INCITING VIOLENT JIHAD: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT AND APPEAL OF
ENGLISH-SPEAKING RADICAL ISLAMIC IDEOLOGUES ON INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM

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INCITING VIOLENT JIHAD: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT AND APPEAL OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING RADICAL ISLAMIC IDEOLOGUES ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

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ABSTRACT

Since September 11, 2001, the United States and our Western allies have become greatly concerned by the threat posed by “homegrown terrorists” and the individuals responsible for their radicalization. These extremists no longer need to travel abroad to join a terrorist group and receive indoctrination; rather, they can be inspired, recruited, and radicalized by radical English-speaking Islamic ideologues either in their home country or through the Internet. The three radical Islamic ideologues who will be evaluated in this study are Anwar al-Aulaqi, Abdullah al-Faisal, and Anjem Choudary; all of whom have played a significant role in influencing radical Islam during the past decade. Through an analysis of existing scholarship on terrorism, U.S. and British court documents, radical Islamic publications, official government press releases, and news reports regarding the three ideologues this thesis demonstrates three key elements which explains these ideologues’ appeal and influence. These elements include the use of the Internet to disseminate their messages, the use of the English language, to include the ability to tailor their message to a specific audience, and their credibility and extremist bona fides. In order to counter these radical ideologues’ influence and prevent acts of
homegrown terrorism, U.S. authorities must continue to target and disrupt these ideologues’ extremist activities.
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INTRODUCTION

On November 5, 2009, Major Nidal Malik Hasan, a 35-year old U.S. Army psychiatrist, entered the deployment center at Fort Hood, Texas, carrying two loaded weapons. Moments later, Hasan jumped on a desk and shouted “Allahu Akbar,” Arabic for God is great, and proceeded to open fire on nearby service members, ultimately killing twelve people and injuring 42 others.¹ Subsequent investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) revealed that prior to this act; Hasan, who the media described as a “lone wolf,” had embarked on a conservative Islamic path and took a significant interest in the lectures of radical Islamic cleric Anwar al-Aulaqi, and had attempted to contact al-Aulaqi via e-mail on numerous instances.² This horrific attack quickly thrust al-Aulaqi into the international spotlight, and left many questioning who al-Aulaqi was and why he had such an inspirational impact on Hasan, which would motivate him to commit such an act. Hasan’s actions were not a singular phenomenon, and were in fact the latest in a series of terrorist attacks committed on U.S. soil by “homegrown extremists.” The concept of homegrown extremism indicates that individuals are of the Muslim diaspora in the West and were born and radicalized in their host country. Moreover, these extremists may have no formal ties with a terrorist


organization, though they may actively embrace the teachings of radical Islamic ideologues, having never met them in person.³

While there are a multitude of reasons why an individual may pursue a path of radical Islam, leading them down a path toward becoming a homegrown extremist, a key element of this radicalization process is the radical Islamic ideologue that inspires and motivates that person to commit such extremist acts. These ideologues, who most frequently come in the form of Muslim imams, serve not only as religious authorities, but also as key propagandists in the Islamic militant movement, recruitment magnets, and as key nodes in the extremist network. These ideologues are often experts at exploiting their followers’ conflicted sense of identity and conveying their own radical interpretations of the Quran upon their followers. Additionally, these ideologues feature prominently in the early stages of the radicalization process, and can appeal to voluntary recruits or conversely, they may actively target vulnerable individuals for recruitment.⁴ Terrorism expert Marc Sageman notes the importance of the doctrine of takfir amongst these ideologues, as takfiris view themselves as “the only true Muslims and believe only they understand Islam. They reject traditional imams, who they view as lackeys paid by the


state or a corrupted mosque,” and they also reject traditional religious interpretations, which they believe have been corrupted.\(^5\)

During the late 1980s through early 2000s, radical ideologues became a familiar sight in Western Europe and the messages they preached appealed to many second and third-generation Muslim immigrants, many of which bore a conflicted sense of cultural identity in their new country. Given the diverse languages spoken by their Muslim followers, the uniting factor amongst the most popular ideologues was their use of the most globally spoken language – English.\(^6\) While radical ideologues were not as prevalent in the U.S., one terrorism study found that, as of 2010, there was an emerging network of radical preachers, demagogues, bloggers, and activists attempting to disseminate extremist ideas among Muslim youth in the U.S.\(^7\) As in Europe, the use of English amongst these radical ideologues is a uniting factor.

As witnessed in the case of Nidal Malik Hassan, a homegrown extremist does not need to attend a militant training camp overseas, receive a formal induction into a terrorist organization, or meet that group’s leader in person. Rather, these extremists can be recruited, radicalized, or inspired to commit such acts by English speaking radical Islamic ideologues, either in their home country or via the Internet. In the digital age, these ideologues’ reach is unlimited and they are not bound by international borders or


restricted in their ability to disseminate their messages. While these radical ideologues do not always formally represent a terrorist organization, they are a loose constellation of radicalizers who maintain a shared belief in radical Islam and serve as a significant catalyst in the radicalization process. Furthermore, while U.S. and European governments have taken steps since September 11, 2001 to contain and arrest homegrown extremists and radical ideologues, new followers continue to be recruited to the extremist cause and many of these radical ideologues currently remain active. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair indicated he believes [the West] “underestimated the power of the bad narrative of Islamist extremists,” and [their movement] “is still there, and if anything, has grown.”

An examination of terrorism related publications and media from the past decade revealed the names of three key English speaking radical Islamic ideologues, each of whom have been linked to numerous radical Islamic groups, terrorism suspects, and extremist Online forums. These ideologues include U.S. citizen Anwar al-Aulaqi, Jamaican citizen Abdullah al-Faisal, and British citizen Anjem Choudary. While each of the aforementioned English speaking radical Islamic ideologues have diverse backgrounds and are each from different countries, an examination of these individuals revealed the existence of three key similarities: their use of the Internet to disseminate their respective messages, their use of the English language, to include delivery style and ability to tailor their message to a specific audience, and the existence of personal

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credibility and extremist bona fides. Further analysis of these three cases will demonstrate that by successfully employing each of the referenced elements, these ideologues are able to maintain a considerable following of young Muslims and play a significant role in influencing international terrorism, specifically with regard to homegrown extremists in the U.S. and in Europe.

Utilizing analysis of court documents, press releases, terrorism publications, video footage, news reports, and the works of established scholars, the following chapters will explore each key element in greater detail and will illustrate why these English speaking radical Islamic ideologues have such an impact and influence on international terrorism. Chapter 1 will provide an overview of al-Aulaqi, al-Faisal, and Choudary, which will detail each individual’s background, extremist views, activities, and current disposition. This section will also briefly illustrate the three key similarities noted above, each of which are used by these radical ideologues. Chapter 2 will highlight the importance of the Internet as a means of communication by radical ideologues. The first half of this chapter will provide a brief overview of the means by which extremist Islamic groups and their leaders have utilized the Internet in order to project their messages, connect with other like-minded extremists, and rally support for their cause. The second half will explore how al-Aulaqi, al-Faisal, and Choudary have relied on the Internet to reach a new generation of young Muslims worldwide, and will specifically focus on their production and distribution of recorded lectures via Internet websites, YouTube, and other forms of social networking and media.
Chapter 3 will discuss how these three ideologues have primarily used the English language to disseminate their messages and propaganda. Additionally, this section will describe each ideologue’s delivery style, ability to tailor their message to a specific audience and their use of modern cultural references and world events, all of which assist in their ability to reach their target audience. Chapter 3 will also briefly note why these three ideologues have been far more successful in conveying their message and reaching a Western audience in comparison to their contemporaries. The final chapter will evaluate the role that extremist credibility plays in enhancing an ideologue’s international influence and extremist persona. Chapter 4 will provide further detail on each radical ideologue’s involvement in extremist activities, and will highlight the legal ramifications each have incurred as a result of their involvement in these activities. Chapter 4 will also present three examples of notable homegrown extremists who were radicalized or influenced by these ideologues, which ultimately served to enhance the ideologues’ extremist personae and profile on the international stage. The conclusion of this thesis will underscore the impact these ideologues have on international terrorism and will note potential means and solutions for combating the threat they pose.
CHAPTER 1
THREE CASE STUDIES OF ENGLISH SPEAKING RADICAL ISLAMIC IDEOLOGUES

Anwar al-Aulaqi

Of the three aforementioned radical ideologues, U.S.-born Anwar bin Nasser bin Abdulla al-Aulaqi is by far the most popular, effective, and well known on the global stage. Al-Aulaqi was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico in 1971 to parents who had emigrated several years earlier to the U.S. from Yemen. Al-Aulaqi’s father was highly educated and worked at a number of U.S. universities; thus it is believed that al-Aulaqi’s upbringing was grounded in education and there is no indication that his father was a Muslim radical. Though the al-Aulaqi family returned to Yemen in 1978, al-Aulaqi traveled back to the U.S. in 1991, and had become proficient in both Arabic and English. While earning his engineering degree from Colorado State University during the early 1990s, al-Aulaqi allegedly spent one summer attending a training camp in Afghanistan, according to his former roommate. Upon his return, al-Aulaqi became more interested in religion than engineering, and became a leader at a local mosque in Fort Collins,


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.
Colorado after graduation. The earliest signs of al-Aulaqi’s influence occurred during this time period, when his sermons on jihad are believed to have influenced a Saudi college student to drop out of school and join jihadists fighting in Bosnia.

Despite his lack of formal Islamic training and scholarship, having primarily focused on engineering and educational leadership, al-Aulaqi relocated to San Diego, California in 1996 and became the imam of the Masjid al-Ribat al-Islami mosque. In addition to his work as an imam, al-Aulaqi also served as the vice-president of the Charitable Society for Social Welfare, a San Diego-based Muslim charity suspected by U.S. authorities of having financial ties to the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. A review of government documents revealed the FBI San Diego Office’s Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) opened a preliminary investigation on al-Aulaqi during his time in San Diego, likely as a result of his association with this charity, though the official predication remains classified. Of note, this charity has been linked to Specially Designated Global Terrorist and radical Yemeni Islamic ideologue ‘Abd al-Majid al-

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5 Ibid.


7 MacEoin, “Anwar al-Awlaki: I Pray that Allah Destroys America.”

8 Webster Commission, Final report of the William H. Webster Commission on the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Intelligence, and the Events at Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009. FBI documents further indicate that the preliminary investigation on al-Aulaqi was closed at an unspecified period due to a lack of evidence.
Zindani, thus providing the first signs of al-Aulaqi’s association with Islamic extremism.\(^9\) Al-Aulaqi’s unique brand of Salafi Islam, a strict, conservative, and puritanical version of Islam, attracted a litany of followers, to include future 9/11 hijackers Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar, who had arrived in the U.S. from Saudi Arabia in January 2000 and had begun attending al-Aulaqi’s mosque in San Diego.\(^{10}\) While the full extent of the relationship between al-Aulaqi and the 9/11 hijackers remains unknown, the 9/11 Commission and the FBI’s investigation later revealed that al-Aulaqi held closed door meetings with al-Hazmi and al-Midhar, and also helped them find an apartment and open bank accounts, provided transportation, and acted as a translator when needed. Al-Hazmi later told acquaintances at the mosque that al-Aulaqi was a “great man” and a “spiritual mentor.”\(^{11}\)

In January 2001, al-Aulaqi took a position as imam at the Dar al-Hijrah mosque, a large and influential establishment in Northern Virginia. Al-Aulaqi continued to maintain a reputation as a respected imam and he presented a very moderate persona when talking with media outlets such as the New York Times, PBS, and National Public Radio (NPR), and he was described by the Baltimore Sun as a “bridge builder between Islam and the


West.” Once again, al-Aulaqi became linked to Islamic extremism, when al-Hazmi and fellow 9/11 hijacker Hani Hanjour relocated to Virginia and worshiped at al-Aulaqi’s mosque. Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, al-Aulaqi denied any association with these hijackers, and he joined the ranks of numerous American imams who denounced the attacks; though al-Aulaqi’s statements were often qualified. In October 2001, al-Aulaqi told the Washington Post “we were told this was an attack on American freedom, on the American way of life. This wasn’t an attack on any of this. This was an attack on U.S. foreign policy.” Following increased scrutiny by U.S. authorities, based on his connection to three 9/11 hijackers, and as a result of his investigation by Virginia and Maryland police for soliciting prostitutes during the late-1990s, al-Aulaqi left the U.S. for the United Kingdom in 2002.

Though al-Aulaqi’s tenure in the United Kingdom would be brief, it represented a period of a continued shift toward radical Islam by al-Aulaqi. Between 2002 and 2003, al-Aulaqi embarked on a series of lectures at the al-Tawid mosque, a radical mosque in London, and spoke at numerous meetings of the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), the U.K. arm of the extremist-linked Muslim Brotherhood; thus highlighting his status to


13 Ibid.


British counterterrorism authorities. In early 2004, al-Aulaqi abandoned the U.K. with his wife and five children and returned to his ancestral home in southern Yemen, where he became a lecturer at Iman University in Sana’a.

