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**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**DISRUPTING EMERGING NETWORKS: ANALYZING  
AND EVALUATING JAMAAT AL-MUSLIMEEN (JAM)  
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EXTREMIST THREAT  
IN THE CARIBBEAN**

by

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June 2012

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JAMAAT AL-MUSLIMEEN (JAM) AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN  
EXTREMIST THREAT IN THE CARIBBEAN**

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## **ABSTRACT**

For the last decade, the primary U.S. and global focus has been on combating terrorism and extremist groups in the Middle East and Asia. Limited resources have been directed to the possibility of extremists groups existing in the Western Hemisphere or the threats that could emanate from this region. Knowing that terror organizations exist globally, a closer look at the possibility of a significant terror threat near U.S. borders is warranted.

Recognizing this era of globalization, counter terror efforts must identify and address the reach of extremist organizations with traditional roots in the Middle East. This thesis evaluates and addresses the viability of a terror threat in the Caribbean through the examination of a known extremist organization, Jamaat al-Muslimeen (JAM). Examining this known organization allows for a better understanding of the actual overall threat that may or may not exist.

After assessing JAM, the authors have found that the threat presented by JAM as a terrorist organization has run its course. What began as a social movement with a political message, evolved into a terrorist entity, and has now dissolved with only its political affiliation and history to keep it on life support. The organization has been undermined by splinter groups and dissention. JAM has been unable to grow numerically and it has failed to expand its influence. Although dangerous as a criminal entity and slightly influential in Trinidad and Tobago as a facilitator of government corruption, Jamaat al-Muslimeen should no longer be considered a threat outside of its home country.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>PURPOSE AND SCOPE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>RESEARCH FOCUS AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>THE HISTORY OF JAMAAT AL-MUSLIMEEN AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS MODEL THAT BEGAN A SOCIAL MOVEMENT.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>COUNTER TERROR TECHNIQUES AND PROMOTING THE DISSOLUTION OF JAM.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>THE CAPTURE OR KILLING OF THE LEADER .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>FAILURE TO TRANSITION TO THE NEXT GENERATION.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GROUP’S AIMS .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>TRANSITION TO A LEGITIMATE POLITICAL PROCESS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>DIMINISHING POPULAR SUPPORT .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>MILITARY FORCE AND THE REPRESSION OF TERRORIST GROUPS.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>G.</b>	<b>TRANSITION TO OTHER MODUS OPERANDI.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>37</b>
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>39</b>
	<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>	<b>43</b>

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	JAM Timeline up to 1990.....	15
Figure 2.	JAM Timeline after 1900.....	17

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

17N	Revolutionary Organization 17 November
COP	Congress of the People
ETZEL	National Military Organization
JAM	Jamaat al-Muslimeen
JFK	John F. Kennedy
NNV	New National Vision Labor Party
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PNM	People's National Movement
PPM	Political Process Model
RAND	Research and Development
TTT	Trinidad and Tobago Television
UNC	Untied National Congress
U.S.	United States of America

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the viability of a significant, extremist threat developing in the Caribbean region. Through examination of Jamaat al-Muslimeen (JAM), a known, Caribbean-based extremist organization, and counter terrorism strategies, this thesis presents a foundation for a better understanding of the actual threat in the region. Although this project focuses on JAM, the scope of this thesis is on the possibility of the development of any regional threat, conditions that allow for such a development, and possible ways the United States and partner nations can act preemptively to combat the emergent threat.

## B. ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS

In a period of social, economic, and ethnic strife in Trinidad in the early 1980s, Yasin Abu Bakr formed a radical Afro-Trinidadian organization called Jamaat al-Muslimeen.<sup>1</sup> During this time, JAM was focused on domestic issues affecting the people of Trinidad and Tobago and ways that their organization could remedy these issues that best suited their own needs and desires. The result was a bloody coup attempt. In 1990, over 100 members of JAM stormed the National Parliament in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The siege lasted six days with JAM members taking numerous hostages, to include the Prime Minister and most of his cabinet, and causing millions of dollars in damage. However, Abu Bakr and his fellow JAM members escaped serious persecution.<sup>2</sup>

Whether it was because Jamaat al-Muslimeen was seen as a local problem by international governments or because they were not seen as a viable threat, JAM received scant attention outside of Trinidad until 1990 when they tried to overthrow their

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen: The Growth and Decline of Islamist Militancy in Trinidad and Tobago," *Terrorism Monitor* 7, no. 23 (July 30, 2009): 10, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=35344](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35344).

<sup>2</sup> Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen: The Growth and Decline of Islamist Militancy in Trinidad and Tobago," 9–10.

government.<sup>3</sup> Following a brief period of attention, the international interest in JAM again subsided until in 2007, U.S. authorities foiled an attack on the fuel system at New York's JFK Airport that was to be executed by Muslim extremists with apparent ties to the Caribbean and Jamaat al-Muslimeen.<sup>4</sup> This incident propelled JAM and Caribbean-based Muslim extremists into the spotlight once again, forcing U.S. and Western authorities to take notice.

Trinidad and the entire Caribbean region is also seen as an attractive target for al-Qaeda recruitment efforts and the presence of al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and other international terrorist organizations, which represents a significant threat to the United States.<sup>5</sup> Corruption, poverty, weak government, and porous borders define many of these Caribbean nations, and provide ample opportunities for these organizations' recruitment efforts.<sup>6</sup> Jamaat al-Muslimeen is a known militant organization because of the 1990 coup attempt in Trinidad and the attempted attack on JFK airport in 2007. However, other Islamic extremist organizations may be operating in the Caribbean region as well, which warrants further investigation and evaluation.

The activities of JAM along with the possibility of other Islamic extremists operating throughout the Caribbean, coupled with international terror organizations' recruitment efforts throughout the region, have given rise to the potential for the development of terrorists very close to U.S. soil. These developments have led the U.S. State Department and Special Operations Command—South to increase their attention on the region, voice their concerns on the potential threat of terrorists emerging from this area, and focus on possible ways to prevent or disrupt these developments prior to becoming a viable threat.

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<sup>3</sup> Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen: The Growth and Decline of Islamist Militancy in Trinidad and Tobago," 8.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Zambelis, "Spotlight on Trinidad and Tobago's Jamaat al Muslimeen," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 12 (June 21, 2007): 1.

<sup>5</sup> Chris Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen on Trial in Trinidad and Tobago," *Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 5 (March 9, 2006): 4.

<sup>6</sup> Amanda Farfel, "The Caribbean: A New Frontier for Radical Islam?" *American Jewish Committee (AJC) Latino and Latin America Institute*, August 15, 2007.

### C. RESEARCH FOCUS AND METHODOLOGY

The focus of this thesis is to identify if Jamaat al-Muslimeen represents a viable threat to U.S. strategic interests in the Caribbean. It also seeks to identify, after establishing the level of the threat, how the United States and partner nations can effectively disrupt this existing and/or emerging extremist network in the Caribbean area. Although countless methods or techniques are used to counter extremist networks, this work reviews the common, base understanding of how terror campaigns end with the intent of establishing a way ahead that encourages the disbandment of Jamaat al-Muslimeen.

When examining the potential for the establishment or expansion of extremist organizations, researchers must try to understand all the factors that contribute to the initial formation and maintenance of these organizations; in other words, it is necessary to dissect social movement theories, as well as the roles of individuals and networks. Individual participation and the reinforcement of individual identities through social relations provide people with a political consciousness, which pushes them towards social networks and collective action.<sup>7</sup> The study of social movements also shows that networks act as mobilizing structures that facilitate increased mobilization and formation of actual social movements.<sup>8</sup> Individuals and networks are key nodes within social movements and a better understanding of the role of each as applied to the formation of JAM can provide insight into the true nature of the threat to the United States that may, or may not, be building in the Caribbean region.

Yasin Abu Bakr founded Jamaat al-Muslimeen and was focused on change within Trinidad. Over the years, his focus broadened and his organization entered the realm of international terrorism with their alleged involvement in the planned attack on JFK airport in New York. The exposure of this plot brought forward the issue of the domestic

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<sup>7</sup> Florence Passy, "Social Networks Matter. But How?" in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, ed. Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Maryjane Osa, "Networks in Opposition: Linking Organizations Through Activists in the Polish People's Republic," in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, ed. Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 78.

threat posed by radical Muslims from the area right in the backyard of the United States.<sup>9</sup> This seemingly sudden spread of international terrorism from JAM and other Muslim extremists in the Caribbean is puzzling, and although the evidence is murky, the presence and guidance of al-Qaeda and Hezbollah seemed to have influenced JAM and other Caribbean extremist organizations.<sup>10</sup> Although the JFK airport plot of 2007 is the only incident that has received international attention, JAM operations in the United States have been ongoing for many years. Weapons used in the 1990 coup attempt in Port of Spain were purchased in the United States, and in 2001, two JAM members were caught trying to smuggle illegal weapons out of the United States and into Trinidad.<sup>11</sup> These developments and the ongoing actions of JAM throughout the region prove that actions towards combating these organizations are needed prior to them becoming more powerful, more dangerous, and solidified in the western hemisphere.

