# Jihad, Crime, and the Internet

## Content Analysis of Jihadist Forum Discussions

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# Abstract

*It is common knowledge that terrorists, and Jihadists in particular, make extensive use of the Internet. But the Internet also provides a window into the full range of Jihadist activities. Previous research has identified the various uses of the Internet by Jihadists; however, little research has focused on forum discussions in Jihadist web sites that are of most concern to U.S. counterterrorism efforts. The purpose of the study is twofold: to provide quantitative and qualitative assessments of the content of communications in the forums. Special attention is paid to the nexus between crime and terrorism as it unfolds in the discussions. The data comprise 2112 discussion threads downloaded over two years from over 15 different prominent Arabic-language Jihadist forums and randomized for distribution to coders who are Arab and Sunni Muslims, whose native language is Arabic, and who grew up in Arab speaking countries. The results suggest that most discussions are short lived, involve a small number of participants from among the pool of registered forum members, and include few entries and pages. Participants often refer readers to approved web sites and share authentic Jihadist multimedia. References and quotes from religious sources are common. Over a third of the discussions include calls for Jihad, and 3% of the communications discuss non-terrorist illegal activities, particularly computer- and software-related offenses. Content analysis of the discussion summaries identified four groups: information dissemination, religious preaching, instruction or training, and social interactions. These groups all support three central activity pillars in the terrorist organization: ideological foundation, organizational structure, and operational means. In addition to traditional methods of waging Jihad, participation in forum discussions is itself considered a form of Jihad. Policy recommendations include making use of the fleeting nature of forum discussions to get inside the loop of Jihadist attention and interest; responding to threats by adding interference at any touchpoint along the communication process; mitigating the harm done by exposure to violent imagery, and understanding the context of the Arab, Muslim, and Jihadist milieu in which the studied social interactions take place. Recommendations for further research include examination of the content of links authenticated through the forums, an analysis of the rate of acceptance and adoption of views and behavior promoted by those in control of the forums, and a comparison of what is known about terrorists' behavior from prosecution data to what is observed in their forums.*

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# Executive Summary

## I. Background

It is common knowledge that terrorists in general, and Salafist or Jihadist ideologues in particular — most prominent among them being al-Qaida, make extensive use of the Internet. The Internet also enables direct observation of what Jihadists say and do, providing a window into the full range of Jihadist activities.

Jihadist web sites function as a venue for extremist social networking. The result is a virtual Muslim community (*ummah*) that is in line with the worldview of Jihadists, devoid of significant deviation or differences of opinion. Jihadist web sites also enable the distribution of information from explicitly religious discourse to open source intelligence regarding perceived enemies of Jihadists and detailed instruction in terrorist tradecraft. Jihadist web sites provide fertile ground for recruiters, while virtual activism in support of global Jihad serves as a kind of entry-level terrorism. Despite instability in Jihadist web sites, Jihadists make effective use of the Internet, and of forums in particular. The robustness of the Internet combines with the perseverance of Jihadist activists to ensure the overall survival of this valuable resource. This combination of disturbance and survival is demonstrated by the sites used in this study: while almost all of them no longer exist, two — Ana al-Muslm (the oldest of the Salafist/Jihadist forums) and al-Shamikh (top-ranking al-Qaida forum circa 2011) — are still in operation.

Forums continue to be the center of online Jihadist activism, and are likely to remain so given their unique features compared to other social platforms, most importantly, their being under the control of Jihadists themselves. At their core, forums are bulletin boards that allow any member in good standing to raise or contribute to a discussion topic.

Because Jihadist forums are openly aligned with the global al-Qaida movement, they serve first and foremost as clearinghouses for authentic Jihadist content. Forums provide private communications capabilities in addition to the open discussions. It is known that private messaging on the forums is used to discuss matters critical to the organization or its members, such as how to travel to a land of Jihad and join an active terrorist organization, initial plotting of real world terrorist attacks, and as a meeting place for al-Qaida leaders. While not necessarily under the direct control of terrorist organizations, the forums are used extensively and openly by al-Qaida affiliated or linked organizations. A significant amount of Jihadist discourse online involves religious/ideological indoctrination, and most Jihadist forum discussions are framed by references to the Quran, Hadith, and the early history of Islam.

Media Jihad — virtual activism related to the production, distribution, promotion, collection, and re-distribution of Jihadist multimedia — is a primary activity of the rank-and-file of the global Jihad. Based on a citation from the Quran (Sura 4:84), involvement in the media Jihad is cast as an obligation to incite others to perpetrate acts of violence.

Research regarding exposure to violence, including graphic media portrayals of violence, suggests that exposure is linked to an increased likelihood of future violent behavior. Terrorist movements must maintain and reinforce a certain level of violence in order to remain relevant. (In the current study, 9% the discussions collected in the first year had been created solely for distributing videos, and roughly 50% of those videos included explicit portrayals of violence. However, virtually none of the videos distributed via the forums were still available one year later, requiring new acts of terrorism that could be filmed and turned into new videos). Imagery of violence perpetrated against Muslims is

vital to maintaining a key part of the Jihadist narrative — that their community is under attack and thus their Jihad is defensive in nature. Regardless of the identity of the perpetrator or the victim portrayed in the videos, the death portrayed has been shown to increase support for martyrdom or violent operations.

Involvement in a virtual community of terrorism supporters, however, is neither necessary nor sufficient to result in violence. Computer mediated communications (CMC) effects explain how the Internet contributes to radicalization, addressing the diffusion of messages over time and across social networks (both online and offline), the interplay between the rapid development of social intimacy online and the spread of radical ideas, and the tendency of both online radicalization and online socialization to be reinforced by face-to-face interaction. Forum features that may be conducive to radicalization include the ability to choose who will become a member of the community, resulting in a fairly homogenous view of the world by members. The egalitarian nature of virtual communities and the sense of anonymity participants often experience create space for non-normative behaviors and ideas.

## II. Purpose

Previous research has identified the various uses of the Internet by Jihadists; however, little research has focused on forum discussions in Jihadist web sites that are of most concern to U.S. counterterrorism efforts. The purpose of the current study is twofold: to provide quantitative and qualitative assessments of the content of communications in the forums. Special attention is paid to the nexus between crime and terrorism as it unfolds in Jihadist web site discussions, the connection between communications related to terrorist

objectives and the use of criminal means to execute them, and how they resonate with target audiences.

## III.   Research design and methods

The data collected for the study are discussion threads downloaded from 15 prominent Arabic-language Jihadist forums. Sites were selected if they met certain criteria: the degree to which the site represents the Salafist/Jihadist school of radical Islam; the possibility of acquiring and maintaining access to the site at the level of an ordinary member; the acceptance and credibility that the site appears to have within the greater community of Jihadists; the history of the site as a source of actionable intelligence; the use of the site by actual Jihadists as indicated by reports of site members who have been killed in action or observation of other terrorist activities; the use of the site for the distribution of official communications from Jihadist organizations and leadership elements, and the site's presentation of unique information, topics of discussion, and perspectives. Discussions were collected from a large number of sites, representing the full breadth of Salafiya/Jihadiya—an ideological variation of Salafism that elevates violent Jihad to a position as a principal pillar of Islam—and were studied in aggregate, to ensure that the findings of the current study are generalizable to the global population of Jihadists.

Data were collected from the sites solely on the basis of having seen activity in the 24 hours prior to collection. Discussions were saved in a way that preserved as much as possible the content of each page, i.e. not only the text of the discussions was saved, but also the graphic elements that make up the design of each site and frame each discussion. This process yielded roughly 300 active discussions per week across about 10 sites, from which discussion threads were selected randomly for coding and analysis.

To provide authentic interpretation of the discussions and avoid outsider bias, the interpretation and coding of the data were conducted by coders who are Arab and Sunni Muslim, whose native language was Arabic, and who grew up in Arab speaking countries. Coders also met other criteria related to their general level of education, understanding of Islam, willingness to work on a project that addresses Jihad, terrorism and crime on the Internet and was conducted with funds of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The methodology of the study included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. For the quantitative data, we used descriptive statistics and examined relationships found in the sample of 2112 discussions. For the qualitative analysis, we conducted content analysis of a randomly selected sample of 500 out of the 2112 discussions. These data were analyzed using grounded theory principles.

## IV. Findings

### A. Quantitative findings

The quantitative analysis sought to answer specific questions regarding the frequency, kind, and quantity of topics discussed by Jihadists, and to describe the range of discussions that make up Jihadist online discourse. For that purpose, the coders read 2112 discussions that included 18130 entries. The duration of the discussion pertains to the time elapsed from start of discussion until time of collection. Over half (52%) of the discussions were active for 24 hours or less. Roughly 17% were active for between 24 and 48 hours. Discussion activity drops off markedly after 48 hours, with 90% of all discussions lasting two weeks or less. These results indicate that at any given time, the vast majority of active discussions on a Jihadist forum will be new discussions.

The majority (86%) of all active discussions are contained within a single page, another 11% was within two to three pages, and another 2% were four or five pages long. Over half of the discussion threads (54%) have four or fewer entries. The majority (80%) of all discussions have 10 or fewer entries, while 90.9% of all discussions have 20 or fewer entries. On average, discussions involve 6 unique participants, and 90% of all discussions involve 14 or fewer unique participants. In short, Jihadist forum discussions are generally active for a short period of time, represent the activity of a small fraction of each forum's membership (which is typically in the thousands), generate very little response from the rest of the community, and with each required turn of the virtual page, participation in the discussion drops off sharply.

The principal source of participant identification with the topic was judged by the coders to be religion, as opposed, for example, to hatred or criticism of other groups. However, 17% of discussions were explicitly critical of Shi'a Muslims, and almost as many expressed criticism of apostate or secular Arab governments. Da'wa (Islamic preaching) was found in 15% of discussions. Despite the global Jihad's claim to be fighting an alliance of Crusaders and Zionists (i.e. Christians and Jews), three-quarters of all discussions lack any reference to either group. Of those that do, 24% mention Christians, whereas 9% mention Jews.

The study confirms that forums serve as a clearinghouse for authentic Jihadist content. Over a third (38%) of all discussions refer the reader to other web sites, while 43% of all discussions are for the purpose of sharing links to downloadable documents (e.g. magazines, videos). Half (51%) of all discussions included quotes from Islamic scripture. Religious authorities from the past or present were cited in 29% of the discussions, but only 7% of discussions included any reference to companions of the Prophet Mohammed.

Discussions that included symbols of, or reference to, historical events from the time of the Prophet, presented as a model for activity against non-Muslims today, made up 6% of all discussions. Fatwas, formal and binding religious edicts, were cited in 3% of the sample. In contrast, operational Jihadist leaders were cited in 9% of discussions.

Jihadist forums clearly encourage action, with 37% of all discussions containing explicit or implicit calls to Jihad. A statistically significant increase in the number of entries and unique participants was observed in discussions containing such calls to Jihad, as opposed to discussions that did not include such calls. One fifth of all discussions included an explicit call for more terrorist attacks, while 8% of discussions either called for suicide terrorism or praised those who had committed such acts. Overall, two thirds of all discussions contain some form of call for or encouragement of terrorist attacks. In the context of examining how Jihadists should relate to or deal with non-Muslims, 19% expressed agreement that it is allowed or required to kill them. Despite this focus on obviously illegal acts of political violence, only 1.5% of the discussions contained any expression of concern about surveillance or the presence of spies in the forums.

The discussions also included references to or advice about criminal activity. Computer-related offenses were discussed in 3% of the threads. Of these crimes, illegal distribution of commercial software was observed in 2.2% of discussions, and the related sharing of software serial numbers in 1% of discussions.

Forum discussion participants were judged to be exclusively male in 87% of discussions, and adults in 97% of discussions.

## B. Qualitative findings

Content analysis of the summaries of the discussions shows that they can be grouped into four groups: information dissemination, religious preaching, instruction or training, and social interactions. These groups are all a means towards the fulfillment of three central activity pillars in the terrorist organization: ideological foundation, organizational structure, and operational means. Forum discussions are not only used as means to a broader organizational end, but rather themselves serve as a rallying organizational goal.

Of the four categories, the first, information dissemination, appears to be the largest of them all. The main purpose of discussions in this category is to report on developments and events and to present views and opinions on various topics, often presented as news reports, official press pieces, or publicity articles.

Discussions in the second category, religious dogma, provide justification and support for organizational activities that are mostly presented as religious argumentation. These discussions also include general lifestyle habits and other matters of religious relevance. They are usually led by a religious cleric who gives a speech or sermon, or revolve around such communications.

The third category, training and instruction, offers topical discussions on technical skill building on a variety of subjects that are both related and unrelated to organizational operations. In a discussion, manuals are often referenced and introduced visually as images. These discussions are also sometimes structured as an in-class schooling experience, emulating classroom-teaching styles.

The fourth group, the interpersonal communications category, is the smallest of the four. The main purpose of this group is to converse with other discussants, to share emotions, thoughts, and feelings and to foster a socially based dynamic.

The political-cognitive infrastructure that is constructed through the discussions points to a global world that is radically divided into "believers" and "infidels," a division whose inevitable outcome is the defeat and surrender of one of the parties. This polarization, as the discussions show, transcends continents and surpasses geographical and national borders, as it attempts to undermine and shatter existing frameworks.

Forum discussions construct operational means that emerge from the difficulties and contradictions inherent in the Jihadist activities, and provide resolutions that address the gap between the yearning for the past and the necessity of technological use while striving towards future goals. Moreover, discussions deal with issues of cooperation and coordination of activities that bridge the temporal, geographical, age, language, knowledge, and attitude gaps, with activities that are legal and obligatory in one legal system but which are illegal and unlawful in the other, and with the gap that seems to shrink between the activity and the discussions about it.

The results confirm that terrorist organizations make widespread and varied use of the Internet as a central means of communication and as a tool to promote organizational activities. The content of discussions in Jihadist forums demonstrates how this unique communication strategy shapes, promotes, and coordinates organizational operations.

## V.  Conclusions

### A.   Implications for policy and practice

If, as a matter of policy, it is desirable to shape Jihadist discourse in a way that inhibits acts of terror, the short duration of forum discussions will provide ample opportunity to test and refine messaging strategies, to develop communications objectives and patterns of behavior that allow the agent to be active, and to pursue policy goals while avoiding unnecessary suspicion.

The relationship between what individuals do on a forum and what kind (if any) of terrorist activities they may be involved in is by and large unknown. One way of addressing this question is by introducing interference (or noise). In responding to threats posed by Jihadist web sites, a number of options beyond passive observation present themselves. Forums can be removed from the Internet permanently. The value of intelligence collected from the forums needs to be balanced against the harm done by such virtual communities of extremists. One course of action would be to monitor and infiltrate forums to the extent resources allow, and to remove those which cannot be adequately handled.

In the case of Jihadists on the online forums, violent videos are experienced in a religious/ideological context that provides repeated justifications for terrorist violence, as well as explicit or implicit calls for forum members to engage in acts of terror, including suicide terrorism. For counterterrorism policy and practice, efforts should be made to interdict the production and distribution of Jihadist videos, with special effort focused on removing from the Internet videos that are particularly harmful — those which portray graphic violence.

For policymakers and practitioners alike, an understanding of Islam, Arab/Muslim culture, and Islamic history is a prerequisite. At the same time, it is important not to generalize from Jihadists to all Muslims.

## B.    Implications for further research

The findings regarding degree of participation, and nature of discussions, should be analyzed and compared with the investigative records upon which terrorism prosecutions have been based to identify if, and to what extent, the online activity of actual terrorists is similar to or different from the generally observed behavior of Jihadists online, or to examine the role or extent of online participation in convicted terrorists' pathways to terrorism.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of authenticated external content (files and sites) that are linked to from within forum discussions may assist in identifying the online content that influences Jihadists.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of scriptural quotes in Jihadist discussion forums may yield a clearer picture of what, in particular, Jihadists find important or salient in scripture.

Comparative analysis of forum discussions as a whole with discussions that a) are promoted by forum management or b) attain popularity with forum members (measured by number of readers, rates of response, duration, etc.) may shed light on whether forum administrators have a more pronounced impact on message diffusion than ordinary members have.

Extensive in-depth analysis of Jihadist discussions related to online operational security methods and issues may yield beneficial information for investigators and collectors of

signals intelligence. Similar comparative study should be made on adoption of security measures by the overall Jihadist population and the use of such methods by Jihadists who have been the subject of prosecution.

Given the importance of accurate and reliable translation and interpretation of Jihadist source material in intelligence and law enforcement activities, the issue of whether native Arab Muslims produce less-biased work should be studied.

Discussions of suicide bombings or other martyrdom operations should be analyzed for imagery (still or video) of the aftermath of the attack in question. It is possible that Jihadist forums increase the likelihood of terrorism regardless of the quantity or quality of intelligence gleaned from their pages.

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In terms of the administrative aspects of the project, we owe thanks to members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) for their efforts in the course of approving the protocol of this research. The UIC IRB, which is well versed with approval of social science and medical research, had to wrestle with the details of an unconventional study, with which they had no prior experience. They had to consult external experts, which led to a delay of over half a year in the approval of the protocol and consequently the start of the research. The project encountered other problems at different stages of the work, causing further delays in the start date of the project or its continuation according to schedule. Before the onset of the work, we had to travel overseas to train coders and instruct them about IRB rules and regulations. Later, when two coders had to discontinue their work due to medical or family reasons, we had to identify and train suitable replacement. It took another lengthy period to find coders, travel overseas, train

them and conduct rounds of inter-coder reliability tests before we could resume the research with the same pace as during the first half of the project.

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# Jihad, Crime, and the Internet

## I.  Introduction

### A.  Statement of the Problem

It is well recognized that "cyberspace has become a global conflict arena" (Weimann, 2004) attracting intense activity by terrorist[1] organizations. There is an increasing awareness, reflected in scholarly research and the press, that those who espouse Jihadist ideology (hereafter referred to as Jihadists) make extensive use of the Internet to further their terrorist aims (e.g. Kaplan, Whitelaw & Latif, 2004; Reid et al., 2005; Qin et al., 2005; Sageman, 2004; Schwartz, 2003;Weimann, 2006a). Jihadist web sites serve as an "open university" for the Jihadist virtual community, making the Internet a "global madrassa" (Paz, 2006).

There is also a growing understanding that studying what Jihadists themselves say and do is a superior approach over research that relies on outsider observations (Brachman & McCants, 2006). Experts have also noted that exchanges found on Jihadist web sites tend to provide useful, reliable information (rather than misinformation) on their aims and practices. Analysis of recently declassified al-Qaida communications reveals the communication goals and objectives of the global Jihad and the Jihadist leadership's own understanding of the various target audiences they are seeking to impact (Corman & Schiefelbein, 2006). However, there has been little systematic study of the extent to which rank and file Jihadists engage in the identified activities, the relative importance of various communications to the Jihadists themselves, or the degree to which communications from the Jihadist leadership meet their own goals and objectives.

Social science research on the connection between Jihadists' use of the Internet and various criminal activities, or how the Internet facilitates deviance and unlawful activities (whether related to the creation/operation of web sites[2] or conventional crime[3]) is likewise sparse. The relationship between crime and terrorism has been addressed in a variety of ways: scholars in various social science disciplines have examined the overlap between perpetration of crime and terrorist acts, or offenders' transition from perpetrating conventional crime to engagement in terrorist acts (Hamm, 2007). Others compared individuals involved in crime with those in terrorism in terms of demographic and social characteristics, motives, aims and ideology (Berko, Erez & Globokar, 2010; Grabosky & Stohl, 2010). Some studied the nexus between crime and terrorism on the organizational level, noting similarities and differences between organized crime and terrorist organizations and activities (Grabosky & Stohl, 2010). A recent study has addressed the use of Fatwas (religious rulings) to encourage criminal activities in the furtherance of Jihadist activities (Weimann, 2011). However, the connection between online Jihadist communications and criminal activities, has received little systematic scholarly attention.

This study attempts to fill these gaps. It examines the types, contents and frequency of Jihadist forum communications, and participants' aims, motives, and justifications for engaging in communications online. It also addresses the nexus between terrorism and crime as it emerges from Jihadist communications on the Internet. Examination of discussions in Jihadist chat rooms can provide us with a unique window into the worldview and mindset of members of these organizations, their perceptions, views and organizational processes, their instillation and preservation. Such discussions combine, as is typical of the Internet, elements of mass communications with elements of inter-personal

communications, providing an opportunity to learn about messaging organizations project

outwards, and are particularly instructive on matters that relate to internal communication

patterns, trends, and styles. Online forums and chatrooms also provides a glimpse into how

forum discussions shape organizations, what are the substantive topics discussed, who are,

the individual people participating in these discussions and how they are bound to each

other and to their leaders. Lastly, discussions can highlight how these communication

platforms facilitate organizational operations, particularly given the illicit and subversive

activities promoted by them.

## B.  Literature review

### 1.   *The Internet as research site*

Over the last decade, some researchers have submitted that the Internet has become the

preferred tool to advance the objectives of terrorist organizations, and that use of this tool

has increased dramatically (Conway & McInerney, 2008; Lawrence, 2005; Mathieson, 2005;

Weimann, 2006a). They claim that certain attributes of the Internet—ease of access, fast

flow of information, low cost, user anonymity, vast potential audiences around the globe,

geographically dispersed membership, and absent or ineffective government regulation

and censorship in most countries—have allowed terrorist groups of different ideological

persuasions to use the Internet freely as a mode of communication. The development and

maintenance of web sites is relatively inexpensive, while their capacity to facilitate access

to a large number of users, to offer various cultural resources to promote a group's cause

(speeches, songs, publications, posters, videos), and to enable information exchange is high.

Some experts (e.g. Thomas, 2003; Weimann, 2006a), claim that these attributes of the

Internet make web sites an attractive tool to spread terrorist visions and to engage in

discussions about goals and means to accomplish them. Researchers (e.g. Weimann, 2006a; Weisburd, 2006) have identified hundreds of web sites containing written, visual, and audio content that serve the global Jihad, specific Jihadist terrorist groups, and their sympathizers or supporters.

The Internet has opened new avenues for research, but it has also raised some ethical concerns. The Internet's unique quality of providing ready access to large numbers of people and populations that are either hidden or otherwise unavailable to most researchers (Rhodes et al., 2002) and the relative anonymity and privacy of Internet activity, present various ethical quandaries precisely because the latter encourages a high degree of openness[4] in the population studied (Ibid). The special characteristics and effects of computer mediated communications are such that the Internet will undoubtedly play an increasingly important role in social science research (Ibid), particularly in studying deviant groups and hard to reach populations.

The ability to study extremist speech unobtrusively has been utilized in other instances of violence-espousing radical political movements (e.g. Glaser et al., 2002; and Wojcieszak, 2009). Those and related studies (e.g. Glaser et al., 2002) assume a correlation between the willingness to advocate violence, and the actual perpetration of violence.[5] This assumption is an empirical question that we do not address in the current study, but which deserves scholarly attention.

## 2.   The aims and uses of Jihadist web sites

Some scholars (e.g. Sageman, 2004) argue that Jihadist web sites, as social networks, have helped potential or actual Jihadists in developing and progressively adopting Salafist (or

fundamentalist) activities and attitudes. The Internet is particularly suitable for this

process of identifying, connecting with, and ultimately joining an operational terrorist cell,

thereby furthering the goals and objectives of the global Jihad. The Internet creates a bond

between the individual and a virtual Muslim community (*ummah*), which offers those who

subscribe to it the Salafist vision of the ideal Muslim world — devoid of national divisions,

corruption, exploitation, and persecution. The absence of real-world restraints promotes

the expression of violent and unlawful goals and aspirations *vis-a-vis* the perceived enemies

of the virtual *ummah* (Roy, 2004), with emphasis on combating the "far enemy" (e.g. the

United States and the West) over nationalistic struggles. The Internet is particularly suited

to serve Salafist/Jihadist approaches — delivering a minimalist version of Islam based on a

literal reading of the Quran and the Hadiths (the oral version of the prophet's tradition),

instead of in-depth analysis of centuries of Islamic scholarship and jurisprudence. The use

of the Internet also requires a degree of modern education, thus selecting for those who

have had less exposure to a more nuanced, complete, and thus less fundamentalist Islamic

education (Sageman, 2004; Paz, 2006). This combination suggests that participants are

relatively articulate, and tend to discuss ideology as well as practice, providing a wealth of

information on their focal concerns and on the issues of interest for the current study —

the connection between Internet use, terrorism, and criminal activities. These exchanges

reflect both common and unique interests and circumstances of participants, dependent on

the particular site or its membership.[6]

Jihadist groups, whether they fight the "far" or the "near enemy" (Sageman, 2004), use the

Internet for various expressive and instrumental purposes (Weimann, 2006a). The

particular use depends on the targeted audience, whether it is their supporters and

sympathizers (their "Diaspora"), the international community, or their enemies. Research

has identified the various uses that terrorists in general make of the Internet (see Corman

& Schiefelbein, 2006; Thomas, 2003; Weimann, 2004; 2006a). They include:

- Data searches — because the Internet comprises a rich and versatile digital library,
  it allows members of terrorist groups to collect and examine details about issues
  such as optimal targets, counterterrorism measures employed, etc. Much of what is
  needed for terrorist operations can be garnered from the Internet by using sources
  legally available to the public. Terrorists also access the Internet to identify sites
  that include manuals and handbooks on making chemical and explosive weapons,
  or other issues of interest to terrorists.

- Networking — The Internet allows diverse and geographically dispersed terrorist
  groups and individual members to communicate and coordinate their activities in
  a speedy, inexpensive, and effective manner. The web also expands the variety and
  complexity of information that can be shared, and allows for a decentralized and
  horizontally structured hierarchy of terrorist groups — a preferred organizational
  arrangement of terrorist organizations in recent years.

- Recruitment and mobilization — recruitment is essential for the life of any
  terrorist organization, and terrorists use the Internet to convert web site visitors
  or recruit sympathizers. Recruiters prowl Internet forums and chat rooms,
  identifying and grooming potential recruits. Users who appear enthusiastic and
  well suited to furthering the organization's cause are contacted for participation in
  operations.

- Planning and coordination — the Internet is a valuable tool in developing,
  coordinating, and implementing specific terrorist attacks. Members of terrorist
  organizations routinely communicate via messages sent through public e-mail or
  through chat rooms to design operations and coordinate efforts in carrying out
  planned attacks. For that purpose they can manipulate data or steal information,
  send hidden messages, and put distance between those planning the attack and
  their targets.

- Publicity and propaganda — the Internet provides opportunities for terrorists to get publicity that traditional media does not offer. It helps terrorist organizations shape the content of mass media, whose members often access the Internet to buttress their own communication.

- Psychological war — the Internet is used by terrorists to wage psychological warfare. Terrorists use it to spread disinformation, to make threats intended to instill fear, and to disseminate disturbing visual information or information on cyberterrorism.

- Attacks on other terrorists — the Internet may be used as a virtual battlefield between and within terrorist organizations. Debates between rival groups, or conflicts within the groups themselves, are sometimes played out over their web sites.

- Fundraising — terrorist organizations rely on demographics of members (as these are found in personal information entered in online questionnaires and order forms) to identify potential donors and solicit them for contributions.

Terrorist communication on the Internet is noted to be unstable (Weimann, 2006a). Web sites rise and fall, suddenly reemerge (at times with different formats) change names, or completely cease to operate. In many cases, web sites change their online address but may present the same content or a modified version. This instability is by and large related to counter-terrorism efforts, such as the arrest of key web site personnel or the removal of the site from its server due to protests against the Jihadist nature of the site, although other practical reasons may also exist.

*3.   The presence of Jihadists online*

The variety of Jihadists present on the Internet, the structure of their organizations, and the production of information as it is played out on the Internet, have been the subject of

recent research. Neumann and Rogers (2008), for instance, describe the complexity of the

relationship between actors, organizations, and information/ communication as follows:

> All the actors involved in Islamist militancy are also represented in the Internet.
> This includes the hard core of Al Qaeda, Islamist militant clerics, the 'strategic
> thinkers', and – of course – the 'grassroots Jihadists movement'. Their roles are
> varied and constantly changing, and it would therefore be mistaken to view the
> first three categories as the (active) providers of information and the latter as the
> (passive) consumers. In fact, one of the main difficulties in combating 'Jihadism
> online' is that the grassroots movement plays an important role in producing and
> distributing information, and that it is key to maintaining the decentralised
> structure of 'Jihadism online' more generally (p. 49).

Research has addressed the various forms of communications produced by Jihadists or

disseminated on their web sites. Weisburd (2008a) identifies eight broad categories of

activity by Jihadists online:

- Agitation and propaganda
- Intelligence collection and dissemination
- Communications
- Training
- Indoctrination
- Identity shaping
- Community building
- Crime (in support of terrorist objectives)

A scholarly history of Jihadist forums and their communications has not been written as

yet, but the well-known forum activist and administrator "Mihdhar" penned a first-hand

account of their development (Stenersen, 2009). His account, while featuring some

inaccuracies and lack of comprehensiveness, provides an interesting first-hand account of

the emergence of the forums and their development (which is current to the date of the study). This chronology is described below:

In the mid to late 1990's a number of general Islamist and/or Salafist forums began to operate, including the *Ana al-Muslim* forum.[7] Islamway, a more openly Jihadist forum, began operation around 2000, but was shut down following the September 11 attacks (Stenersen, 2009). New and increasingly Jihadist forums arose, including al-Tajdeed,[8] al-Qala'a, and al-Tawhid. In 2003, the Montada al-Ansar forum began operation, and was closely aligned with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Tawhid wal Jihad organization (Tawhid wal Jihad later merged with al-Qaida to become al-Qaida in Iraq AKA the Islamic State of Iraq) (Stenersen, 2009). This forum was central to a network of al-Qaida–linked forums and sites concentrated on a single server in a facility in Malaysia. The forum and all the other sites on this server were removed from the Internet by the Malaysian government following the release of the video of the murder of American hostage Nicholas Berg. Montada al-Ansar reappeared online intermittently before ceasing operation altogether sometime in 2005, to be replaced by the al-Ekhlaas forum and the other sites in this study (Stenersen, 2009).

