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Enhancing Security through Collaborative Research

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## Welcome from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume XI, Issue 1 (February 2017) of *Perspectives on Terrorism* at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com>. Our free and independent online journal is a publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI). Now in its eleventh year, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has over 7,000 regular subscribers from 150 countries, and many more occasional readers and website visitors worldwide. The Articles of its six annual issues are fully peer reviewed by external referees while its Research and Policy Notes, Special Correspondence and other content are subject to internal editorial quality control.

While many armed conflicts around the world have become internationalized civil wars, the spillover effects produced by the war in Syria — now in its sixth year — continue to draw an increasing amount of scholarly attention. In our first article, Anne Speckhard and Ahmed Yayla focus on the origins and ominous role of *Emni*, the intelligence service of the Islamic State (ISIS), which casts its long shadow across the region and into Europe. The second article by Hamoon Khelgaat-Doost, also based on local field research, seeks to explain how ISIS manages to instrumentalise women by creating parallel structures for them that combine Islamist female role requirements with active participation in the Caliphate state. Kristy Campion, in turn, tries to make sense of the seemingly senseless destruction of works of art and sites of antiquities by the Islamic State as well as other jihadist groups seeking to leave their mark in history in search of their own identity. As the Islamic State has sought to create both overland and overseas provinces in its drive for expansion, it faces other jihadist groups, one of them being *Ansar al-Sharia* in Libya (ASL)— the topic of an article by Henrik Gratrud and Vidar Benjamin Skretting. ASL has lost some of its foot soldiers to the Islamic State, but ideologically stands closer to al-Qaida while being more firmly rooted in the local conflict dynamics of Libya.

Al-Qaida core is the subject of a Research Note by Sajjan Gohel, who seeks to decipher the statements of Ayman al-Zawahiri for cues about al-Qaida's strategic and ideological directions. A second Research Note by Michele Groppi focuses on Islamist radicalisation in Italy. He finds, based on a large n-study, that the most common explanations for radicalization —including discrimination, economic disparity, and outrage at Western foreign policy— were nowhere as relevant as an individual's interpretation of Islamist ideology. The Special Correspondence section contains a brief contribution from Nina Käsehage who, while researching Salafism in Europe and interviewing more than 170 Salafists, found herself inadvertently becoming involved in de-radicalisation, stopping 35 out of 38 young Muslims intending to go to Syria from doing so.

In the Resources section of this *Perspectives on Terrorism* issue the reader will find— next to the usual book reviews by Joshua Sinai and a bibliography by Judith Tinnes— a new rubric on online resources for the analysis of terrorism by Berto Jongman. Finally, in the Announcements section there is a reminder to those who have finished a doctoral dissertation in 2016 to submit it to the jury for the TRI Thesis Award, with the deadline end of March approaching fast. There is also a report from one of the national/regional networks of Ph.D. theses writers by Jeanine de Roy van Zuidewijn, listing 23 theses in the making and five concluded recently in the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium).

The growth of *Perspectives on Terrorism* as an academic journal owes much to the members of our Editorial Board who act as our regular peer-reviewers. However, beyond them there are many more external peer-reviewers whose specific expertise the editors marshalled in 2016. They are listed— and thanked— in another section of the Announcements. Finally, in our last Announcement we report on the restructuring of both *Perspectives on Terrorism* and its parent organization, the Terrorism Research Initiative.

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

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## Articles

### The ISIS Emni: Origins and Inner Workings of ISIS's Intelligence Apparatus

by Anne Speckhard and Ahmet S. Yayla

#### Abstract

*This article, relying primarily on first person accounts of actual ISIS defectors, expands upon the work of investigative journalist Christoph Reuter of Der Spiegel (Hamburg, GFR) who first reported on the discovery of the files of Haji Bakr, one of the Iraqi organizers of the ISIS's Emni in the years when preparations for the Islamic State were made. Bakr's files make clear that ISIS is not just a terrorist organization, but was set up by former Baathist state intel operators with the intent to build a new state. Our interviews also confirm data collected by New York Times reporter Rukmini Callimachi. Together, these three sources utilized and analyzed here shed light on the highly subversive activities undertaken by the Emni on behalf of the 'Islamic State', also outlining ISIS's aspirations to attack the West.*

**Keywords:** *Emni, intelligence, terrorist tactics, defectors, Iraq, ISIS, Syria, terrorist operations.*

#### Introduction

**F**orty-two ISIS defectors from Syria, Western Europe, Central Asia and the Balkans, interviewed over the last year and a half in our *ISIS Defectors Interviews Project*, reported about life inside ISIS and their reasons for ultimately risking their lives to escape. The sample was collected via a non-probability sampling technique (snowball or chain-referral) resulting in interviews of 32 Syrians in Turkey, 5 Balkans citizens, 3 West Europeans and 2 Central Asians over the time period October 2015 to February 2017. The subjects ranged in age from 15 to 52 and consisted of 6 females and 36 males. Their roles in ISIS varied from fighter, commander, logistical supply personnel, guards, police—including female police, and wives of fighters. Each interview lasted between one and five hours. The interview technique was semi-structured, first allowing the subject to tell his or her story and then a series of 45 questions were applied going in-depth on any areas on which the subject had first-hand knowledge. The defectors were judged genuine on the basis of having been convicted on terrorism charges in 10 cases, or via referrals and verification from known defectors or smugglers in the other 32 cases. They were additionally evaluated as genuine ISIS defectors based on the match of their stories with known facts about ISIS and their post-traumatic responses evidenced while speaking about the brutality of the group.

In addition to their personal stories of life inside ISIS, the defectors also shared their observations of the ISIS intelligence operation—known in Arabic as the “Emni.” From the defectors’ detailed stories, supplemented here with journalists’ reports, and our own experiences interviewing hundreds of terrorists over the years, we have been able to piece together a chilling view of the structure, leadership, duties, funding, and patterns of communication of the ISIS Emni. This article, relying primarily on first person accounts of actual ISIS defectors collected during our work since October 2015 interviewing now 42 ISIS defectors confirm and expand upon the investigative journalist work of Christoph Reuter of *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg, GFR) who first reported on the discovery of the files of Haji Bakr, one of the Iraqi organizers of the ISIS Emni in the years when the Islamic State was first being assembled. Bakr’s files detail the inner workings of ISIS and its intelligence organization and rely heavily on his experience inside Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi intel apparatus. They make clear how ISIS is not only a terrorist organization but was set up by former state intel operators with the intent to function as a state, indeed as what its adherents label the “Islamic State”.[1] Likewise, our

interviews confirm data collected by *New York Times* reporter Rukmini Callimachi. This article builds upon, and confirms, their reports with actual first-person interview material of ISIS insiders. It also sheds light on the highly organized activities undertaken by the Emni since the “Islamic State’s” inception, to give birth to an organization that has become one of the most totalitarian and brutally efficient terrorist organizations to date. The article also sheds new light on its aspirations to attack the West (what the Emni labels “external operations”).

### ***The Emni***

The name “Emni” derives from the Arabic root “amn” (transliterated into English), which means in Arabic ‘trust’, ‘security’, and ‘safety’. In Farsi, “Amniyat”, from the same Arabic root, means ‘security’ and, in Turkish, “Emniyet” means ‘security’ again from the same Arabic root. In the ISIS’s case, the terrorist organization named its intelligence division the “amn” in Arabic. This was passed into Western languages as it is pronounced and written as “emni”. In ISIS parlance, emni basically means ‘intelligence’. The ISIS Emni is responsible for collecting intelligence, both inside the “Islamic State” (IS) and external to it, as well as planning external attacks globally.

The Emni’s tasks, which will be elaborated in detail in the ensuing sections, include, but are not limited to:

- Collecting intelligence for battles in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere;
- Gathering intelligence about everyone who lives inside the “Islamic State”;
- Gathering detailed intelligence about areas that ISIS intends to conquer;
- Studying new recruits to the group, especially those that appear without “referrals”;
- Gathering and analyzing intelligence about possible attacks against IS;
- Spreading ISIS propaganda and fear inside IS and globally, beyond its own borders;
- Recruiting and deploying foreign fighters for intelligence gathering and attacks in their home countries;
- Feeding ISIS media centers about ISIS-inspired and ISIS-directed external attacks;
- Sending and deploying spies and recruiters in Turkey and in other countries, including spying upon the Syrian refugees who are fleeing the violence;
- Monitoring ISIS’s logistical support operations inside Turkey to ensure that there are no leaks or interruptions;
- Interacting with agents from other rival terrorist groups and states, including those from Assad’s intelligence;
- Any kind of critical “dirty job” including organizing slave, oil, wheat and antiquities; trade, as well as assassinations, kidnappings, and bartering for hostages.[2]

### ***Origins of the ISIS Emni***

The origins of the ISIS Emni were revealed in a chance discovery of documents in 2014, owned by Haji Bakr (aka Samir Abd Muhammad al-Khlifawi), a former colonel in the intelligence service of Saddam Hussein’s Air Defense Force. Haji Bakr became the architect of ISIS’s intelligence apparatus—the Emni. Previously jailed

in Abu Ghraib and Camp Bucca, along with ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as well as other embittered former nationalistic Iraqi intelligence officers, Haji Bakr emerged in the leadership of a group, which, after plotting together in Camp Bucca from 2004 to 2008, reunited in 2012 to create the clandestine organization that eventually became known as the “Islamic State.”[3] Eager to retaking power and re-establish Sunni dominance, by making Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi their emir and later “caliph” of what in actuality is a totalitarian state—these former intelligence officers cleverly gave the organization an Islamic face, carefully modeled after the former Iraqi Baath regime but now cloaked in Islamic garb.

Haji Bakr was sent by the group into Syria in late 2012, as a part of a tiny advance cluster, with the mission to help plot out the steps for the future “Islamic State,” to capture as much territory as possible in Syria, and from there to launch an invasion back into Iraq. Haji Bakr settled obscurely in the small Syrian town of Tal Rifaat, north of Aleppo, where he put his immense knowledge of Saddam’s intelligence and totalitarian practices to work, charting out the invasion of Syria and the rise of the “Islamic State”—plans that were later meticulously carried out by ISIS.[4]

Haji Bakr was killed by a Syrian rebel group in 2014 [5], but not before he had transmitted his knowledge and intelligence plans learned inside Saddam Hussein’s former totalitarian regime to his disciples in the nascent “Islamic State.” The documents he produced, discovered after his death, consist of 31 pages of handwritten organizational charts, lists, and schedules, all of which describe how step-by-step subjugate a nation. Christoph Reuter who first analyzed his papers, wrote: “They reveal a multilayered composition and directives for action, some already tested and others newly devised for the anarchical situation in Syria’s rebel-held territories. In a sense, the documents are the source code of the most successful terrorist army in recent history.”[6] In addition, they were the code for a band of determined terrorists to emerge not only as an insidiously brutal terrorist group, but also as a totalitarian state, capable of ruthlessly ruling its citizens and territory.

Just as our interviewed defectors recounted, Haji Bakr’s plan involved the following steps: “Islamic State” recruiters first opened a *dawa* [Islamic teaching] office in the towns they planned to take over, all in an effort to win hearts and minds of locals. In these centers, they recruited spies among those who attended lectures and courses on Islamic life. Most were in their twenties, but some as young as 16 and 17-years-old were also instructed to spy on their own people, assemble lists of the powerful families in the village, and provide details about individuals within those families, their sources of income, and any compromising information that might make them fall prey to blackmail—particularly their *shariah* (Islamic law) violations. Likewise, these spies made lists and descriptions of rebel brigades in the village, their leaders and political orientations. Infiltration was then followed by the elimination of any individual deemed as a potential leader or opponent to ISIS. Moreover, following the lead of other terrorist groups (Basaev’s Chechen rebels for instance), Haji Bakr instructed some of the “brothers,” ostensibly sent in as *dawa* teachers, to marry local women from the prominent families to «ensure [ISIS] penetration of these families without their knowledge.”[7]

Following this blueprint, ISIS overtook Syria, village by village, often completely surprising the residents while avoiding heavy battle losses. The ISIS Emni, following the plans of Haji Bakr, relied on surveillance, espionage, murder, and kidnapping to pave the way for the creation of the powerful totalitarian state structure of the “Islamic State.” At the same time, they also sought to disguise their subversion under the religious cover of Islam, thereby exploiting the religious faith of others to gain ultimate power. Bakr’s plan was to emulate Saddam Hussein’s omnipresent security organs, with the goal of having each individual keeping an eye on each other, thereby creating a security environment in which everyone lived in a state of fear and uncertainty about whether or not they, too, were being spied upon.[8]

Additional ISIS documents captured in Aleppo confirmed the internal surveillance system set up inside of ISIS as well as the highly complex system of infiltration and surveillance of all the groups opposing them. In the captured ISIS archives from Aleppo were long lists identifying the informants installed in each