In 2006, Yemeni authorities arrested and imprisoned al-Aulaqi on kidnapping charges, and he was interrogated by both Yemeni and American officials during his 18-month imprisonment. Al-Aulaqi’s time in prison is believed to have played a significant role in his radicalization and may have served as a key catalyst in his shift from being a jihadist sympathizer to a full-fledged terrorist and member of al-Qa’ida (AQ); and in 2007 he began making overt public calls for jihad against the west. Beginning in 2008, al-Aulaqi became actively involved with the Yemen-based AQ subsidiary group al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), where he was reportedly involved in media affairs, propaganda, and recruitment. During this time, al-Aulaqi became one of the most popular spokesman for radical Islam, and greatly relied on technology to disseminate his messages to a global audience. Moreover, subsequent law enforcement investigations linked al-Aulaqi to multiple homegrown extremists and terrorist activities between 2008-2010, and al-Aulaqi openly advocated for Muslims world-wide to kill U.S.

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16 MacEoin, “Anwar al-Awlaki: I Pray that Allah Destroys America.”

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.


servicemen. In light of al-Aulaqi’s significant influence, the U.S. Treasury Department added al-Aulaqi to its list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists, thereby freezing his financial assets and prohibiting him from traveling to the U.S. In April 2010, President Barak Obama took the extraordinary step of formally adding al-Aulaqi to a U.S. government authorized assassination list, and al-Aulaqi was described by counterterrorism officials as being “the most dangerous man in Yemen” and a “significant security risk.” Al-Aulaqi’s involvement in terrorist activities effectively came to an end in late-September 2011 when he, and his 16-year old son Abdulrahman, were killed in a U.S. airstrike in Yemen. Despite his death in 2011, Al-Aulaqi’s enduring influence on international terrorism, which will be addressed in the following sections, will likely remain an issue of concern, given his significant appeal and numerous recorded lectures, which continue to be available in the digital realm.

21 MacEoin, “Anwar al-Awlaki: I Pray that Allah Destroys America.”


Abdullah al-Faisal

As in the case of Anwar al-Aulaqi, Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal, was also raised in a family that did not embrace radical Islam. Born Trevor William Forest in 1963, al-Faisal was raised in Montego Bay, Jamaica by Christian parents who worked as Salvation Army officers. At the age of 16, al-Faisal converted to Islam after being introduced to the religion by one of his high school teachers. After traveling to Guyana in 1983 to study Arabic for one year, al-Faisal then traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and spent seven years studying Islam at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University, an institution cited for its intolerance toward other Islamic sects and toward Christianity and Judaism. After receiving a conservative religious education in Saudi Arabia from Salafi clerics, al-Faisal relocated to the United Kingdom in 1991. Al-Faisal would later state to British authorities that he “was sent to the United Kingdom to preach by Sheikj Rajhi,” a reference to the Rajhi family of Saudi Arabia, who are accused of supporting international terrorism.

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27 Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.”

From 1991 through 2005, al-Faisal would speak to Muslim audiences throughout England and Wales, having established roots in the residential London neighborhood of Brixton. By the late 1990s, al-Faisal was characterized as one of the most significant extremist preachers in the United Kingdom, who would ultimately serve to radicalize a generation of British youth, thus bolstering anti-western sentiments in Europe. Al-Faisal garnered a respectable number of followers in the UK, many of which were black Muslim converts, and at the height of his popularity in Britain, his firebrand lectures were attended by between 100 and as many as 500 people. Al-Faisal’s sermons and lectures largely played to the fears of British Muslims and promoted a message of anti-Semitism. These lectures became so popular that they were recorded onto tapes and discs and sold at multiple Islamic bookstores in the UK, which eventually attracted the attention of British authorities.

Following an undercover police operation, which resulted in the discovery of the aforementioned extremist recordings, al-Faisal’s home in East London was raided by police and he was subsequently arrested. During al-Faisal’s trial, British authorities presented evidence showing that al-Faisal’s messages called for the death of non-believers, specifically Jews, Hindus, and Americans, advocated for schoolboys to be


30 Kohlmann, “Jamaican Cleric Shaykh Abdullah al-Faisal Alleged To Have Inspired Times Square Suspect.”

31 Abbott, “Al-Faisal’s Journey.”

32 Ibid.
armed with Kalashnikov rifles, and encouraged Britons to go to terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. British prosecutors accused al-Faisal of inciting racial hatred, and he was convicted on three charges under the Public Order Act. Prosecutors also sought to further reprimand al-Faisal for these inflammatory actions, and he was also convicted on three counts of soliciting murder under the 1861 Offences against Persons Act, which was the first such prosecution in more than 100 years, thus garnering al-Faisal a nine year prison sentence. Despite his incarceration, al-Faisal continued to espouse extremist rhetoric, and allegedly sought to radicalize fellow prisoners by serving as the prison’s imam and prayer leader; however, prison officials prohibited al-Faisal from performing these duties. During al-Faisal’s time in prison, British authorities discovered that al-Faisal’s lectures had previously been attended by at least two suicide bombers, who participated in the 7 July 2005 terrorist attacks in London, and al-Faisal’s recordings may have been instrumental in radicalizing and inspiring these attackers. For these reasons, and because al-Faisal had reached his first parole date, British authorities deported al-Faisal to his home country of Jamaica in May 2007. Though the threat al-Faisal posed to the UK was largely mitigated with his deportation, this action would not signal the end of his al-Faisal’s time as a radical ideologue.

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34 Quintan Wiktorowicz, Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 70.

35 Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.”

36 Brandon, Virtual Caliphate, 5-6.
Soon after his return to Jamaica in 2007, al-Faisal obtained a new Jamaican passport, and embarked upon a speaking tour throughout parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, where he claimed to have visited 350 mosques in 10 countries.\textsuperscript{37} Al-Faisal’s time in prison appears to have had no impact on al-Faisal’s extremist sentiments, nor did it give him any pause toward a promoting a jihadist message to Muslim audiences. Of note, al-Faisal delivered a speech in Durban, South Africa in 2008 where he defended the practice of honor killing of women and claimed Islam was under attack.\textsuperscript{38} On 31 December 2009, Kenyan authorities arrest al-Faisal after he left a local mosque in the town of Nyali, claiming al-Faisal had violated the terms of his tourist visa by preaching in Kenya. However, Kenyan authorities later clarified that al-Faisal was viewed “as a security threat,” and was “inciting local followers to support the al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen” movement in nearby Somalia.\textsuperscript{39}

After a forced deportation back to Jamaica in February 2010, al-Faisal resorted to utilizing the Internet as a means to reach his global followers, as his ability to preach at local Jamaican mosques was largely thwarted by the Islamic Council of Jamaica, who opposed al-Faisal’s ideology.\textsuperscript{40} Despite these constraints, al-Faisal’s popularity


\textsuperscript{38} Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.”


\textsuperscript{40} Alison Gendar and James Gordon Meek, “Jamaican Imam Abdullah el-Faisal Wants to be Next Terror Big, U.S. Fears,” \textit{New York Daily News}, November 22, 2010,
experienced a significant surge between 2008 and 2010, as he served as the spiritual leader and advisor to the U.S.-based online extremist Islamic forum Revolution Muslim.41 Though his following in Jamaica may not be robust and his days of traveling the world to promote his extremist message may have ceased, al-Faisal maintains a loyal following through the Internet, has a proven record of inciting terrorism, and his influence remains an issue of concern.

**Anjem Choudary**

Unlike the two previously discussed radical Islamic ideologues, UK-born British citizen Anjem Choudary has largely avoided detention by authorities and currently maintains the ability to travel throughout the UK and Europe to promote his extremist Islamic ideology. Choudary was born in 1967 to Pakistani parents, who had initially traveled from India into Pakistan after the 1947 partition.42 Choudary grew up in a working-class home in a London suburb, and after excelling at his studies in grade school, he began a medical degree in London. However, Choudary switched to law after failing his initial medical school exams.43 After studying law at the Universities of

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41 “Backgrounder: Revolution Muslim,” *Anti-Defamation League*.


Southampton and Guildford, Choudary became a qualified solicitor in the UK, and he presently serves as the chairman of the Society of Muslim Lawyers in London and as the manager of the UK-based Shari‘a Court.\textsuperscript{44} Choudary married a British woman in 1996, who he described as being “very active in Islam,” and they relocated to East London and began attending a mosque in the neighborhood of Woolwich.\textsuperscript{45} It was at this mosque that Choudary met Syrian-born extremist cleric Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, who previously served as the leader of the UK branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a pan-Islamic and conservative Sunni Muslim organization.\textsuperscript{46} Choudary became a committed student, disciple, and confidant of Bakri, and the two would go on to form the extremist Islamic group Al-Muhajiroun in 1996, with Choudary serving as the group’s deputy leader.\textsuperscript{47}

As a leader of Al-Muhajiroun, Choudary embraced a staunch extremist platform and the group advocated for the establishment of a global Islamic Caliphate and for the institution of Shariah law in the UK. Additionally, though Al-Muhajiroun at times stated they intended to effectuate this action through non-violent means, the group widely proclaimed its support for the use of violence to its followers.\textsuperscript{48} Choudary was also

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Chatrath, “Fighting the Unbeliever,” 113, Wardrop, “Anjem Choudary: profile.”
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Rachel Briggs and Jonathan Birdwell,\textit{ Radicalisation among Muslims in the UK} (Brighton: MICROCON, 2009), 19.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Quintan Wiktorowicz and Karl Kaltenthaler, “The Rationality of Radical Islam,”\textit{ Political Science Quarterly} 121, no 2 (2006): 302,
\end{itemize}
instrumental in spreading Al-Muhajiroun’s extremist message in the U.S., having traveled to New York during the late 1990s. During this trip, Choudary visited mosques in the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens and preached his radical Islamic ideology to young second generation Muslims and to American Muslim converts.\(^{49}\) Choudary and Bakri gained international notoriety when Al-Muhajiroun hosted the “Magnificent 19” conference, which glorified the 9/11 hijackers, in September 2002 at the radical Finsbury Park Mosque.\(^{50}\) Following increased scrutiny from British authorities, and in anticipation of a forthcoming ban from the British Government, Al-Muhajiroun disbanded in October 2004 and split into two smaller subgroups, an action that Choudary would undertake multiple times in the years following in order to avert criminal charges.\(^{51}\) Furthermore, Choudary’s mentor Sheikh Bakri left Britain in early 2005, leaving Choudary to lead Al-Muhajiroun’s successor organizations.\(^{52}\)

Choudary’s ultimate successor organization launched in June 2009 under the name Islam4UK, which Choudary once described as a “platform for the global front Al-
Muhajiroun.” As a trained lawyer, Choudary was cautious not to directly make statements which could be in violation of Britain’s incitement laws, and many of his speeches during this time period focused on raising awareness of Muslims imprisoned under British anti-terrorism laws. Choudary’s efforts to avoid law enforcement scrutiny were ultimately unsuccessful after Islam4UK announced in January 2010 that its members intended to hold a protest in the British town of Wootton Bassett against UK military personnel who had fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly two weeks after this announcement, the British Government banned Islam4UK under the Terrorism Act 2000, accusing Choudary and his followers of promoting and encouraging acts of terrorism.

Choudary remained undeterred by the British Government’s efforts to thwart his activities, and as he had done in years prior, Choudary and his followers simply changed the name of their group and established a new Internet website.

Choudary organized the short-lived Islamic organization Muslims Against Crusades in late 2010, and the group largely embraced its predecessors’ positions on Sharia law and opposition to the British Government’s perceived anti-Muslim policies. In November 2011, Britain’s Home Secretary declared that any membership or support for Muslims Against Crusades would be a criminal offense and subsequently banned the

\[\text{\footnotesize 53 Chatrath, “Fighting the Unbeliever,” 112.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize 54 Brandon, Virtual Caliphate, 19.}\]

organization in the UK.\textsuperscript{56} Choudary claimed he was “unfazed by the ban” and criticized British authorities for attempting to “cover up the truth.”\textsuperscript{57} Choudary historically maintained a far more public presence, as compared to al-Aulaqi and al-Faisal, and has been willing to be interviewed by practically any news media outlet that expresses an interest in hearing his perspectives. As of 2012, Choudary does not operate under the formal banner of any particular Islamic organization, though he stated the “important thing is not the name, the important thing is that you plant the seeds in the hearts of the people.”\textsuperscript{58} Moreover, his supporters continue to be linked to international terrorism incidents, which will be detailed in the subsequent chapter, and Choudary remains a subject of concern for British authorities, as he maintains a modest, but devoted following of Islamic extremists in the UK and worldwide.


