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Enhancing Security through Collaborative Research

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## Welcome from the Editor

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume X, Issue 4 (August 2016) of *Perspectives on Terrorism* at [www.terrorismanalysts.com](http://www.terrorismanalysts.com). Our free online journal is a joint publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), headquartered in Vienna (Austria), and the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies (CTSS), headquartered at the Lowell Campus of the University of Massachusetts (United States). Now in its tenth year, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has nearly 6,400 regular subscribers and many thousand more occasional readers and website visitors worldwide. The Articles of its six annual issues are fully peer reviewed by external referees while its Research Notes, Policy Notes and other content are subject to internal editorial review.

This special issue of the journal is the result of collaboration with guest editors Scott Englund and Michael Stohl, who have selected five papers from two conferences on *Constructions of Terrorism* that they convened in December 2015 and April 2016. They summarize each these papers in a separate “Introduction to the Special Issue” which begins on the following page. All five papers have been peer reviewed per the Editorial Board policy of *Perspectives on Terrorism*. This is followed by a sixth paper, published as a Special Correspondence to the journal, in which Clark McCauley offers a thought-provoking vision for the Middle East after the demise of the Islamic State.

The Resource Section of this issue features an extensive bibliography on legal aspects of terrorism, by our Information Resources Editor, Judith Tinnes. This is followed by brief reviews of recent publications in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies by our Book Reviews Editor, Joshua Sinai. Next, we provide an update by Ryan Scrivens on terrorism-related Ph.D. theses in progress or recently completed in Canada. And the issue concludes with a call for papers for a conference on terrorism and social media (at Swansea University), and an announcement for new positions available at *Perspectives on Terrorism* to contribute as Associate Editors or as an IT Associate Editor.

This issue of the journal was prepared by co-editor Prof. James Forest at the Lowell Campus of the University of Massachusetts, who will also publish the next issue (October 2016).

## Guest Editors' Introduction to the Special Issue

# Constructions of Terrorism: Confronting the Challenges to Global Security Created By Daesh/Islamic State

by Scott Englund and Michael Stohl

The articles in this Special Issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* represent a multi-disciplined, concentrated effort to address the new challenges presented by the so-called Islamic State, also known as ISIS/ISIL or by the Arabic *Daesh*. These articles were first presented at the Stimson Center at a conference co-sponsored by TRENDS Research and Advisory, an independent research group based in Abu Dhabi, UAE; the Orfalea Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara; and the Stimson Center, Washington, D.C. The articles address three broad sets of questions: First, what, if anything, sets the Islamic State apart from other terrorist organizations, and are there analogous groups that can better inform our analysis and policy making? Secondly, what is the true measure of the threat that the Islamic State poses to global peace and security and how does this differ from other organizations and threats? Finally, what motivates the Islamic State, how do others perceive those motives, and how can we best respond to them? Combined, these present a thorough and rigorous approach to understanding a complex phenomenon.

The first two articles by Craig Whiteside, and Scott Englund and Michael Stohl offer new perspectives on the Islamic State using a comparative approach, drawing parallels between the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations to which it is not often compared. The authors argue that the Islamic State is best understood as a social movement or political revolutionary group that employs terrorism as just one tactic among a variety of tools at its disposal. In the first, Whiteside compares the Islamic State to the Vietnamese Communists in a revolutionary warfare framework and makes a causal argument that the Islamic State's defeat of the *Sahwa* (Awakening) movement in Iraq was the key to its successful establishment of control of Sunni areas and the mobilization of its population for support. This research provides insight into the return of a powerful method of insurgency as well as a glimpse into the vast clandestine network that provides the strength of the Islamic State movement. In the second, Englund and Stohl compare the Islamic State to the *Sendero Luminoso* (or Shining Path) of Peru, to help understand the forces that gave rise to them, sustained them, and, in the case of the *Sendero Luminoso*, ultimately led to its demise. Through this comparative analysis, they argue that understanding the Islamic State as a social movement, not simply as a terrorist organization, allows us to contextualize its violence within patterns evinced by other violent social movements, with the ultimate aim of developing effective plans to counter the threat it poses.

Next, John Mueller and Mark Stewart throw cold water on the hysteria that often marks the public perception of the Islamic State—hysteria that is fanned by official statements and media reporting. Mueller and Stewart thus challenge the prevailing construction of the Islamic State by flatly answering in the negative whether it is a serious challenge to global security. They argue that although the group presents a threat to the people under its control and contributes to instability in the Middle East, it scarcely presents a challenge to *global* security. They conclude that, as with al-Qaeda, the unwarranted fear and alarm ISIS has generated around the world is likely to persist even if it is effectively extinguished as a physical force in the Middle East.

In the next article, Benjamin Smith, Andrea Figueroa, *et al*, quantitatively compare media representations of the Islamic State and al-Qaeda and find a connection between the perceived motives of a group and the perceived organizational structures of that group. Further, they find that because Daesh is often framed by the media as being an existential threat that there is an inherent disconnect between public perceptions of the threat posed by Daesh and the response to Daesh being pursued by the Administration. This has resulted in a consistent lack of support for the policies pursued by the Obama administration.

Next, Professor Richard Falk turns to the choices that are often made in crafting and implementing counter-terrorism policy. Though international law traditionally limits the application of lethal force by states against others, a militarist response to terrorism in the 21st Century has been dominant, and has largely failed. Falk suggest that old international legal standards may be inadequate to address contemporary terror threats by themselves, but rejecting those normative constraints is not justified either. A mixed approach is called for, one that allows decisive action to maintain the peace, protect people from violence, and preserve the best of international legal traditions that constrain the use of force.

Finally, in a Special Correspondence to *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Clark McCauley offers a thought-provoking vision for the Middle East after the demise of the Islamic State. He begins by taking a social psychological approach to discover the motives behind Islamic State action, suggesting that the conflict is essentially ethnic and is evidence of the emotional response to humiliation, which is the combination of anger and shame. To ameliorate this humiliation is to remove the underlying emotion that prompts support for the Islamic State. He then proposes a radical solution that effectively re-draws the political geography of the Middle East.

Cumulatively, this diverse approach to the Islamic State has produced a multi-faceted image of a confounding complex threat. How to respond to the violence engaged in and inspired by the Islamic State has risen to the top of agendas at international institutions, is raised during domestic political debates in many states, and dominates news media constructions of the contemporary terror threat. These contributions from many disciplinary perspectives combine to offer a set of useful and interesting insights into the phenomenon of the Islamic State and the threat it represents to the peoples and states within the region as well as globally. They also demonstrate that how we perceive the threat constructs much of our preferred responses to it and suggests that we should be much more reflective of those perceptions and the solutions designed to confront them.

### ***About the Guest Editors:***

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## I. Articles

### New Masters of Revolutionary Warfare: The Islamic State Movement (2002-2016)

by Craig Whiteside

#### Abstract

*The Islamic State, despite its longevity, prolific media enterprise, and high profile, escapes easy definition by policymakers, academics, and the media. An examination of the movement using Mao's revolutionary warfare framework, particularly his three stages of conflict, provides a more holistic view of the organization for both understanding and action. As part of an exploration, Islamic State captured documents and press releases were examined to establish the innovations and breadth of its adaptation of Maoist principles of guerilla warfare and the evolution of the theoretical influences on the doctrine from previous Salafi-militant experiences and publications. This research provides valuable insight into the return of a powerful method of insurgency as well as a glimpse into the vast pseudo-clandestine insurgency that is the Islamic State movement.*

**Key Words:** Revolutionary Warfare; Terrorism; Iraq; Islamic State

#### Introduction

Two years after the fall of Iraq's second largest city to the Islamic State (also known as ISIS, ISIL, and Daesh), there is still an alarming dissensus concerning their nature, strategy, and goals. Is it a nihilistic terrorist group, an apocalyptic death cult, an insurgency, a terrorist army, a proto-state, or some hybrid of these? Does the group really adopt Islamic principles, or is it a Sunni neo-Ba'athist restoration movement with genocidal proclivities?[1] The confusion is not limited to academics, whose writings about the Islamic State are insightful yet rarely stray from singular research areas like ideology, economics, terrorism, religion, or regional studies. Even the US Special Forces commander tasked with countering the group in late 2014 admitted in a candid moment that he and his command did not understand "this movement." [2]

To add even more complexity, the group's evolution is rather opaque to the uninitiated, with multiple name changes that force even the bravest reporter to resort to euphemisms in their limited historical references. As such, the Islamic State is referred to in newspaper articles as a successor to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), an offshoot of Al Qaeda, a splinter group from Al Qaeda, a group that rose out of the ashes of AQI, and even frequently as a sui generis group born in 2014. While there are grains of truth in each appellation, they are all partial representations that further obscure rather than clarify.

The resultant confusion is much like a musical ensemble trying to play without a common set of sheet music. If alive today, both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz would disapprove of our collective failure to understand this enemy and to fully grasp the kind of war the Islamic State is waging. This article aims to expand on the idea of the Islamic State as a revolutionary group that has adopted Mao's protracted warfare to establish an expansive caliphate by closely examining its adaption of the doctrine of revolutionary warfare and its execution at the operational level of war.[3] If we are to understand the Islamic State, how its members have operated in the past and intend to operate in the future, an examination of the evolution of the group using Mao's three phases of revolutionary warfare can be helpful.

The idea of a Salafi jihadist group like the Islamic State using political-military doctrine spawned and honed by Marxists might seem fantastical. Yet even a casual glance at movement pronouncements over more than



a decade reveals strategic thought that is clearly influenced by Mao's protracted war concept. In a recent statement that referred to the Islamic State's battlefield defeats, official spokesman Abu Mohammad al Adnani said:

*Were you victorious when you killed Abu Mus'ab, Abu Hamzah, Abu 'Umar, or Usamah? Would you be victorious if you were to kill ash-Shishani, Abu Bakr, Abu Zayd, or Abu 'Amr? No. Indeed, victory is the defeat of one's opponent ... were we defeated when we lost the cities in Iraq and were in the desert without any city or land? ... And victory is that we live in the might of our religion or die upon it. It is the same, whether Allah blesses us with consolidation or we move into the bare, open desert, displaced and pursued.[4]*

This passage is almost incomprehensible in the abstract. Adnani is referencing past leaders of the movement since 2002 in a much different way than you will see in contemporary accounts, highlighting the continuity and the resilience of an organization that has seen its share of victories and defeats. A Syrian volunteer who joined the movement in 2002 and worked for many of those named in the statement—Abu Mus'ab (al Zarqawi), Abu Hamza (al Muhajir) and Omar (al Baghdadi)—Adnani is speaking here in the grammar of Mao's three phases of protracted warfare with references to the desert, pursuit, and consolidation.[5]

Accordingly, this examination of the Islamic State's adoption of Mao's revolutionary war framework is based on the perspective of movement veterans like Adnani, and many others whose writings and speeches were found in captured documents or press releases. This article will evaluate whether Mao's revolutionary war doctrine is a viable framework to view conflict in the 21st century, investigate the influence of revolutionary warfare on the Islamic State leadership, and finish with a detailed exposition of the Islamic State's adaptation and execution of revolutionary warfare doctrine, by phase, since 2002.

### ***Whither Revolutionary Warfare? From Mao to the two Musabs***

Referring to the different elements residing in the larger Salafi jihadist movement, Ryan wrote that Al Qaeda's strategies of conflict with the West are highly influenced by the famous canons of revolutionary warfare literature based on his analysis of the writings of al Muqrin, al Suri, Naji, and al Qurashi.[6] Kalyvas proposed using a revolutionary framework to analyze the Islamic State in order to use recent history to explain and understand, while resisting the temptation to see it as something exceptional.[7] And Dubik, an influential practitioner-scholar, calls the war "our enemies are waging a global, revolutionary war." [8]

This view is not uncontested. One practitioner with experience in Afghanistan called the reliance on using a revolutionary war lens for insurgencies outdated and simplistic, due to the "balkanization" of groups into localized insurgencies with divergent aims and little care about national level governance competitions.[9] Another recent typology of insurgencies published by the U.S. Army War College categorizes Al Qaeda and the Islamic State in the "Radical Islamist" category – with little explanation as to what this type of insurgency is trying to accomplish. In contrast, the author listed Revolutionary/People's War as a defunct "legacy form." There is no consideration that a religiously infused ideology could function in the same manner that Marxism did in motivating a similar version of People's War.

To examine the Islamic State's adaptation of its own revolutionary war doctrine, a review of its original prescriptions is in order. The aforementioned Army War College publication has a reasonable definition of People's War: a form of irregular war that utilizes "peasant armies that are drawn upon for an integrated and protracted politico-military phase strategy of eventual state takeover. A shadow or proto-state is created in parallel to the pre-existing one being targeted for elimination." [10]

Mao, the first proponent and theorist of this type of warfare, believed that victory was only possible once the population is mobilized to support the guerillas, whose goal is to attack the enemy when advantaged and to shy away from conflict when not. The part time fighters and their supporters are to be indoctrinated in the



political philosophy of the movement to motivate them to fight and persevere through a protracted struggle. The campaign progresses through three phases of blended guerilla activities and increasing conventional strength: the *building/preservation phase*, the *expansion phase*, and the *decisive phase*. These periods are fluid and conditions vary from location to location, usually dependent on enemy strength and efforts. The keys to success are developing experienced and disciplined soldiers that bond well with a supportive population, the utilization of a strong influence campaign with propaganda units at the lowest levels, and an integrated set of political goals that are synchronized with military efforts at all levels.[11]

Revolutionary war is more than military action, since those who choose to utilize it blend “military, political, economic, social, and psychological” efforts to achieve their goals.[12] The military objectives are two fold; a slow defeat of the government’s army as well as the use of terror to cripple the existing social organization, which before the conflict served to “restrict or minimize violence among the people.” Once the violence reaches a certain level, these barriers collapse.[13] Crenshaw noted in her study of revolutionary warfare in Algeria that terrorism almost always acts as a “principal instrument” in this form of political violence.[14] This instrument is “not aimed, as war is, at the annihilation of the enemy’s coercive forces, but seeks to wound him politically and psychologically.”[15] Finally, the movement taxes the population under its influence in order to fund operations and derive legitimacy for the shadow state.[16]

While much has been written about the ideological influences of Taymiyah, Qutb, Banna, and Azzam on Islamic State leaders, little has been written on revolutionary warfare’s influence on how these same commanders view strategy. In the larger Salafi jihadist school of thought, the evidence of its impact is unmistakable. Al Qaeda strategists propound a three-stage guerilla warfare strategy following the Maoist model, and frequently cite Mao, Giap, Che Guevara, Marighella, and Taber.[17] The most prolific of these influential writers was a Syrian known as Abu Musab al Suri, who published a 1600 page tome titled *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance*. Al Suri was a lecturer in military strategy in the jihadist circuit in the Afghan camps in the 1990s and influenced a young and independent Jordanian leader named Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the founder of the Islamic State movement.[18]

Suri’s writings on the lessons learned from the Syria campaign, a brutally honest critique of the Islamist uprising against Hafez Assad (1976-1982), were found in jihadist camps in Afghanistan after the 2001 invasion. The following are a few of these lessons that are applicable to groups waging revolutionary war: maintain a covert organization even when seeing success; push a centralized strategy in a decentralized organization that is compartmentalized to avoid compromise; do not prioritize military activities over public opinion; safeguard all communications; quality over quantity in recruits; adopt a clear pattern of publicizing operations; stay true to the Muslim banner; and avoid factionalism by indoctrinating all members.[19]

These lessons served as guides for Abu Musab al Zarqawi’s early followers in Iraq in 2002.[20] Begun with a handful of stalwart followers, Zarqawi transformed the movement into the dominant element of the post-2003 resistance to occupation, establishing de facto control over the Anbar province by 2006.[21] The establishment of the Islamic State in October 2006 corresponded with a split in the Sunni community which led to many defections to the government, with some resistance groups joining rebellious Sunni tribes in the newly formed Sahwa (Awakening groups).[22] Zarqawi’s successor Abu Omar al Baghdadi and his deputy Abu Hamza al Muhajir found themselves facing challenges on all sides before adapting their organization to leverage the advantages of a clandestine movement and adapting tactics of subversion and revolutionary warfare to remove Sunni rivals and government supporters from historic core areas and regain a base of political support in the Sunni community.[23] Islamic State ability to control territory after 2010 facilitated the mobilization of supporters to its cause.[24] Once pro-government Sunnis were eliminated from key areas, Iraqi security forces stood little chance of defeating an underground subversive movement, and their COIN practices suffered in direct correlation with rising casualties from an unseen enemy. By 2011 the Islamic

State was influential in its old core areas, and by 2013 was governing territory openly in defiance of the government.[25] In 2014, Mosul fell as part of a wider collapse of government forces.

To summarize the brief movement history described above in Maoist terms, the Islamic State *built* a widespread network of ideological fighters that thrived in the chaotic environment of Iraq (Phase 1), *expanding* into a national network with a strong bureaucracy and organization supporting its operations (Phase 2). The tribal backlash forced it to return to the build phase, where the leadership analyzed the problem and addressed the fissures within their community. Iraqi political dysfunction and a failed reconciliation allowed the movement to use sectarianism as a lever to return to the second phase. Conditions in Syria provided supplies, money, and a new flow of foreign fighters to enable the Islamic State to initiate a *decisive* campaign that secured the political and environmental conditions for their establishment of the caliphate (Phase 3). In the next section, the strategic-operational nexus of the Islamic State’s execution of Mao’s framework will be explained in detail by phase of historical evolution[26] (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Three Phases of Revolutionary Warfare [27]

	Ph 1 - Building	Ph 2 - Expansion	Ph 1 -- Preserving	Ph 2 - Expansion2	Ph 3 - Decisive
Years:	2002-2005	2005-2007	2008-2011	2011-2013	2013-2016
Leadership	Abu Musab Zarqawi	Zarqawi/Abu Omar	Omar/Hamza	Abu Bakr	Abu Bakr

### The Ebb and Flow of the Islamic State Movement

*“The basic tactic...is constant activity and movement.” Mao Tse-Tung, On Guerrilla Warfare [28]*

The initial political agenda of the Islamic State movement was ambitious, with a goal of growing from just a few foreign fighters and local hosts to domination of the Iraqi resistance to the occupation. Zarqawi’s group had valuable experience in clandestine operations but had to outpace the reorganizing Ba’athists, rival Islamists, and a fledgling Iraqi government while battling a very capable foreign military coalition. Furthermore, unlike other groups who had various degrees of interest in power sharing with the national government, Zarqawi’s group maintained the revolutionary goal of replacing it with a Salafi influenced state run according to the “prophetic method.”

To accomplish this, the Islamic State’s political efforts were five-fold: it had to frustrate and weaken the growing power of the government and its security forces, recruit from rival resistance groups, foster an exaggerated perception of Sunni alienation, provoke an overreaction from Shia militias, and convince the United States to withdraw from Iraq.[29]

Zarqawi’s small group began its military campaign with a strong notion of neutralizing the tremendous technological capabilities of the United States as observed first hand in Afghanistan in late 2001.[30] Ceding the day to day struggle (sniping and road side bombs) to local insurgent groups, Zarqawi’s group focused on high visibility attacks against symbolic targets using ‘precision guided’ suicide bombers and special operations that produced media attention and popularity among resistance sympathizers.[31] The end result of these actions would discredit the state’s authority and legitimacy, and divide elements of the population against each other.

This type of military strategy is summarized in the book *Management of Strategy*, written by al Qaeda strategist Abu Bakr Naji, and propagates a controversial and violent method for destroying both the government and society before starting anew.[32] Interestingly, the Islamic State media disputes the notion that this book was influential, writing

*It is important to note that contrary to Western media claims, this book never defined the methodology of the mujahidin. The top Islamic State leadership – including Shaykh Abu Musab al Zarqawi – did not recommend al Suri's book. As for the concise but beneficial 100 page book titled Management of Savagery by an unknown author who only went by the penname Abu Bakr Naji, then when Shaykh al Zarqawi read this book he commented, "it is as if the author knows what I'm planning." Note: Although Naji's book describes very precisely the overall strategy of the mujahidin, Naji fell into some errors in his discussions on issues related to the takfir of parties who forcefully resist the Shariah and its laws.[33]*

The ideological minders of the Islamic State have disavowed both Suri and Naji's works due to philosophical differences, but there is an implicit acknowledgement that Zarqawi's early military strategy is highly similar to the concepts in Naji's book. Furthermore, there is some evidence that it has been used as teaching aids fairly recently, despite the "errors." [34]

The expertise of jihadists from previous conflicts mixed with one of professional soldiers and intelligence professionals created a potent special operations capability in one other area: assassinations.[35] According to Lia, one al Suri Afghan lecture was titled: "terrorism is a religious duty, and assassination is a Prophetic tradition." [36] The Islamic State created assassination brigades as early as 2004, in order to target Shia militias whose anti-Sunni activities often drove members to the movement.[37] Special brigades began to proliferate, targeting Iraqi Islamic Party (Muslim Brotherhood) members, communists, Iraqi politicians, judges, municipal employees, senior defense and police officials, poll workers, female spies, and later Sunni Awakening council leaders.[38]

Eliminating enemies creates opportunities for access to the population, and the Islamic State was a frequent experimenter and innovator in the creation and structure of its influence campaign. While Abdullah Azzam's use of propaganda to mobilize the Sunni ummah to come and fight in Afghanistan during the Soviet era was an inspiration, the Islamic State built on this precedent to integrate all of the lines of effort together: political, social, military, and economic. Ingram divided the strategic logic of the Islamic State's media strategy into two distinct categories: one pragmatic and the other perceptual. Islamic State's pragmatic appeals focused on stability, security, and economic means; its perceptual appeals highlight sectarian and ethnic divides while championing the group as the only viable protector of Sunni Muslims from a variety of threats.[39]

A successful influence campaign would help the Islamic State alter the social fabric of Iraq, an ideological requirement but also a political one – since in post 2003 Iraq the Sunnis that made up the movement were a demographic minority. This potential for social conflict is what Mao called a "contradiction," and could be used for mobilization purposes by flexible practitioners.[40] Iraq historically had a latent sectarian cleavage within Iraqi Muslims that had grown in salience following the Iranian revolution and the 1991 uprisings throughout Iraq.[41] Therefore it is likely that Zarqawi's fixation on the "dangerous" Shia as an important lever to pry Iraqi Sunnis away from the government was much more strategic and informed than it was a deeply held and irrational belief.[42] Finally, the Islamic State's economic goal was to quickly become an independent movement devoid of outside influence, in order to protect the movement's credibility, legitimacy, and authority.

Given this brief summary of the Islamic State's policies and strategy, the next section will explain the execution of what Fishman calls "the Master Plan," by references to Maoist phases of evolution from 2002 to the present.[43] The idea is not to present a comprehensive history, but rather communicate the interplay between the different lines of effort (political, military, influence, social, self-sufficiency) and how these efforts fared after the inevitable pushback by opponents and the environment. As one distinguished strategist reminds us, "the directions which war takes are unpredictable, because its nature is defined by the competition between two opposing elements, with each side doing its best to prevent the other achieving its objectives." [44]

Figure 2: Phase 1- Building the Islamic State [45]

Ph 1 - Building	2002-2005			
Political	Military	Socio-political	Influence	Self Sufficiency
recruiting	small insurgent cells	integration with Sunni tribes	indoctrinate members	external assistance
formulate Doctrine	assassinations of key figures, collaborators	proselytize (dawa)	create media wing	
build/subsume networks	high visibility terror attacks	experiment with Sharia law	name branding	

The primary focus during the building phase was on recruiting, especially among the very extensive underground Salafi network that had existed during Saddam’s era.[46] During this time period, Zarqawi lieutenants Abu Muhammad al Lubnani and Abu Anas al Shami recruited the future leadership of the Islamic State, including Abu Omar al Baghdadi, al Adnani, and many others who would go on to dominate the leadership in 2014.[47]

It is probably not a surprise that the military campaign got ahead of the rest of the efforts, and as such Zarqawi wisely chose to forgo claims of credit for the UN, Jordanian Embassy, and Imam Ali Mosque bombings in his earliest military operations in the summer of 2003, patiently waiting until he had a functioning media department before making retroactive claims and announcing the “formation” of his group in January 2004.[48]

Recruiting amongst the former underground Salafists and extreme Sunni rejectionists was much easier than convincing the Iraqi Sunni to eschew the 2005 elections. The movement’s main political rival was the Iraqi Islamic Party, whose leaders aimed to dominate the 2005 elections in the majority Sunni provinces. Since the Islamic State’s ideology ruled elections to be forbidden, a careful application of violence and threats to this problem resulted in a de facto Sunni boycott of the elections that further alienated Sunnis from a now unrepresentative government.[49]

The relative success of the movement’s political/military/influence efforts were counterbalanced by poor relations with Sunni tribes that were hostile to the initial governing experiments of the first Islamic State. Efforts to forcibly change the social mores of the population failed. Tribal norms did not match with the strict Sharia law that accompanied early Islamic State control of al Qaim, Ramadi, and Baqubah, and this friction fueled tribal resentment against the Islamic State.[50] Also, the group’s drive for self-sufficiency lagged these other efforts, forcing Zarqawi to officially and belatedly join Al Qaeda to secure funding from the larger movement despite substantial ideological and strategic differences.[51] The Islamic State’s late divorce from Al Qaeda in 2013 does not reflect the true nature of this dysfunctional relationship, which had soured as early as 2006 – a symptom of the Islamic State’s desire to operate independent of outside influence.

Figure 3: Phase 2 – Expansion (2005-2007)

Ph 2 - Expansion	2005-2007			
Political	Military	Socio-political	Influence	Self Sufficiency
mergers	platoon operations	subsume tribes	expanded media organization	income generation
establish Islamic state	assassination brigades	capitalize on sectarianism		booty collection/extortion networks
elect proto-caliph	industrial suicide bombing	impose Sharia in occupied areas		
bureaucratization	air defense/artillery units			
contest elections	sectarian attacks on pilgrims, shrines			

By 2006 the group’s Shura council had crafted a merger with dozens of smaller Iraqi groups, formed a political front, declared “statehood,” and attempted to appeal to Iraqi nationalists by selecting Abu Omar al Baghdadi – an Anbari from Haditha–as Zarqawi’s replacement.[52] The attempt to declare an Islamic State was a political gamble, but a calculated one designed to highlight the uniqueness of a seductive and popular aim of the movement, the establishment of a future caliphate.[53] Meanwhile, the high death tolls of the sectarian civil war fueled a growing sense of crisis in Iraq, a situation rife with opportunities for revolutionaries.

At this point, the Islamic State of Iraq was growing in military capability, infrastructure, and becoming self-reliant due to the development of a large extortion enterprise in the midst of the chaos, fueled in part by an innovative effort to profit from the selling of war “booty.”[54] Its media empire expanded to incorporate provincial media wings as well as its own video production company (al Furqan), and eventually produced over 1000 products in 2007.[55]

As often is the case, an overreliance on military force contained the seeds of a backlash. The Islamic State’s reliance on assassination as a tactic to eliminate its enemies in the government grew to include tribal figures that failed to cooperate, which in turn sparked a growing tribal resistance counter-movement that was angry at the flouting of tribal customs, the loss of black market income, and the alienation of powerful Sunni tribal sheikhs who correctly saw for themselves only a restrained future in any Islamic State. Rival resistance groups that had soured of working with the Islamic State and were tired of its arrogance and brutality joined the tribes in driving it out of Sunni population areas.[56] As a result of this setback, the Islamic State conducted a slow, general retreat to remote rural areas in Iraq to avoid annihilation at the hands of the coalition and its new Sahwa (Awakening) allies.[57]



Figure 4: Phase 1 – Preservation (2008-2011)

Ph 1 -- Preserving	2008-2011			
Political	Military	Socio-political	Influence	Self Sufficiency
justify state	counter-Sahwa campaign	reconcile with select tribes	counter-Sahwa campaign	extortion/black market profits
recruit tribes/former resistance	sticky bomb - IED assassination	demonize democracy (contrasting form)	decentralization to provincial media	energy focus (N. Iraq)
recruit prisoners	high visibility terror attacks		thematic videos	
frustrate reconciliation				
lawfare/subversion				

The loss of core areas in Anbar, Babil, and Diyala, the desertion of many of its fighters, and the difficulty of operating amongst government informants required the Islamic State to return to the *building* and *preservation* phase.[58] To reestablish a base of support within the Sunni community, emir Abu Omar al Baghdadi prioritized the dismantling of the Sahwa movement through a more focused assassination campaign that vetted all killings of key Sahwa sheikhs.[59] As the movement gained space to breathe, it began to reestablish shadow governments to experiment with the application of services, justice, and population control. Most of this experimentation happened in the only remaining urban area it had significant influence, Mosul.

