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## Welcome from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume XI, Issue 3 (June 2017) of *Perspectives on Terrorism* at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com>. Our free and independent online journal is a publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) of Leiden University's Campus The Hague. Now in its eleventh year, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has over 7,200 regular subscribers and many more occasional readers and website visitors worldwide. The Articles of its six annual issues are fully peer reviewed by external referees while its Research and Policy Notes, Special Correspondence and other content are subject to internal editorial quality control.

Here is a brief look at the contents of the current issue:

The first article by Craig Whiteside examines the impact that former Ba'athists made on who joined the Islamic State, how the organizational structure evolved, and its strategy. Then Abdul Basit describes how the evolving Islamic State's presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan has impacted local conflicts and jihadist radicalization.

Next, Miron Lakomy explores an apparent degradation in the quality of Islamic State's online propaganda efforts. And in our final research article of this issue, Tahir Abbas examines the how far right and Islamist extremism can be seen as reciprocal and correlative threats.

This issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* (PoT) features a Research Note by Gavin Lyall, who draws from background data on British jihadists traveling to fight in Syria to explore two theories of radicalization. Then a Policy Note by Joe Becker highlights the valuable role that U.S. military veterans could play in domestic efforts to counter violent extremism.

In the Resources section the reader will find a review by Bart Schuurman, one of our Associate Editors, of Daniel Koehler's book on deradicalization, followed by a series of short book reviews by Joshua Sinai. The journal's Information Resources Editor, Judith Tinnes, provides a third installment of her extensive bibliography series on Islamic State. And the issue concludes with a detailed list of recent online, open-source publications on terrorism and counterterrorism, compiled by web analyst Berto Jongman.

The current issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* was jointly prepared by Prof. James J.F. Forest and Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid, the main editors of the journal.

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## Articles

### **A Pedigree of Terror: The Myth of the Ba'athist Influence in the Islamic State Movement**

by Craig Whiteside

#### **Abstract**

*The presence of former members of Saddam Hussein's regime in the Islamic State is well documented in hundreds of news reports and recently published books, and has become a staple in almost every serious analysis of the group. Attempts to measure the actual impact of this influence on the evolution of the group have left us with a wide diversity of views about the group; some believe it is a religiously inspired group of apocalyptic zealots, while others see it as a pragmatic power aggregator whose leaders learned to govern as the henchmen of Iraq's former dictator. This article examines the impact that former Ba'athists made on who joined the Islamic State, how the organizational structure evolved, and the origins of its unique beliefs that inform strategy. The author relied on captured documents from multiple sources and Islamic State movement press releases collected since 2003 for this examination. The findings reveal that despite the prominence of some highly-visible former regime members in key positions after 2010, the organization was overwhelmingly influenced and shaped by veterans from the greater Salafi-jihadi movement who monopolized political, economic, religious, and media positions in the group and who decided on membership eligibility, structural growth, and strategic direction. This analysis should hopefully correct some inaccuracies about the origins and evolution of the group.*

**Key words:** Ba'ath, Islamic State, ISIS, ISIL, Iraq, Salafi-jihadism

#### **Introduction**

The Islamic State claims in its propaganda to be a Salafi-jihadi group, a categorization that few serious terrorism analysts dispute, and therefore belongs to a community with a long heritage and very distinct membership amongst its different global strands, as documented by the likes of Kepel, Wiktorowicz, Hegghammer, and Hafez.[1] During its inexorable rise to prominence, a handful of existing Salafi groups around the world pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, demonstrating that a plurality of jihadists took the legitimacy of the group seriously. Yet, jihadi rivals of the group frequently impugn this alleged credibility by pointing to the documented presence of former regime elements (FRE) from Saddam Hussein's reign in the highest ranks of the Islamic State leadership. How should we understand this inherent contradiction, and what does it tell us about the group that has generated so much concern among nations around the world?

While competitors use the presence of the FRE in the Islamic State to delegitimize the group, analysts often use the same facts to explain a variety of aspects and events in Islamic State history. Critics of Wood's depiction of the Islamic State as a religiously inspired group often use the Ba'ath angle to argue that the group leadership is more interested in a return to power than the Salafi-jihadi ideology.[2] Others point toward the Islamic State's fielding of effective conventional maneuver forces in 2013 as an example of the impact of Saddam's former military officers, and the same goes for the highly developed Islamic State governance structures in 2014. Certainly, these analysts argue, the Islamic State's security apparatus and emphasis on counterintelligence is an obvious product of an authoritarian regime that perpetrated extreme violence and genocide. These explanations are intuitive, based on real events involving real people, and convincing. And yet, the contradiction remains. How do the ideologues mix with their former persecutors in the Ba'ath, and how did they create such a high performing organization?

The purpose of this article is to answer this question in a more systematic way than previous explorations, and to make a serious effort to go beyond correlations and the use of the FRE as a heuristic for people to understand how the Islamic State rose to power. This article has three parts; the first looks at the people that made up the Islamic State, particularly the FRE, and examines their backgrounds and contributions to the movement since 2003. In the second, it traces the organizational influences on the evolution of the large bureaucracy that at one point was the world's largest and wealthiest non-state armed group.[3] Finally, in the third, it traces the FRE influence on the unique ideas pioneered and advocated by the Islamic State, concepts that have demonstrated remarkable longevity. The evidence—gleaned from Islamic State primary documents that were captured on the battlefield, as well as a database of Islamic State press releases—demonstrates that despite the presence of FRE in high levels of the organization after 2010, their influence has been fairly limited to specific areas. In contrast, long-standing members of the Salafi-jihadi movement from the region created this movement, nurtured it during its nadir, developed its unique and groundbreaking departments, and eventually midwived the return of a modern caliphate.

If this is true, if the conventional wisdom that the former Ba'athists were the driving force behind the creation of the Islamic State is incorrect, then how and why does this matter? The importance of knowing your enemy is more than a pithy phrase; policymakers and advisors that make war on the Islamic State must understand the totality of its character in order to defeat it and achieve some lasting peace. Analysts who exaggerate the Ba'ath angle have contributed to a lack of understanding of the problem, with some consequence. One well-known Harvard scholar cited “the unlikely marriage of an extremist strand of Islam and some prominent former Ba'athist officials who knew how to run a police state” in his justification for a strategy of containment and the socialization of the proto-state into the international community.[4] Fortunately, none of the main protagonists in the campaign to defeat the Islamic State chose to follow his advice, but the situation highlights why politicians must have access to an accurate depiction of threats to national security and global order. Furthermore, with this understanding, these same leaders can inform the public about the realistic duration of a struggle that will continue, at great length, into the unforeseeable future.

### ***Background: ISIS as the Spawn of Saddam***

It would be easier to find articles and books that *do not* mention the outsized influence of the FRE in the Islamic State, but for the sake of brevity I present three of the most influential works that contribute to this idea.[5] *Der Spiegel* reporter Christoph Reuter wrote an article titled “The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State” that is easily on pace to be the most cited article on this subject.[6] In the piece, Reuter advanced an interpretation of the Islamic State based on his examination of one man's personal documents that were captured in Syria in 2013. That same month (April 2015), veteran journalist Liz Sly wrote an article in *The Washington Post* that the editors titled: “The hidden hand behind the Islamic State militants? Saddam Hussein's,” which traced the shadowy influence of mysterious Islamic State figures in Syria who were described as former Ba'athists.[7] Finally, in a *Wall Street Journal* top ten book on terrorism, Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan place a heavy emphasis on the role that Saddam's intelligence men played in the resurgence of the group formerly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq. To summarize the collective and popular wisdom derived from these works, I quote Reuter:

*IS has little in common with predecessors like al-Qaida aside from its jihadist label. There is essentially nothing religious in its actions, its strategic planning, its unscrupulous changing of alliances and its precisely implemented propaganda narratives. Faith, even in its most extreme form, is just one of many means to an end. Islamic State's only constant maxim is the expansion of power at any price.[8]*

This conclusion, made by unbiased professionals and based on interviews with defectors and evidence collected on the battlefield, is completely understandable based on the glimpses of information we have on this clandestine and operational security savvy group.



In examining the veracity of this conventional wisdom, the best place to start is with the people that made up the Islamic State movement. As one observer remarked about the importance of people in his military organization, “Soldiers are not in the army. Soldiers *are* the army.”[9] In examining the Islamic State movement and the extent that FRE were in its ranks, I tried to answer the following questions: how did former Ba’athists rise to prominence in an organization founded by veteran jihadists, including some who had suffered at the hands of the previous regime? What was the role of the FRE in the Islamic State movement prior to 2010? And finally, what influence did the much-touted Faith Campaign have on Iraqis in the decade of the 1990s, which allegedly “primed” some members of the former regime to adopt the harsh politico-religious ideology of Salafi-jihadism?

### ***True Believers, Converts, and More***

*“Heed our warning carefully. Gone are the days of nationalism, patriotism, and Ba’athism.”*

*– Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, emir of the Islamic State of Iraq, 2010 [10]*

In late 2001, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi led a small group of militants from the Levant region into the autonomous regions of Kurdistan in northeastern Iraq, men who formed the nucleus of the future Islamic State. The group’s leadership developed its own adaptation of the Salafi trend, with a focus on establishing a religious government in the near term that would facilitate the practice of what they termed the “prophetic methodology”—the best societal practices as derived from the accounts of the companions of the Prophet in the earliest days of Islam.[11] Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the collapse of the authoritarian government under Saddam Hussein gave the early Islamic State founders room to operate and recruit within an expanded range. The Coalition Provisional Authority’s decision to disband the Iraqi Army broadened this recruiting pool even more by adding military veterans by the hundreds of thousands, including officers with membership in the ruling Ba’ath party. While seemingly thrust into an ideal situation, Zarqawi’s men nonetheless had to walk a careful tightrope; as ideologues who themselves had resisted five different requests to join Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, they were not prepared to admit ideologically suspect candidates into their future state project.[12]

For the purposes of this article, former regime elements (FRE) are defined as people who were Ba’ath party members, such as officers in the Republican Guard and security organizations, or political operatives and workers within government departments. This definition excludes the rank and file military conscripts in the national army as well as low-ranking policemen, none of whom were required to be members of the Ba’ath Party.[13] The leaders who sought out former Ba’athists were trying to attract the best and brightest from the Iraqi Sunni elite into the Salafi-jihadi group, in a very competitive environment made up of many rival Islamist and nationalist groups. Zarqawi’s early thoughts on the Ba’ath were made clear in his famous letter to Zawahiri, where he blamed the lack of enthusiasm of Iraqi Sunnis for jihad on Saddam himself. His impressions of the men who made up his recruiting base were of a race that had “lost their leader and wandered in the desert of artlessness and negligence divided and fragmented, having lost the unifying head... they are the result of a repressive regime that militarized the country, spread dismay, propagated fear and dread, and destroyed confidence among the people.”[14] While Zarqawi earned a well-deserved reputation as an uneducated thug, his critique of the aftermath of Saddam’s reign rings true.

Despite these challenges, Zarqawi’s recruiters moved in many different circles to build the organization from a small cadre of experienced fighters to become the dominant insurgent organization in Iraq by 2006,[15] according to one American intelligence estimate.[16] One of the group’s early priorities was to recruit people with military experience.[17] Abu Abdulrahman al-Bilawi was a former infantry officer who joined Zarqawi’s Tawhid wal Jihad in 2003 and was the only former regime member to make it into the leader’s inner circle, which primarily consisted of non-Iraqi jihadists.[18] Captured in 2005, Bilawi spent eight years in jail before escaping in the large Abu Ghraib prison break in July 2013.[19] His return to the movement, immediate

appointment as a military emir for all operations in Iraq, and subsequent campaign to collapse the Iraqi security forces in several Northern and Western provinces in 2014 illustrates not only the wisdom of the early recruiting effort to secure military experience, but also the continuity of the movement and the current leadership's respect for the "early adopters." [20]

Samir Abd Muhammad al-Khelifawi, more famously known as Haji Bakr, was a former officer in the Iraqi Army who joined the Islamic Army after 2003 and was captured in 2006. Due to his extensive profile in the Reuter article, Haji Bakr is often used by analysts as the archetype of the FRE in the group. A senior Iraqi Interior Ministry figure with access to his prison files indicated that a close associate of Abu Muhammad al-Lubnani—one of Zarqawi's closest deputies—recruited him in Camp Bucca sometime between 2006 and 2008. [21] Haji Bakr was then assigned as a security official in the Islamic State's assassination squads, and he was elevated to the position of head of the military council in 2010 during the bloodletting that saw most of the top leadership killed or captured due to a security leak by the emir of Baghdad, Manaf al-Rawi. [22] According to the Iraqi Minister, Haji Bakr was also responsible for the development of heavy weaponry for the Islamic State. [23]

According to Reuter's article featuring Haji Bakr, the former intelligence officer used his experience as part of a "tiny secret-service unit" attached to the anti-aircraft division to build the campaign plan for the subversion of Syrian rebel groups in 2012-13, and his personal papers revealed a series of sophisticated organizational charts and subversion plans. Based on these papers, Reuter described him in the article as "the architect of the Islamic State." [24] However, this is a very premature conclusion. First, it is possible that Haji Bakr's background as a military intelligence officer did not correlate at all to counter-intelligence activities (they are distinct fields), and the same Iraqi official made no mention of any special *mukharabat* background when describing him as a former "Staff Colonel." [25] Second, there is no proof that these subversion tactics and plans were not standard doctrine for the group before the Iraqi insurgents moved into Syria—men who, after all, had been fighting for much of the past decade against a very capable military.

One of the most thorough (and balanced) examinations of the FRE in the Islamic State to date is Truls Tønnessen's examination of jihadi biographies in *Perspectives on Terrorism*, which concluded that while al-Qaeda-trained veterans founded the Islamic State movement in Iraq, a coterie of former Iraqi officers served as successive heads of its military council since 2010, including Haji Bakr and al-Bilawi (mentioned above), Abu Ayman al-Iraqi (a.k.a. Abu Mohannad al-Sweidawi), and Abu Muslim al-Turkmani (a.k.a. Haji Mutazz). [26] Analysts have used these series of appointments, which occurred during the campaign to secure a more permanent state structure for the movement, as an indication of the importance of the FRE to the Islamic State. However, there is a tendency among these writers to exaggerate and assume a much wider infiltration of the movement by FRE. This is compounded by actors like the Iraqi government—which fears a mythical Ba'athist resurgence—and jihadi rivals that actively promote misinformation campaigns that together have contaminated much of the writings on this topic. [27] Even Tønnessen's analysis included some of these rumors (with qualifications), misidentifying Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, Abu Maysara al-Iraqi, and Abu Ali al-Anbari as former regime members. [28] These errors did not influence his overall conclusion, however; Tønnessen recognized that despite the presence of Haji Bakr et al., "it is still difficult to argue that [the Islamic State] is the 'Ba'ath party resurgent.'" [29]

Ironically, despite the sensitivities of having FRE in the ranks, the leadership made no attempt to hide this recruiting priority. Zarqawi, his successor Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and Baghdadi's military deputy Abu Hamza al-Muhajir made public statements on the need to recruit members of the former regime for their military experience. [30] In fact, the Islamic State's attitude toward recruiting former Ba'athists differs greatly from its harsh treatment of fellow Islamists—particularly the Iraqi Islamic Party (Muslim Brotherhood), whose members were treated as dangerous rivals and targeted for assassination. [31] In a 2008 speech to the Iraqi people, Abu Omar eulogized the field commander of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abul-Basha'ir al-

Juburi (a former colonel in Saddam's army), and called him one of the state's top martyrs.[32] He invited other former regime members to repent, repudiate the Ba'ath, memorize part of the Koran, and then join the Islamic State.[33] In an *al Furqan* media interview during this period, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir also referred to al-Juburi when he deflected complaints against the Islamic State's practice of killing rival Sunnis, bragging that more former regime officers had joined the Islamic State movement than any other in Iraq.[34] This was undoubtedly a lie; there were numerous other popular resistance groups that had an overwhelming presence of Ba'athists that far outnumbered the Islamic State at the time, such as the 1920s Revolution Brigade, the Islamic Army of Iraq, and Jaysh al-Mujahideen.[35] Nonetheless, as these two public interactions confirm, both leaders made repeated and open efforts to recruit religiously vetted FRE in the years after Zarqawi's death.

One mistake that analysts often make regarding the Ba'ath influence, is assuming that Sunnis were monolithically supportive of the regime or that service in the large governmental and security structures equated to a genuine allegiance to the dictator.[36] One such individual who struggled with this reality was Abu Omar al-Baghdadi (Hamid Dawud Mohamed Khalil al-Zawi), a former local policeman in Haditha dismissed from the force during the late 1980s/early 1990s for his outspoken Salafi attitude. His Islamic State biographer excused his service as a policeman in the services of an apostate government, acknowledging that at the time, the Salafi trend did not consider this to be a disqualifying action. As proof of Abu Omar's bona fides, the author related a story about the future emir. When coalition forces detained Abu Omar for suspicion of being a Zarqawi supporter in 2004 (he was), his American captors questioned him about a document on his computer denouncing Saddam Hussein, including a detailed listing of Saddam's one hundred- plus acts of apostasy. According to his biographer, Abu Omar reminded his captors that they had the same opinion of Saddam as he did, and he was later released.[37] He went on to become the first emir of the newly established Islamic State of Iraq in 2006.

The virtual promotion of Abu Omar as a former police or army general at least had some kernel of truth—his past as a local policeman—compared to the case of Abu Ali al-Anbari. Abudulrahman Mustafa al-Qaduli (also known as Anbari, Haji Iman, Abu Ala'a al-Afri) was the former Islamic State head of Sharia and religious policing (*hisba*) in Syria, and later the manager of state finances before his death in 2016 at the hands of U.S. special operations forces.[38] Analysts, reporters, and policymakers repeatedly called him the “ex-Ba'athist general,” using his Ba'athist past as the epitome of the former regime's infiltration of the Islamic State.[39] In their influential and authoritative book on the movement, Weiss and Hassan described the *amni* (security unit) as “developed by former Iraqi Mukhabarat officers in its ranks. The entire spy sector of ISIS is headed by Abu Ali al-Anbari, the former operative in Saddam's regime.”[40] This mistaken attribution of Anbari as a former Saddamist general spawned literally hundreds of citations that were repeated in top journals, newspaper articles, books and blogs.[41] The fact that the origins of the story came from defectors from the Islamic State and rivals should have given these analysts pause. To their credit, Weiss and Hassan are the only writers to correct the record about Anbari in their article titled: “Everything That We Know about this ISIS Mastermind was Wrong.”[42]

Following Anbari's death, we finally learned the truth: he was a career Salafist who had been a member of Ansar al-Islam in 2003 before joining al-Qaeda in Iraq, and was esteemed enough to be elected the head of the Mujahideen Shura Council in 2006—the political front that preceded the establishment of the Islamic State.[43] Detained by British special forces that April, he was able to shield his identity as a top political leader and was later released by the Iraqi government in an early 2012 amnesty.[44] He immediately returned to the Islamic State organization and participated in its phoenix-like rise, playing a large role in its expansion from Iraq into Syria in 2013 by recruiting many independent jihadist groups. He also advised Abu Bakr on relations with their errant affiliate—Nusra Front.[45]



The irony of this confused identity is heavy; despite the capture of detailed Ba'athist records in 2003, no one was ever able or willing to verify that the alleged head of the Islamic State's intelligence unit was not an ex-Ba'athist general trained by the KGB, but instead a veteran Salafi-jihadi (from the 1980s) whose experience was largely in supervising regional sharia functions for then al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and more recently the Islamic State.[46] Anbari's post-prison religious lecture tapes are considered to be the definitive promulgation of the Islamic State's religious doctrine.[47] Furthermore, it is conceivable—based on the Islamic State's detailed eulogy of Anbari in its *al Naba* newspaper—that he had no intelligence responsibilities and that these descriptions were tied to the mistaken assumption that he was a former Ba'ath general.

If the confusion over Anbari stems from rumors that became legend, two other accounts that push the Ba'ath hijacking of a weakened Islamic State movement around 2010 are obvious rival information operations campaigns that should be relied on with extreme caution. “Abu Ahmad” claimed to be reporting the experience of a Zarqawi-era defector in one celebrated report, and “wikibaghdady” in a similar account reported intimate details about the group's efforts in Syria to coopt various armed groups fighting the Assad regime. Both authors claim that the members of the cabal surrounding Abu Bakr - especially Haji Bakr - were agents of a Ba'ath resurgence in Iraq, and close associates of the Bashar Assad's regime in Syria. While both accounts have verifiable details, they are also riddled with errors. For example, “Abu Ahmad” was wrong about Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's imprisonment in Bucca, putting it two years after it happened; he claims that the leader of the MSC, Abu Abdallah al-Baghdadi, was really Abu Omar (instead of Abu Ali al-Anbari); and he makes sure to gratuitously dispute Abu Bakr's Qureshi lineage.[48] Both authors' proposal that Abu Bakr came out of nowhere to lead the group (with the assistance of the Ba'athists), instead of being carefully groomed for years by the existing leadership, is contradicted by many accounts.[49] These issues and their general conspiratorial nature should give us pause about the true background and intentions of these authors.[50]

The misinformation campaign about the Ba'ath influence in the Islamic State, deliberate or not, does not restrict itself to verified veterans of the Islamic State movement. The Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri saga has been the most egregious example of misinformation, with numerous reputable news sources reporting that Douri's Naqshbandi group (known by its Arabic acronym JRTN)—the official neo-Ba'athist movement in Iraq—had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in 2014.[51] The official press offices of the Islamic State and JRTN both denied these reports, which had been breathlessly reported as evidence of the convergence of the two movements. Subsequent JRTN critiques of Islamic State governance, massacres of the Shia cadets at Camp Speicher, and the periodic roundup and execution of senior former regime officers in Mosul have demonstrated that JRTN and the Islamic State do not see eye-to-eye.[52] Despite numerous predictions that JRTN would be the next Sunni insurgency following the withdrawal of U.S. forces,[53] when the Salafis in the Islamic State returned in 2014 from defeat they met the Sufis of JRTN—led by a true Ba'athist general—who then wisely and rapidly disappeared from public view.[54]

The Islamic State's release of biographies and eulogies in the past several years has made it clear that the recent leadership of the Islamic State, particularly politico-religious leaders like Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Abu Ali al-Anbari, and Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, have come from the pre-2003 underground Salafi movements of Iraq and Syria. Their collective embrace of a select cross-section of former regime officials is a strong argument for considering the impact of the religiously infused ideology of Salafism as the magnetic element that brought this “unlikely” group together, to echo a quote cited above.[55]

To explain this religious trend among the FRE, some analysts have put forth the theory that Saddam's Faith Campaign had primed Iraqi society and set the stage for the rising popularity of Islamist movements. In this explanation, it is unclear as to whether Saddam was deliberately manipulating the growing religiosity of the population or if he was truly undergoing a similar conversion to more conservative religious views. In a *New York Times* piece, Kyle Orton described how the influence of Saddam's regime was the cause of a growing

Salafi movement, which by this time supposedly netted Saddam's intelligence agents who, while spying on the underground movement, were themselves converted.[56] No researcher has rigorously tested aspects of this theory, but nonetheless it has been prominently offered as an intuitive explanation for why certain members of Saddam's regime went on to join and fight for the Islamic State.[57]

Brill and Helfont strongly dispute this explanation of an Iraqi society transformed by an Islamist leaning Saddam Hussein, and their examination of captured documents housed at the Hoover Institution's Ba'ath archives found no evidence of any Salafi transformation of Saddam's inner circle or the society at large. Citing Saddam's speeches attacking Islamists as the "two-faced men of religion," Brill and Helfont convincingly dispute any attempt to link Saddam to the Islamic State. Instead, they conclude that the destruction of the Iraqi state in 2003, the sectarian struggles of 2004-2007, and the "authoritarian aspirations" of the Shia-dominated Maliki regime were much more important factors in the rise of the Islamic State.[58]

To conclude this section, the Islamic State's leaders deliberately recruited capable (and religiously acceptable) individuals with military experience from 2003-2006 when they had a shortfall in this particular skill. These people were Salafi first, former military officers second, and then former Ba'athists in identity salience. As the organization matured and its members gained combat experience, there was less of a need to recruit for this skill. In fact, the leaders of 2014 were established and credible members of the old guard—regardless of their original background.

### ***Structure as Destiny***

*You [the U.S.] were [sitting] safely in your country receiving the riches of Iraq, and you had imposed on us a rabid ruler who stole our money and killed our men and fought our religion, and we were ever so eager to fight you directly so that we can [take our revenge] from you, for we knew that you were the serpent's head and evil emanates from you. But the tradition of betrayal mandated that you would turn your backs to your agent [Saddam] and suddenly hate him, so you cut off his neck and you sent him to the Avenging and Overpowering King [Allah], and we got what we never expected or contemplated, to see your soldiers in front of us and on our soil in an act of injustice on your part, and in our yearning for your blood.*

– Abu Omar al Baghdadi (2008)[59]

This next section will assess the influence of the former Ba'ath regime members on the emergent hierarchy of the Islamic State movement. Existing as an amorphous network in its early years in Iraq (2002-2005), emir Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and the shura (consultative) council transformed the movement over several years into a multi-layered bureaucracy.[60] Despite the security risks of building a highly structured organization subject to enemy targeting, the leadership of the movement used the transition from Al-Qaeda in Iraq to the Islamic State of Iraq to build a national level structure that would perform three important tasks: control its members' use of violence, maximize the value of group resources, and expand territorial control into new areas.[61] The vehicle the leadership chose was the "M-Form" type of organizational structure, which has a centralized set of departments that are replicated at multiple localities.[62]

It was the veteran jihadists—most with experience gained in al-Qaeda's camps in Afghanistan before 2001—that put together the blueprint for the future Islamic State. Accordingly, there should be no surprise that the original frameworks of Tawhid wal Jihad, al-Qaeda in Iraq, the Mujahideen Shura Council, and the Islamic State of Iraq are all closely derived from that of Al-Qaeda Central, if not identical. According to captured documents available from the Harmony Collection at West Point, Al-Qaeda's organizational chart in 1999 included the following departments: military, political (sharia), information, security, surveillance, foreign purchase, and an administrative and financial committee (see first line of Figure 1 below, "Al-Qaeda Central.") [63]

In comparison, according to captured Islamic State of Iraq documents, the group's provincial governance in Anbar province had similar subunits by late 2006: military, legal (sharia), media, security, and administration (see Figure 1 below).[64] Missing a foreign purchase division, the leaders instead relied on elements of its administrative wing to conduct financing and run its lucrative extortion efforts that served to free the leadership from outside influences and fundraising activities—a key imperative learned from Abu Musab al-Suri's lessons from the original Syrian uprising.[65] Anbar province's organization mirrored a similar structure at the national level, with the exception of a shura committee.[66] Captured documents confirmed that lower level district organization in the towns of Tuzliyah and Julayba in Anbar were organized exactly like their provincial parent.[67] To show the extent of the sophistication of the organizational structure in this early period—in light of Reuter's surprise at the incredible detail of Haji Bakr's wire diagrams in 2013—the Anbar provincial administrative emir in 2006-7 supervised a unit responsible for economic studies, loots and sales, aid and storage, human resources, inventory and audit, movement and maintenance, finance and accounting, and programs improvement and training.[68]

The announcement of the first “cabinet” of the Islamic State in April 2007 demonstrated the beginnings of an evolution that built on the al-Qaeda Central-influenced structure, with the following ministers: a deputy to the emir/war minister (long-time Zarqawi deputy Abu Hamza al-Muhajir), public relations, public security, media, oil, Sharia, martyrs and prisoners, agriculture and fishing, and health.[69] A second slate in 2009 produced a new list of ministers of the same departments.[70] Aymenn al-Tamimi noted that many of the titles (professor, doctor, engineer) of the individuals named in both slates give the impression of technocratic expertise, while also maintaining an impressive inclusion of diverse and important Sunni tribes (Janabi, Mashadani, Dulaymi, Jubouri) with a minimum of foreigners.[71]

In 2009, in reaction to its routing by pro-government Sunni militias (*Sahwa*) and other counterinsurgent forces two years earlier, emir Abu Omar al-Baghdadi created a tribal engagement office that financed and managed local efforts to recruit and co-opt Sunni tribal figures back into the Islamic State fold. Along with this political outreach, security detachments (like the one Haji Bakr was assigned to run) assassinated key *Sahwa* figures that refused to renounce their affiliation with the government or were fingered by tribal rivals as impediments to the destruction of the local *Sahwa* organization.[72] The survival of the tribal engagement office in the current structure of the Islamic State is vindication of both the importance and the effectiveness of this structural innovation. While Saddam had also flirted with tribal engagement during times of regime stress with limited results, the creation of this department by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi—an original member of the Iraqi Salafi movement—played a large part in ensuring access to the Sunni population and securing a comeback in later years.[73]

The Islamic State's current structure (2016-2017) contains the same original departments of the early movement and many new ones, now that the organization governs territory and tends to the needs of a real population. According to a detailed media release about the current structure, the “delegated committee” advises caliph Ibrahim (Abu Bakr) and supervises 35 provinces (*wilayet*), nineteen of which are in Iraq/Syria. There are 14 departments: Judgment and Grievance, *Hisbah* (religious enforcement), Da'wah and Masajid (religious instruction), *Zakah* (charity), Soldierly (military), Public Security (internal), Treasury, Media, Education, Health, Agriculture, *Rikaz* (energy resources), *Fay* and *Ghana'im* (loot and booty), and Services (electricity, transportation, public utilities). These bodies are supported by the following committees and offices: *Hijrah* (immigrants), prisoners and martyrs' family welfare; research and studies, distant provinces, and public and tribal relations (see Figure 1 below).[74] Each province is led by a governor (*wali*), who supervises a comparable structure, albeit when properly resourced with personnel and funds. From modest beginnings in 2006, the Islamic State evolved from a copy of the al-Qaeda organization to its own unique and sophisticated structure based on its experiments in governance and interactions with the local population. With the possible exception of the internal subdivisions of the *amniyat* (security) department, none of this reflects the influence of the former Ba'ath regime.[75]

Figure 1: Structural Evolution of the Islamic State Infrastructure (2003-2016)[76]

Name	Year	Military	Advisory	Religious/ Legal	Media	Public Relations	Security	Admin	Economic Management	Public Health	Public Services
Al Qaeda Central (Afghanistan)	1999	1) Military 2) Surveillance	Shura Council	Political	Media		Security	Administration and Financial	foreign purchase		
Tahwid wal Jihad (Iraq)	2004	Military	Shura Council	Sharia	Media		Security		Finance		
Al Qaeda in Iraq/Mujahideen Shura Council	2006	Military	Shura Council	Sharia	Media		Security	Administration			
Islamic State of Iraq	2007	War	Shura Council	Sharia	Media	Public Relations	Public Security		1) Oil 2) Agriculture and Fishing	Health	Martyrs and Prisoners
Islamic State of Iraq	2009	War	Shura Council	Sharia	Media	1) Public Relations 2) Tribal Engagement	Public Security		1) Oil 2) Agriculture and Fishing	Health	Martyrs and Prisoners
Islamic State (Departments)	2016	Soldiery		1) Judgment and Grievance 2) Hisbah (enforcement) 3) Da'wah and Masajid (instruction) 4) Zakah (charity)	Media		Public Security (Interior Ministry, Military Intelligence, Foreign Intelligence, State Security)		1) Treasury 2) Agriculture 3) Rikaz (energy) 4) Fay and Ghana'im (loot and booty)	Health	1) Education 2) Services (electricity, transportation, public utilities)
Islamic State (Committees/Offices)	2016	Military Council	1) Shura Council 2) Deliberative Committee			Public and tribal relations		Distant Provinces			1) Hijrah (Immigration) 2) prisoners and martyrs 3) research and studies

**Competing Influences: Salafi Evolution or Sons of Saddam?**

The third and final area of this article relates to this author’s findings on the impact of the former Ba’athists on the ideas and practices of the Islamic State. The proponents of the idea of a strong Ba’ath influence on the group point toward the group’s dramatic military success, excessive and telegraphed brutality, and the sophistication of its intelligence operations as evidence. To date, this analysis has largely been more intuitive and based on interviews of defectors, than on empirical evidence or an appreciation of the history of the organization. To test for Ba’athist influence, this section examines three important practices that have set the Islamic State apart from other insurgent groups: belief in the efficacy of violence, utilization of sectarian wedges, and its unique counterintelligence practices.

The Islamic State’s embrace of violence as a multi-use tool serves many goals, and its irregular warfare campaign strays far from the usual rhetoric of insurgent groups trying to win the hearts and minds of the population for the eventual overthrow of an incumbent government. Some authors ascribe this predilection for public violence to the Ba’ath members within the Islamic State.[77] The problem with this narrative can be explained with one name: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. As the charismatic founder of the movement, Zarqawi set the lasting norms for the group’s unique and enduring doctrine of using violence as an effective political tool. While Jihadi scholars often ascribe the origins of this method to the influence of the 2004 jihadi publication *Management of Savagery*, the Islamic State rejected that notion and claimed that, while similar, Zarqawi’s campaign plans and overarching strategy—often described in its releases as an embrace of *al wala’ wal bara’* (loyalty and disavowal)—were completely original and approved by the group’s shura council before *Management of Savagery* was ever published.[78]

Certainly, the group’s first strikes in 2003 against the United Nations, the Jordanian Embassy, and a Shia procession at the Imam Ali mosque in Najaf were an early proof of concept that violence could tear the new



Iraq apart.[79] Within weeks of announcing the “official” formation of his group in early 2004, Zarqawi’s media department filmed his participation in live decapitation videos posted for worldwide consumption on the Internet.[80] These same media teams followed suicide bombers into markets to capture raw footage of Shia civilian victims in order to peddle them in videos to Sunnis angry about ethnic cleansing by government allied forces.[81] Zarqawi created assassination brigades as early as 2004 to strike back at government targets, Shia militias, and even Sunni rivals in a brutal and devastating irregular warfare campaign.[82] By the time of his death in 2006, Zarqawi had formed well-established norms of organizationally directed violence, including mass executions of Iraqi policemen and targeting civilians for weekly mass bombings, that long outlasted his reign as the leader of the movement. As a sign of this continuity, Zarqawi’s Iraqi successors (Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) both continued these violent practices for over a decade.[83]

In addition to a belief in the efficacy of violence as a strategic tool to shape public perception and terrorize his foes, Zarqawi’s controversial and steady advocacy of a sectarian strategy survived well into the current period. Not surprisingly, this enduring trait of the Islamic State is rarely mentioned in discussions of the role of the former regime members in the group. While the Ba’athist regime professed to be secular in nature, and included Iraqis of all sects and ethnicities, the Islamic State’s peculiar version of Salafism has predisposed its leaders to view the Shia of Iraq as deviants from the proper path and a historic threat to Sunni leadership of Iraq.[84] Zarqawi argued early on that the Shia were the main threat to the establishment of a caliphate in Iraq, and used sectarian attacks as a wedge to push more moderate Sunnis into his camp.[85] Sectarianism was not a result of civil war, despite Zarqawi’s crocodile tears in 2005; Zarqawi’s slaughter of hundreds of Shia pilgrims in March 2004 reinforced that this was a calculated strategy that continues to this day—as seen in the annual targeting of the Ashura and Arbā’een festivals or in the infamous Camp Speicher massacre.[86]

Despite the controversy over his targeting of Shia civilians, one reason Zarqawi expanded his group so quickly in the early years was his recruiters’ focus on the underground Salafi community that existed in Iraq for decades.[87] This community, often viewed by Saddam with extreme suspicion, had ironically benefited from the tentative relaxation of secular practices during Saddam’s Faith Campaign.[88] Often incorrectly described as products of the Faith Campaign, they were instead earlier converts to a more genuine and regionally dispersed campaign waged in mosques by speaking tours of members of the international Salafi movement, similar to those of Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani.[89] While Zarqawi is on public record as bemoaning the state of the Iraqi Sunnis in his famous letter to Zawahiri, he had to have been pleasantly surprised by the existence of such a robust underground community.[90]

An interesting characteristic of this Iraqi Salafi community was its virulently anti-Shia nature, something that most likely existed for decades, if not centuries. While Zarqawi had been a recent adopter of anti-Shiism based on his observations of Shia collaboration with the American invasion of both Afghanistan and Iraq, the members of the Iraqi Salafi milieu—including Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and Abu Ali al-Anbari—all viewed the Shia community as a legitimate target in their efforts to reclaim Iraq and probably held these beliefs long before Zarqawi’s arrival.[91] This relatively extreme belief—not particularly shared among the leadership of mainstream Sunni insurgent groups—was a contributing factor to the violent divisions that eventually inspired the Awakening (*Sahwa*) movement in Iraq in 2006, an event with significant consequences for the Islamic State movement.