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} Raymond, “Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK,” 12.
CHAPTER 2

RADICAL ISLAMIC IDEOLOGUES’ USE OF THE INTERNET

Al Qaeda and similar groups rely on the Internet to contact potential recruits and donors, sway public opinion, instruct would-be terrorists, pool tactics and knowledge, and organize attacks.¹

—Evan Kohlmann, “The Real Online Terrorist Threat”

As referenced in Chapter 1, each of the English speaking radical Islamic ideologies that were discussed incurred legal repercussions as a result of their efforts to openly espouse a pro-jihadist ideology, making it far more difficult for them to preach openly to their followers in person. Despite these obstructions, radical ideologues’ ability to disseminate their messages has by no means been halted, and like many other global extremist organizations, they have simply established a virtual presence on the Internet. Additionally, the current availability of high-speed internet, modern use of file sharing and downloading, has enabled many extremists and radical ideologues to further disseminate their extremist teachings and materials without relying on a central hub or Internet website. To date, extremists have greatly benefited from the rapid development of communication technologies and it has effectively expanded their influence and

reach. Author Peter Neumann notes that all “the real-world participants in the Islamist Militant Movement – the hardcore leadership of al-Qaeda, the radical imams, the strategic thinks and the grassroots movement - are represented on the Internet.” With regard to radical ideologues and homegrown extremists, author James Forest highlights the importance of radical ideologues’ use of the Internet as an “alternative way of radicalizing their target audience,” which does not require a “face to face interaction.” In addition to allowing radical ideologues the ability to espouse extremist rhetoric, the Internet specifically provides ideologues the ability to radicalize and recruit receptive Muslims and distribute their propaganda, both of which come in a variety of forms.

One of the most important ways in which radical ideologues can utilize the Internet is as a mechanism for distributing their propaganda. Terrorism expert Evan Kohlmann notes the growth of extremist videos on the Internet, which often contain disturbing footage of executions, ambushes, and bombings which took place in jihadist battlegrounds such as Bosnia and Afghanistan. These videos can be as benign as a video providing cordial greeting from a radical ideologue to his followers, to a more extreme example of militants providing instructions on the creation of suicide vests. This propaganda, which is significantly embraced by groups like AQ, serves to expand the

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5 Kohlmann, “The Real Online Terrorist Threat.”
jihadist battlefield into the virtual realm and conveys the responsibility of jihad to Muslims around the globe.\textsuperscript{6}

Radical ideologues also rely upon Internet-supported recruitment, which can take two forms, self-recruitment and targeted recruitment. Self-recruitment implies that a prospective recruit’s radicalization process was driven by their viewing of extremist materials online. Conversely, targeted recruitment indicates that a prospective recruit was specifically sought out online by an extremist recruiter or ideologue and subsequently provided with materials promoting radical Islam. However, terrorism experts assess that the Internet is not sufficient alone to radicalize an individual, though it is useful in illustrating and reinforcing ideological messages and plays an important role in “supporting the process of joining the movement.”\textsuperscript{7}

Since the 1990s, Radical Islamic ideologues have propagated an extremist Salafist message on the Internet in furtherance of establishing their ideal model for an Islamic caliphate online. Though each ideologue does not embrace the same extremist ideology, they represent key beacons of information in the global Internet community. Radical ideologues have used a multitude of means to spread their messages and reach followers on the Internet, to include the use of personal and group websites, chat rooms, web forums and message boards, direct e-mail communication, online videos and audio files, and new forms of social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Terrorism expert Marc Sageman notes the “virtual community is no longer tied to any nation, a

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7} Neumann, \textit{Joining al-Qa’ida}, 53.
condition that corresponds to the mythical umma of Salafism, which specifically rejects nationalists and fosters the global Salafi jihadist priorities.\footnote{Marc Sageman, \textit{Understanding Terror Networks} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 161.}

As previously noted, the relationship between homegrown extremists and radical Islamic ideologues cannot be underestimated, and the Internet serves as the key mechanism for uniting these two entities. Given that ideologues have a well established Internet presence, potential homegrown extremists do not need to travel overseas in order to further their radicalization process, and therefore they may pursue either direct or indirect communication online with a radical ideologue. More importantly, prospective recruits may be more willing to pursue radical Islamic messages online, as compared to in person, given the ease of accessing information on the Internet and the anonymity the Internet provides.\footnote{Yaakov Lappin, \textit{Virtual Caliphate: Exposing the Islamist State on the Internet} (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2011), 8.} The primary aim of radical ideologues, with regarding to prospective homegrown extremists, is to provide a message that alienates young Muslims and seeks to dislodge them from their societies, which can be accomplished by supplying them with a message that promotes their own Salafi interpretation of Islam, convinces them that their own environments are morally corrupted, and that action must be taken to rectify this corruption.\footnote{Ibid.}

Interpersonal online communications with radical ideologues are a key element in moving individuals from radicalization to actually engaging in violent action to advance
an extremist group or ideologues’ cause. Given the difficulty of directly contacting an ideologue, individuals may often rely upon their participating in an extremist online forum to support their radicalization. It is in these online forums that “lone wolves” are no longer alone, and they may be encouraged by fellow chat room participants to further their radical beliefs or conduct extremist activities.\(^1\) Furthermore, many radical ideologues and extremist groups rely on these online forums as a means to identify and indoctrinate young Muslims and to foster the development of a social network that focuses entirely on their ideology.\(^2\) An ideologue or his followers may use these forums to promote their own propaganda, by way of audio and video streams, downloadable material, use of discussion boards, and by linking users to other likeminded extremist Islamic websites.\(^3\)

These Internet forums can also assist in bridging the gap between the online world and the offline world, as a newly radicalized Muslim may go seek out a particular extremist mosque or radical ideologue, meet with likeminded Muslims in their area, or even commit a terrorist attack. A significant concern is that many these virtual forums have become the equivalent of what Sagemen describes as online “militant mosques,” which allow participants to plot online and carry out an operation together over large geographical areas.\(^4\) In addition to becoming a committed extremist operative,

\(^1\) Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 122.


\(^3\) Ibid., 14.

participation in these forums may persuade an individual to become a radical ideologue himself. Such was the case with current senior AQ figure and American citizen Adam Gadahn, who originally discovered Islam on the Internet while growing up in California. Specifically, Gadahn characterized the Internet as a gateway for his recruitment, as he personally visited multiple online “Usenet newsgroups which focused on Islam.” and found that they fit his “personal theology.”

Author Gabriel Weimann, an expert on terrorists’ use of the Internet, believes that terrorists are “increasingly resorting to the Internet to disseminate their views to a wider public, and they have come to the realization that establishing their presence in cyberspace is nearly just as critical to their long-term success as any military triumph or act of sabotage.” Based on the Internet presence of al-Aulaqi, al-Faisal, and Choudary, it can be assessed that each of these individuals share Weimann’s sentiments regarding the necessity of the Internet toward accomplishing their greater objectives. In the era of modern terrorism, no radical Islamic ideologue has been a greater proponent of spreading his message on the Internet than Anwar al-Aulaqi.

Anwar al-Aulaqi embraced technology on many fronts, and was an early proponent of recording and videotaping his lectures. In fact, al-Aulaqi produced more audio and video lectures than Osama bin Laden, having recorded over 100 hours of lectures during his lifetime. Al-Aulaqi established his first website in early 2008 after

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16 Weimann, *Terror on the Internet*, 49.
his release from a Yemeni prison, and he purchased the domain name “anwar-alawlaki.com” from an Arizona-based domain registration company. Al-Aulaqi noted a disclaimer on his website which indicated it was an “open forum and collection of essays, articles, comments and other publications that are for educational purposes only,” and the site contained sections providing background on al-Aulaqi, recent lectures by al-Aulaqi in text form, interviews, media articles, and links to videos of al-Aulaqi’s lectures on YouTube. Al-Aulaqi further commented that his website operated “under the divine right bestowed by the Creator to freedom of religion and tasteful expression” and “we hold the belief that the Muslim world should be permitted to unite under the banner of Islam.”

Most importantly, al-Aulaqi’s website providing a link giving users the ability to “contact the Sheikh” directly, which let users type a message to Aulaqi and enter their email address. Moreover, the message was not posted openly on the site and was automatically forwarded to al-Aulaqi’s personal e-mail account alaulaqi@yahoo.com, whereby al-Aulaqi could respond directly to his followers. As of late 2008, U.S. authorities characterized the quantity of communications coming to al-Aulaqi’s e-mail

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19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

account as a “crushing volume,” and by November 2009, the FBI was reviewing approximately 1,525 communications to and from al-Aulaqi per month.\(^{22}\)

Nearly two years after his website became active, al-Aulaqi was described as one of the main clerics spreading radical messages on Internet forums and through media distribution outlets online.\(^{23}\) Audio files of al-Aulaqi’s lectures, such as “Constants on the Path of Jihad” and “44 Ways to Support Jihad,” found new audiences online given the unlimited reach of al-Aulaqi’s Internet community, and were not only hosted on al-Aulaqi’s website, but were shared by al-Aulaqi’s followers and subsequently posted on likeminded jihadist websites and Internet forums. It is also of note that during the 2008-2009 timeframe, al-Aulaqi’s online materials did not solely focus on contentious issues like offensive jihad, and largely focused on relatively benign topics, such as his lecture series “The Hereafter,” which was incredibly popular amongst al-Aulaqi’s followers.\(^{24}\) However, al-Aulaqi did begin to post more openly controversial statements regarding jihad on his website’s blog.

Al-Aulaqi launched a blog on his website in 2008, in which he regularly posted statements, and his followers were allowed to post their own responses and commentary. These blog posts regularly had hundreds of comments, mainly from Western Muslim readers, many of whom considered al-Aulaqi to be their best source of Islamic

\(^{22}\) Ibid.


information. One such reader, who was a member of the British Government’s Civil Service Islamic Society, commented that al-Aulaqi was one of his “favourite speakers and scholars.”\(^{25}\) Additionally, al-Aulaqi used this blog to address broad issues affecting Muslims around the globe, as a way of casting his net as wide as possible. Al-Aulaqi also began to frequently discuss the establishment of an Islamic caliphate and reference the concept of offensive jihad. In August 2008 blog entry titled “A Question about the Method of Establishing Khilafa,” al-Aulaqi provided a concise overview of his diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames for the war on Islam.\(^{26}\) In a subsequent posting regarding establishing the caliphate, al-Aulaqi lays out his vision of jihad and describes jihad “as what Clausewitz would refer to as total war but with the Islamic rules of engagement.”\(^{27}\)

In addition to al-Aulaqi’s website and blog, al-Aulaqi maintained a robust following on the video-sharing website YouTube, based on videos al-Aulaqi posted, and on videos of al-Aulaqi posted by his followers. These videos largely depicted al-Aulaqi’s early lectures on religion, focusing on the importance of Ramadan and stories of the Prophet’s companions. However, by the late 2000s, al-Aulaqi neglected to temper his statements, and his video lectures openly detailed the importance of fulfilling jihad and


\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) Ibid.
provided stories on the mujahideen. The impact and influence of these videos can 
partially be assessed by the vast numbers of YouTube users who viewed these lectures. In 
one such example, a video containing excerpts of al-Aulaqi’s “Lives of the Prophets” 
series had been viewed over 260,000 times as of September 2010.

As an added means of garnering online followers, al-Aulaqi also maintained a 
Facebook page until November 2009. At the height of its popularity, al-Aulaqi had more 
than 4,800 Facebook fans, and al-Aulaqi’s supports followed his Facebook commentaries 
and used the page to discuss al-Aulaqi’s lectures and to note the inspirational influence 
al-Aulaqi had on their lives. Though al-Aulaqi’s original Facebook page is no longer in 
existence, as of early 2013, multiple Facebook users have created tribute pages to al-
Aulaqi, one of which boasts over 1,200 fans and hosts links to multiple YouTube videos 
featuring al-Aulaqi.

Al-Aulaqi’s willingness to correspond with his followers on the Internet would 
ultimately result in significant repercussions for his online presence. As discussed 
previously, Fort Hood shooter Major Nidal Malik Hasan, an avid online follower of al-
Aulaqi, began sending online correspondence to al-Aulaqi, via his website, in December 
2008. Hasan sent as many as 20 messages to al-Aulaqi through mid-2009, though al-
Aulaqi only responded to two of these messages, and there is no information available to

31 Facebook, “Shaykh Anwar Al-Awlaki,” http://www.facebook.com/pages/Shaykh-Anwar-Al-
indicate al-Aulaqi provided Hasan with any operational guidance or directives. Though al-Aulaqi did not instruct Hasan to commit the horrific attacks at Fort Hood, Hasan appears to fit the “lone wolf” mold that Marc Sagemen details, as he was inspired and likely encouraged by the “radical voices” he saw online. In the days following this attack, al-Aulaqi posted a statement on his website that represented a significant shift in his public persona, whereby he called Hasan “a hero,” and claimed Hasan “is a man of conscience who could not bear living the contradiction of being a Muslim and serving in an army that is fighting against his own people.” Shortly thereafter, al-Aulaqi’s website was shut down by the domain provider, and despite al-Aulaqi’s claims that the site would “return shortly,” it remained suspended indefinitely. Al-Aulaqi later released an interview where he criticized the U.S. Government for censuring Internet websites, and he acknowledged that the U.S.’s actions were in response to his support for Hasan’s actions.