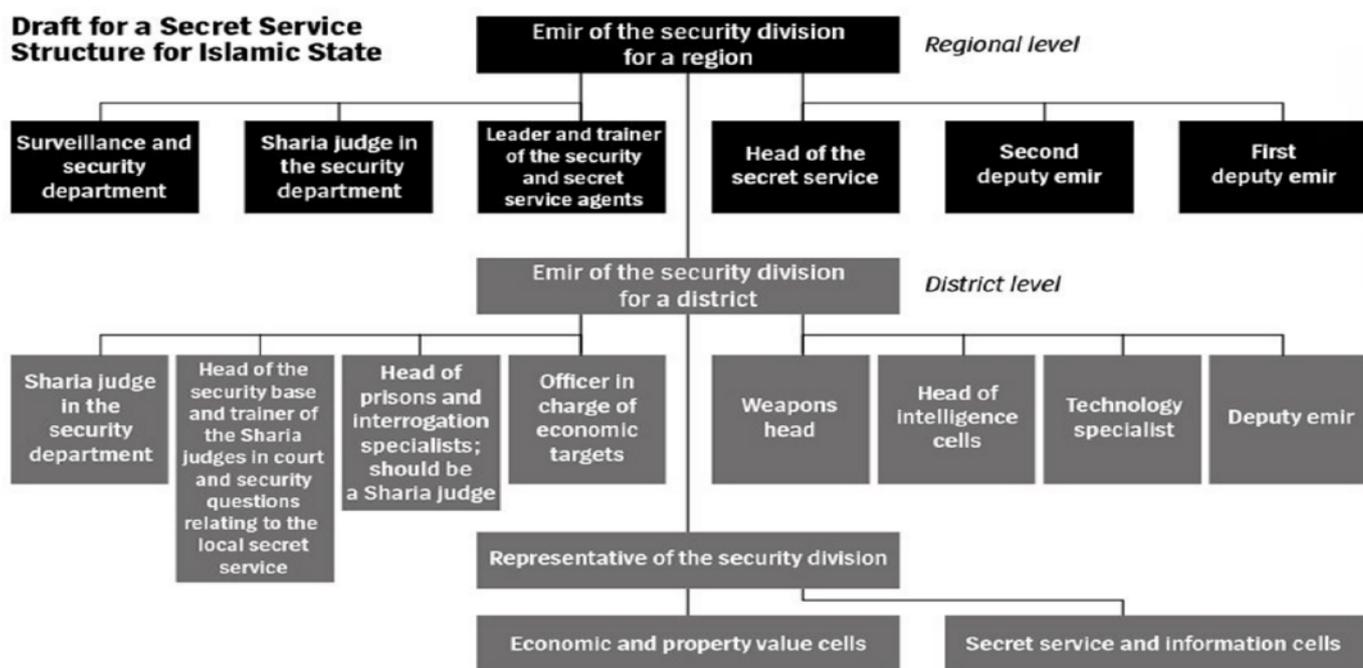
rebel brigade and government militia. These lists even noted who among the rebels was a spy for Assad’s intelligence service. The lists also confirmed instructions for ISIS cadres to strategically marry into influential families ahead of overtaking villages, thereby gaining their loyalty and allegiance before ISIS would take full power.[9]

The Emni was also careful in surreptitiously creating fighting forces in inconspicuous military training camps in remote areas of Syria—that no one could tell who was leading. There they gathered foreign fighters from Arab states, Europe, and the Balkans, most having no serious military experience, and placed them under the command of battle-tested Chechens and Uzbeks which served as elite “special forces” of ISIS.[10] As defectors recounted, this allowed ISIS to create blindly obedient troops who lacked knowledge of the societal terrain in which they operated and had no reasons to show mercy to locals. As a result, they fought loyally and easily followed the ISIS dictum “hear and obey.”[11]

The Emni also used trickery to create fear and doubt within rival Syrian rebel groups. Their fighters always appeared in black masks, giving the impression that there were far more than actually was the case. *Spiegel* reporter, Christoph Reuter, inquired “When groups of 200 fighters appeared in five different places one after the other, did it mean that IS had 1,000 people? Or 500? Or just a little more than 200?”[12] In April 2015 Reuter also noted, “Within IS, there are state structures, bureaucracy, and authorities. But there is also a parallel command structure: elite units next to normal troops; additional commanders alongside nominal military head Omar al-Shishani; power brokers who transfer or demote provincial and town emirs or even make them disappear at will. Furthermore, decisions are not, as a rule, made in Shura Councils, nominally the highest decision-making body. Instead, they are being made by the “people who loosen and bind” (*ahl al-hall wa-l-aqd*), a clandestine circle whose name is taken from the Islam of medieval times.”[13]

Haji Bakr’s hand-drawn organizational chart (below) shows his vision for the Emni, as he drew out the intelligence chain of command that included an emir, or commander, to be in charge of murders, abductions, snipers, communication, and encryption, as well as an emir to supervise the other emirs—”in case they don’t do their jobs well.”[14]

*Source: Christoph Reuter, Der Spiegel* [15]



THE MIRROR

Graphic: A digital rendering of Haji Bakr’s Islamic State organigram.

### ***The ISIS Hierarchy and the Emni***

As we learned from defector interviews, ISIS is a very hierarchical organization, and its members work their way up the ranks. Those at the very bottom, lacking in any skills useful to ISIS, or who displease ISIS leaders in any manner (including learning information that ISIS wishes to cover up), often end as disposable “cannon fodder”—being ordered to “volunteer” for suicide missions or sent to the front lines where they are highly likely to be killed.[16]

The pinnacle of ISIS membership is to be admitted into the prestigious Emni where those selected enjoy more authority, power, and status than other relatively high-status positions in ISIS, such as becoming members of the ISIS police (*hisbah*) or being part of ISIS’s foreign fighters. Cadres in the Emni also have a lot of money at their disposal.[17] When it comes to the relationship between the Emni and *hisbah*, the Emni clearly enjoys a higher status and has operational authority over the *hisbah*. Several of our sources mentioned during our interviews with them that the Emni would take over some of the prisoners or important cases from the hands of the *hisbah* members. This clearly upset and angered the *hisbah* cadres, especially when they found out that their suspects were tortured and killed.

The Emni has a centralized structure and follows a detailed intelligence hierarchy and operations set out by Haji Bakr, who served as a colonel in Saddam’s army (discussed further in the next section). The Emni’s headquarters are located in the Syrian town of al-Bab. Its last known chief was thirty-nine-year-old ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani (previously known as Taha Sobhi Falaha), born near Idlib, Syria.[18] Al-Adnani was killed in August 2016 by a U.S. airstrike in al-Bab.[19] According to a recent ISIS defector, the current Emni leader of Raqqa goes by the *kunya* of “Dr. Samir,” (*kunya* is a nom de guerre used to hide the real identity—a standard practice of professional terrorist organizations). Dr. Samir is considered one of the strongest and most powerful figures of ISIS in Raqqa.[20] However, senior American intelligence and defense officials name the current leader as either one of two top lieutenants of Mr. Adnani who may have taken over when he was killed: either a French citizen who goes by the Arabic *kunya* Abu Souleymane al-Faransi (father of Souleymane, from France) or a Syrian who is known as Abu Ahmad.[21] Ludovico Carlino, a senior analyst with IHS Conflict Monitor in London, raised the prospect of Abu Souleymane (whose family is of either Tunisian or Moroccan origin), having been promoted to the position of top terrorism planner for Europe after Mr. Abaaoud’s death, (another ISIS Emni operative discussed in detail further on).[22]

### ***The Emni’s Intelligence Operations for Governing and Expanding the “Islamic State”***

One of the many things that multiple defectors described, were the many Iraqi former Baathists leading the organization, even in Syria. They had brought with them the tradecraft and totalitarian state style operational intelligence practices learned under Saddam Hussein’s government. These ISIS intelligence agents very cleverly embedded their own cadres into groups that opposed them but also “turned” or recruited selected individuals from rival groups into assets to serve ISIS. ISIS leaders could thereby obtain key information about opposing groups, their fortifications and weak spots prior to attacking them. Likewise, these embedded spies or ISIS “assets” also murdered important leaders in any opposing group, set off explosions, and even ran suicide operations to spread unease and terror throughout a rival group, all with the intent to weaken it prior to facing an attack from ISIS.[23]

In one case, an individual who had been recruited from al Nusra told us about being returned to his regiment as an undercover spy for ISIS. When it came time for ISIS to attack, he was instructed to remain with al Nusra and wear clothing with some special markings that ISIS fighters would recognize, so as not to kill him by accident. He was to remain “in role” throughout the battle, even killing ISIS cadres if necessary to avoid

being caught as a spy. Following orders, he even killed an approaching ISIS cadre and was dumbfounded when a fellow al-Nusra leader reassured him that what he had done was correct. They had each, unknown to the other, been embedded as ISIS spies.[24]

Well before its arrival, the Emni also placed well-paid informants in villages ISIS intended to invade to map out the political and ideological positions of those living there. Upon capturing a new village, and given the fact that spies had already categorized the people, the modus operandi was to quickly order and carry out assassinations of those identified as enemies, or judged as being incapable of working with ISIS.[25]

Twenty-four-year-old Abu Tahir, a Syrian defector told us, “ad-Dawlah [ISIS] started to kill the leaders of opposition before the ad-Dawlah army arrived to fight. So at different places we had been seeing many leadership being killed before the fight by ad-Dawlah spies. There was a bridge in Deir ez-Zor. It is the only way to enter Deir ez-Zor, anyone that controls that bridge controls Deir ez-Zor. Of course no one has boats. Ad-Dawlah came from Raqqa and surrounded Deir ez-Zor from two sides. They captured the bridge and then ordered their people inside ad-Dawlah who had embedded as spies inside Jabhat al Nusra and Jaysh al Hur inside Deir ez-Zor to rise up and create check points and tell the people that ad-Dawlah had captured the city before they had even entered the city [to avoid any fighting by tricking the people].”

The Emni also carefully studies the population of areas they have gained control of to safeguard their positions and to eliminate all dissenters inside the borders of the “Islamic State.” Having learned well from Saddam’s totalitarian state, paid informants are placed everywhere inside ISIS territory, creating a widespread fear of defying the group in any manner. ISIS defectors were even skeptical of their own family members, including young children, fearing that they may have been turned into informants. Some observed children as young as 6 and 7-years-old being trained and deployed for intelligence work. ISIS cadres also reported that they were loath to divulge to other members their doubts and disgust with ISIS’s brutality for fear of being informed upon and punished. Multiple examples were given of beheadings and assassinations for speaking out in any manner, or for expressing doubts about ISIS.[26]

One Syrian defector, a 35-year-old man from Deir ez Zor joined ISIS in 2014 after concluding that they practiced Islam better than the other militias. However, he defected a year later over the behavior of the ISIS Emni. He was upset that after he had invited Free Syrian Army soldiers to join ISIS and having given them guarantees that they were not going to be harmed if they surrendered to ISIS, the ISIS intel nevertheless killed them all without even holding any trial.[27]

The Emni is also responsible for finding spies inside ISIS: capturing, interrogating, torturing, and eventually having them executed.[28] When foreign volunteers to ISIS turn up in Syria, they are held for up to a week in an ISIS holding center near the border, where they are questioned and investigated to be sure they are not spies. Those that are not trusted are sent to the front lines to either prove themselves as valiant or die. [29] Captured documents in Aleppo reveal that the Emni keeps detailed lists and personnel files on the foreign fighters that join them, including letters of application detailing their level of religious knowledge, former military training and terrorism credentials, as well as their telephone numbers, and even their hobbies.[30]

### ***Emni’s Funding***

The Emni receives a significant share of the “Islamic State’s” budget, which is used for propaganda and paying intelligence agents and informants, among other things. Before the heavy onslaught of Russian and Coalition bombings in late 2015-2016, ISIS had no shortage of funds from the sale of oil, slaves, wheat stores and antiquities, bank robberies, and taxation/extortion of cash from those living inside its territory. Funding, up until recent military inroads on ISIS financing, has not been an issue for the Emni who appear to have had large sums of cash at their disposal. Abdelhamid Abaaoud who played a key role in the terrorist attacks in

Paris and Brussels in late 2015 and early 2016, was well financed to travel, rent apartments, move ISIS cadres and to purchase fake passports, weapons, and the necessary ingredients for explosives. French press reported that, according to an interrogated French ISIS cadre, (most likely Reda Hame) Abaaoud was responsible for selecting candidates who could be paid as much as fifty thousand Euros for carrying out attacks. Typical for ISIS, two Tunisians in a higher rank than Abaaoud in the Emni hierarchy, had to sign off beforehand on who would be sent for which missions.[31]

For international operations, under normal circumstances, fighters would not carry large sums of money. Instead, money is sent to different countries in Europe, via the Western Union or MoneyGram via ISIS cadres in Gaziantep or Istanbul. Emni members in Turkey arrange the transfers to occur in smaller amounts to avoid attracting attention, making use of a depositor who is not a member of the Emni.

### ***Emni Cadre Selection and Training***

Emni cadres are considered the “cream of the crop” and chosen accordingly, based on their loyalty and abilities. Those with Western passports who are recruited by ISIS to attack back in their homelands become members who do not stay long in Syria and Iraq, particularly since late 2014 when Western intelligence became more proactive stopping travelers to ISIS and placing them under surveillance upon their return. To avoid detection, the Emni currently instructs foreigners coming to ISIS to book a holiday package in Southern Turkey, complete with a return flight, but instead of taking a vacation, the new recruits are smuggled into Syria for a short time during which they quickly receive the necessary explosives training and are then sent back to their home countries where they are handled both by locally placed ISIS emirs and Emni members still in Syria.[32]

Those from Syria and Iraq who later serve in the Emni are initially not directly assigned to it. They are first tested in different parts of ISIS and, if deemed successful and trustworthy, are transferred to the Emni. Emni members are trained based on the needs and the area they are going to work and receive their training onsite, being mentored as they work under the supervision of senior members. The only specialized courses for Emni members involve military, explosives, and weapons training.[33]

Trust, loyalty, and commitment are key factors for a posting in the Emni, especially if the ISIS member is going to be assigned for an operation outside of Syria and Iraq. Caution is taken because there were several Emni members sent outside Syria and Iraq who later cut their ties with ISIS. They basically had used the task assigned to them by Emni as a means to escape ISIS. As a result, ISIS is very careful not to send people out of their borders in the absence of ultimate trust.

### ***Emni Use and Control of Communications***

While ISIS is infamous for its use of the Internet and its skills with social media, instruments to glorifying its cause abroad and recruiting foreign fighters to ISIS’s so-called “Caliphate”, inside Syria and Iraq, however, there is strict control of Internet usage. The Internet is provided to ISIS fighters and civilians alike, in cafés referred to as ISIS “post offices”.[34] ISIS does not rely on any high-level technical intelligence to monitor Internet usage, but instead places ISIS cadres in their “post offices” to listen in and see what is being communicated. On the technical side, their computers are also monitored in a low-tech manner for Internet history while freely downloadable apps allow monitors to know whether banned sites are being accessed. Unmonitored Internet access can still be obtained via mobile phone service in certain parts of ISIS territory but one runs the risk of discovery of having accessed certain providers if a phone is being searched.

