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## Welcome from the Editor

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume IX, Issue 3 (June 2015) of *Perspectives on Terrorism* at [www.terrorismanalysts.com](http://www.terrorismanalysts.com). Our free online journal is a joint publication of the *Terrorism Research Initiative* (TRI), headquartered in Vienna (Austria), and the *Center for Terrorism and Security Studies* (CTSS), Lowell Campus of the University of Massachusetts (United States).

Now in its ninth year, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has over 5,100 regular subscribers and many more occasional readers and visitors worldwide. The *Articles* of its six annual issues are fully peer-reviewed by external referees while its *Policy Briefs* and other content are subject to internal editorial quality control.

This issue opens with an article by Ali Fisher that explains how ISIS with its Swarmcast technique manages to outwit those who try to contain its propaganda on the Internet. One group that has been vulnerable to ISIS' propaganda are Muslim women in Western diasporas, although women have more to lose from ISIS than most other groups. This paradox is the subject of Anita Perešin's article. What has contributed much to the recruiting success of ISIS and other jihadists groups since 9/11 are the strategic mistakes made by those who oppose them. Scott Englund touches on this issue in our third article. ISIS is still puzzling policy-makers and one reason for this is that they cannot decide on what exactly the danger is. Boaz Ganor offers greater clarity by posing and answering four key questions in his Policy Brief.

The Policy Brief section also features an interview by Brian G. Williams with Lt.-Gen. David Deptula, a former US Air Force officer involved in the use of drones for countering terrorists. While collateral damage is much lower than from other instruments of war, drones have many critics. As customary, this issue contains book reviews and bibliographies from the hands of Joshua Sinai, Judith Tinnes and Eric Price.

This issue of the journal was prepared by Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid, the editor-in-chief of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, while the next issue (August 2015) will be prepared by co-editor Prof. James Forest, Interim Director of the CTSS at UMass Lowell, and by Thomas Hegghammer, Senior Research Fellow at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI).

## I. Articles

### Swarmcast: How Jihadist Networks Maintain a Persistent Online Presence

by Ali Fisher

#### *Abstract*

*Jihadist groups have used the opportunity created by the proliferation of social media platforms to create a persistent as well as ideologically cohesive presence for jihadist propaganda online which is intended to attract fighters and fundraisers to the cause. This article uses a range of big data techniques including network analysis, combined with examples of Jihadist communication strategy to identify the elements which have allowed groups to maintain a permanent presence for their content online, despite the efforts of western governments working with social media platform providers to prevent terrorist propaganda.*

*The article examines the activity of the ‘media mujahedeen’ – the supporters of jihadist groups who disseminate propaganda content online. It shows that the media mujahideen group operates through a dispersed network of accounts which constantly reconfigures much like the way a swarm of bees or flock of birds constantly reorganizes in mid-flight. Drawing on the metaphor of a swarm this article introduces the netwar inspired concept of the user curated Swarmcast and demonstrates the role of the Swarmcast in maintaining the persistent presence of Jihadist content online.*

*The article concludes that future policy to counter the dissemination of Jihadist content must challenge the Swarmcast on a strategic level. To be successful, strategies will need to take account of all three components of the Swarmcast when employing takedowns or other counter measures. This will mean focusing on strategic approaches to disrupting the system-wide emergent structures and collective behaviours rather than the tactical removal of individual accounts.*

**Keywords:** Internet, Network, Jihadism, Al Qaeda, ISIS, Netwar

#### **Introduction**

The sophisticated use of online media platforms facilitates a blend of audio-visual media interspersed with writings that further sanction and explain specific ideological dimensions of jihadist activity. Jihadist groups have used the opportunity created by the proliferation of social media platforms to create a persistent as well as ideologically cohesive presence for jihadist propaganda online which is intended to attract fighters and fundraisers to the cause. This article uses a range of big data techniques, including network analysis, combined with examples of Jihadist communication strategy to identify the elements which have allowed groups to maintain a permanent presence for their content online, despite efforts of Western governments working with social media platform providers.

As the use of the Internet has grown, so extremists have utilised the opportunity it creates. Prior to 2011, al-Qa’ida (AQ) had established a “jihadist cloud” which, Nico Prucha argued, allowed AQ to remain resilient within “its virtual spaces and niches on the Internet”, despite setbacks on physical fronts.[1] Since 2011 the Syrian conflict, recognised as the most ‘socially mediated’ in history, has developed into the new focal point for jihadi media culture.[2]

In this context, the Jihadist online presence has rapidly evolved into an open sub-culture that uses audio-visual elements to cultivate and strengthen group cohesion within the Mujahid vanguard, while also seeking

to propagate awareness amongst the general public in the hope of mobilizing it.[3] Operating within this sub-culture, some jihadist groups are increasingly sophisticated in their approach and are able to address specific diaspora communities while also propagating enmity towards the West in general. In addition, the networks through which Jihadist groups operate have evolved to allow them to maintain a persistent presence online. Previous studies have examined examples of the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes[4], the way specific groups including 'Islamic State' have operated online[5], and how such activity might be challenged.[6] More recent studies have begun to look beyond the 'official' accounts of extremist groups to analyse the support for jihadist groups online.[7] This has included an attempt to estimate the size of the group supporting ISIS on Twitter.[8] In addition, a study of Foreign Fighters' social media activity, revealed the importance of "so-called 'disseminator' accounts, which are run by sympathetic individuals who sometimes lend moral and political support to those in the conflict".[9]

This article extends existing research by assessing the role and strategic importance of these sympathetic individuals. Specifically it looks at how individual interactions between sympathisers aggregate into system-wide structures and collective behaviours which facilitate the persistent sharing of material. These individuals connect to form a dispersed network or "media mujahedeen". The Media Mujahedeen – the supporters of jihadist groups who disseminate propaganda content online – operate through a dispersed network of accounts which constantly reconfigures much like the way a swarm of bees or flock of birds constantly reorganizes in mid-flight. This marks a shift away from the broadcast models of mass communication (often referred to as 'one-to-many') which characterises radio- and television broadcasting, to a new dispersed and resilient form (inspired by 'peer-to-peer' sharing); the user-curated "Swarmcast".[10]

In the Swarmcast model there is no longer a clear division between the audience and a content producer in control of the means through which to broadcast content to that audience. Instead, once content is produced and released, it is often the distributing network of media mujahideen, rather than the original producer, that ensures continuing content availability. This type of activity can be understood with the help of the concept of netwar; defined as 'lower-intensity conflict at the societal end of the spectrum' in which 'a combatant is organised along networked lines or employs networks for operational control and other communications'. [11] That this conception of netwar applies to groups such as ISIS was recently highlighted by Robert Hannigan, Director of the UK government's intelligence and security organisation GCHQ, who wrote that large social media and web platforms have "become the command-and-control networks of choice for terrorists." [12]

An understanding of netwar and, specifically in the context of the jihadist modus operandi of Swarmcast, is an important aspect of future strategy as the U.S. and its Western allies are being drawn into open online warfare, on a battlefield chosen by their jihadist adversaries. The following sections of this article focus on: the meaning of netwar, its application in a Jihadist context, and the evolution of the jihadist strategy into the contemporary Swarmcast. The final section will build on a previous study of *Jabhat al-Nusra* to identify factors which underpin the Jihadist approach to netwar.[13] Through social network analysis this research shows how Jihadist groups choose to share content and how the interactions between individual media mujahideen aggregate to produce structures on a strategic, system-wide, level which facilitate the persistent presence for Jihadist content online. After identifying three elements which underpin the Swarmcast—Speed, Agility and Resilience—the article concludes that future policy to counter the dissemination of Jihadist content must challenge the Swarmcast on a strategic level. To be successful, strategies will need to take into account all three components of the Swarmcast when employing takedown or other counter measures. This will mean focusing on strategic approaches to disrupting the system wide emergent structures and collective behaviours rather than the tactical removal of individual accounts.

### *Netwar*

*This section examines the meaning of Netwar, how this applies in a Jihadist context, and the importance of embracing insights from the study of emergence and self-organisation in understanding the online behaviour of jihadist groups.*

Jihadist groups, including Jabhat al-Nusra (JaN) and specifically the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), have been able to maintain a persistent online presence by sharing content through a broad network which has become one of the clearest incarnations of Netwar since it was first envisaged. The concept of Netwar is an important “emerging mode of conflict in which the protagonists—ranging from terrorist and criminal organizations on the dark side, to militant social activists on the bright side—use network forms of organization, doctrine, strategy, and technology attuned to the information age,” according to an October 2001 RAND paper by David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla.[14]

Part of netwar is the increasing “irregularisation” of war since the end of the Cold War which has become a growing focus amongst analysts of strategy, such as Martin Van Creveld. [15] Concomitant with the increasing irregularisation was the increasing use of Information Technology within the military and civil society. The interrelated development of Information Technology (IT) and irregularisation, emphasises that conflicts would increasingly depend on information and communications. As argued in the *Advent of Netwar*, “cyberwar and netwar are modes of conflict that are largely about ‘knowledge’ – about who knows what, when, where, and why, and about how secure a society, military, or other actor is regarding its knowledge of itself and its adversaries.”[16]

This fusion of informational and physical aspects of conflict is often exhibited by groups such as ISIS, epitomised by images of fighters wearing Go-Pro cameras to provide a first person perspective of combat. The use of the term ‘netwar’ was intended to highlight an approach to conflict at a societal level which involves measures short of all out war and which emphasises network forms of organisation, doctrine, strategy, and communication. While the concept of ‘Cyberwar’ focuses on the use of information-age technology in high intensity conflicts where formal military forces are pitted against each other, netwar was conceived as occurring at the societal end of the conflict spectrum, involving non-state, paramilitary and other irregular forces.[17] Interpreting the contemporary persistent presence of Jihadist digital content as the result of Netwar rather than Cyberwar, highlights that their activity is conducted by irregular forces who are focusing on societal change. For example, the purpose of producing content, as highlighted in greater detail below, is in part to cultivate and strengthen group cohesion within the Mujahid vanguard, guiding their behaviour in all aspects of their life.[18] In addition, the approved communication strategy of jihadist groups and the activity of the media mujahideen specifically,[19] seeks to propagate awareness amongst the general public in the hope of mobilizing it.[20] This emphasis on the strategic use of information, irregularisation, alternate operational structures, and the connection between physical battlefield and information based (or digital) forms of conflict, makes netwar an important conceptual tool for the understanding of Jihadist social media, and the Swarmcast.

For hierarchically organised government departments, groups based on dispersed network principles are “very hard to deal with. ... What these have in common is that they operate in small, dispersed units that can deploy nimbly—anywhere, anytime.”[21] Successfully executing netwar strategy requires that a group know “how to swarm and disperse, penetrate and disrupt, as well as elude and evade.”[22] This type of behaviour is evidenced by the ability of Jihadist groups to continue to disseminate content in the face of concerted efforts by Western governments and social media platforms to disrupt their channels of communication. Jihadist groups have consistently shown their ability to swarm and disperse. Furthermore, their use of ‘crowd-out’

strategies, has demonstrated their ability to penetrate and disrupt the communication channels for alternative voices.[23]

Initially, as David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla argued in their report *Swarming and the future of conflict*, the concept of Swarming was defined as:

*“Seemingly amorphous, but it is a deliberately structured, coordinated, strategic way to strike from all directions, by means of a sustainable pulsing of force and/or fire, close-in as well as from stand-off positions. It will work best—perhaps it will only work—if it is designed mainly around the deployment of myriad, small, dispersed, networked manoeuvre units (what we call “pods” organized in “clusters”).”*[24]

This thought was further elaborated by Sean J. A. Edwards who argued that “Swarming occurs when several units conduct a convergent attack on a target from multiple axes.”[25]

Both these interpretations of swarming in a military setting maintain a paradigm of centralised design, thereby contrasting hierarchies with networks as modes of operation.[26] However, swarms in nature occur without the centralised direction or design. Equally, in their most extreme incarnations, beyond that which Ronfeldt and Arquilla envisioned, the media mujahideen, and other dispersed networks, cease to depend on centralised direction, and instead adopt genuine swarming behaviours as observed in nature. This extends the understanding of netwar and requires netwar to include the importance of emergent behaviour and collective action in complex systems.[27]

In nature swarms often exist as an emergent behaviour and collective action in complex systems rather than due to centralised design. Works ranging from Alan Turing’s *Morphogenesis*[28] to the work by Deborah Gordon on ant colonies[29] and Evelyn Fox Keller’s writing about the erroneous belief in pacemaker cells controlling Slime mold[30] have all argued that the concept of centralised organisation has overshadowed the potential for individual interactions to aggregate into system-wide behaviours in complex systems.

As Jeffrey Goldstein put it “emergent phenomena are conceptualized as occurring on the macro level, in contrast to the micro-level components and processes out of which they arise.”[31] Emergence here refers “...to the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns, and properties during the process of self-organization in complex systems.”[32] It is the reason why there are hurricanes, and ecosystems, and complex organisms like humankind, not to mention traffic congestion and rock concerts, according to Peter Corning.[33]

Interpreting the production, distribution and dispersal of Jihadist digital content as an emergent element of netwar, provides a conceptual framework through which strategic and system-wide assessments of Jihadist digital activities can be developed. Specifically, it can explain how the actions of individual members of the media mujahideen aggregate into system-wide structures and behaviours for the purpose of content distribution. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the successor of Osama Bin Laden expressed it in this way when he stressed that AQ “did not tie our jihad to any organization, to any [specific] leader or leadership, not to any group, and not to any name or territory.”[34] This type of statement indicated that an individual can choose to join the movement, particularly online, without formal connection or explicit approval of senior figures.[35] This ability to act without explicit direction is also the reason why the Swarmcast can survive the loss of prominent nodes and ‘official’ accounts by constantly reorganising, just as a flock of birds reorganises in flight if attacked by a predator. The notion of Swarmcast combines the understanding of emergent properties of complex systems observed in nature with an emphasis on information-age technology with the irregularisation of conflict, alternate operational structures, and the connection between physical and Internet based battlefields.

**Swarmcast: The Jihadist Approach to Netwar**

*This section examines the specifically jihadist approaches to Netwar and the evolution of the jihadist Swarmcast since the killing of Osama Bin Laden.*

In line with the concepts of ‘netwar’ and ‘emergence’ in complex systems, Jihadist groups, such as ISIS and JaN, have adopted fluid, dispersed networks to distribute their media content online. In this approach, individuals have opted into a loose affiliation as media mujahideen, and actively redistribute content in an attempt to ensure it remains available despite ongoing content removal and account suspensions. This approach has evolved amongst Jihadist groups since the death of Osama Bin Laden. In addition to applauding his martyr’s death, Jihadist groups rapidly began developing new ways to communicate their self-definition as the only true believers.[36]

In the wake of the death of Bin Laden, as Nico Prucha has demonstrated, Jihadist groups emphasized the strong connection between the physical and the digital battlefields—one of the key principles of netwar. A statement issued by *al-Fajr* on May 6th 2011, argued:

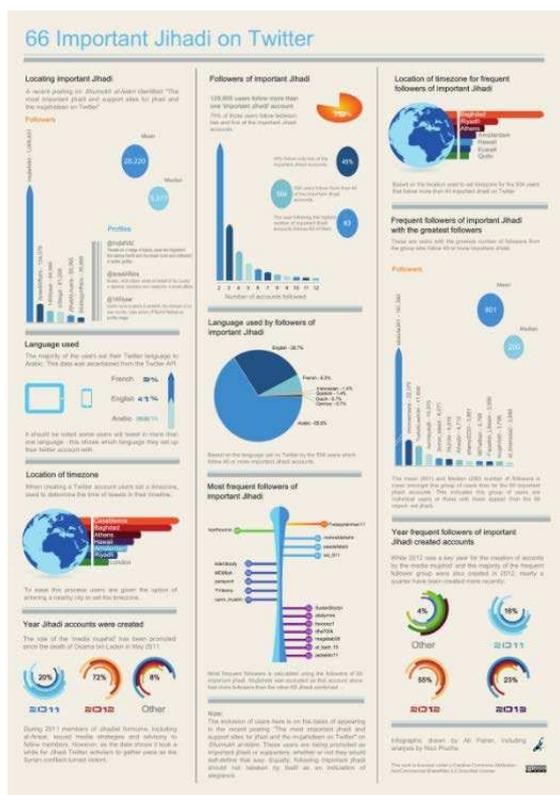
*“Internet is a battlefield for jihad, a place for missionary work, a field of confronting the enemies of God. It is upon any individual to consider himself as a media-mujahid, dedicating himself, his wealth and his time for God.”[37]*

From these initial statements, to the release of *The Media Mujahid – First Steps to Professionalize the Media Jihad* by the “al-Qayrawan” media foundation in the course of the 2012, and individual guides to using social media, the Jihadist operational approach has evolved into one which actively embraces dispersed forms of network organisation and strategy.[38]

The dispersed network of media mujahideen has allowed Jihadist groups to disseminate rich audiovisual content from the battlefield in near real-time. This serves to cultivate and strengthen group cohesion within the Mujahid vanguard, while also seeking to strike a responsive chord amongst the general public in the hope of mobilizing it.[39] The ability to produce content that is appealing to some users on social media is further augmented by the opportunity for sympathizers to interact through forums and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter with prominent *Mujahidin* or supporters (*Ansar*) and ask for guidance or advice about the physical battlefield.[40] As Nico Prucha has argued, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook are natural choices for jihadist strategic communication:

*Whether via ‘retweets’ on Twitter, posting comments on YouTube videos, or ‘likes’ on Facebook, by embracing the emergent behaviour and ‘social search’ which sites such as Twitter and Facebook facilitate, anyone can connect with and disseminate propaganda content outside of the ‘classical forums’.*  
[41]

The increased use of social media was in part a reflection of changing Internet use in general, but it was equally a positive decision to engage via online platforms such as Twitter. To support those wanting to contribute to the effort of the media mujahideen, and speed the adoption of particular social media platforms and digital technologies, practical guides were contributed by members of forums, blogs or posted on social media, which included lists of accounts to follow.[42] For example, a posting on the *Shumukh al-Islam* forum included a “Twitter Guide” (*dalil* Twitter). This ‘guide’ outlined reasons for using Twitter as an important arena of the electronic ribat (‘front’ in contemporary military terms); identified the different types of accounts which users could follow; and highlighted 66 users which *Ahmad ‘Abdallah* termed the Most Important Jihadi Users and Support Accounts for Jihad and the Mujahideen on Twitter.[43]



Full Version can be found here: <http://bit.ly/14kYuul>

The recognition and approval[44] of the media mujahideen, the decision to engage via social media and the increasing violence in Syria provided an opportunity for jihadist groups such as ISIS and JaN to evolve their online strategies which became increasingly aligned with the concepts of netwar. In doing so both ISIS and JaN have enabled them to disseminate content through an interconnected network that is constantly reconfiguring, akin to the way a swarm of bees or flock of birds constantly reorganises in flight. It marks a shift from the hierarchical and broadcast models of communication during conflict to a new dispersed and resilient form which embraces the strength of emergent behaviour; the user curated ‘Swarmcast’.[45]

**Swarmcast: Speed, Agility, Resilience**

*The final section of this article provides a series of examples and introduces social network analysis to explore some of the key elements of the Swarmcast, namely speed, agility and resilience.*

**Resilience**

Resilience against takedowns and account suspensions has become an important element of the Jihadist Swarmcast. This resilience has emerged over the last two years as jihadist groups have moved from broadcasting content via a few ‘official’ accounts to a dispersed network of media mujahideen who have been able to ensure that jihadist content maintains a persistent online presence.

The resilience of the Swarmcast originates from the interconnected nature of the social media accounts. For example within the Twitter guide (dalil Twitter) posted on the Shumukh al-Islam (SSI) forum, discussed previously, included a list of 66 twitter accounts which the author of the guide termed the ‘Most Important

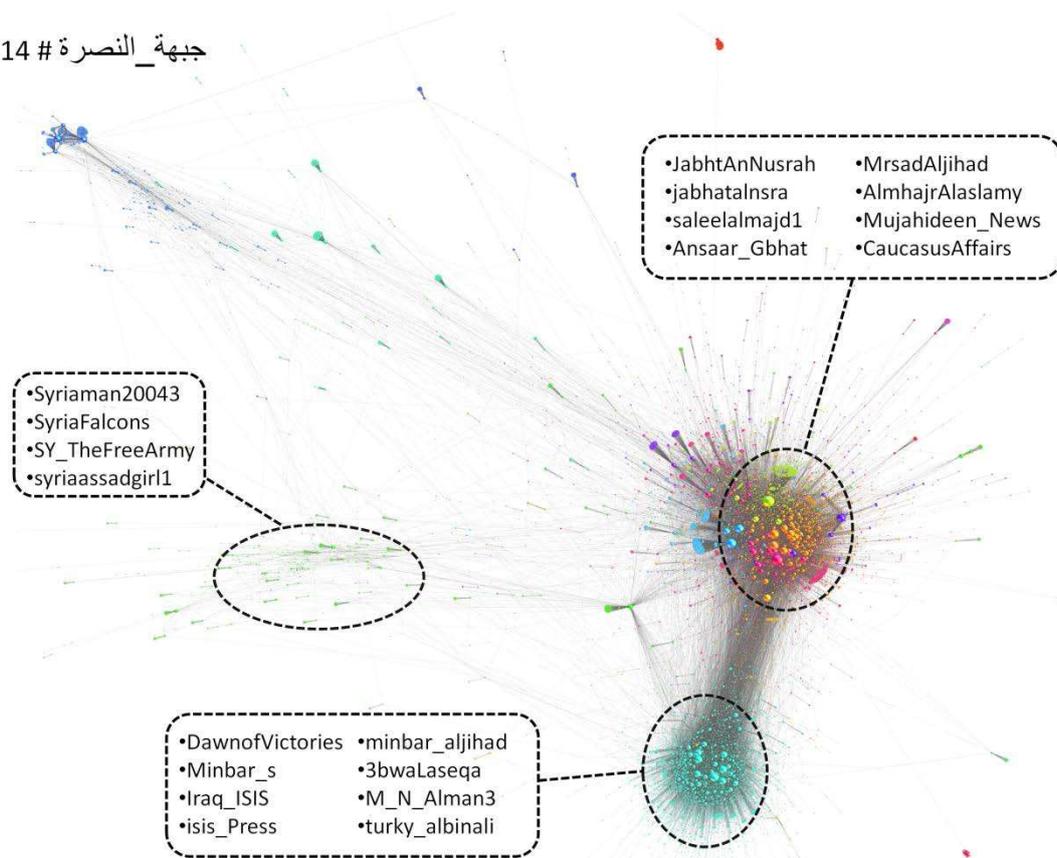


al-Nusra (JaN) used Twitter to disseminate content, and the type of content they shared.[49] The analysis of a JaN hashtag (#جبهة\_النصرة) in 2013 provided two specific findings, first, social media provided a means for “official” channels to engage in active communication with sympathizers, and, second, the study concluded that

*“Twitter functions as a beacon for sharing shortlinks to content dispersed across numerous digital platforms ... Today’s social media zeitgeist facilitates emergent behavior producing complex information-sharing networks in which influence flows through multiple hubs in multiple directions.”[50]*

Network analysis of tweets containing the same tag, (#جبهة\_النصرة) during spring 2014 showed that users have continued to interact using the tag and that the network has remained distributed and resilient. Analysis of the retweets containing, (#جبهة\_النصرة) reveals that JaN and a community of media mujahid sympathetic to their cause have maintained a dispersed network, as opposed to a single chain or hub-and-spoke structures. This is shown in the image below, with the top right cluster having the greatest concentration of accounts connected with JaN and sympathetic media mujahideen. The level of interconnection in this dispersed network limits the potential impact that the suspension of major accounts—or important nodes in network terms—can have on the ability of the group to maintain a persistent and coherent presence online. [51]

2014 #جبهة\_النصرة



In addition to observing the resilience of the network around JaN, the analysis of other clusters revealed that groups with other allegiances, including ISIS, were also using the tag to distribute content. The cluster at the bottom of the image contains those likely to have greater sympathy for ISIS objectives – although mere presence in the cluster should not be considered evidence of allegiance. The cluster of accounts most likely to be sympathetic to ISIS, similar to the JaN sympathetic cluster, contains a sub-network of interconnected accounts, which provides resilience against disruption due to account suspensions. This is because the cluster

does not operate as a hub-and-spoke network, and as such there is no single hub point through which all communication and authority flows.