The incipient Sunni/tribal civil war that festered after 2006 was a natural reaction to the movement’s obsessive desire to alter the social fabric without the appropriate means to do so.[60] The Islamic State’s failure to forcibly bend the tribes, like Saddam Hussein’s earlier failures, influenced the leadership to prioritize dawa (proselytization) and Islamic education over a forced implementation of sharia law, which could be delayed until the decisive phase when resistance to sharia by the population would be more subdued due to power and control dynamics.[61] Abu Omar also mandated the careful recruitment of Sahwa tribes back to the Islamic State by manipulating inner tribal power dynamics.[62]

The Islamic State’s acceptance of asymmetric battle doctrine was complete enough that there were no attempts to conduct large conventional attacks in this stage of weakness. Instead, its terror campaign moved to center stage of their activity, in order to boost propaganda efforts. Captured documents indicate much of the terror was about recruiting former fighters to come back by convincing them the fight was not over.[63] A vibrant cell led by Hudayfa al Batawi in Baghdad pulled off a variety of spectacular attacks against churches and government buildings in the city during 2010; this helped maintain the belief that the group was alive and regenerating from its defeat.[64]

During this crucial period, the movement benefited from a series of mistakes by its opponents. To regain some of its fighters, the Islamic State conducted over a dozen documented prison breaks, freeing thousands of veterans due to lax security.[65] In addition to this influx, over 20,000 prisoners were released between 2008-2010 into an environment with weak rule of law practices and no monitoring of parolees.[66] There is significant evidence that a majority of the current leadership of the Islamic State movement were among these former prisoners that quickly returned to the fight.[67]

Internally, the group refined its vertically integrated, centrally managed structure with functional bureaus in order to effectively control territory.[68] This organizational form was copied largely from al Qaeda, reinforcing the notion that much of the Islamic State’s influences come from its members with experience in Afghanistan with the larger jihadist movement.[69] Often described as a shadowy network dependent on personal ties, the Islamic State in reality has a sophisticated bureaucracy and hierarchy to control the excesses



of subordinates.[70] The discipline and control wielded by the Islamic State leadership at times compares favorably against the actions of a notoriously corrupt Iraqi government and a brutal Assad regime.[71]

The combination of returning and new members, with a steady flow of funds from its ever expanding extortion networks, set the stage for the Islamic State to begin the second expansion in its history despite its loss of some very key leaders to coalition efforts in 2010.[72]

Figure 5: Phase 2 - Second Expansion (2011-2013)

Ph 2 - Expansion2	2011-2013			
Political	Military	Socio-political	Influence	Self Sufficiency
expand into Syria	Breaking Walls (prisoner break out)	reconcile with tribes/armed groups	transition to social media (Twitter)	extortion/black market profits
exploit Sunni disenfranchisement	focus on ISF	contrast with Arab Spring	experimentation	
revitalize networks	platoon operations			
test governance in certain areas	special operations raids			
expand shadow governance				

During this second expansion, the leadership of the Islamic State put their increasing manpower and funding to good use. The new emir, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, was a veteran movement member groomed by the previous leadership for the role,[73] serving in logistics, media, Sharia councils, and as the emir of the heart of the shadow state–Mosul.[74] The campaign against the Sahwa went into overdrive and insurgent attacks against Iraq security forces operating near Islamic State core areas increased dramatically. By 2011, Islamic State attacks in Mosul were three times higher than in Diyala province and 50% more than all of Anbar province.[75] The withdrawal of U.S. forces also gave the Islamic State much more ability to maneuver in larger and larger forces without fear of air attacks.

The collapse of the Assad government in Eastern Syria during this year was a boon for the Islamic State; it used its superior organization, experience, and logistical network to capture large quantities of arms in Syria and capitalize on a renewed flow of foreign fighters responding to the Syrian crisis. On the upswing by mid-2011, Abu Bakr felt comfortable sending his emir of Mosul and six senior officers to Syria to exploit the crisis and establish a cell that became Jabhat al Nusra.[76] Eventually, these interior lines allowed the Islamic State to gain experience at mobile warfare, which was put to use in a combined guerrilla and small conventional unit campaign aiming to again control territory in its old core areas.

The veteran leadership secured in prison breaks and releases, along with the opportunity to conduct platoon sized operations in Syria, facilitated the transition of military activities to the mobile warfare required as part of the Maoist decisive phase. As one observer noted, the “jihadists do not legitimize themselves through statecraft. They draw legitimacy from the battlefield.”[77]

One example of the aggressive type of operations the Islamic State was conducting by 2012 was their company-sized raid on the entire Haditha police establishment, including a barracks, multiple checkpoints, and a headquarters. Filming and later publicizing the entire night raid, the special operators–disguised as Iraqi police–captured and executed 25 policemen and two police commanders before withdrawing with all the captured equipment.[78] This wakeup call went unheeded, but foreshadowed a growing capability that would explode in 2013.

Figure 6: Phase 3 – Decisive (2013-2016)

Ph 3 - Decisive	2013-2016			
Political	Military	Socio-political	Influence	Self Sufficiency
govern newly captured cities	mobile campaign combined with various local forces	create new Islamic Society	deterrence Videos	antiquities sales
establish caliphate	short occupations of cities	eliminate competing influences	atrocities Terror	expanded booty operations from captured territory
promote caliph	defending gains	celebrate Sharia as law of the State	influence citizens using kiosks, direct media	
provide services, law, order	use of suicide bombers in defense			
control population	genocide in controlled territory			

The Islamic State’s deliberate transition into what Mao called the “strategic offensive” phase allowed it to control an increasing amount of territory in 2013, including parts of Syria, Anbar and the “Triangle of Death” south of Baghdad.[79] In other areas like Diyala province, its military units were patiently testing the waters by occupying towns during periodic ventures from secure bases before withdrawing again.[80]

While the establishment of the caliphate was not declared until late June 2014, it is clear that the Islamic State crafted a methodical and successful campaign to build contiguous support zones in both Syria and Iraq in 2013. The establishment of a caliphate enhanced its reputation and persuaded many to come to a land where Muslims could worship according to the Islamic State’s own unique religious ideology.[81] Increased control of territory allowed the Islamic State to tax the population and legitimize its rule, while contributing to self-sufficiency. The successful seizure of large oil producing infrastructures allowed the group to expand its revenue generation to a point where it would outperform at least 30 countries in the world in gross domestic product in 2015, with over \$2.2 trillion in energy reserves, minerals, and cash.[82]

Control of large populations for the first time since 2006 meant more than resource extraction; now the Islamic State could directly communicate with the people through the use of kiosks, roving propaganda teams in public, and endless public ceremonies upholding the values of the movement.[83] The Islamic State’s media machine went from producing 1000 events a year in 2007 to producing that much a month in 2015 in a variety of forms in dozens of new platforms and formats. More than half of these products depicted utopian images of life in the ‘caliphate,’ stressing economic activity, law and order, and the ability to worship according to the ‘correct method’ without interference.[84]

Uniquely and rather unprecedented, the Islamic State has calculated that atrocity messaging might be acceptable to its supporters in line with Ingram’s perceptual appeals concept. In its early phases, the group did not claim attacks against civilian targets, even for many of its signature attacks like suicide bombings.[85] For example, in 2006 the Islamic State strenuously denied the 2006 Samarra “golden” mosque bombing, which is widely attributed to the group.[86] After 2007 this attitude changed, most likely due to the effects of its own ideological teachings and the impact of the sectarian struggle in 2006-2007. There were an increasing number of attack claims against Shia pilgrims after this date, culminating in the horrific Speicher videos which documented the mass killing of over one thousand Shia cadets captured in 2014. The desired effect of social polarization, activated in the form of terrorism as quasi-genocidal levels of terrorism, was mostly complete.[87]

### ***The New Masters of Revolutionary Warfare***

An objective review of the evolution of the Islamic State makes it clear that its leaders have honed and largely perfected the synchronization and execution of Mao's critical elements of revolutionary warfare. Mao's army, once the Japanese invaders were gone, waged a smart campaign against a weak and corrupt regime before achieving success. The Vietnamese communists, facing a much tougher foe, eventually won unification through the use of a largely conventional invasion. In this case study, the Islamic State established a new sovereignty in large parts of two adjoining states within a 12-month period against a state supported by a regional power and a global hegemon.

As this article hopefully chronicled, it was certainly no accident. This was a patient, protracted, and thoughtful campaign worthy of serious study. If so, then what can we learn?

First, that our idealized notion of what constitutes population mobilization needs additional thought. Many researchers dismiss the notion of the Islamic State fitting into a revolutionary model because their use of terror feeds a general perception that groups that need to use terrorism are taking a shortcut. But the Islamic State uses terrorism as a form of "political jujitsu", as McCauley and Moskalenko describe it, using the strength of an opponent (financial and global energy system, air power, powerful social media platforms) against it.[88] If terrorism is mostly part of the military campaign to eviscerate the opponent's state apparatus, and not simply the weapon of the weak, then shouldn't researchers try to gauge the ability of the Islamic State to mobilize the Sunni population behind them? Instead, current research tends to hyper-focus on foreign fighter flows rather than indigenous recruiting.[89]

One poll taken of Mosul residents in late 2015 found that while most citizens oppose the Islamic State's rule, a growing number report that "life is better;" (39%) accepting Islamic State values as their values. This polling suggested that although support for the Islamic State was somewhat low, it still polled higher than the Iraqi security forces or the previous government.[90] Methodological problems with any survey of occupied Mosul aside, these data should suggest that the Islamic State's return to dominance in Sunni areas of Iraq was fed by some measure of popular support, a substantial local recruitment of fighters, and a strong disapproval and distrust of the counterinsurgents. The ever-rising estimates of the number of Islamic State fighters are more proof of this.[91]

Interestingly, terror bombings in Shia areas of Iraq and violent propaganda videos do not seem to negatively impact the local population's perception of the Islamic State. While this type of violence seems to have influenced the decline in popularity of the group in the wider Arab and Muslim worlds (favourable views of IS have shrunk to single digits in most countries), it has had little resonance in Mosul – whose citizens are understandably more concerned about coalition bombing of the city.[92]

A second point, that follows this observation, is the weakness of any counterterrorism strategy against a movement like the Islamic State. It is simply strategically insufficient to deal with a sophisticated, financially sufficient, media savvy movement with a deep leadership bench.[93] Efforts that discuss the defeat and destruction of the Islamic State will therefore require a much more robust set of means and a much different timeline, or goals will need to be modified.

Next, it is easy to predict how the Islamic State will react to its current difficulties. As Mohammad al Adnani alluded to in the article's first quotation, insurgents do not have a choice when faced with direct pressure other than to melt away to fight again, in another time and place. If this case study illustrates anything, these sanctuaries will be within Iraq and Syria just like they were before, not in some far away location where the local dynamics are unfamiliar. The Islamic State will return to either Phase 2 or even Phase 1 if its control mechanisms in the urban areas collapses.

Finally, the Islamic State's methodical campaign of violence against soft targets that belong to the opposing government's control mechanisms seems to have had a significant impact over time – overcoming any perceived costs of its prolific use of terror, even those directed against the population. Bernard Fall noticed a similar effect in the Viet Minh campaign against the French and their native forces in Indochina, which led to a strategic surprise and sudden collapse.[94] The Viet Cong were even more relentless, carrying on a similar terror and assassination campaign for five years to keep the struggle alive while undermining their enemy. [95] The evidence shows that this is exactly what happened in Mosul and other areas of Sunni Iraq, which the Islamic State slowly consolidated and patiently cultivated in a masterful, combined campaign of terror, assassination, limited conventional attacks, and the harnessing of tribal and public support.

## Conclusion

The sad fact is that most observers missed a great deal of this strategy. There is some power in a simply crafted and easily taught ideology when combined with a brutal application of the methods of revolutionary warfare. Dismissal of either of these relics from the past has come at a cost of understanding the rise of the Islamic State, a rise in this particular case that demonstrates the seductiveness of what Hassan calls the hybridization of doctrinaire Salafism for Muslims oppressed by authoritarian or sectarian governments.[96]

This lesson is applicable in examining the civil wars in Syria and Libya. Policy makers should use this understanding to closely examine the groups competing for power. Are they ideological, and what kind of methods are they using in Syria to consolidate power, govern, educate, proselytize, and influence? What kind of state do they propose as a political end state? The evolution of the Islamic State's doctrine is surely influencing groups like Jabhat al Nusra and Ahrar al Sham, who are learning from and improving on the model that the Islamic State has updated. As this article painfully illustrated, the next generation of Salafi jihadist revolutionaries will most likely learn from the mistakes of the past and be even more difficult opponents.[97]

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## Notes

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## **Violent Political Movements: Comparing the Shining Path to the Islamic State**

by Scott Englund and Michael Stohl

### **Abstract**

*The threat posed by the Islamic State[1] is frequently described as unprecedented and unique. Measured by the size of territory it once controlled, its wealth in terms of cash on hand and access to modern military material, and in its shocking brutality, the Islamic State has broken new ground as a terrorist organization. However, the Islamic State is not simply a terrorist organization, but is also a well-equipped insurgent army, and a quasi-state that seized and—with qualified success—operated the bureaucratic institutions of the territories it captured. The Islamic State is often contrasted with its ideological predecessor and operational competitor, al-Qaeda. Highlighting how these organizations differ is helpful in developing effective means of confronting them. In this article, we compare the Islamic State to another terrorist organization the Sendero Luminoso of Peru, to help understand the forces that gave rise to them, sustained them, and ultimately led to Sendero's demise. Through this comparative analysis, we argue that understanding the Islamic State, not simply as a terrorist organization but also as a social movement, allows us to contextualize its violence within patterns evinced by other violent social movements. This approach will also allow us to better understand how the Islamic State might eventually end. Although the military defeat of the Islamic State may be inevitable, the socio-political conditions that gave rise to and sustained it will likely remain and its remnants may very well present a "traditional" terrorist threat for years to come.*

**Keywords:** *Political Violence; Social Movements; Terrorism; Counter-terrorism*

### **Introduction**

**B**y employing a comparative approach to studying the Islamic State and applying social movement and revolution theory, we argue that the Islamic State is more than a transnational terrorist organization. We will compare Peru's *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) to the Islamic State, which, we believe, share important characteristics. The Shining Path held territory as does the Islamic State has and both are/were motivated by a clear political objective, the complete overthrow of an existing order, to be replaced by their own radically different political system. In the case of the Shining Path, we have the benefit of following the life of the organization from birth to eventual death (though it lives on in residual organizations, which is also instructive).

### **Social Movements, Contentious Politics and Terrorism**

"Contentious collective action," Tarrow argues, is at the "base of all social movements, protests, rebellions, riots, strike waves, and revolutions." [2] He explains that collective action becomes contentious, "when it is used by people who lack regular access to representative institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities." The Islamic State meets all three criteria in Tarrow's definition: the post-2003 invasion Iraqi government, though nominally democratic by 2004, did not function as such; the Islamic State claims to act as a state with a form of government wholly new in the modern era; finally, the Islamic State has not only attacked the institutions and regimes in Iraq and Syria, and threatened others elsewhere, they also propose the transformation of those institutions and states into a new order represented by declaring the establishment of a caliphate. Similarly, the Shining Path meets Tarrow's requirements for contentious political action. The global aspirations of

both the Islamic State and the Shining Path are reminiscent of Theda Skocpol's requirement that revolutions completely remake the nature of the state both internally and how the new government relates to the outside world.[3]

The thread tying together the cases considered here is the application of a high-degree of violence to achieve a political objective, either the remaking of a global political-economic order, the vindication of ancient grievances, or the establishment of a divinely-inspired government on Earth. Ted Gurr defines political violence as including all political acts within a community, "against the political regime, its actors—including competing political groups as well as incumbents—or its policies." It is a "set of events, a common property of which is the actual or threatened use of violence." For Gurr, this concept "subsumes revolution, ordinarily defined as fundamental sociopolitical change accomplished through violence" and also necessarily includes, "guerrilla wars, coups d'état, rebellions, and riots." [4] Fundamentally, political violence challenges established orders, and functionally interferes with normal political processes. Collective political action is the product of shared discontent in a society. Political violence is possible when that discontent is focused on the activity or the inaction of a constituted political system. Thus, collective political violence is a function of shared discontent in a society, and the degree to which that discontent is blamed on the established political system. [5] In the cases of both Sendero Luminoso and the Islamic State, we find the qualities Gurr describes as fundamental to collective political violence: community discontent coupled with a perception that the current political order is to blame.

### ***Comparative Analysis: Sendero Luminoso and the Islamic State***

In this section, we compare *Sendero Luminoso* and the Islamic State. It begins with a brief analysis of the Islamic State in the context of the case study, without an extensive history of the organization, which has been treated thoroughly in recent scholarship.[6] Then we introduce *Sendero Luminoso*, beginning with a brief history, followed by comparative analysis.

### ***The Islamic State***

Rather than attempt to re-do the extensive scholarly work done on the history, ideology and tactics employed by the Islamic State, in this section we move directly to comparing and contrasting the Shining Path with the Islamic State.[7] Three dominant themes can be found in the analysis of each of our cases. First, both organizations claimed localized objectives as well as universal ideological goals. Secondly, violence is an essential element of both of these organization's operations; violence was both instrumental and symbolic. Finally, both groups viewed themselves as ideologically pure and belonging to the only "true" manifestation of their belief system.

The Islamic State and the Shining Path represent violent political movements claiming both particularistic and universal goals. The historical antecedents of what we now call the Islamic State rose out of the political marginalization of Iraqi Sunnis following the coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003. While particularistic political goals prompted its rise and motivated many Iraqis who joined its ranks, under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaeda in Iraq adopted its universalistic goals surrounding the establishment of a new caliphate.[8] In its current incarnation, the Islamic State has clearly enunciated its political objective:

*"My dear [Muslim] community: As we did not lie against God when we announced the Islamic State, so we do not lie against God when we say that it will persist...It will persist upon its creed (ʿaqida) and its path (manhaj), and it has not, nor will it ever, substitute or abandon these". – Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, July 21, 2012.*

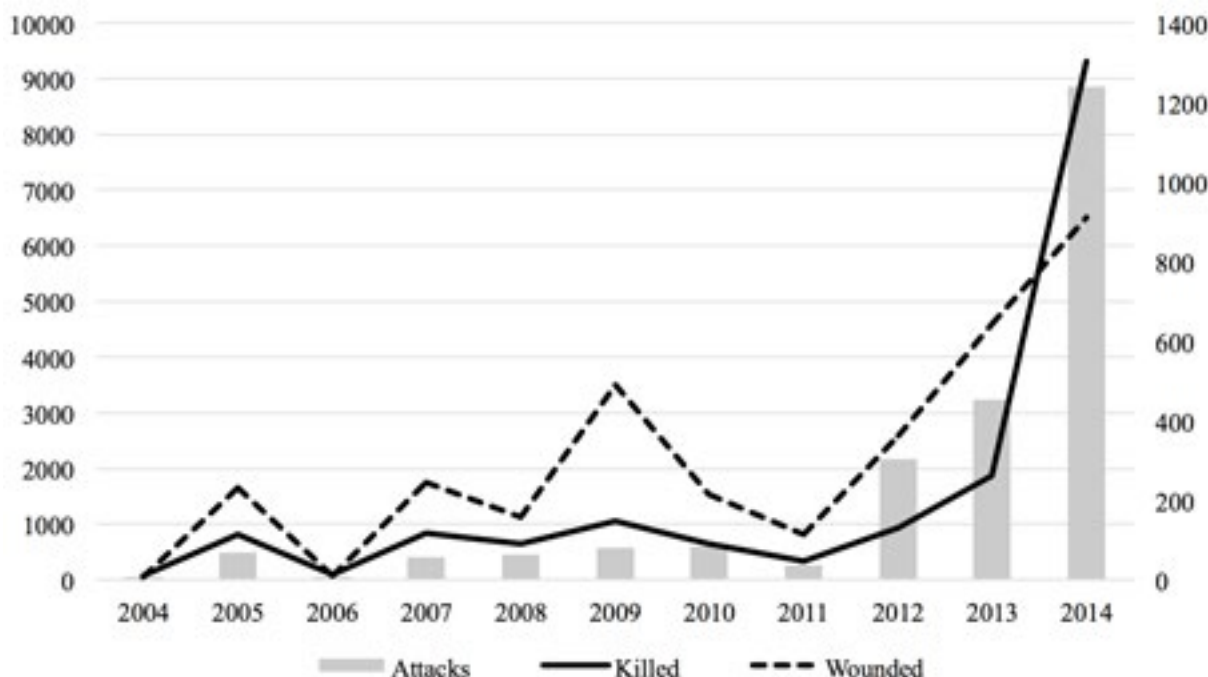
The Islamic State expects to extend its political dominion outward, obliterating current national frontiers as it

does, demanding universal obedience:

*“We inform the Muslims that, with the announcement of the caliphate, it has become obligatory for all Muslims to give bay’a and support to Caliph Ibrahim. Void is the legitimacy of all emirates, groups, administrations, and organizations to which his [i.e., Baghdadi’s] authority extends and his army comes.”*

In a similar way, the leadership of the Shining Path sought to overthrow the Peruvian government, but also believed themselves to be the initiators of global revolution.

Figure 1: al-Qaeda in Iraq-Islamic State Attacks (right vertical axis), Killed, and Wounded



Data Source: Global Terrorism Database

Second, as with the Shining Path, the Islamic State demands violent action to achieve its goals, violence is both instrumental, and symbolic, having its own intrinsic value—violence is a means to an end and an end in itself. The text, *The Management of Savagery*, written in 2004 by Abu Naji Bakr, has served as a guide for waging jihad as violently as the Islamic State has. According to Bakr, savage violence is spiritually cleansing, and in fact merciful,

*“Some may be surprised when we say that the religious practice of jihad despite the blood, corpses, and limbs which encompass it and the killing and fighting which its practice entails is among the most blessed acts of worship for the servants... Jihad is the most merciful of the methods for all created things and the most sparing of the spilling of blood.”*

Violence is inherent to al-Baghdadi’s interpretation of Islam:

*“O Muslims, Islam was never for a day the religion of peace. Islam is the religion of war. Your Prophet (peace be upon him) was dispatched with the sword as a mercy to the creation. He was ordered with war until Allah is worshipped alone. He (peace be upon him) said to the polytheists of his people, ‘I came to you with slaughter.’ He fought both the Arabs and non-Arabs in all their various colors. He himself left to fight and took part in dozens of battles. He never for a day grew tired of war.”[9]*

Violence is also instrumental. Abu Naji Bakr argues in the *Management of Savagery* that violence is useful in forcing non-participants to action:

*“Dragging the masses into the battle requires more actions which will inflame opposition and which will make the people enter into the battle, willing or unwilling, such that each individual will go to the side which he supports. We must make this battle very violent, such that death is a heartbeat away”.*

Similarly, the Shining Path believed in the transformative nature of violence to produce revolution;<sup>[10]</sup> violence is also an essential element of the Jihadi Salafism of the Islamic State which eschews negotiation and compromise.<sup>[11]</sup> Though the actual instrumental nature of their violence needs to be assessed in light of research that suggests that the intentional targeting of civilians is, in fact counter-productive. Terror groups that rely on dramatic surges of violence against civilian targets almost never get their way, and end up becoming pariahs.<sup>[12]</sup> While the Islamic State might believe in the instrumental value of violence, its strategy is almost assured to fail to achieve its political objectives.

Finally, the Islamic State claims to represent an ideological purity and to stand for correction of past errors, or a repentance, as did the Shining Path. The Islamic State embraces Wahhabi-Salafism, which focuses on the elimination of idolatry (*shirk*) and affirms the oneness (*tawhid*) of God. Its adherents view themselves to be the only “true” Muslims and they engage in the practice of *takfir*, or declaring other Muslims to be unbelievers.<sup>[13]</sup> Taken together, this results in a number of rigidly adopted positions by Jihadi Salafist organizations. For example, Jihadi Salafis must oppose democratic forms of government; since God needs no “partners” in legislating; man-made laws are by definition blasphemous. Also, Jihadi Salafis are violently opposed to the Shi’a, whom they consider as non-Muslims. Under Zarqawi, this pursuit of religious purity led him to seek a sectarian civil war in Iraq, beginning in 2004. Zarqawi believed the Shi’a to be even more of a threat to his plans to establish an Islamic state in Iraq than the occupying Americans. Writing in 2004, Zarqawi assessed that “the Crusader forces will disappear from sight tomorrow or the day after,” but the Shia will remain, “the proximate, dangerous enemy of the Sunnis...The danger from the Shi’a...is greater and their damage worse and more destructive to the [Islamic] nation than the Americans.”<sup>[14]</sup> Zarqawi’s murderous antipathy toward the Shi’a was not shared by al-Qaeda senior leadership in Afghanistan, as demonstrated by a letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Zarqawi expressing concern over the latter spilling too much Muslim blood, and exhorting him to focus on expelling U.S. and coalition forces from Iraq.<sup>[15]</sup> That admonition was not heeded then and violence against Shi’a remains a significant element of the Islamic State’s operations in Iraq and Syria.

### ***The Fourth Sword***

Between 1968 and 1979 Peru was governed by a military junta. Escalating protests during the latter half of the 1970s forced Peru’s military rulers to democratize; most of the Marxist movements active in the 1960s and 70s became legitimate political parties and advanced candidates for office. The military government had been markedly leftist, endorsed by Fidel Castro, and militarily supported by the Soviet Union.<sup>[16]</sup> The exception among the Marxist-left organizations was the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Peru led by a philosophy professor at San Cristóbal of Huamanga University. His name was Abimael Guzman, and he founded a movement known as *Sendero Luminoso* (in English: The Shining Path—here referred to as SL). Guzman and his followers believed themselves to be the perfection of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought (Guzman referred to himself as the “Fourth Sword” of world revolution, after Marx, Lenin, and Mao). The *Senderoistas* cast themselves as the initiators of a new revolution that would, inevitably, engulf the entire world, and permanently reset the path of history. The SL was a particularly rigid, uncompromising organization, one focused on ideological purity (repudiating the United States, the Soviet Union, as well as Communist China under Deng Xiaoping). Above all, SL had an unwavering commitment to violent revolution.<sup>[17]</sup> SL followers believed themselves to be both ideologically infallible and utterly immune to failure as the only true vanguard Communist party.<sup>[18]</sup>



Guzman laid out his vision for remaking the world at the first meeting of their “military school”, during his party’s central committee meetings in March-May 1980.