After assessing JAM and the factors behind its existence and identifying a major social movement theory that establishes a foundation for why the Caribbean is vulnerable to this type of threat, this thesis addresses the unique approaches that should be taken to optimize success against extremist organizations in this region; approaches that may be far from traditional, reactive, individual targeting that echo Benjamin Netanyahu's observation that "we must dismantle the entire terrorist network."<sup>12</sup>

Even though no one, all encompassing, model of movement organization exists, a thorough examination of JAM, using social movement theory as a guide, will provide insight into factors that facilitated the establishment, maintenance, and expansion of an organization.<sup>13</sup> If a serious threat is emanating from the Caribbean, which many believe is the case, the authors believe that preventative action through isolation coupled with

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<sup>9</sup> Moshe Terdman, "Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin: A Local Problem or a Global Threat?" *The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM), Occasional Papers* 5, no. 4 (November 2007): 1.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Zambelis, "Radical Islam in Latin America," *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no. 3 (December 2, 2005): 3.

<sup>11</sup> Terdman, "Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin: A Local Problem or a Global Threat?" 9.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies can Defeat Domestic and International Terrorist* (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995), xx.

<sup>13</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 137.

network targeting is the best approach to combating this threat. This approach can magnify the significant problem that many underground organizations face of staying in touch with their constituency while trying to operate, which drives the organization toward ineffectiveness and disbandment.<sup>14</sup>

Through analyzing JAM, social movement theory, and counter terror approaches, the authors hope to establish a way ahead for Caribbean nations and the United States to prevent the solidification of dangerous terror networks in the region. Preventative action, if applied correctly and thoroughly, can be far more effective than reactionary approaches, as well as more effective at saving money and lives.

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<sup>14</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 107.

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## II. THE HISTORY OF JAMAAT AL-MUSLIMEEN AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS MODEL THAT BEGAN A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Lennox Phillip was born in Trinidad in 1941, as the eighth of 15 children fathered by a soldier in the Trinidadian military.<sup>15</sup> Lennox grew up along the western coastline in the town of Carenage where he lived in poor conditions, received little education, and had few skills. Despite these facts, Lennox was able to become a Trinidadian police officer. However, his career as a police officer did not last long and because Lennox possessed no marketable skills and he was generally disgruntled with his home country, he decided to go abroad.<sup>16</sup> In 1968, Lennox Phillip migrated to Canada, became a student, and was fully exposed to the Black Power movements of the Americas.<sup>17</sup>

While in Canada, “[Lennox] was to fall in among the Canadian Black Muslim community and was deeply impressed by the religious fervor, the new tough fundamentalist posturing, the camaraderie among brothers, and the international contacts with the wider Muslim world. It was in Canada that Lennox Phillip had completed the transformation, the metamorphosis, from which he was to emerge as Yasin Abu Bakr, revolutionary Muslim Imam.”<sup>18</sup> The newly minted Yasin Abu Bakr returned to Trinidad ready to impose his new found beliefs on those who would follow. His objective was to form an organization of like-minded individuals focused on change within Trinidad that could challenge the incumbent government and bring about an end of perceived repression.

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<sup>15</sup> Terdman, “Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin,” 7.

<sup>16</sup> Raoul A. Pantin, *Days of Wrath: The 1990 Coup in Trinidad and Tobago* (New York: iUniverse Inc., 2007), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Terdman, “Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin,” 7.

<sup>18</sup> Pantin, *Days of Wrath*, 10.



As a founding member and as the leader of JAM, Abu Bakr was able to gather a foundation of followers pulled from a small yet devoted group of poor, Afro-Trinidadian, Muslim converts within the urban areas.<sup>19</sup> Convincing these Afro-Trinidadians that Christianity symbolized slavery and repression, Bakr methodically built a base of support that felt empowered by their new association with JAM.<sup>20</sup> With his new found quorum of followers, Baker suddenly needed financial backing and a place to gather to further solidify his movement. In regards to a place to gather, Bakr seized a plot of land that had been abandoned by the Muslim League of Trinidad and began to build his own commune.<sup>21</sup> Now that Bakr had followers and a base of operations, JAM turned to foreign countries for financial support to solidify their movement, and reportedly received funds from as far away as Libya and Sudan.<sup>22</sup>

Although JAM has continually sought to expand and intertwine with other international extremist groups, since its inception, JAM has primarily been comprised of Afro-Trinidadian converts to Sunni Islam, and the organization's philosophy has always remained a mix of Islamic rhetoric and symbolism, black power politics, and extreme ideals of pan-African nationalism. However, JAM has continually portrayed itself through the years as an advocate for all Afro-Trinidadians, including non-Muslims.<sup>23</sup> Regardless of the poor, minority stature of his initial assembly, or the questionable methods of how they acquired real estate and garnered support, Abu Bakr's establishment of Jamaat al-Muslimeen in the early 1980s created an entity that would have to be recognized and addressed by the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Although the organization has continually been involved in criminal activities that have garnered the attention of local, and at times regional authorities, a few actions stand

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<sup>19</sup> Chris Zambelis, "Trinidad's Troubling Islamist Yasin Abu Bakr," *Terrorism Monitor* 1, no. 6 (June 29, 2010): 1.

<sup>20</sup> Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen: The Growth and Decline of Islamist Militancy in Trinidad and Tobago," 10.

<sup>21</sup> Pantin, *Days of Wrath*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen: The Growth and Decline of Islamist Militancy in Trinidad and Tobago," 10–11.

<sup>23</sup> Zambelis, "Spotlight on Trinidad and Tobago's Jamaat al Muslimeen," 3.

out as events that helped to shape the organization's way ahead. The coup attempt by JAM in 1990 is one of these decisive moments, but Abu Bakr began constructing the foundation of the organization years earlier. After studying abroad, Abu Bakr returned to Trinidad focused and with a new found religious fervor. Those who came in contact with Abu Bakr saw him as a charismatic leader and those that supported him, admired him greatly.<sup>24</sup> This charisma and support acted as a catalyst for the establishment of the social movement named Jamaat al-Muslimeen.

In social movements, a strong narrative becomes a commonality between oppressed or wronged people; a tie for those who seek to overcome injustices. Narratives transmit and continue a belief in the virtue of the oppressed that support social movements because they assert a social life or at least better understanding of a group's social condition than that which prevails in the dominant culture.<sup>25</sup> However, to be effective and infectious to the populous, somehow the story or narrative must be in tune with the consciousness, voices, and goals of its intended audience. The 1980s in Trinidad and Tobago were a time of economic, ethnic, and social strife. These factors greatly influenced the developing narrative of the Jamaat al-Muslimeen organization.

The formation of JAM bears a great deal of resemblance to that of many other radical movements. Analyzing how the social movement began and developed and the chronology of the organization helps to identify this resemblance. The political process model provides a comprehensive framework to analyze the emergence of such movements, which illuminates various aspects of the movement as the chronology of the organization is presented and allows for a better understanding of JAM, how it was established, and the actions it has taken to remain relevant over the last 25 years.

The political process model, as defined by Doug McAdam, has three distinctive arenas that converge, and therefore, facilitate the emergence of a social movement: (1) development of an insurgent consciousness, (2) mobilization of resources, and (3) political opportunities. Therefore, the development of an insurgent consciousness can

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<sup>24</sup> Zambelis, "Trinidad's Troubling Islamist Yasin Abu Bakr," 1.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Couto, "Narrative, Free Space, and Political Leadership in Social Movements," *The Journal of Politics* 55, no. 1 (Cambridge Press, February 1993), 60.

facilitate recruiting like-minded people who share the idea that together they can do something about their situation.<sup>26</sup> Mobilizing resources involves establishing a meeting place, developing finances for operations, and networking, all linkage characteristics that facilitate emergence.<sup>27</sup> Political opportunities emerge when the existing political infrastructure experiences gaps and an insurgent group believes it can exploit these openings.<sup>28</sup> By definition, all three must be present to increase the chances of the formation of a social movement, and any of them alone are not sufficient for generating one.<sup>29</sup>

This political process model (PPM) is a progressive alternative to the classical explanations for the formation of an extremist organization that incorporates and accounts for both internal and external factors that aid in the group's establishment.<sup>30</sup> Also, the PPM is not entirely focused on grievances, which may provide an explanation to the formation of JAM well, because although grievances against the government were a factor, it was not the only catalyst that formed the foundation of JAM. As the events that unfolded around JAM over the years, are examined the three aspects of the political process model that facilitated the establishment of JAM becomes easier to identify.