## 4.  *Forums as a center for terrorist activity online*

Forums serve as the hub of Jihadist activity online, forming dense networks of sites very similar to networks of forums used by other terrorist organizations (cf. Celebi's 2006 study of the network of web sites of the PKK). Forums are clearinghouses for information from conflict zones, venues for discussion and debate, and the places to find referrals to other Jihadist web sites of good repute (Neumann & Rogers, 2008). A study of the media operations of the insurgency in Iraq (Kimmage & Ridalfo, 2007)[9] notes the effective use of existing Jihadist forums in this context.

Forums are by far the most popular and widespread means of delivering insurgent media products. Forums allow participants to post messages to which other participants can add their responses, making them a lively platform for disseminating insurgent media products and discussing insurgent activity. It should be noted that while discussions sometimes touch on strategy and tactics, participants are aware that forums are a subject of interest for intelligence agencies and researchers, and they generally avoid mentioning operational specifics. Most of the forums listed below are Jihadists and pro-Al-Qaeda in their general outlook, although each one has its own focus and flavor. The list is representative but far from exhaustive. All of the forums are in Arabic unless otherwise noted (p. 53).

The Iraqi insurgent groups were using the forums for the same purpose as was al-Qaida and its supporters (Kimmage, 2008). The forums as clearinghouses perform a number of important functions, including but not limited to the following:

- Branding, through the association of content with organization-specific logos and banners
- Authentication, by assuring that messages from terrorist organizations are in fact from those organizations
- Message discipline, in support of the objective of promoting Salafiya/Jihadiya and maintaining focus on the enemy of choice, whomever that may be at the time (e.g. the United States)
- Efficiency, through the near-simultaneous release of messages across multiple trusted forums, from which they can be re-distributed. (Majority & Minority Staff, 2008, p. 6)

A review of Jihadist use of the Internet conducted by the Netherlands' National Counter-Terrorism Bureau (NCTb, 2007) found additional uses of the forums, including promotion of and instruction in the techniques of eJihad. Discussions were reported regarding methods for attacking critical infrastructure (e.g. SCADA systems), in addition to the

distribution of instructions regarding the manufacture of conventional and unconventional weapons. Intelligence regarding perceived enemies of the Jihad and about counter-terrorism activities were collected and disseminated through the forums. Explicit appeals for funds were only observed in cases of humanitarian relief efforts (Ibid.).

As the al-Qaida–associated al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen in Somalia has adopted views and objectives better in keeping with al-Qaida's global agenda, the forums and various al-Qaida supporting media organizations active on the forums have increased their efforts on behalf of the group and its struggle. It is common for supporters of global Jihad to ask publicly on forums for guidance regarding how to travel to a particular zone of conflict and join an active Jihadist organization. Equally common is the quick response from others on the forum, reminding all concerned that such discussions should not be held in the open forum. What is unusual is to gain access to the private messages exchanged between forum members about this subject. Through a series of technical mishaps, the complete database of a prominent Jihadist forum (Ansar al-Mujahideen-Arabic) became available for download in December of 2008, and copies were acquired by a number of researchers. The following discussion was reported[10]:

> In private messages exchanged over the "Ansar al-Mujahideen" discussion forum in late 2008, user "Abu Aisha" wrote to user "Nasruddin al-Tamimi", "*Recently, a brother in the* [Arabian] *Gulf informed me that he is going to Somalia with one of the brothers from outside, but I am still unsure whether this news is true, and is there really a way in?*" Al-Tamimi replied:
>
> "*My dear brother, I used to think you were from Somalia—I beg you to contact the brother and make sure about the migration… Do you know this brother well? I can arrange with one of the brothers but I don't know this brother well, and I don't want*

*to throw away what I have built without some reassurance and confidence. I am by nature very careful in dealing with the issue of security, and I don't speak about these subjects until I am certain… Brother, just as a reminder, I know one of the Somali brothers who I met abroad, and this brother resides in the city of Medina* [in Saudi Arabia]—*he can transport the brothers to Somalia! And since you are a resident of Medina, I'll send you the brother's name and his description so you can ask him for his phone number, and so I can call him, and Allah willing, he will assist us."*

Upon receiving the message from Nasruddin al-Tamimi, Abu Ayesha wrote back, "*My brother, I am in contact with that person, but until now, there has been only talk… Brother, please know that I wouldn't dare go and speak with you about this subject---but because my heart is so filled with sorrow, the pain of being away from Somalia is killing me, and my feelings of warmth toward you—I have chosen to speak with you about it. And I give you another piece of information that I am from the Maghreb, meaning from* [North] *Africa, and the distance between me and Somalia isn't easy. I made preparations once before with one of the other brothers, but Allah chose a different fate for us."* (Kohlmann, 2009: 36)

The Global Islamic Media Front, a transnational network of supporters of the Jihad unaffiliated with any particular terrorist organization, has a history of intervening in support of terrorist organizations that cannot, or have yet to, establish their own media outlet. They did so in the case of al-Shabaab. Concurrent with an attempt by al-Shabaab to operate their own web site, GIMF produced movies and communiqués in Arabic and English using al-Shabaab–supplied raw video and Somali text (Ibid.). GIMF activists — whose activities required the approval and assistance of the forum administrators — then distributed this material through the forums. The final products were co-branded by al-Shabaab and GIMF. The forums also served as a venue for interaction between the central leadership of al-Qaida on the one hand, and al-Shabaab on the other, as the two moved

closer to each other beginning no later that July of 2006 (Ibid.) A July 1, 2006, audio

message from Osama bin Laden was prepared by al-Qaida Center's media production unit

as-Sahab. In it, bin Laden embraced the Somali Jihad as part of al-Qaida's global struggle.

His message was seconded later in the same year by al-Qaida in Iraq, with the latter going

so far as to promise to help create an "al-Qaida Brigade in the Horn of Africa" (Ibid.) These

messages, together with statements from al-Shabaab and related discussions by the

Jihadist rank-and-file, all occurred within the forums that were the subject of this study.

The Internet in general, and forums in particular, have been noted (e.g. RAND, 2009) as a

venue for meeting and social interaction that is at least as important for contemporary

Jihadists as mosques or prisons. The forums are said to enable a particularly egalitarian

communal environment that is fundamentally empowering for newcomers to the Jihad

(RAND, 2009; Sageman, 2008). This environment also provides a market for terrorist

recruiters or facilitators, who have been observed reaching out to particularly enthusiastic

forum activists with the aim of attracting those activists to zones of conflict such as Iraq

(RAND, 2009; Curiel, 2005; Hegghammer, 2007). Neumann and Rogers (2008) ascribe the

Jihadist adoption of forums to a response by second or third generation Muslim youth to

their diaspora community's focus on older community members, and the weakening of the

"social glue" of formal and informal social ties in Muslim communities generally.

*5.   Analyses and assessments of Jihadist content online*

Jihadist preaching and indoctrination (*da'wa*) formerly relied on local preachers who

interacted with prospective recruits one-on-one or in small group settings (AIVD, 2004).

Increasingly, and as a direct result of the Internet, this activity has become autonomous,

with the significance and influence of individual preachers somewhat diminished. Instead,

individuals and groups of aspiring Jihadists gather online in forums and progressively indoctrinate and radicalize each other (AIVD, 2004). An additional factor in the change of venue is that forums allow Jihadists to select from the works of various preachers only those messages that promote Jihad and express support for the mujahideen. Forums have been created specifically in response to less violent messages put out by Islamist clerics (Brandon, 2008). Indeed, by offering the opportunity for geographically disparate individuals to come together, the Internet has become the primary venue for radicalization in the United States and Great Britain, as demonstrated by the role the Internet played in 117 cases examined by Gartenstein-Ross & Grossman (2009).

Some counter-terrorism investigators and analysts have noted that as individuals and groups become increasingly radicalized, and they begin to mobilize in order to act on the ideological perspective they have adopted, their use of Jihadist web sites changes (Majority & Minority Staff, 2008, citing Silber & Bhatt/NYPD Intel., 2007).[11] Initially, the sites provide access to Jihadist ideology and like-minded seekers. Over time people begin to publicize and spread Jihadist media rather than merely consume it, using forums to accelerate the process of radicalization. Finally the sites become repositories for tactical information about terrorist tradecraft, target identification, and attack justification (Majority & Minority Staff, 2008).

A definition of ideology that lends itself particularly well to studies of online content has been offered by Trethewey et al. (2009). They define ideology as "…a system of ideas about how things are or ought to be that circulates in social discourse." According to these authors, ideology has four functions:

- Naturalizing: making ideas take on the character of *given facts.*

- Obscuring: glossing over contradictions and making otherwise disparate ideas appear to be part of a coherent system.
- Universalizing: presenting the views and objectives of the Jihadist leadership as being in the interest of the followers.
- Structuring: creating social structures that are consistent with the ideology and reproduce it in everyday life.

A study of Malaysian and Indonesian Jihadist sites (Bergin et al., 2009) demonstrates that the content of such sites largely mirrors that which is found in Arabic-language sites. The topics of discussions include: official communications (e.g. from al-Qaida and Jemaah Islamiyyah), articles claiming that Muslims are under attack (and thus are acting defensively), celebration of victories, dissemination of conspiracy theories, anger toward the West and apostate Muslim governments, presentation of a highly selective set of Islamic doctrines, along with bomb-making instructions and firearms manuals (Ibid.).

Finally, any analysis of Jihadist discourse must be guided by an understanding of the way in which the history of Islam, particularly the stories surrounding the life of the Prophet Mohammed and his Companions, provides a common frame of reference and serves as a code (Weisburd, 2009a). For example, in his book *The Management of Savagery*, al-Qaida theoretician Abu Bakr Naji recounts an exchange between himself and a comrade:

> …One of the brothers said to me at that time: "This is not the way that will take us to our goals. Assuming that we get rid of the apostate regimes today, who will take over the ministry of agriculture, trade, economics, etc.?"

> I automatically said to him: "Abu Sufyan, `Ikrama, and so forth." (p. 63[147])[12]

Abu Sufyan and `Ikrama are two individuals who played roles in the early history of Islam. Both were initially enemies of Mohammed who later came to be among his most loyal

followers. In the context of Naji's conversation, the message is that the people who will take

over the government ministries will be the same people who are now the enemies of the

Jihadists, but who will come over to the side of the mujahideen when the latter achieve

victory (Ibid.).

*6.   The presence of al-Qaida leadership online*

The leadership of al-Qaida and affiliated groups maintains an active presence on Jihadist

web sites, to such an extent that former Jihad activist turned critic Dr. Fadl has dubbed

them "Internet heroes" (Al-Zawahiri, 2008). For instance, despite surveillance by the

United States and its allies, al-Qaida's second in command, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, makes

routine use of the Internet and follows discussions occurring on Jihadist forums (Ibid.). The

degree to which Internet activism is seen as integral to the overall struggle can be seen in

Zawahiri's description of al-Qaida ideologue Sheikh Atiyatallah. Prior to recounting the

Sheikh's many years of involvement in real world conflicts in North Africa and Afghanistan,

Zawahiri characterizes Atiyatallah as "...An active and mujahid scholar who stood in the

trenches and is an active advocate of the faith on the Internet." (Ibid. p. 69). Zawahiri does

not simply observe what others are doing; he solicited questions from the Jihadist rank-

and-file via the forums that are included in the current study and used those questions to

hone al-Qaida's messaging and guide discussion in a direction that suited his objectives

(Brachman et al., 2008).[13]

Zawahiri is not alone among leading Jihadists with an active presence online. Most notable

is former al-Qaida training camp instructor and leading ideologue Abu Musab al-Suri AKA

Setmariam Nasser (Cruickshank & Ali, 2007). While al-Suri played an important role in

training and recruiting leading terrorists such as Amer Azizi (who is wanted in connection

with the Madrid train bombings) and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (the founder of Tawhid wal Jihad and later of al-Qaida in Iraq), his greatest impact came later, via the Internet (Ibid.). His books, articles, and videos of his pre-9/11 lectures are a staple of Jihadist web sites, despite his online career being cut short by his capture in Pakistan and subsequent imprisonment in Syria.

Yusuf al-Ayerri — another first-generation al-Qaida activist and veteran of the Afghan Jihad — also made extensive use of the Internet in the post-9/11 period. Like al-Suri, al-Ayerri's works enjoy broad circulation via Jihadist forums and inspire new generations of fighters (Brandon, 2008). Al-Suri and al-Ayerri in fact shared a common webmaster who not only ran web sites for them, but secured hosting services for those sites by hijacking other web sites. Al-Ayerri remains alive in the hearts and minds of the Jihadist rank-and-file despite his death in a gunfight with Saudi Arabian security forces in 2003.

The centrality of Jihadist forums as the venue for post-9/11 strategic debates among leaders of the movement has been highlighted by researchers of Jihad activities (Brooke, 2008), who also observed that strategic directives are distributed to the Jihadist faithful primarily through Jihadist web sites (Jordan et al., 2008). That communication between the Jihad leadership and membership is two-way is borne out in al-Qaida leader Abu Yahya al-Libi's (2009) work *Guidance on the Ruling of the Muslim Spy* where he cites a question asked on a forum. His work was subsequently distributed through the forums.

The case of former al-Qaida camp trainer Oussama Kassir highlights the role that the Internet plays in Jihadist activism. His real-world involvement in terrorist activities came first, and only later did he become active online. Operating as the Islamic Media Center, Kassir created — and used the forums to disseminate — high quality terrorist training

manuals in addition to conspiring to create an al-Qaida training camp in the United States after 9/11, a crime for which he is currently imprisoned. Indeed, the cases of Kassir, al-Ayerri, al-Suri and others demonstrate that there need not be a linear progression from online to offline Jihadist activism. Rather, the Internet is another conflict zone — one that allows established Jihadists to remain active, despite being geographically isolated from real world battlefields.

A recent study by Weimann (2011) addressed the postings of Fatwas (religious decrees) that legitimize the use of criminal practices by Jihadists. It document, for instance, that the American-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki posted an online Fatwa on stealing money from the West for the purpose of financing Jihad. In a Fatwa posted on January 16, 2011, as the lead article of the fourth issue of *Inspire*, al-Qaida's English-language online magazine, Al-Awlaki encourages Jihadists living in the West to assist the financing of Jihad-related activities through any means possible, including theft, embezzlement and seizure of property. In his article titled "The Ruling on Dispossessing the Disbelievers' Wealth in Dar al-Harb [Land of War]," al-Awlaki argued that it is just to take away the wealth of the enemy through deception or force, and urged Muslims to use the stolen money to fund Jihad. He ordered the targeting of government-owned property, banks, global corporations, and "wealth belonging to disbelievers with known animosity towards Muslims." Al-Awlaki argues that Muslims living in the West are not bound by any laws or contracts that prohibit them from harming their countries of residence: "It is the consensus of our scholars that the property of the disbelievers in Dar al-Harb is halal [permissible] for the Muslims and is a legitimate target for the mujahidin."

Cyber terrorism and attacks on web sites were likewise authorized by online Fatwas. In October 2008, a Fatwa was published on the web site of the Islamist Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement. It declared that attacking American and Israeli web sites by hacking and sabotage is allowed under Islamic law and is a form of Jihad or holy war, as decreed by top Muslim scholars. The Fatwa was issued by a committee from the highest authority in Sunni Islam, Egypt's Al-Azhar University in Cairo. "This is considered a type of lawful Jihad that helps Islam by paralyzing the information systems used by our enemies for their evil aims," said the Fatwa. In sum, Jihadist web sites carry orders, permissions, or justifications sanctioned by religious authorities to perpetrate a variety of crimes against the West, its people, financial institutions, web sites or organizations (Weimann, 2011).

## 7.   eJihad/Media Jihad

Writing in *Jihad Recollections #2* (Irhabi, 2009), a short-lived Jihadist magazine published in the United States, the pseudonymous Savvy Irhabi provided an activist's perspective on the perceived value of online work on behalf of al-Qaida. In his view, the world is coming over to the Jihadist view of events and is doing so because of the media Jihad. He notes the centrality of the forums in those efforts, and as further evidence of their effectiveness cites alleged U.S. government activities targeting the forums. Revealing an assumption that forums are as important to the general population as they are to Jihadists, he proposes countering U.S. government efforts against the forums by flooding non-Jihadist forums with al-Qaida propaganda materials (Ibid.).

A guiding principle of Jihadist activism online finds religious expression in a quote from the Quran cited by Palestinian Jihadist recruiter Abdullah Azzam in his work *Defense of Muslim Land*, (1979, p. 39):

Fourth Question:

Does one fight alone if the rest stay behind?

Yes he fights alone because Allah the Almighty the Majestic revealed these words to
His Prophet (saw): *"Then fight (O Mohammed s.a.w.) in the cause of Allah, your are
not tasked (held responsible) except for yourself, and incite the believers (to fight
along with you) it may be that Allah restrain the evil might of the disbelievers. And
Allah is stronger in might and stronger in punishing."*

This verse orders the Messenger (saw) in two obligations:

1- Fight, even if alone.

2- Incite the believers.

The mission of Jihadist forum activists, according to this source, is to incite each other to
perpetrate acts of terrorist violence.

Yemeni-American al-Qaida leader Anwar al-Awlaki, in his work *44 Ways to Support Jihad*,
explicitly calls on activists to establish discussion forums as an important way to contribute
to the struggle. Al-Zawahiri (2008) takes obvious pleasure in the success that al-Qaida has
had in making use of a technology created by his enemies, citing the comments of the CIA's
Michael Scheuer. Al-Suri coined the phrase "global Islamic resistance movement"
(Brachman & McCants, 2006) and discussed the importance that propaganda and
propagandists would play in that movement.

The Internet facilitates the communications objectives of extremists, and the posting and
re-posting of Jihadist media gives a kind of immortality to imprisoned and deceased leaders
of the global Jihad (Cornish et al., 2009). The content of Jihadist media serves as a set of

instructions that shape, frame, and guide behavior (Harrow, 2008). The scope of eJihad

extends beyond propaganda to include attacking "enemy" web sites, and the use of

encryption programs to assist Jihadists in securing their communications and evading

capture (Open Source Center, 2008a & 2008b).

*8.   Exposure to violence/conditioning*

The research on exposure to violence and associated effects suggests theoretical

frameworks and concepts that address exposure to violence and the mechanisms by which

exposure to violence helps to shape behavior (Weisburd, 2008a). They include:

- Imitation and observational learning
- Desensitization and arousal
- Duration of effects and reinforcement of behaviors
- Uses and gratifications
- Presence and empathy

According to Weisburd (Ibid.), of the discussions collected in the first year of the current

study, 9% had been created for the purpose of distributing videos, and roughly 50% of

those videos included explicit portrayals of violence. Similar rates of violence were found in

a follow-up study of Jihadist videos on YouTube (Weisburd, 2009b).

The importance Jihadists place on such portrayals of violence is provided by Savvy Irhabi,

who criticized the videos put out by the Chechen mujahideen. He complained that these

videos often feature nothing more than scenes of life in camp, such as catching fish in a

stream, or cooking over a fire. Savvy Irhabi states:

"...It is always good to see what 'normal life' is like for the Mujahideen, but it has
come to the point where the media that comes out from there focuses on this more

than the fighting itself. In fact, many brothers have openly expressed their disapproval of the Mujahideen in Chechnya for posing in both group and individual pictures and videos." (Irhabi, 2009, p. 57).

In other words, terrorist movements must maintain a minimum level of violence in order to remain relevant. As Weisburd (2008b) noted, Jihadist videos portraying violence that were put into circulation in 2006-2007 had within a year vanished, requiring new acts of terrorism that could be filmed and turned into new videos in order to maintain and reinforce this key element of Jihadist culture.

In addition to video portrayals of terrorist violence, imagery of violence perpetrated against the Muslim community is vital to maintaining a key part of the Jihadist narrative, namely, that their community is under attack and thus their Jihad is fundamentally defensive in nature (RAND, 2009, citing Speckhard & Ahmedova, 2006; Silke, 2008; Obaid & Cordesman, 2005; Hegghammer, 2006, 2007; and Sageman, 2008). Regardless of who is the perpetrator and who the victim of the violence portrayed, the reminder of death that such portrayals provide (i.e. mortality salience) can encourage support for, and a willingness to participate in, martyrdom operations, or suicide terrorism (Pyszczynski et al., 2006).

*9.  Training and tradecraft*

The term "training" is defined broadly, and includes ideological indoctrination and psychological conditioning in addition to terrorist tradecraft (Celebi, 2006). The center of terrorist training online has been noted as a development of the post-9/11 era. Celebi (2006) identifies five steps in the terrorist training process, most of which are likely to be observed on Jihadist forums. These include:

1. Continuous propaganda to prepare candidates for militancy
2. Selective recruitment
3. Manipulation of the individual's psychological and physical environment
4. Enabling recruit identification with the group
5. Assigning the trainee to a real target to prove his commitment and maturity at the end of the training process.

Researchers also noted the widespread availability of training materials, online interactive training programs (Cornish et al., 2009), and importantly, the limits of such training — that their availability is predicated on organizations than can provide additional and more advanced training (Jordan et al., 2008). Stenersen (2008) provides further evidence of the frequently poor quality of terrorist training materials found on Jihadist websites. The weakness of online terrorist training is rooted at least in part in the lack of direct supervision and regular evaluations of students, with the most dramatic issues being seen in the manufacture and use of explosives, where student failure can result in severe consequences (Weisburd, 2009a). Such failure, however, is by no means limited to virtual training camps, as the May 1, 2010, attempted car bombing in New York City's Times Square demonstrates. Kenney (2010) examines the limitations of online training through the application of the concepts of *mētis* and *technē* (Ibid). *Technē*, or technical knowledge, is available on Jihadist forums, but will be found on many other sites as well (Ibid). *Mētis*, practical knowledge or experience, is not something that can be readily acquired in a virtual setting (Ibid). Bale (2009) addresses this issue in his examination of the likelihood of IED *mētis* and *technē* being effectively transferred from the war zones where they have been developed (e.g. Iraq) to Western Europe. His conclusion is that despite the training information and materials found on the Internet, such efforts will be less than effective.

Missing from discussions of online terrorism training is the role that more ordinary online activism may play in providing a kind of *mētis* that may prepare an aspiring terrorist for activities in the physical world. Membership in a Jihadist forum, let alone active participation in discussions, may well serve as a pretext for launching an investigation targeting the activist. Production, distribution, and simple possession of Jihadist propaganda, ideological tracts, or training manuals, may all be illegal. A Jihadist who can engage in these activities and avoid detection is gaining both valuable experience as well being conditioned to better operate under stress.

While the efficacy of online training for terrorism should not be overestimated, there can be no doubt that many Jihadists seek out training materials on the Internet in the course of preparing attacks. The case of United States v Shnewer et al. (2008) documents how the Ft. Dix Six sought out, downloaded, and viewed Jihadist decapitation videos in the course of preparing their attack on the U.S. military base.[14] In United States v Amawi et al. (2008), the plotters downloaded numerous training videos and related documents from Jihadist forums and went so far as to register one of themselves in an online terrorism training course then being offered on one of the sites. Three individuals were arrested and subsequently convicted in November 2007 of planning to carry out a terrorist attack in Denmark. They had selected a mix of fertilizer- and peroxide-based explosives following extensive online research regarding the making of improvised explosives (Europol, 2008). Online training materials were used extensively by two Jihadists arrested in Italy for planning attacks on a broad range of Italian government and military targets in and around the city of Milan (Gartenstein-Ross et al., 2009). Each download of such material is an event that occurs on the public Internet and may be detected. Every such document found in the

possession of a terrorism suspect can be used to demonstrate to judge and jury the accused's intentions. As is the case with much of Jihadist use of the Internet, providing online training resources is likely to be of greater assistance to counterterrorists than to terrorists.

## 10.  *Social networks and computer mediated communications (CMC) effects*

The Internet has enabled the development of a broad range of virtual communities, including those associated with deviant and aberrant behaviors (Durkin, Forsyth & Quinn, 2006). These communities serve to introduce newcomers to the particular form of rule breaking while reinforcing the behavior among more experienced members (Ibid). Whether involvement in such communities actually mitigates the likelihood of the behavior through some sort of catharsis, or makes future deviant behavior more likely, is still an open question (Ibid). It seems reasonable to argue that involvement in a virtual community of terrorism supporters, while it may enable future violent activism, is not always necessary and certainly is not sufficient to result in violence. In any case, evidence of a cathartic effect is lacking. On the other hand, while intense online activism may facilitate involvement in real-world terrorist violence, it also leads to greater scrutiny from law enforcement and intelligence agencies, thus enabling intervention.

The process by which individuals come to be involved in violent Jihadist activism is often described by the term *radicalization*. It has been debated whether online radicalization even occurs, and if so, to what extent (Stevens & Neumann, 2009; Bergin et al., 2009). In reviewing the debate, Cheong (2009) finds the root of the conflict in both sides' failure to account for known effects of computer mediated communications. CMC effects provide the missing link, the answer to the question of exactly *how* Internet radicalization happens.

Issues that need to be considered for understanding online radicalization include the following: diffusion of messages over time and across social networks (both online and offline), the interplay between the rapid development of social intimacy online and the spread of radical ideas, and the tendency of both online radicalization and online socialization to be reinforced by face-to-face interaction (Ibid).

Whether virtual communities fuel radicalization or merely provide a venue for the already-radicalized to gather, there appears to be a kind of virtual geographic effect. Some online communities appear to spawn criminal, violent, or other deviant behaviors with regularity, while others do not (Cohen-Almagor & Haleva-Amir, 2008); the reasons for this selective success, however, remain unclear. Even if CMC effects explain *how* things occur, the question remains as to *why* they occur or why they are linked to some virtual communities more than others, all other factors being equal. Further insight regarding possible CMC effects on extremism, and non-normative behaviors more generally, is provided by Brignall & Van Valey (2005): Effects that are likely to encourage radicalization include the ability to choose who is (or is not) a part of the community, resulting in a fairly homogenous view of the world and an absence of contrary opinions. The egalitarian nature of virtual communities frees the members from social controls, creating space for non-normative behaviors and ideas. (Ibid).

One aspect of CMC that does not appear to apply in this instance is the lack of visual clues and the resulting tendency to rapidly exacerbate tensions among community members (Brignall & Van Valey, 2005). The use of formal, ritualized, and religion-based language is commonly observed among Jihadists online, and likely mitigates some of the more negative CMC effects. Forum members routinely address each other as "Brother," offer religious

blessings to those with whom they are conversing, and assume their brethren have the best of intentions.

While debate over the mechanics of online radicalization continues, for practitioners the effects of computer mediated communications and the role of Jihadist forums in enabling terrorism are increasingly clear (Mueller, 2009). In Congressional testimony, FBI Director Robert Mueller outlined how Jihadist forums, including at least one site that is part of this research, had facilitated the development of multiple interlinked and cooperating cells of Jihadists planning multiple terrorist attacks in the United States, Canada, and Europe, and seeking terrorist training in Pakistan (Ibid). CMC effects research paints a picture of how real-world and online relationships strengthen and reinforce each other — a situation that might be positive were it not for the destructive intention of this population.

While in theory the Internet enables communications globally and allows for the development of long-distance relationships, in practice the most gain is seen in local relationships (Goldenberg & Levy, 2009). Existing social ties are strengthened more than new ties are formed, and real-world proximity appears to be a determining factor in the development of online ties. To the extent that new relationships do develop online, paradoxical CMC effects help to set those relationships on a firm foundation (Bargh et al., 2002). The seeming anonymity of Internet communications encourages self-disclosure that in turn creates a sense of trust and intimacy (Ibid). Studies of online communities (McKenna et al., 2002) have found that, to the extent they were able to express their "true selves" online, users were able to form close online relationships, and those relationships generally moved offline and remained strong even after some years. Experiments revealed that subjects who were introduced to each other online first liked each other more than

those subjects whose first interaction was face-to-face (McKenna et al., 2002). This outcome has been ascribed to a negative association between social anxiety and conversational satisfaction, with increased self-disclosure and reduced relational uncertainty contributing to the overall effect (High & Caplan, 2009).

These online processes appear to make a significant impact on people's real world lives (McKenna & Bargh, 2009) and in the present context would seem to contribute to real world terrorist activity following from online activism and socialization. Otherwise positive effects of online interaction seem more problematic in the context of communities that openly identify with terrorist violence. These include perceived anonymity, reduced importance of physical appearance and distance, and greater control over the time and pace of communications (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). Interestingly, McKenna & West (2005) studied CMC effects in online religious communities and found that the resulting more-positive view of others extended only to others within the virtual community. And while we find no evidence to support a catharsis hypothesis in regard to the relationship between online and real world activism, we note that Wojcieszak (2009) looked at environmental and far-right extremist communities online and found that involvement in real-world activism is primarily predicted by online involvement in such communities of believers.

## 11. *Virtuality and presence: Internet as space or place*

The role of virtual communities in enabling violence and the experience community members have of inhabiting such space lies somewhere between computer mediated communications effects on the one side and operational terrorist activity on the other. Cohen-Almagor & Haleva-Amir's (2008) study of an online vampire cult community illustrates a situation analogous to what we see on the prominent Jihadist forums. As

opposed to other sites dedicated to vampire and Goth subcultures, this particular site (VampireFreaks) served as virtual home for multiple groups of individuals who ultimately committed a series of murders, reaching a crescendo in 2006 with multiple cases of murder, rape, and arson (Ibid). In each case individuals and small groups found a safe space online to express their identity and their desire to perpetrate violence prior to committing particular crimes.