Matthew Barber’s short history of one Iraqi family of the Salafi movement, the Badris, illustrates how anti-Shiism was not a foreign import but a long-standing trend among Iraqi Salafis, particularly in a highly mixed-sect and religiously important area like Samara, the capital of Salahuddin province.[92] Subhi al-Samerai al-Badri was a career police officer who had to curtail his anti-Shia attitudes when the secular Ba’ath consolidated power in Iraq in the 1970s, and went to Saudi Arabia to preach instead.[93] He later returned to Iraq and was known by students for his extended sectarian rants during class, despite the Ba’ath party’s restrictions on such speech. Several biographers of early and influential Islamic State members named the



esteemed Subhi al-Badri (d. 2013) as the religious teacher of their subject.[94] Even more indicative of the importance of this social network to the leaders of the Islamic State is the fact that al-Badri was related to the current “caliph” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, whose real name is Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri. Despite the stringent efforts of the Saddam regime to sabotage any and all threats to its power, the underground Salafi movement grew in influence and membership in Iraq during the late 1980s and 1990s, and was dedicated to replacing Saddam with a more acceptable religious government. Abu Ali al-Anbari’s two part eulogy in the Islamic State media mentions a similar beginning for this movement veteran; Anbari studied under a Sheikh Fayiz in the 1980s, joined the Salafi group Ansar al-Islam around the time of the 2003 invasion, and defected with several others—including future media emir Khaled al-Mashadani and former special forces officer Abu Muslim al-Turkmani—to Zarqawi’s group around 2004-2005.[95] His original teacher, Fayiz Abdul Rahman al Zaidi, was a Salafi preacher in Mosul during the 1970s and had been imprisoned by the Saddam regime on several occasions before being executed with two other individuals, allegedly for trying to convert Shia to Salafism and for declaring military service under the Ba’ath to be “humiliating.”[96] One researcher noted that these acts of defiance were a result of “the role played by Saudi Arabia in promoting Salafi thought by flooding Iraq with Salafi literature during the rapprochement between Baghdad and Riyadh because of the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s. At a time when many religious books, Sunni and Shi’a alike, were banned in Iraq, government censors turned a blind eye to the distribution and sale of Salafi books from Saudi Arabia. But despite its ostensible toleration of the spread of Salafi ideas and literature, the Ba’ath regime did not hesitate on a number of occasions to resort to brutal methods to remind the Salafis of who was really in charge.”[97]

These intriguing threads reveal the difficulty of trying to simplify the complex backdrop from which the Islamic State rose. The group’s first spokesman, Abu Maysara al-Iraqi (from Kazimiyah, Baghdad), was a convert from Shiism who led his family into the Salafi practice. In the process he was jailed by the regime before being released in 2003. Sam Helfont argues that it was this systematic neutralization of Salafis, Wahhabis, and Islamists (including the Iraqi Islamic Party/Muslim Brotherhood) in the decades before 2003 that paved the way for a Faith campaign that was just another method of coercion and control of the population.[98]

Beyond violence and sectarianism, the final analysis of FRE influence on unique aspects of the Islamic State’s beliefs and practices focuses on the group’s excellence at counterintelligence—something widely attributed to Saddam’s former agents. This argument, advanced with persistence and sophistication by prominent Islamic State analysts, points to the skill with which the group conducts intelligence operations outside of its controlled territory and counter-intelligence inside the “caliphate.”[99] This focus on the *amniyat* (security) department and its presumed origin relies on the assumption that jihadist groups do not naturally practice counter-intelligence, a skill which apparently is naturally limited to the government officials of authoritarian states. Once again, like many of the ideas that make up the shibboleth that Saddam was the godfather of the Islamic State, this is a reasonable proposition that weakens in explanatory value with a minimum of effort.

Clandestine movements like al-Qaeda absolutely require counter-intelligence functions in order to operate in authoritarian countries. Abu Musab al-Suri’s experience in the Syrian rebellion against Hafez Assad emphatically pointed to the absence of this skill as a major reason for the infiltration and subsequent collapse of what should have been a great opportunity for the Islamists and Salafi groups that populated the resistance. [100] Al-Qaeda’s experience in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the Soviets demonstrated the lengths that hostile intelligence agencies would go to infiltrate the movement, and there are documents and testimonies that confirm how serious al-Qaeda leaders took counter-intelligence.[101] Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s extensive interactions with a ubiquitous Jordanian intelligence service before his founding of the Islamic State movement surely influenced the policies and practices implemented by the leader in his new Iraqi home after 2002.[102] To summarize, clandestine organizations that survive the punishment that the Islamic State has endured for over a decade, by the very best counter-terrorism forces in the world, eventually develop

excellent operational security measures and understand from an insurgent perspective how to prevent the undermining of the state.

### **Conclusion**

Nibras Kazimi has spent over a decade traveling and working in his native Iraq, and smartly commenting on its politics. In 2011, when most others had moved on from closely examining the insurgency, Kazimi made some important observations about his own mistakes:

*Operationally, I went wrong by trying to understand the network of the non-Al-Qaeda actors as having their origins in the Saddam regime, as former officers, security officials and Ba'athists. What I missed was that there was a supra-network of young Salafists and other assortment of young Sunni Islamists who came to age during the 1990s - many of whom spent time in Saddam's prisons and who all know each other - alumnae went on to become Al-Qaeda, the Islamic Army, the Ansar al-Sunna, the Army of the Mujaheddin and the 1920 Revolt Brigades. This supra-network led the insurgency, and recruited the ex-regime officers and Ba'athists as sub-contractors of the jihad; the Saddamists worked for the Salafists from the very beginning, not the other way around.[103]*

It took this insightful observer several years to come to this conclusion, but it is one that we should take seriously if we are to truly understand the Islamic State's previous return from the dead, as well as try to predict what will happen when the "caliphate" collapses. Kazimi is not alone in this realization. Fawaz Gerges in his recent history of "ISIS" called the Ba'athist influence hypothesis "misleading and reductionist... overlooking internal and external, structural conditions in Iraq and Syria that fueled the group's revival." [104]

This exploration of Ba'athist influence on the Islamic State movement reinforces Kazimi's and Gerges' insights, and demonstrates that the sentiment described by Reuter in his influential article on Haji Bakr—that ISIS is a non-religious power accumulator with little connection to the jihadist trend—is categorically false. That Reuter could make this statement based on genuine captured documents shows that despite the availability of credible information, it is still possible to make erroneous deductions based on limited glimpses into complex organizations. The Islamic State, like its rival al-Qaeda, deliberately recruited former regime members for their military experience early in their existence. Once in the organization, they almost exclusively served in military and command roles—a key function in an insurgency to be sure—but not the most important. In revolutionary war, it is the political and social aspects of the conflict that dominate the action and will determine the outcome. The technical requirements of modern warfare and weaponry absolutely demand an expertise in military operations.[105] But outside of war-fighting functions and internal security, the former regime members in the Islamic State were simply not to be found.[106] Time and time again, the various leaders of the Islamic State installed religious experts, who could reliably interpret and uphold the legitimacy of the so-called caliphate project, into its important governing structures and departments—such as its groundbreaking media department,[107] its religious education programs, its wealth management, etc. Certainly the FRE contributed in a significant manner to the hybrid military campaign that consolidated extensive terrain in Syria and Iraq between 2012 and 2014, and this recognition certainly deserves the attention it has received. The problem with this attention is the need for balance; in looking at it from the Islamic State perspective, their legends are presented as a broad mix of people: homegrown Salafis, FRE, and immigrants.[108]

Beyond the presence of some very prominent FRE in the senior ranks of the Islamic State, and probably scores scattered throughout the mid-level ranks, there is little evidence of any deep Ba'athist influence on the evolving structure or the enduring ideas of the organization.[109] Instead, early adopters of the Salafi-jihadist trend were the ones who shaped the organizational culture during the decade-long struggle to establish an Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. As such, our efforts to understand the ability of the Islamic State to remain a coherent entity should focus on its ties to the global Salafi community, foreign fighter induction networks,

and certainly its demonstrated ability to recruit among local tribes in Iraq and Syria[110]—and much less on a dying ideology from yesterday—in order to avoid a very tainted view of this organization on which to base strategic and operational decisions.[111]

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## Notes

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- [2] Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, Mar 2015.
- [3] It is estimated that IS had over \$2.4B in revenue in 2015, with access to significant energy reserves in its territory; see Laurence Bindner and Gabriel Poriot, "ISIS Financing," Center for the Analysis of Terrorism, p. 5; According to LTG Sean McFarland, IS could have had up to 70k fighters in 2016, Kristina Wong, General: 45,000 ISIS fighters killed in two years," *The Hill*, 11 Aug 2016; URL: <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/291179-general-isis-fighters-becoming-easier-to-kill> .
- [4] Stephen Walt, "What should We do if the Islamic State Wins? Live with it," *Foreign Policy*, 10 June 2015; URL: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/10/what-should-we-do-if-isis-islamic-state-wins-containment/> .
- [5] Not to mention a *New York Times* editorial and a prominent debate featuring multiple articles in *Foreign Affairs*.
- [6] Christoph Reuter, "The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State," *Der Spiegel*, 18 Apr 2015; URL: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html> .
- [7] Liz Sly, "The hidden hand behind the Islamic State militants? Saddam Hussein's," *The Washington Post*, 5 April 2015; URL: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/the-hidden-hand-behind-the-islamic-state-militants-saddam-husseins/2015/04/04/aa97676c-cc32-11e4-8730-4f473416e759\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/the-hidden-hand-behind-the-islamic-state-militants-saddam-husseins/2015/04/04/aa97676c-cc32-11e4-8730-4f473416e759_story.html) .
- [8] Reuter, "The Terror Strategist," 2015.
- [9] Creighton Abrams, quoted in Lewis Sorley, *A Better War*, Harcourt Press, 1999, p. 370.
- [10] Islamic State of Iraq, "Knights of Martyrdom 7" video, *al Furqan Media*, 22 Feb 2010.
- [11] Muharib al Jubouri, "The Announcement of the Establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq," Media Council of the Mujahideen Shura Council in Iraq, al Fajr Media Center, 15 Oct 2006.
- [12] Brian Fishman, *The Master Plan: ISIS, Al Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*, Yale University Press, 2016, p. 19.
- [13] United Kingdom, "The Iraqi Ba'ath Party – Its History, Ideology, and Role in Regime Security," Politico-Military Memorandum released as part of "Chilcot Inquiry," Jan 2002 (declassified).
- [14] Abu Musab al Zaraqawi, "Zaraqawi's Cry," captured document ZAR20040214 found at Global Terrorism Research Project, Haverford College, (Feb 14, 2004).
- [15] A significant number of IS biographies indicated that Zaraqawi's top lieutenants recruited the future leadership of the Islamic State from the local Sunni Salafi networks in Iraq and Syria. Muhammad al-Lubnani and Abu Anas al-Shami appear in dozens of important jihadist biographies as the initial contact with Zaraqawi's early group.
- [16] Peter Devlin, "State of the Insurgency in Anbar," as of 17 August 2006, published in *Washington Post*, 2 February 2007.
- [17] Romain Caillet, "From the Ba'th to the Caliphate: the former officers of Saddam and the Islamic State," NOREF (Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre), Jun 2015; Bilawi was a member of Zaraqawi's inner circle according to several sources: Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 2016, p. 120. The fact these men joined the movement early, and not one of the more Ba'athist centric resistance groups, is telling about their personal beliefs.
- [18] Martin Chulov, "How an arrest in Iraq revealed ISIS' \$2bn jihadist network," *The Guardian* 15 Jun 2014; URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/15/iraq-isis-arrest-jihadists-wealth-power> ; Mohammad al-Adnani eulogized Bilawi in "Whatever good happens to thee – is from Allah," audio tape, *Al Furqan Media (Islamic State of Iraq and Sham)*, 11 Jun 2014.
- [19] Ben Hubbard and Eric Schmitt, "Military Skill and Terrorist Technique Fuel Success of ISIS," *The New York Times* (27 August , 2014); URL: [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/28/world/middleeast/army-know-how-seen-as-factor-in-isis-successes.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/28/world/middleeast/army-know-how-seen-as-factor-in-isis-successes.html?_r=0) .
- [20] It is quite possible that Bilawi's rapid promotion post-2013 was as much a function of his credibility as an early Zaraqawi confidant then it was any Ba'athist military training. He would have been senior in membership status to the so-called caliph Abu Bakr (2005) and deputy Abu Ali al-Anbari (2004) when he was sprung from Abu Ghraib (by his long time friend and former Ba'athist Abu Ayman al-Iraqi). The only member more senior would have been Abu Muhammad al-Adnani – the chief spokesman. To show the importance of veteran status in this organization, Aymenn al Tamimi has a document in his archives from a unit leader to the *wali* of Ninawa from 2015 requesting the longevity bonus and back-pay for a fighter that had joined IS in 2007 and then bounced around different IS *wilayat* due to security conditions, Document No 483, "Request," Aymenn Tamimi archive of IS documents, dated 5 August 2015; URL: <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/09/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents-2> .

[21] Haji Bakr joined the movement in 2004 according to his official eulogy, see Bill Roggio, "ISIS confirms death of senior leader in Syria," *Long War Journal*, 5 February 2014; URL: [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/isis\\_confirms\\_death.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/isis_confirms_death.php); this is contradicted by Iraqi Senior Interior Secretary Adnan al-Asadi, who read from Haji Bakr's prison files in an Al Arabiyah television interview, "Death Industry," 1830 GMT 14 Feb 2014 (see OSC document LIL2014021467808277). Asadi explained from his notes that Ziyad Al-Hadithi (Abu Zinah), an Iraqi close to Zarqawi lieutenant Abu Muhammad al-Lubnani, recruited him in Camp Bucca, which would put his oath sometime between 2006-08, if correct. Certainly he was in the organization for some time before he became head of the military council in 2010.

[22] Al Arabiyah, "Death Industry: Interview with Al Qaida's Baghdad Governor, Manaf al Rawi," 1907 GMT 14 May 2010 (see OSC document GMP20100514676003).

[23] Al Arabiyah, "Death Industry," 14 Feb 2014.

[24] Christoph Reuter, "The Terror Strategist."

[25] Al Arabiyah, "Death Industry," 14 Feb 2014.

[26] Kyle Orton, "Profiles of Islamic State Leaders," *The Henry Jackson Society*, London, 2016.

[27] While they are fairly numerous, one egregious example is the quote in Reuter's article about Haji Bakr, insisting that no Koran was found in his home when he was killed – insinuating that he was not religious. The source of the quote was from the rival faction that killed him.

[28] These are significant people—Abu Omar was the first emir of the Islamic State of Iraq, but had been a local policeman in Haditha not affiliated with the regime, and not an Army officer as described in the piece; Abu Maysara al-Iraqi was the first spokesman of the movement (2004-2006) and had been imprisoned during Saddam's regime as a young college student, and was not a member of the Ba'ath or a former officer; and Abu Ali al-Anbari was a career Salafi-jihadist with senior membership in Ansar al Islam before defecting to Tawhid wal Jihad, and was the former head of the Mujahideen Shura Council (2006) before he was captured. Tonneson correctly identified a man named Abu Ala al-Afri as a long time Salafi member as an exception to the Ba'athist influence in the recent leadership of the Islamic State, except that Abu Ali and Abu Ala were in fact the same person according to his official eulogy in the IS newsletter *al Naba* #41, "The God-Fearing Scholar and the Da'wah-Calling Mujahid: The Shaykh Abu-'Ali al-Anbari, May God Accept Him," 2 Aug 2016.

[29] Truls Tønnessen, "Heirs of Zarqawi or Saddam? The relationship between al Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no.4 (Aug 2015) p. 54.

[30] Nibras Kazimi, "Abu Hamza al-Muhajir's Interview: Very Revealing," *Talisman Gate* blog (27 October 2008); URL: <http://talismangate.blogspot.com/2008/10/abu-hamza-al-muhajirs-interview-very.html>.

[31] "Iraqi Islamic Party Official Assassinated," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* (16 Jan 2006); Michael Hastings, "String of assassination attempts kills 4 in Baghdad and Anbar province in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, 27 Dec 2009.

[32] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "Allah's Promise," *al Furqan Media*, Sep 24, 2008, translated by Nibras Kazimi: "Al-Baghdadi's Twelfth Speech: Putting a New, Divine Spin on 'Victory,'" *Talisman Gate* 20 October 2008; URL: <http://talismangate.blogspot.com/2008/10/al-baghdadis-twelfth-speech-putting-new.html>.

[33] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished;" audio statement released by *al Furqan media*, December 2006.

[34] Nibras Kazimi, "Abu Hamza al-Muhajir's Interview."

[35] Ahmed Hashim, *The Insurgency in Iraq, Small Wars and Insurgencies* (2006); Salam Karam, "The Multi-faced Sunni Insurgency: A Personal Reflection," *Civil Wars* 1, Mar 2007, p. 87-105; Michael Knights, "The next Insurgency: Ba'athists and Salafis pool resources to fight Iraqi government," *Gulf States Newsletter* 17:885, 17 Sep 2010.

[36] Parts of the Sunni Dulaimi tribe rose up against Saddam in 1995; the year before it had been the mostly Sunni Jabouris. See Youssef Ibrahim, "Iraq reportedly cracks down on clan that tried a coup," *The New York Times*, 20 Jun 1995.

[37] Abu Usama al-Iraqi, "Stages in the Jihad of Amir al Baghdadi," 12 May 2012 on *Global Jihad Network* and available at URL: <https://whitesidenwc.wordpress.com/2016/05/25/biography-of-abu-omar-al-baghdadi/>.

[38] Islamic State, "The God-Fearing Scholar and the Da'wah-Calling Mujahid: The Shaykh Abu-'Ali al-Anbari, May God Accept Him, Second Installment," *al Naba* #43, 16 Aug 2016.

[39] Abu Ali al-Anbari's identity was so confusing that I even had a senior official from a special operations task force refer to him as "the Ba'athist" in a personal conversation.

[40] Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, 2015, p. 211.

[41] The incorrect description has found its way into the *New York Times*, *CNN*, *Reuters*, *National Review*, *the NY Review of Books*, *Foreign Policy*, *Der Spiegel*, and even books by respected authors Gerges and Nance.

[42] Weiss and Hassan, "Everything we knew about this ISIS mastermind was wrong," 15 Apr 2016.

[43] Aymenn al Tamimi, "The Complete History of Jamaat Ansar al-Islam," personal blog, 15 December; URL: 2015 <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/12/a-complete-history-of-jamaat-ansar-al-islam>.

[44] Islamic State, "Sheikh Abu Ali al-Anbari, accepted by God," *al Naba* # 41 16 August 2016; URL: <http://jihadology.net/2016/08/02/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-41/>.

[45] C.J. Chivers, "Behind the Black Flag: The Recruitment of an ISIS killer," *The New York Times* 20 December 2015; URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/21/world/middleeast/isis-recruitment-killer-hassan-aboud.html>.

[46] Jack Moore, "ISIS replace injured leader Baghdadi with former physics teacher," *Newsweek*, 22 April 2015. This account has many errors despite citing top analysts on the group, and focuses on Anbari's *kunya* "Abu Alaa al-Afri" as a separate persona. More surprising is that despite modern records and scores of peers serving in the current Iraqi security forces, no one exposed the mythical Baathist general serving at the top level of the Islamic State. It might be what people want to believe.

[47] Hassan Hassan, "The Sectarianism of the Islamic State: Ideological Roots and Political Context," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2016, p. 14.

[48] The Islamic State requires its emirs to come from a tribal lineage that is the same as the Prophet Mohammed, the Quraysh. Abu Omar and Abu Bakr come from tribes that both claim this tie.



- [49] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is most likely the AQI Sharia official Abu Du'a targeted by JSOC near al Qaim in 2005, according to a former JSOC official I interviewed. A captured document has Abu Du'a listed as the emir of Mosul in 2009. While this could be yet another mistaken identity, it certainly would make more sense to appoint a highly vetted movement veteran to lead the organization in an emergency (2010) than a newcomer as the two defector tales would have us believe. See "Al Qaeda facilitator likely Dead in Coalition Air Strike," Armed Forces Press Service, 26 October 2009; URL: <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=17963> and Patrick Johnson, et al., "Foundations of the Islamic State: Management, Money, and Terror in Iraq, 2005-2010," RAND Corporation (2016), p. 6.
- [50] Abu Ahmad, "Testimony" by "One of the Mujahideen in Khorasan and Iraq, and now in Al-Sham," 5 Apr 2014 (OSC document LIN2014090552481892); compilation of Tweets from Wikibaghdady, 14 Dec 2013 -13 Jun 2016, accessed from justpaste.it/10cf8 on 8 May 2017.
- [51] One of dozens of examples is this article: David Blair, "Izzat al-Douri Izzat al-Douri: Last survivor of Saddam Hussein's inner circle who allied with Islamic State," *The Telegraph*, April 17, 2015; URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/11545988/Izzat-al-Douri-Last-survivor-of-Saddam-Husseins-inner-circle-who-allied-with-Islamic-State.html>.
- [52] Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "Non-sectarian nature of JRTN: Naqshbandi Army Statement- 21 July: Analysis and Translation," 29 July 2014; URL: <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/07/naqshbandi-army-statement-21-july-analysis>.
- [53] Michael Knights, "The JRTN Movement and Iraq's Next Insurgency," *CTC Sentinel*, 1 July 2011; URL: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-jrtm-movement-and-iraq%E2%80%99s-next-insurgency>.
- [54] Joel Wing, "Interview with Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi: Rise of the Islamic State and the Fading Away of the Rest of the Iraqi Insurgency," *Musings on Iraq*, 4 May 2015; URL: <http://www.meforum.org/5225/interview-aymenn-jawad-tamimi>; also Aymenn Tamimi, "Enemy of my Enemy: Re-evaluating the Islamic State's Relationship with the Ba'athist JRTN," *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Monitor*, 7 Jun 2015.
- [55] Ahmed S. Hashim dismisses the Faith campaign and Ba'ath influence on IS, arguing the rise of political Islam in the failed authoritarian state was "not conducive to inter-confessional harmony," in his "The Caliphate at War: Ideology, War Fighting and State-Formation," *Middle East Policy* XXIII: 1, Spring 2016.
- [56] Kyle Orton, "How Saddam Hussein gave us ISIS," *The New York Times*, 23 Dec 2015.
- [57] Amatzia Baram and Pesach Malovany, "ISIS: Successors to Saddam Hussein & his Legacy," *Israel Defense*, 31 Dec 2014.
- [58] Samuel Helfont and Michael Brill, "Saddam's ISIS? The Terrorist Group's Real Origins Story," *Foreign Affairs*, 12 Jan 2016.
- [59] Nibras Kazimi, "Al-Baghdadi's Twelfth Speech: Putting a New, Divine Spin on 'Victory,'" Talisman Gate blog, 20 Oct 2008; URL: <http://talismandate.blogspot.com/2008/10/al-baghdadis-twelfth-speech-putting-new.html>.
- [60] Jacob Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations*, Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 82-100.
- [61] Patrick Johnson, et al., "Foundations of the Islamic State," p. 53.
- [62] Jacob Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma*, p. 94.
- [63] Importantly, in their organizational manuals, al-Qaeda authors recommended recruiting men with prior operational experience and professional military academy training for service in the military committee, in order to make up for the shortfall in combat experience among other jihadists. Harmony Documents AFGP-2002-000078 and AFGP-2002-000080, found in "Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting al-Qaeda's Organizational Vulnerabilities," CTC West Point, 14 Feb 2006, pp. 61-63.
- [64] The Mujahideen Shura Council was the transitional political front that represented Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other newly affiliated Salafi groups that eventually became the Islamic State of Iraq. All of this happened between January and October of 2006.
- [65] The original uprising against Hafez Assad, see Abu Musab al-Suri, "Lessons Learned from the Jihad Ordeal in Syria," CTC USMA, Harmony Document AFGP-2002-600080, pp. 6-7.
- [66] Johnson, et al., "Foundations of the Islamic State," p. 74.
- [67] Johnson, et al., p. 78, citing Harmony Documents MNFA 2007-000566 and NMEC 2007-632298.
- [68] Ibid., p. 77, citing NMEC 2007-632298.
- [69] Muharib al Jubouri, "The Establishment of the first Islamic Administration of the Islamic State of Iraq," *al Furqan Media*, 19 April 2007; URL: [https://archive.org/details/The\\_Islamic\\_State\\_of\\_Iraq](https://archive.org/details/The_Islamic_State_of_Iraq); Jubouri was the first spokesman of the newly proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and had a PhD in religious studies. He was another product of the deep Salafist movement in Iraq at the time, and a former student of al-Badri.
- [70] Abu Omar al Baghdadi, "Declaration of the Second Cabinet Reshuffle for the Islamic State of Iraq," *al Furqan*, 21 September 2009; URL: <https://archive.org/details/Al-Tashkeelah-2-Le-Dwla-Iraq-Islamic>.
- [71] Aymenn al Tamimi, "The Evolution in Islamic State Administration: The Documentary Evidence," *Perspectives on Terrorism* Vol. 9, No.4, 5 Aug 2015.
- [72] Documents housed at the Captured Records Research Center describe the office's function well as detailed by an Islamic State operative: see Abu Khalidun, 'Synopsis of the Relations Committee in Baghdad's Southern Belt,' CRRC document AQ PMPR-d-001-717 (2009); and Abu Khalidun, 'OPSuM from Abu Mustafa of Southern Belt trying to overturn Sahwa,' CRRC document AQ-POAK-d-001-695 (9 September 2009).
- [73] A detailed examination of the evolution of the tribal engagement office can be found in Craig Whiteside, "The Islamic State and the Return of Revolutionary Warfare," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 27, no.5, August 2016, pp. 765-767.
- [74] The Islamic State, "The Structure of the Caliphate," *al Furqan Media*, 6 Jul 2016, available at Aaron Zelin's Jihadology website at URL: <http://jihadology.net/2016/07/06/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-the-structure-of-the-caliphate/>.
- [75] The *amniya* (long incorrectly said to have been led by Abu Ali al-Anbari – a possible confusion with his reported role in Sharia enforcement) is reportedly led by former Ba'athist Ayad al-Jumaili, a former *Mukharabat* officer. See Kyle Orton, "The Islamic State was coming without the invasion of Iraq, 12 Dec 2015," *The Syrian Intifada blog*; URL: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2015/12/12/the-islamic-state-was-coming-without-the-invasion-of-iraq/#more-2023>; of course, others insist that Syrian veteran jihadist Abu Mohammad al-Adnani (joined in 2002, non-Ba'ath) is also involved in the external operations wing of the *amniyat*, which is possible but unconfirmed at this time. His eulogy did not mention this role. See Rukmini Callimachi, "How a Secretive Branch of ISIS Built a Global Network of Killers," *The New York Times*, 3 August 2016.
- [76] Data in Figure 1 derived from Harmony documents AFGP-2002-000078, AFGP-2002-000080, MNFA 2007-000566 and NMEC 2007-632298; Rohan Gunaratna and Aviv Oreg, "Al-Qaeda's Organizational Structure and its Evolution," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 33:12, 20 November 2010; Hassan Abu Haniyeh, "Daesh's Organizational Structure," *Al Jazeera*, 4 December 2014; URL: <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/dossiers/decipheringdaeshoriginsimpactandfuture/2014/12/201412395930929444.html>; Aymenn al Tamimi "the Evolution in Islamic State Administration," Michael Weiss, "Confessions of an ISIS Spy," *Daily Beast*, 2015; and *al Furqan* media statements cited above.
- [77] Max Fisher, "The Secret Plot behind the creation of ISIS," *Vox*, 20 April 2015; URL: <http://www.vox.com/2015/4/20/8451627/isis-iraq-saddam>.



- [78] Islamic State, *Dabiq: The revival of Jihad in Bengal* (12), 2015, p. 39; URL <http://jihadology.net/2015/11/18/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-magazine-dabiq-12%E2%80%B3/>.
- [79] Bobby Ghosh, "Twelve years on, remembering the bomb that started the Middle East's sectarian war," *Quartz*, 28 August 2015; URL <https://qz.com/476191/remembering-the-bomb-that-started-the-middle-east-s-sectarian-war/>
- [80] BBC News, "Zarqawi beheaded US man in Iraq," May 13, 2004 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3712421.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3712421.stm).
- [81] Matt Alexander, *How to Break a Terrorist: The US interrogators who used brains, not brutality to take down the deadliest man in Iraq*, Free Press, 2008.
- [82] Malcolm Nance, *The Terrorists of Iraq*, 2014, p. 234.
- [83] Brian Fishman outlines the extreme and numerous acts of terrorism quietly committed by the group after 2006 in his "Redefining the Islamic State; The Fall and Rise of Al-Qaeda in Iraq," New America Foundation, Aug 2011; for an empirical confirmation of how faithfully the successors of Zarqawi carried on his vision, see Regan and Mould, "Continuity and Change in the Operational Dynamics of the Islamic State," *Journal of Strategic Security*, 10 (1), 2017.
- [84] Fanar Haddad's book on the influence of sectarian beliefs before and after the 2003 war is excellent in this regard: *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity*, Oxford University Press, 2011.
- [85] Abu Musab al Zarqawi, "Zarqawi's Cry," 14 Feb 2004.
- [86] CNN, "Deadly attacks rock Baghdad, Karbala," 2 March 2004; URL: <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/03/02/sprj.nirq.main/>; for the continuity of the use of sectarianism as a tool by IS, see Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Caliphate at War," (Spring 2016). For an analysis of the movement's annual targeting of the two main pilgrimages, see Craig Whiteside, "A Case for Terrorism as Genocide in an era of weakened states," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 8 (3), 2015. The Camp Speicher massacre was a pre-planned event with prepositioned media teams present during the massacre, and led by the wilayat emir – Abu Nabil al-Anbari (a.k.a. Abul-Mughirah al-Qahtani). See Aymenn al Tamimi, "Eulogy to Abu Nabil al-Anbari: Islamic State leader in Libya," 7 Jan 2016; URL: <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/01/eulogy-to-abu-nabil-al-anbari-islamic-state>.
- [87] Reference the previous note about al-Lubnani and Abu Anas al-Shami (both non-Iraqis), who were very influential recruiters among the Salafi trend in Anbar province and elsewhere. The pair recruited a vast cadre of leadership that continues to lead the Islamic State as late as 2014, a story that hopefully will one day be told.
- [88] Samuel Helfont and Michael Brill, "Saddam's ISIS: The Terrorist Group's Real Origins Story," *Foreign Affairs*, Jan 12, 2016.
- [89] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," p.213.
- [90] Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, "Zarqawi's Cry," 14 Feb 2004.
- [91] For an understanding of the evolution of Zarqawi's thoughts on the Shia, see Nibras Kazimi, "Zarqawi's Anti-Shia Legacy: Original or Borrowed?" *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 1 November 2006; the takfiri influence on Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al Muhajir can be seen in their many speeches, but recent deputy caliph Abu Ali al-Anbari's lectures concerning the Yazidi status in the "caliphate" indicate that he might be the most influential takfiri thought leader in the group. See Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, "Everything we knew about this ISIS mastermind was wrong," *The Daily Beast*, 15 April 2016; URL: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/04/15/everything-we-knew-about-this-isis-mastermind-was-wrong.html>.
- [92] Matthew Barber, "Meet the Badris," *Syria Comment blog*, 13 Mar 2015; URL: <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/meet-the-badris/>.
- [93] Interestingly, this is the same failed career in the police that led Abu Omar al-Baghdadi to the movement.
- [94] Craig Whiteside, "Lighting the Path; a history of the Islamic State media," The Hague, ICCT, November 2016.
- [95] Islamic State, *al Naba* #41. Apparently Abu Ali was a big influence on Abu Muslim/Haji Mutazz, recruiting him in 2003 and another example of a veteran Salafi recruiting a former regime member in the early days of the insurgency; for more, see this thread at URL: <https://storify.com/CraigAWhiteside/abu-ali-al-anbari>.
- [96] Interview with researcher Nibras Kazimi, 10 May 2017.
- [97] Nasr Salem, "Outstanding analysis of the resistance movement in Iraq," *Crescent International*, 1 July 2007; URL: <https://crescent.icit-digital.org/articles/outstanding-analysis-of-the-resistance-movement-in-iraq>.
- [98] Sam Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: Saddam Hussein, Islam, and the Roots of Insurgency in Iraq*, Oxford University Press, forthcoming late 2017.
- [99] The most prominent is the previously mentioned book: Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, as well as Kyle Orton, "A response to criticism: Why the ex-Saddamists in the Islamic State matter," (10 Aug 2015); URL: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2015/08/10/a-response-to-criticism-why-the-ex-saddamists-in-the-islamic-state-matter/>.
- [100] Abu Musab al-Suri, "Lessons learned from the armed Jihad ordeal in Syria," CTC West Point Harmony Document AFGP AFGP-2002-600080, 4-6.
- [101] This letter by a jailed jihadist in Afghanistan details the length that al-Qaeda took to root out intelligence moles from Gulf states: "Letter to Brother Hatim," Harmony Document AFGP-2002-800078-001-0124 (capture date: 2002), from Brian Fishman's website for *The Master Plan*: <http://www.isismasterplan.com/resources/>. His book is the new definitive history to date of the Islamic State movement: Fishman, *The Master Plan: ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*, Yale University Press (2016).
- [102] Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* (2016), pp. 42-58.
- [103] Nibras Kazimi, "The story of the Sunni Salafist insurgency in Iraq, 1999-2010," *Talisman Gate* (21 January, 2011; URL: <http://talismangate.blogspot.com/2011/01/story-of-sunni-salafist-insurgency-in.html?m=1>).
- [104] Fawaz Gerges, *ISIS: A History*, Princeton University Press, 2016, p. 151.
- [105] For an exceptional paper on how the early members of the Islamic State absorbed the military training of the few regime members that joined the early movement in Iraq, see Truls Tønnesson, "Training on a Battlefield: Iraq as a Training Ground for Global Jihadists," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20, 2008, pp. 546-547.
- [106] One important exception could be by Abu Salah, who according to Hisham Hashemi is actually Ayad Abdel-Rahman al-Ubeidi and a former *Mukhabarat* officer turned Salafi adherent in the 1990s. He turned into a financial expert and was the Islamic State's financial emir in Iraq. Again, it's not clear how any of this has anything to do with his former regime experience. See Nibras Kazimi, "The Islamic State's Sovereign Wealth Fund," *Talisman Gate* Again blog, 11 December 2015; URL: <https://talisman-gate.com/2015/12/11/the-islamic-states-sovereign-wealth-fund/>.
- [107] Whiteside, "Lighting the Path," 2016.

