

# NARRATIVE STRATEGIES JOURNAL

ACTIONABLE \* PRACTICAL \* INTREPID

Scope: Articles are operational and relevant to the cyber, psychological, influence warfare, countering violent extremism professional.

Disclaimer: All opinions, assumptions, findings, observations, analyses, hypotheses, and theses are those of the author alone.

Submissions: [howard@narrative-strategies.com](mailto:howard@narrative-strategies.com)

## Contents:

<b>Complete Target Audience Analysis: Triggering the Unconscious to Counter Insurgencies</b>	p. 1
<b>Is Cybersecurity Possible? Yes, Go Back to Basics</b>	p. 4
<b>Revolt Against Islamic State</b>	p. 6
<b>Trickle Down Stabilization</b>	p. 11
<b>Fourth Act in Narrative Construction</b>	p. 13
<b>Where Violent Extremists Go Next</b>	p. 14
<b>Identity and the Future of America</b>	p. 16
<b>Gospel of Leadership</b>	p. 19
<b>Narrative Strategies Update</b>	p. 21

Editor note: This is the inaugural issue of our monthly journal. This is neither a newsletter nor a formally peer reviewed journal. Instead it is a collection of essays and articles from scholars and strategic leaders—some new, some repurposed for current events—meant to support analysts, operators, and leaders in the public and private sectors. Narrative Strategies is a think/do tank providing training, counsel, and direct support to strategic leaders and their teams in developing and implementing narrative strategies ([narrative-strategies.com](http://narrative-strategies.com)).

\*\*\*\*\*

## Complete Target Audience Analysis: Triggering the Unconscious to Counter Insurgencies

—Ajit Maan, Ph.D.

How is it possible to adhere to the ancient admonishment to “know your enemy” when one’s enemies only partially know themselves? Identities, like the narratives that shape them, are largely unconscious. The serious omissions in the way [target audience](#) information is gathered, and the manner in which analysis is conducted, are a result of not understanding the unconscious aspects of identity.

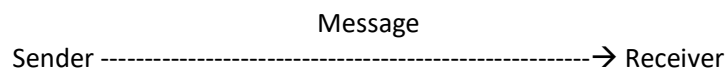
Fortunately we need not base our knowledge of our adversaries upon their own knowledge of themselves; it **is** possible to know more about the enemy than he knows about himself by enlisting Narrative Identity Analysis© and Internarrative Identity Analysis©.

Narratives are cognitive frameworks with which we organize the influx of information to our brains. And those cognitive frames stay in the head unless they are dislodged by another frame. The influx of second by second information is either dismissed by the brain as unimportant or, if it is retained, it is placed somewhere in the narrative structure; that “placing” is the assignment of the meaning of the new information in the pre-existing narrative context.



How the new information fits into the existing cognitive frame determines the meaning of the new information for what has traditionally been called “the receiver.” I don’t use the term “receiver” because it inaccurately describes the TA. The target audience is not simply the receiver of information. The TA are the makers of meaning.

When I was an undergraduate we were taught a communication model that has since been demonstrated to be [inaccurate](#) but many, including IO practitioners, still use it. The old model goes like this:



In this old model, the goal of the sender is to relay the message as intact as possible to the receiver. And we were taught methods to secure or insulate the message from being contorted in the relay process. What we did not understand then was that *the message does not carry the meaning. The meaning happens in the mind of the receiver.*

The mind of the “receiver” is not an empty space into which information is placed along with the meaning that the sender attached to it. There is a pre-existing narrative frame in the mind of the TA and unless the sender understands the narrative frame that will process the information and give it meaning, he has no control over how the message is received.

Thought of topographically, narratives are like the soil that supports the stories that spring forth from it. We humans are largely unconscious of the soil below the surface, but we are well aware of stories above the surface. We like stories particularly stories about ourselves. We like telling them, we like hearing them. And even if we are trained and able to do otherwise, we tend to think with and through stories.

Note that even when not explicitly asked to tell about ourselves, the stories we choose to relate are often stories that tell who we are and what we value. We choose certain stories over other stories because they fortify ourself-image.

Understanding the narrative soil is imperative to understanding the identity of the TA, the actions that result from that identity, and the elements that will trigger behavior. Actions that may seem otherwise illogical make perfect sense when the narrative context is clear. Another way to put the point is that autobiographical reasoning animates much of human behavior.

For practitioners the question should not be “What message do we want to send?” The question should be “What effect do we want to cause?” Knowing how to cause an effect requires knowing how your TA will process information.

[Narrative Identity Theory](#) focuses on how humans learn and develop who we are (identity), and consequently how we are behave (action), through the narratives that we inherit.



But because that inheritance is largely unconscious no amount of polling or accumulation of demographic data is going to yield information about the narrative soil of a TA. For that we need Cultural Anthropologists to tend to the soil and we need Narrative Identity Analysts to listen to stories, collect themes and identity points, and trace them down to their cultural soil. When I asked a specific American target audience, for example, “What narratives do you live by?” most asked me to define narrative. But when I asked “What stories do you live by?” most of the answers were variations stories of overcoming – overcoming obstacles, getting knocked down and getting up again, the little guy beating the odds. Rarely do Americans say “I am living a heroic quest as a rugged individual” but that is, in fact, a cultural narrative frame which supports the individual stories of overcoming.

The implications of this split between unconscious narratives and conscious stories are multiple, but the one implication I am addressing here is the implication for understanding the subconscious narratives. *That is how we learn what the target audience doesn't know about itself.*

**Narrative Identity Analysis**© involves analyzing the way a person or community (whatever your TA) frames their experience in accordance with a theme (content) of a narrative. It also involves analyzing how the content is organized and how it progresses (structure). These analytics taken together yield the narrative trajectory.

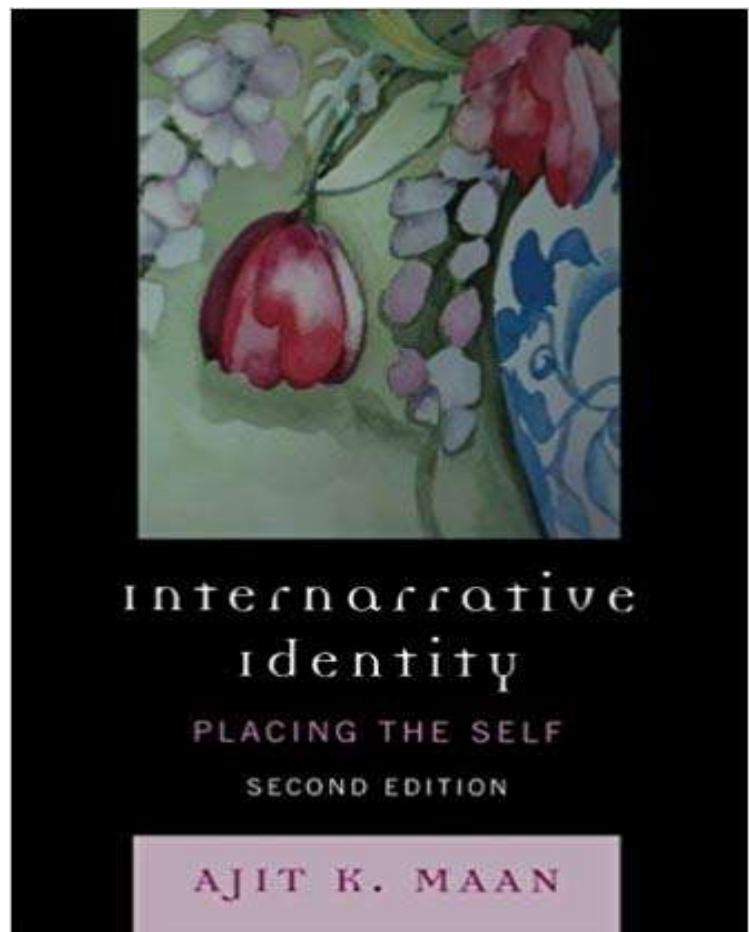
The predictability of behavior is heightened when TA story is supported by their cultural narrative. Narrative Identity Analysis as applied to individuals is a process of uncovering who people are supposed to be. You need to know what types of identities the target audiences' culture supports and how completely or incompletely the individual you are targeting is culturally supported. Cultural narratives shape what it is possible to tell. And cultural assumptions determine who is able to do the telling.

Note that there is never just one narrative; there are narrative layers and in order to predict behavior we need to know which layer is operative in a particular circumstance. And that is tricky because narrative conflict is common.