*“Revolution will find its nest in our homeland...the people’s war will grow every day until the old order is pulled down, the world is entering a new era: the strategic offensive of world revolution. This is of transcendental importance.”*

Guzman’s millenarian, cosmic imagery could just as easily have been used to launch a holy war centuries ago:

*“The trumpets begin to sound, the roar of the masses grows, and will continue to grow, it will deafen us, it will take us into a powerful vortex...we will convert the black fire into red and the red into light. This we shall do, this is the rebirth. Comrades, we are reborn!”[19]*

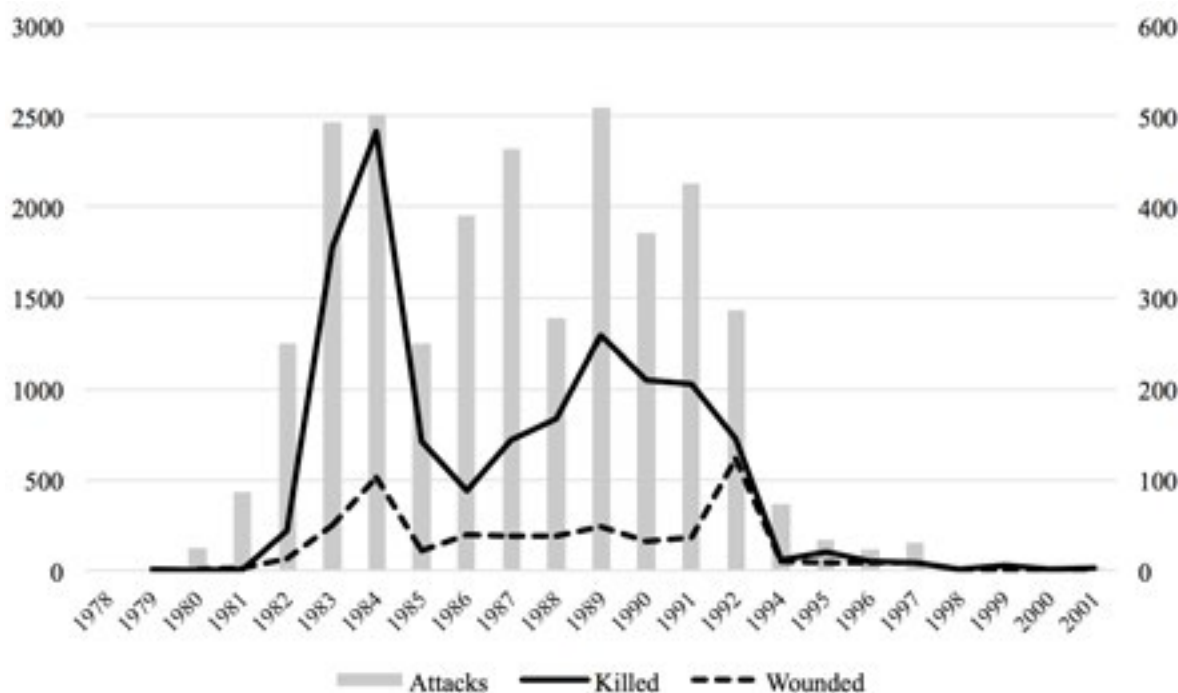
SL leaders had been influential academics, but in the late 1970s their status at the National University at San Cristobal de Humanga had suffered a decline.[20] Its bizarre tactics, the cult of personality around Guzman, and their rural isolation caused many observers to dismiss the SL as an obscure oddity, nothing to be concerned about.[21] Within three years of beginning its violent uprising, the SL not only attacked the government but also the Peruvian legal left movements, assassinating over 500 union leaders, political candidates and others from the left who participated in the legal democratic process in Peru.[22]

The SL presents an interesting analytical puzzle. As many theorists have noted, violence has little appeal in systems marked by even a small amount of democracy, as was the case in Peru in 1980.[23] Yet the SL chose a path of violence, targeting both the symbols and representatives of democracy, and eventually also killing leftists with whom they should have been ideological allies. Why did the SL enter its armed struggle in 1980, pursue it so vigorously as to murder tens of thousands of Peruvians, and at one point claim the allegiance of several thousand fighters, extending control through much of the countryside of the center and south of Peru? Ron argues that the SL saw violence as an end in itself, “a cleansing or a liberating force capable of driving out traditional ways of thought, allowing for new, revolutionary modes of behavior to take root.”[24] The SL choice of violence was determined by their uncompromising commitment to armed struggle. Marks (1994), however, takes a distinctly different approach. Instead of explaining the SL’s use of terror by its ideological commitment to protracted violent conflict, he argues that their application of violence can be understood as the rational application of “selective incentives” to persuade the under-motivated to join.[25]

The SL used violence to force non-participants to essentially choose sides, to intimidate Peruvians to join in their struggle. Others argue that ideological commitment is necessary, but not sufficient. Quoting Alexis de Tocqueville in his study when referring to the contentious politics that eventually ended the Soviet System in the 1980s, Tarrow asserts that, “the most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways.”[26] In the case of the Soviet Union, the major reform measures initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev opened opportunities for contention, which threatened the stability of the whole Soviet system. For Tarrow, ideology alone cannot predict action, rather, a “spiral of opportunities and threats” [27] offers the political space in which contentious political movements can grow and operate.



Figure 2: Shining Path Attacks (right vertical axis), Killed, and Wounded



Data Source: Global Terrorism Database

The SL was ultimately undone by three forces: First, though the Peruvian government failed initially to fully appreciate the threat posed by SL, suffered from widespread corruption, and failed to understand counter-insurgency doctrine, eventually, the Peruvian government managed to score some significant intelligence victories. This had the effect of undermining SL’s urban campaign and ultimately led to the capture, trial and imprisonment of Guzman, the founder and chief personality of the SL.[28] By 1992, the year of Guzman’s capture, the personality cult surrounding “Presidente Gonzalo” (as Guzman was known) [29] was “rigorously enforced” by the party; the loss of so central a figure could only severely hobble an organization dedicated to honor such a cultivated image.[30] Guzman’s capture appears to have a quantifiable effect on SL’s terrorist activity. Immediately after Guzman was captured, the number of terrorist attacks by SL dropped; before his capture SL averaged over 150 acts of terror per quarter, after his capture, they averaged just ten (see Figure 2). Additionally, the lethality and complexity of these acts were also reduced.[31]

Secondly, the Peruvian government (especially under Fujimori) ruthlessly pursued the SL, undermining its ability to wage a guerilla war. Guzman explicitly organized the SL as a military organization, distributing to subordinate cadres documents that detailed its military doctrine, situated in Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought.

*“For Guzman, the militarization of the Shining Path did not presume a conversion into an army, but rather the focus of political activity on armed insurrection and restructuring the party so that it could direct war. Politics concentrated on the war, but did not become subordinate to the military organization charged with waging war.”[32]*

Organized as a revolutionary party, with a military force as its agent, the SL were committed to guerrilla warfare. As such, the SL required a safe base of support beyond the reach of government forces, the ability to maneuver unhindered, and reliable resupply of fighters and material. Relentless, oppressive government action denied SL the ability to act as a guerilla army, though it did little to address the underlying conditions

that engendered support for SL at its outset, which helps explain the arrival of successor organizations that bear some of the ideological commitments of SL.

Finally, the SL's campaign of violence estranged it from the Peruvian people.[33] Wickham-Crowley observed,

*“The utter sectarianism and sheer ‘orneriness’ of Sendero is the root cause of its limitations. It has systematically lambasted and even assassinated, not just government officials and peasant villagers in the highlands, but even members of Marxist and social democratic political parties. They had shown virtually no concern about the attitude of other Peruvians concerning the future of the nation.”*[34]

The effect of waging a protracted “people’s war,” one that often targeted the very same people in whose name the struggle was allegedly being fought, was to wear down popular support. “Just as ruthless violence cannot build a ‘New Democracy’, neither can it continue indefinitely as a political party’s principal source of strength.”[35]

Ultimately, between 1980 and 2000, between 61,000 and 77,000 lives were claimed during the conflict between SL and Peruvian government forces. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2001-2003) (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, CVR), SL was responsible for more than half of the victims; government forces for the balance, mostly during the administration of Alberto Fujimori (1992-2000).[36] In those years, (especially after his self-styled “self-coup” or *auto-golpe* during which he dissolved the judiciary and Congress), and after Guzman’s capture, the SL rapidly decayed. The final demise of SL, as the Communist terror organization it was in the 1980s and early 90s, has been variously set as early as September 1992 when Guzman was captured [37], or the year 2000, by the CVR, or at the end of the Fujimori era in 2001, after the disgraced president resigned and fled to Japan. [38]

Although the radically violent SL no longer exists, two remnant groups have continued to operate at a very low level in the coca growing regions of the valleys of Apurímac, Ene, and Mataro Rivers (VRAEM) and the Upper Huallaga Valley. The fervor and certitude of the Peruvian Communists who were utterly convinced of their future success at pulling down the current global political-economic-cultural system has long since faded. Their source of inspiration and central personality, Guzman himself, called for the end of violence as early as 1993, and one of the remaining members of the original leadership arrested in 2011 admitted defeat and the end of armed struggle.

How does Peru in 1980 compare to Iraq in 2003-2004? Peru in 1980 saw significant institutional change: military rule ended after twelve years, and a democratic system of contested elections came to be. Similarly, the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces in 2003 ended the thirty-year dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and introduced political reforms. The invasion meant revolutionary change was now possible; mobilization and agitation among contentious groups (divided along communal lines) precipitated an escalating spiral of action and counter-action. Violence and protracted struggle were “established repertoires” to shape political action in Peru in the 1980s and 90s, and in Iraq after 2003. The availability of violence as an acceptable tool of political action meant that once political space opened and allowed expression of contested political objectives, the move toward violence was just as likely as other forms of political action.[39] Marks’s rational-actor approach appears to fit with justifications for violence found in the jihadi text, purportedly employed by the Islamic State and its predecessors, “The Management of Savagery.” In both Peru and Iraq, violence has been both symbolic and instrumental.[40]

In both Peru and Iraq, the challenging movements arose in conditions of, as Gurr had hypothesized, shared discontent in a society. That discontent was blamed on the established political system, which, through the mobilization led by Guzman, resulted in collective violent political action.[41] In Peru, Guzman often asserted that “elections never served the masses,” underscoring the SL dogma that their utopia could only come through violent overthrow of the existing order. The accompanying non-violent political movements

(against whom Guzman also directed Sendero's violence) provide strong evidence that a high degree of discontent existed, and that discontent was focused on a political system perceived to be beyond repair. Similarly, Sunnis in Iraq had, under Saddam Hussein enjoyed disproportionate political power. The invasion, and subsequent disbanding of the Iraqi army, and the criminalization of Saddam's Baath party, had opened the gates for strong currents of discontent among Iraqi Sunnis, who felt specifically targeted for retribution. These two decisions of the U.S.- led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) had the unintended (if not, unpredictable) consequence of alienating the Sunni community as a whole. In addition, Sunni leaders chose to boycott critically important elections early in the formation of a post-Saddam Iraqi government, which, in practical terms, served to ensure the Sunni's political marginalization.

### ***How Might the Islamic State End?***

When the Islamic State is defeated on the battlefield and its territorial control severely contracted or eliminated, it will likely persist as a traditional terrorist threat even if that defeat is accompanied by the collapse of its central leadership structure. The process of their inevitable defeat is already in progress. Significant portions of the territory they rapidly seized in 2014-2015 have been re-taken. Indeed IS leadership seems resigned to losing their so-called caliphate, and have begun to spin that possibility in the best possible way.[42] Many analysts and political leaders have interpreted their apparent shift from guerrilla warfare to more "traditional" terrorist attacks as evidence of a badly weakened Islamic State.

In this section we contemplate how the Islamic State may end, given what we have learned from our comparative analysis. First, we argue that the Islamic State has some unique characteristics when compared to SL that make it particularly dangerous, even if severely disabled. Secondly, decapitation is not likely to have a significant impact on its ability to operate; the effects of organizational "decapitation" will not resemble the almost complete collapse of SL following the capture of Guzman. Finally, the underlying social and political conditions that gave rise to the Islamic State are particularly intractable, and may have been significantly exacerbated since it came into existence.

The ideology of the Islamic State contains some deeply held convictions that set it apart from SL as well as many other terrorists. First, the Islamic State leadership is convinced that we are living in the End of Times and plans to play a central role in ushering in the coming apocalypse. Secondly, and related to the first, the Islamic State is committed to its war against Shi'a Muslims, whom they believe are apostates, a fact that will be revealed during the end times.[43] While SL may have believed themselves to be the vanguard of a new global order, figuratively ushering in a new millennium, they did not believe they were involved in a pitched battle of Good versus Evil on the brink of the end of the world. These differences make the Islamic State particularly dangerous: its apocalyptic vision makes conceding defeat impossible, and its war against Shi'a Muslims makes the majority population of Iraq and a minority elsewhere potential targets of terrorist violence. Even severely degraded and deprived of all of its territory and much of its other resources, followers of the Islamic State can carry on these elements of its violent ideology.

Killing Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (the self-proclaimed caliph and "commander of the faithful," also known as Caliph Ibrahim) is not likely to have much impact on the operational capacity of the Islamic State. We would argue that he does not have the charismatic leader role that Guzman had for the *Senderoistas*. In the Islamic State's apocalyptic belief system, who in particular is the caliph at the End of Times is not as important as what is being done to fulfill apocalyptic prophesies.[44] Research on the effects of targeting leadership is mixed. Jenna Jordan found that religious organizations are resilient even when their leaders are killed or captured.[45] Indeed, so far the leadership of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and its IS successor organizations have been successfully targeted, only to be quickly replaced up to and including its present cadre. Secondly, the case of Guzman and the SL could present an interesting lesson: capturing, trying and imprisoning Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi may have a different effect than simply killing him. The logistics of such an undertaking would

be problematic at best, even after locating and capturing him. For example, any trial that would be held in United States, Iraq or Syria would immediately be denounced as illegitimate.

Finally, even after the Islamic State is militarily defeated, with its leadership dead or in prison, and all its territories reclaimed, the social and political circumstances that gave rise to it (both in Iraq after 2003 and its resurgence in Syria, and then again in Iraq in 2012-2014) are likely to persist, and may even have been exacerbated. The inequality experienced by rural Peruvians contributed to the popularity of the SL.[46] If the underlying conditions that led to Sunni Muslims in Iraq and Syria (and beyond) to join and support the Islamic State are not addressed, it is reasonable to expect that it will continue to present a significant terrorist threat in the Middle East and beyond, likely to inspire additional attacks in Europe and beyond. There is no reason to believe that the operations of Islamic State affiliates (or “Emirates”) in places like Libya, the Sinai, and Afghanistan would be significantly affected by the collapse of the central leadership structure without the successful management of the underlying local conflicts that gave rise to each of the groups who have declared their allegiance to IS.

### **Conclusion**

Although the so-called Islamic State represents a significant challenge to the peace and security of the Middle East, and manages to project its terrorist violence to the Western world as well as Russia, one cannot conclude that it is wholly unique and unprecedented, or that the challenge it presents is insurmountable. We have assessed, through a comparative analysis of the *Sendero Luminoso*, that the Islamic State can be understood as a political movement borne of specific social-political conditions, with clear ideological objectives. As such, the historical trajectory of other comparable movements can be instructive for explaining how the Islamic State may have risen, earned sympathy with a constituency, and could eventually wither away. Our analysis has led us to conclude that the inevitable destruction of the Islamic State’s military apparatus, and the eventual loss of the territory it has seized, will not mean that it ceases to exist altogether, but will continue as a traditional transnational terrorist threat.

Some of the Islamic State’s core characteristics lend themselves to the perpetuation of struggle. Yet the present challenge is not unique. In 1947, George Kennan (under the pseudonym X) analyzing the Soviet system noted:

*“The leadership of the Communist Party is therefore always right, and has been always right ever since in 1929 Stalin formalized his personal power by announcing that decisions of the Politburo were being taken unanimously...On the principle of infallibility there rests the iron discipline of the Communist Party... Like the Church, it is dealing in ideological concepts which are of long-term validity, and it can afford to be patient.”[47]*

The same may surely be said of the leaders of the Islamic State. After all, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current leader of the organization, chose to take the name of the first of those leaders known as the “Rightly Guided Caliphs” in Sunni Islam, Abu Bakr as Siddiq.

Kennan’s prescription for foreign policy under such circumstances are now well known. He recommended “a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.” He cautioned that “such a policy has nothing to do with outward histrionics: with threats or blustering or superfluous gestures of outward ‘toughness.’”[48] He suggested that the United States create in the world an image of consistency, harmony, and peaceful prosperity. Kennan cautioned that disunity is a balm to one’s opponents in an ideological battle, “by the same token, exhibition of indecision, disunity and internal disintegration within this country have an exhilarating effect.”[49]

Perhaps Kennan's seventy-year-old advice about one ideological conflict can be fruitfully applied to this present one. The intervening years have suggested that Kennan's read of Soviet conduct exaggerated the expansionist strategy of the Soviet Union, but given the Kremlin's inscrutability and open hostility at the time he wrote, his urgency may be forgiven. Arguably, it may not be possible to deter an organization like the Islamic State the same way that the Soviet Union and Stalin, a realist with an instinct for institutional survival, was deterred. However, Kennan's principal stricture was patient resolve in containing and squeezing the perceived threat from international Communism. Swagger, grand gestures, fruitless engagements were contra-indicated. Kennan understood that in open warfare the Soviet Union could not be defeated without great cost, and skirmishes would likewise harden Stalin's resolve. Instead, persistent containment, through positive example, negative consequences for bad behavior, and above all, unified action and harmony, were what he advised. Political competition is natural in liberal democratic societies, but the current level of discord and disunity in the United States and Europe must comfort Islamic State ideologues in Raqqa, Mosul and elsewhere. Just as it took forty-four years from Kennan's *X* article before the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the Islamic State and its residue may present challenges for many years to come. The important question is how well the threat that IS poses can be managed and reduced in the interim.

Open warfare may achieve one goal: the disintegration of the Islamic State's leadership and its ability to wage an insurgency, but it will not resolve the political conditions that brought it into existence, and neither will it contain the transnational threat remnant splinter groups may pose. Thus, "carpet bombing" the Islamic State (if one could practically accomplish that) would be counter-productive. As was Stalin's Kremlin in 1947, the Islamic State leadership believes themselves to be locked in an end-of-days battle in which it will inevitably be victorious. As Kennan advised, the longer the rest of the world can deny them any semblance of victory, and lay bare the adversary's hypocrisy and contradictions, then his decline and fall is achievable through patient, thoughtful opposition and defense.

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### Notes

[1] The so-called "Islamic State" refers to the organization now also known as ISIS/ISIL or Daesh. We will use the name "Islamic State" because our analysis includes the period during which this organization was known by other names (such as, as al-Qaeda in Iraq, the Islamic State in/of Iraq, and others) before present names were popularly used, not because we endorse the organization's religious claims.

[2] Tarrow, Sidney G. (2011). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics, 3rd Edition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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[4] Gurr, Ted Robert. (1970). *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-4.

[5] Gurr, Ted Robert. (2015). *Political Rebellion*, London: Routledge, Chapter 1; Gurr, 1970..

[6] See: Byman, Daniel. (2015). *Al Qaeda, The Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; McCants, William. (2015). *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

[7] For the Shining Path, see, for example: D'Alessio, Stolzenberg & Dariano 2014; Gorriti 1994, 1999; McCormick 1992; McClintock 1994, 1989; Lozada 2008; Ron 2001; Marks 1994; Wickham-Crowley 1992; Woy-Hazleton & Hazleton 1992. The full conference paper on which this article is based also made a comparison with al-Shabaab, but for considerations of length was removed for this publication; the full conference paper (not peer reviewed), is available at the TRENDS Research and Analysis website.

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[9] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, 14 May 2015; URL: <http://www.memrijtm.org/in-new-audio-speech-islamic-state-isis-leader-al-baghdadi-issues-call-to-arms-to-all-muslims.html>.

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- [24] Ron, 2001, p. 575.
- [25] Marks, 1994.
- [26] Tarrow, 2011, p. 157.
- [27] Tarrow, 2011, p. 159.
- [28] McCormick, 1992; Gorriti, 1999.
- [29] Some other colorful nicknames include: Dr. "Puka Inti," Quechua for "red sun," and "Shampoo" because "he brainwashes you" (Gorriti, 1994).
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## Misoverestimating ISIS: Comparisons with Al-Qaeda

by John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart

### **Abstract**

*An examination of the ISIS phenomenon, comparing it with that generated a decade and a half earlier by al-Qaeda. Although the vicious group certainly presents a threat to the people under its control and although it can contribute damagingly to the instability in the Middle East that has followed serial interventions there by the American military, it scarcely presents a challenge to global security. Moreover, the group is in very considerable decline in its key areas, Syria and particularly Iraq. As with al-Qaeda, however, the unwarranted fear and alarm ISIS has generated is likely to persist even if the group is effectively extinguished as a physical force in the Middle East.*

**Keywords:** ISIS; al-Qaeda; terrorism; Islamic State; public opinion

### **Introduction**

In 2014, a militant group calling itself the Islamic State or ISIL, but more generally known as ISIS, burst into official and public attention with some military victories in Iraq and Syria in the middle of the year—particularly taking over Iraq’s second largest city, Mosul. Cries of alarm escalated substantially a few months later when ISIS performed and webcast several beheadings of defenseless Western hostages. Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein was soon insisting that “The threat ISIS poses cannot be overstated”—effectively proclaiming, as columnist Dan Froomkin suggests, hyperbole on the subject to be impossible.[1]

This article examines the ISIS phenomenon, briefly comparing it with that generated a decade and a half earlier by al-Qaeda. The exercise suggests that, although ISIS certainly presents a threat to the people under its control, and although it can contribute damagingly to the instability in the Middle East that has followed serial interventions there by the American military, it scarcely presents a challenge to global security. Moreover, the group is in very considerable decline in its key areas, Syria and particularly Iraq. As with al-Qaeda, however, the unwarranted fear and alarm ISIS has generated is likely to persist even if the group is effectively extinguished as a physical force in the Middle East.

### **Al-Qaeda**

For almost all of the period since September 11, 2001, the chief group of concern has been al-Qaeda, a fringe element of a fringe movement with grandiose visions of its own importance.[2] With the 9/11 attack it managed, largely because of luck, to pull off a risky, if clever and carefully planned, terrorist act that became by far the most destructive in history: scarcely any terrorist deed before or since has visited even one-tenth as much destruction, even in war zones where terrorist groups have plenty of space and time to plot. It also proved to be spectacularly counterproductive. It was apparently designed in the belief that the United States would respond to a massive attack at home by withdrawing from the Middle East.[3] But the attack had, to say the least, the opposite effect.

As with the assassination of President John Kennedy in 1963, there has been a great reluctance to accept that such a monumental event could have been carried out by a fundamentally trivial entity, and there has been a consequent tendency to inflate al-Qaeda’s importance and effectiveness. At the extreme, the remnants of the group have even been held to present a threat to the survival—to the very existence—of the United States or even of the world system.[4]

The alarm has been substantially misplaced. Al-Qaeda Central, holed up in Pakistan, has consisted of perhaps one or two hundred people who, judging from information obtained in Osama bin Laden's lair when he was killed in May 2011, have been primarily occupied with dodging drone missile attacks, complaining about their lack of funds, and watching a lot of pornography.[5] It has served as something of an inspiration to some Muslim extremists, has done some training, seems to have contributed a bit to the Taliban's far larger insurgency in Afghanistan, and may have participated in a few terrorist acts in Pakistan. In his examination of the major terrorist plots against the West since 9/11, Mitchell Silber finds only two—the shoe bomber attempt of 2001 and the effort to blow up transatlantic airliners with liquid bombs in 2006—that could be said to be under the “command and control” of al-Qaeda Central (as opposed to ones suggested, endorsed, or inspired by the organization), and there are questions about how full its control was even in these two instances, both of which failed miserably.[6] It has also issued videos filled with empty threats. Thus, for example, it was a decade ago that bin Laden denied that the “delay” in carrying out operations in the United States was “due to failure to breach your security measures,” and ominously insisted that “operations are under preparation, and you will see them on your own ground once they are finished, God willing.”[7] God, apparently, has not been willing.

Various variously affiliated groups in places like Iraq and Yemen and Nigeria have done considerable damage in connection with ongoing civil wars, but little to the “far enemy” which is al-Qaeda's stated central goal. [8] For the most part, they haven't even tried. Even isolated and under siege, it is difficult to see why al-Qaeda (of any branch) could not have perpetrated attacks at least as costly and shocking as the shooting rampages (organized by others) that took place in Mumbai in 2008, at a shopping center in Kenya in 2013, in Paris and San Bernardino in 2015, or in Orlando in 2016. None of these required huge resources, presented major logistical challenges, required the organization of a large number of perpetrators, or needed extensive planning.

Operating under an apparently unanimous alarmist mentality after 9/11, U.S. intelligence came extravagantly to imagine by 2002 that the number of trained al-Qaeda operatives in the United States was between 2,000 and 5,000.[9] The actual number, as it turns out, was close to zero. Even though something like 300 million foreigners enter the United States legally every year, al-Qaeda appears to have been unable to smuggle in any operatives at all.[10]

Meanwhile, authorities have been able to roll up dozens of plots by homegrown would-be terrorists, some of which have been inspired by al-Qaeda. Brian Jenkins' summary assessment of these is apt: “their numbers remain small, their determination limp, and their competence poor.”[11] In contrast to this conclusion, there has been a widespread tendency to assume terrorists to be clever, crafty, diabolical, resourceful, ingenious, brilliant, and flexible—opponents fully worthy of the exceedingly expensive efforts being made to counter them. The exaggeration of terrorist capacities has been greatest in the many much overstated assessments of their ability to develop nuclear weapons.[12]

The lack of success of al-Qaeda terrorists in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and other Western countries mirrors that in the United States: the number of people killed by Islamist extremist terrorists in the UK is less than four per year, while for Canada and Australia, it is two in the last decade. In all, extremist Islamist terrorism—whether associated with al-Qaeda or not – claimed some 200 to 300 lives yearly worldwide in the several years after 2001 outside of war zones.[13] That is 200 to 300 too many, of course, but it is about the same number as deaths from bathtub drownings in the United States.

The 9/11 attacks by Al Qaeda proved to be a spectacular aberration, not a harbinger.[14] And global security was hardly challenged.

## **ISIS**

History may now be repeating itself with ISIS. One of the most remarkable phenomena of the last few years is the way this vicious insurgent group in Iraq and Syria has captured and exercised the imagination of the public in Western countries. From the outset, Senators John McCain and Lindsay Graham proclaimed the group to be an existential threat to the United States.[15] President Barack Obama has repeatedly insisted that this extreme characterization is overblown.[16] However, he clearly has lost the debate. A poll conducted in the spring of 2016 asked the 83 percent of its respondents who said they closely followed news stories about ISIS whether the group presented “a serious threat to the existence or survival of the US.” Fully 77 percent agreed, more than two-thirds of them strongly.[17]

That anxiety was triggered by a set of web-cast, and for ISIS supremely counterproductive, beheadings of Americans in the late summer and fall of 2014. Only 17 percent of the US public had favored sending American ground troops to fight ISIS after it surprisingly routed US-trained Iraqi forces in Mosul in June 2014. However, the beheadings abruptly boosted that support to 40 to 50 percent even as upwards of two-thirds came to deem ISIS to present a major security threat to the United States.[18]

Outrage at the tactics and brutality of ISIS is certainly justified. But, as with al-Qaeda after 9/11, fears that it presents a worldwide security threat are not. Its numbers are small, and it has differentiated itself from al-Qaeda, initially at least, in that it has not sought primarily to target the “far enemy,” preferring instead to carve out a state in the Middle East for itself, mostly killing fellow Muslims who stand in its way.[19] Unlike al-Qaeda Central, it welcomes foreign fighters into its ranks in sizeable numbers, and seeks to administer the territory it occupies. In that, it is far more like an insurgent group than like a terrorist one.[20]

However, as Middle East specialist Ramzy Mardini put it in 2014, “the Islamic State’s fundamentals are weak”; “it does not have a sustainable endgame”; its “extreme ideology, spirit of subjugation, and acts of barbarism prevent it from becoming a political venue for the masses”; its foolhardy efforts to instill fear in everyone limits “its opportunities for alliances” and makes it “vulnerable to popular backlash”; “its potential support across the region ranges from limited to nonexistent”; and it “is completely isolated, encircled by enemies.”[21] In particular, its brutalities, such as staged beheadings of hostages, summary executions of prisoners, and the rape and enslavement of female captives have greatly intensified opposition to the group. As Daniel Byman notes, with its “genius for making enemies,” ISIS can not make common cause even with other Sunni rebel groups, and, by holding territory, presents an obvious and clear target to military opponents.[22]

Not only does it scarcely present an existential threat to the United States (or to the globe), but it seems to be in very considerable decline in its core areas in Syria and Iraq.