Instead, this dispersed form of network structure is attuned to the information age, in which a mode of conflict based on netwar is largely about “who knows what, when, where, and why, and about how secure a society, military, or other actor is regarding its knowledge of itself and its adversaries.”[52] The structures imagined by Arquilla and Ronfeldt in their vision of netwar are sufficiently interconnected to reconfigure after disruption, as a flock of birds reconfigures after avoiding a predator. In other words, loss of a few important nodes cannot inhibit overall operational ability to maintain a persistent presence.

### Speed

*The second element of the Swarmcast is speed and, more specifically, the ability to rapidly transfer content or information to a wide network of individuals. This section shows how the media mujahideen successfully executed a netwar-based strategy through which they were able to distribute video content to a wide network.*

Once the initial wave of postings had been removed from social media, sufficient numbers of users have downloaded the content to enable it to be reposted faster and in a greater variety of places than platform owners and government agencies can remove them. In doing so the Swarmcast demonstrated some of the key netwar behaviours: “swarm and disperse, penetrate and disrupt, as well as elude and evade.”[53]



مؤسسة الفرقان تقدم صليل الصوارم 4

مشاهدة 124,170

488 4,197

مؤسسة الاعتصام - منطلق فيديو واحد

2,982

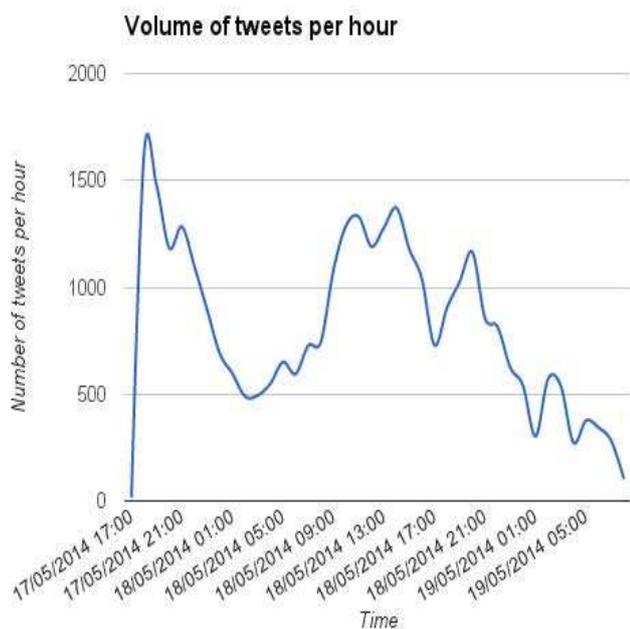
اشترك

لا إله إلا الله

In essence, a video is at its most vulnerable at the moment before release, as at that moment it is stored on only a few devices. Hence, the group releasing the video has the tactical problem that it needs to efficiently distribute that video so it can be stored on sufficient devices, and so achieve a level of redundancy that the video can be, in effect, permanently available. The key element in this tactical problem is that public releases are the most efficient method, yet once the video is publicly released and the media mujahideen are alerted, so are the government agencies and platform providers who begin the race to remove the content.

The utility of speed in response to this tactical challenge, in effect the rapid and high energy swarming behaviour envisaged in netwar, was aptly demonstrated by the release of the video 4 صليل الصوارم (Salil al-sawarim-SAS4) by ISIS's media department al-Furqan. The film was rapidly distributed, creating a

multiplatform Zeitgeist, ensuring users had access to the content before it could be removed by platform owners.



Al-Furqan's sister department, al-I'tasimu, announced the release of the fourth installment of *Salil al-sawarim* on Twitter on Saturday March 17th, 2014 at noon. The video was published via *al-I'tasimu's* high-profile Twitter account and the tier-one jihadist forums. In the first twenty four hours after the video was posted on YouTube, it was viewed 56,998 times with an average user watching a little over 17 minutes of the hour long film. By Monday morning when the video file was eventually removed from YouTube, this single posting of the video on YouTube had been viewed over 150,000 times with users collectively spending well over 680 days watching this single version of the video.

The ability to achieve this breadth of distribution was the result of the speed at which the media mujahideen reacted, causing sharp spikes in the volume of tweets and video views. Between 17th May and 8am on the 19th May a total of 32,313 tweets were observed carrying the name of the video in Arabic. This was an average of roughly 808 tweets per hour over a period of two days, with most tweets occurring in two periods of intense activity. In total the tweets containing the name of the film were tweeted by 6,428 Twitter users.[54]

Embedded within the tweets, were links to a range of platforms. YouTube was the most linked platform in these tweets including various different postings of the video, but other frequently linked domains included *justpaste.it* and *archive.org*. In addition, the most linked to *justpaste.it* page contains links to further locations where the video could be downloaded including *archive.org*, and *gulfup.com*. [55] This multi-platform approach to video release highlights the importance of speed within the Swarmcast. Users were able to rapidly locate, view and download the content for further distribution in the future.

Speed also embraces the ability to out-manoeuvre an adversary. For example, in contrast to the Media Mujahideen who rapidly reached a wide audience, accounts charged with countering jihadist social media content were silent on the release. The Twitter account run by the US State Department intended to engage jihadist accounts in Arabic (@dsdotar) did not tweet at all on the Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th May, as shown in their public timeline. By the time @dsdotar burst into action again on Monday 19th, "The Clanging

of the Swords, 4” had been viewed over 100,000 times and was on sufficient devices to remain effectively permanently available to web users (see below).



As a result, current efforts to stop ISIS and other groups from disseminating their propoganda have had little effect. There remains a persistent as well as ideologically cohesive presence for jihadist propoganda online. The use of netwar concepts allows ISIS, and jihadists in general, to withstand the U.S., and its allies’ attempts to weaken their distribution networks by shutting down individual Twitter accounts and remove YouTube videos. This is because the Swarmcast, in contrast to traditional broadcast approaches, relies on the network of accounts run by the media mujahideen to maintain the availability of content once the original YouTube videos, the YouTube accounts that posted them, and even the Twitter accounts which tweeted links to them had all been removed by platform owners.

### Agility

The final element of the Swarmcast is agility, the ability to move rapidly between platforms and even adopt new technologies for short periods of time before migrating to other digital locations. The advantage of such agility in maintaining a persistent presence online is that it takes time for the files posted across multiple different platforms to be located – by which time, as the release of the SAS4 video demonstrates, the content has reached a large network capable of reposting multiple copies, thereby ensuring this content can have a persistent presence online.

Agility is not merely breadth of platforms, but is also the ability to rapidly adopt new platforms, knowing some will rapidly become obsolete while others flourish. In the Swarmcast, moving between platforms forces the Western online adversaries to identify the adoption of a new platform and locate and contact the appropriate platform administrators before that content may be removed. The longer that takes to achieve, the more time the media mujahideen have to download the video content and repost it elsewhere.

For example, trailers for the ISIS-released *Flames of War* video could easily be found on YouTube. A single posting of the trailer was watched over 750,000 times and the average duration was over one minute for the 1 minute 27 second trailer.[56] The full version was also easily available via the agile, multiplatform release. For example, a version of *Flames of War* with Russian subtitles was posted on *Vimeo* and played over 13,000 times, while another version available on *LiveLeak* has been viewed 5,500 times. At least two versions of the full HD download were available on *Gulfup* and had been downloaded 21,550 and 5,600 times respectively. Another version of the video was hidden in the e-books section of *Archive.org* and had been downloaded over 12,000 times. Further versions were also available from *180upload.com* and *Mediafire.com*, while references to the film are still shared on Twitter using both Arabic ([#الحرب لهيب](#)) and English ([#FlamesOfWar](#)) tags.[57]

The rapid dispersal of content means that within a day of being released copies of jihadist films such as *Flames of War* were on thousands of devices around the world. With copies of a film dispersed so widely it then has a permanent presence as it can be re-shared any time a copy is removed or a user requests a specific video. Furthermore, if a user cannot locate a specific piece of content they can simply ask. This ability to request videos is an important element of the Swarmcast. For example, less than five hours after a Twitter user had requested a video produced by AQAP (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula), that particular video was uploaded to YouTube and the link shared via Twitter (see below).



**Khattab Al Muhajir**

@khattab\_rt1

Follow

Does anyone have a working link to AQAP video about how to avoid detection from drones?



RETWEETS

3

FAVOURITES

6

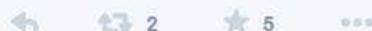


10:07 am - 17 Mar 2015



**Dawah Akhi** @AK8372K · 5h

@khattab\_rt1 [youtube.com/watch?v=P8UDas...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8UDas...)

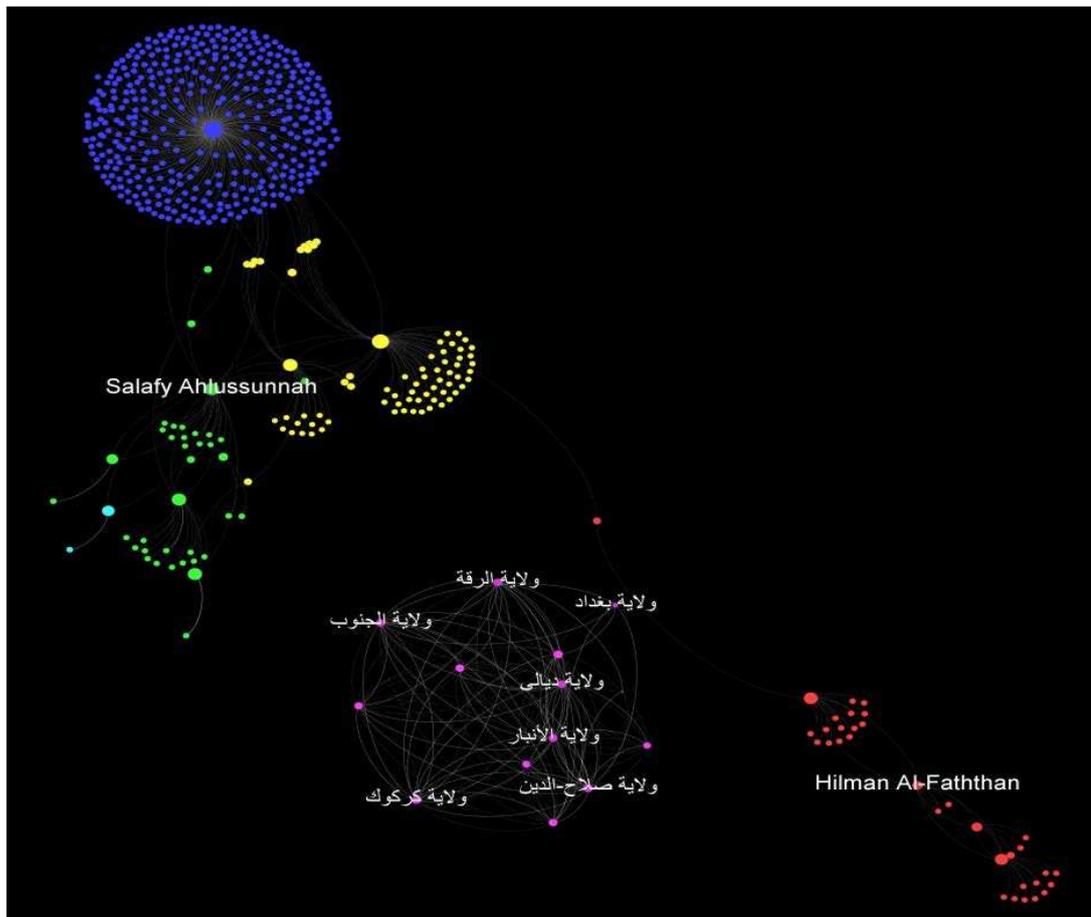


2

5

In addition to posting a single video to multiple platforms, the media mujahedeen are constantly reconfiguring the mix of platform which comprise the Swarmcast. At the start of 2014 there was increased use of Google+ and experiments with platforms such as *Friendica.eu* had little success. A recent attempt to establish an Internet presence is *VK.com* (a social network with headquarters in St. Petersburg). VK briefly appeared to be more successful at establishing relatively static libraries of content. VK's publicity claims that the platform is the "most visited site in Eastern Europe. It has over 60 million average daily users, 260 million registered accounts, and 2,800,000,000 daily page views." [58]

A list of VK accounts shared via *page* on *Justpaste.it*, for example, revealed an interconnected network of 'friend' relationships between these accounts. While these accounts were active, links to the content posted on VK were shared via other platforms, including lists of accounts made available on *Justpaste.it*. However, these accounts were subsequently closed by VK after about a week of activity.



*Network of connected accounts on VK (only those accounts found on the Justpaste.it list are labeled)*

In a similar approach to the accounts listed in the in the Twitter guide, discussed earlier, the intent was not to analyse whether they should be identified as jihadist, but instead to identify those accounts which were being promoted as jihadist.

The accounts using Arabic display similar network characteristics to the networks of core jihadist users on Twitter. The network of accounts on VK has sufficient interconnection for the network to survive the loss of some members and additional resilience is provided by the links created to other platforms, including Facebook, Google+ and Twitter. Furthermore, while much interaction now takes place via social media, the classic forums still have a role in providing information allowing the swarm to reconnect and reconfigure. The way the combination of platforms is used, emphasises the need for a strategic level approach which treats Internet use as a multi-platform phenomenon.

### **Conclusion**

According to a recent report by the London-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “It is now recognised that violent extremists have made effective use of the Internet and social media to advance their aims, whether through engagement, propaganda, radicalisation or recruitment.” [59] The contemporary social media *Zeitgeist* facilitates emergent and self-organising behaviours within complex information-sharing networks. In these online networks, influence flows in multiple directions through multiple influential actors.

Since Twitter was first identified as the beacon for Jihadist content, the Internet has become an increasingly important 'battlefield for *jihad*' in which the media-*mujahideen* believe they conduct missionary work and confront the enemies of God.[60]

As an approach to Netwar, the Swarmcast has proven that it is very hard to deal with, as the media-*mujahideen* are able to operate as small, dispersed units that can deploy nimbly—anywhere, anytime.[61] According to Director of GCHQ Robert Hannigan, ISIS “are exploiting the power of the web to create a jihadi threat with near-global reach.”[62] To challenge these activities from a law enforcement perspective, Hannigan continues, will take “greater co-operation from technology companies” to develop “better arrangements for facilitating lawful investigation by security and law enforcement agencies than we have now.”[63]

While “much of the emphasis to date has been placed on restrictive measures, such as take-downs and filtering emphasis to date has been placed on restricting counter-narratives.[64] Attempts to counter jihadist messages, for example by the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), have included: “creating communities of interest, supporting positive voices, narrowing the space violent extremists have to work in, repeatedly and aggressively presenting the reality of what is going on on the ground,” according to now former CSCC coordinator Alberto Fernandez.”[65] In addition, The Think-again-Turn-away campaign run by the US State Department has produced images and video which seeks to counter ISIS, including a video “Welcome to the ‘Islamic State’ Land” which seeks to satirise elements of ISIS.[66] Other counter narratives, not run by the US State Department, including ‘Abdullah X’, produced by a UK-based former Muslim radical, have sought to develop a more direct message to extremists through framing YouTube videos in the style of graphic novels.[67]

However, in spite of these incipient efforts to develop counter-narratives and block websites, to date the components of the Swarmcast—Speed, Agility and Resilience—have ensured a persistent presence for Jihadist content online. Future policies to counter the dissemination of Jihadist content must challenge the Swarmcast on a strategic level and take account of all three components of the Swarmcast *modus operandi* when employing take-downs or other counter-measures. The challenge is not to disrupt the activity of individual members of the media-*mujahiden*, but to focus on strategic approaches to disrupt the system wide emerging structures and collective behaviours rather than go after individual accounts.

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## Fatal Attraction: Western Muslimas and ISIS

by Anita Perešin

### Abstract

More than 550 Muslim women from Western countries have joined ISIS and moved to its proclaimed 'Caliphate' in Syria and Iraq. No extremist group has been able to attract so many female Western recruits so far, and their number continues to grow. This article is intended to explain the reasons behind such unprecedented success, the motivation of Western Muslimas to join ISIS and their roles in the 'Islamic State'. It also compares living conditions under ISIS' rule with the expectation induced by ISIS' recruiters in women from the West who had shown an interest to make *hijra* and join ISIS. Understanding these factors is vital to figure out how to stop this trend and to assess the security threat posed to the West by possible female returnees, or radicalized sympathizers who are unable to leave their countries of residence.

**Keywords:** ISIS, Islamic State, Caliphate, female foreign fighters, *muhajirat*

### Introduction

This article explores the reasons why a growing number of Muslim women (Muslimas) from the West are joining the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a group that became notorious for its brutal violence, torture, executions, and mistreatment of prisoners, hostages and civilians, including women and children. By formally approving of brutalities against women accused of being unbelievers, such as physical and sexual violence and slavery[1] (in the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Taking Captives and Slaves"[2]) and by clarifying strict behavioural norms and the roles women are allowed to play in ISIS-controlled territory (in "Women in the Islamic State: Manifesto and Case Studies"[3]), the group has spread fear and demonstrated its power to control and use women to achieve some of its goals. Even though the image the group chooses to offer could be expected to make it unattractive to women from the West, a surprisingly high number of female Muslims and converts, identifying themselves as *muhajirat*, have recently left their Western countries and performed *hijra*[4] to the newly proclaimed 'Caliphate'.

Previous research on individuals involved in terrorism and violent extremism demonstrates that, among other factors, the causes of terrorism can be found in an environment that is conducive to, and permissive of, such acts and in motivating factors that directly encourage violence.[5] The fact that more than 20,000 foreign militants have gone to Syria and Iraq to fight,[6] a higher number than in all other jihadist struggles combined, raises concerns that radicalised and traumatised individuals with combat experience could return to plot against their home countries. The phenomenon of ISIS' Western foreign fighters and the threat they pose as potential future terrorists, have been primarily analysed focusing on the male component. This article analyses the importance of females for ISIS' strategic goals, both in the 'Islamic State's' territory and in the West. Thus, using open-source information and the voluntary statements of self-identified female adherents active on social media, this article explores the background of ISIS' Western women, their motivations and expectations, their importance for ISIS, and the differences between the conditions promised and the reality of life in the 'Islamic States' or 'Caliphate'.

Understanding the motivations of Western Muslim women to join the group and the importance of the experience some of them get in the 'Islamic State', is necessary to assess the capacity of women to go through the "terrorist production system"[7] to become female terrorists, skilled and instructed to conduct violence in the ISIS-controlled territory or in their Western countries of residence. Women who successfully went

through different stages of the “complex model of foreign fighter radicalization: decide, travel, train & fight, return, plot,”[8] will require different types of treatment if/when they return to their home countries – something that needs to be recognized in any counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism policies.

The available data, which is currently limited due to the lack of reliable socio-demographic profiles of women and neutral information on the reality of life in the ‘Islamic State’, has nevertheless helped to paint a preliminary picture of the ISIS’ Western Muslim women that still needs to be further corroborated and elaborated. Such limits restrict our understanding of how their motivation to participate in violent jihad is progressing, how to counter this trend, and what kind of threat these women could pose to their home countries. However, it clearly demonstrates the importance of Western women for ISIS and the need to seriously assess the phenomenon in the West.

### ***Who are ISIS’ Western Muslim Women?***

The exact number of Muslim women from the West who joined ISIS is still not officially confirmed. It is estimated that their number exceeds 550,[9] or that they represent 10 percent of the number of all ISIS’ Western foreign fighters. [10] Apart from that, authorities from different European countries, as well as the US, Australia and Canada, continuously report new cases of women who are being arrested at airports on suspicion of trying to travel to Syria or who express their willingness to make *hijra* on their social media accounts.

A research by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue showed a significant amount of diversity within the profiles of Western female migrants. This makes it impossible to create a broad profile of women at risk of being radicalized by ISIS based on age, location, ethnicity, family relations or religious background.[11] These girls and young women are mainly aged between 16 and 24,[12] but even younger girls have attempted to travel to Syria. In most cases they are second or third generation Muslim immigrants, but the number of converts is also growing. A considerable number of girls who have left school, who are students, or are already well-educated and supposedly possess a certain level of intellectual independence, such as Aqsa Mahmood (a.k.a. Umm Layth), the privately-educated and trained radiologist from the UK,[13] indicate that a significant number of girls and young women have good prospects of education and life in the West and come from well-established, moderate and non-radicalized families.

Unlike cases of entire families moving from the West to the ‘Islamic State’, in the case of individual female migrants there is no evidence that their families support their decision to follow radical jihad and move to ISIS-controlled territory. On the contrary, there are several examples of family members who begged their daughters or sisters to change their mind and return home.[14] Some of them even travelled to Syria and tried to bring them back, while others, clearly shocked after having discovered the connections of their “intelligent and lovely daughters” with violent jihadists, publicly expressed condemnation of “perverted and evil actions of the distortion of Islam.”[15] Families with such attitudes could, in many cases, become valuable partners for security services implementing new female-oriented counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism measures.

An important question is: what term to use to properly refer to ISIS’ Western women, considering the motivation and the roles they play in the territory controlled by ISIS. Are they to be labelled *terrorists*, *female foreign fighters*, *muhajirat* or *naïve manipulated victims*? Female terrorists are not a new phenomenon. Many terrorist organizations have used women for carrying out terrorist attacks, especially suicide bombings. Up to now, such use of ISIS’ women has not been confirmed, but it is also not strictly forbidden, as it will be described below.