[108] A collage circulated on *Telegram* by IS supporters and retrieved by @Mr0rangetracker with comments by reporter Daniele Raineri shows the blending of all three types of IS – home grown Salafi, FRE, immigrants (in order, left to right from the top): Muharib al-Jubouri, Umar Hadid, Zarqawi, Lubnani, Anas al-Shami, Bilawi, Abu Suleiman/Abu Ibrahim, Abu Omar, Abu Hamza, Manaf al Rawi, Huthaifa al-Batawi, Abu Nabil, Abu Aymen al Iraqi, Abu Laith al-Ansari, Haji Bakr, Anbari, Abu Muslim; see the picture at URL: <https://storify.com/CraigAWhiteside/history-lesson-on-the-islamic-state-mvt>.

[109] Hisham Hashemi, an Iraqi researcher, maintains a list of more than two dozen former regime members that have worked in important positions for the Islamic State in the last six years.

[110] Abby Fanlo found that tribal affiliation was a better predictor of joining AQI/Islamic State than Ba'athist affiliation: "A Ba'athist Insurgency? The Role of Saddam's Elites in Iraq's Civil Conflict," unpublished thesis, Stanford – CISAC, 2016; Andrew Tabler's research on Syrian tribes near Raqqa found that tribal affiliation had a large effect on membership in the Islamic State and other jihadi groups, "Eyeing Raqqa: A tale of four tribes," PN 38, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 2017.

[111] Clausewitz's admonition concerning the importance of ascertaining the type of conflict one is about to enter comes to mind here. Assessment is the first step in designing operational campaigns; flawed assumptions lead to failed and costly efforts.

## IS Penetration in Afghanistan-Pakistan: Assessment, Impact and Implications

by Abdul Basit

### Abstract

*Since the inception of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group, the jihadist landscape in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Af-Pak) has transformed subtly. IS has captured the imagination of the younger generation of jihadists in the two countries, triggering defections in the form of allegiances to the so-called caliphate. This has resulted in turf wars between IS and the Taliban-Al-Qaeda duo over recruitment, resources and the loyalties of the local militant groups. The Af-Pak jihadist groups have responded to IS efforts to penetrate the jihadist community with open rejection of the caliphate or its acceptance as well as adopting a hedging attitude. This article maps out IS presence in the two countries and its operational capabilities. IS has forged alliances with like-minded Sunni extremist groups and cultivated ideological constituency among the educated urban youth. This has complicated the militant landscape, contributed to the expansion of Sunni-Shia conflict and lowered the threshold of online radicalization.*

**Key words:** Khurasan, Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Afghanistan, Pakistan

### Introduction

Following its rise on the global jihadist landscape in 2014, the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group gained the support of some disillusioned factions of Islamist militant groups in the Af-Pak region.[1] IS also found appeal among the university-educated radicalized youth of the urban middle and upper middle classes. [2] However, unlike its gains in the Middle East, IS's foothold in Afghanistan and Pakistan has been rather limited.[3]

The first evidence of IS's presence as an organization in the Af-Pak region emerged on January 11, 2015 when the group announced formation of its so-called *Wilayat Khurasan*. A former Pakistani Taliban commander Hafiz Saeed Khan Orakzai was appointed as its *emir* (head) and an ex-Afghan Taliban commander Abdul Rauf Khadim as the deputy *emir* .[4] Prior to that, signs of IS's attraction among the jihadists in Pakistan had surfaced in November 2014, when Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Authority (NCTA) wrote a letter to various government agencies warning them to be vigilant of IS's growing influence. The letter noted, "The successes of IS plays a very dangerous, inspirational role in Pakistan, where more than 200 (terrorist) organisations are operational." [5]

Since then, six militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan have either pledged allegiances to IS or forged partnerships with it. In Afghanistan, the Central Asian militant group Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) declared its support for IS in October 2014.[6] In Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Khilafat[7], Jandullah[8], and the Bajaur faction of the Pakistani Taliban[9] have pledged allegiances, while Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Alami[10], Lashkar-e-Islam[11] and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar[12] have forged tactical and transactional alliances.

Policy-makers and terrorism experts differ widely about the scale and nature of IS ingress in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Some are dismissive of the group's presence in the region, while others exaggerate its capabilities and potential threat. Against this backdrop, it is essential to analyse IS's operational strengths in order to assess what kind of threat it poses to the Af-Pak region. There are at least two contending schools of thought on this issue.

One school of thought dismisses any systematic and organized presence of IS in the region. This school argues that the discussion of IS's influence among jihadist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan has been

over-hyped. It believes the following four factors have hindered IS efforts to gain a sizeable foothold in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[13] First, IS is an outsider to the region: linguistic, cultural, and geographical barriers have hampered its growth among the Af-Pak jihadist community. Second, in the presence of well-established jihadist movements—such as the Afghan Taliban, Al-Qaeda and the Kashmiri militant groups—there is no space for IS to grow. Third, IS's pro-Caliphate propaganda is over simplistic and detached from the ground realities and local conflicts in the region.[14] And finally, IS is a group defined by its Salafi-Takfiri-Jihadist ideology, while most of the militant outfits in Afghanistan and Pakistan are followers of Deobandi-Hanafism, a puritanical branch of Sunni Islam in South Asia. According to this perspective, the limited appeal of the Salafi-Takfiri-Jihadist ideology in the region has also constrained IS's appeal.[15]

A second school of thought contends that undermining IS's threat in Afghanistan and Pakistan is fraught with security risks. Proponents of this view argue that, short of challenging major militant groups in the region, IS has found a constituency among the new generation of jihadists in Afghanistan and Pakistan. [16] This new so-called 'fourth generation' of jihadists includes mainly college and university educated radicalized youth from middle and upper-middle classes of urban areas.[17] Furthermore, the easily available ungoverned spaces (physical sanctuaries), conducive environmental factors which assist in growth of extremist ideologies (social sanctuary), and a large youth cohort susceptible to militant recruitment (demographic sanctuary) make Afghanistan and Pakistan attractive for the IS.[18]

Considering the territorial losses, infrastructure damages and depleting finances in Iraq and Syria, many observers have suggested that IS may turn its attention towards its so-called *Wilayats* in order to survive. Following its potential implosion in the Levant, *Wilayat Khurasan* (among others) is a viable fall-back option for IS. This article posits that in the last three years, IS has created enough of a footprint in northeastern Afghanistan and southwestern Pakistan to carry out large-scale attacks in both countries.

The relocation of some of its fighters and commanders from Iraq and Syria will further augment the operational capabilities and organizational strengths of IS affiliates in the Af-Pak region. Based on a host of primary and secondary sources—such as IS propaganda literature distributed in different parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan and video transcripts of various militant groups who have pledged allegiance to IS, as well as various research studies, newspaper reports and articles regarding IS activities in the two countries—the following sections of this article explain the nature and scale of IS activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan, reactions of major jihadist movements in the two countries to the growth of IS, and the implications of these developments for regional security.

### ***Why Afghanistan and Pakistan are Important for IS***

Before exploring the IS network of affiliates (militant factions that have pledged allegiances), supporters (self-radicalised urban cells) and sympathizers (lone-wolf fighters) in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is imperative to understand the ideological and strategic factors which make these two countries attractive to the terrorist group.

#### *The Black Flags of Khurasan*

After the emir of IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, declared his self-styled caliphate from Mosul, Iraq, the group released a map online of its five-year expansion plan. It showed Pakistan and Afghanistan as part of its Khurasan province, which also includes Iran, Central Asia and some parts of western China.[19] The inclusion of the Af-Pak region in the map has historical reasons.[20] (See *Figure 1*).

Figure 1: Map showing IS five-year expansionist plan for the caliphate



Source: URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2674736/ISIS-militants-declare-formation-caliphate-Syria-Iraq-demand-Muslims-world-swear-allegiance.html>

As a concept, Khurasan is an apocalyptic vision that drives many Sunni radical groups around the world with a belief that at the onset of the End of Times, an army of the *Mujahideen* (Islamist fighters) carrying black flags will rise from Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan.[21] This narrative has been supported by a saying of the Prophet Muhammad narrated by the classical Hadith scholar Ibne Majah (570-632), which talks about the carriers of black banners or flags from the land of Khurasan representing true Islamic believers towards the End of Times. He reported that the Prophet said, “If you see the Black Banners coming from Khurasan go to them immediately, even if you must crawl over ice, because indeed amongst them is the Caliph, Al Mahdi [the Messiah]...and no one can stop that army until it reaches Jerusalem.” It is worth mentioning, though, that some Islamic scholars contest the authority of this *hadith*.[22]

Because of this *hadith*, jihadists believe that Afghanistan-Pakistan region is the place from where they will inflict a major defeat against their enemies in the Islamic version of the Armageddon. This army of the *mujahideen* will help revive the global Islamic caliphate and Muslims will once again become the global leaders.[23] Ultimately, according to this utopian vision, this movement will lead to the End of Time (Day of Judgement) as a result of a battle between ‘good and evil forces,’ where the latter will be defeated and God’s judgement will come to pass.[24]

#### *Af-Pak, Al-Qaeda’s Birthplace*

Since its inception in 1988, Al-Qaeda Central (AQC) has considered Afghanistan and Pakistan region as its home and power bastion. Current Al-Qaeda Chief Ayman Al-Zawahiri is still thought to maintain residence in the Afghanistan-Pakistan tribal region.[25] According to a *Newsweek* report, Zawahiri narrowly escaped a US drone attack in January 2016 in the Shawal Valley near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.[26]

The majority of the militant groups in the two countries remain loyal to Al-Qaeda central, which still maintains close ties with Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Harkat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami (HuJI), the Haqqani Network, and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM).[27]

One measure of that is the reaffirmation of allegiances by Zawahiri to two new Taliban chiefs in 2015 and 2016. In the first instance, Zawahiri renewed his loyalty to Mullah Umar’s successor Akhtar Muhammad Mansoor in August 2015.[28] Mansoor welcomed Al-Qaeda’s allegiance to bolster his legitimacy and position



within the Taliban movement, amidst a bloody leadership transition.[29] The second oath of allegiance came in 2016, following Mansoor's killing in a US drone attack near Balochistan[30], and the appointment of Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada as the new Taliban chief.[31]

#### *A Conducive Environment for the Growth of Extremist Ideologies*

The easily available ungoverned spaces, weak government institutions, disenfranchised periphery population and prevalent anti-Western and American sentiments make Afghanistan and Pakistan suitable places for the incubation and spread of extremist ideologies.[32]

IS's message of creating a Sunni Muslim Caliphate has won itself the sympathies and support of at least six like-minded jihadist groups in the Af-Pak region (as mentioned above), along with isolated pockets of support in the form of self-radicalised individuals (lone wolves) and cells. These pro-IS individuals and cells have been involved in terrorist attacks, recruitment, fundraising and distribution of IS's extremist propaganda in different parts of the two countries.[33]

For instance, in 2015 a group of pro-IS female militants was nabbed in Karachi for fundraising, matchmaking and distributing pamphlets and CDs containing IS propaganda material.[34] The members of this group hailed from educated and wealthy families.[35] Likewise, another female wing of IS militants was discovered in Karachi in January 2016, following the arrest of an important IS Commander, Kamran Gujjar, in the port city. His wife and sister-in-law were working for IS and they were involved in recruitment and propaganda operations.[36]

In December 2015, another cell of female radicals working for the IS "Bushra Network" was discovered in Lahore. The authorities came to know about this cell after a report of a missing girl was lodged with the local police. The ensuing investigation revealed that an IS-recruiter, Burshra Cheema, had relocated her to Syria with 20 others. Bushra—a religious scholar with an M. Phil in Islamic Studies from the Punjab University—ran an Islamic school, the Noor-ul-Hudaa Islamic Center, in Lahore. She got in touch with IS operatives in Syria through social media. Currently, she lives in Syria with her children.[37]

Additionally, two terrorist cells that defected to IS from Jamaat-ud-Dawn (JuD) were busted in Lahore and Sialkot in 2015[38] and 2016[39], respectively. Another IS-cell involved in a series of high-profile attacks was neutralised in Karachi in 2014, following the attack on a bus carrying members of the Ismaili Shia community. The attackers left leaflets announcing the arrival of IS in Pakistan. The post-attack investigation led to the arrests of the attack mastermind Saad Aziz and his associates—Hafiz Rashid and Tahir Minhas—who were university graduates and belonged to middle and upper middle class families.[40] The group is also known as the Tahir Saeen Group.[41] Similarly, in November 2016, Punjab's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) neutralised an eight-members cell of IS in Lahore. The cell was involved in the propagation of IS ideology on social media, and also sent 14 aspiring jihadists to Syria.[42] In the first four months of 2017, as many as six IS cells have been busted in eastern Punjab province.[43]

#### *Links of Afghan and Pakistani Jihadists with Conflicts in Iraq and Syria*

Jihadists from Afghanistan and Pakistan have been travelling to Syria since 2013 to participate in the Syrian civil war.[44] Later, many of them shifted to the Iraqi theatre. The Pakistani Taliban established their camp in Syria in 2012. Initially, 12 trainers from the Pakistani Taliban having expertise in bomb-making and information technology moved to Syria. Later, fresh recruits from different parts of the country joined them. [45]

Similarly, a militant training camp named after a deceased Pakistani jihadist, Abdul Rashid Ghazi, was created in Iraq's Irbil city in 2013, assisted by the anti-Shia Pakistani militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Abdul Rashid Ghazi, along with his elder brother Abdul Aziz, had spearheaded an anti-state uprising of madrassa

students in Pakistan's capital Islamabad in the winter of 2007. Ghazi was killed in a military operation later that year.[46]

This link became clearer in August 2014 when a statement from Iraq's Defence Ministry announced the death of IS-allied Pakistani jihadist Abdul Rahman Amjad Al-Pakistani in the Iraqi military's airstrikes within the IS-stronghold in Mosul.[47] Al-Pakistani, also known as Al-Punjabi, was a former Al-Qaeda commander. He had defected to IS in March 2014 along with eight other leaders.[48]

### ***IS Network in Afghanistan and Pakistan***

Presently, the Islamic State of Khurasan (ISK)—IS's Af-Pak affiliate—is headquartered in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province. Initially, ISK spread its tentacles to nine districts of Nangarhar, but its presence has now been reduced to three districts (Achin, Deh Bala and Chaparhar).[49] Currently, there are 1,000 to 1,500 fighters—Afghans, Pakistanis, Indians (22)[50] and a few Arabs—in its ranks.[51] If the Central Asian fighters of the IMU are combined with this figure, the approximate strength of ISK would be 2,500 to 3,000. According to a report of United State Institute of Peace, as of April 2016, ISK had around 2,500 jihadists in its ranks.[52] Similarly, a report of the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team puts the number of ISK fighters in Afghanistan between 2,000 and 3,500.[53] According to General John Nicholson, commander of US forces in Afghanistan, almost 70 percent of ISK fighters in Afghanistan are Pakistani Taliban who joined the group after being pushed out of Pakistani tribal areas in counter terrorism operations. [54]

US airstrikes, ground operations of the Afghan forces, and inter-group fighting with the Afghan Taliban in Nangarhar has compelled ISK to move some of its fighters and commanders to eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province where Salafist influence is rather strong.[55] The group has significant pockets of influence in southern Zabul province as well; most of the fighters here are Central Asians.[56]

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, ISK has no significant organizational presence. However, as mentioned above, isolated supporters—self-radicalised cells and individuals—are present in urban centres of the country, such as Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot and Hyderabad. The other node of IS presence in Pakistan is its alliances with like-minded militant groups, such as LJA, Jandullah and JuA.

Presently ISK is leaderless—both Saeed (first emir) and Khadim (the deputy emir) have been killed in US drone strikes in Afghanistan. Saeed's successor Maulvi Abdul Hasib Logari has likely been killed in a joint operation by the US and Afghan forces in the Nangarhar province as well.[57]

Prior to the appointment of commander Saeed Khan as ISK's head, a former Afghan jihadist and ex-Guantanamo detainee, Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, was the architect behind the pro-IS graffiti campaign in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The 50-year old Rahim is a Salafi Islamic scholar from Afghanistan's Nangarhar province.[58] Another former Afghan jihadist, Maulvi Abdul Qahar Khurasani, helped Muslim Dost in spreading IS influence in the region.[59] Rahim and Qahar pledged allegiance to IS on 1 July 2014, just two days after Baghdadi pronounced his self-styled caliphate.[60]

Retrospectively, the first signs of a cell working for IS in Afghanistan and Pakistan surfaced in September 2014, with the appearance of pro-IS slogans and distribution of propaganda literature in different parts of the two countries.[61] However, the formal announcement of ISK's creation was only made on 27 January 2015 by IS spokesperson Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani in IS' English magazine *Dabiq*. [62]

### ***IS Recruitment in Afghanistan and Pakistan***

In Pakistan, IS has focused on recruiting university students and professionals (engineers, doctors, lawyers, journalists and businessmen) along with using females for fundraising.[63] Most of these recruits have been

targeted and radicalized online.[64] Professionals can be utilised in leadership positions or run the group's powerful propaganda operations, which includes producing high-quality videos, social media campaigns and various publications which are churned out in multiple languages.[65]

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan IS has recruited from existing militant groups, and in 2015 launched a radio station in eastern parts of the country to attract new recruits. The Pashtu language broadcast "Voice of Caliphate" spanned over ninety minutes daily and included interviews, messages, *nasheeds* (songs) and lectures about the Islamic State. It encouraged youth to find a sense of direction in their lives by joining the group.[66] IS has also been recruiting people quite actively from Kunar province.[67]

According to the London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR), as many as 350-400 Pakistani and Afghan fighters have gone to fight alongside IS in Iraq and Syria. [68] Of this figure, 50 are Afghans and around 350 are Pakistanis. Meanwhile, the official number given by Pakistan's National Crisis Management Cell (NCMC), as of August 2016, is approximately 650.[69]

In October 2014, the Home Ministry of Pakistan's Balochistan province wrote a confidential memo to the federal government and other Pakistani law enforcement agencies, warning them to be vigilant of the increasing influence of IS in the province. The report, which was leaked to the media, noted that members of the IS cell were trying to recruit from KP's Bannu district and the Pakistani tribal areas.[70]

In November 2014, a three-member IS delegation led by Al-Zubair Al-Kuwaiti entered Pakistan's south-western Balochistan province where they met with the leaders of Pakistani Taliban's splinter group Jandullah. According to Jandullah's spokesperson Fahad Marwat, "The purpose of the visit by the Islamic State group was to see how it could work to unite various Pakistani militant groups." [71] Six days after this meeting, Jandullah pledged allegiance to IS maintaining that: "They (Islamic State) are our brothers, whatever plan they have we will support them." [72]

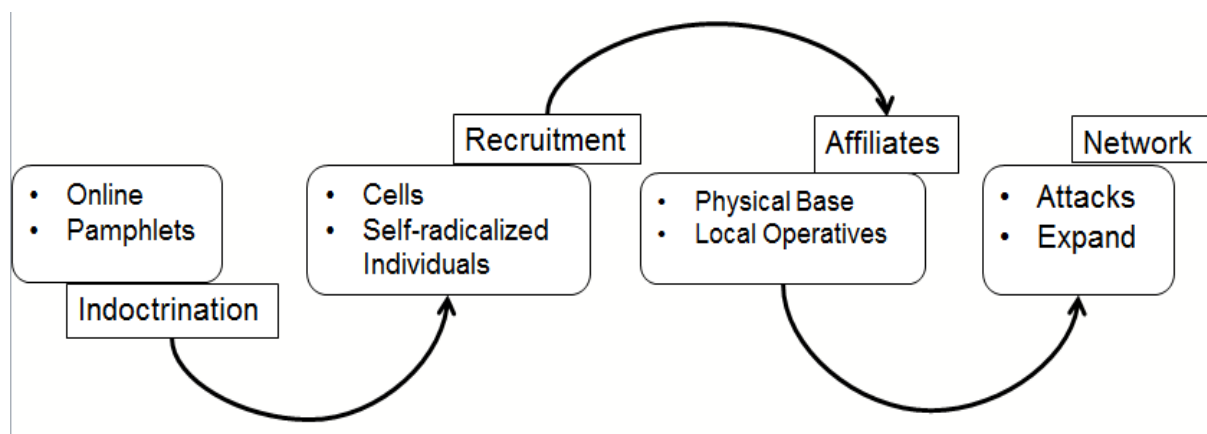
*(See Annex 1 & 2 for the profiles of the groups and individuals who have pledged allegiance to IS in Afghanistan and Pakistan.)*

#### *Four-phase Progression of IS in Afghanistan and Pakistan*

Chronologically, there has been a non-linear progression of IS in Afghanistan and Pakistan in four phases. In the first phase, IS promoted its brand of global Salafi-Takfiri-Jihadist ideology and propagated its extremist worldview through distribution of online propaganda material, pamphlets and booklets. For instance, in September 2014, IS supporters distributed a pamphlet entitled *Fatah* (Victory) in Peshawar and bordering areas of Afghanistan.[73] Written in Pashtu and Dari languages, the magazine contained articles that aimed to recruit the jihadists into IS and to spread the group's extremist ideology.[74] The pamphlet maintained that IS was not only focusing on the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, but also intends to spread its influence over the Indian subcontinent.[75]

In the second phase, the would-be radicals were encouraged to perform the so-called *hijrah* (migration) to IS-controlled territories.[76] This was done through online recruitment and intermediaries. The third phase involved declaring the *Wilayat Khurasan* and establishing a sanctuary in eastern Afghanistan to further expedite the recruitment process and impart militant training to fighters for future attacks. The fourth and current phase has been aimed at mustering enough manpower and operational strength to carry out large-scale attacks both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[77] *(See Figure 2)*

Figure 2: Four-phase progression of IS in Afghanistan-Pakistan



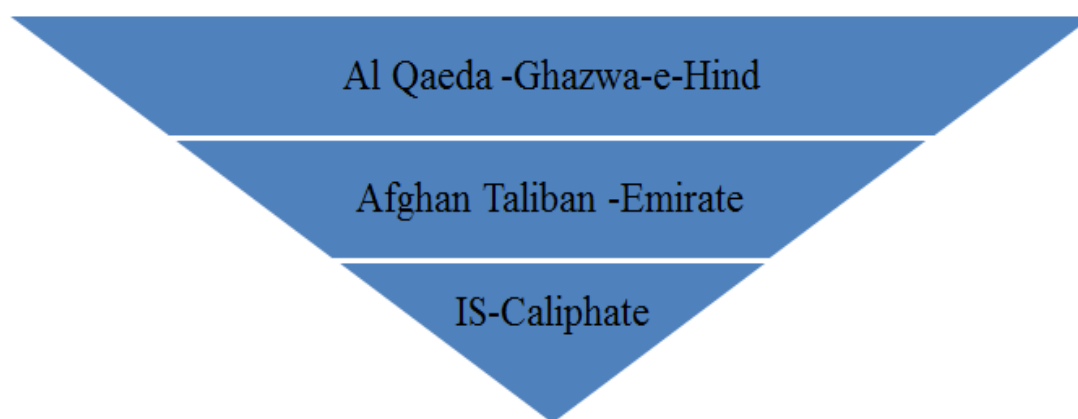
Source: <http://www.slideshare.net/RahulBhonsle/how-isis-and-aqis-expand-in-indian-sub-continent>

**Responses of Militant Organizations in Afghanistan-Pakistan to IS Growth**

The Af-Pak jihadist groups have responded to IS efforts to spread its tentacles in the region in three broad ways: a) renewing commitment to old ideologies and rejecting IS; b) jumping on the IS bandwagon; or c) adopting a hedging attitude.[78]

Taking into account the aforementioned reactions to IS’s jihadist vision, arguably there are now three jihadist models available to the militant groups in Afghanistan-Pakistan: the IS propounded caliphate model, the Al-Qaeda espoused *Ghazwa-e-Hind* (Battle of India) for South Asia, and the Afghan Taliban’s Islamic Emirate model.

Figure 3: Three Models of Jihad in Afghanistan-Pakistan



The *hadith Ghazwa-e-Hind* contains a prophecy of a great battle towards the End of Times in the Indian sub-continent between true believers and non-believers. The references have been used by Al-Qaeda when it launched its South Asian branch (AQIS) in September 2014.[79] By lumping South Asia with its jihadist narrative as an important battleground, Al-Qaeda has tried to retain the sympathies of the local militant organization in the region.[80]



Meanwhile, the IS approach to jihad centres around the idea of holding territory—i.e., the creation of a Caliphate that can be used as a base to spread influence transnationally in the form of *Wilayats*. Moreover, IS focuses on the “near-enemy” (the apostate Muslim regimes of the Middle East) as opposed to Al-Qaeda’s strategy of targeting the “far-enemy” (the US and its Western allies). Also, Al-Qaeda and IS differ over who is the true successor of Osama bin Laden–Zawahiri or Baghdadi. Additionally, Al-Qaeda, unlike IS, opposes brazenly violent tactics against Shia Muslims and other religious minorities, like Yazidis and Kurds.[81]

Strategically, Al-Qaeda favours a gradualist approach to jihad by preparing society to accept its version of the Islamic state. In theory, Al-Qaeda supports a caliphate—but as a long-term goal. In other words, the creation of a caliphate is an end-point of the jihadist struggle for Al-Qaeda, while it is the starting point for IS.[82] This is why Al-Qaeda prefers to work through local jihadist affiliates by providing them its ideological umbrella. Meanwhile, the Afghan Taliban has a limited focus confined to Islamization of Afghanistan. The jihadist movement has categorically maintained having no ambitions outside Afghanistan.

### *Reaffirming Commitment to Old Loyalties*

The rise of IS transiently disturbed the jihadist landscape in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[83] The broader context of these reverberations was the changing dynamics of the competition between Al-Qaeda and IS for the leadership of a global jihadist movement.[84] Al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban and TTP categorically rejected IS’ message of the Caliphate.

TTP disowned those commanders and splinter groups that pledged allegiance to IS.[85] Additionally, in May 2015 TTP released a 60-page statement rebutting IS leader Baghdadi’s claim to head a caliphate through its official propaganda wing, Umar media. TTP jihadist Abu Usman Salarzai wrote the statement in which he exposed errors in Baghdadi’s claim to be the new caliph.[86]

While the Afghan Taliban outgunned and outnumbered ISK during the embryonic phase of the latter’s emergence, the Taliban felt the pinch of its growing ideological appeal in their backyard. In June 2014, then-leader of the Afghan Taliban Akhtar Mansoor wrote a fourteen-page letter to IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, warning him to stay out of Afghanistan. Mansoor maintained in the letter, “Jihadi groups across the Muslim world are struggling for Islam and they have their own organizational structure. If your meddling in their affairs creates division, it will result in bloodshed within these organizations.”[87]

In October 2015, the Afghan Taliban also constituted a special task force comprising of well-equipped 1,000 fighters to avert further defections to IS. The fighters allocated to this unit were better trained than regular Taliban, and their sole aim was to crush IS.[88]

Meanwhile, in reaction to IS’s ingress in the Af-Pak region, Al-Qaeda chief Ayman Al-Zawahiri announced the formation of Al-Qaeda’s South Asia branch, Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), in September 2014. Al-Qaeda exploited local issues, such as the oppression of Muslims in the Indian-administered Kashmir and in Myanmar to counter IS influence. On the other hand, IS offered the same audience its so-called caliphate model as a solution to oppression.[89]

Al-Qaeda has been trying to keep its preponderant position as the vanguard of the global jihadist movement in the Af-Pak region intact, while IS effort is focused on making a larger impact in the region. Al-Qaeda’s aim is to contain IS’ expansion by keeping its current network of affiliates intact. IS, on the other hand, relies on its brand popularity as a tool to win loyalties of the local jihadists.

### *Jumping on the IS Bandwagon*

At least four splinter groups of the Pakistani Taliban (Jandullah, Tehrik-e-Khilafat, Bajaur and Orakzai region Taliban), one faction of the Afghan Taliban (the Salafi Taliban) and the Uzbek militants of the IMU have

pledged allegiance to IS. The major reservation shown towards the Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda by fighters and commanders of these factions was the underground nature of the two groups' top leadership.[90]

The two major hurdles in the way of jihadists eager to join IS were *bayah* (oath of loyalty to Mullah Umar) and *aqeedah* (faith, as most of Afghan Taliban are Deobandi-Hanafis while IS followers are followers of the Salafi-Takfiri-Jihadist ideology). Within the jihadist community, reneging one's allegiance and changing the faith is considered illegal and an act of rebellion. However, the death of Mullah Umar freed them of their *bayah* to him.[91]

IMU switched sides from the Afghan Taliban to IS because it did not see Mullah Umar in person for a long time. The statement issued by IMU spokesperson before joining IS noted, "Mullah Omar has not been seen for some 13 years, and he can no longer be the leader in accordance with Islamic Sharia." [92] Another case in point is the statement of allegiance to IS by the Bajaur faction of the Pakistan Taliban, issued in April 2015. It noted, "Mullah Omar was limited only to Afghanistan and not for the whole Muslims. He was only our jihadi Ameer [leader] and not a Khalifa (caliph). We do not know where Mullah Omar is. We have not heard that he considers himself as Ameer. No one has ever asked (us) to declare Mullah Omar as our Ameer." [93]

Operationally, questions were raised about the air of secrecy wrapped around the decision-making structures of the Afghan Taliban and its disconnect with mid-level field commanders. The Afghan Taliban's Afghan-centrism was also questioned. The more ambitious younger generation of the jihadists termed the Afghan Taliban as a political group using Islam as a cover to restore their government toppled in Afghanistan by the US invasion in 2001.[94]

#### *Fence-Sitter Groups*

A third category consists of opportunistic militants. Rather than siding with Al-Qaeda/Afghan Taliban or IS, these groups have exhibited a 'fence sitting' attitude while monitoring which terror group emerges as the ultimate victor in the struggle for the leadership of the global jihadist movement. A case in point is Pakistani Taliban's splinter group Jamaat-ul-Aharar (JuA).[95] The head of JuA Umar, Khalid Khurasani (real name Abdul Wali), offered IS-central his allegiance, provided he was made the emir of the latter's *Wilayat Khurasan*. [96]

In the broader context of the changing global-militant landscape, this group falls in the category of "swing groups." Hitherto, JuA has kept itself open to invitations or temptations by Al-Qaeda and the IS. More particularly, it has attempted to leverage its position within the broader competition between IS and al-Qaeda. For now, it is likely that JuA will keep its independent identity intact by giving mixed signals to both IS and Al-Qaeda, but not siding with either group completely.[97]

#### ***How Widespread and Penetrative is the IS Threat in Afghanistan and Pakistan?***

Notwithstanding stiff resistance from the (much larger) Afghan Taliban, the US air and drone strikes, and the Afghan forces' military operations, ISK has been successful in creating space for itself in the Af-Pak militant landscape. The group has shown resilience and regenerative capacity.[98] It has attained enough operational strength, organizational structure, and skills to carry out large-scale attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in coordination with like-minded militant groups.

Through a series of high-profile attacks in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, in the second half of 2016, ISK has proved its credentials in the Af-Pak jihadist market place. For instance, on 8 August 2016, ISK claimed the suicide bombing of a hospital in Quetta that left as many as 70 people dead and 120 others injured.[99] Similarly, on 24 October, ISK militants targeted a police training academy in Quetta, Balochistan's capital, killing 61 police cadets and wounding 165.[100] A month later, in November, it attacked

a Sufi Shrine (Shah Nurani) in the Khuzdar district of Balochistan, killing 52 devotees and injuring 100 others.[101]

ISK has displayed a similar strength in Afghanistan through a series of high-profile attacks in different parts of the country. For instance, the 13 January 2016 attack on the Pakistani consulate in Jalalabad (7 killed) [102], the 23 July 2016 attack in Kabul, targeting Hazara Shia protesters[103] (80 killed, 230 injured) and the 8 March 2017 assault on the military hospital in Kabul (30 killed, 50 injured) are indication of its outreach and operational strength.[104]

At the same time, IS has found an ideological niche among the radicalized youth of urban areas. Pro-IS allegiances and the spread of IS's online propaganda among the educated youth of middle and upper middle classes are a matter of concern for three reasons. First, it has shaken the existing jihadist landscape, making it more complex, violent, and polarised. Second, while IS has not succeeded in challenging the traditional jihadist groups in the Af-Pak region, the competition has negatively affected regional security. Third, the IS model has provided the new generation of jihadists with an alternative option.

Al-Qaeda's inability to carry out a major terrorist attack within the last several years and the Afghan Taliban's failure to break the stalemate in Afghanistan has left many jihadist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan disillusioned. To many of them, al-Qaeda's old school and gradualist approach to jihad seems out-dated. In addition, many jihadists see the Afghan Taliban's Afghan-centric focus as a ploy to restore its government in Afghanistan rather than fighting for Islam. The Afghan Taliban is seen as a political rather than an Islamic force.

However, Al-Qaeda is not a spent force in Afghanistan and Pakistan. With the exception of aforementioned defections, the majority of militant groups in the region still support Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By announcing its new South Asian branch, the AQIS, Al-Qaeda central has offered a more compelling model of *Ghazwa-e-Hind* to its Af-Pak affiliates. Unlike IS, which has attracted foreign fighters from across the world to fill its ranks in Iraq and Syria, Al-Qaeda prefers working with local fighters on behalf of local issues.

It will be difficult for IS to penetrate the veteran jihadist entities, like the Kashmiri jihadi groups, the Afghan Taliban and their Pakistani counter-parts. However, the splintered and disillusioned fighters and leaders of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban may gravitate towards IS in future.

### ***Implications of the IS Rise for Afghanistan-Pakistan***

#### *A Complex Militant Landscape*

The Af-Pak militant landscape has become more complicated, divisive, and a highly contested domain with the emergence of IS.[105] Consequently, it has become unpredictable, diffused and fluid in nature.[106] Operationally, it is Al-Qaeda and Afghan Taliban-led, but ideologically it is an IS-inspired landscape.[107] The IS ingress has also lowered the threshold of violence and influenced online radicalisation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

IS has the ability to universalise individual grievances of the educated youth of urban areas with its global Salafi-Takfiri-Jihadist narrative, and offers putative solutions in a collective setting. This has allowed the group to transcend the barriers of language, culture and geography.[108] It has given birth to new leaders, cells, symbols, recruitment methods and extremist narratives, adding new layers of complexity to an already overcrowded landscape. The onset of social media has decreased the distance between local and global developments along with accelerating the flow of information.[109]

New militant leaders—like the mastermind of the 2014 attack on the Ismaili Shia community in Karachi, Saad Aziz—escaped the gaze of security surveillance due to their lesser-known militant past. At the same time, the cellular structure of IS's urban affiliates makes their detection and elimination difficult. Moreover, the neutralization of one cell does not affect the working of other cells given their discreet and disconnected nature. This has made counter-terrorism policing and surveillance an uphill task.