In the case of Jihadists, Barlow (2009) echoes McLuhan's argument that the medium — in this instance, Jihadist forums — is more important than the specific messages communicated via that medium. The forums have become virtual safe-havens where plots are hatched, information is collected, and arrangements are made (Lamb, 2008; Innes, 2009; Exum, 2009). Brachman and McCants (2006) root this process in a post-9/11 adaptation to a much more hostile real-world operating environment. While it is reasonable to question if virtual communities can supplant real-world opportunities to meet and interact, they certainly are among the venues available to Jihadists, and are noted as being on equal footing with such spaces as prisons, schools, sports clubs, bookstores, and barbershops (Precht, 2007, Hamm, 2009). Innes (2009) makes the point that these virtual spaces are social constructs: the product not of technology but of people who make use of technology, with clear implications for counter-terrorist activity.

Nicovitch, Boller, and Cornwell (2006) identify the means by which people — and young men especially — are drawn into a virtual environment and come to feel that they are sharing a common virtual space. The researchers see men as experiencing a sense of presence in the virtual space through their interaction with that space while women tend to connect with the space through observation and empathy. This may be significant given

the interactive nature of Jihadist forums and the predominance of young men in the Jihadi population.

## 12. Recruitment, operations, and cases

The literature is replete with references to Internet use by Jihadists for purposes of recruitment, facilitation, planning, and pre-operational collecting of information related to targets and tradecraft. Neumann and Rogers (2008) identify two distinct elements of Internet recruitment to Jihad: Internet-supported recruitment and virtual self-recruitment. Cornish et al. (2009) reports on the consensus opinion among both Western and Middle Eastern intelligence services regarding the importance and centrality of the Internet, and in particular the forums, for indoctrination, recruitment and radicalization. A similar opinion is held by al-Qaida, which has used the forums to distribute a manual titled "The Art of Recruitment" to empower individual Jihadists to serve as al-Qaida recruiters (Ibid).

In bombing cases in which the perpetrators were identified, such as the Casablanca bombings of 2003 and the Madrid bombings of 2004, investigations revealed that they have acquired their tradecraft knowledge online (Kalpakian, 2005; Weisburd, 2009a). The Madrid plotters blew themselves up when confronted by Spanish police, but a hard disk drive and a USB memory stick survived. The results of the forensic analysis were released to the public by the Madrid court that investigated the incident (Weisburd, 2009a). Analysts identified 49 web sites visited by the Madrid cell. The list included the prominent al-Qaida supporting forums of the period; the major points of distribution for al-Qaida propaganda and communiqués; the sites of prominent Salafist/Jihadist ideologues; and official sites of a number of Islamic extremist or terrorist organizations including Hamas,

al-Muhajiroun, the Taliban, Soldiers of Shareeah, and others. Weisburd's (2009a) analysis

of the documents collected by the Madrid bombers found four broad classes of material:

- Ideological/Theological 75%
- Agitation/Propaganda 15%
- Terrorist Tradecraft 8%
- Pornography and Miscellaneous 2%

Many of the ideological or theological documents acquired by the Madrid bombers dealt

with issues related to Jihad and justifications for the use of violence. Most of the files

downloaded were written by just a few contemporary and historical individuals including

`Abd al-Qadir, Abu Qatada al-Filistini, Ibn Taymiyya, `Abd Allah `Azzam, Abu Basir al-

Tartusi, Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi, and Sayyid Qutb. The terrorist tradecraft files dealt

mostly with the preparation and/or use of explosives (Ibid). Jordan and Torres Soriano

(2007) found a substantially similar variety of material, albeit broken down into a few

more categories:

- *Adoctrinamiento ideológico* (ideological indoctrination)
- *Refuerzo emocional* (emotional reinforcement)
- *Adiestramiento* (training)
- *Obtención de información operative* (Obtaining operational information)
- *Comunicación privada* (private communication)
- *Comunicación pública* (public communication)
- *Seguimiento del impacto mediático* (Monitoring the media impact)

Multi-national investigations into terrorist cells linked to Jihadist forum activists Aabid

Khan and Younis Tsouli that preceded the Jordan and Torres Soriano (2007) study were

instrumental in facilitating the operations. Khan and Tsouli coordinated the efforts of self-

organizing terrorist cells in multiple countries as they developed plans for various terrorist attacks, using Jihadist forums that they operated — namely at-Tibyan (Khan) and al-Ansar (Tsouli) (Gartenstein-Ross et al., 2009; Kohlmann, 2008; Weisburd, unpublished). Both were active on multiple Jihadist forums: Khan was focusing on English language sites, scouting for recruits to send for training in Pakistan, while Tsouli was on Arabic language sites, collecting and disseminating intelligence and al-Qaida propaganda videos, and doing other work for al-Qaida in Iraq and al-Qaida's central leadership (Ibid). Tsouli was also involved in the establishment and operation of the al-Ekhlaas forum that features prominently in our collected data (Weisburd, unpublished).

Tsouli and two co-conspirators funded their online work for al-Qaida through large-scale credit card fraud and used the al-Ekhlaas forum as a collection point for username and password data they and recruits from the al-Ekhlaas forum stole from victims' computers (Ibid). Tsouli also recruited potential suicide bombers, whom he referred to al-Qaida in Iraq (Kohlmann, 2008) and conspired with American al-Qaida activist Syed Haris Ahmed to lay the foundation for an attack in the United States (United States v Syed Haris Ahmed, 2009). These plans were disrupted when Tsouli, known online as *Irhabi007* (translated as Terrorist007), was arrested by British authorities after the disruption of a suicide bombing in Sarajevo.

The case of Malika el-Aroud, the widow of the al-Qaida assassin who killed Afghan Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud immediately prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001, provides another example of the links between online forum activism and real world terrorist activity. Following to the death of her husband, el-Aroud moved to Europe and married al-Qaida activist Moaz Garsalloui (Gartenstein-Ross et al., 2009).

Together they operated the first Arabic and then French-language Jihadist forums.[15] Ultimately Garsalloui fled Europe for the northwest of Pakistan, while el-Aroud settled in Brussels. In 2008 she and a dozen associates were arrested by Belgium authorities who connected them to a planned suicide bombing in Belgium, the facilitation of travel for suicide bombers heading to Iraq, and the promotion of Jihadist terrorism on the *Minbar* forum (Ibid, Weisburd, unpublished)

Jihadist forums have enabled al-Qaida to make inroads in Israel and the Palestinian territories — areas previously dominated by the Hamas organization. With assistance and guidance from Jihadist forum activists and administrators, Israeli al-Qaida volunteers collected information for future attacks on Israeli civilian and military targets, in addition to plotting the assassination of then U.S. President George W. Bush (MLM, 2008a, MLM, 2008b). While preparing for future terrorist operations, these online volunteers were also assigned the task of assisting in the preparation and distribution of al-Qaida propaganda media.

Finally, Aaron Weisburd (co-PI of the current study) was a senior administrator of an open source intelligence forum circa 2005–2007. This forum was heavily infiltrated by al-Qaida supporters seeking links to Jihadist video releases and came to be used by a UK-based Jihadist to recruit like-minded individuals into his emerging terrorist cell and to coordinate their public activities on a number of the Jihadist forums (many of which are used in this study). This incident provides a rare glimpse at the inner workings of such self-recruited groups. Beginning in May of 2006, Ishaq Kanmi, using the alias Umar Rabii, began recruiting fellow Jihadists on the non-Jihadist forum, making it clear his ultimate goal was the creation of an al-Qaida franchise in Great Britain that would conduct suicide bombings.

He identified individuals in the UK, developed relationships with them, and supplemented

his online meetings with fact-to-face contact. With his online recruits, Kanmi coordinated

the preparation and release of graphics, audio files, and text communiqués that were

subsequently released through the al-Ekhlaas forum, while offline the group began to train

for future terrorist activity and to collect ingredients for improvised explosive devices. The

group's threat to assassinate British Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown led to

their arrest and subsequent conviction on a range of terrorism-related charges (see also

Gartenstein-Ross et al., 2009).

### 13. Fundraising and crime

Overt fundraising and open discussion of non-computer-related criminal activity are rare

on Jihadist forums and equally absent from the literature. A number of researchers have

noted the involvement of Jihadist activists and supporters of al-Qaida linked terrorist

organizations in credit card fraud (Gartenstein-Ross, 2007; Weisburd, 2008a; Cornish et al.,

2009). This activity is observed particularly among the senior administrators of the forums,

who often have above-average computer skills. In addition to the case of Younis Tsouli

discussed earlier, Weisburd (2008a) notes credit card fraud and related phishing activity

perpetrated by administrators of websites of Hamas and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb

(formerly GSPC). More common crimes include attacks on the web sites of perceived

enemies and the trading of pirated software, books, and videos (Ibid).

## C.  Rationale for the study

The literature review on the intersection between Internet, terrorism and crime has

addressed questions such as how and for what purpose Jihadists use the Internet. However,

little effort has been made to quantify exactly *how much* of each type of online activity or

content of communications can be observed.[16] Even less attention has focused on issues related to degrees of interactivity — active participation versus passive observation by forum participants — or the role and likely consequences of computer mediated communications effects on both the active and passive members of Jihadist communities online. There is also little attention paid to the way in which forum discussions are related to criminal and deviant activity. The current study seeks to address these questions.

This study focuses on Jihadist web sites, specifically those espousing global Salafist Jihad[17] (also known as global Jihad) because these Jihadists are involved in terrorism on a worldwide scale, rather than merely locally or even nationally, and their numbers are continually on the increase (Ariza, 2006; see also Qin et al., 2005; Reid et al., 2005 for the lack of research on the topic and the importance of focusing on Jihadist web sites).[18] In light of the centrality of Arab Jihadists in the global Jihad movement (see Sageman, 2004, for a discussion of the prominent role played by "Core" and "Maghreb" Arabs), the study is restricted to Arabic-language sites of the global Jihad rather than including Jihadist sites that operate in other languages (e.g. French or Turkish). The global Jihad developed within the Arab world, from which it was subsequently exported to the larger Muslim world. Experts have noted that the global Jihad is directed in Arabic and its content is closely tied to the political context of the Arab world (Paz, 2006). The situation in Iraq and the subsequent Jihadist insurgency have further increased the importance of the Arab element in the global Jihad. Additionally, most global Jihad supporters involved in terrorism among Muslim communities in the West are Arabs or have Arab origins (Ibid.). Internet experts have also observed that the Arabic-language Jihadist sites serve as primary distribution

points for Jihadist content, which then filters out to the more peripheral non-Arabic sites (Weisburd, 2004; 2005a; 2005b).

Theoretical considerations also inform our focus on Jihadist web sites, especially in regard to the connection between terrorism and crime. Global Jihad ideology views terrorism against the West, particularly the U.S., and crimes perpetrated in pursuit of Jihadist aims, as a moral and legitimate undertaking. This ideology provides followers with various "techniques of neutralization" (Sykes & Matza, 1957), couched in religious texts and fiats, that negate the victim, justify the harm inflicted, and invoke higher loyalties to rationalize their crimes (see Weimann, 2006a for a discussion of the rhetoric of moral disengagement).

Criminological theories may also illuminate the processes by which Jihadists online come to engage in terrorism and related crime: Sutherland's differential association theory (Sutherland & Cressey, 1960) and Wolfgang and Ferracuti's (1982) subculture of violence theory may apply to Jihadists' engagement in crime, if the exchanges of communications reveal virtual differential association, or indicate learning and internalization of a subculture of violence (and other law violations) through forum exchanges. Group interactions online may produce various "solutions" to the strain and anger they experience (Agnew, 1992) or a rebellion adaptation (Merton, 1938) that offers religious, spiritual goals (e.g. *shahada*, *istishahad*[19]), to replace conventional Western, worldly success goals. The online virtual groups provide direction to the underlying motives, and support rationalizations/justifications for the behavior, which become compelling to a person engaged and socialized by the group. These groups are not open to everyone, and only some individuals will be attracted to the groups (or drift toward them) — usually someone with a background of strain who is looking for a channel to express his or her

anger (Agnew, 1992) or alienation (Sageman, 2004). Jihadist forums foster the emergence

of a subculture of violence, employed to defend honor, gain respect, or respond to

perceived violations of entitlements or rights (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1982). This

subculture supports the growth and continuation of online groups that promote and train

recruits in the conduct of violence (or terrorism); it also gives a message of a "righteous

cause" to turn nascent anger or alienation into a "righteous rage" that readily promotes

terrorism (Erez, 2006; Rosenfeld, 2002).

In sum, previous research has identified the various uses of the Internet by terrorists;

however, little research has focused on forum discussions in Jihadist web sites that are of

most concern to U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Further, no study has provided a

quantitative assessment of the ways in which virtual Jihadist communities employ the

Internet to further their terrorist objectives, or addressed the cognitive and emotional (e.g.

pride, revenge, anger, shame) content of different communications in the forums. Lastly, no

study has addressed the connection between crime and terrorism as it unfolds in Jihadist

web site discussions, or the connection, if any, between communications related to

terrorist objectives, the use of criminal means to execute them including proposed *modi*

*operandi*, rationalizations or neutralizations (Sykes & Matza, 1957) and how they resonate

with target audiences. In this study we address these issues, and explore the content of

forum discussions, their aims and objectives as they emerge from the discussions.

### Endnotes

[1]  In the context of this report, all acts of political violence perpetrated by supporters of the global jihad are considered terrorism, though many would argue that terrorism (targeting principally civilians) should be differentiated from insurgency (targeting conventional military forces) or guerrilla warfare.

[2]  For instance, the production of propaganda materials or online security for terrorist operatives.

3  An unsystematic casual observation of Jihadist criminal activity online as observed by the co-PI includes such activities as: (1) The distribution of "warez and cracks," i.e. unauthorized copies of proprietary software or altered versions of such software. The software in question is usually one of two types: a. Software related to the production or distribution of documents, most commonly multi-media propaganda. b. Software related to computer security. The latter is directly related to facilitating secure use of the Internet by Jihadists and secure communications between Jihadists, with obvious implications related to on-the-ground terrorist activity. (2) The orchestration of attacks against "enemy" e-mail accounts, web sites, etc. Such activity is often referred to as "hacktivism." (3) Threats against the lives of people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, who are judged by Jihadists as being anti-Islamic or in the service of the Crusaders and Jews, i.e. the enemies of Islam, and incitement that calls for such people to be put to death. For example, the threats posted against the lives of Theo van Gogh, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, various Danish cartoonists, Aaron Weisburd (the co-PI) and others. (4) Credit card fraud/identity theft/phishing. This includes: (a) The posting on sites of stolen credit card information. (b) The use of stolen credit cards to pay for services related to hosting Jihadist sites. (c) The use of another (non-Jihadist) individual's name, address, etc. when registering the domain names of Jihadist sites. (d) The use of phishing sites (fake banking sites, sites that pretend to be legitimate, known online business, etc.) to pay for hosting Jihadist sites and/or to raise funds to support Jihadist activity.

4  *Openness* seems a more appropriate term in this instance than *truthfulness*, to the extent that *truth* is understood as a construct that is considered true by a particular individual or community, rather than being factually correct in the strictest sense.

5  For an act of political violence to occur, the motivation to do so is a necessary but insufficient pre-condition.

6  Although Jihadist web sites do not necessarily connect an individual to a specific terrorist organization, they prepare users — forum participants and prospective recruits — for what is expected of them, and may provide specific pointers to radical institutions on the ground.

7  This web site is included in our study in order to capture the more Salafist-leaning parts of the Jihadist community online.

8  This web site is included in our study.

9  All of the forums in the Kimmage & Ridalfo (2007) study were sources of discussions in our own research, including: *Tajdeed*, *Faloja*, *Mohajroon*, *Firdaws*, *Boraq*, *Nusra*, and *Ana al-Muslm*.

10  Details about this exchange can be obtained by contacting the corresponding author of this study.

11  The Silber and Bhatt (2007) study was derived from observations of multiple counterterrorism investigations conducted by NYPD, which, while not revealing a consensus, provides as much information on the topic as the current state of the research presents.

12  The number 63 refers to the page in the source Arabic book, while 147 is the page of the translation of the work.

13  This request for questions and the responses Zawahiri provided to them both evaded collection, coding, and analysis in this study. This speaks to the pitfalls of applying strictly random assignment in selecting discussions for study.

14  These individuals came to the attention of U.S. investigators as a result of a video they made of themselves training for the attack.

15  The names of these forums were all based on the word *Minbar*, a characteristic that could serve to identify them for researchers wishing to include them in future investigations.

16  We should note that there is also a wealth of valuable information that is unavailable to most researchers: evidence collected in the course of a decade of counterterrorism investigations. When investigations culminate in a public trial, only evidence deemed essential to a successful prosecution is presented in court. This information, which is normally not available through conventional literature searches, can be

gleaned from specific cases. Even then the costs and other difficulties associated with accessing trial transcripts leave the researcher to rely on news media reports. Despite these difficulties, a degree of consensus has emerged in the past decade at least as regards what jihadis do online, if not how much of it they do.

[17]  Salafist Jihad embodies the radical Islamists' struggle to revive the Islamic civilization through global solidarity and brotherhood on one hand, and the demonization of the eternal enemy, on the other. In general, Salafist Jihad ideology involves the promotion of Islam as it was practiced in the time of Mohammed and his Companions, and the strategic goal of re-establishing the rule of Islamic law (shariah) under the leadership of an autocratic Muslim ruler (caliph). Salafist Jihad is predicated on the belief that participation in the Jihad is a religious obligation of each Muslim (Fard Ayn in Arabic).

[18]  According to Paz (2006) the culture of militant global Jihad is a relatively new phenomenon in the Islamic world, currently advocated by only by a small minority of Muslim groups, movements, scholars, and individual sympathizers. However, various political, social, and economic factors have led to a widening of its network of supporters and sympathizers. These developments include "the extensive use of terrorism (primarily by martyrdom-suicide operations); the insurgency in Iraq; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; growing anti-American and anti-Western sentiments; social and economic frustrations among Muslims; and growing multinational integration among Muslim communities in the West or regions of conflict in the Muslim world." (Paz, 2006:1) Global Jihad is deeply rooted in the interpretations of the earliest sources of Islam and Islamic history, and adheres to the strictest doctrines of Salafist scholars; it is primarily a doctrinal development that requires legitimacy on the part of clerics and scholars, in the form of interpretations, rulings, and preaching.

[19]  A concept in radical Islam typically translated as "Sacrifice in the name of Allah." It began as a concept of Palestinian origin used to justify suicide bombings (Erlich 2004). *Istishhad* has been adopted by al-Qaida as the centerpiece of the ideology of the global Jihad (Schweitzer and Ferber 2005).

## II.  Methods

### A.   Characteristics of forum discussions

The data collected for the study are discussion threads downloaded from prominent

Arabic-language Jihadist forums (see details below). Jihadist forums feature various

discussions that may be started by any person who has applied for and received a

membership in the forum. Once a discussion is started, other forum members may post

responses or additions to the first entry. This activity can be controlled to a certain extent

by the web site's administrative staff; however, the content and the flow of the discussions

are determined by the members themselves, which makes these discussions particularly

useful for our study. Official statements of Jihadist organizations are frequently distributed

via the forums, and members of the forums are free to respond to official statements as

they see fit, providing a window into the world of the Jihadist rank and file, and the degree

to which official Jihadist communications are reaching their target audience. The

individuals who populate Jihadist forums identify themselves with the global Jihad but may

not be affiliated with any particular organization; nor are the participants likely to be the

leaders of any particular organization. The forums selected are important for the purpose

of the study because Jihadists regularly link to them and mention them in their discussions

on other forums. They are the sites that keep coming up in Jihadist discussions observed

online, which is the reason they have come to our attention and were included in the study.

The discussions sampled were subjected to content analysis, which generated a

quantitative assessment of categories and subcategories of Internet use, and a qualitative

analysis of the exchanges aimed at providing answers to the research questions.

## B.   Sampling considerations and procedures

### 1.  *Jihadist web sites sampling frame*

The sampling frame of the Jihadist forums from which we drew the sample of discussions comprised all Arabic-language Jihadist forums that were active when the study began (January 2007). The forums are known to contain predominantly Jihadist content, and to be used on a regular basis by members/supporters of terrorist organizations that endorse global Salafist/Jihadist ideology (e.g. al-Qaida, GSPC[1]). We excluded from the study Arabic-language forums in which Jihad is not the dominant theme of the site, or Arabic-language sites that are directly linked to particular terrorist groups with well-defined nationalistic, rather than global Jihadist, orientations (e.g. the al-Qassam site of Hamas).[2]

Sites were selected on the basis of their meeting a number of criteria. These include the degree to which the site represents the Salafist/Jihadist school of radical Islam and the global Jihad perspective; the ability to acquire and maintain access to the site at the level of an ordinary member; the acceptance and credibility that the site appears to have within the greater community of Jihadists; the history of the site as a source of actionable intelligence; the use of the site by actual Jihadists as indicated by reports of site members who have been killed in action or observation of other clearly terrorist activities; the use of the site for the distribution of official communications from Jihadist organizations and leadership elements, and the site's presentation of unique information, topics of discussion, and perspectives. Discussions were collected from a large number of sites, representing the full breadth of Salafiya/Jihadiya ideologies and were studied in aggregate in order to ensure that the findings of this research would be generalizable despite the high rate of web site attrition.

The objective of the site selection process was to identify a sufficiently large pool of sites so that routine monitoring of the activities on those sites would provide a reliable source of intelligence regarding the full range of uses Jihadists make of the Internet. Sites were selected in consultation with experts in Arabic and radical Islam, and the selection of sites was corroborated using techniques of social network analysis and link analysis (Weisburd, 2006–2008, unpublished).

The list of ten sites, and five alternates in case some of the sites closed, (see list below) was compiled based on evaluation of the sites' importance to the Jihadists, judged by the following criteria: the number of participants, their demographic attributes including the countries in which they reside (when known[3]), the longevity of the web site, the intensity and nature of communication, and the degree to which the sites are reflective of the global Jihad movement online. The researchers' ability to acquire and maintain the necessary credentials to access the sites over the course of the study was also a consideration in the selection of this list. Additional sites were added as they arose to replace sites that ceased operation. Our experience with Jihadist web sites, as discussed previously, confirms that forums sometimes go offline, temporarily or permanently, and others rise to replace them. Some of the new forums are accepted by the Jihadist community while others are not (the reasons for a particular site's attractiveness are not always evident). Thus sites selected or sites considered suitable replacements were those that the Jihadists themselves chose to use and recommend to each other.

The list of sites based on the criteria listed above includes the following:

- Tajdeed.org.uk
- Abualbokhary.net

- Mohajroon.com
- Alhesbah.org
- Al-boraq.com
- Anfaal.net
- Morabteen.com
- Al-saf.net
- Islamicminbar.net
- Alommh.org
- Alnusra.net
- Farouqomar.com
- Muslm.net
- Alfetn.com
- Al-Ekhlaas.net

Maintaining access to a pool of sites larger than what was judged necessary for valid and reliable results (i.e., we prepared a list of 15 sites when we needed 10 sites) guaranteed that the unpredictable nature of site availability would not overly interfere with or otherwise undermine the validity of our data. An example of a listing of active discussions on a forum (al-Ekhlaas) appears in Figure 1.

*Figure 1. Search result listing discussions active in the previous 24 hours on the al-Ekhlaas forum as it appeared on November 29, 2006.*

In establishing the criteria for selecting web sites from which the discussions for content analysis were sampled, we were guided not only by web sites' stability but also by our ability to access their content. Access/availability issues are paramount, as the web sites

selected have restricted access. Ability to access and collect samples of Jihadists'

discussions frequently requires that one gains membership in the community and

maintains a minimum level of participation. Previous experience with accessing these sites

and with the demands of maintaining membership in them allowed us to assume that

access would not be a problem for data collection purposes. We did not participate in the

discussion in any way beyond the mere act of logging onto the forum in order to search for

and collect active discussions.

## 2.   *Sampling forum discussions*

Based on our understanding of and familiarity with the volume of activity on the sites, and

the "life cycle" of individual discussion threads, we made decisions about the forum

discussions for the sample.

Data were collected from the selected sites solely on the basis of activity. Forums use

software that can be queried to produce lists of the discussions by degree of recent activity.

With very few exceptions, Jihadist forums use the vBulletin program to run their sites.

Within the search feature of the program there is a function that returns a list of all

discussions on the forum that have had activity in the previous 24 hours. Activity in this

case means the posting of text, images, or links. The database for each site was queried, and

the first page or two listing active discussions was saved to disk. Each site can be

configured to return a varying number of links to active discussions on each page, with 25

being most common. A number of prominent sites, however, return only 15 links to active

discussions per page, and in these cases two pages of active discussions were saved rather

than only one.

Care was taken to save the listed/active discussions in a way that preserved as much as possible the content of each page, i.e. not only the text of the discussions was saved, but also the graphic elements that make up the design of each site and literally frame each discussion. Great effort was made to avoid the appearance that the agent collecting the discussions was a part of any sort of automated web site monitoring program of the sort that intelligence agencies might use, in order to prevent undue suspicion from falling on the individual accessing the sites and saving the discussions.

To provide a sufficiently diverse array of data sources, we sought to collect discussions from 10 sites per collection period, and as sites would drop offline, temporarily or permanently, others available would replace them. To avoid collecting the same discussions more than once, sites were accessed for the purpose of data collection no more than once every seven days, and data were collected from all of the selected sites over the course of a seven-day period. This process yielded roughly 300 active discussions per week across 10 sites on average. It is from these weekly collections of sites that discussions were selected for coding and analysis.

To provide a random sample of discussions, a table of random numbers consisting of 52 sets of 100 random numbers between 1 and 10 was generated using Microsoft Excel™. Discussions from each of the available sites were stored each in their own directory and, using the random number table, discussions were selected from each site, with each selected discussion being assigned in turn to each of the coders. Where possible, equal numbers of discussions were selected from each site, and where necessary — due to the number of coders, and the number of sites available in any given week — sites were favored if they were judged to be more important to the Jihadist community. This means

that, for example, three discussions from each forum might be assigned to each coder, but

to prepare a set of 25 discussions for each coder, a fourth discussion might be selected

from a more prominent site such as al-Ekhlaas. This process was repeated on a weekly

basis. The data collection phase was from Ramadan 2006 to Ramadan 2008. Figure 2

presents an example of a typical discussion.
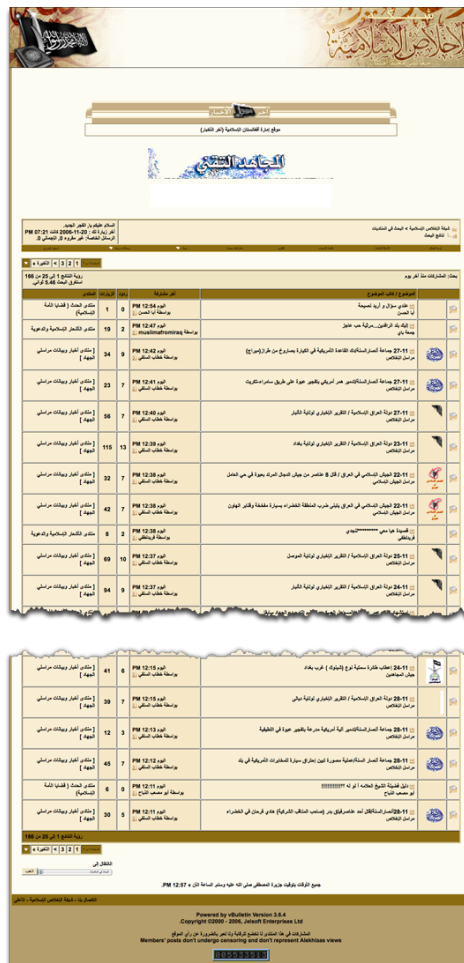


*Figure 2. A typical forum discussion. This discussion addresses software piracy.*

## 3.   Preparation of forum discussions for delivery to coders

In preparing the discussions for delivery to the judges/coders, we followed a process that

included removing links back to the parent site where possible, removing the identity of

the individual who collected the discussions when that information was displayed on

discussion pages, and removing elements of the underlying code of discussion pages which

would effectively prevent the archived pages from loading in the browser of the coders.

Various data were collected from each discussion, including the source URL of the

discussion, the start date of the discussion, the date at the time the discussion was

collected, the number of entries in the discussion and the number of unique participants in

the discussion. The duration of the discussion at the time of collection was calculated, and

all this information was included in the discussion coding form that was prepared for each

discussion. A password-protected directory for each coder was created and each week's

discussions were uploaded there along with the corresponding questionnaire schedule.

*4.  Coding instrument development*

The coding form itself was divided into sections related to the areas of inquiry of the

project (see Appendix A, Coding Instrument), including:

- Information related to the discussion and the URL of the discussion
- Summary and general characterization of the discussion
- Topics related to Islam
- Operational activities
- Illegal activities (not directly terrorist in nature)

*5.  Coder selection*

To provide maximum authenticity to the interpretation of the discussions and avoid

outsider bias, we recruited judges/coders (hereafter coders) who met certain criteria.

Because the discussions sampled were in Arabic and involved issues related to Islam, we

selected coders who are Arab and Sunni Muslim, whose native language is Arabic, and who

grew up in Arabic speaking countries. Coders had also to meet criteria related to their

general level of education, understanding of Islam, and willingness to work on a project

that addresses Jihad, terrorism and crime on the Internet and was conducted with funds of

the U.S. Department of Justice. Prior to their final selection, we conducted interviews as

well as background checks. The resulting group of coders comprised Arab Muslims who are

Iraqi, Jordanian, Palestinian, and Egyptian and who at the time of the study were citizens or

residents of Israel/Palestine, Jordan, or the US. They all met the criteria of having grown up

in (and continuing to live in) communities that are Arab and Muslim. Because their work on

this project would likely be viewed by extremists in their own community as a kind of

"collaboration" with an enemy, it was necessary to hire, train, and manage the coders as

one would manage confidential sources — they have been kept isolated from one another,

trained, and communicated with separately so that should any one of them "turn" on the

project, they would not be able to expose the other coders. The selection process took some

time, as it was necessary to ascertain the coder's qualifications and ability to perform the

task and to maintain confidentiality regarding the project. We interviewed nine individuals

who met these criteria and ended up with six who conducted the coding.