ISIS' women are often labelled by security experts and journalists as 'female foreign fighters', a term that implies the same role for women and men within the group. 'Foreign fighters' are defined as "non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil war,"[16] but "whose primary motivation is ideological or religious rather than financial." [17] That implies that foreign fighters are paid, as ISIS' fighters are,[18] but money is apparently not their primary motivation. Such a broad definition of 'foreign fighters' could be applied to women from the West who receive some financial allowance and some of whom, once they arrive in Syria or Iraq, learn how to use weapons and can be seen on the streets of the 'Caliphate' carrying Kalashnikovs. However, a strict interpretation of *Shariah* law prohibits combative activities for women and so far there is insufficient evidence that ISIS use women in combat. The individual statements, like the one given by a self-identified former member of the Al-Khansaa Brigade who escaped to Turkey, published in April 2015, that the European members of this brigade "fought on the frontline" [19] has not yet been confirmed from different sources. The same is true with regard to two cases of executions presented as being performed by women. In one case, Al-Khansaa Brigade members executed a former comrade, who was accused of being a spy. [20] In another case, a Syrian soldier was shot dead by an off-screen individual identified as the wife of a slain fighter.[21]

In terms of self-identification, Muslim women who joined ISIS and moved to the 'Caliphate' call themselves *muhajirat*. The term *muhajirah* (sg.; *muhajirat*, pl.) was coined by the first historians of Islam to honour the women who protected the Prophet during the early Islamic battles in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, both female members of the Prophet's family and new converts to Islam.[22] It is important to highlight that not all ISIS women, depending on their motivation for making *hijra*, clearly understand the importance and honourable value of the term in its religious sense, which could offend true believers. The same term has also been used to specify female suicide bombers, "reflecting the evolution of women's role in conflict from passive to active supporters of the violent jihadi movement" [23] – something which might in some cases also be applicable to ISIS' Western women.

Finally, notwithstanding how adolescents understand what concepts such as 'Caliphate', *ummah*, or violent jihad really mean, ISIS also use naïve and easily manipulated teenage girls to play a role in territory under its control, inducing them to embrace a cause that they often do not clearly understand.[24]

With the above-mentioned limitations in mind, none of the terms—*terrorists*, *female foreign fighters*, *muhajirat* or *naïve manipulated victims*—can be generally applied to all the Western female migrants. Proper labelling will depend on the evidence of their motivation, role and activities in the ISIS-controlled territory.

While it is hard to quantify the extent of the growing alienation between female migrants and the respective countries of residence, there is widespread concern about this trend and is trying to find out what motivates women from the West to move to the war-torn area and join such a notorious terrorist group.

### **Motivation**

In public, ISIS' Western Muslim migrants expressed different motives to join ISIS: from religious, ideological and political to personal ones. Here we will explore if and how their sense of frustration was exploited by ISIS' propaganda to offer them a 'new meaningful life' in a 'better society'. Religious motivation is cited most often by the women themselves as the most important driver. It is always present at some level, but by itself it is not sufficient to explain the willingness of Western-educated Muslim women to move to the 'Caliphate' and to join ISIS. In most of the cases analysed, a combination of religious and other motivating factors fuel the aspirations of women to take part in violent jihad.

Firstly, women are responding to ISIS' leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who urged Muslims from around the world to fulfil their religious duty and move to the new 'Caliphate' "to help build its infrastructure, economy and army for jihad." [25] Entire families answered that call, "believing that they are doing the right thing for their children." [26] The same intention can be found among a significant number of single women, who decided to move to the 'Caliphate', alone or with their children. Others left their families after finding a prospective husband with whom they want to start a new life in Syria. One such example is the Bosnian woman Elvira Balic Karalic, who left her husband and two children, aged ten and three, to go to marry a French foreign fighter of Bosnian descent, with whom she now lives in Raqqa and has another child. [27]

In the newly proclaimed 'Caliphate' some women see a chance to take part in the state-building process and to participate in the creation of a new society that would be built in contrast to the "decadent and morally corrupt Western society, which has no respect for women." [28] With that in mind, women talk about joining the *state*, not a terrorist group, and expect to be given an important role in creating the new, ideologically-pure state, where they could live 'honourably' under a strict interpretation of *Shariah* law. Zehra Dunman, a 21 year-old woman of Turkish descent from Melbourne, Australia, explained that once the 'Caliphate' was declared, she could no longer wait even a second to migrate there. [29] Promoting the same aim in online blogs, ISIS' female recruiters "talk about the failings of Western societies, speak negatively about restrictions on how they can practice Islam (for example, the ban on wearing the *burqa* in France), and criticize the political system." [30] In a similar instance, a Dutch woman in Syria called Khadija declared: "I always wanted to live under *Shariah*. In Europe, this will never happen." [31]

Some women express the belief that the *ummah* is under attack and needs to be defended, or that they are protecting their religion from the war they believe the West is waging on Islam itself. Umm Irhab, writing about this 'War on Islam', invited all Muslims to defend the *ummah* by choosing to be "either with us or against us." [32] Thus, some women publicly expressed their willingness to play traditional female non-combatant roles like cooking or being nurses for soldiers or to fight alongside their jihadi husbands. Such an intention, for example, has been expressed by a certified nurse from Colorado, Shannon Maureen Conley, 19. She was arrested at Denver Airport in April 2014 on her way to Syria "to become a soldier's' wife and to fight alongside him, or to help using her skills as a nurse." [33] By expressing their belief in the mandatory religious duty to migrate and to assist in the process of building a Muslim 'Caliphate', women are expecting a twofold reward: a sense of belonging on earth now and a place in paradise later. [34]

Motivated more by political reasons, some women believe that they are taking part in a humanitarian mission to relieve the mistreated Syrian population after seeing the horrific pictures of the Syrian conflict, like Aqsa Mahmood, whose parents said she was desperate to help suffering Syrians. [35] Identification with the sufferings imposed on Muslims around the world, coupled with the disapproval and anger for their country's foreign policy toward Muslim countries, often plays a significant role in pushing young people toward violent extremism. [36]

This, together with the feelings of alienation and inequality, racism and a lack of religious freedom, xenophobia or negative attitudes toward Muslim immigrants in the West, is used by ISIS' recruiters to boost the aspirations of Muslims to live and practice their religion in a more congenial environment. As Umm Ubaydah writes, such reasons motivate her and others to try "to build an Islamic State that lives and abides by the law of Allah." [37]

When it comes to personal reasons troubling adolescent girls, ISIS exploited the personal identity battles of some women, provoked by liberalism and modernity in multicultural Western societies. Many Muslim female youths have found themselves caught between traditional and liberal values imposed by their families

on the one hand, and their friends on the other. In ISIS' ideology they found a third path, which offers them a sense of belonging to a global cause,[38] as well as stability and acceptance within a group, which they previously lacked.

Furthermore, some young people are just "bored" and the possibility of being part of a "movement that claims to be changing history"[39] seems very attractive to them. Supporting that, Mia Bloom argues that ISIS—by promoting "a new kind of utopia" offers women a "fantasy escape" and a feeling that by joining ISIS "they will be empowered, have an exciting life, and do something meaningful with their lives." [40]

Some women are just looking for 'a real man, a fighter', and are attracted by the possibility to marry a foreign fighter, "a heroic figure willing to sacrifice himself for a cause." [41] In addition to getting a 'brave and noble husband', ISIS' female recruits are promised a free house, equipped with top-of-the-line appliances and all expenses paid.[42] Even though financial reasons are not highlighted in women's posts as decisive to make *hijra*, the benefits and financial awards they are promised for each child could be an important incentive. That makes them believe that they will be financially secure and will not miss out on anything in life.

Other motivations that women have expressed, include adventure, alienation, dissatisfaction with their lives, searching for alternatives, romantic disappointments, adolescent rebellion, or other forms of discontent. For many teenage girls, participation in jihad seems very romantic, as well as being married to 'holy warriors' and living in the idyllic 'Muslim Disneyland'. However, naïvety and romanticism do not mean that their motivation to join ISIS is weak. A very strong determination is necessary for women, especially teenage girls, to leave their family and to move to a war-torn area.[43] Such strong motivation to follow radical jihad opens the road to new security concerns, such as the possibility that they could also be ready to follow orders to conduct acts of violence, or remain exploitable for the same cause when they return home.

The available data demonstrates the specific motivations of individual Western Muslim women to join ISIS, mostly a combination of different motivating factors. Some women are willing, for very different reasons, to leave their Western countries to change their lives or "to wash themselves clean of a previous life of *haram*." [44] This makes it difficult to define the most influential motive or the tipping point of intense ISIS propaganda which might lure the majority of them to leave their families and friends. ISIS, tuning in on different aspirations of potential recruits, creates a propaganda strategy that covers a very wide spectrum of motivating factors in order to offer something to almost anyone.[45]

The motivation of recruits also changes over time. Someone who was initially motivated primarily by one set of factors may thereafter gradually change his or her thinking based on experience. Such an example is provided by Umm Layth, who had expressed a willingness to become a martyr before she moved to the 'Islamic State'. Later, as an ISIS online recruiter, she urged women not to think about how to carry out suicide attacks, but to focus rather on their domestic role in the 'Caliphate'. This is not the only case illustrating how former plans and intentions of Western female migrants had been transformed during their stay in Syria. Others too encountered life conditions and found roles in the 'Islamic State' different from what they expected after the initial exposure to ISIS social media campaign.

### ***Social Media Campaign***

To lure Western women to Syria and Iraq, ISIS has introduced a new type of social media campaign that is primarily led by those female supporters who have already joined the group; some of whom seem to have quasi-official status within the ISIS media wing. The main goal of ISIS' propaganda is to motivate women from the West to join the 'Caliphate' by offering them solutions for resolving the above-mentioned

frustrations and dissatisfaction with their lives, to make their decision easier by giving them useful travel tips, and to demonstrate that their living conditions will be better than in the West—both in terms of material as well as intangible benefits.

This campaign is being led in a variety of languages (for Western supporters, mostly in English and French), and on various platforms. Twitter has been the group's platform of choice[46], in part because users can effectively conceal their identities and accounts can be easily re-established after being shut down by officials, or by Twitter itself. Beyond Twitter, ISIS supporters also use Facebook, Instagram, Kik, WhatsApp, YouTube, SureSpot, Ask.FM, Tumblr and other alternative sites. ISIS is continuously searching for means of exploiting new social media resources.

By using social media, ISIS empowers individual supporters to take part in creating and distributing its narrative. Such promoters share official propaganda about ISIS 'victories' in battles, promote ISIS ideology and regularly post pro-ISIS slogans, together with personal details about their experience in the group. Narratives about individual experience of life in the 'Caliphate' have proven to be a very effective tool for luring Western women to join the group. By presenting their daily activities, such as cooking, making Nutella pancakes, doing housework, playing with children or posting pictures of romantic sunsets in Syria, online promoters are offering a picture of life under ISIS' rule that is positive and attractive to would-be followers. Such communication is specially intended to help prospective recruits to easily identify themselves with the chatty young female jihadists who express their happiness at living in the 'Caliphate'. [47] However, Bloom warns that women from the West are getting a very distorted view on social media of what their life would be like if they were to join the Islamic State[48] – something also outlined below.

Social media posts also give a variety of practical and motivational tips and guidance to would-be *muhajirat*, from facilitating their travel to advising them on what to bring (warm clothes, a good pair of boots, a hair dryer, the type of vaccinations required), what not to bring (coffee and tea—easy to find), how to communicate with their families back home, as well as courses on how to be 'good wives of jihad'. [49]

Media outlets, such as the "Zora Foundation," [50] have been established with the aim of preparing potential female recruits for different roles in the land of jihad, covering the competencies of housewives and facilitators. That means that, on the one hand, women are taught how to sew and cook 'fast and easy recipes' from the ISIS recipe book – food that can be served to fighters at any time but especially during breaks in battles, and with the necessary nutrients and calories to enhance the power and strength of fighters. [51] On the other hand, they are offered advice on how to use weapons, how to administer first aid to wounded fighters, and how to work with computer design and editing programs to help spread ISIS propaganda. [52]

International travel, apart from being more accessible and affordable than ever, is made easier by online planning and support from women who have already been through the process. Yet travel support consists of more than tips published online. ISIS' Western women can expect well-organised operational support on their way to the final destination, including phone numbers of contact persons who will be waiting for them at airports, guides and even lawyers for solving administrative or other problems with officials in transit countries such as Turkey. For instance, Umm Khattab explained that ISIS sent her a lawyer "who worked some magic and after a looooong tiring week in prison they let us go..." [53] Travel advice is often more general and more focused on women's emotions than on practicalities which could hamper the efforts of future migrants. Women seriously interested in making the journey are advised to use encrypted channels or private messages to get more precise information. [54]

ISIS has progressively tightened security checks on Westerners to prevent spies infiltrating the group by posing as foreign fighters.[55] It is believed that at least one recommendation from a prominent *sheik* already known to the group could be required from new recruits. Such measures do not seem to complicate the attempts of many women to reach ISIS-controlled territory, as long as their recruiters provide strict and detailed travel support information.

A great deal of attention has also been paid to the issue of communication with the family back home once they have arrived, which is especially important for teen migrants. Umm Layth explained to her followers on social media that the most difficult part about joining the group is opposition from family back home. On her Tumblr blog she wrote how difficult it is to stay calm despite the family's call to return. "The first phone call you make once you cross the borders is one of the most difficult things you will ever have to do ... when you hear them sob and beg like crazy on the phone for you to come back it's so hard." [56]

Social media allows ISIS to promote its goals quicker and more easily to a younger generation who spend a great deal of time on the Internet and are adept at utilizing all its advantages. ISIS successfully transformed social media "into an offensive strategy of psychological warfare," [57] using it at the same time "as a weapon in its fight for ideological supremacy on the global jihadist spectrum." [58] Images of violence and brutal executions, communicated online, provide an effective instrument in this type of psychological warfare, seeking to achieve local, tactical goals of spreading fear while demonstrating superiority and projecting power globally. Such promotion of brutality gives ISIS relevance, as the jihadist group most feared by the West. Carefully-formulated propaganda is framed in order to maximize the international community's abhorrence of ISIS actions, to keep them in Western headlines and to be attractive to would-be followers.

Youthful ISIS sympathizers, both male and female, are influenced by the glamour of images of a war with a cause, including images of torture and executions of those who oppose the 'Caliphate'. Fascinated by the "cult of death" and by places like "heaven" and "life after death", they talk about "five-star-jihad" to describe the fun and excitement they are having fighting in Syria, rather than being "bored" in their home countries. There is the risk that such "jihadi-cool subculture" drives more youth to the 'Islamic State'. [59] Another question is whether they find what they expected in ISIS-controlled territory.

### ***Life under the Rule of ISIS: Expectations vs. Reality***

From ISIS' propaganda material it is clear that the main attraction by which ISIS so strongly lures Muslim women living in the West to move to the 'Caliphate' is the opportunity to become wives of ISIS' fighters and mothers of a new generation of jihadists. Additionally, they are needed to play domestic female supporting roles (like cooking or being nurses for soldiers), to take professional positions left unfilled by man, to control the civilian population and to recruit others to join ISIS.

To ensure that thousands of male Western foreign fighters will not leave the 'Islamic State' territory, ISIS created a strategy to retain them, by giving them a job, a house and a family. [60] In addition to being promised a salary, they are promised a wife, and often more than one. Western migrants who enthusiastically make themselves available to marry ISIS foreign fighters are apparently regarded as better mothers and supporters of jihad than local women, who are often reluctant to marry foreigners. Western foreign fighters might also prefer Western women, who are culturally and linguistically much closer to them. Foreign women, blondes and converts are highly ranked by ISIS officials, and as such are rewarded to the most prized fighters. [61]

The fact that Muslim women leave the West to move to the 'Caliphate' also demonstrates that they see ISIS ideology as superior to the Western worldview.[62] ISIS promotes women from the West in its ranks as a validation of its power, strength, and the acceptance of its ideology throughout the world.[63]

What we know about the life of Western Muslim women on the territory controlled by ISIS primarily comes from women's social media posts. On the one hand, active ISIS female online recruiters and promoters of idealistic living conditions in the 'Caliphate' emphasise their satisfaction and assert that everything is functioning as in normal society. For some women the conditions are "amazing".[64] They report better treatment than in the West and the sense of belonging they have found in the 'Islamic State'. As Umm Hamza explained, "women are harassed [sic] and some are beaten in the street in the West, but here under the law of Allah we are protected." [65] That makes some of them feel "free for the first time in life as a woman." [66]

Some women are amazed by the relations with others, especially with the 'sisterhood in *Dawla*', where there are no fake relationships, where friendships are very strong and where they are not sorry to leave their families back at home. For Umm Layth, "the families you get in exchange for leaving the ones behind are like the pearl in comparison to the shell you threw away into the foam of the sea which is the *ummah*." [67]

On the other hand, there are the impressions of women who succeeded either in escaping or in contacting their families in a desperate attempt to receive help to return home. They talk about shocking experiences and an awareness of having made the biggest mistake of their lives, based on mistreatment by their husbands or dissatisfaction with their role in the 'Caliphate'.

Such negative experiences seem to have afflicted two Austrian teens Samra Kesinovic, 17, and Sabina Selimovic, 15, known as 'ISIS poster girls'. [68] The reality of life was similar for a one French *muhajirah*, whose brother, after meeting her in Syria, reported that "she was thin and sick... she never saw any light ... and lived surrounded by armed men." [69] A 25 year-old single mother, Tareena Shakil, [70] a short time after joining ISIS, also expressed a willingness to return to Great Britain, after she had realized what type of life she would have had in Syria in a forced marriage with a one-legged fighter. In an interview with CNN, a former member of the Al-Khansaa Brigade confirmed the "many cases of sexual violence to which Western women are exposed," [71] explaining that foreign fighters could be very brutal even with the women they marry.

Other disappointments, presented in a research report by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, range from "concerns over the role of females, specifically frustrations over being banned from military combat and emotional strains of becoming a widow at a young age, to physical descriptions of failing infrastructure and harsh environments." [72]

However, there is no indication that data and images of a good living conditions posted on social media are all false or fictitious, that they do not represent a reality on a par of that experienced by many Western women, or that women in general are not satisfied with their lives. A Swedish migrant [73] tweeted criticisms of Western media reports about life under the 'Islamic State', which she said were "fantasy stories," insisting that her life in Raqqa was "good." Katherine Brown also said that no woman she has spoken to via social media was considering returning home, after they had migrated to a "better life" where they could "feel free." [74] It seems that each woman has a unique experience of life under ISIS, and that the level of satisfaction depends on how she is treated, first by her husband, and then by the people around her, as well as by her capability to adjust her behaviour to comply with the strict *Shariah* rules.

Even if they are treated well, women are exposed to a very different way of life than in the West. ISIS women are always entirely dressed in black, not even the eyes are visible through *niqabs*. They are heavily controlled once they arrive, and their movement outside the home is restricted, especially for unmarried women.

According to ISIS propaganda, on arrival, women are either given a home, if they are married, or settled in an all-female hostel with a guaranteed monthly allowance, if they are single. Women coming alone are therefore accepted, but they are supposed to marry shortly after arriving in Syria. Umm Layth in her “Diary of Muhajirah” explained that women would not be forced to marry,[75] but in a subsequent post she urged sisters on Twitter “to really stop dreaming about coming to *Shaam* and not getting married.”[76 ] Another woman, Umm Ubaydah echoed this warning too, explaining how hard it was to live in the ‘Caliphate’ without a husband.[77] In a cultural environment where marriage remains an important form of social currency, many ISIS online recruiters openly advise women to try to arrange a marriage before they even arrive in Syria or Iraq. Finding an appropriate husband is an important precondition to make their position in the ‘Caliphate’ easier.

To prepare incoming Western Muslim migrants for the ‘trials’ that come with their lifestyle changes, ISIS’ women published a post on the “Al-Muhajirat” Tubmbr blog on May 2015.[78] In this blog they explained that migrating to the ‘Caliphate’ does not mean that life of *muhajirat* will be “smooth and dandy” and will not be difficult. Some hardships are expected both in the marriage and in other *dunya* [this world] matters: for example, with new families, local people or with health. Such situations are presented as a means by which Allah tests women, their patience through difficulties and their faith.

Some women already explained that foreigners are not always well-accepted by the local population. They report communication problems or misunderstandings with local people who are generally not very welcoming, hospitable or eager to help.[79] More drastic examples of mistreatment and discrimination include cases of inappropriate care some women face in hospitals, because they are foreigners. The better living conditions and benefits that foreign fighters enjoy in the ‘Caliphate’ create divides and resentment among the local population, complicating relations.

Additional tensions could be caused by unfilled expectations of some Western women. ISIS propaganda mostly shows women carrying guns but enjoying ‘normal’ activities such as taking care of children, meeting each other for coffee, eating in restaurants, reading, studying religion and learning Arabic during their free-time.[80] Indeed, another question is whether women are satisfied with the strict rules and limited female roles, having in mind the participation in combat activities that some imagined, and featured on social media accounts before joining the group.

The vast majority of Western female Muslim migrants occupies very traditional domestic female roles and is only seldom permitted to be engaged in active employment.[81] For any woman who could think that coming to Syria and Iraq and joining ISIS might bring new opportunities or equal rights, Umm Ubaydah is clear. “The main role of the *muhajirah* here is to support her husband and his jihad and [God willing] to increase the *ummah*.”[82] They are expected to be a “righteous wife who will raise righteous children.”[83]

The role of ISIS’ women is more clearly described by ISIS itself. In the document posted on a jihadist forum in January 2015 in Arabic (translated by the Quilliam Foundation under the name “Women in the Islamic State: Manifesto and Case Study)” [84] ISIS, in contrast to what is mostly promoted online to Western women in English, clarified that the designated role of women under the ISIS version of *Shariah* law was primarily domestic: to raise the new generation of jihadists. On the other hand, this manifesto does not exclude a combat role for women, but only in case of extreme situations of an enemy attack against the country, insufficient men or a fatwa issued by an imam. Considering the threat that the returning women of ISIS could pose to the West, it is important to assess their attitude towards violence and their intentions to participate in combat activities.