Al-Aulaqi’s Internet presence did not end with the suspension of his website and blog, and subsequent U.S. and British terrorism investigations revealed that al-Aulaqi


33 Sageman, Leaderless Jihad, 122.

34 “U.S.-Born Yemen-Based Imam Anwar Al-Awlaki on His CA-Hosted Website: Fort Hood Shooter ‘Nidal Hassan Is A Hero’


36 Stalinsky, “American-Yemeni Al-Qaeda Cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki Highlights the Role and Importance of Media Jihad, Praises Al-Jazeera TV Journalists and WikiLeaks.”
continued to correspond with extremists online throughout 2010-2011. Of significant note, during 2010, al-Aulaqi corresponded via e-mail with now convicted British extremist Rajib Karim, who sought al-Aulaqi’s guidance in order to conduct an attack against a British airliner.\(^{37}\) According to British authorities, Karim claimed to have significant reverence for “the shaykh,” and “was immeasurably strengthened after making direct contact” with al-Aulaqi.\(^{38}\) Al-Aulaqi’s shift toward an open endorsement of acts of terrorism was further demonstrated though his association with the English-language terrorism magazine *Inspire*, which was the brainchild of al-Aulaqi’s close associate and fellow Yemen-based AQAP member Samir Khan.\(^{39}\) Copies of *Inspire* were first published in June 2010 under the banner of AQAP, with exclusive content and oversight from al-Aulaqi himself.\(^{40}\) This publication, which was widely distributed on the Internet, often featured original material from al-Aulaqi, jihadist propaganda from AQ, and direct guidance on creating explosives.\(^{41}\)

Al-Aulaqi’s death in September 2011 will obviously prohibit the release of any new lectures or materials, though given the level of popularity al-Aulaqi achieved and the wealth of materials he released, he will likely have a lasting impact on radical Islam and


\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) Mudd, “Evaluating the Al-Qa’ida Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” 5.


\(^{41}\) Ibid.
jihadist activism. Furthermore, his audio and video speeches will survive through continued media and Internet dissemination. As of 2013, al-Aulaqi’s recordings can easily be found on Internet sites like YouTube and on second-tier extremist social networking forums like the Ansar al-Mujahideen extremist web forum; a site which has seen a continued growth in online followers since its inception in 2008.\footnote{Evan Kohlmann, “A Beacon for Extremists: The Ansar al-Mujahideen Web Forum,” \textit{CTC Sentinel} 3, no 2, (February 2010), 1, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-beacon-for-extremists-the-ansar-al-mujahideen-web-forum (accessed May 1, 2012).} Al-Aulaqi’s body of work will continue to serve as principal resource and a call to action for aspiring jihadists who discover his teachings in various radical Islamic online forums. Al-Aulaqi’s enduring influence largely mirrors a scenario proposed by a key U.S. terrorism scholar, who concluded that “the Internet and traditional news media can keep a martyr’s actions alive forever as an inspiration to potential new members.”\footnote{Sageman, \textit{Leaderless Jihad}, 122.}

As in the case of Al-Aulaqi, Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal also recognized the importance of using the Internet to broaden his appeal and to reach his followers around the globe. Given his forced deportation from the UK in 2007, and considering that al-Faisal has effectively been shunned by Jamaica’s small Muslim population and the Islamic Council of Jamaica, al-Faisal essentially had no choice but to rely on the Internet in order to find a receptive audience. Shortly after his return to Jamaica, al-Faisal began establishing an online presence aimed at delivering online sermons and disseminating extremist Islamic propaganda. Researchers found that the content of al-Faisal’s sermons during the 2007-2008 timeframe were nearly identical to the content of his sermons that
were previously distributed by audio and video tape in the UK prior to his arrest in 2003. Additionally, al-Faisal has greatly focused on propaganda in recent years, which can best be summarized as anti-West Islamic propaganda comprised of truth mixed with exaggeration and also some blatant deception.

Beginning in 2008, al-Faisal’s primary means of reaching his online followers has been through his own website and blog Authentic Tauheed, meaning doctrine of oneness [of God], which is a vast repository for al-Faisal’s lectures, and also contains lectures from other radical Islamic ideologues such as al-Aulaqi and Sheikh Omar Bakri. Al-Faisal’s site also provides users with over 200 of his audio lectures in a downloadable format, opportunities to receive online Arabic language instruction from al-Faisal, and also the ability to pose questions to al-Faisal, which will be answered in subsequent blog entries. Most importantly, al-Faisal offers his followers the ability to listen to his weekly sermons via PalTalk, an online service that allows users the ability to create their own public virtual chat room.

The “Authentic Tawheed” channel on PalTalk, which is currently administered by al-Faisal, contains regular sermons from a variety of English-speaking radical preachers,

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44 Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.”

45 Forest, ed., Training, 14, Gendar and Meek, “Jamaican Imam Abdullah el-Faisal Wants to be Next Terror Big, U.S. Fears.”


47 Ibid.
to include al-Faisal himself. In July 2010, al-Faisal’s PalTalk channel organized a special “Global Online Conference” termed “Take Over Washington,” which contained live commentary from al-Faisal, Anjem Choudary, and U.S. extremist Younes Abdullah Muhammad (also known as Jesse Curtis Morton). These radical ideologues called on listeners to resist “the crusaders” and to do so “verbally, financially, or physically if you can.”

Though al-Faisal avoids providing any operational guidance or direct calls for violence on his public website, British authorities have called for this site to be shut down, as they allege that al-Faisal uses the site to urge his followers to take up jihad.

Following in step with his radical ideologue contemporaries, al-Faisal has pursued modern forms of social networking in order to promote his ideology. As of 2013, al-Faisal maintains a profile page titled “@AuthenticTauhid” on the online micro-blogging service Twitter. Al-Faisal uses his Twitter page to espouse daily commentary on Islam and world events, and provides topics and times for his upcoming sermons on PakTalk.

Though al-Faisal does not personally maintain a Facebook account, a review of Facebook indicates multiple “tribute pages,” which provide commentary of al-Faisal. One such

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49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.


page has approximately 300 members from multiple countries, and appears to be administered by a Muslim student from Canada. Additionally, there are presently more than 200 videos on YouTube depicting interviews and lectures from al-Faisal, and a video of al-Faisal’s three part sermon on Ramadan has been viewed by over 1,200 YouTube users. Terrorism expert Marc Sageman assesses the interactivity of these sites is “a more important driver of radicalization than just watching jihadist videos.”

Al-Faisal’s true colors as a radical Islamic ideologue are best represented by his involvement from 2008-2010 as the imam and spiritual advisor to the online extremist and anti-Semitic Muslim organization Revolution Muslim (RM); a group which openly justified terrorist attacks and other forms of violence against non-Muslims. RM was created to promote the ideology of al-Faisal and sought the dismantlement of Western, secular dominance across the world. RM forum administrators directed RM’s members and supporters to al-Faisal’s PalTalk site and the administrators also provided links to al-Faisal’s audio and video lectures. Additionally, RM served as a mechanism for raising funds directly for al-Faisal. In a May 2010 RM Facebook message, supports were asked to “donate to the shaykh directly” by accessing a PayPal link on the RM website, and the group specifically sought to raise at least $100 monthly to cover the cost of al-Faisal’s lectures.

53 Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.”


55 Mudd, “Evaluating the Al-Qa’ida Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” 8.

56 Backgrounder: Revolution Muslim,” Anti-Defamation League.

57 Ibid.
online activities.\textsuperscript{58} Al-Faisal’s involvement with RM appears to have extended beyond just serving as an inspirational figurehead and investigation by the FBI revealed al-Faisal was in direct contact with RM’s leaders. At an unspecified date, RM leader Younes Abdullah Muhammed communicated with al-Faisal, where the two discussed now-convicted U.S. extremist Colleen LaRose, who was a subscriber to RM’s YouTube account.\textsuperscript{59} Al-Faisal also told Muhammed that “Muslims can help me by complying with the requests of RM.”\textsuperscript{60} Al-Faisal was also a profound influence on RM co-leader Abdullah as-Sayf Jones, who called al-Faisal “my sheikh,” and claimed his lectures helped him “learn the true message of Islam.”\textsuperscript{61}

Following a series of threats made by RM members in November 2010, the site was subsequently shut down by U.S. authorities.\textsuperscript{62} Though al-Faisal no longer has access to RM’s pool of potential recruits, al-Faisal avoided any criminal charges as a result of his involvement with the group, and his ability to promote his extremist ideology on the

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} The United States Department of Justice, “Leader of Revolution Muslim Pleads Guilty to Using Internet to Solicit Murder and Encourage Violent Extremism,” http://www.fbi.gov/washingtondc/press-releases/2012/leader-of-revolution-muslim-pleads-guilty-to-using-internet-to-solicit-murder-and-encourage-violent-extremism (accessed January 10, 2013). Jesse Curtis Morton, also known as Younes Abdullah Muhammed, plead guilty in 2012 to using his position as a leader of RM’s Internet sites to conspire to solicit murder, make threatening communications, and use the Internet to place others in fear. Additionally, Colleen R. LaRose, also known as “Jihad Jane,” of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, was charged in 2010 with a variety of terrorism-related offenses.

\textsuperscript{60} “Backgrounder: Revolution Muslim,” \textit{Anti-Defamation League}.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
Internet persists. Furthermore, al-Faisal’s website and blog show no indications that his efforts to disseminate information have diminished.

Like his predecessors, Anjem Choudary is no stranger to the power of the worldwide web, and much of his current success and popularity can be credited to his online presence. As a senior leader of al-Muhajiroun in the late 1990s, Choudary and his followers were one of the first high-profile radical Islamic groups to establish an Internet presence. The group attempted to undermine the mainstream Muslim media with its own brand of Islamic propaganda on its website almuhajiroun.com, which provided information from “authentic Muslim sources,” and also offered speeches from jihadist figures like Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar.63 Choudary was undeterred when al-Muhajiroun’s site was dismantled as a result of a massive cyber attack in 2003, and subsequently moved on to other online ventures.64 Choudary recognized the difficulty of keeping a website of this kind online, and commented that his followers “use different platforms depending on what we are dealing with.”65 Choudary’s successor Internet site Islam4UK.com was also shut down following the proscription of the group by British authorities.66

Recognizing the difficulties faced by groups whose websites share their namesake, Choudary’s future Internet endeavors would seek to subvert British laws

63 Wiktorowicz, Radical Islam Rising, 158.
64 Ibid.
66 Ibid, 14.
regarding proscribed terrorist groups. As such, lectures by Choudary and other English-speaking radical ideologues began appearing on the Internet forum salafimedia.com, a site which Choudary admitted was “one of his group’s websites.”67 This forum, which presently boasts flashy banners and well edited graphics, contains video and audio lectures from multiple extremist personalities to include “Sheikh Anjem Choudary,” and provides propaganda that is critical of Christians and Jews.68 Choudary’s unique brand of hate speech and jihadist rhetoric has spawned numerous websites by likeminded groups, such as Sharia4Belgium and Sharia4Uk, which openly support holy war and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Europe.69 As a result of these websites, one researcher found that Choudary’s group continues to “attract some new followers, keeping their radical narrative alive in the UK.”70

Choudary also utilizes his Internet presence as a direct means of mobilizing his network of supporters in the UK. In March 2009, Choudary posted a statement on an extremist Islamic website in which he called a homecoming parade of a returning British military unit to be a “vile parade of brutal murderers.” Following those comments, the returning soldiers were subsequently confronted by Choudary’s supporters who held

67 Ibid.


70 Pantucci, “Muslims Against Crusades Banned in Latest Episode of the UK Jihad.”
signs which branded them as killers and terrorists.\textsuperscript{71} Choudary was also the first to release an online video statement from Anwar al-Aulaqi’s father Nasser, who called upon Muslims to spread Anwar’s message and to “keep it alive.” This message coincided with a protest held in November 2011 by Choudary and his followers outside the U.S. Embassy in London, which resulted in the arrest of 20 of Choudary’s supporters for violent disorder.\textsuperscript{72} Given the above examples, it is apparent that the propaganda spread by Choudary on the Internet has direct consequences and can often result in violent actions by his supporters. Based on a review of Choudary’s Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages, it is evident that Choudary recognizes the value of communicating his radical ideology over the Internet in order to reach his global network of supporters. It is of concern that Choudary’s personal YouTube page boasts more than 285,000 views as of January 2013, and also offers contact information for viewers who are interested in “studying under the Sheikh.”\textsuperscript{73}

As evidenced by the three case studies of Anwar al-Aulaqi, Abdullah al-Faisal, and Anjem Choudary, radical Islamic ideologues have utilized the Internet for more than a decade as a means to disseminate their extremist message and expand their influence, directly reach their followers, and in some cases incite acts of violence. These

\textsuperscript{71} Wardrop, “Anjem Choudary: profile.”