### ***Military Prowess***

ISIS’s ability to behead defenseless hostages certainly should not be taken as an indication of its military might, and its major military advance, the conquest of Mosul in Iraq in 2014, was essentially a fluke. Its intention seems to have been merely to hold part of the city for a while in an effort to free some prisoners. [23] The defending Iraqi army, trained by the American military at a cost to U.S. taxpayers of more than \$20 billion, simply fell apart in confusion and disarray, abandoning weaponry, and the city itself, to the tiny group of seeming invaders even though it greatly outnumbered them (even taking into account the fact that many soldiers had purchased the right to avoid showing up for duty by paying half their salary to their commanders).[24] The fall of the smaller city of Ramadi a few weeks earlier may have been similar: Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter noted that although they “vastly” outnumbered the ISIS attackers, the Iraqi forces had “failed to fight.”[25]

After its startlingly easy advances of 2014, however, the vicious group's momentum has been substantially halted, and its empire is currently under siege and in retreat. Even by late 2014, it was being pushed back from Kobani, a strategically-located area in northern Syria, and was finding that its supply lines were overstretched and its ranks of experienced fighters were being thinned. The group's magazine claimed that ISIS was "ready to burn 10,000 fighters" in the fight and would "never accept to lose." However, they left after losses of a few hundred.[26]

In late 2015, it tried to push back by launching three badly-coordinated offensives in Northern Iraq. The fighting force in each case comprised 80 to 160 fighters using, among other things, "armored bulldozers." They were readily beaten back.[27] The weakness of the Iraqi army, even after billions more were spent by the United States on training, remains ISIS' main military "strength." And continuous wrangling, often vicious, among the various entities opposing it is also very much to its advantage.[28] However, after an additional expenditure of more than \$1.6 billion by the US, it was being reported that the Iraqi army, or significant portions thereof, had "revived considerably since its disastrous collapse in 2014" and that ISIS was in retreat on many fronts and appeared to be "a rapidly diminishing force." [29] By 2016, ISIS had lost some 40 percent of its territory overall,[30] 65 percent in Iraq.[31] The key issue, as US General Sean MacFarland has stressed, is not how good the forces arrayed against in ISIS are, but "Are they better than the enemy." His conclusion: "Yes they are." [32]

Frontline commanders were observing of ISIS that "They don't fight. They just send car bombs and then run away. And when we surround them they either surrender or infiltrate themselves among the civilians.... Their morale is shaken.... Their leaders are begging them to fight, but they answer that it is a lost cause. They refuse to obey and run away." More generally, concludes one analyst, "They are starting to fall apart. They're a small movement. If you bring them under pressure on half a dozen battlefields at the same time, they can't do it." [33] One local tribal leader said, "As soon as they saw our forces, they ran away.... Every week they execute four or five members because they refuse to obey orders or try to turn against their leaders." [34] In defense, they seem to rely primarily not on counteroffensives, but on planting booby traps, using snipers, and cowering among civilians. [35]

Moreover, to the degree that ISIS, unlike the more wary al-Qaeda central, welcomes fighters from abroad, the group is likely to be penetrated by foreign intelligence operatives. Indeed, the fear of informants in the ranks has fueled paranoia, and executions of suspected spies and traitors to the cause has become common. [36] There may also be another problem for ISIS. By most accounts, their most effective fighters are those imported from Chechnya and nearby areas. Many of these arrived in early 2014 because, fearing terrorism at the time of the Sochi Olympics, Russian authorities were opening borders and urging them to leave. In the latter half of that year, however, the Russians reversed the policy. [37]

### ***Economic and Social Viability***

ISIS is finding that actually controlling and effectively governing wide territories is a major strain, and it has to work hard to keep people from fleeing its brutal lumpen Caliphate. [38] On close examination in fact, its once highly-vaunted economic capacity seems to be proving to be illusory. Even by late 2014, it was finding that there were major problems with providing government services and medical care, keeping prices from soaring, getting schools to function, keeping the water drinkable. [39] Indeed, conclude some analysts, ISIS is "extremely unlikely to be sustainable from a financial perspective. Its economy is small compared to its enemies, its institutions are not conducive to economic growth, and it is reliant on extractive industries that in all other non-democratic countries foster the creation of kleptocratic elites.... Even if it endures as a fragile state, it will be vulnerable to internal strife." [40]



In part because the territory it controlled had diminished so much—thereby reducing the number of people it could tax (or extort) ISIS was forced by the end of 2015 to reduce the salaries of its fighters by half. Those salaries, it appears, constitute two-thirds of the group's operating budget.[41]

By 2016, there were increasing reports of “financial strain,” as well as of “clashes among senior commanders over allegations of corruption, mismanagement and theft.” Not only were the tax or extortion bases much reduced and oil sales disrupted, but the huge cash windfall resulting from the seizure of banks during the group's season of expansion in 2014 was now “mostly gone.”[42]

In 2015, ISIS tried to create a currency that it called the “Gold Dinar.” In what the *Economist* calls “a bizarre sales pitch” for the new currency, it railed about “the dark rise of bank notes, born out of the satanic conception of banks” and proclaimed that the death of its “oppressive banknote” would bring America “to her knees.”[43] However, by 2016, ISIS seems to have scrapped its fanciful new currency and is now relying on US dollars. All utility bills, extortion payments, fines for dressing improperly, and inducements to obtain the release of detainees must be tendered in that currency. The regime also ceased supplying free energy drinks and Snickers bars to its followers. They now have to buy such essentials with their enemy's “oppressive” and “satanic” currency.[44]

### ***Returning Militants and Homegrown Inspirees***

One major fear has been that foreign militants who had gone to fight with ISIS would be trained and then sent back to do damage in their own countries. However, there has been virtually none of that in the United States. In part, this is because, as Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro detail, foreign fighters tend to be killed early (they are common picks for suicide missions), often become disillusioned especially by in-fighting in the ranks, and do not receive much in the way of useful training for terrorist exercises back home.[45]

Although ISIS continues to focus primarily on defending its shrinking lumpen caliphate in Syria and Iraq, in 2015 it appears to have decided to lash out abroad to strike, in particular, foreign countries, fighting them perhaps in part to divert attention from its territorial losses.[46] At least some of those in the small group (not a “terrorist army” as French President François Hollande has labeled them) that perpetrated the Paris attack of November 2015 and the one in Brussels a few months later may have received training and/or support from ISIS.[47] However, the best estimates currently are that only about perhaps one in a hundred returnees from Syria has engaged in terrorism when they went back to Europe.[48]

In a reactive ploy that has become routine for the group, ISIS has claimed responsibility for—or, more accurately, boorishly celebrated – terrorist attacks abroad like those in Paris, Brussels, Nice, and Munich. But there is little indication that ISIS central planned or significantly participated in them. Indeed, in the case of the Brussels attack, notes Benjamin Friedman, ISIS claimed that the attackers “opened fire” with “automatic rifles,” repeating errors that were initially reporting from the scene. Moreover, like the webcast beheadings of 2014 or the burning alive of a captured Jordanian pilot in early 2015, such terrorism has been spectacularly counterproductive and tends, as Friedman continues, “to provoke nationalistic anger, unifying nations against attackers rather acquiescence in their demands.”[49]

Fears have also focused on the dangers presented by potential homegrown terrorists who might be inspired by ISIS's propaganda or example. As early as September 2014, a top ISIS spokesman was urging foreign supporters to kill disbelievers, whether civilian or military, “in any manner or way however it might be”. The “spiteful and filthy French” were singled out for special attention.[50] As several recent attacks, in particular the one in Nice on 14 July 2016, tragically demonstrate, potential targets for dedicated terrorists—peaceful aggregations of civilians—remain legion. However, as terrorism specialist Max Abrahms noted in 2011, “lone wolves have carried out just two of the 1,900 most deadly terrorist incidents over the last four decades.”[51]

Although the attacks in Orlando and Nice in 2016 indicate that even lone wolves can sometimes do substantial damage, global security is unlikely to be challenged, much less upended, by such miscreants.

However, continuous failure on the battlefield may well have a dampening effect on enthusiasm, much of which was impelled by the sudden—and, for some, exhilarating—expansion of ISIS. By one count there were only two Islamist terrorist plots by locals in the United States in 2014, neither of them ISIS-related. In 2015, this rose to 19, 14 of them ISIS-related—that is, both plots related to *and* unrelated to ISIS increased significantly.[52] Thus far in 2016, however, there have been but two (both ISIS-related). In addition, the FBI reports that the trend for Americans seeking to join ISIS is also decidedly downward.[53] In fact, by 2016, the flow of foreign fighters going to ISIS from any country may have dropped by 90 percent over the previous year.[54]

In this connection, there has been a trendy concern about the way ISIS uses social media. However, as Byman and Shapiro and others have pointed out, the foolish willingness of would-be terrorists to spill out their aspirations and their often-childish fantasies on social media has been, on balance, much to the advantage of the police seeking to track them.[55]

Childishness is also found in much of the verbiage spewed out on ISIS websites that is often taken so seriously and seen to be so ominous by commentators. In one, for example, ISIS threatened the Russians: “We will make your wives concubines and make your children our slaves...Soon, very soon, the blood will spill like an ocean...The Kremlin will be ours.”[56] And another bragged, “Know, oh Obama, that we will reach America. Know also that we will cut off your head in the White House and transform America into a Muslim province.”[57] Or there is the trainee in Syria who eagerly asked his mother about what people were saying about a friend of his who had recently blown himself up: “Are they talking about him? Are they praising him? Are they saying he was a lion?”[58] And the preposterous, grandiloquent ravings of Islamic State’s forefather Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (who was killed in 2006), that “We fight here, while our goal is Rome” are gravely and ominously relayed as if they had some serious meaning.[59]

### ***Assessing the Future***

After the heady days of 2014 and early 2015, ISIS appears to be in considerable disarray. Its advances have been stopped and then reversed, and it is in clear decline in its main base areas in the Middle East, especially Iraq. Indeed, there are strong indications that, two years after proclaiming its caliphate and the start of a glorious new epoch in world history, the group is preparing its supporters for the possibility, even likelihood, of total territorial collapse while urging its supporters on with such cheerless proclamations as “a drowning person does not fear getting wet.”[60]

The plan now seems to be to become a sort of virtual Islamic State, exacting revenge and reminding the world of its continued existence by launching sporadic and vicious terrorist attacks in the Middle East and by inspiring them abroad in any country at all, not just ones participating in the fight against ISIS: “We do have, every day, people reaching out and telling us they want to come to the caliphate,” says one operative, “But we tell them to stay in their countries and rather wait to do something there.”[61]

It is certainly possible to see this development as essentially, indeed profoundly, mindless and, as has been suggested by Secretary of State John Kerry, as an indication of the group’s desperation.[62] However, there has been considerable push-back against this plausible hypothesis in prominent publications.

One, for example, somehow concludes that, by massacring people in various locales in various countries, the group was actually growing in appeal—or in “allure” in the words of a headline writer.[63] How this remarkable process has come about is not explained, nor is evidence given to back it up. Indeed, ISIS has followed policies and military approaches that have repeatedly proven to be counterproductive in the extreme

in enhancing its “appeal” and/or “allure.” Opposition to the group among Arab teens and young adults has risen from 60 percent to 80 percent.[64] Any allure the group may have in Iraq certainly fails to register on a poll conducted there in January 2016 in which 99 percent of Shiites and 95 percent of Sunnis express opposition to it.[65] And ISIS’ appeal among jihadists as being dynamic, victorious, and unstoppable has been severely undercut: as noted, the flow of foreign fighters going to join the group has plunged, and there has been a clear decline in the degree to which it inspires what commentator Kurt Eichenwald calls “jihadist cool” and “Rambo envy”.[66]

Another writer acknowledges that the appeal of Islamic State as “the promise of living in an Islamist utopia” and as a victorious military force has been in severe decline, and that the group has suffered many defections in the ranks as well. But the group’s shift in focus from dealing with territorial degradation to slaughtering civilians in random attacks is taken not to be a sign of its “desperation and weakness,” but one that demonstrates its “strength and long-term survival skills.”[67]

In the long term, there is good reason to believe that the ISIS policy will be self-destructive—like just about everything else it (or, for that matter, al-Qaeda in its “far enemy” phase) has done. The killing of civilians by terrorist or insurgent groups has been shown to be especially counterproductive. Thus, in her analysis of civil wars, Virginia Page Fortna concludes that insurgencies that employ “a systematic campaign of indiscriminate violence against public civilian targets” pretty much *never* win. Similarly, Max Abrahms finds that the targeting of civilians by terrorists is “highly correlated with political failure.”[68]

However, as the experience with al-Shabab in Somalia suggests, declining insurgencies can make trouble and create misery in their operational area for years.

In a thoughtful analytic perspective on ISIS, Middle East specialist Marc Lynch concludes that ISIS seems to him to be “a fairly ordinary insurgency that has been unduly mystified and exoticized in the public discourse.”[69] It does not differ from many other insurgencies in that it is peculiarly vicious or in that it applies a crackpot ideology—Boko Haram in Nigeria, for example, exhibits those qualities as well. Rather, ISIS differs in the sense of mystery and exoticism it has generated not only in a considerable number of supporters around the globe but in its deeply alarmed opponents worldwide. Something similar could be said for al-Qaeda.

How much substance remains behind the mystery and exoticism ISIS once inspired among jihadists has yet to be determined. ISIS could still provide inspiration to at least some isolated, vicious, and ultimately pathetic death cult sycophants around the world even if it essentially ceases to exist altogether. After all, some still find inspiration in the example of Che Guevara even though he has been dead for half a century.

However, the damage that these inspired individuals manage to commit is likely to remain limited, albeit tragic. Even if all the terrible outrages committed in Europe in 2015 and 2016 are taken to be ISIS-related, far more people on that continent perished yearly at the hands of terrorists in most years in the 1970s and 1980s.[70] The existence and survival of the continent were scarcely imperiled.

Such comparisons are frequently taken to be irrelevant. Terrorists like those in al-Qaeda and ISIS that manage to create a spooky threat that emanates from abroad—one that exudes mystery and exoticism—are commonly taken to present a danger that is not only special, but perpetual. Even though other issues—particularly economic ones—have crowded out terrorism as a topic of daily concern in the US, 9/11 has resulted in a long-term, routinized, mass anxiety—or at least a sense of concern—about that sort of terrorism that, despite many reasons to expect otherwise, has shown little sign of waning over the years since 2001. This was the case even before the threatening and attention-arresting rise of ISIS in 2014.[71]

Thus, as with al-Qaeda, the unwarranted fear and alarm ISIS has generated since 2014 is likely to persist even if the group is effectively destroyed as a physical force in the Middle East. Because of the special formlessness,

even spookiness, of terrorism's hostile foreign referent in this case, it is likely to be exceptionally difficult to get people to believe that the threat has really been extinguished—or at least that it is no longer particularly significant.

It is probably best to see public opinion as the primary driver in the excessive and somewhat bizarre counterterrorism process that has taken place since 9/11. Because of the persistent public fear and alarm about al-Qaeda and ISIS, leaders seem incapable of pointing out that an American's chance of being killed by a terrorist is one in 4 million per year. And to suggest that, at that rate, terrorism might pose an acceptable risk (or even to discuss the issue) appears to be utterly impossible.[72] And it took until 2015, nearly a decade and a half after 9/11, before public officials, including in this case the president of the United States, were willing to suggest that terrorism, even that presented by ISIS, did not, as it happens, present a threat to the country that was “existential” in nature, an observation that is “blindingly obvious” as security specialist Bruce Schneier puts it.[73]

President Obama seems to be ready to go further, but has not summoned the political courage to do so. Reportedly, he “frequently reminds his staff that terrorism takes far fewer lives in America than handguns, car accidents, and falls in bathtubs do.” However, out of concern that Obama will “seem insensitive to the fears of the American people,” his advisers are “fighting a constant rearguard action to keep Obama from placing terrorism in what he considers its ‘proper’ perspective.”[74] That is, the incentives in the United States and elsewhere are to play to the galleries and to exaggerate the threat: if 77 percent of the people appear to be convinced that ISIS presents “a serious threat to the existence or survival of the US,” there is likely to be considerably more purchase in servicing the notion than in seeking to counter it.[75] In the process, the misoverestimation of terrorism and of the threat that ISIS presents will continue apace.

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## Framing Daesh: Failures and Consequences

by Benjamin K. Smith, Andrea Figueroa-Caballero, Samantha Chan, Robert Kovacs, Erinn Middo, Lauren Nelson, Richard Palacios, Supriya Yelimeli, and Michael Stohl

### Abstract

*The actual structures and motivations of terrorist organizations like Daesh (aka. IS, ISIS, ISIL) are often invisible to the general public, and given their clandestine nature, often opaque to all external actors (including governments, militaries, and others). For the general public, the ‘picture’ of terrorism and terrorist organizations is often painted by the media, with media framing having a direct influence on the American public’s understanding of the global terrorist threat, and in turn on the policies and actions the public expects and wants in response. We argue that the central disconnect between the preferences of the American public and the actions of the current administration – a disconnect that we argue did not exist in relation to al Qaeda – can in part be explained by media framing of Daesh. We compare media representations of Daesh, and al Qaeda, with a specific focus on the time period between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2014 and find that Daesh has been framed as an existential threat, derivative of its framing as a singularly motivated militaristic group. Because of this framing, there is an inherent disconnect between public perceptions of the threat posed by Daesh and the response to Daesh being pursued by the Administration.*

**Keywords:** terrorism; framing; al Qaeda; Daesh; Islamic State (ISIL, ISIS, IS); media discourse

### Introduction

In the past year, attacks in Brussels and Paris by terrorists linked to Daesh (the Arabic acronym for al-Dawla al-Islamiya al-Iraq al-Sham – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), and in San Bernardino and other places by persons who either declared allegiance to—or were characterized as linked to—Daesh, have helped to increase the fear of terrorism as demonstrated in opinion polls within the United States. The Obama administration has consistently argued that its counterterrorism strategy is working and that the fight against ISIS will be won. The public clearly is not convinced that this is the case – Americans are more worried today that they, or a family member, will be a victim of terrorism than at any point since October of 2001.[1]

The structures and motivations of terrorist organizations like Daesh are often invisible to the general public, and given their clandestine nature, often opaque to all external actors (including governments, militaries, and others). For the general public, the ‘picture’ of terrorism and terrorist organizations is often painted by the media, with media framing having a direct influence on the American public’s understanding of the global terrorist threat, and in turn on the policies and actions the public expects and wants in response. We argue that the central disconnect between the counterterrorism preferences of the American public and the actions of the current administration can in part be explained by media framing of Daesh. In what follows, we compare media representations of Daesh, and al Qaeda, with a specific focus on the time period between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2014 and find that, unlike the framing of al Qaeda, Daesh has been framed as an existential threat. The result of this framing is an inherent disconnect between public perceptions of the threat posed by Daesh and the response to Daesh being pursued by the Administration. The public’s dissatisfaction (and heightened fear of attack and rejection of the administration’s response to Daesh) is predictable, given the media framing of the organization as an existential threat, because given that framing, only the complete elimination, not management of the threat, is an acceptable outcome.

In what follows we explore how the disconnect emerges in media texts through the framing of Daesh as an existential threat driven entirely by a singular, ideological motivation. We begin by first identifying and

explicating the repertoire of attributes, and attribute frames, used by journalists when writing about Daesh and al Qaeda. Second, we pinpoint similarities and differences between the framing of the two organizations. Finally, we explore how attribute framing serves to identify the disconnect between public opinion and specialist opinion.

### ***Constant Comparison***

Utilizing a constructivist approach, we argue that social understanding of terrorist organizations is discursively derived and socially constructed.[2] As a result, the public's knowledge of these organizations is affected by the media and the media's public discussions of terrorism and terrorist organizations.[3] Thus, an examination of media mentions of al Qaeda and Daesh can in turn help further understanding of the public's perceptions of these groups. Our focus turns specifically to how journalists use frames in this context and how consistently the same frames are utilized. Of note, the higher the frequency of, or the consistency with which, a frame is used, the more entrenched it is in the public consciousness.[4] For example, if time and time again journalists use the same framing package in relation to identifying the motivations of al Qaeda or Daesh, the greater influence that frame has in the public's understanding of that organization.

There has been a substantial amount of work looking at the how terrorism is framed in terms of organizational structure, 'The War on Terror,' 'Islam,' or 'Islamic terrorism'; but only recently have researchers begun to explore the role that some groups play in the framing of other terrorist organizations. One such study, found that al Qaeda has dominated terrorism discourse and was the primary referent in print media for understanding terrorism.[5] Specifically, the study's findings indicate that not only has the use of al Qaeda as a frame shaped public discourse of terrorism but it has also limited public understanding of other terrorist organizations such as Daesh. As Hülse and Spencer point out, the projection of a known entity (i.e., Al Qaeda) onto an unknown entity shapes the perception of the latter.[6] Put simply, the use of al Qaeda as the primary referent for terrorism and terrorist organizations situates it as the lens through which we see, understand, and form opinions about terrorism. As a result, the attributes associated with al Qaeda are subsequently associated with other terrorist organizations.

The detriments of such approaches (i.e., of using al Qaeda as a blanket heuristic for all terrorist organization) have far reaching implications, especially when considering that al Qaeda is unlike most other terror organizations.[7] One difference is the scope of the terror threat; al Qaeda is atypical in the target of its attacks when compared to other terror organizations. Specifically, at the height of its activity, the group focused on international targets as opposed to domestic ones which are more common among other terror organizations.[8] Further, unlike Daesh, al Qaeda did not focus on initiating in the near future an Islamic state or manufacturing feelings of alienation in the Muslim diaspora but rather emphasized pan-Islamism and argued against the persecution of religious minorities.[9] [10] Moreover, experts have argued that the structural and functional components of the two organization are quite different, despite Daesh originally being formally affiliated with al Qaeda up until early 2014.[11]

Despite these critical differences, Smith et al. found that print media mentions of Daesh frequently discussed the group as an 'al Qaeda offshoot' or an 'al Qaeda-linked splinter group.' This association, although understandable given the time period of the texts under consideration (2013-2014), ignores important nuances between the two groups. Further, because the public's knowledge of terrorism and the best way to combat it are inextricably linked to al Qaeda-centric solutions, the administration's failure to adhere to the same antiterrorism strategies to combat Daesh results in less support for the adopted approach. Recent public opinion polling indicates that American's today are more displeased with the administration's handling of the terrorism threat more generally than at any point since 9/11.[12] Specifically, since Daesh entered the public consciousness there has been a marked decrease in the belief that the U.S. government has the capability of protecting itself from future acts of terrorism. When comparing recent polling data to data collected post

9/11, the contrast is illuminating; today, about 50% of Americans believing that the government cannot protect the country from future attacks whereas in March 2002, about 80% believed it was capable of doing so and as Gallup reported, the public's worry about terrorism rose this year by 12 percentage points, from 39% who expressed a great deal of concern in 2014 to 51% in 2015.[13] These data indicate that, in marked contrast to the immediate post 9/11 situation, there is great dissatisfaction within the public about the country's strategy in combating the modern terrorist threat.

The current administration's chosen 'contain and degrade' strategy in the fight against Daesh is a long term one and as a result the already low public support for the strategy will likely continue to wane with time, particularly, as is likely, when additional attacks occur. Thus, an examination of the main source of terrorist information for most Americans, the media, can help elucidate the manner in which these groups are discussed and perhaps further inform as to how they are conceptualized as separate entities that are also intrinsically linked together.

### ***The Current Study***

Given the distinctions between al Qaeda and Daesh laid out above and findings by Smith et al. demonstrating the role of al Qaeda in media texts, there is an apparent disconnect between reality and what is occurring in the print media. However, although previous work has looked at the use of al Qaeda as a frame for other organizations, there has, to our knowledge, been (a) no study examining the framing of other terrorism organizations and (b) no comparison between how these frames are manifest in the print media. The goal of the current study is to identify the differences in the framing of Daesh and al Qaeda, paying particular attention to how the framing of Daesh in the print media explicates the motivations and structure the terrorist group.

### ***Methods***

This study relies upon two sets of analyses, one focused on Daesh and the other focused on al Qaeda. As part of a larger research project, we developed a database of newspaper articles from the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* that discuss terrorism, terrorist organizations and/or terrorist actors. The database includes all print articles on these topics published in either paper between January 1, 1996 and December 31, 2015. We obtained articles by using the ProQuest News & Newspapers databases.[14] Stories included in our database were located using a very inclusive search command (available from the authors upon request). In both instances, the current analysis focuses specifically on newspaper articles published between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2014. The goal in selecting this specific time period was to sufficiently limit the influence of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election, while allowing us to investigate the impact of the emergence of Daesh.

### ***Al Qaeda Sample***

For the al Qaeda portion of the study, articles were included in our sample if the words Qaeda, Qaida, or Qa'ida were mentioned anywhere in the article's file (e.g., anywhere in the title, body text, photo caption, etc.).[15][16] This resulted in a sample of 2,734 unique newspaper articles, 1,498 from the *New York Times* and 1,236 from the *Wall Street Journal*. To create a set of coding units, each article was searched to identify instances of the term al Qaeda, using the same procedure we used to identify relevant articles. Each time al Qaeda was mentioned, the paragraph containing the reference was recorded into a separate database for use in our analysis, resulting in a collection of 6,332 coding units. The actual coding was conducted on randomly selected units from the database. Each article was given a randomly generated unique object identifier, so that coders did not know the date the article was published, nor the newspaper from which the article was taken.



### *Daesh Sample*

For the Daesh portion of the study, articles were included in our sample if the words Daesh, Islamic State, ISIS, ISIL, al Qaeda in Iraq or AQI were mentioned anywhere in the article's file (e.g., anywhere in the title, body text, photo caption, etc.).[17][18] This resulted in a sample of 2,341 unique newspaper articles, 1,268 from the New York Times and 1,073 from the Wall Street Journal. To create a set of coding units, each article was searched to identify instances of the term Daesh (or any of the akas for the organization), using the same procedure we used to identify relevant articles. Each time Daesh was mentioned, the paragraph containing the reference was recorded into a separate database for use in our analysis, resulting in a collection of 12,552 coding units.[19] The actual coding was conducted on randomly selected units from the database. Each article was given a randomly generated unique object identifier, so that coders did not know the date the article was published, nor the newspaper from which the article was taken.

### *Coding of Articles*

Coding was conducted using a constant comparative method, as described below.[20] The coding teams were led by the lead author, who was present for all coding sessions, and a rotating team of twelve undergraduate research assistants, who were provided academic credit as compensation for their work.[21] The coding process was identical for both al Qaeda and Daesh. The coding teams were instructed to only code articles where the organization of interest (i.e., Daesh or AQ) was the subject of the coding unit, or where removing the reference to the organization would fundamentally alter the meaning of the coding unit. This limited the coding to articles that were serving to shape the applicable attributes of the organization, rather than simply instances where the organization of interest was being used to frame other organizations.

Although coders were provided with paragraphs containing references to either Daesh or al Qaeda, the coders were instructed to use the sentence in which the reference appeared as the unit of analysis, rather than the paragraph as a whole. Coders were instructed to note for each sentence how the organization proper was being described by the author, in as much detail as possible, and to note key words that were explicitly used as descriptors or modifiers of the relevant organization in the sentence in which the reference appeared. Paragraphs were provided to give additional context when needed.

The coders conducting this study relied upon three basic assumptions to guide their analysis. First, it was assumed that communication through language is based on the idea that words have a shared meaning within a set context; second, that the process of encoding information into language requires making choices from among the options available in grammar, and finally that the choices made while encoding information into language, though not always conscious, are deliberate. From this, we can state that the coders' primary concern was in identifying how the use of framing packages,[22] in context, served to communicate wider ideas, identities and attitudes. Coders were asked to note for each sentence the function the framing package played in creating meaningful narratives around the issues, events and actors being depicted. Additionally, coders sought to make interpretative judgments as to why certain choices were used to shape meaning, instead of others, and the implications of these choices.

As prescribed by Glaser and Strauss,[23] each time a coder looked at a new randomly selected unit, it was compared to all previous units in an attempt to group units into similar categories. Once a framework of categories was developed, theoretical properties for each category (e.g., deep descriptions for each frame package) were noted. From that point forward, units were compared both to other units in the sample and to the theoretical properties of the frame package. As the units were coded, and as the theoretical properties took shape, categories were compared to each other to identify overlap, and units in each category were compared to identify instances where a category was too encompassing. This continued until the list of frame packages reached theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation was reached after coding approximately 17%

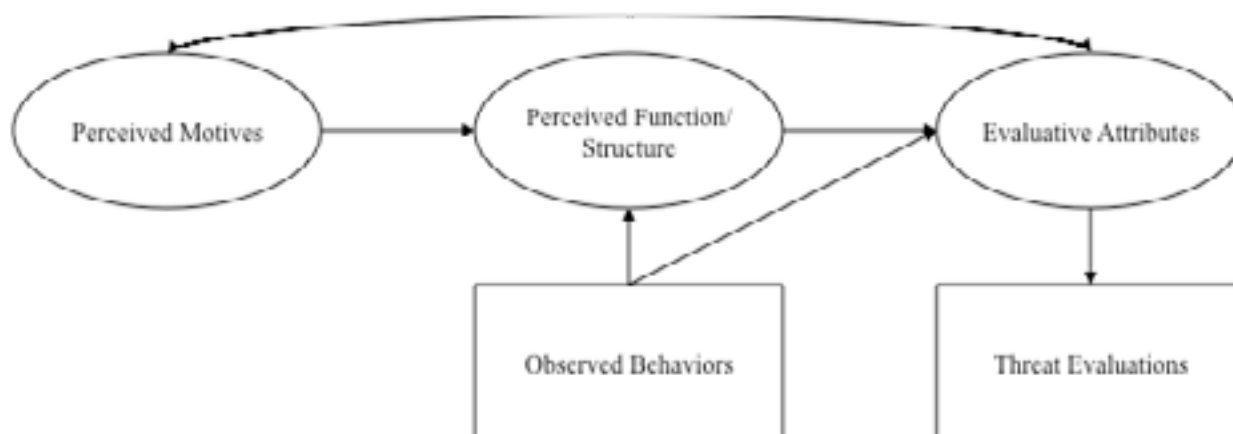


of the al-Qaeda coding units ( $n \approx 1,050$ ), and after coding approximately 14% of the Daesh coding units ( $n \approx 1,700$ ).

