

Taqiyya and kitman: The role of Deception in Islamic terrorism

Tradecraft. Persona. Deception. Disinformation. Cover: Western operational terms and techniques. But, Islamic terrorists have their own terms: **taqiyya** (pronounced *tark-e-ya*) : precautionary dissimulation or deception and keeping one's convictions secret and a synonymous term, **kitman**: mental reservation and dissimulation or concealment of malevolent intentions...



Taqiyya and *kitman* or 'holy hypocrisy' has been diffused throughout Arabic culture for over fourteen hundred years since it was developed by Shiites as a means of defence and concealment of beliefs against Sunni unbelievers. As the Prophet said: 'he who keeps secrets shall soon attain his objectives.'

The skilful use of *taqiyya* and *kitman* was often a matter of life and death against enemies; it is also a matter of life and death to many contemporary Islamic terrorists. As so often in the history of Islam, a theological doctrine became operational.



During the Spanish inquisition, Sunni Moriscos attended mass and returned home to wash their hands of the 'holy water'. In operational terms, *taqiyya* and *kitman* allowed the 'mujahadeen' to assume whatever identity was necessary to fulfill their mission; they had doctrinal and theological and later jurisprudential sanction to pretend to be Jews or Christians to gain access to Christian and Jewish targets: 'the mujahadeen can take the shape of the enemy'.

Taqiyya is common to both Shiite and Sunni Muslim discourse and has significant implications for understanding Islamic fundamentalism and terrorist operations. The theory and practice of counter terrorism would be counter productive, indeed pointless, and even harmful, without reference to *taqiyya* and *kitman* and the crucial role of deception ranging from Islamic jurisprudence to Al Qaeda training manuals, which carry detailed instructions on the use of deception by terrorists in Western target countries.

According to Christian ethics lying is a sin; In Islamic jurisprudence and theology, the use of *taqiyya* against the unbelievers is regarded as a virtue and a religious duty.

.. إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

"Verily the most honourable of you in the sight of God is the most pious among you; verily, God is knowing, aware!" 49:13

أَتْقَاكُمْ

Shi'a interpret the phrase above as "he among you who exercises *Taqiyya* most"

Like many Islamic concepts *taqiyya* and *kitman* were formed within the context of the Arab-Islamic matrix of tribalism, expansionary warfare and conflict. *Taqiyya* has been used by Muslims since the 7th century to confuse and split 'the enemy'. A favored tactic was 'deceptive triangulation'; to persuade the enemy that *jihad* was not aimed at *them* but at another enemy. Another tactic was to deny that there was *jihad* at all. The fate for such faulty assessments by the target was death.

Sydney NSW Australia: 2 November 2002



Sheik Taj el-Din al Hilaly, the controversial Grand Mufti of Australia, is enjoying lunch with his trusted assistant Keysar Trad. The journalist writing of the meeting with the Sheik noted:

'Several times, when direct responses to questions about passages in the Koran begged a simple yes or no, both men preferred to avoid the issues by talking about the difficulties of translating passages from Arabic to English.'

Referring to the Sheik's blithe dismissal of his virulent anti-Semitic remarks in 1998, the journalist reflected:

'I can only muse at the facility of my guest, who has also praised suicide bombers in more recent times, to dismiss his notorious and abominable remarks with such ease and without actual apology. It seems clear that he is considering the way his remarks will be construed by the Sunday Telegraph's huge and influential audience when they are translated into Arabic for Muslims to debate. He's walking a tightrope.'

The skilled journalist should not be puzzled as the Sheik's target audiences were *Australians* and not Arab readers. *Taqiyya*, or dissimulation, is a key feature in Islamic public discourse and confuses Western audiences. It is meant to, according to the Koran:

'Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers; if any do that; they shall have no relation left with Allah except by way of precaution....that ye may guard yourselves'. 3:28

Al *Taqiyya* is with tongue only; not the heart. A believer can make any statement as long as the 'heart is comfortable'. The 9/11 terrorists lived and visited in the United States for two years before the 9/11 attacks. How did they acculturate? By the use of *taqiyya*. Meaning: ***I hate you but I smile at you-in public.***

Taqiyya and 'Outwitting' in contemporary political discourse and debates

Outwitting: Islamic spokesmen commonly use *taqiyya* as a form of 'outwitting'. The matter under discussion is not to be debated or discussed; rather the opponent is to 'outwitted' through *taqiyya*, by diversion of the subject and obfuscation aided at times with a mystical reference to God or Allah.

