Motivations for extreme actions
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“...form of alignment with groups that entails a visceral feeling of oneness with the group. This feeling is associated with unusually porous, highly permeable borders between the personal and social self.”
Measuring fusion
“Brothers in Arms”: Revolutionaries in Libya, Whitehouse et al, 2016

First time that fusion among fighters tested in the field, during conflict

Ceiling effects of fusion to other fighting revolutionaries; floor effects of fusion to sympathisers to the revolution who were not fighters
What causes fusion?

Group identity is structured by shared values and it is difficult to disentangle the two.

“We had our faith, we were all together”, ex-ISIS fighter in prison in Kosovo, April 2016.
Devoted Actor Model: Atran

FUSION and SACRED VALUES = DEVOTED ACTOR
Formidability: Peshmerga
Formidability: ISIS
Fusion – Iraq
Fusion - family
Sacred Values

• Electoral democracy leading to rule of the majority
• Free speech for minority opinion

For Kurds:
• Kurdeity
• Independent Kurdistan

For ISIS fighters:
• Caliphate (probe: what does this mean to you?)
• Sharia (probe)
• Armed Jihad (probe)
Testing SVs: trade-offs

“Would you give up on this issue if...”

• There were benefits to society, such as better social harmony or trade?
• To prevent a civil war?
• If others close to you changed theirs?
• If your leader (specified) changed his?
Testing SVs: costly sacrifices

To defend this opinion, would you risk the following:

• Die fighting
• Kill civilians
• Lose family
• Carry out a suicide mission
• Torture women/children
Case study: Morocco

Data Collections in Tetuan and Casablanca

• N = 260 adults
• Average 32yrs (18 to 50)
• 50% males
• wide range of education
Sacred Value: Sharia

What is your opinion about delaying the full imposition of Sharia in the country?

• I do not object to this

• This is acceptable only if it leads to material benefits that are great enough, such as significantly more jobs and housing in the area

• This is not acceptable no matter how great the benefits
Results from Casablanca

Costly Sacrifices for Sharia

- No Sacred Value (Sharia)
- Sacred Value (Sharia)

Not Fused vs. Fused
Shifting the research questions

• How do people get to the state of Devoted Actor, and what are the resulting behaviours?
• For some, a birthright (e.g. Kurdiety)
• For others, there is a pathway: “radicalisation”
Research techniques: ISIS

• Social media analysis
• Social network analysis
• Interviews
  – Qualitative analysis
  – Computational linguistic analysis; complexity “data mining”
  – Psychology surveys
Professor Zichichi’s instructions

• monitor research
• organise scientific workshops
• disseminate research findings
• have group meetings in Erice
• write recommendations for governments and international agencies
Project

• To build up the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict in order to fulfil all these instructions and to coordinate cutting edge research

• To this end, we are planning events in Oxford with our fellow PMP, Mitigation of Terrorism, starting in spring 2017

• Fundraising for extra staff to run the Centre and coordinate research