



# Closing the Gap: Measuring the Social Identity of Terrorists

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Studies of terrorism today focus on psychological and behavioral aspects of individuals. Most research shows that using a single model in an attempt to profile terrorists psychologically is problematic, if not impossible. However, using two well-established theories from social psychology, Social Identity Theory and Social Distance Theory, allows the development of a practical model to develop a social profile of a terrorist group. From that, it is further possible to use the resulting social profile to compare terrorist groups against each other in order to develop predictive models as to the propensity of violence of a particular group. To test this, the research within this thesis uses open source interviews of the terrorist group HAMAS and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), taken from on-line magazines, on-line journals, on-line newspapers, and official web sites, to serve as respondents to a survey instrument developed from other social identity studies. The results of this research shows that a social profile of a terrorist group can be developed from standard social identity measurement survey instruments, and it is possible to develop practical methods for comparing groups, based on their social identities, to predict their propensity to violence.

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