After the bulk of foreign troops withdrew from Afghanistan at the end of 2014, the Af-Pak region has become a recruiting pool for IS.[110] Addressing the 10th Global Coalition ministerial meeting on IS in Washington, on 24 March 2017, US Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson noted that IS is stepping up its recruitment of young people from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. He said, “Today, Daesh (IS) is resorting to many terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and many other places in Europe in order to send a message that they are still standing and they want for those young people to go fight in its ranks.”[111] IS not only offers better remuneration but fighting in Syria and Iraq produces a deeper sense of meaning and significance among those persuaded by the apocalyptic idea.[112]

#### *Widening of the Sunni-Shia Conflict*

IS's alliances with the anti-Shia militant organizations, such as JuA, LJA and Jandullah have contributed to an escalation of sectarian violence in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The extreme hatred and penchant to target Shias make IS, Jandullah, LeJ and JUA appealing allies and natural partners.

In addition, IS not only excommunicates the Shias but it also apostatizes the Sunni groups who do not follow its extremist version of Salafi Islam.[113] In this regard, IS is a Sunni supremacist organization. The IS-claimed attacks on the Sufi shrines of Saints Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sindh and Shah Nurani in Balochistan clearly show that IS-affiliates in Af-Pak will not limit their sectarian attacks only to Shias. Sufi Muslim practices in Afghanistan and Pakistan seem to be the target of IS attacks as well.

Since 2015, the intensity and frequency of the anti-Shia violence in Afghanistan has risen sharply.[114] The Afghan Taliban, despite being a Sunni militant group, is pan-Islamist, not sectarian. The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan has remained nationalist and Islamist in nature.

IS's anti-Shia campaign in Afghanistan has forced Iran to enter into a deal with the Afghan Taliban—two erstwhile adversaries—to protect Shia interests in Afghanistan. In return, the Afghan Taliban obtain medical facilities, weapons, and resting places in Iran.[115] It is important to point out that Iran has recruited around 4,000 to 5,000 Shias from Afghanistan and Pakistan to participate in the Syrian civil war.[116] These Shia fighters are trained and financed in Iran and dispatched to Syria to fight under the *Liwa Al-Zainebiyoun* (Brigade of Zaineb, Pakistani)[117] and *Liwa Al-Fatimyoun* (Brigade of Fatima, Afghan) brigades.[118]

In retaliation for the Pakistani Shias' participation in the Syrian civil war, the Sunni terrorist groups have carried out reprisal attacks against the Shia community in Pakistan. For instance, in December 2015, LJA targeted Shia residents of Parachinar (a city in the Kurram tribal region) with a bomb blast, killing 24 Shias. Claiming responsibility for the attack, the spokesperson of LJA, Ali bin Sufyan, said, “This is revenge for the killing of Muslims by the Syrian president and Iran.”[119] More recently, JuA has targeted a Shia mosque with a suicide attack in Kurram, killing 23 Shias and injuring 100 others.[120]

In retrospect, media reports indicate that since 2012, several LeJ fighters have travelled to Iraq and Syria to help the Sunni rebels against the Shia regimes of the two countries. In fact, in 2012, LeJ was jointly running the network with the Pakistani Taliban, which sent Sunni Pakistani fighters to Iraq and Syria. A former LeJ commander Usman Ghani, and leader of the Pakistani Taliban Alim Ullah Umray, ran the network.[121]



*Threat of Online Radicalization*

IS's effective and smart use of the internet and social media for its propaganda campaign and recruitment has taken the threat of online radicalization to a new level. It has revolutionized the recruitment prospects of the would-be jihadists to their favourite militant organizations, thus leaving vulnerable youth segments increasingly susceptible to online radicalization. So, the battlefield has expanded from the real world to the cyber world. Moreover, the threat of cyber radicalization spearheaded by IS is potent and real. Online chat rooms and social media platforms have become the new meeting and recruiting places for jihadist organizations and would-be jihadists.

Since 9/11, Pakistan has shown great vulnerability to online radicalization with increasing Internet penetration in the country. Currently, there are 30 million Internet users in Pakistan and 2.4 million in Afghanistan; half of them use the Internet on their portable electronic devices, including mobile phones. [122] More than 70 percent of these Internet users are youth. Pakistan and Afghanistan should understand that online radicalization is a critical threat, and then devise a collective mechanism to monitor online chat rooms of jihadist organizations, their websites and the profiles of individuals subscribing to their materials.

**Conclusion**

Defeating IS in Afghanistan is one of the goals of Trump administration's new Afghan policy.[123] Similarly, in December 2016, the declaration of a tripartite meeting in Moscow -comprising Pakistan, China and Russia-pointed out IS as the "main threat" in Afghanistan.[124] This shows that the group has created enough space to feature in the highest-level regional security discussions of the Af-Pak region.

The dilemma facing IS in Afghanistan and Pakistan is that it does not have a towering figure like Ayman Al-Zawahiri to challenge the authority and legitimacy of other major jihadist groups. Though IS has recruited fighters and mid-level commanders from existing militant groups, it has struggled to bring seasoned leaders from these groups to its fold. As a result, ISK is not a major jihadist movement in the region, but only one militant group among a plethora of others.

However, ISK has made two irrefutable gains: alliances have been established with anti-Shia militant groups, and their ideology is resonating among an educated, urban, youthful constituency. The IS partnerships with local sectarian groups have not only encouraged a renewal of these groups but will also sustain IS in the region in the long-term. The security implications of this development are potentially catastrophic, as it will intensify the Sunni-Shia conflict and expand it further.

Meanwhile, the traction of IS propaganda among the educated youth of urban areas, especially in Pakistan, raises new questions about the causal factors and motivations behind their radicalization. IS's smart use of internet and social media has alarmingly increased youth's vulnerability to cyber-radicalization. However, this is not new or surprising. The trend is consistent with the overall radicalization of educated youth with a pro-IS bent in the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia. Nonetheless, an effective response to this radicalization must be sought within the local contexts and extremist milieu of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This is why military defeat alone will not eliminate the IS threat from the Af-Pak region. Ideological delegitimization of IS's extremist narrative-through counter-ideological responses-will also be needed. It is essential to neutralise the propaganda appeal, while the kinetic response is warranted to destroy IS's ability to carry out large-scale attacks.

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<b>Annex 1: Militant Groups in Afghanistan-Pakistan That Have Pledged Allegiance to IS</b>		
<b>Group Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Message</b>
Tehrik-e-Khilafat (Pakistan)	July 9, 2014	“From today, Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi shall consider Tehrik-e-Khilafat and jihad mujahideen fighters of Pakistan as one of the arrows among his arrows which he has kept for his bow. We are praying from the almighty Allah to give us chance in our lives to see the expansion of Islamic State boundaries toward the Sub-Continent and Khurasan region in order to hoist the flag of Islamic State here...”[125]
Shahidullah Shahid (Pakistan)	Oct 15, 2014	“I am going to announce my allegiance to Al-Baghdadi Al-Qureshi. I will obey his every command, whether good or bad and whatever the situation. Neither the TTP nor its leader Maulana Fazlullah has directed me to announce my allegiance to the ISIS, but I and five senior leaders have decided to join al-Baghdadi al-Qarshi. I want my allegiance to be accepted. I will wait for your reply and at the end all praise must be for Allah Almighty.”[126]
Jandullah (Pakistan)	Nov 18, 2014	“They (Islamic State) are our brothers, whatever plan they have we will support them.”[127]
Al-Tawhid Battalion in Afghanistan-Pakistan	Sept 21, 2014	“Should we keep fighting against the disbelievers and the apostates, or should we refrain from that until you come here? Some of the ignorant ones who left jihad could object to us, as well as some of the people of knowledge, which is that your fight in the land of Khorasan, its advantage and core will apply to some others, and your killed and your martyrs will be contrary to that which Allah has asked from you...”[128]
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Pakistan)	Oct 6, 2014	“Hereby, on behalf of all members of our movement, in line with our sacred duties, I declare that we are in the same ranks with the Islamic State (ISIS) in this continued war between Islam and (non-Muslims) Islamic State is free from the patriotic or nationalist agenda...you can see Arabs, Chechens, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Russians and many English-speaking Muslim mujahidin in its ranks.”[129]
Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost (Afghanistan)	July 1, 2014	“In Guantanamo in [2002] I saw a vision of a palace with a huge closed door, above which there was a clock pointing to the time of 10 minutes before 12. I was told that was the home of the caliphate. So, I assumed then that the caliphate would be established after 12 years. Coincidentally, the Islamic State declared its caliphate in 2014–or 12 years. Ever since the caliphate fell in 1924 the Islamic ummah has experienced phases of disagreement, division...” failure and disputes and became divided into fighting groups and different small states that fail to represent Islam. All Muslim governments are now null and void as they have been replaced by the caliphate with Baghdadi, the caliph of the Muslims...” and the emir of the believers.”[130]
Bajaur Taliban	April 9, 2015	“Mullah Omar was limited only to Afghanistan and not for the whole Muslims. He was only our jihadi Ameer and not a Khalifa. We do not know where Mullah Omar is. We have not heard that he considers himself as Ameer. No one has ever asked to declare Mullah Omar as our Ameer.” [131]

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**Annex 2: Profiles of Influential Jihadists and Radical Clerics who have Pledged Allegiance to the Islamic State****1. Hafiz Saeed Khan Orakzai**

Hafiz Saeed Khan Orakzai was a local judge and the former head of the Pakistani Taliban for the Orakzai tribal region. Saeed, 42, left the Pakistani Taliban in October 2014 and pledged allegiance to IS. On January 13, 2015, he replaced the interim head of IS in Afghanistan-Pakistan, Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost who was tasked to organize the group in the region.[132]

Saeed's militant career began after 9/11, when he went to fight against the US forces in Afghanistan in 2001. He hailed from the Mamozai Pashtun tribe of Orakzai agency. He left the Pakistani Taliban with five other commanders, including its former spokesperson, Shahidullah Shahid.

Saeed was considered a close associated of Pakistani Taliban's founding leader Baitullah Mehsud and was with the militant group since its inception in December 2007. He was one of the most hardliner militant commanders in the Pakistani Taliban. He organized a number of terrorist attacks, including the March 2013 attack on the U.S. consulate in Peshawar.[133] He was killed in a US drone strike in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province in August 2016.[134]

**2. Mullah Rauf Khadim**

Rauf was the deputy head of ISK in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He was killed in a US drone strike on February 9, 2015, in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province.[135] Rauf was a fluent Arabic speaker and swore allegiance to IS on January 26, 2015. He was initially a member of the Afghan Taliban. However, he was demoted after developing differences with the Afghan Taliban for placing restrictions on varying interpretations of the Quran.[136] Another point of contention with the Afghan Taliban arose when Rauf declared allegiance to IS and began recruiting for the organization in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Rauf along with his followers raised black flags of IS in Helmand and removed white flags of the Taliban.[137]

In 2001, Rauf had been detained by U.S. forces and spent six years in Guantanamo Bay before being released. During his stay in prison, he converted to Takfiri Salfism. He was transferred back to Afghanistan in 2007. [138]

**3. Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost**

The 50-years old Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost is a veteran Afghan jihadist. He participated in the anti-Soviet jihad (1979-1988) under the banner of Salafi Mujahidin front led by Maulvi Jamil-ur-Rahman in eastern Afghanistan. He hails from Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province. On July 1, 2014, he pledged allegiance to IS commander Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.[139] During the rule of Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan (1996-2001), he did not hold any official position. Throughout that period, he worked with different Saudi-funded aid agencies.

In 2001, he was arrested in Pakistan and handed over to US authorities. For three years, he was kept in Guantanamo Bay. The US released him in April 2005 due to his health problems.[140] However, in 2006, Pakistani security forces detained him but subsequently he was released in 2008 as part of prisoners' exchange between the Taliban and the Pakistani government.

Dost is a prolific writer in Pashtu, Arabic and Dari languages and author of more than a dozen books.[141] He has written on topics as diverse as Islamic theology, politics and poetry. However, his best known work is his Guantanamo memoir published in Pashto language entitled *Matī Zawlanē* (Broken Shackles).[142] Dost parted his ways with ISK after he was not given an influential organizational position.[143]



#### 4. Maulvi Abdul Qahar

Maulvi Abdul Qahar Khurasani is a Salafi-Jihadist ideologue. Khurasani has authored a number books and religious testimonials (available online) about the Salafi-interpretations of jihad. Since 2012, he owns a jihadi media publication house *Abtalul-Islam* (Heroes of Islam). According to his work, all Muslim states working with the West are *murtad* (apostate) and those working with them as legitimate targets.[144] Khurasani is very hostile towards Pakistan. One of his books entitled the *Criterion on Virtues of Fighting Pakistan* justifies militant attacks against Pakistani security forces and government.[145] On July 5, 2014, he took an oath of allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdai in a video published through *Abtalul-Islam*. [146] In the video, a masked man, introduced as Abu Dujana al-Afghani and acting as Khorasani's spokesman, reads the message in eloquent Arabic.[147]

#### 5. Maulana Abdul Aziz

Maulana Abdul Aziz is an influential Pakistani religious cleric, a jihadi ideologue and head of the controversial Red Mosque.[148] In December 2014, a group of female-student from his madrassa, *Jamia Hafsa*, publicly pledged allegiance to IS.[149] Aziz endorsed the video and admitted to his open support for the group.[150]

In 2004, he issued a controversial *fatwa* (religious edict) against the Pakistani army, maintaining that Pakistan army soldiers and personnel of other Pakistani security forces killed during the fight with the militants were not martyr. On the contrary, the militant who died fighting the Pakistani security forces were martyrs.[151]

In 2007, students of the Red Mosque-affiliated seminaries *Jamia Hafsa* and *Jamia Faridia* organized an Islamist uprising against the state.[152] The then army chief and president General Pervez Musharraf crushed the uprising. Aziz spearheaded the uprising with his younger brother Abdul Rashid Ghazi, who was killed during the operation. Aziz was put under house arrest for 21 months on charges of kidnapping, incitement to violence, sedition and terrorism.

#### 6. Shahidullah Shahid

Shahidullah Shahid aka Sheikh Abu Umar Maqbool is the former spokesperson of TTP. On October 6, 2014, he pledged allegiance to IS along with six other commanders of the Pakistani Taliban. In an online video message, he said, "From today, I accept Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as my Caliph and will accept every directive of his and will fight for him whatsoever the situation." [153]

The top leadership of the Pakistani Taliban sacked Shahid from his position and distanced itself from him, terming his allegiance to IS as an individual act rather than organizational. He was appointed as spokesperson of the Pakistani Taliban in 2013. Shahid was among the founding members of TTP. He is also the teacher of slain TTP chiefs Baitullah and Hakimullah Mehsud.[154]

## Notes

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## Cracks in the Online “Caliphate”: How the Islamic State is Losing Ground in the Battle for Cyberspace

by Miron Lakomy

### Abstract

*This article argues that the Islamic State’s cyber jihad, fully launched in 2014, is currently undergoing a regression that is demonstrated by the weakening of its quality, coverage and effectiveness. Comparing the character, major forms and popularity of Daesh’s releases from 2014 and 2015 with its most up-to-date productions, one can notice evident alterations signaling the long-awaited, but limited as yet, impairment of the “Caliphate’s” propaganda machine, composed of such specialized cells as the Amaq News Agency, al-Furqan Media, al-Itisam Foundation, al-Himmah Library, or the al-Hayat Media Center. This transition is caused by a multitude of factors, with both offline and online origins.*

**Keywords:** ISIS, cyber jihad, Daesh, propaganda, Caliphate

### Introduction

The phenomenon of cyber jihad has been thoroughly discussed by the academic community, blogosphere pundits, the media and government decision-makers around the world. Despite the fact that it has been ongoing for more than two decades, Islamist propaganda in cyberspace has only recently been widely recognized as a top international security threat.[1] This is mostly due to the fact that in 2014 the Islamic State launched the most advanced, massive and probably also the most efficient cyber jihad campaign ever. Its operations online resulted in, to use U.S. military doctrine terms, *shock and awe* among Western audiences. Images and recordings of brutally decapitated, shot or burned hostages, professionally recorded and directed, instantly proliferated over the Web 2.0 environment, reaching millions of Internet users. A similar phenomenon (but on a smaller scale) has occurred with other advanced releases of Daesh: battle footage, “documentaries”, online magazines, and *nasheed* music videos.

It is unsurprising that much has already been written about the character of the Islamic State’s activities on the Internet. Some academics have focused their research on the communication channels exploited by Daesh, while others have analyzed the content of its propaganda releases. Moreover, many scientists have attempted to assess the impact of its cyber jihad on international security.[2] All these monographs, papers and reports usually have one thing in common—they all agree that the Islamic State’s propaganda on the Internet is sophisticated, well-thought-out, and a threat to the internal stability and safety of developed states.

With this background in mind, this article argues that the Islamic State’s cyber jihad—fully launched at the turn of 2014[3]—is currently undergoing a regression that is demonstrated by the weakening of its quality, coverage and effectiveness. Comparing the character, major forms and popularity of Daesh’s releases from 2014 and 2015 to its most up-to-date productions, one can notice evident alterations signaling the long-awaited (though currently limited) impairment of the “Caliphate’s” propaganda machine, composed of such specialized cells as the Amaq News Agency, al-Furqan Media, al-Itisam Foundation, al-Himmah Library, or the al-Hayat Media Center. This transition is caused by a multitude of factors, with both off-line and on-line origins.

This study has two major goals. The first is to compare the current characteristics of the Islamic State’s cyber jihad with its 2014-2015 features. There are several distinct differences regarding (among others) the distribution strategies exploited, the scope of propaganda proliferation, and the quantity and quality of various materials. The second goal is to provide an answer to an important question: What has influenced

the recent degradation of Daesh's psychological operations (PSYOPs) in cyberspace? This issue has crucial meaning for international security, as it may suggest which anti-*jihadi* solutions introduced by developed states are proving to be effective in the long run.

In order to achieve these goals, this article has been divided into three parts. The first contains an overview of the Islamic State's initial cyber jihad features, as well as the reasons why it became so successful. The second examines the major negative changes in the online activities conducted by Daesh that have taken place since the end of 2015. Finally, the last section of the article explains what has caused this degradation.

### ***Islamic State's Online Blitz, 2014-2015***

The Islamic State's full-blown propaganda campaign in cyberspace was launched at the turn of 2014, which slightly preceded the proclamation of the "Caliphate".[4] This does not mean that ISIS/ISIL did not devote its resources to cyber jihad before. It is clear that the organization had developed its information warfare capabilities throughout the Syrian conflict, which was proved by many releases posted online in 2012 and 2013.[5] The quality of these early productions varied. Some, like the famous rally video depicting probably the ill-famed *Jihadi John* and Abu Omar al-Shishani, were no different from other Islamist terrorists' productions at the time.[6] Others constituted glimpses of their future mastery in online PSYOPs. As early as November 2013, ISIS combat footage, recorded in high definition, had already drawn limited attention from Internet users on the popular video hosting service *LiveLeak* due to its unusual technical parameters and the proficiency of its director.[7] The upsurge in the quality and quantity of propaganda releases corresponded with fast territorial gains at the time. In effect, when the "Caliphate" was declared on June 29, 2014, the basic tools of cyber jihad—aiming to indoctrinate and gather the support of Muslim societies around the world, as well as to intimidate its real or imaginary enemies—were tried, tested and ready to go.

There are various opinions among academics concerning the major goals of the Islamic State's cyber jihad. On the one hand, according to Gabi Siboni, Daniel Cohen and Tal Koren: "ISIS's propaganda machine and the use of the social communications media fulfill two important functions (...) The first is psychological warfare, targeting the morale of the enemy's soldiers (...) The second involves gaining support from Western Islamic groups, while unifying the Islamic State's soldiers behind one goal." [8] In contrast, Lauren Williams argues that "Islamic State's media effort has a number of aims that target both sympathetic and hostile audiences. One goal is to recruit supporters (...) A second goal is to generate fear among its opponents, which has very specific advantages on the battlefield. A third goal is to assert its legitimacy and gain acceptance of its status as a state." [9] In this context, it must be stressed that the bulk of Islamic State's releases target Muslim societies around the world, although they also attempt to influence "disbelievers".

From day one, Daesh's propaganda has utilized advanced methods of distribution. This was one of the key reasons for its impressive success. To begin with, Al-Hayat Media Center, as well as other specialized cells, benefited from the vast popularity of both mainstream (Facebook, Twitter) and niche social media platforms. Unlike many other terrorist organizations, they relied on a massive network of tens of thousands of unaffiliated supporters in the Web 2.0 environment, which used the "share" function to transfer the propaganda to their followers and peers.[10] This in turn contributed to the creation of a specific "snowball effect" in cyberspace. As a result, one message posted in one place could potentially reach hundreds of thousands or even millions of Internet users. Clearly Islamic State perfected the use of social media to reach audiences, who would normally never seek *jihadi* materials online. The surprising efficiency of social networks in the Islamic State's strategy was accurately explained by Victoria Pues, who stressed that "young westerners encounter (...) terrorist content in their ordinary online environment. It makes a significant difference whether we see terror attacks in the format of the evening news or on our newsfeed on Facebook. Firstly, it is a more direct conversation between terrorist organization and target on a more individual basis (...) Secondly, the content is not framed by the news agency's comments but is reaching the user unfiltered



and framed by harmless tweets and posts of friends. Thirdly, the content published over social media does not have the format of ordinary advertisement.”[11] To summarize, thanks to the sophisticated use of social networking, as well as thousands of supporters online, the Islamic State’s ideological influences could reach a truly global audience.

The same trend occurred in other services corresponding technologically with social media—i.e., image, video and audio hosting services such as *YouTube*, *LiveLeak*, *Instagram* or *Tumblr*. Their popularity was utilized by Daesh to spread various types of propaganda, which quickly proliferated in the interconnected environment of Web 2.0, despite numerous counteractions by social media service administrators.[12] In fact, services which allow audiovisual content online to be posted played a crucial role in Daesh’s cyber jihad. This was manifested by the apparent “success” of a video series depicting the savage decapitations of Western citizens, such as James Foley, Steven Sotloff, David Haines, Alan Henning or Peter Kassig.[13] These videos spread instantly, just after their initial release, across the web, reaching massive audiences.[14] Moreover, they came to the increased attention of the mass media, which due to its alarming reports on these executions further fueled Internet users’ interest in Islamic State propaganda.

Aside from social media and hosting services, the Islamic State utilized several other channels of distribution. Initially, traditional websites and blogs, frequently located on the most popular blogosphere platforms (e.g. *BlogSpot*).[15] They were clearly secondary, backup channels of distribution, as in principle, they are much more difficult to find via conventional search engines. Moreover, they are frequently deleted, and thus their addresses tend to change. They have, however, two major advantages: they can be easily and quickly recreated (using blogger templates) and they can act as repositories, gathering all manner of content released by Daesh in one place. Another channel used by the Islamic State in cyberspace is the radio. Despite the fact that since its creation the “Caliphate” did not launch a proper online radio, it operates a conventional one called *al-Bayan*, which broadcasts locally in many *wilayahs*. According to the Memri Cyber & Jihad Lab, its content was, however, disseminated in cyberspace using various formats and channels, most notably through the *archive.org* website.[16] Finally, the Islamic State also exploited various online communication applications, such as *Skype*, *Signal*, *Whatsapp* and *SnapChat*. They were usually used for more confidential forms of contact. This kind of software was frequently utilized for recruitment purposes at the later stages of selection, as it provided a high degree of privacy and security for terrorists.[17]

Daesh propaganda releases can be divided into four major categories:

- audio (radio broadcasts, *nasheed* music)
- visual (memes, pictures, banners, symbols, infographics)
- audiovisual (execution recordings, battle footage, “documentaries”, interviews, *nasheed* music videos, short advertisements and reportages, such as *mujatweets*)
- text (websites and social media statements and news, leaders’ declarations, bulletins, online magazines)

The most influential and successful pieces of propaganda posted online in 2014 and 2015 were clearly videos, which depicted the sheer brutality of the Islamic State’s executioners. These materials proved to be unusual and exceptionally disturbing, when compared to the “mainstream” *jihadi* releases. They proliferated instantly over the Web, reaching millions of Internet users, and thus becoming the greatest success in the history of cyber jihad.[18] Equally sophisticated audiovisual content in the form of *nasheed* music videos, which frequently resembled the best American and Western European pop stars’ productions, was also hugely successful. This was perfectly symbolized by the infamous *nasheed* entitled *Fisabilillah*, which encouraged recipients to conduct terrorist attacks against the “disbelievers”. Only one of its sources, posted on the popular video hosting service *LiveLeak*, has been viewed more than 120,000 times since April 2015. It has to be



stressed that both the audio and visual layers of this music video were very impressive.[19] Other Islamic State productions—such as “documentaries”, interviews and reports (e.g. *mujatweets*, *Windows* episodes)—were clearly designed to look like the best programs from global TV networks. All of them were of the highest technical quality and contained sophisticated manipulation techniques. From the plethora of audiovisual content, only the ordinary (but still usually recorded in high-definition[20]) battle footage lacked this exquisite complexity, yet it was still an important method of glorifying IS members’ heroism and dedication to jihad, and thus encouraging recipients to follow in their footsteps.[21]

Texts, including primarily online magazines (“*Dabiq*”, “*Islamic State News*”, “*Islamic State Report*”, “*Dar al-Islam*”, “*Konstantiniyye*”, “*Istok*” or “*Furat Press*”)[22], Internet bulletins, as well as declarations and statements posted on the web usually had the same high technical quality, as well as exploited similar, advanced manipulation methods. Their roles were, however, narrower, as they usually aimed to enlist or strengthen the attitudes of jihadist supporters. For instance, “*Dabiq*” being the most recognized media outlet of this kind, frequently used narratives that encouraged Muslims living in the West to conduct *hijrah* [migration] to the Islamic State.[23] Other articles and statements regularly attempted to inform or to mislead global audiences about events which held importance for the al-Baghdadi organization. Thus, their importance when it comes to shocking and terrorizing “disbelievers” and “crusaders” was rather marginal.

The significance and form of the IS’s visual propaganda varied. Some—such as the ordinary pictures, symbols and banners—played rather decorative or informative roles, despite their high quality, as they were extensively used in online bulletins, social media, articles, magazines, and movies released on the Internet. However, within the wealth of Islamic State visual productions, memes and infographics stood out, as they both employed persuasion techniques, were easily exploitable via social media, and appealed to qualitatively different groups of receivers. Memes composed of a picture/-s combined with a short text message, on the one hand, were designed to reach younger, less educated and less aware audiences. They frequently contained references to mass culture canons, such as popular movies, music, ideas, gestures or symbols. These pieces of propaganda usually exploited humor and aimed to infect ignorant receivers with jihadist concepts, to recruit them or only to improve the organization’s image among the youth. Infographics, on the other hand, were designed to reach more demanding and conscious audiences, who usually need illusionary facts and statistics, in order to strengthen or to change their attitudes. Both, however, were easily transmittable via social media communication channels, and therefore, played a key role in the online strategy of the Islamic State.[24]

Audio propaganda fulfilled similar functions. *Nasheed* songs and radio broadcasts were usually designed to encourage Muslim audiences to enter the path of jihad, and to reinforce the attitudes of IS supporters. Some also provided false information to audiences. *Nasheed* songs frequently referred to such themes as war and fighting, which inspired some listeners,[25] while, radio broadcasts covered a much wider spectrum of issues, ranging from religious programs and *nasheeds* to news bulletins. The quality of these broadcasts often compared favorably to popular Western radio stations like NPR.[26] Nevertheless, this kind of content played a rather complementary role in the online strategy of the Islamic State in comparison to its audiovisual, visual or text propaganda.

In this context, the Islamic State’s cyber jihad in 2014 and 2015 had several outstanding features, which ensured its success:

1. Its initial creativity in the planning and realization of executions was somewhat surprising. In addition to beheadings, Daesh members shot, burned and crucified its prisoners, and some victims were also dropped from roofs. Sometimes, these executions were carried out by child soldiers, which was even more disturbing for audiences, as it was a visible sign of the complete dehumanization of the

Islamic State's propagandists. Obviously, this was done intentionally, in order to shock and intimidate "disbelievers", "apostates", "crusaders" and "heretics".

2. Many of Islamic State's audiovisual productions (e.g. "documentaries") were carefully directed and edited. As Charlie Winter described one of Daesh's videos: "undeniably, the production effort behind *Although the Disbelievers Dislike It* was formidable. It is clear that the content of the video was carefully considered and the individual (or individuals) who directed it were obvious perfectionists. The fact that they took between four and six hours to film a single scene using a number of different takes demonstrates this." [27] These features noticed by Charlie Winter could be observed in the majority of serious IS audiovisual productions, which exploited such professional methods of filmmaking as: aerial shots, crowd shots, ambient light, various camera angles (even first person), compilations, adjusting the range of colors, depth of field, and slow motion. [28] A recent study by Ahmet S. Yayla and Anne Speckhard indicates that these advanced techniques, contrary to popular belief, were employed not only by foreign-educated IS members, but also locals, such as Syrian engineers, using professional equipment. [29]
3. Post-production was also of the highest quality, which was proved by frequent and impressive special effects, as well as professional computer graphics (both 2D and 3D). For instance, *the al-Hayat Media Center* 3D official teardrop-like spinning logotype seen at the beginning of many videos can be viewed as proof that Daesh make use of a team of skillful and experienced CG artists.
4. The majority of productions, especially those aimed at non-Arabic speaking audiences, were released in high-definition, which was rare among other terrorist groups in 2014.
5. Its audiovisuals were usually well-thought-out and far more sophisticated than the average cyber jihadist messages. Aside from "traditional" content like forced prisoners' speeches, Daesh productions frequently referred to the most up-to-date political events, commented on statements of NATO/EU state leaders, contained professionally conducted interviews, street surveys, and presented the ordinary life of Islamic State citizens. Moreover, all of Daesh's propaganda materials, including "documentaries", reports, interviews, articles, *nasheeds* and the aforementioned executions, utilized advanced propaganda techniques. The most evident were: artificial dichotomy (demonizing the *kuffar* and "crusaders"), bandwagoning (presenting Daesh as the bright and only valid future for Muslims), testimonial, deification (appealing to the *Quran* and Allah), glittering generalities and the distortion of data (providing manipulated or forged statistics).
6. The propaganda strategy of the Islamic State was strongly supported by a number of professionals originating from NATO/EU states, which allowed the quality of its productions to be taken to a whole new level. Some of the best-known examples include the former German rapper Denis Cuspert (*Deso Dogg*, who was responsible for *nasheed* production), IT specialist Mohammed Emwazi (*Jihadi John*, who participated in the most ill-famed executions), and the British rapper Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary (*L.Jinny*, who conducted propaganda on Twitter). This could explain the unusual fitting of IS propaganda to mass culture and cyber culture canons in the Web 2.0 environment.
7. In principle, the campaign was also multilingual. Daesh published its releases not only in English and Arabic, but also in German, French, Russian, Polish, Mandarin Chinese, Bengali, Uyghur, Sorani, Indonesian and Turkish. [30] This effectively meant that it was the first cyber *jihadi* campaign to ever have truly global scope, reaching not only Muslim societies but also these nations and ethnic groups, which should not be an important target for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's organization. Such a solution

resulted in significant success, as even in relatively homogenous, Christian countries, this propaganda allowed some new members to be recruited. For instance, there were dozens of Polish citizens fighting for the Islamic State in mid-2016.[31]

Finally, it must be stressed that the early propaganda strategy of the Islamic State in cyberspace had a feature that is rarely discussed but which greatly contributed to its initial success: it employed methods of distribution similar to viral marketing. It seems that the propaganda cells of the Islamic State from day one attempted to generate a “viral effect”, which refers to attracting receivers’ interest in order to “infect” them with an idea, subsequently transferred by them to other users through social networks.[32] Viral marketing is an increasingly popular method of advertising products or brands offline and online, but it had not been utilized intentionally by terrorist organizations before 2014. And in this case, both the content, and the distribution methods of the IS clearly imitated this kind of innovative communication strategy. On the one hand, the vast majority of its productions were designed to strike audiences with unconventionality, which is a *sine qua non* requirement for something to “go viral”. As mentioned above, they were of the highest, exquisite technical quality, distinguishing themselves from the plethora of other cyber *jihadi* releases. [33] They also depicted unimaginable cruelty and referred to the latest popular culture trends, canons and fashions, such as games, Hollywood movies or humorous memes (frequently presenting cats).[34] This approach was clearly designed to enable Western audiences to fully embrace manipulated messages. [35] Yet, on the other hand, these pieces of *jihadi* content were primarily distributed with the use of the aforementioned, diverse social media communication channels, which enabled and increased the chances of the “viral effect” to occur.

### ***Cracks in the Online Caliphate?***

At first glance the Islamic State’s propaganda in 2016 did not change significantly in comparison to 2014 and 2015. The bulk of its audiovisual content seems to have the same features as the first, infamous videos which caused such major upset among Western audiences two years ago. Their quality, when it comes to directing, editing, post-production, special effects, and the manipulation techniques employed, usually not only remains at the same first-class level but also indicates certain improvements in a number of areas. For instance, Daesh has started to more commonly exploit drone videos[36], especially to make up SVBIED attacks and battle footage. Their intros based on computer-generated imagery (CGI) are also much more impressive than a year or two ago (e.g. *al-Battar* Media Foundation 3D logo). Moreover, its text propaganda has been enriched with a new type of online magazine—“*Rumiyah*”—which has a modern-looking layout and a slightly different focus and size than “*Dabiq*”. While still attacking enemies of the “Caliphate” and inspiring readers to conduct terrorist attacks against the *kuffar*, it frequently supports the use of knives and cars instead of less accessible guns and explosives.[37] Such appeals have been carried out before by the IS before, but never with such intensity[38] and to such a high level of sophistication. This move seemed to have had a significant impact on the latest Ohio State University attack, conducted by Abdul Razak Ali Artan, who rammed a car into pedestrians and stabbed them with a knife shortly after these releases.[39] Another innovative feature introduced by Daesh concerns a series of “photo reportages” depicting assassinations of its enemies in Yemen, shown in the first person perspective (FPP), which brings to mind the popular FPP video games genre.[40] Its activities are also increasingly focused on children, which was proved by the release of the mobile app *Huroof*, containing *jihadi* images and terminology.[41] Daniel Milton accurately notes that “Islamic State propaganda videos and executions routinely target children as the main audience. While a number of analysts have discussed the group’s use of child soldiers, the fact that children appear to be a target population of the group’s media efforts raises additional long-term concerns about deradicalization and the possibility of future threats.”[42]

A more detailed analysis of the Islamic State's cyber jihad in 2016 shows, however, that it is not as perfect as its members and sympathizers would like it to be. While still being the best Islamist online propaganda out there, a number of features can be noticed that indicate arising weaknesses and problems. To begin with, the Islamic State's productions while improving in certain areas, manifest some technical clumsiness in others. Some of the newest high-profile videos contain evident editing, montage and post-production mistakes, which were previously very rare. For instance, the video entitled *Glory Road* (length: 11:42), which was produced by the *al-Battar* Media Foundation in August 2016 and presented the Islamic State's viewpoint on the war in Libya, contains an embarrassing spelling mistake at 08:39: "Battles between the Islamic Statw and soldiers of Taghut in Sirte." [43] Such basic errors in the IS's promotional videos of 2014 and 2015 were rather unthinkable. This effectively means that al-Battar's members did not examine this film carefully before its final rendering and release, which may highlight personnel shortages, excessive hastiness or incompetence. Even the most publicized and carefully considered pieces of IS propaganda, characterized by outstanding technical quality, are not flawless. Some of the most significant, such as the one presenting John Cantlie's remarks on Daesh's anti-tank warfare from December 2016, contained some visible inconsistencies. Despite its remarkable introduction, the rest of the "documentary" is uneven at best. The interludes in the movie are of a much lower quality than the introduction and it lacks a proper ending. Moreover, it exploits well-known and already played out scenes depicting destroyed Abrams tanks, which were recorded in 2014 in Iraq. [44] Thus, it does not look to be a significant step forward in comparison to, for example, the infamous *Flames of War* (length: 55:14) [45] from 2014 or the short *No Respite* (04:13). [46]

The Islamic State is also becoming increasingly dependent on photo reports and short battle videos, bearing no signs of advanced post-production attempts, which in principle are much more apt for mass production and distribution. This has become especially evident since the beginning of the Mosul operation in Iraq in October 2016. Frequently these materials are re-used several times in various forms, such as compilations. [47] On the one hand, this trend increases the sheer scale of its cyber jihadist campaign. On the other, however, it may be a sign that the specialized propaganda bureaus have encountered problems with generating enough output of more sophisticated productions, and they are compensating for this by using a surplus of simpler and shorter releases. Such a trend, in consequence, lowers the efficiency of Daesh's online campaign. Reaching and terrorizing societies of developed states is much more difficult with this type of propaganda, as it is generally much less attractive for ordinary Internet users.