The *hisbah*, or ISIS police, routinely stop those in ISIS territory to sporadically check cell phones of civilians and their own fighters. This is done to ensure they are not downloading religiously banned material

(including music) or accessing banned sites, as well as to check if there is anything compromising in their cell phones in terms of communications with other groups, or states. In this way ISIS tried to ensure that there are no spies among ISIS ranks.[35]

The Emni also investigates the phones of captives and hostages. Several ISIS hostages who have survived reported that one of the first things ISIS cadres demanded from them were the passwords to their phones and social media accounts. Indeed, with personal information so easily accessed via the Internet, the Emni investigates foreign fighters that arrive unannounced or without referrals, as well as hostages and captives via Internet search, to learn if what they are telling them is true and to glean facts about them, such as what assets they and their families possess for procuring ransoms.[36]

Parents of Europeans who had joined ISIS, particularly mothers, reported that their sons routinely called home to talk with them using Internet-based applications such as WhatsApp. However, at least one Belgian mother complained about restrictions being applied in the last year. She noted that her son appeared to be under the supervision of a “minder” who controlled both the lengths of calls home and what could be said to the families.[37]

For its own communications, Emni members learned from the precursor organization (al-Qaeda in Iraq and al-Qaeda central) not to use e-mail or phones that could be traced by foreign intelligence and exploited to discover their plots and whereabouts. They prefer face-to-face communication. This is difficult, however, in those instances when the Emni needs to communicate with foreign fighters they have recruited or deployed outside Syria and Iraq. For that there are special procedures. While regular ISIS members frequently use phone communication via encrypted social media apps like Telegram and WhatsApp, the Emni may avoid even using those means.[38] Instead, to completely avoid security scrutiny, Emni cadres rely on prearranged communication via video games, making use of video call or chat functions inside the games. Communicating behind the game platforms is clever, as they can hide and blend in between the hundreds of people playing, chatting, and communicating on the game platforms at any given moment.[39]

Emni operatives are instructed to be careful with their words and not to reveal much openly about their plans as they communicate, often using cryptic phrases that have been agreed upon beforehand for passing messages. Furthermore, they use VPNs (Virtual Private Network: a technology which establishes an encrypted connection over a less secure network to hide identity, data packages and communication) to camouflage the IPs to which they are connected.[40] Defectors have also reported that the Emni gave recruits it deploys in Europe software such as *CCleaner*, a program to erase a user’s online history. They are also asked to use various encryption programs and instructed to upload encrypted messages into a dead inbox on a Turkish server—to avoid detection of uploaded encrypted e-mails.[41] Likewise, the Emni also uses new converts in Europe to serve as face-to-face go-betweens to carry messages between Emni handlers and their operatives.

Foreign fighters and new recruits acting outside ISIS territory are expected to carry out attacks while minimizing communications. When the attack is imminent, ISIS usually ceases communication, expecting the ordered attack to be carried out immediately and smoothly without additional communication, unless approvals for changes in the plan are needed.[42] Defectors reported, however, that internal “chatter” often named locations of imminent attacks without providing details in the days leading up to it.[43]

In some cases, if a local self-starting jihadist, unknown to ISIS, has carried out an ISIS-inspired attack, then the Emni emir in charge of that country would try to initiate contacts through video games or other available communication medium to back up ISIS media claims that certain attacks were carried out in the name of ISIS.[44] Furthermore, when footage from attack videos are being uploaded, the cadres processing that use new mobile phones and unused accounts so that the uploads cannot be traced.

ISIS media centers also work under the coordination of the Emni, which until recently were being run by al-Adnani, who also functioned as the ISIS spokesman. The Berlin rapper, Denis Cuspert (aka Deso Dogg), is also believed to have had a key role in the ISIS media arm, *al Hayat*, formed in May 2014. *Al Hayat* is one of the key media platforms of ISIS. It produces videos in multiple languages, including English as well as its online magazine *Dabiq* to recruit for ISIS.[45] Before his death, Cuspert often starred in many of these videos as a key propagandist to attract Western recruits.[46] ISIS media is carefully crafted for recruitment and propaganda purposes, sometimes glorifying ISIS barbarities, but also spending considerable efforts in an attempt to convey an image of a stable and functioning utopian state.[47] Before his death, al-Adnani used various media channels to stimulate supporters of ISIS to attack and kill Westerners with stabbings or by running them over with vehicles, even suggesting using a rock as a weapon to crush their skulls. He also promoted the militant jihadi view of “martyrdom” missions, frequently producing media footage that glorified home-grown, ISIS inspired suicide attacks in the West.[48] ISIS media centers are not allowed to push any news or analysis about attacks or incidents happening external to the “Islamic State” without control by the Emni.[49]

### ***The Emni’s Role in External Relations***

The Emni is also responsible for dealings external to ISIS, specifically navigating and bartering among the ever-shifting political alliances in the terrain surrounding ISIS. This became evident when an al-Qaeda emissary sent by Ayman al-Zawahiri bypassed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the titular head of ISIS, and met with Haji Bakr instead, the Emni’s architect, along with other “Islamic State” intelligence officers.[50]

Likewise, in 2014, Haji Bakr rekindled ties with Assad’s intelligence agents; ties made a decade earlier, in 2003, when Assad feared that victorious U.S. troops in Iraq would continue to march into Syria to topple his dictatorship as well. In 2003, Assad’s intel conspired with deposed Iraqi intelligence agents, including Haji Bakr, to transfer foreign fighters through Syria into Iraq. It is estimated that about ninety percent of the suicide attackers—that set off the Sunni/Shia sectarian violence and made it difficult for the U.S. military to provide security for ordinary Iraqis—had entered Iraq via Syria. Haji Bakr had cemented loyalties with the Syrian generals in 2003, who, in 2014, were again happy to reunite for the realization of jointly held goals against common enemies.[51]

Through these rekindled intelligence links, the Emni bartered for assistance from Assad’s air force—that would regularly bomb positions and headquarters of opposing rebel groups, while leaving ISIS fighters unscathed. In return, ISIS, through its Emni, ordered their fighters to refrain from shooting at the Syrian army. Many defectors were deeply disillusioned by these upsetting alliances that included the sale of wheat stores and oil to Assad, oil some of which later found its way into barrel bombs raining down on Syrian civilians.[52] Defectors also observed regime forces strangely giving up territory to ISIS without much of a fight, and even leaving their weapons for ISIS rather than destroying them. However, in those instances when ISIS cadres questioned the decisions of the Emni, they were sharply reprimanded with statements like, “We are a state and we can make deals with anyone we want.”[53]

Among its many tasks, the Emni actively controls and monitors the flow of ISIS’s logistical support operations inside Turkey. These have been crucial to its operations, including the flow of materials used for making explosives (igniters, chemicals, fertilizers, cables, etc. that have been passed from Turkey to ISIS) and other deliveries critical to ISIS.[54] Although Emni cadres do handle logistics themselves, they also commandeer regular ISIS logistical support people as they wish.[55]

The Emni also deploys spies, assassins, and recruiters in countries where there are large numbers of Syrian refugees. This is especially true for Turkey. A defector told us of an Emni agent who clandestinely followed and photographed an ISIS member on his R&R break into Sanliurfa, Turkey, as he met in a café with a

member of the opposition. Upon his return to Syria, this ISIS member was arrested, interrogated, and shown the picture of his meeting, after which he was murdered.[56] The Emni in Turkey also collects intelligence about opposition groups, their activities and silences enemies of ISIS. At least four Syrian opposition leaders who spoke out against ISIS were assassinated in Turkey at the orders of the ISIS Emni.[57]

### ***The Emni's Role in Attacks in the West***

ISIS has declared its desire to expand its “Caliphate” beyond the borders of Syria and Iraq and has worked hard to recruit new members and plan attacks in the West—tasks also carried out by cadres of the ISIS Emni. These activities serve both the purpose of expanding the ISIS “Caliphate” as well as punishing those enemies who attack them the hardest.

According to interrogation reports of arrested ISIS members in Europe and Australia, the Emni has sent operatives into Austria, Germany, Spain, Lebanon, Tunisia, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia. Internal reports from ISIS informants have revealed that the Emni has placed hundreds of its operatives in countries of the European Union, including hundreds in Turkey alone.[58] It is now understood that Emni trained operatives carried out the November 2015 Paris café, stadium, and nightclub attacks as well as recruited the cadres for and built the bombs used in the 2016 Brussels airport and metro attacks. Emni operatives have also been involved in plotting and carrying out many more attacks globally – including multiple attacks in Turkey, Tunisia, and Bangladesh. A *New York Times* review of interrogation records provided from European capitals, revealed that the Emni operatives are selected by nationality and grouped by language into small, discrete units (similar to what defectors told us) whose members sometimes only meet one another on the eve of their departure abroad.[59]

European recruits who are deployed after receiving quick basic training enjoy a great deal of autonomy in choosing their targets and decide on the mode of attack, as are those who never make it to Syria but are drawn into Emni directed operations by ISIS’s online seduction campaign. In its online French magazine, *Dar al-Islam*, ISIS quoted a French security blog that likened some of its attacks to the 19th century German army *Auftragstaktik* [mission tactic] approach in which commanders gave their subordinates a goal and timeframe for completion of the attack with complete freedom to when and how exactly to execute it. The ISIS author implied that in order to avoid detection, the Emni follow such German tactics as they deploy their recruits, giving them “complete tactical autonomy” with “no micro-managing.”[60]

This account has been confirmed by the interrogation records of an Algerian ISIS cadre named Adel Haddadi who had entered Europe alongside Syrian refugees and was eventually interdicted and arrested in an Austrian migrant camp outside Salzburg. He met his co-conspirators only days before leaving ISIS territory, when ISIS Emni leader, Abu Ahmad (who some believe has now taken over after al-Adnani was killed), gave them his Turkish (not Syrian) cell phone number, telling them to label him as FF on their phones. He wanted them to communicate with a Turkish phone that he kept near the border inside Syria, believing it would not raise the same suspicions as calls into Syria. He also supplied the men with two thousand dollars (all in one hundred dollar bills) and had them driven to the Turkish border where another ISIS cadre took their pictures and supplied them with fake Syrian passports, while an ISIS-paid smuggler in Turkey arranged their boat travel to Leros, Greece. Haddadi kept in touch with Abu Ahmad via the encrypted app Telegram as well as via text messages on Abu Ahmad’s Turkish phone and received additional money via the Western Union. This same Turkish number was also found on a slip of paper in the pants pocket of the severed leg of one of the suicide bombers at the Stade de France.[61]

The Emni top leaders identify who among Western ISIS cadres is to be sent back. They choose targets and organize logistics for operatives, including paying smugglers to get them to Europe and, according to European intelligence documents, in at least one case, sending money via Western Union transfers. That ISIS

hierarchy is strictly observed inside the Emni as well is also confirmed by one of the hostages in the Bataclan concert hall who overheard one of the bombers in a moment of doubt, asking his compatriot, “Should we call Souleymane?” referring to a Frenchman who is believed to be one of the top Emni leaders.[62] Emni operatives sent abroad work with autonomy regarding tactics and strategy, but they must have a green light from their Emni leaders before embarking on an attack, noted Jean-Charles Brisard, chair of the Center for the Analysis of Terrorism in Paris.[63]

Harry Sarfo, a German of immigrant descent from Ghana, and now ISIS defector jailed after his three-month stint with ISIS, gave testimony to German prosecutors and was interviewed by journalists about his interactions with the Emni. According to Sarfo, he arrived in ISIS territory only to be met shortly thereafter by masked Emni members who told him that ISIS wanted Europeans like him to stay in his home country, or, in case they had already ISIS, train and quickly return for attacks at home. According to Sarfo, the Emni wanted to plan Western attacks “that happened everywhere at the same time.”[64]

Similarly, another European, Reda Hame, a 29-year-old computer technician from Paris who was arrested in August 2015, was only a week-long member of ISIS when the Emni approached him. His work as a computer technician for Astrium, a subsidiary of the French aeronautics giant Airbus, and his French passport, made him attractive to the Emni. In a six-day training course outside of Raqqa, Hame was shown how to fire an assault rifle, hurl a grenade at a human silhouette, and use an encryption program to enable him to keep in touch with his handlers back in Syria.[65] When Hame was sent back to Europe, his Emni handler drove him to the Turkish border and supplied him with two thousand Euros, passwords to encrypted online forums, and instructions to “Hit a concert hall to cause the maximum number of casualties.”[66] He was also told to pick an easy target and to take hostages while shooting as many civilians as possible until security forces made a “martyr” of him, which is exactly in line with what happened in ISIS attacks carried out by others in November 2015 in Paris.[67]

Hame’s handler was none other than one of the Emni leaders, Abdelhamid Abaaoud—the architect of the deadly 2015 Paris attacks—whose cell also carried out the 2016 Brussels airport attacks. Abaaoud, known in ISIS by the *kunya* Abu Umar al-Baljiki (father of Umar from Belgium), left Belgium via Germany to join ISIS, where he quickly rose up to become the head of an Emni unit devoted to sending Europeans ISIS cadres to attack in their home countries.[68] Abaaoud is now believed to have also recruited and directed Mehdi Memmouche, a French ISIS cadre returned from Syria who gunned down visitors in front of the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014.[69] Abaaoud clandestinely crossed back and forth from Syria into Europe to purchase weapons, recruit others, plot and direct attacks in France and Belgium. At times, he directed attacks from Greece, before he was nearly arrested and escaped back to Syria, only to resurface again in Europe where he again plotted out the infamous Brussels and Paris attacks. Abaaoud is believed to have also mentored the Moroccan born Ayoub al-Khazzani who attempted to kill passengers on a high-speed train from Amsterdam to Paris but was taken down by off-duty American soldiers. Additionally, he is believed to be behind the lesser-known foiled attacks on a Belgian police station, priests in France, and the killing of a ballet instructor.[70]

Algerian born Sid Ahmed Ghlam, a university student residing in France, also appears to have been recruited and handled remotely by the Emni from Syria. He murdered a French woman while trying to take her car, apparently to be used in an ISIS directed attack.[71] Having traveled to Turkey for a ten-day stay, Ghlam possibly represents one of those Emni recruits who crossed briefly into Syria, was trained, and then quickly sent back as to remain undetected by security services. French police stated that Ghlam appeared to have received instructions on how and where to obtain a Kalashnikov, pistol, bullets, and bulletproof vests, and was given orders from Syria to mount an attack on a church in France.[72] Ghlam was charged with “murder, attempted murder, association with criminals with a view to commit crimes against people”—charges which carry a life sentence.[73]

