Lebanese viewers. Al-Manar station manager Nayef Krayem says as much, stating that the station has links to multiple militant Palestinian groups (including the military wing of Fatah's Abu Musa faction and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), and that part of the station's mission is to generate material and moral support for the Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation.<sup>70</sup> Hizballah Deputy Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassam told Lebanese Future Television that Hizballah provides "national support to the Palestinians through al-Manar television,"<sup>71</sup> and Hussein Nasrallah's rhetoric in multiple venues has included consciousness raising on behalf of the Palestinian struggle.<sup>72</sup>

Consider, for example, a video broadcast which includes images of a suicide bomber destroying an Israeli checkpoint. Or in another case, a video shows footage of Israeli bulldozers knocking down Palestinian dwellings. A third video details Palestinian suicide bombers who have died while killing IDF members. These videos emphasize the themes that would need to be developed if surrogate consciousness were to appear. Recall that (in the case of the development of related oppositional consciousness) the group would need to become aware of injustices, identify with the group being repressed, and feel the need to redress the injustices; in the case of surrogate consciousness, feeling of group belonging

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<sup>69</sup> . See generally AVI JORISCH, BEACON OF HATRED: INSIDE HIZBALLAH'S AL-MANAR TELEVISION (2004). Of note, I disagree with many of the policy recommendations Jorisch floats in this book, and I recognize that the Washington Institute has a "not-so-hidden" agenda. Even so, the book offers valuable background information, and the CD it contains has numerous video clips from station broadcasts which are very interesting and useful.

<sup>70</sup> . *Id.* at 34.

<sup>71</sup> . *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> . *Id.* (Clips 17, 35 and 39 on the CD-ROM included with book).

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does not need to be present, or if it is present it is sustained only by common fate considerations and will also probably involve recognition that one is not actually a member of the surrogate group. Such videos lay the groundwork for *all* these things by raising awareness of injustices done to the Palestinians, by providing a means of redressing them (al-Manar broadcasts bank account information for those who wish to donate to organizations which support violent action in response, and also provides sometime material and moral support to Palestinian organizations such as Hamas), and by laying the emotional groundwork for support for things like the second Intifada via the use of resonant music and emotion-laden images.<sup>73</sup>

One objection is that to assume any particular broadcasts reflect shifts in strategic goals of Hizballah would be unjustified. This is probably the case. For instance, there are links between themes emphasized in al-Manar programming and short-term political goals related to the Lebanese elections. Consider, for instance, the period between May and September 2000, in which the tone and content shifted to emphasize the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, Hizballah's successful military campaign, and Israeli military weaknesses. The "triumph over Israel" theme was probably related not just to facts on the ground about the Israeli/Lebanon situation but also to the upcoming September 2000 Lebanese parliamentary elections.<sup>74</sup> Even so, the shift in tone and content about the Palestinian plight has sustained itself for long enough that the conclusion that this change from the attitude of practiced distant concern of the mid-80's is more than a tactical political development is plausible. It passes the sniff test.

#### 14. UPSHOTS OF SURROGACY

Whether this development is a positive one remains an open question. On the one hand, it increases the chances Hizballah will continue to develop a bona fide constituency and moderate its goals so they become irredentist rather than millenarian, making it all the more likely those goals can be achieved by peaceful political means. This may have

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<sup>73</sup> . *Id.* at 67-70. I realize these examples do not necessarily disprove the null hypothesis. They are suggestive, however.

<sup>74</sup> . *Id.* at 37.

the pleasant upshot of marginalizing the militant wing of Hizballah. As Baylouny points out, involvement in democratic institutions has a moderating influence even on those who have anti-system goals.<sup>75</sup> Cultivation of a bona fide constituency tends to decrease the likelihood of violent political action, as such cultivation usually involves the formation of moderate organizations and institutions designed to minister to the needs of this constituency.

