A SMALL CHURCH PASTOR PROVOKES THE WORLD: POSITIONING THEORY UNRAVELS THE QURAN BURNING CONTROVERSY

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By

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ABSTRACT

On July 12, 2010, Terry Jones, pastor of the Dove World Outreach Center, in Gainesville, Florida tweeted: “9/11/2010 Int Burn a Koran Day.” The result of the tweet, subsequent interviews, and media reportage preceding September 11, 2010, was increased tension and fear of possible worldwide violent reactions that exacerbated already existing insecurities surrounding September 11. In this study, I utilize positioning theory as a tool, by examining the positions and discourses within the course of events, as a means to analyze how individuals create meaning for themselves and others according to what they perceive as their rights and duties. Positioning analysis is especially fitting for this case in that positions are dynamic and temporally limited to the social interactions and contexts of a particular conflict. As events unfold, it is possible to follow and assess, in depth, the divisive discourses and dynamic positions within a controversy or conflict. Potential intervention strategies can then be tailored to the dynamic positions and divisive discourses with an understanding that as events unfold, positions transform through social interactions and by means of their social meaning. For the President of the United States to feel compelled to publicly intervene through direct condemnation of a threat made by a pastor of a 50-member church in Florida, demonstrates how seemingly minor, local events can transform into a complex international controversy.
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“If he’s listening, I just hope he understands that what he’s proposing to do is completely contrary to our values as Americans” (Stephanopoulos, 2010). On September 8, 2010, U.S. President Barack Obama spoke these words to a lone pastor, Terry Jones, because the threat Jones proposed was within the context of the ninth anniversary of the attacks on September 11, 2001. On July 12, 2010, Pastor Terry Jones, pastor of the 50-member Dove World Outreach Center, in Gainesville, Florida tweeted: “9/11/2010 Int Burn a Koran Day.” What started out as initially little more than a statement by a pastor on a social media site escalated over the course of the next two months into a global controversy. The result of the tweet, subsequent interviews of Terry Jones, and media reportage preceding September 11, 2010, was increased tension and fear of possible worldwide violent reactions that exacerbated already existing insecurities surrounding September 11. The proposed plan, one that the pastor of the church leading the charge referenced as a message to the radical elements of Islam, transformed over the course of a few days from a local concern in the community in Florida to an international controversy eliciting condemnation from the world’s leaders. Pleas from the world’s religious and political leaders included that from President Barack Obama. As the President of the U.S., he felt it was his duty and obligation to decry an act of free speech by a single American citizen. Such pleas were met with little consideration by Jones. On September 11, 2010, the Quran burning day was cancelled just hours before it was scheduled with no explanation. However, protests in a number of countries over the threat, including those in Afghanistan and Indonesia left people angry, injured, and dead.
Rationale for this study

At the time that I conducted the research, the events discussed herein were taking place. I began the research in August of 2010 originally out of interest and curiosity, just as news coverage of the Quran burning controversy began. I became increasingly interested in this particular case as it unfolded in the media, drew international attention, and subsequently was addressed by world leaders. As a first semester graduate student in a masters program in Conflict Resolution at Georgetown University, one of my first courses was an engaging social psychology course on Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations. As I followed the events taking place in Florida, I realized that this case fit well as a semester paper topic as it was a case and subject matter with which I had already begun grappling. It fascinated me that someone on the fringe could have such a calamitous impact and draw so much attention. Some of the original questions I grappled with were: Was this just a single incident/person seeking attention and if so, why him? How did the religious and political climate at the time reflect the positions that the parties took? Even after writing my final paper for the course, I remained interested in the case, eventually leading me to delve even deeper and write a masters thesis on the case.

Methodology

For this study, I adopted a qualitative research methodology in order to focus attention on the particular set of events that occurred and to extract the dynamic positions within the escalation of the controversy. Utilizing the tool of positioning analysis, this paper paints a picture of the social encounters, positions (rights and duties), and storylines in the weeks leading up to September 11, 2010. I look at concrete human productions such as conversations, interviews, and quotes in order to evaluate the positions of key figures and how such utterances contributed to
interpersonal and intergroup relations. Such an examination focuses on the illocutionary force, the meaning in producing an utterance, as central to the message sent out by Terry Jones that was then received and perceived.

My mode of data collection was gathering primary news articles and primary interview transcripts as well as videos from reputable journalistic sources that covered the course of events from across the levels of conflict: local, national, and international. Such sources included but are not limited to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Gainesville Sun*, the BBC, and CNN. If I was unable to find the primary source for a particular discourse, I consulted with a number of different secondary sources in order to double-check the accuracy of the quoted material. I further developed categories based on the storylines and positions that I found within the news coverage. I then coded the data based on the following questions: What is the context of this speech-act? Who is saying it? What is being said? What kinds of issues do the parties perceive to be in dispute? Does this speech-act relate to other events taking place that same day, either influencing or influenced by the speech act? From these basic conflict assessment questions, I then coded the speech-acts based on rights and duties. Based on this coding, I assessed the illocutionary force or meaning of the storylines, and positions in this case. It is important to note that I am unaware exactly how Jones accessed the media about him. I do not know whether he was watching TV reports, going on the internet, or reading the newspaper. I simply do not know how he received the information about the reactions and responses to his actions.

I present the case and findings in a chronological order within each day of the events and through this, I allowed the temporal sequence of events to guide my analysis. Since positioning theory depends upon the rapid dynamics of change within positions taken by parties in and as an
event unfolds, a strict chronology was essential. An interview that took place in the evening comes after a discussion of the day’s events. Due to the nature of reportage, reporting of the events in some cases would come the day after or a few days after events occurred requiring me to double check with multiple sources to account for inconsistency with news reporting. As in all kinds of reportage about a chronology of events, there are moments in this timeline and analysis where I feel less than confident in the relationship between the events. Sometimes when I looked at and wrote about the course of events, I did my best to not suggest causation about what may in fact be circumstantial evidence. Such in depth and analytical study on this case with the methodology and mode of presentation has not been done in an academic setting.

**Research questions**

What were the positions of the parties involved? How did the positions of the parties transform and progress over the course of events and its escalation?

How did the Quran burning controversy escalate? How did a Quran burning threat progress and transform into an international controversy?

How it is that an international controversy resulted from a small church in Florida in 2010, but not when the church previously posted signage against Islam in 2009 and actually burned a Quran in March of 2011?

**Organization of this study**

In the second chapter of this study, I provide a thorough and strictly chronological presentation of the course of events and discourses, without any commentary of my own, within the Quran burning controversy that took place in the summer and fall of 2010. In the third
chapter I present the literature and theoretical underpinnings of my method of analysis: positioning theory. Positioning theory is a useful tool to understand psychological processes and motivations in constructing meaning through storytelling in social interaction. This theory is composed of three fundamental and interconnected elements, usually depicted using a triangle metaphor of interrelated concepts. The positioning triangle serves as a framework for defining the meaning of events and explaining the actions which people carry out in their interactions with one another (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 6). These three elements are: 1.) Positions: rights and duties, which are distributed in changing patterns in social relations; 2.) Storylines: the composition of evolving positions; and 3.) Illocutionary force: the intention in making a speech act. People will construct and ascribe positions (patterns of rights and duties) that are based on the social meaning of their actions, or illocutionary force. Following the presentation of the theoretical framework, in the fourth chapter, I utilize positioning analysis as a tool, by examining the positions and discourses of the course of events, as a means to analyze how individuals create meaning for themselves and others according to what they perceive as their rights and duties. In the following chapter, I present recommendations for areas of further research that would further ground this analysis in existing theories and scholarly discourse relevant to developments in conflict and its dynamics. I first present the topics of globalization and cultural carriers, both concepts that are integral to understanding and evaluating the context and discourses surrounding a course of the events. Then, I present the concept of conflict escalation that includes a discussion of the transformations that occur as conflict escalates as well as a discussion of three grounded escalation models. These three models are meant to help assess and analyze the progression of conflict with the intent of applying these models in the real world and potentially mitigating or preventing destructive conflict. I propose that these analytical models will serve to
clarify the dynamics of the interchanges between Terry Jones and his congregation and the outside world. I then conclude with an overview of the previously discussed course of events, positioning theory, analysis, and recommendations for further research. Ultimately, I argue that to understand the complexity of the events and dynamic positions as they unfolded may prove useful to those striving to intervene in, transform, and/or resolve such conflicts in the future.

**Significance of this study**

The significance of such a case study centers on the import and impact of instantaneous worldwide communication through such media as the internet, Facebook, and Twitter, in which one person, while on the fringe of society, is able to create and perpetuate a potentially calamitous controversy. Such a study of a well-timed provocation, that had worldwide impact, is valuable and has significant implications for understanding social interactions in our rapidly changing and interconnected world. Positioning analysis is especially fitting for this case in that positions are dynamic and temporally limited to the social interactions and contexts of a particular conflict. What this study suggests is that as events unfold, it is possible to follow and assess, in depth, the divisive discourses and dynamic positions within a controversy or conflict. Such a temporally limited examination has broader implications for the use of positioning theory in other conflict contexts. Potential intervention strategies can then be tailored to the dynamic positions and divisive discourses with an understanding that as events unfold and escalate, positions transform through social interactions and by means of their social meaning. For the President of the United States to feel compelled to publicly intervene through direct condemnation of a threat made by a pastor of a 50-member church in Florida, demonstrates how seemingly minor, local events can transform into a complex international controversy.
CHAPTER 2: 2009-2010 QURAN BURNING COURSE OF EVENTS

In this chapter, I provide a thorough and strictly chronological presentation of the course of events and discourses, without any commentary of my own, surrounding the Quran burning controversy that took place in the summer and fall of 2010 and winter of 2011. This narrative will be the body of data which I will later analyze. In the analysis chapter, I will assess the positions of the parties involved and their contribution to the escalation of events. I will later discuss, in detail, the discourse regarding the events and the reactions that occurred through the perspective of positioning theory as a means to unravel the meaning of the course of events. The purpose of the chronology is to answer the question how it was possible that a small church could have caused a tremor of insecurity across the entire world?

Gainesville, Florida: July and August 2009

On July 7, 2009, the Dove World Outreach Center, a small church located in Gainesville, Florida posted a sign written in red letters on their front lawn, stating: “Islam is of the devil” (Fisher & Voules, 2009). According to the Dove World Outreach Center’s website, this organization was founded in 1986. They describe themselves as a “New Testament, Charismatic, Non-Denominational Church that believes in the whole Bible and that we are to act in response to the word of God in order to change the times we are living in. Those times have gotten further and futher [sic] away from God; full of deception like abortion and same sex marriages” (“The Sign,” 2009). In 2010 and 2011, Terry Jones was the pastor and spokesperson for this church of about fifty members, in Gainesville, Florida.
On July 8, 2009, local news agencies in Gainesville, Florida and, in particular, *The Gainesville Sun*, began reporting on the sign, and the church. This first sign brought about scrutiny of the church’s activities by protesters and picketers from the local community, and vandalism of the sign. As reported by Lise Fisher and Karen Voules in 2009 in the local *Gainesville Sun* newspaper article, “Anti-Islam church stirs up community Outrage,” the journalists quoted Terry Jones at length and others who reacted to him. In the article, Jones expressed the Dove World Outreach Center’s purpose for posting the sign as an expression of their religious beliefs and as a message of “a great act of love” (Fisher & Voules, 2009). At the time, Jones stated: “It’s an act of saying there is only one way, and that is actually what Christianity is about. It is about pointing the people in the right direction, and that right direction is Jesus and only Jesus. We feel the sign is an act of giving the people a chance” (Fisher & Voules, 2009). Even with the picketers and vandalism, Jones maintained that they “actually posted the sign because there is a tremendous growth of Islam at this time. It is a violent and oppressive religion and does not have anything to do with the truth of the Bible. We are definitely trying to send the message that Jesus Christ is the only way” (Fisher & Voules, 2009).

According to the Dove World’s Frequently Asked Questions section of their website, they put up the sign to “To expose Islam for what it is. It is a violent and oppressive religion that is trying to mascarade [sic] itself as a religion of peace, seeking to deceive our society” with an intended message of “the truth that there is only one way to God, only one way to salvation, and that is through the blood of Jesus. Through the repenting of your sins and being born again. It is time that all Christians unite, stop being passive and selfish and stand up and fight for the truth” (“The Sign,” 2009). Another question on the Frequently Asked Questions, asked what response the Dove World had to those offended by the sign or the message of the sign: “The truth should
never offend us. We should embrace the truth. That is the foundation of our country and that is the only way to true freedom. Islam is a lie based upon lies and deceptions and fear. In Muslim countries, if you preach the gospel or convert to Christianity - you will be killed. That is the type of religion it is” (“The Sign,” 2009). Jones also emphasized his thought that: “every pastor, every Christian pastor in this city, must be in agreement with the message. They might find the message a little bit too direct, but they must be in agreement with the message because the only way is the Bible and Jesus” (Fisher & Voules, 2009).

In July 2009, the president of the Muslim Association of North Central Florida, Saeed R. Khan, responded to the church’s sign:

There are a couple of things on this that come to mind, first there is freedom of speech. People are free to say, but then society has to think about it. When it becomes inflamed, the reaction on both sides can be detrimental to the people that live there. You have to make some kind of balance (Fisher & Voules, 2009).

Khan also said “sometimes when you don’t know others, it’s easy to demonize someone you don’t know. I would rather sit down and see what the issues are” (Fisher & Voules, 2009). In response to the posted sign, individuals living near the church also expressed shock and one individual was “initially very offended. Someone took it down sometime on Sunday, but it was back up on Monday…We’re sad it is up. It is such a divisive message when it (the sign) could be used to put out a statement of unity” (Fisher & Voules, 2009). Jones responded to such reactions and stated that he would be open to talking to others about the sign and its message: “We are definitely trying to open up dialogue, create interest, create awareness, get people to think” (Fisher & Voules, 2009).
Then, in August of 2009, *Gainesville Sun* journalist Cindy Swirko, reported in the article, “New Dove World Outreach sign again takes aim at Islam,” that a new sign had appeared on the Dove World’s lawn that paraphrased a quote from the Quran (Swirko, 2009). The new sign read: “Koran 9:5 Kill the disbelievers wherever you find them” (Swirko, 2009). In the news article, Ramzy Kilic, Tampa’s executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, responded saying that the sign’s message was not the normal translation of that verse of the Quran and that it had been isolated from a broader context. In addition, he said: “ Anyone, Muslim or non-Muslim, can take a verse, isolate it and almost formulate it to an idea they want to convey. When you take something out of context, you are not appreciating the true message of the religion.” Kilic added, “With the sign, it seems like [Jones] is antagonizing Muslims and wants to continue spreading a message of hate” (Swirko, 2009).

**July 12, 2010: The Day of the Tweet**

On July 12, 2010, about a year after the Dove World Outreach Center posted the signs on its front lawn, Jones tweeted on the social media site, Twitter: “9/11/2010 Int Burn a Koran Day” (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). He then started a related “International Burn a Koran Day” Facebook group (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). Within two days of Jones’ initial posting, on July 14, the website EuroIslam.info posted Jones’ Quran burning announcement. The website also posted the Dove World Outreach Center’s mission statement, which read at the time: “To bring awareness to the dangers of Islam and that the Koran is leading people to hell” under the “Islamaphobia Observatory” section of its site (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). In reaction, on July 21, The Council on American-Islamic Relations called for Quran education sessions to respond to the threat of the burning. On July 23, Jones then tweeted that he had more than 700 members
in his Facebook group (Gerhart & Londono, 2010).

July 29, 2010: CNN airs interview

Then on July 29, CNN aired the first national television interview with former TV news anchor Rick Sanchez and Jones. Rather than summarizing the back and forth that occurred between Jones and Sanchez in the interview, I provide the interview transcript below: (Sanchez, 2010).