Mohamad Jamal Khweis, a 26-year-old American from Alexandria, Virginia, who joined “Islamic State” but defected during his training, also claimed that the Emni approached him about its desire to send him back to the U.S. for an attack. According to Khweis, foreigners trained by the Emni to return home to mount attacks had to “be single, train in remote locations, be free of any injuries, and had to agree to remain reclusive when returning to their home countries.”[74] Despite some initial hopes by counter-terrorism officials to use Khweis as a regretful ISIS defector to speak out against ISIS, he was not given clemency for defecting early on and currently faces federal charges that could keep him in prison for up to twenty years.[75]

According to former ISIS cadre, German Harry Sarfo, there were ten grueling levels of training one had to undergo to become an Emni operative, training that included running, jumping, push-ups, parallel bars, crawling, swimming, scuba diving, sleeping in holes in the ground, navigating by the stars, and surviving on limited food and water rations and under difficult conditions in the desert. Upon completion of all ten levels, recruits were blindfolded and driven to pledge their allegiance (still blindfolded) to then-Emni leader, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani.[76]

Sarfo was only three days in ISIS occupied Syria before being approached in 2015 by masked men from the Emni who told him they were looking for Europeans, particularly Germans and British citizens who were willing to return for attacks at home. They claimed to have more than enough French fighters willing to do so, but lacked British and German volunteers. Sarfo recounted being told that al-Adnani had set up an elaborate system of lieutenants posted globally, each empowered to plan attacks in different parts of the world, including a “secret service” for European, Asian and Arab affairs.[77]

Harry Sarfo claimed that Emni’s undercover operatives in Europe evade detection by making use of “clean men”—new converts with no known ties to extremist groups as go-betweens. They link up new recruits attracted by ISIS propaganda and eager to carry out attacks with trained underground operatives who instruct them on everything they need to know—from how to make a suicide vest to how to credit their violence to the “Islamic State.” In this way Emni ensures that its underground operatives avoid direct contact with new recruits, remain hidden while giving out instructions and receive video-taped pledges of “martyrdom” and allegiance to ISIS for upload and later use by ISIS’s propaganda channels.[78]

Ibrahim Boudina, arrested in February 2014, was another European ISIS operative sent back from Syria to attack. Pulled over only four miles from the Turkish border by Greeks, he was questioned but released, as there was no warrant for his arrest in Europe. That happened despite the fact that the Greek police found fifteen hundred Euros in his car and a French document entitled, “How to Make Artisanal Bombs in the Name of Allah.” It turned out that Mr. Boudina’s residence was already being wiretapped by the French police as he was on their watch list as part of a cell of 22 men radicalized at a mosque in Cannes, France. Only a few weeks after being stopped by Greek police, Boudina’s mother received a call from Syria informing her that her son had been sent on a mission. While searching his residence, police discovered in a utility closet 600 grams of TATP—the same explosive used in the Paris and Brussels attacks.[79] Evidently, Boudina had been trained in Syria for the preparation of explosives.

## **Conclusion**

The defectors testimonies as well as the captured documents of Haji Bakr make clear that ISIS is a ruthless organization. It profited from the meticulous intelligence planning techniques of former Iraqi Baath regime elements who joined ISIS. Emni has been the core structure that gave birth to ISIS, both as a terrorist organization and as a nascent totalitarian state. Emni was formed by disgruntled former Sunni Baathists dismissed from the intelligence regime of Saddam Hussein following the 2003 American-led Coalition invasion of Iraq. Angry over the Shia ascendance in Iraq and by the many attacks against Sunnis, and fiercely nationalistic, as well as strategic and fanatical in its drive to put Sunnis back into power, the

ISIS' Emni cadres have seen it opportune to clothe themselves in Islamic garb in order to manipulate the masses. Yet, on closer scrutiny, it is clear that there is nothing Islamic in their actions, nor in their corrupt and ever shifting alliances, their calculated plotting, their masterfully carried out propaganda campaigns, and its Internet seduction. As Christoph Reuter wrote of ISIS, "Faith, even in its most extreme form, is just one of many means to an end. Islamic State's only constant maxim is the expansion of power at any price." [80] Power and restoration of Sunni dominance in Iraq and Syria is the main mission of the ISIS Emni and calculated manipulation of faith is only one of its means to that end.

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### **Notes**

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- [26]Ibid.
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## Women of the Caliphate: the Mechanism for Women's Incorporation into the Islamic State (IS)

by Hamoon Khelghat-Doost

### Abstract

*The ongoing incorporation of women into the Islamic State (IS) is unlike what any other jihadi organization in the recent history of jihadism has attempted to achieve. An important question is therefore: how does IS reconcile its ultra-conservative Islamic narrative of women, with the organization's incorporation of women? By analyzing primary data collected through fieldwork in the Middle East, the author of this article argues that, through the platform of 'gender-segregated parallel institutions,' IS has established a mechanism by which Muslim women are being effectively incorporated into its envisaged Islamic State. Through this mechanism, IS has inspired a substantial number of women from around the globe by advocating an alternative narrative of divine redemption to the one of secular emancipation of women.*

**Keywords:** ISIS, Islamic State, Caliphate, Women, gender-segregated parallel institutions, redemption

### Introduction

Women in black veils go about the street bazaar, purchasing household items, adhering to a strict law that requires them to be accompanied by a male relation; on the other side of the street, a woman is being harshly questioned by several armed and veiled female police personnel regarding her lax dress code; little girls put up their veils to get ready to go to their girls' schools; a husband at a hospital waits for news of his wife, who is in labor, behind doors that say "men strictly not allowed." These scenes may seem highly exaggerated reflections of the ordinary lives of many women in conservative Middle Eastern societies; however, these are real scenes of life for women under the Islamic State (IS).

Contrary to the extremely conservative conventional views of jihadi organizations over women's participation in social affairs[1], the increasing trend of women's incorporation[2] into IS is unlike any other jihadi organization in the recent history of jihadism. It is estimated that over ten percent of westerners, who made *hijrah* (migration) to IS territories, are female[3] while this number is much smaller and often close to none in most other jihadi organizations. This figure does not include local women and those migrated to IS territories from non-western countries, especially from the Islamic world. Therefore, an important question is how does IS reconcile its strict ultra-conservative Islamic narrative of women, with the organization's growing incorporation of the same? Current scholarly research on women's incorporation into IS focuses mostly on women's motivations for joining IS. Due to security and logistical restrictions, research on the dynamics of women's incorporation within IS's territory and institutions has received less scholarly attention.

By analyzing primary data (including interviewing Syrian and Iraqi refugees and government and security officials) collected through fieldwork between May 2015 to December 2016 in Kurdistan of Iraq and along the Syrian borders in southern regions of Turkey and Lebanon, the author of this article argues that, through the platform of 'gender-segregated parallel institutions,' IS has established a mechanism by which many women are being successfully incorporated into its vision for an Islamic society. Understanding this mechanism of incorporation provides a better understanding of IS's view on women, the gender dynamics[4] within its territory, and ultimately, the utopian society it promises.

For this article, 20 male and 30 female Syrian and Iraqi refugees were interviewed in refugee camps in Iraqi Kurdistan and in different cities of Turkey and in Beirut, Lebanon. The data collection process also included several interviews with military and security officers, local NGO members, relevant government officials,

academicians, and social activists in Iraq, Turkey, and Lebanon over a course of four months from 2015 to 2016.

### ***Islamic State: One of a Kind***

The rise of the IS has changed the geopolitical image of the Middle East. Started as a branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq with *salafi* jihadi ideology, the organization shocked the world by announcing the establishment of a Caliphate in 2014 in a vast geographic area within Iraq and Syria. Contrary to the vague vision of most other jihadi organizations, such as Al-Qaeda, about running a supra-nationalist world by jihadi leaders[5], the main objective of IS appears to be to embrace a new vision for society, governed by a strict and harsh interpretation of sharia law in practice.[6] For this reason, IS should not be studied as a mere insurgent organization, such as Al-Qaeda, but an organization in charge of running a functioning proto-state. Contrary to other jihadi organizations, IS's different take on state building in practice paved its path to incorporate thousands of women from around the world in its vision society.

The classic image of a jihadi organization is one of a transnational organization comprising "militant Sunni Muslim activists, who feel that they must be engaged in a prolonged and perhaps even endless war with the forces of evil." [7] This description can be easily applied to most well-known jihadi organizations, including Al-Qaeda, Ansar Al-Sunnah, Al-Shabaab, Jemaah Islamiyah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Lashkar-i Jhangvi, Islamic Jihad Union of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and others. Most Jihadi groups retreat to their hidden safe houses after a hit-and-run operation and hold no identified territorial areas. Due to the militant nature of such groups and organizations, violence is "first and foremost a sacramental act of divine duty (martyrdom) executed in direct response to some theological demand (jihad) or imperative." [8]

In contrast with the militant nature of jihadi organizations, Islamic jurisprudence puts restrictions on women's engagement with militant activities. Some also argue that "classical Islamic sources are fairly negative about the role of women in military activities," [9] and these texts emphasize the importance of women's roles as "mother, sister, daughter, and wife of Muslim men at war." [10] Jihadi organizations largely "either purposely refrained from calling on women to make their presence felt on the battlefield as warriors or have explicitly excluded them." [11] Although women are incorporated by some jihadi organizations, including Al-Qaeda, Islamic Jihad Union of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, their number remains extremely modest compared to those of their male counterparts. The most significant manifestation of women's incorporation into jihadi organizations is in their role as suicide bombers, which is, to a great extent, a tactical tool more than an expression of some social vision. Due to the lack of trained female officers and operatives in the security structures of most Islamic countries and due to religious and cultural obstacles facing male officers in dealing with women, female suicide bombers enjoy tactical superiority over men in the conduct of suicide operations. [12] However, due to strong religious and cultural negative sentiments against the use of women in violent operations, even this tactical advantage has not resulted in extensive use of women in combat roles.

Building upon classical Islamic sources, women's lower incorporation into jihadi organizations is justified by them through the concepts of *mahram* and sexual purity. Based on these conservative concepts, a Muslim woman should always be accompanied by a male *mahram* (either her husband or a relative in the prohibited degree of marriage) in public. Due to the nature of war zones, "women warriors would inevitably find themselves in the unlawful company of males who are not their close relative;" [13] therefore, to avoid such seemingly sinful situations, jihadi organizations initially banned women's participation in jihad. Building upon such narrations of sexual purity, jihadi organizations initially found themselves in an ideological battle against "a world characterized by sexual disorder, one in which females are seen as encroaching on the male domain." [14] Subsequently, they emphasized the domestic roles of women in jihad, which included being virtuous wives to male jihadists and good mothers to the next generation of jihadists.

Contrary to classic jihadi organizations and with establishing a supra-nationalist functioning state in practice as its core objective, IS has been a game-changer among jihadi organizations. Established its caliphate in war-torn Syria and Iraq, IS successfully moved beyond a mere Islamist militant organization by setting up its own alternative institutions to fill the governance vacuum in parts of Syria and Iraq. Like institutions in any other functioning state, IS institutions include a wide range of sectors, including police, military, education, healthcare, finance, and governance.[15] By moving towards establishing a state, IS is in charge of running a defined territory and the population within it.

The story of jihadi organizations establishing their proto-states does not start with IS. Several other jihadi organizations have tried the state-building process, including Jund al-Islam of Iraq or Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam (MSSI) of Libya. However, the territories and population under their control were very localized and limited. They failed to develop full-fledged governing institutions. Only the Taliban of Afghanistan and Al-Shabaab of Somalia have established their rule over relatively large territories and population. However, although IS is not the first jihadi organization to establish its proto-state, it is relatively the most successful among them in incorporating women into its state apparatus. The call by the its Caliph, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi[16] in early 2014 upon all Muslims around the world to make *hijrah* (migration) to IS territory was received positively by thousands of Muslim women from around the globe.[17]

It is argued[18] that jihadi proto-states share four common characteristics. First, they are “ideological projects.” In this regard, these proto-states are established upon the divine principles of sharia law; therefore, there is limited room for ideological evolution, pragmatism, and gradualism within them. Second, these proto-states are “international projects.” In this regard, they are keen on absorbing foreign fighters while also seeking ideological approval from foreign clerics. Third, these proto-states manifest “aggressive behavior vis-à-vis neighboring states and the international community.” Most of these proto-states are considered significant threats to international security and stability. Last, these proto-states are committed to “effective governance” and have set up well-functioning systems of justice (according to sharia law) and service provision within their territories.

Although, in principle, IS shares the same characteristics, the organization has a unique approach to these characteristics, which makes it ultimately different from all the other jihadi-proto-states. In terms of the “ideological project,” unlike any other jihadi proto-state, IS has shown a great degree of pragmatic flexibility, including security and intelligence cooperation[19] with non-Islamist groups, such as former Baathists.[20] Regarding the “international project,” IS showed a clear understanding of the concept of governing a state in the 21st century. IS’s professional use of electronic and social media platforms to spread its ideology has earned them the title of “the Digital Caliphate.”[21] The call for foreigners to join its proto-state was not only for fighters, but also for “doctors, judges, engineers and experts in Islamic jurisprudence to help develop the caliphate.”[22] IS’s effective and comprehensive approach towards establishing state institutions to use such professionals is also not comparable with the primitive state institutions of the Taliban and Al-Shabaab. While the caveman approach of the Taliban and Al-Shabaab towards running a state is based on primitive tribal structures[23] with poorly functioning crude institutions, IS has successfully established “a holistic system of governance that includes religious, educational, judicial, security, humanitarian, and infrastructure projects”[24] within its territories in Iraq and Syria.