\textsuperscript{73} YouTube, Anjem Choudary, http://www.youtube.com/user/anjemchoudary (accessed January 10, 2013).
ideologues’ online presence can also serve to embolden future homegrown extremists, as their extremist voices can provide inspiration via the Internet at each stage of radicalization process, even if those extremists never meet the ideologue in person. Furthermore, as witnessed in the case of al-Aulaqi, the Internet provides a vehicle for a radical ideologue’s teachings to live on for years to come, even if that ideologue is deceased or no longer active.
CHAPTER 3
RADICAL ISLAMIC IDEOLOGUES’ USE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ABILITY TO CRAFT A MESSAGE THAT RESONATES

A recent terrorism study found that homegrown extremists were responsible for approximately 30 terrorist plots in the U.S. since September 11, 2001. This study also concluded that the majority of the extremists arrested were influenced by English-language jihadist materials, which “encouraged violence in pursuit of a global caliphate ruled by Islamic fundamentalists.”¹ This statistic is of significant concern, given the immense quantity of English-language extremist materials that have been published by Anwar al-Aulaqi, Abdullah al-Faisal, and Anjem Choudary. Each of these radical ideologues have historically recognized the importance of using English to disseminate their messages, as English is the World’s most widely spoken language and is a uniting factor for their global Muslim audience. Additionally, their use of English is largely out of necessity rather than merely a personal preference, given the wide array of language spoken by Muslims throughout Europe and the U.S. However, the use of English alone is not sufficient for a radical ideologue to maintain international influence, and that ideologue must also possess the ability to speak in a way that captivates their audience and must be able to craft an extremist message that resonates with their followers. Al-Aulaqi, al-Faisal, and Choudary’s use of each of these elements has ensured that their

message reaches vast numbers of followers, and has also resulted in these ideologues becoming far more effective in comparison to many of their Islamic contemporaries.

For radical Islamic ideologues in the U.S. and the UK, the use of English is an imperative in order to reach one’s followers and prospective recruits. Studies have found that second and third generation Muslim immigrants in the UK prefer English as their primary means of communication.\(^2\) Moreover, Britain’s Muslim population, which totals more than two million people, is becoming increasingly diverse and encompasses Muslims from more than 56 nations, who speak more than 70 languages.\(^3\) During the rise of radical Islam in the UK during the early 1990s, radical ideologues such as London-based Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri were pioneers in using English during their services and prayers in order to communicate an extremist message to their audience. This was unique as al-Masri’s audience at the Finsbury Park Mosque was largely comprised of young Pakistani immigrants, and because many of his counterparts continued to preach to their Pakistani members in their native language of Urdu.\(^4\) The importance of hearing sermons in English has also been recognized by these ideologues’ Muslim followers. Of note, former Hizb ut-Tahrir member Ed Husain, a British Muslim whose parents immigrated to London from Bangladesh, was initially radicalized by the English-language sermons of Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed.\(^5\) Husain described how the first


\(^3\) Briggs and Birdwell, *Radicalisation among Muslims in the UK*, 4.


floor of the mosque was filled with Muslim elders listening to lectures in Urdu, while the younger Muslims congregated on the second floor awaiting a translation in English, which al-Masri’s followers were eager to provide. Considering that these young British Muslims were in a religious frame of mind and were eager to receive English-language sermons, this scenario allowed for easy recruitment by members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. While this particular event transpired nearly two decades ago, it remains a relevant example illustrating the importance of English-language extremist messages in the radicalization process.

As previously referenced, exposure to English-language extremist materials has a direct correlation toward the development of homegrown extremism. Additionally, terrorism experts have seen a link between “the rise of English-speaking radical imams” and the increase in homegrown extremists, and one U.S. terrorism official concluded that this increase began once these radical ideologues “landed on the scene.” There has also been a significant shift toward the use of English in extremist publications and online social networking forums, both of which appear to play pivotal roles in the indoctrination and radicalization process. In 2009, one contributor to the Ansar al-Mujahideen extremist web forum called upon the site’s administrators to “produce more video and audio releases…in English if possible.” A subsequent posting by the forum’s administrator

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Gendar and Meek, “Jamaican Imam Abdullah el-Faisal Wants to be Next Terror Big, U.S. Fears.”
noted the “lack of available English subtitled videos” and he believed that the inclusion of English subtitles on important jihadist videos would be “a great help to the mujahideen, by spreading their words to the West.”

In addition to producing extremist materials in English, successful radical ideologues must understand the needs of their followers and be adept at demonstrating an awareness of their audience’s social and political concerns. Additionally, their ability to interpret world events using colloquial English will assist in maximizing their relevance to their followers. A number of these ideologues’ immigrant followers in the West felt disillusioned by their current disposition and were attracted by the sense of community that Islam offered, which made them vulnerable for recruitment. Many of these Muslim immigrants, who are often the targets of discrimination and Islamophobia, are receptive to radical ideologues and groups that perpetuate an Islamist ideology which criticizes their detractors and the oppressive elements within their host government. Radical ideologues have also been effective at framing and promoting the narrative that the West is conspiring to destroy Islam, and that the threat to Muslims from these powers remains significant. As one author describes, these ideologues often convey to their followers that the suffering of Muslims “is no longer confined to far-away lands, but is evident in their own countries” and they must “take up the call to arms before it is too late.”

10 Ibid.


12 Briggs and Birdwell, Radicalisation among Muslims in the UK, 5.

Salafi ideologues further believe that acts of jihad will “reverse the tide of history” and redeem Muslims from their “misery.”\textsuperscript{14} The anti-Western messages perpetuated by these radical ideologues becomes a concern when they are able to effectively alienate new recruits from their society and convince them that it is their religious duty to take violent action.

No radical English-speaking Islamic ideologue has been more successful at maximizing the aforementioned elements than Anwar al-Aulaqi. As both an Arabic and English speaker, al-Aulaqi was able to enhance his profile early on as a result of his efforts to translate and interpret famous Arabic-language documents, Hadith stories, and Quranic teachings for his followers.\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore, Al-Aulaqi’s extensive body of written and spoken work, which covered a range of Islamic topics, was almost all composed in English.\textsuperscript{16} As initially witnessed during his time as an imam in California, al-Aulaqi was astute in his ability to simplify complex religious concepts and convey them in a manner that would clearly be understood by his followers.\textsuperscript{17}

Al-Aulaqi’s ability to deliver his message in English is not the singular element that explains his success; and his ability alternate fluently between English and Arabic is also what makes him an effective orator. Al-Aulaqi was known to be able to deliver a


\textsuperscript{15} Heffelfinger, “Anwar al-Awlaqi,” 1.


\textsuperscript{17} Berger, “The Myth of Anwar al-Awlaki.”
sermon in English, while incorporating Quranic and Hadith quotations in perfect Arabic, which gave al-Aulaqi’s sermons a unique sense of authenticity and credibility, and resulted in al-Aulaqi developing a wide following in the U.S. during the 1990s.\(^{18}\) Even after his relocation to Yemen and subsequent involvement with AQAP, al-Aulaqi continued to compose teachings in English, which allowed him to communicate directly with homegrown extremists in the U.S. and Europe. This action is corroborated by the FBI’s investigation into al-Aulaqi’s online activities, which revealed that the majority of communications the FBI reviewed were almost entirely in English, with occasional Arabic salutations.\(^{19}\) Al-Aulaqi continued to disseminate statements in English up until the time of his death in 2011, many of which were published by AQAP in its online issues of *Inspire* magazine. In what would become one of his last public statements, al-Aulaqi composed an English-language article titled “Shaykh Anwar’s message to the American people and Muslims in the West,” which appeared in the summer 2010 issue of *Inspire*, and praised acts of jihad against the West.\(^{20}\)

Al-Aulaqi was initially able to achieve notoriety and a wide following in the U.S. as a result of his popular Islamic lectures such as “Understanding the Quran” and “Lessons from the Companions,” which provided a contemporary interpretation of


\(^{19}\) Webster Commission, *Final report of the William H. Webster Commission on the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Intelligence, and the Events at Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009*.

Islamic matters for his English-speaking audience in the U.S.Though al-Aulaqi received no formal religious education, one author believes that may have been the key to al-Aulaqi’s success, as he “did not carry the baggage of a regular religious scholar” and he was able to adopt his own calm and charismatic style for delivering sermons.\footnote{MacEoin, “Anwar al-Awlaki.”} Al-Aulaqi was well read in Islamic history and teachings, and became very adept at composing a narrative using simplistic interpretations of Islamic scripture and history, which made his sermons easily understood by his audience.\footnote{Meleagrou-Hitchens, “Anwar al-Awlaki’s Disciples,” 6.}

Another key element toward al-Aulaqi’s ability to connect with his followers, specifically with his Western audience, was the fact that he spent his formative years in the U.S. and served in Muslim communities in the U.S. as a young imam. This experience would prove to be invaluable for al-Aulaqi, especially in comparison to his radical contemporaries who never spent time in the West, and lacked first-hand knowledge of the issues faced by Muslims in these countries. As such, al-Aulaqi was able to find common ground with his Western audience and forge a strong connection, as he could directly relate to the issues they faced.\footnote{Heffelfinger, “Anwar al-Awlaqi: Profile of a Jihadi Radicalizer,” 4.} Al-Aulaqi’s Salafi-jihadist message, which often focused on a grievance-driven ideology, greatly resonated with his Western followers, as al-Aulaqi was able to illustrate that he was aware of his followers’ interests and values.\footnote{Meleagrou-Hitchens, “Anwar al-Awlaki’s Disciples,” 6.}

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alleges that Muslims in the West have “been made the target of ideological war being waged by the U.S.,” and he suggests this action was undertaken as a way to divert young Muslims away from the true message of Islam.25

Al-Aulaqi’s years spent in the U.S. also enabled him to attain a masterful message framing ability, which employed the inclusion of information regarding current events and international affairs into his “war on Islam narrative.”26 Al-Aulaqi spoke about international politics on multiple occasions, and sought to strengthen his followers’ resolve by referencing recent actions taken by the U.S., NATO, and the European Union, which he claimed were examples of their intention to “fight Islam.”27 Al-Aulaqi maintained a particular sense of distain toward U.S. foreign policy following September 11, 2001 and he believed Muslims had a duty to act against the U.S.’s perceived attacks on Islam. In his 2006 lecture “Constants on the Path of Jihad,” al-Aulaqi informs his followers that the Quran states that Muslims’ relationship between Christians and Jews “should be a relationship of fighting until they pay attention.”28 In “44 Ways to Support Jihad,” one of al-Aulaqi’s most famous English-language publications, al-Aulaqi stated “Muslims need to be inspired to practice jihad” and cited the oppression of Muslims by the “crusaders and Zionists.”29 Moreover, al-Aulaqi would go on to state that “any

Muslim who lives peacefully in the lands of the enemies of Islam is a munafiq (religious hypocrite),” and he called for Muslims to reject these Western governments.

Al-Aulaqi’s ability to convey his own interpretations of Quranic teachings in English, with charisma and clarity, along with his incorporation of an anti-U.S. and Salafi-jihadist themes, had a significant impact toward radicalizing Muslim youth in the West. While his early works sought to give Muslims a greater understanding of the Quran, al-Aulaqi later came full circle and in February 2010 he openly advocated for the destruction of “America and its allies.”30 Through these actions al-Aulaqi was successful in establishing a strong connection with followers and bolstered his international presence in the process.

