INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

CTTA: Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis

Volume 3 Issue 2 | February 2011

Inside this issue:

The Egyptian Uprising: Analysis and Implications 1

Terrorist Manuals and Tradecraft Online: Indicators of Higher Risk? 5

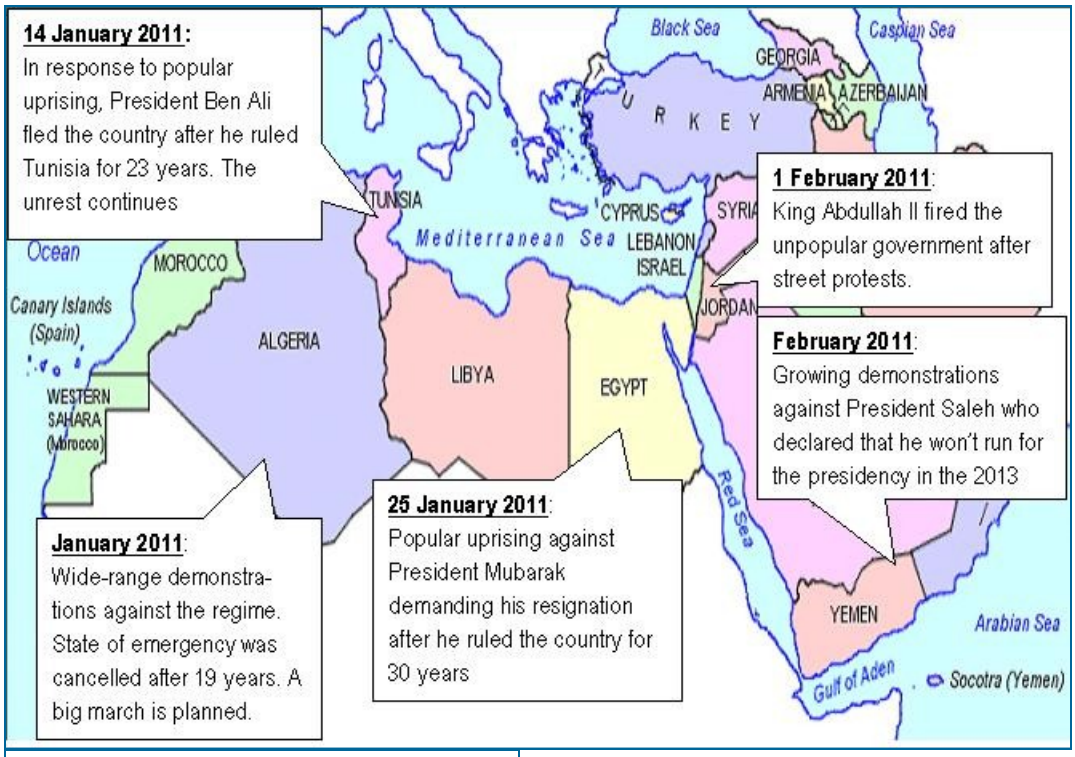
About Us 8

Events and Publications 8

The Egyptian Uprising: Analysis and Implications

Eran Zohar

The spontaneous nature of the protests in Egypt makes the ability to forecast the results of the current events limited. Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that any drastic change in Egypt would have significant strategic implications for the Middle East and beyond.



The Middle East and North Africa in Transition
Image Credit: Eran Zohar, ICPVTR

After weeks of chaos and hundreds of casualties in the uprising which started on 25 January 2011, it seems that the political situation in Egypt is at a crossroad. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak remained unwilling to step down and instead made some concessions. He nominated Omar Mahmoud Suleiman, the head of security services and regarded as a "strong man" in the Egyptian regime, to start negotiations with representatives from the protest movement about constitutional reforms. Mubarak also dropped his plan to appoint his son, Gamal, to be his successor, which had been one of the causes of resentment among many Egyptians.

Cont. to Page 2

The Egyptian Uprising: Analysis and Implications

(Continued from Page 1)

On the other hand, the opposition started to suffer from internal disputes. Some members of the opposition, mainly traditional political parties, met with Ahmad Suleiman on 6 February 2011 to start negotiations on political and constitutional reforms. Other opposition members maintain that there will be no negotiations with the government until President Mubarak steps down. They demand a real change in the political system, not just a replacement of the persons heading that system, and they would not accept promises for reforms. The leading opposition figure, Mohamed al-Baradei, said that he is "ready to engage when we believe that Mr. Mubarak is ready to step down".