With this in mind, it is easy to see how the formation of JAM began years before the most significant event in its existence. Even before 1990 and the coup attempt, social issues swarmed Trinidad and Tobago. The atmosphere warranted the description of being problematic and explosive with racial, religious, and social imbalances.<sup>31</sup> Afro-Trinidadians saw social inequality between themselves and the Indo-Trinidadians. The Afro-nationals in Trinidad and Tobago perceived the Indo-Trinidadians as having monopolized the commercial and agricultural sectors of the islands, as well as owning a

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<sup>26</sup> Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 59.

<sup>27</sup> McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*, 47.

<sup>28</sup> McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*, 48.

<sup>29</sup> Sean Everton, "Social Movement Theory," in *Gangs and Guerrillas: Ideas from Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism*, ed. Michael Freeman and Hy Rothstein (Monterey: NPS Press, 2011), 37.

<sup>30</sup> McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> Herb Addo, "Crisis of Shock: Insurrection in Trinidad and Tobago, 1990," *Caribbean Quarterly* 37, no. 2/3 (June 1991): 1.

majority of the property.<sup>32</sup> The respective Diasporas battled for social, economic, and political space with the Indo-Trinidadians and often achieved victories since they were the demographic majority on the islands. As a man raised in Trinidad and educated abroad, Abu Bakr saw himself as someone knowledgeable enough to institute change and create social equality in his country through a unified group. Indo-Trinidadians, or East Indians, were able to hold a majority of economic power that created a large socioeconomic disparity between different ethnic groups. In turn, portions of the Afro-Trinidadian populace often found themselves or perceived themselves as the impoverished population.

Little information exists on the formative phase surrounding the genesis of JAM but after witnessing the Black Power movements within the United States and Pan African and Black Identity politics throughout the region, Abu Bakr and JAM focused on developing a narrative centered on humanitarian rights and religious freedom in Trinidad and Tobago. JAM sought to care for the underprivileged and poor and provided basic necessities to the poorer communities.<sup>33</sup> The organization felt the government was overly restrictive and even wanted to curtail religious practices.<sup>34</sup> This overt version of the narrative emphasized social justice, anti-poverty measures, and economic redistribution within Trinidad and Tobago. Abu Bakr and JAM members felt the Indo-Trinidadian population possessed a majority of the nation's wealth and land. Likewise, JAM believed the incumbent regime was either unable or unwilling to address these inequalities within Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>35</sup> Jamaat al-Muslimeen's initial and stated motivation was to seek equality on the islands, address poverty issues, and redistribute the nation's wealth amongst all people, especially the Afro-Trinidadians. While outwardly expressing their desires, which reflected noble and lofty goals, the organization's practices and means to achieve these goals would remain hidden, shrouded in rumors of illegitimacy.

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<sup>32</sup> Addo, "Crisis of Shock: Insurrection in Trinidad and Tobago, 1990."

<sup>33</sup> Charles Bloeser, "Deprivation, Rationality, and Rebellion: The Case of Trinidad and Tobago," *Caribbean Studies* 25, no. 3/4 (1992): 292.

<sup>34</sup> Bloeser, "Deprivation, Rationality, and Rebellion: The Case of Trinidad and Tobago," 289.

<sup>35</sup> Helen Pyne-Timothy, "Abu Bakr's Perceptions of His Movement as Seen Through an Analysis of His Language," *Caribbean Quarterly* 37, no. 2/3 (1991): 39.

Yasin Abu Bakr and JAM remained adamant that they focus on legitimate change, through legitimate operations, that were for the benefit of the people. However, they soon had a more violent and poignant narrative that would follow. Much of the less obvious portions of the group's narrative fueled distrust for the government, criminal activity, and a hatred towards the Indo-Trinidadians. Racial tensions and ethnic conflict were obvious throughout Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>36</sup> Not only did JAM seek to settle socioeconomic issues, but it sought and continues to seek a sense of retribution on the Indo-Trinidadians. "Abductions targeting the prosperous and politically influential have evoked comparison to the Abu Sayyaf guerrillas."<sup>37</sup> The Trinidadian police's battle with the Jamaat over the targeting of Indians by the predominantly black gang illuminates the racial issues that exist.<sup>38</sup> Both sides of the narrative would continue to play significant roles in the years to come.

Nonetheless, as part of the deprived Afro-Trinidadian population, Abu Bakr and the majority of the members of JAM found themselves to be political outcasts and the victims of economic depravity. This situation was a key component in the group's continued motivation to foster a vigilante attitude.<sup>39</sup> Abu Bakr also imparted his personal motivations learned from the Black Power Movement and Marxist concepts to develop a fueling story to raise the JAM to an influential level. The perception of young members that JAM offered upward social mobility coupled with the charismatic teaching and enticing pull of the Black Power Movement, set the conditions for recruitment and solidification of the movement as truly influential within Trinidad and Tobago.

After the establishment of Jamaat al-Muslimeen, it did not take long for JAM and Abu Bakr to make their presence known to the government of Trinidad and Tobago. In 1985, Abu Bakr claimed a piece of semi-abandoned land along the western coastline of

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<sup>36</sup> Kevin K. Birth, "Bakrnal: Coup, Carnival, and Calypso in Trinidad," *Ethnology* 33, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 166.

<sup>37</sup> Carol J. Williams, "Kidnappings Send a Chill Through Sunny Trinidad," *Trinidad and Tobago News*, January 2005, [http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/forum/webbbs\\_config.pl/noframes/read/2734](http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/forum/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/2734).

<sup>38</sup> Williams, "Kidnappings Send a Chill Through Sunny Trinidad."

<sup>39</sup> Pantin, *Days of Wrath*, 14.

Trinidad in the St. James area of the capitol city of Port-of-Spain. He chose this location for the construction of his JAM commune. He set out to construct a mosque at this location but the Port-of-Spain City Corporation filed an injunction claiming that Abu Bakr's presence on the land and his desire to build a mosque were illegal because the land belonged to them. Of course, Abu Bakr defied this injunction, took a vehement stance against those who opposed him and was promptly sentenced to 21 days in jail for contempt of court.<sup>40</sup> This sentencing was Abu Bakr's first real brush with the law, a mere first step for further encounters over the next 25 years.

Following his short stint in jail, Abu Bakr and his Jamaat al-Muslimeen followers were somehow allowed to continue to inhabit the disputed land and construction on the commune proceeded but did not mean that the Trinidadian authorities were not keeping a watchful eye on them. They paid serious attention to the compound because it fast became known as a place that attracted "footloose drifters, ex-convicts, and young men with no place to go." Several times during this period, Trinidadian police raided the JAM commune in search of illegal weapons, ammunition, and wanted criminals.<sup>41</sup> Nothing much ever came of the police raids, but JAM continued to develop into a major thorn in the side of the government while attracting numerous followers. Unfortunately, this situation was augmented by the repressive actions of the authorities. The overtly active targeting of JAM by the police and military may have helped to solidify JAM's ideology and core constituency. Instead of distancing the moderates from the extremists within the group, this form of repression left the moderates unappeased and pushed them towards bolstering the extremist point of view.<sup>42</sup> The actions by the government may have also played a role in the support JAM received from foreign observers sympathetic to Bakr's cause.

Abu Bakr, busy standing up against his own government and recruiting within his own country, also reached out to the international Muslim community not only for

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<sup>40</sup> "Profile on Yasin Abu Bakr," *Trinidad and Tobago News Bulletin Board*, August 23, 2003, [http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/forum/webbbs\\_config.pl/noframes/read/1180](http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/forum/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/1180).

<sup>41</sup> Pantin, *Days of Wrath*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Earl, "Tanks, Tear Gas, and Taxes: Toward a Theory of Movement Repression," *Sociological Theory* 21, no. (March 2003): 54.

support but to learn how to further his own cause. Although known to the authorities of Trinidad and Tobago as a troublesome organization, they were unsure of the actual depth and scope of the organization. International relationships by Bakr helped to facilitate the growth of JAM and solidify his teachings with scores of followers. For example, throughout the 1980s, Abu Bakr built a relationship with Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi, and counted him as a close friend and advocate for JAM's struggles.<sup>43</sup> This relationship and other international forays to garner support provided much needed, yet limited, financial and political clout that may have helped his recruiting efforts, as well as build the facade of JAM being larger and more influential than it really was. Yasin Abu Bakr began the 1980s as a solitary figure with an idea and closed out the decade as a leader of an organization with specific goals and distinct aspirations.

As important as the 1980s were to Abu Bakr and the growth of Jamaat al-Muslimeen, the early 1990s would prove to be the defining era for the man and the organization. In April 1990, JAM and the government were at odds once again over land. Abu Bakr and his followers were attempting to build a school, as an expansion of their commune, when government forces and police were sent in to prevent the construction project. This time, Abu Bakr filed an injunction against the government in to keep law enforcement off "his" land.<sup>44</sup> This act was the second time that the government of Trinidad and Tobago had directly and audaciously interfered with the internally perceived progress of JAM. Abu Bakr and his followers may have seen this as the final act of repression that propelled them towards their next strategic move.