SANCHEZ: On the anniversary of the September 11 attacks in our country, the Dove World Outreach Center is hosting what they're calling International Burn a Koran Day. Church members -- yes, church members, Christians -- plan to set fire to copies of another faith's most sacred book. The pastor of this church, his name is Terry Jones. He believes that Islam is of the devil. In fact, it is the name of his book. And Pastor Jones joins me now. Pastor, thanks so much for being with us. Do you know how many Muslims there are in the world?
JONES: I think there's about 1.5 billion.
SANCHEZ: Yes, yes. So, I guess I ask you that question because that's a very big number. Why would you want to do this to 1.5 billion people as you say in the world by burning their most sacred book? That's crazy.
JONES: Well, for one thing, for us the book is not sacred.
SANCHEZ: But it is for them. But it is for them.
JONES: By doing this action. But not to us.
SANCHEZ: So, if I don't -- I don't mean to interrupt. But you just told me something that's ridiculous. To you it's not sacred. How about it's sacred to them? That's like saying
I'm going to burn down your house because I don't like your house. It's not my place to burn down your house.

JONES: Well, we're not burning down a house. And what we are also doing by the burning of the Koran on 9/11, we're saying stop. We're saying stop to Islam. Stop to Islamic law. Stop to brutality. We have nothing against Muslims. They are welcome in our country. They are welcome to worship. We have freedom of worship. We have freedom of speech. They are welcome. What is not welcome, what we are saying with the burning of the Koran --

SANCHEZ: So how would you --

JONES: -- what is not welcome is Islamic law.

SANCHEZ: How would you --

JONES: The brutality of Islamic law. That is what's not welcome.

SANCHEZ: How would you feel if a Muslim said to you what you just said to them, I have no problem with you, Mr. Christian, you're welcome in my country but I'm burning your bible? How would you feel?

JONES: I would not like it. But it's their right. We live in America.

SANCHEZ: Well, they live in America --

JONES: We're making a statement. It is time to stand up and speak out on what we believe in. We believe that Islam is of the devil. It is causing billions of people to go to hell.

SANCHEZ: You believe that.

JONES: It is a deceptive religion.

SANCHEZ: You believe that.
JONES: It is a violent religion.

SANCHEZ: You believe that.

JONES: That is proven, many, many times…It is time that churches, politicians stand up and speak the truth.

SANCHEZ: There are moderate Muslims, sir, who live in this country who love America probably every bit as much as you say you do. Some of them died on September 11th.

JONES: That is exactly right. There is moderate -- there is moderate Muslims.

SANCHEZ: Why are you insulting them?

JONES: There are moderate Muslims, but there is no such thing as a moderate Islam. I do not understand why people defend Islam. All you have to do is just look in dominated, in Islam-dominated countries and you will see the oppression.

SANCHEZ: Why would you want to act in a way that's very much like what they do? Why would you sound or do something as hateful as to burn their most -- their most sacred book?

JONES: Because we believe the times call for it. It calls for radical times. If we do not stand up, if we do not do something, if we do not, this church and other churches do not call people to stand up, you know what's going to happen to us?

SANCHEZ: Yes.

JONES: We're going to end up like Europe. Look at England. Look at Germany. Look at Holland. We're going to end up like that because Muslims.

SANCHEZ: So burning their book while doing something --

JONES: The true Muslim is a believer in the Koran. The Koran calls for the killing of unbelievers.
SANCHEZ: So burning --

JONES: A true Muslim believes in Sharia law. Sharia law OKs honor killings.

SANCHEZ: Well, the problem is --

JONES: Is that really a religion we want here in America?

SANCHEZ: The problem is, sir, as being a devotee of the prince of peace just as you are, you do Christians in this country a disservice by sounding as hateful as you do and saying that you're going to perform hateful acts as you say you are for people who may not necessarily believe the things that you say they do.

By the next day, July 30, the National Association of Evangelicals, one of the largest collections of evangelical churches, criticized the threatened Quran burning day event and urged Jones to cancel it (Kolawole, 2010).

August 2010

In early to mid August 2010, only a few national news media in the U.S. had begun coverage of the Quran burning threat even as senior officials within the FBI, the State Department and U.S. military intelligence kept their eye on the situation (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). A few blogs, local Florida news outlets, and international websites discussed the proposed action but the general focus was on other news such as the controversial Park51 mosque and community center, or the so-called, “Ground Zero Mosque.” Then, on August 25, in the New York Times article “Far From Ground Zero, Obscure Pastor Is Ignored No Longer,” Damien Cave reported on the Dove World Outreach Center, Terry Jones, and the proposed burning. In this article, Cave quoted Jones as saying that he had the right to burn Islam’s sacred book because it “is full of lies” (Cave, 2010).
Wednesday, September 1- Monday, September 6, 2010

Even though the threatened Quran burning had not fully caught the attention of the national U.S. news media, on September 1 in a statement released and signed by 15 Imams, the American Muslim Association of North America called for “all Muslims, friends and associates to stop any plan for any sort of violence against the Dove World Church in Gainesville, Florida” (Smith, 2010). While Chad Smith, in an article in the Gainesville Sun, reported that the proposed burning made international headlines and provoked a number of death threats, some religious leaders condemned the threats of violence against Jones. The next day, on Thursday, September 2, twenty religious leaders in the local community of Gainesville, Florida called for solidarity on the steps of their City Hall against the Dove World Outreach Center. Smith further reported that the show of solidarity was against the “stated common enemy:” Terry Jones (Smith, 2010). The gathering at City Hall was intended to contextualize the situation and contain it as a local issue, though the news report in the Gainesville Sun suggested that such a desire seemed impossible in an age of social networking. Wajeech Bajwa, the president of the Orlando chapter of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community said at the religious solidarity gathering: “In this day and age, an event happening in a small town can have effects around the globe” (Smith, 2010). Another religious leader, Reverend Milford Lewis Griner, the pastor at Hall Chapel United Methodist Church in Rochelle, Florida, sought to rouse the community calling them to: “rise up with boldness and swift determination and show forth love, peace and understanding at this time in our history.” Griner continued, “Let it be declared, that we stood together and spoke and prayed as one community and collectively became a new biblical David that brought down a new and threatening Goliath with a spiritual stone of humanity” (Smith, 2010). In addition, to highlight commonalities among the three Abrahamic religions, Rabbi David Kaiman of Congregation
B’nai Israel, quoted passages from the Torah, Bible and Quran that referenced their belief in one God and concluded: “Peace. Shalom. Salaam” (Smith, 2010).

While news coverage in the U.S. of the proposed burning was localized to the community in Gainesville, Florida, on Saturday, September 4, the first of major protests occurred in Jakarta, Indonesia where thousands of people took to the streets with signs that read: "You burn a Qur'an, You Burned in Hell!!" (Montopoli, 2010; Kolawole, 2010). On Monday, September 6, CBS News reported on an Associated Press report from Kabul, Afghanistan, in which an Imam in the capital city, Kabul, had assembled a demonstration of approximately 500 protesters who burned a cardboard effigy of Jones, chanted "Death to America," “Long live Islam,” and called for President Barack Obama’s death (Faiez, 2010). That evening, the U.S. Embassy, in Kabul, issued a statement reaffirming the United States’ respect for Islam. The press release strongly condemned the plans to burn the Quran, saying that the United States government “in no way condones such acts of disrespect against the religion of Islam, and is deeply concerned about deliberate attempts to offend members of religious or ethnic groups.” And that: “Americans from all religious and ethnic backgrounds reject this offensive initiative” (U.S. Embassy Press Release, 2010).

According to a PBS Newshour report with Gwen Ifill, Jones’ provocation then sparked responses from some of the most senior U.S. officials. General David Petraeus, the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, was the first senior U.S. official to speak out soon after the protests in Kabul on Monday, September 6. Petraeus’ statement that “It puts our soldiers in jeopardy…I think, in fact, the images from such an activity could very well be used by extremists here and around the world,” suggested that the real threat would be the potential
images that would come out of such an action (Ifill, 2010). Petraeus added to this concern about the potential threat of the harm of images when he said:

I am very concerned by the potential repercussions of the possible burning…Even the rumor that it might take place has sparked demonstrations such as the one that took place in Kabul yesterday. Were the actual burning to take place, the safety of our soldiers and civilians would be put in jeopardy and accomplishment of the mission would be made more difficult (Ifill, 2010).

A Washington Post article by David Nakamura and special correspondent Javed Hamdard, published on September 7, focused on Petraeus’ words the previous day as he had highlighted the potential problems that such an action could cause and compared such an action to that of the Taliban: “It is precisely the kind of action the Taliban uses and could cause significant problems. Not just here, but everywhere in the world we are engaged with the Islamic community” (Nakamura & Hamdard, 2010).

Tuesday, September 7, 2010

According to the PBS Newshour report with Gwen Ifill, “Church’s Quran-Burning Pledge Rankles U.S. Diplomatic, Military Officials,” on Tuesday, September 7, a journalist for GlobalPost, Jean MacKenzie who, at the time was reporting in Kabul, said:

This Koran-burning campaign, which has been mounted by the Dove World Outreach Center in Florida, coming on the heels of the Ground Zero mosque debate, is starting to convince Afghans that there is a strong Islamophobic strain in the United States and in the West in general. And trying to convince them that this is a very small group of people and do not represent the United States so far has been an uphill battle (Ifill, 2010).
In addition to Petraeus’ comments, other senior officials such as White House press secretary Robert Gibbs reiterated the potential harm that could be caused to U.S. forces:

I think the best place to look for the views of this administration would be to look at what General Petraeus said over the weekend. We know that that type of activity -- we know that that type of activity is being transmitted back to places like Afghanistan, when General Petraeus obviously is our lead commander. As he said, it puts our troops in harm’s way. And obviously that -- any type of activity like that would be -- that puts our troops in harm’s way would be a concern to this administration (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2010).

The State Department’s spokesman P.J. Crowley further called the proposed burning “un-American” and also said it was “inconsistent with the values of religious tolerance and religious freedom” (Nakamura & Hamdard, 2010). NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen also echoed Petraeus’ warning that burning the Quran would go against “all the values we stand for and fight for” (Nakamura & Hamdard, 2010). Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton added her disapproval at a dinner on Tuesday evening in observance of Iftar, the breaking of the daily fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan: “I am heartened by the clear, unequivocal condemnation of this disrespectful, disgraceful act that has come from American religious leaders of all faiths” (CNN Wire Staff, 2010a).

In response to Petraeus’ and other U.S. senior official’s warnings, Jones rejected the warnings and said his church would continue their plans for “International Burn a Koran Day” (Nakamura & Hamdard, 2010). In the evening of September 7, CNN’s Anderson Cooper interviewed Terry Jones. Jones clearly and repeatedly stated his intent and the purpose of his actions whose “goal is to send a message to radical Islam. It’s to say, no more” (Cooper, 2010).
He said that he "understands the government's concerns, but plans to go forward with the burning." He left "the door open to change his mind” and that he and his church were “praying on the decision” (“Despite Warnings,” 2010). Jones said:

We do not consider our message a message of hate. It is- it is a clear message of warning. We have tried to make it very, very clear that, according to the United States Constitution, Muslims are more than welcome in America. They are welcome to worship. They are welcome to build mosques. We have made that very, very clear. I understand they’re not in agreement. And they’re mad and angry. They’re- they’re- they’re insulted because we are burning the Koran, but they should, indeed, be with us on the fact that radical Islam is bad. It is evil. We do not want it in this country (Cooper, 2010).

In the CNN interview, Anderson Cooper pointed out that in sermons and speeches on YouTube and to his church, Jones said one thing and in interviews and news articles, he said something contradictory. For instance, on his website Jones stated that there should be no Muslims allowed to immigrate to the United States and that no new mosques should be allowed to be built in the United States (Cooper, 2010). In response to Anderson’s question, Jones said:

That is my […] opinion, but my opinion does no supersede the Constitution. My opinion, we would be better off if we paid more attention. We would be better off if we really check the Muslims that immigrated here…So, I stand to the Constitution, that they have freedom of worship and freedom to build mosques (Cooper, 2010).

In Terry Jones’ opinion, “As a Christian, I wish that all Muslims would get saved. I wish that they would all convert to Christianity, because Christianity is the one and only true religion. The Koran, in our opinion, is an evil book” (Cooper, 2010). Even though Terry Jones claimed the Quran is evil, he, in fact, had never read the book (Cooper, 2010).
When asked if he would feel responsible for people’s lives being lost, Jones addressed the fact that his life was in danger and that “We are burning a book. We are not killing someone. We are not murdering people. [...] We are simply burning a book” (Cooper, 2010). He repeatedly returned to the fact that he had received over 100 death threats and that he had started carrying a pistol:

We are putting our own life at risk. We have received over 100 death threats, some of them being very graphic, some of them stating exactly when they will come, how they will kill us, what they will do. I mean, of course. But, then again, does that not show and reveal the nature of Islam? I think what we are doing is long overdue. We are revealing, again, the violence of Islam that is much, much deeper than we would like to admit (Cooper, 2010).

In an interview with ABC News’ Terry Moran for “Nightline” on September 7, Moran asked Jones why he decided to hold an “International Burn a Koran day.” Moran also asked Jones how he was reacting to the pleas from the Obama administration, General David Petraeus and religious leaders. In response, Jones responded with similar answers as in previous interviews, citing their church’s growing awareness of the “dangers of sharia law and the dangers of radical Islam and that’s what this message is geared towards” (Moran, 2010). Jones noted that they “realize the actual burning of the Koran is a radical statement we feel very convinced about it, we plan on doing it, we feel it’s very necessary” (Moran, 2010). Moran posed to Jones that the “message you are sending to moderate Muslims is one of hate” to which Jones responded, “We have tried to make that very clear. Obviously this is not a message of love and it is obviously not intended to be a message of love. It is intended to be a clear clear warning” (Moran, 2010).
When Moran asked Jones what he had learned from the increasing controversy, his response, however, did not explain his actions:

Definitely all of those things we have taken into prayerful consideration…Our opinion of Islam has not changed, our opinion of Islam has only been confirmed through the very fact (that) we’ve done nothing. We have not burned the Koran, even though we haven’t done anything there have been riots and threats around the world to us- - that already confirms our mission has been accomplished to bring a greater awareness to America and the world that [Islam] is more dangerous and much more violent than we thought (Moran, 2010).

In addition to the interviews and news coverage of the proposed burning, on September 8, two dozen Christian, Muslims, and Jewish leaders from across the country came together in Washington, D.C. for an Emergency Faith Leaders Summit on anti-Muslim sentiment (Bahrampour & Boorstein, 2010a). According to a news story with PBS Newshour’s Gwen Ifill, this group of interfaith leaders gathered to speak out against what they referred to a as “creeping Islamophobia” as they intended to express a collective religious voice against Terry Jones, decrying him as not really representing Christian beliefs and actions.

While this unified voice across religions sought to appeal to him in terms of faith, Christian leaders sought to appeal to him through Christianity. Geoff Tunnicliffe, head one of the world’s largest faith organizations, the World Evangelical Alliance, tried appeal to Jones as a fellow Christian after hearing from Pentecostal leaders from around the world who feared that burning the Quran could cause sectarian violence (Boorstein, 2010). As Michelle Boorstein reported in the Washington Post article, “Evangelical leaders try to reach out to pastor who plans to burn Koran,” Tunnicliffe pleaded with Jones on the phone not to go through with the burning
for what he saw as “the reality: That video will never go away...It will be so detrimental to our work with religious liberty around the world. Everywhere I go around the world, I will have to address this for years to come” (Boorstein, 2010). Franklin Graham, son of famed evangelist Billy Graham and an outspoken critic of Islam, tried twice without success to reach Jones to express his disapproval of defacing or destroying the sacred texts or writings of other religions, a spokesman said (Bahrampour & Boorstein, 2010a). Another appeal for Jones to cancel the threat came from another evangelical Christian, Reverend Richard Cizik, of The New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, who espoused the importance of not taking action, even when one has the right to do so. He said:

Those mainly conservative Christians who are responding to their Muslim brothers and sisters, their fellow Americans, with anti-Muslim bigotry or hatred, they are openly rejecting, you see, the First Amendment principles of religious liberty, which we, as evangelical Christians, benefit daily…Watch out for so casually trampling on the religious liberty of others. You may be able to do that when are the majority. But, if you undermine liberty for other people’s children today, your own children may one day see their religious liberties deprived from them (Ifill, 2010).