As in the case of Anwar al-Aulaqi, Abdullah al-Faisal was also able to develop a following among homegrown extremists and radical-leaning Muslims in the West, based on his ability to project his extremist ideology in English. Following his eight years of Islamic education in Saudi Arabia, al-Faisal emerged with an in-depth knowledge of Arabic and Islam, placing him in a unique position to interpret traditional Islamic teachings to his English-speaking followers. Though al-Faisal never spent time in the U.S., his 10 year stay in the UK afforded him the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the issues facing Muslims in the West, and he developed a staunch anti-Western mindset, which made him popular with much of al-Aulaqi’s same constituency.31

30 MacEoin, “Anwar al-Awlaki: I Pray that Allah Destroys America.”

Abdullah al-Faisal utilized his ability to translate Quranic teachings and other Arabic language documents in order to provide his followers with the Islamic materials he deemed important. Most notably, al-Faisal is known to have provided English translations of the Arabic writings of popular jihadi figures to include Usama bin Laden’s 1996 “Declaration of War.”\textsuperscript{32} Al-Faisal characterized his own actions by stating he was “interpreting the words of the Quran” and “updating” its teachings.\textsuperscript{33} It was these so-called “interpretations” that would result in al-Faisal’s eventual deportation from the UK. From a stylistic perspective, al-Faisal maintains a highly charismatic persona when addressing his followers, and is known for his ability to energize his audience with his own brand of “blood-and-thunder Takfiri rhetoric.”\textsuperscript{34}

During his decade in the UK, al-Faisal built a loyal following of radical-leaning Muslims at London’s Brixton and Finsbury Park Mosques, the latter of which had developed a reputation as an institution associated with Islamic extremism. His popularity also extended to Muslim converts, including many Muslims from English-speaking parts of the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{35} Al-Faisal was cited as having a keen ability to “explain ideological concepts to English-speaking audiences in a way that made the material compelling,” and he was also skilled at incorporating contemporary local and international political issues

\textsuperscript{32} Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.”

\textsuperscript{33} “Muslim cleric guilty of soliciting murder,” The Guardian.

\textsuperscript{34} Barclay, “Challenging the Influence of Anwar Al-Awlaki,” 7.

\textsuperscript{35} Abigail R. Esman, Radical State: How Jihad Is Winning Over Democracy in the West (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 159.
into his sermons.\textsuperscript{36} Prior to its purging of radical elements in 2005, the Finsbury Park Mosque offered Muslims access to a “panoply of radical Islamic movements,” and attracted a multitude of young working-class Muslims with grievances against the British Government.\textsuperscript{37} It was at this location that al-Faisal is known to have preached his extremist ideology to countless Muslim extremists, to include failed shoe bomber Richard Reid and jailed 9/11 plotter Zacarias Moussaoui.\textsuperscript{38} The pro-jihad firebrand sermons al-Faisal delivered in the UK are what differentiated him from his contemporaries, as al-Faisal showed no reluctance in making inflammatory statements.

One terrorism expert characterized al-Faisal as being “charismatic” and is “willing to say things that would make even al-Aulaqi turn pale.”\textsuperscript{39} A review of al-Faisal’s statements regarding the British and American Governments, non-Muslims, and jihad would all fall under the above statement. In his lecture titled “Tafsir Surah Al Kafirounon,” which discussed the Quranic chapter Al-Kafiroun, al-Faisal openly denounces democracy and accuses the British Government of using “germ warfare” to spread corruption among Muslim communities in the UK, and he later told an audience that the UK is a “cancer” which corrupts Muslim youth.\textsuperscript{40} In his lecture “Jihad DAT,” al-Faisal sought to embolden his followers’ grievances against the West, telling them that

\textsuperscript{36} Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.”

\textsuperscript{37} Wiktorowicz, Radical Islam Rising, 2.

\textsuperscript{38} Esman, Radical State, 159.

\textsuperscript{39} Gendar and Meek, “Jamaican Imam Abdullah el-Faisal Wants to be Next Terror Big, U.S. Fears.”

\textsuperscript{40} Brandon, Virtual Caliphate, 6.
they need to “wage jihad to repel the aggression of NATO, the UN, the USA, and the 
UK,” and “our methodology is the bullet not the ballot.” Al-Faisal not only sought to 
instruct young Muslims on the way they should lead their lives, but also attempted to 
convince his audience that the problems they faced were caused by Jews and Christians. 
This message was exemplified through al-Faisal’s lectures “Traits of the Jews,” “No 
Peace with the Jews,” and “Them v US,” which openly encouraged Muslims to wage 
jihad and “kill Kaffars” who did not believe in the Islamic faith.

Though al-Faisal claimed that he “reformed” his message after returning to 
Jamaica in 2007, available evidence suggests this is not the case. As of 2011, al-Faisal 
continues to propagate hostility toward Christians and radical interpretations of jihad on 
his English-language website, stating that jihad requires “obedience to the Amir,” 
“training,” and “weaponry.” As referenced in Chapter 2, al-Faisal’s message greatly 
resonated with his U.S. followers, many of whom were members of RM, and embraced 
al-Faisal’s message that “Islam is under siege” and Western governments and Zionists are 
to blame. The impact of the radical sentiments can be witnessed though statements 
made by former RM leader Younes Abdullah Muhammed, who proclaimed “America is

41 Lord Justice Potter, Royal Courts of Justice: Appellate Review of Case No. 2003-01860-C2 
(London: Crown Prosecution Service, 4 March 2004), http://judgmental.org.uk/judgments/EWCA- 

42 Ibid.

43 Abdullah al-Faisal, “Notes: Requirements of Jihad - Shaikh Faisal,” Authentic Tauheed Blog, 

44 Brandon, Virtual Caliphate, 7.
at war with Islam,” and “Allah used the word [jihad] to terrorize, so we terrorize the Kaffars.”\(^{45}\) Muhammed was actually quoting the words of his mentor al-Faisal.

Like his contemporary Anwar al-Aulaqi, Abdullah al-Faisal was skilled in utilizing both English and Arabic in his radical sermons as means to infuse those teachings with a feeling of authenticity. Al-Faisal’s popularity as orator can be observed through his success in building a following amongst young Muslims in the UK, who attended his lectures at extremist mosques in London during the late 1990s. Moreover, his sermons sought to contort the beliefs of Muslims in the UK and the U.S. and convince them that they have been wronged by the non-believers and must respond through violent jihad.

As in the cases of al-Aulaqi and al-Faisal, Anjem Choudary also preaches to his followers in English and infuses his extremist message with magnetism and zeal, though Choudary only lectures in English and does not frequently interlace his statements with Arabic terminology. In contrast to the aforementioned ideologues, Choudary is far more cautious in his public statements, and is careful to ensure that he is not in violation of British incitement laws. Choudary also recognized the diverse Muslim immigrant community in the UK, and sought to espouse a conservative religious message which would have a broad appeal in these areas.

In 2010, a former U.S. terrorism official stated Choudary was among the group of “radical preachers” who helped “spread the contagion of radical Islam in the UK,”

through “a formula of speaking English with charisma about how the United States and its allies were at war with Islam.”

While Choudary is not known to openly advocate for violent action, he has consistently promoted the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Europe and has encouraged jihad. During his time as deputy leader of al-Muhajiroun, Choudary claimed the group was focused on recruiting Muslim converts and recent immigrants by offering them “a religious mission, the values of sharia law and jihad.”

Choudary is known to have openly endorsed acts of offensive jihad to his followers, though he often caveats that those acts have been in self-defense. Specifically, Choudary justified the London bombings on 7 July 2005 as being acts of “self-defense,” claiming “you can have offensive actions within a defensive jihad context,” and he stressed offensive jihad is “imperative for Muslims today.”

One of Choudary’s principal talents is his ability to localize his message and directly speak to the social issues that are important to radical-leaning Muslims in the UK. One example of this is that Choudary encourages his followers to “interact with the culture and to go out regularly on talks and demonstrations and attend monthly gatherings.”

Choudary also stated his group “tailors its message to increase its appeal,”

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48 Chatrath, “Fighting the Unbeliever,” 115.

and they often go to places impacted by drugs and other issues, and “present Islam as an alternative,” and encourage interested Muslims “attend future events.”\textsuperscript{50}

The core tenants of Choudary’s extremist message involve highlighting acts of systematic discrimination and injustice against Muslims in the West, rejecting the British Government, and promoting anti-Semitism. In one such talk, Choudary claimed his followers were being unfairly jailed, as one individual was given a six-year prison sentence purely “for holding up a nasty placard,” while non-Muslims have received lesser sentences for more egregious crimes.\textsuperscript{51} In a show of support for fellow radical ideologue Abdullah al-Faisal, Choudary and al-Muhajiroun criticized the British Government for trying to “stomp out Islamic activism…and relegate Islam to the domain of private observance and ritual.”\textsuperscript{52}

In response to a question regarding the British Government, Choudary candidly stated his group does not “abide by British law,” and he goes on to assert that his group is “engaged in a non-violent ideological struggle in the UK…but when the time comes and they are about to attack us, then we will fight.”\textsuperscript{53} Choudary is equally critical of what he perceives to be the enemies of Islam and believes that Muslims must challenge these enemies upon the establishment of the Islamic caliphate. In a posting on the website Islam4UK.com, Choudary stated “countries we are at war with such as Israel must be

\textsuperscript{50} Raymond, “Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK,” 15.
\textsuperscript{51} Brandon, \textit{Virtual Caliphate}, 20.
\textsuperscript{52} Wiktorowicz, \textit{Radical Islam Rising}, 70-71.
\textsuperscript{53} Raymond, “Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK,” 10.
confronted with jihad...Islam obliges all Muslims to fight them until the land is liberated.”\textsuperscript{54}

To date, Choudary continues to promote a message that plays to the fears of British Muslims, and conveys to his followers that “prejudice has become a widespread and acceptable part of life for Muslims in the UK today.”\textsuperscript{55} From Choudary’s perspective, he and his supporters are attacked by the government because they “speak out openly and publicly about what they believe.”\textsuperscript{56} While Choudary’s ranks may not match those of al-Muhajiroun during its hay day, his extremist message still garners support from likeminded Muslims who share his belief that Islam is under attack in the UK.

Though a radical Islamic ideologue may be able speak English and may have spent time in the West, these traits alone are not sufficient to be effective on a global scale. This is evidenced through the example of senior AQ figure Adam Gadahn, who has produced more than one dozen propaganda videos in English for AQ. While he was raised in the U.S., Gadahn grew up on a goat farm in California and was described as being isolated and lonely.\textsuperscript{57} Gadahn moved to Pakistan in 1998 at the age of 18, having never spent substantive time as an adult in the West, and he later became a spokesman for

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{56} Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler, “The Rationality of Radical Islam,” 310.

AQ. 58 While Gadahn is able to convey his radical ideology in English; he lacks charisma and routinely delivers messages in an accusatory and condescending tone. 59 Given his unconventional upbringing in the U.S., lack of charisma, and inability to successfully tailor a message for his target audience, Gadahn lacks authenticity and is unable to connect with radical-leaning Islamists in the same way as al-Aulaqi, al-Faisal, and Choudary.

As demonstrated in this chapter, radical Islamic ideologues’ use of English to convey their extremist teachings is a critical instrument in their ability to reach a broad Muslim audience world-wide. Moreover, first-hand knowledge of their followers’ societal and political concerns is absolutely necessary in order for an ideologue to demonstrate authenticity and promote an ideology that is resonates with their audience. Lastly, that ideologue must also be able to interpret current events and world affairs in a way that their audience can clearly comprehend, which ultimately leaves their audience believing that they must act in defense of Islam.

58 Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

RADICAL ISLAMIC IDEOLOGUES’ NEED FOR CREDIBILITY

In the modern era, there are a multitude of Islamic voices, both extremist and moderate, vying for the attention of Muslim audiences. In order to effectively persuade potential extremist-leaning Muslim recruits that their ideology is worthy of their interest, radical English-speaking Islamic ideologues must be able demonstrate they are a credible voice, both from a religious and extremist perspective. Moreover, this credibility is further enhanced by the ideologue’s ability to demonstrate that he is a legitimate Islamic leader and by the ideologue’s overt or non-overt association with extremist activities, both of which serve to bolster their international influence. This chapter will also present three examples of homegrown extremists, who are believed to have been radicalized by al-Aulaqi, al-Faisal, and Choudary; thus garnering these ideologues added attention on the world stage.

In the Islamic faith, there is no universally accepted central governing authority, and in theory, every Muslim male is entitled to lead Friday sermons at the mosque.\(^1\) As such, there is often dispute over proper sources of religious opinion, which allows a radical ideologue the ability to both present himself as a credible Islamic voice and offer his own interpretations. As flag bearers in the extremist Islamic movement, it is imperative for radical ideologues to maintain religious legitimacy and credibility. As one author notes, they must portray they hold the true message of Islam and “must constantly

convince themselves, their supporters, and those they are trying to recruit” that they are serving Allah’s will.² This is especially important with regard to homegrown extremism, as credible radical ideologues are able to convey a pro-jihadist message and can often convince their followers that they are bound to act under religious auspices in defense of Islam.³

To defend their position of religious authority, radical ideologues frequently dismiss criticisms from moderate Islamic leaders by characterizing those individuals as “ulama al-sulta” (scholars of power), implying they are not a legitimate religious authority and are only acting on behalf of an authority structure or corrupt regime.⁴ Additionally, Salafi-jihadi ideologues often “ignore, deny, or reinterpret information that counters or could potentially weaken their argument.”⁵ To preserve their credibility, radical ideologues must also portray their detractors as hypocrites who are attempting to undermine the Muslim community and mislead Muslims with regard to the “divine duties of real Islam.”⁶ Furthermore, jihadist strategist Abu Mus’ab al-Suri openly dismissed the importance of religious education and the religious hierarchy, having stated “the only

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³ Radu, “Radical Imams and Terrorists.”