## 6. *Coder training and inter-coder reliability testing*

Coders were trained in issues of human subjects' protection and confidentiality, and

instructed as to the nature and purpose of the study. At first, four coders were hired and

inter-reliability tests were conducted. In each test, the coders were presented with the

same discussion in order to verify that they coded the discussion content in substantially

the same manner. We then conducted two pilot projects, where each coder was assigned

25 unique discussions to code, and their work was checked for consistency or inter-coder

reliability. Based on the responses, the coding form was further modified to resolve the inconsistencies that emerged.

Once the form was finalized, we conducted inter-coder reliability tests. Inter-coder reliability is a measure used to reflect the extent to which independent coders evaluate characteristics of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion. Reliability could be based on correlational (or analysis of variance) indices that assess the degree to which "ratings of different judges are the same when expressed as deviations from their means." Inter-coder agreement is needed in content analysis because it measures "the extent to which the different judges tend to assign exactly the same rating to each object" (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000: 98). There are dozens of different measures, or indices, of inter-coder reliability. In communication studies the most widely used indices are percent agreement or Krippendorff's alpha.

Inter-coder reliability tests conducted showed that in the initial coder inter-reliability there was 100% agreement since it was conducted in the context of training the first team of coders and the simultaneous final development of the questionnaire. Subsequently, ten additional discussions were coded by both members of the team of replacement coders, following the training of the second replacement coder. Overall agreement on a discussion-by-discussion basis was 94%, which is a high level of agreement. Question-by-question review of reliability reveals a generally high reliability scores: 22 of 32 variables had 100% agreement; 26 had 90% or greater agreement; 28 had 80% or greater. Agreement below 80% is considered problematic, and generally questions that do not meet the standard of being at least 80% are not used in analyses (see Appendix B, Inter-coder Reliability Results). However, we included in the findings two items[4] that received respectively a

inter-coder reliability level somewhat lower than 80%. The first addresses topical categorization of the content of discussions. The second addresses the presence of religious sources in the discussions[5]

## 7.   *Quality control throughout the coding period*

Quality control of the coding throughout the project was conducted weekly by selecting at random 25% of the coded materials and examining their quality. At a quarter and midterm of the coding process we conducted a thorough review of the quality of the work conducted to that point. Based on the results, we had a refresher meeting with the coders or recalibrated the coders so that their coding continued to demonstrate high reliability. We started with four coders working for the project. After about six months two coders resigned, one due to medical problems and the other due to family issues, and we hired two coders to replace them. The new coders were trained in the project, the coding, and in research ethics and confidentiality. After their coding output had been subjected to a round of inter-reliability tests, they were added to the team of coders and began to code 25 discussions weekly.

## 8.   *Processing of completed coding forms*

Completed coding forms were checked for completeness of information and if data were missing, they were returned to the coders to compete the missing data. Errors in classifications or other data quality and reliability issues were likewise addressed. The data were then processed, entered into an SPSS file, and the file was cleaned and prepared for the analyses.

## C.    Research methods and procedures

The methodology of the study included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The *quantitative* part of the study focused on the variables listed in the questionnaire that included items about the content of the discussions (see Appendix A, Coding Instrument). We processed the coders' responses to the items and created an SPSS file. This file was used to provide descriptive statistics and conduct cross tabulations, bivariate and multivariate analyses (detailed below).

The *qualitative* data consisted of the coders' summaries of the discussions together with the coders' responses to the open-ended questions. The qualitative analysis employed content analysis, that consisted of textual analysis of 500 discussions randomly selected from the larger sample of discussions ($N$ = 2112) downloaded from the Jihadist forums listed above.

Content analysis is a research technique that employs a set of procedures to make valid and replicative inferences from data to their content (Krippendorff, 1980), and is particularly suitable to analyzing communications and examining their manifest and latent meanings. Two central approaches were used to analyze the summaries created by the coders. The principal method used to read and write the analysis is the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a qualitative data analysis and theory development methodology. This approach comprises a research process that facilitates an instantaneous and sequential gathering and analysis of data, and at the same time, data collection is continually guided by analysis of the results and vice versa. The purpose of this process is to interpret raw data by the creation of meaningful categories that unite the perspectives of the researcher and those of the materials themselves. This approach is specifically beneficial with this data

set because of its receptivity to issues that arise during the interpretation stage. A high

degree of receptiveness and openness is important due to the disputed nature of the

materials.

In addition, and in order to assess ideological dimensions and influence of social activities,

100 discussion files were randomly sampled from the general 500-file pool and analyzed

with the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology (Fairclough, 2003). This

methodology was selected because of its potential to address opportunities and limitations

posed by dominant and explicit relations of power and the exercise of control in discourse.

The combination of the two approaches allows, on the one hand, for extensive open reading

of the texts, but also requires coping with central elements of the text such as the

ideological element, on the other.

**Endnotes**

[1]   Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Al-Jama`ah al-Salafiyyah lil-Da`wah wal-Qital in Arabic),
      i.e. the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which officially aligned itself with al-Qaida and
      the forces of the global Jihad in a video statement by the group's then-leader Abu Ibrahim Mustafa
      (Internet Haganah, 19 May 2004. Internet-haganah.com/harchives/002019.html)

[2]   Researchers and organizations have attempted to quantify the total number of terrorist web sites.
      Numbers range from 4,300 (Weimann, 2006a), to over 5,000 (Shrader, 2006), to as many as 6,000 (Simon
      Wiesenthal Center, 2006). Weimann and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, however, discuss all terrorist web
      sites, not only Jihadist ones, and the Pentagon is monitoring many sites that may support the activities of
      Sunni Muslim insurgents who are waging a Jihad in Iraq, but they are not representative of the global
      Salafist/Jihadist movement (see Sageman, 2004 regarding similar issues). Other researchers (Marcus,
      2006) refuse to put a number on extremist use of the Internet, whether it is by Jihadists, Marxists, or neo-
      Nazis, noting that no matter what the gross count of such sites may be, only a relative handful achieve any
      degree of prominence and persist for any length of time. For our purposes, we are focusing exclusively on
      web sites that represent the global Salafist/Jihadist movement. Among those web sites, many are static
      and non-interactive. They may represent a particular organization (e.g. al-Qaida in Iraq), or serve a single
      purpose (e.g. to distribute one video message from Zawahiri offered in multiple files sizes and file
      formats). Among the web sites of the global Salafist/Jihadist movement, only a small number are
      interactive web sites that allow individual supporters of the global Jihad to speak in their own voice about
      the issues of interest or concern to them (i.e. forums). We should note that there are thousands of Arabic-
      language forums that may, from time to time, feature content and discussions related to the global Jihad;
      but such discussions are not the primary focus of the sites in question.

[3]   For the purpose of this research we had access to demographic data regarding the global distribution of
      the users of a number of the sites in our list (Weisburd and Kovler, 2006).

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4   The two items examined are the following:

Item 13. Categorize the discussion general terms (Check all that apply). (65%).

Item 20. Are the Quran, Hadith, or other Sunni texts quoted? (yes, no) (70%)

The other two questions that produced lower than 80% levels of inter-coder reliability scores were the following:

Item 14. What are the issues that are raised or referred to in the discussion or the main topics in the discussion (Check all that apply). (70%)

Item 43. In summary, what are the purposes of the discussion, List all options. (62.5%).

5   In responding to multiple option questions such as item 13 or 43, at times coders did not include all possible categories (the categories were not mutually exclusive, so discussions could receive scores on more than one topic). In addition, the markings on the topic pertaining to sources of Islam had lower levels of agreement. This problem was noticed in the second item as well, which addressed the question whether various sources of Islam were listed in the discussions. Coders' familiarity with religious sources varied somewhat, producing lower agreement on this item. This lower level of agreement or familiarity with sources of Islam is likely to characterize the general population. For these reasons we felt we were justified to include these items in the analysis.

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## III.  Results

## A.  Quantitative findings

The quantitative analysis sought to answer specific questions regarding the frequency, kind, and quantity of topics discussed by Jihadists on the Internet, and describe the range of discussions that make up Jihadist online discourse. For that purpose, the coders read 2112 discussions that included 18130 entries.

We first provide a descriptive presentation of the items included in the questionnaire filled out by the coders. We then move to analysis of the discussions, topics, and uses of the Internet by Jihadists. Following the descriptive statistics, we address relationships that emerge in the data.

### 1.  Extent of participation in Jihadist online forum discussions

All discussions were assigned a four digit number beginning with 0001 and applied sequentially to each selected discussion. The source URL of each discussion was also saved to the coding form to assist in quality control.

The first part of the quantitative study (nine items on the coding form) addressed indicators of the extent and level of participants' involvement in online communications on the web site: discussions' length, number of entries, and number of unique participants. These data were extracted from the discussions and were entered into the data file.

#### a. Discussion duration
To examine the length of discussions, we proceeded as follows: the discussion's recorded start date was noted by looking at the date of the first post of the discussion thread displayed in the archived web page.

Second, notation was made of the date when the discussion was collected for analysis. A collected discussion, unless deliberately "closed" by a forum administrator, can remain open and available for discussion indefinitely. By definition, each discussion was active on the date it began, and saw additional activity, i.e. posted comments, within 24 hours prior to the date of collection.

The duration of the discussion pertains to the time elapsed from start of discussion until time of collection. This item is tantamount to saying, "the discussion had been active over X days at the time it was collected, including activity within 24 hours of collection." In practice, a discussion may lie dormant for years, but if someone added a comment within 24 hours of collection, it will appear in our study as being an extremely long-lived discussion when in reality it was inactive for most of that time. Table 1 and Figure 3 show the distribution of discussion duration.

Table 1
*Distribution of discussion durations*

| Duration | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 52.6% | 52.6% |
| 2 | 16.9% | 69.5% |
| 3 | 5.4% | 74.9% |
| 4 | 4.3% | 79.1% |
| 5 | 2.7% | 81.9% |
| 6 | 2.0% | 83.9% |
| 7 | 1.5% | 85.4% |
| 8 | 1.3% | 86.7% |
| 9 | .5% | 87.2% |
| 10 | .8% | 88.0% |
| 11 | .5% | 88.5% |
| 12 | .6% | 89.1% |
| 13 | .4% | 89.4% |
| 14 | .5% | 89.9% |
| 15 | .4% | 90.3% |
| 16 | .3% | 90.6% |
| >17 | 9.4% | 100.0% |

*Note:* 1 = less than 24 hrs.

Figure 3
Distribution of discussion durations
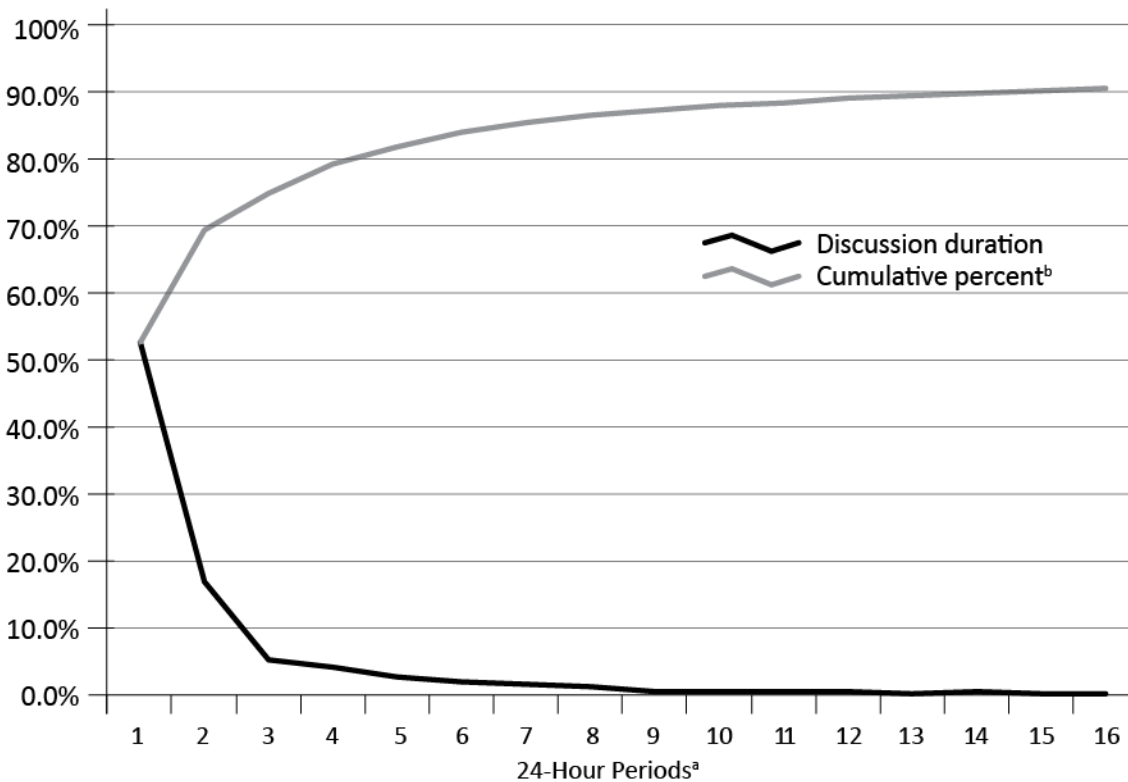


ᵃ The recorded start date should be thought of as approximate, as the date displayed will be a function of the forum's default settings, such as the time as understood by the site's server and the user settings of the individual collecting the discussion for future analysis.
ᵇ The cumulative percent range ends at 90.6% in this figure. Cumulative percents over 90.6% to 100% represent a span of more than 2 weeks to 3.64 years.

The descriptive results pertaining to the length of discussion are: mean: 13.25; median: 1; mode: 1; max: 1,331; standard seviation: 63.81. The majority of the discussions (87%) were less than one week old, and 89% of all discussions were less than two weeks old at time of collection. Discussion activity drops off markedly after 24 to 48 hours. These results indicate that at any given time, the vast majority of active discussions on a Jihadist forum will be new discussions.

Another measure of degree of online participation by Jihadists is the number of pages that each discussion was divided among by the forum software. This measure is not an absolute

indicator, as it is based on how the forum had been configured. This measure may vary

widely between sites, from as few as 10 to as many as 20 posts per page. The results for

this variable are: mean: 1.3; median: 1; mode: 1; standard deviation: .96. The majority

(85.9%) of all active discussions are contained within a single page, another 10.9%

comprise two to three pages, and an additional 2.1% are four to five pages long.

### b. Number of entries per discussion

The number of entries in the discussion is another measure used to gauge Jihadists' online

participation. The item listed in the questionnaire is the total number of entries or posts

made to a single discussion or thread, including the post that began the discussion. The

descriptive statistics for this variable are: mean: 8.6; median: 4; mode: 1; standard

deviation: 14.2. Over half of the discussion threads (53.6%) have four or fewer entries. The

majority (80.2%) of all discussions have 10 or fewer entries, while 90.9% of all discussions

have 20 or fewer entries. It is reasonable to assume that, regardless of the number of

entries per page, there is a relationship between the number of entries in an active

discussion and the number of pages that discussion covers. Table 2 and Figure 4 shows the

distribution of discussions by the number of entries they have.

Table 2
*Distribution of discussion entries*

| Number of entries | Percent of discussions | Cumulative percent |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 18.1% | 18.1% |
| 2 | 14.1% | 32.2% |
| 3 | 12.0% | 44.2% |
| 4 | 9.6% | 53.8% |
| 5 | 7.1% | 60.9% |
| 6 | 5.6% | 66.5% |
| 7 | 4.3% | 70.8% |
| 8 | 3.8% | 74.6% |
| 9 | 2.8% | 77.4% |
| 10 | 2.8% | 80.2% |
| 11 | 1.8% | 82.0% |
| 12 | 1.8% | 83.8% |
| 13 | 1.0% | 84.8% |
| 14 | 1.1% | 85.9% |
| 15 | .9% | 86.8% |
| 16 | .7% | 87.5% |
| 17 | .9% | 88.4% |
| 18 | .8% | 89.2% |
| 19 | .7% | 89.8% |
| 20 | 1.1% | 90.9% |
| >20 | 9.1% | 100% |

**Figure 4**
**Distribution of discussion entries**
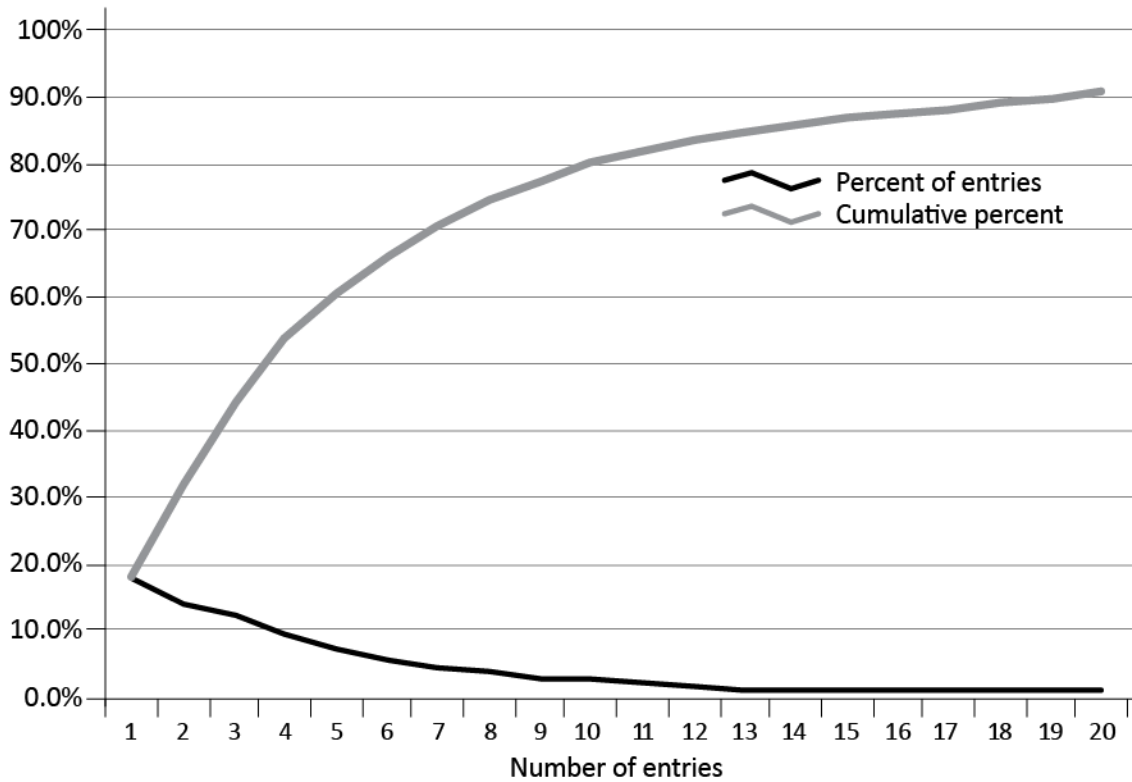


## c. Number of participants

The number of unique participants in a discussion was also examined. We studied each discussion thread to determine the unique participants by analysis of their user identification number (assigned by the forum software at the time they joined). While we did not save the identifiers[1], this item provides a measure that may be readily applied across all sites in the study, as opposed to measures such as number of views a discussion has received — which may vary significantly depending on the overall size and vitality of a particular community. The results for this variable are: mean: 6.3; median: 4; mode: 1; standard deviation: 9.4. Table 3 and Figure 5 show the distribution of participants per discussion.

Table 3
*Distribution of unique participants per*
*discussion*

| Number of participants | Percent of discussions | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 19.1% | 19.1% |
| 2 | 17.1% | 36.2% |
| 3 | 13.0% | 49.2% |
| 4 | 11.4% | 60.6% |
| 5 | 6.6% | 67.2% |
| 6 | 5.4% | 72.7% |
| 7 | 4.5% | 77.2% |
| 8 | 3.6% | 80.9% |
| 9 | 2.7% | 83.6% |
| 10 | 2.3% | 85.9% |
| 11 | 1.8% | 87.6% |
| 12 | 1.3% | 89.0% |
| 13 | 1.0% | 90.0% |
| 14 | .7% | 90.6% |
| 15 | .8% | 91.4% |
| 16 | .5% | 91.9% |
| 17 | 1.1% | 92.9% |
| >17 | 6.5% | 100% |

Figure 5
Distribution of unique participants per discussion
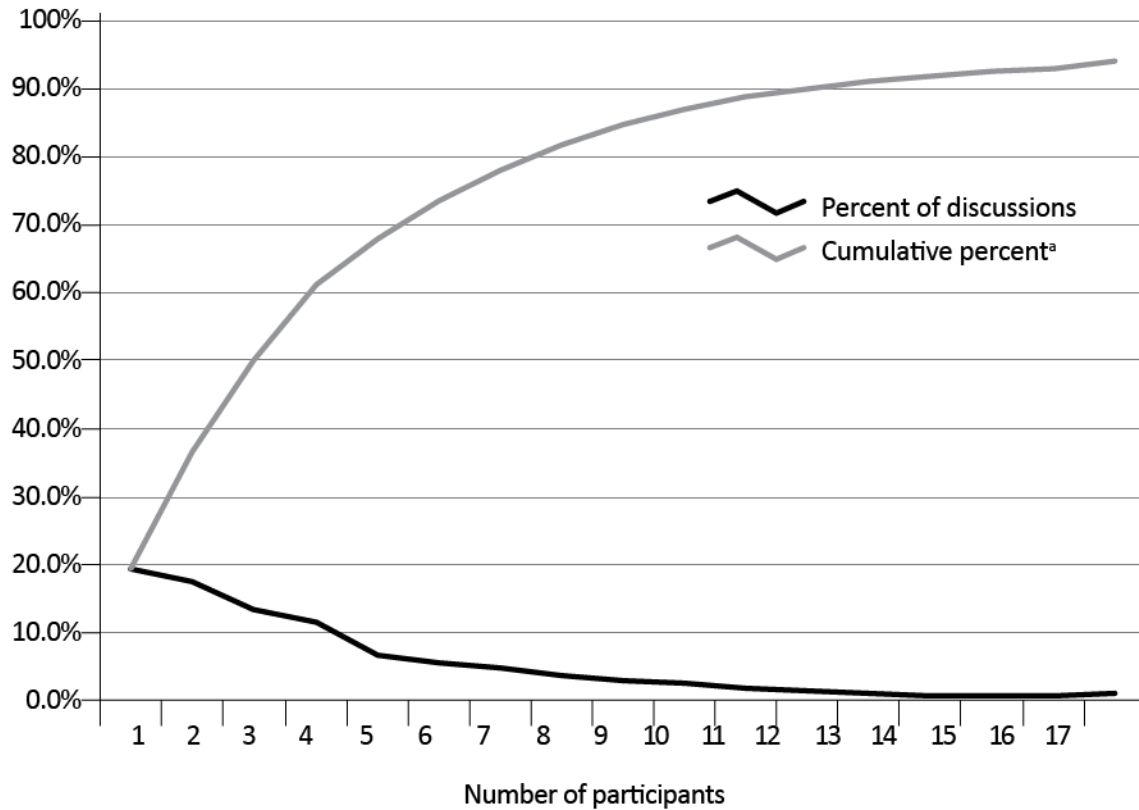


ª The cumulative percentage range ends at 92.9% / 17 participants in this figure. Cumulative percents over 92.9% to 100% represent 18 to 131 unique participants. The percent of discussions with that amount of participants was under 1% for each number of participants between 18 and 131.

Building on the data presented so far, the picture that emerges is that discussions on Jihadist forums are commonly short-lived, tend to span only a few pages, involve a handful of participants, and of those few activists, some will contribute multiple times to the discussion. The topics that sustain interest over time revolve around multimedia links, discussions of Islam ,and propaganda related to Jihadist activities. But the longer discussions also involve topics related to crime and illegal activities, particularly those aimed at improving their ability to communicate, spread the word of Jihad, and implement terrorism related activities including use of weapons.

## 2.   *The content of online communications: general observations*

The second quantitative part of the study examines the content of online activity and the distribution of topics and types of communications among the discussions threads.

In terms of the language of communications, our study focused on Arabic-language Jihadist forums, and this preference was reflected in the percentage of Arabic vs. other languages found in the discussions. The majority of the forum discussions (98%) were in Arabic, and only 2% were in mixed languages — a combination of Arabic and another language within discussions (French, English etc.), or sections presenting information entirely in a language other than Arabic.

Coders were asked to select the most salient aspect of identification or the one that unites the online participants as it emerges from reading the discussions. In the overwhelming majority (97%) of the discussions, religion was listed as the major source of identification. Other sources included shared past or traditions (9%), hatred of Christians (6%), hatred of Jews (4%), national identification (3%), and denial of democratic ideals (1%). Although this distribution of underlying dimensions of identification that unite participants may be related to the topics discussed rather than their internal motivations , it is noteworthy that forum participants more often identified positively with their religion, past, and tradition rather than negatively in opposition to Christians, Jews, or Western democratic ideals.

Coders were asked to note if the body of the discussions included links that participants posted to other sites. Over one third (38%) responded in the affirmative. In other words, roughly four of every ten discussions are used to refer participants to other web sites. For example, Discussion 1661 includes links to religious sites that discuss *niqab* and the sites are supportive of religious interpretations that regard it as a religious duty. This finding

regarding the large number of referral to links (also identified in Table 4) suggests that participants use the forums as a clearinghouse for authenticating or otherwise vouching for information that may be found in other sites.

Another variation of the use of forum discussions to share information is in an item requesting coders to note whether the text of the discussion includes links to downloadable documents such as literature, poetry, Fatwas, videos, or audio files. This question addressed documents only, and not sites.[2] For instance, Discussion 2166 included two links to download computer programs, a link to an audio file, and a link to a Quran-related document. Almost half (43%) of the discussions included such links, providing further support to the claim that participants use the forums as a clearinghouse to share information.

3. *The role of Islam in forum discussions*

Coders were asked to list whether forum discussions included references to religious authorities from the past or the present. This question was meant to measure the virtual presence of past or present religious figures viewed by Jihadists as worthy of attention when they speak on religious matters, regardless of formal title or education of this figure. The item addresses less formal expressions of religious opinion (as opposed to more formal religious edicts, e.g. Fatwas). Almost one third (29%) responded in the affirmative. For example, in Discussion 2079, the coder records, "A number of religious authorities, such as Mohammed Abd-al-Wahab, Ibn Taimiyah and Al-Nawawi, are quoted for their support for rebellion against un-Islamic or apostate rulers."

Another aspect of the prominence of religion in forum discussions was addressed by asking coders to note whether discussions included or revolved around Fatwas. A Fatwa is a formal religious ruling roughly analogous to the decision of a judge in a Western court of law. An affirmative answer was followed by a request that the coder identify the topic, date, and author of the ruling. In contrast to less formal opinions from religious leaders, Fatwas are to some extent binding on Muslims, allowing little room for debate without the participants being required to play an adversarial role. This may be one explanation for the low presence of Fatwas (3%) in forum discussions.

Coders were asked to list whether the discussions included quotes from the Quran, Hadith, or other Sunni texts. A finding in the affirmative was followed by a request that the coders identify the verse or verses and explain how the quote is related to the topic of the discussion. Over half (51%) of the discussions included such quotes. For instance, Discussion 2157 included a quote from Sura as-Saff (The Ranks) about the light of Allah remaining unextinguished despite the wishes of the infidels. The coder describes the light of Allah as being likened to al-Qaida. In the coder's view, the Quran quote expresses the original poster's confidence that al-Qaida will never cease its mission despite resistance.

In response to a question whether any figure, hero, or leader from the period of the Prophet (Mohammed) and his Companions is discussed in the threads, coders responded that in the overwhelming majority (93%) there was no such mention; only 7% of the discussions included references to any figure from the period of the Prophet. This proportion is less than expected based on the Jihadist ideology to which participants subscribe. Jihadists view themselves as continuing the traditions of warfare and religious practice they trace back to the time of the Prophet.

A related aspect of the role of Islam or religion in Jihadist online communication pertained to Jihadists' criticism of other groups as they arise in the forum discussions. The results suggest that over half (57%) of the discussions do not include such criticism. But the groups that do appear (and some quite frequently) include Shi'a (17%), followed by apostate rulers or regimes (16%). For example, in Discussion 1751 the poster expresses an opinion that Shi'a Muslims worship idols and believe the Quran has been altered. A substantially lower level of criticism is voiced against targets such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad (2%), and the Sunnis, al-Qaida and Hizballah are each criticized in 1% of the discussions. The poster in Discussion 2005 names Shi'a as a threat to Sunnis and also views Hizballah as an Iranian or Shiite tool that colluded with Israel. Various other groups are criticized in 20% of the discussions.

There is a sense that forums are a dumping ground for all grievances Jihadists may have about the world around them; however, six of every ten discussions contained no criticism of other ideologies, sects, or movements, while two of every ten contained criticism of a broad range of other groups. Given that the data collection period corresponds with the height of the conflict in Iraq, which pitted the Shi'a majority against the Sunni minority, it is not surprising that almost one fifth (17%) of the discussions contained explicit criticism of Shi'a. In light of the subsequent Arab Spring uprisings of 2010–2011, it is noteworthy that almost as many discussions contained explicit criticisms of apostate (Sunni) Muslim rulers and governments.