**Internarrative Identity Analysis**© comes into play in cases of narrative conflict. When narratives are in conflict we need to analyze both the fractures that define the conflict and the bridges that mend it (if there are any). And when the conflict is unresolved we need to know as much about the fissure as we can learn.

Predicting behavior, and going further to provoke behavior, will often involve capitalizing on conflicting narrative identities. Extremist [recruitment methods](#) effectively capitalize on those conflicts.

Narrative Identity Analysis focuses on all the elements that hold the narrative-identity together. **Internarrative** Identity Analysis focuses on what keeps them apart - fractures and conflicts. We need both.



To influence the behavior of a TA we either need to cause a shift in the cognitive frame, or we need a method to ensure that the information is stored in a specific place in the existing structure because that is how meaning is assigned/determined. It is the only way to have some measure of control over the meaning assigned to the information.

And that is the imperative because achieving dominant influence requires shaping the environment, not just understanding it.

Ajit Maan, Ph.D. is Founder and CEO of [Narrative Strategies LLC](#), affiliate faculty of the [Center for Narrative Conflict Resolution at George Mason University](#), member of the [Brain Trust of the Weaponized Narrative Initiative at Arizona State University](#), and author of [Internarrative Identity: Placing the Self](#), [Counter-Terrorism: Narrative Strategies](#), and [Narrative Warfare](#).

\*\*\*\*\*

### Is Cybersecurity Possible? Yes, Go Back to Basics

—Howard Gambrell Clark, Ph.D.

As societies grew, data collection beyond what a human mind is capable of maintaining became essential. It's little surprise our first written letters and numbers were from accountants, not poets.

Recordkeeping of massive amounts of data allowed civilizations to grow and maintain.

However, the price for the most recent information revolution is assured insecurity and lack of privacy.

The solution is to do as the U.S. Marines do: manual backup and deception. Only then can we achieve a chance at business and government continuity.

How can a state or business defend itself against cyberattack? It cannot.



So goes NSA, so goes the world. There is a near certainty any entity will be targeted to some degree at some point. No complex software system has ever been without a defect,<sup>1</sup> and no information management system without a zero-day vulnerability. And today some computer viruses are taught to mutate: they may evolve their resilience against the most clever of patches.

### Complexity Breeds Pernicious Opportunity

The cloud, internet of things, smart cities, metadata storage, automated jobs, basic artificial intelligence, and driverless cars provide more and more opportunities for cyberattacks. Technology outpaces security and outpaces citizens' understanding of new vulnerabilities.

While the environment becomes ever more target rich for criminals, cyberattacks are becoming ever more easy and rewarding.

Ransomware, for example, locks people out of their system or encrypts files only to be restored upon ransom delivery. Digital payment systems are becoming harder to trace, companies do not have the resources to access

their blocked data and make payment less shareholders catch wind, and hospitals do not have the luxury of waiting to beat the cybercriminals. Hackers-for-hire, coding-for-purchase, and ransom intermediaries have built a cottage industry in which most anyone can conduct an attack with little chance of being caught.

In addition to criminals, smaller weaker powers and non-government organizations can now attack the infrastructure, transportation, and communications systems in other countries. Weaker powers have a great incentive to focus precious limited time and resources on preparing remote electronically initiated 'bombs.'

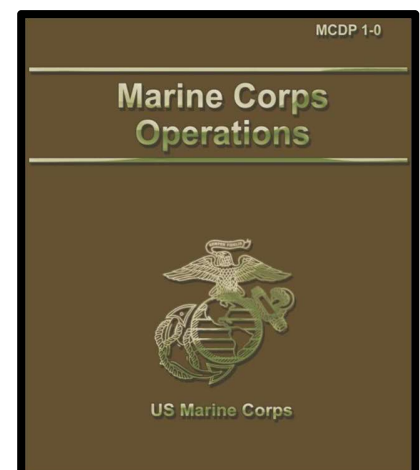
And of course there are earthly natural disasters, solar flares, human error, and other factors that may affect information systems or provide an inroad for malicious actors. Even if facilities were unaffected by disasters, software updates and patches immediately applied, only cleared personnel allowed access to a facility, and employees continually trained, all it takes is one worker having one bad day accidentally clicking on one link for a cyberattack to be possible.

And even when the best law enforcement, intelligence, and private investigations sniff out leads, the few international arrangements for countering transnational cybercrime have proven often ineffective.

#### What Can Be Done?

Because technological innovation continues to accelerate and because any day someone may purposefully or unwittingly uncover physically and cognitively revolutionary ways of data storage and communication (innovation that cannot be imagined now; innovation that goes beyond making systems smaller, faster, and with greater storage capacity), there is no technological panacea. Any specific applications suggested here will almost certainly be usurped before completing this sentence.

We fall back on the ever-important basics of information security and deception. We must return to the fundamental theories and methods of information warfare, strategic influence and deception, and intelligence that have spanned human history. And then apply them to digital and analog systems. The nature of conflict is unchanged even as technology evolves at neck-breaking speed.



As with preparing against a potential physical attack, strategic leaders must manage or reduce cyber threats, vulnerabilities, and adverse effects through intelligence-led planning.

#### Recommended Approaches to Cybersecurity

Four policies can ease the effects and frequency of cyberattack attempts.

First, we should identify our legal and moral parameters. Many companies and governments do not act or act ineffectively because they are unaware of or have not thought through international laws and norms.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes organizations act outside legal frameworks out of ignorance.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes organizations fail to act because they are unaware of the lawful ways they can protect themselves.

Second, ensure everything a state does on the cloud or with software and hardware is backed up with offline stand-alone guarded soft and/or hard copies. Assume power outages, assume cyberattacks, assume sabotage of the integrity of information stored, and assume human error that allows cyberattacks and unwitting self-sabotage.



Going offline does not have to be an unreasonable handicap. Yes, communications will be slower when one goes offline. Yes, it will be costly. But if cyberattacks are certain, one must be able to shift from the 'world of google' to the world of 'library catalogues' without anxiety. If this is too burdensome and even the occasional exercise too costly, then at least take the most vital systems and data offline sometimes.

After one scheduled backup power test failed at one airline office building in one city in 2016, the world economy rumbled. As one affected passenger criticized, "I guess it has been a long time since they used the manual process."<sup>4</sup> He was right.

Third, ensure all sensitive communications are conducted by means that most avoid detection. Assume surveillance of email and electronic communications no matter how guarded or closed a system is. Go analog or offline if possible.

If communications are not conducted within an encrypted and highly and continuously defended system, assume the media, other governments, and non-state actors can read and understand every communiqué.

Extreme cases include intelligence services throughout the world that have their top analysts use typewriters to produce the most sensitive assessments that are then hand delivered to the appropriate policymakers.

However, even if these above extreme measures are taken, one must accept that this only limits the likelihood of cyber intrusion. Even if intelligence analysts are writing with a typewriter, if one unwitting asset brings her turned-off cellphone to work, a savvy intelligence organization may know what she is writing from the sound of the typewriter and overheard conversations in the office. Safety of information and its integrity is never bulletproof. So, we fall back to military deception concepts—our fourth recommendation comprising four parts.

A 'fence' simultaneously blocks systems from outsiders and does not bring unwanted attention to itself. Hiding in seemingly plain site be a prudent course of action. For example, if you are running a political campaign, you may wish to place your main databases in some ostensibly regularly guarded rural district vice the national headquarters.

A 'fake' may include a deception narrative that causes a competitor or adversary to misappropriate precious focus, time, money, and energy on a phony target. Gaudily guarded faux databases are an elaborate example.

A 'feint,' prearranged for when a hacker or virus 'nears' your vital data, may help to confuse and draw attention away from what you wish to protect. For example, in 2017 French President Emmanuel Macron's election team took action as phishing attacks against their email accounts increased. They "created a collection of fake email accounts seeded with false information." The false information were created as "traps."

A 'fix' may then be deployed as an attack is upon your system. It may help to fix the attacker's 'eyes' away from your protected system as you take emergency actions to take yourself offline. Such actions could be, for example, releasing metadata on a corporate website with benign real and false information together to slow down or cause a cyber spy to pause as you 'unplug.'