After years of continual opposition from government and law enforcement officials and two attempts by the government to disrupt the building of an Islamic commune for the members of Jamaat al-Muslimeen, Abu Bakr was left reeling from what he believed to be repressive actions. Abu Bakr, therefore, decided to make a statement, and it came in the form of an attempted coup.

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<sup>43</sup> Zambelis, "*Jamaat al-Muslimeen*," 10.

<sup>44</sup> "Profile on Yasin Abu Bakr," *Trinidad and Tobago News Bulletin Board*.

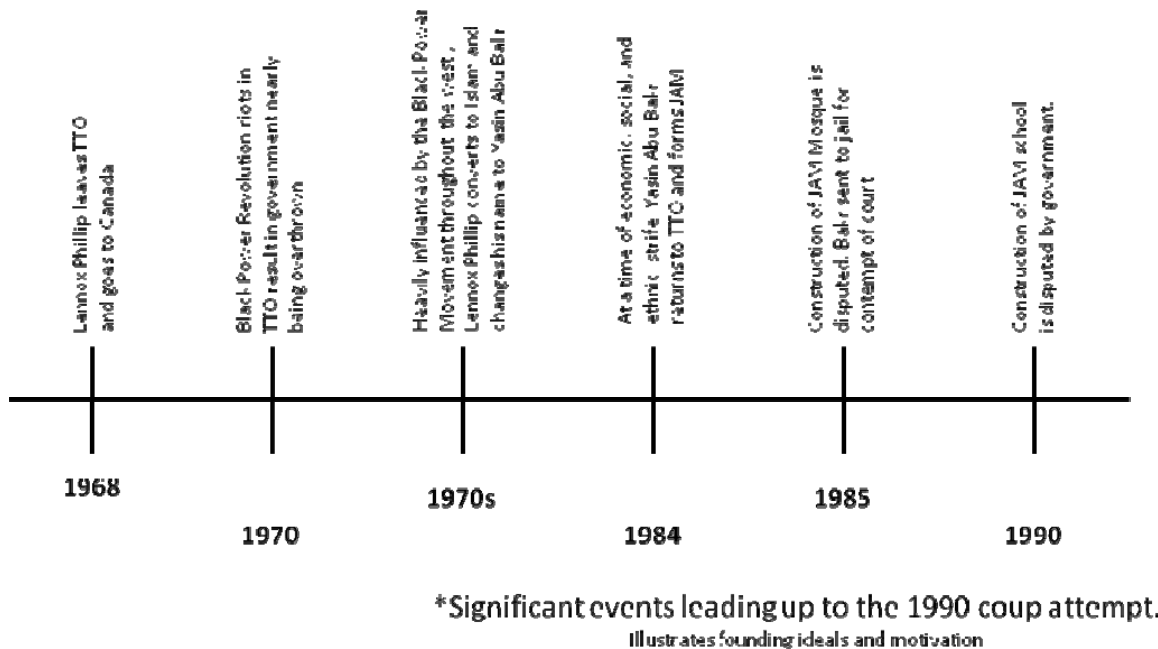


Figure 1. JAM Timeline up to 1990

On July 27, 1990, Abu Bakr and over 100 armed JAM members stormed the Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) and Radio facility and the Parliament building in the capitol city of Port-of-Spain. The JAM members secured these buildings and everyone inside, and held numerous hostages for nearly a week.<sup>45</sup> Shortly after securing the two locations, at approximately seven o'clock in the evening, Abu Bakr was broadcast on local television. He announced that the government had been overthrown and that the government officials in his control were arrested to face trial.<sup>46</sup> Abu Bakr also appealed to the citizens of his nation and spoke out against the wickedness of the seated government. He declared that his actions were in the best interest of the people, and wanted to bring about change that would assure everyone within Trinidad and Tobago was able to afford basic life necessities, such as food.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> "Profile on Yasin Abu Bakr," *Trinidad and Tobago News Bulletin Board*.

<sup>46</sup> Pantin, *Days of Wrath*, 17.

<sup>47</sup> Pantin, *Days of Wrath*, 20.



The coup attempt lasted approximately six days, an estimated 24 people were killed, and hundreds of millions of dollars in damage due to the coup and subsequent rioting, looting, and lawlessness were the result.<sup>48</sup> Although Abu Bakr called for calm throughout the island nation, the intensity of the coup infected everyone. The intense standoff with the Trinidad Army saw no progress during negotiations and left neither side willing to give in to the others demands. Defiant until the end, Abu Bakr finally agreed to surrender, but not before declaring victory to his followers. He assembled his gunmen and told them that he was proud of their discipline and behavior and that they had not been defeated. The JAM members were leaving with their guns in their hands and he promised that they would not become prisoners.<sup>49</sup>

Abu Bakr knew that his movement would survive far beyond this initial surrender. Following their surrender, JAM members “were taken into custody. They were tried for treason, but the Court of Appeal upheld the amnesty offered to secure their surrender, and they were released. The Privy Council later invalidated the amnesty, but JAM's members were not re-arrested and the case was abandoned.”<sup>50</sup> Abu Bakr had predicted this and the outcome had illustrated the complex and chaotic situation with which the government of Trinidad and Tobago was faced.

The coup attempt of 1990 was not only the defining moment for Abu Bakr and JAM, it was also an event that would transform a nation and the way its government conducted business. Although most Trinidadians did not support the 1990 coup attempt, many, especially impoverished Afro-Trinidadians, agreed with the issues that Abu Bakr and JAM raised.<sup>51</sup> After restoring order and returning calm to the communities of Trinidad and Tobago, both the local government and Jamaat al-Muslimeen had to refocus. The government of Trinidad and Tobago now had a significant social issue that it had to address accordingly. JAM struck first but needed to refocus and figure out how to further their cause effectively. While Jam focused on the positive outcomes that came

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<sup>48</sup> “Profile on Yasin Abu Bakr,” *Trinidad and Tobago News Bulletin Board*.

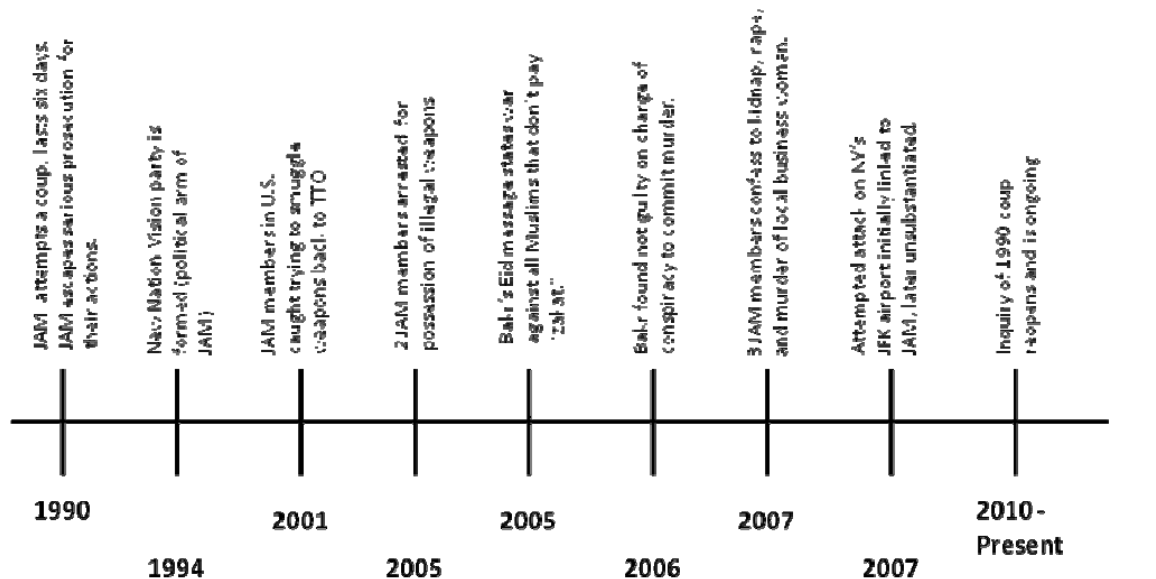
<sup>49</sup> Pantin, *Days of Wrath*, 136.

<sup>50</sup> Terdman, “Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin,” 8.

<sup>51</sup> Terdman, “Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin,” 8.

from the issues they had publically raised, the government had to address how to retard JAMs efforts while also focusing on preventing another coup attempt from ever happening again.

