

Terrorism and the End of Western Hegemony: A Gramscian Perspective

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CHLOÉ LALA- -GUYARD, OCT 24 2019

“The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear,” explains Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*. Used to describe fascism, the 1929 Wall Street Crash, and the Great Depression, the imprisoned intellectual’s quote singularly echoes contemporary global historical movements and crises. The current progression of far-right movements and the appearance of the Islamic State and the Caliphate can be depicted as morbid symptoms indicative of a crisis. Building on the Marxist notion of ideology, Gramsci proposes a reinterpretation of the notion through the concept of “hegemony.” Hegemony is defined as a domination technique designed to convince people that the elite’s ideas are rights and part of the common sense. The Italian author traces the origins of this notion by distinguishing between two major mechanisms of social power: coercion and consent. In opposition to methods of coercion, hegemony relies on consent by attempting to persuade people to adopt a specific set of social values and norms of a given system. The hegemonic situation is therefore a form of social power accepted by individuals to be accepted as their “common sense” through which their reality is understood.

Unlike Marx, Gramsci foresaw a relative degree of autonomy of the cultural sphere insofar as the elite would not establish the defining cultural and social norms of society. Rather, the continuous process of social actions and interactions would be the conditions producing hegemony. Another main founding feature of this concept is the inherent tension between the dominant class and the “subaltern groups” (meaning the other—the dominated ones), because ideological domination cannot forcibly irrigate the entire system. This gives rise to a dialectical relationship in which hegemony and counter-hegemony mutually reinforce each other.

In this context, the main issue is for the dominant group to preserve an “ideological unity” to preserve its status quo (1971:328). Gramsci’s eighty-year-old words resonate with our contemporary society, where this ideological unity is increasingly shattered, reinforcing the well-known thesis of a clash of civilizations. Evocative of the International Relations curriculum, authors such as Robert Cox, Carl Boggs and Owen Worth understood the rich implications of extending the concept to understand the production of power at a global level.

Applied to the international system, hegemony describes the “relationship between the dominant (the West) and the dominated (South and East)...that is central to the fabric of power within global politics” (Worth: 2015:17). Through this prism, “the constitution of a stable order is the result of a manufactured compatibility between dominant ideas, institutions and material capabilities” (Burnham: 75:2006). The current international order seems to be dominated by American hegemony as it primarily originates from the US economic, political and cultural might influencing the world.

Evidence of this argument can be found in the creation and control of this domination through the Bretton-Woods system, the indexation of the dollar, Hollywood culture and economic Neo-liberalism shared by the majority of the countries in the world. Yet, this ideological domination is the subject of a rampant contestation in several parts of the world, including Brazil, India, China, Russia and South Africa (BRICS). Following Gramsci’s words, the BRICS countries would be part of the notion of caesarism; that is, oscillating between this hegemonic pressure and the will to stay independent from it. At the end of this spectrum lies the terrorist actors, engaged for decades in a war against the West. Al Qaeda and the Islamic State epitomized this virulent response against Western cultural invasion

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and destruction of the region. They have become the tantamount of this cultural and ideological incompatibility. For the purpose of this analysis, terrorism is defined as “violence or the threat of violence calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm—in a word, to terrorize—and thereby bring about some social or political change” (B. Jenkins: 2003:16).

In this light, terrorist activities could be read as a counter-hegemonic strategy caused by an emotional wound left after the American invasion of their culture. From this proposal, multiple questions arise. How do these individuals run and resist this ideological domination? What mechanisms are at work to revoke hegemonic norms on a global level? Borrowing from Susan Strange’s concept of structural power as a practical methodology to fully develop Gramsci’s analysis and further emphasize the cultural, emotional effect caused by US hegemonic positions and actions in the Middle East. From these feelings, the analysis will focus on the appearance, discourses and attacks of terrorist organizations to illustrate their counter-hegemonic dimension. Adopting a Gramscian perspective will thus allow one to re-read the motivations of terrorists’ organizations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State through innovative, cultural lenses.

Terrorism, the New Counter-Hegemonic Resistance?