For more, read *Information Warfare: The Lost Tradecraft*.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Revolt Against So-Called Islamic State in South Asia and North and West Africa**

—Robert ("Doc") Faraday

Below are quotes from clergy, political leaders, social groups, fighters, and citizens. If republished, translated, and marketed aggressively through third parties, these messages could potentially help to:

- Force violent extremist spokesmen further on the rhetorical defensive.
- Perhaps dissuade some who may be susceptible to radicalization/mobilization.
- Bolster the will of those already fighting Islamic State and other violent extremist organizations.
- Perhaps compel otherwise apathetic citizens to action against violent extremists and their influence.

Each message should appeal to targeted communities with a local hook as al-Qa`ida and similar groups do successfully, be free of any semblance of government involvement (even if the narrative originated from a government official), offer sound bites, explain truthfully the credentials and inadequacies of the messenger, and be translated into every language so-called Islamic State (IS) and al-Qa`ida use to recruit.



IS photo for propaganda/intimidation

Any counter or master messaging campaign should be considered within a greater strategy to undermine violent extremism as it encroaches in North, West, and East Africa along with South Asia. It may also be considered as an alternative to shutting down websites and social media accounts after which violent extremist spokespeople often move to new accounts, the dark web, and/or decentralized messaging networks.<sup>5</sup>

#### On Child Victims

United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria:<sup>6</sup>

*[IS] prioritizes children as a vehicle for ensuring long-term loyalty, adherence to their ideology and a cadre of devoted fighters that will see violence as a way of life.*

Laurent Chapuis, UNICEF regional child protection adviser for the Middle East and North Africa:<sup>7</sup>

*What is new is that [IS] seems to be quite transparent and vocal about their intention and their practice of recruiting children.*

*Children as young as 10, 12 years old are being used in a*

*variety of roles, as combatants as messengers, spies, guards, manning checkpoints but also for domestic purposes like cooking, cleaning, sometimes providing medical care to the wounded.*



IS photo for propaganda/intimidation

Leila Zerrougui, UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict:<sup>8</sup>

*This is not a marginal phenomenon. This is something that is being observed and seems to be part of the strategy of the group.*

*They are abducting children and forcing them to join, they are brainwashing children and indoctrinating them to join their group. All the tools used to attract and recruit children are used by this group.*

IS video of a reported graduation of child soldiers:<sup>9</sup>

*[Children are the] generation of lions, protectors of religion, dignity and land.*

Tanvir Sheikh, the father of an IS foreign fighter, speaking about his son:<sup>10</sup>

*He had got a job offer from Kuwait with a salary of three lakh rupees (\$4,800) but he ignored that and instead took up arms. Now what happens to his future?" Sheikh told the Indian Express newspaper on Monday.*

*I feel let down by my son. He had a bright career ahead of him but he took advantage of our love and betrayed us.*

From letters and messages from several IS fighters from France:<sup>11</sup>

*I'm sick of it. They make me do the washing-up.*

*I'm fed up to the back teeth. My iPod no longer works out here. I have got to come home.*

*I've done hardly anything but hand out clothes and food. I've also cleaned weapons and moved the bodies of killed fighters. Winter is beginning. It's starting to get tough.*

*Aint allowed to have a phone when training...cos I don't have it on me and I can't charge it without someone grassing me up [sic].*

Former 15-year-old IS soldier "Yasir:"<sup>12</sup>

*I spent a month without seeing my family or anyone that I knew. It was forbidden to see or speak to anyone.*

*We used to crawl under webbing. There was fire above it, and we would be firing our weapons. We would jump through large*

*metal rings, and the trainers would be firing at our feet and telling us if we stop we will be shot.*

*I was very careful not to stop running. I didn't stop, even if I was exhausted, out of breath, I didn't stop.*

*When we arrived they gave us guns and the explosive belt and the radio. We would get calls from the checkpoints alerting us [when] the IS VIPs were coming.*





*Anyone who wasn't a VIP, we would pick up our guns and stop them.*

*[When his "Yasir's" father planned an escape with his son,] I was asking him 'why are you doing this? What happened?' My father turned to me and said they are not on the right religious track.*

*I am discovering over time IS has no religion.*

### From a Rival Violent Extremist Group

Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula's "spiritual guide" Sheikh Harith al-Nadhari:<sup>13</sup>

*[IS] revoked the legitimacy of all the Islamic groups across the Islamic world...and drove a wedge among Mujahadin ranks by collecting allegiances from within the jihadi groups. They announced the expansion of their caliphate in a number of countries in which they have no mandate.*

### On Impiety

Waseem Iqbal—British citizen planning a trip to Jordan to provide packages of food for refugees of the Syrian conflict:<sup>14</sup>

*How do you save innocents in Syria? By going into a war zone and getting yourself killed? Or by...bringing people water pumps, schools and food packages? This is what saves innocents.*

Indian engineering student turned disillusioned IS foreign fighter 23-year-old Areeb Majeed:<sup>15</sup>

*Only after I begged them, I was taken to a hospital.*

*There was neither a holy war, nor were any of the preachings in the holy book followed.*

Pope Francis:<sup>16</sup>

*...an extremist and fundamentalist group [has subjected communities to] barbaric violence simply because of their ethnic and religious identity.*

*It is essential that all citizens—Muslim, Jewish and Christian—both in the provision and practice of the law, enjoy the same rights and respect the same duties.*

### On Slavery, Rape, and Crimes Against Humanity

IS Pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Taking Captives and Slaves:"<sup>17</sup>

*It is permissible to have intercourse with the female slave who hasn't reached puberty if she is fit for intercourse.*

*It is permissible to capture any "unbelieving" women and have sex with her "immediately" if she is a virgin. If she is not, though, "her uterus must be purified" first.*

*[A man] may not kiss the female slave of another.*

*It is permissible to beat the female slave as a [form of] darb ta'deeb [disciplinary beating], [but] it is forbidden to [use] darb al-takseer [extreme beating],*

*[darb] al-tashaffi [beating for the purpose of achieving gratification], or [darb] al-ta'dheeb [torture beating]. Further, it is forbidden to hit the face."*

A reported high-level IS official of German origin:<sup>18</sup>

*I would say that slavery is a great help to us, and we will continue to have slavery and beheadings. It is part of our religion...many slaves have converted to Islam and have then been freed.*

A captured Christian woman:<sup>19</sup>

*At two in the morning we heard the girls screaming. The gunmen were raping the girls. You could tell they were being raped, and they were hurting them. They said, 'these ones don't have religion.'*

Former IS captive child "Suzanne:"<sup>20</sup>

*They beat me with a plastic hose and a cable.*

*They were saying 'it is useless for you to try to escape'...They hit me everywhere: my hands, my legs, my back. Everyone took a turn—even the children from the village and the wives.*

Former IS captive 15-year-old "Sabreen:"<sup>21</sup>

*Lots of men used to come and look around, and when they would see a girl they liked they would say, 'I want to buy that one.' There was an emir who was taking money for the girls—\$1,000 to \$1,500.*

"Sabreen's" uncle Hamid:<sup>22</sup>

*Suddenly you get a phone call out of the blue saying 'We have your daughter.' They don't tell you their names or anything like that. Or 'we have your girl. We want this amount of money.'*

*If you can find someone you can trust, that man goes and says, 'I want this girl to marry,' and he pays it straight to IS. You can't say 'I want to buy three girls back' – they won't give them to you like that.*

*People were willing to pay any amount of money. But now in my own family, we have about 30 girls missing. If you have to pay \$5,000 for each one of them...you will not be able to buy all of them back.*

Turkish aid worker Abdullah having been contacted by a British 16-year-old girl:<sup>23</sup>

*These girls are young and naïve and maybe also impulsive teenagers who are fed up with life in the West. And on social media IS makes life there look so appealing. But then the fairy tale cracks.*

*She was very dispirited. 'I need you to help me. I need to get out,' she said. And then she explained her situation. They were living in a house of single women in an IS town. They were not allowed to leave the house or be in touch with anyone from their families. Their worst fear was that they would be forced into marrying someone against their will.*

*Areas run by the IS are like an iron dome. There are checkpoints all over, and no one gets in or out without a proper reason.*

19-year-old Kurdish farmer's daughter turned peshmerga fighter Pervin Kobani:<sup>24</sup>

*I didn't really have any other ambitions. I just wanted to live a free life, as a woman, (to) be able to see our reality, and have our rights and just live.*

*We won't allow the terrorist groups in until the last drop of our blood.*

### IS Goals

Supposed IS cell leader:<sup>25</sup>

*We will conquer Europe one day. It is not a question of if we will conquer Europe, just a matter of when that will happen.*