## 4.   Operational activities

Coders were asked to state whether the discussions included a call for Jihad. This question measures the occurrence of explicit or implicit calls for Jihad (in this instance understood

to be synonymous with terrorism in the minds of Jihadists). The findings show that over

one third (37%) included an explicit or implicit call for Jihad.[3] For instance,

Discussion 1594 is a poem that calls for further Jihad against the West, and praises the

Jihad of Osama bin Laden. Further, discussions that included calls for Jihad ($n = 776$ ) had

larger number of participants and entries than discussions that did not include such calls

($n = 1318$). A test of differences in means between the two groups showed that the

differences were statistically significant:. Table 4 presents the results:.

Table 4
*Differences in means in number of entries and in number of participants in discussions with and without a call to Jihad*

| Number of: | With call to Jihad ($n$=776) | Without call to Jihad ($n$=1318) |
|---|---|---|
| Entries | .6802 | .6240 |
| | $t = 7.02, p < 008$ | |
| Participants | .6200 | .5444 |
| | $t = 16.05, p < 0001$ | |

*Note:* The means appear as logarithmic scores; for both variables we did a logarithmic transformation to normalize the distributions that were positively skewed.

That a substantial number of discussions contain such a call that attract more participants

who post more entries paints a picture of Jihadist forums as being focused not merely on

discussion of Jihad-related issues but also on action.

Another item that addressed operational activities was embedded in the question whether

there was a call for martyrdom or *istishahad*, i.e. suicide operations or suicide terrorism, or

praise for people who perpetrated such acts. As an example, Discussion 1596 contains a

defense of suicide bombings citing Sura 2:207. A call for *istishahad* (martyrdom), or praise

to those who have carried out such operations, was included in 8% of the discussions.

Coders were asked to note whether there were special appeals to women or children to

participate in Jihad. The overwhelming majority of the discussions (98.4%) did not include

such appeals. In 1.2% of the discussions, appeal was made to women, in 0.2% to children,

and in 0.2% to both.

Lastly, coders were asked to list whether there was any other mention of explicit calls or

encouragement for future terrorist activities in the discussions they read. One fifth (20%)

of the discussions included such mention and/or encouragement for future terrorist

activity. For instance, Discussion 1601 is a warning to Iraqi officials that they will continue

to be a target of violence. The writer presents religious justification for attacking them and

cites Sura 66:9, which can be understood as a call for Jihad and confrontation with the

enemy.

The total of these calls for terrorism via different forms (call for Jihad – 37%, *istishahad* –

 8%, and for other acts of terrorism – 20%) suggests that two thirds of the discussions

contain some form of call for encouraging or performing terrorist attacks.

Yet, despite the combative nature of some of the discussions and the violence they at times

recommend in their postings, the participants felt quite secure in their communications.

The overwhelming majority of the participants (98.5%) did not fear any surveillance,

spying, or attempts to cause conflict in the discussion by others. The few who did (1.5%)

sometimes made references to the need to be careful about the information imparted over

the Internet. It is noteworthy that despite years of Jihadist forums being the subject of

interest on the part of law enforcement, intelligence, and military organizations, this subject is discussed infrequently on the forums. Computer mediated communications works on many levels to build trust between activists online, particularly when it occurs in the context of (virtual) social networking.

## 5.   *Crime and illegal activity in forum discussions*

Coders were asked to mark the purpose of any mention of criminal or illegal activity they encountered in the discussions they read. The data suggest that in the majority of the discussions (97.2%) there was no mention of illegal activity. In the minority of the cases in which there was a discussion of illegal activities, they were described as follows: in 0.5% participants were asking for instruction, in 2% they provided instruction, and in 0.3% they recruited participants for some illegal activity. Non-terrorism related law violations are clearly not a subject commonly discussed in public forum postings.

When criminal activity not of terrorist nature was discussed, the data show that the crimes discussed mostly involved computers (2.5%), followed by weapons trade or manufacture (0.2%) and the remainder (0.5%) included a host of criminal activities. Drugs, non-computer-related credit card fraud, non-computer-related identity theft, document forgery, cell phone/sim card related criminal activity, and charity fraud were looked for but not found in any of the sampled discussions. The largest percentage of crime discussed is computer-related (2.5%), while the main purpose for discussing crime involves asking for or giving instructions (also 2.5%). More information on computer-related crime discussions is given below.

The majority (99.7%) of the online participants who discussed or recommended criminal activities did not explain or provide justification for the law violations they endorsed or described, suggesting that the illegal nature of the acts does not preoccupy Jihadists engaged in online participation in Jihadist web sites.

The largest category of illegal activity found in the discussions (3%) involved computer crimes. The categories of these computer crimes are not mutually exclusive. The majority of references addressed illegal software downloads (2.2%), followed by illegal trade in software serial numbers (1%), breaking into sites or servers (0.4%), defacing web sites (0.3%), and theft of computer programs (0.2%). The remainder of illegal activities discussed by participants in equal frequency (0.1%) included denial of service attacks and theft of usernames or passwords.

Software piracy is the only criminal activity observed on the forums in anything more than negligible amounts. Three of these options measure different aspects of software piracy (theft, downloads, serial numbers). That only three out of every hundred discussions on a Jihadist forum contain explicit evidence of software piracy may seem insignificant. We note, however, that each instance of software piracy is a criminal offense implicating several individuals, entities, or organizations., such as the following.

- The individual distributing the software and/or serial numbers
- The forum where links are posted to the stolen items
- The sites used to actually store the stolen items online
- The forum members who download and use the stolen software

A prominent Jihadist forum may have 100,000 discussions, of which 3,000 will represent a separate crime that may be investigated. In addition, the lead U.S. law enforcement agency

in software piracy investigations is also the lead agency in counter-terrorism

investigations, namely the FBI.

Coders were queried as to whether the Muslim community could acquire the information

related to illegal activities in the discussions from other (non-Jihadist) web sites or mass

media. Interestingly, their responses were almost evenly divided between affirmative

(52%) and negative (48%) responses. It may be the case that individuals (whether Muslim

or not) believe that information about criminal activity related to computers can be found

more commonly in subversive web sites and through online communications involving

people who share similar ideology and beliefs.

## 6.   *Characteristics of the online participants*

Coders were asked to note whether, based on what they read in the materials given to

them, women and children participated in the discussions. The majority of the discussions

(87%) were judged to include only men, and 13% included women. While it is not possible

to determine with certainty whether a forum participant is male or female, their username

on the forum is likely to indicate their gender; findings from computer mediated

communications research suggest that if online participants present themselves as male or

female, they are likely to be what they present. The finding of predominantly male

participation in Jihadist forums is also consistent with the socially conservative Islamic

ideology that online participants are affiliated with or engaged with through the web sites.

In regards to participation of children or youth under 16, the coders found the majority of

the participants to be adults (97.1%), and only 1.3% children or youth under 16. In another

portion of about equal numbers (1.6%), the age of the participants could not be ascertained

by the content of the discussion. Short of a participant claiming to be under the age of 16, there is no way to determine with certainty a participant's age, and there is no way to confirm a claim of being a juvenile.

Coders were asked to provide their opinions about the religious inclinations of the online participants based on the discussions they read. The overwhelming majority of the participants (94%) were defined as religious fundamentalists (of Sunni affiliation), 1% were thought to be secular, and the remainder were considered other than the first two categories.

*7.   Participants' Jihadist views, convictions, and activism*

Coders were asked whether the discussion included any quotes from leaders of the Jihad (e.g. Abdallah Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Musab al-Suri, Osama bin Laden, etc.). Less than one tenth (9%) of the discussions included such quotes. In this respect it is interesting to note that despite the extensive use of the forums to distribute content from recognized leaders of the Jihad, they are only quoted half as often as religious figures or scholars. Having said that, it is significant that roughly one of every ten discussions includes quotes from such leaders, ensuring that they have a constant, albeit virtual, presence in the community.

Coders were asked to list whether participants engage in the question of how Muslims should relate to non-Muslims. The findings show that this issue was raised in over one fifth (21%) of the discussions. In most of them (19%), the discussion expressed agreement that it is allowed or required to kill them, whereas only in 0.3% of the discussions there was disagreement with this statement. Another issue in this respect was that agreements with

non-Muslims may be broken (0.8%) and only 0.4% of the participants thought that agreements with them must be kept.

Another question addressed whether there is mention of Jews or Christians in the discussion. In almost a quarter of the discussions (24%), Christians were mentioned, whereas Jews were mentioned in 9% of the discussions. In Discussion 2015, both Christians and Jews are labeled as either complete infidels or simple unbelievers. For instance, Discussion 1579 does not mention Jews, but equates the threat of the U.S. with the "crusading faith" of Christianity. Discussion 1580 includes a post calling on Muslim preachers to refrain from calling Christians brothers. Discussants also call for the killing of Jews, citing the Bani Quraiza incident from the life of the Prophet as an example. It is important to note that al-Qaida is the lead organization in what they refer to as a "Jihad against the Zionists and Crusaders." Despite the significance of this element in Jihadist organizations, Christians and Jews are absent from three quarters of Jihadist discussions.

Another way to examine the prominence of Salafist/Jihadist ideology in online discussions was through asking whether the discussions included expressions of Da'wa. Da'wa is a kind of Islamic preaching, a calling or invitation to practice the faith. It is a form of evangelism directed towards those who are already nominal adherents to the faith. As Salafist Jihadists, forum participants fall within the broader Salafist movement, which historically is connected to preaching and calling Muslims to return to what is presented as authentic Islamic religious practice. For instance, Discussion 1774 began as a series of questions on how a Muslim should live, while the answers constituted Da'wa. In Discussion 1948, a Christian female asks for more information about Islam and is answered with social, historical, and religious information as well as verses from the Quran. The results show

that the majority (85%) of the discussions did not include any da'wa, while 15% of the discussion included some form of such preaching.

A related question addressed whether the discussions included any symbols or historical events from the time of the Prophet presented as a model for activity against non-Muslims today. The overwhelming majority (94%) of the discussions did not include such references, and only 6% of them did refer to such symbols. For instance, Discussion 1580, mentioned above, presents the actions of the Prophet against the Jewish Bani Quraiza as a model for behavior vis-à-vis Jews today.

It is noteworthy that while 37% of discussions call for Jihad, 19% view the killing of non-Muslims as permissible, if not required, and 8% promote suicide operations, only 6 of every 100 discussions reference events from the time of the Prophet and his Companions, despite the latter having been by and large continually at war with the unbelievers. The suggestion is that, despite claiming to be part of a tradition dating to the very beginnings of Islam, Jihadist ideology and practice is actually a more recent phenomenon, if not an innovation (*bid'a* in Arabic) that is forbidden. Likewise, 99.6% of the discussions surveyed did not contain any comparison between the Islamic community in the West today, and the condition of the Muslim community in the times of Mohammed (e.g. the Meccans, the Medians, the Tent of al-Bayt, etc.). The condition of Muslims in the West is essentially a non-issue for Jihadists, despite the fact that about a quarter of all online Jihadists live in the West. There were also hardly any references (1%) to how Muslims in the West need to behave. The distribution of the minority discussions that included such references mentioned statements such as Muslims need to become a separate community, act against the non-Muslims, or use the institutions and laws of the host country to act against it. But

also included were statements such as Muslims need to blend in/assimilate, or the Muslims should act only according to the laws of Islam. The fact that these options accounted for no more than 1% of the selected discussions suggests that issues related to life as a member of a religious and/or ethnic minority in the West is not a major political concern to Jihadists, although it may motivate or preoccupy the mind of some Islamist extremists.

## B.   Qualitative findings

### 1.   Introduction

Content analysis of the summaries of the discussions confirms that they can be grouped into four categories or themes: information dissemination, religious preaching, instruction or training, and social interactions. These themes are all a means towards the fulfillment of three central activity pillars in the terrorist organization: ideological foundation, organizational structure, and operational means. Further analysis shows that forum discussions are not only used as means to a broader organizational end, but rather themselves serve as a rallying organizational goal and purpose. The discussions' categories and their aims as reflected in the data are detailed below.

### 2.   Four categories of distinction

Based on the textual organization of materials, the substantive content of Jihadist forum discussions can be divided into four principal categories: (1) information dissemination; (2) religious dogma; (3) training and instruction; and (4) interpersonal communications.

The first theme, information dissemination, appears to be the largest of them all.[4] The main purpose of discussions in this category is to report on developments and events and to

present views and opinions on various topics. Some discussions in this category are often

presented as news reports, official press pieces, or publicity articles.

Discussions in the second category, religious dogma, provide ample justification and

support for organizational activities that are mostly presented as religious argumentation.

Moreover, in this category, discussions include general lifestyle habits and other matters of

religious relevance. These discussions are usually led by a religious cleric who gives a

speech or sermon.

The third category, training and instruction, offers topical discussions on technical skill

building on a variety of subjects that are both related and unrelated to organizational

operations. In a discussion, manuals are often referenced and introduced visually as

images. These discussions are also sometimes structured as an in-class schooling

experience, emulating classroom-teaching styles.

The fourth category, the interpersonal communications category, is the smallest of the four.

The main purpose of these discussions is to converse with other discussants, to share

emotions, thoughts, and feelings and to foster a socially based dynamic. In fact, every

category facilitates communal relationships to a certain degree; however the fourth

category remains distinct because relationship building is the sole purpose of these

discussions.

## 3.  *Three organizational principles*

These four categories combined serve three basic organizational principles and those are

the ideological foundation, the organizational structure, and operational means. Analysis

will show that all four categories serve to reinforce these three foundational principles.

### a. Ideological foundation

Studying Jihadist organizational forum discussions reveals a great deal of complexity in this age of globalization; a similar and common portrait arises with regards to all Jihadist organizations. Jihadists generally split the world into two parts — Dar al Harb (house of war or land of war) for the infidels, and Dar al Islam (house or land of Islam; our home, our land). Discussions demonstrate that the worldview of members belonging to Jihadist organizations is largely polarized and factious. Moreover, a distinct and eternal war between extremes is taking place on two ends that will never intersect or meet.

In one way or another, problematic relations of the Muslim world with the West, especially with the U.S. and Israel, arise from most of the discussions. Different statements suggesting alienation, anger, and hatred frequently appear throughout discussions, and further fuel a polarized one-dimensional worldview between the hated "West" and its opposite extreme, "Islam." It should be noted that it is Islam and not the "East" that comprise the two polarities as these appear in the discussions. Dividing the world into East and West has been viewed as a natural and accepted paradigm for hundreds of years, although it still remains controversial and divisive at times. It is difficult to determine where the border between the two is drawn and what the cultural demarcation between West and East and between East and West is (Said, 1978/1995). It is thus interesting and useful to examine forum discussions that highlight where the borderline is between what is clearly considered the "West" and what is non-West, and who, according to discussants, is included in the groups to be hated and who is not. Moreover, it is instructive to examine the characteristics associated with the different groups.

An initial characterization of those perceived as distinctly belonging to the West, according to discussants, is found in discussions on topics related to information-dissemination and organizational fighting operations. Frequently, these discussions portray a news-like feel or types of communiqués (to the press) from different organizations, offering news updates and details on the latest operations (terrorist activities) against enemies of the organization. An example from Discussion 24 is helpful in this regard:

> A news item from the Taliban movement of fighter activities on the day of the 26-11-2006 and from the previous night report the following: an explosion of an American tank… has killed all the soldiers. The report also includes two photos, one of a wounded American soldier on a gurney and a second photo of a downed helicopter. Both photos confirm Taliban accomplishments and success in fighting the Americans. At the bottom of this report a picture of Bin Laden is portrayed adorned with a statement of good will and a quote from a song criticizing willing leaders who will never return. The quote also calls to fight against the Christian army.

Much like in other discussions, the enemies are the American soldiers on tour in Iraq. All U.S. activities are conceptualized in the discussions as an occupation and are often the declared central reason for hating the Americans specifically, as well as other Western countries that cooperate with them. Similar to the hatred toward Americans, which is mostly attributed to their military actions against Muslims, Russia is often mentioned as a country that must also be fought and resisted due to its actions. An example of this view can be found in Discussion 43, which can be categorized as a discussion emphasizing inter-personal communication:

> The discussion describes the Chechen leader Doku (Dokka) Umarov who was surprised to learn that Muslim countries were looking to strengthen ties with

> Russia and yet, it is considered to be the number one enemy of Islam... Russian
> wars against the Muslims for 400 years, the occupation of Muslim lands such as
> Siberia and the Caucuses, the demolition of homes and banishment of more than
> 90% of Muslims... since 1994 until 2006 when Russia killed 225 thousand Chechen
> Muslims among them 45 thousand children... destroyed all the land... Russia... is a
> traitor.

The accepted perception is not only that Russia is part of the East but is also a leader in the

Eastern block rather than the West. Nonetheless, the two discussions above demonstrate

that in the background of what is called the West — including Russia — a great deal of fixed

national and political tension appear and are related to concrete events such as the

American operations in Iraq or Russian involvement in Chechnya.

Along with political justifications, other discussions offer additional rationale for hating the

West. Perceived moral deficiencies amongst Americans in particular and the West in

general are often specifically highlighted and denigrated. As such, a topic that repeats itself

with high frequency, and demonstrates the perceived American moral flaws, is the hurtful

manner in which Muslim prisoners are treated in jails. Discussion 801, which has been

categorized in the information dissemination category, was written as a letter to the press:

> The discussion involves the Muslim country, Iraq, and the suffering of those
> prisoners imprisoned by the crusaders [Americans] and their collaborators in jail
> cells. The crusaders have punished the prisoners harshly and severely and
> prevented them from eating, drinking and reading the Qur'an.

By preventing helpless Muslim prisoners from eating and drinking, and submitting them to

cruel and harsh punishment, as well as assaulting their freedom of religion, the Americans

are in fact demonstrating how, aside from the direct situation of warfare, members of the

West are lacking in moral attributes. However, the moral failure of the West, as is claimed

in these discussions, is far worse than it seems on the surface. In an extraordinarily

interesting example, taken out of Discussion 1222, a moral deviation that is not connected

to warfare is brought forth. Contentwise, this example aligns with the information

dissemination category and discusses commentaries, while the integrity of Western science

and technological developments are assessed:

> The American landing on the moon is refuted and the evidence for that relies on
> analysis of NASA photos, related chemical, physical and astronomical data and the
> assertion that the entire event was staged by the Americans, and if that were not
> the case they would have attempted to land on the moon again.

This claim does not reject technological or scientific progress, which is generally associated

with the West, and often depicted as the opposing view to religious or more conservative

ones. On the contrary, disproving the landing on the moon, according to the author, relies

on scientific data from the same field and discipline, and its goal is not to dismiss the

scientific process, but rather those Americans and the West who distort and misuse it and

boast of bogus accomplishments.

Thus far, two central sources have been cited to support and justify discussant alienation

from the West: (1) the national-political justification; and (2) the moral justification.

Nevertheless, underpinning these justifications is a deeply entrenched rationale that is

much more pervasive. Much like in other discussions, American soldiers in Discussion 24

are represented as the direct enemies of the discussants; however, they may only be

symbolic of the true enemies. Throughout this discussion, the American military

(particularly those soldiers in Iraq) are referred to as the "Christian Military." And so, the

religious justifications, along with the entire Christian world, are specifically revealed as the real enemy of the organization, which is in fact the "true justification for hating the West." Discussion 20, which is also dedicated to notifications of organizational activities, highlights the contrast between the religious background of Muslim organization members and the Christian and Jewish enemies:

> The notification results in a call of destruction against America, Christians and Jews, to ruin their crop, destroy their power and take their possessions as bounty for Muslims, to frighten and humiliate them, to instigate disputes between them, bring down their planes, damage their aims and not accept reconciliation with them.

Hatred towards whoever is not a Muslim is based on a religious distinction, common amongst discussants, between the "believers" — Muslims, usually of the Sunni stream, and the "infidels" — all the others. This sole distinction, in this and other discussions, provides suitable justification for hatred and is an appropriate rationale for a Jihadist war. Oftentimes this argument is backed not only by those discussions preaching religiosity, but also across all other categories of discussion including quotes from the Quran, Hadiths, and Fatwas. Such is a quote reporting on "military" operations from Discussion 816, which belongs to the information dissemination category:

> A verse from the Qur'an glorifies Allah, the Prophet and believers. Another verse from the Qur'an, discusses fighting the infidels who shall be punished by the believers. An additional passage from the Qur'an discusses fighting the infidels in order to prevent heresy and temptation.

This quote is an example of the way in which religiosity and religious preaching is instrumentally integrated into different types of discussions in order to cultivate support,

provide justification for action, and incite the discussants towards Jihadist activities and operations.

Both the explicit and implicit refusal of "infidels" to be Muslims (of the "right" stream) is sufficient religious justification to hate and fight them. Nevertheless, discussions show that alongside the religious justifications are social and emotional ones, including a sense of deprivation, contempt, and a general fear for dangers posed to Islam by actions and behaviors of "infidels" towards Islam and Muslims. A quote from Discussion 1538, which is devoted to inter-personal communication between discussants, demonstrates this by explaining why Muslims will always be estranged from Jews and Christians:

> The Qur'an says that Jews and Christians will not accept you until we succumb to what they want.

From this quote and other discussions we infer a common perception held by discussants that views believers as a small group, an underdog that is fighting for its path, its honor, and survival. An additional example demonstrating feelings of alienation and personal insult from the "West" towards Islam and Muslims can be found in Discussion 1801, which belongs to the religious preaching category, and is dedicated to the advertising of what may be partly a lecture or some preaching by a Muslim religious cleric who had renounced his American identity in favor of Islam. In his statements the converted cleric relates information on "Western" attitudes towards Islam:

> The Evangelists talk about Arab men's dress and Western people consider it a funny thing. Also he talks about how he got into trouble at the airport when he arrived in the United States because of his Arab dress.

These statements demonstrate American belittling and condescending attitudes towards Arab customs, not only as an object of laughter, but also as a reason for suspecting the Arab of wrongdoing — enough of a reason to detain the man dressed in Arab garb at the airport. This treatment, and the accompanying sense of insult repeated and referenced by discussants, are instrumentally channeled toward Jihadist activities. Discussion 1608, dedicated to religious preaching, highlights a dualistic approach in which Jihad is not only a religious commitment, but also an essential reaction and response to the clear offensive launched against Islam by "infidels":

> The sermon praises Islam as a lifestyle and calls on Muslims to help establish the Muslim caliphate and implement Sharia [Islamic law], as these are the only ways through which the "glory" of Islam can be achieved. Al-Ali [Kuwaiti preacher] then recounts the "injustices" facing Muslims, saying that these make Jihad a necessity, both against the West, as well as against those within the Islamic community who have become subservient to the West.

Much like in other discussions, Al-Ali's statements above also target the ambiguously defined West as the source of evil and the target for Jihad. At the same time, the preacher calls for the glorification of Islam and its defense against the un-enlightened, because only the enlightened are deserving of life. Al-Ali also mentions that solely being a Muslim is not sufficient to be a "believer" and vice versa. The American who converted to Islam, and is quoted in Discussion 1801 for example, is not perceived as an "infidel" and, according to our coder, is even utilized as a positive example of an American who has successfully converted to and joined the ranks of Islam. Moreover, much like other justifications for hating the West, the rage towards Muslim infidels is also directed towards other groups under different pretexts.

The first group towards which sentiments of rage are directed during discussions are those Muslim streams that are not members of the discussant in-group's stream. Most of the organizations and discussions tracked are those belonging to the Muslim Sunni stream. It is largely other non-Sunni streams that are targeted. Discussion 830, for example, highlights the divisions between the various streams, and specifically focuses on historical differences between Shi'ites and Sufis.

> A discussion that attacks three historical leaders of the Sufi stream: Ibn al'Arabi, Mansur al-Hallaj, Muhammad al-Slimani and discredits them via quotes and passages from other historical religious clerics such as: Ibn Taimiya, Ibn Kathir, al-Dhabi, Shams al Din Muhammad al-Jazri al-Shafi'I, Abdul Rahim Bin Al Hussein Son of Iraq and others. He discredits them by accusing them that they have erred from the way of Islam, are ignorant, infidels … (Zandikim) and liars.

The coder suggests that many of these arguments are multi-faceted and old, and are therefore not unique to the online forum medium but can also be found in books, other web sites, etc. Nonetheless, these important historical matters are often presented as deeply meaningful and the streams are presented as having significant theological differences:

> The discussion focuses on a Shi'ite story about an elephant made out [of] mud, that one day picked up and flew to Mecca. One of the discussants had seen this story on a website and cynically told it in the forum. The story was followed by ridicule regarding the absurdity of the story and those misguided Shi'ite members of the misguided Shi'ite faith who believe in it.

In Discussion 292, belonging to the inter-personal communication category, participants mock Shi'ite believers, their intellect for believing in the legend about the elephant made

out of mud, and address them as the enemy stream. Discussion 1467 truly mocks the

division between Sunni's and Shi'ites:

> The discussion mentions a link for football (soccer) in which participants laugh
> and scorns the Shi'ite leaders and the participant recommends the website in order
> to laugh and be amused.

Moreover, in Discussion 116 for example, Sunni discussants openly call on all forum

members to attack and destroy a Shi'ite news web site. These examples illustrate that

beyond the theological divisions, conversations in the various discussion categories foster

and facilitate the manifestation of social tensions. Political issues, also apparent in

discussions, are raised as an additional distinction between "believers" and "infidels." A

collaborative link between Shi'ites and the West is emphasized in discussions, and

examples are given to illustrate the toxic impact Shi'ites have on Islam. In Discussion 272, a

discussant mentions that more than 250 Shi'ites have died because of the collaboration

with infidels and a poem describing the victory of Islam over the enemy is iterated in

celebration.

Hatred and contempt towards a second group of Muslim "infidels" is justified by claiming

that members of this group not only object to organizational activities on political grounds

but also behave and conduct themselves shamefully. Members of this group, for example,

would be soldiers of the Iraqi military who have cooperated with the Americans, Iraqi law-

enforcement officials, and so on. Members of these groups are represented as tolerable

victims of organizational operations and are often brought up in the information

dissemination category. To justify attacking and hurting members of their own

communities and faith, discussants provide verses from the Quran calling for resistance

and struggle against all infidels. Discussion 290, for example, publicizes an official

statement of the Islamic Army in Iraq and also includes a religious justification of attacks:

> The launching of three mortars on a central Shahid hub belonging to the infidel
> Iraqi police in Baghdad has caused a high number of casualties and wounded,
> largely from the ranks of the Iraqi police who are considered "Murtadin", those who
> have retracted from the faith. Verses from the Qur'an on fighting infidels say that
> God will punish infidels through the hand of the believers.

It is interesting to note the emphasis placed on appropriate justification of attacks against

Iraqi law-enforcement officials; after all, they are Muslims. Law enforcement officials are

not merely infidels but have also rescinded from faith and the punishment they are

receiving is from God and the believers are merely the executioners.

Excessive justification for attacking other Muslims is also conveyed with regards to the

third group. This group, with the exception of the Americans, is perhaps the most slandered

throughout the discussions, and includes leaders of the Arab states. The criticism and

wrath directed towards these leaders is not only harsh but also multi-faceted and includes

criticism of political decision-making but also their moral and religious standing. They are

often heckled and mocked. Discussants often comment that the fate of the Arab Muslim

leaders is worse than that of other infidels such as Christians. In Discussion 46, for

example, discussants disparage Arab leaders and Sheikhs who they accuse of having been

"proponents of the war in Iraq." Discussants criticize and question the decision-making of

leaders from Arab countries specifically as they are perceived to have succumbed to the

West. Discussion 349 highlights the notion that the Arab leaders are factitious and weak

against the West. Specifically as the United States and the European Union are unified, Arab

nations have abandoned religion and do not support the Mujahideen in their holy war.

Discussion 5, which belongs to the information dissemination category, addresses a news

item drawn from the French paper *Le Monde* and harshly criticizes Tunisia's president for

his treatment of Muslim cultural tenets:

> Zayn al-Abadin, Tunisia's ruler, is called an: adulterer, cheater, the biggest hounds
> of all the hounds in the region, a step son of the American intelligence services…
> for he has called upon Tunisian citizens to refrain from going to Mecca because it is
> a tradition from the "jahiliya days", money should be saved and used for
> construction and capacity building, and he has also called for a resistance against
> the wearing of the veil. Moreover, he has described Muslim religious clerics as
> Darwishes and described those countries in which the veil is popularizing as
> backward countries.

In this discussion, as well as others, three levels of criticism are intertwined: (1) a religious

criticism — al-Abadin's attitude toward the Hajj to Mecca and the wearing of the veil; (2) a

political criticism, which in this case is not explained — "America's step child"; and a

(3) social-moral criticism — adulterer and cheater. Thus, according to discussions, heresy

projects on the general behaviors of a person and claims a high moral price. In this sense, it

seems that the call for Jihad asit emerges from the discussions relies on a conceptualization

of heresy that is multi-layered, all-inclusive, and destructive, not just religiously speaking,

but also politically and socially. As such, heresy destroys the fabric of life on a broad global

level by shaping bad national and political processes, and also impacts locally, by

destroying individuals, the family and community. This duality is typical of the global post-

modern era as well as of the changes and crises brought about by globalization (Ram, 2005).

In summary, what emerges from the discussions is that the political-cognitive infrastructure that is constructed through the discussion points to a global world that is radically divided into "believers" and "infidels," a division that cannot be bridged, and whose only and inevitable outcome is the surrender of one of the parties. This polarization, as the discussions show, transcends continents and surpasses geographical and other borders, as it attempts to undermine and shatter existing frameworks. In the next section, we address the alternative frameworks offered, by examining the structure of the various organizations as they emerge in the forum discussions.

### b. Organizational structure

The previous section presented analysis of the general worldview captured via textual materials from four central substantive categories. In this section, we analyze how this worldview links to the structure of the terrorist organization, and the ways in which organizational operations as expressed in tracked discussions contribute to the development of this structure.