Counter-hegemony is essentially a process through which Country A challenges the normative and political opinions spread by Country B, when these opinions are acknowledged and supported by the majority of countries. One such idea is the idea that Western economic norms and cultural visions are the only options available. It “defines the way people develop ideas and discourse to challenge dominant assumptions, beliefs and established patterns of behavior” (Cox: 1983). Thus, laying the foundation for a contestation of the traditional, current, international order (Cox and Schilthuis: 2012:1).

Al Qaeda asserts itself in this vein because it seeks to “serve as the basis for the new social, political and economic order” of the new society they seek to establish against the West. As such, “Al Qaeda considers Islam a ‘revolutionary ideology’ that unites global Islamic society” (Turner: 2010:549) using a ‘violent struggle to remake the world’. (Devetak: 2005:240) Indeed, the underpinning principle of the organization consists on waging a crusade against the United States, who they perceive as invading and destroying the birthplace of Islam. Because of this, the declaration of *Jihad*, a defensive war, is justified. Because of American pillaging of the Holy Land, the organization established the necessity to unite the Islamic world through *Ummah* (unity) to defend itself. Al Qaeda has criticized America and its allies, particularly in Europe, as branding themselves as free and democratic while forcibly imposing ideals and regimes in the Middle East without any respect for Muslims’ right to self-determination. Al Qaeda legitimized the 9/11 attacks through “the ideas that Western societies are morally corrupt, that recent democratic reform and human rights initiatives are insincere or bankrupt, and that American and British civilians should be held accountable for the policies of their democratically elected governments in the Middle East that Al Qaeda finds objectionable or unjust.” (Blanchard: 3:2007).

In return, hegemonic status demands the ability for hegemony to maintain its capacities—as Susan Strange coined it—to achieve a separation between relational and structural power. In other words, the Hegemon exercises its relational power to subordinate another country to do what suits its interests. This structural power then organizes subordinate systems that perpetuate relational power. Therefore, “structural power, confers the power to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to each other, relate to people, or relate to corporate enterprises” (Strange: 1988:24). The concept can be defined as a globally accepted ensemble of “customs, usages, and modes of operation” (Strange: 1988:26). Strange’s terminology can be used to further illustrate how the United States employed relational power created by its structural power to compel the United Kingdom to invade Iraq in 2003. Using the urgent need to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, the US was able to organize a coalition of thirty-six countries and to be strongly supported by the United Kingdom because of its relational power acquired throughout the years. This relational power is a direct consequence of American structural power which largely destabilized Iraqi society, led to anti-American sentiment within the country and further legitimized Al Qaeda’s actions. The scars left behind remain visible and are a source of a grudge for many in the region, fueling dissatisfaction and resistance against the United States.

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Considering Gramsci's points, the counter-hegemonic process is symbiotically linked to an affective realm because our experience and understanding of the world are intertwined with our feelings. Along this line, emotions become the central pivot motivating social and political transformation towards counter-hegemonic responses. Al Qaeda's rise blatantly illustrates such interpretation. Indeed, the organization arose as a violent reaction to the invasion of Iraq by the United States. This was understood as an aggression against the East proved by Bin Laden's famous declaration against the Crusaders:

First, for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples . (Osama Bin Laden, February 1998 – Full Text on the Federation of American Scientists – FAS)

The organization's *raison d'être* therefore took root in a violent cultural wound caused by the multiple fault lines of America's foreign policy along the years, thus positioning itself as a counter-hegemonic actor according to Gramsci's perspective.

Like the legitimization of the 9/11 attacks and the US invasion and presence in Iraq demonstrate, Al Qaeda's counter-hegemonic resistance relies on a new definition of reality, using the narrative of Muslims as victims of the West, and the West being the invader of the Holy Land. As C. Castoriadis suggests, this re-definition of the Muslim people's reality is based on:

What counts and what doesn't count, what makes sense and what doesn't, a definition not inscribed in books, but on the very being of things: the actions of human beings, their relations, their organization, their perception of what is, their affirmation and search for what counts, the materiality of the objects they produce, use and consume . (1973).

Beyond the narratives, Gramsci posits that such resistance "presupposes the formation of a new set of standards, a new psychology, new ways of feeling, thinking and living" (1991: 41). This process is allowed through the cementing of terrorist ideology, creating a mental universe structured by a radically different understanding and analysis of the same historical moment. As such, the extremist religious interpretation provides a meaning to the effects of the hurtful actions of the "Crusaders".