In an interview with the Associated Press on Tuesday, Jones posed a question to the media: “How much do we back down? How many times do we back down?” (Stacy, 2010). For Jones, canceling “International Burn a Koran Day” would be a sign of weakness stating: “Instead of us backing down, maybe it’s time to stand up [...] it’s time to send a message to radical Islam that we will not tolerate their behavior” (Stacy, 2010). Jones continued: “It’s hard for people to believe, but we actually feel this is a message that we have been called to bring forth. [...] We do not feel like we can back down” (Stacy, 2010). Jones also mentioned that supporters had been
mailing copies of the Quran for the proposed event even though the local fire department denied him a required burn permit. Jones said he would go ahead with the event since lawyers informed him that his right to burn the Quran was protected by the First Amendment whether he had permission or not (“Despite Warnings,” 2010).

**Wednesday, September 8, 2010**

On Wednesday morning, September 8, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton spoke at the Council on Foreign Relations, saying:

> We're a country of what, 310-million-plus right now [...] And it's regrettable that a pastor in Gainesville, Florida, with a church of no more than 50 people can make this outrageous and distressful, disgraceful plan and get the world's attention, but that’s the world we live in right now (Bahrampour & Boorstein, 2010b).

Echoing Secretary Clinton’s remarks, on Wednesday morning, the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue issued a statement expressing its “great concern” over Jones’ plan, stating that, “these deplorable acts of violence [the attacks on the United States on 9/11/2001]...cannot be counteracted by an outrageous and grave gesture against a book considered sacred by a religious community” (“Vatican council,” 2010). The statement continued, “we are speaking about the respect to be accorded the dignity of the person who is an adherent of that religion and his/her free choice in religious matters” (“Vatican council,” 2010).

Republican John Boehner as well as other politicians such as Sarah Palin, were among the few politicians who spoke out adamantly against the proposed Mosque building near the area of ground zero (Bahrampour & Boorstein, 2010b). On the morning of September 8, in an interview with ABC News, U.S. House Minority Leader John Boehner condemned Terry Jones
and the proposed Quran burning, calling it “not wise.” Boehner said:

To Pastor Jones and those who want to build the [so-called Ground Zero] Mosque, just because you have a right to do something in America, does not mean it’s the right thing to do. We’re a nation of religious freedom – we’re also a nation of tolerance. I think in the name of tolerance, people ought to really think about the kind of actions they’re taking (Beutler, 2010).

On Wednesday evening, Sarah Palin, the former Republican Governor of Alaska and former Republican candidate for vice president, decried the burning and drew an equivalence between the Quran burning and “Ground Zero Mosque,” Palin also linked the threat of burning the Quran to the plan to build a mosque near the ground zero site when she wrote in a Facebook message: “People have a constitutional right to burn a Qur’an if they want to, but doing so is insensitive and an unnecessary provocation—much like building a mosque at Ground Zero” (Palin, 2010). In both instances, these political figures cited the right to burn the Quran and the right to build a mosque but spoke out adamantly that neither should exercise their right.

Even President Barack Obama spoke up on Wednesday and echoed similar sentiments as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted previously, about the ‘American way’ and fear for the troops according to the interview transcript of ABC news, George Stephanopoulos. In the interview, Stephanopoulos asked President Obama if there was anything he could say to Terry Jones to convince him not to burn the Quran. President Obama responded, without mentioning Jones’ name directly:

If he’s listening, I just hope he understands that what he’s proposing to do is completely contrary to our values as Americans…I want him to understand that this stunt that he is talking about pulling could greatly endanger our young men and women in uniform who
are in Iraq, who are in Afghanistan. We’re already seeing protests against Americans just by the mere threat that he’s making (Stephanopoulos, 2010).

When Stephanopoulos asked what President Obama was worried about, the President said, “this is a recruitment bonanza for Al Qaeda...this could increase the recruitment of individuals who’d be willing to blow themselves up in American cities, or European cities” and that Jones “understands that this is a destructive act that he’s engaging in” (Stephanopoulos, 2010). Stephanopoulos also asked President Obama whether such a situation made him feel helpless or angry to which President Obama responded:

It, well it is frustrating. Now, on the other hand, we are a government of laws. And so, we have to abide by those laws. And my understanding is that he can be cited for public burning. But that’s the extent of the laws that we have available to us. You know, part of this country’s history is people doing destructive or harmful things. And yet, we still have to make sure that we’re following the laws. And that’s part of what I love about this country (Stephanopoulos, 2010).

Even with all the pleas and condemnation to call off the burning, Jones remained steadfast, scheduling a press conference that attracted journalists from the BBC, Sweden, and other international news outlets (Hudak, 2010a). At the press conference, Jones stated that: “As of this time we have no intention canceling […] As of right now, we are not convinced that backing down is the right thing” (Hudak, 2010a). At the press conference, Jones complained that the news media had failed to report what he called “quite a bit of support” for the proposed Quran burning (Hudak, 2010a).

In an interview with USA TODAY on that Wednesday, Jones stated that no one from the White House, State Department, or Pentagon had contacted him. If they were to, he said, "that
would cause us to definitely think it over. That's what we're doing now. I don't think a call from them is something we would ignore" (Copeland & Hampson, 2010).

In a statement sent to the Orlando Sentinel, Jones stated that he had met with an Imam, Imam Muhammad Musri, president of the Islamic Society of Central Florida, in an unplanned meeting to discuss the burning (Hudak, 2010a). In their meeting, Jones said that Imam Musri “was very respectful towards us. He was in agreement with us that it is necessary that both Muslims and Christians condemn acts of terrorism by radical Islam” (Hudak, 2010a). Later that evening, Imam Muhammad Musri emerged from a meeting with Jones, saying he was hopeful Jones would change his mind and expressed his concern about the effect of desecrating a text that is sacred to billions of people. Appealing to Jones with biblical Scripture, Musri relayed the message that Jones said:

He will consider…he will pray about it. I told him that Christ in the Bible has offered a different solution, a different way. The reason that we all love Christ is because is a man of peace…He chose always to express love and peace and compassion, and I think the pastor, as a Christian, will follow in the footsteps of Christ and will do the right thing (Hudak, 2010a).

Thursday, September 9, 2010

In the afternoon of Thursday, September 9, the Associated Press reported that Jones said, "As of right now, we are not convinced that backing down is the right thing" (Kolawole, 2010). Later that day, Jones held another press conference with Imam Musri in which Jones announced he would cancel the burning event. During the conference Jones claimed an agreement had been reached with Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf to move the proposed mosque near Ground Zero and that
a meeting had been planned with Jones and Imam Rauf on September 11. Jones stated that the Dove World Outreach Center “felt that there would be a sign that God would want us to do it...The American people do not want the mosque there and, of course, Muslims do not want us to burn the Quran" (Kolawole, 2010). Jones also stated that he was against any other groups burning the Quran (Kolawole, 2010).

Almost immediately, the Associated Press reported that Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf stated that no agreement had been reached to move the mosque and that he had not spoken with either Imam Musri or Jones. Furthermore, Rauf said that the plans to build the mosque near Ground Zero would go forward as planned. Imam Musri also stated that there had been no agreement to move the mosque and that the only agreement reached was for Jones to meet with the Imam Rauf on September 11. In response, Jones insisted that Imam Musri had promised him the mosque would be moved and that he would be "very, very disappointed" if it was not (Kolawole, 2010). Later that evening, Jones announced that the Quran burning was suspended, not canceled, and that he might reconsider, claiming Musri "clearly, clearly lied to us" (Kolawole, 2010). In response, Imam Musri said that Jones "stretched my words" during the press conference (Kolawole, 2010).

On Thursday, a Pentagon press secretary announced in a statement that Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates had called Jones directly:

Secretary Gates reached out to Pastor Jones this afternoon. They had a very brief phone conversation during which the Secretary expressed his grave concern that going forward with the Quran burning would put at risk the lives of our forces around the world, especially those in Iraq and Afghanistan, and he urged the Pastor not to proceed with it (Carden, 2010).
Friday, September 10, 2010

Speaking with the Today show’s Meredith Vieira on Friday morning, September 10, Jones reconfirmed his intention to enact the planned burning. Vieira noted the confusing back and forth nature of events: from Jones canceling announcement during the previous afternoon, to announcing it was simply suspended the night before (Vieira, 2010). Addressing the confusion, Jones said, “I think the confusion has not really come from us, it's come from the fact that I was told something, I was lied to” (Vieira, 2010).

In the interview, Jones explained that Imam Musri had come to Jones after he had heard Jones on a radio broadcast the previous day:

JONES: I mentioned that we would be willing to cancel our event, something that the Muslim world wants to happen, if they would be willing to cancel or move the ground zero mosque, something that the American world wants to be done. And he came to me with that proposal. I said, yes, we will do that. We are supposed to fly up and meet the imam either today or tomorrow. And then later on -- then he took that back […]

VIEIRA: He told you directly that the imam in New York had said that he would not build a mosque near ground zero in return for you not burning the Koran?

JONES: That is exactly what he told me. I have witnesses that are there. I asked him three or four times, and that's exactly what he said. I said let me make this clear. If we cancel our event on Saturday, then the mosque in New York city will be moved from its present location? He said, yes. There was absolutely no doubt about it.

VIEIRA: Well, if that is off the table, do you plan, then, to burn the Korans on Saturday?

JONES: Right now we plan to meet with the imam on Saturday. If we meet with him on Saturday, then of course, we will not burn the Korans, no.
VIEIRA: But I thought that meeting was not going to happen now. [...] I’m still very confused by what you're saying. I thought you said that meeting is not going to happen.

JONES: [...] That is the problem. I am sorry to say, the man is lying. He asked me yesterday, when would you like to meet with the imam, on Friday or Saturday? I said I do not want to meet on Friday. I would like to meet him on Saturday. He said, okay. That meeting will take place. These are the things exactly what he told me. Based upon that, I trusted him and believed him. If he is now changing it, then he is not telling the truth.

VIEIRA: Yesterday, the Secretary of Defense, Gates, he called you personally, and he said please do not go through with this because you are risking lives if you do. What did you respond to him?

JONES: I told him that we were taking it very, very serious. We have been contacted by many people. We take that danger very, very seriously, and I told him that we were definitely praying about it and reconsidering.

VIEIRA: But today, sir, in Afghanistan, a man was shot dead when protesters angry over your plan to burn Korans attacked a NATO base. Do you feel that you bear any responsibility for what happened?

JONES: We do not feel we bear responsibility, no. We feel what has actually happened is that we have brought an awareness. It is very clear that Islam, that radical Islam is much more dangerous, violent and radical than we ever thought. They are doing things although we have done nothing. It has just been an excuse for violence.

VIEIRA: Hatred and bigotry, don't you expect this kind of an outcome? You’ve incited this.

JONES: We did not. We do not feel responsible. We did not pull the trigger. It reveals the
true nature of Islam. People burn all the time bibles, they burn the flag. Americans do not
go around killing them. Christians do not go around killing them, whether they burn one
bible, 10,000 bibles. We do not do that because that is not our nature.

VIEIRA: Well, there are people --

JONES: I think we need to look here at who is actually responsible for that.

VIEIRA: There are people of all faiths, sir, today, who are calling you intolerant, bigoted,
even calling you crazy. What are you?

JONES: I am just a man who is trying to do what god has told us to do one of those
things, we feel, is to shed a light to take the cover off, to take the blinders off and to
really look at how dangerous, violent Islam is. We have to get our head out of the sand.

VIEIRA: And if what you're doing results in people dying, so be it?

JONES: Not at all. That would be absolutely, absolutely terrible. That is what we do not
want --

VIEIRA: Well, it's already happened.

JONES: We are even surprised. We are even surprised by the violence of Islam. We did
not kill anybody. Islam is killing people. We need to realize, we need to wake up and see
the danger.

On Friday morning after Jones had announced on NBC's "Today" show that he would
cancel Quran burning if he could meet with Imam Rauf in New York, Rauf insisted that no
meeting had been planned with Jones but that he was committed to meeting with anyone
"seriously committed to pursuing peace" (Kolawole, 2010). On Friday afternoon, it was still
unclear whether Jones would meet with Rauf, whether he would cancel the burning indefinitely
or just avoid the anniversary of September 11, 2001 (Kolawole, 2010).
By Friday afternoon, according to the Orlando Sentinel, Jones and fellow evangelist Kilari Anand Paul established a two-hour deadline to hear from Rauf (Hudak, 2010b). As the 3:20 p.m. deadline came and went without response from Rauf, Paul told the Associated Press that the September 11 burning was called off. According to an interview with the Orlando Sentinel, Paul stated: "I can tell you 100 percent Pastor Jones will not burn the Quran tomorrow" (Hudak, 2010b). When Paul was asked whether Jones would burn the Quran in the future, Paul said he could not speak for the future (Hudak, 2010b). In addition, in the afternoon of September 10, Luke Jones, Terry Jones' son, insisted that his father would not go through with the Quran burning on September 11, but would also not guarantee that his father would not burn the Quran in the future (Kolawole, 2010).

In the Washington Post article, “Pastor Terry Jones’s Koran-burning threat started with a tweet,” Ann Gerhart and Ernesto Londono reported that in Pakistan, where national attention had been focused on the devastating floods and deadly bombings, the issue in Florida surged to the forefront only on Thursday, after Obama spoke. On that Friday, about 200 lawyers in the central city of Multan burned a U.S. flag in a protest against the plan and several Pakistani officials and religious leaders denounced it. The President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, through a spokesman, called the threat a “despicable act” that would inflame Muslim sentiments and “cause irreparable damage to interfaith harmony and also to world peace” (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). Pakistan’s Interior Minister Rehman Malik wrote a letter to the chief of the international police agency Interpol, urging it to help prevent the act. Later in the day, the agency issued a statement that cited Malik’s letter and warned member nations of a heightened terror alert (Gerhart & Londono, 2010).

Even after Jones cancelled the burning Thursday, thousands of Afghans took to the
streets to protest the plan on Friday, the first day of Eid, the holiday that marks the end of Ramadan. In Badakhshan province, hundreds of people joined protests, including some who tried to scale the fence of a NATO base, prompting guards to open fire (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). Even as Jones retracted his plan, at least 11 people were injured in Afghanistan as they protested the proposed event (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). Gerhart & Londono’s report in the *Washington Post* noted an individual in Kabul stated that the issue of the Quran burning had not sparked widespread anger in Afghanistan until after news media outlets in Muslim countries replayed the first interview Jones did with CNN. Shakir Stanikzai commented that “After the interview on CNN, it got very hot, people started seriously thinking about it” (Gerhart & Londono, 2010).

On Friday, State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley stated that: “This is not the first time something like this has happened” (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). Other pastors had burned the Quran and posted videos on YouTube. The difference, Crowley noted, was “the potential that the world will be watching and reacting,” because of the contentious debate over the proposed Islamic center at Ground Zero (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). As a reflection of State Department Crowley’s sentiment, on Friday, numerous international leaders added their voices to the chorus of condemnation for the proposed event. Comments came from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, U.S. Senate Minority leader Mitch McConnell, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, and the spokesman for France’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bernard Valero among a host of others (CNN Wire Staff, 2010b). CNN also reported that a spokesman for the Taliban in Afghanistan told CNN, “If in Florida they were to burn the Quran, we will target any Christians, even if they are innocent, because the Quran is our holy book and we do not want someone to burn our holy book” (CNN Wire Staff, 2010b).
**Saturday, September 11, 2010: “Int’ Burn a Koran Day”**

On the morning of Saturday, September 11, 2010, as the world waited to see what would happen at 6:00 pm, the scheduled time for the burning, Jones flew to New York to try to meet with Imam Rauf. That morning, Jones sat down with NBC’s TODAY show’s interviewer Carl Quantanilla and announced that the Dove World Outreach Center would “definitely not burn the Quran” (Quantanilla, 2010). In the interview, Jones expressed hope that he would be able to meet with Imam Faisal Rauf but at that time, no meeting had been scheduled. Jones further said that the church would not burn the Quran, “Not today, not ever,” even if the Islamic center were built near ground zero. The interview proceeded as follows:

QUINTANILLA: The burning was scheduled to happen tonight...

QUINTANILLA: Is it going to happen?

JONES: We have decided to cancel the burning.

QUINTANILLA: Why?