Differences in worldview demonstrated in the previous analysis not only show the differences between the Muslim world and the West, but also highlight the distinct, often bloody divergence in worldviews within the Muslim world and between Arab-Muslim states. According to discussions, the main distinction that is repeatedly reinforced and emphasized is the distinction between "infidels" and "believers," and this distinction is the only truly meaningful boundary that must be observed. In accordance with this view, which essentially rejects other boundaries utilized in other parts of the world, such as national

and political ones, discussants often called for pan-Arab unity that supersedes state borders. Discussion 484, for example, which belongs to the information dissemination group, involves personal commentary and analysis:

> True resistance… honorable resistance… must be national and universal and not align with any one race or nationality but must rather unite under one leadership and religion…

This statement, attributed to al-Zarqawi, demonstrates a viewpoint that Muslim unity ought to be supported and achieved by resistance; in fact, all Muslims must struggle and resist heresy and the "infidels" because "only honorable resistance is true resistance in the name of God against anyone who stands in the way of religion." Rather than emphasizing the viewpoint that unity should be based on resistance to infidels, other discussions emphasize unity as a function of religiosity. Such is Discussion 258, which belongs to the information dissemination category. Discussants view a film titled "Muslim Bliss," which is "…the happiness of Muslims over the establishment of the nation of those who dedicate themselves to God," and is described as the "…Muslim country is a country of Muslim individuals dedicated to God (Dawlat Almuhawdin)."

It seems that the idea of Muslim unity is not only a concept relevant to individuals perceived to be believers, or to organizations ranked amongst believers, but also to those who are perceived as infidels; namely, the ideal unity will include all sects of Muslims, even though it will be a complex unification. Discussion 1526 demonstrates the complexity of such an alliance:

> The subject of discussion is posed by a discussant who ponders how all Muslims
> can be united, specifically Sunnis and Shi'ites, when the Shi'ites do bad things and
> invent new ways and ideas which are foreign to Islam.

Despite the intent towards unity in this discussion, much like others that deal with Sunni and Shi'ite relations, it ends with the conclusion that fighting the Shi'ites is inevitable because they are infidels. Even online, via forums, some boundaries and differences cannot be ignored or dissolved, and are even elevated in importance. Nonetheless, the calling for crossing boundaries in favor of Muslim unity receives an interesting level of attention in discussions, as the technological platform via the Internet allows individuals and organizations to establish relationships between "believers" across the globe, and thus underpin their organizational foundation. For example, one discussion includes a discussant from Jerusalem, who conveys support for the "believers" struggle elsewhere — to a discussant in Iraq. From Discussion 403:

> The conversation discusses a statement made by a man named Abu Abd Allah al-
> Maqdsi from Jerusalem (Gaza). He addresses the Mujahideen in Iraq and calls them
> brothers and those who are similar in religion and speaks to them as the
> Mujahideen army (the army of the Muslim state – Ansar al- Sunna). He begins to
> speak of the Mujahideen and that he is proud of them and that they bring pride to
> the nation, and they are active and miracle-workers... he is proud of the
> Mujahideen and their customs and asks God to keep them safe and aspires to be
> like them.

It is estimated that the technological platform and rapid communications offered by the Internet has facilitated activities and cooperative operations between activists across the globe, between people who do not know each other and will never know each other in the traditional face-to-face manner. In Discussion 124, participants bring up the idea of Jihadist

web site unification, so that they too can present a cohesive front to the "enemy." In their

discussion, participants suggest using the Internet not just as a communications platform,

but also as an educational tool to spread their message. Web sites and cyber-activity, it was

argued, offer a systematic method of warfare and can assist in shaping and controlling the

enemy's communication and intelligence capabilities.

Furthermore, web sites and forums often offer direct links to inspiring films documenting

Mujahideen warfare, as well as educational materials documenting the struggle between

Islam and "infidels" (Discussion 191). These materials are available for download at

varying degrees of speed and quality, making them accessible to all types of Internet

connections and cell phones, and can easily be downloaded by people with limited

technological knowledge.

Discussion 194 illustrates that forum members are encouraged to request specific

materials to meet their interests and needs. Specifically, participants were offered custom-

tailored poems, songs, lectures, speeches, and Suras from the Quran. Most discussion

participants requested poems glorifying Jihad and songs about paradise. These materials

are often circulated by hyperlinks which allow a participant to follow-up with additional

questions and requests for further analysis.

Virtual meeting spaces are sometimes used as a rallying mechanism in itself. Discussion

103, for example, brings forth the idea that the American CIA has been scouring the

Internet for Islamist web sites, specifically focusing on the al-Fajr Media Center and the

Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), which serve as al-Qaida's online couriers and a

clearinghouse for information exchange between organizational activists. Discussants relay

that the CIA fears the movement and flow of information between members of the

organization and use this "evidence" to support and disseminate a new al-Qaida warfare strategy that is rooted in online presence and activity.

The interactive capability, which is a central and valuable characteristic of forums as a communications platform, demonstrates exactly how they override inter-personal connection and can be appropriately used for cooperative activities in lieu of meetings in person. Indeed, this type of cooperation takes place in a number of discussions across differently sized groups and varying organizational structures from various geographical locations and areas of expertise. For example, virtual communication was tracked between groups that focus on computer collaboration, that is attacking web sites, information dissemination etc., and groups that are not computer-centric such as cells focused on "conventional" warfare. As a result of this cross in communications between groups specializing in different areas, action cells with unlimited members engage in supporting and congratulating each other on their work, and specialized functional hybrid cells are formed. Other cell formation also takes place with a limited number of individuals that engage outside of the online virtual world, and are independently established by members across the globe. A testimony to this effect is found in Discussion 348, which suggests basic training in ways in which a non-computer based cell can be established, in other words — a small terror cell:

> A discussant states that although it is important work, it is unnecessary to travel to
> Chechnya, Iraq or Palestine to become a Mujahid, rather one can be a Mujahid in
> the country one lives in... You don't need to meet Osama or any other Mujahid... as
> you are a Mujahid for God and not for an organization... When you meet two or
> three good friends, who are strong believers, you start talking amongst yourselves
> of the need to create a cell, meet and talk and plan for your future, also experts are

available to provide guidance afterwards... meet in secret locations in unknown places, not a mosque, and change the time and place you meet in... in terms of funding, initially cell members shall subsidize their own activities after which funding will be secured... additional discussion on scope of work, which doesn't need to be on the al-Qaida scale, initially it is enough to assassinate an American ambassador which only requires a gun and bullets...

These last two examples demonstrate the vast differences in organization and structure advocated for in these discussions. Through online forums, and it can be assumed through other means, the organization enjoys a varied structure, one that is dynamic and significantly de-centralized. Cells of varying size and specialization make up the organizational fabric and ultimately remain independent of each other and of a central command or leadership. These cells maximize the lethality and power of the lone wolf, which can independently initiate, create, and recruit supporters and activists for Jihad activities.

Nonetheless, the relative independence relegated to Jihadists through these discussions should not lead to the conclusion that a central leadership does not exist or is missing in action. On the contrary, a strong ever-present leadership surfaces from discussions, even though it is presumed that discussants have never met and will probably never meet those leaders of the organization. The ability to communicate and act beyond the limits of time and space allows for global active discussant participation that in fact strengthens and reinforces the organizational power and its leadership. Similar to other organizations that act within the limits of the law, such as political parties, business firms, or social organizations (NGOs) who promote both external and internal goals through discussions, seminars, and workshops for members of the organizations, terrorist organizations

function in the same manner. The Internet, which facilitates the crossing of temporal and spatial boundaries, not only supplies full anonymity and cover but also allows for discussants to "meet," listen to preaching, and participate in religious seminars held by religious leaders and clerics and so on. In support of this observation, Discussion 1146 applauds Bin Laden and quotes a number of statements from other organizational leaders including al-Zarqawi and al-Baghdadi:

> A song by Nasr al-Fahd glorifying Osama bin-Laden says: that who loves you is not indecent, and even the tyrant of all wild beasts urinates out of fear and cries from your actions, and the despot of Algiers complains of your blow and the despot of Egypt does not sleep and the despot of Saudi Arabia is delusional, oh Sheikh of the Jihad, walk in peace.

> A quote by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi says: know the nation of the cross, that the war has begun and that the Islamic nation has began its walk in the ladder of the saved and although she may momentarily stop, she will not walk down, and you will fall from a high boulder and your heads will shatter against the bitter reality because we will either live in honor or die as *shahids* (martyrs), so be warned cowards.

> A quote by al-Zarqawi says: God knows that the saving of the Sunni women in Iraq in general but in Fallujah specifically is our most cherished thing and al-Qaida in Iraq has sworn that it will fight until annihilation to free these women from the prisons of the crusaders and the Shi'ite rebels.

It seems that utilizing the virtual medium to spread the words and ideas of various leaders is a powerful tool for sustaining the influence and power of the leadership, one that is not only global in operational scope but exists outside of legal and legitimate boundaries. Discussants' choice of online screen names and symbols demonstrates how the organizational leadership structure is reproduced time and time again. Frequently,

discussants make use of a leaders name or choose a picture of the leader to visually align themselves with a particular leader. This selection and alignment serves three purposes simultaneously: first, it perpetuates the anonymity element where a discussant does not need to expose himself; second, it serves as a public declaration in front of his peers of his views, loyalty, and commitment to the organization, and third, it bolsters and perpetuates the omnipresence of the leaders and their role in the organizational structure. In contrast to the challenges and limitations of physical assembly and meeting leaders, discussants convey support and demonstrate allegiance toward illicit organizations in a global outlawed setting without repercussion.

The online meeting space and its benefits are key elements that preserve and strengthen the decentralized organizational structure on the one hand, but also serve the global extended reach of a single leadership, which draws to it local and global operation cells of varying size and differing specialty and expertise, on the other. Operational means is the next topic of discussion.

### c. Operational means

The previous section presented analysis demonstrating how discussions from varying substantive content groups fulfill and construct the Jihad organizational structure as a global organization. Analysis suggests that two types of operational cells and two types of activities are enabled and supported via the virtual online platform: the first is the computer mediated based operational cells, where computer mediated activities take place; the second are more conventional non-computer cells, which conspire operations unrelated to online activities.[5] This section will examine the significance and meaning of

each of these operations, how they are structured through the discussions, and what are

their guiding principles.

One of the most salient uses of Jihadist forums is the instruction and training provided for

offline resistance and terrorist activities that do not require computer activities. An

important and central type of instructional discussion training for armed struggle is

demonstrated in Discussion 1949, which teaches how to use a small weapon, and includes

a variety of instructional interactive multimedia and films:

> The discussion is about three types of rifles, the M16, AK47 and the AR15 and are
> also supported by three documentary videos posted in the discussion as a
> reference on how the three mechanisms work along with detailed usage
> instruction.

In addition to this highly technical training, discussions offer at times broad instruction on

general fields of interest related to armed terrorist struggle, as Discussion 390, categorized

in the Instructional training category, which teaches "effective physical exercise for Jihadi

fighters." Discussion 122, on the other hand, offers online lessons on the preparation of

explosives, its chemical components, its substance characteristics and vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, discussants in one forum specifically request instructional materials on

tactical military maneuvers, additional weapons and explosives training, and information

on guerilla warfare (Discussion 180) as well as technical guides and links to rocket

manufacturing, wiring cars with explosives, and producing IED's. Textual links as well as

videos, diagrams, and images are also circulated in the forum (Discussion 1822).

In these discussions, direct and concrete instruction and logistical advice in preparation for

an armed struggle is provided, although other broader discussions from the information

dissemination group are also part of the concrete operational training. According to the

coders, the "newsworthy" discussions from the information dissemination category are

often provided to discussants as an example of successful operations and a model of how

fighting ought to be conducted. Discussion 108, for example, details the successful activities

of the Mujahideen in Iraq and specifically details dates and locations, as well as any

casualties or deaths, particularly of U.S. forces. The purpose of presenting newsworthy

items in a reporting format is not merely as an update, but is also a direct calling for Jihad

and a glorification of operations (Discussion 102). Discussions therefore have a dualistic

meaning or role as they initially communicate expressive newsworthy information, but can

also be interpreted and understood in an operational sense. This is a distinct advantage of

the online virtual medium as communication hubs that allow for double meaning and

messaging. The interactive characteristic of forums makes the distinction between the

messaging value and the operational value redundant. Frequently, the sole activity of

chatting online is perceived as Jihadist activity. For example, Discussion 1155, from the

information dissemination group, presents an explicit perception that spreading

propaganda is akin to warfare:

> The chat discuses a network (the Front for Islamic information) that is returning to
> broadcast and produce new material in order to fight the infidels with new
> publicity materials and films. A link for the network is provided in the chat
> discussants offer a blessing for the return of network broadcasts.

Internet activity is seen as particularly important and even critical to

information/propaganda and psychological warfare, and is inseparable from the Jihadist

war. For example, in Discussion 1369, categorized under interpersonal communications,

discussants lament the blocking and cessation of activity of a Muslim web site called al

Hesba, which is also called "…A green fortress for the communication Jihad." The term

*communication Jihad* emphasized yet again the central role communication has in

organizational activities. The same term is also used in Discussion 366, which quotes

statements by al-Zawahiri regarding communication Jihad and its role:

> Discussants mostly analyze an audio recording of Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri who
> conveys a message to the heroes of "shavkat muhajron" and all the brothers in
> other Jihadi networks as well as to those working in communication Jihad for all of
> their blessed efforts. He encourages them to continue in their way… and asks all
> media people to also push the nation to do Jihad with money and spirit, and reveal
> to the nation the crimes of the corrupt rulers who receive instructions from their
> masters by technological means and from Tel Aviv. Towards the end, he prays to
> God to keep the communication Jihad people safe.

The importance of information in all channels emphasizes the centrality of individual

online activities within the organizational structure. The Internet, especially the forums

(which are distinguished by high level of interactivity), allows anyone who is interested,

without dependence on place, time, or identity, to immediately and actively take part in

various organizational activities. The extensive references to web sites, whose purpose it is

to centralize supportive messaging of organizational activities, is perhaps the most

important example of the essential role the Internet medium offers Jihadist organizations.

Other highly original and imaginative examples for such activities include, for instance,

Discussion 23. This discussion demonstrates an active action with dualistic meaning of a

Jihadist fighter — once in the online reality as a fighter in an online game by al-Qaida, and a

second time in actual reality outside of the computer as an organizational publicity activist who is playing a game and publicizing it:

> Publication of a link to a computer game titled "Hell For Americans", directed towards kids and presents al Qaida against America with a calling to God for defeating of the Americans and to kick her out of Iraq defeated and humiliated.

The perception that online activity on Muslim web sites is part of the Jihadist struggle allows for a new age group to become active participants — children. Integrating different age groups into the organizational structure via forums exemplifies how decentralized the activities are. This also emphasizes the importance of the inter-organizational communications utility offered by forum discussions that offer a powerful rallying tool and provides a common language for all forum participants. This common language overcomes all gaps such as place, time, age, perspectives, and views and allows for cross-boundary activity towards a common goal. Furthermore, discussions from the instructional and training group are considered to be a learning space for studying the common language and also offer technical support, links to downloading software and learning how to use them etc.

Some of the content, even though it appears on terrorist organization web sites, is not linked to any type of Jihadist activity. For example, some discussions offered links to downloadable software explaining routine care for a computer — Discussion 553 offers a "new and enhanced software for keeping your computer secure"; updates for familiar software — Discussion 1721 offers an update for a Microsoft product as well as general training on how to use it.

Nonetheless, illicit activity and software pirating links are circulating in forums. As opposed to the general guidance, some discussions offer technical advice and support and are directly linked to terrorist activities. Discussion 569, for example, not only teaches how to attack web sites but also discusses the role of those involved and how they ought to fulfill the job:

> The discussion presents computer software that is combined with a different program that was on the website beforehand to attack websites. Links to the program coupled with detained explanations and images are also included. Discussants work together to attack and topple a website and draw on each other for support, sharing of information and technique sharing.

Other than explicit directions and instructions on how to engage in online Jihad, a unique discussion (Discussion 839) offered software which allows an individual to hide the IP address of the computer, thus offering full anonymity to active users. This discussion gives us further insight on the illicit nature of the activities. It seems that discussants purposefully ignore the legal questions surrounding on- or offline activism, although in this discussion it is acknowledged that existing legal systems forbidding hiding the IP address are illegitimate and irrelevant to discussants. Reading of this discussion raised the issue that the only legal system discussants must adhere to are Sharia, religious Muslim law, and the Sunnah. These frameworks are not to be viewed as supplementary to or complementary to any other legal system, but rather in place of them. A commentator from Discussion 677 has the following to say on the issue:

> The belief that religion is Islam and that the last of all prophets is Mohammad, who must be obeyed and his Sunnah adhered to… secularism is heresy, democracy is

heresy, the ruler who exchanges these rules with opposite ones is an infidel and must be disobeyed and when possible fought against…

As it seems, adhering to jurisdiction and laws, especially those that contradict customary law, is heresy. Discussion 1613 also offers a preaching in which the adherence to state rulers, that is, to secular law systems, is heresy:

> The discussion consists of a transcript of a lecture by Sheikh Abu Huzayfa al-libi in response to the Mufti (head of religious edicts) of Saudi Arabia. The lecture criticizes the reliance on clerics who "serve" the country's rulers and not religion. Furthermore, it criticizes how these state appointed clerics forbid matters such as Jihad, while 'making legal whatever' the ruler wants.

The last two examples illustrate the problematic contradiction between religious laws that require complete adherence and submission and obedience to laws that are based on the "whims of a ruler." According to the cleric, it must be the absolute preference of the believer to embrace the religious law and reject all secular attempts to revoke Muslims of their rights to fulfill religious obligations such as Jihad.

It thus seems that behavioral conduct, observed in discussions, develops under the influence and inspiration of the Sharia law system or, at the very least, the aspiration to implement it does. Two different reasons to explain and support this very aspiration as well as the general perception of organizational activity are put forth. Firstly, the religious reason states that implementing Sharia law is considered a religious obligation and decree, and it is therefore incumbent upon the believer to unwaveringly conduct himself within its framework. Additionally, it is a religious obligation to implement the Sharia legal system in place of any other legal system already in existence.

Secondly, there is political rationale and motivation for implementing Sharia law. This argument aligns with the calling for Muslim unity, presented at the beginning of this chapter. According to this view, the establishment of one single solid legal framework in place of a number of state frameworks is central to the existence of a unified Muslim nation. Once separate legal systems within states are eliminated, state boundaries will crumble and the path is paved to the creation of the ideal world of believers — an all-Muslim population unified under Sharia law.

The ideal world, as discussed in forums, especially the ways and means discussants expect to implement these ideals, raises an internal contradiction typical of the global post-modern era. On the one hand, discussants convey a reactionary yearning for the golden days of Islam during Prophet Mohammed's time. In Discussion 310 discussants respond to the preaching by Sheikh Abu Yahya Al Libi:

> There is a general calling to fight the crusaders and the Shi'ites, the haters and their allies and the Jews – to destroy and humiliate them and to take their possessions as bounty and to tear them apart and drown them, destroy them and destroy their possessions and funds and their seed, and to handle them as Muslims had treated infidels and the Jews who had united against them in the Battle of al-Ahzab, and so, Muslims are broadly called to create a covenant, like the covenant of al-Ratsuan during the days of the Prophet Mohammad and his fight against infidels.

The longing for the revival of the glorious Muslim past is supported by conceptualization of the current Jihad with terms and concepts from the past. The Americans and the Christians for example are called the "crusaders" (also in Discussion 24), and their current mission in Iraq is simulated as crusader journeys in the Middle Ages. Even the battles conducted by

Jihadist fighters bear comparison to and often resemble historical battles, such as the one

in al-Ahzab.

Similarly, discussions suggest that conducting warfare to resurrect the past must include

cutting edge technologies. Discussion 510, for example, belonging to the Instruction and

Training category, suggests a new book on this topic:

> The discussion concentrates on an announcement by Shavkat Rasalt al Uma al
> Jahidia about the publication of a new book on the military utility of electronics in
> warfare. The book is one out of a series of books and is intended as an introduction
> to electronics and includes thoughts and new ideas on technology for the purposes
> of Mujahideen... The book mostly discusses the usage and application of watches
> and cell phones in explosive devices and mechanisms. The discussion also includes
> links to download the book.

This example illustrates how the traditional and conservative ideas of Mujahideen activists,

specifically of one Muslim nation unified under the laws of Islam, are in line with

technological innovations in the actual Jihad fighting. Apparently, the parallel yet

contradictory aspiration, of rejuvenating the past and recreating it as striving for future, is

typical of the Jihadist movement.

In summary, the forum discussions construct operational means that emerge from the

difficulties and contradictions inherent in the Jihadist activities, and provide resolutions

that address the gap between the yearning for the past and the necessity of technological

use while striving towards future goals. Moreover, discussions deal with issues of

cooperation and coordination of activities that bridge the temporal, geographical, age,

language, knowledge, and attitude gaps, with activities that are legal and obligatory in one

legal system but which are illegal and illegitimate in the other, and with the gap that seems

to shrink between the activity and the discussions about it.

The results confirm that terrorist organizations make widespread and varied use of the

Internet as a central means of communication and as a tool to promote organizational

activities. The content of discussions in Jihadist forums demonstrates how this unique

communication strategy shapes, promotes, and coordinates organizational operations.

Forums serve as a significant avenue of inter-organizational communication and are

utilized to meet organizational goals that are both local and global in nature, and

simultaneously allow for centralized control, on the one hand, and for decentralized

division of power, on the other. Organizational operations require maximum flexibility for

sustenance and viability outside of legitimate and legal boundaries — and the virtual

platform facilitates this advantage.

**Endnotes**

[1]   This requirement was set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and became part of the IRB protocol.

[2]   As mentioned above, the files in the links were not web pages, but documents of some kind. Coders were asked to specify the nature of the files based on what is discussed in the form. They were instructed not to download and examine the files linked, as such activity is likely to be monitored by the authorities in the countries in which the coders live, and the research team sought to minimize the risks of working on this project. It was made clear to the coders that this item was to be answered in the affirmative only when links were to distinct files, rather than to web sites (which may well also be used to distribute files) in order to distinguish it from the previous item, which queried about links to web sites (though these two items are not mutually exclusive). For example, a forum discussion might contain links to a web site where a video may be viewed online (e.g. YouTube) and also links to the video file in various formats that may be downloaded for offline viewing.

[3]   One can argue that a call for Jihad could be considered implicit in the very existence of almost any posting to a Jihadist forum. We therefore instructed the coders to examine the content of the discussion and to mark the item in the affirmative only when they found an explicit or implicit call for Jihad. The reliability test of this item was 100%.

[4]   Both the results of the quantitative study and the reading of the 500 coded discussions by one of the research team who is experienced in studying Jihadist Web sites support this conclusion.

[5]   As manifested in some of the discussions collected for this study, and supported by evidence provided by other studies (e.g. Weimann, 2006b), practical information was sent via these online platforms. Such

information includes terrorist manuals, courses on methods, and suggestions for attack targets. Thus, the discussion boards often become "virtual training camps" or at least contain links that send the interested surfer to sites that are such online camps.

## IV.  Conclusions

### A.  Summary of the findings

The quantitative study of forum discussions in Jihadist web sites demonstrates both temporal and spatial aspects to the discussions. By and large, discussions are short-lived and involve very few members of the Jihadist community. The overwhelming majority of the discussions included fewer than 14 entries. Discussion activity drops off markedly after 24–48 hours, with most discussions being active for fewer than seven days. Forums capture visitors by offering a stream of fresh content in the form of user posts. User posts can only come from members who are willing to be active by creating new posts. We know from our study that most forum members are passive consumers of the content provided by a few activists. The passive forum members who are in the majority continue to come back to the forum as long as there are new discussions. Discussions typically fade within 24 to 48 hours. To keep the attention of the majority of its membership, a forum needs new discussions. To provide this new content every 24 to 48 hours, a forum is highly dependent on its activists. Every individual active member in a forum is significant and important to its continued success.

Because on average discussions are short in duration and involve a small number of participants, forums have a constant need for members who are willing to be active, and who are able to post content that captures attention and meets the expectations of the community as a whole.

The topics that appear most often in Jihadist discussions include multimedia links, agitation or propaganda, and Islam. Discussions of these topics also tend to increase in duration. Discussions of concrete illegal activities that facilitate terrorism, criminal activities in the furtherance of terrorism, and virtual Jihad also have higher duration, but their fraction in

the discussions is smaller. Discussions of crime most often pertain to computers and software.

Discussions that included explicit or implicit calls for Jihad comprised over a third of the discussions. They were also associated with a larger number of entries and participants compared to those that did include such calls. Yet, participants were concerned about being monitored in only a negligible number of discussions.

Virtually all discussions on Jihadist forums are couched in Islamic terms, and interactions between community members commonly begin and end by invoking God (*Allah*) in some way. The most common citations are drawn from the Quran or Hadith, followed by past or present religious authorities, recognized leaders of the Jihadist movement, and lastly from Fatwa. Da'wa is often observed, as Jihadists seek to bolster each other's religious practice. Examples from the life of the Prophet and his Companions, while cited, are not as common as one might expect given the claim Jihadists make to the Salafist tradition.

The importance of the forum as a clearinghouse, which collects new and authentic Jihadist content, is highlighted by the finding that much of what is offered (about half of the discussions) involves links to other web sites or other types of content (e.g. videos), hosted elsewhere. A forum member's sharing of a link acts as an endorsement that the content linked to is likely to be of interest.

Almost half of the discussions sampled are devoted to agitation and criticism of perceived "enemies." Criticisms of so-called apostate Sunni Muslims, as well as of Shi'a, are almost as common as criticism of Christians — the acknowledged "far enemy." Expressions of

hostility towards Jews and/or Israel, while not uncommon, occur with considerably less frequency than what is observed directed towards Christians and fellow Muslims.

A qualitative analysis of a random sample of discussions identified four main underlying themes that support the structural and operational work of Jihadist organizations. They include: (1) information dissemination; (2) discussions of religious dogma; (3) training and instruction; and (4) interpersonal communications.

The analysis shows that substantive discussions, whether they involve information dissemination, religious preaching, training, or social interactions, are all a means toward the fulfillment of three central activity pillars in the terrorist organization: (1) ideological foundation; (2) organizational structure, and (3) operational means.

The discussions echo the tenets of Jihadist ideology. For instance, the world is divided into "believers" and "infidels," between Islam and the West, and refusal of infidels to become Muslims (of the "right" stream) is a justification to hate, fight, and kill them. The "West," however, takes a different meaning in Jihadist communications than in conventional discourse — it includes all countries or groups that have fought or harmed Muslims in some way.

Analysis also shows that forums are not only used as means to a broader organizational end, but rather themselves serve as a rallying organizational goal and purpose. Forum discussions facilitate the crossing of temporal and spatial boundaries with anonymity and cover, allowing participants to "meet," listen to preaching, and participate in religious teachings by leaders and clerics. Such "meetings" strengthen and reinforce the organizational power and its leadership, on one hand, and allow members to convey

support and demonstrate allegiance to the global illicit organizations, on the other. The

forums also serve participants' social interaction needs, providing a platform for jokes,

stories, and other exchanges that increase participants' bond and satisfaction.

The content of the discussions reveals that the online platform facilitates two types of

operational cells and two types of activities: The first is computer mediated operational

cells, where computer mediated activities take place; the second includes more

conventional non-virtual cells which coordinate operations unrelated to online activities. In

the former, the sole activity of chatting online is perceived as Jihadist activity, as part of the

Jihadist war or *communication Jihad*. In the latter, practical advice, training, references, and

instructions for various activities are provided and discussed, allowing participants to act

in the world outside the Internet.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses show that Jihadist forums are oriented toward

both real world activism, as well as discussion of events and actions undertaken by others.

In forum discussions, like in other venues Jihadists use to recruit for action, calls for Jihad

by both the rank-and-file and by bona fide Jihadist leaders are supported by religious

arguments justifying terrorist violence, including encouragement of suicide terrorism.[1]

Resort to crime and illegal means to accomplish or enhance Jihadist aims, while not

extensive, can be found.

## B.   Discussion

The various types of discussions inform a sophisticated network of inter-organizational

communication. The forums provide an online meeting space and benefits that preserve

and strengthen the decentralized organizational structure, but also serve the extended

reach of a single leadership which draws to it local and global operation cells of varying

size and differing specialty and expertise. These communication modes promote messaging

and contribute to organizational management, both locally and globally, while maintaining

simultaneously a decentralized division of labor and a centralized organizational

structure,[2] operating illegitimately yet seemingly adhering to religious law. The power and

vitality of online communications serve as a force multiplier that narrows geographic,

cultural, and temporal gaps. These processes that function on "glocalized" levels, along with

their impact on inter-organizational communication, highly influence the management

modules of Jihadist organizations as well as their internal division of power. Jihadist

organizational structures foster a solid internal communication system and are able to

minimize knowledge, cognitive, and conceptual gaps, as well as spatial and social

differentials between forum discussants. These communication systems preserve the

hierarchical structure of the organization, maintain its rallying capabilities, and serve as a

unifying force for the organization as a whole (see also Chary, 2007).

Another way to look at the advantages as well as the major disadvantage of the forums as a

communication channel addresses the common premises of mass communications. The

wide selection of content, uses, topics, and textual organizations, as captured in this study,

along with its textual categorization and analysis, involve five characteristics often

attributed to mass communications: a survey of the surroundings, analysis, entertainment,

continuity, and recruitment. The fulfillment of these roles, each of which has much

importance in its own right, is the contribution of the communication platform to the sound

functionality of the social system as a whole. Forums, it can be argued, fulfill these roles and

thus contribute to the existence and functionality of an alternative social system — the

virtual social framework of Jihadist activists. Thus, forum discussions provide lone activists with a support network and timely news regarding Jihadist activities that have become dear to them over time. Moreover, discussions clarify Jihad for the activists by offering analysis, publications, a virtual yet realistic community and network with which they can share traditions, faith, and religion. The network, via games, films, books, poems, and conversations also provides entertainment and distraction from other commitments, which turn their focus to the transformation into loyal and skilled activists amongst organizational ranks.