### *Tendency toward Violence*

There are many posts in social media in which ISIS women support and celebrate brutality and violence towards enemies, such as Umm Ubaydah calling for “more beheadings please,”[85] or a woman who described the brutal murder of the American aid worker Peter Kassig and 18 Syrian hostages as “gut-wrenchingly awesome.”[86] ISIS women do not just celebrate it, they justify such brutality according to their reading of Islamic Law, and dismiss Muslims who criticize ISIS: “Beheading is halal [permissible under Islamic law]. Go kill yourself if you say it’s haram.☺” Additionally, some women also indicate a desire to inflict violence themselves, like Umm Ubaydah, who remarked “I wish I did it!”[87] after the beheading of journalist Steven Sotloff, or Khadijah Dare who declared a desire to replicate the execution by saying: “I wna b da 1st UK woman 2 kill a UK or US terrorist!”[88]

Some women also manifest militant desires, expressing a willingness to become a fighter or a suicide bomber, by tweeting about martyrdom as the “highest dream.”[89] Umm Ubaydah wrote about a grenade being her “best friend,” indicating an intention to participate in military operations. The same intention was expressed by Umm Layth who told her father, shortly after she arrived in Syria, that she wanted to become a martyr and would see him again on the “day of judgment,”[90] while Zehra Duman often tweets about her own personal wish to undertake *istishad-operations* [suicide missions].[91]

Despite such fatal desires of some Western women, ISIS online promoters are clear. They urge them not to think about martyrdom operations but to focus rather on their domestic role in the ‘Caliphate’. Umm Layth, in contradiction of her own expressed desires mentioned above, explained that women “may gain more *ajr* [reward] by spending years of sleepless nights by being a mother and raising children with the right intentions and for the sake of Allah than by doing a martyrdom operation.”[92]

However, the idea of taking part in *qitaal* [fighting] is very attractive to some Western women. Melanie Smith from the London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalization explains that “the younger ones are very wrapped up in the idea of fighting, but they know they cannot go over the heads of the authorities.”[93] Whether or not the women want to fight for ISIS, it would appear that they cannot freely take up arms and join the men in battle because, as muhajirah Amatullah explained on October 2014, “unlike other armies, IS isn’t void of men!”[94]

On her blog, Umm Layth acknowledged this frustration and confirmed that it is one of the most common questions she has been receiving from ‘sisters’. She explained the background of the situation in more depth: “... there is absolutely nothing for sisters to participate in *Qitaal* [fighting]. Sheikh Omar Shishani has been quite clear on his answer and has emphasised that there is nothing for sisters as of yet. No *amalia istishihadiya* [martyrdom operations] or a secret sisters *katiba*. These are all rumours... And the women you may have seen online participating are all part of propaganda... For the time being *Qitaal* [fighting] is not *fardh ayn* [a compulsory religious duty] upon the sisters... For the sisters it is completely impossible for now. *InshaaAllah* [God willing] in future.”[95] In response to a user asking whether females are allowed to engage in combat, Zehra Duman also declared: “not at the moment... but maybe one day soon, it just might happen... which I cannot wait for.”[96]

It is possible that, with the losses that ISIS is experiencing, women will soon be given some new roles, such as gathering intelligence or even participating in military operations. This appears to have been the case with the Canadian woman who calls herself L.A. She is believed to be the first documented case of a female on the frontlines with ISIS,[97] after she reportedly infiltrated hard-to-reach “enemy” territories and penetrated Kobane, Aleppo and Mosul. A reasonable inference would be that L.A.’s presence in all major ISIS battlegrounds may have facilitated surveillance for ISIS in the vicinity of military operations. Even though it

is believed that ISIS prohibits fraternizing between genders on the front lines, L.A. stressed that in the actions of ISIS male fighters she did not see “anything but the utmost of respect for me as a sister.”[98]

Even if the participation of ISIS women in current fighting, mentioned by a former member of Al-Khansaa Brigade, still has to be verified against other sources, posted pictures and statements show that some women are trained to use weapons, but “only for their own protection...obviously”.[99] Also, members of two all-female brigades, Al-Khansaa and Umm al-Rayan, responsible for patrolling the streets, are armed. They accompany male fighters at checkpoints and on home raids to search women, look for male fighters who might have concealed their identities under a veil or *niqab*, and enforce ISIS’ strict rules of dress and morality for other women.

The most famous one, the Al-Khansaa Brigade, set up in Raqqa in February 2014, is composed of 25-30 women, mostly British, aged between 18 and 25, who receive a monthly salary of 25,000 Syrian lira (less than 200 USD).[100] Its members are presented in the media as being very brutal with women who do not obey the strict moral rules. They have been accused of taking cruel punitive methods, such as the disfigurement of 15 women’s faces with acid for not wearing a *niqab*,[101] or the torture of a mother with a spiked clamp device for breastfeeding in public.[102]

The main role of these all-female brigades is expected to be much broader. Strict control over people’s behaviour is essential for ISIS to impose the fear and obedience necessary to establish an authoritarian rule over a controlled territory and to generate civilian support. To maintain such control over territory held, ISIS needs support from the population and sees women as an important “means of ruling and controlling civilians.”[103] ISIS wanted women to fill these roles instead of men, because women could help ISIS control civilian populations in ways that men could not.[104] Additionally, women have better ability to access, engage and recruit civilian women and to make sure that they support the group.[105] Such extended roles will fulfil the expectations of some women, giving them more power but also making them more dangerous for the West if and when they return.

### ***The Future of ISIS’ Women***

A key concern is what the future of ISIS’ Western women will be, especially if the so-called ‘Islamic State’ collapses and the group loses control over its core territory. Some disenchanted ISIS female volunteers have already expressed their willingness to return home, but they have not been allowed to do so by their husbands and now risk punishment, including execution for attempts to escape. It seems that it is much harder to leave than to join the group, due to the strict measures ISIS has gradually introduced, such as confiscating the passports and identity documents of newcomers. Escape is even more complicated for women, because they cannot freely leave their houses or travel unescorted. Disappointed, disillusioned and perhaps awareness of having made the biggest mistake of their life, such women will probably not be interested in following a violent jihad in the future.

The future activities of most Western migrants will be closely interconnected with the future plans of their husbands, and with the future of ISIS as a group or the ‘Islamic State’ as the territory of the proclaimed ‘Caliphate’. If the latter should collapse, many of those who may remain fully committed to a global jihad are likely to seek to come to the help of Muslims embattled elsewhere; in other words, they will migrate to other fronts, where ISIS may have found new allies. Others could be discouraged from returning home by the fear to be jailed in their home countries for their involvement with the group; they will try to find another place to live and to continue their mission.

Some Western migrants already express their willingness to achieve more militant roles in the 'Islamic State', as indicated above. Even though they are currently discouraged from becoming suicide bombers, such a contribution would be neither forbidden nor unexpected, if the situation on the ground worsens for ISIS. Having lived in a warzone, women could become desensitized to violence and this might boost their motivation to be more active participants in terrorist operations, not only in territory controlled by ISIS, but also in case of their return. By showing the willingness to defend the 'Islamic State' territory arms-in-hand, women express the readiness to fight for the jihadist cause even outside the 'Caliphate', as Umm Khattab explained: "Laawl, me and the akhawats [sisters] thought maybe murtads [apostates] were in the city lool I put the belt on and everything." [106]

Some scenarios thus envisage a more active role for the women of ISIS in their home countries as recruiters, facilitators or direct perpetrators of violent acts. The fall of the 'Islamic State' could strengthen their commitment to ISIS and motivate them to continue the struggle for the jihadist cause in their countries of residence. Their motivation, together with the military training they received in Iraq or Syria and their experience of living in a warzone, means that they must be considered a potentially serious security threat to the West if/when they return to their home countries. Special attention should also be focused on children who have grown up in the 'Caliphate', since they have been exposed to the same scenes of violence, and have been indoctrinated and trained in using weapons, just like their parents.

On their social network accounts, some women have already posted threats against the West, sometimes even using their real names, like Aqsa Mahmood who, after being informed that her passport was being cancelled, said that the only time she will ever return to her native country would be to raise the ISIS flag there. [107] A recent study by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King's College London also found that British *muhajirat* were urging women to commit terror attacks in the UK. [108] The same was the case of a French 15-year-old girl who, after failing to reach Syria, was urged by her recruiters to carry out attacks at home. [109] Zehra Duman instructs her Twitter followers to "kill Kuffar in alleyways, stab them and poison them. Poison your teachers. Go to haram restaurants and poison the food in large quantities." [110] Umm Layth used the same platform to encourage Western Muslims to perpetrate acts of violence in their home countries, following the examples of their 'brothers' from Woolwich, Texas and Boston. She invited them, if they cannot make it to the battlefield, "to bring the battlefield to yourself." [111]

Not all ISIS female sympathisers are active on social media, and this makes them less visible to security services. [112] As such, they could pose an even more significant security threat. In comparison to women who succeeded in joining ISIS, radicalised females who for whatever reason did not make the *hijra*, and who lack military training, could be instructed to perform simpler attacks (using knives, cars or homemade explosives), focusing on unprotected and softer targets. However, as of early 2015, the ISIS' Western women pose no direct physical threat to the West. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out a possible shift in roles in the future. As Umm Ubaydah wrote, "maybe the time for us to participate is soon." [113]

### **Conclusion**

Explaining why a growing number of Muslim women from the West have left their countries to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria is a complex task. Their motivations are a combination of religious, ideological, political and personal reasons. ISIS, for its part, has two evident strategic reasons to attract women from the West. The first is to use them in traditional domestic female roles in the newly established 'Caliphate', like wives of fighters and mothers of the next generation of jihadists. The second is to occupy professional female positions, to

recruit new (female) followers, to support fighters, to serve in a police role and be ready to participate in military operations if the need should arise.

By using a professionally designed social media campaign, ISIS is more aggressively and more effectively recruiting women than any other terrorist group in the past. ISIS uses Muslim women who have already joined the group, to attract new recruits by stressing positive personal life experiences and by glorifying military successes and violent acts against non-believers. Its aim is to highly glamorise 'ISIS' lifestyle' and to make it attractive to would-be followers. However, the realities of life in the 'Caliphate' often do not match the romanticised and utopian images presented online by ISIS' recruiters.

Women with a strong will to participate in the state-building process, dedicated to the creation of a better 'Muslim society' and willing to protect the newly-proclaimed 'Caliphate', generally accept the female roles assigned to them by their male companions. However, they also often express their willingness to fulfil more militant functions. Regardless of the expectations of some of them, there is so far no evidence of women's engagement in ISIS' combat roles. Some women work for the all-female police, gather intelligence or prepare themselves for military operations or possibly suicide attacks. Others are active online recruiters and encourage potential (female) recruits to move to the 'Islamic State' or to carry out domestic terrorist attacks. Such activities make them invaluable for ISIS and crucial for the future of the 'Caliphate'.

In consideration of their strong motivation, current engagement and potential role for the future, these women could pose a considerable security threat to the West. Some of these Muslim women will come back disillusioned and, as such, will probably be easily reintegrated into society. Others who will come with military training and the intention to continue to be an active part of the global jihadist network, could pose a more significant threat as potential female terrorists, ready to plot against their home countries or to inspire others to do so. As such, they should be monitored, seriously assessed for risk, categorised and properly treated in the case of return.

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## At What Cost? United States' Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Reputation, and Public Opinion

by Scott H. Englund

### *Abstract*

*As the United States aggressively pursues transnational terrorists, what value does the American public put on the United States' reputation abroad? This project investigated the American public's opinion about the United States' reputation and influence abroad, and Americans' willingness to bear costs—in terms of damaged reputation and influence—in order to feel secure. Data were collected via an online survey experiment. Six different scenarios were created which manipulated the way a threat was described and the way the costs associated with a policy response were described. The threat description varied by either including specific information about a domestic threat or presenting an ambiguous warning about a global threat. After reading the threat description, subjects were asked to select the best response to that threat from a menu of four increasingly aggressive policy options. Descriptions of the potential costs associated with each of these four options varied in three ways: descriptions that emphasized non-material, reputational costs, descriptions that emphasized material costs only, or had no information about potential costs at all. We found that if the costs associated with policy options were framed as damage done to US reputation and diplomatic relationships, people were less likely to pursue more aggressive options.*

**Keywords:** Terrorism, counterterror policy, public opinion, soft power.

### *Introduction*

The declaration of a “global war on terror” has been criticized for being conceptually misguided and damaging potentially more effective strategic communication efforts.[1] Many have argued that a “war” against terror is essentially unwinnable. Post, for example, argues that vanquishing a psychological response to a particular form of violent political expression is fundamentally impossible.[2] Aggressive military action such as the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, special operations activity to kill or capture terrorist group leaders, and the continued detention of terrorism suspects as enemy combatants has had the effect of highlighting the coercive and lethal elements of the United States' counter-terrorism strategy. Certain highly publicized scandals have become irrevocably identified with this strategy and these have negatively impacted American image and reputation abroad.[3] This negative attention comes precisely when, according to a broad consensus of experts, the US must rely more heavily upon its ability to persuade and influence through the implementation of an effective strategic communication plan.[4] Thus, the manner in which the US has prosecuted its war on terror has not only been critiqued as conceptually deficient but also has problematized non-military responses that focus on political origins of terror and strategic communication strategies.

As the United States pursues its interests abroad, it does so with a mix of coercion and persuasion. Theorists have long posited a connection between the way the United States conducts itself abroad and the reputation—and attending influence—it can expect to maintain. Hans Morgenthau referred to perceived “warlike intentions” of the United States,[5] while Nye has identified American unilateralism, and others have found that gross misbehavior in the conduct of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost the United States dearly in terms of its prestige and influence abroad.[6] This study tested whether the American public is attuned to potential non-material costs of its power projection and if so, to measure what tolerances they have with

respect to these costs. In short, what costs are Americans willing to bear in terms of “soft” power resources to accomplish their foreign policy goals?

### ***Soft power: Definitions and Examples***

Soft power is derived from three broad categories of conditions and behaviors: culture, domestic values and policies, and foreign policy “substance and style”.[7] The first of these is a general state of affairs beyond government control; the second two are borne of political decisions made by Americans and their leadership. [8] The following will briefly describe each of these.

According to Nye, one element of soft power is culture, which can be divided into high culture and popular culture; both are important. As an example of high culture, the attractiveness of the United States’ excellent higher-education system of teaching colleges and well-endowed research universities brings tens of thousands of scholars to the United States each year. American popular culture has global reach, but it has its limits. First, since popular culture is beyond the reach of government control, it cannot always be counted on to contribute to official foreign policy objectives. Secondly, some aspects of American popular culture can be, and frequently are, perceived as repulsive in some parts of the world, engendering a negative or mixed response.

*“The videos that attract Iranian teenagers offend Iranian mullahs. Thus the repulsion of American popular culture may make it more difficult for the United States to obtain its preferred policy outcomes from the ruling group in the short term, while the attraction of popular culture encourages desired change among younger people in the long term.”[9]*

Domestic values and foreign policy can also contribute to American soft power. The attractiveness of American-style democracy and liberty draws millions of immigrants each year, a rate that has remained steady in spite of spikes in anti-Americanism. The attractiveness of America’s liberal society can have its limits. Liberty contains in it individual freedom of expression which in turn produces a variety of moral standards, some of which may be offensive to more people in more traditional societies. In addition, when the United States appears to have a “double standard,” e.g., liberty is essential in the United States, but dictatorships can be tolerated elsewhere, American soft power is damaged. Likewise, in foreign policy, when the United States advances traditionally held values of human rights and self-determination, it gains influence. Conversely, when these same values appear to be forced unilaterally by a hegemonic United States, it loses influence and prestige.[10]

To change attitudes effectively, a message must be communicated such that its persuasive potential increases. Credible and attractive sources are generally more persuasive; messages that are sent frequently to more receptive targets are more successful. Finally, the target population must be in a position to effect the desired policy change. A person must have the correct influence and the material incentives to apply that influence. “In a few select issue areas, such as terrorism, insurgency, or civil war, the individual is an important political actor in his or her own right.”[11] Where ideas are important, the United States in particular is not seen as a credible or trustworthy source, a further handicap against soft power use.

Trustworthiness is therefore a critical element in using soft power. Comparing survey responses before and after a visit from a high-level American political figure to various African countries, Goldsmith & Horiuchi explored the effect of three distinct events associated with the United States’ counter-terrorism efforts.[12] What they found is that actions do speak louder than words. Visits closely following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks tended to reinforce positive attitudes about the United States. However, this changed after the

2003 invasion of Iraq. Visits during this period had mixed effects, reinforcing both positive and negative attitudes. After the shameful 2004-2005 Abu Ghraib prison scandal, in which photographs of US military personnel abusing and humiliating Iraqi detainees became widely publicized, high-level visits tended to reinforce already negative attitudes about the United States. This pattern of response makes cooperation with United States' counter-terrorism strategy more difficult for host nations. How durable these effects are is unclear. More recent international polling indicates that negative attitudes were not permanent.[13]

### *Assessing Costs & Public Opinion*

If the benefit of a given strategy is great (such as avoiding a dreadful attack—real or imagined) and the cost is low, or is borne by others, then it would be rational to pursue such a strategy. However, if that same strategy were shown to be inconsistent with a people's own perception of its commonly held morals and values, then a purely material calculation may be an insufficient rubric to estimate support for a given policy. If Americans maintain certain perceptions about themselves that are strong enough, e.g. "the United States defends democracy and liberty," or "the United States is just in war," then new information about a counter-terrorism policy that is inconsistent with those self-perceptions may result in reduced support for that policy. Inconsistency between what one values and what is done in one's name, can be understood as self-imposed costs. If a moral constraint exists that makes a certain strategy too costly, then this self-imposed threshold will limit the kind of policy options that can be considered.[14] This argument implies an ability for people to acquire and effectively apply information to develop policy preferences and requires an examination of how people acquire political information, the effect this information has on preferences, and what role these preferences play in the formation of foreign policy.

We know that the way in which we fight is connected to people's perception of the fight. There have been several recent studies that demonstrate statistically that, for example, the United States' use of remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs, or "drones") has both increased negative perceptions of the United States in the areas most affected by drone activity and changed the way terror groups advertise their positions and try to gather support.[15] In terms of effectiveness, the evidence is mixed: senior terror group leaders who are killed are quickly replaced, but those who replace them may be less capable and experienced. Also, people who are continually in fear of being killed are less effective because they are then more cautious in how and how often they move.[16]

Some researchers have asserted that a gap exists between the American public and its foreign policy leaders. [17] Their research indicated that at least since the end of the Second World War, the American public has been less bellicose than American political leaders. Page and Bouton's research has found that Americans are less inclined to support the use force, and when they do, they desire it be as a last resort, in coordination with international support and using only as much force as is necessary. Their work focused on elected leaders and they have theorized that the structure of the political system is essentially un-representative or easily occupied by special interests. This effect was illustrated by public reticence about invading Iraq in 2003 absent international support, clear connections to al-Qaida terrorism, and Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Ole Holsti also found a gap between the American public and foreign policy elites.[18] He concluded that while the public debate of international affairs has grown more partisan and ideologically driven in the United States since the end of the Vietnam War, certain issues have remained consistent since at least the end of the Cold War. The American people tend to be less inclined to have the United States "go it alone" than are foreign policy makers and they are more selective about approving military action abroad. He suggests that greater information and public education about foreign affairs is a critical element in reducing

the chance that the public will hold factually erroneous opinions and may reduce the possibility that they are intentionally misled.[19] This relationship may be especially true among the more politically aware, where political elites have been able to reach a consensus on strategy.[20] Those who are generally more knowledgeable will be able to more readily access information about a particular situation and place it in context.[21]

### **Research Question**

Controlling for knowledge about politics and foreign policy, what value does the American public put on the United States' reputation abroad, what costs in this area are they willing to bear given certain levels of threat? The burden of a particular security policy can be expressed in material and non-material costs. Material costs, such as the money spent on increased security for the transportation infrastructure, the cost of invading and occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, the costs of lost and damaged equipment and, ultimately lost lives have been analyzed *vis-a-vis* the benefits they are supposed to provide.[22] Several non-material costs in pursuit of security can be imagined: damage to civil-liberties, inconvenient and intrusive security screening and surveillance, government becoming less accessible by and less responsive to its citizens. Some of these have already been researched.[23] However, not all have been. Wide consensus exists among scholars and practitioners alike that the ability of the US to persuade allied cooperation and to improve its image abroad is a necessary element of a successful counter-terror strategy.[24]

Recent experimental work by Joseph Grieco *et al* provides additional theoretical support.[25] An online experiment was embedded in a survey to test the effect an endorsement by an international organization had on American public support for a hypothetical military action. A 2 x 2 factorial design was employed to test the interaction of domestic congressional support and/or international organization (IO) support for a president's hypothetical use of military force. Grieco *et al* found that the American public is more likely to support a policy that ends up in war if the American government first obtains international authorization or support. Specifically, people who value multilateral institutions and lack confidence in the president are more likely to support military action if an IO endorses that action. Since eighty percent of the participants in their study either support IOs, lacked confidence in the president, or both, IO endorsement had substantial influence. Their ultimate conclusion was that IO endorsement could have an indirect effect because leaders of democratic states are sometimes constrained by public opinion to obtain international institutional support prior to military action.[26]

This work by Grieco and colleagues is significant for this study in two ways. First, its experimental design is similar to the methodology used here to study public opinion and the use of force. Second, it provides direct support for the assessment regarding the respect the American public has for international institutions and legal obligations. The Grieco *et al* study focused on support for a specific, hypothetical application of lethal force. This experiment differs slightly in that respondents were asked to select a response from a menu of options, leaving to them the decision to obtain international support or not. Arriving at a similar conclusion through different approaches to the question strengthens the findings of both.

This study will investigate the American public's attitude about the United States' reputation and influence abroad, i.e., *soft power*, and its willingness to bear costs in terms of damaged reputation and influence in order to feel secure. Specifically, this study will test the relationship between the kind of information people receive and their policy preferences. If people are sensitized to non-material, reputational costs, will they be less likely to incur those costs than if those costs were described in purely material terms?

*Hypothesis:*

*Costs described as damaging US reputation and influence will depress willingness to incur higher costs, compared to material costs or having no cost information.*

***Experiment Design and Procedures***

This hypothesis was tested using an online survey experiment in which the way counter-terrorism policy “costs” could be effectively manipulated given a certain simulated threat scenario. Experimental settings have been specifically recommended for investigating non-material cost-benefit trade-offs in counter-terrorism policy choices.[27] Experiments have the potential for simulating decision-making processes in current national security issues, which are, by their nature secret or otherwise not easily observable.[28] Research has indicated that within an experimental setting, providing information about specific policy trade-offs, and motivating people to make a decision as a responsible official, focuses the attention of participants on making a decision, even to the point that the experimental setting environment can mitigate education and general political knowledge effects.[29]

*Dependent variable*

The dependent variable was the respondents’ choice of policy in response to a given scenario. There were four potential policy choices, escalating in aggressiveness, and potential costliness. These options were (as presented in the survey instrument):

*Option 1. Apply diplomatic pressure:*

Apply diplomatic pressure on regional allies to capture terror group leaders and hand them over to the United States. This option carries the least risk and costs.

*Option 2. Deploy “drone technology” alone:*

Use remotely piloted aircraft alone, sometimes called “drones,” to hunt terror group leaders on the ground where they live. This is a low risk and low-cost option.

*Option 3. Deploy special forces in addition to drones:*

Deploy highly trained soldiers in addition to using drones to kill or capture terrorist group leaders. This is a higher risk, higher cost option. It is an escalation over option 2.

*Option 4. Conduct large-scale conventional military operations:*

Attack and invade the country with large numbers of troops and aircraft without prior agreement of allies or the United Nations. This is the highest risk and cost option; it is a dramatic escalation.

Note that the escalating nature of each option is clearly described. Additional information about the nature of the costs associated with each option was part of the independent variable manipulation, described below.

***Independent Variable Manipulation***

For the primary variable of interest, information about costs varied by either emphasizing costs in terms of “soft power” or de-emphasizing soft power factors in favor of material costs only or by having no information about costs at all. To accomplish this, the descriptions of an option and its potential ramifications were

altered slightly. To emphasize non-material costs, damages done to diplomatic relationships and the potential for diminished foreign public opinion of the United States were described. To emphasize material costs, descriptions focused on damage done to military equipment, the cost of transporting and supporting military personnel and the potential for death or injury of US personnel. The no-cost information group served as a control group and can also be interpreted as simulating a low-information environment. For example, compare the different descriptions of the same option below in Figure 1.

Material or “Hard Power” Cost Description of Option 4:

*Option 4. Conduct large-scale conventional military operations:*

Action: Attack and invade the country with large numbers of troops and aircraft without prior agreement of allies or the United Nations. This is the highest risk and cost option; it is a dramatic escalation.