JONES: We feel that whenever we started this out, one of our reasons was to show, to expose that there is an element of Islam that is very dangerous and very radical. I believe that we have definitely accomplished that mission. Even though we have not burned one Quran, we have gotten over 100 death threats, we see what is going around in the whole world even if we do it. We feel a little bit -- if you're familiar with the story of Abraham we feel a little bit like -- Abraham was also called to do something very crazy. I mean, God told him to go to the mountain and sacrifice his son. Of course, Abraham was much wiser than us. He told no one.

JONES: Yeah. So he got to the mountain. He started to do it, and God told him to stop. So we feel -- we feel we have accomplished our goal. We were obedient. We feel that
God is telling us to stop. And we also hope that with us making this first gesture, not burning the Quran. […]

JONES: to say, 'No, we're not going to do it'...

QUINTANILLA: Not today, not ever.

JONES: Not today, not ever. We're not going to go back and do it. It is totally canceled. We hope that through that maybe that will open up a door to be able to talk to the imam about -- yeah, about the ground zero mosque.

QUINTANILLA: So there are -- you can guarantee us today that there will never be a burning of the Quran at your church.

JONES: I can absolutely guarantee you that, yes. […]

QUINTANILLA: We've been criticized in the media, perhaps fairly, that we gave you a microphone and made you basically an international name, well-known in this country certainly, and that that was publicity for your church, that you've been toying with us with these on-again, off-again pronouncements; 'Is he going to burn? Is he not going to burn?' Was it for publicity?

JONES: Absolutely not. We were 100 convinced -- 100 percent convinced that this was a -- this was a type of a -- of a mission. We believe very much that there is Shariah law, that there is an element that is -- that is very, very radical. I am of the opinion it is much larger than our politicians and our news media would like for us to believe. And I believe that we have -- we have -- we have well, well proved that point by the reaction worldwide.
QUINTANILLA: You arrived at La Guardia last night amid lots of security. The security around here this morning has gotten very intense. You've gotten 100 death threats, you've said. You're a reviled man and you're a wanted man in some places.

JONES: Right.

QUINTANILLA: How much of that is part of this decision? Were you scared into it?

JONES: No. No, no, we already -- we definitely did not realize that all of this would take place. Of course not. But we knew that if we went in this direction that our life could be threatened or would be threatened, we could possibly even get killed. I think the fact that we changed this decision -- we felt as though God was telling us to do this. I don't believe that has changed the death threats against us. […]

JONES: I believe that we have already went too far to change that.

QUINTANILLA: If this mosque is still built, which you clearly oppose, you still will not reverse your decision, you still will not burn the Quran?

JONES: We will definitely not burn the Quran, no.
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Positioning Theory Analysis

In order to analytically examine the process as well as the dynamics of the Quran burning controversy’s course of events, I will utilize the social-psychology framework of positioning theory as my method of analysis. Positioning theory provides a useful tool to understand psychological processes and motivations in constructing meaning through storytelling in social interaction. According to positioning theory scholars, positioning theory is an analytical framework based on the fields of linguistics, psychology, micro-sociology and philosophy (Moghaddam, et.al. 2008). Positioning scholars focus on everyday encounters in which people reveal explicit and implicit patterns of reasoning into what is right and proper to say and do (rights and duties) (Harre, et.al. 2009). The realization that the “content of positions is local and may even be momentary and ephemeral is the deep insight of positioning theory” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 10). For these purposes, the application of positioning theory as a tool of analysis can provide insight into conflict and its context by examining the unfolding dynamic discourses surrounding a conflict.

This theory is composed of three fundamental and interconnected elements, usually depicted using a triangle metaphor of interrelated concepts. The positioning triangle serves as a framework for defining the meaning of events and explaining people’s actions in their interactions with one another (Harre, et.al. 2009). These three elements are the crucial conditions for meaningful interactions (Moghaddam, et.al. 2008):

1. Positions: rights and duties, which are distributed in changing patterns in social relations. These rights and duties are “shorthand terms for clusters of moral (normative)
presuppositions which people believe or are told or slip into and to which they are momentarily bound in what they say and do” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 9). Pre-suppositions can be characterized as culturally bound. According to positioning theorists, Moghaddam et.al., a distribution of a right or duty is a position (Moghaddam, et.al. 2008). The process of positioning takes place in the course of interaction and can be “deliberate, inadvertent, presumptive, taken for granted, and so on” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 10).

2. Storylines: the composition of evolving positions, defined as “the flow of actions and interactions in an evolving social episode” (Moghaddam, et.al. 2008, p. 11). In other words, “acts of positioning and the positions are contextualized within a storyline, consisting of already established patterns and conventions, which the acts follow in a mutually constituting relationship” (Moghaddam, et.al. 2008, p. 43). Storylines are composed of the actions resulting from the varying distributions of rights and duties.

3. Illocutionary force: is a term derived from linguistics, which is focused on the intention in making a speech act. Used in the context of positioning theory, the illocutionary force is the meaning of actions in a social context, derived from a “local repertoire of admissible social acts” (Moghaddam, et.al. 2008, p. 10). People will construct and ascribe positions (patterns of rights and duties) that are based on the social meaning of the actions, or illocutionary force.

By examining these three elements and their relation to each other, positions of rights and duties begin to take shape. Such positions consist essentially of “clusters of beliefs about how
rights and duties are distributed in the course of an episode” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 9).

Furthermore, positions are the “features of the local moral landscape. People are assigned positions or acquire or even seize positions via a variety of prior implicit and explicit acts” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 9). Positioning theory further focuses on “bringing to light the normative frames within which people actually carry out their lives, thinking, feeling, acting, and perceiving—against standards of correctness” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 9). Positioning theory looks at what a person “may do and may not do” in light of and in relation to others’ perceptions (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 9).

The positioning process is believed to be a discursive practice, meaning that it is a practice involving the discourses of interaction. This practice, demonstrated through “prepositioning discourse,” consists of identifying and sometimes justifying “attributions of skills, character traits, biographical facts,” deemed relevant to whatever positioning is going forward (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 10). Essentially, pre-positioning consists of gathering information that is relevant to the evolving positions. The act of prepositioning might be positive or it might be negative, meaning that it is just as significant to deny someone’s rights and duties as it is to assign them: “You don’t have the right to” or “it is not your duty to” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 10). Such pre-positioning does not have to be based on verifiable facts but rather can just as easily be believed and perceived understandings. It is important to note that positioning theory scholars do not mean duties and rights in terms of declared laws and constitutions. The laws and constitution are excluded from the domain of positioning theory “since they are set up by decree and intended to last” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 11). Positions, therefore, consist of the distribution of rights and duties of each party at each phase of the course of events.

There is an additional distinction in the discussion of rights and duties that is relevant to
this context and course of events. This distinction is between ordinary rights and duties and what are deemed supererogatory rights and duties. Ordinary duty is defined as “what a person owes others in a society whereas supererogatory duties are what a person is not obligated to carry out, but what is applauded for carrying out” (Moghaddam, 2008, p. 56). Furthermore, there are also supererogatory rights, defined as “what a person is owed by others, but is willing to forgo for the sake of a greater good” (Moghaddam, 2008, p. 56).

Scholars of positioning theory take the view that “life unfolds as a narrative, with multiple, contemporaneous interlinking story-lines” in which “the significance of the actions that people carry out, including speech acts, is partly determined by the then-and-there positions of the actors” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 8). The significance of the actions that people evince in a social episode is based on the recognized but temporary rights and duties of those individuals. The formation of the triangle and its interconnected elements suggests that as storylines are unfolding, the speech acts that people produce are mutually determined by the positions that they choose to occupy. Such positions are “constituted by their assigned, ascribed, claimed, or assumed rights and duties to make use of the available and relevant discursive tools” (Harre, et.al. 2009, p. 8).

Particularly relevant to the discussion of the Quran burning controversy is the fact that positioning theory is coupled with narratological analysis. Narratological analysis, according to Harre et.al. (2009), “reveals the normative constraints on the unfolding of a story-line, constraints which are expressible in the alternative language of locally valid patterns of rights and duties” (Harre et.al., 2009, p. 6). The primary medium is discursive. Additionally, a useful concept within narratology is “footing.” “Having a footing” means that a person has status:
someone with footing is listened to. Therefore, the illocutionary force of their speech acts is noticed and in some cases adopted.

Another relevant component of positioning theory to this discussion of the Quran burning controversy is the illocutionary force, or the meaningfulness derived from social interactions. Illocutionary force is the contextual, social significance of what is said and done (Austin, 1959). This suggests that the same speech act or material object can have a variety of meanings depending on who said it, who is using it, where it is said and for what purpose (Harre, 2004).

Harre et.al. further address the relation between material objects and the meaning associated with such objects: “Physical objects are recruited to the role of meaning bearers in the course of entering into a culture,” such as the book called the Quran (Harre et al, 2009, p. 7).

The significance of positioning theory in conflict analysis is still developing. Harre et.al (2008), argue that there are underlying psychological matters that affect conflict. This is directly relevant to the topic of the Quran burning controversy in that it focuses on moral orders of the rights and duties a person may hold. Specifically, different meanings may be given to the same action. The evaluation of conflict through positioning theory increases the potential for resolution. For instance, if the antithetical moral orders of rights and duties are presented to the parties involved, they may be able to see their differences. Moghaddam et.al, (2008), further note that while there is recent work in the field conflict resolution, there is work that remains to be done on how conflicts are exacerbated. Analyzing conflict utilizing the positioning framework and assessment of the dynamic discourses, provides an opportunity to develop “an understanding of the complexities of social positioning while understanding that we can never see the whole picture” (Moghaddam, et.al. 2008, p. 187).
CHAPTER 4: POSITIONING ANALYSIS: QURAN BURNING

“9/11/2010 Int Burn a Koran Day.” In this chapter, I will utilize positioning analysis as a tool, by examining the positions and discourses that I articulated in the previous chapter, as a means to analyze how individuals create meaning for themselves and others according to what they perceive as their rights and duties. Terry Jones, for instance, could have planned to burn the Quran because he took the position that Muslims did not have the right to have rights. This discussion also proposes the idea that there are certain cases in which it is better not to exercise rights and duties. This analysis will consider polarizing means of discourse through positioning. “You burn a Qur’an, You Burned in Hell!!” (Montopoli, 2010; Kolawole, 2010).

The Quran burning controversy began with a tweet. Terry Jones created an anti-Islam storyline that fueled already existing insecurities due to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. In reaction to his speech-acts, ‘moderates’ denounced his proposed action, calling for the cancellation of the event by focusing on the potential deadly repercussions. Over the course of a few weeks, the story expanded and the public learned of a man, who on a number of occasions had voiced his views in relation to polarizing topics. In addition, his threat to act-- to burn approximately two hundred books of the Quran on the ninth anniversary of the attacks on September 11— was felt to be a provocation. He took the position that he had the right to burn the Quran, an act, which he clearly understood to be protected by the Constitution. In one interview after another, he claimed he was deliberating on this course of action. Up until the day of the proposed event, he continuously changed his mind in public as to whether he would actually carry out the Quran burning, finally changing his position and calling off the proposed event.
Gainesville, Florida: July 2009

The events surrounding the Quran burning accelerated rapidly in the days leading up to the ninth anniversary of the attacks on September 11, 2001. However, these events must be seen in their deeper historical context beginning with the actions of the Dove World Outreach Center in 2009 and the development of the positions emanating from them. We learn from this contextual analysis more about the fundamental positions and messages of the church and their complexity.

*Jones’ Position.*

In the summer of 2009, the Dove World Outreach Center used its position as a religious institution within the local Gainesville, Florida community to publicly post signs proclaiming that “Islam is of the Devil” (“The Sign,” 2009). For the Dove World Outreach Center to proclaim such a judgment by posting this sign, they suggest that Jones, as the pastor and spokesperson of the church, is ‘of God’ and therefore right. Through this public proclamation, Jones and his church ground their action in the Christian Bible as they saw themselves responding to the word of God by negatively defining the other, or Islam, as of the devil. In this situation, Jones adopted a Bible passage, John 8:44, in which, Jesus says to a Jew, “you are of your father, the devil,” and transformed the message to malign Islam. At that time, Jones was appropriating the role of Jesus as he proclaimed that, “Islam is of the devil.” He therefore believed that he had the right to claim that the holy book, the Quran, should be burned. Jones used a passage from within the Bible to justify his belief that Muslims are evil. This use of religious language by a religious man, further implied that Muslims are actors on the stage of history who are being guided by the devil.

Jones believed that posting this sign was his right and duty to express the church’s religious belief that Christianity is the only right religion. From Jones’ perspective, the posting of
the sign was a great "act of love" on the churches part. He accepted that his message could be
construed as too direct but believed that his intended message, that Jesus and the Bible is the
only way, would not garner any criticism. Rather, Jones believed that as a Christian, it was his
duty to deliver a kind and positive gesture to announce the truth and to show Muslims the
‘correct’ or right way. Jones further linked feelings of U.S. patriotism with his religious
convictions.

While Jones believed that this message would be construed as guiding people toward the
right path, it was actually felt to be a direct affront to Islam. Jones described Islam as “a violent
and oppressive religion and does not have anything to do with the truth of the Bible” (Fisher &
Voules, 2009). This affront continued in his statement that, “Islam is a lie based upon lies and
deceptions and fear” (“The Sign,” 2009). Such language referring to lies based upon lies is again
a statement found in the Bible, John 8:44. As a preacher of the gospel, he is always preaching
the gospel: Jones’ language always derived from the bible. It is important to note that he was not
speaking in secular language and we must understand this point if we are to understand his
position at any moment in this controversy. Terry Jones’ affront to Islam through this sign
expressed clearly his underlying feeling of being threatened by the Muslim world. He went on to
say of Islam, “if you preach the gospel or convert to Christianity - you will be killed. That is the
type of religion it is” (“The Sign,” 2009). By implication, as a preacher of the gospel, Jones
perceived the religion of Islam to be a direct threat of death against him and his church.

Local Community Position.

In response to the sign, some in the local community of Gainesville picketed the church. Someone even vandalized the sign. Such deliberate and direct reactions against the posted sign
suggest that the sign did not represent the community and its values. It was so extreme from the
community’s point of view that some felt moved to protest. Those who protested in July 2009, were concerned that the sign would harm the image of their community to the outside world. Members of the Gainesville community expressed shock, offense, and sadness, as community members declared that the sign was a “divisive message” (Fisher & Voules, 2009). These community members believed that it was their right and duty to speak out against the behavior of the church within their community, because they believed that it was the church’s duty to express messages of unity, not divisiveness. Once the community had expressed its dismay, Jones responded from his positions, rights, and duties that he would be open to dialogue as long as such dialogue would “create interest, create awareness, get people to think” about his position so that they might see the ‘correct’ way (Fisher & Voules, 2009).

Religious Position.

The sign drew attention from the local Muslim community as well. The president of the Muslim Association of North Central Florida, Saeed Khan, took it upon himself to acknowledge Jones’ Constitutional right to say and do what he wanted. Even so, Khan expressed his concern over the potential reaction and consequences of delivering such a message. Even if Jones intended the posting of the sign to be a great act of love, Khan pointed out that the meaning and message could become inflamed and “the reaction on both sides can be detrimental to the people that live there. You have to make some kind of balance” (Fisher & Voules, 2009). Khan noted Jones’ isolation within the local community. He said, “when you don’t know others, it’s easy to demonize someone you don’t know. I would rather sit down and see what the issues are” (Fisher & Voules, 2009). What Khan was doing, as a Muslim, was positioning himself as being more tolerant, than the Christian was. Therefore, Khan was more likely garner respect from the broader, liberal Christian community. In an effort to intervene, before the situation
potentially became a greater issue, Khan recognized a key characteristic of intergroup relations relating to the notion of in-group and out-group biases, which remains a central characteristic of the escalation of this conflict.

**Gainesville, Florida: August 2009**

*Jones’ Position.*

There is direct evidence that Jones believed that his use of signs was effective in stirring up emotion about Islam. Whereas some might stop creating such overt speech-acts that were felt by the community to be divisive, Jones created a whole new set of signs, the purpose of which was to further rile the community. In a local *Gainesville Sun* news article, Ramzy Kilic, Tampa’s executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, was quoted as saying that the signs were further “antagonizing Muslims,” further noting that Jones intended “to continue spreading a message of hate” (Swirko, 2009). With the introduction of the new signs, Jones’ positioning further escalated as he was reacting to all the responses by trying to stir up other people’s emotions against Islam. He realized that his signs were getting people riled up so in order to capitalize on that momentum, he created more signage.