Audio propaganda has encountered some visible setbacks as well. Since its proclamation, the "Caliphate" has released dozens of *nasheeds* in cyberspace. [48] However, none of those published in 2016 were as popular and technically advanced as the infamous *Fisabilillah* music video from 2015 or the *Let's Go for Jihad* from 2014. [49] It is difficult to find a recording of this kind which attracted increased attention in 2016. Moreover, some analysts have noticed that recently the IS's frequency in publishing Arabic *nasheeds* has decreased, in comparison to the *al-Hayat* Media Center output, which is responsible for releases in other languages. According to Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "it is possible the small output partly reflects a disruption to the Islamic State's media production in terms of killing potential Arabic *language munshids*, while al-Hayat media has continued to produce *nasheeds* in languages besides Arabic." [50]

The significant decrease in the output of the Islamic State's propaganda campaign was proven by the recent Combating Terrorism Center at West Point study, which collected more than 9,000 Daesh videos and about 52,000 photographs, released online between January 2015 and August 2016. According to its author, Daniel Milton, the Islamic State's monthly production of visual content dropped from 761 in August 2015 to 194 in August 2016. [51] This huge and steady decrease manifests serious malfunctions within the Islamic State's cyber *jihadi* machinery.

In this context, the biggest challenge that the Islamic State faces nowadays in cyberspace concerns the decreasing availability of online propaganda distribution channels, previously based mostly on social



media. Since 2014 top social media companies have reiterated attempts to curb Daesh's PSYOPs, which had previously brought rather limited effects. However, since the second half of 2015 the efficiency of the combat against *jihadi* content online seems to have increased. Twitter alone banned about 125,000 *jihadi* accounts (mostly related to the IS) since mid-2015 to February 2016.[52] Additionally, between January 2016 and August 2016, 235 000 accounts were deleted.[53] J.M. Berger and Heather Perez's study indicates that there were usually no more than 1,000 English-speaking pro-ISIS accounts on Twitter at any given time between June and October 2015. Moreover, they noted that the follower count of these accounts dropped due to an "aggressive wave of suspensions." [54] However, as Daniel Milton notes, "Islamic State social media accounts that have been taken down do not give up, but instead continue to reemerge on social media platforms under different usernames." [55]. Nevertheless, such a continuous reemergence usually does not allow them to fully reconstruct their former network of followers.[56] In effect, the general amount of Islamic State's propaganda accessible via *Twitter*, as well as via other communication platforms has been reduced.

It is not only social media administrators that have been fighting against *jihadis* in cyberspace.[57] The same trend is increasingly visible among many online media outlets and ordinary Internet users, who frequently ridicule Islamic State's members with humorous productions. One of the most famous cases concerns the video entitled *What It's Really Like to Fight for the Islamic State* published on *YouTube* by *Vice News* in April 2016. This piece was recorded by the headcam of a fallen member of the IS and depicted an extraordinarily clumsy fighter called Abu Hajaar during a firefight. The film instantly went viral (above 7 million views by the end of 2016)[58], as it depicted chaos, incompetence and frustration among the Islamic State's ranks, disenchanting the professional image of jihadists, created by Daesh propaganda.[59] Moreover, there are dozens of popular and comical memes concerning this subject, presenting for instance, Islamic State's "air force" in the form of flying camels.[60] Finally, its releases are also combated by hacktivists. 'Anonymous' conducted a massive hacking operation against Daesh's supporters on Twitter in June 2016.[61]

To recapitulate, it must be stressed that the Web 2.0 environment has become a much more hostile place for *jihadis*. There is notably less Islamic State propaganda in popular social networks nowadays. Its releases are also deleted much quicker than before. Obviously, accounts in social networks are easy to recreate, but it takes time to gather followers again. Therefore, the very coverage of Daesh's online campaign has seemed to plunge. Islamic State still attempts to use these outlets (e.g. *Twitter*), usually with little success in the long run, but at the same time, it has started to focus more on other communication channels. One can mention niche social media, message boards (*Ansar AlKhelafa Europe*), hosting services, blogosphere platforms, as well as encrypted applications, such as Telegram. Even there, however, al-Baghdadi's organization has decreasing room for maneuver. For instance, *Telegram*—which had become a leading and convenient communication tool for Daesh—has started to ban pro-IS channels recently.[62] Obviously, this does not mean that it is impossible to access this type of content anymore. Many pieces of the "Caliphate's" propaganda are still easily accessible via gore or no-censorship websites. Some are also available via the *Internet Archive* or multiple sharing platforms. Nevertheless, Islamic State is nowhere near reaching its former efficiency of propaganda distribution from 2014 and 2015. These services and platforms, such as *justpaste.it* or blogs usually offer limited reach, evanescence and lack of interconnectedness which impedes Daesh's communication strategy, previously based on the exploitation of the Web 2.0 environment and a kind of "marketing buzz". Effectively, none of the 2016 releases were comparable, in terms of their proliferation scale, to the infamous executions of James Foley or Steven Sotloff. Moreover, none of them—excluding the embarrassing recording released by *Vice News* -have gone viral.[63]

### ***Reasons Behind the Shift in the Islamic State's Cyber Jihad***

The aforementioned shortcomings of the IS's propaganda campaign in 2016 have several causes. To begin with, Islamic State's releases are gradually losing their uniqueness, which was so striking in 2014 and 2015.



Judging by the content of online magazines, *nasheeds* and audiovisual productions, their creators are suffering a serious creativity crisis. When the first major IS productions started to emerge online in 2014, they were fresh and unique in comparison to the earlier releases of other Islamist terrorist organizations. After two years, most potential audiences (including journalists) got somewhat weary with the similar issues addressed by the IS's cells over and over again. Their methods of presentation, excluding those mentioned above, were also not innovative. This trend is perfectly visible in the online magazines, which are usually repeating the same topics regularly. These include: martyred terrorists, calls to *hijrah*, attacks against the “disbelievers” and “crusaders”, boasting over the legitimacy of the Caliphate and successful operations, recruitment appeals, inspiration to conduct terrorist attacks against the *kuffar*, and various theological deliberations. Also the audiovisual content did not change significantly. The IS still publishes execution videos, as well as recordings depicting fallen enemies—such as Iraqi, Turkish or Syrian soldiers—but its bestiality has ceased to shock the majority of accustomed spectators. It basically means that there is far less chance that these productions will draw enough attention to spark a proper viral effect, unlike the 2014 executions.

Secondly, this state of affairs is also caused by the aforementioned policy introduced by leading social network companies, who—due to widespread criticism—have boosted their efforts in combating terrorism. *Twitter*, being the most frequently utilized by Daesh supporters, has not only deleted numerous reported *jihadi* accounts, but also increased “the size of the teams that review reports, reducing (...) response time significantly.” It has also introduced new tools to fight spam, initiated cooperation with law enforcement institutions and entered into partnership with organizations countering extremist content online (e.g. *PAVE, Institute for Strategic Dialogue*).[64] Moreover, in December 2016 *Twitter, Facebook, Microsoft* and *YouTube* teamed up to develop innovative tools of identifying terrorist imagery and videos. As their statement declares: “we commit to the creation of a shared industry database of “hashes”—unique digital “fingerprints”—for violent imagery or terrorist recruitment videos or images that we have removed from our services. By sharing this information with each other, we may use the shared hashes to help identify potential terrorist content on our respective hosted consumer platforms.”[65] The rising importance of this agenda in the activities of the leading social media groups was already reflected in the aforementioned Islamic State's distribution strategies.

Similarly, the same policy was introduced by many governments, which have developed two types of solutions. On the one hand, some institutions—such as the U.S. Department of State—have initiated a counter-propaganda campaign aiming to expose the brutality of the Islamic State. In principle, it was expected to curb IS recruitment efforts. Initiated in 2014, it was composed of multilingual videos and social media messages. An analogous solution was introduced a year later by the British Foreign Office, who created a *Twitter* account: “UK against ISIL”. Security services have started to monitor and disrupt communication channels used by Islamists, and have also increased their efforts to detect and arrest all those responsible for distributing Daesh propaganda. For instance, in 2016 New Zealand's court sentenced Imran Patel for making, distributing and possessing Islamic State propaganda.[66]

Cracks in the online “Caliphate” are also caused by serious offline problems suffered by the organization. Since 2015, the strategic situation of the Islamic State in the Middle East has aggravated significantly. Russian and Turkish interventions in Syria allowed some territories formerly under al-Baghdadi's control to be regained. In the second half of 2016 the Iraqi army—as well as its allied forces (the Peshmerga, militias)—also launched a massive operation aimed at recapturing Daesh's stronghold in Iraq, Mosul.[67] Additionally, it suffered significant defeats from the Syrian Democratic Forces in November and December 2016.[68] Moreover, constant aerial bombardments, conducted both by the U.S.-led coalition and Russia, are aimed not only against Daesh positions on the frontlines but also against its infrastructure, which causes logistical disruption and significant financial losses. According to the Wilson Center data from March 2016, the U.S. and its allies conducted more than 10,000 airstrikes against the Islamic State alone, which damaged or

destroyed more than 21,500 targets.[69] As reported by Israeli officials in October 2016, Daesh had lost about 10,000 fighters in the previous 18 months.[70]

On the one hand, it has to be stressed that due to these military defeats and aerial bombardments, Daesh has suffered a budget shortfall, which has forced its leaders to cut salaries of IS members by around 50%. Many of the fighters which were responsible for managing energy resources --a major source of revenue--have been killed.[71] According to the recent ICSR report, in just two years the group's income decreased by about 50%, to a level of \$520-\$870 million in 2016.[72] Considering the fact that the bulk of their funds must be destined for military expenditures, the propaganda arm is undoubtedly underfinanced.

On the other hand, available information on the U.S.-led airstrikes suggests that they are particularly focused on disrupting the organization's propaganda potential. Since 2016, they have successfully targeted and eliminated a number of key figures in the Islamic State's media arm, such as Abu Mohammed al-Adnani (IS's spokesman and chief propagandist), Wa'il Adil Hasan Salman al-Fayad (IS's minister of information, overseeing, among others, execution videos released online), Mahmoud al-Isawi (Daesh's propaganda supervisor in Raqqa), and Ibrahim al-Ansari (responsible for the recruitment of foreign fighters and online instructions for homegrown terrorists).[73] According to Missy Ryan and Greg Miller, "Adnani's death would damage the Islamic State in two areas that have made the terrorist organization particularly dangerous: its sophisticated use of social media to reach a global audience and its willingness to employ the crudest forms of violence." [74]

Islamic State has also suffered significant losses among lower-ranked propagandists of great importance. For instance, the infamous *Jihadi John* was killed by a drone strike in January 2016. As mentioned before, he was one of the key figures responsible for the unusual success of the first execution videos released on the Internet. It is worth mentioning that he also possessed advanced knowledge and understanding of digital technologies, as he was a graduate of Information Systems with Business Management from the University of Westminster. This meant that he could contribute to the high technical quality of the Daesh productions. [75] Former British rapper *L.Jinny* vel Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary abandoned the Islamic State's ranks in 2015. Until that moment, he was an important person in the IS's operations in Anglophone social media (*Twitter*). Furthermore, due to his music career in the West, he possessed invaluable knowledge and experience for the organization.[76] There were also false reports on the death of the infamous former German rapper *Deso Dogg* (Denis Cuspert), who has been engaged in the propaganda arm of the "Caliphate" since joining the group.[77] It may be, however, that his ability to act freely in Syria and Iraq has been limited, as he is one of the top figures being hunted by the coalition. All the aforementioned cases suggest that similar losses could be suffered among the ordinary members taking part in the production or distribution of cyber jihadist content.[78] This would explain the aforementioned uneven quality and errors in many recent Daesh productions, as well as their decreased output.

## Summary

The Islamic State's extraordinary propaganda campaign, initiated at the turn of 2014, has finally experienced some setbacks after two years of constant progress. In 2016, the problems in the "Caliphate's" cyber jihad manifested themselves in the quantity and quality of the releases, as well as their reach. None of the IS's declining number of propaganda products sparked increased interest from worldwide audiences, as they are much more difficult to access, sometimes contain embarrassing mistakes, and they have lost the trait of uniqueness, which is crucial to generating the viral effect. Thus, the general popularity of the Islamic State's *jihadi* messages nowadays is much lower than two years ago. Daesh is indeed losing ground in the battle for cyberspace, as throughout just one calendar year it was forced to refocus from its already tried, tested and efficient communication channels to new and less popular ones, where the organization also encounters unexpected obstacles.

This essentially means that the combination of proactive antiterrorist measures employed by IT companies and security services in the Web 2.0 environment, the counter-propaganda campaign conducted independently by many Internet users, as well as massive airstrikes targeting IS's logistical backbone and key Daesh propagandists has finally led to some tangible effects. The Islamic State, nowadays, fails to maintain its former, top-notch level of cyber jihad, as it struggles with serious financial and personnel shortcomings, as well as with the increasingly hostile digital environment.

These first "cracks" in the online "Caliphate", as examined in this article, may be a great and unique chance for Western nations. The current situation is a fantastic starting point to develop a worldwide counter-propaganda strategy, which will take advantage of the troubles experienced by the Islamic State. Obviously, it will never be possible to completely block all extremist content in cyberspace without violating the fundamental rights of Internet users, such as the freedom of communication and the right to privacy. However, it is possible to curb the global resonance of Daesh's online broadcasts, especially considering the fact that it may lose most of its territories in the Middle East in the near future. Cutting off the logistics and financing behind this propaganda machine using troops and air forces active in the region, combined with the already initiated efforts in the online environment is the right way to go. This, in turn, would mitigate many contemporary threats emanating from the phenomenon of cyber jihad.

All the aforementioned considerations, to be clear, do not mean that the Islamic State's cyber jihad has already ceased to be a major threat to international security. Its presence in the most popular social networks, while diminishing over time, is still noticeable. Moreover, despite all the previously mentioned flaws, it is still the best example of Islamist propaganda on the Internet. Other terrorist organizations attempt to mimic its online solutions to a certain extent, but even the best among them, such as al-Qaeda, are nowhere near the competence of the *al-Hayat* Media Center or even the unofficial bureaus, such as the *al-Battar* Media Foundation. Some of their messages still surprise audiences, including academics, with their level of sophistication and proficiency in using manipulation techniques. To summarize, it is too early to state that the organization was pushed back to the "digital underground", but it is surely on the road to getting there in the future.

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## Notes

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## Ethnicity and Politics in Contextualising Far Right and Islamist Extremism

by Tahir Abbas

### Abstract

*This article critically reviews contemporary understandings of the drivers, objectives, and the social and political distinctions of far right and Islamist extremism as reciprocal and correlative threats. While social structure and identity politics are important themes in the social science literature on the radicalisation of far right and Islamist extremist individuals and groups, there remain significant knowledge and policy gaps. Based on a discourse analysis of two related concepts, this article seeks to explain the nature of similarities and differences. As exclusivist and self-reinforcing narratives, the actions and perspectives of one group embolden the other. Policymakers need to understand far right and Islamist extremism as phenomena with shared local driving forces and impacts. This approach would also avoid duplication of effort, as well as misrecognition and insensitivity, in counterterrorism efforts. It also generates valuable political inroads into grounded notions of social cohesion.*

**Keywords:** Far right, Islamist extremism, politics, radicalisation, identity, spatiality

### Introduction

In late July 2016, an 18-year old German-born man fatally shot nine young people in a fast-food restaurant and a shopping mall in Munich. He was a child of Iranian parents who had sought refuge in Germany in the early 1990s. As news first came in, the immediate response was to suggest that this incident was an example of an Islamic State-inspired or -instigated act of terrorism. Indeed, after a spate of attacks in Brussels, France and Germany during 2016, the Sonboly attack appeared to be another instance of radical Islamism leading to violent extremism. There was, however, a twist to this story. Due to various personal, psychological and political motivations, the Munich shooter—now named Ali David Sonboly, although born Ali Sonboly—had subscribed to a ‘pure racial identity’. It transcended his co-ethnic cultural, immigrant and minority background of friends and relations. ‘Lone actor’ Sonboly idolised Anders Behring Breivik, a convicted far right violent extremist terrorist, [1] and he carried out his tragic shootings on the fifth anniversary of the Breivik attacks in Oslo, Norway, on 22 July 2011, which killed 77 people. The stark reality was that Sonboly did not feel comfortable in his own skin: he murdered others because of insecurities regarding his individual ethnic and cultural identity. What was peculiar about the Sonboly episode were the twin issues of radicalisation and far right extremism in an individual who was born into a Shia Muslim household but subsequently rejected his past. It confirmed how identity formation and self-realisation journeys of a few young people exist within various instances of conflict. It leads some to radicalisation and ultimately violence. This event was a reminder that similar issues at the margins of society affect a variety of young people challenged by their local and global identities.

It is now increasingly apparent that an anti-Muslim outlook plays a part in radicalising far right extremists. [2] In Britain, the English Defence League (EDL) operates as an ethnic nationalist group with links to the British National Party (BNP) and football hooliganism.[3] It reflects the wider notion of ‘reactive co-radicalisation’[4] or ‘cumulative extremism’[5], which is a response on the parts of states, organisations, groups and individuals to the apparent threat of Muslims in the West. These sentiments have also become a defining feature of current forms of Islamophobia [6], much of which also demonstrates a correlation with rising populism and nationalism.[7] In recent years, the far right have also demonstrated a discernible shift from ethno-racial to cultural-ideological forms of extremism. Breivik’s objections were against various

ideological strands: not merely ethnic and religious differences in society but also the ideologies and philosophies of multiculturalism and diversity underpinning them—the idea of *différence*. Breivik was also hostile to broadly conceived notions such as Marxism and liberalism.[8].

This article establishes two principles. First, in thinking through radicalisation, it is important to situate the debate within the wider economic, political and cultural contexts of post-industrial urban centres. Second, conceptualisation of these extremisms suggests how identities conflict due to the simultaneous moving terrains of localisation and globalisation. This article is an attempt to explore the theoretical and conceptual nature of the symbiosis that defines and characterises far right and Islamist extremism. It synthesises current knowledge on the similarities and differences between these two extremisms arising from disjuncture between social structure and identity, the knowledge gaps raised in existing research, and the ramifications for policy and practice in this area. The conclusions discuss the repercussions of these growing extremisms and the implications raised for further research in this area.

### ***Structural and Cultural Context***

Understanding radicalisation is all about appreciating context and perspective. In some respects, radicalisation refers to pathways. In others, it relates to outcomes. Furthermore, radicalisation does not always equate with terrorism. [9] This lack of clarity over what is radicalisation distorts the understandings of violent extremism,[10] in particular where there is confusion over clearly problematic social outcomes that are high priority security threats. No two countries define ‘radicalisation’ in the same way. For some, violence is the main concern. For others, an ideology that may or may not lead to violence is the primary focus. All definitions, nevertheless, recognise the notion as a highly individualised and largely unpredictable process. [11] For the purposes of this discussion, radicalisation refers to both the *processes* and *outcomes* of violent extremism.

That far right and Islamophobic attacks result in Islamist-inspired terrorism is now a given. It reflects a shift within broader right-wing extremism, with many groups and individuals – including Breivik – condemning Nazism, fascism and anti-Semitism but defining their cause as a defence against the perceived threat from Islam.[12] A significant proportion of ‘lone actor’ terrorists, however, are solely preoccupied with neo-Nazi symbolism and the idolisation of far right figureheads and their ideologies. However, there is relative underreporting and under-analysis of the threat from right-wing extremism in North America and in Europe.[13] Pavlo Lapshyn, a Ukrainian far right terrorist convicted for the murder of 82-year old Mohammed Saleem from Small Heath in Birmingham, confessed killing Saleem because he was a Muslim and because there would be no witnesses. Saleem had been walking home from his local mosque in the late hours of 29 April 2013. In June and July 2013, Lapshyn attempted to bomb three mosques in Walsall, Wolverhampton and Tipton during Friday afternoon prayers, the busiest time of the week. [14] His devices failed on all three occasions.

Western European societies and economies have transformed profoundly since the deregulation of the financial sector and the dominance of privatisation of public utilities and economic neoliberalism that began in the 1980s.[15] This has led to repercussions for youth identities, particularly in urban spheres.[16] The inner cities, oft-forgotten by urban planners and policymakers until the deleterious conditions facing disadvantaged ‘underclass’ groups cannot be neglected any further, are sites of diverse communities. Here, residential concentration emerges largely through a lack of choice, not through choice. [17] Post-war ethnic minorities cluster in specific urban areas to utilise social, economic and cultural capital for group survival. Simultaneously, the spatial concentration of deprived marginalised majorities is also an opportunity to protect group norms and values associated with the group identity, which, in the light of present politics, perceives a threat from the dominant (or subordinated) other. The general overriding discourse, however, is to present ‘self-styled segregation’ among ethnic minorities as a self-induced rejection of integration. This

discourse, though, is harmful for many minorities who are on the receiving end of frequent vilification, alienation and discrimination. [18]

Majority white communities also suffer from the predicaments that lead to extremism, radicalisation and violence, but media and political discourses concentrate less on such groups, markedly skewing the debate. [19] Deindustrialisation, post-industrialisation and globalisation affect Muslim minority groups in the inner cities of Western Europe, but these concerns also affect majority groups who can turn to far right political views for solace.[20] In general, there is limited discussion on the associations between extremist far right and radical Muslim groups. Developments to such thinking would help to explore the synergies between arguably two parallel and similar radicalisation and violent extremism outcomes. [21] Indeed, from 1970 to 2012, Islamist extremists only carried out 2.5 per cent of all attacks in the USA. This was compared to 4.9 per cent for Jewish groups. That is, over 90 per cent of all attacks were carried out by non-Muslims. [22]

The separation between white indigenous and Muslim minority groups is defined, arguably, through differences in identity formations at local and global levels. It reveals a distinct layer of conflict, locking both groups in intense struggle for the least in society. A crucial feature in the radicalisation of far right and Islamist extremists is, therefore, the search for an alternative, 'purer' identity [23]. Although both groups have made various political impacts, their electoral successes, however, haven been until recently negligible [24]. This was the case until the Brexit vote in the UK, which was, in part, motivated by negative discourses on immigration, refugees and questions of national political identity.[25]

### ***Socio-Spatial Identities in Conflict***

At the individual level, various social, psychological, economic and structural issues can problematise the formation of identities, introducing the need for self-actualisation, which is the realisation of individual potential. This applies to both Muslim minorities and the 'left behind' white working classes. In both cases, apprehensions arise over multiculturalism, dislocation and identity conflict. A lack of hope leads to psychological conundrums, leaving countless young men vulnerable, exposed and then pliable to external influences. With limited educational and employment opportunities due to entrenched patterns of discrimination and disadvantage, the uncertain futures facing various young men in inner city areas, minority and majority, create challenges with limited opportunities. [26]

Notably, these anxieties affect young men of all backgrounds. Part of the reason for the radicalisation of both European-born Muslims and far right youth is an aspect of their coming to terms with hegemonic masculinity in the context of intergenerational disconnect, combined with economic insecurity.[27] Such dominant male aspirational qualities include notions such as heterosexual, attractive and high-earning. Britain First, the English Defence League and what were organisations such as Al-Muhajiroun and Islam4UK consisted of young men with limited education, employment or social status. These men are outraged and simultaneously embittered by the spiritual or material challenges of their existence. Many of the recruits to Islamic State heralding from the inner cities of Western Europe display similar anxieties and aspirations.

Disconnect is also highly relevant in the context of minority communities with particular cultural characteristics. Research has shown that the existence of patriarchy among Pakistani and Turkish fathers acts as a form of dominance over the family. [28] This includes power over sons who reproduce patterns of dominant hegemonic masculinity within the home, which may lead to greater separation between fathers and sons. These behaviours derive from an Islamic as well as cultural reading of the role of the male head of household. In wider society, however, these same fathers experience racialisation and subjugation in the work place, while suffering wider labour market penalisation of the group as a whole. Therefore, it appears there are internal issues within homes reinforced by patriarchal practices, but this is in the context of a situation where Muslim minorities face ethnic and religious penalties in the labour market, further affecting income



levels [29], status and a sense of persecution felt by Muslim men. In these situations, these Muslim minority masculinities are multiple and situational.

The local, regional and transnational interconnects the space in which these masculinities are constructed and deconstructed. [30] For example, British South Asian Muslims have endured interchangeable characterisation as either effeminate or hyper-masculine. In the early phases of post-war migration and settlement, due to their apparent 'nimble' nature, these men were ascribed feminine characteristics. At the same time, they were regarded a threat because of their 'dark and handsome' allure. [31] The latter ensured that employers, often through the assistance of unions, did not permit minority men to share workspaces with white English women. In the post-9/11 climate, however, British Muslim men are seen as a threat to society projected through the classical orientalist lens of violent hypermasculinity. [32]

To address the problems of Islamist extremism, Western governments have identified 'Muslim communities' as the most 'vulnerable' to radicalisation compared with other groups. Muslim groups are therefore seen as the main target group to benefit from engagement with CVE policy, where the policy of 'Prevent' is the equivalent of CVE in the UK. [33] Far right groups are notably absent from the discourse on 'Prevent', although referrals from far right groups grow year upon year. It focuses on disengagement from radicalisation and reintegration at a community level, while building resilience, engagement and participation in society, underscored by maintaining community cohesion through 'shared values'. There has been fierce resistance to the 'Prevent' policy among community actors arguing that the policy is intrusive. It is viewed by some as an attempt to delegitimise criticism of politics and policy while maintaining the status quo concerning foreign policy, and ignores the complete absence of domestic policies to help integrate ethnic minorities.

The phenomenon of 'convert radicalisation' among white groups is associated with a lack of suitable grounding in community values or the adoption of Islam as a method of rebellion. [34] Inter-generational disconnect and the importance of the socio-economic and socio-cultural context are also important considerations in the experiences of 'white' as well as Muslim minorities. A broad sense of alienation transpires among a wide range of communities due to the political, religious and cultural transformations of the social milieu that has occurred in light of wider developments to thinking and practice on localisation and globalisation.

In the midst of material challenges facing young men (and women) in Western European and North American societies, particular concerns arise over hypermasculinity and hypersexuality (an over-concentration on sexual activity). [35] This apprehension refers to unrealistic expectations placed upon young people. It creates fear, anger and anguish, rather than a smooth transition from youth to adulthood. Here, 'jihadis' and far right young men experience equivalent challenges, where differences in religion and culture regarding 'the other' are problematised and subsequently politicised. In quite considerable ways, hypermasculinity diminishes the confidence of young people in Britain. The consequences are that young people become encouraged to prove themselves- to seek recognition, to become somebody-by using all means necessary.

### ***Disconnected Tribalisms***

A crisis of masculinity (and femininity) is at the centre of many of the predicaments facing marginalised communities. It is created by a lack of social mobility, persistent unemployment, growing anomie and political disenfranchisement, fuelling a national identity crisis. The effects are anger, fear, loathing, intimidation and violence. In reality, when trying to understand radicalisation among young Islamists and far right extremists, one needs to look at the role of the individual, social structure and the question of anomie. Islamist radicals are anti-globalisation, while far right extremists are anti-localisation but both are pro-totalitarian. These groups wish to instil a sense of purist identity politics and both have a utopian vision



of society. Furthermore, both have a narrowly defined vision of the self, which is exclusive of the other, where identities are *domaine de l'imaginaire*. In the case of far right groups, much of their motivation stems from a counter-jihadist discourse. Here, radical Islamists also experience status inconsistency. Both groups are the structural and cultural outsiders of society *and* directly opposed to each other.

As new tribalisms emerge, radicalised groups situate a core narrative at the heart of their newfound tribalistic radicalisation.[36] Membership of this new tribe is both ascriptive and aspirational, shaped by how the young are using the internet as an instrument in their radicalisation.[37] All of these young people variously enter into the theatre of radicalisation and violence due to emotional, psychological, ideological and sociological factors. Measures targeting such acts of crime must recognise the multi-layered nature of the processes involved in radicalisation, and hence introduce more joined-up policy thinking at a much earlier stage of the process. It is thus vital to understand the intersecting paths towards radicalisation affecting Islamists *and* far-right extremists in order to achieve the necessary impact on research, policy and practice. The need to appreciate the dynamics of radicalisation as embedded in social processes at the structural level, where concerns over identity, belonging and self-realisation, remains fundamental.

The recent murder of MP Jo Cox in June 2016 brought to the surface major concerns regarding far-right extremism in Britain today. Media and political discourses tend to focus on Islamic political extremism, with little attention given to far-right violence. These acts are no aberration either. Rather, various reporting necessarily suggests that far right extremism has become a considerable worry, and in recent periods there are more examples of violence and terrorism at the behest of these groups than that of Muslims in Western Europe. Why is it that we hear so little about it? In addition, why do principal actors regard it differently from that of Islamic political radicalism?

First, when far-right extremism does occur, it is invariably underreported or misrepresented. Furthermore, when a discussion does ensue, the dominant argument is that it is some kind of violence carried out by loners or the mentally ill. When it comes to young Muslims involved in acts of serious violence, there are unconscious associations made with Jihadism, Islamic radicalism or even the Islamic State. Indeed, there is a particular reporting bias of such crimes inherent in the media, and it has a long history.[38] There is also a sense that Islamic extremism is a given, while far right radicalisation is an emerging phenomenon. Thus, in the recent case of the murder of Jo Cox, while evidence was emerging relatively quickly that the assailant had direct associations with sinister far right groups, as well as a chequered history with far right activism, most media and political elites were slow to take the story up to its fullest. It confirms the bias against far right extremism while maintaining an overt focus on Islamist radicalisation.

Second, in many ways, two sets of 'left behind' groups are in direct competition with each other, one racialised and alienated and the other marginalised and alienated, but both emerging in the context of neoliberalism and economic restructuring in post-industrial urban settings. As social divisions widen, these groups remain angry, voiceless and underrepresented. For far right groups, they vehemently hold onto a sense of identity presented to them as potentially at risk due to the emergence of other groups in society seemingly taking away or diluting the purity of this identity. Such representations are ideological, selective and political. Indeed, the idea that to be a Briton is to be one in a nation of immigrants was strongly held until the event of 9/11. After which multiculturalism was seen in wholly negative terms. Due to the conservative politics of anti-Europeanism and ethnic nationalism, however, being English remains closely associated with Anglo-Saxon blood. Race is the signifier here, but an imagined race, as is perennially the case when it comes to ethnic nationalism. [39]

### ***An Historical Accident***

Muslims who came to Britain at the end of the Second World War found themselves subordinated and subjugated by the workings of industrial capitalism. After its collapse and replacement by neoliberal globalisation, many of these Muslim communities were confined in the inner city areas to which they first migrated. In the 1950s and 1960s, in locations such as Birmingham, parts of the North and areas in Greater London, diverse groups lived cheek by jowl with indigenous Britons *and* in relatively peaceful harmony. As the pace of deindustrialisation accelerated, the extent of 'white flight' enhanced due to fears of residential concentration at the hands of specific ethnic minority groups accused of fragmenting communities. The response was political then and it is political now. In various parts of these same inner city areas today, while those groups who desired to leave have left, minority and majority, what remains are the poorest and most excluded of white Britons. In these areas, the third and fourth generation offspring of Muslim minority groups are trapped due to racism, social immobility as well as cultural separateness. It leads to excluded groups in society who are in intense competition for the least in society, where Islam has replaced race and ethnicity as the main categories of difference.

How states react in response to these challenges can enflame localised conflicts if the thinking behind actions is premature. As elites become ever more powerful and wealthier relative to the rest of society, they hold onto a notion of an exclusive and inward looking Englishness. In an ironic twist, the working classes have always remained loyal to the workings of classed English society, in particular, the monarchy. In an effort to sustain their existence, working class groups enhance their identity formations through an allusion to a pure Englishness, subsequently rejected by elite groups who have little interest in English groups at the lower rungs of society, regarding them as a blot or a burden. Right-wing politicians in the mainstream, however, continuously focus on immigration as a way in which to protect English society from 'alien others' whose alleged objectives are only to dilute and dissect. Vehemently re-expressed by groups at the bottom of society, who consequently project their anxiety outwardly, such sentiments lead to alarm and, to an extent, hate towards their nearest neighbours; namely Muslim minority groups in inner-city areas.

Since the end of the Cold War, global politics has shifted attention onto the Muslim world, while in Western European societies Muslim minorities are increasingly seen in religious terms rather than ethnic or cultural ones. It gives Muslims greater exposure, which is negative and in some cases hostile and violent. Political elites instrumentalise local area tensions for political gain, nationally and internationally. As some young men expressing forms of hyper-masculinity, combined with self-realisation, engage in acts of violence and extremism, there are automatic associations made with a global phenomenon, further legitimising invasive foreign policy and regressive domestic policy on integration. With the securitisation of multiculturalism now the norm, where Muslim cultural and religious differences are seen as problematic in relation to matters of security, Muslim minorities are even more under the spotlight, receiving even greater attention from vast swathes of society that generalise Islam and Muslim. It leads to the accusation that Islamophobia has passed the 'dinner table test' to the extent that it has become hyper-normalised.[40] As the levels of frustration among certain young Muslim men lead to the point of no return, they vent their anger at the global level, rendering their local area realities invisible. Many Muslim men do not fight for their local communities, but for an imagined global project, leading to a further vacuum at the local level, filled by the machinations of right-wing politics, fermented locally but curated nationally.