Assessment

Our assessment is that the passage of time favors President Mubarak and his supporters. As long as the opposition groups cannot force President Mubarak to resign and as long as the ruling elite stand behind him, he can contain the anger of the protesters and hope to exhaust them. At present, it appears that Mr. Mubarak has succeeded in consolidating the ruling elite around him. Moreover, the fact that the Egyptian army has maintained some sort of neutrality would make Mubarak believe that there is still hope for his rule.

Frank Wisner, the United States special envoy to Egypt said that President Mubarak must stay in office to oversee the transition of the regime, and that Mubarak's "continued leadership is critical." United States President Barack Obama himself did not mention anything specific about the removal of President Mubarak when he referred to the coming change in the political system in Egypt. These statements could have further encouraged Mubarak to stay on.

As time passes, the protest movement will find it difficult to maintain the momentum. There is a question of how sustainable the protests will be once people realize that they need to continue to earn a living. Furthermore, an increase in criminal incidents, like looting, might cause some people to resent the protesters and push for measures to stop the protests.

It is important to take note of the fact that the political opposition in Egypt is not homogenous. The only unifying objective among the opposition is their demand for a regime change. The longer the situation carries on, the probability of dissension between the various groups in the opposition will rise. The first sign of the opposition's difficulties was seen with the announcement of the Muslim Brotherhood movement that it is willing to enter talks with officials to end the country`s political crisis while Mubarak is still in power. This announcement came only a few days after the group said it would not negotiate until President Mubarak steps down. Another sign would be the decrease in number of people who join the protests.

At the end of the day, the opposition in Egypt might have no other choice than to intensify its actions against the regime, so as to achieve its goal – the immediate resignation of the president. This kind of development could lead to a blood-bath in the streets of Egypt. At this stage, it is not clear whether the opposition is willing to take this direction or to adopt a more pragmatic policy.

Regional implications of the developments in Egypt

The ability to forecast the results of the current events is very limited, mainly because of its spontaneous character. Nevertheless, the developments in Egypt have significant regional implications. Any drastic change in Egypt, a state that symbolized leadership and a source of stability in the Middle East (ME), could affect the whole region. Other similar regimes in the ME, particularly those which are seen to be close to the United States in particular and the West in general, could come under threat. This has already manifested in Jordan and Yemen.

For Israel, the possible emergence of a hostile regime in Egypt and even a long period of instability in its southern neighbor would lead to a drastic change in its strategic approach. For more than 30 years, Israel concentrated its security efforts on the northern front or in the Gaza strip, knowing that Egypt is its ally. The worst case scenario for Israel is that the Muslim Brother-

Cont. to Page 3

The Egyptian Uprising: Analysis and Implications

(Continued from Page 2)

Criterion	Riots in Iran (June 2009)	Riots in Egypt (2010)
The Trigger	Allegations of election fraud in the Presidential elections	The successful uprising in Tunisia
The Targets	Removal of President Ahmadi Nezad but no demand for termination of the Moslem Revolution	Removal of President Mubarak & change in the regime
Root causes	Disappointment from the Revolution. Uprising against the totalitarian rule of Ahmadi Nizad	Poverty, corrupt regime, deprivation of civil rights
Profile of the protestors	Mainly young people & educated	Apparently different social groups
Leadership	Mainly Liberal & Moderate conservative politicians	In the beginning of formation. Mohamed al-Bardaei seems to be the leading figure
Counter actions by the regime	Brutal suppression	Containment policy, some violent acts against civilians but the army refrain from using force
Main weakness	Lack of wide public support, lack of military power, the West reaction was not definitive	Lack of military power, maybe internal disagreement regarding the long range targets, Mr. al-Baradei has no charisma

The Uprising in Egypt in light of the failed riots in Iran Credit: Eran Zohar, ICPVTR

hood, known for its extreme anti-Israel stance, might become a leading player in any new regime as a result of new and free elections. However, it seems that most of the political groups in Egypt will favor peace with Israel.

Egypt played an important role in the United States-led war against global terrorism and in the conflict between the pragmatic camp and the radical camp, led by Iran, in the Middle East. Prolonged instability in Egypt could serve the interests of Iran and the Islamic terror groups and endanger the US's strategic interests in the region. In this framework, it is not clear why the Al Qaeda has not made any statement yet regarding the events in Egypt, although many of its top leadership are Egyptians, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, the deputy of Osama Bin-Laden.