It is therefore possible to assume that the holistic "one-stop-shop" environment offered by forums offers an attractive and powerful resource for those interested in learning more about Jihadist ideas and opportunities for activism. This, however, is precisely the grave threat posed by discussion forums. In the absence of any real oversight on the Internet, discussions foster alternative virtual "societies" that are committed to and rooted in terrorist activities and conceptions, and that do not hesitate to promote or resort to illegal means to accomplish their aims.

Despite the emphasis placed on Jihadist activism in forums, the linkages between "keyboard warfare" (or *communication Jihad*) and conventional warfare remain unclear. In their classic publication, Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton (1948) suggest observing the connections and lurking dangers between mass communication instruments and social involvement and activism. Participating in the communications process, according to the researchers, may turn participants apathetic to the broader social process, and serve as an alternative to "real" social participation. A similar concern is also mentioned by an activist in Discussion 34:

> The discourse relates to a statement by one of the participants… he begins by glorifying and congratulating the mujahedeen and suggesting they are symbols of Islam, that they sacrifice themselves for Islam and give up all forms of entertainment for the religion… [The participant] criticizes the audio tapings offered by various websites… he ponders what the purpose of such tapes is. "Should we be proud of what the mujahedeen are doing or feel lazy, that we do not join them in Jihad"…The participant believes that the tapes in fact humiliate those people who do not join the activism and prove that they are worthless in comparison to the mujahedeen that sacrifice themselves for God. He goes on to suggest that joining the mujahedeen, rather than listening to taped lectures would provide a strong sense of social purpose and inclusion — 'instead of staying at home and watching the mujahedeen from afar.'

It seems that crossing borders between real action and the communicative activities around it could turn into a double edged sword: on the one hand, crossing over from online activism to real world action may recruit masses to Jihadist activities and offer a sense of camaraderie and social exclusivity. On the other hand, it could turn conventional Jihadist warfare, that is, the planning and executing of terrorist operations with conventional weapons, superfluous and irrelevant. Jihad could consist of "keyboard warfare" as a substitution for actual operations. This assertion is of course problematic, as there is no evidence to suggest that online activity on extremist web sites does not promote operational capabilities and action offline and vice versa. Similarly, it would not be a mistake to underestimate the impact of virtual online warfare and consider it as having a lesser impact than conventional warfare. The complex relationship between terrorist organizational online activism and their field operations raises the need for framing a sophisticated, multi-layered conception of terrorist organizations, communications, crime, and terrorism, as well as their interaction inside and outside the virtual world. The

possibility of crossing borders and moving from online activity to real action has also

implications for policy and practice.

## C.    Implications for policy and practice

The patterns and contents of Jihadists' online communications and activities, as

documented in this study, have several implications for policy and practice:

### 1.    *Utilize the ephemeral nature of discussions*

If, as a matter of policy, it is desirable to shape Jihadist discourse in a way that inhibits acts

of terror and violence, the short duration of forum discussions will provide ample

opportunity to test and refine messaging strategies. Interventions that are judged as

ineffective will quickly fall out of focus while effective messages can — in fact, must — be

repeated frequently. Regardless of the maximum number of posts per page of discussion,

the requirement that a reader must load another page to post an entry may serve as a

significant barrier, resulting in a loss of interest and decrease in activity. Consequently, if

one were seeking to intervene in a given discussion, not only would it be necessary to

respond rapidly, but also to get one's response onto the first page of the discussion. Given

the low rate of member participation in Jihadist forums, undercover agents seeking to

create a presence will be able to stand out and gain attention by participating, while

undercover agents seeking to remain less noticed will need to remember that participation

draws attention, therefore that they will blend in better in by *not* participating. As a result,

the strategy each agent will pursue needs to be thought out in advance, in order to enable

the agent to rapidly respond to newly-created discussions and to start discussions on a

regular basis. To that end, this research may be utilized to develop communications

objectives and patterns of behavior that allow the agent to be active and to pursue policy

goals while avoiding unnecessary suspicion. Finally, those agents deployed for the purpose of passive monitoring of discussions benefit from the fact that, at least on Jihadist forums, the behavior known commonly as *lurking* is normative.

## 2. Identify and respond to threats

The relationship between what an individual does on a forum and what kind (if any) of real world terrorist activism they may be involved in is by and large unknown. Individuals may clearly express their interest in perpetrating an act of terrorism in a public forum discussion, but for many reasons they may not reveal or indicate their intentions, capabilities, associations, and so on. In fact, they may say nothing at all. Counterterrorism must be proactive and preventative — a task which can be challenging in democratic societies with legal protections against self-incrimination and prohibitions against prior restraint. Given that all levels of the al-Qaida movement make use of Jihadist forums, there is an obligation to exploit that use in order to prevent terrorism from occurring; yet much of that involves identifying individuals and assessing the extent to which they constitute a threat to public safety.

One way of addressing this concern is by introducing interference. In responding to threats posed by Jihadist web sites, a number of options, beyond passive observation of the forums, present themselves. Forums can be removed from the Internet by any of a number of methods, ranging from legal takedown notices in countries where that is an option, direct appeals to service providers, the arrest of forum administrative teams, and finally network warfare techniques. The findings of this study may assist policymakers in deciding which forums are best targeted for disruption or removal, which would be better infiltrated and aggressively monitored, and which ignored. The value of intelligence collected from the

forums needs to be balanced against the harm done by such virtual communities of extremists. One course of action would be to monitor and infiltrate forums to the extent resources allow, and to remove those which cannot be adequately attended to or handled.

The society-building functions of a forum, cluster of forums, or other online community such as Yahoo! Groups or Facebook — survey of surroundings, analysis, entertainment, continuity, and recruitment — could be undermined by the subtle or blatant application of disrupting "noise" at any step of the process. Disruption can take several paths, one of which may be to allow a forum or other online community to continue operating as a social system for Jihadists while steadily and stealthily altering its character. Using the Shannon-Weaver model as a starting point, von Knop and Weimann (2008) characterize noise as a metaphor for any barrier to communication, such as stress, time constraints, distraction, damage to credibility or reputation, and reduction in channel reach or signal clarity. Inserting "semantic, psychological, cultural, and physical noise" into targeted forums may leave those channels receptive to substitution of themes and messages less likely to encourage or enable acts of terrorism. Offering, for example, entertainment with subtly diluted themes, or frequently updated information that is compelling but innocuous, may attract the attention and consume the time of Jihadists, keeping them away from an online locus that presents more of a threat of genuine operational radicalization. These co-authors also suggest approaching information operations from the standpoint of a political campaign that seeks to mobilize, convince, and convert through persuasion and facilitation of desired behavior. To counter these capabilities in terrorist web presences, von Knop and Weimann suggest learning more about the psychographic profiles of the targets and the

messages that affect them. The data collected in this study can serve as a starting point to that end, while its methodology can inform further data collection in pursuit of that goal.

### 3. *Mitigate exposure to violence*

Exposure to violence, some would argue, is a predictor of future violent behavior (see section I.B.8, *Exposure to violence/conditioning*). Significantly, in the case of Jihadists on the online forums, violent videos are experienced in a religious/ideological context that provides repeated justifications for terrorist violence, as well as explicit or implicit calls for forum members to engage in acts of terror, including suicide terrorism. That this context is religious is confirmed by the findings of this study regarding the content of Jihadist discussions, and the large percentage of discussions rated by the coders as based on or reflecting religious identification. This supportive, encouraging, and enabling context is likely to exacerbate the known consequences of exposure to violence. For purposes of counterterrorism policy and practice, efforts should be made to interdict the production and distribution of Jihadist videos, with special effort focused on removing from the Internet videos that are particularly harmful — those which portray graphic violence. First Amendment protections may apply to independent production of violent Jihadist videos, but production and distribution of videos in support of designated terrorist organizations is not protected speech, as is borne out by the conviction of a number of American citizens for engaging in just such activities. Additionally, online service providers — such as the operators of video sharing sites — are well within their rights to enforce their own standards regarding acceptable content and should be encouraged to do so. Because opportunities for the abuse of such visual information abound, and in light of the videos' potential for producing social harm, government agents should refrain from involvement in

producing such videos, and in any case, should only aid in the production and distribution of violent Jihadist videos under the most extreme of circumstances (i.e. if the benefits of infiltrating a media production network significantly outweigh the costs incurred as a result of the media they produce).

The quantitative data collected from the forums indicate that while forum members number in the thousands, readers of any given discussion are in the hundreds, and actual discussants per discussion are a handful of members. If there is a profile of an online Jihadist activist, its most salient attribute is lack of active participation in discussions. We know that those who *do* participate express very little concern about surveillance, but it would be speculation to say that those who *do not* participate behave in this way in order to avoid detection or investigation. So much of what Jihadists do online involves passive observation of discussions, and so many of those discussions involve links directing the observer to other sites or to data in other formats (i.e. files to be downloaded), that any investigation of Jihadist activity online needs to follow the links *out* of the forums. External sites need to be assessed and, where appropriate, monitored and investigated. Likewise, files available for download need to be collected and analyzed. To the extent possible — for example through network surveillance — access to these other sites and files should be monitored, particularly if such access can be traced back to the forums, and to particular forum users. Such correlations could prove invaluable in assessing the threat represented by otherwise apparently passive members of terrorist-supporting online communities.

*4. Understand Arab, Muslim, and Jihadist context*

Jihadist discourse occurs in an undeniably Islamic context. For policymakers and practitioners alike, an understanding of Islam, Arab/Muslim culture, and Islamic history is

a prerequisite. At the same time, it is important not to generalize from Jihadists to all

Muslims, as this tendency will cut us off from important allies, expertise, sources of

actionable intelligence, and opportunities to isolate Jihadists from the mainstream Muslim

community. Data on the kinds of Islamic content and their prevalence can inform the

practice of agents deployed in forums — whether they seek to shape perceptions or to

make friends and infiltrate networks.

## D.   Potential limitations of the study

Jihadists do not access forums, select discussions to view, or respond to entries randomly.

Upon accessing the forum they are presented with a non-random selection of topics,

toward which the forum administrators seek to steer the membership based on the

administration's own assessment of what is important. It is possible that as a consequence

of our desire to avoid bias or convenience in sampling discussions for analysis, we have

presented a picture of the forums that is not shared by Jihadists, or a view of the forums

that does not represent the way Jihadists experience them.

This research was predicated on the notion that native speakers of Arabic from the Middle

East who are also Sunni Muslim will produce a more accurate or authentic reading of the

discussions (in anthropological terms, *emic* accounts) than the interpretations of coders

who do not have all these attributes (*etic* accounts). Relying on social and cultural insiders

is beneficial for a study such as ours precisely because coders who are Arab Muslims are

closer to and more familiar with the subject matter.[3] It is possible that an outsider who is

well-versed in Arabic and Islam may do better work because the *etic* can maintain distance

from the subject matter. We believe, however, that our decision to employ coders who can

be considered insiders is defensible in terms of receiving authentic coding and interpretations of the discussions.

Formal inter-coder reliability testing was conducted on ten discussions. However, each discussion contained varied information and numerous items. Further, the lengthy process of creating the final version of the questionnaire involved numerous rounds of revisions and rewriting items until the level of inter-coder reliability was sufficiently high to conduct formal inter-coder reliability testing.[4] Additionally, throughout the course of the research we maintained a strict regime of quality control that involved a detailed weekly review of 25% of all coded discussions, with ongoing feedback provided to the coding staff throughout the coding process.

Lastly, we wish to address value judgments inherent in research on terrorism. In the course of this study, all acts of violence perpetrated by Jihadists were labeled and coded as *terrorism*, though many of those acts would commonly be referred to as *insurgency*. There is no doubt that insurgents engage in acts of terrorism, and that terrorists can participate in an insurgency; however, the two forms of violence are fundamentally different. For example, an attack by an armed unit on a military outpost is not the same as an individual driving a car bomb into a marketplace crowded with civilians. Research on the foreign volunteers who joined al-Qaida in Iraq indicates two distinct "career paths": fighter and martyr (Combating Terrorism Center, 2007; Watts 2008a, 2008b, 2009). These two classes of al-Qaida activists correspond roughly to the ways their subsequent violence would be labeled (insurgent and/or terrorist); they came from different places, and they were likely motivated by different factors (Ibid.) There is also reason to believe that the would-be martyrs were exposed to more violent Jihadist media than the aspiring fighters.

## E.  Implications for further research

### 1.  *Use terrorism prosecution data to study forum behavior and its impact*

This research was restricted to content analysis of online discussions by anonymized Jihadists. The findings regarding degree of participation, and nature of discussions, should be analyzed and compared with the investigative records upon which terrorism prosecutions have been based. The objective of such research would be to identify if, and to what extent, the online activity of actual terrorists is similar to or different from the generally observed behavior of Jihadists online, or to examine the role or extent of online participation in convicted terrorists' pathways to terrorism.

### 2.  *Examine what is linked and shared*

The presence of links to authenticated external content (files and sites) is a salient feature of forum discussions. The clearinghouse function is therefore the single most important role played by the forums. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of sites and files that are linked to from within forum discussions would identify the online content that influences Jihadists. For agents operating in an undercover capacity on Jihadist forums, a richer understanding of the files and web sites that are most often shared by Jihadists will improve the quality of their own participation in forum discussions. Our study points to the importance of these links, and further research would provide guidance as to what content agents should be seen to interact with in order to blend in, what type of content they should offer if they wish to build a reputation as a curator of popular content, and what content they should avoid providing if their goal is to avoid negative attention.

*3.   Analyze themes in popular scriptural material*

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of scriptural quotes in Jihadist discussion forums would yield a clearer picture of what, in particular, Jihadists find important in scripture. The prevalence of quotations from scripture in Jihadist forum discussions is important beyond the meaning of the text or any bearing it may have on the discussion in which it appears. A quantitative analysis of the prevalence of particular quotes from scripture will likely reveal frequent references to a particular subset of text whose common interpretation is in agreement with the world view of Jihadists (as opposed to Muslims generally). Such knowledge would aid in developing a better critique of Jihadist ideology and also give those seeking to infiltrate forums clearer guidance on topics of discussion that are likely to generate interest and approval. In other words, it would help arm agents seeking to counter or undermine (cf. von Knop & Weimann, 2008) Jihadist incitement with scriptural arguments that would resonate with the intended audience. It would also give agents who want to increase their credibility on the forums another source of material to share that is likely to be popular.

*4.   Measure acceptance of promoted content*

Comparative analysis of forum discussions as a whole with those discussions that a) are promoted by forum management or b) attain popularity with forum members (measured by number of readers, rates of response, duration, etc.) would yield a clearer understanding of whether forum administrators have a more pronounced impact on message diffusion than ordinary members have. If further research shows forum administrators to be a greater factor in message distribution, policy may be formulated to control their messaging activities. If an analysis shows that forum administrators do not

wield greater influence than ordinary forum members, the implication would be that there is not a special need to expend resources on controlling administrators' activities.

## 5.   *Analyze operational security practice adoption*

Extensive in-depth analysis of those Jihadist discussions related to online operational security methods and issues would yield information of benefit to investigators and collectors of signals intelligence. If possible, classified information regarding the prevalence of proxy server use or other security measures by Jihadist forum activists should also be studied to see if there is a significant correlation between such discussions and actual Jihadist practice. Similar comparative study should be made on adoption of security measures by the overall Jihadist population and the use of such methods by Jihadists who have been the subject of prosecution. It would be helpful to understand the extent to which Jihadists practice the procedures they discuss, if there is any correlation between discussions of operational security and actual practice of operational security, and finally, if there is any correlation between the practice of operational security and subsequent prosecutable behavior. Related to operational security behavior online is the issue of trust and distrust. If it emerges that computer-mediated communication increases participant trust, what is the effect on efforts to sow distrust in order to, for example, disrupt the formation of operational terrorist units?

## 6.   *Study translator characteristics*

Given the importance of accurate and reliable translation of Jihadist source material in intelligence and law enforcement activities, the issue of whether native Arab Muslims produce higher-quality, authentic, or bias-free work should be studied. A side-by-side study pitting translations by Arab Muslim coders against non-Arab and/or non-Muslim coders

with comparable language skills and understanding of Jihadist ideology may help in this respect.

## 7.  *Weigh intelligence gains and risks*

Discussions of suicide bombings or other martyrdom operations should be analyzed for imagery (still or video) of the aftermath of the attack in question. Understanding the prevalence of such imagery would enable an assessment of the role Jihadist forums play in fomenting support for and encouraging participation in suicide terrorism, and would build on the findings of previous research based on mortality salience theory (Pyszczynski et al., 2006). It is possible that Jihadist forums increase the likelihood of terrorism regardless of the quantity or quality of intelligence gleaned from their pages. Ultimately, policymakers must balance the exploitation of Jihadist forums for intelligence purposes with the potential such forums may have for increasing the overall threat of terrorism.

**Endnotes**

[1]  Studies of the content of videos and other links listed in Jihadist web sites indicates that at least 50% of all Jihadist videos confront the viewer with scenes of actual terrorist violence; see Weisburd, 2008b; 2009b.

[2]  Most of these forums are operated or at least controlled by al Qaeda operatives. They are monitored by al Qaeda and are often used by members or fans to post their videos, audio recordings, messages from the leaders, etc. Thus, despite the "diffuse" nature of this platform, it is used, regulated or monitored by al Qaeda's core, and thus serve as a medium to facilitate "centralized" flow of communication. The centralized and decentralized modes of organizational functioning and structure manage to co-exist side by side, supporting Hoffman (2008), Sageman (2008) , and Sageman & Hoffman (2008) theories of recruitment, operations and organizational control or structure (for summary, see Picarelli, 2009).

[3]  Our impression throughout the data collection period was that the Arab Muslim coders who provided the summaries and classification of the forum discussions at times found the content of Jihadist forums offensive. During our periodic refresher sessions or discussions with coders about particular statements included in the coded questionnaires, the coders occasionally commented that the discussions' content does not represent Islam, nor are the activities discussed acceptable to the broader Muslim community.

[4]  During the training process, one of the candidates for doing the coding had to be removed from the team due to poor coding output, and the training was continued with a replacement candidate until a satisfactory level of agreement was reached.

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## VI.  Dissemination of Research Findings

"Jihad, Crime and the Internet: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings" A presentation at the America Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. November 17, 2010.

"Jihad, Crime and the Internet: Content Analysis of Forum Discussions" A presentation at the National Institute of Justice Conference, Washington DC. June 21, 201

## VII. Appendixes

### A. Coding Instrument

**Coding form**

**Identifiers** (these should be filled in already)

1. Discussion code: _____
   Source URL: _____
2. Codebook code: _____
3. Discussion start date: _____
4. Discussion "end" date: _____
5. Duration of discussions: _____
6. Coder no.: _____
7. No. Of pages: _____
8. No. Of entries: _____
9. No. Of unique participants: _____

**You have to analyze a discussion from a forum on the internet. If you find interesting information or something of importance, please add it at the empty lines at the end.**

10. Coder number _____ (same as no. 6, above)

**General questions**

11. Name of the site/community: _____

12. Language of the discussion:
        12.1 Arabic only ____
        12.2 other ____
        12.3 mixed (which other languages) _____

**Summary of discussion**

In one page or less, please summarize the discussion in your own words.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

13.3 ___ technical (weapons/explosives)
13.4 ___ official communication/statement from a group
13.5 ___ Islam: Quran & Hadith, religious teaching and practice, preservation of religion
13.6 ___ quotation from foreign sources: information/news from media (BBC, Al-Jazeera, etc.)
13.7 ___ other
please describe:

_____
_____
_____

14. What are the issues that are raised or referred to in the discussion or the main topics in the discussion (check all that apply)
14.1 ___ hatred of the West/US
14.2 ___ hatred of the Jews/Israel
14.3 ___ criticism of rulers of Muslim countries
14.4 ___ humiliation/discrimination/insulting the honor of Muslims by non-Muslims
14.5 ___ Salafiya - Islam turning back to glories of the past
14.6 ___ victories against the west
14.7 ___ successful action against the Jews/Israelis
14.8 ___ superiority of Islam over the west
14.9 ___ west takes advantage or exploits Muslim countries - (e.g. colonialism, crusades).
14.10 ___ illegal activities allowed (only against non-Muslims)
14.11 ___ other
please describe:

_____
_____
_____

15. What is the most important aspect of identification with the topic discussed, or what unites the participants in the discussion?:
15.1 ___ shared past / shared tradition?
15.2 ___ national identification (Kavamiyya/Bataniyya)
15.3 ___ religious identification
15.4 ___ hatred of the Jews
15.5 ___ hatred of the Christians
15.6 ___ denial of democratic ideals/the idea of democracy

please explain/provide examples:

_____
_____
_____

16. Are there links in the body of the discussion to other sites? (as opposed to links that appear before the discussions, that are 'built in' to the site)
16.1 no ___
16.2 yes ___

if yes, which sites are linked to, and why?

_____
_____
_____

17. In the text of the discussion, are their links to documents, literature, poetry, fatwas, video or audio files

     17.1 no ____
     17.2 yes ____
     if yes, what is the nature of the files (as best as can be determined from the discussion)?

_____
_____
_____

**Topics related to Islam**

18. Are religious authorities from the past or present cited?

     18.1 no ____
     18.2 yes ____
     if yes, who, and in what context are they mentioned?

_____
_____
_____

19. Is there discussion of a fatwa?

     19.1 no ____
     19.2 yes ____
     if yes

          topic: _____
          date: _____
          author: _____

20. Are the Quran, Hadith, or other Sunni texts quoted??

     20.1 no ____
     20.2 yes ____

     If yes, which verse or verses:

_____
_____
_____

     How is the quote related to the topic of the discussion?

_____
_____
_____

21. Are there any quotes from leaders of the jihad (e.g. Azzam, Zawihri, Abu Musab al-Suri, Bin Laden)

21.1 no ___
21.2 yes ___
Who was quoted, what did they say, and in what context/reference to what?

_____
_____
_____

22. Is there criticism of any of the following groups
     22.1 no criticism is expressed/none ___. If yes, is the criticism directed
against…
     22.2 Shi'a ___
     22.3 Sunni ___
     22.4 al-Qaida ___
     22.5 Hamas/Palestinian Islamic Jihad ___
     22.6 Hezbollah ___
     22.7 Muslim rulers/regimes___
     22.8 others ___
     what is the nature of the criticism?

_____
_____
_____

**Operational activities**

23. Is there a call for Jihad?
     23.1 no ___
     23.2 yes ___
     If yes, how/what is the nature of the call, how are people
convinced/praised/recruited to participate in jihad? (Please give examples, including
religious sources found in the discussion)

_____
_____
_____

24. Is there a call for Ishtishahad, or praise for people who perpetrated it?
     24.1 no ___
     24.2 yes ___
     if yes, who? Women or men? In what way? Mention of religious sources if
mentioned

_____
_____
_____

25. Is there a special appeal to women or children?
     25.1 no ___
     25.2 yes, women ___
     25.3 yes, children ___
     25.4 yes, women and children ___
     if so, in what way, for what purpose

_____
_____
_____

26. Is there any mention of, or encouragement for future terrorist activities?
       26.1 no ___
       26.2 yes ___
       If yes, in what context, in relation to what, in what way? What are people asked to do?

_____
_____
_____

       please detail the reasons and justifications given for perpetrating the terrorist act(s).

_____
_____
_____

**Aspects of illegal activity**

27. If in the discussion there is mention of crime, what is the purpose of the discussion
       27.0 ___ there is no mention of crime
       27.1 ___ to get information or guidance on how to commit a particular crime.
       27.2 ___ to distribute information or guidance on how to commit a particular crime.
       27.3 ___ to recruit others to participate in crime

28. What kinds of non-terrorist criminal activities are discussed?
       28.1 ___ none
       28.2 ___ money laundering, or how to transfer money
       28.3 ___ drugs (use, production, distribution, sale)
       28.4 ___ credit card fraud (how to do it, trading account information, etc.)
       28.5 ___ identity theft (appearing as another person for the purpose of committing a crime).
       28.6 ___ document forgery (e.g. passports, other identification papers)
       28.7 ___ illegal use of cell phones/sim cards
       28.8 ___ weapons purchase, trading, manufacture
       28.9 ___ transfer of charity funds for terrorism
       28.10 ___ offences against or using computers (answer in detail in no. 30, below)
       28.11 ___ other. Please describe:

_____
_____
_____

29. Are any reasons given to justify criminal activity, or justification for those who are involved in criminal offenses?
       29.1 no ___

29.2 yes ___
If yes, explain/list the justifications

_____
_____
_____

30. Are there any mention of crimes related to computers
      30.1 no ___
      If yes:
      30.2 ___ breaking into computers or sites
      30.3 ___ theft of computer programs
      30.4 ___ phishing/deception with computers
      30.5 ___ downloading of programs illegally
      30.6 ___ illegal use of serial numbers of programs
      30.7 ___ breaking into other people's computers
      30.8 ___ damage to sites of "enemies"
      30.9 ___ causing the collapse of a site through organized mass accessing of the
site (e.g. denial of service attack – D.O.S.)
      30.10 ___ theft of passwords/logins for email, or other sites/programs.
      30.11 ___ breaking into messenger programs

31. Is the information discussed, related to crime, something that the muslim
community can get from other sources (e.g. other kinds of websites, mass media,
etc.).
      31.1 no ___
      31.2 yes ___ where?

_____
_____
_____

**Characteristics of the participants**

32. Do women participate in the discussion?
      32.1 no ___
      32.2 yes ___
      32.3 can't know ___

33. Does it look like children and youth under 16 participate in the discussion?
      33.1 no ___
      33.2 yes ___
      33.3 can't know ___

34. In your opinion, most of the discussion participants are
      34.1 secular ___
      34.2 religious fundamentalist ___
      34.3 others ___ describe

_____
_____
_____

35. Do the participants fear that there is surveillance, spying, attempts to cause conflict in the discussion
      35.1 no ___
      35.2 yes ___ how so, in what way

      _____
      _____
      _____

36. What figure, hero, leader from the period of the prophet and his companions, is discussed?
      36.1 no such person discussed ___
      36.2 yes ___ who is it and what is said about him?

      _____
      _____
      _____

**Value and religious aspects**

37. How should Muslims relate to non-Muslims?
      37.1 ___ there is no mention
      37.2 ___ no need to fulfil agreements with them
      37.3 ___ there is a need to fulfil agreements with them
      37.4 ___ allowed/need to kill them
      37.5 ___ not allowed to kill them
      37.6 ___ other. Please describe:

      _____
      _____
      _____

38. Is there mention of Jews or Christians in the discussion
      38.1 no ___
      38.2 yes, about Christians ___. What is said?

      _____
      _____
      _____

      38.3 yes, about Jews ___ what is said?

      _____
      _____
      _____

39. Are there expressions of Dahwa
      39.1 no ___
      39.2 yes ___ in relation to what

      _____
      _____
      _____

40. Are symbols or historical events from the time of the prophet presented as a model for activity against non-Muslims today
      40.1 no ___
      40.2 yes ___ if so, what are they

_____
_____
_____

41. Is there in the discussion a comparison between the Islamic community in the west today, and the condition of the Muslim community in the times of Mohammed (e.g. the Meccans, the medians, the tent of al-Bayt, etc.)
      41.1 no ___
      41.2 yes ___ in what way

_____
_____
_____

42. Is there in the discussion reference to how Muslims in the west need to behave
      42.1 ___ no
      42.2 ___ yes, to become a separate community
      42.3 ___ yes, use the institutions and laws of the host country to act against it
      42.4 ___ yes, to blend in/assimilate
      42.5 ___ yes, to act against the non-Muslims
      42.6 ___ yes, through another way
      42.7 ___ yes, the Muslims should act only according to the laws of Islam
      if yes, in what way

_____
_____
_____

43. In summary, what are the purposes of the discussion, list all options
      43.1 ___ to justify or recruit to the movement/organization (in religious or social perspective)
      43.2 ___ to attack/criticize others
      43.3 ___ to distribute propaganda
      43.4 ___ to frighten enemies
      43.5 ___ to teach and guide others in the perpetration of terrorism
      43.6 ___ if any other goals/uses, please list

_____
_____
_____

44. If there is any issue of substance that have not been raised in the questionnaire, please list here.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Many thanks for participating in this research project.

1

שאלון ניתוח תוכן למקודדים
Codebook Guide
מחקר ג'יהאד ופשיעה באינטרנט

Identifiers :
1. Discussion code:
   Source URL:
2. Codebook code:
3. Discussion start date:
4. Discussion end date:
5. Duration of discussion:
6. Coder No.:
7. No. of pages:
8. No. of entries:
9. No. of unique participants:


עליך לנתח קטע הלקוח מתוך שיח באינטרנט )צ'אט(.  אם תמצא מידע מעניין נוסף או דבר שחשוב לציינו –
אנא הוסף אותו <u>בשורות הריקות שבסוף</u>.