*Our expansion is perpetual...And the Europeans need to know that when we come, it will not be in a nice way. It will be with our weapons. And those who do not convert to Islam or pay the Islamic tax will be killed.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Trickle Down Stabilization: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Foreign Policy and the Narrative of Insurgent Violent Extremism**

—Kevin Ofchus

Shortly after the longest war in U.S. history began in 2002, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) was established. The intent was to provide tangible resources crafting a new narrative of internal stabilization in a post Taliban climate. This narrative focused on mitigating insurgent violent extremist (INS/VE) grievances by bolstering and supporting strategic financing capabilities for the nascent government's prioritized post conflict stabilization projects. Nearly a decade later, the U.S. Coalition again sought to re-calibrate the narrative in Afghanistan by enabling the Afghan First Initiative (AFI) seeking to essentially "buy" our way into soft power capacity building stabilization. The intent of AFI was to bolster U.S. counterinsurgency (COIN) objectives by supporting and prioritizing Afghan companies in order to increase Afghan employment and participation in the quagmire of reconstruction. In effect, the AFI placed fiduciary *output* over programmatic COIN/CVE *outcome* with the misplaced understanding that giving hundreds of millions of U.S. tax dollars to Afghan companies translated to re-investment into Afghan programs and objectives stabilizing the country. The strategy aimed at thwarting precursor grievances (lack of resources, opportunity, poverty, employment, etc.) of a disenfranchised populace mitigating symptoms of the INS/VE rhetorical narrative via what I termed "trickle down stabilization."

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the Department of Defense to limit millions in defense spending competition to Afghan products, services, and sources. In 2010, further guidance was issued to agencies encouraging local procurement contracting for the purpose of improving the Afghan economy by building Afghan leadership, participation, capacity, and sustainability.<sup>26</sup> The trickle-down stabilization theory was a challenging undertaking but could not escape the frame of reference within which it was enabled. The enduring problems of corruption and a historically fragmented tribal culture, co-opted by the alternative INS/VE narrative confronted the AFI COIN/CVE effort. In principle, trickle-down stabilization was a good tool, if it was applied with strict oversight. Yet knowing the corrosive effects of systemic corruption was rooted deeply into the fabric of Afghan culture, AFI and the ARTF pushed forward undaunted. The irony was without having adequate oversight for productive *outcomes* on our own contracts, wasting billions in U.S. taxpayer dollars during the previous decade, what expectation could anyone have that there would be more success handing U.S. tax payer dollars over to the country ranking 169 out of 176 on the worldwide corruption index?<sup>27</sup>

AFI appears to have little if any effect. The underlying assumption of the AFI was that by forcing hundreds of millions of U.S. tax dollars via contracts to Afghan companies, there would be a stabilization effect, the "trickle down." However, the roots of corruption ran deep and were wide spread poisoning the AFI and actually furthering the ongoing corruption while strengthening the INS/VE counter stabilization narrative. The

dysfunctional pattern was clear. Contractors sub-contracted to a second tier company who in turn sub-contracted to another company and so on. By the time funding filtered down to who was actually going to do the work, U.S. taxpayer funds were dried up and the last sub contractor at the bottom was left getting burned with the hot potato in hand. In reality it was *trickle down corruption*, a Ponzi scheme of sorts. In classic fashion, blame was delegated throughout the chain of the scheme. A large part of the problem was our own lack of oversight enabling the dysfunction to fester as U.S. contracting authorities used at least six different methods to announce contract solicitations to the Afghan business community and at least seven separate databases to vet contractor ownership and capacity.<sup>28</sup> With multiple authorities announcing contract solicitations for hundreds of millions, if not billions, of U.S. tax dollars, it was easy for Afghan contracting entities to escape and evade accountability.

As the contracts were sub-contracted *trickling down* multiple times, the overall quantitative *output* in dollars was high, but the *outcome* and qualitative effect was demonstrably low. Thwarting this, some contracts included clauses not allowing 2<sup>nd</sup> tier sub-contractors to work on the contract awarded, but there was no mechanism to enforce it. In Afghanistan, there was no viable remedy in a corrupt legal system where payoffs are common. The judicial remedies in Afghanistan were seriously undermined by systemic corruption, resulting in undermined legitimacy of the state, weak rule of law, and the inability to enforce it.<sup>29</sup> This further rationalized the INS/VE narrative of a grievance oriented populace within a government exploited by nepotism and well connected corrupt criminal patronage networks reaping the benefits of squandered and unmonitored U.S. tax dollars. Without adequate oversight on outcomes, many U.S. agencies did not use the full range of information available to vet companies prior to award. For example, although U.S. agencies obtained business licenses at the time of award to confirm Afghan ownership, they did not independently verify these licenses with Afghan authorities or monitor the validity of the licenses throughout the contract's period of performance.<sup>30</sup>

What ensued was repetitive delegation of blame throughout the multi-tier subcontracting scheme as funded programs and/or projects failed. If the U.S. government tried to punish the prime contractor and re-coup funds (now gone and out of country) they were left with little recourse and stuck running around a maze of liability in a country with no effective civil or criminal law enforcement capacity and no mutual legal assistance treaty in place for extradition.

One of a plethora of examples of the problem was the \$121 million dollar sixty-four mile road U.S. tax dollars funded from the province of Gardez to the province of Khost. "There would be a string of subcontracts, where the subcontractors would take a cut and subcontract it out again [said a civilian who worked with the military on the project] and we had a problem with the final subcontractors. They didn't have enough money to get the work done."<sup>31</sup> Even worse some of the inflated funding was suspected to have made its way to the INS/VE Haqqani Network as part of the security for the project. It was quite literally the fox guarding the hen house as funds "trickled down" to INS/VE seeking to undermine the post conflict stabilization narrative! Not a surprising circumstance when the contracting officer is sitting in the D.C Beltway or at the U.S. Embassy fortress in Kabul never actually travelling to the work site. Predictable outcome(s) repeated ad nauseam.

Companies (Afghan or otherwise) were then "black listed" and prohibited from the AFI. However, as in any INS/VE conflict environment, survival mandates adaptation and company owners simply re-formed and re-organized adapting under another name to continue obtaining U.S. tax payer funds. Compounding this on an even greater scale was the ARTF (Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund), a multi-donor trust fund supported by 34 donors and administered by the World Bank with the government of Afghanistan. According to the ARTF, all funding is channeled through government systems with ministries and government agencies responsible for implementing the projects.<sup>32</sup> Astonishingly, USAID and the Department of State both new that this was spurious. USAID contractors assessed sixteen (16) Afghan ministries and found them unable to manage and account for funds. Furthermore, shockingly USAID waived its own requirements for direct assistance without insisting Afghan ministries fix problems before the disbursement of U.S. funds.<sup>33</sup> As a result, billion-dollar amounts of U.S./Coalition tax dollars were going to institutions we had reason to believe were corrupt. Moreover, we apparently ignored our own *outcome*-monitoring requirement for direct assistance without holding anyone

accountable for the oversight. The *output to outcome* ratio stunningly off the charts, confirmed by the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, (SIGAR), was not only within USAID/DoS but within DoD as well. The Defense Department committed more than \$4 billion to the Afghan Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior without conducting a comprehensive risk assessment of the two ministries' financial-management capabilities.<sup>34</sup>

Trickle down stabilization was being thwarted in the field and inside the Government with staggering effectiveness, further enabling the INS/VE narrative of an ineffective and incapable government...while INS/VE's simultaneously were fleecing the U.S. taxpayers, the AFI and ARTF in sub-contracting schemes. The constant flood of billions in U.S. taxpayer dollars into Afghanistan without effective oversight fueled symptomatic corruption, a key piece of the INS/VE narrative and ideological leverage for sustained destabilizing activity throughout the country.

It is no secret within DoD military intervention or soft power stabilization; corruption is rampant in the most destabilized areas around the world, just like Afghanistan. The lesson learned for twenty-first Century foreign policy is that we must understand first and foremost in the most at risk post-conflict environments corruption is an important frame of reference within which the *outcomes* are pitted against *output*. Second, with this in mind start with simple projects proving and verifying success. *Verify then trust in the post cold war era, it is no longer "trust but verify."* Third, focus on the *outcome* and the desired end result incrementally, do not continue obligating and spending U.S./Coalition tax dollars on programs unable to be verified and monitored effectively. Finally, by extension of the former, the soft power priority must be *outcome over output*.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Fourth Act in Narrative Construction

—Weston Brewster

This article is for those constructing narratives: a meta-story that showcases and strengthens identity, meaning, and purpose.