Sociological aspects of the uprising

The mass protests in Egypt is a classic example of *collective behavior,* a concept from political sociology. That is, many people are acting spontaneously and challenging the social order. Collective behavior has different symptoms, some of which are being used in Egypt (demonstration, looting, clashes, etc.). Protestors are actually an *acting crowd* or a *protest crowd*. They are motivated by an urgent and defined purpose or purposes, which in this case is to make the President step down, make the regime more democratic and improve the country's economic conditions. Since this crowd is influenced by a deep sense of marginalization against the regime, it is very excitable. Thus violence and some events of mass disorder, such as looting and riots are expected.

Cont. to Page 4

The Egyptian Uprising: Analysis and Implications

(Continued from Page 3)

There is a question about whether this crowd could become a social movement that would lead to a real change in Egypt's political system. In other words, is there a possibility that the mostly unorganized (and spontaneous) mass uprising could become an organized revolution? It is composed of different groups with different agendas, some of them secular, others religious. However, they are all united in their critique against the current social order and in their aspiration for a dramatic change.

Political sociology provides different explanations for the development of social movements; some are relevant to analyze the situation in Egypt.

Social structure

Problematic social structure causes feelings of frustration and alienation. In Egypt there is a huge gap between the rich (minority) and the poor (majority) However, there is a common awareness that there is no hope for change through the current social institutions in Egypt.

A narrative

A powerful narrative is the basis of social mobilization. In the case of Egypt, the oppression of the regime and widespread corruption forms the narrative that binds the protesters together. The country has been under a corrupt and autocratic rule for 30 years. The demonstrations are seen as a way to end Mubarak's rule and form a new political system that would be more responsible and responsive to people's aspirations.

Capacity to Mobilize

A basic social problem is a good reason to go out to the streets. However, there is a need for mobilization mechanisms. In Egypt, similar to Iran in 2009, the social and cellular networks provided that service.

A trigger:

Sometimes and event is needed to ignite the fire which will turn deep feelings into action. The uprising in Tunisia functioned as the trigger to all the protests in the Middle East that followed.

Government Response

The brutal behavior of the local police, which tried to crackdown on the protestors with gunfire, produced opposite results. The same can be said for President Mubarak's speech to the nation on 29 January 2011 where he mainly repeated slogans from the past which are not likely to be seen as a promise for a new day. Additionally, the fact that the armed forces have refrained from enforcing the curfew and have not suppressed the protest, could encourage the protestors to carry on and even intensify their actions.

A social movement needs to satisfy several preconditions before it could implement its aims. Otherwise it could fade away in time as it did in Iran. These include forming a leadership that will define future policy and tactics and is able to maintain a good public image, keep access to the media, and raise money and more of the like. One important factor is the ability to maintain support for the cause and the will to protest, especially when people do not go to work as has happened in Egypt the last week. On the other hand, internal disputes, bad leadership and brutal suppression could bring protests to an end.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor
Dr. Arabinda Acharya

Associate Editor
Diane Russel Junio

For inclusion in the mailing list please email your name and the name of your organization with the subject "CTTA subscription" to Miss Diane Russel Junio at the following address: isdiane@ntu.edu.sg

Terrorist Manuals and Tradecraft Online: Indicators of Higher Risk?

Nur Azlin Mohamed Yasin, Tuty Raihanah Bte Mostarom, Nur Aziemah Binte Azman, and Nur Irfani Binte Saripi

The presence of tradecraft and bomb-making manuals in online jihadist forums is seen as a worrying development. There is a question on whether the presence of such materials online would manifest to more terrorist attacks and violence in the real world.

In 2010, a particular trend observed in the Bahasa Indonesia and Malay language websites was the shift from the promotion of merely ideologically loaded materials to the introduction of a significant amount of operational information in the form of handbooks and tradecraft manuals. In line with the observation, there is a perceived gap between online trends and offline developments. It could be argued that the two dimensions do not necessarily meet as the internet in this context is suggested to be used more often as a platform to express perceived grievances, hence acting to release the pressure that would have, if sufficiently accumulated, otherwise manifested in violent activities in the real world.