⁴ Wiktorowicz, Radical Islam Rising, 145.


⁶ Wiktorowicz, Radical Islam Rising, 146.
obligation is to embrace jihad.”

In many instances, the use of the above arguments is key toward a radical ideologue’s ability to promote himself as a figure of legitimate religious authority.

According to one terrorism scholar, studies of persuasion have demonstrated that a radical ideologue’s reputation is an important factor for consideration by prospective Muslim recruits who are considering whether to embrace that ideologue’s ideology. In addition to their reputation as a religious figure, an ideologue’s reputation as active participant in the global extremist Islamic movement is also important toward their overall credibility. Though radical ideologues rarely directly participate in violent or operational activities, their association with groups and individuals who have undertaken such actions can serve to strengthen their perceived credibility by potential homegrown extremists. According to author Marc Sageman, in order to survive, the extremist Islamic movement “requires a constant stream of new violent actions to hold the interest of potential newcomers to the movement.”

Given this, a radical ideologue’s link to such violent acts ultimately earns them notoriety within the global extremist Islamic movement and generates additional attention from Western media outlets. Additionally, should a radical ideologue incur negative repercussions for their association with extremist groups or individuals, this can be portrayed as a self-sacrificing act for the

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8 Ibid., 135.

greater movement. According to a study on social cognition, “when sources of information take positions that seem to undermine their self-interest, audiences may consider them more trustworthy and credible.”  

This point is especially relevant when compared to radical ideologues who have been arrested, deported, or even killed by Western authorities, as their followers perceive them to have been persecuted based on their efforts to defend Islam.

During his lifetime, Anwar al-Aulaqi was widely viewed by radical-leaning Muslims as an ideologue that demonstrated both religious and extremist credibility. As noted in Chapter 1, al-Aulaqi’s religious education was not extensive; however, al-Aulaqi did undergo short periods of Islamic education in Saudi Arabia and in Yemen, where he reportedly studied under radical cleric ‘Abd al-Majid al-Zindani. Al-Aulaqi’s lack of formal religious education appears to have had no negative impact on his abilities as a radical imam, as he was widely respected for his abilities to quote Islamic scripture and texts, and his supporters noted their appreciation for his “beneficial Islamic advice.” Additionally, in February 2002, al-Aulaqi was asked by U.S. officials to give a lecture on “Islam and Middle Eastern Politics and Culture” at the Pentagon, thus further illustrating that al-Aulaqi was widely considered to be a legitimate authority on Islam. Al-Aulaqi was also willing to refute the criticisms of his detractors, and in one instance accused his

10 Wiktorowicz, Radical Islam Rising, 146.


12 Ibid.

13 Meleagrou-Hitchens, “As American as Apple Pie,” 40.
critics of “blasphemy,” and also chastised Muslims who allegedly sin by “spreading moderate Islam.”

As of 2008, al-Aulaqi largely lacked sufficient extremist bona fides and had no actual battlefield experience to draw upon. However, in a brief period of time, al-Aulaqi was successful in bolstering his extremist credentials largely through his association with AQAP members in Yemen. By late-2009, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence stated that al-Aulaqi had “pledged allegiance to the head of AQAP… and played a key role in setting the strategic direction for the group.” Al-Aulaqi sought to further publicize his affiliation with AQAP through his contributions to Inspire magazine, and in 2011, the magazine published photos of al-Aulaqi standing in a desert holding an AK-47. Through his involvement with AQAP, al-Aulaqi removed any remaining doubts regarding his direct involvement in extremist activities.

Al-Aulaqi’s extremist credibility was also enhanced as a result of the suffering he incurred in defense of Islam. During al-Aulaqi’s incarceration in Yemen, he received an outpouring of support from his followers in Yemen and abroad. One supporter stated they were “praying for al-Aulaqi’s release” and claimed “tyrants hate those who only fear Allah and speak the truth.” Furthermore, al-Aulaqi was respected by his supporters for


continuing to speak the truth, in spite of the great personal risks, and one Salafi web forum user noted “whoever the Kuffar speaks ill about is the one who is on the Haqq [truth] i.e. al-Awlaki.”\(^{18}\) While al-Aulaqi may have lost the respect of moderate Islamic scholars, based on his endorsement of violent extremist activities, his credibility amongst radical Islamists remained intact, thus reinforcing his position as an influential radical ideologue.

Anwar al-Aulaqi’s international influence on terrorism can best be demonstrated through his association with Nigerian-born Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Western educated extremist who attempted to blow up a U.S. passenger aircraft over Detroit, Michigan in December 2009.\(^{19}\) At the age of 22, Abdulmutallab was the son of a wealthy Nigerian businessman and had attended college and post-graduate school in London and Dubai.\(^{20}\) Though Abdulmutallab may have appeared to be a young man on his way to success in business, U.S. authorities discovered that during his time in Dubai in early 2009, Abdulmutallab became inspired by listening to the online lectures of al-Aulaqi, and ultimately decided to travel to Yemen in hopes of meeting al-Aulaqi in person. After arriving in Yemen, Abdulmutallab stated he attempted to contact al-Aulaqi with the


\(^{19}\) Heffelfinger, “Anwar al-Awlaqi: Profile of a Jihadi Radicalizer,” 1.

intent of “telling him of his desire to become involved in jihad” and to “seek his
guidance.”

Based on al-Aulaqi’s response to Abdulmutallab’s inquiries, there can be no
doubt of al-Aulaqi’s shift from being merely a radical ideologue to becoming an active
participant in operational terrorist activities. Specifically, al-Aulaqi informed
Abdulmutallab that he “would find a way” for him to “become involved in jihad,” and he
later invited Abdulmutallab to his home in Yemen to discuss “martyrdom and jihad.”
Al-Aulaqi was successful in transforming Abdulmutallab’s jihadist aspirations into direct
action, as he blessed martyrdom mission and facilitated Abdulmutallab’s assistance in an
AQ training camp to receive weapons training and jihad indoctrination. Furthermore, it
was decided that Abdulmutallab would participate in a martyrdom operation by
detonating a concealed explosive device onboard a U.S.-bound passenger airliner, and al-
Aulaqi assisted Abdulmutallab in drafting a statement for his martyrdom video, which
AQ intended to release upon Abdulmutallab’s death. Abdulmutallab claimed that al-

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21 The Investigative Project on Terrorism, “Government’s Sentencing Memorandum,” The United
States District Court Eastern District of Michigan, United States of America versus Umar Farouk
Abdulmuttalab, Government’s Memorandum in Connection with the Sentencing of Umar Farouk
Abdulmuttalab, 2:10-cr-20005, February 10, 2012, 13,

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.
Aulaqi’s last instructions to him were to “wait until the airplane is over the U.S. and then take the plane down.”

Though Abdulmutallab’s efforts to detonate an explosive device and destroy the aircraft were unsuccessful, AQAP claimed credit for Abdulmutallab’s actions, stating they were in retaliation for the U.S.’s attacks in Yemen. While al-Aulaqi’s extremist profile was raised after the November 2009 attacks at Fort Hood, al-Aulaqi’s association with Abdulmutallab would thrust his profile to the highest levels within the global jihadist movement and al-Aulaqi’s name was widely circulated in international media outlets based on his direct involvement with this plot. Al-Aulaqi’s involvement in radicalizing Abdulmutallab and in providing him with operational guidance further highlights al-Aulaqi’s influence and impact on international terrorism.

In contrast to al-Aulaqi, Abdullah al-Faisal held sufficient credentials to be considered an authority on Islam, having received a degree in Islamic Studies in Saudi Arabia. Al-Faisal was largely successful in attracting large audiences in the UK based on his ability to articulate his own pro-jihadist interpretation of Islam. With regard to his staunch commitment to Islam, al-Faisal told British authorities that “it was impossible to separate him from the Quran, and if he were put on trial, the Quran would be on trial.”

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25 Ibid.


Al-Faisal was equally as passionate in his denunciations of other Islamic sects, namely those that sought to challenge his ideology. During a lecture in 2009, al-Faisal called Salafists in Saudi Arabia “the enemies of Islam,” based on their reluctance to challenge their “apostate leaders.” Moreover, in one of his more scathing criticisms, al-Faisal claimed it was acceptable to kill fellow Muslims “if they are apostates and not faithful Muslims.” Al-Faisal’s credibility as an authority on Islam is a key facet in his ability to appeal to radical Muslims in the West, and is also the primary quality that drew groups like RM to his teachings.

In addition to his religious authority, Abdullah al-Faisal’s extremist credentials are also well established. During his time in the UK, al-Faisal showed little hesitation in his open calls for violent jihad, having told audiences “the days of soft Islam are over…and the Kuffars are going to bring it [jihad] to your doorstep.” While al-Faisal has never been a full-fledged member of a terrorist group like al-Aulaqi, a litany of examples exist which serve to highlight his extremist associations. These associations are best evidenced through al-Faisal’s direct involvement as the spiritual advisor to the online extremist forum RM. Not only did he provide Islamic lectures to the group, but al-Faisal also interacted with many of the group’s members, and in one instance he thanked RM’s followers for their “physical and moral support.” Though it remains unknown if al-

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29 Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.”

30 Christopher Heffelfinger, Radical Islam in America: Salafism's Journey from Arabia to the West (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2011), 82.

31 Brandon, Virtual Caliphate, 8.

32 Backgrounder: Revolution Muslim,” Anti-Defamation League.
Faisal provided any direct operational guidance to the members of RM, it is of significance that between 2008-2011, more than 10 homegrown extremists linked to RM were arrested by U.S. authorities based on their involvement in terrorist plots.\(^{33}\)

Al-Faisal’s credibility amongst radical Islamists has also been substantiated due to the legal ramifications and suffering he has incurred as a result of his self-proclaimed defense of Islam. In his lecture “Jihad DAT,” al-Faisal acknowledged the risks undertaken by imams who speak openly about Islam, and claimed “at this particular moment in time, your Islamic scholars are dumped in prison like Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman.”\(^{34}\) Al-Faisal witnessed this first hand when he was arrested by British authorities in 2003 for inciting violence. After reaching his first parole date in 2007, al-Faisal was deported back to Jamaica as his presence in the UK was deemed “non-conducive to the public good.”\(^{35}\) Al-Faisal’s supporters have claimed authorities are unfairly targeting him for promoting Islam. After Kenyan authorities arrested and deported al-Faisal from their country in 2011, Muslim activists claimed this was part of


an effort to target Muslim clerics. As witnessed in the aforementioned examples, al-Faisal’s association with radical Islamists and his entanglements with government authorities resulted in a significant increase in his extremist persona.

Prior to his arrest by British authorities in 2003, Abdullah al-Faisal’s name was not widely known outside of Islamic circles in the UK; though, after the horrific terrorist attacks in London on July 7, 2005, al-Faisal would once again be thrust into the annals of controversy. Through their investigation into these attacks, British authorities discovered that one of the four suicide bombers, 19 year-old Muslim convert Jermaine Lindsay, may have been “strongly influenced” by the teachings of al-Faisal. Lindsay – a Jamaican-born British citizen, was described as being a “bright” child, but came from a troubled home and lacked guidance from a male figure. Lindsay converted to Islam in 2000, and was later disciplined for “handing out leaflets in support of AQ.” A further review of Lindsay’s background reveals that, like many other immigrant converts in the UK, he was searching for guidance and a sense of belonging.

While aspects of his radicalization process remain unclear, the BBC reported that Lindsay was likely introduced to Mohammad Sidique Khan, the ringleader of the July 7, 2005 bombings.

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38 Ibid., 17.

39 Ibid., 18.
2005 plot, through their mutual association with al-Faisal.\textsuperscript{40} Investigation later determined that Lindsay and the other three suicide bombers attended sermons given by al-Faisal at a mosque in the town of Beeston, on likely more than one occasion, and Lindsay is also believed to have listened to tapes of other lectures by al-Faisal.\textsuperscript{41} Though no evidence has been discovered to indicate al-Faisal directed Lindsay to participate in these attacks, available information suggests al-Faisal’s teachings may have served as key source of inspiration to Lindsay. According to the imam at the West Yorkshire mosque that Lindsay attended, the bombers were “the children of Abdullah al-Faisal,” and the imam also claimed the group also attended sermons in Yorkshire by al-Faisal and listened to al-Faisal’s audio recordings.\textsuperscript{42} In statements al-Faisal later made to Jamaican media outlets, he distanced himself from Lindsay’s actions and claimed “there is no cleric who will give his blessing” to such actions; however, in the same article al-Faisal did not comment on his prior relationship with Lindsay and he also defended the concept of jihad.\textsuperscript{43}


Jermaine Lindsay’s actions, and this association ultimately served to cement al-Faisal’s status as a prominent extremist Islamic cleric and radicalizer.