Potential Costs:

- Exposes soldiers, marines, sailors and airmen to high risk. An unknown number of them will be killed or wounded.
- It is expensive to transport all the people and equipment needed; equipment may be damaged or destroyed.

Non-Material or “Soft power” Cost Description of Option 4

*Option 4. Conduct large-scale conventional military operations:*

Action: Attack and invade the country with large numbers of troops and aircraft without prior agreement of allies or the United Nations. This is the highest risk and cost option; it is a dramatic escalation.

Potential Costs:

- Very likely that it will result in the death, injury and displacement of thousands of civilians, damage property and it violates international law.
- Anti-American groups will be able to exploit these conditions to enflame anti-American sentiment in the region this will encourage support for violent groups.

*Figure 1: Comparison of Option Description*

Certain assumptions have been made about what reduces soft power. Policy strategies that can be perceived as being inconsistent with an American’s own perceptions of how power ought to be used will be considered as containing non-material soft power costs. Recent survey research has indicated that the American public, while willing to use lethal force, is less inclined to act unilaterally and prefers a deployment of force proportional to a threat, often as a last resort.[30] These preferences are reflected in the “core principles that guide counter-terror policy” as found in the 2011 *U.S. National Strategy for Counterterrorism*. These core principles include respect for human rights, building strong international partnerships, and exercising force in a “thoughtful, reasoned and proportionate way.” Significantly, the strategy notes that “certain tactical successes can have unintended consequences that sometimes contribute to costs at the strategic level.” This

concern with the application of the appropriate amount of force to avoid unnecessary violence is also found in the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency (COIN) Manual. It describes one of the paradoxes of modern warfare, “some of the best weapons do not shoot.”[31] The same manual further instructs commanders, “to adopt appropriate and measured levels of force and apply that force precisely so that it accomplishes the mission without causing unnecessary loss of life or suffering.”[32]

Terrorist threats were characterized as being either well-defined and nearby or ambiguous and remote. Well-defined threats specified the potential targets, timing and size of the threatened attack. Ambiguous threats lacked specifics about the location or timing of an attack. The combination of the independent variable manipulations resulted in six different experimental conditions, to which six different groups of survey participants were randomly assigned. These combinations are illustrated in Figure 2. A subject’s political ideology,[33] knowledge about politics,[34] their worry about terrorism generally, and their preferences regarding the national counter-terrorism strategy[35] could influence their willingness to pursue more aggressive and risky responses to the hypothetical terrorist threat scenario. These potentially confounding variables were included in this analysis.

		Costs		
		Soft-Power=C	Material=c	No Info=n
Threat	Near Target=T	T,C	T,c	T,n
	Remote Target=t	t,C	t,c	t,n

Figure 2: Matrix of independent variables

In each experimental setting, participants were presented with four different policy options along with the implications of each of those options. Each option was paired with clear costs associated with it to make comparison easy. One set contained implications that emphasized “soft power” factors, such as damage to diplomatic relationships, or enflaming anti-American sentiment. In a second set of participants two groups were presented with the same policy options, but listed implications that emphasized material costs, such as American casualties, wear on military equipment, and financial cost. In the final set of two groups, participants were given the same four options, but without cost implications; participants needed to make a choice based entirely on their knowledge and their previously held values. The first four groups allowed comparison across the kind of information supplied; the final two measured the effect of having cost information against having little or no information about costs at all. Six different tests were conducted between October 2012 and February 2013 to check the manipulations’ effectiveness. These tests were broadly divided into two categories, tests of the terrorist threat description and tests of the policy option description.

The survey experiment was deployed in March of 2013 by the University of California, Santa Barbara Social Science Research Center, which empaneled a national sample. Participants were randomly assigned to the six

experimental conditions. To negate potential priming effects the survey section might have on responding to the experimental conditions and *vice-versa*, half the participants in each condition were given the survey section first, the other half responded to the experimental conditions first.

### *Analysis and Discussion*

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

The national sample was provided by Survey Sampling International (SSI). Participants were contacted online through a three-stage randomization method from SSI's survey panels who are provided small monetary incentives for participating. The sample was sent out nationally, and was received naturally, i.e. without weighted categories. The survey experiment was conducted 19-22 March, 2013, and returned 587 complete responses; 307 were males, 292 were females. Thirty percent were high school graduates, twenty-two percent completed a bachelor's degree and ten percent attained an advanced degree, while fewer than ten percent did not complete high school. Data from the 2010 census indicate that the sample was slightly more educated; specifically, the sample had a greater number of high-school graduates. The average age in this sample was forty-four years old; according to census data, the national average age in 2010 was forty-eight years old. The average income for this sample also reflected the population, \$48,000 annually.

Ideologically, in the national sample, thirty-three percent described themselves as moderate. The remainder was very evenly distributed across liberal and conservative on a seven-point scale. They were generally well informed about politics; more than half scored either a four or five out of five on the Delli Carpini and Keeter scale.[36] Their worry about terrorism and preference for an aggressive counter-terror policy was fairly evenly distributed around the middle, neutral, value. Thirty-one percent of respondents supported a strong United States military force posture generally. These distributions are presented in Figure 3. The distribution of the dependent variable is presented in Figure 4.

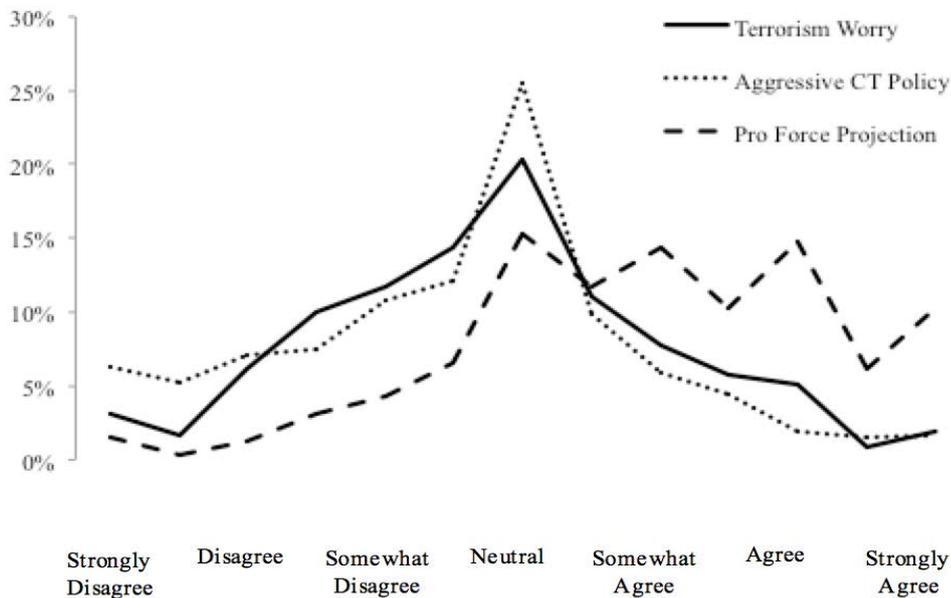


Figure 3: National sample opinions on terrorism and use of force

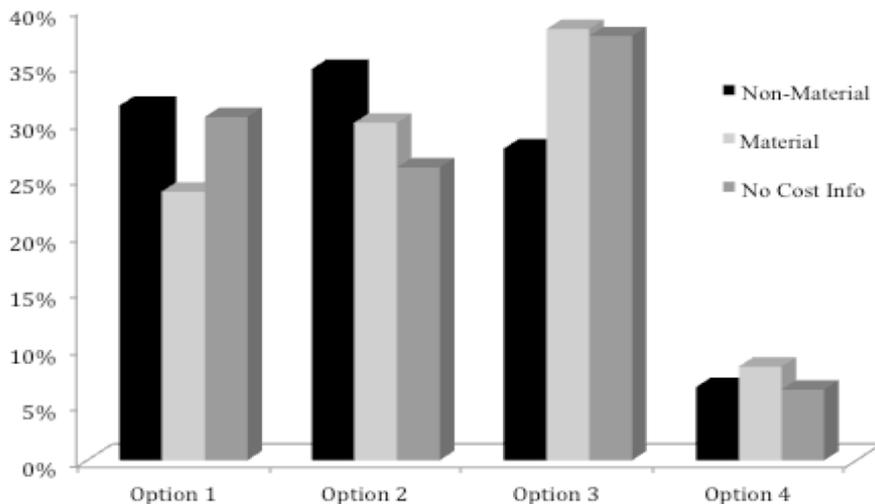


Figure 4: Distribution of the dependent variable, "policy choice" by cost description

**Information and Policy Preferences**

Our analysis found a statistically significant relationship between cost description and a person’s policy choice. When costs were described in terms of damage done to US reputation and diplomatic relationships, people were less likely to choose more aggressive policy options. The independent variable, cost description,

was coded in such a way that a negative coefficient would indicate decreased likelihood to escalate when presented with non-material, reputational cost information. The results are reported in Table I.

Variable	Material vs. Non-Material Information
<b>Threat</b>	.213 (.153)
<b>Cost Description</b>	-.259** (.097)
<b>Worry about Terrorism Threat</b>	-.003 (.033)
<b>Pro-Aggressive Domestic Counter-terror Policy</b>	.030 (.032)
<b>Pro-Military Action against Terror Groups</b>	.144*** (.035)
<b>Pro-Military Force Projection Generally</b>	.078* (.036)
<b>Political Knowledge</b>	.063 (.063)
<b>Conservative Ideology</b>	.094 (.052)
$t_1$	1.22
$t_2$	2.59
$t_3$	5.02
LR $X^2$	74.42
Pseudo $R^2$	0.0498
Log Likelihood	-709.30569
$N$	587

Standard errors reported in parentheses.

\* denotes  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* denotes  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* denotes  $p \leq 0.001$

$t_1, t_2, t_3$  indicate the cutoff points for the ordered dependent variable

Table I: Ordered Logistic Regression, likelihood of selecting a more aggressive policy option.

The data were then manipulated to separate the three cost-description experimental conditions. The results are presented in Table II. In that comparison political knowledge and political ideology become statistically significant for those given non-material cost descriptions. People with higher political knowledge were *less* likely to pursue more aggressive counter-terror strategies if costs were described in non-material, reputational terms. For those given the material cost information, political knowledge had the opposite affect from those in the non-material cost group. Those with more political knowledge were *more* likely to choose more aggressive, costlier options if costs were described in material terms only. For those given no cost

information, the only statistically significant predictor of policy choice was a person’s attitude about the use of military force against terrorist groups. This indicates that political knowledge sensitizes people to policy costs, but the tendency to be more aggressive is dampened when costs are described in non-material terms. Therefore, people who are more politically aware are willing to incur costs in order to be more secure, but they prefer to not damage US reputation and diplomatic relationships.

Variable	Non-Material Cost Info.	No Cost Info.	Material Cost Info
<b>Threat</b>	.018 (.282)	.346 (.253)	-.018 (.281)
<b>Worry about Terrorism Threat</b>	.054 (.062)	-.033 (.054)	.009 (.057)
<b>Pro-Aggressive Domestic Counter-terror Policy</b>	.008 (.050)	.047 (.054)	.016 (.057)
<b>Pro-Military Action against Terror Groups</b>	.169** (.058)	.155* (.061)	.136+ (.073)
<b>Pro-Military Force Projection Generally</b>	.064 (.065)	.050 (.060)	.313 (.113)
<b>Political Knowledge</b>	-.340** (.116)	.147 (.101)	.313** (.113)
<b>Conservative Ideology</b>	.192* (.097)	.094 (.083)	.044 (.095)
<i>t</i> <sub>1</sub>	1.35	1.83	2.11
<i>t</i> <sub>2</sub>	3.01	3.01	3.58
<i>t</i> <sub>3</sub>	5.25	5.70	6.06
LR X <sup>2</sup>	37.89	27.51	28.01
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0814	0.0492	0.0610
Log Likelihood	-213.73826	-265.52906	-215.7936
N	184	223	180

Standard errors reported in parentheses.

\* denotes  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* denotes  $p \leq 0.01$ ; +  $p = 0.061$

*t*<sub>1</sub>, *t*<sub>2</sub>, *t*<sub>3</sub> indicate the cutoff points for the ordered dependent variable

Table II: Ordered Logistic Regression, likelihood of selecting a more aggressive policy option in three models, national sample.

In light of the findings regarding the effect of political knowledge, this effect was analyzed more deeply. To accomplish this, the data were truncated to compare two groups, those who scored a five out of five on the political knowledge index and those who scored a zero or one. The results are reported in Table III.

Those who are more politically knowledgeable are less likely to incur greater costs when those costs are described in terms of damage done to reputation or diplomatic relationships. On the other hand, those who were less politically knowledgeable were more willing to incur similar costs. Thus, one can infer that the more politically aware are more cognizant of potential “soft power” costs and while they may be willing to incur

costs, they prefer to limit damage done to reputation and diplomatic relationships. The less politically aware rely more on their preferences about the use of force, than they do on potential political costs in terms of reputation or diplomatic relationships.

Finally, the data were also manipulated to compare gender and political ideology. Significantly, self-identified liberals and female respondents were less likely to choose more aggressive options when costs were described in terms of damage done to reputation and diplomatic relationships. Other manipulations of the data set were tested, such as education level and age, but these produced no significant correlations.

Variable	MODEL I High Political Knowledge	MODEL II Low Political Knowledge
Threat	.332 (.315)	-.598 (.618)
Cost Description	-.578** (.196)	.957* (.399)
Worry about Terrorism Threat	.073 (.072)	.120 (.124)
Pro-Aggressive Domestic Counter-terror Policy	.014 (.065)	.474* (.208)
Pro-Military Action against Terror Groups	.068 (.076)	.354* (.175)
Pro-Military Force Projection Generally	.261** (.076)	-.112 (.114)
Conservative Ideology	.161 (.119)	-.035 (.184)
$t_1$	1.76	7.39
$t_2$	3.60	8.38
$t_3$	6.81	9.60
LR X <sup>2</sup>	50.56	17.71
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.1311	0.1380
Log Likelihood	-167.58958	-55.332488
N	158	49

Standard errors reported in parentheses.

\* denotes  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* denotes  $p \leq 0.01$ ;

$t_1, t_2, t_3$  indicate the cutoff points for the ordered dependent variable

Table III: Ordered Logistic Regression, likelihood of selecting a more aggressive policy option in two models, national sample.

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### *Discussion of Results*

The results of this study suggest two major findings: First, how the costs associated with policy options are presented influences policy choice. Specifically, when costs are described in non-material, reputational terms, people are less willing to pursue riskier options. Second, political knowledge depresses a person's willingness to incur costs when framed in terms of negatively impacting the United States reputation, diplomatic relationships or foreign public's perception.

The clearest result from this study is that people responded differently to descriptions of non-material, reputational costs than they did to descriptions that focused on material costs. The fact that non-material, reputational costs depressed willingness to pursue riskier strategies means that people seem to value the United States' reputation abroad and prefer cooperative strategies that can also minimize the inevitable collateral damage that comes with the use of force. Those respondents with greater political knowledge were less likely to prefer more risky or costly options when those costs were described in terms of damage done to United States' diplomatic relationships or reputation abroad. This suggests that those who are more political aware are more attuned to possible "soft power" costs.

Together, these findings may be interpreted to mean that the American public values US trustworthiness and diplomatic cooperation. That priority is reflected in the *2010 National Security Strategy*. The word "cooperation" is found on thirty-one of sixty pages, expressing in many different ways that US national interest is best served by, "an international order advanced by US leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges." [37] Trustworthiness is also central to Nye's "power of attraction," which he argues is vitally important in today's international political order. [38] The power to attract and then obtain from others what is in the interest of the United States is part of an effective counter-terrorist security policy. [39]

Unsurprisingly, people who expressed stronger approval of an aggressive military force posture were also more likely to select more aggressive policy options. The findings did not show that ideology was a significant factor, except in one condition. When limiting these data to those who were exposed to non-material cost descriptions only, a more conservative ideology was positively correlated with a preference for a more aggressive response. Therefore, when only considering the effect of ideology on preferences, conservatives were more likely to select options that included greater risk of damage to US reputation, diplomatic relationships and which risked violating international law.

How the United States executes its foreign policy is almost as important as the strategic goals themselves. The degree to which the US does or does not adhere to a high ethical standard when it uses lethal force and collects intelligence has affected its counter-terror strategy both at home and abroad. In pursuing a national counter-terrorism strategy, as part of its larger national security interest, the United States can simultaneously make its people feel more secure, ensure that they are more secure, and yet lose the people's approval for the way in which they have been given that security. Thus, American reputation and image abroad and its ability to protect its citizens may be directly related to domestic public support for US security policy. There is evidence that the US government does care about international opinion and this is often couched in terms of observing its own domestic values, i.e., aligning what it says it values with how it pursues its interests.

The ethical application of power was discussed during John Brennan's Senate hearing to confirm him as the Director, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI), Senator Dianne Feinstein opened the hearing by reporting that, "I also intend to review proposals for legislation to ensure that drone strikes are carried out in a manner consistent with our values." [40] Brennan himself testified that many people "have a misunderstanding of what we do as a government, and

the care that we take, and the agony that we go through to make sure that we do not have any collateral injuries or deaths.” One can infer from these statements that the US government values the traditional law of war principle of “discrimination,” i.e., non-combatants are not legitimate targets of lethal force and need to be strictly separated from combatants. Brennan also testified that targeted killings are never conducted to “punish terrorists for past transgressions” but rather, “as a last resort to save lives when there is no other alternative.”[41] This distinction is significant. Generally the laws of war have prohibited acts of reprisal, but a state does have an inherent right to defend itself from attack.[42] Taken together these statements represent a clear appeal to an ethical tradition that the government claims has always been how the United States uses lethal force and always will be.

How the United States pursues its own security is important. When photos of American soldiers abusing Iraqi detainees in the infamous Abu Ghraib prison emerged, American hypocrisy was confirmed for many in the outside world. This incident, and other insensitive acts, can serve to reinforce how extremists employ narratives to recruit support for their cause.[43] This reality is not lost on US military officers. Commander of the US Army Command and General Staff College, Lieutenant General Robert Caslen, in a 2010 speech concluded that,

*“The complete moral and ethical collapse of one army unit [the Abu Ghraib military police battalion] completely overshadowed and neutralized the many hard fought tactical successes and boosted recruitment for anti-US Islamist extremists. This ethical lapse created foreign fighters and increased casualties to coalition and Iraqi security forces”.*[44]

In a completely different setting, General Martin Dempsey, during his hearing for promotion and appointment as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked about his views on the government’s standards for detainee treatment and interrogation, as they apply to the US counter-terror mission. He testified that these new regulations (which he helped to write) should, “articulate the nexus of the importance of gaining intelligence with the importance of preserving our values as a Nation and an Army.”[45] These claims represent something more than a caution about reciprocity; that if we treat our detainees badly, it opens the possibility that should any of our personnel be captured, they will be treated badly too.

Caslen and Dempsey, like Feinstein and Brennan, appealed to a distinct ethical tradition and a moral standard which the United States has claimed it follows. It is important to note that these statements were made in the context of Americans speaking to Americans, underlining the maintenance of a high moral and ethical standard by which these agents of the people have promised to act. The long-term success of any security campaign relies on maintaining public support which, in turn, is dependent upon executing the campaign in a way that is morally and ethically aligned with the population’s values. Moral agency is necessary, but not sufficient, to the long-term success of a security policy. Strategies that are perceived as being inconsistent with American’s own values will lose support.

### **Conclusion**

I have argued that the American public cares about the manner in which its government pursues security. The American people are willing to incur costs, but they prefer a particular kind of strategy that does not damage US reputation, respects diplomatic relationships, and reduces the chance that our actions will create more enemies than friends. This preference is rooted in pre-existing, self-referential values held by Americans. These values pertain mostly to the manner in which people believe the United States ought to act in the international arena. Essentially, the implication is that the US should apply an old and well-known

tactical principle to its national security strategy. Namely, in order to obtain long-term security, some risk needs to be accepted in the short-term.

*“Counterinsurgents that use excessive force to limit short-term risk alienate the local populace. They deprive themselves of the support or tolerance of the people. This situation is what the insurgents want. It increases the threat they pose. Sometimes lethal responses are counterproductive.”[46]*

If Americans appreciate the need to develop cooperative measures, then a counter-terrorism strategy will likely contain within it an element of respect for cultural differences and diplomatic traditions. Likewise, if Americans believe that the US should observe its international commitments, then security strategies will work within existing international institutions and treaty obligations. A successful security strategy, defined in part as one that retains support at home, and does not perversely create more enemies, and more danger, abroad, will need to fully account for potential damage done to the ability of the United States to project soft power.

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## II. Policy Briefs

### Four Questions on ISIS:

#### A “Trend” Analysis of the Islamic State

by Boaz Ganor

##### *Abstract*

*During the past year, the Islamic State (IS) has taken control of extensive areas of the Middle East. Its military achievements, extreme and historically unprecedented barbarism, success in recruiting thousands of young people from around the world to its ranks in Iraq and Syria, its store of financial resources and, above all, its skilled use of social and other media to publicize its terrorist acts and spread its propaganda, have all made IS an increasing and alarming threat to global security.*

*Although experts on terrorism, security officials and decision makers worldwide concur that IS poses an unparalleled threat, they disagree about the answers to the following four key questions: What is the nature of the Islamic State?; Are the doctrines of the Islamic State an innovation?; What are the Islamic State's aspirations? and, What is the Islamic State's strategic situation? How we answer these four questions will affect not only our understanding of the nature, aims and activities of the Islamic State; it will also dictate what counter-strategy should be implemented in order to stop, if not trounce, the Islamic State.*

**Keywords:** ISIS; ISIL; Islamic State; IS; Terrorism; Counter-Terrorism

##### *Introduction*

During the past year, the Islamic State (IS) has taken control of extensive areas of the Middle East. Its military achievements, extreme and historically unprecedented barbarism, success in recruiting thousands of young people from around the world to its ranks in Iraq and Syria, its store of financial resources and, above all, its skilled use of social and other media to publicize its terrorist acts and spread its propaganda, have all made IS an increasing and alarming threat to global security.

Although experts on terrorism, security officials and decision makers worldwide concur that IS poses an unparalleled threat, they disagree about the answers to the following four key questions:

1. *What is the Nature of the Islamic State?* Should IS be regarded as a terrorist organization? Does its scope of operations, paramilitary activities, involvement in guerilla warfare and insurgency, and control over vast territories and populations not stretch the definition of a terrorist organization?[1]
2. *Are the Doctrines of the Islamic State an Innovation?* By its actions, is the Islamic State introducing new doctrines and concepts, or is it merely implementing and refining modern terrorism strategies, which aim to spread fear and anxiety to achieve political goals?
3. *What are the Islamic State's Aspirations?* Are the Islamic State's aspirations limited to the Middle East, or does it see itself as *avant garde*, spearheading an operation whose objective is global? Is the Islamic State striving for hegemony and, ultimately, to establish a caliphate in Syria, Iraq and the Levant? Or does it see such a caliphate as only the first step in its drive to establish a global caliphate? In this regard, how does IS differ from Al-Qaeda, if at all?[2]

4. *What is the Islamic State's Strategic Situation?* Following the successful military campaign of summer 2014 that enabled IS to seize extensive swaths of Syria and Iraq, the organization's progress seems to have stalled – in part thanks to the establishment of a broad coalition of international allies, whose goal was to halt the organization's advance and eradicate it. Does this mark “the beginning of the end” for IS? Is it on the brink of disappearing? Or, despite the air and ground military campaign of the international coalition, will the Islamic State recoup its losses and experience a resurgence, pushing past Syria and Iraq?[3]

How we answer these four questions will affect not only our understanding of the nature, aims and activities of the Islamic State; it will also dictate what counter-strategy should be implemented in order to stop, if not trounce, the Islamic State. To this end, I will analyze the essence of the Islamic State and revisit its definition as a “terrorist organization”.