While Gramsci asserts that hegemony also had its material component by giving the example of Fordist production, so does counter-hegemony. The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) (also known as the Islamic State) arose in June 2014. This rise can be interpreted as the response to the continuous process of social actions of everyday life of those who contest Western hegemony. It was the natural reaction of a people who lacked a protected Islamic community in the face of Western persecutors. Along this line, the Islamic State's rhetoric is also worth pondering. The organization's *raison d'être* for its propaganda relied on demonstrating the deviating effects of Western foreign interventions in the Middle East. Going back to Al Qaeda's "Crusade" metaphor (referring to the Zionists and their Western allies), the organization asserts its fight against the West in time immemorial. The repeated use of the term also offers a parallel to Western, Christian aggression during the Medieval ages, which only reinforces the legitimacy of today's battle. Coined as the "Final Crusade," the appearance of the Caliphate makes sense as it is a reparative mechanism for the subjugated Muslims of the West. Its primary goal is to offer a protected land for Muslims. Along the same line, the issue of the Dabiq (July 2016) explains the reasons "why we (The Islamic State) hate you and why we want to fight you" (title of the Dabiq from July 2016). Multiple reasons pertaining to non-Muslims, atheism and liberal systems are given. However, the last one stipulates that "we (ibid) hate you for invading our lands and fight you to repel you and drive you out" emphasizing that Western foreign policy choices are perceived as invasions (Dabiq: July 2016).

Paralleling Al Qaeda, the Caliphate also subscribes to a form of political strategy against Western domination. Their grand strategy is designed to "remain and expand" by maximizing their interests—the Caliphate epitomizing its ideology—"to all current Muslim countries in the world to fight and win the apocalyptic war against the West" (Oosterveld, W., Bloem W., Farnham N., Kayaoğlu B., & Sweijs: 2017:162). Therefore, "holding a state in their view,

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is the prelude to knocking down the dominoes of the world's secular Muslim regimes" (Benjamin and Simon: 2003:134). The Islamic State then appears to be the contrary of a status quo power; rather, it looks like a revisionist power seeking to create a revisionist wave within the perceived US-led international order. The appearance of the Islamic State offers an interesting historical parallel as it appears almost five centuries after the first one. Symbolically, the last Ottoman Empire climaxed during the sixteenth century before Atatürk's Republic. This encouraged a wave of Occidentalism, shutting down any attempt to preserve the oriental culture from Western invasion. ISIS' Caliphate thus resonates as a significant revival of this specific era, perfectly preserved with no trace of Western "barbarism." The Caliphate is the realization of the prophecy of destroying Western domination over Islamic territories. According to the strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, the world order, led by the United States, would "never accept a state ruled by Islamic law" because "such a state had its own civilization and its own ideology, independent of the world order" (cited in Lia 2007: 238), hence its creation. Therefore, as A. Cronin emphasizes, this strategy intensifies ISIS' efforts to become a legitimate actor in bolstering the world order. With the establishment of the Caliphate, ISIS sought to carve out its own political space to force the West to re-conceptualize its certainty.

Considering a Gramscian perspective on terrorism and understanding it as a counter-hegemonic response against cultural domination inflicted by the West, the emotional dimension of this phenomenon becomes even more salient. Yet, as the Italian author explained, this cultural wound alone does not suffice to inspire resistance. Rather, a combination of multiple ingredients becomes necessary for the revolt to take place.

Passion and Feelings, Ingredients of Sedition

In the process of establishing counter-hegemonic practices, Gramsci emphasizes the decisive role of ideological agents such as intellectuals, political parties, and subaltern classes in socially organizing change and sedition. Opponents of the imposed normative culture have to produce their own intellectual figures to replace it. These intellectuals must recreate people's reality by justifying their historical wounds. The first step in the process therefore consists of raising critical thoughts to become self-reflective on one's culturally dominated status, paving the way for instilling revolutionary practices.