Therefore, the question of the associations between two sets of similar experiences points to local area considerations. The failures of government to introduce policies that bring about equality and fairness to limit the deleterious consequences of neoliberalism are evident. This disappointment is also about the loss of the imagination of the nation in a global climate of inequality and competition, where national elites hold onto an imagined notion of the nation as well its peoples. No more are concerns about social justice and equality presented as major planks in policy thinking, but rather vacuous notions such as 'values', which has no direct purpose in bringing communities together—as, in reality, they are exclusive rather than inclusive.

Groups already facing downward pressures on social mobility are pushed down by the machinations of elite groups, leading to intense levels of competition and conflict in certain local area communities. Some of this reaches fever pitch violence and what is ultimately terrorism. Thus, both sets of violent extremism are the result of the biopolitics of the state, but among groups in opposition to each other due to narrow definitions of identity. Far right groups project their angst nationally, while jihadists project it globally. These realities emerge in various spatial formations, reflecting the search of self-actualisation due to their 'left behind' status with few or no alternative routes to empowerment or status.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This article has shown that issues of social structure and identity politics are important to take into consideration when attempting to understand the nature of radicalisation and extremism among those who engage in far right extremism as well those drawn to Islamist extremism. Further research is required to understand the intersections of these variables in specific situations. It is also important to examine how understanding these concepts can determine how best they can feed into policy development. Moreover, the approach needs to engage with extremism as a wider societal issue, not simply as a task for particular communities. It ultimately places accountability on government and authorities to take greater responsibility for the problems *and* the solutions to violent extremism. In the current political climate, violent radical Islamism is seen as a function of Muslim communities, in which lie all the problems *and* all the solutions.

Implications for further research include ensuring that far right and Islamist extremists are regarded as similarly problematic with distinctively related issues as the path towards radicalisation is often local and urban in nature and outcome. There is also a need to recognise that these kinds of extremism are two sides of the same coin, where limiting one will invariably reduce the other. Both extremisms feed off each other's rhetoric. It is compounded by elite discourse that seeks to maintain a divide and rule approach to dealing with differences in society. It is combined with the issue of the diminished status of white working class communities in general terms. Greater understanding of the linkages, interactions and symbiosis between these two oppositional but related forms of extremism is crucial for going forward. This is especially the case in the current climate, where a post-truth, post-normal world has gained ascendancy, while experts are derided and the status quo prevails.

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## Research Notes

### Who are the British Jihadists? Identifying Salient Biographical Factors in the Radicalisation Process

by Gavin Lyall

#### **Abstract**

*Drawn from a wider-ranging piece of research into radicalisation processes, this research note presents findings about the backgrounds of British jihadists travelling to fight in Syria. The research identifies biographical factors that are salient to two theories of radicalisation—Social Movement Theory (SMT) and Olivier Roy's 'youth revolt' theory and presents a short discussion on the validity of these theories in regard to British jihadists.*

**Keywords:** Radicalisation, Syria, British jihadists, foreign fighters, terrorism

#### **Introduction**

The phenomenon of foreign fighters is not a new one, nor is it confined to Salafist-jihadism. Many conflicts have attracted ideologically inspired fighters, the most famous example being the Spanish Civil War, which saw both Communist and Fascist sympathisers enlisting to fight for their cause. Over the past two decades, European Muslims have fought in a number of different wars—Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia—in the name of Salafism (a conservative version of Islam adhered to by a minority of Sunni Muslims). The civil war in Syria, however, has been marked by the involvement of an unprecedented number of European citizens, most of them with an immigration background.

What is it that draws people to extremist organisations like Islamic State (IS)? The most common response is 'radicalisation'. It is an idea that has achieved widespread currency in political and academic circles and there is much debate on the dynamics of the process. Experts are divided on which factors are most important: some focus on macro-level explanations that emphasis economic deprivation, political disenfranchisement or racial discrimination, while others point to the influence of Salafist religious doctrines or to Western foreign policy. For some sociologists, the answer lies in the dislocation felt by young European Muslims caught between their parents' culture and the one in which they grew up.[1]

Yet despite becoming the most popular conceptual framework for understanding why some European Muslims are drawn to violent Islamism, the study of radicalisation remains controversial. Some scholars not only question the various assumptions made but the validity of the entire concept. In their view the discourse is politically motivated and designed to deflect attention from wider political and social circumstances. Arun Kandani [2] for example, points out that 'homegrown' terrorism and radicalisation increased dramatically in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and therefore it makes little sense to isolate the process of radicalisation from the political context in which it occurs.

Studies on radicalisation usually fall into two categories: those that focus on analysis of demographic data and those that formulate theories of radicalisation (usually based on literature reviews or case studies). Less emphasis has been placed on testing these theories against empirical data. This Research Note demonstrates a way of doing this by identifying biographical factors that are salient to two radicalisation theories—Social Movement Theory (SMT) and Olivier Roy's 'youth revolt' [3] theory—in order to see what factors hold most water when applied specifically to British jihadists enlisting in IS or a similar group in Syria or Iraq.

There are areas of commonality between the theories but also clear differences. For example, in SMT radical political or religious groups are seen as ‘gateways’ to enlistment. Roy, on the other hand, does not believe they play a significant role. The primary difference is between individualistic motivations (in the view of Roy) and wider social ‘strains’ (in the case of SMT). The aim of this Research Note is not to prove one theory right and the other wrong but to identify insights that could help answer three research questions regarding British jihadists:

- (i) What are their backgrounds in demographic, educational and socio-economic terms?
- (ii) Can British jihadists be regarded as political or religious actors?
- (iii) Are they linked to certain organisations or religious groups?

First, we begin with a review of both radicalisation theories.

#### *European Jihadism as a ‘Youth Revolt Against Society’*

Olivier Roy presented what can be referred to as ‘youth revolt’ theory. At a conference organised by the German Bundeskriminalamt (Federal criminal police office) in November 2015 he presented a general portrait of the causes and circumstances that can lead to radicalisation. The talk was entitled ‘What is the driving force behind jihadist terrorism?’ Roy includes in his analysis those who travel to the Middle East to do jihad.

In Roy’s view the radicalisation of some young European Muslims is a:

*Youth revolt against society, articulated in an Islamic religious narrative of jihad. It is not the uprising of a Muslim community’s victim of poverty and racism: only young people join, including converts who did not share the ‘sufferings’ of Muslims in Europe. These rebels without a cause find in jihad a ‘noble’ and global cause, and are consequently instrumentalised by a radical organisation that has a strategic agenda.[4]*

For many, jihadism is an extension of a shared youth culture that includes membership of street gangs and delinquency. Radicalisation is, in this view, not the maturation of long-term involvement in political or Islamic movements, and few jihadists have a history of political or religious militancy. Nor can the phenomenon be linked to the frustrations of a wider Muslim community—the high proportion of converts in the ranks (highest in France but significant in all European countries) is seen as evidence of this.

Several biographical factors are significant to this theory; a history of criminal activity could be regarded as a manifestation of resentment against society and also as a sign that jihadism is often an extension of gang culture; furthermore a large number of converts in the database would lend support to the theory and few of the British jihadists would be expected to have a history of political or religious activism.

#### *Social Movement (SMT)*

The central proposition of SMT, when applied to violent radicalisation, is that it cannot be isolated from the political or social context in which it occurs. Radicalisation happens through pre-existing networks and organisations, which are active agents in the radicalisation process.[5] If this is the case, then jihadists are the violent subgroup of a larger social movement and those that travelled to Syria could be expected to have links with radical political or religious groups.

SMT argues that because of the costs and risks involved, participants will likely be defined by a lack of personal constraints like full-time employment and family commitments (known as ‘biographical availability’ in the literature).[6] Therefore British jihadists would not be expected to have much in the way of family ties. A high number of immigrants and low numbers of people with university education (or a large number of

people with degrees who have been unable to capitalise on their qualifications) would lend weight to the idea that 'strains' on a certain community are a cause of radicalisation.

SMT argues the importance of informal ties and networks based on friendship and kinship. This idea was put forward by Donatella della Porta [7] in her work on left-wing groups, when she observed the decision to join an underground movement almost always involved cliques of friends. Therefore, the mobilisation patterns of the jihadists are relevant—although this is a factor common to both theories and would not therefore give more credence to one over the other.

## **Methodology**

The study on which this Research Note is based used secondary sources to create a database of jihadists. The first source of information was an existing BBC News database. This source was chosen over others because it was the most comprehensive. The BBC database provided the names and basic biographical details of 203 British jihadists. 59 of these had been convicted of offences related to the war and were removed from this analysis because the study focuses on those who reached Syria. People were kept in the database regardless of what their likely role would be after they arrived in Syria (for example, women or elderly people who left in family groups). Among the remaining 144 individuals, 32 were removed because their names were unconfirmed or because very little or no information could be gathered on them. This left 112 profiles of British jihadists who became foreign fighters. 40 of them had died and the remaining 72 are believed to still be in Syria or Iraq.

Information for the following categories was gathered: name; age (at the time of departure); immigration background; educational background; family ties (biographical availability); history of membership in radical religious or political groups; criminal history and whether they travelled individually or as part of a group. The sources were primarily media organisations—the *BBC*, the *Guardian*, the *Independent* and the *Daily Mail* were the most diligent reporters of jihadist activity. Information was only used if it could be confirmed by two independent sources. In addition, local newspapers contained valuable information that was often not included in the national media. The personal blogs of experts and researchers were also used, along with an activist group that campaigns for Muslims imprisoned as part of the war on terror.

## **Findings**

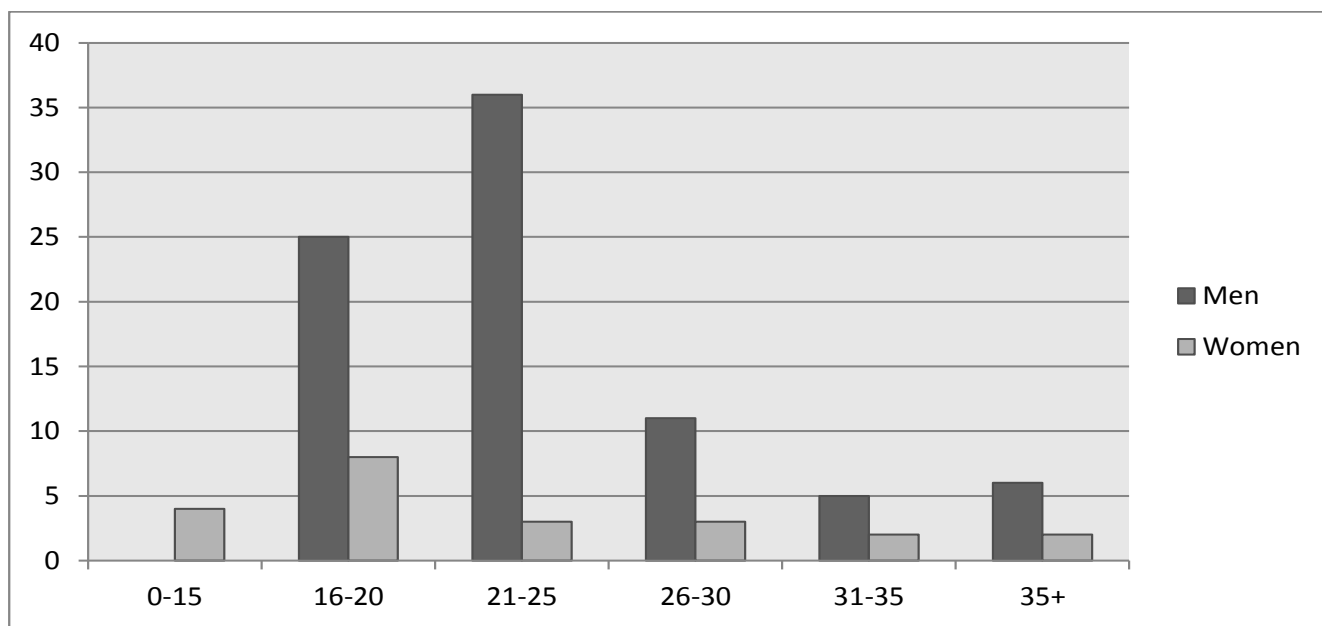
### *Gender*

Of the aforementioned 112 profiles, 88 were men and 24 women. The decision to include family groups meant there were more women than usual in studies like this. For example, there were four women in the extended family from Luton—Minera Khatun (53), Sheida Khanam (27), Rajia Khanom (21) and Roshanara Begum (24)—who left for IS controlled territory in April 2015. There were also four women among a group of medical students who were studying at the University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST) in Khartoum before they left for Syria.

### *Age*

The person's age at the time of their departure was used. It was possible to determine ages in all but seven cases. The average age for men was 24. There were no men aged under 17 and only six were older than 35. The oldest was Muhammed Abdul Mannan (a member of the same extended family from Luton), who was 75 when he left. The average age of the women was 23; however, it was notable that 12 were under the age of 20, and four of them were just 15. Figure 1 provides an overview of the age ranges.

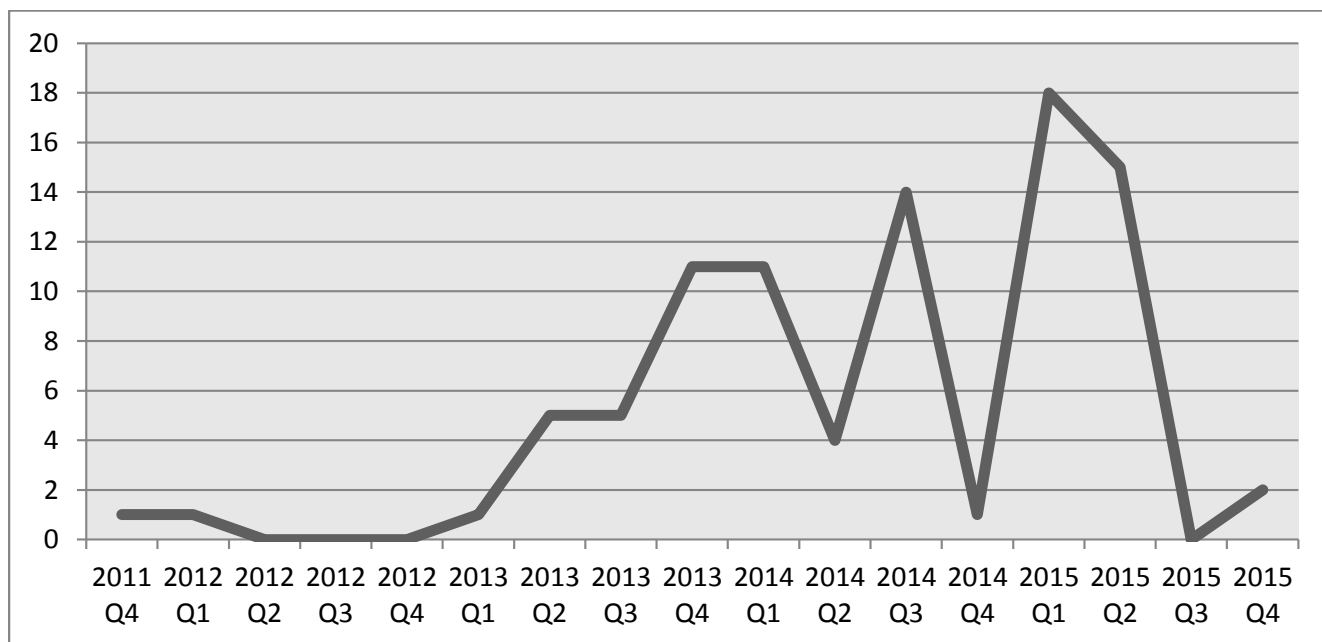
Figure 1: Age at Time of Departure



*Time of Departure*

The time of departure could be determined in 78 cases. Media reports often only specified a season or time of year. Therefore, each year was divided into quarters and the data classified accordingly. The first person to definitely leave for Syria was Kamran Hoque (29) who left the UK at the end of 2011; originally he signed up to be an ambulance driver but it seems that he later became a fighter for the al-Nusra Front.

Figure 2: Date of Departure



*Mobilisation Patterns*

The profiles were examined to determine whether people were more likely to travel alone or in groups. This has significance in terms of radicalisation patterns. The profiles were divided into three mobilisation groups depending on whether the individual travelled alone, with one other person, or as part of a group of three or



more (family groups were included in this category). Information was found for 89 of the profiles: of them, 22 people travelled alone, 20 travelled in a pair and 47 travelled with a family or in a group of three or more.

#### *Criminal Histories*

Criminal histories were discoverable for 19 individuals, all of them male (in other words, 22 percent of male jihadists in this database had convictions prior to departure). This number is likely to be higher when taking into account the incompleteness of the data. In several cases, individuals had no reported convictions themselves but were close associates of those who did. Only those with convictions were designated as such in the data however.

Six people had served time in prison and six were on bail for serious offences when they left for Syria. It is therefore likely that serious legal trouble was the impetus for travelling. Examples include Choukri Ellekhli (22), who was convicted (in absentia) for a series of violent robberies; Abu Aziz (32), who skipped bail when facing charges of public fighting; and Ibrahim Kabir Sadik (24) and Daha Essa (25), who fled the country when facing fraud charges. In six cases, it was unclear what crime the individual had been convicted of, but in four of these cases the convictions were linked to gang culture. Two people had been convicted of sexual offences, one for drug dealing and one for computer hacking. Two people had convictions for activism (or what could loosely be termed political offences): Kabir Ahmed, was convicted of inciting hatred against homosexuals after distributing leaflets, and Mohammed el-Araj (23), was convicted for violence at an anti-Israel rally. Abu Rumaysah (31) was on bail for membership of a banned organisation (*al-Muhajiroun*) when he took his family to Syria. It is thought that three people were radicalised in prison, all of whom also had gang connections—Fasil Towalde (21), Ondogo Ahmed (23) and Aine Davis (30).

#### *Education*

The educational status of 35 people was found (this includes a group of 15 who abandoned their medical studies in Khartoum). Seven people had undergraduate degrees and 27 had abandoned their studies to travel to Syria. One person—Mohammed Azzam Javeed (18)—left for Syria shortly before he was due to study for an undergraduate degree.

#### *Links with Political or Religious Groups*

The research looked for connections with established groups, radical preachers or mosques that had a reputation for preaching an extremist message. 17 people had links with extremist groups prior to departing for Syria. It was found that those with links to social movement groups tended to be older (their average age was 27). The group that came up most often was *al-Muhajiroun*, a Salafist group banned under the UK Terrorism Act in 2010. Seven individuals were members of this group or had links with its founder Omar Bakri Muhammed or its leader, Anjem Choudary. Members of *al-Muhajiroun* who went on to fight or support the cause in Syria include Kabir Ahmed (32), who came to national media attention when he was jailed for inciting hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation in 2012, and Abu Aziz (32), who was jailed for an assault following an anti-Israel protest. Those with links to *al-Muhajiroun* were all male except for Rajia Khanom (21), who left for Syria with 12 family members.

#### *Biographical Availability*

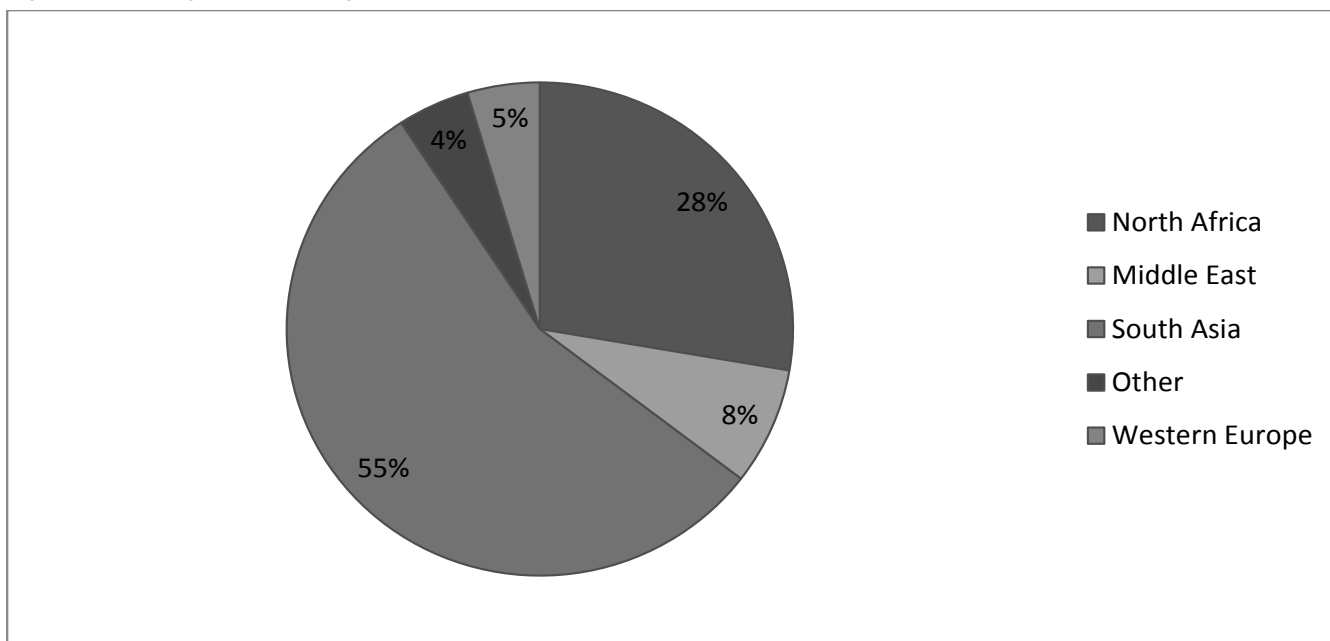
The profiles were also investigated for 'biographical availability'—factors such as whether or not the individuals were married, had children, or had embarked on a career. SMT holds that people with such ties are less likely to involve themselves with radical causes. The family status of 77 people could be determined. In cases where information could not be found, the age of the person often pointed to the assumption they would not be married or have children. However, this was not confirmed. 24 people were married prior to departure. Of these 20 had children, and two were divorced but also had children. 12 of those with children

left their family to travel to Syria or Iraq, and 10 took their children with them. Of the four married without children, two jihadists left with their wife and two left alone.

*Immigration Backgrounds*

The immigration backgrounds of 80 people could be ascertained. Only three had no recent immigration history; all of the others had at least one parent with non-British ancestry. The majority were second or third-generation immigrants, but nine were identified as being first-generation immigrants. Press and court reports did not reveal the backgrounds of the remaining 32 profiles, but their names suggested that they too had non-British ancestry. Figure 3 presents the findings.

Figure 3: Immigration Backgrounds



*Converts*

12 people were converts to Islam (11 percent). This is a smaller percentage than is the case with other European countries.<sup>[1]</sup> Of these, 12 three were native Britons: Jake Petty (24), Jack Letts (19) and Lucas Kinney (26). Most other converts had immigration backgrounds in Africa (three from Eritrea, one from Ghana, one from Nigeria, and one from Gambia). Abu Rumaysah (born Siddhartha Dhar) had Indian-born parents and Jamal al-Harith was of Jamaican lineage. One other convert’s background could not be discovered. Two converts, both with Eritrean backgrounds, found Islam in prison.

*Career*

Information on employment history or career status could be determined for only 15 people. Many were too young to have worked full-time. 12 people were in full-time education when they left. For the 15, the range of occupations showed enough variety that no generalisations could be made. Included in the database were a care worker, a road engineer, a math tutor, an employee of British Gas and an estate agent. There were very few people with established careers or professions. There was one doctor (Issam Abuanza) and one owner of a successful software company (Siful Haque Sujan), but the overall tendency was towards underemployment—individuals with degrees working in jobs below their skill level.

<sup>1</sup>Roy estimates that 25 percent of French jihadists are converts

## Discussion

The biographical circumstance that lends most weight to Roy's theory is evidence of criminal behaviour prior to departure. This can be read as an indication both of resentment against society and that jihadism is often an offshoot of gang culture. In the database, 19 people had criminal convictions (although two of these convictions could be linked to activism). This constitutes 17 percent overall or 22 percent of men—a significant minority. However, the number of people with convictions that could be firmly linked to gang culture was smaller – only eight or nine people. Although the link with gang culture is real and many researchers have pointed to it [8], the numbers are not large enough to explain the phenomenon in isolation. In fact, this research points to criminal history actually being more rare than assumed, at least for the British contingent.

A large number of converts in the database would support Roy's theory; 11 percent of the jihadists were indeed converts. Kevin Brice [9] estimates that up to 100,000 of the UK's Muslims are converts, amounting to at the very most 4 percent. Therefore converts are disproportionately represented in this database of British foreign fighters. In Roy's view, this is a sign that individual radicalisation does not reflect the radicalisation of a frustrated Muslim community. However, all but three of the converts in the database were from other immigrant communities, so they could have suffered similar frustrations in terms of cultural assimilation, socio-economic disadvantage and discrimination.

Roy [10] argues that jihadism involves 'a relatively sudden individual jump into violence' and is not the result of long-term involvement with radical groups. He also argues that jihadists do not have a religious background or links to mosques. However, the present research found that 15 percent of people in the database had a history of involvement with radical Islamic groups. Whilst this is not a large minority, it is still a sign that political or religious activism might not be as insignificant as Roy's theory contends. It is certainly true that in the case of the British jihadists, involvement with radical organisations is *one* route into fighting jihad.

The fact that 15 percent of the people in the database had links with radical groups demonstrates that there is a radical Islamist movement within the UK that operates as a gateway to jihadism. At the centre are *al-Muhajiroun* and its spinoffs like *Sharia4*. [11] Reports issued by Europol in 2014 and 2015 describe *al-Muhajiroun* as a driver for people going to Syria. Its leader, Anjem Choudary, was charged with inviting support for IS in August 2015. [12] However, the role of *al-Muhajiroun* should not be overstated; the majority of jihadists had no links to it or any other group. This is significant because SMT posits that movements act rationally to advance their aims—violence is just one tactic, but more conventional methods will also be used. Therefore, it does not seem to be accurate to describe the jihadists travelling to Syria as part of a social movement in the traditional sense. There is no collective rational mobilisation of resources to achieve some kind of reform or change in society. However, the idea that jihadism is a subculture allows for it to be understood through the theoretical insights of SMT—in this way it can be seen as a response to social strains.

More jihadists were married than expected (24 out of the 77 about whom marital information was available). Many also had children and were split roughly 50/50 on whether they took their children with them. This contradicts the theory of biographical availability that argues people with family attachments are less likely to embark on risky courses of action. In this database, being married and having children is no barrier to becoming a jihadist.

## Conclusion

All theories identify general conditions and circumstances—there will always be exceptions and specific cases. Furthermore, although there are certain patterns across Europe, their distribution will change, depending on the country. Allowing for these caveats, what insights from the theories fit the profiles? A great many,

but the research also found that the range of backgrounds and motivations leading to radicalisation is over-generalised. For example, although Olivier Roy's theory offers a relatively accurate portrait, there are enough anomalies to suggest slightly different dynamics at work in the British case.

In emphasising 'generational nihilism' and the role of self-realisation through violence, Roy ignores the idealistic appeal IS holds.[13] He also fails to recognise that the disillusionment with society is often more existential in nature than a simple 'discrepancy between expectations and social outcomes'.[14] The jihadists seem just as disillusioned by what 'success' might bring in Western society. This could be a difference between the French and UK cases. Research shows that the British contingent is often better educated than their European counterparts. A survey by researchers from the Queen Mary College pointed out that in the British case, 'youth, wealth and being in education were risk factors'.[15] Many see a community that offers personal redemption rather than a foreign fighting career being an escalation of delinquent or criminal behaviour. It is not clear that nihilism is the best way to characterise the jihadists. As Scott Atran [16] testified to the UN Security Council:

*Few if any of those who join militant jihad, or xenophobic nationalisms for that matter, are nihilists. That is an accusation levelled by those who wishfully refuse to consider the moral appeal, and hence real danger of such movements.*

Relative deprivation plays a role in a wide variety of radicalisation models and is a central part of SMT. Although there is no straightforward relationship between strain and radicalisation, the idea places radicalisation in a vital wider context that is missed by the characterisation of jihadists as only alienated youth. If one accepts that young British Muslims are subject to these social and economic strains, it becomes clear that jihadism offers one way out that might appeal to some people. SMT offers interesting insights regarding wider structural strains on the Muslim immigrant community. The possibility that these wider dynamics are creating the circumstances where radicalisation can take root is still not given enough credence.

**About the Author:** Gavin Lyall is a recent Master's graduate from the University of Kent's International Conflict and Security Programme.

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## Policy Note

### Why the U.S. Military Should Support Domestic CVE

by Joe Becker

#### Abstract

*This Policy Note highlights the valuable role that the U.S. military, and especially military veterans, could play in domestic efforts to counter violent extremism. The fight against radicalization has been one of the most challenging aspects of counterterrorism for both the U.S. government and civil society. Success against the proliferation of extremist ideologies will require this nation to openly address difficult questions and develop novel approaches that incorporate a broader range of national resources. The U.S. military has unique capabilities that should not be dismissed out-of-hand. Careful planning and execution could make the military a useful partner in domestic efforts against radicalization and strengthen national security at home and abroad.*

**Key words:** Military, community relations, counterterrorism, countering violent extremism

#### Introduction

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is a catch phrase covering a spectrum of activities designed to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies at the community level before they lead to violence and to preempt planned acts of violence in the earliest possible stage.[1] Unfortunately, this term has become a lightning rod for controversy in Western countries, including Europe and most recently the United States. Many individuals view attempts to identify vulnerable communities and individuals as a form of racial, ethnic, or religious profiling. For some, activities associated with CVE, such as “community policing,” are viewed as an attempt by the government to convince friends and family members to spy on one another.[2] Others, while eschewing extremist ideologies, view any attempt by the U.S. Government to propagate values or influence perceptions as tantamount to propaganda – an activity the U.S. government is generally prohibited from conducting against its own population. However, in recent years, leaders such as (now former) FBI Director James Comey have consistently identified the threat of “lone wolf” attackers (those who act independently after exposure to radical ideas) as one of the greatest threats to U.S. national security.[3] While CVE may be controversial in practice, the need for effective strategies has never been clearer. In order to safeguard the U.S. population in the coming years, the U.S. government must address these controversies head-on, develop coherent policies and socially acceptable approaches with regard to CVE, and engage in a concerted effort that maximizes its available resources. Departments and agencies across the U.S. government, including the Department of Defense (DoD), will have to learn to operate outside their comfort zones in greater coordination with each other and in direct partnership with the public.

The U.S. military has become the primary face of this nation’s efforts against violent extremists overseas, with a continuous record of deployments and operations since the attacks of 9/11. U.S. military personnel are familiar with the conduct of CVE on foreign soil. On the domestic front, the military provides limited support to a broad range of counterterrorism initiatives, primarily through U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). This has recently included consideration of various CVE programs, and USNORTHCOM planners are familiar with the topic, but these projects have yet to move beyond the most nascent stages of planning and implementation. Most of the military focus in support of domestic counterterrorism is currently apportioned between consequence management in the event of a major terrorist attack [4] and support to interdiction operations against threatening materials and actors entering the U.S. Homeland.[5] While this arrangement is constitutionally appropriate, given the restrictions on military operations in the

domestic space, the military has tremendous potential to support domestic CVE. The Department of Defense (DoD) should look for creative ways to get involved, and policymakers would be wise to ask this of them.

### ***Why the U.S. Military Should Get Involved***

Why should the DoD consider increasing its support to a mission like domestic CVE, which falls outside of its traditional purview? The first answer is that CVE is an important component of the global counterterrorism effort that has received insufficient emphasis and support in recent years. Responsibilities for domestic CVE within the U.S. Government are divided primarily between two agencies, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DoJ). These two agencies jointly established a CVE Task Force in 2016 to provide central leadership in coordinating the activities under the CVE umbrella. [6] However, this remains a fledgling endeavor with minimal funding, no tasking authority back to parent organizations, and only a small staff of personnel on temporary loan from participating agencies. In spite of dedicated efforts by a handful of American CT professionals, the CVE Task Force represents a humble start toward addressing the many issues that the DHS identified in its own Advisory Council's 2016 report on CVE.[7]

For a variety of reasons, including both political pressures and legal complications, the U.S. finds itself behind many other Western nations in the application of CVE techniques – often looking to European partners for best practices.[8] Ironically, the U.S. provides funding for some of these other nations' programs through the Department of State (DoS) while struggling to replicate them at home.[9] The DoS even published a 2016 strategy for the conduct of international CVE that paints the U.S. as a member of the global CVE community. Yet this document has almost no practical linkage to concrete activities within the U.S. itself.[10] Further complicating the picture, effective CVE efforts are by, their very nature, often decentralized, drawing on initiatives from local governments or civil society. The U.S. has made little headway in providing formal coordination, direction, and integration across this enterprise. Even with a significant boost in resources and authority, it might take the CVE Task Force years to build a coherent and effective program at the national level. They cannot achieve this by themselves. The CVE effort needs all the effective partners and support that it can get.

The second reason that the DoD should take a role in domestic CVE is that the military has unique capabilities and characteristics and could offer considerable advantages as a supporting effort and interagency partner. First among these capabilities are its service members themselves, a ready-made pool of public ambassadors. Soldiers (including sailors, airmen, and marines) hail from local communities across the nation and represent every racial and ethnic background of the American "melting pot." Many soldiers have first-hand experience in combatting various forms of violent extremism from operational deployments overseas. A large number have personally witnessed the reality that belies utopian visions presented by groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS). Military veterans carry these experiences into civilian life and could provide an additional source of ambassadors for CVE (either paid or on a volunteer basis). Unlike police and other law-enforcement officers who cannot help but carry the stigma of government authority, service members and veterans could be presented to local communities as relatively neutral parties.

Translating this vision of service member ambassadors to practice would present challenges, but they are surmountable with careful planning and preparation. Perhaps the least controversial starting point might be a concerted effort to recruit and employ military veterans to support various CVE programs at the community level. While veterans offer many of the advantages of uniformed service members in terms of experience and credibility, their civilian status presents a degree of separation from both security services and the vagaries of political controversy. Many veterans also retain a strong service ethic that might predispose them to this type of work. Veterans could serve any number of roles, from guest speaker to behind-the-scenes volunteer, in local-level service and outreach programs designed to reduce the growth of extremism. This

type of partnership could be introduced in a variety of ways, but one suggestion would be to employ a core of professional, full-time veteran staffers to coordinate and direct a network of volunteers. Coordination for this undertaking might fall to USNORTHCOM or even potentially the National Guard Bureau, but the actual hiring and employment of veterans could even be handled by state or local agencies if federal funding is made available. For the purposes of this Policy Brief, it suffices only to demonstrate the viability of the concept.

The employment of veterans presents an appealing possibility, but this does not mean that the military should shy away from community engagement by active duty service members, as well. The potential outreach forums (both physical and virtual) are almost limitless, and even small-scale efforts by members of our nation's volunteer military could have a positive impact. This said, military involvement should almost always occur in the form of direct support to a civilian organization, according to the needs and preferences of the community. Service members might serve as invited guest speakers, online coaches or mentors, or simply as helping hands, even wearing civilian clothes if appropriate. Service members should be prepared in advance to deal with tough questions, controversial issues, and outright criticism. Much like working with tribal chiefs in Iraq or Afghanistan, they will have to become adept at reading perceptions and interests, before eventually building rapport. In some communities, this might start very small, merely investing time and personnel in community service events like leadership camps or sports clinics. Effective CVE is a long-term relationship-building effort, and every relationship will be different. Fortunately, the military has a reputation for non-partisanship and stands out as one of the most trusted and respected institutions of federal government.[11] This does not mean that the communities and demographics most susceptible to radicalization towards extremist violence will welcome them with open arms, but it does provide a viable platform from which to start. Regardless of how a U.S. citizen might feel about their military, service members cannot hurt them, cannot arrest them, and cannot collect intelligence on them except in very specific cases. This message alone is worth emphasizing to the American public.