The following years were filled with court cases, underhanded deals, and relative calm, while Abu Bakr focused on change within his own nation. During this time, he developed the idea to transform JAM into a legitimate political organization. His efforts resulted in the establishment of The New National Vision (NNV) party in 1994, and it is attributed to be the political arm of JAM. The NNV claims to be a party of the people, regardless of race or color, wanting change and a fair, free, and secure nation.<sup>52</sup> However, it is continually linked to the criminal element that is still a major component of JAM.



\*Significant events following the 1990 coup attempt.  
 Illustrates the criminal activities that underlie JAM's attempts at establishing credibility.

Figure 2. JAM Timeline after 1990

The modern version of the group's narrative continues to focus on fixing social, economical, and political issues within Trinidad and Tobago. A less violent and more

<sup>52</sup> New National Party (NNV) Information Page on Facebook, 2012.  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/NEW-NATIONAL-VISION-NNV/115682721786174#!/pages/NEW-NATIONAL-VISION-NNV/115682721786174?sk=info>.

political wing of JAM known as the New National Vision (NNV) Labor Party states its common goal to establish “a free, fair and secure society where Trinbagonians can thrive.”<sup>53</sup> While it appears the NNV does not want its organization associated with terrorism or criminal plots, the leadership of the NNV finds itself directly associated with JAM. Fuad Abu Bakr, the son of Yasin Abu Bakr, leads the organization and numerous other family members hold prominent positions within the NNV. In response to allegations the NNV condones and participates in terrorist-like activity Fuad Abu Bakr stated, “We are not a terrorist organisation, I think we are a humanitarian organisation and I think we are a social help organisation and, above all, I think we are a religious organisation,”<sup>54</sup> Regardless of public opinion, the NNV is attempting to alleviate itself of having a negative reputation.

The NNV attempt at re-branding its image or creating an image separate from JAM is a difficult endeavor to say the least. Numerous underlying associations and ties to criminality plague the NNV and continually call in to question their loyalties and legitimacy. In 2010, the NNV was again accused of attempting to sabotage the country’s election process when the police arrested five people on weapons and ammunition charges with suspected ties to the NNV. Again, Fuad Abu Bakr released statements discrediting the arrests and denying any allegation of ties with the individuals.<sup>55</sup> Although much of the Trinidadian government’s case linking the NNV and JAM is unproven because it is built on accusations and speculation, these events show that the NNV may not be able to escape its affiliation with JAM. The mere kinship between Yasin Abu Bakr and Fuad Abu Bakr appears to influence public opinion and create a natural distrust for the majority of the population towards the NNV.

Both the JAM and NNV have significant political weaknesses that prevent them from gaining political territory and solving grievances. No members of government or

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<sup>53</sup> New National Vision (NNV) Information Page on Facebook.

<sup>54</sup> Aabida Allaham, “... Jamaat: We're Not Terrorists,” *Trinidad Express Newspapers*, July 27, 2011, [http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/\\_\\_\\_\\_Jamaat\\_\\_We\\_re\\_not\\_terrorists-126299213.html](http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/____Jamaat__We_re_not_terrorists-126299213.html).

<sup>55</sup> Akile Simon, “Abu Bakr Denies Involvement in Plot to Disrupt Elections,” *Trinidad Express Newspapers*, May 16, 2010, [http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Abu\\_Bakr\\_denies\\_involvement\\_in\\_plot\\_to\\_disrupt\\_elections.html](http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Abu_Bakr_denies_involvement_in_plot_to_disrupt_elections.html).

political parties overtly align themselves with the NNV or JAM, even though the corrupt influences of these organizations reach deep into all major political parties within Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>56</sup> As a result, JAM, through the NNV, lacks actual political power, and the organization does not hold any positions of authority anywhere in the country.<sup>57</sup> It is not difficult to understand why these politicians do not overtly admit an allegiance to an organization with criminal-like and terrorist-like reputations. JAM and the NNV do not have the political backing and sponsorships that were reported during the 1980s and 1990s even though the Congress of the People (COP), People's National Movement (PNM), and the United National Congress (UNC) used JAM to solidify political positions in the past.<sup>58</sup> This lack of support was made evident when Jamaal Shabazz, one of the 114 JAM members in the 1990 coup attempt, implicated several former politicians to include former Attorney Generals, police officials, and the current Prime minister, and indicative of the political isolation of the NNV.<sup>59</sup>

Over the last two decades, although they maintained their status as a threat in many regards, it has become apparent JAM and NNV lack political influence and following as illustrated during the elections in 2010 when 12 members of the NNV ran for offices throughout Trinidad and Tobago. None of the 12 members of the party won in that election to include Yasin Abu Bakr's son, Fuad Abu Bakr, and one of his wives, Indrani Mharaj Abu Bakr.<sup>60</sup> This loss was a massive blow to the establishment of NNV as a legitimate and influential organization, which displayed the lack of constituency for the NNV and JAM. Although the NNV broadcasts a different narrative than JAM and refutes allegations of crime and terrorism, it still fails to mobilize the population in support of the new *vision*.

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<sup>56</sup> Terdman, "Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin," 9.

<sup>57</sup> "Trinidad and Tobago 2010 Electoral Candidates," *Trinizagada*, 2010, <http://www.trinizagada.com/2010/05/trinidad-and-tobago-2010-electoral.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Clint Chan Tack, "Jack on Jamaat Claims 'Never Again'," *Trinidad and Tobago's Newsday*, May 7, 2011, <http://www.newsday.co.tt/news/0,140125.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Ria Taitt, "We Were Betrayed," *Trinidad Express Newspapers*, May 4, 2011, [http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/We\\_were\\_betrayed-121297194.html](http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/We_were_betrayed-121297194.html).

<sup>60</sup> Zambelis, "Trinidad's Troubling Islamist Yasin Abu Bakr," 1.

Much has changed over the past 25 years for the nation of Trinidad and Tobago and for Jamaat al-Muslimeen; yet they remain entangled, and are trying to constantly impose their influence on each other. In fighting JAM, the government of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as some outside associations, has tried to categorize JAM as a terrorist organization; however, evidence continually characterizes it as a criminal entity.<sup>61</sup> Although the evidence suggests that they are deeply rooted in criminal activity, Jamaat al-Muslimeen remains a viable threat to the government of Trinidad and Tobago because of the goals and aspirations of the group as a social and political entity and their continued involvement in criminal activity. On top of the immediate threat it may pose, an awareness also exists that JAM continues to use popular sentiment to continue its efforts to solidify and grow its organization. Many of the socioeconomic factors present in the 1980s in Trinidad and Tobago that helped JAM establish its organization are popping up again today. Although the government is trying to deal with these issues politically and professionally, the recent economic hardships in Trinidad and Tobago have allowed JAM to once again become explicitly vocal in hopes of garnering support from citizens on the fringe.

Jamaat al-Muslimeen was formed by a man with a vision. A vision born from perceived oppression, repressive governance, and extremist views influenced by western social movements of the era. Yasin Abu Bakr's vision started as one of equality for the citizens that he most closely associated with inside of Trinidad and Tobago and expanded to all that would listen. Although seen as a ruthless criminal kingpin out to enrich himself and his followers, his vision, no matter how misguided, was able to take hold due to his targeting of those who were easily influenced.<sup>62</sup>

Abu Bakr possessed the knowledge and charisma to influence enough followers to act in accordance with his desired goals and the antecedent conditions found in the political process model were readily available, which allowed for the successful launch of a social movement that he could call his own. It was these conditions, his charisma, and the instillation of a vision of prosperity within the minds of the JAM followers that has

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<sup>61</sup> Terdman, "Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin," 10.

<sup>62</sup> Zambelis, "Trinidad's Troubling Islamist Yasin Abu Bakr," 1.

allowed the organization to maintain an influential presence in Trinidad and Tobago over the last two and a half decades. However, JAM's focus remains on issues within Trinidad and Tobago and makes involvement in terrorist activities outside of the country highly unlikely. The following chapter highlights the conditions and factors that prevented JAM from growing into a more formidable threat for both Trinidad and Tobago and the international community. Moreover, it also discusses viable methods used by the Trinidadian government to discredit, dissolve, and contain JAM.

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### III. COUNTER TERROR TECHNIQUES AND PROMOTING THE DISSOLUTION OF JAM

Understanding all of the elements of a terrorist or criminal organization, its founding principles, its objectives, and the personalities involved are all very important for analyzing and targeting if necessary. However, also essential is understanding how terrorism ends, and what brings about this end, so that if the decision is made to eliminate or degrade the organization, targeting is conducted efficiently and thoroughly. Creativity and a long-term outlook may be paramount because if only tactical aspects of targeting are focused upon, broader patterns that are present, and which can be capitalized upon when a group is already on the decline, can be missed.<sup>63</sup> In the case of Jamaat al-Muslimeen, understanding and reviewing possible ways that terror campaigns end may facilitate an easy way to push them where they are already going: away from terrorism into petty crime and corruption and possible disbandment.