**Theoretical Foundations**

In order to develop a fuller understanding of the course of events, I will use this opportunity to discuss two theories that are relevant to and form a basis for the assumptions of positioning theory, which include the theories of irrationality and social identity formation. These two theories focus on the formation of in-groups and out-groups and the interest of the collective identity to remain unique and distinct.
Irrationalist Perspective.

Central to positioning theory is the notion that “beliefs and motivations are strategic constructions” rather than rationally constructed (Moghaddam, et.al. 2008, p. 29). The basic tenet of the social psychological perspective of rationalist/irrationalist theory is that people do not act rationally usually because they are not fully aware of what they do and why they behave as they do (Moghaddam, 2005). The irrationalist perspective suggests that individuals are influenced by unconscious factors such as hidden motives, wishes, and fears. The unconscious influences individuals to then favor particular groups, discriminate against out-groups, justify intergroup inequalities and discrimination, and generally behave in ways that favor their in-group and show bias against an out-group. These concepts form the basis of the following social identify formation discussion.

Social Identity Formation Perspective.

Whereas the former theory is closely associated with positioning theory, identity perspective is not as closely associated with positioning, though it is critical to take into account in order to fully understand the full ramifications of positioning analysis. According to Donald Taylor (2002), identity is collective, something formed by an association and shared characteristics with others (Taylor, p. 35). Therefore, identity conflicts are collective, with shared interests and shared fates (Kriesberg, 2003). Social psychology theories on intergroup relations help to explain why people have the tendency to construct collective identities and identify positively with certain groups while identifying negatively with other groups. These theories suggest that group formation occurs in order to maintain in-group cohesion, a sense of belonging, and individuality against a perceived out-group. The emotional ties associated with
group formation are explained from a theoretical understanding of a positive social identity construction and a quest for distinctiveness.

Henri Tajfel’s (1982) minimal group paradigm theory suggests that individuals tend to favor their own group (in-group) in relation to other groups (out-group) even when the formation of the group is based on certain characteristics. Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) developed the Social Identity Theory in order to explain this tendency to discriminate favorably towards members of an in-group and negatively against members of an out-group. They suggest that socially and culturally constructed characteristics of social identification lead to in-group favoritism towards those who share similar beliefs or values. Once individuals identify and categorize themselves as a group, they then seek to achieve positive self-esteem by differentiating their in-group beliefs and values from those of an out-group. Generally, such emotionally charged categorization contributes to in-group social cohesion.

Marilynn Brewer (1991), another social psychologist, took the social identity theory and expanded it into the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory. This theory focuses on the cognitive strategies of belonging to and standing apart from groups. The focus of identifying with a larger group while also maintaining a distinct identity within a group suggests the value the individuality of groups and within groups. According to Brewer’s conception of the optimal distinctiveness theory, it is important to maintain a balance between strong in-group identification and strong out-group differentiation, assimilation versus distinction. Incorporating the notions of social identity theory and distinctiveness, Turner (1982) aptly summarizes the concepts of social identity and distinctiveness as the “need for positive social identity [that] motivates a search for, and the creation and enhancement of, positive distinctiveness for one’s own group in comparison with other groups” (Turner, p. 34). Turner further argues that when
“conditions where group membership is salient, we perceive or stereotype ourselves and others in terms of the common or criterial attributes of the categories to which we have them belong” (Turner, p. 26). Psychologically, when out-groups are present, relevant, and perceived as a threat, the emotional reactions of the in-group cannot be discredited. This trend in social identity construction is seen throughout the world, “aiming at the preservation or the achievement of diversity, of one’s own special characteristics and ‘identity’” (Tajfel, p. 2).

Kinnvall (2004) further notes that “as individuals feel vulnerable and experience existential anxiety, it is not uncommon for them to wish to reaffirm a threatened self-identity. Any collective identity that can provide such security is a potential pole of attraction” (Kinnvall, p. 742). The collective identity will seek to reduce feelings of unpredictability and ambiguity and maintain group cohesion. This suggests that groups will rally behind their collective emotions and around leaders who will draw people together in order to alleviate their emotional insecurity. The tendency, as Northrup (1989) points out, is for “human beings, individually and in groups, to establish, maintain, and protect a sense of self-meaning, predictability, and purpose” (p. 63).

The implications of social identity formation, minimal group paradigm, and optimal distinctiveness theories, for the analysis of this case, center on the perceived threats to collective identity and in-group identification. Positive identity formation and in-group distinctiveness remain present considerations and motivations throughout the unfolding course of events as Jones and his church maintained in-group cohesion against the out-group they deemed a threat.

July 12, 2010: The Day of the Tweet

July 12, 2010 marked a dramatic shift in Terry Jones’ position and tactics. While in the previous year, Jones’ signs against Islam contributed to local concern, condemnation, and acts of
vandalism, the message of these speech-acts did not draw the attention of national or international news media. On July 12, 2010, Terry Jones tweeted the following: “9/11/2010 Int Burn a Koran Day.” This tweet declared that on September 11, 2010 there would be an event held on the lawn of the Dove World Outreach Center entitled, “International Burn a Koran Day.” This was a new speech act and a very different kind than those that had preceded it. Jones now positioned himself by the international medium of Twitter as the leader of a new ‘movement’ whose intent would be to burn the Quran. Jones transformed his earlier speech act with this new one into promoting action directly against Islam. While the early signs were informational, the new one was action oriented.

Such a transformation reflected Jones’ adoption of heavier tactics in order to put pressure on and send a deliberate message “of warning” to Muslims. Implicit in that warning was a threat. Such a move married the church’s opinion of Islam as being ‘of the devil’ with the threatened action against the holy book of Islam, the Quran. The message of the tweet was a threatening and violent one. Jones’ first speech-act called Islam “of the devil,” his new speech-act called for direct action against “the devil.”

**July 14, 2010**

On July 14, 2010 the website EuroIslam.info posted the burning announcement and Dove World Outreach Center’s mission statement on their website. The mission statement stated that Islam was dangerous and that the Quran is leading people to hell (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). As a result of this post on the internet, national and international coverage began. Prior to this posting, the course of events had remained localized in the community in Gainesville.
In posting the announcement and the Dove World Outreach Center’s mission statement, the website EuroIslam.info took the position of bridge between two separate media, the twitter sphere and the internet. Prior to posting the proposed event on the web, there had been a disjunction between the twitter world and the internet world. EuroIslam.info felt the right and duty to make known to those who might not otherwise have seen this tweet that Jones had sent out this message. This further introduced the controversy to communities across the world who would not have otherwise heard about it.

**July 29, 2010: CNN airs interview**

On July 29, 2010, CNN aired the first national television interview with Jones. During this interview Jones said that to his church, the Quran is not a sacred book. When questioned more directly about the sacredness of the Quran to Islam, Jones expressed his clear disinterest in dialogue and hardened his position that he would fulfill the intended action. Note the way that Jones positioned himself in the interview so as to deflect the questions he was being asked and turn instead to express his message, thus not entering into dialogue:

SANCHEZ: So how would you--

JONES: -- what is not welcome is Islamic law.

SANCHEZ: How would you --

JONES: The brutality of Islamic law. That is what's not welcome.

SANCHEZ: How would you feel if a Muslim said to you what you just said to them, I have no problem with you, Mr. Christian, you're welcome in my country but I'm burning your bible? How would you feel?

JONES: I would not like it. But it's their right. We live in America.
During the interview, Jones maintained that the message of the church was directed at radical Islam. He proclaimed, “We’re making a statement. It is time to stand up and speak out on what we believe in. We believe that Islam is of the devil. It is causing billions of people to go to hell” (Sanchez, 2010).

Position Shifting.

In this interview, Jones’ position shifted. On the one hand, he was claiming to have a position by “making a statement” through the sign. On the other hand, he was planning to take action in the more recent, tweeted position. In this speech-act, Jones was wearing two hats simultaneously as he withdrew from his new position by proclaiming that he was just making a statement. Why was he shifting positions? Is it because he was feeling pressure? Such an enigmatic speech-act suggests that he was either withdrawing from a certain position, or that he was playing two positions simultaneously. In addition, this interview demonstrated that Jones was not open to dialogue. He was not involved in dialogue at all which was also a change in position from when he had said he wanted dialogue in the previous year. While he had had a willingness to enter into dialogue, now, through his new his speech-acts, he was demonstrating not just a disinterest but an unwillingness to engage with an interviewer.

While Jones was characterizing his position as “making a statement,” the tweet was surely more than just making a statement. In his speech-act during the interview, he seemed to be reverting to his earlier position of making a statement, as with the signs he had posted, but in reality, his tweet had become his new position, calling for an action against Islam. He further stated that:
What we are also doing by the burning of the Koran on 9/11, we're saying stop. We're saying stop to Islam. Stop to Islamic law. Stop to brutality. We have nothing against Muslims. They are welcome in our country. They are welcome to worship. We have freedom of worship. We have freedom of speech. They are welcome. What is not welcome, what we are saying with the burning of the Koran [...] what is not welcome is Islamic law (Sanchez, 2010).

Citing the sacredness of the Quran to Islam, Sanchez tried to impress upon Jones the importance of the Quran. Jones’ statement that the Quran is not sacred to him and his church, suggests his awareness that the Quran is sacred to Muslims, otherwise he would not be burning it. He may not have realized the extent to which the Quran is sacred, but rather he realized that the threat to burn the Quran would be felt to be an act of incitement. This positioning raises the questions, was there research that went into the choice of burning the Quran? Did Jones understand the significance of burning the holy book?

Later in the controversy, an individual who took part in the protests in Afghanistan cited viewing this initial CNN interview as the flame that ignited reaction in Muslim countries (Gerhart & Londono, 2010). Seemingly, without direct intention to incite an international reaction, when Jones participated in and stated his positions during the CNN interview, he entrenched himself in the controversy further as it then escalated and transformed on the international scene with reactions and actions in opposition to him. In this instance, a form of media became a bridge that acted to inform the international community of a local issue in Florida.

Jones’ Position.

Contained within this first interview as well as every other subsequent interview later on
was the logical error of Jones’ position. In every interview, blog post, and YouTube video, Jones stated that the goal was to send a message to the radical elements of Islam, to say no more. A logical error occurred in the way Jones characterized his position in opposition to radicalism, thus directing himself against evil. Calling something radical already made it evil. Throughout the controversy, Jones repeatedly spoke using the logical error “begging the question,” meaning that he coupled concepts that were by definition illogical and practically impossible to disagree with, such as the notion that radical Islam is something bad and therefore should be defamed.

August 2010

Turning away from a direct focus on Jones, I would like to establish the context of the month of August 2010 in international news as it was focused on Islam in a different way. In August 2010, the primary storyline in news coverage was the controversial Park51 mosque and community center or the so-called, “Ground Zero Mosque.” This separate series of events later became intertwined with the proposed Quran burning. At the time, however, the controversy over the proposed “Ground Zero Mosque” focused on what some considered the inappropriate placement of a mosque near the location of ground zero, the former site of the World Trade Center towers that were hit in the 2001 terrorist attack.

On August 25, Damien Cave, a *New York Times* journalist bridged two previously unconnected ideas in the article, “Far From Ground Zero, Obscure Pastor Is Ignored No Longer” (Cave, 2010). The author, in a bridging position, brought together these two concepts for the first time in a medium that is very mainstream, the *New York Times*. This journalist played a role in the further escalation and development of Jones’ storyline. Cave, in this article, was in fact feeding Jones’ storyline, position, and his rights and duties. In publishing this article, the author
created a nexus between the two separate issues. In fact, the author expressed Jones’ positions saying he had the right to burn Islam’s sacred book because it is “full of lies,” which led to the escalation, broadening, and development of the controversy surrounding the mosque building nationally and internationally (Cave, 2010). In this instance, Jones’ position was being broadened for him. In published material of interviews of Jones between, August 25, 2010-September 8, 2010, Jones stuck to his position and tactics found in CNN interview with Sanchez on July 29. The innovation that took place on 8th of September, when Jones and Imam Musri met to discuss the Quran burning and subsequently addressed the proposed mosque near ground zero, was that such a meeting may or may not have been attributable to the New York Times journalist who made the connection. While we have the evidence of the article in the New York Times and the development of the course of events, the connection remains unclear, however, one can suspect there may be a connection.

These developments raise a number of questions: What was Jones reading or listening to that allowed him to learn about the building of the mosque? Did Jones read about the idea in the New York Times article? At this time, I am neither aware of his relation to the New York Times article, nor aware of evidence that brings them together.

Jones’ Position.

While Jones does have the legal right to burn the Quran, he maintained that burning the Quran would be the morally right thing to do because he claimed that the book is full of lies. Jones’ suggestion that the book is full of lies meant that the book was something bad and that burning it would therefore be something good. This suggests that he would not only be right to burn the Quran but that it would be his duty to do so.
Wednesday, September 1- Monday, September 6, 2010

As attention began to increase within the community of Gainesville, on September 1, a
group of 15 Imams signed a statement condemning any threatened action against Jones. In this
instance, these Imams positioned themselves as protectors of the physical body of Jones. Note
that the Imams’ position was similar to the one Jones had taken in the previous year when he said
that his speech-act, that “Islam is of the Devil,” was spoken out of love. The group of Imams, in
this instance, unexpectedly defended someone who had established himself as an enemy of
Islam. The Imams saw it as their duty, as religious figures, to do the right thing. In addition, local
religious leaders joined together on September 2 in solidarity to publically criticize Jones. As
their stated common enemy, these religious leaders saw it as their duty to speak as a unified
religious voice against him and the proposed events. In doing so, such an appeal was intended to
create an image of unity. In both instances, these religious figures saw their position as offering
containment to the local area. Even as they were attempting to curtail the effects of Jones’ speech
acts, the first major protests occurred in Jakarta, Indonesia on September 4.

International Position.

In direct reaction to the proposed burning, protesters took to the streets in Indonesia on
September 4 with signs that read: “You burn a Qur’an, You Burned in Hell!!” (Montopoli, 2010;
Kolawole, 2010). Not only does this statement present a direct reaction to the proposed burning,
but it also speaks directly to Jones and the religious notion of burning in hell for committing sins.
Such a protest, in reaction to Jones’ proposed event, was an instance of dialogue. The reaction,
taken up by the protester’s position, converses with Jones by utilizing religious language he
understands and he uses. In addition, the first protests abroad took place days before the U.S.
media grabbed hold of the issue, as illustrated by the opening reference from the rally in
Indonesia. In this instance, the protesters were equating Jones with the United States, meaning that his identity became identified with the United States.

In this early stage, some protesters in the international Muslim community began equating Jones’ actions to those of America and even began calling for the death of the President of the United States. As this occurred, the conflict began to transform from small issues to large concerns. As the conflict escalated, additional responses began to be heard in other Muslim countries, for example, in the assembled demonstration on September 6 in Afghanistan. Such escalation was seen through a geographical broadening in the Muslim world in reaction to the threat of burning. At the time of these events, the United States was at war in Afghanistan. Not only did Jones become the target through burning of an effigy in Afghanistan but also the United States became the target in the call, “Death to America” (Faiez, 2010). In this instance, the blame shifted for the speech act from Jones to the U.S. generally. It was the mere threat, the idea of burning the holy book that brought people to the streets. This transformation signaled a turn, a positioning, within a violent protest, which then brought the government of the United States into the affair because of the concern for the security of the citizens of the United States.

**U.S. Government Position.**

In direct response and in reaction to the protests in Afghanistan on September 6, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul issued a Press Release, “U.S. Embassy reaffirms U.S. Respect for Islam” on the evening of September 6 (Embassy, 2010). Such an affirmation of respect suggests that the U.S. government sought to appear to have respect for Muslims. Further, in their condemnation of the proposed action, the U.S. government sought to dissociate themselves from Jones’ actions and make it clear that they in no way condoned such acts of “disrespect against the religion of Islam” (Embassy, 2010). Noting what they perceived as “deliberate attempts to offend members
of religious or ethnic groups” they sought to create a unified image against Jones as they rejected the “offensive initiative” (Embassy, 2010). The Embassy further “emphasize that we strongly condemn the offensive messages, which are contrary to U.S. government policy and deeply offensive to Muslims especially during the month of Ramadan” (Embassy, 2010). The position here was to condemn the speech-act, the messages of Jones.