While the American service member could put a new and convincing face on CVE, the DoD also has considerable capabilities to support domestic efforts behind the scenes. The military embodies expertise in planning and organization on a level unmatched by other institutions of government. It also trains service members in the various disciplines of information operations, and the military services have a considerable pool of expertise built from experience in practicing their skills overseas.[12] While other agencies struggle to find even small numbers of personnel to contribute to initiatives like the CVE Task Force, the DoD could make a significant contribution with minimal pain. Selected service members would be most effective working in civilian clothes and answering directly to civilian leadership to avoid counterproductive perceptions of a military takeover. However, these individuals would come with ready-made links to international networks of CVE practitioners and planners, forged by shared operational experience from around the world. Extremist groups rely on their own networks and make no distinction between foreign and domestic. In the words of (retired) General Stanley McChrystal, "It takes a network to defeat a network." [13] The U.S. military cannot succeed overseas in its fight against terrorist actors if it chooses to partition its capabilities from the broader long-term effort. Neither can America's domestic CVE community afford to summarily dismiss a robust pool of capabilities because of institutional biases against the military and security forces.

A final reason why the DoD should choose to actively engage in domestic CVE is that radicalization, regardless of the source of its inspiration, directly affects the U.S. military. The scale of military recruiting makes it virtually impossible to vet incoming recruits for all but the most sensitive positions. Attacks such as the one conducted by Maj. Hasan at Fort Hood in 2009 provide a stark demonstration that even active-duty soldiers are susceptible to radicalization and recruitment by extremist organizations.[14] Military veterans, including Timothy McVeigh, have also conducted several of the most prominent attacks on U.S. soil.[15] Even closer to home, military family members are potentially vulnerable to online radicalization, especially



as service members are frequently deployed and not always available to actively monitor their children's activities. If the DoD were to implement nothing else recommended by this Policy Brief, it should certainly recognize the need to support and protect its own communities with some of the proactive measures available under the umbrella of CVE. USNORTHCOM is already examining these issues, and the military has a vested interest in any CVE effort which helps to strengthen and secure its recruiting base, protect its families, and secure its standing force from insider threats.

### ***Challenges to This Approach***

Any increase to military involvement in domestic CVE will draw some controversy. There are powerful arguments against increasing military support to this effort, and these must be considered before making a decision to proceed. A likely first argument from the military establishment is that increased support for domestic CVE would be a distraction from the service members' primary warfighting mission and functions. It is true that supporting CVE would take personnel away from their regular duties and syphon away a certain amount of funding. On the other hand, the investment required to make a difference in CVE pales in comparison to the cost of many high-end military weapon systems. As a supporting effort, the most effective contributions the military could make would be measured in personnel and time. Furthermore, increased public engagement would provide ancillary benefits, which may include a boost in recruiting opportunities. Findings by the Pew Research Center indicate that, while Americans generally hold a high opinion of the military, those between 18 and 29 had the lowest levels of confidence.[16] Considering that this is both the target age for military recruitment and the greatest window of vulnerability for radicalization, it would appear that the military's interests in public engagement converges with those of the CVE community. It is also important to note that many of the service members who might be utilized for domestic CVE are likely the same who regularly support various forms of CVE and other counterterrorism efforts overseas. This new effort might actually help them hone aspects of their skills and isolate best practices in deterring radicalization. At the very least, it would broaden their understanding of the overall counterterrorism fight and strengthen the network connections between practitioners of CVE at home and abroad.

Another argument against supporting CVE on the domestic front derives from the concept of "mission creep." New missions beget new missions. Any new undertaking risks the possibility of discovering that the keys to success lie beyond the initial scope of the project. Initial successes by the military in supporting CVE might lead to additional demands on an already strained force. This is certainly a concern, but because the military would only provide a supporting effort in domestic CVE, it would not be primarily responsible for ensuring success. Good planners could scope the level of military involvement, and leaders could enforce this scope. The onus will always be on civilian agencies to lead the effort and fight for the funding and resources required to ensure success.

Perhaps the most compelling argument against this initiative involves risks of public (mis-) perception. First, if this were not planned and presented carefully, military involvement in CVE could be perceived as "militarization" within local communities or as "executive overreach" into local security matters. The massive scale of the DoD compounds this risk, and perceptions of anti-Muslim sentiments within the political realm have created landmines that will have to be overcome. These can, however, be mitigated by careful planning and presentation. Second, the military could put its own reputation and popularity at risk by affiliating with a controversial effort like CVE. This is certainly a consideration, but it pales in the face of a potentially existential threat to the freedoms this nation holds dear. The military is charged with defending the Constitution against all enemies, *both foreign and domestic*. The professionalism and dedication of the U.S. military has prevailed through greater challenges, and the DoD could certainly navigate these perilous waters.

## Conclusion

Recent generations of military leadership have become adept at cheerleading for interagency partners, especially when it involves missions that the DoD does not want. The U.S. Armed Forces may not initially appear to be a logical fit for domestic CVE, and such a role finds little precedent among military forces worldwide, but the challenge posed by violent extremism defies conventional logic and threatens the values upon which this nation was built. No instrument of national power can afford to sit idle or simply cheer for somebody else's players, especially against an adversary with no respect for the divide between foreign and domestic issues. The U.S. Government as a whole is going to have to wade into the muck and dirt of a difficult issue and develop compromise solutions that will never make everyone happy. The military will not be the leader in domestic CVE, nor should it be. The DoD might even encounter resistance from some elements of the CVE community against its participation. This initiative will require planning, leadership and finesse, but few organizations are more suited to navigating these difficult issues than USNORTHCOM. If the military demonstrates a willingness to jump in and get dirty, it will provide significant informal leadership across the interagency. When the largest department of the Federal Government is willing to operate humbly in a supporting role outside of its core mission, it sends a strong signal. CVE is important.

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**Disclaimer:** The author's views are his own and do not reflect endorsement by the United States Government.

## Notes

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## Resources

Daniel Koehler. *Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism* (London / New York: Routledge, 2017), 306 pp., US \$155.00 [Hardback], US \$43.88 [E-book]. ISBN: 978-1-138-12277-2 (Hardback), 978-1-315-64956-6 (E-book).

### Reviewed by Bart Schuurman

Acts of terrorism tend to elicit hardline responses from politicians and the public. But the modern experience with this form of political violence has demonstrated time and again the limitations of what are euphemistically termed ‘kinetic’ countermeasures. A criminal justice approach has become prevalent in Europe especially, but here also limitations must be acknowledged. Most terrorists cannot be imprisoned forever. In the European context, the prosecution of returned ‘foreign fighters’ has shown just how difficult it can be to gather sufficient evidence for crimes allegedly committed in conflict zones. Finally, for the relatively limited number of actual terrorists, there are many more individuals whose ‘radical’ views (whether Islamist, right-wing or otherwise) make them potential security risks in the eyes of the authorities.

In response to these issues, recent years have seen many initiatives across the globe aimed at developing policies to prevent or respond to terrorism by addressing the radical convictions often assumed to underpin it. Just as the debate on how and why people become involved in terrorism has been dominated by the concept of radicalization, policies and programs aimed at preventing such involvement, or accomplishing the reintegration into society of former terrorists, frequently center on ‘deradicalization’. Notwithstanding some governments’ suspiciously triumphant claims of success, if and how such prevention or reintegration efforts can work remains uncertain. Key issues include a muddled definitional debate, lack of (publicly available) hard data to measure initiatives’ effectiveness, an associated lack of program evaluations and, no less critically, ambiguity about the processes underpinning deradicalisation and disengagement and just how interventions can (contribute to) bring about these outcomes.

Enter Daniel Koehler’s new book *Understanding deradicalization*. Although research on deradicalization has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, there are few publications that provide a central point of reference for the many issues and questions that this topic raises. Koehler’s book recommends itself in part precisely because it covers the breadth of the debate on deradicalization and disengagement and because it presents this material in a fashion that is accessible to both professionals and academics. Those working to develop, implement or assess deradicalization or disengagement projects will benefit in particular from the topically-focused chapters, the many examples and overviews taken from existing initiatives and the work’s emphasis on practice as well as theory. Readers with a stronger orientation on research will appreciate Koehler’s ability to map the state of the art, his theoretical perspectives on deradicalization and disengagement, and his typology of the various efforts currently underway to effectuate these outcomes.

Koehler’s work spans eleven chapters and numerous themes. The first three chapters outline the methodological approach taken in the book and provide the necessary academic background on the research and practice of deradicalization and disengagement. Particularly noteworthy are the sources on which the book is built; in addition to the academic literature and press reporting (which usefully includes German and French as well as English sources), Koehler incorporates the experiences of staff involved in these programs on various levels, as well as his own professional background working within such initiatives. Chapters 4, 5 and 7 theorize the various aspects of deradicalization and disengagement programs and critically assess the (under-researched) question of effectiveness. Chapter 7 in particular will be of benefit to readers eager to learn more about designing and evaluating deradicalization and disengagement initiatives.

The book gives detailed descriptions of existing programs in chapter 10, which provides a useful overview of relevant initiatives from a global perspective. In a sense, chapter 6 complements this descriptive approach with a look at programs that specifically include or are centered on family-based counseling. It is a shame this chapter isn't longer, as it is one of the most interesting ones in the book. Effectuating deradicalization and disengagement requires the cooperation between a host of agencies, such as the public prosecution service and the probation service. It is becoming increasingly apparent that families also have a key role to play in achieving these policy goals, for instance by providing an alternative social environment to that offered by erstwhile extremist compatriots. At the same time, families are often torn apart by the radicalization process and in need of specialized counseling themselves, a topic that Koehler could have covered more extensively.

Perhaps most interesting to those looking for guidance on actual interventions that they can use to bring about deradicalization or disengagement, are the tools and methods covered in chapter 9. Covering such topics as the role that former extremists and the various forms of counseling can take, Koehler provides to-the-point overviews that will appeal to the professional seeking information on 'what works'. This focus on lessons learned returns in the concluding chapter, which also provides some pointers for useful future research including the need for more empirical studies.

The overall impression of Koehler's book is a very favorable one. Of course, there are some aspects of the book that raise questions; the thematic organization of the chapters sometimes feels slightly disjointed and some paragraphs tend to run very long. Chapter 8 on moral and methodological problems is so short as to feel somewhat like an unfinished afterthought. In his discussion on evaluation initiatives, the published experiences with Dutch and Indonesian programs are not referenced. On the whole, however, the breadth of the topics covered, the use of unique data, the attention drawn to important yet underexplored topics and a presentation style that will appeal to both academics and practitioners combine to make Koehler's book an important and valuable addition to the debate on deradicalization and disengagement.

***About the reviewer:** Bart Schuurman is an Assistant Professor at Leiden University's Institute of Security and Global Affairs, a fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague and Associate Editor of Perspectives on Terrorism. One of his research projects focuses on evaluating a Dutch initiative to re-integrate into society extremist and terrorist prisoners.*



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## Counterterrorism Bookshelf:

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

Reviewed by Joshua Sinai

*This column consists of capsule reviews of books from various publishers. The reviews are listed in the sections on Terrorism – General Accounts, Counterinsurgency, Radicalization and Countering Extremism, Africa, Afghanistan/South Asia, Global Jihad, Hizballah, Israel, Red Army Faction, and United Kingdom.*

#### **Terrorism – General Accounts**

Kai Bird, *The Good Spy: The Life and Death of Robert Ames* (New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2014), 448 pp., US \$ 16.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-3078-8976-8.

On April 18, 1983, a bomb exploded outside the American embassy in Beirut, killing 63 people, injuring 120 others, including Robert Ames, the CIA's Director of the Office of Near East and South Asia Analysis, who was considered one of the agency's most influential and effective operatives in the Middle East. The attack, which was carried out by a suicide bomber driving a van packed with explosives, was attributed to Hizballah, and was reportedly organized by Imad Mughniyah, its most effective terrorist mastermind. This book is an extensively researched journalistic account of Ames' life and CIA career leading up to his death. It also provides a wider context for understanding the 'spy games' played in the Middle East at the time by America, Israel, and other governments, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), with whose operative Ali Hassan Salameh, Ames had maintained close contact. Mr. Bird is a prominent American journalist and author.

Peter Calvert, *Terrorism, Civil War, and Revolution: Revolution and International Politics* [Third edition] (New York, NY: Continuum, 2010), 200 pp., US \$ 99.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 31.46 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4411-5364-7.

This is a well-informed account of the components of terrorism, civil war, and revolution. These are discussed in terms of issues such as challenges to the state (e.g., urban and rural insurgency, coups, civil war, revolution, and wars of national liberation); the use of force in the international system to effect change (e.g., provision of military aid to a threatened government or direct military intervention); the characteristics of terrorist and revolutionary leaders (their social and psychological origins, the relationships between leaders and followers, and the qualities of effective insurgent leaders); the role of societal sub-cultures in providing the environments for the growth of radical movements; and the components of effective counterinsurgency doctrines and campaigns (e.g., planning, intelligence, training, and technology, maintaining the primacy of civilian government, understanding the mind of the opposition). A final section discusses the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the impact of 9/11, and offers an assessment of the U.S.-led military intervention in Iraq. Major theories and concepts, as well as historical examples, are used to explain these topics, making this book a valuable textbook for courses on this subject. The author is Emeritus Professor of Comparative and International Politics at the University of Southampton, UK.

Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, (Eds.), *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to ISIS* [Updated edition with a new preface and final chapter] (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 536 pp., US \$ 34.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-5202-9250-5.

This volume was initially published in France in 2004, with an American edition published in 2007. This updated edition includes a new preface and a final chapter on jihadism in the age of ISIS, written by Gerard Chaliand. The new preface discusses topics such as the nature of terrorism, responding to terrorism, terrorism and the paradox of strategy, the cyclical history of terrorism, and the evolution of terrorism in

history. The book is divided into three parts: “The Prehistory of Terrorism” (e.g., the zealots and assassins); “Terrorism From 1789 to 1968” (e.g., the origins of modern terrorism, anarchist terrorism in the 19th century, and terrorism from World War II to the wars of national liberation); and “Terrorism Since 1968” (e.g., from 1968 to radical Islam, the roots of Islamic radicalism, al Qaida, suicide terrorism, United States counterterrorism, terrorism in Southeast Asia, and the origins of ISIS). Gerard Chaliand is a visiting professor at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Arnaud Blin is Executive Director of the Center for Global Policy and Governance Studies, France.

Richard A. Clarke and R.P. Eddy, *Warnings: Finding Cassandras to Stop Catastrophes* (New York, NY: Ecco/Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 2017), 416 pp., US \$ 29.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-06-248802-2.

This book is about the capability to forecast new trends, especially impending disasters, in spite of conventional wisdom’s dismissal of such warnings, which is part of what is termed a Cassandra complex. Cassandra was a Greek princess who was endowed with “the ability to see impending doom, but the inability to persuade anyone to believe in her.” (p. 1). To detect the presence of “a real Cassandra among the myriad of pundits” (p. 5), the authors present short case studies of individuals who had exhibited a Cassandra-like ability concerning important disasters, but were ignored. These case studies include the failures to adhere to warnings about Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1991, Hurricane Katrina, the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the 2008 financial meltdown, and the rise of ISIS. In the chapter “The Arabist: The Rise of ISIS,” former U.S. ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, is portrayed as the Cassandra who had advocated American arming of the non-jihadist Free Syrian Army (FSA) Syrian opposition, which the authors believe would have prevented the taking over of the anti-Assad opposition by ISIS. While one may not agree with this assessment because the situation in Syria was much more complicated and the FSA was a weak force, this chapter is worth reading for its discussion of what former Ambassador Ford had recommended and how it was met by the Obama Administration. To remedy the need to identify other Cassandras, the authors propose to empower the book’s readers with the capability to forecast impending disasters through what they term the “Cassandra Coefficient,” which consists of a series of questions derived from their observation of past Cassandra events. As they explain, “It involves four *components*: (1) the *warning*, the threat, or risk in question, (2) the *decision makers* or audience, who must react, (3) the predictor or possible *Cassandra*, and (4) the *critics* who disparage or reject the warning.” (p. 168). Each of these four components are accompanied by several factors, totaling 24, which enable the user to then assign the four components a score of high, medium, low, or absent. Once a Cassandra prediction is proposed and, following appropriate persuasion, is accepted by decision makers, the authors turn to the response component, which they explain needs to involve an intelligence type indications and warning surveillance strategy, hedging, mitigation and prevention. Such a warning system, the authors recommend, needs to be established in government and the corporate world. For the counterterrorism community, the authors’ Cassandra Coefficient methodology is recommended as a warning tool to forecast new terrorism warfare trends and how to transmit such warnings to decision makers. Richard Clark is a veteran national security expert in the U.S. Government and White House. R.P. Eddy is the CEO of Ergo, a business intelligence firm, based in New York.

David S. Cohen and Krysten Connon, *Living in the Crosshairs: The Untold Stories of Anti-Abortion Terrorism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 336 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Hardcover], US \$ 19.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-1993-7755-8.

This important book examines the terrorist-type threats confronting abortion providers in the United States, how such targeted threats affect the lives of those who work in these medical clinics, and proposes suggestions for upgrading the legal measures to counter and defeat such threats. The authors conclude that “targeted harassment” by anti-abortion extremists “will not end abortion in this country. Rather, abortion providers are too committed and too passionate to allow themselves to be dissuaded.” (p. 284). David Cohen

is a law professor at Drexel University's Thomas r. Kline School of Law, in Philadelphia. Krysten Connon is a graduate of this law school and an attorney in private practice in Philadelphia.

Mark S. Hamm and Ramon Spaaij, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017), 336 pp., US \$ 35.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-23118174-7.

This is a conceptually innovative and empirically case-study rich account of the characteristics of lone wolf terrorism in order, as the authors explain, "to illustrate and support broader theorization about the social and psychological processes involved in lone actor terrorism." (p. viii). Although one may not agree with the authors' restrictive definition of lone wolf terrorism as "terrorist actions carried out by lone individuals, as opposed to those carried out on the part of terrorist organizations or state bodies" (p. 5) since even lone wolves, who are radicalized by such groups, especially on the Internet, without necessarily having any direct physical contact with them, still regard themselves as "self-empowered" to carry out the wishes of such terrorist organizations through their own individualized attacks, there is much to commend in this book. Drawing on the authors extensive database of 123 cases across 21 variables that address issues such as attacks/plots, prior criminal history, triggering events, and others – with numerous of such individuals and their plots discussed throughout the book – they present a valuable six-phase model of the processes leading to lone wolf terrorism. This model consists of personal and political grievance, affinity with online sympathizers or an extremist group, enabler, broadcasting intent, triggering event, and engaging in terrorism (p. 159). The concluding chapter assesses the effectiveness of the United States' three-pronged approach to combatting lone wolf terrorism in the form of digital diplomacy, forging ties with Muslim community leaders who are in a position to detect potential militants in their midst, and the FBI sting program, which they criticize as employing informants to entrap potential terrorists, ending up "working only with marginal criminals, and not with the real threats like [Omar] Mateen... [and] only inflates the FBI's prosecution numbers without making us safer." (p. 266). Although others, such as this reviewer, might argue that this sting program is much more effective than claimed by the authors, this book's comprehensive and detailed coverage makes it a leading reference resource for those studying these issues. The appendix includes a listing of the authors' database's 123 cases of lone wolf terrorists. Dr. Hamm is professor of criminology at Indiana State University and Dr. Spaaij is a sociologist based at Victoria University and the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Saiful Karim, *Maritime Terrorism and the Role of Judicial Institutions in the International Legal Order* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill & Nijhoff, 2017), 202 pp., US \$ 143.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-9-0043-2928-7.

This book examines the role of judicial institutions in countering maritime terrorism. Judicial institutions, the author explains, "have two main roles to play in the maritime security discourse, namely prosecutions of offenders and settlement of disputes." (p. 2). Maritime terrorism is defined as terrorist acts that occur within the maritime environment, whether at sea or in port, and against coastal facilities or settlements. (p. 8). To discuss these issues, following an introductory overview, the book's chapters cover topics such as the international law of maritime terrorism, prosecution of maritime terrorism, the settlement of "vertical, transnational and horizontal disputes arising from maritime terrorism," and concluding observations. With maritime terrorism, like its ground and aviation terrorism counterparts, also subject to politicization, the author argues that "States may be reluctant to utilize the potential of judicial institutions because of the highly political nature of maritime terrorism. However, greater involvement of courts is needed to ensure the legitimacy of the process and to devise an enduring solution to the problem. A long-term solution is not possible without establishing a system that is legally sound and accountable. International judicial institutions can play [a] vital role in ensuring the accountability of States in the process of combating maritime terrorism." (pp. 33-34). In the conclusion, the author proposes "coordinated efforts by all States for the operationalization of judicial institutions for the common goal of combating maritime terrorism." (p. 176). This book is recommended as a valuable reference resource on the application of legal and judicial

components of maritime terrorism. The author is Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Law School, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

Brenda J. Lutz and James M. Lutz, *Globalization and the Economic Consequences of Terrorism* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 210 pp., US \$ 65.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-137-50393-0.

This book examines the potential linkages between globalization and terrorism and the impacts that terrorism can have on a country's economic activities. As explained by the authors, globalization can "cause disruption to local economic, social, cultural, and economic systems," with such disruptions generating "discontent, frustration, and opposition to change which can lead to outbreaks of political violence." (p. 1). To examine this thesis, the first chapter defines terrorism and globalization, and the impact of terrorism on a country's economy in terms of key sectors such as tourism, foreign investment, and trade flows. The second chapter explains the authors' methodology, which utilizes information from several data sources, such as the Swiss Technological University's (ETH Zurich) globalization index and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), developed by the University of Maryland's START Center. This methodology is applied to the next chapters which present case studies on Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Oceania, Sub-Saharan Africa, West Europe and North America. In the concluding chapter, the authors present several findings, including the observation that "Political globalization in a number of cases indicated that countries with greatest connections to the outside world had lower levels of terrorism which could suggest that countries with connections to other countries, including allies, found the means to limit terrorism, perhaps by relying on additional external resources." (p. 171). This finding can be questioned, since even "well-connected" countries such as the United Kingdom and France are experiencing a relatively high level of terrorist incidents, with terrorism in each country driven by local drivers exacerbated by foreign conflicts, such as in Syria – a result that is not included in the authors' overall hypothesis. Aside from this criticism, this book is an important contribution to the literature on the economic impact of terrorism. The authors are professors at Indiana University – Purdue, Indiana.

Orla Lynch and Javier Argomaniz (Eds.), *Victims of Terrorism: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Study* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 182 pp., US \$ 45.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-20067-8.

The contributors to this volume focus on the victims of terrorism, which, as the editors point out is an important but "a fundamentally under-researched subject in the academic sphere." (p. 1). As they explain, "Thus, naively, often victims are considered relevant only insofar as they allow terrorist groups to reach an audience who is the actual intended recipient of their political message. They are only rarely considered central to the process itself." (p. 1). As a result, citing a 2012 study by Alex Schmid, "the economic, psychological, medical and social needs of the victims have suffered relative neglect although, like other subject areas, they have started to attract interest in the post-9/11 environment." (pp. 1-2). To advance research and analysis on these issues, the volume is an outgrowth of a joint project between Spanish and UK academics who examined the experiences of UK and Spanish victims in the protracted conflicts in Northern Ireland and Basque Country, and the attacks of July 2005 in London and the March 11, 2004 Atocha train bombings in Madrid. The impacts of these attacks on their victims are examined in terms of their psychological and social needs, identity and recognition needs, and justice needs. Also examined are how their needs are presented in social media, and how legislation and legal statutes address their rights. The concluding chapter presents Best Practice recommendations for supporting victims of terrorism in terms of compensation and financial support, medical and psychological assistance, and judicial, social and educational, and political support. The editors are lecturers at the universities of St Andrews and Cork respectively.



Nevzat Soguk (Ed.), *Global Insurrectional Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 160 pp., US \$ 155.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-138-20849-0.

One of this edited volume's premises is that the Arab Spring's uprisings in the Middle East can be understood "as part of a broader politics of normative defiance of predominant political and economic orders." (p. 1) It is against this background that the volume's contributors aim "(a) to identify the material shifts giving rise to insurrectional politics, (b) to reflect on key arenas of insurrection, (c) to map/chart the impact of insurrectional movements on institutions and relations of political governance at national and global levels, and (d) to explore analytics that will advance theorization of insurrectional politics." (p. 1). This framework is applied to case studies on the "Save Rosia Montana" socio-ecological movement in post-communist Romania, the Indian middle-class's "obsession with the GDP," the Islamic responses to the challenges of Western modernity in Southeast Asia, the February 1915 Singapore mutiny, and the predicament of the Kurds in Iran and Iraq. Some of the chapters are jargon laden and difficult to understand, but the coverage of insurrections that are not usually addressed make this volume worth reading. The editor is Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Laura Westra, *Faces of State Terrorism* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 243 pp., US \$ 139.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-9-0042-2456-8.

This book examines how states, especially those that engage in "oppressive, imperialistic policies," respond to the challenges presented by non-state terrorism. Following an account of how states define the threats presented by non-state terrorists, with the author portraying terrorists as "not criminals" due to the nature of their politically-based intent and motivation, the discussion shifts to a characterization of state responses as "most often accompanied by illegal, violently repressive means that, therefore, constitute ongoing 'faces' of state terrorism." (p. 2). Other chapters discuss the measures available in national and international law to counter such state abuses, as well as the relation between the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, which the author argues "confirm the intimate connection between terrorism, counter-terrorism, and globalization." (p. 2-3). A Postscript discusses the legal implications of the assassination of Usama bin Laden, which the author characterizes as a breach of international law. Not everyone might agree with the author's argument, but it is worth noting. The author is a veteran Canadian legal scholar specializing in environmental ethics, policy and law, with special emphasis on human rights and global justice.

### **Counterinsurgency**

Ronald Haycock, *Regular Armies and Insurgency* [Routledge Library Editions: Terrorism and Insurgency, Volume 5]. New York, NY: Routledge, 1978/2015, 102 pp., US \$ 100.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 36.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-90270-1.

The papers comprising this edited volume were presented at the Fifth Annual Military History Symposium held at the Royal Military College of Canada in March 1978. The contributors, all renowned experts, discussed five representative situations involving regular armies and insurgencies in the cases of Mexico, the Irish insurgency from 1918 to 1921, the Malayan Emergency, the French Army and the Algerian War, 1954 to 1962, and the American intervention in Vietnam. The volume's first chapter by Sir Robert G.K. Thompson is especially relevant to the current era as it discusses his principles on effective counterinsurgency: a "clear political aim": a "whole [of] government" approach, with "the army, police, and civil administration" functioning "in accordance with the law of the land"; "an overall plan and an overall strategy"; public relations and psychological warfare; securing one's "own base areas"; and "the priority of attack should be against the insurgents' infrastructure, not against their guerrilla units," in order to deny them freedom of movement. (pp. 10-14). All the volume's case studies provide numerous lessons for understanding the predicaments in resolving current insurgencies, including the finding by Herbert Y. Schandler's chapter



on “America and Vietnam: The Failure of Strategy,” that “The American failure was caused by the lack of realization that military power alone could not solve what was basically a political problem.” (p. 94).

Seth G. Jones, *Waging Insurgent Warfare: Lessons From the Vietcong to the Islamic State* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 352 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-1906-0086-0.

This conceptually innovative account examines the factors involved in how groups start and engage in insurgencies, including how such insurgencies might end, as part of the questions that need to be addressed in formulating effective counterinsurgency campaigns. The author utilizes qualitative and quantitative data on 181 insurgencies between 1946 and 2015. These are applied to examine five issues that characterize insurgencies in terms of their strategies, tactics, organizational structures, information campaigns and propaganda, and types of external support they receive. After defining insurgency as “a political and military campaign by a nonstate group (or groups) to overthrow a regime or secede from a country” (p. 7), the author differentiates it from terrorism, which “is a tactic” and with terrorist attacks “often episodic, while insurgency is protracted warfare.” (p. 8). While lots of examples exist of protracted attacks by groups that are terrorist in nature, as well as groups that are both terrorist and guerrilla, such as Hizballah, ISIS, and others, the author’s definition is still valuable for analytical purposes. Counterinsurgency is defined as “a political-military campaign to prevent insurgent groups from overthrowing a regime or seceding from a country.” (p. 9). The concluding chapter provides practical findings on the components of effective counterinsurgency, which need to address the five issues (mentioned earlier) that characterize an insurgency. The appendices list the study’s 181 insurgency cases and the statistical results for ending insurgencies in terms of their impact on decreasing external support, insurgent strategy and strategic interaction, regime type, insurgent goals, counterinsurgent force structure, insurgent structure, and duration of an insurgency. The author is director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at the RAND Corporation.

### **Radicalization and Countering Extremism**

Sarah V. Marsden, *Reintegrating Extremists: Deradicalisation and Desistance* [Palgrave Pivot] (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 147 pp., US \$ 54.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-137-55018-7.

This book examines efforts to rehabilitate former prisoners who had engaged in terrorism, “taking a close look at both community and statutory organisations’ work with politically motivated former prisoners” (p. 3). To analyze these issues, the author proposes “a reframing of how the disengagement and reintegration process might be understood. Through interpreting the framework of goals in the context of the wider literature on desistance from crime, three themes relevant to interpreting what success might ‘look like’ with the group are suggested: supporting *reintegration*, developing *resilience* and *redirection* of the motivation to commit terrorist offences.” (p. 22). Concerning reintegration, the author explains that it requires a holistic approach that enables former prisoners to be reintegrated “into the family, local community, a job and wider political structures...” (p. 64). Finally, the author proposes that “supporting desistance involved equipping former prisoners with the practical, social and cognitive attributes to help them engage more positively with [the] wider society.” (p. 126) With all the significant components of deradicalization from violent extremism, disengagement from terrorism, and rehabilitation of former prisoners so ably discussed in the author’s conceptual framework, this volume is an important contribution to the literature on these issues. The author is a Lecturer in the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion at Lancaster University, UK.

Peter R. Neumann (Ed.), *Radicalization: Volume I – Models and Theories; Volume II – Issues and Debates; Volume III – Groups and Places; Volume IV – De- and Counter-Radicalization* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 1.858 pp., US \$ 1188.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-1387-9126-8 (Set).

As the four-volume set’s editor explains, the purpose of this nearly 70-contributor-based collection is to present major findings from multiple disciplines “to create a core of ideas and approaches that will enable

researchers to recognize, utilize, and build upon the achievements, insights and methods in disciplines other than their own” (p. 1). The first volume begins with the editor’s introductory overview, which ably discusses cross-cutting issues such as defining radicalization, terrorism as an endpoint of the radicalization process, and macro- and micro- level risk factors involved in radicalization pathways and how these relate to understanding the “specificity” of the factors that might drive individuals to become radicalized into terrorism. These issues play out in the four volumes which are organized thematically into Volume I: “Theories and Models” (e.g., definitions, models and theories, psychology of terrorism, ideology, and recruitment); Volume II, “Issues and Debates” (e.g., the roles of conflict, repression, and counterterrorism; the role of religion, suicide terrorism, lone actors, online radicalization, and radicalization and foreign fighters); Volume III, “Groups and Places” (e.g., jihadism in the West, Middle East, and other regions; far-right and left-wing extremists) ; and Volume IV, “De- and Counter-Radicalization” (e.g., theories and concepts, individual and collective de-radicalization, and counter-radicalization strategies). While the volumes’ articles, all of which were previously published, are generally representative of the discipline, and, as the author acknowledges, “it would have been easy to find many other chapters, articles and reports worthy of being reprinted...” (p. 17) the collection would have benefited from an additional section of selected government reports on radicalization, such as the United Kingdom’s important “Contest Strategy”, to explain how governments address these issues. Overall, this compendium is a valuable resource for understanding the literature on the processes and manifestations of radicalization and countering extremism. The author is Professor of Security Studies at the Department of War Studies, King’s College London, and has directed the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) since its establishment in early 2008.

Tinka M. Veldhuis, *Prisoner Radicalization and Terrorism Detention Policy: Institutionalized Fear or Evidence-Based Policy Making?* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 206 pp., US \$ 155.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-138-91719-4.

Correctional policies for arrested Islamist terrorist offenders are generally based on the premise that prisons are hotbeds of radicalization therefore such prisoners need to be separated from a prison’s general inmate population. This book examines the important question of whether such extremist prisoners should be concentrated in separate wings in a prison or be integrated into its general population. With the Netherlands opting for a solution that concentrates Islamists convicted of terrorism-related charges into separate “terrorism wings,” the author uses it as a case study “to examine why and how concentration policies are implemented and whether or not the underlying decision-making process is based on sound reasoning” (p. 3). “More specifically,” the author adds, “this book explores the ways in which fear in the policy context can influence the development, implementation, and outcomes of such policies.” (p. 3). To examine these issues, the book is divided into four parts. Part I, “The Making of Terrorism Detention Policy: The Terrorism Wing,” discusses the Dutch terrorism detention strategy. Part II, “Theoretical and Empirical Observations on Prisoner Radicalization,” presents a theory of prisoner radicalization and the role of terrorists in the general inmate hierarchy. Part III, “Terrorism Detention Policy in Practice: The Implementation of the Terrorism Wing,” discusses how imprisoned terrorists are housed in a separate terrorism wing, including their transfers and releases. Part IV, “Captivated by Fear,” presents the author’s critique of the separate detention policy and her “realist approach to rehabilitation and reintegration”. One of the author’s conclusions is that “the risk of radicalization among ‘ordinary’ prisoners may be smaller than is often believed.” (p. 179). This book is valuable for its systematic analysis of the important issue of how convicted terrorists are placed in prison, as well as its diagrams that provide templates for analyzing these issues. The author is a researcher at the University of Groningen and a Research Fellow at the ICCT – The Hague, the Netherlands.

***Afghanistan/South Asia***

David B. Edwards, *Caravan of Martyrs: Sacrifice and Suicide Bombing in Afghanistan* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 296 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-5202-9479-0.

What drives an individual to conduct a suicide bombing attack against an adversary within the Afghanistan context? According to the author of this well-informed book, this can be understood in relation to Afghanistan's historic cultural beliefs and ritual practices associated with sacrifice. With the sacrificial killing of sheep demonstrating a tribe's desire for peace, this practice was transformed following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, when the killed anti-regime insurgents were venerated as martyrs by the Afghan Mujahideen. The author adds that under the influence of the Afghan Arabs, led by Abdullah Azzam and Usama bin Laden, this "pivotal moment in the history of sacrifice in Afghanistan...laid the groundwork not only for September 11 but also for the subsequent alterations and manipulations to the machinery of sacrifice that have been undertaken since that cataclysmic event..." (p. 15). Today, the author explains, suicide attacks, from the Afghan insurgents' perspective, reflect "a realistic assessment of the nature of the conflict and an understanding of where strategic and tactical advantage resides. When the enemy you are facing uses unmanned drones to kill, the most effective response might be to go to the opposite extreme, matching the disembodied nonpresence of the drone with the embodied presence of the suicide bomber. If your enemy wants the conflict to be as bloodless for them as possible, then the best expedient might be to make it as bloody as humanly possible for everyone close at hand, even those who have had no part in the conflict themselves" (p. 214). The author, a Professor of Anthropology at Williams College, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, is a veteran field researcher in Afghanistan.