Creative strategies that increase operational costs for terrorist organizations while decreasing their expected benefits can help push these organizations towards dissolution.<sup>64</sup> A baseline for reviewing how terror campaigns end to build a creative and effective solution, and applying this to JAM, is Audrey Kurth Cronin's seven broad categories that contribute to the decline of a terrorist group: "(1) the capture or killing of the leader, (2) failure to transition to the next generation, (3) achievement of the group's aims, (4) transition to a legitimate political process, (5) undermining of popular support, (6) repression, and (7) transitioning from terrorism to other forms of violence."<sup>65</sup> Reviewing these seven possible culminations, bolstered by numerous other scholarly works that examine the same occurrences, illustrates the most efficient approaches to dealing with JAM, some of which may already be in play.

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<sup>63</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How Terrorist Campaigns End," in *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement*, ed. Tore Bjorgo and John Horgan (New York: Routledge, 2009), 49.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Shemella, "Introduction," in *Fighting Back: What Governments Can Do About Terrorism*, ed. Paul Shemella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>65</sup> Cronin, "How Terrorist Campaigns End," 55.



## A. THE CAPTURE OR KILLING OF THE LEADER

Targeting the leadership of a terrorist organization must be carefully analyzed as it can produce unintended and harmful second and third order effects.<sup>66</sup> Fractionalization due to decapitation can actually cause an increase in violence and the succession of leadership is so unpredictable that a new, more violent and dangerous leader could emerge.<sup>67</sup> Those who generally oppose the approach of leadership targeting because the belief is that too many variables exist to apply this approach broadly across the spectrum propose this argument. The overall effectiveness of removing the leadership from an organization varies and often organizations are resilient to attacks on their leadership.<sup>68</sup> Numerous costs and benefits are associated with targeting killings or captures and supporters and critics alike will passionately present their opinions whenever this approach is suggested.<sup>69</sup> For these reasons, and because of the unique dynamics of each individual terrorist group, a complete understanding of the targeted organization is needed before any action, in regards to decapitation, is taken.

When an enemy leader is captured or killed, often it does not result in a favorable change in enemy policy or behavior, and past examples have shown that extremely harmful unintended consequences can be produced from attacking the leadership of this type of organization.<sup>70</sup> Past examples tend to show more failures than successes, and empirically, the records illustrate that leadership targeting has produced mixed results.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, although it is somewhat difficult to argue definitively for leadership targeting, a few cases bolster the argument, such as the removal of Abimael Guzman and

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<sup>66</sup> Stephen T. Hosmer, *Operations Against Enemy Leaders* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), 1.

<sup>67</sup> Jenna Jordan, "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation," *Security Studies*, 18 (2009): 724.

<sup>68</sup> Jordan, "When Heads Roll," 722.

<sup>69</sup> Daniel Byman, "Do Targeted Killings Work?" *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (Mar–Apr 2006): 96.

<sup>70</sup> Hosmer, *Operations Against Enemy Leaders*, xiii.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Freeman, *The Headless Horseman: A Theoretical and Strategic Assessment of Leadership Targeting* (Unpublished, 2009), 20.

Abdullah Ocalan, with the subsequent collapse of their respective organizations The Shining Path and the The Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK).<sup>72</sup>

The demise of the terror organization Revolutionary Organization 17 November (17N) in Greece is another good example of how removing the leadership of an organization can cause it to crumble. Although the immediate effectiveness in this case was uncommon, it is a case that exemplifies Freeman's assertion that "leadership targeting is most likely to be effective the more important a leader is to an organization."<sup>73</sup> Once Alexandros Giotopoulos, the leader and center of gravity for 17N, was removed, other members of 17N knew their terror campaign was finished and the organization disintegrated.<sup>74</sup>

Only in rare situations is an operational and inspirational leader effectively targeted at the height of his influence, which provides the greatest effectiveness in regards to dissolution of the organization that includes infighting and subsequent collapse.<sup>75</sup> The unique, secretive and small nature of the 17N organization facilitated this, but these same attributes are not found in every terror campaign, which makes thorough analysis and understanding of the targeted group absolutely necessary before action is taken. If the leader of a terror organization was once the inspirational and operational focus of the group but has become less important over time, the ideological message can become readily available through other mediums and his influence will become institutionalized. Therefore, if the leader is no longer exceedingly important to the group or its aims, he is no longer the catalyst for the organization's existence.<sup>76</sup> This lack of importance reinforces the aspect of continued analysis of the target group over time, instead of a snapshot, to obtain a true understanding of the organization and how it can be affected.

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<sup>72</sup> Jordan, "When Heads Roll," 721.

<sup>73</sup> Freeman, *The Headless Horseman*, 1.

<sup>74</sup> Nicholas Gage, "Race Against Terror," *Vanity Fair* 557 (January 2007): 72, <http://sfxhosted.exlibrisgroup.com/nps?genre=article&sid=ProQ:&atitle=Race+Against+Terror&title=Vanity+Fair&issn=0733-8899&date=2007-01-01&volume=1&issue=557&spage=64&au=Gage%2C+Nicholas>.

<sup>75</sup> Freeman, *The Headless Horseman*, 8.

<sup>76</sup> Freeman, *The Headless Horseman*, 19.

In the case of Jamaat al-Muslimeen, it would be hard to argue for the killing or capture of their leader, Yasin Abu Bakr. JAM has already been weakened by the break off of splinter organizations, such as Waajihat-ul-Islamiyyah, and establishment of the NNV, which reduced Bakr's influence to a vocal yet small portion of the Afro-Trinidadian population.<sup>77</sup> Although he provided inspiration and operational guidance, both key components of a terror organization leader, his importance in these aspects within JAM has diminished and his remaining influence and efforts seem to have shifted to his political organization, the NNV.<sup>78</sup> JAM is largely ineffective as an organization, has not produced any globally noteworthy events since the 1990 coup attempt, and the NNV has continually failed to win any political seats. JAM's leader, Abu Bakr, is in his seventies now, his authority is waning, and any influence he may have leans towards maintaining the criminal prowess that provides finances for himself and his organization through extensive criminal activity.<sup>79</sup>

By viewing these characteristics of JAM and its leadership, it is easier to identify that the organization is in a position in which leadership targeting is unlikely to induce JAM's demise. The organization is in the realm where "inspirational and operational guidance have become institutionalized," which reduces the importance of the leadership.<sup>80</sup> With all of this in mind, along with the documented failed attempts at prosecuting him, removing Bakr would likely provide no benefit.<sup>81</sup> However, it could backfire severely by causing increased publicity and renewing recruitment efforts in the name of a newly created martyr.<sup>82</sup> His absence, through death or incarceration, could open the door to more extreme leadership and ideas, and revert JAM from a criminal entity back into a terror-minded organization. Therefore, this option is untenable.

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<sup>77</sup> Terdman, *Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin*, 9.

<sup>78</sup> Freeman, *The Headless Horseman*, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen on Trial in Trinidad and Tobago," 1.

<sup>80</sup> Freeman, *The Headless Horseman*, 8.

<sup>81</sup> Terdman, "Radical Islam in the Caribbean Basin," 8-9.

<sup>82</sup> Cronin, "How Terrorist Campaigns End," 58.

## **B. FAILURE TO TRANSITION TO THE NEXT GENERATION**

Organizational disintegration is one of the factors that can contribute to the dissolution of a terror organization.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, failure to recruit and pass on ideals and motivation to bring about change via violent and extreme measures can also quickly erode a terror campaign. Third, the inspiration provided by a terror organization's leader and its importance can diminish over time.<sup>84</sup> These three factors all contribute to the lack of interest from the would-be, next generation of JAM members, and consequently, the erosion of any valid threat presented by Jamaat al-Muslimeen outside of the criminal circles within Trinidad and Tobago.

To seduce the next generation into any organization, it must present a valid argument that the benefits outweigh the costs and the ideology of the organization must be accessible if a new generation is to adopt it.<sup>85</sup> If these views are not clearly evident and members of the terror organization are no longer seen as 'romantic figures', public support will swing to the opposition.<sup>86</sup> This phenomenon in Trinidad and Tobago is not unusual, as it is common for a terror group to decline or end due to its failure to pass into the next generation.<sup>87</sup>

JAM has experienced a steady decline in support since the failed coup attempt in 1990 because what was once seen as a grand strategy for liberating the oppressed of Trinidad and Tobago transformed into what is perceived to be nothing more than criminal action. Bakr easily created his organization during a time of economic and social strife and he effortlessly recruited new members to his cause with promises of power and wealth.<sup>88</sup> Over time, the failures of JAM and the futility of their promises have repelled the next generation, which is evident when examining Bakr's own son, Fuad, who, as the

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<sup>83</sup> Martha Crenshaw, "How Terrorism Declines," in *Terrorism Research and Public Policy*, ed. Clark McCauley (New York: Frank Cass and Co., 1991), 70.