## Results

In our investigation of the framing of al Qaeda and Daesh, we observed a complex reciprocal relationship between the frames used to describe each organizations' motives, functions / structure and evaluative attributions, in concert with the documented (or observed) actions of each organization. The basic relationship is shown in Figure 1. The core of the argument given by this model is that, for any organization, behaviors are shaped by goals, or motives. To understand the motives of an organization is to understand most other parts of the organization as well. While it may not be possible to know the actual motives of complex organizations like Daesh or al Qaeda,[24] we believe that *perceptions* of motives play a large role in shaping public understanding of the organizations, as seen through the framing of motives.

**Figure 1.** Graphical Depiction of an Emerging Theoretical Model for Understanding the Framing of Daesh and al Qaeda



*Legend:* In this model, perceived motives are mutually caused by, and affects, evaluative attributions. In turn, perceived motives directly influence the perception of the organizations function / structure. Observed behaviors also directly influence perceived function / structure, as well as having a direct effect on evaluative attributes. In this model, threat evaluations are seen as a type of evaluative attribution (e.g., evaluative attributes is the latent variable, whereas threat evaluations is the observed indicator), and as such solely a function of evaluative attributes.

Continuing our discussion of the model, we argue that perceptions of motive, along with observed behaviors of the organization, drive perceptions of functional and structural attributes of the groups; in other words, how the organizations are perceived as operating, and the types of actions prescribed to them. Derivative of these perceived functional and structural attributes, and in relation with perceived motives, are evaluations of the organization, among these evaluations of the type of threat posed by groups like Daesh and al Qaeda.

There is not enough space in this article to fully discuss all of the attribute frames and classes of attribute frames used by the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* when discussing al Qaeda and Daesh. Instead, our focus in this section will be on highlighting the core areas of distinction – frames used to characterize one organization, but not the other – which are relevant to the model shown in Figure 1, including the framing of each organizations (a) motives, (b) function / structure, and (c) evaluative attributions.[25]

## ***Motives***

As argued above, the way an organization is framed has a strong influence on the framing of the organization's function / structure, and the framing of the organizations' evaluative attributes. In congruence with the arguments and empirical findings of other researchers – showing that frames in text are manifestations of the writer's cognitive schema – we argue that these frames are indicators of the underlying perceptions of the organization held by the writer.[26] As such, it is our contention that the perceptions of the organizations' motives directly influence perceptions of the organizations' function / structure, and have a reciprocal relationship with evaluations of the organizations. Given this line of reasoning, it is especially striking that the strongest area of differentiation between al Qaeda and Daesh is in the framing of their motivational attributes.

Al Qaeda has been a functioning organization since at least 1996, and has been cemented within the general American consciousness at least since the attacks of September 11, 2001. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that there is, relatively speaking, a robust representation of their motives. We were able to identify four distinct and entirely separate motivations differentially applied to al Qaeda: (a) idealistic / ideological motives, (b) Islamic / religious motives, (c) anti-American / anti-western motives, and (d) confrontational / reaction seeking motives.[27]

In contrast to al Qaeda, Daesh has only been in the public consciousness for a relatively short period of time, perhaps explaining the relatively simple understanding of their motives seen in the way they have been framed.[28] In fact, across the nearly 1,000 coding units we analyzed, Daesh was framed as having only one real motive: the creation of an Islamic utopia. Often, there was cursory acknowledgment that this motive was derivative of a larger ideological motive. However, in contrast to al Qaeda, the ideological motives of Daesh were almost never explicated and were solely manifest within the predominant framing of the organizations motive, the creation of the Islamic State. Derivative of Daesh's primary motive, we were able to identify two perceived sub-motives, which we are tentatively calling an expansionist motive, and a theistic motive. Importantly, these should not be considered motives on their own; these are best understood as two separate manifestations of the organizations primary motive.

## ***Functional / Organizational Attributes***

We next address frames which focus upon the function and organizational structure of al Qaeda and Daesh. In reference to the organizational structure, these frames often use organizational metaphors to link together separate organizations, or to describe the way the organization self organizes. The importance of organizational attribute frames cannot be overstated, in that identification of an organizations inter/intra-organizational structure serves to define the range of actions of which the organization is help to be capable of. In contrast (albeit equally important) are the functional identify attribute frames, which are used to shape an understanding of *how* the organization operates.

The framing of an organizations function / structure is often determined by the types of action being performed by the organization. However, as argued above, the framing of each organization's motives also helps drive the choice of functional / organizational attribute frames. This is especially clear in the texts describing Daesh. Derivative of the expansionist sub-motive, Daesh is differentially framed as having (a) a military function, (b) a government or administrative function, or (c) a criminal–or cartel like–function. Alternatively, and derivative of their theist sub-motive, Daesh is differentially framed as having (d) a proselytizing–or religious–function, (e) a branding function, or (f) a terrorist function.

Comparing this to al Qaeda, there are some rather stark differences, although there are also a number of similarities. The biggest difference between the framing of Daesh and al Qaeda is the large emphasis in the framing of al Qaeda of the way the group is organized – whether they are framed as a network structure,

a hierarchical-type corporate structure, or a franchise-type corporate structure. We did not observe any of this type of discourse when looking at Daesh. This may be because the organizational structure of Daesh is unknown, or because there is no interest among journalists in explicating Daesh's organizational structure. [29]

In addition to the framing of al Qaeda's organizational structure, we also observed four types of functional attributes attributed to the group: (a) a paramilitary function, (b) a government / corporate function, (c) a nefarious / shadowy function, and (d) a movement function. Looking specifically at these functional attributions, we begin to see some similarities with the framing of Daesh, but almost always with very slight differences. For example, al Qaeda is framed as a movement, whereas Daesh is framed as a brand. Both types of frames are similar, in that they discuss the more ephemeral functions of the organizations, but they are also starkly different in their connotations. Similarly, while we found Daesh framed as having a military function, we observed that the framing of al Qaeda was more characteristic of a paramilitary. Again, both types of frames are similar, in that they imply the use of an organized fighting force, but distinctly different in their connotations – a paramilitary is often perceived as less capable, more loosely structured, and more covert than traditional militaries.

### ***Evaluative Attributes***

The evaluative judgement attribute allows the author of a text to ascribe a “moral judgement” to both the “causal agents” of the news story (e.g., al Qaeda), the actions taken by the causal agent and the “effects” of said actions.[30] Evaluative judgements are attributed to these organizations through a range of mechanisms, both explicit and implicit, including metaphor, association and allusion. These frames, in contrast to the other classes of frames discussed so far, almost never stand alone in a text; assignment of an evaluative judgement attribute was usually done in connection with another attribute (e.g. motivation). As argued previously, functional / organizational attributes, in connection with perceived motives and observed behaviors, help to drive evaluative attribute framing.

Our investigation found that the evaluative attribute frames used when describing the actions of Daesh are much more contested and diverse than those attributable to the fact used when describing the actions of al Qaeda (see Table 1). This may be the result of al Qaeda being in the public consciousness for much longer than Daesh, and therefore there may be a more strongly shared conceptualization of the group.

**Table 1.** *Evaluative Attribute Frames Applied to Daesh and al Qaeda*

<b>Evaluative Attribute Frames</b>	
<i>Daesh</i>	<i>Al Qaeda</i>
Evil / Barbarians, monsters	Evil / Bad
Extremist	Extremist
Propagandists	Terrorists
Cult-like	Criminal
Complicated	
Modern (in capabilities and philosophy)	
Not serious	
Exemplar of Islam / Islamists (not holistic)	
<b>Threat Evaluations</b>	
Ideology as intrinsic threat	Extraordinary threat
Existential threat to...	Enemy
Status quo (especially within the region)	Destabilizing entity
United States	
West (e.g., Europe)	

Looking at Table 1, there are some clear differences in the evaluative attribute framing used to describe each group - for example, while both groups are framed as 'evil', the choice of language used when discussing Daesh tends to be much stronger (e.g., barbarians, monsters) than when discussing al Qaeda. However, many of the most interesting differences may be seen through which frames are applied to Daesh, but not to al Qaeda. For example, the members and leaders of Daesh are framed as being propagandists. This is clearly derivative of the branding function, which in turn is driven by the organizations theistic sub-motive.

*Evaluative Attributes – Threat*

Beyond the differences in evaluative attribute framing already discussed, there is one area that warrants further specific focus, as it applies directly to the question of why there is a disconnect between the general public and the US administration as to how best to combat Daesh: perceptions of threat. Both organizations are framed as being a threat, but the extent to which they are a threat—and the way in which they are a threat—is starkly different. In the case of al Qaeda, it is framed primarily as an extraordinary threat, and as an enemy. This framing implies that they are a group worth combating, to be sure, but it pales in comparison to the framing of Daesh.

Over and over again, we see discussion of the extent to which Daesh threatens to upend the status quo. The group’s ideology itself is framed as being an intrinsic threat, something not found in the articles which discussed al Qaeda. Additionally, whereas al Qaeda is seen as an extraordinary threat, Daesh is primarily framed as an *existential threat*, as it pertains to the ephemeral ‘status quo’ (especially within the Middle East), and more specifically an existential threat to the United States and the West in general. While the framing of al Qaeda implies the group must be combated, the framing of Daesh as an existential threat implies they must be eliminated or else they will remain a threat to the very existence of the United States.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this article has been to explicate the differences in the attribute framing of Daesh and al Qaeda, in order to gain additional insight into the continuing disconnect between the American public and the United

States administration about how best to combat the threat posed by Daesh. We have argued that the framing of these two organizations is driven by a complex reciprocal relationship between the frames used to describe each organizations' motives, functions / structure and evaluative attributions, as well as the documented (or observed) actions of each organization (as shown in Figure 1).

We focused our reporting of the results on the key differences between the framing of al Qaeda and Daesh. This began by noting the sharp contrast between the motive attribute frames used to describe Daesh as compared to those used to describe al Qaeda. We then showed how these sharp differences help to drive additional differences in the way each organizations function and structure are framed. We next discussed the derivative evaluative attribute frames, which again show hard contrasts between the two organizations, and which again demonstrate a more concrete and nuanced understanding of al Qaeda than is shown for Daesh. Most importantly, we discuss the key differences in the framing of each organization as a 'threat': whereas al Qaeda is framed as an extraordinary threat and an enemy, Daesh's ideology is framed as an extrinsic threat, while the organization is framed as an existential threat.

This difference is important, because it sheds insight into why the public is not satisfied with the current administrations strategy of 'contain and degrade,'[31] and why this dissatisfaction was not present as it pertained to the war against al Qaeda (specifically the war in Afghanistan). Further, it may help to explain why the vitriolic language of opponents of the current strategy has had such staying power. Speaking at the Naval Institute's 2015 Naval History Conference, retired Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen, who at the time was Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, described the goals of the U.S. this way:

*"What we have to do is isolate the organization. That will require that we can contain it – and containing it is in many respects a military function - but containing it also means containing its access to the international financial system. Containing its access to resources. And they have to pay their people. They have to buy food.... It is a comprehensive effort to contain, degrade and then defeat the organization, not just a military one."*[32]

If we accept the argument that the media has an influence on public perceptions, then the results of this study indicate that it will always be difficult for the administration to convince the public that the current strategy for combatting Daesh, as described by Allen, is a reasonable solution. If the group is an *existential threat*, as the media so often communicates to the public that Daesh is, then there is only one real solution: eradication. Thus the discussion of carpet bombing the entire region, rounding up all those who many have any sympathies to the group, etc. will always have greater positive resonance.

To be clear, the authors of this article are not of the opinion that Daesh actually is an existential threat. It is our position that while the organization must be combated, only a long-term strategy in line with General Allen's description of contain, degrade and then defeat, will work. However, given the framing of Daesh in the American media, it is hardly surprising that much of the US public seems to disagree. The problem, as indicated by the results of this study, is that the current policy of contain and degrade is not a natural fit to perceptions of the organization as an existential threat. In addition, where the predominate framing of Daesh is as a singularly motivated organization with a military function, statements like the one made by Allen (and others in the Administration)–arguing for a more holistic approach to combating Daesh, a solution not solely focused on a military solution–are anathema, because they do not fit with the perceived nature of the threat posed by the group. If the administration believes that their preferred policy really is the best policy for combating Daesh, then it must do a better job of framing the threat and response to the media as well as communicating more clearly to the public why and how their policy addresses the threats posed by the organization. This requires communicating a more nuanced understanding of the organization which explains why Daesh is not an existential threat and this begins with communicating a more nuanced



understanding of the group's motives. Unless this happens, there is little hope of obtaining the public's support for a long-term strategy.

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- [14] Our database does not include articles published in the online version of either paper, or in magazines published by either paper (e.g., *The New York Times Magazine*), unless those articles also appeared in some form in the standard print edition of the paper.

- [15] In order to be as inclusive and complete as possible, we used wildcard search terms, which allow us to find articles with any version of these spellings / names, e.g. Qaeda, Qaedàs, Qaida's etc.
- [16] For this investigation, we did not limit the sample to only 'news' articles, opting instead for being as inclusive as possible.
- [17] In order to be as inclusive and complete as possible, we used wildcard search terms, which allow us to find articles with any version of these spellings / names, e.g. Daesh, Daesh's, ISIS's etc.
- [18] For this investigation, we did not limit the sample to only 'news' articles, opting instead for being as inclusive as possible.
- [19] It is worth pointing out that there are almost twice as many Daesh coding units than al Qaeda coding units, despite there being more articles about al Qaeda than Daesh. This is mainly because Daesh was mentioned more frequently per article than al Qaeda was.
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- [27] For a more detailed discussion of these frames, see: Smith, Figueroa-Caballero, and Stohl, "Al Qaeda in the American Consciousness: Communicative Construction of the Terrorist Actor through Attribute Framing."
- [28] Arguably only since the August 2014 beheading of American journalist James Foley, although Daesh began to garner significant media attention in April 2013 following adoption of the moniker 'Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham' in connection with rapid military gains in northern Syria.
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## Failures of Militarism in Countering Mega-Terrorism

by Richard Falk

### Abstract

*The introduction of this article is devoted to the distinctive challenges posed by this era of mega-terrorism initiated by the 9/11 attacks. The article offers a critique of the American response which is based on a 'war' rather than a law enforcement paradigm. An argument is then made to adapt international law to new modalities of conflict while at the same time learning the right lessons from the repeated militarist failures of transnational counterterrorism. These issues are further considered via the parallel analysis of American counterterrorism policy by the distinguished diplomat, Chas Freeman.*

**Keywords:** Militarism; intervention; terrorism; international law

### Introduction: Tensions Between Post-9/11 Counterterrorism and International Law

There are multiple complexities arising from the interactions between sovereign states and large-scale political violence of extremist groups and individuals associated with, or inspired by, such groups. These complexities profoundly challenge the efforts of international law and the capabilities of national governments to contain and minimize political violence. They also raise serious questions about the relations between war, territorial sovereignty, law, and morality under contemporary conditions.

To begin with, international law evolved in the last century to prohibit all uses of force that cannot be convincingly validated as claims of self-defense or as authorized by the UN Security Council. These are innovative and core ideas of the UN Charter that were agreed upon in the aftermath of World War II when the uppermost priority was the establishment of constraints on discretionary recourse to international force by states in the course of international disputes. Article 51 of the Charter further restricts valid claims by limiting self-defense under international law to situations in which a government is responding to "a prior armed attack." [1] As suggested, supplemental to self-defense claims are authorizations to use force that are given to political actors by the UN Security Council. This was the case with respect to the 2011 NATO regime-changing intervention in Libya, although the precedent remains controversial as the scope of the use of force exceeded the evident intent and language of the authorizing resolution. [2]

Also, within the UN framework, recourse to force is required to be a matter of last resort, that is, after the failure of good faith diplomatic efforts. [3] Arguably, the practice of states during the Cold War was deeply inconsistent with this restrictive view of legally valid uses of force, and so there emerged a degree of uncertainty and disagreement as to the effectiveness of law in regulating recourse to international force. [4] Because of the absence of governmental institutions on a global level, there is a blurred line separating violations of existing international law and the practice of states that can have lawmaking impacts as a result of patterns of behavior that establish precedents. [5]

The kind of transnational political violence that reached its climax in 2001 with the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. World Trade Center and the Pentagon poses a more systemic challenge to the UN framing of lawful uses of international law. First, both al Qaeda (in attacking) and the United States (in responding)—whether prudently or not—viewed the ensuing political violence through the prism of 'war' rather than 'crime,' expanding the scope and magnitude of the violence. The 9/11 attacks had characteristics blurring the boundaries separating traditional terrorist acts from traditional acts of war, giving political leaders in the United States the choice of whether to respond within a war paradigm or a crime paradigm. That the leadership at the time in the United States immediately chose war partly reflected the neoconservative

worldview of the presidency of George W. Bush, the traumatizing and symbolic nature of the targets, the gravity of the harm done, and a feared vulnerability to additional attacks by Al Qaeda.[6]

Second, Al Qaeda's political violence was uniformly described as 'terrorism.' A non-state actor who lacked a territorial presence in the targeted country had attacked major civilian targets in the United States. This feature of 9/11 had the immediate effect of transnationalizing the interaction between terrorism and counterterrorism. In the process a new species of war was borne. By and large terrorism had been largely a state/society interaction, previously treated as a law enforcement challenge to be addressed within the boundaries of the targeted state or, internationally, with the cooperation of foreign police and security forces or through covert special operations. This international militarization of counterterrorism was essentially a new political phenomenon, although there had been a foretaste in the decades before in the form of retaliatory strikes (as distinct from extended military campaigns) against foreign countries thought to have sponsored terrorists, harbored them, or were otherwise complicit in the attacks.[7] The contemporary nature of transnational extremist politics and the forcible responses of geopolitical actors are contributing to the restructuring of world order by way of deterritorializing armed conflict.[8]

Third, the absence of a clear territorial base from which terrorists launched their provocative attacks made it more challenging to design a military response able to engage, defeat, and destroy such an adversary. On the terrorist side, the dispersal of its bases of operations, which are often inter-mingled with the civilian population, had several effects: turning the entire world into a potential battlefield, subverting notions of territorial sovereignty, eliminating legal options of neutrality in situations of armed conflict (as George W. Bush famously put it, "you are either with us or with the terrorists"), and strengthening incentives to engage in political assassinations that undermine the core distinction of international humanitarian law between civilians and combatants.[9]

Fourth, this kind of conflict also shifts the strategic focus away from deterrence and retaliation toward preemption and prevention. Such an anticipatory orientation expands the UN Charter's conception of self-defense by allowing a threatened state to strike first rather than being compelled by law to wait until attacked.[10] This shift also encourages the adoption of legally and morally controversial tactical and weapon innovations intended to enhance counterterrorist effectiveness, including reliance on torture, drones, and special operations (covert military groups seeking to find and destroy terrorist targets in foreign countries) as necessitated and justified by the distinctive character of the security challenge.[11] The shift also reflects the politically motivated goal of minimizing casualties on the counterterrorist side even at the sacrifice of effectiveness so as to avoid the rise of anti-war sentiments of the sort that were thought by the U.S. government to have interfered with the prosecution of the Vietnam War.

Fifth, the insistence on treating the adversary as 'terrorist' identified as 'evil' substantially eliminates both diplomacy and self-scrutiny as instruments of counterterrorist statecraft. In the past, many 'terrorist' entities were at some stage in a conflict treated as political actors, enabling negotiated arrangements that succeeded in bringing high levels of political violence to a virtual end. Without this option, there is the prospect of permanent war, already acknowledged to some extent by the Pentagon in its designation of the struggle as the 'long war,' with side effects that increase the authority of the state and correspondingly decrease the freedom of the citizenry. The decision to treat an international adversary as a 'terrorist entity' is a highly subjective determination that can be withdrawn at any point that it becomes convenient to treat the enemy as a political actor.

These five clusters of issues deserve a detailed treatment that is critical of the self-serving manipulation of international law to free state actors from prior constraints on the use of international force. It is also appropriate to consider revisionist steps that loosen the constraints of international law in reasonable response to a series of grave new security challenges.[12] In this regard, the old international law is not reasonably calibrated to address this new generation of transnational mega-terrorist threats, but neither is

the wholesale rejection of normative constraints justified, nor practically necessary. How to strike a proper balance is the central question being addressed here by distinguishing between the contextually rational use of counterterrorist force and, at the same time, striving to uphold those features of international law that in the past sought, with admittedly mixed results, to minimize political violence and the human suffering caused by warfare during the past hundred years.[13]

### ***Critical Challenges***

These background considerations inform and structure an assessment of how best to fashion an effective response to the ISIS phenomenon. There are two overlapping challenges associated with ISIS. There is the challenge of selecting the best tactics to address the immediate territorial and security threats presently posed by ISIS in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and other parts of the world. In short, within the Middle East and North Africa, the challenge is essentially at this point both territorial and political, which is producing a new hybrid form of armed conflict and asymmetric warfare that gives rise to new tactics of combat that should, in turn, lead to corresponding modifications in the framework of international humanitarian law. So far, this has not happened. As far as Europe and the United States are concerned, the terrorist events have involved mainly individuals or small groups operating independently, although claiming allegiance to, or inspiration from, ISIS, but essentially posing traditional internal state/society challenges.

For these reasons, at least for the present, the challenges emanating from outside the Middle East and North Africa directed at the established order should be treated primarily as an issue of crime prevention, and not as an occasion for war. Turkey situated next to ISIS-held territory in Iraq and Syria is faced with several types of threats, the radical destabilization of neighboring countries and the disruptive spillover generated by refugee flows and isolated acts of terrorism apparently intended both as retaliatory responses to Turkish counterterrorist initiatives jointly undertaken with the United States and as efforts to widen the conflict theatre and extend the zone of subversive and destabilizing influences attributable to ISIS. The Turkish case is complicated by the priority presently accorded by Ankara to anti-Kurdish operations; creating tensions with counterterrorist goals as has been the case in Syria.

A third deeper challenge associated not only with ISIS, but also with other expressions of jihadism, including Al Qaeda and its affiliates, is to alter relations with the Islamic world in ways that minimize the prospect of the continuing (re-)emergence of anti-Western extremist political organizations and movements. In my view, the militarist and politically deficient character of present and past Western, particularly American, counterterrorism policies has unwittingly contributed to the rise, spread, and success of jihadist militancy. Such movements have in common the perception that the West is their supreme enemy as a result of intervening in the politics of the region as well as engaging in resource exploitation, especially oil and gas, and by a globally influential popular culture perceived to be undermining Islamic values.[14] The West is also viewed as responsible for upholding Arab governments regarded by ISIS and kindred groups as corrupt, incompatible with Islamic ideas of political community, and viewed for other reasons as illegitimate. The very origins of ISIS are bound up with the US/UK occupation policies pursued in Iraq since 2003, particularly the sectarian purge of Sunni elements in the Iraqi armed forces and governing process.

The main focus of this article is on this structural challenges to the West that can only be effectively met by abandoning certain patterns of past behavior, including an attitude toward global security, which has in the past given rise to jihadism that arose to resist foreign military occupation, but adopted perverse types of liberation strategies, including the repeated commission of crimes against humanity which are viewed generally as atrocities. From this perspective, a critique of Western militarism is put forward both with regard to past ineffectiveness in achieving its goals and with respect to the normative unacceptability of the counterterrorist modalities of response. The distinct interpretative lens concerned with policy assessments of counterterrorist containment efforts are sufficiently interrelated with structural dimensions as to cause some



overlap in analysis while still respecting the differences between immediate security threats in combat zones and the underlying conditions that give rise to the threats.[15]

The attention given here to the reliance on the military instrument in the service of counterterrorist policy cannot be separated from the surrounding historical circumstances that led to the present conditions, nor be oblivious to prospects for change. The surprises surrounding the Arab Spring events of 2011 should encourage humility with regard to any effort to evaluate the lasting significance of the reactive counterrevolutionary political turn of the last several years.[16] The situation remains in flux as to what will endure and what is likely to change.

This critique of a militarist orientation also reflects skepticism as to whether current terrorist threats to the security of sovereign states and their populations are being adequately interpreted as a new species of international warfare that calls for a rethinking of the proper role of international force. There is also the related question as to whether—by having recourse to war rather than to the criminal justice machinery—the established political order did not unwittingly create a self-fulfilling prophesy, generating the very threat it is designed to suppress. The dysfunctional application of a war approach to counterterrorism indirectly encourages extremist political movements to emerge, especially through treating a non-state movement as if it were a state, and then, being shocked, as in the case of ISIS by the actuality of its territoriality. This heightening of status by establishing a terrorist identity is illustrated by the transition from al-Qaeda in Iraq to ISIS.

### ***Militarism and the Military Instrument***

The distinction between ‘militarism’ and ‘military’ instruments of security is central to an understanding of a structural critique of Western post-colonial policy in the Middle East and North Africa over the course of the last century. By militarism is meant the compulsion to address threats and conflict situations primarily by reliance on a militarist reflex, that is, by an over-reliance on the use of force without giving appropriate consideration to such non-military alternatives as diplomatic negotiations, removing legitimate grievances, adhering to international law, and engaging in self-scrutiny as to the roots of, and responsibility for, the emergence, persistence, and appeal of ISIS and other kindred threats. The argument put forward here is not pacifist, but is directed at the misuse of military capabilities that has led to serious blowback phenomena. This should give rise to an overdue occasion for stocktaking with respect to counterterrorist tactics and doctrine since 9/11.[17]

This misuse reflects, in large part, the failure to adjust to altered historical circumstances. At the height of the colonial era, essentially up until 1945, military superiority was used effectively in the Arab world and elsewhere, to satisfy the colonial ambitions of Europe at acceptable costs to the colonizers. What changed politically was the rise of self-confidence on the part of nationalist forces, the influence exerted by strong global anti-colonial support at the UN and elsewhere under the leadership of the Soviet bloc, and the weakening of European colonial powers due to the losses suffered in the two world wars. Although the United States endeavored to fill the geopolitical vacuum left by the collapse of colonialism, it failed to appreciate the accompanying shift in the balance of forces that shape the outcomes of internal political struggle. Hence the US found itself caught between loyalty to alliances and friendships with European colonial powers and an anti-colonial tradition strongly reinforced by recent historical trends – something that goes back all the way to the American Revolution, which was the first fully successful anti-colonial war.

Despite experiencing a series of frustrating setbacks, the United States continues primarily to rely on innovations in military technology (e.g. drones) and doctrine to sustain a false confidence in militarist approaches to the maintenance of the established political order in non-Western settings of strategic interest. It does so by ignoring a record of frustration and failure associated with military interventionism.[18]

The American failure in Vietnam was expected at the time to generate a more realistic understanding of the limits of military superiority in shaping the political outcome of asymmetric wars. In Vietnam the United States military possessed complete and essentially unchallenged control of air, sea, and land dimensions of the battlefield, and yet could not get the assigned job done to win the war. It was unable despite a decade of effort to crush the Vietnamese political will to continue national resistance to foreign intervention whatever the costs, and finally it was Washington gave in, calculating that it was not worth the effort to continue. In effect, the *unconditional* will to resist prevailed over the *conditional* will to intervene, and controlled the outcome, but this core explanation of the Vietnam experience was never understood by the American policy community as providing the key lesson for the future. Instead, the lessons learned were to take steps to blunt the rise of opposition to such foreign wars by abolishing the draft, relying on a professional army, and making a greater effort to enlist the media in support of an ongoing war effort.