The key here was the emphasis on the perceived need by the U.S. government to re-establish their position on Islam and in particular respect for Muslims. The instances of protest in Afghanistan and Indonesia did not cause the U.S. to shift from their respect for Islam. In this Press Release, the U.S. government was addressing the people of Afghanistan directly in an effort to dissuade them from believing that Jones did in fact represent U.S. They were trying to say that the U.S. should not be identified with his initiative. The U.S. Embassy’s press release was a statement, creating a hard position, in that they represent the U.S. government’s position on the matter, as it was positioning itself vis-à-vis the Muslim population of the world, in general, and in Afghanistan in particular. It goes without saying, although it should not, that the Executive Branch of the U.S. government and the Secretary of State’s office that represents the Executive Branch, affirmed Jones’ right to make such speech acts but utterly condemned the content of the message. Speaking indirectly through the Embassy in Kabul, Hillary Clinton as head of the Department of State, positioned the United States by speaking out. Then, once the official U.S. government commented, the military, as represented by General Petraeus, spoke out. They got involved because of military action on the ground in Afghanistan.

**U.S. Military Position.**

Even with the U.S. Embassy’s statement against the proposed event, one of the pivotal voices in opposition to the events came from General David Petraeus, the top U.S. and NATO
commander in Afghanistan on September 6. Addressing a different perspective than that of the U.S. government, Petraeus saw it as his duty after the protests in Afghanistan to condemn the proposed action in order to prevent potential harm that could befall U.S. troops. Petraeus, as head of American and allied forces in Afghanistan at this point, was concerned that “It puts our soldiers in jeopardy […] the images from such an activity could very well be used by extremists here and around the world” (Ifill, 2010). The real threat, Petraeus noted, would be the potential images that would come out of such an action. He stated his concern over the potential “repercussions of the possible burning…Even the rumor that it might take place has sparked demonstrations such as the one that took place in Kabul yesterday. Were the actual burning to take place, the safety of our soldiers and civilians would be put in jeopardy and accomplishment of the mission would be made more difficult” (Ifill, 2010).

At the time, General Petraeus, as commander, was responsible for the war being carried out in Afghanistan. Throughout Petraeus’ time in Afghanistan, his mission was to build good relations with Muslims. What Jones’ potential action did was to undermine any positive gains that may have been made, by equating such a threat and fear to that of the Taliban. All of the sudden, as the reactions to the proposed action moved from Indonesia and spread to Afghanistan, the United States became directly involved on the international level. While the U.S. had already been implicated through triangulation by what was said in Jakarta, in this symbolic shift from Jones to the U.S., the proposed action now physically connected the U.S. because of the war in Afghanistan. At this point, the threatened action could no longer be ignored.

There are a few questions to keep in mind at this point: Why did Petraeus comment on Jones’ threatened action when the U.S. government had previously offered a statement on the issue? Why not allow that to simply speak for him?
As soon as protests happened in Afghanistan, such actions entered the purview of the U.S. and its sphere of influence, which required the Executive Branch first, then the military, which is the separate institution within the U.S. that carries out the will of the U.S. upon the soil of Afghanistan, second, to condemn Jones’ proposed plan. Furthermore, the storyline, placing primary concern for the safety of U.S. troops serving abroad, continued throughout the entire controversy as it was adopted by a number of influential world leaders, including U.S. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. This storyline was continually maintained throughout the course of events. Rather than judging Jones on the rightness of his actions, international leaders tried to appeal to him in terms of the potential consequences his actions would have on fellow Americans.

Once the United States was targeted and implicated in the issue, a question arose as to who would speak for it as the now triangulated party. In both the U.S. Embassy Press release and Petraeus’ interview, they attempted to disassociate the United States from the behavior of Jones. These were positions designed to correct the perceptions of the U.S. from the outside. Even though Jones’ right to speak freely was never questioned, the U.S. government and military attempted to mitigate the issue by stating that they did not agree with Jones’ speech-act.

**Tuesday, September 7, 2010**

Tuesday, September 7, 2010 was a critical turning point in the course of events surrounding the proposed burning. Not only did the number of conflicting parties increase, the discourse of the parties involved became increasingly direct, positioning themselves directly against Jones as the “deadline” of September 11 was approaching. Those attempting to appeal to
Jones tried to persuade him through his religious beliefs as well as through an appeal for the welfare of U.S. troops serving overseas.

**U.S. Government and Military Position.**

On September 7, Secretary of State of the United States Hillary Clinton added her comments to Petraeus’ that directly condemned the proposed event. Clinton sought to pressure Jones to back down from what she called a “disrespectful” and “disgraceful” act (Bahrampour & Boorstein, 2010). In her role as Secretary of State, she had already spoken through the U.S. Embassy in Kabul’s Press Release. Even so, on the evening of September 7, Secretary Clinton publicly announced her position within the context of the U.S. government and through her position, spoke to the world. Such condemnation arose out of the concern for the image of the United States. In addition, Secretary Clinton’s statements highlighted a sense of pride in the American tolerance and appreciation for the religious voices that had denounced the proposed action. In this instance, Secretary Clinton was trying to credit them with doing the right thing.

In addition to Secretary of State Clinton and General David Petraeus’ comments, other senior officials took public positions against Jones on September 7. As the spokesperson for President Barack Obama, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs reiterated the potential harm that could be caused to U.S. forces: “it puts our troops in harm’s way. And obviously that - - any type of activity like that would be -- that puts our troops in harm’s way would be a concern to this administration” (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2010). Even though the U.S. government had already positioned themselves through Secretary Clinton’s comments, it is interesting to ask why the Executive Branch further felt that it was necessary to have the White House spokesperson comment? By having so many voices address the topic, the government
appeared to be deeply concerned, needing to speak loudly and often, perhaps feeling it was otherwise powerless to stop him.

While the statement from the Embassy was really directed at the people of Afghanistan and Muslims of the world, Gibbs’ statement also solidified his position which is the President’s position and assured the American people that the Executive Branch was aware of the situation, was concerned, and in doing so expressed its reasons, agreeing with Petraeus’ concern for Americans in Afghanistan. In this instance, Gibbs, in his position as spokesperson for the White House, spoke directly to the American people, which suggests that they had not actually played their gambit. While they had not contacted Jones directly, this did not mean that they were not going to. Such a suggestion was a veiled threat and one that implicitly asked the American people to put pressure on Jones to back down.

In this instance, the Executive Branch was trying to assure the American audience that they were involved directly in the situation. It is important to note that the U.S. government chose to use the Press Secretary, who speaks for the President, but did not use the President at that time. This would suggest that as the deadline was approaching, escalation was occurring, necessitating vocal opposition from Hillary Clinton, Petraeus, and Gibbs as mouthpiece for the President, before the President spoke the next day. By and large, the Executive Branch of the U.S. does not respond to everyone who threatens to carry out a controversial act. Therefore, it was surprising in this case that the Executive Branch did come forward and speak through Robert Gibbs. Eventually, at the highest level of government, the President himself was drawn into taking a position with rights and duties as Commander in Chief that forced him to condemn the actions of a very small, but apparently not insignificant threat. Presumably such direct condemnation was a response to Petraeus’ storyline that harm would potentially be done to the
troops in Afghanistan. In addition, there was an implicit fear that actions, such as Jones’, who was then being identified with the U.S., would empower the most radical people in Afghanistan, namely the Taliban.

In addition, the State Department’s spokesman P.J. Crowley, called the proposed burning “un-American” and also said it was “inconsistent with the values of religious tolerance and religious freedom” (Nakamura & Hamdard, 2010). Crowley’s ascription of the position of “un-American” to Jones comprised the highest form of condemnation from a U.S. government figure. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen also echoed Petraeus’ warning that burning the Quran would go against “all the values we stand for and fight for” (Nakamura & Hamdard, 2010). The fact that the highest levels of the U.S. government used such strong language suggests that Jones stabbed at the core of one of the most sensitive national issues as well as chose the right moment in the calendar year to do so, when Americans are very sensitive about 9/11. Jones deliberately chose a raw moment to propose the threat and tensions escalated to such a point that the President of the United States had to get involved.

Jones’ Position.

By September 7, Jones began receiving worldwide pressure about his opinions and threatened action. This pressure grew in response to his potential radical actions but also in response to Jones’ contradictory speech-acts. In sermons and speeches on YouTube and to his church, Jones said one thing and in interviews and news articles, he said something contradictory. For instance, in an interview with Anderson Cooper, Cooper asked Jones about his contradictory speech acts. Cooper pointed out that on Jones’ website he said that there should be no Muslims allowed to immigrate to the United States and that there should be no new mosques allowed to be built in the United States (Cooper, 2010). In response, Jones maintained, “That is
my opinion, but my opinion does not supersede the Constitution… We would be better off if we really check the Muslims that immigrated here… So, I stand to the Constitution, that they have freedom of worship and freedom to build mosques” (Cooper, 2010). In this instance, Jones’ position was one of deflection as well as defensiveness. In his position of deflection, it was as though there was a website persona and an in-person persona, suggesting that Jones catered to the audience he was speaking to.

In the interview with Cooper, Jones clearly and repeatedly articulated the purpose of his actions. While he said he "understands the government's concerns," he still stated that he planned on going forward with the event but that he left "the door open to change his mind" and that he and his church were praying on the decision (“Despite Warnings,” 2010). In this statement, Jones’ position was one of ambivalence. Whereas his positions were firm before in terms of giving information as he saw it, now in his call for an action he was hesitating. In this, he was acting as though he was exercising judgment. If God were really telling him to do the proposed action, he would go forward without concern for secular authorities. But rather, in his hesitation, he was proving to be in some dialogue with his environment. His position had become more tenuous and less strong by means of his hesitation. In this instance, Jones created some mystery for the first time, as to whether he could carry out his proposed action.

When Cooper asked if he would feel responsible for people’s lives being lost, he remained steadfast in his intention to burn the Quran. When he was asked about the effect of burning the book on other people, Jones only focused on the fact that his life was in danger. He repeatedly returned to the fact that he had received over 100 death threats and that he had started carrying a pistol. By carrying a pistol, Jones admitted to feeling threats to his person, which is not a prophetic way to behave. In this instance, Jones was dissociating as his position again had
weakened in his admission of feeling threatened. Furthermore, he did not seem to equate his actions with the actions of others, meaning that he did not seem to realize that the potential deaths and injuries that could arise from protests would be reactions to him and his actions. He instead flipped these accusations of the potential harm it would cause on soldiers to focus on what he deemed as true justification and rationalization for his plans. His rationalization of the situation was apparent when he said that if people got hurt, if people protested, then that would be proof that Muslims are violent. In his opinion, if there were protests, riots, and lives lost, this would surely show the world and would be proof that his mission and message were justified.

Jones further repeated himself in the ABC interview with Moran, maintaining that, “our message is clearly to the radical element of Islam” even though he realized that the actual burning of the Quran was a radical statement, they felt “convinced about it” and “feel it’s very necessary” (Moran, 2010). Even when Moran noted that the “message you are sending to moderate Muslims is one of hate,” Jones responded, “Obviously, this is not a message of love and it is obviously not intended to be a message of love. It is intended to be a clear clear warning” (Moran, 2010).

In reaction to the international and national responses, Jones began to take a defensive position. This new position of defensiveness suggests his right and duty to protect himself. His new interest was more in protecting himself than in fulfilling what he had said was the will of God. Such defensiveness had transformed him from what one might call a prophetic to non-prophetic pastor model. A prophetic pastor might pursue his plans because he holds such strong beliefs that God is speaking and will use him in whatever way God pleases. His position, in relation to the non-prophetic pastor model, began to shift from one of being the aggressor but also being a defender of his actions.
Religious Position.

In contrast to Jones’ claims as a Christian, there arose another unified religious voice and position against Jones, decrying him as not really representing Christian beliefs and actions. According to the PBS news story, “Church’s Quran-Burning Pledge Rankles U.S. Diplomatic, Military Officials,” the group of interfaith leaders who gathered to oppose what they referred to as “creeping Islamophobia” intended to express a collective religious voice against Jones in the nation’s capital.

While this unified voice across religions sought to appeal to him in terms of faith in general, Christian leaders sought to appeal to him through Christianity. Geoff Tunnicliffe, head one of the world’s largest faith organizations, the World Evangelical Alliance, decided to try to appeal to Jones as a fellow Christian and persuade him to abandon his plan (Boorstein, 2010). Another evangelical Christian, Reverend Richard Cizik, of The New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, espoused the importance of not taking action, even when one has the right to do so. In this instance, Cizik addressed the positioning concept of supererogatory right and duty in that his focus was on the wisdom of not taking such action even though Jones had the right to do so. From an evangelical perspective, while they have the right to evangelize, teach and preach as they choose because they are protected under the law, there are certain instances when it is better to not act. In this instance, Cizik was counseling his fellow pastor to exercise discretion. The concern in this situation focused on the notion that if one person acts out against another religion, there arises the potential fear that there would be repercussions for the rights of other evangelical Christians.
**Wednesday, September 8, 2010**

**U.S. Government Position.**

In a rare instance of bipartisanship, democrats and republicans joined together to condemn Jones’ threat. Citing the idea that there is an ‘American way,’ Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton strongly opposed the church’s planned event, saying, "We're a country of what, 310-million-plus right now. And it is regrettable that a pastor in Gainesville, Florida, with a church of no more than 50 people can make this outrageous and distrustful, disgraceful plan and get the world’s attention, but that’s the world we live in right now. It is unfortunate, it is not who we are” (Bahrampour & Boorstein, 2010). Such a position clearly focused on the idea and ideals of ‘who we are’ as Americans, living in a country with life, liberty, and freedom. Even while citing the freedom of religion and the right to burn the Quran, American political, military, and religious leaders cited the insensitivity and unwise nature of exercising these rights in this circumstance.

In addition to the left wing and military leaders voicing their concerns, the right wing and in many cases the biggest critics of Islam politically, spoke out against the Quran burning on September 8. In an interview with ABC News, then House Minority Leader John Boehner condemned Jones saying that, “Just because you have a right to do something in America, does not mean it’s the right thing to do” (Beutler, 2010). Sarah Palin, who had previously spoken out against the ‘ground zero mosque,’ wrote in a Facebook message: “People have a constitutional right to burn a Qur’an if they want to, but doing so is insensitive and an unnecessary provocation—much like building a mosque at Ground Zero” (Palin, 2010). In both instances, these political figures cited the supererogatory rights and duties whether to burn the Quran and the right to build a mosque but then stated adamantly that neither should exercise their right.
The escalation of these events reached a crescendo when President Barack Obama expressed his dismay at the threats made by the pastor of the Dove World Outreach Center. Under normal circumstances the President of the U.S. does not involve himself in a free speech action of a United States citizen. However, the President chose to enter the fray and condemn Terry Jones’ actions directly. In the ABC interview with George Stephanopoulos, President Obama discussed the contradictory nature of the proposed event, calling it a “stunt.” President Obama further echoed the sentiment that such a stunt would greatly endanger American troops serving overseas. He also noted that the mere threat of the action had already brought about protests abroad contributing to serious injury. He further addressed another potential consequence, as “a recruitment bonanza for Al Qaeda” and noted that Jones “understands that this is a destructive act that he’s engaging in” (Stephanopoulos, 2010).

From President Obama’s perspective, why would he choose to enter the conversation? In this instance, President Obama was speaking to the American people. He was in fact criticizing someone who could exacerbate the opposition in the war on terrorism. Burning the Quran would actually cause the hearts of the enemy to burn more strongly with desire to kill Americans. As President and Commander in Chief, Obama did two things simultaneously by voicing his position. First, he addressed the raw feelings of the American people as the clock ticked ever closer to 9/11. Second, he spoke as Commander in Chief of the armed forces of the U.S. in concern for his troops and the repercussions that could follow if this act were carried out. President Obama intervened at a moment when the clock was ticking to 9/11 with a stern warning to Jones to really reconsider his plans and the effects that he might have: “If he’s listening, I just hope he understands that what he’s proposing to do is completely contrary to our values as Americans” (Stephanopoulos, 2010).
President Obama clearly positioned himself vis-à-vis Jones. He, President Obama, was doing the right thing in regards to his own right sand duties, he was personally responsible in his role. It is the presidential prerogative to speak or not to speak, and in this instance, he chose to act through speech because the clock was ticking nearer the very raw date in contemporary American history. For more people to die, because one person wants to pull a stunt, as Obama called it, would make 9/11 an even worse memory for people.