The above-mentioned approach of IS is well manifested in IS’s ability to incorporate a higher number of women within its state apparatus than any other jihadi organization. It is argued here that this unprecedented incorporation of women is made possible through IS’s pragmatic approach towards learning from other contemporary historical cases and through the mechanism of establishing ‘gender-segregated parallel institutions’ within its evolving state apparatus.

### ***Learning from Others***

Unlike jihadi organizations, such as the Taliban and Al-Shabaab with ultra-rigid orthodox ideological tenets, IS has repeatedly shown interest in adopting pragmatic approaches learned from others. Implementing a gender-segregated parallel institution, with the idea borrowed from the practices of Iran and Saudi Arabia, is an example of such pragmatic approaches. IS might not be the first organization to use gender segregation as a tool for social engineering;[25] however, it is the first jihadi organization to implement this policy effectively throughout its territory.

Post-1979 revolutionary Iran is one of the classic examples of nation-wide implementation of gender segregation. Iranian women were exercising a higher level of rights than the women of their neighboring countries during the secular regime of the Shah, including suffrage (in 1962) and Family Protection Law (in 1967), which “gave women the right to divorce, with custody of their children upon the court’s approval, and increased the minimum age of marriage for girls from 13 to 15.”[26] The Shah’s top-down policies in offering such rights to women, combined with his efforts for promoting liberal western social values, faced a strong backlash from the largely conservative and religious society of (rural) Iran.[27] Ayatollah Khomeini (later the leader of the Iranian revolution) called these rights as being incompatible with Islam and warned the Shah of the consequences of pro-Western social policies. Many religiously conservative Iranian families were reluctant to allow their female members of families to participate in social activities, including attending high school and university, which were co-ed.

Following the 1979 revolution, the new regime of Iran imposed a rigid gender-segregation and dress code for women in several public spaces, including “schools (from primary to high school), sports centers, and public transportation.”[28] As a result of this new approach, many Iranian women banned by their conservative families from participating in social activities during the Shah’s era found such a gender-segregated society an opportunity to expand their social participation. The number of girls attending schools increased significantly upon establishing gender-segregated schools and the rural female literacy rate, which was 17% in 1976, increased to 70% in 2006. While women’s share of university population was only 30% in 1976, this share rose to over 60% in 2006.[29] Therefore, gender-segregation created a platform for conservative Iranian women to increase their social participation.

The same patterns of gender-segregation can be traced in Saudi Arabia, where most institutions, including schools, universities, several healthcare centers, banks, and restaurants, are gender-segregated. Many houses in Saudi Arabia even have different entrances for men and women.[30] As many women in Saudi Arabia wear a veil, dining in restaurants is a challenge as they need to remove the veil to eat. Restaurants allocate specific gender-segregated dining halls to families and women.[31]

Patriarchy[32] as a “social constant” is profoundly rooted in all forms of private and public lives of most Muslim societies, especially those in the Middle East, and extend to the political, social, and economic spheres.[33] Gender-segregation has, therefore, enabled the male-controlled states, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, to extend their strict and harsh patriarchal control over women beyond their private lives at home into to public space. Gender-segregation by these patriarchal states enables them to protect what they believe is the sexual purity of Muslim women by minimizing interactions between different sexes in public sphere. This would, in their interpretation, prevent sinful acts, including fornication and adultery, and therefore ensures society’s commitment to the state’s strict interpretation of Islamic morality and codes of ethics.

### ***Redemption vs. Emancipation***

Aware of the successful use of gender-segregation by countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia to control the female half of the populace, IS imposed a harsh and unyielding system of gender-segregation in public spaces throughout its territories in Iraq and Syria. Imposing this system has been achieved through the mechanism

of establishing 'gender-segregated parallel institutions.' This means a section within almost every existing IS institution is assigned to women only to address relevant women's affairs. These sections are fully run by women, and their level of communication with their male counterparts is minimized. This system comprises all IS state institutions, such as education, healthcare, administration, police, finance, and service provision.

As a functioning proto-state with a clear vision for the establishment of a utopian alternative society to Western secularism that is based on sharia law[34], IS cannot afford to ignore the importance of half of its society's populace. By establishing gender-segregated parallel institutions, IS has overcome the *mahram* obstacle in incorporating women into its state apparatus. As mentioned earlier, providing a religiously permitted environment for women to perform their duties is a challenging task for classic jihadi organizations, such as Al-Qaeda. By establishing 'women-only' sections within every institution, IS has practically reduced mixing between opposite sexes and has provided a functioning environment to utilize women in different roles. Through its propaganda magazine *Dabiq*, IS portrays the situation for Muslim women in Western and secular societies as one where it is "impossible to live as a pious and righteous Muslim." [35] IS therefore promises all those Muslim women, who are marginalized for their orthodox religious and ideological beliefs in Western secular societies[36], a utopian society in which they can fulfill their social obligations, while adhering to their strict interpretation of religion.

For instance, women banned from entering public schools for wearing a burqa[37] or face veil in France, can become teachers and school principals in gender-segregated schools within territories controlled by Islamic State. In an article in IS's *Dabiq* in 2015[38], IS criticizes women who continue study in secular medical schools around the world and instead calls on them to make *hijrah* and to enroll in IS's medical schools in Raqqa and Mosul to serve the *ummah* rather than Western infidels, adding, "the Islamic State offers everything that you need to live and work here, so what are you waiting for?"

By establishing gender-segregated parallel institutions, IS unveils its vision of a utopian society for women. Through these parallel institutions, IS challenges the Western secular (in its eyes, sinful) emancipation of women and, instead, offers its own version, which includes the benefit of divine redemption. In his 2014 call for jihad and migration, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the IS Caliph, directly addressed this issue: "is it not terrorism when women are prevented from wearing the hijab in France? All this is not terrorism, but freedom and democracy?" [39]

By replacing redemption for emancipation, IS rejects Western gender equality, based on its orthodox interpretation of Islam. In this strict interpretation, biological differences between men and women are stressed. For the same reason, women are viewed as more emotional and physically weaker and therefore not equal to men in the social, economic and political spheres. This has resulted in men's superiority over women in issues including "marriage, divorce and remarriage, leadership in religion and politics, inheritance, witness in a court of law, dowry, travel, business and work, and dress and clothing." [40]

In line with the above argument on biological differences, modesty for women is another important issue in IS's view on women. The notion that Eve is the initial seducer and that women have thereafter been vessels of sinful sexual power, has set the premise for IS to establish patriarchal restrictive regulations, curtailing and controlling women's social activities. IS views women's emancipation in Western secular societies as to unleash this sexual sinful power, something held to be against Islamic teachings. One of the Quranic verses selectively used by IS to justify its opposition to Western secular emancipation is, "And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their chests, and not to reveal their adornment." [41] In line with this Quranic command, IS forces women to "adhere to humility, scarves, and coverings" [42] by which their power can be controlled and their path to divine redemption will be paved. To achieve this objective and as an authoritarian, ideologically driven proto-state[43], not only in charge of earthly affairs of its citizens, but

also their divine ones, IS offers gender-segregated parallel institutions as a mechanism for women to achieve divine redemption, while fulfilling their earthly commitments.

### ***Gender-Segregated Parallel Institutions in Practice***

Empirical data and evidence collected through fieldwork in Kurdistan of Iraq, along the Syrian borders in southern regions of Turkey and Lebanon reflect the effectiveness of IS in reconciling its ultra-conservative Islamic narrative of women, with the organization's continuing incorporation of the same through establishing gender-segregated parallel institutions. Iraqi and Syrian refugees interviewed for this research as well as conversations with Iraqi and Turkish security and military officials, confirmed the existence and functioning of these institutions across IS's territories.

A 32-year-old former resident of Raqqa[44] stated she has frequently come across IS's all-women sharia police brigade of Al-Khansa in the streets of Raqqa. According to her, the *al-Khansa* women normally drive SUV cars with the IS logo on it. They are wrapped in long black robes and use black gloves. The *al-Khansa* women are armed with AK-47s and pistols. They regularly stop women on the street and ask for their identity and inquire where they are heading. If they find a problem with women's dress code (mostly if the robe is too tight or in any color other than black), they take them to one of *al-Khansa's* special facilities.[45] "*Al-Khansa* has its own headquarters in Mosul, and women who are arrested are interrogated and even harshly tortured (especially Yazidi[46] women) by *al-Khansa* female officers. No man is allowed to enter their center. They come from different Arab countries, and you can only identify them by their Arabic accent," stated a 44-year-old female former resident of Mosul, Iraq.[47] All the Syrians and Iraqis interviewed for this research emphasized that *al-Khansa* women on streets are consisting of Arab nationals. This validates reports on the possible use of *al-Khansa* Western women in other capacities than patrolling streets.[48] *Al-Khansa* is being effectively utilized by IS to expand its brutal control over women and to repress women of religious minorities and those Muslim women opposing its ideological interpretation of Islam.

The same arrangements can be seen in other institutions within IS's territories. A 29-year-old mother of two girls who fled the city of Raqqa in early 2016 mentioned "upon capturing the city, IS banned men to enter girl schools. All teachers, principals, and cleaners at her daughters' schools in Raqqa were females. Students were forced to cover their hair even in the class. All teachers were also forced to wear black robes while at school." [49] A 22-year-old former resident of Mosul also stated that "her younger sister's (15-years-old) high school was frequently checked by *al-Khansa* forces to ensure no male is hanging around its entrance. A girls' school was also shut down by IS as it was in a close distance with a boys' school." [50] According to her, Al-Mabra'a Elementary School and Al-Ryad Secondary School are among the few girls' schools which are still functioning in Mosul. A 35-year-old former resident of Raqqa pointed out that "IS has established an English language girl's school named Aisha for the daughters of foreign migrants to IS. The teachers of the school are all Western females." [51]

Healthcare is another sector in which IS has imposed its gender-segregated parallel institution system. According to a 35-year-old former resident of Mosul, "IS has assigned a section in Mosul general hospital for women only. In this section, female doctors and nurses are allowed to provide services only for women patients. Both patients and doctors are forced to wear black robes and only behind the closed doors of [the] doctor's office, patients are allowed to take off their robe if necessary." [52] The same situation can be observed in hospitals and clinics in different cities throughout IS-controlled territories. "There is always a woman in a black robe guarding the entrance of the women-only section of the hospital, and she does not allow any man, even the husband of a patient, to get into the section," [53] said a 28-year-old former resident of Raqqa.

Gender-segregation has been also expanded into IS's economic sector, including its tax collection system. After losing control over oil fields in Iraq and Syria, IS is becoming more dependent on tax collection as its

main source of income. The system relies on the income tax collected by the agents, commonly known as tax collectors. “IS female tax collectors were visiting the hospital I was working in on a monthly basis and upon calculating my income tax and receiving the cash, they were issuing me an official stamped receipt,” [54] stated a 40-year-old female nurse working in a hospital in Mosul till late 2015. A 33-year-old former shopkeeper in the city of Raqqa also mentioned he had witnessed a room in the offices of IS’ tax authority in Raqqa assigned for women to pay their income tax. According to him “only women who wanted to pay their taxes (including the religious tax of *zakat*[55]) could enter the room as an IS armed member was guarding its door.” [56]

Women who make *hijrah* (migration) to IS territories also play an important role in supporting IS’s counter narrative of women’s place against that of the Western secular societies. A specific women-run division in IS’s state apparatus, commonly known as ‘housing and sheltering division’, is in charge of these women’s affairs. “IS female housing and sheltering officers are assigned to make necessary arrangements for the new single foreign members of IS to assimilate into IS apparatus. These women are in touch with the new members from the moment they pass the borders into IS territories” [57] said a 26-year-old female former resident of Raqqa. A 38-year-old Iraqi female refugee also mentioned these officers are those “teaching the single newcomer women basics of Arabic language to facilitate their incorporation into local societies. These officers work under the female division of IS’s department for *muhajirun* (migrants) affairs. These officers also act as matchmakers by introducing the single women to male jihadi fighters.” [58]

## Conclusion

IS might not be the first jihadi organization that has successfully established a proto-state, but it is the most effective and practical in terms of amount of territory and size of population controlled, the level of institutionalization and the number of foreign members. Despite its brutal treatment of women of minority religious sects (and those ideologically opposing it) and, unlike any other jihadi organization, IS has incorporated a wide range of women from many countries, including from Western societies. The high number of women who made *hijrah* (migration) to IS territories is historically unprecedented.

Through establishing gender-segregated parallel institutions, IS has – unlike other jihadi organizations – found a practical solution for the religious obstacle of *mahram* in utilizing women in different capacities. These parallel institutions have provided IS female members with an enabling women-only environment to perform the social obligations assigned to them by IS, with the lowest possible degree of intermixing with the opposite sex. IS has pushed the boundaries of women’s utilization in jihadi organizations beyond combat tactical capacities. As a functioning proto-state, female IS members are assigned to different gender-segregated parallel institutions to address women’s affairs throughout IS territories. The services offered by these parallel institutions cover a wide range, including education, healthcare, police, and charity.

Although IS’s brutality against women (especially those of religious minorities and ideological opposition) is undisputable, through the mechanism identified in this article, IS has inspired a large number of women abroad by offering them an alternative narrative to the one of secular Western female emancipation, emphasizes divine redemption over gender-equality.