<sup>84</sup> Freeman, *The Headless Horseman*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Freeman, *The Headless Horseman*, 5.

<sup>86</sup> Crenshaw, "How Terrorism Declines," 82.

<sup>87</sup> Cronin, "How Terror Campaigns End," 59.

<sup>88</sup> Zambelis, "Trinidad's Troubling Islamist Yasin Abu Bakr," 5.

head of the NNV, has worked hard to distance himself publicly from JAM.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, the next generation of Afro-Trinidadians seems to have followed Fuads' example, (at least his public example) and are distancing themselves as well. This separation is evident through the government of Trinidad's seizure of real estate and continually applied pressure that has had devastating effects on JAM that has resulted in a severe decline in the organization's influence in Trinidadian society.<sup>90</sup> It is abundantly clear that Jamaat al-Muslimeen is already experiencing a huge decline in support and further encouragement by government and law enforcement officials should be able to augment the efforts already in place aimed at dissolving JAM all together.

### **C. ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GROUP'S AIMS**

If Jamaat al-Muslimeen was going to achieve its goals, it would have likely happened long ago following their coup attempt in 1990. Historically, terror organizations do not end by this means. Only in a very small minority of cases has a terror organization achieved its aims, and usually those campaigns are prolonged and on a grand scale, such as the national level operations by the National Military Organization (ETZEL) and the African National Congress headed by Nelson Mandela.<sup>91</sup>

In this era of global counter-terror efforts, coupled with the steady decline of Jamaat al-Muslimeen and the influence of its leader, Yasin Abu Bakr, it is highly unlikely that JAM could embark on another significant terror campaign and be successful. In the RAND report, "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qa'ida," Seth Jones and Martin Libicki demonstrate the solidity of this trend by emphasizing that no religiously motivated terror group achieved its aims during the period of its study, and overall, these organizations rarely achieve their goals.<sup>92</sup> The bottom line is that JAM is highly unlikely to achieve its goals given all the factors hindering its progress.

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<sup>89</sup> Fuad Abu Bakr, TV6 News Interview Posted on NNV Facebook Webpage, October 19, 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen: The Growth and Decline of Islamist Militancy in Trinidad and Tobago," 11.

<sup>91</sup> Cronin, "How Terror Campaigns End," 59.

<sup>92</sup> Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lesson's for Countering al-Qa-ida* (Research Brief) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 1.

#### D. TRANSITION TO A LEGITIMATE POLITICAL PROCESS

The approach of transitioning to a legitimate political party seems to be the strategy now being employed by Bakr. However, Bakr has completely rebranded his organization, removing the JAM moniker and is working under the new title of the New National Vision party (NNV). Does this approach constitute a transition or a complete dissolution of the original terror organization and the creation of something new? It seems that if the NNV wants to be successful, it must distance itself from JAM and the organization's tainted past. Other terror organizations have tried this approach in the past. Sinn Fein can be viewed as a contemporary example as it separated itself from its violent past and provisions of the Irish Republican Army to gain legitimate political recognition. Moreover, Sinn Fein wanted to distance itself from any label resembling a terrorist organization in the wake of the attack on the United States.<sup>93</sup>

However, JAM does not currently appear to muster the necessary support to become a viable political threat in Trinidad and Tobago. JAM has not been able to garner any legitimate political positions unlike Sinn Fein, which gained 29 of the 108 seats of Members of the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland in its 2011 elections.<sup>94</sup> Can JAM muster enough support to do the same? It is unlikely that JAM could achieve this because it has routinely failed to rally sufficient support in Trinidad and Tobago to mirror the efforts of Sinn Fein. Although highly unlikely, to be effective and influential in this arena, JAM must gather more support to adapt into an effective political entity and compete with existing parties to demonstrate its popular support and transition to a legitimate organization. As witnessed in recent Trinidadian elections, JAM, through the moniker of NNV, is far from achieving its political goals.<sup>95</sup>

JAM may actually facilitate its own inadvertent dissolution with the creation of the NNV. By leaning towards legitimacy and creating a recognized political and social

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<sup>93</sup> Rogelio Alonso, "The IRA's Transition from Terrorism into Politics and the Challenge for Democracy in Northern Ireland," Working Papers Online Series, *Departamento de Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales, Facultad de Derecho, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, 2005, 9.

<sup>94</sup> UTv, "Results Summary," 2011, <http://www.u.tv/Election2011/results.aspx>.

<sup>95</sup> Trinidad & Tobago News, "Trinidad and Tobago 2010 Preliminary Election Results—May 24, 2010, 2010, <http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/articles/2010electionresults.html>.

wing, JAM and its traditional ideology has been seemingly forgotten or at least antiquated. Moreover, as NNV gains traction and recognition as a viable party, the violent agenda of JAM becomes undermined by a legitimate organization, which is highlighted by the expressed, chosen methods of the two groups that essentially contradict each other.

While it may be controversial, it may be useful to consider allowing selective political incentives for the NNV to further isolate JAM. By providing the political space for the NNV to exist, the incorporation of the party will force it to detach itself from its violent roots and undermine the aggressive ways of JAM. In turn, the ability of JAM to achieve political success will heavily depend on its desire to depart from its violent ways and gain the necessary support to move into the political realm. Although it is highly unlikely that the NNV will be achieve a high level of electoral success, the continued incorporation of the NNV into the political realm will undermine JAM's original ideology and help further marginalize JAM.

#### **E. DIMINISHING POPULAR SUPPORT**

The marginalization of JAM, either facilitated by the Trinidadian government or brought on by the group itself, has the potential to end JAM and support for JAM can dissolve due to multiple reasons. The supporting populace can lose interest in the political aims or ideology of JAM, the government of Trinidad and Tobago can offer better alternatives to JAM supporters, and JAM, through its own actions, can create dislike amongst the public.<sup>96</sup> As seen as recently as in the May 2011 elections, the re-branded, political branch of JAM, the New National Vision party (NNV), registered 12 candidates for government positions.<sup>97</sup> Abu Bakr and JAM profess large portions of the population suffer from social and economic injustices, and these grievances were to fuel the group's political success. JAM attempted to use these candidates to enter into the political realm

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<sup>96</sup> Cronin, "How Terror Campaigns End," 61–62.

<sup>97</sup> Renuka Singh, "12 Candidates for New National Vision," *Trinidad Express Newspaper*, January 29, 2011, [http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/12\\_candidates\\_for\\_New\\_National\\_Vision-114871484.html](http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/12_candidates_for_New_National_Vision-114871484.html).

to achieve its goals, as well as demonstrate the amount of public support the group gathered over the years; however, JAM and NNV failed to win any positions in the election.

With the lack of public support in the last elections, does this mean JAM has lost its perceived, vast numbers of support? Moreover, does the lack of gaining political ground in Trinidad and Tobago suggest the support does not exist? The authors submit, the goals of the group, even more so, the methods and approaches used by JAM and NNV are now irrelevant and distant from the group's so-called support base and ideology. Little evidence supports JAM inciting revulsion amongst its supporters due to violent action. However, it is likely the population fears punishment and repression from the government or has grown tired of the group's failure to affect change in the country. The regime can target the population, not with absolute violence, but with other pressures to further diminish the public's willingness to support JAM.<sup>98</sup> The waning support of JAM may be one of the better indicators of its diminishing influence within the region.

Another approach by the Trinidadian government to further diminish JAM and Abu Bakr's influence was to attack some financial targets. In August 2009, the Attorney General, Anand Ramlogan ordered the public auctioning of properties held by Abu Bakr and his second-in-command, Kala Akii Bua.<sup>99</sup> Attacking the financial support may deter future support and sponsorship of the declining organization. The loss of assets itself financially weakens JAM. Moreover, the Trinidadian government aims at finding more assets and properties of those involved with JAM, more specifically, those involved in the 1990 coup attempt, and the government plans to seize those assets upon discovery.<sup>100</sup> These actions can cause a potential, positive effect for the government on the support base and recruitment of JAM if potential JAM advocates witness the government's willingness to attack in the financial realm. Whereas, financially attacking and destroying

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<sup>98</sup> Martha Crenshaw, "How Terrorism Ends," in *Special Report*, ed. Jon B. Alterman (United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, 1999), 4.

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Human Rights Report: Trinidad and Tobago," *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor*, April 8, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/wha/154521.htm>.

<sup>100</sup> Joel Julien, "Coup-makers Get Served," *Trinidad Express Newspapers*, August 20, 2010, [http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Coup-makers\\_get\\_served\\_-101136409.html](http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Coup-makers_get_served_-101136409.html).



poor recruits and supporters may not have a drastic effect, the continued financial attack on JAM leadership and support systems that cannot afford financial devastation further weakens the failing group.