**Jones’ Position.**

Scheduling a press conference for Wednesday, September 8, marked Jones’ determination to continue his plans. At the press conference, Jones stated that: “As of right now, we are not convinced that backing down is the right thing” (Hudak, 2010a). Even though his position remained steadfast, his position transformed from the previous disinterest in dialogue when he announced that he had spoken with Imam Muhammad Musri, president of the Islamic Society of Central Florida, in an unplanned meeting to discuss the burning. In an effort to appeal to Jones in terms of faith, Musri expressed his position that he believed that Jones would do the right thing and not go through with the plans. In this instance, Musri’s position, his right and duty, was to act as an intervener and counselor of discretion. He thought that he could convince Jones to be reasonable and exercise good judgment.

**Thursday, September 9, 2010**

On September 9, as Jones joined in dialogue with Musri, Jones’ position waffled in the hours leading up to 9/11. In the afternoon of September 9, the Associated Press reported on Jones as saying, "As of right now, we are not convinced that backing down is the right thing" (Kolawole, 2010). Later that day, Jones held another press conference with Imam Musri in which
Jones announced he would cancel the burning event if the proposed site of the “Ground Zero Mosque” were moved. Up until September 9, Jones had not discussed the controversial mosque in New York. His only focus, whether deliberately or not, was on the Quran and radical Islam. Suddenly, and perhaps due to media attention, his focus turned to a mosque as a possible way out of the controversy. Finding new strength through the “Ground Zero mosque” issue, Jones now positioned himself, once again in a prophetic fashion stating that, “there would be a sign that God would want us to do it” (Kolawole, 2010). This meant that Jones believed he had received a message from God that the church should cancel the event if the proposed mosque were moved.

**U.S. Government Position.**

Even after President Obama admonished Jones the previous day, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called Jones directly to express his “grave concern that going forward with the Quran burning would put at risk the lives of our forces around the world, especially those in Iraq and Afghanistan, and he urged the Pastor not to proceed with it” (Carden, 2010). Up to this point, speech-acts of intervention by the highest echelons of the U.S. government had mostly been limited to indirect pleas responding to interview questions. While many had expressed their condemnation, this was the first instance in which someone from the highest levels of the U.S. government confronted Jones directly. Speaking first-hand to Jones suggests that the Executive Branch was feeling the pressure of time because of 9/11’s imminence.

**Friday, September 10, 2010**

At this point in the course of events, Jones’ hesitation merely served to fill the time. While one might expect that a flurry of activity would occur during the hours leading up to 9/11, in fact, most of the tension of escalation had fizzled after September 9. By the tenth, everyone
was just waiting to see what Jones would do. Anyone who had needed to express their positions vis-à-vis Jones had already spoken, leaving only Jones to either go through with his plan or back down. Even so, Jones’ union with the “ground zero mosque’ controversy only served to extend the mystery, as there was not actually a negotiation happening.

Saturday, September 11, 2010: “Int’ Burn a Koran Day”

Finally, on the morning of September 11, Jones told NBC’s today show that he would not burn the Quran that day, or ever: “We have decided to cancel the burning...Not today, not ever. We're not going to go back and do it. It is totally canceled” (Quintanilla, 2010). During the interview, Jones once again positioned himself as a prophet, proclaiming that not going through with the burning was what God wanted after all. As Jones rationalized his decision, those watching the controversy unfold, were relieved to hear that the proposed burning would not take place.

Every event, speech-act, and position taken and ascribed was part of a lead up to September 11, 2010. The symbolic nature of September 11 proved to be the key point in the attention that Jones received in advance that critics used to dissuade him from his actions. Jones even commented on September 11 that one of his mistakes was going public with his proposed plan. The significance of 9/11 in this whole debate cannot be downplayed.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH: GLOBALIZATION, CULTURAL CARRIERS, AND CONFLICT ESCALATION

For the purpose of this study, I utilized positioning analysis as a tool to analyze the discourses and course of events surrounding the temporally limited Quran burning controversy. Because of the limitations of the scope of this study, I will take this opportunity to present areas of recommended further research on this controversy and the set of dynamics that flow within it, namely globalization, cultural carriers and conflict escalation. Such areas of further research are ripe with information that I think would further ground this analysis in existing theories and scholarly discourse relevant to developments in conflict, conflict resolution, and their dynamics.

I will first present the topics of globalization and cultural carriers, both concepts that are integral to understanding and evaluating the context and discourses surrounding the course of the events. Then, I will present the concept of conflict escalation that includes a discussion of the transformations and changes that occur as conflict escalates as well as a discussion of three grounded escalation models. These three models are meant to help assess and analyze the progression of conflict with the intent of applying the model and to potentially mitigate or prevent destructive conflict. I propose that these analytical models will serve to clarify the dynamics of the interchanges between Terry Jones, his congregation and the outside world.

Globalization Context

Within the context of globalization, “i.e., increasingly deeper forms of interconnectedness between economies, organizations, and people across national boundaries and the realization of
the global village” instances of intergroup relations and conflict are increasingly salient due to the rapid rate of information dissemination (Moghaddam, 2008, p. 8).

Social psychological theories of identity construction, who we are and with whom we identify, explicate the consequences of a globalized world of rapid change and integration. As the world has become ever more globalized, the spread of very foreign ideas and beliefs has led to continued reactions toward perceived threats on collective identity. Utilizing globalized capacities (i.e. technology, mass communication, transportation), identity-based conflicts of all sizes are able to wreak havoc against whoever threatens collective identity. As people grapple to maintain unique and positive identities, increased identity uncertainty, insecurity, and conflict occur.

The effects of globalization on identity-based conflict stem from perceived threats to a positive and distinct collective identity. Threats of globalization are threats to distinctiveness because identity is challenged on many fronts. Therefore, with the imposition of globalization and assimilation, identities become fractured. On the one hand, identities are melting together and on the other hand, communities are closing themselves off in order to preserve their uniqueness and distinctiveness (Moghaddam, 2010, p. 15).

From a globalization perspective, differences in values and cultures are meant to be assimilated and generally wiped away, leaving behind a homogenized, western perspective. These tendencies of unification, homogenization, and assimilation, therefore, threaten the cognitive inclinations for uniqueness and positiveness. Globalization contributes to in-group collective identities being inundated with ideas and beliefs from the outside. Non-western and developing countries do not share the same histories and hold radically different notions of values and identity that play out in the cultural realm (Lieber & Weisberg, 2002, p. 276). The
resulting unpredictability and ambiguity on collective identities is two-fold. Either, copy the dominant and imposed values (Western values) or return to the roots in hopes of gaining authenticity (Moghaddam, 2010, p. 1). When there is insecurity from globalization, scholars of these psychological perspectives suggest that people will draw closer together and to return to their roots.

The media’s role in the escalation of this situation was two-fold. Not only did the media help disseminate the story but the media indirectly contributed to its escalation. Kevin Lerner, a visiting professor in Communications/Journalism at Marist College, in a Christian Science Monitor article, said that the role of the media and the Quran burning, that the media is “changing from one of strictly delivering the news to a waiting audience to one more of curation or helping to guide the discussion that is taking place across the vast digisphere” (Goodale, 2010). The question over whether the controversy would have escalated to the extent that it did was echoed by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton when she criticized the media for giving Terry Jones attention and suggested that the media ‘ignore’ his actions. According to a number of news articles, most journalists agreed that one fanatical preacher in Florida should not have been front-page news across the United States. However, the story, they claim, carried more weight because major officials and world leaders continued to weigh in (Calderon, 2010).

However, it is impossible to know what may have happened if the media had not become involved. Additionally, globalization and the subsequent rapid spread of information could have easily created the same spectacle with or without news media involvement. Either way, press and attention elevated the scope and scale of the controversy. Finally, as I have demonstrated earlier, one medium acted as a bridge to bring coverage to another that had yet to report on the burning
threat and, in this way, contributed to the overall dissemination of the threat and the eventual escalation.

**Cultural Carriers**

Before addressing the concept of cultural carriers, I will first present the relevant literature related to the anthropological notion of culture. Culture, for this case study, is “a derivative of individual experience, something learned or created by individuals themselves or passed on to them socially by contemporaries or ancestors” (Avruch, 2006, p. 5). Meaning making is therefore a subjective/intersubjective process that focuses on power relations in the construction of knowledge and meaning. The aim is to ‘understand from within’ by utilizing holistic methods that focus on the context and uncover how individuals and groups participate in the creation of their perceived social reality.

Culture is not static but rather is an ongoing and dynamic process. Therefore, social conflict emerges and develops through the interactive process of meaning making and interpretation rooted in: perceptions, assumptions, worldviews, biases, myths, language/communication, interpretations, and expressions. Culture is not homogenous or a thing, but rather cultures change, are flexible, dynamic, and responsive to experiences and surroundings. Both visible and invisible cultural components can act to unite or divide parties, contribute to conflict, and affect the process of the conflict and intervention. Barre Toelken’s (1996), “Cultural Worldview” suggests that, ‘worldview’ refers to “the manner in which a culture sees and expresses its relation to the world around it” (Toelken, p. 263). One’s worldview is based on perception and individual experience that leads to varied understandings of world. Through a comparative analysis of the Western and non-Western folklore of time and space,
Toelken argues that people live in “different perceptual worlds” because they grow up in different cultures (Toelken, p. 264). Therefore, members of a culture believe their worldview to be normal and internally valid. Toelken maintains that when a sense or perception of normalcy is questioned, criticized, or not represented, individuals react emotionally and not intellectually (Toelken, p. 275).

E.C. Stewart, J. Danielian & R. J. Foster’s (1998), “Cultural Assumptions and Values,” discuss the cultural assumptions that make up a Western or in this case American culture. The authors argue that cultural patterns may be “seen as guides to a limited number of common human problems for which all peoples at all times must find some solution” (Stewart et al, p. 159). These human problems are covered by a system of assumptions and values that include activity, social relations, motivation, perception of the world, perception of the self, and of the individual (Stewart et al, p. 159). This argument suggests that in all cultures, these five categories help explain and characterize human problems. Cognitive processes influence cultural assumptions based on different conceptions of these five categories. Through such an analytical lens, the authors suggest that studying and examining different cultures must be done with an understanding of culturally specific characterizations.

In the September 7, 2010 CNN interview with Anderson Cooper, Jones stated, “We are burning a book. We are not killing someone. We are not murdering people…We are simply burning a book” (Cooper, 2010). Implicit in these words, is Jones’ statement of what he believed to be a simple justification for the event. Throughout the entire controversy, Jones positioned himself deliberately by ignoring and demeaning the importance of the Quran and proclaiming that “Islam is of the devil.” When asked if he understood the importance of the Quran to Muslims, he made it clear that he and his followers did not believe that the Quran is holy,
thereby justifying in his mind, the reason why burning the book was indeed a radical message, but not one he believed others would take offense to. According to the literature, the importance of cultural carriers is that they have influence in the “means by which styles of social thinking and doing are sustained and passed on from generation to generation” (Moghaddam, 2002, p. 8). Certain criteria become carriers, giving meaning to and propagating the significance of intergroup difference. For instance, carriers help groups maintain their positive and distinct identity—a key tenet of Social Identity Theory and intergroup relations (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

For many religions, their holy books not only represent their teachings but for Islam in particular, the Quran is the uninterrupted, unchangeable, and eternal word of God and “demand that it, along with any printed material containing its verses or the name of Allah or the Prophet Muhammad, be treated with the utmost respect. Any intentional damage or show of disrespect to the Quran is considered deeply offensive” (Faiez, 2010). Therefore, burning the book of the Quran is parallel to burning the word of God. By Jones’ own admission, provocation is what Jones sought. He claimed that he and his followers had been sent a clear message from God. The conflict is between Jones and Mohammad, both acting as spokesmen for God, the one having approximately 50 followers and the other a billion. However, taken from a psychological perspective and according to the literature on intergroup relations, the irrationalist perspective helps shed light on Jones’ possible motivations. In viewing this issue through the irrationalist perspective, it is possible to postulate that Jones was unaware of the factors influencing his behavior.

Perhaps, due to his own insecurities about Islam, the potential terrorist threats, and by equating all Islam with a few radicals, Jones believed and perceived a message from God to act.
What Jones did, however, was rationalize his behavior. Jones repeatedly stated the intended message of his and his church’s actions. It doing so, however, he repeatedly rationalized the church’s behavior in such a way that contradicted their own statements. In addition, when he was asked by anchor Meredith Vieira whether he was crazy, Jones said, "I'm just a man trying to do what God has told us to do. What one of those things we feel is to shed a light, to take the cover off, to take the blinders off and to really look at how dangerous, violent Islam is. We have to get our head out of the sand" (Vieira, 2010). Therefore, it can be postulated that Jones believed that his actions were based on a message from God. He did not stop his actions because he believed burning the Quran was wrong or because of the political pressure placed on him, but because he received a message from God not to.

Escalation of Conflict: Transformations and Models

Transformations.

In the literature on conflict escalation, theorists Dean Pruitt & Sung Hee Kim (2004) in the Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement (3rd edition), discuss two related meanings of the term escalation. The first meaning suggests that in conflict, one party may adopt heavier tactics as a means to put pressure on the other party or parties involved (Pruitt & Kim, p. 88). The other meaning is that escalation is an “increase in the intensity of a conflict as a whole” (Pruitt & Kim, p. 88). These meanings are related, “since escalation by one participant usually leads to escalation by the other and hence an intensification of the conflict as a whole” (Pruitt & Kim, p. 89). The two primary components, therefore, are the increase in intensity of a conflict as a whole and the adoption of heavier tactics as a means of pressure. According to Pruitt and Kim (p. 89), certain incremental changes occur on each side of the conflict and are mirrored by the
other side. Such mirrored incremental transformations result in an intensified conflict that is especially complicated to undo.

Pruitt and Kim (2004) identify and discuss five types of changes that commonly take place as relationships between parties and the intensity of the issues in a dispute worsen. The five transformations are: 1.) The change from light to heavy coercive tactics; 2.) Small issues become large concerns; 3.) Specific issues transform into general antagonism; 4.) The goal transforms from doing well, to winning to potentially hurting the other party; and 5.) A few conflict parties/sub-conflicts become many (Pruitt & Kim, p. 96).

More specifically, with the transformation from light to heavy tactics, one party’s initial light efforts to influence the other party through the use of persuasive arguments is replaced by heavier tactics such as threats. In the second transformation, small issues become large concerns, in which there is a tendency for issues to proliferate (McEwen & Milburn, 1993 referenced in Pruitt & Kim, p. 89). As the issues multiply, there is also the tendency for the parties to become entrenched and further commit resources in order to succeed. As specific issues transform into general issues (Coleman, 1957 referenced in Pruitt & Kim) and then antagonism, the relationship between the parties worsens. Therefore, as the escalation occurs, “small, concrete concerns tend to be supplanted by grandiose and all-encompassing positions and by a general intolerance of the other side” (Pruitt & Kim, p. 89). The fourth transformation is that in the early stages of conflict, a party usually seeks its own goals without considering the repercussions or consequences on another party. This outlook has been described by Deutsch (1958) as an “individualistic orientation,” a position characterized by self-interest that is independent of other parties. Then, when conflict escalates, a party’s previously simple interest is overridden by a competitive objective to succeed over the other party. The final transformation occurs because of the
continued escalation and the costs associated with it. As parties commit further to the conflict, Pruitt and Kim (p. 90), suggest that the parties’ goals tend to shift again to a new objective to hurt the other party and if the parties are committing significant resources, to hurt the other party more than the other is hurting it (Glasl, 1982 referenced in Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 90).