Raising critical awareness rapidly becomes a politicization of emotions to further instrumentalize revolutions and ultimately instill terror. Indeed, achieving this oppositional reflexivity follows different foundations. As Laurence Miller explains, the first stage consists of making people conscious of the fact that their lived experience stems from a false reality. The second phase is about showing them how unfair their situation is, and the third is about finding the culprit and demonizing it. Ultimately, these stages must lead to the operational move towards the perceived responsible person (Miller: 2006:127-128). This psychological conditioning may resemble the traditional radicalization process as described by Moghaddam in his staircase to terrorism theory. Beyond this, for such a counter-hegemonic strategy to take place, "counter-hegemonic leaders must be mindful to align themselves with the subaltern in a way that resonates with their passions (emotional lives and understanding) as well as with their lived experiences" (Reed: 2012: 11).

These features are also required because the task of conscious awakening is a thorny one. Indeed, the subaltern group must realize that their so-called common sense does not correspond to their daily experience and, especially, does not fit with their feelings of discomfort. These feelings are then used by leaders to recreate a more understandable reality. This redefinition works through combining past and present, and unifying individual and collective experiences into a single history to emphasize timeless suffering. Bin Laden's rhetoric suggests this historical rewriting:

Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more eighty years of humiliation and disgrace, its sons killed, and their blood spilled, its sanctities desecrated. (Osama Bin Laden: 7:2001)

These intellectuals provide the basis for any counter-hegemonic maneuver but must be organized in a meaningful direction. In other words, a "conscientization" of the cultural domination must occur through which the masses can liberate themselves from the false acknowledgment to acquire a counter-consciousness and transform this hegemonic order.

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Passion also accounts for a critical component in the making of this social transformation. It must be articulated with knowledge and implies that leaders maintain a high level of closeness towards their subalterns so as to understand their feelings, justify them, and connect them to a particular historical context. As such, Intellectuals need to become “organic intellectuals,” in other words, a part of their environment. This privileged relation is intended to create a self-reflectivity towards their emotions, understanding of their experiences in the world. This involves a relentless engagement to operationalize the resistance.

The mentorship system within terrorist organizations participates in the fabric of this awareness; eased by the notion of organic intellectuals. Indeed, an efficient mentorship system has been put in place to prepare the promising ones for leadership tasks. Al Qaeda’s leaders themselves have been mentored, Abdullah Azzam was Bin Laden’s mentor for decades while Al-Maḳḳisi was Al-Zarqawi’s mentor. As such, terrorist leaders such as Bin Laden, Al Baghdadi and Al Zarqawi themselves played an important role in politically preparing the “subaltern groups” (jihadist fighters), hence the hunt for and elimination of terrorist leaders portrayed as symbols of victory within Western mythology. Therefore, an “educational relationship” is built through media campaigns, ISIS magazines, and social networks. Indeed, many terrorist organizations rapidly understood the role of education in colonizing the young minds and hearts with diverging ideas, which led to a series of attacks on schools. As Gramsci explains, “counter-hegemonic resistance necessarily involves struggling over the hearts and minds of people, their attitudes, beliefs, and emotions about the world” (Reed: 2012). ISIS and Al Qaeda both resort to this strategy. The Islamic State has designed a set of educational services and a health infrastructure for its population. The organization also appeals to communications, emphasizing the utopian dimension of the state. As Charlie Winter explains:

*Through their regular publication of for example videos and photographic reports, depicting the so-called – *istirāḥat al-mujāhidīn* – fighters relaxing with tea and signing with each other – the propagandists emphasize the idea of Brotherhood in the Caliphate. The strategy thus intends to show the welcoming and enjoyable environment of the state playing on emotional appeals. In other words, ISIS recognizes that offers of friendship, security and a sense of belonging are powerful draws for its supporters abroad (Winter: 2017).*

Consequently, the emotional dimensions of belonging to this specific community is worth noticing. As the lived experience is reinterpreted and moved from a single person to several, the creation of a meaningful community occurs. Experiences, but also ideology and actions, towards the world are now shared. Silke emphasizes this dimension by documenting:

Former terrorists when asked what they miss about their lives as active members of such groups often talk about the closeness, they felt with group members, the sense of shared risk and common purpose. In their eyes, life as terrorist had an intensity and purpose that life outside the organization noticeably lacked (Silke: 2004:192).

In other words, the unifying component of the mission creates a togetherness reinforcing the reasons to believe in this counter-narrative and urge to resist.