Whether a clear structure is important or not, many communications scholars suggest that even security and business narratives be framed in a way that captures consumers with "sets and surprises" and "heroes and villains."<sup>35</sup> They warn of "an unfulfilled idea that fails to connect with audiences, not because it's a bad idea, but because it's not packaged in a way that moves people."<sup>36</sup>

It is also important to keep in mind that there is no single structure or character arc. There appears "no universal cross-cultural agreement about how a story should proceed."<sup>37</sup>

The hero's journey—sometimes three acts including character, conflict, and resolution—is one structure that originates from the Near East and became common last century in some Western traditions. However, many today, even in the West, find the structure predictable, boring, tired, and saccharin.

Many stories, instead, rely heavily on a post-hero-journey tale.

This fourth act is how the protagonist (not always a hero) deals with the outcomes of the three-act journey.

Popular examples of this include how the protagonist in *Aliens* deals with what happened during her escape off the planet—she must return to save a child and reap the wrath of the monsters she had upset. In *Raging Bull*, the majority of the film focuses on the protagonist (an anti-hero of sorts) must deal with his intended obtained goal he reaches at the beginning. In *Goodfellas*, the story mostly focuses on the how the protagonist deals with the fallout of his ascension in the mob—the paranoia, fear, and need to escape that comes from his version of success. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the protagonist (not Max, who is a supporting character as he was in the second film of the series) successfully escapes. But upon learning her paradise is a wasteland must go back and



face head on the fallout of all the chaos and death that she wrought. *Godfather II* sees Michael Corleone deal with the fallout of him attaining absolute power—losing his family, isolating himself, and obsessively murdering even those who no longer pose a threat.

Storytellers of fourth act tales seem to be interested in moving beyond the tired tropes of the hero's journey. They investigate the meaning and repercussions of an overused plot device. They ask: what next?

\*\*\*\*\*

### Where Violent Extremists Go Next

—Howard Gambrell Clark, PhD

Violent extremists thrive in unstable under-governed areas.

One does not need a complicated algorithm to understand probabilities of geographic shift or growth. One must only find areas that are unstable, and one will see violent extremists running and thriving there. If violent extremists are the rain, unstable areas are gorges and valleys.

On a strategic scale, al-Qa`ida and its offshoots like so-called Islamic State will rush to war and civil conflict. Not only can violent extremists waltz across borders when armies are turned on one another, but they can also take advantage of weakened governance in rural home fronts to then establish armies and take and own new land. Violent extremists' enemies are struggling with myriads of problems and cannot focus all their efforts on al-Qa`ida-like groups. The situation in Syria and Iraq in 2015 was an example.<sup>38</sup>

- The Kurds vied for rights, autonomy, oil, and perhaps territory in Turkey and/or Iran.
- The ethnic and religious tensions and political brinkmanship between the Shi'a Arabs, Sunni Arabs, Sunni Kurds, and minority ethnicities and faiths did not even begin to describe the strategic systemic causes of instability in Iraq—a country drawn together literally with a wooden ruler.
- Saudi Arabia and Iran vied for influence throughout southern, western, and central Iraq as well as in the politics of Baghdad.
- Turkey and Iran feared Kurdish expansion or autonomy in their homelands.
- The Kurds continued historical internal political rivalries that Saddam Hussein had stoked under his reign.
- Syria saw numerous groups looking to control the country. It is an ever-morphing collage of secular, tribal, and religiously oriented groups changing sides, alliances, and scales of violence to evoke change.

The more complicated the conflict, the more actors involved, and the more armies of different fighters on the ground allow violent extremists to live and thrive. Other examples include post-Gaddafi Libya in which former soldiers are fighting self-claimed Islamists to the point to which Islamic State is able to control an entire town as other violent extremists embed in rural areas throughout the country. From alcoves throughout Libya, violent extremists can support and perhaps even conduct incursions into the Sahel.<sup>39</sup> Also, as of January 2015 the Egyptian military is still trying to defeat the violent extremists in Sinai that grew during the temporary political confusion that Western media erroneously dubbed the "Arab Spring." One last example is Yemen in January 2015, when al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula has surged in new safe havens throughout the desert regions as Sunni tribes distress over Shi'a overtake of the capital and a perceived constant flow of drone attacks.<sup>40</sup>

On a more tactical level, violent extremists embed into areas in which the local governance systems are unable to overcome basic challenges—where societal capacity has been degraded to the level that locals seek any outsiders that could help. Consider the aftermaths of civil wars in areas like Somalia and Afghanistan—where informal and traditional community leaders have been killed or exiled to the point at which basic knowledge about growing crops, conflict resolution mechanisms, and how to access water in a dry season is lost. Fortunately for many Pashtun areas of rural Afghanistan and Arab tribal areas of the Middle East deserts, clans

have shown incredible resilience reconstituting themselves and relearning governance savvy even when generations of leaders have been lost. However violent extremists only need some safe haven and some support from which to launch attacks and recruit. And even among the most resilient societies may lie some villages or some city blocks that may well welcome and need violent extremists.

It should also be noted that sometimes lack of societal capacity may derive from earlier extremist attacks and threats towards an area. Violent extremists will instigate political or sectarian conflict, for example, and then swing in to offer stable and severe governance in the ensuing power vacuum.<sup>41</sup> They can enter the community and offer courts, social services, and stability even if that stability comes with the cost of implementing perverse extreme laws such as the Afghan Taliban did in the 1990s and again in some Afghan territories from 2001 through today. In short, violent extremists create and/or exacerbate sources of instability. But they will not offer the community real resilience and self-sufficiency, because they need just enough instability or promise of impending instability to be needed by the locals.

What does local instability look like? How can analysts predict specific villages, tribal areas, or urban blocks that have the type of instability that could help allow violent extremists entry and refuge? Instability has three broad elements.

First is lack of support for governance—governance being an end state that can comprise the formal government and/or informal traditional leadership structures to varying degrees.<sup>42</sup> One must never mistake government with governance. Even in urban environments in Europe and the United States informal community organizations and youth group leaders may play an important hand in overall governance. Also, one must not mistake a lack of support for governance with less-than-optimal power players. The focus is on popular perception, because it is the people that will or will not allow violent radicals in. In addition, an analyst must not misinterpret dislike of a particular leader with the type of lack of support for governance that translates into revolt or siding with extremists. After all, in a healthy democracy people may not like the policies of a particular leader only to vote her out during the next election or immediately support a minority political party. For the study of instability, it is the type of revulsion of governance that sends people running into the hands of insurrection that is of interest. Finally, one should ask to what a community is accustomed. For example, if a community states that it is against the government and local tribal elders because they are not getting electricity, this discontent may not translate into a source of instability if no power was the norm—especially if that community never had power and functioned fine without it. While the improvement of overall livelihood through long-term development may be a constructive governance goal, certain types of gripes (after we look to history and see how people lived before) may unlikely translate into instability—especially when violent extremists cannot offer a viable alternative and do not use the matter in their propaganda.

Second is a support for violent extremists. People may tend toward malign actors if said persons can offer a viable substitution of governance functions such as speedy courts and immediate security. They also may sway towards an insurrection if the opposition employs effective enough propaganda to convince people that the existing governance systems are unfair or in complete disrepair. In the previous example of people wishing for electricity, a violent extremist group, who may not be able to offer power themselves, may convince people that the government cares not for them as towns and cities throughout the world and perhaps nearby enjoy power easily with new technology. In other words, they could use something as seemingly benign as a lack of power, in a community that never had power, to create a sense of social injustice.<sup>43</sup>

Third is a lack of societal capacity.<sup>44</sup> This is when citizens cannot provide basic needs for themselves and cannot overcome normal challenges like seasonal tribal infighting or regular annual flooding. If people are unable to put food on their tables or cannot survive a slight draught, they may very well flee or look to malign actors that are waiting with food and water.

Overall instability, then, will marry all three components: lack of support for governance, support for violent extremists, and lack of societal capacity. Places that face these three troubles are the areas that violent

extremists may very well attempt to enter.

Peeling back the elements of instability further, one must ask why instability was able to reign in the first place. An analyst should ask how such instability came about, why it continues, and why people are unable to stop it. Normally, the answer is that there is some blockage between resilient actors and the challenge—a lack of institutional knowledge, exiled elders, or so much insecurity that people are afraid or leave their homes, perhaps. Ask why enough—and more specifically ask why people are not fixing the problem themselves as they likely had for centuries, otherwise that particular village or tribal area would not have been populated in the first place—and one gets closer to the systemic source of instability.