Pruitt and Kim also identify changes in the parties’ feelings as escalation occurs. First, such transformations include changes from any positive feelings that quickly dissipate and are overcome by mild negative feelings such as irritation. Next, the mild feelings become much stronger ones, such as anger, hostility, and ultimately intense hatred. These changes in feelings are supported by and support the main transformations previously described (Pruitt & Kim, p. 90).

Models.

According to Pruitt & Gahagan (1974), there are three broad models of escalation: the contender-defender model, the conflict spiral model, and the structural change model. Each of these models helps to explain the processes that occur within and between parties as conflict intensifies.

The contender-defender model (formerly known as the “aggressor-defender model”) delineates a separation between the parties (one as contender, one as defender) (Pruitt & Kim, p. 93). In this model, the contender party has a goal of creating change. Such change puts it in conflict with the other party. Pruitt and Kim suggest that the contender party may first start with mild contentious tactics because mild tactics have the least risk of retaliation or potential harm. If mild contentious tactics do not work to create the parties desired change, the contender party moves on to heavier tactics. As the contender party continues to escalate in the intensity of tactics, the defender may either give in or the cost may exceed the contender’s goal. In some
cases, the defender does not always escalate and remains passive, however, if the defender
escalates in response, its reasons for doing so are identified as strictly defensive (Pruitt & Kim, p. 93).

Even though the contender-defender model fits some instances of conflict escalation, Pruitt & Kim (p. 96) argue that this particular model is given too much weight in everyday thinking. The problem with this model is that it portrays a unidirectional casual sequence, suggesting that one party challenges the other party, to which the other party has to defend itself, whereas most cases of conflict involve a circular process (Pruitt & Kim, p. 96). Part of the reason why this particular model may be so prevalent and popular is due to people’s natural urge to seek someone to blame. Not only are parties looking for someone to blame, but by doing so, make themselves feel better about themselves or their group (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). Pruitt and Kim suggest that “one side (which is usually labeled the “aggressor”) is viewed as taking the lead in instigating the conflict, while the other (which is labeled the “defender”) is viewed as legitimately trying to counter the first side’s outrageous behavior” (Pruitt & Kim, p. 96).

The second model that Pruitt and Kim discuss is the Conflict Spiral Model. They propose that the conflict spiral model is more accurate in describing the “vicious circle” (p. 96) of the action-reaction dynamic of conflict escalation. In this model, one party adopts contentious tactics that encourage a retaliatory or defensive reaction from another party. This retaliatory or defensive reaction further provokes contentious behavior from the other party, thus completing a circle of action, reaction, and further reaction. In a conflict spiral, the parties are motivated partly by revenge for their suffering at the hands of the other party and by the perceived needs to defend themselves or deter further attack. The parties seek to protect themselves, possibly teach the other party a lesson, and/or make the other party suffer.
Conflict spirals are exceedingly difficult to stop once they start as each party sees failure to retaliate as a sign of weakness (Pruitt & Kim, p. 97). As neither party trusts the other, neither is willing to make conciliatory gestures that could break the cycle. As each party is seen to be the aggressor, neither feels the responsibility to make the first move toward conciliation. Pruitt and Kim suggest that in the conflict spiral model, the parties employ tactics moving from light to heavy for three reasons as each reaction is seen to be more severe than the action that provoked it. First, as the parties progress in the action, reaction, and further reaction spiral, issues transform from small to large, as previously noted, since every additional action-reaction cycle creates new issues. The second reason is that each perceives their own losses to be greater than the other party’s losses (Baumeister et al., 1990). The third reason is that people fail to realize that they are in a conflict spiral but instead perceive themselves to be defenders. Pruitt and Kim suggest that individuals think they are rationally adopting more contentious and heavier tactics in an effort to persuade the other party. As the conflict spiral model predicts, the ‘other’ party will also react and believe themselves to be rationally adopting more contentious and heavier tactics (p. 97) Once conflict has spiraled and the parties involved continue to adopt heavier and more contentious tactics, the spiral continues to be perpetuated (Pruitt & Kim, p. 98).

Pruitt and Kim further note that the contender-defender and conflict spiral models are often found together in escalating conflict. There can be sequences of contender-defender within a larger conflict spiral or a conflict spiral that is part of a larger contender-defender dynamic. In sum, escalation is commonly accompanied by such transformations as the proliferation of issues, increasing commitment by the parties to the struggle, specific issues give way to general ones, the desire to succeed turns into a desire to win which can turn into a desire to hurt the other; positive feelings give way to negative feelings, and both sides grow by recruiting formerly
neutral individuals and groups (Pruitt & Kim, pp. 99-100). The contender-defender model outlines escalation when one party (contender) attempts to take something from another party (defender), to change reality at the defender’s expense, or to stop the defender’s behavior. If the use of mild tactics fails, the contender adopts heavier tactics to which the defender may either remain passive or escalate defensively. The conflict spiral model traces the vicious circle of action-reaction as the sides escalate in response to one another. Invoking both models helps to explain the escalation process.

The third model that Pruitt and Kim discuss, the Structural Change Model, reflects a more complicated escalation model. This model “describes changes (i.e. processes) that occur when escalation takes place and that push the escalation forward” (Pruitt & Kim, p. 101). These changes include psychological states, the way in which groups function, or changes in communities. Changes in psychological states include emotional changes, and hostile attitudes, perceptions and goals that develop within individual disputants or group decision makers. Another change is in the way in which groups function such as the development of militant leadership. These are all considered “structural” changes because “they are changes in one or another feature of the situation affecting the parties’ choice of tactics” (Pruitt & Kim, p. 101). For the purpose of this study, I will discuss the psychological changes fully.

The structural change model consists of a conflict spiral, in which heavy tactics used by the first party produce structural changes in the second party, which encourage a harsh reaction from the second party, producing structural changes in the first party, which encourage further heavy tactics from the first party, and so on around and around. They call this process a cycle of escalation (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 103)
This particular version of the structural change model embodies Deutsch’s “crude law” of conflict development (Deutsch, 2000). The crude law says that processes that produce heavy contentious tactics are also produced by those tactics. Deutsch’s (2000) describes his original “crude law of social relations” as: “The characteristic processes and effects elicited by a given type of social relationship also tend to elicit that type of social relationship” (p. 29). Such processes include all of the different types of structural changes discussed here. The value of the structural change model lies in its ability to predict the conditions under which conflicts will escalate since, as Pruitt and Kim point out, “we know a lot about the conditions that allow and encourage the changes described in the model” (Pruitt & Kim, p. 102).

As conflict escalates, the psychological consequences to the parties may be profound. The first of the structural changes are the different psychological changes that occur in the escalation of conflict. According to Pruitt and Kim, “some psychological changes involve emotions or emotionally related perceptions” (Pruitt & Kim, p. 102). Emotions can have a powerful impact on behavior as they can build up to the point where they may overpower reason. Even when emotions become high, however, they are usually temporary states directly related to the events and issues in dispute. Four particular emotional states relevant to the discussion of emotional changes are blame, anger, fear, and image threats (Pruitt & Kim, p. 103). These states of being encourage the use of heavy contentious tactics. Another set of psychological states include, hostile attitudes, perceptions, and goals, of which a high quality of persistence is present, unlike in emotional states. These states tend to affect the relationship between the parties (Pruitt & Kim, p. 105).

Based on the documentary record found in interview transcripts with Terry Jones, it is likely that he would consider himself the defender. He would see himself as reacting to
something he and his church deemed as threats, i.e. not only radical Islam but Islam in general and Sharia Law. Once the media and politicians began to pressure him and began to question his intent and motives, he began to justify and rationalize his actions. His spoken message had transformed from an intimate communication to his congregation to preaching to the entire world who heard and scrutinized it. Under the watchful eye of the world, he could no longer claim that his message was just the word of God as he began to get questioned and ridiculed. In addition, he openly stated that any negative repercussions of his actions—including the potential for lives lost, would not be his responsibility, suggesting his complete dissociation from the consequences of his actions.

**Discourse and Positioning Model of Escalation**

Such models, standing alone or used together, are meant to help explain and predict how particular events unfold. While the models discussed here represent three common and broad mechanisms for explaining the process of escalation, they do not explicitly consider and identify the actual language and discourses surrounding the conflicts as a means for understanding the escalation of events and subsequently, conflict. On the other hand, the conflict spiral model, action and reaction—fails to deal with the precipitating events (speeches, discourses, interviews) that perpetuated the spiral. While there is a significant amount of literature that focuses on why escalation occurs there is not a significant amount of literature on how escalation occurs.

In future research, I hope to incorporate the transformations as well as the conflict spiral model and expand it with positioning theory to consider the discourses of rights and duties surrounding conflict. Such analysis identifies the speech-acts of the parties involved and considers how the different escalation tactics coincide with the escalatory use of positions.
ascribing certain rights and duties to different parties. Furthermore, an in depth consideration of
culture and globalization would further contribute to a deeper understanding of moments ripe for
conflict and its escalation.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

“If he’s listening, I just hope he understands that what he’s proposing to do is completely contrary to our values as Americans” (Stephanopoulous, 2010). As I return to President Barack Obama’s statement, I reflect on how seemingly minor events can transform into a complex course of events through the influence of divisive positioning. It may be argued that Pastor Terry Jones’ threat of burning the Quran was simply a well-timed provocation. It may also be argued that Jones really did not want to burn the Quran after hearing the pleas from international and national leaders and realizing the potential threat that it would have on U.S. troops serving overseas. Perhaps he arrived at a point where he needed to find any excuse possible to release himself from the threatened action. Or perhaps, he would have gone through with his plan if the highest political leaders had not intervened and pleaded with him to not take action. While he claimed in interviews that his message was directed only at radical Muslims, his past speech-acts, blog posts, book, and preaching demonstrate that his message was really a message for all Muslims. The idea that one man, who did not represent anyone but himself and his small church, could create such an international controversy, suggests the potential for future events like this to take place again.

In this study, I first presented a thorough, chronological presentation of the course of events and discourses, without any commentary of my own. I then presented the literature and theoretical underpinnings of my method of analysis: positioning theory. In the analysis, I utilized the framework of positioning theory in order to focus on the unfolding positioning frameworks in which meaning was ascribed through interpretations of rights and duties. The three fundamental and interconnected elements of positioning theory: 1.) Positions: rights and duties, which are
distributed in changing patterns in social relations; 2.) Storylines: the composition of evolving positions; 3.) Illocutionary force: the intention in making a speech act, served as a framework for explaining social interaction. It was necessary to emphasize a variety of storylines that arose through the social encounters in order to paint a picture of the incident’s escalation.

The acts taken by Jones independently and in response to global reactions depict a provocative position of a person who eventually backed down. This study examined the positions of Jones and influential political and religious leaders in order to argue that this controversy exemplified the important roles of divisive narratives, positions, and speech acts. In this case, Jones’ positions and the meanings behind his words can be attributed to his intention to provoke. Throughout the entire controversy, the issue surrounded the threat of a speech-act about potentially burning of 200 Qurans. It seems as if the escalation of the protests abroad could have spiraled almost to the point of violent conflict if the event had not been cancelled. The fear of military and political officials among others was based solely on the spread of images that would arise from such an act. The potential for the image of a burning Quran to be used as a means for retaliation and as a way of garnering support for the anti-American sentiment became a central concern for the U.S. and its allies. One of the most telling elements of the controversy was the fact that one pastor and his actions became equated with the U.S. as a whole. In protests abroad, U.S. flags, effigies of Terry Jones and cries for the death of the President, suggest a deeper and more complex interplay between cultures and the dissemination of information. Internationally, however, the conflict proceeds to this day with many international communities continuing to worry and take offense at the events that occurred. Even as Jones’ proposed actions contributed to fear and concern over the potential reactions, in many ways, this controversy brought different groups together through a call for solidarity against Terry Jones. The military and religious
leaders, political right and left, and heads of state, voiced their collective concern for the potential harm such an event could have. While their storylines differed in how they approached the issue, the common condemnation of such an event unified them all. This not only indicates the breadth of the conflict, but it also suggests the deep reach of the controversy’s effects into the globalized world by means of instantaneous communication and media. Such media acted as a bridge across boundaries to exacerbate issues that in the past might have remained local.

In order to further contribute to the development of positioning analysis, I presented recommendations for areas of further research that would ground this analysis in existing theories and scholarly discourse relevant to developments in conflict, conflict resolution, and its dynamics. Such topics included: globalization, cultural carriers, and conflict escalation models and transformations. Such further research would address integral parts of the unfolding course of events within the controversy that could add to and clarify the dynamics of the interchanges between Jones and his congregation and the outside world. To understand the complexity of the events and positions as they unfolded may prove useful to those striving to intervene in, transform, and/or resolve such conflicts in the future. Lastly, an important gap in this understanding from the point of view of positioning is that I simply do not know how Jones received the information about the reactions and responses to his actions. This additional area of further research could inform and contribute to an understanding of positioning.

Updates

In order to bring the reader up to date, it is necessary to briefly address events that took place after the threatened Quran burning was called off in 2010. Once the event did not happen on September 11, 2010, media interest dwindled. On January 1, 2011, Terry Jones announced on a YouTube video that he was going to “put the Koran on trial” on “International Judge the Koran
Day” (“International Judge the Koran Day, 2011). Jones explained that on March 20th, 2011, he and another pastor were going to accuse the Quran of “murder, rape, deception, being responsible for terrorist activities all around the world. We are accusing the Koran of these violent acts” (“International Judge the Koran Day, 2011). Calling forth those who wished to defend the Quran, Jones proclaimed in a video posted to YouTube: “present to us your Defense Attorney who is going to defend the Koran. [...] We challenge you. [...] Come and try to prove to us, that day, on March 20th. On that day the Koran will be judged, “International Judge the Koran Day”” (“International Judge the Koran Day, ”2011). Jones further explained that they would have a prosecuting attorney and witnesses and that the verdict would come from voting on their associated “International Judge the Koran Day” Facebook page:

> If the Koran is found guilty, there are four forms of punishment...[it] will be burned, (and yes, the Koran will be burned, if it turns out to be the will of the people.) Or the Koran will be drowned. Or the Koran will be shredded into little bitty pieces - destroyed, shredded. Or the Koran will face a firing squad ... And Muslims, we challenge you. Last time you had a big mouth. You mouthed off, you continue to mouth off around the world about how peaceful the Koran is. But we challenge you. Send us, submit to us your defense attorney...If the Koran is found guilty, it will be burned or drowned, it will be shredded or it will face a firing squad (“International Judge the Koran Day, ”2011).

Then on March 20, 2011, Jones dressed in a judicial robe and ordered a copy of the Quran to be burned in a portable fire pit. On April 2, 2011, protests broke out in Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan, in reaction to the March 20 Quran burning. According to the United Nations, a U.N. building was attacked that left 12 people killed, including eight U.N. workers and four Afghans (CNN Wire Staff, 2011). When he actually carried out the Quran burning, why did this not garner the
same reaction? The answer to this question awaits further investigation.

Throughout the entire controversy, Terry Jones and his followers were never questioned as to their right to burn the Quran. What was questioned, however, was the wisdom, purpose, and impact of the intended actions. These elements were not only questioned, but they were challenged by the most influential and powerful world leaders. Many feared the propaganda tool that would come out of the book burning, in images, videos, stories, and the very memory of it happening. Such images, in many cases would be indelible since they would be in cyber space forever. Some would argue that that if the media had not covered the story, the controversy and discussion of Jones would only have occurred in a small and contained space. Based on the timeline of events, it can be argued that Jones’ initial use of social media sites to present his message allowed for the dissemination of the story internationally weeks before the U.S. news covered it. The instantaneous media acted as a bridge, to move information about a local event onto the world stage.

The endeavor to understand the complexity of the unfolding events and positions leading up to September 11, 2010 may prove useful to those striving to intervene in, mitigate, transform, and/or resolve similar conflicts involving threats of action in the future. As Jones’ threat to burn the Quran transformed from a local concern into an international controversy, the dynamic positions and divisive discourses of those involved contributed to heightened fear and escalation up to September 11, 2010. As the number of parties grew with vocal condemnation of the rightness of taking action, Jones maintained his prophetic position to continue. The broader implications of this study suggest that an assessment of unfolding positions of parties involved in conflict has the potential to inform intervention strategies that can be tailored to the unfolding dynamic positions and divisive discourses in the future.
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