On 1 January 2011, a bombing attack took place outside the Coptic Saints Church, in Alexandria, Egypt. Twenty nine people were killed and 79 others were wounded in the explosion. Weeks prior to the incident, several Al Qaeda linked websites carried a "how-to" manual on "destroying the cross", followed by a list of potential churches to target for an attack. The Coptic Saints Church was listed as one of the targets. Apparently, the manual was distributed, complete with videos on how to build a bomb. The main question here is whether the attack could have been prevented, considering the circumstances. Or have analysts and security agencies become obsequious with the assumption that such materials are only meant to hype up a virtual mass of sympathizers and followers, without any real implications. Or perhaps this Egyptian case was a matter of sheer coincidence?

In light of this incident, ICPVTR analysts working on the Terrorism Informatics team revisited our database with the purpose of ascertaining whether this particular case carries any characteristics that renders it a more viable threat than what is commonly found on the internet.

Overall trends in Bahasa Indonesia and Arabic Islamist extremist sites online

When ICPVTR first started to monitor Bahasa Indonesia websites in 2007, no manuals of any sort were detected. The types of materials posted were of articles, news updates and documents that portrayed a Muslim *ummah* (community) oppressed by the *'kafir'* (infidel) western forces, and in need to wage a *jihad* of violence against the latter. It was only in August 2007 that hacking manuals were posted in the *Al Firdaus* forum (now offline). The hacking manuals were soon followed with postings of bomb making and weaponry handling manuals in the *Al Tawbah* forum in February 2008 and April 2008. The conversation threads in the online forums where these manuals were posted were quite worrying. The desire for *jihad*

Cont. to Page 6

Terrorist Manuals and Tradecraft Online: Indicators of Higher Risk?

(Continued from Page 5)

Sample illustration and photograph of bomb-making collected from an online Arabic Islamist Extremist forum by ICPVTR Informatics Team

seemed to have intensified when postings of participants' reactions evolved from one of "noise" exemplified with their exclamation of pride with the presence of the manuals in their forum, to one of frustration and eagerness to use them. There was also a desire for more assertiveness on their purported propaganda. Despite the enthusiasm, it appeared that no one seemed to have studied the manuals to the point of experimentation. Furthermore, there was no talk about the technicalities of the manuals themselves. Today, tradecraft manuals include the postings of materials on martial arts and bomb making videos taken from just about anywhere, from the Arabic Islamist extremist online sites to the BBC documentary series. There was no observed change in the reactions of forum participants.

On the part of the Arabic extremist websites, to date there are two forums that have a section dedicated to tradecraft: the *Mujahideen* Electronic Network and *Shumukh* Islamic Network. Previously there was another forum called *Ma'arik* Islamic Network with a tradecraft section but it was shut down. There has been an increase in the number of manuals and instructions on explosive materials and chemicals posted online. These are first on the list of most posted topics in the tradecraft section, followed by manuals on rockets and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), firearms information and the art of combat. Such postings usually receive positive feedback. Similar to those on the Bahasa Indonesia sites, this was limited to showing support and forum participants often do not discuss the details of the contents posted. However, a change was observed in late 2009, when readers appeared to become more proactive, posing questions on the details provided and at times even requesting for details on other types of IEDs. Yet unlike the manual that was released prior to the January 2011 Egyptian bombings, these manuals were not accompanied by recommendations on specific targets.

The case of the Egyptian church bombing: indicators of higher risks

The comparison of information released prior to the bombing with other similar materials that have been introduced, revealed that there are three flags or indicators. If these flags were to exist simultaneously, it could be considered as indicative of a case that deserves particular attention:

(1) The explicitness of the details given.

According to the posted manual, supposedly addressed to the "Christian West" the clear intent was to attack in retaliation for the "kidnapping of Muslim women" and other "heinous deeds" in Egypt. The manual clearly mentioned that the mode of attack was to be a bombing against churches and it listed some potential targets. The manual had step-by-step set of instructions on how to build a bomb, complete with graphics. The

Cont. to Page 7

Terrorist Manuals and Tradecraft Online: Indicators of Higher Risk?

(Continued from Page 6)

materials suggested for the bomb are relatively easy to procure, thus it gave the impression that the whole operation is feasible, and encouraged attempts and experimentations.

(2) The context or justification given for the attack, which accompany the manuals/handbooks posted and whether it echoes real life developments.