The relationship between the terrorist community and the *jihad* act naturally reveals itself. Indeed, emphasizing the need for a global Islamic community through *Ummah*, Al Qaeda relies on a community of feelings; mostly humiliation, hatred, and resentment for the Western enemy. This community engages itself in “emotional responses to events that lie outside international politics” that is, counter-hegemonic practices (Berlin: 2002:43). Al Qaeda and the Islamic State’s violent activities consequently provide a strong framework; reinforcing links between its fervent members. This, in turn, creates a global ideological duality between “them” (the “Crusaders,” invading and hurting) and “us” (the people) in responding to their unrighteous actions, echoing Edward Said’s “us versus them” argument. It seems that terrorist organizations almost recreate a new form of Occidentalism—a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (the Orient) and the strange (the “perverted Occident”). Maintaining this polarization is critical; its vector exploits the unseen corners of education.

Having underlined the critical components and the repertoire of contention that the counter-hegemonic activity implies, it is necessary to dive into the question of how this Gramscian critical pedagogy seeds the soil for jihadist involvement and recruitment around the world.

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A Subversive Curriculum

Gramsci notices that “every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship” (1971:350). Beyond raising awareness and understanding people’s frustration, counter-hegemony, understood as a political practice with transformative consequences, involves the establishment of an educational relationship between leaders and subalterns. Through this relationship, teachers must show their subalterns how their suffering is part of a cultural and historical understanding of the world by the so-called enemy. This process leads their students to develop critical thinking and reflexivity on their own suffering and victimization. More than a critical reflexivity, counter-hegemonic practices also involve the establishment of a critical pedagogy. ISIS’ new form of education embodies a resistance against hidden ideologies embedded in education normalizing the hegemonic culture. The core of this critical pedagogy thus consists of maintaining and enforcing a constant level of critical consciousness to build counter-hegemonic practices and positions of resistance against the injunction of Western hegemony. The ongoing use of this counter-narrative, as suggested by Gramsci, to eradicate the hegemonic culture is quintessential. Education becomes a land of possibility to inoculate disruptive practices.

The Islamic State provides a compelling illustration of this reflexive task. After revoking the traditional educational system in their besieged region, the organization put a biased curriculum in place. Math, History, and English classes are taught in a way that reinforces the teachings of the Caliphate. For example, Math problems often ask to calculate such things as the number of casualties in a car bombing. History is re-written to proclaim the glory of the organization, spreading a normalization of violence and a justification of its role in the students’ daily lives. Civil rights are also taught to emphasize the righteous actions of the Caliphate and the necessity of people to engage themselves in this enterprise to resist the cultural *Diktat* and oppression. The development of a victimhood logic also becomes a common theme, allowing ISIS to present itself as a holy, protective entity against the Invader. Lastly, the extremist religious appeal invokes that every good Muslim should die for the Caliphate and its ideology as the only way to become pure and to escape from Western perversion. ISIS’ critical pedagogy entails a historical conceptualization of reality, the demonstration of forms of oppression and a quest for emancipation and the emancipatory action of this education, following Gramsci’s terminology.

This educational relationship is also increasingly visible in the leaders’ addresses to their youngest followers, as seen below:

It should not be hidden from you that the people of Islam had suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed on them by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators; to the extent that the Muslims blood became the cheapest and their wealth as loot in the hands of the enemies. (Osama Bin Laden, August 1996)

The discourse suggests that terrorist leaders must unveil the truth for their public, to proceed to an exegesis practice of the reality pervaded by Western justifications.

As Foucault explained in his previous work, “truth” is the result of social relations and political relations of power remain “the very ground on which the subject, the domains of knowledge and the relations with truth are formed” (Foucault: 15:2000). The production of discourse and terrorist discourses here creates a mechanism of social power. These power relationships are symbiotically linked with the resisting capacities. “Therefore, networks of power and knowledge are also sites of resistance, wherein all of the partners in a power relationship produce and contest the truth” (Stoddart :206:2007). These discourses thus reinforce the production of re-defining and contesting the accepted reality and creates a community of resistance against it.