A second lesson could have been learned in Afghanistan: those opportunistically trained and equipped as allies in a secondary struggle (in this case, containing the spread of Soviet influence) may turn out to be enemies in a more primary sense (the direct attack of 9/11 would never have been undertaken by the Soviet Union, which is inhibited because vulnerable to retaliation).[19] In effect, short-term geopolitical opportunism was pursued at the expense of intermediate-term security and stability. Al Qaeda's anti-Soviet collaboration in Afghanistan was followed by launching a struggle to dislodge the United States from the Islamic world, especially its large military deployments in close proximity to the sacred sites located in Saudi Arabia.

A third lesson should have been learned in reaction to the spectacular failures of the Iraq policy pursued by the United States ever since 1992, reliant on punitive sanctions, aggressive war, and a badly mishandled occupation.[20] The aims of imposing 'democracy,' influencing oil pricing, securing military base rights, containing Iran, and reconnecting Iraq with the world economy were all frustrated. What is worse from Washington's strategic point of view, the war intensified sectarian tensions throughout the Middle East, which, contrary to the intention of the mission, increased Iran's regional influence, led to the formation and local popularity of ISIS, and damaged the American reputation in relation to both the effectiveness of its military diplomacy and the propriety of its political goals and methods.

In my view, the U.S. response to security threats posed by transnational terrorism and specifically, by the rise of ISIS, has often been deeply flawed due to this persistence of militarism. The 2016 presidential campaign discourse in the United States on how to deal with ISIS, especially the policies proposed by the opposing presidential candidates, are surrealist exaggerations of this militarist mindset that has so badly served American and regional security needs in the 21st century. This militarism has also intensified widespread suffering and chaos throughout the Middle East and North Africa. It has also accentuated violent disorder and devastation in other parts of the post-colonial world.[21]

This critique of militarism as 21st century counterterrorism should not be understood as a disguised pacifist plea for an unconditional renunciation of force in response to mega-terrorist threats. There are appropriate counterterrorist roles for military power, although its efficiency and effectiveness in achieving global, national, and human security has markedly declined in the period since the end of World War II, especially when used to wage wars of choice in political struggles for the control of foreign states.

The colonial wars after 1945 confirmed the declining historical agency of military power in recent decades. The colonial powers, despite enjoying overwhelming military superiority in relation to national resistance forces, lost almost every colonial war. The French experience in Indochina and Algeria were, perhaps, the clearest instances of this decisive shift in the operation of the balance of forces in conflict situations in the global South. The genocidal behavior of ISIS along with the regional and global consensus that has formed around its containment and defeat provides a legitimate basis for reliance on military power if coupled with a recognition of its narrow utility, given the mix of political circumstances, including the prior Shi'a abuses in

Sunni areas of Iraq and the insistence of parts of the population, especially in Iraq, to be freed in the future from Shi'a governance. The superior military capabilities of the intervening forces do not assure an enduring victory even if it achieves temporary control over a combat zone; what counts is a sense that the political future is entrusted to the indigenous society and to a legitimate national government rather than managed and manipulated by outsiders. It is surprising that the colonial record of failure with respect to military interventions under Western auspices in the period since 1945 did not yield a much more selective approach toward uses of force by the West when addressing security threats in the Middle East and elsewhere in the South.

The U.S. war efforts' outcome in Vietnam was lamented in Washington, provoking much handwringing with respect to why the Vietnam War was lost, but without questioning the militarist mindset that had, for more than ten years, guided American participation in the struggle. After the Vietnam War a variety of steps were taken to fix the military instrument so that it could function more effectively in the future. However, what was not done, was an assessment of why military intervention had itself become intrinsically dysfunctional late in the 20th century—in contrast to earlier times when it provided an efficient instrument of force projection and allowed the assertion of control over foreign societies. It was true that after the Vietnam experience the American public, for several reasons, became disillusioned about getting involved in distant wars seemingly unrelated to national defense or clearly explainable national interests. Militarists derided this public disillusionment by derisively speaking of 'the Vietnam syndrome,' a label intended to convey the unhealthy reluctance of the American public to support the use of military power. The Gulf War, and then the NATO Kosovo War, seemed to remedy the political situation by the delivering quick military victories, and—this is crucial—achieved with minimal casualties, accompanied by national enthusiasm that was bolstered by the militarist claim that warfare could now bring victory to the West in what were approvingly labeled 'zero casualty wars.' This change in war fighting tactics was promoted by militarists who were trying to regain their political traction in Washington. They sold it as 'a revolution' in the conduct of warfare: no boots on the ground, precision targeting from the air and heavy explosive payloads accurately delivered over long distances with 'shock and awe' drama, and a supposedly more respectful relationship between intervening forces and the indigenous population.

It is not surprising that President George H.W. Bush's first exultant words after victory in 1991 were "We have finally kicked the Vietnam Syndrome". This is best translated as saying "we can again confidently use military force as a potent instrument of American foreign policy, without encountering either anti-war resistance at home or facing the prospect of a disillusioning long war that ends in defeat." Actually, it was not as innovative as claimed. The neoconservative Project for a New American Century made this clear in its influential 2000 report, which regretfully acknowledged the absence of a political mandate to support the regime-changing military interventions that it strategically favored in the Middle East.[22] The report contended that 'a new Pearl Harbor' was needed to create a political atmosphere in the United States that would be supportive of the aggressive geopolitics that neoconservatives believed promoted American interests in the Middle East after the Cold War. Subsequent developments would show this particular analysis of public sentiments was correct. After 9/11, the public and Congress endorsed, on the basis of a bipartisan consensus, militarist and interventionist undertakings in the Middle East that had no persuasive justification as necessary to meet threats of mega-terrorism. As it turned out, carrying out the interventionist agenda has clearly had the opposite effect of generating and intensifying terrorism in the region and beyond, implementing a misguided neoconservative diplomacy centered on upholding 'special relationships' with Israel and Saudi Arabia. The Iraq War, launched in 2003, was a disaster from a counterterrorist point of view. It transformed a stable autocracy into a strife-ridden, occupied country that became a fertile breeding ground for extremist resistance movements.[23]

The mood of militarist optimism with respect to American uses of military force was short lived; it was discredited by the distinctive challenges of the post-9/11 world. This new approach to war fighting, while

enjoying success in removing Iraq from Kuwait and persuading Serbia to withdraw from Kosovo, had not been tested in conflict situations in which the goal was to shape the outcome of political, religious, and ethnic strife in medium-sized states, in response to counterterrorist regime-changing interventions, and in relation to dispersed extremist base areas situated in countries with which the United States is at peace. The threats posed in the post-9/11 world were unlike either the kind of missions undertaken in the failed anti-colonial wars or the success stories of the Gulf War and Kosovo. George W. Bush mindlessly sold the government and the public on a militarist response to 9/11. And surprisingly, there have been no fundamental *conceptual* reassessments during the Obama presidency despite the major disappointments experienced in Afghanistan, and even more so, in Iraq. At most there have been several controversial and ambiguous cautionary retreats made during the Obama presidency.

Three costly and misleading tactical ideas overlapped. First, that regime change as a result of military intervention could control the post-conflict state's (re-)building process under the mentorship of a foreign occupation that was subsidizing economic recovery. The actual outcomes witnessed the rise of regimes that proved totally unsatisfactory from a counterterrorist point of view – regimes that seemed not even capable of providing orderly governance within their national borders. Secondly, that eliminating an unfriendly regime or a regime supportive of international terrorism or unable to prevent the use of its territory for international terrorist activities, would lead to the elimination of the terrorist threat rather than its dispersal, reconfiguration, and renewal. In different ways, both Afghanistan and Iraq, are illustrative of these unexpected blowback consequences. Without viewing conflict through a militarist lens, these consequences would have been anticipated, and the fact that they were not, strengthens the contention that policy shaped within a militarist box will not grasp the nuances of post-9/11 security challenges in the Middle East. And thirdly, that a regime-changing intervention would enhance internal security and promote the regional and global security goals of Washington. Even now those that defend the Iraq War claim, without showing why, insist that the Iraqi people are better off without the dictatorial leadership of Saddam Hussein. It seems obvious that a second coming of Saddam, despite many misgivings, is the only way to overcome the violent forms of disorder that continue to dominate the everyday landscape of Iraq.

An obvious puzzle is 'why do smart people of good faith continue to behave dysfunctionally in the face of such costly military failures?' There is no simple answer, and none that applies to all conflict situations. There are some elements of the ISIS type challenge that seem useful to take into account in shaping a tentative answer to such a question. I would here only mention six worth analyzing:

1. The difficulty of turning the ship of state around on fundamental issues of security. This is partly because political leaders and their advisors continue to subscribe to hard power versions of political realism, which affirms an abiding faith in the agency of military power in international conflict situations.
2. A combination of bureaucratic and special interests (military-industrial complex) that resist all efforts to reduce the defense budget, and are inclined to justify with militarist bravado high fiscal outlays to augment military capabilities even in peacetime, reinforced by exaggerating security threats that are usually accompanied by fear-mongering; a compliant media has the effect of setting limits on 'responsible' debate, marginalizing the critics of militarism.
3. A prevalent feature of collective political consciousness, which views current forms of terrorism as both evil and extremely frightening, with restored security depending on their elimination, and not an eventual negotiated accommodation.
4. More controversially, the merger of counterterrorist tactics with a broader American program of *global pacification* that depends upon a structure of military globalization that is given the



unacknowledged mission of upholding the neoliberal world economy. This necessarily mixes the pursuit of geopolitical goals that arouses anti-West resentment with the realization of somewhat inconsistent counterterrorist objectives.[24] The Iraq War, its motivations, frustrations, and eventual failure, exemplify the tensions and contradictions caused by pursuing geopolitical goals beneath a banner of counterterrorism.

5. The adoption of this militarist agenda by the United States is tantamount to a partial rejection of the ethos of self-determination in the post-colonial era and as such opposes the flow of history.
6. The militarist mindset, by its very nature, does not adequately explore alternative and complementary nonmilitary responses to terrorist provocations, and as a result tends to produce outcomes that are the opposite of what is set forth as initially justifying military intervention. For instance, the attack on Iraq was seen as part of a policy to contain Iran, yet its effects were to expand the regional influence of Iran, including the irony of bringing Iraq into its sphere of influence. In this respect, the United States, at great expense, produced widespread devastation and casualties. It not only failed to achieve its goals, but has become worse off than had it accepted Saddam Hussein's autocracy as it did gratefully during the Cold War due to anti-Soviet, rather than anti-Iran priorities, and then, incidentally, turning a blind eye toward the abusive human rights record.

In my view, the basic conceptual mistake of militarism is its inability to recognize the limits of the military instrument in achieving desired security goals under current historical conditions and in light of the essentially non-military distinctive challenges responsible for the rise of jihadist extremism. As argued, not only does militarism not achieve its goals, it makes matters worse. This has been the experience of warfare generally after 9/11, and most concretely in relation to the ISIS phenomenon. More precisely, the successes of counterterrorist operations have been essentially preventive law enforcement actions, the failures have been foreign wars.

### ***The Diplomatic Critique of Militarism***

One of the most seasoned and thoughtful American diplomats in the Middle East, Chas Freeman, has similarly diagnosed this failed militarism in the region from a mainstream perspective—with illuminating insight. As Freeman put it, “the major achievement of multiple interventions in the Muslim world has been to demonstrate that the use of force is not the answer to very many problems but there are few problems it cannot aggravate.”[25] Or more succinctly, the militarist impulse is a goad to action, in his words, “Don't just sit there, bomb something.” Freeman's main point is that not only has military intervention failed almost wherever it was relied upon, despite enjoying the benefit of overwhelming superiority in capabilities, but that it has made the situation worse than it would have been had the situation been left to fester on its own. Again Freeman expresses this assessment in clear language: “Our campaign against terrorism with global reach has multiplied our enemies and continuously expanded their areas of operation.”[26]

When it comes to ISIS, or Da'esh as he prefers to call it, Freeman's diagnosis is a direct challenge to mainstream thinking: “Given our non-Muslim identity, solidarity with Israel, and recent history in the Fertile Crescent, the U.S. cannot hope to unite the region's Muslims against Da'esh.” Freeman adds that we cannot stop Da'esh “without fixing the broken political environment in which extremism flourishes.”[27] What this might mean is uncertain, and whether such goals are within reach of the US and its allies is dubious even if recalibrated. Yet, what makes Freeman's approach worthy of close attention is that he is a Washington insider who dares to think outside the militarist box, and has paid a political price for doing so. His views acknowledge the fundamental failures of military intervention, blaming the rise of ISIS (Da'esh) on American mishandling of Iraq and Syria. The failure is not just the formidable difficulty of translating



‘mission accomplished’ results on a battlefield into a program of *political transformation* designed to produce results congenial to Western ideas of regional and global security. It is the more generic matter of territorial resistance encountered in the 21st century whenever a Western intervening power seeks to override the politics of self-determination.

The political side of the Freeman story is revealingly relevant. When President Obama near the beginning of his presidency proposed Freeman to be the chief of National Intelligence Estimates, a pushback of tsunami proportions blocked the appointment. An official, no matter how qualified, who was situated outside the militarist box would naturally be expected to be a subversive presence inside the box, and for this reason would not be wanted by the Washington nomenclatura. Perhaps, Freeman’s real Achilles’ heel was his willingness to question along the same lines ‘the special relationship’ with Israel in framing his critique of American foreign policy in the Middle East. As the controversy heated up, the White House abruptly withdrew Freeman’s name from further consideration. In effect, this amounted to an undisguised surrender to the militarist worldview with the Israel Lobby serving as the No. 1 enforcer. The Freeman experience confirms the opinion that the militarist bias of governmental policymaking is currently impenetrable. Thus, there is little likelihood of adopting an approach to the menace posed by ISIS and related phenomena that is any less prone to blowback and harmful adverse consequences.

Not all of Freeman’s policy recommendations seem helpful. He is too ready to work toward stability by collaborating with the most authoritarian political actors in the region, especially Saudi Arabia, while overlooking their miserable record in human rights, including crushing popular uprisings. And worst of all, overlooking the massive Saudi financial and diplomatic commitment to the international dissemination of a fundamentalist version of Islam. Freeman puts himself on the wrong side of history by repudiating the Arab Spring from its inception, and is even critical of the American failure to lend support to such old allies as the corrupt and oppressive leader of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak. In these respects, Freeman seems insensitive to the mass misery experienced by impoverished populations in the Middle East; he would likely be antagonistic to the still unfolding effort of the peoples in the region to control their destinies. The appropriate diplomatic posture for the United States is one of non-intervention, not one of either regime change or regime stabilization. Admittedly, this posture of detachment may produce results that bring chaos and strife to a foreign country, but it seems preferable to accept the dynamics of self-determination than to embark on the futile and destructive work of opposing populist and nationalist challenges to the established order.

### ***A Concluding Note***

In light of the analysis offered, it is essential to draw a sharp distinction between dealing with ISIS as a present reality and pursuing policies, as in the past, that create conditions conducive to the emergence of jihadist challenges. In this regard, coping with ISIS requires some reliance on military power to contain and preempt its violent activities and, if possible, engage with its forces in battlefield combat in which it is likely to be defeated, but combined with a willingness to have exploratory negotiations and even a receptivity to possible diplomatic compromise. Such an outlook would be in line with the extended effort in Colombia to find an end to the prolonged strife between FARC and the state, in the Philippines to end the rebellion on the island of Mindanao.

On the broader issues of security, abandoning militarism as the cornerstone of counterterrorist strategy would be a dramatic starting point. President Obama has gone part of the way by seeking to reduce American combat activities in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, but with only limited success and an uncertain will. Obama is to be praised for his insistence that the ‘global war’ against terrorism not be treated as a ‘perpetual’ conflict, but the policies pursued by his administration seem insufficiently modified to give such ideas real world credibility.[28] Instead, Obama’s approach is seen as an instance of ‘weak militarism’ that pleases neither

militarists nor critics, but has more continuities than discontinuities with his neocon predecessor in the White House.

There are several connected policy proposals that seem responsive to the global and regional setting that exists at the present time. First of all, desist from policies of military intervention that are unlikely to succeed at acceptable costs and will likely generate conditions conducive to the rise and spread of transnational terrorism. Secondly, recognize that the security priority of the West is to prevent attacks within Western homelands or against Western targets, making the challenge more in the nature of law enforcement, inter-governmental collaboration, terrorist prevention than the sort of traditional military undertakings associated with deterrence, defense, retaliation, and foreign territorial occupation. This understanding makes international collaboration with police, intelligence, and internal security forces of foreign countries the most promising way to address this category of mega-transnational terrorist threat.

It also seems sensible to discourage, and even restrict, Islamophobic sentiments and activities, but without abridging freedom of expression. The political response to the Charlie Hebdo incident was exaggerated, and illustrative of how the Western establishment should not respond. Western leaders took the occasion of a horrifyingly brutal and murderous incident to identify unnecessarily and excessively with an often viciously anti-Muslim magazine. And although some display of solidarity with the victims of such a vicious attack was certainly justified as a counterterrorist affirmation of freedom of expression, it was widely perceived and presented to the world as a seizure of an opportunity to slam Islam through appearing to endorse the inflammatory outlook of Charlie Hebdo with greater vigor than was being devoted to upholding the abstract principle of freedom of expression. Beyond this, why should this incident have drawn such a display of global solidarity, with many heads of state joining the huge Paris demonstration, than earlier or subsequent comparably brutal incidents of terrorist violence?

As suggested, the emergence of ISIS was definitely a byproduct of American-led militarism, and its containment will not be effectively achieved by reliance on militarism. The needed policies for such a hybrid war is a mixed strategy that emphasizes the political, seeks the higher moral and legal ground, and is imaginative about and receptive to diplomatic opportunities to restore security.

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## Notes

[1] See United States v. Nicaragua, ICJ Reports 1986.

[2] See UN Security Resolution 1973, 17 March 2011.

[3] For views that practice of dominant states alters legal norms by setting precedents, see Anthony C. Arend & Robert J. Beck, *International Law and the Use of Force Beyond the Charter Paradigm* (New York: Palgrave, 1993); Mark Weisbrud, *Use of Force: The Practice of States Since World War II* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1997); see especially, Ruchi Anand, *Self-Defense in International Relations* (New York: Palgrave, 2009); for strong geopolitically oriented jurisprudence, see Michael J. Glennon, *Limits of Law: Prerogatives of Power: Interventionism after Kosovo* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

[4] There is a good case to be made that Vietnam War was the turning point. In post-Cold War settings, the NATO Kosovo War and the Iraq War of 2003 were both non-defensive wars undertaken without the authorization of the UN Security Council.

[5] In struggling with the relationship between legal norms, defying patterns of state practice, and the absence of strong central institutions, some scholars have identified 'the law' with 'reasonable expectation,' which turns out to be deferential to dominant political actors. For an influential attempt along these lines, see Myres S. McDougal & Florentino P. Feliciano, *Law and Minimum World Public Order* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961).

[6] An intense fear of further attacks after 9/11 as undermining respect for international legal constraints is depicted from a governmental insider's perspective in Jack Goldsmith, *Terror Presidency: Law and Judgment inside the Bush Administration* (New York: Norton, 2007)

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[8] See for a challenging interpretation of the impact of transnational terrorism on the nature of world order: Philip Bobbitt, *Terror and Consent: The Wars for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

[9] George W. Bush, September 20, 2001, speech to Joint Session of the US Congress.

[10] *Nicaragua vs. United States*, ICJ Reports (1986) is the most authoritative judicial treatment of the scope of self-defense, refrains from expressing an opinion on the legality of anticipatory self-defense. In §194 of the decision the following statement appears: “In view of the circumstances in which the dispute has arisen, reliance is placed by the Parties only on the right of self-defence in the case of an armed attack which has already occurred, and the issue of the lawfulness of a response to the imminent threat of armed attack has not been raised. Accordingly the Court expresses no view on that issue.”

[11] On the torture debate, see Sanford Levinson (Ed.), *Torture: A Collection* (New York, Oxford, 2004); Marjorie Cohn (Ed.), *Torture: Interrogation, Incarceration, and Abuse* (New York: New York University Press); Alfred McCoy, *Torture and Impunity: The U.S. Doctrine of Coercive Interrogation* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

[12] This suggestion of a middle course is not represented in the literature very well; there assessments are either apologetic or denunciatory. For example, Philippe Sands, *Lawless World: Making and Breaking Global Rules* (New York: Penguin, 2006); compare John Yoo, *Crises and Command: The History of Executive Power from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Kaplan, 2005).

[13] For two attempts, see Richard Falk, *The Great Terror War* (Northampton: Interlink, 2003) and Gens David Ohlin, *The Assault of International Law* (New York: Oxford, 2013).

[14] The root cause of the Arab political encounter with the West was explicitly associated by ISIS with the artificiality of the states generated by colonial ambition in the aftermath of World War I, and originally delineated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. The other underlying explanation of perceived injustice is traced to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, a pure colonialist pledge by the British Foreign Secretary to support the commitment of the world Zionist movement to establish a Jewish homeland in historic Palestine. See David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt, (19—); David A. Andelman, *A Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Price We Pay Today* (New York: John Wiley, 2003); Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2010); Patrick Cockburn, *The Rise of the Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015); Daniel Byman, *Al Qaeda, The Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[15] Western diplomacy has also contributed to the spread of jihadist politics as through the ‘special relationship’ with Saudi Arabia despite its encouragement of jihadism in numerous ways, including billions of dollars to finance madrasas throughout the Islamic world. See Richard Falk, “Saudi Arabia and the Price of Royal Impunity,” *Middle East Eye*, 6 October 2015.

[16] See Marc Lynch, *The New Arabs Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016); also: Richard Falk, *Chaos and Counterrevolution: After the Arab Spring* (Charlottesville, VA: Just World Books, 2015).

[17] See Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York, Henry Holt, 2000).

[18] See the rise of David Petraeus as a result of his influential text revising counterinsurgency thinking: *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). See Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013); the failure of such tactical onslaughts as ‘shock and awe’ in the 2003 attack on Iraq as essentially a belief that political ends could be achieved by a traumatizing show of military superiority.

[19] Effectively explored in Deepak Tripathi, *Breeding Ground: Afghanistan and the Origins of Islamist Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011).

[20] Richard Falk, *The Costs of War: International Law, the UN, and World Order after the Iraq War* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[21] See books cited in Note 14.

[22] “Rebuilding American Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century,” Project for a New American Century, Sept. 2000.

[23] See Note 12.

[24] See Jeff Halper, *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians, and Global Pacification* (London: Pluto, 2015).

[25] Chas Freeman, “The End of the American Empire,” April 2, 2016, Remarks at the Barrington Congregational Church, Barrington, RI.

[26] Chas Freeman, *America’s Continuing Misadventures in the Middle East* (Charlottesville, VA: Just World Books, 2016), 238.

[27] Note 24, 17

[28] See President Barack Obama, “U.S. Drone and Counterterrorism Policy,” National Defense University, March 23, 2013.

## II. Special Correspondence

### What Comes After ISIS? A Peace Proposal

by Clark McCauley

#### **Abstract**

*This proposal develops the following points: (i) Emotions are an important part of mobilizing for violent conflict, especially ethnic conflict. (ii) Sunni versus Shi'a in Iraq and Syria is more an ethnic than a religious conflict. (iii) Sunni in Syria and Iraq join ISIS for a job and for defense against humiliation and domination by Shi'a; religious ideology has little to do with recruitment. (iv) Sykes-Picot is dead; peace in the Middle East depends on development of some degree of self-determination and security, not only for Sunni and Shi'a but for Kurds, Alawites, Christians, and Druze. (v) There is a pressing need for a vision of the Middle East after ISIS; I briefly describe one possibility that Western countries might wish to support.*

**Keywords:** *ISIS; Syria; Iraq; Sykes-Picot; peace; ethnic conflict*

#### **Introduction**

ISIS is more than violence, it is a brand name. We need to fight the brand in a war of ideas that is just as important as the war on the ground in Syria and Iraq. In this text, I suggest a diplomatic initiative to describe the world we want to emerge in Syria and Iraq. I begin with a brief review of emotions in intergroup conflict, then assess the current situation, then describe a view of the future that the U.S. could offer for discussion, and end with some estimates of likely reactions to the initiative.

#### **Emotions in Intergroup Conflict**

Rational choice is not absent in intergroup conflict, especially in tactical choices, but emotions are important, especially for taking risks for a group or cause. Ethnic conflicts are fraught with emotions.

The idea of nationalism is that an ethnic group, a perceived descent group and its culture, should have a state. Nationalism was the most powerful source of political mobilization in the 20th century, despite punditry predicting that economic interest would supplant ethnicity. The weakness of economic interest and the power of ethnic nationalism was already apparent at the beginning of WWII, when the members of 'international' labour unions rallied vociferously for what union leaders denounced as a 'capitalist' war.

For ethnic majorities, domination by a minority is associated with the experience of humiliation. Here I understand humiliation to be a corrosive combination of anger in response to injustice and shame for not fighting injustice. Anger calls for revenge, not taking revenge because of fear is cause for shame, shame leads to additional anger at those who have shamed us—and the cycle continues. Shi'a in Iraq and Sunni in Syria experienced years of humiliation as majorities repressed by minorities.

Particularly humiliating is sudden reversal of status. In Iraq, the U.S. intervention against Saddam Hussein turned Sunni minority dominance into Sunni minority subjugation by Shi'a. In Syria, civil war turned large parts of the country from the original Alawite-Christian-Druze minority dominance of a Sunni majority to Alawite-Christian-Druze subjugation and ethnic cleansing by Sunni Muslims. In the incipient state of Kurdistan, made possible by U.S. support, Sunni minority dominance has turned to Sunni subjugation by a Kurdish majority. Roger Petersen's book, *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Use of Emotion*

*in Conflict*, which traces the emotional consequences of status reversals in the Balkans [1] is a guide to the power of emotions that are also at play in the Middle East.

### ***Viewing the Sunni - Shi'a Divide as Ethnic Conflict***

Although often referred to as sectarian conflict, the conflict between Shi'a and Sunni in Iraq and Syria is not about religion. ISIS wraps itself in a particular fundamentalist form of Islam, but it is not the interpretation of the Koran that is at issue. ISIS wants political power, land, oil, money—wants to be the new Sunni caliphate, wants to be a state.

Sunni versus Shi'a in Iraq and Syria is no more a sectarian conflict than Loyalist vs. Republican in Northern Ireland was a sectarian conflict. The issue in Northern Ireland was not Catholic versus Protestant religious practice or doctrine, but two groups defined by perceived descent at war over land and political power.

Similarly the conflict between Jews and Palestinians is not a sectarian conflict, is not about Muslim versus Hebrew religious practice but about two perceived descent groups at war over land and political power.

Are Shi'a and Sunni ethnic groups? Are they defined by descent? Under Saddam Hussein's repression of Shi'a in Iraq, from 1979 to 2003, intermarriage between Shi'a and Sunni was not uncommon. Intermarriage as we know, means the dissolution of groups defined by descent. But after the U.S. deposed Saddam Hussein, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi began a campaign of attacking Shi'a in order to incite Shi'a revenge on Sunni, which would turn complacent Sunni into warriors bent on revenge against Shi'a. This campaign succeeded in its aims after Zarqawi blew up the Shi'a mosque in Samarra: Shi's and Sunni began a cycle of violence and counter-violence in which no one was safe. Militias arose on both sides to offer protection, and violence escalated. [2]

It is fair to say that Shi'a and Sunni were declining as ethnic groups in Iraq as perceived descent distinctions were blurred by intermarriage in the last decades of the 20th century. But violence and ethnic cleansing have strengthened group boundaries so that today intermarriage is rare and existing Shi'a-Sunni marriages are strained and breaking. [3] This is not a case of ethnicity causing war, this is a case of war building ethnicity.

### ***The Roots of Violence in Syria and Iraq***

ISIS is successful to the extent that the Sunni of Iraq and Syria see ISIS as their only effective defense against domination and humiliation by Shi'a. [4]. As Charlie Winter pointed out at a conference, ISIS communications in the territory they control emphasize the horrors of Shi'a retribution against Sunni if ISIS loses. For many in Iraq and Syria, ISIS is also the only source of jobs. [5].