### ***What is the Nature of the Islamic State?***

As is well known, for the nearly half-century since the emergence of modern terrorism in the 1960s [4], no one international definition of terrorism has become consensus[5]. On the contrary, most researchers and counter-terrorism experts see “terrorism” as a loaded, problematic term, and have therefore avoided using it, favoring alternatives to describe and define the phenomenon we experience as terrorism[6]. This hesitance to define terrorism has grown concurrent with the increasing involvement of Islamists in the perpetration of terrorist attacks in the Middle East and elsewhere, out of a fear of besmirching Muslims as a whole and provoking their opposition. In an attempt to circumvent this problem, and in service to “political correctness”, decision makers have chosen to refer to terrorist attacks carried out against Jewish and other targets throughout Europe as “hate crimes”, and to their perpetrators as “violent extremists”[7]. However, insistent replacement of the loaded term “terrorism” with terms that are seemingly more neutral only serves to hinder an effective response to the phenomenon. “Violent extremists” may be driven by any number of motives to achieve any number of objectives – as witnessed by the brutal acts committed by members of criminal organizations and cults. “Escape” from the need to define terrorism to more palatable terminology turns the act of definition into a useless tool, which merely paves the way for a “photo opportunity” of mock international unity in the face of heinous acts. Above all, the lack of an essential consensus on a definition of terrorism impedes the formulation of a real and effective international campaign against terrorism.

Moreover, the reluctance to use the term “terrorism” stems from its negative connotation, which various countries have manipulated to portray their opponents as “terrorists”. Yet it is precisely this negative connotation that is now needed in naming and shaming IS. If we define the Islamic State as a terrorist organization, we may then differentiate it from the rest of the Muslim world, including those Muslims who hold radical but non-violent religious views. If we define terrorism as “a *modus operandi* by which violence is deliberately used against civilians to achieve political goals”[8], we clear the way to label IS a terrorist organization, thereby obviating any potential justification for its barbaric actions. Labeling any organization a terrorist organization is, first and foremost, a way of saying that that organization has violated a moral boundary by deliberately and systematically targeting civilians. No argument – be it political, socio-economic, ideological, or religious – justifies the targeting of innocent civilians, and the Islamic State is a terrorist organization expressly because it perpetrates extremely barbaric attacks – including mass murder, kidnapping and beheading, mutilation, rape and maiming – against the civilians under its control and elsewhere in the world.

At the same time, the Islamic State is not *only* a terrorist organization. Its operatives also engage in guerilla warfare, military attacks against other non-state actors, and insurgency against the Iraqi and Syrian armies. [9] Concurrently, others of its members engage in “law enforcement” among the civilian populations under its control, and in service provision to these same populations. Specifically, immediately after taking over a city or town, the Islamic State imposes Shari’a (Islamic) law, which it enforces with extreme and terrifying violence to ensure compliance; at the same time, it provides essential welfare, education, and religious services (Da’wa) to the citizens who have come under its control. These varied actions make the Islamic State a “hybrid terrorist organization”[10] – that is, an organization that operates simultaneously in the (illegitimate) military-terrorist sphere and in the (pseudo-legitimate) civilian sphere. In this sense, the Islamic State is no different from other hybrid terrorist organizations like Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Hezbollah in Lebanon, which also control a given territory and govern all aspects of the lives of the people living there.

It is important to note, however, that IS has gone a step further than Hamas or Hezbollah, by deeming itself “the Islamic State”. IS’s declaration of itself as a state is designed to promote it as an Islamic caliphate (in parts of Iraq and Syria) and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as the caliph. Needless to say, IS’s attempt to position itself as a sovereign state should not be condoned, even though it sees itself as one and controls extensive territory. Indeed, IS has not been recognized by any international institution, state or entity.

In light of the above, we may answer the first question by determining that the Islamic State is a “hybrid terrorist organization”, a sub-state actor, which operates simultaneously in the military, civilian and political spheres. Through its terrorist acts and crimes, IS severely challenges international norms, defies morality, and breaks international humanitarian law. In so doing, IS has positioned itself as an enemy of the enlightened world.

### ***Are the Doctrines of the Islamic State an Innovation?***

To answer the second question – is IS introducing an innovative *modus operandi* or is it merely using the strategic framework of modern terrorism more efficiently – I will analyze the characteristics of modern terrorism, as it has evolved during the past half century.

Modern terrorism emerged in the 1960s[11] as a result, in part, of certain countries’ use of terrorist proxies to promote their interests and spread their ideology.[12] In addition, the increasing cost of conventional warfare and the threat of unconventional warfare, the burgeoning of technology and, especially, innovations such as television stimulated the growth of modern terrorism.[13] Beginning in the late 1960s, we can identify the development of successive waves of terrorism. Each wave would swell when a terrorist organization employed a violent means of achieving its political aims, which was perceived as being effective and efficient and which therefore was then copied by other terrorist organizations. To illustrate: during the 1960s airplane hijacking was the preferred *modus operandi*; during the 1970s terrorists favored hostage negotiations; and during the 1990s suicide attack became the dominant mode of attack and remained so into the early 21st century. These successive waves of terrorism, and the transition from one to another, can be viewed as the development of consecutive trends: each time a new form of attack was deemed effective, terrorist organizations would adopt it. In this context, we can see the Islamic State as the harbinger of a new trend in terrorism.

Albeit, IS did not invent the strategy of modern terrorism, whose essence is to spread fear and terror to advance chosen aims, but it certainly has honed this strategy, taking it to a more extreme level of barbarism, cruelty and violence than ever seen before. IS’s terrorism and guerilla warfare have one goal: to instill horror and dread. The beheading of captives, the immolation of a Jordanian pilot, the mass public executions, the mutilation of civilians and other heinous acts intensify the fear imposed by the terrorist organization on

its various target audiences. However, extreme cruelty would not in and of itself be sufficient to achieve the desired effect. To bring its message home, IS has developed a deft system of “translating” fear and loathing so that they can be disseminated through the media to its target audiences: opponents and enemies, followers and supporters in the Muslim world, the civilian populations under its control, and the international audience.[14] IS’s leadership has not only comprehended and adopted the strategy of modern terrorism, but has made unprecedented, sophisticated use of the Internet and social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to reach vast audiences while evading censorship. Moreover, it appears that IS’s leaders have cracked the code of what becomes popular on the Internet; they have succeeded in skillfully editing their video clips such that they quickly “go viral”. The viciousness of the terrorist attacks themselves and the choice of camera angles used to film them, along with psychological warfare and intimidation, have intensified IS’s influence. Like the horror movies about zombies and the violent video and computer games that have become so popular in the West, IS’s video clips pique the curiosity of young people worldwide. As I will detail below, the Islamic State’s sophisticated propaganda and visual fear-mongering have succeeded in promoting three of its goals: to gain control of more territory in Iraq and Syria; to recruit young people to its arenas of battle; and to cow those under its control into obedience.

1. First, the Islamic State’s strategy of fear was designed to help it expand its territorial control. During the past year, IS struck dread into the hearts of the Iraqi and Syrian armies and the Kurdish militias that rose to oppose it. Often, when these fighters were exposed to IS’s heinous acts – either online or on the battlefield – they chose to lay down their arms[15] (which were then plundered by IS), don civilian clothes, and run for their lives lest they fall captive to IS and suffer the atrocities they had seen. This enabled IS to rapidly conquer extensive territory, and afforded it the opportunity to amass state-of-the-art weapons, which were originally supplied by the US and other countries to the armies and militias opposing it.
2. Second, IS has succeeded in using the Internet and social media to transmit a message of cruelty, which has won the hearts and minds of those young Muslims who have come from around the world to join its ranks, or who have conducted lone wolf attacks of their own. Its message has inspired marginalized Muslim youth in Europe and the West, second- and third-generation immigrants (some of them with a criminal past) who are disaffected, frustrated, seeking a sense of identity and belonging, full of hatred for the societies that have not adequately integrated them, and facing a bleak future with few prospects for development and self-actualization[16]. When these problems are compounded by real personal and family distress, such young people become easy prey for IS’s Internet propaganda, which seems to offer an outlet for their frustration and yearning for power and control. The Islamic State’s use of images of brutality, coupled with its message of victory, spark these young people’s curiosity and yen for adventure, give vent to their loathing and sense of helplessness, and take advantage of their adrenaline-propelled hormones – to the point where they are willing to leave home to join IS in Iraq or Syria or to purchase weapons and initiate attacks where they live, usually without any contact with IS, let alone direct orders from it. Already in 2014, IS had recruited some 10,000 impassioned and incensed Muslim youth to its struggles in Syria and Iraq[17] - a figure that has probably doubled since then. Some of them return home after having spent time with IS in these countries, where they were both trained to fight and exposed to an intensified and accelerated process of radicalization. In other cases, so-called “lone wolves” have been stirred by IS’s instructional videos and other materials that it posts to the Internet with the express aim of their being used or imitated.
3. Third, the profound unease aroused by IS’s nauseating violence and propaganda has yet another goal:

to ensure the complete obedience of the civilians under its control. In this, the IS is no different from other sinister dictatorships and totalitarian regimes that have used cruelty and brutality to assure compliance and suppress opposition.

We may therefore conclude that IS has not invented any new strategies of violence, but rather has enhanced the strategies of modern terrorism. By spreading terror and panic among its target audiences, it has garnered concrete military gains and achieved its psychological aims.

The Islamic State's achievements cannot be understood without taking into account the religious component of its essence. Its main target audience is young Muslims everywhere. IS captivates these young people, not only by virally disseminating its messages of victory and barbarism, but also, and perhaps mainly, by inviting them to join an alternative conceptual system. IS offers these young people a new identity, a sense of belonging, and a different set of values and beliefs: that of the Salafist-jihadist interpretation of Islam. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who has appointed himself the new Muslim caliph and the successor to the Prophet Muhammad, calls on these young people to accept what he defines as the religious imperative of restoring Islam to its former glory. He demands that they take an active role in the fight against the infidel "enemies of Islam"; using the conspiratorial claim that Islam is currently in an existential struggle against "heretics" from within and without. The young Muslims exposed to this religious propaganda are ordered to join in the "defense of Islam" and sacrifice their lives to defeating the infidels. IS leaders and propagandists cynically exploit Islam to arouse, recruit and motivate Muslim youth to take radical, violent action, and even to commit suicide for the cause. To paraphrase Karl Marx, IS exploits religion as an "opium of the masses", which it manipulates to justify a viciousness that knows no restraint or moral inhibition.

If we ignore the Islamist-religious dimension of the Islamic State, we risk steering our analysis away from the root causes of radical Islamist terrorism and failing to find the appropriate means of consistent and effective action against it. At the same time, laying the blame for the heinous acts of Islamist-jihadist extremists such as the Islamic State at the doorstep of Islam is also wrong; in fact, it is no less dangerous because, in defiance of reality, it gives the Salafist-jihadist interpretation of Islam more prominence than it warrants, thereby excluding the vast majority of Muslims – who do not subscribe to this interpretation or support such acts – from playing an active role in destroying IS, in particular, and radical Islamist-jihadist terrorism in general. In this respect, the trend exemplified by IS reflects not a problem with Islam, but a problem *within* Islam, one that requires in-depth internal analysis and criticism, first and foremost by Muslims themselves.

### ***What are the Islamic State's Aspirations?***

The third question we would address concerns whether the Islamic State is a local or global phenomenon. On one hand, there is a tendency to view IS as a local phenomenon limited to parts of Iraq, Syria and even the whole of the Levant (Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, etc.).[18] This tendency is based on the history of the organization and the beginning of the dispute between al-Zarqawi, who headed an early version of the Islamic State between 2001 and 2006, and al-Zawahiri, who during those same years served as a deputy to Osama bin Laden and as the spiritual leader of Al-Qaeda. At that time, Al-Qaeda intended to promote a global Islamic caliphate, and feared the diversion of resources, power and focus to local Islamic caliphates in one or another territory. In contrast, al-Zarqawi emphasized the need to liberate Iraq from the American occupation and establish an Islamic caliphate there. Ostensibly, this dispute seemed to concern timing – that is, whether the global campaign to establish an Islamic caliphate should precede the campaign to establish local caliphates, or vice versa – absent any question as to the ultimate goal of establishing a global caliphate. When Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took control of the Islamic State in 2011, his goal seemed to be to establish an Islamic caliphate first

in Iraq, and then in Syria and the Levant. In fact, the Islamic State's aim of expansion developed as its control of territories in Iraq and Syria expanded; this is reflected in its name changes: from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), to simply the Islamic State (IS), without any territorial designation. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's global aspirations developed over time, as is illustrated by his public speeches. His self-appointment as caliph and as the successor to the Prophet Muhammad can be seen as an expression of his global aspirations, perhaps even of his megalomania. The Islamic State's global ambitions were also stoked by its military successes and by the viral propaganda that quickly made it a role model for other individuals and terrorist organizations, including those that had previously sworn allegiance to Al-Qaeda and bin Laden but which now switched their allegiance to IS and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the new caliph.

As the heir of Al-Qaeda, IS is the new trend in modern terrorism, an inspiration to other terrorist networks and organizations, and individuals. Analysis of the evolution of modern terrorism reveals many instances in which an organization split up when some of its members left because they believed its leadership was too moderate, too willing to compromise, not militant enough, or not sufficiently dedicated to achieving the goals for which it was established. The dissident members then form a splinter organization, which is usually more violent and dangerous than its predecessor. Such splinter organizations tend to claim that they are "the real thing", the keepers of the flame who are loyal to the goal, unlike those in the mother organization, whom they claim have deviated from the path. This is illustrated by the Real IRA, which split off from the IRA; the PFLP/General Command led by Ahmed Jibril, which split off from the PFLP led by George Habash; and Hamas, which defines itself as "the real thing" vis à vis Fatah. In the case under review, it would seem that many radical Islamists are beginning to perceive IS as the "real thing", as opposed to Al-Qaeda. Although in its nascency, this process may be expected to expand, increasing the power of IS and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at the expense of Al-Qaeda and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Regardless of whether this was al-Baghdadi's intention all along or whether circumstances led him to make establishing a global caliphate IS's ideological platform, IS should today be regarded as striving to extend its authority to networks, organizations and individuals around the world. At present, the Islamic State is focused on Syria and Iraq, and is developing an agenda that includes Libya and the Sinai Peninsula, but if it succeeds in stabilizing its rule in the areas under its control, we can expect it to expand further. Alternatively, if IS loses its territorial strongholds in Iraq and Syria, we can anticipate that it will not disappear, but rather will take on another form based in territories such as northern or central Africa, for example, or in Southeast Asia. This is what happened to Al-Qaeda, which changed following the loss of territory in Afghanistan, and especially following the killing of bin Laden. If and when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is killed, IS will likely change its nature and rate of expansion, although the course this change will take will naturally depend on the identity and capabilities of al-Baghdadi's successor – specifically, whether he is able to fill al-Baghdadi's shoes and inherit his status as caliph.

### ***What is the Islamic State's Strategic Situation?***

This insight brings us to our fourth question about the Islamic State: what is its position today? Is it stagnating? In retreat? Or can we expect it to grow stronger in the near future? Many researchers believe that IS and al-Baghdadi have made a staggering number of enemies because of IS's violence and cruelty to Muslims and others, the danger it constitutes to the world, and the challenge posed by the foreigners who fight in its ranks, as well as because of al-Baghdadi's megalomaniac agenda. For example, Shi'ites, Christians, Yazidis and Kurds in Iraq and Syria – all of whom have suffered and continue to suffer greatly at the hands of IS – are actively fighting it. Even other Islamist organizations active in Syria, such as the Al-Nusra Front (some of whose members used to belong to IS), the Muslim Brotherhood and, of course, Iran's proxy Hezbollah – are opposing IS no less than is Assad's army. Multiple countries are fighting IS, among them

Saudi Arabia (which supports the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria just as Iran supports the Assad regime); Jordan, which wishes to avenge the brutal killing of its pilot and which fears IS will advance to its border; and an international coalition of the Gulf States and Western countries, led by the United States. That IS's acts have given rise to the establishment of this coalition is unprecedented, even if the coalition has made do with an ongoing air campaign and limited achievements on the ground in Iraq and Syria, and has yet to wage an extensive ground offensive.

Beyond the difficulty of making additional military gains in Syria and Iraq, IS may yet have to cope with an economic crisis. Thanks to its takeover of several oilfields and of gold and monetary reserves in the commercial banks of the cities it has conquered, the Islamic State has larger financial coffers than do other terrorist organizations. In addition, its policy of kidnapping foreigners and demanding large ransoms for them has swelled its income. However, it may reasonably be assumed that without additional significant military victories, the Islamic State's financial resources will eventually dry up. Since IS does not have an ally that could support it financially, and since it has no sea access, the organization may find itself in a financial crisis, unable to restock its weapons or meet the demand for the essential supplies it needs to keep itself running.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the members of the coalition fighting IS have differing, sometimes even opposing, interests. For example, the interests of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States differ from those of Iran, Hezbollah and the Assad regime. These differences make it difficult to undermine IS and translate the fear it instills into an effective, unified strategy to neutralize it. It is also important to remember that so far, the air strikes against IS have been limited in scope and, at present, most members of the coalition are unwilling to embark on a ground campaign against IS. Moreover, some of the countries that are ostensibly part of the coalition are simultaneously maintaining informal or even formal ties with members of the Islamic State. For example, large amounts of oil are being piped to Turkey from oil fields now in the Islamic State's purview, for a price that is financial oxygen for IS[19]. Consequently, it seems that the campaign currently being waged against IS in Syria and Iraq – given its level of intensity, the lack of an extensive ground operation, and the conflicting interests of the coalition members – is unlikely to neutralize or eradicate IS. The growing support for IS among other Islamist-jihadist organizations (such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines and Ansar Bayt al Maqdis in the Sinai Peninsula), the strengthening of its branch in Libya and elsewhere, and the success of its viral propaganda campaign all guarantee that IS will continue to present a significant local and global security threat.

### ***Conclusion***

To summarize the four questions I have tried to answer here, we can see the Islamic State as a new and dangerous trend in modern terrorism, one that has brought the heartlessness and barbarism of terrorism to previously inconceivable extremes. However, the Islamic State has not changed the rules of the game or altered the strategy of modern terrorism adopted by multiple organizations worldwide during the past half century; rather, it has intensified and enhanced that strategy through its skillful wielding of propaganda. At present, the Islamic State is enjoying growing popularity among young Muslims, who consider it to be the “real deal” compared to rival organizations and ideologies. IS is exploiting the chaos that has ensued from the Arab Spring, especially in Syria, Iraq and Libya, to conquer large swaths of territory. It is also exploiting the confusion and indecision in the policies of Western countries, chiefly the US, concerning the Arab Spring – the result of unstinting support for any process that appears to promote “the will of the people”, even when that process is actually a springboard for the overthrow of an existing regime and its replacement by an Islamist-fundamentalist one based on Shari'a (Islamic) law, under the guise of democracy. At the same

time, IS activists and supporters are exploiting the liberal-democratic values and slack immigration policies of Western countries, especially those in Europe, and of the European Union's belief in multiculturalism, accord and cooperation (as evidenced by the Schengen Agreement, which permits the free passage of people among countries in Europe, without border checks or luggage inspection). Moreover, the Islamic State is brainwashing young second- and third-generation immigrants to Europe, recruiting them to its ranks and inspiring them to carry out "lone wolf" terrorist attacks in Western countries.

In order for Western countries to effectively counteract the trend of IS, they must first abandon political correctness and "call a spade a spade": they must define the Islamist-jihadist terrorist threat as such. It is first necessary to recognize that the enemy is not just one lone wolf, or a group of violent extremists, or a certain terrorist organization; rather, it is the Islamist-jihadist ideology and world view, which distorts Islam. True, this world view is accepted by only a fraction of the members of the Muslim Nation, but they are a very vocal and dangerous fraction, and their doctrines must be acknowledged for what they are and neutralized if this new trend in the evolution of local and global terrorism is to be addressed effectively.

Therefore, Muslim clerics and religious leaders have a key role to play in formulating a doctrine that will combat the message of the Islamic State. They must proffer and disseminate an interpretation of Islam that constitutes an alternative to the religious laws and teachings being warped and misused by jihadist terrorists. Their key role will be not to defend the Western world or other religions and cultures but rather, first and foremost, to defend Muslims from Islamist jihadists, to defend their own religion from those who are trying to twist it and drag believers nearly 1,500 years back in time. Also, Muslim clerics should take a stand against Islamist-jihadist ideology so as to mitigate the waves of "aftershock" that follow jihadist terrorist attacks in Western countries, which are manifested as Islamophobia.

In addition, the entire world – Muslims, Christians, Jews and others – must unite around a normative standard that prohibits intentional terrorist attacks against civilians and refuses to accept any religious, political or operative justification for deviation from this standard. An interfaith agreement is needed, which will divorce the personal, religious value system of a man and his Creator from political policies and goals. The spiritual leaders of various religions must jointly sign a pact prohibiting the use of violence for religious propagation, forbidding forced conversion, and preventing the conquest of territory in the name of religion. Only thus will it be possible to counteract the expanding scope of international terrorism emanating from the madrasas (Islamic schools) of local and global Islamist-jihadist terrorist organizations, and particularly of IS, the severity of the Islamist-jihadist threat, and the implications of IS for the stability of Arab regimes and for the lives of the citizens of Arab, Muslim, Western and other countries. This must be accompanied by a broad yet focused and effective military campaign against terrorist organizations in general, and against IS and its offshoots in particular.

In formulating such a doctrine, it will be necessary to distinguish between good and evil, between those who hold pragmatic religious views, and those who pose as pragmatists but ally themselves with thugs. There are no shortcuts, and there can be no leniency, in the war against terrorism, which cannot be waged well with a wink and a nod and lip service. The war against terrorism is first and foremost a war of values, a war for morality and ideology. It is a lengthy war of attrition, with military, psychological and social components – but it is not a holy war between religions. It is a war between civilization and barbarism.

**About the Author:** Prof. Boaz Ganor is the Founder and Executive Director of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) as well as the Dean and the Ronald S. Lauder Chair for Counter-Terrorism at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya.

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## The Drone Campaign against Al Qaeda and ISIS

### Interview with Lt. General David Deptula USAF (Ret.)

by Brian Glyn Williams

#### *Introduction*

The new era of covert drone war began on October 7, 2001—the opening night of Operation Enduring Freedom—America’s response to the Al Qaeda attacks that killed almost 3,000 Americans—with the firing of a Hellfire missile by an MQ-1 Predator in Afghanistan against the Taliban leadership. Since that historic event, Central Command, Air Force, and CIA Predator and Reaper drones have become one of the most effective killers of insurgents, terrorists and enemy combatants in a war that has gradually extended from the Hindu Kush Mountains of Afghanistan and the tribal zones of Pakistan to the deserts of Yemen and the battlefields of ISIS-controlled territories in Syria and Iraq.