This may seem like a grueling process, but this analytic map may help not only to explain where violent extremists may next look towards for safe harbor but also help to understand how violent extremists will embed in a new area—what sources of instability they may address or exacerbate.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Identity and the Future of America**

Christopher Holshek

Americans are more anxious about the future than ever. Sure, every generation seems to think, for one reason or another, that the place is going to hell in a hand basket. This time, it appears to be a unique convergence of several things.

America is in decline because it's hopelessly divided and going broke fast, because Washington is dysfunctional and corrupt, and because it's drawing back from a world it no longer can or wants to lead. Or maybe it's because Americans are obese, lazy, addicted to sugar and prescription drugs, reality TV, and their social media echo chambers. We are insular, ignorant and ill-educated, and we don't read. Or maybe it is because we are gun-crazy and violent, narcissistic, racist, misogynistic, puritanical, and turning against factual truth, science, math, art, and history. The American Dream is dead because today's children must expect to have less rather than more than their parents had, at least materially.

Given all that, it's a wonder how we ever became the country we are.

This time, however, Americans sense the country is in real and not just relative decline. Their way of life is changing for the worse, and there's very little they can do about it--national insecurity. We are a nation unhinged by a midlife crisis, coming to grips with profound national and global changes. Frontiers have become limitations.

But America's relative decline should be no surprise, really, considering our national psychological point of reference in 1945. At the end of World War II, we dominated as no other nation had in history. No wonder that era is thought of so nostalgically. Yet, when the Berlin came down in 1989, we failed to see we needed another national conversation about who we are and what we're about as a changing nation in a changing world. So we muddled along, searching for the next big idea to help us figure it all out. Because the United States was the sole superpower, we had no sense of urgency to have that unifying dialogue, though things were changing more rapidly than we realized. That's because in good part we were too busy being congratulating ourselves, telling ourselves how great we are, even more convinced that the way we do things was how everyone else should.

So why change? A status quo power is more conservative and risk-averse. Real reform is nearly impossible because too many people who profit from the system have too much of a stake in things as they are. Meanwhile, the rest have decided it's more comfortable and gratifying to be consumers than citizens - just give us another tax cut and go away. So we checked out of self-governance at the voting booth and dumbered ourselves down with our smartphones, with attention spans shrinking as fast as indifference was growing.

The world has been changing in ways in which our national business model has been increasingly ineffective. In most areas of national competitiveness, we've been losing ground. We're living more on a legacy and less on a promise.

America has managed to globalize everything but itself. The world we largely created is now closing in on us, and we're pushing back. But we'll have to change our profligate ways, get out of our comfort zones and re-engage, get in the sandbox and play nice with the others, and compete and collaborate by rules that suit others and not just us. The latest seismic signs of this eventuality were 9/11 and the Great Recession. These signals will keep coming in larger installments, like superstorms in climate change. The more we ignore them, the more extreme they will become. Until it's too late.

Our self-inflicted problems will continue until the fundamental power relationships somehow shift back toward greater inclusion and moderation - socially, economically, and politically. The bad news is that it will get worse before it gets better. The good news is that our fate is still very much in our own hands - but not for much longer.

The more our political bipolar disorder goes on, the more it will cost us irrevocably, and the fewer and worse our collective options become. Our irresponsible political behavior is accelerating national decline faster than anything else. We have met the enemy and he is us.

Standing most in the way of America's future is its paralyzing angst. Nothing embodies this more than our obsession with terrorism. Even though America is as safe and secure as it has ever been, the fear factor seems to drive everything, including our fear of foreigners. We still see the world predominantly in terms of threats, persistently pursuing a highly costly strategy of global dominance and intervening because we think we have monsters to destroy. The more we respond to the world out of fear, the more imperious and domineering, even arrogant, we become. That generates exactly what our enemies look for, helping them take us further down in a narrative-driven world. Arrogance is a substitute for self-confidence, fear feeds on ignorance, and kindness can't live without humility.

America cannot long remain the land of the free if it is no longer the home of the brave, because people in fear are easy prey for mass manipulation. As a nation, when fear overrules hope and we obsess with our vulnerabilities rather than play our strengths, we set ourselves up for failure. Name one championship team that has won playing not to lose.

The other problem with all this pervasive negativism is that it generates an unwillingness to face the frontiers of change, to step outside our comfort zones and reach out to the other side of the aisle, let alone the other side of the ocean, in a real sense of human connectivity.

The larger point is that most of our sense of decline is an emotional response to something we perceive, rightly or wrongly. There's plenty of evidence that we're going under, but this is as much a psychological condition as it is a physical or virtual reality.

We're doing better than advertised. Our inherent strengths go beyond the blessings of history and geography, demographic diversity, capacity for self-reinvention, and what the late Senator John McCain called "ideals and not blood and soil." Among them is an integrated immigration-assimilation culture centered on the simple yet sophisticated principle of *e pluribus unum*. This, in fact, is our greatest comparative advantage in the twenty-first century - a societal software the Russians or Chinese can neither hack into nor pirate, unless we let them phish us.

In many ways, we are becoming more the country we were set up to be in the first place. Our national formula of identity is a complex fractional equation, and although those fractions feature many numerators of human differences, there is always one common denominator - personal freedom, equal rights, and human dignity.

People have multiple identities in their professions, family lives, social circles, and so on. What makes them the same person in their various personal manifestations is their character – the values a person believes in enough to live them out in all of their incarnations.

The painful moment of truth has arrived. If we don't like what's going on with our country, the first place to look is in the mirror and ask whether we're part of the problem or part of the solution – what have we done to make our communities and our country a better place. We want it all our way but can't have it all our way. We and our elected leaders can no longer afford our supersized self-indulgence and willful obliviousness. We got away with absentee citizenship for much of our national life, but we can't anymore. The world beyond our doors and shores just won't let us anymore.

Washington isn't going to fix America; America is going to fix America. It's our communities more than our capital that make our country great. The good news is that networks of metropolitan and municipal leaders are stepping up to move the nation forward, in a demonstration of cooperation among many organizations that once competed with each other, to solve problems that defy singular solutions. Potholes, after all, don't have parties.

Jefferson's informed and active citizenry is an idea whose time has finally come. The governance we need comes from citizenship as responsible to our neighbors as it is to our nation. And for those whose attitudes toward government, politics, and civic duty range from apathy to enmity – well, when you go bad on the system, the system goes bad on you. Our leaders won't rise to the occasion any more than those they lead.

If you don't know who you are and what you're about, events control you more than you control them. Learning that takes a journey, even if it's just down the street. The world we inhabit is often a cold, hard, and unfair place. It always has been. But you can't find the goodness in it unless you find the goodness in yourself. They are one and the same.

It begins and ends with us. What is good about America is all our doing; what is not is all our fault. That's why our behavior, big and small, should strive to reflect more what we're for and not what we're against. "The key to the future of the world," [the late] Pete Seeger said, "is finding the optimistic stories and letting them be known." What the heroes in our personal and collective consciousness have been teaching us is to keep the big picture and the long run in mind while living in the moment--to think globally and act locally.

In a world of uncertainty, there's one thing we can be sure of: What we refuse to experience positively we will most assuredly experience negatively. Motorcycling is an appropriate metaphor. Like people and nations, you can only stay upright and balanced when moving forward - there's no reverse gear. To avoid potholes and other hazards, you must first acknowledge they're there and then look away, because where you look is where the bike goes. If you focus your attention and energy on negatives, that's where you wind up steering yourself. More times than not, what you look for is what you get.

So, by answering the constant call to citizenship as obligation rather than just birthright - local, national, and global - we embrace and renew the strength and promise of American reinvention and renewal. Greatness is a lot of small things done well. Every one of us, in every generation, must take our own journey to learn what it means to be a citizen not only of our country but of a larger world that technology and trade are hooking us up with, within and beyond the horizons of our lifetimes.

The choices we make along the way reveal our true character. By taking that personal journey in service to others, we change and help ourselves by helping others, building bridges instead of walls. And when we change ourselves, we change our communities. By changing our communities, we change America. And when we change America, we change the world.



Because the new frontiers are more psychological than physical, more internal than external, the path to a more perfect union and a more peaceful world lies within us. The big idea we seek has been with us all along: It is America itself. How lucky, indeed, we are as a people - especially when we're good.

America is in and of itself a journey – the culmination of more than three hundred million of them - whose signposts are frontiers and whose ultimate destination is the world's and thus uncertain. With all its good and bad, it is the greatest collective adventure the world has ever seen. The arc of that collective journey is often a slow, imperfect, torturous, violent, but inexorable march toward freedom and the inclusivity of a more perfect union.