On the other hand, if Palestinians are unable to reach accommodation with Israel through non-violent means (e.g, via the resurgent peace process), the development of surrogate consciousness could retrench Hizballah's militant elements, which would not be a favorable development.<sup>76</sup> Developing surrogate consciousness boosts the complexity and interconnectedness of the system; from a policy-making perspective, this can be both a good and bad thing, contingent upon how the system as a whole develops.

Before concluding, let us acknowledge the multiple limitations afflicting my thesis for this Article. These limitations include not only space limitations but also my radically incomplete survey of Hizballah rhetoric and propaganda, amplified by the complication that the author does not speak or read Arabic (this limitation is being redressed in the long run). The necessary resources were not available to distinguish between elite rhetoric and other layers of stratification in Hizballah's organization; a more in-depth study would discuss this difference in detail.<sup>77</sup> Nor did this Article provide a comprehensive review of the political

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<sup>75</sup> . Ann Marie Baylouny, *Democratic Inclusion: A Solution to Militancy in Islamic Movements*, STRATEGIC INSIGHTS, Apr. 2004, at 2, <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2004/apr/baylounyApr04.asp>.

<sup>76</sup> . Daniel Byman argues that we should not crack down on Hizballah itself, but should instead focus on undercutting Iranian and Syrian stakeholder involvement. This tack, he contends, will maximize the chances that Hizballah will fully become a mainstream political actor. Daniel Byman, *Should Hezbollah Be Next?*, FOREIGN AFF., Nov./Dec. 2003, at 54, 64-66.

<sup>77</sup> . Consider, for example, Glenn Robinson's argument that Hamas and the PLO converged in their use of symbology even as animosity between elites in the organizations persisted. GLENN E. ROBINSON, *BUILDING A PALESTINIAN STATE* 160-62 (1997). While I would assume that Hizballah elites control al-Manar content, I am not familiar enough with al-Manar's production process to say so with complete assurance. An interesting and important project would be to analyze elite control over Hizballah rhetoric especially in light of use of media like call-in televised talk shows and the internet where centralized control of content becomes more difficult.

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context in which Hizballah has been acting. On the whole, however, despite these limitations these linked theses are at least plausible and worthy of further investigation.

### CONCLUSION

This Article argued for a series of hypotheses. First, it distinguished the concept of surrogate consciousness from related psychological processes involved in framing. Surrogate consciousness arises from the conjunction of empathetic responses with a "thin" sense of shared identity even in the face of obvious and self-acknowledged out-group distinctions; it can play a critical role in broadening an organization's base of support. Second, by analyzing official documents of Hizballah and the rhetoric of Hizballah leaders such as Nasrallah and Fadlallah and the al-Manar television station, it provided (admittedly slim) evidence that the Party of God has broadened its goals and that this in turn has led to narrative efforts designed to boost surrogate consciousness in the Shi'a of Lebanon for the plight of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Third, and most briefly, this Article argued that whether this is a positive development is an open question. It contributes to Hizballah's maintenance of a constituency, which is a net positive, but it could also lead to identification with militant means of resolving disputes should the latest incarnation of the Palestinian/Israeli peace process fail. Irrespective of how political events in the Middle East shape—and are shaped by—Hizballah in the future, this Article has driven home the importance of understanding the rhetorical and narrative "top cover" movements and organizations use. Only by engaging in this endeavor in subtle (and sympathetic) ways can we hope to shift the story-telling atmosphere in such a manner that peaceful resolutions to political conflict become the norm in the region. In other words, a critical aspect of shifting culture will involve understanding how military force produces change in the narratives which shape organizational development.

It also has served as a test bed for a larger theoretical point, one that could be the subject for a major research program: the relationship between narratives, the development of identity, and the presence of empathy. Understanding how these three things are interrelated could help us improve not only the struggle against political

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violence and how to help Hizballah develop into a legitimate political actor renouncing terrorism, but also how genocides happen to how we can better engineer a judicial system that is fair and just. These are all important and pressing questions for our time.