## **F. MILITARY FORCE AND THE REPRESSION OF TERRORIST GROUPS**

The use of force and repressive tactics contributed to the downfall of terrorist organizations in countries, such as Turkey with the Kurdistan Workers' Party and Peru with Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path).<sup>101</sup> However, JAM does not overtly present a militant threat as do the aforementioned organizations. Even though over 100 members of JAM attempted a coup in 1990 and the group continues to engage in criminal activities, such as kidnappings, a full-pressed, armed response with military and police may not be appropriate in Trinidad and Tobago. As JAM presents only a domestic and petty threat, complete military engagement or any effort outside of constabulary realms would be excessive in dealing with JAM.

Jennifer Earl offers two main methods when dealing with social movements. She suggests using coercive repression, a direct technique utilizing force, or channeling, a more indirect form of repression.<sup>102</sup> Whereas coercive techniques were blatantly visible in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the Egyptian revolution of 2011, and the 2009 Iranian election protests, Earl suggests a more subtle method of engagement that the regimes and the Trinidadian government could employ to counter threats. More specifically, the Trinidadian could limit protest times by enforcing time windows or even require permits to assemble.<sup>103</sup>

The active targeting of JAM members and the group through military and police efforts could possibly diminish the popular support of the government. Although JAM may be ideologically distant from popular support, its members may be physically integrated throughout the populace and live amongst non-supportive Trinidadians. As seen in counter-insurgency operations in which the threat group and population are

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<sup>101</sup> Cronin, "How Terror Campaigns End," 63.

<sup>102</sup> Earl, "Tanks, Tear Gas, and Taxes: Toward a Theory of Movement Repression," 48.

<sup>103</sup> Earl, "Tanks, Tear Gas, and Taxes: Toward a Theory of Movement Repression," 51.

difficult to separate, government action may lead to resentment, because members of the populace unresponsive of JAM become engulfed in government-sponsored violence and repressive tactics. Ideally, military repressive efforts would not work best in Trinidad and Tobago since the government cannot necessarily delineate the target of the efforts from the general population.<sup>104</sup>

A better approach to JAM using military or police efforts is to continue to pursue a course of coercive deterrence. The government of Trinidad and Tobago can use the coercive capacity of its military and police to inflict punishments too costly for JAM to continue as a violent threat.<sup>105</sup> However, the application of force must focus on the individual members of JAM or in response to individual actions. Limiting a forceful response affords the government the ability to target specific incidents and limit collateral damage amongst the population. In turn, discriminate repression punishes and isolates the threat while preventing any resentment of the uninvolved.

#### **G. TRANSITION TO OTHER MODUS OPERANDI**

As a final end to terrorist organizations, the groups can eventually transition from customary terror methods to criminal activity.<sup>106</sup> As seen with JAM, or better yet, the lack of evidence supporting terrorism in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the lack of evidence demonstrating the group's ability to export terrorist activities, may suggest the group's shift from terrorism. Recent JAM efforts include "gangland-style slayings, narcotics and arms trafficking, money laundering, extortion, kidnapping, and political corruption."<sup>107</sup> As the group is becoming defunct militarily, JAM is leading towards, and often blamed, for strictly criminal-type activities.

This transition from being a viable and violent threat to national security and stability to now becoming a mere criminally minded organization can lead to the further ruination of JAM and Abu Bakr. As JAM transforms to petty activities, the Trinidadian

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<sup>104</sup> Cronin, "How Terror Campaigns End," 63.

<sup>105</sup> Crenshaw, "How Terrorism Ends," 2.

<sup>106</sup> Cronin, "How Terror Campaigns End," 64.

<sup>107</sup> Zambelis, "Jamaat al-Muslimeen: The Growth and Decline of Islamist Militancy in Trinidad and Tobago."

government can easily use that opportunity to re-engage JAM with military and law enforcement efforts to prosecute JAM and its members of crimes effectively. However, a danger lies within the group's ability to fade while resorting to criminal activity and possible reemerge, as has the Shining Path in Peru.<sup>108</sup> Also, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia successfully used criminal activity to financially and ideologically fuel their efforts and grow as an organization while pursuing political objectives.<sup>109</sup> In spite of these potential dangers, it is difficult to imagine a future resurfacing threat or a dual-approach of terrorism and politics to come from JAM. More importantly, the failure of JAM to resort now to crimes and gang activity will further de-legitimize the goals and reputation of JAM. Abu Bakr would become the leader of a gang of thugs rather than becoming the leader of recognized political party competing to improve the conditions he sought to remedy.

Understanding the possible ways a terrorist group or campaign can end may allow the governments of Trinidad and Tobago and the United States to facilitate the demise of Jamaat Al-Muslimeen. As presented in this chapter, several methods and approaches can be taken to deal with JAM. Whereas directly targeting the group's leadership and broken network may not result in the complete dissolution of JAM, its own failure to achieve its antiquated goals and to adapt to the contemporary environment appears to lean towards the group's termination.

The inability of JAM to maintain a popular support base through relevant and achievable goals and its active participation in low-level criminal activities suggests that the Trinidadian government's approach to solving their dilemma may be working. Where the public may reject excessive military engagement, active military and police efforts to curtail funding activities and monitor the borders of Trinidad and Tobago appear to prevent JAM from growing and establishing support and exporting influence. Moreover, the political transition of JAM to NNV has not demonstrated desirable results for the group; evidence of a waning constituency. The government's multi-faceted approach

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<sup>108</sup> "Shining Path," *The New York Times*, May 3, 2012, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/s/shining\\_path/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/s/shining_path/index.html).

<sup>109</sup> In Sight: Organized Crime in the Americas, "FARC," (n.d.), [http://www.insightcrime.org/criminal-groups/colombia/farc/item/82-farc#modus\\_operandi](http://www.insightcrime.org/criminal-groups/colombia/farc/item/82-farc#modus_operandi).

coupled with the group's failings are eroding support and destroying public opinion for JAM. Public opinion and support are important in that they affect the amount of financial and operational support the group receives.<sup>110</sup> The government may apply some of the above-mentioned techniques to accelerate the demise of JAM, but a combination of those efforts mixed with the group's weaknesses will provide better results.

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<sup>110</sup> Crenshaw, "How Terrorism Ends," 4.

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## IV. CONCLUSION

The threat presented by JAM as a terrorist organization has run its course. What began as a social movement with a political message, evolved into a terrorist entity, and has now dissolved with only its weak political affiliation and history to keep it on life support. The organization has been undermined by splinter groups and dissention. JAM has been unable to grow numerically and it has failed to expand its influence. Although dangerous as a criminal entity and slightly influential in Trinidad and Tobago as a facilitator of government corruption, Jamaat al-Muslimeen should no longer be considered a significant threat outside of its home country.

Yasin Abu Bakr created Jamaat al-Musilmeen with the vision of gaining power and control, and therefore, influencing the politics and social situation within Trinidad and Tobago. Following the failed coup attempt in 1990, even Bakr realized that he would be unable to act overtly and gain any type of influence and power. With this in mind, he sought to create a mechanism that would allow him and his organization to retain some semblance of influence; thus, he created the NNV. JAM was a target and no longer overtly effective. The NNV could be argued to be legitimate and law abiding while underhandedly capitalizing on corruption, intimidation, and criminal enterprise. This new approach was nothing more than a rebranding in hopes of hiding its true intentions.

Delegitimization and treating terrorists like criminals are keys to the strategy of effectively combating any terror organization.<sup>111</sup> In this age of shrinking budgets and resources, along with finite human and material assets, the recommendation on how to combat the JAM and the NNV criminal threat is twofold. First, focus on isolation rather than direct confrontation. Trinidad is already isolated by geography, which can be accentuated by keeping JAM from influencing its neighbors and other outsiders. Not only will the organizations be able to implode on themselves, it will save and redirect funds that could be better utilized elsewhere. Secondly, direct any assistance and training towards internal security and stability of Trinidad and Tobago. Fighting corruption while

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<sup>111</sup>Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lesson's for Countering al-Qa-ida*, 2.

bolstering and backing local and state government and law enforcement will allow for direct targeting of criminals and corruption to help increase the legitimacy of those in power while destabilizing any remnants of JAM and its message.

Given the information provided in this thesis through research and analysis, the authors found that Jamaat al-Muslimeen is a criminal element entrenched in Trinidad and Tobago. No longer a terror threat, as traditionally defined, it seems to be motivated by money and focused on establishing itself as a political entity in its home country. In fact, so called members of JAM seem to be more closely associated with the NNV as its affiliation with JAM continually fades into the past. Thus, the authors recommend that JAM and the NNV be treated as a criminal entity and the issues of criminality and corruption that define them should be the focus when targeting them.

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