"Follow your bliss," Joseph Campbell advised his students, but bliss, like freedom, is not just doing what we want. It's taking responsibility for your destiny. It's answering a call to a personal voyage in the public realm. We must all grab and pass the baton and run the human relay race, if only to enable others to do the same, as those who went before us did for us.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Gospel of Leadership**

—Ryan Krupa

Editor note: Narrative Strategies has received a number of requests for analyses on crossroads of narrative and strategic leadership. Interests include leadership for improved corporate culture, motivation, sense of purpose, internal and external communications, and brand. This article is the first in a series that investigates leadership and narrative—a phenomenon that includes meta-stories, identity, meaning, and purpose.

This particular article is an excerpt from the author of the just out *The Gospel of Leadership: An Unconventional Dialogue in the Pursuit of Truth*. It is written in the storytelling tradition of two characters discussing theses, antitheses, and syntheses.

*Guardian: I have always taken to soul Lamennais' sage wisdom—*

*Everyone looks at what I am looking at, but no one sees what I see.*

*Warrior: We must, and our leaders must, learn to see by awakening what sees the unseen.*

*Guardian: I'm reminded of a conversation I had with an executive. We were at a dinner with real decision-makers, the ones who control wealth and by proxy control government policy. I felt a bit out of sorts, because I could not connect nor relate to the beings I met. These sorts possessed power by coercive means—ownership and economics—based on quantitative measurements, none of which I had. While I live a rich intellectual and spiritual life, I have virtually no assets. I live a Spartan existence, I wear simple clothes, and I have no wealth. The conversation—*

*Executive: Young man, what do you do?*

*Guardian: I develop and train leaders.*

*Had I said, I develop the souls of leaders, I would have bypassed the following exchange. At the time, I feared telling executives what I actually did because I thought they'd run to the door once I began speaking. I had a policy of self-censorship back then.*

*Executive: What makes you qualified to train leaders?*

*He had a tone of contempt. He was old and weak in mind and spirit but wealthy and powerful. Rage took over—I lost compassion—and I took a head shot at his ego—*

*Guardian: Imagine, tomorrow you wake up to find yourself in the following state of existence: First, you've been fired from your executive position after 25 years of service. Second, your identity has been stolen and your finances have been wiped clean to a balance of zero. Third, your wife left you upon hearing the news of your misfortune, and sought comfort with another wealthy benefactor whom she met at an event like this a decade ago, and with whom she had been in correspondence because of her need for affection. Affection you never provide to her. Fourth, because you have no finances, foreclosure has taken place on your home. Your entire belongings have been auctioned off. Fifth, you find yourself with only a suitcase of belongings. Sixth, being stripped naked of the comforts and sources of power and authority, you find yourself standing before men like me. Seventh, and this is the point, in this state of nakedness, standing before men like me, what do you say to inspire and to lead us? What do you say? What can you possibly say or do to inspire us to follow you?*

*I let a long pause bring the man into silence. Then I continued.*

*Guardian: You don't have an answer. You can't answer. Why? Because you are nothing. Why? Because you're insignificant without coercive power. Why? Because you have no inner power. Why? Because you are a hollow man instead of a hallowed man. You know nothing of the hallowed ground. There's no light of truth in you. You're an empty shell. You're a company man. There's nothing in your soul worthy of admiration. You are a soul-less man walking.*

*He looked shell-shocked when I finished. He had vacant eyes. A longer silence ensued. I just stared at him. I both pitied and held contempt for him. He finally spoke.*

*Executive: What kind of watch is that?*

*I looked at my watch. I looked in his eyes. Yes, he is a hollow man. He is a vacant man. And he is making decisions over thousands of people's lives and over the nature of earth.*

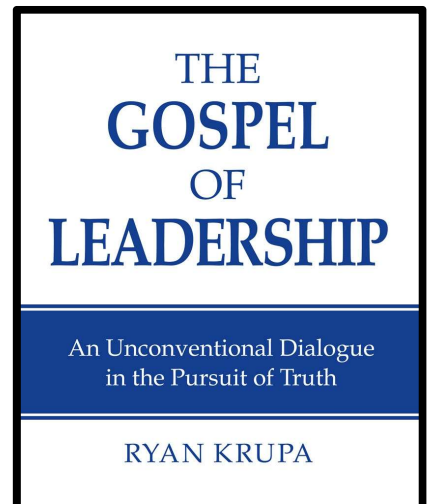
*Guardian: I pray for your soul.*

*I left the conversation and I left the dinner. Obviously, I did not end up working with the executive's team. But, a strange thing took place a few years later. I received a call from him, introducing me to his son, who had just been commissioned a Marine Officer, asking if I would mentor his son.*

*Warrior: Wow. You wielded the tomahawk of truth.*

*Guardian: I share this story because it's too late by the time you're an executive to recover from growing corruptly. That is why we need to focus on the coming-of-age years. We need to work with human beings in their formative years. Even this Executive, upon reflection, steered his son toward me for guidance. And I am finding, this happens to be the case all the time.*

*Warrior: And yet, businesses tend to focus on their executives.*



*Guardian: Yes. See how it's all upside down instead of right side up? I share this as an example of how to use the tools of truth and the tools of spirit.*

*Warrior: I don't follow.*

*Guardian: How did I even learn to think that way? How did I know how to respond to this executive to bring the light of truth? I went to the dinner with the hope of working with executives. My hope did not match reality. Truth means meeting reality and coming into harmony with it. My hope is subjective. Truth is objective. The spirit of truth is objective. It does not bend to what it subjective. What is subjective bends to it.*

*Warrior: Ah. Then a great injustice is when souls, no, the ego, aims to bend the truth and light to its will, instead of turning its will to the light and truth it receives?*

*Guardian: Yes. When I looked deeply into the executive's soul, into his inner nature, his essence revealed itself. There is no hiding from truth. Where I failed, and I am ashamed to admit this, but because it's between you and me I will speak truly, is that when truth revealed itself my ego asserted itself and jumped out to strike the guy in a combative, antagonistic way. I should have worked with him to steer both him and me towards the truth. I regret that lapse and it still serves as a lesson to guide me.*

*Warrior: You created an injustice. You took the beauty of light and truth and distorted and corrupted it.*

*Guardian: I know. Painful.*

Contact information:

Available at Amazon and Barnes & Noble

Title: The Gospel of Leadership: An Unconventional Dialogue in the Pursuit of Truth

[krupa@exploremosaic.com](mailto:krupa@exploremosaic.com)

[www.mosaicumanddevelopment.com](http://www.mosaicumanddevelopment.com) & [www.themosaicfoundation.org](http://www.themosaicfoundation.org)

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Narrative Strategies Update**

Dr. Ajit Maan, CEO, Narrative Strategies

- Current research: Target Audience Analysis
- Recent publications: Introduction to Narrative Warfare: A Manual and Study Guide, Narrative Warfare
- Forthcoming publications: Extreme Aesthetics
- Forthcoming presentations/media events: "Aesthetics and Criminology" for the conference "Narrative Justice: Aesthetic Education From Theory to Practice," Edge Hill University, England, 4-6 March 2019

Dr. Howard Gambrill Clark, President, Narrative Strategies

- Recent seminars/training: "Defeating Violent Extremism: A Tradecraft" at Georgetown University and "Information as an Instrument of National Power and Joint Function" at National Defense University, "Narratives to Support Religious Freedom" at Religious Freedom Institute.
- Forthcoming publications:
  - *Influence Warfare*
  - *Consonance and Resonance: The Untold Story of Successes in Information Warfare*
  - *Killing for Imagined Realities: The Influence of Fictive Constructs in Radicalization*
  - "Transcendent Narratives to Stop War"
  - "Stemming Lone Wolf Attacks: A Societal Approach"