Dilip Hiro, *Apocalyptic Realm: Jihadists in South Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 320 pp., US \$ 35.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-300-17378-9.

This book focuses on the ongoing jihad and its associated violence in the conflict-ridden South Asian countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and the disputed Kashmir. The book, which consists of short sections, begins with an account of Sufi Islam in the region, a chronicle of events in Afghanistan since 1848, the factors responsible for the overthrow of the Soviet-led regime in Afghanistan in 1992, the rise of al Qaida and Lashkar e-Taiba (LeT) in Pakistan, including LeT's attack in Mumbai, India in November 2008, Pakistan's interest in inflaming the situation in Kashmir, the status of Muslims in India, the role of the Taliban in Pakistan, developments in Afghanistan under the Hamid Karzai presidency, America's involvement in Afghanistan, and future scenarios for these countries, such as Afghanistan's future as a "second Vietnam." The author is a British-Pakistani author and journalist who specializes in South Asian and Middle Eastern affairs.

Barnett R. Rubin, *Afghanistan From the Cold War Through the War on Terror* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 528 pp., US \$ 36.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-1902-2927-6.

This is a collection of the author's published writings on Afghanistan from 1998 to 2009. It includes an introductory overview and an epilogue. Several of the articles were co-authored with other experts on Afghanistan. What makes this collection of special interest is the author's several decades-long academic research on modern Afghanistan, including extensive field research in the country as part of his work at the Council on Foreign Relations and his consultation work for the United Nations on the issues that are covered in the book. The volume is divided into three parts: Part I, "Prelude: Afghanistan Between Two Wars, 1989 – 2001" (e.g., Afghanistan in the international system, the rise of the Taliban, and the involvement of the Arab Islamists, including al Qaida, in Afghanistan); Part Two: "Nation Building Lite" (e.g., a blueprint for Afghanistan following the Taliban's overthrow, including crafting a constitution and legal system; and the politics of securing the country); and Part Three: "Back to War" (e.g., resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan stalemate, and the way forward). The author is Director of Studies and Senior Fellow at the Center on International Cooperation at New York University.

**Africa**

Christopher S. Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa'ida in Africa* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 242 pp., US \$ 99.99 [Hardcover], US \$ 29.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-107-54678-3.

In January 2013, the French military's special forces, fighter aircraft, and army units intervened in Mali, its former colony, in an attempt to defeat an al Qaida advance on the country's capital. The French counterinsurgency campaign succeeded with a relatively small force of some 4,500 troops, the author writes, "in part because they enjoyed several natural advantages. They were familiar with the territory, and jihadist support among the local population was limited." (p. 13). Aside from this volume's in-depth study of the nature of the French military intervention and its impact, this book is also valuable for its discussion of metrics of effectiveness in counterinsurgency. This includes assessing a campaign's strategic and tactical achievements, as well as a question that is not often asked: "what would have happened absent intervention" (p. 158). The author adds: "in assessing the costs and benefits of a particular case, analysts must think in terms of counterfactuals – what would have happened if nothing had been done" (p. 158). The author is Associate Director of the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center and teaches at the Johns Hopkins Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC.

Jakkie Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* [Routledge Library Editions: Terrorism and Insurgency, Volume 4] (New York, NY: 1985/2015), 284 pp., US \$ 112.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 36.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-88789-3.

This is a highly systematic account of the Rhodesian government's counter-insurgency campaign during the war's crucial period of 1972 to 1979. It begins with a history of the period from 1890 to 1979, with successive chapters examining the Rhodesian security forces command and control management of the campaign; how their forces approached the concept of protecting and consolidating control over the country's villages; conducting border minefield clearing operations; engaging in psychological operations to gain population support; conducting external military operations against insurgent base areas, including against insurgent sanctuaries in neighboring countries; and the role of intelligence in penetrating insurgency forces and gaining situational information advantage against them. The author concludes that when the war for Zimbabwe officially ended on December 21, 1979, despite the execution by the Rhodesian Security Forces of their counter-insurgency strategy, "very few of these had in fact proved successful." (p. 243). One of the problems, the author explains, is that a "racial preconception...permeated all levels of white/black interaction, specifically in rural areas. Counter-insurgent operations were conducted to the exclusion rather than the support of environmental improvement. Population and resources control, a means to the end of regaining and re-establishing government control, became an end in itself: the object simply being to facilitate counter-insurgent operations" (p. 246). Above all, "At no stage was attention at high level seriously directed towards redressing grievances exploited by the insurgents to justify their criticism of the existing white administration" (246). This important book was originally published in 1985, but its approach and findings continue to be pertinent to the current period, with unresolved insurgencies in countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, and elsewhere. The author is Chairman of the Board and Head of African Futures & Innovation at Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa.

Hussein Solomon, *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Africa: Fighting Insurgency from Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 192 pp., US \$ 90.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-137-48988-3.

This is a comprehensive account of the threats presented by African terrorist groups such as al Shabaab, in Somalia, Ansar Dine, in Mali, and Boko Haram, in Nigeria, and how local governments, the African Union, and the United States have attempted to counter them. Beginning with a useful discussion of how to define terrorism and the components of effective counterterrorism (such as reducing the number of terrorist attacks, seizing terrorist funding, the number of terrorists incarcerated, and resolving a conflict's



underlying root causes), the author turns his attention to the spread of radical Islamism in Africa, which is manifested by the insurgencies of these three terrorist groups, which are discussed in separate chapters. In the book's conclusion, the most effective way to defeat such insurgencies, the author argues, "is by focusing on the root causes driving terrorism as opposed to focusing on the symptoms" (p. 126). These root causes, he explains, "include underdevelopment, poverty, poor governance and the dearth of justice..." (p. 126). Countering violent extremism (CVE) programs are another effective means to counter terrorism, the author adds (p. 131). The focus on countering the threats posed by the three most significant terrorism groups in Africa make this book an important contribution to the literature on African terrorism and counterterrorism studies. The author is Senior Professor in the Department of Political Studies and Governance at the University of the Free State, South Africa.

### **Global Jihad**

Al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyah [Translated with an Introduction by Sherman A. Jackson], *Initiative to Stop the Violence: Mubadarat Waqf al-'Unf – Sadat's Assassins and the Renunciation of Political Violence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 184 pp., US \$ 85.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-300-19677-1.

This book, as explained by its editor, presents *al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyah's* series of manifestos after it announced its decision to abandon political violence in 1997. This was a significant transformation, given the group's assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on October 6 1981. This was followed on November 17, 1997, when a *Gama'ah* faction had massacred some 58 Western tourists and additional Egyptians at the temple of Hepshatsut in Luxor. The reasons and implications for the group's abandonment of violence are explained in the editor's 50 page introduction, which is followed by his translation of its text, *Initiative to Stop the Violence: A Reality-Based Assessment and a Shari'ah-Based Approach*. This volume is an important contribution to the literature on disengagement from terrorism by militant groups. The editor holds the King Faisal Chair in Islamic Thought and Culture and is professor of religion and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Mark Ensalaco, *Middle Eastern Terrorism: From Black September to September 11* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 328 pp., US \$ 59.95 [Hardcover], US \$ 24.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-8122-4046-7.

This is a general account of Middle East-originated terrorism, focusing on the agendas and activities of primarily Palestinian, Lebanese, and al-Qaida type terrorism. It also covers attempts at advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace processes. The account is dated, as it ends in 2007, but it is worth reading to understand the thinking on these issues at the time. The author is associate professor of political science at the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio.

Assaf Moghadam, *Nexus of Global Jihad: Understanding Cooperation Among Terrorist Actors* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017), 400 pp., US \$ 35.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-231-16537-2.

With the author claiming that the study of cooperation between terrorist organizations receives "scant attention to date" in the academic discipline (except for a few studies, such as Ely Karmon's landmark 2005 book, which is discussed in this volume), this important book attempts to redress this shortfall by constructing "a novel framework precisely for understanding how contemporary terrorist actors cooperate." (p. 3). Focusing primarily on jihadi terrorist groups, this framework, which describes their cooperation in their pursuit of joint interests in terms of whether they are organizational or networked in nature, then examines the roles of several environmental factors, such as their shared jihadist ideology (a key motivator), their presence in insurgencies and civil wars (as a geographical enabler), and the Internet's social media platforms and encrypted communications (their virtual enablers). These environmental factors, the author adds, then play out in "a multitude of forms, whether ideological, logistical, operational, or any combination



of these.” (p. 3). The extent of such cooperation is further classified as transactional cooperation, tactical cooperation, strategic alliance, or merger. This framework is applied to the book’s two parts, with the first part offering a theoretical and conceptual analysis of terrorist cooperation, and the second part applying the framework to examples of cooperation within the global jihad movement. The author’s elaboration of how the framework plays out in the way terrorist groups learn from each other in areas such as suicide terrorism, weaponry, al Qaida and its pre- and post-9/11 ties with like-minded groups, as well as al Qaida, Iran, and Hizballah, and how terrorist operatives such as Khaled Sheikh Muhammad partnered with al Qaida in masterminding 9/11’s sophisticated and innovative attack, is excellent. His conceptual framework is also strong in explaining the components of cooperation, which are outlined in a series of useful diagrams and tables, and his overall thesis and research questions are also valuable in advancing scholarship on these issues. The framework, however, is weaker in its definition of terrorism as “premeditated, extra-normal violence against civilian or noncombatant targets...” (p. 8). By *extra normal* is the author using a jargony synonym for “excessive violence”? Also, the author appears to overly rely on organizational theory in explaining how terrorist groups cooperate, for instance, terming terrorist masterminds such as Khalid Sheikh Muhammad as “terrorist entrepreneurs” (p. 63) – which is a misuse of the definition of entrepreneurship as the capability to establish and manage a business venture in order *to make a profit*, when terrorists are by their very nature *destructive* and not *constructive* in their violence-based activities, with many of them ending up either arrested or killed. Finally, the author never uses the term “lone wolf”, preferring to call such radicalized, yet non-affiliated operatives as “informal terrorist actors.” (p. 43). In the conclusion, the author makes the excellent point that for counterterrorism policy to gain an accurate picture of how terrorists operate, “gathering and analyzing data using ‘terrorist organizations’ as the single, or main, unit of analysis is no longer adequate,” since the threat emanates “from a variety of actors.” (p. 269). The author is associate professor at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya and director of academic affairs at its International Institute for Counterterrorism (ICT), in Israel.

Fernando Reinares, *Al-Qaeda’s Revenge: The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press/Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2016), 288 pp., US \$ 50.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-2317-0454-0.

On March 11, 2004, an al Qaida cell detonated ten explosive devices on four commuter trains in Madrid, killing 191 and wounding more than 1,800 people. As explained by the author, “Far from being perpetrated by an independent cell of self-radicalized individuals only inspired by al-Qaeda, the 3/11 Madrid attacks were a coordinated, complex manifestation of al-Qaeda’s capabilities in Western Europe after 9/11. The 3/11 explosions evidenced the existence of jihadist networks or cells prone to direction and support, and even supervision, from al-Qaeda’s external operations command through intermediaries with first-hand knowledge of the concrete operational scenario and close ties to local operatives.” (p. 3). This thesis is extensively detailed in the author’s authoritative account, which is based on his unique access to primary Spanish government, law enforcement and court documents about the attack and the terrorist cell and larger network behind it. The author is director of the Program on Global Terrorism at the Elcano Royal Institute, as well as professor of political science and security studies at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, both in Madrid, Spain.

Brian Glyn Williams, *Counter Jihad: America’s Military Experience in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 400 pp., US \$ 39.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-8122-4867-8.

This book’s objective, as the author explains, is “to shine a retrospective light on the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria in order to ‘historicize’ the disparate events once collectively known as the War on Terror.” (p. xii). The account begins with a brief overview of the origins and evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict until the current era and how the Middle East region became “the incubator for both the Afghan Taliban (literally:

the students) and the Arabic group Al Qaeda al Jihad (the Base of the Holy War)." (p. 12). The discussion then shifts to al Qaida's 9/11 attacks and America's retaliatory campaign against it in Afghanistan, as well as the American shift to Iraq in March 2003, when it overthrew Saddam Hussein's regime and occupied the country, which led to the emergence of al Qaida in Iraq (AQI) – the forerunner to the Islamic State (ISIS). Following a discussion of the Taliban's re-emergence in Pakistan, the book's final chapter discusses the rise to dominance of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Among the author's concluding remarks is the prescient observation that "there are two distinct layers to ISIS, one based on Sunni empowerment and one on militant jihadism, that would seem to ensure that the battle to destroy its ideas could take years, decades, or even generations." (p. 319). The author, a veteran academic field researcher in the Middle East and Central Asia, is Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth.

### ***Hizballah***

Dave Dilegge, Alma Keshavarz, and Robert J. Bunker (Eds.), *Iranian and Hezbollah Hybrid Warfare Activities* [A Small Wars Journal Anthology (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2016), 780 pp., US \$ 40.93 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-5320-0866-5.

This anthology comprehensively examines the military capabilities and the global and regional ambitions of Iran and Hizballah, its terrorist proxy. It is composed of 60 chapters, which were previously published from 2007 to 2015 in the *Small World Journal*. It begins with a brief foreword and introductory overview, which set the stage for the volume's chapters, which are organized into four sections. At this point, it would have been helpful for the editors to explicitly define what is meant by "hybrid warfare," which, based on the volume's coverage, could be deduced to mean a combination of conventional and irregular warfare (i.e., terrorism), a nexus between terrorism and criminality, and the development of a weapons of mass destruction capability. These topics are discussed in the volume's four sections: "Iran's Military Capabilities and Nuclear Ambitions" (e.g., the development of Iran's nuclear weapons program, Iran's warfare intentions, and an account of Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Quods Force); "Hezbollah's Global Operations" (e.g., an overview of Hizballah and Hizballah and Syria); "Iran and Hezbollah's Involvement in Middle East Security Dilemmas" (e.g., Iran's involvements in Iraq and Bahrain, Iran and the Arab Spring, Russia and Iran, Hizballah and Israel, and the impact of the Syrian conflict on Hizballah); and "Iran and Hezbollah in Latin America" (e.g., Iran and Hizballah in South America's Tri-Border Area). These issues are summed up in the volume's Postscript, in which John P. Sullivan insightfully concludes that "it is important to view Hezbollah as a hybrid organization with military, criminal, political/social, and terrorism arms." (p. 733).

Lina Khatib, Dina Matar, and Atef Alshaer, *The Hizballah Phenomenon: Politics and Communication* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 229 pp., US \$ 30.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-1993-8440-2.

This book's authors argue that Hizballah's communication strategy has "served as the foundation for its political evolution and endurance as a movement." (p. 5). Specifically, as they explain in the first chapter, "Hizballah's activism and mobilization have resulted from the agency of its elites and ideologues and their implementation of a political communication strategy designed to widen its support base and increase its influence" (p. 5). To analyze these issues, the book's second and third chapters cover topics such as "the methods, features, tools and rhetorical framework used in Hizballah's communication strategy", focusing on the two formative periods between 1982 (when the organization was founded) until 2000 and from 2000 to 2012. The fourth chapter examines Hizballah's poetry "as a form of communication," and the fifth chapter traces the rise of its leader Hassan Nasrallah "and the shift in his image from a devout, relatively unknown cleric into Hizballah's first charismatic leader in the media age." (p. 11). In the concluding chapter, the authors observe that Hizballah's communication strategy succeeded because it projected "credibility" as it "consistently relied on notions of justice and liberty to prove its legitimacy to its audiences, claiming to represent the voices of the people, to speak for the oppressed and to seek 'justice' for victims of Israeli

aggression while branding itself as a ‘liberator’ and ‘defender’ of land [and] the people.” (pp. 189-190). The authors admit, nevertheless, that Hizbullah’s “image was threatened when the Assad regime in Syria turned its weapons on its own people during the Arab Spring, as opposed to directing them towards the Israeli ‘enemy’ in the occupied Golan Heights.” (p. 190). This book is a generally favorable treatment of Hizbullah, but the discussion of its communication strategy and its appeal to its Lebanese constituents is valuable in explaining the organization’s political success in the Lebanese political arena. Lina Khatib is Director of the Carnegie Middle East Center, Dina Matar is Director of the Centre for Media and Film Studies of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and Atef Alshaer is Lecturer in Postcolonial Literature at the University of Kent.

### ***Israel***

Maayan Geva, *Law, Politics and Violence in Israel/Palestine* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 188 pp., US \$ 129.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-3-319-34152-1.

This book examines Israeli legal practices governing military operations against the Palestinians, such as how the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants is applied in combat, providing early warnings to adversary civilian populations when military operations will be directed against their areas, such as in the 2012 and 2014 Gaza Wars, as well as legal justifications for the targeting killings of suspected terrorists. Also examined is how Israeli legal field operations are applied in the “Occupied Palestinian Territories” (OPT). This book is well-researched, although one-sided, with no discussion of violations of international law by the Palestinian adversaries. The author is Lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Roehampton, UK. She had previously worked as a researcher for B’tselem – the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the OPT.

Erella Grassiani, *Soldiering Under Occupation: Processes of Numbing among Israeli Soldiers in the Al-Aqsa Intifada* (New York, NY: Berghahn, 2013), 168 pp., US \$ 120.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 27.95 (Paperback), ISBN: 978-0-8574-5957-2.

As explained by the author, this book uses the case of the deployment of Israeli soldiers in the West Bank to counter the threat of Palestinian terrorism [although she does not use this term] to examine “What happens when soldiers serve as occupiers within an occupied territory? What factors are of influence on their behaviour, on their moral decision making and on the violence that they use” (p. xii). The author argues that the “spatial surroundings” in which these soldiers operate, influences the “moral behaviour of Israeli soldiers and that this spatial influence, with its operational dynamics, enhances a process of numbing on the three levels mentioned above: physical, emotional and cognitive, which, in turn, have a profound influence on the moral numbing of soldiers. This moral numbing makes the soldiers unaware of the morally problematic aspects of the situation they find themselves in and can lead to an increased use of violence and harassing behaviour.” (p. 2). This framework is applied to examining what the author terms as “Israel: a Militarized Society” and the impact on soldiers of having to perform duties such as managing security checkpoints. Fieldwork for this research was conducted by the author between March 2005 and August 2007. Although the author’s approach is one-sided, with no discussion of the difficulty Israeli soldiers face in confronting Palestinian terrorism – the primary reason for their deployment in the West Bank – the book’s conceptual framework is valuable in examining the dilemmas faced by soldiers who are tasked to perform policing duties in hostile environments in which terrorist insurgents operate. The author is Lecturer in the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the University of Amsterdam.

Mike Kelly, *The Bus on Jaffa Road: A Story of Middle East Terrorism and the Search for Justice* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press/An imprint of Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 320 pp., US \$ 26.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-7627-8037-2.

On the morning of February 25, 1996, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on a No.18 bus traveling along Jaffa Road near the Jerusalem Central Bus Station. The blast killed seventeen civilians and nine Israeli soldiers, with 48 persons injured. Among the civilians killed on the bus were Sara Duker, aged 22, of Teaneck, New Jersey, and Matthew Eisenfeld, aged 25, of West Hartford, Connecticut, who had been dating for almost two years and were in Israel as part of their graduate studies. Written by a veteran American journalist from New Jersey, this is a detailed account of the lives of Duker and Eisenfeld, the motivations and pre-incident activities of the Palestinian cell that had conducted the bombing, how Israeli security services succeeded in uncovering and arresting the attack's perpetrators (with the cell's manager interviewed by the author at his Israeli jail), and the efforts by the victims' American families to file lawsuits against Iran, which was perceived as the state sponsor behind the bombing campaign by the Palestinian group, and their interactions with the U.S. Department of Justice and Congressional supporters. This book, which reads like a dramatic documentary, is an important case study for understanding the nature of Palestinian terrorism in the mid-1990s and the use of legal instruments to counter terrorism.

Yoav Mehozay, *Between the Rule of Law and States of Emergency: The Fluid Jurisprudence of the Israeli Regime* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2016), 220 pp., US \$ 80.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 20.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4384-6339-1.

Using Israel as its case study, this book examines the interdependent relationship between law and state of emergency (SOE), in which both sustain themselves into what the author terms "stable rule." (p. 11). As the author explains, "the book analyzes law and emergency as mutually dependent in Israel. Unlike previous scholarship, which is often preoccupied with *why* Israel relies on SOE, this book asks how the regime has made two conceptually opposed doctrines coexist, and has fostered its convenient, if convoluted, government structure." (p. 12). The perpetuation of this legal regime, the author concludes, has enabled Israel "to bridge what appeared to be an intrinsic contradiction, a government by law and systemic discriminatory policies, particularly against the Palestinians." (p. 136). Although the author's legal argument is sound, the book would have benefited from a separate chapter that examined the continuous terrorism threats facing Israel, which would have placed the Israeli legal system within a more nuanced perspective. The author is Assistant Professor of Criminology at the University of Haifa, Israel.

### ***Red Army Faction***

J. Smith and Andre Moncourt, *Daring to Struggle, Failing to Win: The Red Army Faction's 1977 Campaign of Desperation* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2008), 44 pp., US \$ 5.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-60486-028-3.

This pamphlet is an introductory overview of the causes and ideological rationale that led to what is considered the Red Army Faction's (RAF) most intense year of terrorist activities in West Germany in 1977. As explained in this interesting account, the RAF was established in 1970 and when its leaders, particularly Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof were arrested, followed, some years later, by the suicide of Meinhof in prison (with the authors questioning whether she had committed suicide or had died under different circumstances), the group's remaining members escalated their militant activities, such as kidnapping on September 5, 1977 of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, "the most powerful businessman in West Germany at the time" who had represented "the ruling class point of view." (p. 20). Although the pamphlet does not discuss it, Schleyer was subsequently murdered by his kidnapers the following month on October 18. With a new generation of younger activists continuing the RAF's armed struggle, in 1992 the group declared a unilateral



ceasefire and ultimately disbanded in 1998. This pamphlet is intended to provide an overview for the authors' compendium, *The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History – Volume 1* (below).

J. Smith and Andre Moncourt [introductory texts and translations], *The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History – Volume 1: Projectiles for the People* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2009), 736 pp., US \$ 34.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-60486-029-0.

This is a valuable compendium of the manifestos and communiques issued by West Germany's Red Army Faction (RAF) between 1970 and 1977, with many of them translated into English for the first time. It provides a context for understanding the nature of West Germany's revolutionary left's rationale in the 1970s for waging an armed struggle against what they term the "First World." The compendium begins with a preface, a translators' note, an acronym key, and an explanation of German terms. This is followed by the volume's 15 sections. In the first two sections, the editors provide an overview of the historical period in which the RAF had operated. The remaining 13 sections begin with the editors' overview of the context for that section's respective documents. The sections cover topics such as "Building a Base and 'Serving the People'; "The May Offensive: Bringing the War Home"; "Black September: A Statement From Behind Bars"; "Staying Alive: Sensory Deprivation, Torture, and the Struggle Behind Bars"; "A Desperate Bid to Free the Prisoners: The Stockholm Action"; "The Murder of Ulrike Meinhof"; and "The Stammheim Deaths". The appendices, which include additional documents, are followed by a listing of individuals and their affiliations that are mentioned in the documents, a chronology of the armed struggle in West Germany, a bibliography, and an index.

J. Smith and Andre Moncourt [introductory texts and translations], *The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History – Volume 2: Dancing with Imperialism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2009), 448 pp., US \$ 26.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-60486-030-6.

This second volume provides a valuable historical overview and collection of manifestos and communiques by West Germany's Red Army Faction (RAF) between 1977 and 1984, with many of them also translated into English for the first time. It also begins with a preface, a translators' note, an acronym key, and an explanation of German terms. This volume consists of ten sections, with the first three providing the editors' overview of the revolutionary left's advocacy of international armed struggle against imperialism, including in what it considered to be "rear base areas" such as Lebanon and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, and the struggle by the anti-nuclear movement, especially in Western Europe. In the other sections, the editors introduce each one with an overview that provides a context for its accompanying documents. The sections cover topics such as "The Guerilla, the Resistance, and the Anti-Imperialist Front (May 1982), a German guerrilla on the question of collective responsibility, and "Strategic Thoughts" (Brigitte Mohnhaupt, December 4, 1984). The appendices include documents such as "For Us It Was a Question of Learning Explosives and Shooting Techniques." Like the first volume, it is also followed by a listing of individuals and their affiliations that are mentioned in the documents, a chronology of the armed struggle in West Germany, a bibliography, and an index.

### **United Kingdom**

Yonah Alexander and Alan O'Day (Eds.), *Terrorism in Ireland* [Routledge Library Editions: Terrorism and Insurgency, Volume 2] (New York, NY: 1984/2015), 288 pp., US \$ 112.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 36.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-90307-4.

Originally published in 1984, this edited volume is noteworthy for capturing the thinking at the time about the nature and impact of primarily IRA terrorism on Northern Ireland's politics and daily life. The volume is divided into four parts: Part I: an overview (the international dimensions of terrorism in Ireland, the United States and terrorism in Ireland, and Scotland's and Britain's involvement in the conflict); Part II: sociological,



psychological and operational aspects (covering case studies such as women and the conflict, the psychology of terrorism in Northern Ireland, political assassination in the Irish tradition, and the Catholic Church and revolution in 19th century Ireland); Part III: political communication and terrorism (terrorism and public opinion, and media coverage of terrorism); and Part IV: the future of terrorism (the historical roots of Ulster Unionist terrorism and the persistence of IRA terrorism).

Gordon Clubb, *Social Movement De-Radicalisation and the Decline of Terrorism: The Morphogenesis of the Irish Republican Movement* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 180 pp., US \$ 124.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-138-93394-1.

This book's thesis is that a full conceptualization of the de-radicalization process can explain durable declines in terrorism by such groups once the drivers of violence are eliminated. This involves two processes: first, disengagement, particularly organizational disengagement by a terrorist group's overall social movement, which reduces "the risk of recidivism through disarmament, demobilization and re-integration." (p. 5) The second process involved de-radicalization, which "refers to the motivations, ideology and attitudes to armed violence changing genuinely, meaning the individual or group no longer wish to engage in armed violence." (p. 5). This framework is applied to assessing how the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) (which is defined as a social movement in this account), including its younger generation, succeeded in de-radicalizing and disengaging from terrorism, ultimately reintegrating itself into the Northern Irish political system. The author's application of such a conceptual framework to the PIRA's integration in Northern Ireland's new political system make this book an important contribution to the literature on de-radicalization and disengagement from terrorism. The author is Lecturer in International Security at the University of Leeds, UK, and Director of the Terrorism and Political Violence Association.

Peter Joyce, *The Policing of Protest, Disorder and International Terrorism in the UK Since 1945* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 401 pp., US \$ 99.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-230-54235-8.

This book examines the evolution and current policing methods used to control what the author refers to as 'extra-parliamentary political activities' in the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland) since 1945. Such 'extra-parliamentary' activities include protests, labor picketing, riots, subversion, and national and international manifestations of terrorism. The manifestations of policing methods range from physical, surveillance and monitoring responses by police, security and military organizations, to judicial measures against the organizations and individuals associated with such political activism and subversion. The weaponry, equipment, tactics and training of the police, security and military services engaged in responding to such threats, are discussed, as well. As explained by the author, the final chapter "evaluates the transnational dimension of protest and contemporary terrorism and the manner in which these activities are policed by the global community" (p. ix). This includes the roles of international and regional police organizations, such as Interpol, Europol, and various European Union bodies and treaties, as well as cooperation with the United States. This book is an important contribution to the literature on policing protest and terrorism in the UK. The author is Principal Lecturer in Criminology at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.

Paul Wilkinson (Eds.), *British Perspectives on Terrorism* [Routledge Library Editions: Terrorism and Insurgency, Volume 9] (New York, NY: Routledge, 1981/2015), 200 pp., US \$ 112.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 36.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-89924-7.

When this edited volume was originally published in 1981 it presented cutting edge thinking from leading British experts on countering terrorism within the United Kingdom context. Its reissuance is welcomed as many of its insights on the components of effective counterterrorism are still pertinent to the current period. Following an introductory overview by Paul Wilkinson on the evolution of the British approach to counterterrorism, the volume's chapters discuss issues such as public opinion and the Provisional IRA in

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Northern Ireland, leadership challenges facing the IRA, the legal response to IRA terrorism in the form of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the role of the British Police in countering terrorism, the origins of the British approach to managing the risk of kidnapping (including the roles of Lloyd's of London and Control Risks in providing risk management and support services), and a concluding chapter by the volume's editor on proposals for government and international community responses to countering terrorism. Interestingly, even in the early 1980s it was recognized that "democracies must also learn to defeat the terrorists' sustained propaganda war" (p. 191) – yet it appears that more than 35 years later, best practices in countering terrorists propaganda narratives still appear to be beyond reach. Paul Wilkinson, the volume's editor, passed away in August 2011.

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## Bibliography: Islamic State (Part 3)

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

[Bibliographic Series of Perspectives on Terrorism - BSPT-JT-2017-3]

### Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on the Islamic State (IS / ISIS / ISIL / Daesh) and its predecessor organizations. To keep up with the rapid changing political events, more recent publications have been prioritized during the selection process. 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.

**Keywords:** bibliography; resources; literature; Islamic State; IS; ISIS; ISIL; Daesh; Al-Qaeda in Iraq; AQI, Syria, Iraq

NB: All websites were last visited on 14.05.2017. This subject bibliography is conceptualized as a multi-part series (for earlier bibliographies, see: Part 1 and Part 2). To avoid duplication, this compilation only includes literature not contained in the previous parts. However, meta-resources, such as bibliographies, were also included in the sequels. – See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

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Ziemke, Jen (Ed.) (2017, January): *Coalition Activities and Terrorism*. (SMA Reach-back). URL: <http://nsiteam.com/sma-reachback-correlation-between-coalition-activities-and-global-terrorism>

### **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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## Recent Online Resources for the Analysis of Terrorism and Related Subjects

Compiled and Selected by Berto Jongman

### **Introductory Note by the Editor**

*The amount of new publications, reports, policy papers, lectures, presentations, videos and briefings in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism can be overwhelming for the untrained researcher as well as for young counterterrorist professionals. In the following, a selection of recent open-source online publications, grouped into a dozen categories, has been made by a seasoned former intelligence analyst. An attempt has been made to select items from a variety of sources and positions, presenting different perspectives. Selection not necessarily means endorsement for certain positions or specific lines of argumentation. In addition, an attempt has been made to include also a number of non-terrorist items from the broader spectrum of political violence and armed conflicts.*

*All the items included here surfaced online in the period beginning of April to beginning of June 2017.*

*'Perspectives on Terrorism' plans to offer its readers regular updates in future issues of our journal, categorised in the same format:*

1. *Non-Religious Terrorism: Actors, Groups, Incidents and Campaigns*
2. *Religious (mainly Jihadi) Terrorism: Actors, Groups, Incidents and Campaigns*
3. *Terrorist Strategies and Tactics*
4. *Conflict, Crime and Political Violence other than Terrorism*
5. *Counter-Terrorism – General*
6. *Counter-Terrorist Strategies, Tactics and Operations*
7. *State Repression and Civil War at Home and Clandestine & Open Warfare Abroad*
8. *Prevention and Preparedness Studies (including Countering Violent Extremism, De-Radicalization, Counter-Narratives)*
9. *Intelligence*
10. *Cyber Operations*
11. *Risk & Threat Assessments, Forecasts, Analytical Studies*
12. *Also Worth Reading*

### **1. Non-religious Terrorism: Actors, Groups, Incidents and Campaigns**

A. Carassava. Greek extremists go abroad for training in revolution. *Deutsche Welle*, June 4, 2017. URL: <http://www.dw.com/en/greek-extremists-go-abroad-for-training-in-revolution/a-39094660>

L. Marshall. Domestic terrorists, gang members have little in common, study says. University of Colorado Boulder. May 18, 2017. URL: <http://www.colorado.edu/today/2017/05/18/domestic-terrorists-gang-members-have-little-common-study-shows>

A. Perliger. The rising homegrown terror threat on the right. *The Conversation*, May 30, 2017. URL: [http://theconversation.com/the-rising-homegrown-terror-threat-on-the-right-78242?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=facebookbutton](http://theconversation.com/the-rising-homegrown-terror-threat-on-the-right-78242?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=facebookbutton)

L. Beckett, J. Burke. Pathway to extremism: what neo-Nazis and jihadis have in common. *The Guardian*, May 27, 2017. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/may/27/extremism-terrorism-far-right-neo-nazi-devon-arthurs>

L. Surugue. Terrorism psychology: how terrorists justify carrying out atrocities to themselves. *IB Times*, May 26, 2017. URL: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/terrorism-psychology-how-terrorists-justify-carrying-out-atrocities-themselves-1623523>

S. Labbé, C. Seucharan, A. Villegas. Disarmed and dangerous: can former FARC guerrillas adjust to civilian life? *The Guardian*, May 24, 2017. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/may/24/disarmed-dangerous-farc-guerrillas-struggle-city-life-cali>

A. Alsema. All eyes on Santos as Colombia's peace process spirals out of control. *Colombia reports*, May 22, 2017. URL: <https://colombiareports.com/eyes-santos-peace-process-spirals-control/>

J. Chase. Study links far-right extremism and eastern German mentality. *Deutsche Welle*, May 18, 2017. URL: <http://www.dw.com/en/study-links-far-right-extremism-and-eastern-german-mentality/a-38892657>

L. Iaccino. Nigerian president Buhari increases budget to give amnesty to Niger Delta militants. *Newsweek*, May 8, 2017. URL: <http://www.newsweek.com/niger-delta-amnesty-militants-triple-budget-million-596123>

## **2. Religious (mainly Jihadi) Terrorism: Actors, Groups, Incidents and Campaigns**

D. Lerner. It's not Islam that drives young Europeans to jihad, France's top terrorism expert explains. *Haaretz*, June 4, 2017. URL: <http://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/1.791954>

M. Weinger. Terror in London: ISIS threat to West intensifying. *The Cipher Brief*, June 4, 2017. URL: <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/europe/terror-london-isis-threat-west-intensifying-1089>

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*Perspectives on Terrorism* (PoT) is a joint publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), headquartered in Vienna, Austria, and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) of Leiden University, Campus The Hague. PoT is published six times per year as a free, independent, scholarly peer-reviewed online journal available at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com>.

PoT 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 researchers and 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;
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*Perspectives on Terrorism* has sometimes been characterised as ‘nontraditional’ in that it dispenses with some of the 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 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.

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The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) is a non-profit, educational and scientific corporation, registered on 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2008 at the City of Raleigh, North Carolina. TRI's mission is 'Enhancing Security through Collaborative Research'. It has three Directors of which one is also President: Robert Wesley (President and Director), Alex P. Schmid (Director) and Edwin Bakker (Director). TRI has an International Advisory Board, currently consisting of eleven experts, a Consortium of Participating Institutions, currently consisting of 17 centers and institutes, and a group of 125 individual researchers supporting its efforts. They are listed below.

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