Yet despite the fact that remotely controlled drone operations have become a signature component of America’s campaigns in Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia, this aspect of warfare remains widely misunderstood. The public hears about the occasional strike on a terrorist hideout or the use of drones in support of a combat operation in some exotic locale, but has only sketchy information. The recent unfortunate killing of an American hostage held by the Taliban in Pakistan by a drone, which was announced by the White House on 23 April 2015 brought rare and unprecedented scrutiny to Obama’s murky drone campaign.

All too often it is the issue of an airstrike’s “collateral damage” (i.e. accidentally slain civilian bystanders) that dominates the discussion of drones. Much of the conventional wisdom on drones is shaped by anti-drone activists, such as the Code Pink movement. In these circles, and among average Pakistanis who live in a country that has seen hundreds of drone strikes by the CIA’s separate drone fleet, it is not uncommon to hear comments like “99% of those who die in drone strikes are civilians.” According to these voices, the high tech drones, which can fly over their targets for over 24 hours monitoring movements on the ground with high-resolution cameras from two miles away before firing their precise, laser-guided mini-missiles, are engaged in the most uniquely indiscriminate “bombing” campaign since the fire bombing of Dresden or the carpet bombing of Hanoi. The recent furor caused by the accidental killing of the American hostage in Pakistan, Warren Weinstein, by a CIA drone intensified the debate on collateral damage killings.

Remarkably, there has been little or no push back from the CIA or Air Force to ill-informed and misleading claims. The CIA and the Air Force typically have a policy of not addressing accusations about covert drone operations. This means they have essentially ceded the field of debate to the anti-drone activists. Not surprisingly, average Americans cannot just sit down with those in charge of drone operations to get a better understanding of this opaque issue that has been all too often sensationalized or dominated by those who decry the drones’ alleged lack of discrimination.

At a recent conference in Boston, I got the extraordinary opportunity to talk with Lt. General David Deptula USAF (Ret.), the man who led the air campaign against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the decisive opening months of Operation *Enduring Freedom* and subsequently served as the first Chief of the Air Force Headquarters’ Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance mission. Deptula has a unique insider’s perspective on the drone campaign as he was in charge of much of it since this new remote sensor-shooter technology made its debut above the battlefields under his command.

What evolved from my meeting with retired Lt. General Deptula was the following interview which, peels away some of the layers of secrecy, hype, disinformation and misunderstanding of the Air Force's secretive drone operations and finally addresses some of the charges of the anti-drone critics.

### *Interview*

**Brian Glyn Williams (BGW):** *General, among the greatest concerns of the anti-drone voices is that drones lead to the roboticization of warfare and are taking us on a slippery slope towards creating a Terminator-style killing tool that will take humans out of the “kill chain.” What is your response to this accusation?*

**Deptula:** These issues are subject to much confusion and misunderstanding. Part of that confusion is due to the continued use of inaccurate terminology. Airpower today, and in the future, is not, and I predict, will not be “unmanned” in its application. It may involve the use of aircraft that are *uninhabited* by humans, but the application of those aircraft and the associated airpower, will not be [unmanned]. Aircraft will continue to be controlled by people – [however] what degree of autonomy aircraft will be allowed to possess is [an area] where significant policy implications lie.

The intent behind the term “unmanned aircraft vehicles” (UAV) – the term that is commonly used by the Department of Defense—was to indicate that there is much more to operating and exploiting the unmanned vehicle than simply the operation of the aircraft itself. In reality, today there is nothing unmanned about the system, except the aircraft itself which does not have a pilot on board. Words matter, that's why the US Air Force changed the way it refers to these aircraft to “remotely piloted aircraft,” as opposed to “unmanned [aircraft] systems.”

The media likes to use the term “drone.” They use this term because it is only one word and they don't have to explain what a “remotely piloted aircraft” is. In military parlance, a “drone” is a flying target for target practice—not a multi-role aircraft with a variety of intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance sensors (as well as precisely accurate weapons controlled under the watchful eyes of operators informed by multiple intelligence sources). Furthermore, the word “drone” connotes a degree of autonomy that remotely piloted aircraft or UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) or “drones” simply do not possess. This term perpetuates many of the misperceptions regarding these aircraft. In actual fact, it takes about 200 people to operate and exploit one MQ-1 Predator or MQ-9 Reaper orbit using a remote-split concept of operations. There is *nothing* autonomous about weapons employment from these UAV aircraft—they are piloted, with a human in the loop. The pilot is simply remote from the aircraft, ergo the use of the term “remotely piloted aircraft.”

**BGW:** *Another claim of the anti-drone activists is that drones lead to a “play station” mentality towards killing. In your personal experience with the Air Force's drone program what sort of preparation goes into a drone strike and are these accusations valid?*

**Deptula:** The short answer to this set of questions is that an enormous amount of time and preparation goes into a drone strike. And no, the accusations you relate are not valid. Remotely piloted aircraft allow users significantly greater control, oversight, and review before a shot is fired than occurs using manned aircraft, or operations conducted by soldiers, sailors, airmen or Marines. The persistence, situational awareness, and degree of control possible with remotely piloted aircraft (drones) allows for the immediate suspension of a lethal engagement if circumstances change, or questions emerge—even after a weapon has already been released or launched. Remotely piloted aircraft (drones) are networked aircraft and their data can reach any spot on earth in less than two seconds. Hence, in addition to the hundreds of operational, maintenance, and intelligence personnel, many lawyers and senior leadership are directly involved with remotely piloted aircraft

lethal engagements. This kind of oversight allows for exquisite preparation that is rarely, if ever, the case with the use of manned aircraft or with boots on the ground, or sailors at sea.

**BGW:** *You were Director of Combined Air Operations during much of the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. How did drones make their debut above the battlefields of Afghanistan and what role do they typically play in combat operations? Can you cite a few examples of their use in combat situations?*

**Deptula:** The bottom line is that the Predator was used the vast majority of the time to increase our situational awareness of what was going on with the enemy. Periodically, when we had good confirming intelligence, it was used in an attack role, but to give you an idea of the use between classic intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and its use in a strike role, about 98 percent of the time it was used for ISR. Over a drone's mission's duration, the unblinking, unseen Predator would lurk in the sky, find enemy targets for manned fighters, bombers, and AC-130 gunships and allow them to "rain down lots of iron on bad guys"—and then keep loitering to help manned aircraft do the same thing again. As I stated, only rarely would we use the MQ-1 Predator in direct attacks on its own, and when we did, it was for a very specific target, with very specific intelligence, requiring extreme accuracy, and minimal collateral damage.

**BGW:** *Ethicists have decried the use of the remote controlled drone in killing [technologically] less advanced enemies in locales ranging from the remote tribal zones of Pakistan to deserts of 'Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula'-controlled Yemen. What do you say to the charges that this form of warfare, which does not put our pilots at risk, is cowardly and gives America an unfair advantage?*

**Deptula:** War is not about "equality;" it's about inflicting damage on your enemy without suffering damage yourself. Remotely piloted aircraft provide one of those asymmetries for peace-seeking allies today. The use of remotely piloted aircraft has substantially boosted effectiveness in accomplishing critical security objectives—with zero operator casualties, at significantly less cost, and with significantly less collateral damage than have surface-force operations in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade plus. The anti-drone movement keeps saying how much ill-will drones generate, but it never discusses how much ill-will the alternatives generate. If the people harboring terrorists around the world don't like drones, do you think they like military occupations with boots on the ground more? Relative to other options, remotely piloted aircraft are the most precise way of employing force at a distance in a manner that reduces collateral damage and minimizes casualties. The accuracy of weapons employed from a remotely piloted aircraft is nominally within less than 10 feet of the intended target. The accuracy of a 155mm howitzer is around 1,000 feet, and mortar accuracy ranges from 200 to 800 feet. None of the procedures governing the use of artillery, mortars, missiles fired from ships, or manned aircraft employ the tremendous oversight associated with the use of networked 'remotely piloted aircraft.'

**BGW:** *Another fear of ethicists is that drones are the exact opposite of nuclear weapons. While nukes are too horrible to use, remotely controlled drones are seductively easy to use and may make warfare and killing too easy. What is your response to this claim?*

**Deptula:** It is nonsense, and a false assertion unproven by any fact. The truth is, remotely piloted aircraft are the most precise means of employing force in a way that reduces collateral damage and minimizes civilian casualties. The critics don't understand the reality of what they call "drone" operations, nor do they comprehend that our adversaries are most certainly conducting an aggressive perception management campaign on this issue—an effective campaign if the recent attention over remotely piloted aircraft use is a measure of effectiveness. Because remotely piloted aircraft are so effective, enemies try to manipulate our use of those aircraft to do what they cannot—limit their use—by spreading falsehoods which posit that, what they call "drones," cause reckless collateral damage, or are somehow not accurate. The fact of the matter is that remotely piloted aircraft are one

of, if not *the* most, accurate means of employing force at a distance in the military arsenal. Airpower, in the form of remotely piloted aircraft, is the one capability that terrorists around the globe cannot defeat directly. The terrorists, by creating international focus on civilian casualties, and attributing those casualties to drones, versus the biggest cause of those civilian casualties (themselves) create political and societal pressure to limit the use of drones. Adversary falsehoods regarding inaccuracy and collateral damage by drones divert attention from the fact that the massive intentional damage, intentional killing of civilians, and intentional violations of international law are being conducted by Al Qaeda, ISIS, and the Taliban—not “drones.” Remotely piloted aircraft allow users significantly greater control, oversight, and review before a shot is fired than occurs using manned aircraft, or any other lethal operations conducted by soldiers, sailors, airmen or Marines.

**BGW:** *No weapons system is perfect and, for all their state-of-the-art technology, even drones are only as good as the humint (human intelligence) and technint (technological intelligence) that goes into a strike. What does the Air Force do to prevent drone strike errors and how has it learned from past mistakes?*

**Deptula:** Every second of a remotely piloted aircraft's high-fidelity video footage, communication, and aircraft parameters is recorded and stored for very precise review and evaluation. This, ironically, is one of the reasons there is so much attention paid to what the media labels “drones.” Imagine if one could see the results of every missile, artillery, mortar, and rifle round fired, as is the case with drones. A principal value of remotely piloted aircraft is that they provide a perspective only available from operating in the air, and surveillance persistence to a degree much greater than an aircraft flown by a pilot. Remotely piloted aircrafts' ability to fly over one spot for a very long time allows those flying them to observe, evaluate, and act very quickly, or to take all the time necessary to be sure they can do what they really want to do. That precise engagement is simply not available to other types of weapons.

Unfortunately, military combat operations do result in civilian casualties—from all sources in all mediums—air, ground, and sea. However, the fewest number of civilian casualties result from air operations, and fewest number by aircraft system type are from UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles). According to the ‘UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan,’ for the first six months of 2013, air strikes caused two percent of all civilian casualties in the country. Among air strikes, the fewest number of civilian casualties were attributable to UAVs (just one third of that two percent). This is not just due to their accuracy, but also as a result of surveillance persistence; low collateral damage weapons such as mini-missiles; and continual aerial oversight that results in unmatched situational awareness. In 2012, the ‘UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan’ report was more specific and counted just 5 collateral damage incidents out of 1,336 total “weapons releases from remote piloted aircraft.” That is just 0.37 percent—or less than one-half of one percent—of RPA (Remotely Piloted Aircraft) air strikes caused civilian casualties. Regardless, after every mishap involving unintended collateral damage, the Air Force does a complete investigation to determine the cause of the error(s), and establishes corrective procedures to minimize the chances that that particular reason occurs again.

**BGW:** *Without giving away classified details, can you shed some light on the ongoing use of drones in Operation Inherent Resolve (the campaign against the terrorist group ISIS) in Syria and Iraq?*

**Deptula:** Drones in Operation *Inherent Resolve* are being used in ways similar to other operations, ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance), strike, and directing other aircraft operations. For example, let's say that there is a particular known ISIS target of interest near Ar-Raqqah—the “capital” of ISIS. Drones are being used to assist, satisfying the ever-increasing demand to avoid unintended damage and casualties and thus political backlash. Let me quote from an article on the subject in which Rick Whittle discussed how that is being accomplished with a civilian expert. [Deptula reads:] “If it [a target] is going to be struck, they can't take their eyes off of it,” the civilian expert said. “So they help other people come in. They have all kinds of rigor,

confirming that we're all looking at the same thing. How you say that is not something we want to go into detail on, but the 'fast-mover' [slang for a jet – BGW]] comes in and does his thing. He's lucky to see what's going on for less than a minute – thirty seconds in and thirty seconds out. He just gets coordinates. He doesn't get to see a higher resolution of what's really going on. Having a Reaper [drone] that's there on chat with him, kind of giving him a playbook rundown before they come in and do this quick strike, is paramount. It eliminates a lot of the errors in which we're going after the wrong thing." In military operations, the Reaper's weapons are most often used at the end of such strikes, this expert said. "Typically they're last, because they don't carry all that much [weaponry]."

**BGW:** *The Air Force is today pouring money into the drone program and training more drone pilots than manned aircraft pilots. This, at a time of cutbacks for the military and general austerity in the Air Force. What do you foresee as the future of drones in the US arsenal of weapons and do you think this killing technology will spread to other countries, or even to terrorist groups?*

**Deptula:** Given all that I have said, while introducing enormous capability and employment advantages, remotely piloted aircraft are not a panacea for warfare, nor will they replace manned aircraft. They are but one tool among many in the set of modern weapon systems. They have advantages, and they have disadvantages. For example, the most popular remotely piloted aircraft today that possess weapons delivery capability are very vulnerable in contested or denied airspace. Remotely piloted aircraft present challenges in terms of integration with manned aircraft in congested airspace, and the deconfliction of challenges from an air defense perspective are not trivial. However, remotely piloted aircraft and their effects will continue to have an important role as the U.S. rebalances its forces. Some of the central issues at play are determining the appropriate mix of drones, given available funding that we should design and build to operate in permissive versus non-permissive airspace. Remotely piloted aircraft can enable global vigilance, reach, and power effectively and efficiently so the next generation [of drones] need to be multi-role aircraft that combine all elements of ISR and strike on a single platform. The information age allows new aircraft to become much more than just "bombers" or "fighters," but actually sensor-shooter aircraft. When integrated with other system "nodes" in every domain -air, space – land–sea, [drones] will have the capability to create a "combat cloud." A "combat cloud" is a manifestation of a self-forming, self-healing intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR)-strike-maneuver-sustainment complex and has the potential to usher in an entire new era in defense and play a crucial role in what people are now seeking in a "third offset strategy." This kind of future requires acquisition of drones that are open, modular and rapidly adaptable to the broad range of military operations. They will work with manned aircraft to a degree unforeseen today...where dozens [of drones] may be controlled by F-22s and F-35s and the next generation long-range sensor shooter aircraft formerly know as bombers. With respect to their potential in the future, we are today with drones where we were with manned aircraft just after WW 1 with bi-planes...so we have an exciting period of development ahead.

**BGW:** *Many thanks for taking the time to speak to me on these important and controversial issues.*

**Deptula:** Thanks for giving me this opportunity.

**About the Interviewer:** **Brian Glyn Williams** is Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth and author of 'Predators. The CIA's Drone War on Al Qaeda' (Washington DC: Potomac, 2013).

*About the Interviewee: Lieutenant General David A. Deptula (Ret.) spent more than 30 years with the US Air Force (AF) and finished his military career in 2010 as first Deputy Chief of Staff for ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) at AF Headquarters.*

### III. Book Reviews

#### Gabriel Weimann, *“Terrorism in Cyberspace: The Next Generation”*

(New York, NY: Columbia University Press/Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2015), 313 pp., US \$ 90.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 30.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-231704496.

#### Reviewed by Joshua Sinai

In the United States, Canada and Western Europe, dozens of al Qaida, al Shabaab- and ISIS-related terrorist-related plots have been thwarted by government counterterrorism agencies through electronic surveillance of terrorist operatives' suspicious activities on the Internet. While their activities were likely also monitored “on the ground,” the fact that terrorists of all extremist ideological and religious types are so reliant on using their computers and smartphones to access the Internet for their communications, cyberspace has become a necessary focus of operations for counterterrorism agencies.

Tracking the suspicious activities of potential terrorists in cyberspace is so crucial, in fact, that in certain cases where terrorists succeeded in carrying out their attacks, such as Major Nidal Hassan's murderous rampage at Fort Hood and the Tsarnaev brothers' bombing of the Boston Marathon, electronic data had existed about their suspicious online activities, but counterterrorism agencies had failed to ‘connect the dots’ to appreciate the significance of such evidence in their possession prior to these incidents.

Because it is obvious to counterterrorism professionals from intelligence and law enforcement that it is crucial to electronically monitor such suspicious activities (with full legal compliance), it has been somewhat surprising to see the recent controversy in the United States Congress over reauthorization of electronic surveillance operations under the Patriot Act [which was passed in a modified form in early June]. For this reason, among others, we are fortunate to have Gabriel Weimann's “Terrorism in Cyberspace: The Next Generation,” as an authoritative account of the ways in which terrorists operate in cyberspace. Dr. Weimann (whom I know and, for full disclosure, also wrote the blurb on the book's back cover), is Professor of Communications at the University of Haifa, Israel, where he leads a research program that tracks terrorist activities on the Internet. He also is the author of the landmark book *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, The New Challenges* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2006).

In his new book, Gabriel Weimann addresses the following questions: how are terrorists exploiting the Internet, what new trends in cyberspace can be expected in the future, how can terrorist operations on the Internet be effectively countered, and how can we balance the need for security while protecting civil liberties.

Prof. Weimann explains that terrorist groups—and lone wolves—view the Internet as an ideal arena to exploit for their communications, propaganda, training, fundraising, and for mobilizing support for their violent activities because of its ease of access from anywhere around the world, “lack of regulation, vast potential audiences, fast flow of information,” and, most importantly, the anonymity to post “their extremist beliefs and values” and then “disappear into the dark.” (p. 21). Terrorists and their supporters exploit the Internet's websites, email, chatrooms, virtual message boards, mobile phones, Google Earth, YouTube and other online video sharing sites, as well as social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Such exploitation, however, is not being conducted openly, as their tech-savvy operatives often use encryption tools and anonymizing software to make it difficult for counterterrorism agencies to identify “the originator, recipient, or content of terrorist online communications.” (p. 23)

Dr. Weimann identifies three new trends in Internet exploitation: narrowcasting (targeting propaganda and recruitment messaging to narrow audiences that are deemed to be especially susceptible, such as children, women, lone wolves, and diaspora communities), encouraging the proliferation of lone wolf adherents, such as Major Nidal Hassan, and advancing cyberterrorism.

The proliferation of lone wolves is especially worrisome, according to the author, because “they are extremely difficult to detect and to defend against.” (p. 66) Nevertheless, they are not undetectable to counterterrorism agencies because they must still “connect, communicate, and share information, know-how, and guidance — all online — on the ‘dark web.’” (p. 66)

Cyberterrorism is the most threatening of the trends, according to Gabriel Weimann, because they would be able to use their “computer network devices to sabotage critical national infrastructures such as energy, transportation, or government operations.” (p. 150) Dr. Weimann warns that terrorists are keen to develop a cyber-warfare capability, with the possibility of “money, ideology, religion, and blackmail” being used to recruit such “cybersavvy specialists” in the future.

How can terrorist exploitation of cyberspace be countered and defeated? While the Internet and its online platforms, as Dr. Weimann points out, provide terrorists with “anonymity, low barriers to publication, and low costs of publishing and managing content,” (p. 150) at the same time they also provide counterterrorism agencies with the capability to damage and block them. Under what Dr. Weimann terms the “MUD” model (monitoring, using, and disrupting), he recommends covertly tracking their activities in order to gain information about their strategies, motivations, internal debates and associations, while disrupting them with ‘hard’ power cyber-weapons to spread viruses and worms against their websites. These would be accompanied by ‘soft’ power elements that conduct psychological operations to discredit their extremist propaganda and offer constructive alternatives to resorting to terrorism..

In light of the still continuing controversies over the electronic surveillance provisions of the Patriot Act, the book’s final chapter, “Challenging Civil Liberties,” is particularly valuable in discussing the challenges presented by the need to preserve civil liberties when countering online terrorist activities. Dr. Weimann cites the impact of Edward Snowden’s illicit revelations of the U.S. government’s counter-online surveillance measures and proposes a set of guidelines to regulate governmental online surveillance.

“Terrorism in Cyberspace” is a timely and indispensable resource for all those concerned about effectively countering terrorists’ exploitation of the Internet’s and the dark elements that can reside there.

*N.B.: This is an expanded version of a review that originally appeared in The Washington Times on June 2, 2015. Reprinted with permission.*

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**Counterterrorism Bookshelf:****20 Books on Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects****Reviewed by Joshua Sinai**

*This column consists of capsule reviews of books published by various publishers, with the authors listed in alphabetical order.*

***Hurst & Company***

**Simon Cottee, *The Apostates: When Muslims Leave Islam*** (London, UK: Hurst & Company/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 263 pp., US \$ 35.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-849-0444691.

An interesting and important account of the experiences of ex-Muslims documenting the difficulties and challenges they face in traversing the two opposing worlds of Islam and the secularism in diaspora communities in the United Kingdom and Canada. The author, a senior lecturer in criminology at Kent University, England, draws on what he terms “life-history” interviews with ex-Muslims (whose identities are concealed in order to protect their security) to explore the processes, predicaments and negative consequences, especially from their families, that face them upon leaving Islam and becoming “irreligious” and apostates in their home communities. Simon Cottee also focuses on the problems they face in adjusting to their new “secular” environments. Explaining that “Islamic apostasy in the secular West is perhaps best understood not as a legal or political problem, but as a moral issue within Muslim families and communities,” (p. 211) the author concludes that “The crucial policy issue is how to effectively challenge and change illiberal attitudes within Muslim communities in the West and how to provide better support for wavering and ex-Muslims in moral jeopardy.” (p. 212) Although this book does not discuss violent extremism or terrorism, as such, “The Apostates” is highly recommended for contextualizing the challenges involved in attempting to de-radicalize violent extremists in Western societies.

**Leon T. Goldsmith, *Cycle of Fear: Syria’s Alawites in War and Peace*** (London, UK: Hurst & Company/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 317 pp., US \$ 37.50 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-849044684.

A comprehensive survey of the history and evolution of Syria’s minority Alawite community in order to provide a deeper perspective on its response to the events that led up to the early 2011 ‘Arab Spring’ uprising by the Sunni majority against Alawite continuous rule over Syrian society. As explained by the author, who teaches in the Department of Political Science, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman, his book “seeks to illustrate an important example of how fear affects the political behavior of ethno-religious minorities, influences their support for authoritarian regimes and leads to recurring conflict and social dislocation.” (p. 4) The author concludes on the hopeful note that “the aftermath of the [current] war will be setting forth on an open and honest collective reckoning with sectarianism and the cycle of fear among communities, in a way that has not been possible or attempted before” (p. 209). However, in this reviewer’s opinion this is highly unlikely given the zero-sum game type genocidal fighting being waged by the jihadi opposition and the Assad regime. Nevertheless this book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the nature, aspirations, and likely future fate of Syria’s Alawite minority.