\*\*\*\*\*

- <sup>1</sup> McAfee, John, "What if Artificial Intelligence Hacks Itself," *Newsweek Opinion*, newsweek.com, 22 April 2017.
- <sup>2</sup> Lachow, Irving, "Active Cyber Defense: A Framework for Policymakers," *CNAS*, 10 January 2015.
- <sup>3</sup> Lachow, Irving, "Active Cyber Defense: A Framework for Policymakers," *CNAS*, 10 January 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> Jamieson, Alastair, Shamar Walters, Kurt Chirbas, and Gabe Gutierrez, "Delta Warns of Chaos After Power Outage, Worldwide System Failure," *NBC News*. Nbcnews.com, 8 August 2016.
- <sup>5</sup> Townsend, Mark and Toby Helm, "Jihad in a social media age: how can the west win an online war?" *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, 23 August 2014.
- <sup>6</sup> Karam, Zeina and Vivian Salama, "Islamic State group recruits, exploits children," *Associated Press*, bigstory.ap.org, 23 November 2014.
- <sup>7</sup> Karam, Zeina and Vivian Salama, "Islamic State group recruits, exploits children," *Associated Press*, bigstory.ap.org, 23 November 2014.
- <sup>8</sup> Karam, Zeina and Vivian Salama, "Islamic State group recruits, exploits children," *Associated Press*, bigstory.ap.org, 23 November 2014.
- <sup>9</sup> Karam, Zeina and Vivian Salama, "Islamic State group recruits, exploits children," *Associated Press*, bigstory.ap.org, 23 November 2014.
- <sup>10</sup> AFP, "Indian IS recruit 'goes home after having to clean toilets,'" news.yahoo.com, 1 December 2014.
- <sup>11</sup> Draper, Lucy, "Would-Be Jihadists' Letters Home Reveal Unhappy, Mundane Life in ISIS," *Newsweek*, newsweek.com, 2 December 2014.
- <sup>12</sup> Damon, Arwa, "Child fighter tormented by ISIS," *CNN*, cnn.com, 13 November 2014.
- <sup>13</sup> Al-Hajj, Ahmed, "Al Qaeda In Yemen Denounces ISIS," *Associated Press* huffingtonpost.com, 21 November 2014.
- <sup>14</sup> Aboulenein, Ahmed, "For many young British Muslims tug of peace is stronger than pull of war," *Reuters*, reuters.com, 23 November 2014.
- <sup>15</sup> AFP, "Indian IS recruit 'goes home after having to clean toilets,'" news.yahoo.com, 1 December 2014.
- <sup>16</sup> Pulella, Philip and Tulay Karadeniz, "Pope condemns 'barbaric violence' of Islamic State," *Reuters*, news.yahoo.com, 28 November 2014.
- <sup>17</sup> Tharoor, Ishaan, "The Islamic State issues guide on when it's okay to beat your sex slave," *The Washington Post*, washingtonpost.com, 12 December 2014.
- <sup>18</sup> Draper, Lucy, "German Journalist Returns From Time With ISIS With Chilling Stories," *Newsweek*, newsweek.com, 22 December 2014.
- <sup>19</sup> Araf, Jane, "Yazidi families reclaim girls seized by Islamic State – for a price," *The Christian Science Monitor*, news.yahoo.com, 21 November 2014.
- <sup>20</sup> Araf, Jane, "Yazidi families reclaim girls seized by Islamic State – for a price," *The Christian Science Monitor*, news.yahoo.com, 21 November 2014.
- <sup>21</sup> Araf, Jane, "Yazidi families reclaim girls seized by Islamic State – for a price," *The Christian Science Monitor*, news.yahoo.com, 21 November 2014.
- <sup>22</sup> Araf, Jane, "Yazidi families reclaim girls seized by Islamic State – for a price," *The Christian Science Monitor*, news.yahoo.com, 21 November 2014.
- <sup>23</sup> Ward, Clarissa, "ISIS 'bedroom jihad' victims seek help after joining extremists," *CBS News*, cbsnews.com, 17 December 2014.
- <sup>24</sup> Associated Press, "INSIDE KOBANI: Kurdish women on the frontline," news.yahoo.com, 2 December 2014.
- <sup>25</sup> Draper, Lucy, "German Journalist Returns From Time With ISIS With Chilling Stories," *Newsweek*, newsweek.com, 22 December 2014.
- <sup>26</sup> John Sopko, Office Of The Special Inspector General For Afghanistan Reconstruction; "Afghan First Initiative Has Placed Work with Afghan Companies, but Is Affected by Inconsistent Contract Solicitation and Vetting, and Employment Data Is Limited" 31 January 2012 [www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/2012-01-31audit-12-06.pdf]
- <sup>27</sup> Transparency International "Corruption Perceptions Index 2016", 25 January 2017. [www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\_perceptions\_index\_2016]
- <sup>28</sup> John Sopko, Office Of The Special Inspector General For Afghanistan Reconstruction; "Afghan First Initiative Has Placed Work with Afghan Companies, but Is Affected by Inconsistent Contract Solicitation and Vetting, and Employment Data Is Limited" 31 January 2012 [www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/2012-01-31audit-12-06.pdf]
- <sup>29</sup> Danny Singh, *Journal of Intervention and State Building*; "Explaining varieties of corruption in the Afghan Justice Sector" Pages 231-255, Volume 9, 2015 - Issue 2: WANA Uprisings and the Limits of Liberal Governance Published online: 21 May 2015 [www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17502977.2015.1033093?needAccess=true]
- <sup>30</sup> John Sopko, Office Of The Special Inspector General For Afghanistan Reconstruction; "Afghan First Initiative Has Placed Work with Afghan Companies, but Is Affected by Inconsistent Contract Solicitation and Vetting, and Employment Data Is Limited" 31 January 2012 [www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/2012-01-31audit-12-06.pdf]
- <sup>31</sup> Alissa Rubin and James Risen, *The New York Times*; "Costly Afghanistan Road Project Is Marred by Unsavory Alliances"; 1 May 2011 [www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/world/asia/01road.html?\_r=1]
- <sup>32</sup> "The Afghan Reconstruction TrU.S.t Fund" http://www.artf.af/who-we-are Website
- <sup>33</sup> Gandahar, AP/Rueters; "U.S. Inspector Faults U.S.AID Over Continued Afghan Funding" 31 January 2014 [https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-U.S.aid-inspection/25248697.html]
- <sup>34</sup> John Sopko Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction Quarterly Report to the United States Congress 30 January 2014 [www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014Jan30QR.pdf]
- <sup>35</sup> Gallo, Carmine, *The Story Teller's Secret: How TED Speakers and Inspirational Leaders Turn their Passion into Performance*, MacMillan, London, 2016, p. 11.
- <sup>36</sup> Gallo, Carmine, *The Story Teller's Secret: How TED Speakers and Inspirational Leaders Turn their Passion into Performance*, MacMillan, London, 2016, p. 11.
- <sup>37</sup> Maan, Ajit, "Narrative and Conflict: Explorations of Theory and Practice," *Narrative Approach to Interethnic Conflicts: Narrative Templates as Cultural Limiters to Narrative Transformations*, Volume 2 Issue 1, April 2015, p. 79.
- <sup>38</sup> Harrison, Ross and Michael W. S. Ryan, "The ISIS Paradox: A Mirage or Mortal Threat," *The National Interest*, 7 July 2014.
- <sup>39</sup> Corbet, Sylvie and Brian Rohan, "France says ready to strike extremists on Libya border," *Associated Press*, news.yahoo.com, 5 January 2015.
- <sup>40</sup> Michael, Maggie, "Yemen's Al-Qaida Branch Is Surging, As Instability Grips The Country," *Associated Press*, huffingtonpost.com, 5 January 2014.
- <sup>41</sup> Rosen, Armin, "ISIS is Running An Alarming Effective Terrorist State," *Business Insider*, finance.yahoo.com/news, 1 December 2014.
- <sup>42</sup> USAID, "Stabilization & Transition," Stabilization Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan, 28 January 2013, slide 2-5; USAID, "Community Outreach and Engagement for Stabilization Activity Planning and Implementation: An Evaluation of Best Practices," Analytic Report, Management Systems International, Coffey International LTD, Caerus Associates LLC, Washington, DC and Kabul, Afghanistan, p. 3-26; Center for Complex Operations, "District Stability Framework Project Overview," U.S. Department of Defense, 3 February 2013, p. 1-5.
- <sup>43</sup> USAID Stabilization Unit, "District Stability Framework" briefing document, January 2012.
- <sup>44</sup> USAID, "Stabilization & Transition," Stabilization Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan, 28 January 2013, slide 2-5; USAID, "Community Outreach and Engagement for Stabilization Activity Planning and Implementation: An Evaluation of Best Practices," Analytic Report, Management Systems International, Coffey International LTD, Caerus Associates LLC, Washington, DC and Kabul, Afghanistan, p. 3-26; Center for Complex Operations, "District Stability Framework Project Overview," U.S. Department of Defense, 3 February 2013, p. 1-5.