Of the three radical ideologues discussed, Anjem Choudary maintains the least amount of legitimate religious authority and Islamic education; though Choudary has not allowed this to affect his overall efforts to promote radical Islam. Choudary’s education was primarily in the legal field, though he did study for nearly a decade under his spiritual mentor Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, who Choudary described as being “verifiable in terms of the accuracy of his knowledge [of Islam].”\footnote{Wiktorowicz, Radical Islam Rising, 141.} In addition to his recorded lectures, Choudary also provides Islamic education courses to Muslims and non-Muslims at the London School of Sharia, and he has characterized himself as being at the “forefront of pro-Islamic discourse in Britain.”\footnote{Raymond, “Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK,” 5.} Considering that many of Choudary’s radical contemporaries in the UK have either been deported or arrested by British authorities, Choudary’s status as the UK’s primary radical ideologue has been greatly elevated, and he has subsequently emerged as the foremost authority on Islam for UK-based extremists.

In defending his radical ideology, Choudary has readily criticized his Muslim detractors, often by claiming they are “not true Muslims.”\footnote{Chatrath, “Fighting the Unbeliever,” 114.} In defense of his views on the necessity of jihad, Choudary has countered opposing viewpoints and has dismissed
what he believes to be “less belligerent understandings of jihad.” In response to accusations that his views are radical, Choudary outright discounted the notion that there are radical and moderate versions of Islam, claiming it “is complete nonsense,” and if a Muslim is not committed, “then he should not be practicing.”

Choudary’s extremist credibility is a key element in his appeal for radical Islamists in the UK, and his nefarious connections date back to his time as the deputy leader of al-Muhajiroun. Of note, one terrorism study found that “15% of all those convicted in the UK of terrorism-related offenses were either members of, or were linked to al-Muhajiroun.” Though he has no actual experience on the battlefield, Choudary has consistently praised the actions of jihadists who have undertaken offensive actions in global conflict zones. In 2007, Choudary claimed his “brothers in al Qaeda and other mujahideen are involved in a military campaign.” While Choudary has deflected questions regarding his follower’s involvement in terrorist activities, it is clear that many extremists are drawn in by Choudary’s ideology, which does embrace terrorism.

47 Ibid., 119.


Additionally, Choudary boasted that the “extremist” or “terrorist” label bestowed upon his group is a “medallion on our hearts.”

While Choudary has not suffered in the same ways as al-Faisal and al-Aulaqi, he has routinely come into conflict with British authorities, and has sought to portray these incidents as Western efforts to silence his activities. In one such instance in 2011, Choudary denounced the British Government for banning his group Muslims Against Crusades, and claimed the ban was caused by the “enemies of Islam” and would only “increase the zeal with which one works to establish the Shari’ah.” In each situation when his group was reprimanded by British authorities, Choudary sought to frame these actions as part of a larger effort to target Muslims, often claiming this was “Allah’s way of testing his followers.” The radical message espoused by Choudary’s at public events has also bolstered his standing in extremist circles, as Choudary is perceived by some to be brave enough to speak his opinions, in spite of the potential legal ramifications he may be facing.

A review of terrorism incidents in the UK revealed multiple links to Anjem Choudary and his extremist group Muslims Against Crusades, with one of the more noteworthy examples being that of homegrown extremist Richard Dart. Born into a middle-class family in the British seaside town of Weymouth, Dart was an average

52 Pantucci, “Muslims Against Crusades Banned in Latest Episode of the UK Jihad.”
student, and in recent years began pondering the notions of God and the universe.⁵⁴ Dart began to explore the Islamic faith, and following his conversion in 2011, he changed his name to Salahuddin al Britani.⁵⁵ Aspects of Dart’s radicalization process are portrayed in a documentary film made by Dart’s half-brother, who also recorded Dart’s conversion ceremony, which was administered by Choudary. In addition to administering his oath of conversion, Choudary also served as Dart’s spiritual mentor and Dart attended Choudary’s lectures at the London School of Sharia.⁵⁶ Soon after his conversion, Dart was featured in the background of a news interview in which Choudary called for the implementation of Sharia law in the UK.⁵⁷

Choudary’s influence on Dart’s radicalization is evidenced through Dart’s statements during a protest against British soldiers returning from Afghanistan, in which Dart chastised the troops as “crusaders” and claimed Britons should wake up from their “degenerate lifestyle.”⁵⁸ While Dart had only been a Muslim for less than one year, he appeared to have already taken on a mentoring role to new members of Choudary’s group, and practically quoted Choudary verbatim when espousing his hatred of the West


⁵⁶ *My Brother the Islamist*, Leech.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.
and belief that Sharia law is absolutely necessary to these young Muslim converts. Dart also advised these converts that it was “necessary to eradicate the evils of society” and claimed “they will take the fight to them for their occupation of our Muslim lands.”

Through this documentary, we are also able to gain early insights into Dart’s acceptance of a more extremist version of Islam. In addition to his presence at a lecture by Choudary on martyrdom, Dart also joined Choudary in a flag burning protest in front of the U.S. Embassy in London, in which Dart stated “we cannot sit silent while evil is taking place.” Furthermore, Dart released a video on YouTube in which he criticized the West for their crimes and atrocities against Muslims, and he condemned the decadence of the British Government and the British Royal Family.

Dart, who once claimed he was “willing to die for the Islamic cause,” was arrested by British authorities in July 2012 for his involvement in “preparing for acts of terrorism,” and was accused of traveling to Pakistan for terrorism training and for targeting British soldiers at Royal Wootton Bassett. On the day of Dart’s initial court appearance, Choudary posted an online statement claiming the charges against “Salahuddin aka Richard Dart… relating to terrorism offences is an outrage.”

The case of

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Whitehead, Evans and Marsden, “White Muslim one of six arrested over terror plot.”

Richard Dart was just the latest in a series of terrorism incidents linked to Choudary, and served to further bolster Choudary’s status as one Britain’s most prominent radical ideologues, a distinction that Choudary does not appear to openly reject. 

As the three case studies reveal, a radical Islamic ideologue’s capacity to achieve and maintain both religious and extremist credibility is critical in their ability to appeal to radical-leaning Muslims in the West. In addition, it is not absolutely necessary for an ideologue to have participated in terrorist activities himself, as direct association with extremist individuals or groups who have committed such acts can also bolster one’s extremist credibility. Through the examples of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, Jermaine Lindsay, and Richard Dart, we are presented with further evidence of the significant impact radical Islamic ideologue’s have on inspiring acts of terrorism.
CONCLUSION

As demonstrated by the referenced scholars, terrorism experts, and government officials, the threat posed by radical English-speaking Islamic ideologues remains significant. These ideologues not only pose a threat to the West as a result of their own involvement in extremist activities, but more importantly, their inspirational impact on homegrown extremists in the U.S. and Europe is a critical concern. While the direct threat from overseas terrorist groups AQ may have decreased since 9/11, the litany of homegrown extremist-linked incidents that have transpired in the U.S. are evidence that ideologically inspired terrorism has broadened the threat posed by radical Islamists. Additionally, the continued expansion of the Internet has enabled new means by which homegrown extremists can communicate with radical ideologues and other like-minded extremist, without having to travel to a terrorist safe haven in a foreign country.

In order to prevent future efforts by radical Islamic ideologues to recruit, radicalize, or inspire potential homegrown extremists, it is imperative to take into consideration the three elements that have enabled their impact and international influence. As previously detailed, these elements include use of the Internet to disseminate their radical ideology, their use of the English language, to include the ability to tailor their message to their target audience, and the existence of religious and extremist credibility. As evidenced through the case studies of Anwar al-Aulaqi, Abdullah al-Faisal, and Anjem Choudary, each of these ideologues were effective in maximizing the above elements and were ultimately successful in developing an extremist narrative that resonated with radical-leaning Muslims in the West. Their
example also serves as mold for future ideologues who seek to build a wide following within the global extremist community.

Each of these radical ideologues recognized the utility of the Internet, and available evidence indicates that at least al-Aulaqi and al-Faisal used the Internet as a means of directly communicating with known extremists in the U.S. Given the extensive amount of jihadist material available online, the anonymity of communication, and the limitless opportunities to connect with like-minded extremists, it is critical for counterterrorism authorities in the U.S. to undertake actions aimed at curbing the growing threat posed by radical Islamic ideologues on the Internet. To effectuate this end result, three potential mechanisms could be employed; the first of which involves targeting radical ideologues’ online communications. As witnessed through the example of al-Aulaqi, scrutiny of an ideologue’s e-mail contacts, via court authorized surveillance, can provide significant insights into their operational activities and extremist associates in the West. Given the actions of individuals like Nidal Malik Hasan, further analysis should be conducted to ascertain the identity, and more importantly the location, of individuals who attempt to correspond with radical ideologues via e-mail communication.

Secondly, U.S. counterterrorism authorities should increase their efforts to target and identify online extremist forums, specifically those that provide English-language content. Increased monitoring of these forums, many of which host audio and video recordings from radical ideologues, could assist in providing early indications of forum users who may be seeking to conduct acts of violence or establish off-line relationships with extremists in their home country. Lastly, radical ideologues are reliant upon the use
of social media and Internet websites in order to reach their followers. Considering that many extremist websites are hosted on servers outside of the U.S.’s jurisdiction, enhanced counterterrorism cooperation with individual European countries and with organizations like the European Union could prove useful in the U.S.’s ability to gain support for targeting and removing violent extremist material from the Internet.

As detailed in Chapter 2, each of these three ideologues were able to attract a wide following within the extremist community not only because of their English-language abilities, but also as a result of their ability to tailor their message and appear relevant to their target audience. In an effort to counter their radical ideology, U.S. authorities and Muslim communities across the country must encourage moderate Islamic voices and expose the weak narrative of these radical ideologues. For instance, California-based Imam Abu Laith Luqman Ahmed publically rejected al-Aulaqi’s “Call to Jihad,” and responded by stating “peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims is not a crime, and the Lord that we worship favors not the East or the West.”

Refutations like this, from credible Muslim leaders, will have an impact on weakening the message propagated by radical ideologues, as they not only expose their inaccurate interpretations of the Quran, but also show that peaceful coexistence is possible.

The involvement of a radical Islamic ideologue in extremist activities remains a concern, as it serves to heighten their credibility amongst radical Islamists, and can also inspire homegrown extremists to conduct acts of terror themselves. As such, one of the most critical steps that U.S. authorities must continue to pursue is to disrupt these

ideologues’ activities either through arresting them, deporting them, or targeting them through more lethal measures, when legally feasible. This action is best exemplified through the kinetic actions taken against al-Aulaqi in 2011, which permanently removed al-Aulaqi, at least in a physical sense, from the battlefield. Though al-Aulaqi’s extremist message lives on in cyberspace, his prominent role as a radicalizer and senior member of AQAP will likely make him hard to replace. As of 2013, no clear successor for al-Aulaqi has emerged, which may indicate that AQAP will be forced to rely upon a series of radical individuals to fill aspects of al-Aulaqi’s prior duties, given that no single individual may ever be as effective as al-Aulaqi. Furthermore, increased law enforcement scrutiny of radical ideologues will be critical in identifying any infractions or crimes that these ideologues may be guilty of, which could ultimately facilitate their arrest and also their deportation, if they are a foreign citizen. The arrest and deportation of al-Faisal by British authorities removed his ability to interact with UK-based extremists in person, though as demonstrated in Chapter 2, al-Faisal’s online presence persists. When ideologues are located outside of the U.S.’s borders, U.S. authorities must engage in counterterrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing with that ideologues host country, in furtherance of articulating the threat they pose and to encourage foreign law enforcement investigations.

Finally, the U.S. Government and local governments must continue positive dialogue with Muslim communities and religious leaders in the U.S., and also support moderate Muslim organizations. Increased cooperation with these entities will facilitate the U.S. Government’s ability to address instances of extremism at their onset and will
also allow greater understanding of local grievances that may exist in these communities. Moreover, these moderate Muslim groups and leaders play an instrumental role in fostering a greater understanding of Islam and in educating individuals on the proper interpretations of the Quran; an action which serves to erode the radical and often inaccurate teachings of extremist ideologues.

As the examination of these three case studies has shown, radical English-speaking Islamic ideologues continue to inspire and influence homegrown extremists in the U.S. and elsewhere. Additionally, their role in the radicalization process remains a significant threat. Therefore, the U.S. must continue efforts to identify, target, and disrupt these radical ideologues’ activities, in furtherance of protecting our nation’s national security and countering future instances of violent homegrown extremism.
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