**Mustafa Hamid and Leah Farrall, *The Arabs at War in Afghanistan*** (London, UK: Hurst & Company/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 355 pp., US \$ 25.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-849044202.

A fascinating insider's account of the history and origins of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Arab groupings that formed al Qaida – the Taliban's ally in Afghanistan and later on in Pakistan. This collaborative account takes the form of a series of interviews between Mustafa Hamid (aka Abu Walid al-Masri) and Leah Farrall, an Australian academic and former senior counter-terrorism analyst with the Australian Federal Police. Dr. Farrall provides additional analysis to contextualize these accounts. Mr. Hamid, an Egyptian, was one of the first Arabs to join the jihad against Soviet rule in Afghanistan. He became a senior Mujahideen leader, but had fled Afghanistan after 9/11, spending nearly a decade in detention in Iran, after which he was able to return to Egypt, where he renounced his jihadi ideology. After explaining how the two authors met and established a common dialogue, the book's chapters cover topics such as the origins of the Arab-Afghan jihad, how the Taliban was formed and how al Qaida established its training camps in Afghanistan. Further chapters cover the nature of the relations between the Taliban and al Qaida and tensions in the relations with other extremist ethnic groupings, such as the Uzbeks.

The motivations and events that led to al Qaida's 9/11 attacks against the United States, and the failure of both Taliban and al Qaida to anticipate the massive retaliation by America are also covered. Mr. Hamid concludes that one of the lessons he has learned from his experience in Afghanistan is that al Qaida/Taliban-type "Salafi Wahabbism is a key obstacle...to natural human rights....with the events of the Arab Spring and its aftermath [signaling] the complete failure of the Islamist project, which in part grew in the soil of Egypt from the hands of Sayyid Qutb, and in Afghanistan from the hands of Azzam, Abu Abdullah and the Jalalabad School. This failure is clearly visible in people's loss of sympathy for the Islamists – and in Egypt, this took only one year." (p. 325) The book includes a detailed listing of notable people mentioned in the discussion, as well as a glossary of terms, a listing of Mujahideen training camps, and a listing of significant doctrinal publications to provide a wider context for understanding the authors' account.

**Raffaello Pantucci, *"We Love Death As You Love Life": Britain's Suburban Terrorists*** (London, UK: Hurst & Company/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 377 pp., US \$ 25.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-849041652.

This is a highly detailed and comprehensive account of the history, evolution and terrorist activities of Islamist extremists in the United Kingdom, including the influence of their countries of origin in shaping their radicalization and mobilization into terrorism. In addition to setting the stage for the rest of the book, the introduction also includes a valuable discussion of how the confluence of the drivers of radicalization, ideology, grievances, and mobilization has shaped the emergence of Islamist extremism in the UK. Within this framework the author explains how numerous British Muslims, such as Mohammed Siddique Khan and others, turned to al Qaida-inspired terrorism to carry out their attacks, whether in the UK or overseas – up to the present period with its foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. The book's first chapter examines the roots of Britain's Muslim population, with many of them immigrating from Pakistan. Interestingly, a sizeable portion of those who became extremist activists had claimed to flee 'persecution' in their homelands in the Middle East, but ended up, as in the case of the cleric Abu Hamza, as firebrand Islamist extremists in Britain where they took advantage of its "long tradition as a home for foreign political activists." (p. 5) This is followed by discussions of the socialization of Britain's Muslims, including social tensions arising from (non-) integration into British society, the early involvement in terrorism by operatives such as Richard Reid (the "shoe-bomber"). Raffaello Pantucci also explores the impacts of the post 9/11 conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq in

mobilizing British Islamists to join their al Qaida ‘compatriots’ in those conflict zones. In addition, he focuses on the role of the new Jihadist battlefields in the Internet’s social media platforms, including online extremist clerics such as Anwar al-Awlaki, in mobilizing the British Islamists for violent activities. In the concluding chapter, Mr. Pantucci observes that even with improved British counterterrorism capabilities, “the threat has not disappeared. Indeed, with events in Syria it appears that the threat may be growing once again. Old narratives playing out again show that the complacency produced by a long period of success is dangerous. The reality is that while the British security services understand much better the networks they are dealing with and what radicalization looks like, there is still very little understanding of how to counter and de-radicalise.” (p. 292) The numerous well-researched accounts of Islamist terrorist operatives, their associated networks and cells, and their terrorist plots and activities in the UK and in overseas conflict zones make Mr. Pantucci’s book an indispensable resource for understanding Britain’s continuing Islamist terrorist threats and the sub-cultures that sustain them.

*Palgrave Macmillan*

**Cristina Archetti, *Understanding Terrorism in the Age of Global Media: A Communications Approach*** (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 232 pp., US \$ 90.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-230-36049-5.

This is a well-argued critique of terrorism and counterterrorism studies. The author calls for greater rigor in conducting research and pleads for formulating empirically-derived findings on the root causes and how terrorist groups operate, radicalize and mobilize adherents to their cause in today’s all-pervasive media environment. Dr. Archetti, a Lecturer in Politics and Media at the University of Salford, UK, believes that to analyze these components of terrorism “in an age of interconnectedness and globalization” it is essential to “understand the processes of communication that underpin it.” (p. 1) These issues are first addressed in the chapter on “The Problems with Terrorism Research,” which criticizes the discipline for being largely “a-theoretical” because of what she terms “The missing dimension of theory testing.” (p. 28). Other problem areas she identifies include the discipline’s inability to formulate a consensual definition of terrorism, and what the author terms “The missing ‘why’ of terrorism” – i.e., the lack of explanations that provide “any insight into the causation of terrorism.” (p. 25) The book’s remaining chapters cover topics such as the relationship between terrorists, how they communicate, and how they employ the mass media (including the Internet) in their operations. The book’s chapters also focus on the importance of applying what is termed the theoretical framework of “relational sociology” to understand how terrorists “negotiate”, terrorists’ relations with their adherents, and the roles of persuasion, ‘messaging,’ narratives, and myth-making in terrorists’ radicalization and mobilization of their adherents. The author concludes that in countering terrorists’ communications, i.e. “attempting to target radicalized individuals with the ‘right’ message” is a waste of time. She holds that Western democracies “can stop fueling the terrorists’ narrative by being consistent with what they claim to represent and what they actually do.” (p. 142) While one may argue that the author’s survey of current literature overlooks numerous studies that do, in fact, apply social science rigor and empiricism in their analysis of these components of terrorism, and that even the solutions that she proposes are not as effective or empirically-based as she claims, the issues that she raises in this well-written study merit wide attention in the discipline.

**Wolfgang Benedek, Christopher Daase, Vojin Dimitrijevic, and Petrus van Duyne, (Eds.), *Transnational Terrorism, Organized Crime and Peace-Building: Human Security in the Western Balkans*** (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 288 pp., US \$ 125.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-230-23462-8.

This comprehensive edited volume is the product of a collaborative and multidisciplinary research program funded by the European Union (EU) and carried out by the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC), in Graz, Austria. It examines the impact of transnational terrorism and organized crime on the prospects for peace-building and stability in the Western Balkans – the former Yugoslavia. This is a serious challenge, as one of the volume’s editors, Wolfgang Benedek, concludes that “The post-conflict and transitional situation is an obstacle to counter-crime strategies and security sector reform as they run against vested interests that benefit from state fragility in order to capture part of the security sector, the economy, or the media.” (p. 361) With civil society playing an “important watchdog role in this process,” Dr. Benedek calls on the European Union “to use its ‘soft power’” to improve the region’s human security. (p. 361)

**Hamed El-Said, *New Approaches to Countering Terrorism: Designing and Evaluating Counter-Radicalization and De-Radicalization Programs*** (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 312 pp., US \$ 100.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 40.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-137-48002-6.

This book attempts to fill a gap in the literature on countering violent extremism by Islamists. In order to facilitate their de-radicalization and disengagement from terrorism Prof. El-Said proposes a “framework through which Counter-de-Rad programs can be studied, understood and even effectively designed and implemented.” (p. 6) To do so, the author analyzes and evaluates Counter-de-Rad programs in the Muslim-majority states of Mauritania, Pakistan, Sudan, and Turkey, as well as similar programs in two Muslim-minority states–Australia and Singapore. Hamed El-Said is Chair and Professor of International Business and Political Economy at the Faculty of Business and Law, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. He has served as an advisor to the Arab Thought Forum and the United Nations al-Qaida and Taliban 1267 Monitoring Team. This enabled him and his collaborators to work on Counter-de-Rad programs (which provided the foundation for this book’s updated research). Following a detailed discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the Counter-de-Rad programs in the six case studies, the concluding chapter offers numerous findings that are worth noting. One is the need to move “away from the narrow focus on religious rehabilitation to inject a more secular focus in the Saudi de-radicalization policies: through education, including political education, vocational training, painting, physical education and social and economic programs to facilitate reintegration of detainees.” (p. 256) Another finding is that there is no one size fits all model for all countries or ‘silver bullet’ that can end violent extremism. This is because “The key lies in designing programs which are consistent with and derived from each country’s political, legal, cultural, historical and social capital tradition.” (p. 257) The most important finding – and arguably the most crucial component in effective Counter-de-Rad programs – is that “States with strong developmental capacity, strong political capacity and which enjoy an active and dynamic civil society are not only at lower risk of VEm [violent extremism], but are also better positioned and equipped to deal with it wherever it arises than countries characterized by weak development capacity, political capacity and hostile and thwarted civil society.” (p. 258) Prof. El-Said’s “New Approaches to Countering Terrorism” is an important contribution to the sub-discipline’s study of the effectiveness of Counter-de-Rad programs around the world.

**Hugh Gouch, *The Terror in the French Revolution*** [Second Edition] (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 144 pp., US \$ 32.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-230-20181-1.

A highly interesting, concise account of the French Revolution during the period of 1793-95 as the first instance when a newly formed revolutionary government employed the brutality of terror as a political weapon against its 'counter-revolutionary' opposition. The author is Emeritus Professor at University College Dublin and a noted expert on the history of the French Revolution.

**George C. Lovewine, *Outsourcing the Global War on Terrorism: Private Military Companies and American Intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan*** (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 244 pp., US \$ 105.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-137-37282-6.

A highly detailed account of the role and impact of private military security companies (PMSCs), such as KBR and DynCorp International, in supporting the U.S. government's military and political-economic development efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9/11. The author concludes that PMSCs contribute in a positive way by creating "an environment where the US military is able to respond to crises, to surge in additional capabilities and focus on the battlefield requirements, while fulfilling essential support needs." (p. 149) The risks in their involvement, however, "are also great," the author explains, because "any advantage they provide on the battlefield can be negated by activities that either cast a negative light on US activities or present a negative perception of US mission." The author, a retired U.S. Army Officer, is a civilian military analyst with the U.S. Department of Defense.

**Ron Schleifer, *Psychological Warfare in the Arab-Israeli Conflict*** (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 228 pages, US \$ 100.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-137-46702-7.

This is an important account of how psychological operations as 'non-lethal' weapons serve as crucial force multipliers in a nation's warfare against its adversaries. As Dr. Schleifer points out, they are also employed in asymmetric warfare by weaker non-state adversaries against their more powerful state adversaries in order to undermine their legitimacy and continued will to fight. These issues are discussed within the context of how such 'non-lethal' weapons have been used by Israel and its Palestinian and Hizballah adversaries. The book begins with an overview of psychological warfare theory and how it is applied in warfare, its use by Israel's pre-State Zionist insurgents against the British Mandatory authorities in Palestine, the evolution in the employment of psychological warfare by Palestinian armed groups against Israel from 1948 to 2010, Hizballah's use of psychological warfare against Israel in Southern Lebanon from 1985 to 2000, and Israel's own psychological warfare operations against Arab adversaries. Although this book's focus is on the Arab-Israeli conflict, its discussion of the use of psychological warfare is also especially relevant for understanding how these issues play out in the military campaigns being waged against al Qaida- and Islamic State-type insurgents around the world. Dr. Schleifer is Head of the Ariel Research Center for Defense and Communication, Israel (For full disclosure, this reviewer wrote the blurb for the book's back cover).

**Natasha Underhill, *Countering Global Terrorism and Insurgency: Calculating the Risk of State Failure in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq*** (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 264 pp., US \$ 100.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-137-38370-9.

An interesting theoretical examination of the role and impact of failed/failing states (such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq) in the proliferation of terrorism and insurgency, in comparison with strong states. To

conduct this assessment, the book's first two chapters attempt to explain terrorism, insurgency and state failure. In addition, the initial chapters explore the extent to which failed states might play a role in the emergence and proliferation of terrorism and insurgency. The author also explores whether a "pattern of failure" and other underlying conditions make such failed states more susceptible to attracting militant groups into their territory. The following six chapters apply the conceptual framework to discuss the three case studies of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. In the concluding chapter the author presents several interesting findings, such as "there is a significant lack of correlation between a state's level of failure and the number of terrorist groups that are based there." She also notes that "the placement or ranking of a particular state on the [Fund for Peace's] Failed State Index does not appear to exhibit any significant difference with respect to the incidence of terrorism." She demonstrates that "there are significant numbers of FTSs [Foreign Terrorist Organizations] and domestic terrorist groups present in states with a low level of failure, as well as in relatively strong democracies." (p. 177) The concluding chapter also includes a valuable table that lists the impact of the conceptual framework's factors in the three case studies. The author is Senior Lecturer at Nottingham Trent University, UK.

### *Routledge*

**Gwen Brookes, Julie Ann Pooley and Jaya Earnest, *Terrorism, Trauma and Psychology: A Multilevel Victim Perspective of the Bali Bombings*** (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 192 pp., US \$ 145.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-138-78884-8.

A systematic, field research-based examination, based on the October 12, 2002, Bali bombings. The authors explore the direct and indirect impacts of terrorism on the individuals and communities that are affected by such incidents, including the forms of post-attack disaster support offered to victims and their families. The introductory chapter presents an overview of terrorism, its objectives, a survey of countries that have experienced protracted terrorist attacks, the types of groups that conduct terrorism, and, more specifically, how the Bali bombings were conducted and their impact in terms of fatalities and injuries. The remaining chapters discuss the effects of the bombings on the victims in Bali and the Australian tourists, and the types of support that was provided to these victims. In conclusion, a framework is proposed by the authors for post-disaster planning.. The authors are academic psychologists and public health specialists who are associated with the University of Western Australia and Curtin University, also in Western Australia.

**Cheryl Lynn Duckworth, *9/11 and Collective Memory in US Classrooms: Teaching About Terror*** (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 134 pp., US \$ 145.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-415-74201-6.

An examination based on quantitative and qualitative survey data of how the traumatic events of 9/11 are taught by teachers at American middle and high schools, particularly the narrative that is used to teach students about that fateful day. The author concludes that in teaching about terrorism, curriculum units need to discuss questions such as the right balance between liberty and security and how people in history have handled fear, loss and trauma. Further suggested topics for discussion are: Is religion the cause of conflict?, What has been the impact of U.S. interventions in the world. What causes violence and how can it be prevented, and how can peace and justice be attained in society. (p. 116) The appendices include the study's quantitative survey and interview protocol. The author is a professor of conflict resolution at Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

**Rosalyn Higgins and Maurice Flory (Eds.), *Terrorism and International Law*** (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997/Reissued 2014), 396 pp., US \$ 190.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 49.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-87432-9.

First published in 1997, the contributors to this reissued edited volume present the approaches of British and French legal experts on how to apply effective legal measures to counter terrorism domestically and internationally. The chapters cover topics such as the international legislation on terrorism, principles of jurisdiction, legal aspects of maritime terrorism, extradition of terrorists, the rights of victims, State liability for terrorist acts on its territory, and international action against state terrorism. Although some of this discussion may be dated, it provides a valuable foundation for understanding the role and application of international law in counterterrorism and the prosecution of terrorists.

**Lee Jarvis, Stuart Macdonald and Thomas M. Chen, (Eds.), *Terrorism Online: Politics, Law and Technology*** (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 210 pp., US \$ 145.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 9780415732888.

The contributors to this edited volume apply multi-disciplinary approaches to examine how terrorists utilize digital technologies for their operations in cyberspace. The chapters cover topics such as terrorism online as a new strategic environment, how lone wolves use the Internet and how they are radicalized and mobilized into terrorism, hacktivism as an emerging form of cyberterrorism, how governments monitor and track terrorism in cyberspace, including how to identify the source and perpetrators of a cyberterrorist attack, as well as how to define cyberterrorism as a ‘terrorist’ act. The volume also covers issues of international cooperation, including United Nations authorization for countering cyberterrorism. The volume’s editors, respectively, are professors of security, including cyber security, at the University of East Anglia, the College of Law, Swansea University, and City University, London, UK.

**George Klay Kieh and Kelechi Kalu, (Eds.), *West Africa and the U.S. War on Terror*** (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 208 pp., US \$ 44.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-85143-6.

The contributors to this edited volume examine possible roles and strategies for the United States in assisting to counter terrorism in West Africa at bilateral and multilateral levels. This is a difficult and complex task, as recognized in the concluding chapter, since countering the sub-region’s criminal gangs and international terrorists also involves “consistently urging the governments in this sub-region to protect the rights of their citizens against repressive state institutions and structures...” (p. 186) since such an undertaking is difficult to achieve. Dr. Kieh is Professor of Political Science at the University of West Georgia, and Dr. Kalu is Director of the Center for African Studies at Ohio State University.

**Alan J. Kuperman, (Ed.), *Nuclear Terrorism and Global Security*** (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 256 pp., US \$ 145.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 54.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-84762-0.

The contributors to this edited volume examine the challenges posed by the attempts at a global phase-out of highly enriched uranium (HEU), and the risks that some of the remaining material might be acquired by terrorists, such as al Qaida and its affiliates, to manufacture and weaponize atomic bombs to deploy against their adversaries. Following the editor’s conceptual overview, the remaining chapters present case studies of the nuclear programs, including in certain cases, phase-outs of such programs, in Argentina, South Africa, United States, Canada, Belgium and the Netherlands, France, Germany, China, Russia, as well as phasing out the use of HEU from use in space-based nuclear reactors. Attesting to the difficulty in achieving a global phase-out of HEU, the concluding chapter cautions that “so long as HEU commerce persists for non-weapons

purposes, the danger of nuclear terrorism will be much greater than it needs to be. That is one risk to humanity that can, and should, be phased out.” (p. 228) The volume’s editor is Associate Professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin.

**Magnus Ranstorp and Magnus Normark, (Eds.), *Understanding Terrorism Innovation and Learning: Al-Qaeda and Beyond*** (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 298 pp., US \$ 145.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-138-84743-9.

Since this reviewer contributed one of the chapters to this edited volume (which will likely be reviewed in greater depth in a future issue of this journal by another reviewer), this capsule note is intended merely as an overview of the book’s contents. Following an introductory survey of the subject of terrorism innovation and learning as it is applied to the case of al Qaida and its affiliates (a theme running throughout the volume), the book’s chapters discuss topics such as the theoretical underpinnings of the terrorist innovation decisions (by Gary Ackerman), innovation in terrorists’ manufacture of IEDs (John Allison), trends in terrorists’ weaponry and targeting (Adam Dolnik), innovation in al Qaida’s ideology of attacking the West (Soren Hove), Jihadists’ innovation in utilizing cyberspace’s new social media (Nico Prucha), innovation in jihadists’ training (Paul Cruickshank), and innovation in terrorists’ counter-surveillance tradecraft (Joshua Sinai). The remaining chapters provide case studies of innovation and learning in the British Jihad scene (Rafaello Pantucci), Denmark (Morten Skjoldager), and Germany (Yassin Musharabash and Guido Steinberg). The editors’ concluding chapter discusses the volume’s general findings. Dr. Ranstorp is Research Director at the Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies (CATS) at the Swedish National Defence College, Stockholm, and Dr. Normark is a Senior Analyst at the Division of CBRN Defence and Security at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI).

**Mattia Toaldo, *The Origins of the US War on Terror: Lebanon, Libya and American Intervention in the Middle East*** (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 218 pp., US \$ 140.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 45.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-138-85138-2.

A detailed account based on news reports and declassified archival resources of the early formative period in United States’ counterterrorism policy when it responded to the terrorist threats against it in the cases of Lebanon and Libya in the 1980s. With much of the discussion sound, one may not necessarily agree with some of the author’s assumptions, such as that “American policy in the Middle East during the Cold War was indeed based on the idea that the West held the monopoly over modernity” (p. 168) – with ‘modernity’ viewed by the author as a negative notion when in fact, if it had been implemented in the Middle East it would have prevented its current political upheaval and instability. In any case, the components of ‘modernity’ (e.g. education) were never massively promoted by the United States during that period in its counterterrorism campaigns in Lebanon and Libya. Finally, although the author is correct that the Reagan legacy continues to influence U.S. counterterrorism policy, the current terrorism landscape in the Middle East is vastly different and much more threatening than what is portrayed in this book. The author is a lecturer of Political Science and International Relations at IES-Rome.

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Awet T. Weldemichael, Patricia Schneider, and Andrew C. Winner, (Eds.), *Maritime Terrorism and Piracy in the Indian Ocean Region* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 124 pp., US \$ 145.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-138-85064-4.

The contributors to this edited volume examine the challenges presented by maritime terrorism and piracy in the Indian Ocean region, including Somalia and Yemen. Following an introductory overview, the book's chapters cover topics such as "maritime corporate terrorism" in the form of illegal fishing, waste dumping and piracy off the coast of Somalia. These are no doubt criminal activities but hardly actions that fall under the concept of terrorism. The volume also covers maritime security countermeasures by European countries such as Germany and Spain, the security dynamics in Yemen and their impact on maritime threats and the role of international law in countering piracy. This book was originally published as a special issue of the "Journal of the Indian Ocean Region."

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## IV. Resources

### Bibliography: Conflict in Syria (Part 2)

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

*[Bibliographic Series of Perspectives on Terrorism–BSPT-JT-2015-3]*

#### Abstract

*This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on the Syrian conflict. 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, Syria, conflict, uprising, civil war, Assad regime, rebels, al-Nusra Front, Jabhat al-Nusra

*NB: All websites were last visited on 08.06.2015. This subject bibliography was preceded by an earlier part (Part I). To avoid duplication, this compilation only includes literature not contained in the previous part. However, meta-resources, such as bibliographies, were included in both parts. Literature focusing specifically on the “Islamic State” (a.k.a. ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) has been excluded. ISIS will be covered in a forthcoming (summer/fall 2015) special thematic issue of ‘Perspectives on Terrorism’. –See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.*

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### Note

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**See also Resources on the Internet:**

Lone wolf (terrorism) / Wikipedia [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone\\_wolf\\_\(terrorism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_wolf_(terrorism))]

Lone Wolves / The Information Collection [<http://informationcollective.org/lone-wolf/>]

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The Rise of Lone Wolf Terrorists / Time (Magazine) [<http://time.com/3533581/canada-ottawa-shooting-lone-wolf-terrorism/>]

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

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