The claim that difficulties in translating from Arabic to English make communication with non-Arab speakers difficult or impossible, is another form of outwitting. The tactical use of a translator offers considerable advantage.

Role playing as victim:

Claiming to be 'the victim' of religious discrimination and intolerance during debate or discussion is another form of distraction and 'outwitting'.



Manipulating ambiguity:

Sheik Hilaly of Sydney, Australia is on public record as (a) 'condemning' the 9/11 attacks in ambiguous terms and (b) praising suicide and martyr operations. However, Islamic spokesmen will rarely condemn a *specific* act of terrorism and direct questions will be skillfully evaded.

Diversion: For example, questions relating to the 9/11 terrorists attacks will be diverted by a causally irrelevant counter reference to the plight of the Palestinians, the nefarious role of Israel and US foreign policy and support for Israel as 'causes' of terrorism.

Anti-Semitism, a core belief of Islamic fundamentalism is also skillfully diverted by misleading and exaggerated historical references to the alleged status enjoyed by Jews and non-believers under Islamic rule, thereby deflecting critical examination of the virulent contemporary Islamic anti-Semitism.



Demanding 'evidence': Islamic spokesmen practice a form of *taqiyya* defined in psychology as 'cognitive denial' by repetitive and extreme requests for 'evidence' and 'proof' of alleged terrorist acts, which they know cannot be disclosed.

Tactical denial: Rather than admitting that a proposition concerning a state of affairs can be partly true, an Islamic spokesman will deny a claim or proposition in absolute terms. For example, "*It is impossible to be a Muslim and a terrorist*", which is false and "*Islam forbids suicide*", which is true, but irrelevant as suicide or martyrdom attacks are *not* forbidden in the Koran.

Exploiting cognitive dissonance: Islamic spokesman tend to be baffle television interviewers and puzzle viewers as they resort to double talk 'clichés and platitudes' concerning Islam. A state of cognitive dissonance-holding two contradictory beliefs and attempting to resolve them-is induced in viewers as they attempt to process the claim that Islam is a peaceful religion with the dissonant facts of Islamic terrorist acts and operations.

The Islamic 'defence' script: Islamic spokesmen repeat the same predictable platitudes concerning Islam in London as do Islamic spokesmen in Seattle and often appear to follow a prepared script from "*Islam is tolerant and peace loving*" to the claim by Islamic spokeswomen invariably claiming that wearing the veil offers them more freedom (women in Muslim countries are therefore 'freer' than women in western countries), thereby precluding further examination into the real status of women under Islamic rule.

Islamic platitudes are also echoed uncritically by Western politicians, for example "A small group of fundamentalists have



hijacked a great religion'. The timely, skilful, misleading and diversionary theme of the 'hijacking' of Islam was introduced into public, political and media discourse by an Islamic 'spokesmen' in the United States shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The "*Islam has been hijacked*" diversionary theme is now a conventional media and political reference deflecting attention from empirical and historical examination of the doctrinal, political and religious continuity of Islamic terrorism. A related theme that a small minority of Muslims are engaged in terrorism is utterly irrelevant as Islamic terrorism is always perpetrated by 'small minorities' or more accurately 'small groups'.

Taqiyya as impressions and perceptions management



The tactical use of children:

Australia television viewers noted that interviews with terrorist suspects raided by security authorities invariably featured veiled women holding small children or a baby as they protested their husband's innocence and attested to his innate goodness. Trembling

fingers pointed to 'damage' to the family residence. In some interviews the suspect / father holds the child, whilst denying involvement or knowledge of terrorism in any sense of the word: an example of *taqiyya* in the age of impressions and perception management.



Taqiyya and the Deceptive use of Jihad: The contemporary political meaning of jihad is clear: it is Jihad of the sword. Egyptian-based Islamic fundamentalists, from whom Bin Laden recruited his key operatives, believe jihad is the fourth pillar of Islam and is a *binding* belief and integral to the faith. Claiming that Jihad is a subjective and psychological state of personal struggle is *taqiyya*. In contemporary terms, Jihad means - holy war - against unbelievers and it in this context that Al Qaeda training manuals refer to Jihad as '*Holy War*'.

The study of *taqiyya* and *kitman* is crucial to an understanding of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism ranging from the issuing of false terrorist threats, operational and strategic disinformation issued by Al Qaeda in the form of 'intelligence chatter' to the use of *taqiyya* and *kitman* by terrorists during interrogation and the use of systematically misleading expressions concerning Islam and terrorism by Muslim 'spokesmen'.