But ISIS protection and ISIS jobs are currently welded together with an extremist form of Islam that many Sunni would rather do without. [6] To undermine Sunni support for ISIS, the U.S. must show Sunni in Syria and Iraq a path to security from Shi'a humiliation that does not depend on ISIS. Thus John Bolton, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, has argued that the creation of a Sunni state is required to defeat ISIS. [7]

Similar issues of security and status exist for other ethnic groups in Iraq and Syria. Kurds are seeking security from subjugation and humiliation by both Arabs and Turks. Alawites and Christians seek security from revenge and humiliation by the Sunni majority they previously dominated. Russians seek to continue Mediterranean port and airbase facilities and the survival of their ally Bashar al-Assad. Turks want good relations with the Sunni majority in Syria and no Kurdish state on their border. Iran wants to extend its influence and protect Shi'a Arabs. Sunni tribes in both Syria and Iraq have been both perpetrators and victims of violence; tribal sheiks have both welcomed and fought ISIS.



Denise Natali (National Defense University), who has been studying ISIS and related security issues in Syria and Iraq, recognizes the complexities of local actors in her February 2016 report, *Countering ISIS: One Year Later*. The last section of her report, titled Post-Da'ish stabilization, is worth quoting here.

Even if the U.S. defeats Da'ish tomorrow, there will be a day-after problem in much of Iraq and Syria. U.S. aims to stabilize Iraq and Syria should address the larger problem of weakened states and the emergence of strong, violent non-state and sub-state actors. This effort will demand a stable set of political security arrangements that can avoid the emergence of another Da'ish in the future. It should also assure that liberated areas are successful and stable so that people can return. This effort should include providing massive refugee assistance, immediate resources and humanitarian aid, developing local power sharing and security agreements, building local institutions, and mitigating regional spillover. [8]

What comes after ISIS? What would it mean to develop "local power sharing and security agreements, building local institutions"? The U.S. needs a diplomatic initiative that can promise at least a degree of security and status to all the major actors. This initiative would describe a world the U.S. would like to see emerge from the current violence in Iraq and Syria, and include a statement of willingness to talk with anyone and everyone about how to reach this world or something like it.

### ***A Future for Syria and Iraq***

The U.S. goal should be recognition of political units providing security and status for the groups identified below. Security and status would be assured to the extent that each unit has its own police and court system and controls a population-proportionate share of oil revenues in Iraq and Syria. The units may initially be thought of as states in a federal government responsible for allocating water and oil resources, but other descriptions of the units are possible: provinces, departments, or cantons. The U.S. would talk with any group or power about how to get to these or similar units. The U.S. should try to enlist EU/NATO allies to support the initiative. There should be no pre-conditions for the discussion, all borders and conditions being up for negotiation.

In particular, the lines drawn by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 are on the table for reconsideration. Giving up the Sykes-Picot division of Syria from Iraq will be necessary because Sunni fears will not countenance a continuing division of Sunni into a Syrian majority and an Iraqi minority.

The initiative would raise for discussion the following as possible federal states with local institutions of governance and security:

- IS territory becomes a state of Sunni who want ISIS governance. U.S. will cease attacks on ISIS and cease opposing foreign volunteers for ISIS, including volunteers from the U.S.
- Tribal state for Sunni who do not want ISIS governance.
- Alawite state on the Mediterranean north of Lebanon (~Latakia, French Mandate 1920-1936).
- Turkman areas near the Turkish border annexed to Turkey.
- Kurdish state around Erbil.
- Shi'a state around Baghdad and south of it.
- Druze state next to Jordan (~French Mandate 1920-1936).
- Damascus Federal District with police but no military.

- Christians who wish to emigrate will be accepted as refugees in Europe and the U.S.

### ***Likely Reactions to such a Peace Initiative***

- ISIS will oppose the initiative because it threatens ISIS's claims to represent an international caliphate. But if ISIS loses more territory it may become ready to negotiate to save the remaining caliphate. At a minimum such an initiative would generate conflict inside ISIS between power pragmatists (localists) and international Islamist radicals (globalists). [9] Such a conflict would weaken ISIS from the inside.
- Sunni who do and do not want ISIS will be in conflict. The Awakening of 2007 showed the potential power of this conflict; in 2016 it would weaken ISIS from the outside.
- Tehran would likely oppose the initiative because any movement toward a peaceful solution in the area would reduce Iran's influence in Iraq and Syria.
- Hizballah would likely oppose the initiative and follow Iran, its supporter.
- Some Baghdad Shi'a may welcome the initiative as a way to reduce threat from ISIS, even at the cost of more self-determination for Sunni areas of the old Iraq. Others in Baghdad would be against any initiative that does not continue their revenge posture against the Sunni who dominated Iraqi Shi'a for so long. This is a split already evident in reactions to Prime Minister al-Alabadi's efforts to represent Sunni more in Iraqi politics.
- Moscow should welcome saving Bashar and de facto Western recognition for its Mediterranean air and sea bases in the Alawite state. Russia might welcome a division of territorial influence that can limit potential conflict between Russian and NATO armed forces.
- Israel would be satisfied with a devolution movement of Syria and Iraq from strong centralized states into militarily weaker federal states.
- Kurds would welcome recognition of their statelet.
- Turkey would strongly oppose recognition of the present de facto autonomous Kurdish territory but would see some sweetener in transfer of Turkman areas along the Syria/Turkey border to Turkey.
- Druze would be pleased at the prospect of recognition and a degree of self-governance.
- Christians, who are by now too few for effective self-defense, would be glad for an escape hatch to immigrate to Christian-majority countries.
- The United States would get credit in the Muslim world for seeking peace without Western domination and for putting an end to the Sykes-Picot colonial boundaries.
- France and U.K. should not oppose the initiative; these countries lost the benefits of Sykes-Picot decades ago.
- Arab oil countries will likely oppose the initiative because it does not promise to crush ISIS; however, they might be glad to see limiting Iran's power in Syria.
- U.S. sympathizers with ISIS would more likely go to join ISIS than perform attacks on U.S. soil.
- Refugees from Syria are likely to welcome an initiative that might permit some of them to return.

## Conclusion

The proposed initiative should, in public relation terms, be positive for the United States and help to reduce Sunni support for ISIS. It should shake up all sides by shifting the narrative from who is winning at the moment to a realistic vision of a future worth working for. Even opposition from Turkey, Iran, and the oil states might be tempered by a desire to avoid being seen putting self-interest above the welfare of millions who prefer peace. With such an initiative the U.S. government could seize the moral high ground that brings new friends and new opportunities.

What comes after ISIS? The old states of Syria and Iraq have dissolved in violence. The U.S. needs, and the people suffering civil war in these areas need even more, a vision of how peace can emerge from violence. Unfortunately there is currently no appetite in the U.S. for thinking beyond defeating ISIS. Similarly there was little thought for what would come after defeating Saddam Hussein. I have described one possible future in an effort to get the future in our sights. If this or a similar initiative were announced, and diplomatic efforts and material resources were committed to it, there is a chance of failure. However, if we do not think about what comes after ISIS, failure will be certain and new rounds of fighting will be all but certain—with no peace in sight.

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### III. Resources

#### Bibliography: Legal Aspects of Terrorism

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

[Bibliographic Series of Perspectives on Terrorism - BSPT-JT-2016-4]

##### Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on legal aspects of terrorism (e.g., laws, legislation, jurisdiction, prosecution, and human rights issues). Though focusing on recent literature, the bibliography is not restricted to a particular time period and covers publications up to July 2016. The literature has been retrieved by manually browsing more than 200 core and periphery sources in the field of Terrorism Studies. Additionally, full-text and reference retrieval systems have been employed to expand the search.

NB: All websites were last visited on 23.07.2016.–See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

**Keywords:** bibliography; resources; literature; law; prosecution; jurisdiction; legislation; human rights

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Note: Whenever retrievable, URLs for freely available versions of subscription-based publications have been provided. Thanks to the Open Access movement, self-archiving of publications in institutional repositories or on author homepages for free public use (so-called Green Open Access) has become more common. Please note, that the content of Green Open Access documents is not necessarily identical to the officially published versions (e.g., in case of pre-prints); it might therefore not have passed through all editorial stages publishers employ to ensure quality control (peer review, copy and layout editing etc.). In some cases, articles may only be cited after getting consent by the author(s).

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## IV. Book Reviews

### Counterterrorism Bookshelf:

#### 21 Books on Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects

*This column consists of capsule reviews of books from various publishers. It is divided into three sections: general, legal aspects, and the Middle East (i.e., books that provide a regional basis for understanding a wider context for terrorism and counterterrorism in such areas).*

**Reviewed by Joshua Sinai**

#### General

Anne Aly, Stuart Macdonald, Lee Jarvis and Thomas Chen, Eds., *Violent Extremism Online: New Perspectives on Terrorism and the Internet* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 194 pp., US \$ 155.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-13891-229-8.

This highly informative and well-organized edited volume resulted from a symposium on terrorists' use of the Internet that was hosted by Swansea University, Wales, United Kingdom, in June 2014. It was organized under the auspices of the Cyberterrorism Project ([www.cyberterrorism-project.org/team/](http://www.cyberterrorism-project.org/team/)), which brings together experts from multi-disciplines to examine terrorists' use of the Internet. This is expressed in the volume's chapters which cover four central themes: how terrorist propaganda is disseminated on the Internet, how terrorist radicalization is conducted on the Internet, the nature and effectiveness of the affected governments' counter-terrorism campaigns approaches to disrupting such Internet radicalization, and future directions in academic approaches to researching and analyzing these issues. The volume's chapters, written by prominent academic experts, include Martin Rudner's article on al Qaida's use of the Internet as a force multiplier in its global jihad; Angela Gendron's analysis of the role and influence of charismatic preachers on the Internet, which is complemented by Anne Aly's discussion of how academic research is required to focus on the nature of the audience of such preachers; Gabriel Weimann's examination of the appeal of the Internet's social media to terrorists; David Mair's discussion of how al-Shabaab used Twitter during its Westgate terrorist attack in September 2013; Keiren Hardy's examination of how the downloading and dissemination of extremist propaganda is used in the prosecution of such suspected terrorists; Sarah Logan's discussion of the approaches by the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States to counter terrorist narratives online; Halim Rane's analysis of Islamist narratives online and how to counter them; and Maura Conway's suggestions for further research on the role of the Internet in promoting violent extremism and terrorism. The volume's focus on approaches and methodologies to analyze terrorists' use of the Internet and effective response measures make it a highly useful text for courses on terrorism and counterterrorism studies.

Edwin Bakker, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism Studies: Comparing Theory and Practice* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Leiden University Press/Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 192 pp., US \$ 39.50 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-90-8728-221-9.

This excellent, comprehensive, and concisely written textbook is "the product of and linked to the Massive Open Online Course on *Coursera*: "Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Comparing Theory & Practice," which is taught by the author and his team at Leiden University's Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism (CTC). It is organized into six sections: (1) "Definition and nature of terrorism" (the impact of terrorism

as a worldwide phenomenon, and the controversies over how the term terrorism is used and defined); (2) the “History of terrorism: a constantly changing phenomenon” (a discussion of David Rapoport’s notion of the four historical waves of modern terrorism, including the possibility for a new fifth wave of terrorism, although it is not defined); (3) “Terrorism studies” (a discussion of the history of terrorism studies, key approaches and experts, and the current state of the art); (4) “Assumptions about terrorism” (e.g., is terrorism caused by poverty, do terrorists suffer from psychological disorders, is terrorism becoming increasingly lethal, is terrorism primarily anti-Western, and is terrorism successful in achieving its objectives); (5) “Assumptions about counterterrorism” (e.g., is it possible to profile a terrorist, can terrorists be de-radicalized, can the killing of terrorist leaders result in the defeat of such organizations, is it ultimately impossible to defeat terrorism, and is a “holistic or wide approach” the most effective method to defeat terrorism); and (6) “Future research topics in terrorism studies” (e.g., what the author considers as 50 “un- and under-researched topics,” which are listed in the Appendix, such as terrorists’ targeting tactics, methodologies and techniques to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures, how to minimize the boomerang effects of certain counterterrorism measures, best practices and lessons learned in de-mobilizing guerrilla and terrorist groups, and other valuable topics); and how to minimize fear of terrorism while upgrading a population’s resilience to such threats through a better understanding of the nature of the terrorist threat). As a textbook, each chapter is accompanied by key points, recommended readings, discussion questions, and examples of significant terrorist incidents, leaders, and documents.

William J. Brenner, *Confounding Powers: Anarchy and International Society From the Assassins to Al Qaeda* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 290 pp., US \$ 99.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-107-10945-2.

This theoretical study argues that “the decline of once-dominant powers enables expanded agency for marginal political organizations [such as terrorist groups] to exert themselves as systemic actors rather than subsystemic adjuncts.” (p. 2). The new “systemic actors” highlighted in this study include the Nizari Ismailis (Assassins), Mongols, Barbary powers, and al Qaeda. These case studies are expertly written and highly interesting. While an academic study of the role of such insurgent actors in disrupting the prevailing international systems of their respective periods would be highly interesting and conceptually innovative, the author’s over-use of academic jargon ends up producing what are largely pedantic arguments or findings, such as the following: “The overarching emphasis in this study, how systemic developments rooted in the logics of anarchy may engender international society is one opening for a progressive inter-paradigmatic exchange between neorealists and members of the English school,” (p. 10); “Al Qaeda’s severe aberration in form and behavior rather than its clear deviation from Islamic tenets best explains its trajectory as a systemic actor,” (p. 241); “Judgments and actions based on shallow foundations, contesting with a civilization rather than an outgrowth of international systemic and societal deviation, are most likely to extend it,” (p. 242); and, in the book’s concluding sentence, “These insights demonstrate the necessity for both intra- and inter-paradigmatic pathways to theoretical progress, opening the possibility of understanding a broader range of historical experiences and, in turn, aiding in comprehending future theoretical and policy challenges.” (p. 267) Despite its excellent case studies, such a largely theoretical study is not likely to find a receptive audience among practitioner experts in terrorism and counterterrorism studies, whether in academia or government who seek clearer and more informed thinking on these issues. The author is a national security analyst based in Washington, DC.

Anna Cento Bull and Philip Cooke, *Ending Terrorism in Italy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 248 pp., US \$ 145.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 54.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-67620-6.

This is a highly interesting and conceptually useful examination of the legislative, law enforcement, and penal measures employed by the Italian government to terminate the far-left terrorist threats facing it in the late

1960s and 1970s. As discussed by the authors, these ultimately employed a conciliation and reconciliation process that resulted in the de-radicalization and disengagement of such operatives from terrorist activity. The volume's second objective is to analyze the legacy of such terrorism on Italian society from the perspective of the "victims" as well as the "former terrorists." (p. xiii) The authors conclude that while terrorist activity was terminated through the re-integration of many of these former terrorists, the "process of 'reconciliation proper' has not been embarked upon and that the preferred strategy by the political class and the government has been one of collective amnesia." (p. 210) Anna Cento Bull is Professor of Italian History and Politics, University of Bath, UK, and Philip Cooke is Professor of Italian History and Culture at the University of Strathclyde, UK.

Emma Gilligan, *Terror in Chechnya: Russia and the Tragedy of Civilians in War* (Princeton, NJ: 2010), 288 pp., US \$ 21.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-691-13079-8.

This is an interesting and disturbing account of the magnitude of the human rights crisis in Chechnya caused by the politically-related violent crimes committed by the various combatants during the second war in the period 1999-2005. The volume is divided into two parts: "Part One – The Crimes," discusses the 1990-2000 Russian bombing assault on Chechnya, what is known as the "Zachistka" massacres in 2000-2002, the 'disappearances' of Chechen insurgents in 2002-2005, and the ensuing refugee crisis caused by the mass displacement of Chechens. The second part, "The Response," examines the violent retaliation by the Chechen insurgents, the reactions by civil society in Russia and Chechnya, what the author considers as the failure by the international community to effectively respond to the human rights crisis in Chechnya, and the attempts by Chechens to seek justice through the European Court of Human Rights. The author is assistant professor of Russian history and human rights at the University of Connecticut.

Jutta Lindert and Itzhak Levav, Eds., *Violence and Mental Health: Its Manifold Faces* (New York, NY: Springer, 2015), 423 pp., US \$ 159.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-94-017-8998-1.

The contributors to this important and empirically-based edited volume examine the spectrum of the phenomenon of violence in societies, including at the levels of communities, families, and "even acted against oneself." (p. v) The volume's primary emphasis is on the "emotional and psychopathological outcomes" of such violence, which is investigated "using epidemiologic approaches." (p. v) It is divided into six parts: (1) "General Issues in Violence and Mental Health," (2) "Self-Inflicted Violence," (3) "Violence in Families," (4) "Violence in Communities," (5) "Violence in Societies," and (6) "Facing the Challenge of Violence." In examining violence in societies, of particular interest are the chapters on "Terrorism and Its Impact on Mental Health" "Political Violence in the German Democratic Republic Between 1949 and 1989 and Its Consequences for Mental and Physical Health"; "The Aftermath of the European and Rwandan Genocides" (with the European genocide consisting of the German Holocaust against the Jewish population during the Second World War); and "The New H(5) Model of Refugee Trauma and Recovery," which is based on the five overlapping dimensions essential to trauma recovery: humiliation, healing (self-care), health promotion, habitat and housing, and human rights. (p. 362) Jutta Lindert is a Professor of Public Health at University of Emden, Germany, and at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. Itzhak Levav is a Professor of Psychiatry, Public Health, and Psychosomatic Medicine at the University of Haifa, Israel.

Douglas Laux and Ralph Pezzullo, *Left of Boom: How a Young CIA Case Officer Penetrated the Taliban and Al-Qaeda* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 320 pp., US \$ 26.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-250-08136-01.

A riveting account by Douglas Laux, a former CIA clandestine operations officer, about his multiple tours in the Middle East and Afghanistan, where he was involved in numerous significant counter-Islamist insurgent activities. The text is heavily redacted due to the largely secretive nature of these military operations.

Malcolm Nance, *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2016), 544 pp., US \$ 27.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-5107-1184-6.

This is a comprehensive, authoritative, and detailed compendium on the Islamic State (ISIS). It is divided into four parts: Part I: “Who They Are” (the history of ISIS, its leaders, organizational structure, and members); Part II: “Where They Are” (their geographical locations in the Middle East, Africa, the West, and Afghanistan); Part III: “What They Believe” (the cult of jihad, the use of punishments, violence, and police state methods to control their adherents and populations under control, funding sources, the use of cultural cleansing as a precursor to ethnic cleansing and genocide); and Part IV: “How They Fight” (their global military strategy, types of weapons used in their warfare, involvement in terrorism and hostage taking, their use of social media, and the author’s approach to effectively defeat ISIS). Malcolm Nance, a former U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer in Naval Cryptology, and the author of several books, including the “*Terrorist Recognition Handbook*,” is the executive director of the counter-ideology think tank the *Terror Asymmetrics Project on Strategy, Tactics and Radical Ideologies* (TAPSTRI), in Hudson, New York.

Patricia Taft and Nate Haken, *Violence in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends* (New York, NY: Springer, 2015), 136 pp., US \$ 99.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-3-319-14935-6.

This is an important and empirically based cataloging of patterns and trends of violence and opportunities for peace in Nigeria at the national, state, and local levels. These empirically derived findings are collected in a web application (<http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org/peace-building-map>), with data technologies provided by the Gadfly Project, which integrates data on peace and conflict from a wide range of sources. As explained by the authors, the data is coded according to date, indicator, sub-indicator, region, state, and Local Government Area (LGA). The findings are visualized in static, dynamic, and clustered heat maps, including line analysis. The indicators used in the research include conflict indicators, demographic pressures, insecurity, economic pressures, group grievance/collective violence, government/legitimacy, public services, and refugees/internally displaced persons (IDPs). The peace agents indicators include economic development, human rights, governance, education, human security, community development, children, and others. From January 2009 to July 2014, there were more than 13,000 incidents of conflict risk and 400 Agents of Peace mapped to the web application platform, with hundreds of additional incidents added monthly. (p. 4) This massive data is explained and outlined in the book’s chapters which cover all of Nigeria’s geographical regions. In the conclusion, the authors point out that a situational awareness of patterns indicating trajectories towards violence or peace is possible when examined such indicators are examined at multiple levels of granularity. They write: “Stakeholders must examine the patterns and trends, and then undertake a deep qualitative assessment of the social, economic, political, and security drivers to understand the causes. Then they must perform a careful scoping and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis as part of a planning exercise for the solutions.” (p. 133) The authors are senior analysts at the Washington, DC-based Fund for Peace, which manages this ongoing project, which is based on the authors’ field research in Nigeria.

### **Legal Aspects**

Beatrice de Graaf & Alex P. Schmid, Eds., *Terrorists on Trial: A Performance Perspective* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Leiden University Press/Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 576 pp., US \$ 79.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-9-08728-240-0.

This conceptually important edited volume examines terrorism trials from what the editors term a ‘performance perspective’: trials are viewed as “a site of ongoing communicative struggle.” (p. 11) In this perspective, as explained by the introductory chapter, the court room is “a stage, not of warfare, but *lawfare*



where legal instruments are used (and abused) by prosecution and defense and all kinds of performance acts are executed and (communicative) strategies are adopted to convince the court and audiences outside the courtroom of the validity of their respective narratives of (in)justice.” (p. 11) Thus, “by combining the notion of *lawfare* with that of *performance*,” a new framework is presented “for analyzing terrorism trials as sites of communicative contestation of political, ideological, religious and legal aims, pivoting around the concepts of (in)justice and legitimacy.” (p. 11) This is followed by an overview chapter by Alex Schmid, entitled “Terrorism, Political Crime and Political Justice,” in which he discusses conceptual issues related to terrorism and justice, such as political crime and the political offence exception, how terrorism is defined, the application by governments of the ‘justice’ label to take revenge against terrorist attacks, prosecuting terrorists in ‘fair’ trials, and the possibility “for a political trial to take place without violations of the Rule of Law.” (p. 39)

This framework is then applied to the court trial cases of Vera Zasulich in 1878 (by Alex Schmid), Stalin’s 1936 show trial against the ‘Trotzkyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre’ (by Alex Schmid), the trials of the IRA in the 1970s (by Joost Augusteijn), the 1975-1977 Stammheim trial of the Baader-Meinhof Group in Germany (by Jacco Pekelder and Klaus Weinbauer), the case of Zacarias Moussaoui from 2001 to 2006 (by Geert-Jan Knoops), the attempts to prosecute the post-2001 Guantanamo inmates on trial (by Fred L. Borch), the issues involved in the trial of the Hofstad Group (by Beatrice de Graaf), the 2008 trial of Gestoras Pro Amnistia in Spain, and the 2012 trial of Anders Breivik (by Tore Bjorgo, Beatrice de Graaf, Liesbeth van der Heide, Cato Hemmingby and Daan Weggemans).

In the concluding chapter, Beatrice de Graaf observes that “After shocking incidents of terror and destruction, society needs to regain a greater degree of balance. Terrorism trials, well-prepared and properly conducted, can help to repair the damage by offering a secure, communicative space where clashing narratives of justice and injustice can be discussed and balanced, where facts and culpability can be assessed.” (p. 524) Such a balanced analysis and innovative framework that are applied to significant cases of terrorist trials make this volume a valuable contribution to the literature on the legal aspects of countering terrorism.

Aniceto Masferrer and Clive Walker, Eds., *Counter-Terrorism, Human Rights and the Rule of Law: Crossing Legal Boundaries in Defence of the State* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013), 360 pp., US \$ 154.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-78195-446-1.

This edited volume is an outgrowth of a workshop on “Democratic States’ Response to Terrorism under the Rule of Law: A Historical and Comparative Approach to the Protection of Human Rights and Civil Liberties in the Fight Against Terrorism,” which was held in July 2011 at the International Institute for the Sociology of Law, Onati, Spain. It is such a comparative perspective that is pursued by this important volume’s contributors who, as explained by the editors, examine how “new codes of counter-terrorism laws have constantly and often acutely challenged traditional legal concepts. The emergent counter-terrorism legal catalogue thereby transcends traditional ethical, legal and organizational boundaries of legal categorization and poses fundamental questions about the values at the heart of each affected legal system, both in domestic and international law.” (p. 5) To discuss these issues, and with a focus on countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Spain, the volume’s chapters cover topics such as defining terrorism, the relationship between human rights and counterterrorism, terrorism as a criminal offence, counter-terrorism and freedom of expression, the relationship between terrorism and criminal law governing the right to interview suspects and their right to access a lawyer, maintaining human rights in cross-border counter-terrorism, the relationship between counter-terrorism policing and military detentions, and the transformation of domestic security services into intelligence and counter-terrorism agencies.



Clive Walker, Ed., *Contingencies, Resilience and Legal Constitutionalism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 162 pp., US \$ 160.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-138-89042-8.

With societies facing a spectrum of terrorist threats, the requirement by governments to upgrade their contingency planning to mitigate such risks is a top priority in national security. To address these significant issues, the contributors to this edited volume examine the legal developments in such contingency planning on a comparative basis, which concerns the relationship between law and constitutionalism, as well as relations between public and private, national and local, and civil and military. Following the editor's overview of these issues, the volume's chapters cover topics such as the contingency issues involved in responding to Anders Breivik's July 2011's lone wolf type terrorist attacks in Norway, managing civil contingencies in Australia, Canada's emergency measures legislation, the United Kingdom's Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the governance of other emergency arrangements, risk management in United States' counterterrorism responses, as well as an assessment of effectiveness in its homeland security program. One weakness in the volume's approach is that while the subjects, as specified in the title, of contingencies and legal constitutionalism are well covered, the topic of resilience is not clearly defined and receives scant coverage. The volume's chapters were originally published as a special issue of *The International Journal of Human Rights* in February 2014. Clive Walker is Professor Emeritus of Criminal Justice Studies in the School of Law at the University of Leeds, UK.

Vicente Medina, *Terrorism Unjustified: The Use and Misuse of Political Violence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 280 pp., US \$ 80.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4422-5351-3.

In this excellent and balanced analysis, the author, an associate professor of philosophy at Seton Hall University, examines the philosophical issues involved in whether it is justified or not to engage in terrorism to achieve one's objectives. He begins by explaining that "For hard-core opponents like me, terrorism is categorically wrong and, therefore, morally and legally unjustified. I view terrorism as either equivalent to murder or manslaughter in domestic law, or equivalent to crimes against humanity or war crimes in international law." (p. xi) By contrast, he adds, "apologists of terrorism, be they hard core or soft core, typically, though not necessarily, espouse a consequentialist or teleological view of morality. For them, terrorism is equivalent to homicide that can, at times, be justified. I argue, however, that apologists' arguments and reasons are insufficient to justify terrorism." (pp. xi-xii) These important issues are examined in the volume's six sections, which discuss the modern history of terrorism based on David Rapoport's four waves typology, how terrorism is defined, the approaches of what the author terms the hard core and soft core opponents and apologists of terrorism, the ambiguity of the expression "whatever it takes" and its relevance for debates about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the resort to terrorism, and a postscript which sums up the author's views on terrorism. There is much to commend in this insightful account, including the author's working definition of terrorism as "the use of political violence by people who deliberately or recklessly inflict or threaten to inflict substantive undeserved harm on those who can be conceived of as impeccably innocent, aiming at influencing a domestic or an international audience." (p. 204)

### ***Middle East***

Michael Kerr and Craig Larkin, Eds., *The Alawis of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 384 pp., US \$ 50.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-19-045-811-9.

With the Syrian civil war continuing to rage into its fifth year, it is crucial to understand the history and nature of the conflict's warring sides. The contributors to this edited volume shed important light on the

Alawi minority, the country's rulers. The book's chapters, which are written by leading experts, cover topics such as the history of the Alawis during the Ottoman and French Mandatory periods, the role of the Alawis in the ruling Ba'ath Party regime, the conflict between the Alawis and the country's Muslim Brotherhood, the geographical location of the Alawis in the country's coastal and interior regions, patronage and clientelism in Bashar al-Assad's government, the presence of some Alawis in the Syrian opposition, and the Alawi-dominated regime's responses to the current uprising and insurgency against its continued rule. The editors are professors at the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies at King's College London, UK.

Avi Melamed, *Inside the Middle East: Making Sense of the Most Dangerous and Complicated Region on Earth* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2016), 392 pp., US \$ 26.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-63450-572-7.