10.        מקדד מס':_____


<u>כללי</u>
11.        שם האתר/הקהילה:_____        )על פי רשימת אתרים/קהילות(
12.        שפת הדיון: 1. ___ ערבית בלבד
              2. ___ שפה אחרת - איזו? _____ )על פי רשימת שפות(
              3. ___ מעורב, שפות שונות יחד


<u>סיכום הדיון</u>
נא לסכם בשפה חופשית את  נושאי הדיון בצ'אט ]כחצי עמוד[

_____

_____

_____


13. מה <u>מאפיין בעיקר את התוכן</u> של קבוצת דיון זו )ניתן לסמן כמה אפשרויות(?
        13.1 ___ תעמולה/ הסתה- עבור או נגד מי _____
        13.2 ___ חומר טכני – על מחשבים
        13.3 ___ חומר טכני – על נשק, חומרי חבלה
        13.4 ___ הודעות רשמיות של הארגון
        13.5 ___ אסלאם: קוראן וחדית' / הטפה דתית ושמירת הדת
        13.6 ___ ציטוט ממקורות זרים: מידע/חדשות מאמצעי תקשורת )BBC, אל ג'זירה וכדומה(
        13.7 ___ אם יש תכנים נוספים, נא לציינם:

_____

_____


14. מהן הפניות )או הפניה( או <u>הנושאים העיקריים</u> בתוכן שבדקת )ניתן לסמן כמה אפשרויות(?
        14.1 ___ שנאת המערב/ארה"ב
        14.2 ___ שנאת יהודים/ישראל
        14.3 ___ ביקורת כנגד שליטים של מדינות אסלמיות
        14.4 ___ פגיעה בכבוד/קיפוח/השפלה של מוסלמים <u>על ידי לא מוסלמים</u>

2

14.5 ___האסלאם חוזר לתפארת העבר [סלפיה]
14.6 ___ ניצחונות על המערב
14.7 ___ ניצחונות על היהודים/ישראלים
14.8 ___ הדגשת עליונות האסלאם מול המערב
14.9 ___ המערב מנצל את ארצות האסלאם  [קולוניאליזם/צלבנות למשל]
14.10 ___ מותרת פעילות בלתי חוקית רק כלפי "לא מוסלמים"
14.11 ___ אם יש תכנים נוספים, נא לציינם:

_____

_____

_____

15. מהו הבסיס העיקרי  להזדהות ואחדות כפי שהוא מוצג בדיון )ניתן לסמן כמה אפשרויות ולהסביר בשורות הריקות למטה(
15.1 ___ עבר משותף, מסורת משותפת
15.2 ___ הזדהות לאומית [קומ ̣יה/ווטנ ̣יה]
15.3 ___ הזדהות דתית
15.4 ___ שנאת יהודים
15.5 ___ שנאת נוצרים
15.6 ___ שלילת רעיון הדמוקרטיה

נא להסביר ולהדגים:

_____

_____

_____

16. האם יש קישוריות )"לינקים"(  המפנים לאתרים אחרים בגוף הדיון? [נא לא להתייחס ללינקים המופיעים לפני הצ'אט]
16.1 ___ לא
16.2 ___ כן, לאילו אתרים,  ציין אותם ולמה מפנים אליהם:

_____

_____

_____

17. האם יש בצ'אט מסמכים, סיפורת, שירה, פתות, תמונות, קריקטורות, קבצי וידאו, אודיו?
17.1 ___ לא
17.2 ___ כן, איזה סוג של חומר זה, נא לתאר:

_____

_____

_____

נושאים הקשורים לאסלאם

18. האם מוזכרים  מנהיגים דתיים [מההווה ומההסטוריה]?
18.1 ___ לא
18.2 ___ כן, מי הם ובאיזה הקשר הם מוזכרים?

_____

_____

3

---

19. האם יש אזכור או דיון בפתווה?

19.1 ___ לא

19.2 ___ כן, מה הנושא, תאריך ומחבר הפתווה, למה היא מוזכרת?

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---
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20. האם יש ציטוט מהקוראן או מה"חדית" או מ"הסירה אלנבוויה"?

20.1 ___ לא

20.2 ___ כן, במה הפסוקים קשורים לנושא הדיון?

---
---
---

21. האם יש ציטוטים ממנהיגים ידועים של הג'יהאד )כמו לדוגמה: עזאם, זוואהירי, אבו מצעב אל-סורי, בן לאדן(?

21.1 ___ לא

21.2 ___ כן, מי צוטט, מה אמר ובאיזה הקשר?

---
---
---

22. האם יש ביקורת כנגד אחת מהקבוצות הבאות?

22.1 __לא

ואם כן על  מי:

22.2 __ על שיעים

22.3 __ על סונים

22.4 __ על אלקאעדה

22.5 __ על חמאס ועל ג'האד אסאלמי

22.6 __ על חיזבאללה

22.7 __ על שליטים או משטרים  מוסלמים

22.8 __ על אחרים, מי הם? _____

מהי הביקורת?

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---
---

<u>היבטים אופרטיביים</u>

23. האם יש קריאה לג'האד?

23.1 __לא

23.2 __כן, כיצד משכנעים/משבחים/מגייסים לבצע ג'האד נא לתת דוגמאות גם ממקורות דתיים המצויים בדיון?

---
---
_____

4

_____

_____

_____

24. האם יש קריאה ושבחים לאנשים שביצעו אסתשהאד ]הקרבה עצמית[?

24.1 ___ לא

24.2 ___ כן, נא לתת דוגמאות ושמות ]נשים או גברים[ לכך מהדיון כולל מקורות דתיים אם הוזכרו:

_____

_____

_____

25. האם יש פנייה מיוחדת אל נשים או ילדים?

25.1 ___ לא

25.2 ___ כן, לנשים

25.3 ___ כן, לילדים

25.4 ___ כן, גם לילדים וגם לנשים

אם כן, באיזה אופן ולאיזו מטרה?

_____

26. האם מזכירים ומעודדים פיגועי טרור ?

26.1 ___ לא

26.2 ___ כן

אם כן, נא לפרט כיצד קוראים להם ומה מבקשים לבצע?

_____

_____

_____

נא לפרט מה הסיבות ומה ההצדקות לביצוע פיגועי טרור?

_____

_____

_____

<u>היבטים של פעילות בלתי חוקית</u>

27. אם בדיון מוזכר פשע או עבירה, מהי מטרת הדיון?

27.1 ___ לקבל מידע או הדרכה איך לבצע פשע מסויים

27.2 ___ להפיץ מידע או הדרכה על אופן ביצוע פשע ]שעליו מדובר בדיון[

27.3 ___ לגייס אחרים כדי להיות שותפים לפשע הזה

Erez, Weimann, & Weisburd

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28. איזה סוגי פעילות פשיעה )שאינה טרוריסטית( מוכרים? ניתן לסמן כמה אפשרויות.
28.1 ___ אין אזכור לפעילות בלתי חוקית
28.2 ___ הלבנת כספים או שיטות להעברת כספים ותשלום
28.3 ___ סמים: שימוש, ייצור, הפצה או מכירה
28.4 ___ מרמה באמצעות כרטיסי אשראי )כיצד לעשות זאת, מידע על חשבונות ומספרי כרטיסי אשראי(
28.5 ___ גניבת זהות ]התחזות לאדם אחר לצורך ביצוע עבירה[
28.6 ___ זיוף מסמכים )כמו דרכונים, תעודות מזהות, רשיונות נהיגה(
28.7 ___ שימוש לא חוקי בטלפונים, בסלולרי, בכרטיסי טלפון ו SIM
28.8 ___ סחר בנשק, ייצור והפצת נשק
28.9 ___ העברת כספי צדקה לטרור
28.10 ___ עבירות במחשבים ]פרוט יעשה בשאלה 34[
28.11 ___ אחר, מהו? _____


29. האם נותנים סיבות להצדקת פעילות פלילית או מצדיקים את אלה שעוסקים <u>בעבירות פליליות?</u>
29.1 ___ לא
29.2 ___ אם כן, פרט מה ההצדקות:

_____

_____
_____


30. האם מוזכרות עבירות שקשורות למחשבים, אם כן מה הן:
30.1 ___ לא
ואם כן מה הן?
30.2 ___ פריצה למחשבים או לאתרי מחשב
30.3 ___ גניבה תוכנות מחשב
30.4 ___ "פישינג", מרמה במחשבים
30.5 ___ הורדת תוכנות באופן לא חוקי
30.6 ___ שימוש בלתי חוקי במס' סודרים של תוכנות מקוריות
30.7 ___ פריצה למחשבים של אחרים
30.8 ___ נזק לאתרים של אויבים
30.9 ___ גרימה לקריסת אתר דרך התחברות המונית מאורגנת של משתמשים
30.10 ___ גניבת סיסמאות אי-מייל וסיסמאות אחרות
30.11 ___ פריצה לתוכנות מסנג'ר


31. האם יש בתכנים שקראת חומרים שהקהילה המוסלמית יכולה למצוא גם באמצעי תקשורת אחרים או במקורות אחרים?
31.1 ___ לא
31.2 ___ כן, היכן?

_____

_____
_____


<u>מאפייני המשתתפים</u>

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32. האם נשים משתתפות בדיון?
___32.1 לא
___32.2 כן
___32.3 אי אפשר לדעת

33. באיזו מידה נראה כי ילדים ונוער (עד גיל 16) משתתפים בדיון?
___33.1 לא
___33.2 כן
___33.3 אי אפשר לדעת

34. האם לדעתך רוב משתתפי הצ'אט הם (ניתן לסמן כמה תשובות):
___34.1 חילוניים
___34.2 דתיים פונדמנטליסטים
___34.3 אחרים, נא לפרט?_____

35. האם המשתתפים חוששים שיש מעקב או התחזות או נסיון לסכסך בצ'אט?
___35.1 לא
___35.2 כן, באיזה אופן?

_____

_____

_____

36. מי הדמות מן העבר מתקופת הנביא וחבריו [גיבור, מנהיג, איש דת וכד'] שהדיון עוסק בה?
___36.1 אין דמות כזו
___36.2 אם יש, מי הוא, מה נכתב עליו ולמה?

_____

_____

_____

<u>היבטים ערכיים ודתיים</u>

37. כיצד המוסלמים צריכים להתייחס אל <u>לא מוסלמים</u>?
___37.1 אין התייחסות
___37.2 לא צריך לקיים הסכמים איתם
___37.2 כן צריך לקיים הסכמים איתם
___37.4 מותר/צריך להרוג אותם
___37.5 אסור להרוג אותם
___37.6 אחר, נא לפרט:

_____

_____

_____

38. האם יש התייחסות ליהודים או נוצרים בדיון?
___38.1 לא
___38.2 כן, לגבי נוצרים ומה נאמר לגביהם?

_____

_____

7

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38.3___כן לגבי יהודים ומה נאמר לגביהם?

_____

_____

_____

39. האם ישנם ביטויי "דעווה" בדיון?
39.1 ___ לא
39.2 ___ כן, בהקשר למה?

_____

_____

_____

40. האם מופיעים בדיון סמלים ואירועים היסטוריים <u>מימי השליח מוחמד</u> כמודל לחיקוי לפעילות כנגד לא מוסלמים כיום?
40.1 ___ לא
40.2 ___ כן, בהקשר למה?

_____

_____

_____

41. האם יש בדיון השוואה בין מצב הקהילה האסלאמית <u>במערב כיום</u> למצב הקהילה בימי מחמד [לדוגמה;כמו "אהל אלבית"  במכה "מהגרים", "הקהילה האסלמית כמובלעת באלמדינה" ה"חנדק/ אלאחזאב"  "חדיביה" ועוד]?
41.1 ___ לא
41.2___כן, באיזה אופן?

_____

_____

_____

42. האם יש בדיון התייחסות כיצד על מוסלמים הנמצאים במערב לנהוג?  [ניתן לסמן מספר אפשרויות]
42.1 ___ לא
42.2 ___ כן, להתבדל כקהילה נפרדת
42.3 ___ כן, להשתמש המוסדות וחוקי המדינה המארחת כדי לפעול כנגדה
42.4 ___ כן, להתמזג בקהילה המארחת
42.5 ___ כן, לפעול נגד "הלא מוסלמים"
42.6 ___ כן, דרך אחרת להתנהגות
42.7 ___ כן, על מוסלמים לנהוג רק על פי חוקי האסלאם
אם כן, באיזה אופן?

_____

_____

_____

43. לסיכום, מה המטרות של הדיון הזה )ניתן לציין יותר מאפשרות אחת(?

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43.1 ___ להצדיק או לגייס לתנועה/ארגון [מבחינה דתית או חברתית]
43.2 ___ לתקוף אחרים
43.3 ___ להפיץ תעמולה
43.4 ___ להפחיד אויבים
43.5 ___ להדריך וללמד באופן מעשי מעשי טרור
43.6 ___ אם יש מטרות/שימושים נוספים, נא לציינם:

_____

_____

_____


44. אם יש הערה או תוכן שלא הועלה בשאלון נא לציין כאן:

_____

_____

_____


רוב תודות על השתתפותך במחקר

## VII. Appendixes

## B. Inter-coder Reliability Results

| Question | Score (out of 10) | % Agreement |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | 10 | 100% |
| 13 | 6.5 | 65% |
| 14 | 7 | 70% |
| 15 | 9.5 | 95% |
| 16 | 10 | 100% |
| 17 | 8 | 80% |
| 18 | 10 | 100% |
| 19 | 10 | 100% |
| 20 | 7 | 70% |
| 21 | 10 | 100% |
| 22 | 9 | 90% |
| 23 | 10 | 100% |
| 24 | 10 | 100% |
| 25 | 10 | 100% |
| 26 | 10 | 100% |
| 27 | 10 | 100% |
| 28 | 10 | 100% |
| 29 | 10 | 100% |
| 30 | 10 | 100% |
| 31 | 10 | 100% |
| 32 | 9 | 90% |
| 33 | 10 | 100% |
| 34 | 10 | 100% |
| 35 | 10 | 100% |
| 36 | 8 | 80% |
| 37 | 9 | 90% |
| 38 | 10 | 100% |
| 39 | 10 | 100% |
| 40 | 10 | 100% |
| 41 | 10 | 100% |
| 42 | 10 | 100% |
| 43 | 6.25 | 63% |

## VII. Appendixes

## C. Complete Quantitative Findings Tables

## Table 1: Distribution of discussion duration

|       | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------------:|-------------------:|
| .00   | 52.6 | 52.6 |
| 1.00  | 16.9 | 69.5 |
| 2.00  | 5.4  | 74.9 |
| 3.00  | 4.3  | 79.1 |
| 4.00  | 2.7  | 81.9 |
| 5.00  | 2.0  | 83.9 |
| 6.00  | 1.5  | 85.4 |
| 7.00  | 1.3  | 86.7 |
| 8.00  | .5   | 87.2 |
| 9.00  | .8   | 88.0 |
| 10.00 | .5   | 88.5 |
| 11.00 | .6   | 89.1 |
| 12.00 | .4   | 89.4 |
| 13.00 | .5   | 89.9 |
| 14.00 | .4   | 90.3 |
| 15.00 | .3   | 90.6 |
| 16.00 | .4   | 91.0 |
| 17.00 | .1   | 91.1 |
| 18.00 | .2   | 91.4 |
| 19.00 | .2   | 91.6 |
| 20.00 | .4   | 92.0 |
| 21.00 | .4   | 92.4 |
| 22.00 | .2   | 92.6 |
| 23.00 | .0   | 92.7 |
| 24.00 | .1   | 92.8 |
| 25.00 | .1   | 92.9 |
| 26.00 | .1   | 93.0 |
| 27.00 | .2   | 93.2 |
| 29.00 | .2   | 93.4 |
| 30.00 | .1   | 93.5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 31.00 | .1 | 93.6 |
| 33.00 | .1 | 93.7 |
| 34.00 | .1 | 93.8 |
| 36.00 | .2 | 94.0 |
| 37.00 | .0 | 94.1 |
| 39.00 | .0 | 94.1 |
| 40.00 | .1 | 94.3 |
| 41.00 | .0 | 94.3 |
| 42.00 | .0 | 94.4 |
| 43.00 | .1 | 94.5 |
| 44.00 | .0 | 94.6 |
| 45.00 | .0 | 94.6 |
| 47.00 | .0 | 94.6 |
| 50.00 | .1 | 94.7 |
| 51.00 | .0 | 94.8 |
| 52.00 | .1 | 94.9 |
| 54.00 | .1 | 95.1 |
| 55.00 | .2 | 95.3 |
| 58.00 | .0 | 95.3 |
| 59.00 | .1 | 95.5 |
| 60.00 | .0 | 95.5 |
| 62.00 | .0 | 95.5 |
| 64.00 | .0 | 95.6 |
| 65.00 | .0 | 95.6 |
| 67.00 | .0 | 95.7 |
| 69.00 | .0 | 95.7 |
| 71.00 | .0 | 95.8 |
| 72.00 | .1 | 95.9 |
| 73.00 | .0 | 95.9 |
| 74.00 | .0 | 96.0 |
| 78.00 | .1 | 96.1 |
| 79.00 | .0 | 96.1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 80.00 | .0 | 96.2 |
| 83.00 | .0 | 96.2 |
| 84.00 | .0 | 96.3 |
| 87.00 | .0 | 96.3 |
| 89.00 | .0 | 96.4 |
| 90.00 | .1 | 96.4 |
| 91.00 | .0 | 96.5 |
| 96.00 | .0 | 96.5 |
| 105.00 | .1 | 96.6 |
| 107.00 | .0 | 96.7 |
| 109.00 | .0 | 96.7 |
| 110.00 | .0 | 96.8 |
| 111.00 | .0 | 96.8 |
| 114.00 | .0 | 96.9 |
| 115.00 | .0 | 96.9 |
| 117.00 | .1 | 97.1 |
| 119.00 | .0 | 97.1 |
| 120.00 | .1 | 97.2 |
| 121.00 | .1 | 97.3 |
| 124.00 | .0 | 97.4 |
| 130.00 | .0 | 97.4 |
| 131.00 | .0 | 97.5 |
| 133.00 | .0 | 97.5 |
| 134.00 | .0 | 97.6 |
| 135.00 | .0 | 97.6 |
| 139.00 | .0 | 97.7 |
| 143.00 | .0 | 97.7 |
| 148.00 | .1 | 97.8 |
| 152.00 | .0 | 97.9 |
| 153.00 | .0 | 97.9 |
| 157.00 | .0 | 98.0 |
| 160.00 | .0 | 98.0 |

| 162.00 | .0 | 98.1 |
|--------|-----|------|
| 169.00 | .0 | 98.1 |
| 173.00 | .0 | 98.2 |
| 180.00 | .0 | 98.2 |
| 188.00 | .0 | 98.2 |
| 192.00 | .0 | 98.3 |
| 200.00 | .1 | 98.4 |
| 207.00 | .0 | 98.5 |
| 214.00 | .0 | 98.5 |
| 215.00 | .0 | 98.6 |
| 221.00 | .0 | 98.6 |
| 223.00 | .0 | 98.7 |
| 254.00 | .0 | 98.7 |
| 269.00 | .0 | 98.8 |
| 284.00 | .0 | 98.8 |
| 291.00 | .0 | 98.9 |
| 304.00 | .0 | 98.9 |
| 323.00 | .0 | 99.0 |
| 324.00 | .1 | 99.1 |
| 338.00 | .0 | 99.1 |
| 339.00 | .1 | 99.2 |
| 342.00 | .0 | 99.2 |
| 344.00 | .0 | 99.3 |
| 348.00 | .0 | 99.3 |
| 356.00 | .0 | 99.4 |
| 358.00 | .0 | 99.4 |
| 362.00 | .0 | 99.5 |
| 363.00 | .0 | 99.5 |
| 370.00 | .0 | 99.6 |
| 386.00 | .0 | 99.6 |
| 391.00 | .0 | 99.7 |
| 491.00 | .0 | 99.7 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 538.00 | .0 | 99.8 |
| 619.00 | .0 | 99.8 |
| 653.00 | .0 | 99.9 |
| 719.00 | .0 | 99.9 |
| 1284.00 | .0 | 100.0 |
| 1331.00 | .0 | 100.0 |

**Table 2: Distribution of discussion entries**

| | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent | | | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.00 | 18.0 | 18.0 | | 43.00 | .2 | 96.7 |
| 2.00 | 14.1 | 32.1 | | 44.00 | .1 | 96.8 |
| 3.00 | 12.0 | 44.1 | | 45.00 | .1 | 97.0 |
| 4.00 | 9.6 | 53.6 | | 46.00 | .1 | 97.1 |
| 5.00 | 7.1 | 60.8 | | 48.00 | .1 | 97.2 |
| 6.00 | 5.6 | 66.4 | | 49.00 | .2 | 97.4 |
| 7.00 | 4.3 | 70.7 | | 50.00 | .2 | 97.6 |
| 8.00 | 3.8 | 74.5 | | 51.00 | .1 | 97.7 |
| 9.00 | 2.8 | 77.4 | | 52.00 | .1 | 97.9 |
| 10.00 | 2.8 | 80.2 | | 53.00 | .1 | 98.0 |
| 11.00 | 1.8 | 82.0 | | 55.00 | .0 | 98.1 |
| 12.00 | 1.8 | 83.8 | | 57.00 | .1 | 98.2 |
| 13.00 | 1.0 | 84.8 | | 58.00 | .1 | 98.2 |
| 14.00 | 1.1 | 85.9 | | 60.00 | .1 | 98.3 |
| 15.00 | .9 | 86.8 | | 61.00 | .1 | 98.5 |
| 16.00 | .7 | 87.5 | | 62.00 | .0 | 98.5 |
| 17.00 | .9 | 88.4 | | 63.00 | .0 | 98.6 |
| 18.00 | .8 | 89.2 | | 64.00 | .1 | 98.7 |
| 19.00 | .7 | 89.8 | | 65.00 | .1 | 98.8 |
| 20.00 | 1.1 | 90.9 | | 66.00 | .1 | 98.9 |
| 21.00 | .4 | 91.3 | | 67.00 | .0 | 99.0 |
| 22.00 | .9 | 92.2 | | 68.00 | .0 | 99.0 |
| 23.00 | .4 | 92.6 | | 71.00 | .1 | 99.1 |
| 24.00 | .4 | 92.9 | | 72.00 | .0 | 99.1 |
| 25.00 | .2 | 93.2 | | 78.00 | .0 | 99.2 |
| 26.00 | .3 | 93.5 | | 79.00 | .1 | 99.3 |
| 27.00 | .3 | 93.8 | | 80.00 | .0 | 99.3 |
| 28.00 | .2 | 94.0 | | 83.00 | .0 | 99.4 |
| 29.00 | .3 | 94.3 | | 88.00 | .0 | 99.4 |
| 30.00 | .3 | 94.6 | | 90.00 | .0 | 99.5 |
| 31.00 | .1 | 94.7 | | 92.00 | .1 | 99.6 |
| 32.00 | .3 | 95.0 | | 93.00 | .0 | 99.6 |
| 33.00 | .2 | 95.2 | | 100.00 | .0 | 99.7 |
| 34.00 | .1 | 95.3 | | 113.00 | .0 | 99.7 |
| 36.00 | .3 | 95.6 | | 116.00 | .0 | 99.8 |
| 37.00 | .0 | 95.7 | | 135.00 | .0 | 99.8 |
| 38.00 | .1 | 95.8 | | 139.00 | .0 | 99.9 |
| 39.00 | .2 | 96.0 | | 141.00 | .0 | 99.9 |
| 40.00 | .2 | 96.3 | | 165.00 | .0 | 100.0 |
| 41.00 | .1 | 96.4 | | 170.00 | .0 | 100.0 |
| 42.00 | .2 | 96.5 | | | | |

## Table 3: Distribution of unique participants per discussion

| nber of particip | Percent of discussions | Cumulative Percent | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.00 | 19.1 | 19.1 | 43.00 | .0 | 99.0 |
| 2.00 | 17.1 | 36.2 | 45.00 | .1 | 99.1 |
| 3.00 | 13.0 | 49.2 | 46.00 | .0 | 99.1 |
| 4.00 | 11.4 | 60.6 | 50.00 | .1 | 99.2 |
| 5.00 | 6.6 | 67.2 | 53.00 | .1 | 99.3 |
| 6.00 | 5.4 | 72.7 | 55.00 | .0 | 99.3 |
| 7.00 | 4.5 | 77.2 | 56.00 | .0 | 99.4 |
| 8.00 | 3.6 | 80.9 | 60.00 | .0 | 99.4 |
| 9.00 | 2.7 | 83.6 | 61.00 | .0 | 99.5 |
| 10.00 | 2.3 | 85.9 | 62.00 | .0 | 99.5 |
| 11.00 | 1.8 | 87.6 | 63.00 | .0 | 99.6 |
| 12.00 | 1.3 | 89.0 | 66.00 | .0 | 99.6 |
| 13.00 | 1.0 | 90.0 | 67.00 | .0 | 99.7 |
| 14.00 | .7 | 90.6 | 76.00 | .1 | 99.8 |
| 15.00 | .8 | 91.4 | 90.00 | .0 | 99.8 |
| 16.00 | .5 | 91.9 | 99.00 | .0 | 99.9 |
| 17.00 | 1.1 | 92.9 | 110.00 | .0 | 99.9 |
| 18.00 | .9 | 93.9 | 118.00 | .0 | 100.0 |
| 19.00 | .4 | 94.3 | 131.00 | .0 | 100.0 |
| 20.00 | .5 | 94.7 | | | |
| 21.00 | .5 | 95.2 | | | |
| 22.00 | .6 | 95.8 | | | |
| 23.00 | .2 | 96.0 | | | |
| 24.00 | .3 | 96.4 | | | |
| 25.00 | .1 | 96.5 | | | |
| 26.00 | .4 | 96.9 | | | |
| 27.00 | .2 | 97.1 | | | |
| 28.00 | .1 | 97.2 | | | |
| 29.00 | .2 | 97.3 | | | |
| 30.00 | .2 | 97.6 | | | |
| 31.00 | .1 | 97.7 | | | |
| 32.00 | .0 | 97.8 | | | |
| 34.00 | .1 | 97.9 | | | |
| 35.00 | .2 | 98.1 | | | |
| 36.00 | .2 | 98.2 | | | |
| 37.00 | .0 | 98.3 | | | |
| 38.00 | .2 | 98.5 | | | |
| 39.00 | .2 | 98.7 | | | |
| 40.00 | .1 | 98.8 | | | |
| 41.00 | .1 | 98.9 | | | |
| 42.00 | .0 | 98.9 | | | |

## VII. Appendixes

## D. Qualitative Analysis Categories

| מספר דיון | פעולות | מטרות | יחסים חברתיים | מדיום | הנחות, תביעות, הצדקות | מונחי פעולה | שמות ותארי שם |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | אילו פעולות מבוצעות באמצעות הטקסט? יש להתייחס בעיקר לפעולות הקשורות בטרור, ג'יהאד, פשיעה והשילובים האפשריים ביניהם. | מהן המטרות שלשמן פועל הטקסט? מטרות אינסטרומנטליות/ מטרות אקספרסיביות | אילו יחסים חברתיים מתקיימים בין המתדיינים? | אילו מדיה מוזכרים או משמשים בטקסט? | אילו הנחות נשמעות לגבי העולם בטקסט, ואילו ציוויים עולים מהן? (למשל, מיהם 'הכופרים' ומיהם המאמינים, מהן המחלוקות המפלגות בין הצדדים, האם מתואר סכסוך בין ארגונים, או דווקא שיתוף פעולה, האם הפעילות הג'האדיסטית מצליחה או מצויה בסכנה וכו'). | אילו פעלים ושמות משמשים לתיאור פעולות? | באילו מילים מתוארים שמות (שמות אנשים, מקומות, חפצים וכו') בטקסט? |
| | | | | | | | |

| מספר דיון | אוצר מילים | אירועים | משתתפים ונעדרים | זמן | מקום | חפצים, אמצעים טכנולוגיים |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | באיזה אוצר מילים משתמשים הכותבים כדי לתאר את העולם? | אילו אירועים מיוצגים? | מי לוקח חלק באירועים המיוצגים? מי נעדר? נא לציין (גם אם שמות התואר הוזכרו כבר בקטגוריות קודמות) כיצד מתוארים המשתתפים בדיון או אחרים המוזכרים בו. | איזו תקופת זמן עומדת לדיון (כעת, בעבר, בעתיד וכו'). | אילו מקומות מתוארים או נזכרים, ובאילו אופנים? למה מקושרים המקומות הנזכרים (האם לכופרים, לפעולות ג'יהאד וכו'). | אילו סוגי חפצים ואמצעים טכנולוגיים נזכרים בטקסט? נא להתייחס במיוחד לכלי נשק, אביזרים הקשורים בפעולות טרור, פשיעה וכו', חפצי קודש, אמצעים טכנולוגיים הקשורים למחשבים, וכן אמצעים טכנולוגיים הקשורים בהסברה (עיתונים, כתבי עת וכו'  אם הוזכרו בקטגוריית המדיום, נא לציין). |
| | | | | | | |

| מספר דיון | אופנות (מחויבות/ חוסר מחויבות) | רצוי | בלתי רצוי | דיאלוגי/ בלתי דיאלוגי |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | עד כמה מבטאים הדוברים בטקסט מחויבות לאמירות שלהם? האם הם תובעים תביעות, מעלים הצעות, מבקשים וכו'? אם ניתן להבין, יש לציין מהיכן שואבים הדוברים את מקורות הסמכות שלהם (למשל, האם הם נסמכים על פסוקים מן הקוראן, על דברי מנהיגים וכו'). | אילו התנהגויות, תפיסות וכו' נחשבות לרצויות על פי הטקסט? (אם ניתן להבין בעיני מי רצוי או לא רצוי, יש לציין). | אילו התנהגויות, תפיסות וכו' נחשבות לבלתי רצויות לפי הטקסט? | האם קיימת פנייה אל קוראי הטקסט? האם הטקסט כולל בתוכו אמירות של דוברים אחרים ('מומחים מספרים', 'מקורות טוענים' וכו')? האם ישנה התייחסות לערך דבריהם של מקורות אחרים? הכוונה היא לאמירות לגבי אמינות המקורות הנזכרים, נכונות דבריהם, זכותם להשמיע דברים וכו'. |