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## Notes

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- [50] Face to face interview. 13 July 2016, in Dibaga Refugee Camp in Northern Iraq.
- [51]Face to face interview. 22 May 2016, in the city of Kilis at the border of Turkey and Syria.
- [52] Face to face interview. 13 July 2016, in Dibaga Refugee Camp in Northern Iraq.
- [53] Face to face interview. 1 November 2015, in Istanbul, Turkey.
- [54] Face to face interview. 13 July 2016, in Dibaga Refugee Camp in Northern Iraq.
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## Blast through the Past: Terrorist Attacks on Art and Antiquities as a Reconquest of the Modern Jihadi Identity

by Kristy Campion

### Abstract

*Terrorist destructions of art and antiquities could be the result of extreme Salafist ideology, with contextual and strategic concerns ancillary in the targeting process. Previously, politico-military, theological, and economic approaches were used to explain terrorists targeting cultural property. This article examined the ideological and historical context, and explores the strategic appeal for terrorists targeting heritage. The four case studies include the Islamic Group's attack on the Temple of Hatshepsut, Al Qaeda's bombing of the Askariya Shrine, Ansar Dine's assault on Timbuktu, and the Islamic State's partial destruction of Palmyra. Findings suggest that jihadists are engaging in a subconscious reconquest of the contemporary Salafi identity, through opportunistic (yet deliberate) dominance performances. These performances take advantage of the strategic appeal of heritage sites, while sending symbolically loaded messages to target audiences. Through re-enacting the Abrahamic rejection of idols, jihadists reimagine and propagate themselves as heirs to ancient conquest traditions. This tradition—involving the rejection, defacement, and destruction of works of art and antiquities—is rooted in a chaotic attempt at reconstructing identity. To that end, art works and antiquities are being targeted by jihadists who are engaged in reimaging the highly idealised, Al Wala jihadi, and benefiting from the subsequent influence and attention.*

*Keywords:* terrorism, heritage, antiquities, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Islamic State, Al Qaeda

### Introduction

Antiquities and works of art are increasingly targets of acts of terrorism. In the past, terrorists of the first three secular waves of terrorism showed little inclination for deliberate attacks on heritage sites and monuments. Such targeting by jihadi groups appears to be unique to the fourth, religious wave of terrorism, notably conducted by extreme Salafists.[1] Previous explanations have tied such attacks to economic gain, assaults on cultural memory, ignorance, or cultural anachronism. This article first examines the historical and strategic context for attacks with the help of four case studies. Subsequently, it considers the ideological motivations and associations, examining the interrelationship between strategic access, symbolism, historical context, and ideological influences.

The case studies are Islamic Group's attack on the Queen Hatshepsut's temple in 1997, Al Qaeda's attack on the Askariya Mosque in 2006, Ansar Dine's desecration of Timbuktu in 2012, and the partial destruction by the Islamic State of the Palmyra ruins in 2015-2016. Conclusions throughout are limited to global Salafi jihadists. The four cases appear to be ideologically motivated, with strategic and historical concerns ancillary. While these were simple attacks in terms of strategy, they were all redolent in symbolism which was not explained by the strategic logic itself. The symbolism inherent in the targeting can lend itself to greater deductions. Are attacks on art and antiquities merely acts of iconoclastic destruction, and if so, why are so many resources going towards what would otherwise be merely an opportunistic attack on a soft target? It is suggested in the following that the symbolism of these attacks is integral to dominance performances which a) overwrite and replace place-based memories with a new, more favourable narrative, and b) supports a simple propagandistic message in line with ideology, which c) contributes, subconsciously perhaps, to a restructuring and reimaging of the Caliphate concept and the idealised, pure jihadi fighter.

The attackers were found to be using heritage site targets as props for an ideological narrative of re-identification. Significant place-based memories are erased and replaced with a specific Salafist narrative through the re-enactment of Koranic traditions of conquest and dominance. This idea, reinvigorated by Sayyid Qutb, but consolidated by Ayman Al-Zawahiri, is based on the concepts of *Al Wala* and *Wal Bara*, loyalty and enmity, cleanliness and the repudiation of the unclean. The targeting of art and antiquities by Salafists is not simply the result of ignorance, but constitutes a fundamental reconquest of modern jihadi identity. Through the Abrahamic rejection of idols, jihadists reimagine themselves as heirs to an ancient, purifying conquest performance. This new explanation, as will be shown below, provides a distinct interpretation from previous approaches.

### ***Something Old, Something New***

Conflict is rarely kind to art and antiquities. The act of destroying cultural property in order to destroy the foundations of a community or people has a long history. This destruction has commonly manifested itself as the looting of cultural property for profit. Art and antiquities are valued as sources of potential capital, wherever there exists a commercial supply and demand for the stolen goods, or, alternatively their deconstruction can serve to extract its individual resources (e.g., gold, silver and ivory). In the past, the main approaches for researching the destruction of works of art and antiquities have been politico-military, theological, or economic.

There are ancient precedents for politico-military destruction. The Roman Empire was notorious for destroying sacred indigenous sites. According to Roman law, sacred indigenous sites were not legally considered consecrated—despite the mythologised Roman *pietas*—respect for gods and ancestors. As a result, according to Steven Rutledge, such sites were “fair game for fire and sword.”[2] Acts included the politically motivated destruction of the shrine of Bacchus and the temple of Isis.[3] Cicero was known for using such events, including the alleged burning of the temple of Nymphs by Clodius, to discredit his enemies. Rutledge’s research demonstrates that the destruction of sacred sites was often a result of internal Roman politics.[4]

Throughout World War II, works of art and antiquities were sought after war booty, with Adolf Hitler’s Nazi regime systematically looting artwork, particularly from the Jewish community. This theft ranged from world class collections, like the Rothschild art collection, through to family portraits.[5] The Commissar for the Ukraine, Erich Koch, was responsible for the looting of Kyiv. Koch also ordered the Amber Room panels of Queen Catherine’s Palace to be moved to Königsberg, along with 900 paintings and 450 icons.[6] Much of this art was stored in the cellars of the Wildenhoff Mansion. As the Red Army advanced towards Königsberg in 1945, the Germans ordered 65 crates to be destroyed. The mansion was set ablaze by an SS commando, one of them allegedly saying that they could not “leave all this for Ivan.”[7] According to Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, the Wildenhoff art works were “among the most substantial Ukrainian cultural losses in the Second World War.”[8]

Wegener and Otter directly compared the protection of heritage sites during World War II with the US-led coalition’s invasion of Iraq.[9] Nazi Germany’s systematic theft of art and heritage was compared to the feared potential destruction of the Iraqi National Museum. In both instances, Wegener and Otter highlight the interventions of museum and gallery staff as a similarity, despite the historical differences. Staff removed artwork, hid it, and—in the case of Iraq’s National Museum—painted the internationally recognised blue shield symbol on the museum’s roof to identify it as a cultural site. Wegener and Otter limited their review to conventional conflict.

The seemingly unreasonable destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001 by the Taliban marked a departure from the conventional destruction of cultural property in the context of war. This led to theological

justifications (or, in some cases, condemnation), with some news sources around the world describing the Taliban and its ideology as ignorant and backward. [10]

According to Finbarr Barry Flood, it was (and is) commonplace to assume that the destruction of antiquities is indicative of Islamic iconoclasm.[11] Flood examined Muslim iconoclasm through historical practices. These practices included defacement, beheading, and trampling on icons. Throughout medieval Islamic conquests in South Asia, trampling on icons was an integral part of the victory celebration, thereby demonstrating that Muslims did not revere such icons.[12] Flood suggested that iconoclasts targeted the Buddhas of Bamiyan specifically because of that reverence: the greater the object or place is worshipped, the better its ability to generate publicity.[13] This publicity was used by the Taliban to exemplify Western hypocrisy. Many Western institutions were eager to donate millions to preserve the Buddhas–non-Islamic stone statues–but not to save the lives of Afghani people suffering from hunger. This was represented by the Taliban as the “fetishistic privileging of inanimate icons”, according to Flood.[14] Ultimately, Flood rejected the ahistorical paradigm where destructive acts are situated as forced cultural homogenization, in favour of specific historical circumstances where due credit is given to agency, motivation, and analyses.

Francesco Francioni and Frederico Lenzerini believed the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas to be a “dangerous precedent” in that it was defying international public opinion and law.[15] They noted that while conflict has left collateral damage on such sites throughout history, the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas was a distinct departure from historical norms. Reasons for this included that the Taliban were not destroying foreign heritage, but their own Afghan national heritage; there was no tactical military objective; it was a meticulously planned and advertised demolition, not a careless bombardment; and it was undertaken in direct defiance of United Nations sanctions. Finally, Francioni and Lenzerini characterised the act as “narcissistic self-assertion” by the Taliban against the Director General of UNESCO. [16] Their findings about the Taliban’s motivations stand in direct opposition to the position of Jamal Elias.

Elias examined the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas within the context of the Taliban general behaviour. [17] In a millennium of Muslim rule, the Bamiyan Buddhas had faced infrequent destructive acts, but there had also been occasional attempts to use the pre-Islamic site to boost the tourism industry. In 1999, the Taliban’s Supreme Leader Mullah Umar had issued a decree protecting non-Islamic antiquities. However, less than two years later, a *fatwa* by Umar permitted the destruction of the statues which took place on 19 March 2001, followed by the sacrifice of one hundred cows.[18] Elias argues the destruction was not based in an Islamo-anachronistic world view, or in response to political pressure. Abraham is known in the Koran for the sacrifice of his son, but he is also recognised for departing from the idolatry of his predecessors. This, according to Elias, was “an obvious precedent” for the Taliban.[19] Elias found the Taliban were symbolically casting themselves as heirs to Abraham, by re-enacting traditions in line with the Hijri calendar, which also explains the animal sacrifice. The Western world denounced the destruction, emphasising the Islamic tenet that condemns destroying places of worship of other religions. The Taliban replied that as there were no Buddhists in Afghanistan, it did not constitute a place of worship. Moreover, the attempts of the international community to preserve the statues transformed them into idols, which further necessitated their destruction within the Taliban’s Abrahamic re-enactment. Significantly, Elias suggested: ‘Those who condemned the destruction of the statues on the grounds of preservation of global heritage, art, and religious tolerance view the icon smashers as the standard-bearers of an archaic ideology completely out of place in modern society.’[20] The act was a Taliban attempt at religious authenticity more so than an act of defiance against international political pressure, or proof of an ignorant society. Instead of condemning the act as irrational, Elias provides an insight that goes beyond political or economic explanations.

On the other hand, economic motivators were clear in Cambodia with the commoditisation of works of art and antiquities. The invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam, and the subsequent Lon Nol/communist insurgency, caused major political destabilisation. Dougald O’Reilly found that the gap between rich and poor in

Cambodia was responsible for the looting of heritage sites, whereby impoverished rural people turned to looting to generate income. [21] Cambodia, which hosts sites such as Angkor Wat and Koh Ker, is an ideal target. International initiatives have been organised to create sustainable tourism to these areas to generate income and reduce looting. [22] Still, according to Tess Davis, the sale of illicit Khmer artefacts continues, especially through Sotheby's auction house, where as much as seventy-one percent of sales have no published provenance or legitimate sales history. [23]

Regional destabilisation also contributed to the looting of museums in Iraq for profit. Eric Garcia viewed the subsequent destruction in the Iraq National Archive, National Library, and Museum as the fault of the Bush administration, which did not prioritise protection. [24] Garcia believed the looting was economically motivated, and that Iraqi art and antiquities were stolen for illicit trade and financial gain. Garcia broadens his scope to the entire Middle East, discussing also the burning of the Iranian Mazar-e-Sharif and the destruction of 55,000 books in northern Afghanistan's Pol-e Khumri Library. [25] Such acts, Garcia argued, attacked intellectualism at its fundamental level. [26]

Other researchers have looked into the possibility of deterrence. Frey and Rohner examined possibilities for protecting cultural monuments against terrorism. They described terrorists as media-hungry, and monuments as attractive targets. [27] They suggest that terrorists focus on sites which are important symbols of the state. By that logic, they claim that rebuilding the symbol will reverse or mitigate the symbolic damage to the state. Based on the assumption that vulnerable sites will be targeted and eventually destroyed, Frey and Rohner suggested that one should prepare for post hoc reconstruction rather than anticipating damage by maximising security. Examples of successful reconstruction can be found in Dresden, Germany and Lucerne, Switzerland. They suggested that the reconstruction will be received by the media as a triumph over arson and terror, thereby removing the incentive for the act.

Briggeman and Horpedahl questioned Frey and Rohner's logic. [28] It was their suspicion that, should terrorists be discouraged from targeting cultural monuments, they would redirect their efforts towards people or production sites. While they admit that terrorists derive value from the exposure generated by attacks on such sites, Briggeman and Horpedahl also make the valid point that mass-casualty attacks also generate significant publicity, even without leaving permanent visible reminders. They contend that even if funding was set aside for the reconstruction of cultural monuments and prominent buildings, the policy would still be suboptimal by redirecting the destructive instincts of terrorists towards the populace. Buildings can be rebuilt – people cannot.

Crettez and Deloche entered the debate as to whether cultural sites should be protected or rebuilt, using a game-theoretic framework. [29] They found that if the monuments were considered truly unique treasures, then by the same logic, they were worth protecting. As deterrence relies on rebuilding, it does not address the primary problem of the targeting in itself. It actually recreates it, with terrorists able to target the same site again after every rebuilding. Al Qaeda-type terrorists, they claim, are generally more interested in killing people than targeting symbolic sites.

Yet the economic approach might be able to provide actionable outcomes for UNESCO. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, highlighted the impact which terrorism has had on cultural heritage. She identified the threat as new and distinct, and described it as “a tactic of war, to tear humanity from the history it shares.” [30] Bokova goes on to list three ways to economically combat terrorism's impact on cultural heritage: undermining illicit traffickers, reinforcing training and support for protection, and reinforcing international cooperation through sharing of intelligence and actions. Bokova was declared “the woman standing between ISIS and world heritage” by *The Guardian*. [31] She made a strong connection between people and places, identifying attacks on cultural heritage sites as cultural cleansing, whereby even people's memory is removed. Bokova successfully campaigned for UN Resolution 2199, which aims to prevent terrorist groups from benefiting from the trade in antiquities, by asking member states to make sure their

nationals do not access the black market.[32] This approach assumes that targeting art and antiquities is influenced by financial gain motives.