This pedagogical enterprise essentially is about redefining reality; recreating people’s reality to give it a new meaning, to justify their suffering and transcend through the *Jihad*, “a just war.” Through this education, “people become conscious of the conflict between content and form of the world of production in the sphere of ideologies” (Gramsci: XX). As a result, the “war of position” starts in classrooms and in textbooks. The notion is epitomized by education and indoctrination provided by terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda or the Islamic State. The notion of a war of position consists of all the means (for example: discourses and teachings) designed to subvert the hidden hegemonic culture. Understood as a long or “silent revolution.” This form of counter-education must underline the

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asymmetries of power through manipulating the social relations and realities through a twisted syllabus (Williams: 1975). Forcefully used, this critical pedagogy becomes an insurrectional pedagogy allowing individuals to question ideologies and to engage themselves in revolutionary, terrorist activities to suppress the condition of their perceived oppression and ultimately to “change the world.” Gramsci’s notion of critical pedagogy thus becomes a political praxis of counter-hegemony through education.

These leaders and teachers assume the responsibility of serving as vehicles for questioning the traditional cultural landscape, radicalizing the subalterns to create “a revolutionary subjectivity through the formation of continuous and multifaceted counter-hegemonic activity and the development of a revolutionary historical bloc where divergent interests converge and coalesce around shared visions and objectives” (MacLaren: 434). In recruiting terrorist fighters across the world, these teachers use the exact process described by Gramsci. Calling for insurrection and insubordination manipulates the young people’s distress, especially in the Western part of the world. Indeed, as many of them suffer from a loss of identity, “the fear of the cult of “individualism” experiencing a cultural crisis, anomy or normlessness” (Postel: 2013), the terrorist’s enterprise of justification of these people’s feelings thus resonates as the ultimate solution for their reality at this specific moment. These common themes become the Achilles Heel for the Western-marginalized population, easing their indoctrination and promoting further recruitment.

Al Qaeda and ISIS promptly realized the potential of the Internet in spreading its ideology to vulnerable minds throughout the world. As Levine and Brachman reminds us,

The majority of Westerners following a radical interpretation of Islam who have been arrested on terrorism charges have either been active in the hardline forums or in possession of extremist materials downloaded from the web . (2011).

Consequently, terrorist organizations envisioned the centrality of education, critical pedagogy or indoctrination as leverage to expand their defensive *jihad* against the West. Using classrooms and textbooks, but also forums, gaming hubs, and innovative social networks such as Telegram. The terrorist entrepreneurs seemed to have incorporated the Western means of communication to set their counter-domination plan into motion.

Conclusion

To conclude, various observations arise from a cultural analysis of terrorism. Adopting a Gramscian perspective provides a primer on the motivations behind the ways in which terrorists organize themselves. Understood as the contestation of the Western hegemony experienced as an emotional, cultural effect, the terrorist enterprise became a political praxis to create a political *transformismo* of the current world using political violence and unconventional methods. Through these lenses, Gramsci’s work also sheds light on the mechanisms used to produce these contesting practices; whether through discourse, pedagogy, or actions.

Gramsci’s work highlights how emotions provide a solid basis for ideology to work and pervade the minds. The author of the *Prison Notebooks* conceptualizes subaltern and organic intellectual notions to establish an incipience for asserting resisting practices. His emphasis on passion and feelings reveals the materials needed for teachers and intellectuals to raise a critical reflexivity against a given cultural reality. Lastly, highlighting the affective dimension of a perceived cultural destruction can be used as an extremely strong resource to question hegemonic conditions and organize counter-hegemonic means. In manipulating individuals’ frustration, the counter-hegemonic means also lies at the critical juncture of another contemporary issue inherent to terrorism: global jihadist recruitment.

While discourse establishes the first step for making sense of effects and emotions, critical pedagogy ignites minds, seeding the soil for the sedition to happen by critically raising people’s awareness of the conditions of their oppression. From there, sparking the idea of revolutionary action—for example, the defensive *Jihad*—becomes a logical yet crude result. Terrorist leaders seem to have understood the need for a critical pedagogy to justify the right emotions to indoctrinate and further recruit jihadists, bolstering the present international structure and its current cultural hegemony.

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The appearance of ISIS, like 9/11, revived the idea that the world currently finds itself in an interregnum. The Islamic State opened a breach in time, illustrating the movement between old powers and emergent ones while seeking to affirm and challenge the order. Without reflecting upon the cultural dimensions of the power structure, the interregnum could indeed trigger additional morbid consequences.

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Notes

[1] "Correspondent Meets with Opposition Leader Bin Ladin: February 1997

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