This is an interesting and sweeping account of significant political trends in the Middle East by a former senior official in the Israeli government on Middle East strategic intelligence. The book's chapters cover the drivers of these trends such as the Arab Spring, militant Islam and al Qaida post-Usama bin Laden, the rise of ISIS, the Iranian-Arab power struggle, the war in Syria, the future of the monarchic regimes, the failure of the West to influence developments in the Middle East, the rise of the Internet as a major regional force for change, and future trends in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Among the author's numerous insights is his proposal for an 'out-of-the-box' solution to the current stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: "the creation of an interim triangular Palestinian-Egyptian-Jordanian confederation that would be a temporary member of the Gulf Cooperation Council and have a seat in the Arab League. The confederation, in conjunction with the GCC, would authorize a representative body to negotiate with Israel." (271) With Saudi Arabia edging closer to Israel in the diplomatic realm, such a proposal might have some geo-strategic weight, although, as the author notes, such an alliance would have to obtain Israeli concessions on further construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and "the broadening of Palestinian control in other areas in the West Bank." (p. 272)

Madawi al-Rasheed, *Muted Modernists: The Struggle over Divine Politics in Saudi Arabia* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 224 pp., US \$ 55.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-1904-9602-9.

This book aims to highlight what the author characterizes as "a certain intellectual mutation that has been fermenting amongst a minority of Saudi Islamists, referred to here as modernists. This modernism corresponds to what Muhammad Qasim Zaman defines as an attempt to 'rethink Islamic norms, reinterpret foundational Islamic texts, and reform particular Muslim institutions in ways that aim to align them more closely with both the spirit of Islam and current needs and sensibilities of society.'" (p. 1) This is accomplished through an analysis of textual and oral sources produced by a selected number of leading Islamist *ulama* and intellectuals who the author explains "are either in prison, banned from travel, or expecting harsh punishment for thinking and writing," (p. ix) such as members of the Saudi Association for Civil and Political Rights (HASM), Sheikh Salman al-Awdah, Abdullah al-Maliki, Muhammad al-Abd al-Karim, and Muhammad al-Ahmari. Although one may not necessarily agree with the author's position that "readers must be warned that it would be counterproductive to impose Western meaning of modernism on this group of writers," (p. 159) since, at least in this reviewer's opinion, 'Western modernity is modernity' (i.e., secularism, pluralism and democracy) and if one disagrees with it, then they are opposed to such concepts, which is their right, but then they cannot twist this notion out of its original meaning. Nevertheless, this book is a major contribution to understanding the importance of such 'Islamist modernists,' since, at the very least, they are attempting, as the author points out, to propose "real political reform" in Saudi Arabia in contradistinction to the Saudi leadership or the 'Salafi constituency' that have not "produced a reform agenda that is worth considering the future of the country." (p. 163) Madawi al-Rasheed is Visiting Professor at the Middle East Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science and Research Fellow at the Open Society Foundation.

Paul Aarts and Carolien Roelants, *Saudi Arabia: A Kingdom in Peril* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press/London, England, UK: Hurst & Company, 2015), 288 pp., US \$ 35.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-84904-465-3. Please note that a paperback edition is scheduled to be published by Hurst & Company in October 2016.

This is an excellent account of whether the latest political and socio-economic trends affecting the Saudi Arabian monarchy, regionally and internally, are likely to result in peaceful stability or revolutionary change. As the authors write, “The aim of this book is to consider all sides of this question by looking at a number of potential scenarios, ranging from that of business-as-usual to a complete break with the existing order.” (p. 3) This is accomplished by examining the relationship between the country’s clergy and the royal family, the role of oil in the country’s economy and the impact of the drop in oil prices on future economic development programs, whether the ruling elite will be able to manage the “soaring ambitions” of the country’s “new generation” of educated technocrats and professional classes, the changing roles of women in society, the role of social media in exposing younger generations to new ways of thinking, trends in the protest by the country’s marginalized Shiite minority, how the regime has succeeded so far in blunting the impact of the Arab Spring on Saudi society, and likely succession to the country’s aging ruler. In the concluding chapter the authors present five alternative future scenarios: muddling through, social explosion, reforms – the king’s dilemma, severe repression, and total implosion. They conclude that while “total implosion” is “very unlikely...in the long run a combination of factors such as we have described above can easily come about. It is no more unlikely than that the Saudi dynasty will survive forever. Few experts foresaw the fall of the Berlin Wall, or that of the shah of Iran or of Hosni Mubarak. The fall of the House of Saud is certainly no foregone conclusion, but the ingredients for an upheaval of this kind are certainly present.” (pp. 139-140) It is such insights that make this book invaluable for understanding the likely future of the Saudi Kingdom – one of the Middle East’s most significant countries. Paul Aarts teaches International Relations at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Carolien Roelants is senior Middle East editor at the Dutch daily newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*.

Yossi Alpher, *Periphery: Israel’s Search for Middle East Allies* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 196 pp., \$36.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4422-3101-6.

This is a comprehensive and authoritative examination of what the author terms “the periphery doctrine” in the evolution and implementation of Israel’s overall national security strategy. Within this context, the “periphery” refers to Israel’s dealings with Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Morocco, the Kurds of Northern Iraq, and others. The current ramifications of these dealings include Israel’s response to the Arab Spring, and the reaction by Arab states, such as Jordan (and the Palestinians) towards Israel. The author concludes that while the original periphery doctrine was “broadly successful,” “Today’s challenges require the display of similar capabilities on Israel’s part. Its current performance falls disappointingly short of Ben Gurion’s standard.” (p. 147) Although this book was published prior to Israel’s recent diplomatic re-engagement with Turkey and, at least, what is reported to be a largely behind-the-scenes diplomatic and military engagement with Saudi Arabia, this account provides a valuable context for understanding how Israel’s “periphery doctrine” still plays a significant role in its foreign relations with such nations. The author is a prominent Israeli national security expert.

Ehud Eilam, *Israel’s Way of War: A Strategic and Operational Analysis, 1948-2014* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2015), 208 pp., \$35.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4766-6382-1.

This is an expert account by a former civilian researcher for the Israeli military of how Israel has dealt with “high-intensity, hybrid and low-intensity wars” since 1948. Beginning with an account of Israel’s national strategy and combat doctrine and how they apply to the different categories of wars it has faced, the chapters cover topics such as Israel’s campaigns in the Gaza Strip in 1956, 1967, 2008-2009, and 2014; Israel’s fight

against the “hybrid” PLO and Hizballah adversaries; and how Israel’s military strategy and doctrine resemble those of Western states. Also discussed is a comparison of the United States intervention in Vietnam and the Israeli-Hizballah war in the 1990s and a comparison between Israel and the Western intervention in Libya in 2011. The author concludes that “Israel survived the era of high intensity wars, but only time will tell if it can deal with the ongoing pressure of hybrid/low-intensity wars, not only in the military arena but also in the political, economic and social ones.” (p. 179)

Gregory S. Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State* [Third Edition] (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 496 pp., \$120.00 [Hardback], \$49.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4422-6536-3.

This is the third edition of the author’s comprehensive and detailed textbook on the origin, evolution, and current situation of Israel’s politics, government, and foreign policy. Beginning with an introductory overview of the study of Israeli politics in a comparative context, the succeeding chapters discuss the historical setting for the country’s political system (including Zionism and the Jewish religion); the roles and functions of the governmental institutions, including political parties and the electoral system; and the nature of the country’s foreign policy, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the peace process. The author is Vice President for Academic Affairs, Academic Dean, and Professor of Politics at Earlham College, in Richmond, Indiana.

Avi Shilon, *Ben-Gurion: His Later Years in the Political Wilderness* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 282 pp., \$45.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4422-4946-2.

This is an extensively researched, highly detailed, and authoritative examination of the political career of David Ben-Gurion – the dominant political figure, following the First World War, in spearheading Israel’s independence in May 1948, and serving as its prime minister for most of the period until the mid-1960s. The book’s first part focuses on the period that led to his political decline in the years of 1963 to 1970, and, in the second part, on the years from 1970 until his death on December 1, 1973. The author, an Israeli journalist, is also a postdoctoral fellow at the Israel Institute – Taub Center for Israel Studies at New York University.

**About the Reviewer:** Dr. Joshua Sinai is the Book Reviews Editor of ‘*Perspectives on Terrorism*’. He can be reached at: [Joshua.sinai@comcast.net](mailto:Joshua.sinai@comcast.net).

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## V. News

### From TRI's National Networks of Ph.D. Theses Writers: List of Canadian Ph.D. Theses in Progress and Completed

Prepared by Ryan Scrivens

*Coordinator of the Canadian Network of Ph.D. Theses Writers of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI)*

**Note:** Each entry contains information on the (working) title of the doctoral dissertation, its author, the academic institution where the thesis is being written (including name of supervisor where provided) and the expected date of completion. At the end of the list are a number of theses that have recently been completed.

#### ***Ph.D. Theses in Progress:***

##### **Ahmed, Kawser**

- The Perceptions, Experiences, and Contributions of Leaders of Selected Community-Based Organizations in Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Kawser Ahmed, umahme33@myumanitoba.ca
- University of Manitoba; Arthur. V. Mauro Center for Peace and Justice/Center for Defence and Security Studies; Dr. Sean Byrne
- Expected date of completion: October 2016

##### **Bérubé, Maxime**

- Understanding the Framing of Jihad Through Al-Qaeda's Inspired English-Language Propaganda
- Maxime Bérubé, m.berube@umontreal.ca
- Université de Montréal; École de Criminologie; Dr. Benoît Dupont
- Expected date of completion: 2018

##### **Boudreau, Geneviève B.**

- Understanding the Other: Communicating Social and Religious Identities During Conflict Amongst Different Radical Muslim Groups in the Middle East
- Geneviève B. Boudreau, gbouc052@gmail.com
- University of Ottawa; School of Sociological and Anthropological Studies; Dr. Mahmoud Eid and Dr. Ari Gandsman (co-supervision)
- Expected date of completion: August 2018



**Chan, Alice**

- Religious Bullying: Can Religious Literacy Programs Address this Phenomenon?
- W. Y. Alice Chan, [alice.chan@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:alice.chan@mail.mcgill.ca)
- McGill University; Department of Integrated Studies in Education; Dr. Ratna Ghosh
- Expected date of completion: 2018

**Crosset, Valentine**

- La Visibilité Oppositionnelle, Étude de Cas du Groupe Armé État Islamique sur les Médias Sociaux
- Valentine Crosset, [valentine.crosset@umontreal.ca](mailto:valentine.crosset@umontreal.ca)
- Université de Montréal; École de Criminologie; Dr. Samuel Tanner
- Expected date of completion: Autumn 2018

**Dilimulati, Maihemuti**

- A Comparative Study of Identity Reconstruction Experiences of Highly Educated Muslim Uyghur Immigrants in Quebec and English Canada
- Maihemuti Dilimulati, [maihemuti.dilimulati@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:maihemuti.dilimulati@mail.mcgill.ca)
- McGill University; Department of Integrated Study in Education/Faculty of Education; Dr. Ratna Ghosh
- Expected date of completion: December 2018

**Dominique-Legault, Pascal**

- Police Knowledge and Global Crowds in Quebec
- Pascal Dominique-Legault, [pascal.dominique-legault.1@ulaval.ca](mailto:pascal.dominique-legault.1@ulaval.ca)
- Université Laval; Département de Sociologie; Dr. André C. Drainville
- Expected date of completion: Winter 2017

**Dunford, Tyler**

- Public Perceptions of Terrorism and Bill C-51: A Comprehensive Analysis of Canadian Anti-Terrorism Initiatives
- Tyler Dunford, [tdunford@ualberta.ca](mailto:tdunford@ualberta.ca)
- University of Alberta; Department of Sociology; Dr. Kevin Haggerty
- Expected date of completion: September 2019

**Ford, Katie**

- Countering Violent Extremism on University Campuses: A Critical Analysis and Canadian Case Study
- Katie Ford, katie.ford@uwaterloo.ca
- University of Waterloo; Department of Sociology; Dr. Lorne Dawson
- Expected date of completion: Late 2017

**Hai, Nadia**

- Join ISIS, Save the World: Understanding Online Recruiting Practices of Religious Insurgent Groups
- Nadia Hai, nadia.hai@carleton.ca
- Carleton University; School of Journalism and Communication; Dr. Karim Karim
- Expected date of completion: May 2018

**Landry, Joe**

- From Fragility to Stability: The Effect of Third Party Interventions on Transitioning Countries Out of the Fragility Trap
- Joe Landry; joseph.landry@carleton.ca
- Carleton University; Norman Paterson School of International Affairs; Dr. David Carment
- Expected date of completion: Summer 2017

**Laprise, Véronique**

- Police Intervention with Radical Religious Groups
- Véronique Laprise, veronique.laprise@usherbrooke.ca
- Université de Sherbrooke; Centre d'Études du Religieux Contemporain; Dr. David Koussens; co-supervised by Dr. Ali Dizboni, Department of Political Sciences, Royal Military College of Canada
- Expected date of completion: 2020

**Macnair, Logan**

- The Phenomenology of Radicalization
- Logan Macnair, lmacnair@sfu.ca
- Simon Fraser University; School of Criminology; Dr. Richard Frank
- Expected date of completion: April 2018

**Mangat, Rupinder K.**

- The World is Watching: Military Approaches to Public-Military Relations on Social Media and the Implications for Security Governance
- Rupinder K. Mangat, rmangat@balsillieschool.ca
- Wilfrid Laurier University; Balsillie School of International Affairs; Dr. Alistair D. Edgar
- Expected date of completion: April 2017

**Martin, Kenneth**

- Dagger of the Mind: Social Network Analysis of Relationships Between State and Non-State Actors in Conflict
- Kenneth Martin, martin.kenneth@gmail.com
- Concordia University; Department of Political Science; Dr. Julian Schofield
- Expected date of completion: August 2017

**Masse, Johanna**

- Extreme Beliefs and Violent Actions: The Processes of Radicalization Through Life Stories of Terrorist Women
- Johanna Masse, johanna.masse.1@ulaval.ca
- Université Laval; Département de Science Politique; Dr. Aurélie Campana
- Expected date of completion: November 2018

**Nash, Shannon**

- Al-Qaeda Sleepers and the Power of Perception on Policy, 1990s-2000s
- Shannon Nash, shannon.nash@utoronto.ca
- University of Toronto; Department of History; Dr. Wesley Wark
- Expected date of completion: Spring 2017

**Neal, Patrick**

- Protecting the Information Society: Exploring Corporate Decision Makers Attitudes
- Patrick Neal, patrick\_neal@bcit.ca
- Royal Roads University; Office of Interdisciplinary Studies; Dr. Bernard Schissel
- Expected date of completion: Spring 2017

**Nolan, Elanna**

- Countering Violent Extremism in Multicultural Cities: A Comparative Study of National Security at the Local Scale, in Melbourne and Vancouver
- Elanna Nolan, elanna.nolan@geog.ubc.ca
- University of British Columbia; Department of Geography; Dr. Daniel Hiebert
- Expected date of completion: December 2017

**Ouellet, Marie**

- From Emergence to Desistance: The Structural Evolution of Violent Extremist Networks
- Marie Ouellet, marieo@sfu.ca
- Simon Fraser University; School of Criminology; Dr. Martin Bouchard
- Expected date of completion: August 2016

**Pumphrey, John V.**

- Using Computational Intelligence to Inform Where and How the Canadian Armed Forces Might Be Employed to Prevent Conflict
- John V. Pumphrey, john.pumphrey@royalroads.ca
- Royal Roads University; Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences; Dr. Eileen Piggot-Irvine
- Expected date of completion: Late 2017/early 2018

**Rahman, Mohammad Azizur**

- Refugee Youth Experiences and Integration Trajectories in Canada
- Mohammad Azizur Rahman, rahman17@myumanitoba.ca
- University of Manitoba; Arthur. V. Mauro Center for Peace and Justice; Dr. Sean Byrne
- Expected date of completion: 2019

**Rebbani-Gosselin, Meriem**

- Making Counter Radicalization: A Case Study of Montreal's Center for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence
- Meriem Rebbani-Gosselin, meriem.rebbani@umontreal.ca
- Université de Montréal; École de Criminologie; Dr. Karine Côté-Boucher
- Expected date of completion: Summer 2019

**Scrivens, Ryan**

- Searching for Signs of Extremism on White Supremacy Websites: A Machine Learning Approach
- Ryan Scrivens, rscriven@sfu.ca
- Simon Fraser University; School of Criminology; Dr. Richard Frank
- Expected date of completion: August 2017

**Shkolnik, Michael**

- Nascent Insurrections: Understanding the Evolution of Militant Groups into Full-Blown Insurgent Organizations
- Michael Shkolnik, michael.shkolnik@carleton.ca
- Carleton University; Norman Paterson School of International Affairs/Faculty of Public Affairs; Dr. Jeremy Littlewood
- Expected date of completion: June 2018

**Simon, Clémentine**

- Romantic Violence: Entre Haine et Affirmation Identitaire. Analyse des Trajectoires Violentes de Skinheads en Amérique du Nord
- Clémentine Simon, clementine.simon@umontreal.ca
- Université de Montréal; École de Criminologie; Dr. Massimiliano Mulone
- Expected date of completion: 2017

**Speed, Shannon T.**

- Apparatus of Exception: Security Certificates and Scale
- Shannon T. Speed, sspeed@uwaterloo.ca
- University of Waterloo; Department of Sociology and Legal Studies; Dr. Daniel O'Connor
- Expected date of completion: June 2017

**Tishler, Nicole**

- Why Hoax? Examining Terrorist Groups' Resort to Hoaxing as a Mode of Attack
- Nicole Tishler, nicole.tishler@carleton.ca
- Carleton University; Norman Paterson School of International Affairs; Dr. Jeremy Littlewood
- Expected date of completion: Summer 2017



**West, Jessica**

- Resilience Reconsidered: The Epidemiological Roots of Public Order
- Jessica West, jwest@balsillieschool.ca
- Wilfrid Laurier University; Balsillie School of International Affairs; Dr. David Welch and Dr. Simon Dalby (co-supervision)
- Expected date of completion: April 2017

**Wu, Edith**

- A Social Network Analysis of Terrorism in the Middle East: From Al-Qaeda to the Islamic State
- Edith Wu, esw1@sfu.ca
- Simon Fraser University; School of Criminology; Dr. Garth Davies
- Expected date of completion: June 2020

***Recently Completed Ph.D. Theses:*****Amarasingam, Amarnath**

- Pain, Pride, and Politics: Social Movement Activism and the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Canada
- Amarnath Amarasingam, amarnath0330@gmail.com
- Wilfrid Laurier University/University of Waterloo; Religious Studies; Dr. Lorne Dawson
- Completed: February 2013

**Amirault, Joanna**

- Criminalizing Terrorism: The Impact of Context and Cohort Effects on the Sentencing Outcomes of Terrorist Offenders
- Joanna Amirault, joanna.amirault@humber.ca
- Simon Fraser University; School of Criminology; Dr. Martin Bouchard
- Completed: August 2014

**Bakali, Naved**

- Islamophobia in Quebec Secondary Schools: Inquiries into the Lived Experiences of Muslim Youth Post-9/11
- Naved Bakali, naved.bakali@mail.mcgill.ca
- McGill University; Department of Integrated Studies in Education; Dr. Aziz Choudry

- Completed: June 2016

**Ducol, Benjamin**

- Devenir Jihadiste à l'Ère Numérique, Une Approche Processuelle et Situationnelle de l'Engagement Jihadiste au Regard du Web
- Benjamin Ducol, benjamin.ducol@icloud.com
- Université Laval; Département de Science Politique; Dr. Aurélie Campana
- Completed: 2015

**Hofmann, David**

- Warriors and Prophets: The Role of Charismatic Authority in the Radicalization Towards Violence and Strategic Operation of Terrorist Groups
- David Hofmann, dhofmann@unb.ca
- University of Waterloo; Department of Sociology; Dr. Lorne Dawson
- Completed: August 2015

**Horncastle, James**

- The Pawn that would be King: Macedonian Slavs in the Greek Civil War, 1946-1949
- James Horncastle, jhorncas@sfu.ca
- Simon Fraser University; Centre for Hellenic Studies/Department of History; Dr. Andre Gerolymatos
- Completed: Fall 2016

**Jardine, Eric**

- The Insurgent's Dilemma: A Theory of Mobilization and Conflict Outcome
- Eric Jardine, ejardine@cigionline.org
- Carleton University; Norman Paterson School of International Affairs; Dr. Jeremy Littlewood
- Completed: May 2014

**Kang, Charanjit S.**

- The Rise and Decline of Sikh Anti-State Terrorism in India: An Economic Based Explanation
- Charanjit Singh Kang
- Simon Fraser University; School of Criminology; Dr. Garth Davies
- Completed: July 2013

**Kowalski, Jeremy**

- In and Out of Place: Islamistic Domestic Extremism and the Case of the “Toronto 18”
- Jeremy Kowalski, jkowalski@wlu.ca
- York University; Department of Geography; Dr. William Jenkins
- Completed: October 2014

## VI. Notes from the Editor

### Conference Announcement

### Terrorism and Social Media: An International Conference

*Swansea University, June 27-28, 2017*

The Terrorism and Social Media conference will bring together a range of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, from a number of different countries and disciplinary backgrounds. Keynote speakers will include Sir John Scarlett, Prof. Philip Bobbitt, Prof. Maura Conway, and Prof. Bruce Hoffman. Attendees will also have the opportunity to choose from a total of 16 breakout sessions featuring 48 other speakers. The conference will be hosted at Swansea University's new £450m Bay Campus on 27-28 June 2017. More information about the conference can be found on the following website:

<http://terrorismandsocialmedia.com/>

#### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

We are pleased to invite submissions for papers to be presented at the Terrorism and Social Media conference. Submissions on all aspects of terrorism and social media (widely construed) will be considered, including ones focusing on methodological issues.

The first day of the conference will focus on terrorists' use of social media. The following are illustrative examples of the topics that will be considered:

- What can we learn about terrorist groups and lone actors from their use of social media?
- Is it possible to track the release and dissemination of terroristic content on social media – and, if so, what do these insights tell us?
- To what extent do terrorist groups engage in hashtag hijacking to propagate their messages?
- Has Twitter had its day? What other social network platforms are being used by terrorist groups online?
- How social is social media? Can individuals be radicalized online?
- How do terrorist groups regulate conversation and communication within their social network platforms?
- What is the effect of a terrorist attack on online social media posts by terrorist and extremist actors?

We are particularly keen to receive proposals that consider these issues from an empirical basis.

The second day of the conference will focus on our responses to terrorists' use of social media. The following are illustrative examples of the topics that will be considered:

- How effective are global and local strategies, and how should these two types of strategy interact?
- How effective are hard and soft forms of response – and how should effectiveness be measured?
- Should social media companies regulate terrorist content – and, if so, are they doing enough?

- Do state responses show sufficient regard for the privacy of citizens and other basic principles?
- Has the suspension of terrorist social media accounts pushed them onto other platforms?
- Should we look past anonymity on social media and identify extremist actors online – and, if so, how?
- Can data from social media be used to identify individuals who are at risk of radicalization and to predict future terrorist activity?

Whilst submissions on all forms of violent extremism and social media will be welcomed, we are particularly keen to receive submissions on violent extremisms other than jihadism and on non-mainstream social media.

**To submit your proposal, please send: (1) the title of your presentation; (2) an abstract of up to 250 words; and, (3) a brief (one paragraph) biography to [TASMConf@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:TASMConf@swansea.ac.uk) no later than Friday 30th September 2016.**



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## New Positions Available at *Perspectives on Terrorism*

### ***Associate Editor***

*Perspectives on Terrorism* is seeking Associate Editors to join our editorial team and gain managerial experience taking the lead on one issue of the journal per year. Under the mentorship of the Editor-in-Chief and the Co-Editor, the Associate Editor will be responsible for assigning and managing peer reviewers, editing/proofreading all the issue components (including book reviews, resource columns, etc.), working with the IT Associate Editor through the final production process, and so forth. Associate Editors will also be asked to help expand our roster of peer reviewers, through their professional networks, and to help publicize the journal through their social media activities.

**Requirements:** A Ph.D. and a publication record in the field of terrorism studies is required. Successful candidates will also have a record of relevant conference presentations, and experience peer reviewing manuscripts for a scholarly journal.

To apply for this position, please email your resume to [ctss@uml.edu](mailto:ctss@uml.edu) before September 30, 2016.

### ***IT Associate Editor***

*Perspectives on Terrorism* is seeking one or more individuals to serve as IT Associate Editor. Working with the journal's editors (in Austria and the U.S.), this position involves converting final proof articles from MS Word into Adobe InDesign (using the journal's templates), sewing together all the pieces and creating the table of contents for the issue, and troubleshooting any technical challenges during the final production process. Then the issue is provided to our readers in both PDF and HTML formats.

**Requirements:** Proficiency with Adobe InDesign (and other Creative Cloud applications, including Adobe Acrobat PDF software), and HTML/CSS website design. Familiarity with MySQL database and open source journal software platform (2.3) is also highly desirable.

To apply for this position, please email your resume to [ctss@uml.edu](mailto:ctss@uml.edu) before September 30, 2016.

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## Crowdfunding Initiative on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of Perspectives on Terrorism

Dear Reader,

*Perspectives on Terrorism*, by some accounts the most widely-read peer-reviewed journal in the field of terrorism research, is celebrating its 10-year anniversary.

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), the non-profit organization behind *Perspectives on Terrorism*, has continually sought to provide the research community with free and non-partisan information on developments in terrorism and counter-terrorism from around the world.

For the past ten years, the journal's editorial team, led by Alex P. Schmid, James J. Forest and Robert Wesley—the three directors of TRI – have not only volunteered their time, but have also fully financed the publishing of *Perspectives on Terrorism* out of their own pockets.

Now, as we prepare to ensure the next 10 years of service to the terrorism research community, we are, with this letter, appealing to those who value open access scholarship to help alleviate at least some of the financial burden associated with the publication of *Perspectives on Terrorism*.

To this end, we are inviting our readers and supporters to contribute to our new crowdfunding campaign in order to help keep *Perspectives on Terrorism* free of charge, openly accessible for its tens of thousands of regular and occasional readers.

Any and all contributions are welcome, and can be made online via the website link provided below. We run *Perspectives on Terrorism* on a shoestring budget – so a little money goes a long way!

TRI is a US non-profit (501c3) organization, so donations may be tax deductible.

We hope you will recognize our efforts to produce an independent journal on behalf of the international research community, and we thank you in advance for your contribution!

Sincerely,

Alex P. Schmid  
James J. Forest  
Robert Wesley

To make a donation in support of the open-access scholarly journal, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, click on the following link:

<https://www.gofundme.com/perspectivestri>

## About *Perspectives on Terrorism*

*Perspectives on Terrorism* (PT) is a joint publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), headquartered in Vienna, Austria, and the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies (CTSS), headquartered at the Lowell Campus of the University of Massachusetts, United States of America.

PT is published six times per year as a free peer-reviewed online journal available at [www.terrorismanalysts.com](http://www.terrorismanalysts.com). It seeks to provide a platform for established scholars as well as academics and professionals entering the interdisciplinary fields of Terrorism, Political Violence and Conflict Studies. The editors invite readers to:

- present their perspectives on the prevention of, and response to, terrorism and related forms of violent conflict;
- submit to the journal accounts of evidence-based, empirical scientific research and analyses;
- use the journal as a forum for debate and commentary on issues related to the above.

*Perspectives on Terrorism* has sometimes been characterised as ‘nontraditional’ in that it dispenses with some of the traditional rigidities associated with commercial print journals. Topical articles can be published at short notice and reach, through the Internet, a much larger audience than subscription-fee based paper journals. Our free on-line journal also offers contributors a higher degree of flexibility in terms of content, style and length of articles – but without compromising professional scholarly standards.

The journal’s articles are peer-reviewed by members of the Editorial Board as well as outside experts. While aiming to be policy-relevant, PT does not support any partisan policies regarding (counter-) terrorism and conflict-waging. Impartiality, objectivity and accuracy are guiding principles that we require contributors to adhere to.

### *Editorial Team of Perspectives on Terrorism*

**Alex P. Schmid**, Editor-in-Chief

**James J.F. Forest**, Co-Editor

**Joseph J. Easson**, Associate Editor

**Joshua Sinai**, Books Reviews Editor

**Judith Tinnes**, Information Resources Editor

**Jared Dmello**, Editorial Assistant

**Jodi Pomeroy**, Editorial Assistant

**Eric Price**, Editorial Assistant