Further pursuing economics-based theories of terrorist target selection is a plethora of articles examining the relationship between terrorism and tourism. Paraskevas and Arendell cite sources from the eighties and nineties, describing tourism areas as soft targets for terrorism, as they are easy to infiltrate, guarantee international media coverage, and have substantial impact on the target government's foreign exchange earnings, making them cost-effective targets.[33] An article by Mete Feridun explored the relationship between tourism and terrorism in Turkey between 1986 and 2006.[34] More recently, Raza and Jawaid examined the situation in Pakistan from 1980 to 2010, and similarly found that there were significant long-term and short-term negative effects on tourism from terrorism.[35]

One of the few studies situating recent attacks in an ideological context was conducted by Omur Harmansah. He investigated the destruction of art and antiquities by terrorists, specifically by the Islamic State (IS).[36] Operating mainly in Syria and Iraq, IS has engaged in a program of destruction against cultural heritage sites, targeting artefacts, archaeological sites, libraries and archives. Harmansah argued in terms of place-based violence, with the intent of destroying belonging and memory in local communities, and is integral to a scorched-earth policy. These attacks are also choreographed media events which form part of IS's own self-representation. It was found that IS's media performances "operate like a reality show that effectively mobilizes the consumerism of visual media".[37] The international outrage about the destruction at Hatra or Mosul is the very purpose for the destruction. Harmansah therefore argues that IS is not, as widely assumed, backward and anachronistic, but extremely modern in its adoption of social media for propaganda, creating a sense of hyper-reality. Hence, the perceived iconoclasm in IS acts must be treated with scepticism. IS may exploit iconoclasm as powerful rhetoric without sincerely believing the icons pose a threat to its religious practice.

As the above literature review makes clear, previous research has adopted explanations based on politico-military, theological, or economic frameworks. While these approaches are all valid in their own way, this article takes a more historical view. While its author had hoped to find earlier examples of attacks on antiquities in the history of terrorism, the clearest cases were found in the last two decades. Using historical research, mitigating factors such as ideology, situational context, and strategic logic will be examined. The methodology involved utilises historical research, site examination, and the analysis of primary sources. Case studies include the massacre at the Temple of Hatshepsut by the Islamic Group, the bombing of the Askariya Shrine by Al Qaeda, the partial destruction of Timbuktu by Ansar Dine, and the attacks on Palmyra by the Islamic State.

### ***Holy of Holies, Temple of Hatshepsut***

The mortuary temple of Queen Hatshepsut was built during the fifteenth century BCE, and has chapels for the Egyptian deities, Hathor and Anubis.[38] There is very little about the site which, in and by itself, would present symbolic significance to Salafi terrorists such as the Islamic Group (*Gamal Islamiya*). Yet, on 17 November 1997, fifty-eight foreign tourists and four Egyptians were killed at this temple.[39] In what became known as the Luxor Massacre, between six and ten terrorists ambushed the site with guns, killing two policemen before turning their attention on the tourists. Most of the victims were shot during the forty-five minute attack, but others had their throats slit using long knives, and some victims were defaced.[40]

Handwritten leaflets left at the scene allegedly said: "No to Tourists in Egypt". [41] In another statement, they claimed: "*We shall take revenge for our brothers who have died on the gallows. The depths of the earth are better for us than the surface since we have seen our brothers squatting in their prisons, and our brothers and families tortured in their jails.*"[42]. Based on the propaganda of the Islamic Group, this attack can be seen as an act of

vengeance, targeting the vulnerable tourist industry but aimed at a powerful government. Taking advantage of weakness in the protection of people to damage and undermine a target government has been a terrorist strategy of long standing.

The symbolism of this attack was taken to reside with those who visited it. This was not so much an attack on antiquities, as it was an attack on tourism, described by Raymond Stock as “the bloodiest assault yet” on the industry.[43] At that stage, Egypt had a three billion dollar tourism industry, providing occupation to ten million people, based on the income from four million visitors every year.[44] However, the heritage site itself played a significant role in generating media attention. The Egyptian public appeared to be unsympathetic to the terrorist goal, with Stock noting that the public turned on the Islamic Group because the economic backlash caused a sharp decline in the tourism industry. [45] The Luxor Massacre must be viewed as terrorism at a heritage site, rather than terrorism targeting a heritage site. Nonetheless, the rejection of the infidel, and the purification through violence, are symbolic themes that are also present.

Why was the site chosen by Islamic Group? Was it, in line with Parasevkas and Arendell’s theory, a combination of access, influence, and impact that made this an attractive site to target? The temple was guarded by two armed policemen: one Muslim, the other Christian. They were killed in the first moments of the attack. The site (at that time) had no phone access, which delayed the arrival of Egyptian security forces. There was meagre cover provided by the stone pillars, not enough to hide most tourists from the gunmen.

The site was only accessible from one direction, had minimal contact with the outside world, and minimal protection. The foreign nationalities of the victims made this an international incident. That, combined with the significance of the site itself, guaranteed international media coverage which, in turn, contributed to the economic losses suffered by the Egyptian tourism industry. Not only was this attack by the Islamic Group successful in an operational sense, it provoked a significant economic loss on the target government. If their propaganda is to be believed, they achieved their goal of limiting tourism in Egypt, at least for some time.

The site choice and victim choice magnified the propaganda of this attack, but the tactical considerations do not entirely justify its selection over other significant tourist destinations. It could be that the Temple of Hatshepsut was nothing more than a convenient podium to agitate against foreign tourism. But this does not explain the defacement of some of the victims or throw light on their ideological motives. As demonstrated by Flood, defacing idols is a recurring theme in Muslim conquest hadiths, where Muhammad blinded the eyes of idols with an arrow following the conquest of Mecca.[46] Perhaps, then, the defacement of the victims was an indication of the evolving dominance performance for a barely recognisable narrative. The place itself is arguably more symbolic than the victims. Luxor has a longstanding reputation as one of the most sacred sites of Ancient Egypt. The dominance performance then becomes symbolic, trying to overwrite ancient glories with new place-based memories reflecting the Islamic Group’s ideology.

Luxor remains a popular target. On 10 June 2015, jihadists launched an attack on Karnak, detonating a suicide vest before police engaged two suspects.[47] Such a new attack could be interpreted as an effort to bring back memories of the previous attack. It must be remembered that Islamic Group had connections with the Egyptian Al Jihad – an group with which the future al-Qaeda leader, Ayman Al Zawahiri, was involved before it merged in the late nineties to become al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda is no stranger to symbolic attacks; in 2006 it bombed the Askariya Shrine.

### ***Twice Shy—the Askariya Shrine***

The Askariya Shrine in Samarra (Iraq) is one of the holiest sites in Shiite Islam, built in the ninth century CE. It contains the tombs of the tenth and eleventh Imams (considered to be successors of Muhammad) and the mausoleum of the Hidden Imam. The Shrine was frequently renovated, with the Great Dome finished in 1623, and tiled in gold in 1868.[48] Various heritage sites, including Samarra were noted as being at risk in

the ICOMOS 04/05 report, but it did not receive much attention until the 06/07 report, by which time it was too late.[49] On 22 February 2006, seven al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) members in paramilitary clothing entered the mosque, subdued the sleeping guards, and rigged the building with explosives. At 9:00 a.m. the explosives were detonated, with the power of the blast leading to the collapse of the dome while also destabilising the north wall.[50] On 13 June 2007, AQI again targeted the site, destroying the two remaining minarets.[51] They did not claim responsibility for either attack. Later that year, the Samarra shrine was included in the World Heritage listing. It was reconstructed in 2009.

At the time, Iraqi leaders and others suggested that the bombings were intended to inflame tensions between Shiite and Sunni Muslims.[52] Reprisal attacks swept across Iraq, with over twenty Sunni mosques being bombed, shot at, or set ablaze, leaving eighteen people dead.[53] In his 18 June 2007 address, President G.W. Bush said:

*This barbarous act was clearly aimed at inflaming sectarian tensions among the peoples of Iraq and defeating their aspirations for a secure, democratic, and prosperous country. I join Iraq's leaders in calling on all Iraqis to refrain from acts of vengeance and reject Al Qaida's scheme to sow hatred among the Iraqi people and to instead join together in fighting Al Qaida as the true enemy of a free and secure Iraq.[54]*

In lieu of al-Qaeda claiming responsibility, there are clear statements by Iraqi and Coalition force leaders condemning the attack on the important monument, and positioning it within the broader scope of sectarian violence. Some claim that this was the event which paved the way for Iraq's later civil unrest.[55] While sectarian tensions were inflamed, this conclusion does not necessarily explain why the site was targeted twice.

The site is strategically located, with three major access and exit points. It is situated in an urban area, which means that the jihadi attackers would have been capable of blending in with the populace after changing clothing. The site was minimally protected as their guards were sleeping. The terrorists were able to work uninterrupted throughout the night, carefully positioning their explosives around key symbolic and structural points of the mosque – notably, the famed golden dome. No one was killed in this bombing, which indicates that the target was the building and what it stood for itself. Likewise, the lack of international deaths limited the attention and influence of this event to regional significance. The addressees of this bombing appeared to be Shiites, and beyond them, regional stability. Osama bin Laden himself once portrayed a similar attack on buildings as punitive, writing that when he saw the towers of Lebanon fall in the early 1980s civil war, he wanted to see America's towers fall in retribution. [56] There was no financial or economic incentive to this attack as Al Qaeda did not steal the gold from the dome. It was an unprovoked act of destruction against a significant monument, a symbol of Shiite heritage, and a place of worship.

The symbolism of the Askariya Shrine lay in its image and importance to Shiites, spurred by the attackers Salafist repudiation of all other forms of Islam. It could hardly be considered idolatrous, but could be considered unclean to extreme Salafists, who assert their interpretation of Islam as being the only correct one. Bringing down the golden domes was an act of self-assertion by al-Qaeda, which also constituted the alteration or erasure of a significant place, trying to overwrite it with a new Salafist narrative and memory. Such an act went beyond AQI's desire to merely destabilise the Iraqi government; it was a performance to demonstrate dominance and assertion. This attack can be seen as the forerunner of the much more systematic destruction of heritage by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

### ***All the Way to Timbuktu***

Timbuktu is a heritage-listed city of Outstanding Universal Value, located in Mali. The city was built in the fifth century, and is home to Sankore University, a major spiritual and intellectual centre for Islam in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The mosques and mausoleums are a testament to the strength of the former Askia dynasty, while the city itself was a centre for culture and trade, particularly of gold and salt.

[57] Influenced by regional unrest and the Arab Spring, in March 2012, Mali saw its fourth Tuareg uprising since the end of colonial days. Coinciding with a military coup attempt in the capital Bamako, Islamist forces overran some of the key northern cities.[58] The fractious Islamist coalition comprised of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA); Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith) led by Tuareg rebel Ag Ghaly; Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); and their splinter, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Ansar Dine and AQIM split from MNLA over religious differences, and implemented strict observance of Sharia Law in major towns. In April 2012, Ansar Dine seized Timbuktu. By May, its militants had begun to destroy the World Heritage site.

On 4 May 2012, one Ansar Dine member burned the tomb of Sidi Maymoud.[59] On 30 June 2012, Ansar Dine members destroyed three Sufi shrines, including the greater mausoleum of Sidi Maymoud.[60] On 1 July 2012, thirty Ansar Dine jihadists targeted Sufi mausoleums in Timbuktu city, damaging three, using AK-47s and pickaxes.[61] It announced: "Ansar Dine will today destroy every mausoleum in the city. All of them, without exception... God is unique. All of this is haram... We are all Muslims. UNESCO is what?"[62] The fourteenth century Djingareyber mosque, the sacred door of the Sidi Yahia mosque, Sidi Moctar's tomb, Alpha Moya's tomb, countless manuscripts and artefacts were destroyed. The group believes that saints should not be idolised, making Timbuktu's 333 tombs of saints attractive targets.[63] As a Salafist group, Ansar Dine condemned the worship of Muslim saints as idolisation and *haram* (forbidden). Before Ansar Dine and AQIM were driven out of Timbuktu, they had also set fire to the Ahmad Babu Institute, targeting an irreplaceable and extensive fourteenth century collection of artefacts.[64]

Timbuktu had great strategic appeal. Ansar Dine had easy access when the Malian army abandoned the city, leaving the attackers to establish their military dominance in a regional power vacuum. Though the sites were in urban regions, Ansar Dine's position as the dominant local power gave them situational control. Ansar Dine used pickaxes, hoes, chisels, and cheap, effective assault rifles, such as the AK-47, for the attack. The timing was also significant, coming four days after Timbuktu was listed as in danger by UNESCO. The impact of the destruction measured in terms of coverage by international media was extraordinary. *The Australian* reported that the crime was payback against UNESCO, and a "rape".[65] Sebastien Martinez argued that the acts constituted war crimes.[66] In line with Salafi ideology, others noted that the site was considered blasphemous by Ansar Dine, similar to the Bamiyan Buddhas.[67] Timbuktu, like Mecca and Medina, has important symbolism within the history of Islam. However, while the Taliban destroyed pre-Islamic national heritage, the Ansar Dine was destroying both Malian and Islamic heritage. In August 2016, one Ansar Dine member, Ahmad Al-Faqi al-Mahdi, was prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for cultural destruction, to which he pleaded guilty, expressing regret for his actions.

Can this event be interpreted as a simple rejection of folk Islam by extreme Salafists? This risks ignoring the links with al-Qaeda and the influence of ideological concepts such as repudiation and purity. It is also possible the attacks represented the Ansar Dine quest to establish itself and its identity by engaging in a dominance ritual for consumption by local and international observers. The psychological victory and the media attention made it worthwhile for Ansar Dine, mitigating possible drawbacks. Similar to earlier attacks, Ansar Dine overwrote the place-based memories with a new story of conquest, of heavy-handed assertion of newly-gained power. This narrative appeals to modern Salafi audiences, as it signifies the destruction of old empires and paving the way for a Salafist Caliphate.

### ***Palmyra, Bride of the Desert***

In the Syrian Desert lie the ruins of Palmyra. It was originally a caravan oasis, thought to have been established in second millennium BCE, which later expanded into a vast city. It was a cultural epicentre of the ancient world, combining Greco-Roman and Persian architecture and influences; and acted as a thoroughfare for trade from Rome to Persia, India, and China. Important attributes include an 1,100 metre

long colonnaded street, a triumphal arch, the Agora, Amphitheatre, Diocletian's Camp, the Temple of Baal Shamin, the Temple of Bel, the Mamluk Citadel, and the Valley of Tombs.[68] Islamic State, having seized control of large swathes of territory abandoned by a retreating Syrian Army, established a Minister for Antiquities, and began a program of systematic looting and destruction.

