EVENTS CALENDAR

Director’s Speaker Series

EITAN ALIMI

“The Relational Context of Radicalization: The Case of Jewish Settler Contention before and after the Gaza Pullout”

Tuesday, April 01, 2014, 12:00PM - 1:30PM
The Mershon Center for International Security Studies
150 Neil Ave. Columbus, OH 43220

Register here for this event.

Eitan Alimi is senior lecturer in political sociology at the Department of Political Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from Boston College in April 2004. His research interests include contentious politics and social movements, radicalization and political violence, and conflict resolution, putting the Israeli case in comparative perspective. Recent research projects include the role of cultural elements in influencing the dynamics and trajectories of contention; the role of the news media in peace-building efforts; the relational dynamics of political radicalization and de-radicalization; and applying theories and models of social movements in highly repressive settings.

He is serving as an editorial board member for the journal Mobilization. Recent publications have appeared in Research on Social Movements, Conflict, and Change; Political Studies; British Journal of Political Science; Theory and Society; Comparative Politics; Mobilization; Studies in Conflict and Terrorism; Sociological Forum; and Terrorism and Political Violence. His book Israeli Politics and the First Palestinian Intifada (Routledge, 2007) was awarded the 2008 best English book on Israeli Politics by the Israeli Political Science Association. A book on radicalization and de-radicalization in the case of the Jewish settler movement has recently come out (Resiling, 2013), and a co-authored book on processes of radicalization in comparative perspective is under contract with Oxford University Press.

Abstract

Why is it that some social movements engaged in contention experience radicalization of member factions, whereas others do not? The fact that in the vast majority of cases opposition movements experience a shift to political violence on the part of one or more organization must not lead us to overlook “exceptions to the rule.” Indeed, there are times when violent-prone ideologies and aggressive propensities do not translate into violent mode of contention. To explain those exceptions, I argue that relational mechanisms mediate the influence of motives for aggression and ideologies that justify violence on actual engagement in violence, through their separate, but most centrally their combined operation in forming what I term Infrastructure of Coordination.

A comparison of two “similar yet different in outcome” episodes of Jewish settler contention offers strong support for the key role relational mechanisms play in specifying the possibility of radicalization. Despite ample environmental stimuli and widespread violent-prone ideologies constant in both episodes, in the Gaza pullout radicalization was impeded as a result of high levels of coordination established between and within the contending parties and, conversely, in the dismantling of Amona outpost the disintegration of ODC-member radicalization. Supportive evidence is provided from a multi-methods, mechanism-based design, including surveys with key players, content analysis of various movement-based news outlets, social network analysis, and contention-only data. In concluding, I discuss the generalizability of the findings and the "exceptionality" of the Jewish settlement case.