The justification given by the perpetrators for the attack, that is in retaliation for the kidnapping of Muslim women and other heinous deeds in Egypt, echoes developments on the ground. Communal tensions between Coptic and Muslim Egyptians have been very intense in recent times. Accusations of kidnapping of women and forced conversions have been going back and forth between the two groups. These have also developed into heated protests and demonstrations.

(3) Whether the sentiments evoked in the posting resonates with the online audience.

Based on the responses to the posted manual, it was evident that the online community strongly relates with the sentiments evoked and the type of message that was put across to them. This should have been an indicator of an increased probability of an attempt to carry out a terrorist attack.

The difference with other online attack manuals and tradecrafts

Most of the attack manuals and tradecrafts found in both the Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia extremists' websites manifest the above-mentioned indicators, albeit partially. The bulk of the materials tend to focus on the technicalities but neglect all other aspects. There are also several attack manuals that recommend the use of methods or materials which are not easy to obtain, such as the building of a nuclear bomb (2007), the use of a hot air balloon to attack camps (November 2009), and the use of a specific type of drug to poison army personnel (May 2010).

However, this is not to suggest that manuals or tradecrafts that do not fulfill the criteria should then be completely ignored. Based on analysis, the fulfillment of all three of the abovementioned indicators derived from the Egyptian case should render a particular case worthy of close scrutiny and follow-up action. The threat of online extremism should not be over exaggerated and hence such measures can be used to narrow down the scope of threat analysis.

GLOBAL PATHFINDER II

The ICPVTR Terrorism Database – Global Pathfinder - is a one-stop repository for information on the current and emerging terrorist threat. The database focuses on terrorism and political violence in the Asia-Pacific region – comprising of Southeast Asia, North Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and Oceania.

Global Pathfinder is an integrated database containing comprehensive profiles of terrorist groups, key terrorist personalities, terrorist and counter-terrorist incidents as well as terrorist training camps . It also contains specific details and analyses of significant terrorist attacks in the form of terrorist attack profiles.

In addition to providing the latest information on terrorist attacks and pronouncements, Global Pathfinder also includes over a hundred terrorist training manuals, counter terrorism legislations and conventions, analytical papers on terrorist ideologies, commentaries on terrorist trends and patterns, transcripts of landmark cases, interviews with terrorists as well as photographs from different conflict zones across the world. Further, Global Pathfinder also has a huge collection of jihadi websites, the contents of which are routinely translated and analyzed by our analysts. This analysis helps develop an understanding of the developments in the ideological spectrum and trajectory of the terrorist threat, in both in tactical as well as strategic space.

For further inquiries please email Ms. Karen Law Yu Ling at ISYLLaw@ntu.edu.sg

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

Nanyang Technological University
Block S4, Level B4, Nanyang Avenue,
Singapore 639798

Phone: +65 6316 8925
Fax: +65 6791 1941
Website: www.pvtr.org

The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) is a specialist centre within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

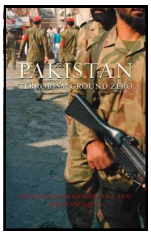
ICPVTR conducts research, training, and outreach programs aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and at mitigating its effects on the international system. The Centre seeks to integrate academic theory with practical knowledge, which is essential for a complete and comprehensive understanding of threats from politically-motivated groups.

The Centre is staffed by academic specialists, religious scholars, as well as personnel from the law enforcement, military and intelligence agencies, among others. The Centre is culturally and linguistically diverse, comprising of functional and regional analysts as well as Muslim religious scholars from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

Events and Publications

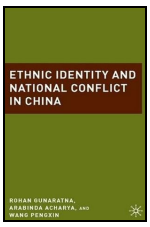
8-13 March 2011: Workshop on Countering the Financing of Terrorism, Tashkent, Uzbekistan jointly organized by ICPVTR, World Check and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Uzbekistan

25 March 2011: Countering the Financing of Terrorism organized by the Association of Banks of Singapore and supported by the Consortium for Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CCFT)



•Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero (Reaktion Books, 2011) by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna and Mr. Khuram Iqbal

- International Aviation and Terrorism: Evolving Threats, Evolving Security (Routledge 2009) by Dr. John Harrison



- Ethnic Identity and National Conflict in China (Palgrave Macmillan 22 June 2010) by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, Dr. Arabinda Acharya and Mr. Wang Pengxin

•Targeting Terrorist Financing: International Cooperation and New Regimes (Routledge 2009) by Dr. Arabinda Acharya