On 23 August 2016, IS detonated explosives within the Baal Shamin Temple, claiming it was idolatrous.[69] Two days later, IS blew up the Kithot, Jamblique, and Elahbel Funeral Towers in three separate attacks.[70] On 30 August 2015, IS terrorists destroyed the Temple of Bel, claiming to have used 30 metric tons of explosives.[71] Within a week, the Arch of Triumph was also destroyed by an explosive device.[72] On 27 April 2016, UNESCO attempted to take stock of the destruction, finding that Palmyra's Museum had been considerably damaged. That which could not be looted and sold was defaced or destroyed.[73] The triumphal arch, the Temple of Bel, and Temple of Baal Shamin were entirely destroyed. The Mamluk Citadel remains inaccessible. The Islamic State did not limit its destruction to Palmyra. IS also targeted heritage sites in Bosra with its Roman ruins; the frescoes of Nimrud; Hatra, the first Arab Kingdom which withstood a Roman invasion in the second century CE; the 721 BCE palace in Khorsabad; and the museums, library, and tombs of Mosul.[74]

The strategic logic appears to be based on access and opportunity. The destruction occurred in areas where IS was, however briefly, the dominant power, holding the site despite regional conflict. This situational dominance gave them the access required to meticulously plan the destruction, as evidenced by the amount of explosives used for destruction of the Temple of Bel. IS also publicly beheaded the museum's curator, Khaled Al-As'ad, in the square and displayed his body with the severed head between his legs alongside a placard bearing the word "heretic".[75] The dominant argument is that IS considered Palmyra idolatrous, polytheistic, and blasphemous. IS released videos titled "Smashing Idols", and statements attributing the destruction to fundamentalist iconoclasm. The choice of target was perhaps less a matter of ideological symbolism, and more about the dominance performance (indicated by thirty tons of explosives) which resulted in a dramatic photo and an expansion of the conquest narrative.

If the sites were chosen for theological reasons, it might have been expected that IS would emphasise the theological rationale behind the attacks. Conversely, if Palmyra was chosen to enhance the dominance performance, it might explain the multitude of Twitter photos and posts. The impact was tremendous because of the site's significance and how they were dramatised on social media. IS *mujtahidun*[76] (industrious ones) have hyperactive Twitter accounts, numbering between 500-2,000 IS accounts, with 46,000 affiliated supporting accounts who have, on average, 1,000 followers each.[77] Tweets occurred in sporadic, concentrated bursts, with *mujtahidun* tweeting 50-150 times per day.[78] The images are frequently graphic. This achieved a high level of media saturation. IS was able to convey, within a limit of 140 tweet characters, an impression of what their new world order would look like – all this without lengthy theological manifestos. The simplicity of their slogans appeals to a broad audience, and the imagery juxtaposes to the chaotic present an idealised, and yet achievable, sense of identity.

The performance then becomes one emphasising dominance: sites were used depending on how they supported the performance, such as the colonnades or agora; or destroyed based on impact, such as in the case of the Temples of Bel and Baal Shamin. The symbolic importance of Palmyra for IS became evident in late 2016 again when it reconquered the site from which it had earlier been expelled. The rationale for reconquering Palmyra appears to have been largely symbolic. The Russian government, which intervened in Syria, staged a musical concert among the ruins to celebrate its victory, which was broadcast worldwide by satellite television. It was probably in an effort to overwrite the Russian image that IS decided to have a second go at Palmyra – a symbolic slap in the face of Russia.

### ***Reconquest and Reimagining***

Terrorist strategic logic has undergone significant adaptation in modern history. High profile targets were, and are, often famous and important people, such as demonstrated by the assassinations of the Russian Tsar Alexander II in 1881, Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, and former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2008. Given the challenges in taking down high-risk targets, there has been a gradual turn towards low-risk targets (not limited to civilians in holiday resorts). One can see that instead of targeting highly restricted sites such as the Al'Aqsa Mosque, jihadists aim instead at significant sites with little protection and low risks for themselves, with access that allows them to easily establish (usually only temporary) dominance. The destruction of these sites damages local economies and affects public morale, while generating enormous media attention. Yet, there is more to such events than opportunism or symbolic iconoclasm.

The strategic appeal, the ease of access and withdrawal, and the damage to morale makes attacks on art and antiquities easy targets for a psychological victory, which is intrinsic to the dominance performance. Flood demonstrated that trampling, defacing, and destroying idols has long been part of the victory performance, alongside repudiation of idolatry and barbarism. Central Al Qaeda ideology spurns idolatry, and indeed throughout the AQ manifesto "Moderate Islam is prostration to the West," there are half a dozen rejections of idolatry.[79] All of the mentions of idolatry are basic, in line with Harmansah's argument. [80] Iconoclasm, ignorance, and opportunism appear to be too simple explanations.

This article sought to find a rationale behind terrorist groups' engaging in the destruction of cultural property. The Egyptian Islamic Group, which first targeted Luxor, was interlinked with Islamic Jihad. Islamic Jihad merged with the Afghan Mujahedeen Service Bureau in the 1990s and formed Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda's Iraqi cell, AQI, was then responsible for the bombing of the Askariya Shrine. As Al Qaeda spread across North Africa in the form of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, allying closely with Ansar Dine, the group which desecrated Timbuktu. Al Qaeda in Iraq then evolved into the Islamic State, which targeted Palmyra (among other sites). The key leader during these times is Ayman Al Zawahiri, who has been associated with Islamic Jihad, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and, initially at least, with al-Qaeda in Iraq, the precursor of the Islamic State. The al-Qaeda ideology, and Al Zawahiri himself, were influenced by Sayyid Qutb and his concept of *jahilliya*.

*Jahilliya* translates as ignorance of Allah's guidance. Once taken to refer to a time of pre-Islamic barbarism, Qutb made *jahilliya* a very modern condition, a "living movement" permeating throughout modern society. [81] Qutb believed that the only way to confront this was *jihad bis saif* (striving through fighting) until nothing remains of the ignorant *jahili* society.[82] Such a totalitarian world view demands that barbaric sites be razed. The old world must make way for the new, which would adhere to a presumably purer notion of fundamental Islam. It has long been part of the terrorist credo that decadent society must be utterly torn down and cleansed to make way for the ideal order. Destruction must precede construction. The repudiation of the existing, flawed order by Salafists is therefore not so different from the goals of 19th century anarchists.

Al-Qaeda's ideology championed by al Zawahiri in "Loyalty and Enmity", placed more significance on the interrelated concepts of *wala* and *bara* than on idolatry. *Al Wala*, generally translates as 'devotion' or 'protection', but it is a loaded term which can in this context mean 'loyalty'—that is, allegiance to Islam. *Wal Bara* means 'repudiation/enmity', but also refers to 'spurn/reject with contempt', to keep oneself pure.[83] Modern Salafists, according to Bin Ali, want to purify Islam from *shirk* and *bid'ah* (idolatry and innovation). [84] Essentially, *bara* means to be free from the corruption of *shirk*, but the Salafists broadened this notion to repudiate anything un-Islamic or contravening *Shariah*. [85] In order for *tawhid* (oneness with God) to be achieved, *wala* and *bara* must be applied.[86] These two concepts reveal another dimension: that of purification. The destruction of art and antiquities generally only happens in territories which the terrorists

consider their own. It also legitimises the destruction of pre-Islamic and non-Salafist Islamic sites. The territory is being purified, making way for *dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam).

This is not to negate Elias's Abrahamic re-enactment theory or Flood's performance theory, but to expand upon both. The destruction of works of art and antiquities is not simply a dominance performance rooted in its strategic appeal, but also an act of purification. The territory is being cleansed to prepare for an idealised world order, with the monuments of past civilisations making way for the new. These elements indicate a subconscious reconquest of identity that is buried within the strategic, historical, and ideological factors underwriting the formulaic rhetoric. The concept of conquest is key to the Islamic State as territorial expansion plays a crucial role in its propaganda. On 22 May 2016, a spokesman of the Islamic State called for international lone wolf attacks during Ramadan, "the month of conquest and jihad."<sup>[87]</sup> Another statement from 6 September 2016 encouraged fighters to launch attacks on Australian landmarks, specifically pointing at iconic sites such as the Opera House and Bondi Beach, indicating the importance of significant places in conquest performances.<sup>[88]</sup>

This reconquest of territory goes hand in hand with the proclamation of a modern Salafi identity and the projection of that identity. The elaborate re-enactment, the gaudy fervour, the posed Twitter imagery, the iconoclastic displays—all these contribute to the dominance performance which, at its heart, is reimagining the pure Salafi identity in a chaotic age of *jahilliya*. Salafi jihadists are attempting to rebuild and rediscover a quintessential and highly idealised, *wala* jihadi. Destructive acts against works of art and antiquities are not limited to their immediate strategic appeal, but are instrumental dominance props for the broader reimagining of their Salafi ideal.

### ***International Response***

International attempts have been under way to address but also limit the impact of conflict on art and antiquities. The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) was ratified in the wake of the large-scale destruction of art, antiquities, and cultural property in World War II.<sup>[89]</sup> It provided for the protection of moveable and immovable artefacts, works of art, and sites through a series of peacetime measures, considerations, sanctions, and the establishment of specialised cultural property protection units. Cultural property could only be attacked in cases of a clear military necessity. The Geneva Conventions's additional Protocol I of 1977 clearly defined which objects could be legitimately attacked. The Convention's Second Protocol from 1999 refers inter alia to the enhanced protection of cultural property, and allows the criminal prosecution of those responsible for the destruction of cultural property.<sup>[90]</sup> Article 22 also expanded this to include armed conflicts of a non-international character. However, it did not cover sporadic acts of violence which are often be associated with terrorist attacks.

Many Western government agencies, including the U.S Department of Defence, have no strategic policy for the protection of works of art and antiquities in areas of military operations.<sup>[91]</sup> In 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2199.<sup>[92]</sup> It specifically condemns the destruction of cultural property by terrorists, the looting of significant sites, reaffirming the ban on illicit trade in antiquities, while imposing a new ban on such activities regarding Syria. It remains to be seen whether these measures will be effective at curtailing terrorist targeting of art and antiquities. This is the more so when an extremist militant state is in the process of shaping its global identity. In such a situation, the destruction of monuments can serve its efforts of narrating a reconquest of place and memory.

## Conclusion

It is commonplace to assume that terrorists who target works of art and antiquities are displaying iconoclasm, ignorance, and/or intolerance. By examining the massacre at the Temple of Hatshepsut by the Islamic Group, the bombing of the Askariya Shrine by Al Qaeda, the desecration of Timbuktu by Ansar Dine, and the partial destruction of Palmyra by the Islamic State, new conclusions were drawn. Associations between the terrorist groups involved were found to be close, elevating the ideological significance. It was found that gaining control of the heritage sites demanded no strategic complexity, as they were relatively easy to access, destroy and to retreat from, while yielding significant media coverage. These attacks carried with themselves the strategic appeal of psychological victory, served to lower international and regional enemy morale, while contributing to the terrorists' dominance performance. This dominance performance is, as has been argued here, intrinsic to a re-enactment of celebrating conquest, and purifying territory. Significant to this are the concepts of *Al wala* and *Wal bara*, in which devotion to Allah is offset by the repudiation of unclean otherness. In rejecting, defacing, and destroying heritage sites, jihadists are actually engaged, however chaotically, in self-purification and reconstruction of identity. In a time of turmoil, jihadist Salafists appear to be engaged in the formation and projection of a highly idealised modern jihadi identity. To that end, works of art and antiquities are being destroyed by terrorist groups, optimising opportunities for influence and attention, in order to re-imagine or model the modern jihadi identity.

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## Notes

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## **Ansar al-Sharia in Libya: An Enduring Threat**

by Henrik Gråtrud and Vidar Benjamin Skretting

### **Abstract**

*Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL) is one of the most powerful jihadi groups in Libya and it might, in fact, represent a more significant long-term threat than IS' provinces in Libya. However, there are few recent studies of ASL, so exactly what kind of threat the group poses has not been adequately understood. After examining the group's evolution, ideology, strategy and violent activities, we find that ASL is, and most likely will remain, more of a local and regional threat than a global one. The group still poses a significant threat to Western interests, as it has carried out attacks against Western targets in Libya, has close ties to al-Qaida, and operates training camps for international jihadis within its territory.*

**Keywords:** Jihadism, ASL, threat, Libya, dataset

### **Introduction**

The attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi on 11 September 2012 brought the al-Qaida-linked group Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL) into the international spotlight. Once widely considered the most powerful jihadi group in Libya, ASL's activities have been largely overshadowed by the Islamic State's (IS) presence in the country since late 2014 and, as a result, most recent studies of jihadi groups in Libya have focused on IS.[1] However, ASL might represent a more significant long-term threat than IS in Libya due to its close ties to other Islamist and jihadi groups in the country. While some analysts have briefly examined the threat from ASL,[2] this topic merits further attention, as there is no in-depth study of what type of threat the group poses today.

This article aims to further the understanding of ASL by addressing two questions: What kind of threat does ASL pose? Is the group mainly a local and regional threat, or is it also a global one? Threats are usually understood in terms of intent and capability, and our analysis revolves around these dimensions. First, to get an idea of the current state of ASL and its priorities, we have examined the group's evolution, ideology and strategy. We based this part of the study on the group's propaganda output, including communiqués and audiovisual productions, in addition to secondary sources. Second, we sought to establish key features of ASL's violent activities, such as target selection and tactics. For this purpose we compiled a dataset of ASL's violent activities dating back to the attack on the U.S. Consulate on 11 September 2012.

Our data suggest that ASL is, and most likely will remain, more of a local and regional threat than a global one. The group has neither carried out any attacks outside of Libya, nor has it released any official propaganda output in which it explicitly threatens to internationalise its operations. Yet ASL still poses a threat to Western interests, as it has carried out attacks against Western targets in Libya, maintains close ties to al-Qaida, and operates training camps for international jihadis within its territory.

The article has four parts. First, we take a brief look at the post-revolutionary political landscape in Libya that has allowed ASL to emerge and proliferate. Second, we examine the group's evolution, ideology and strategy. Third, we take a closer look at the group's violent activities. Finally, we discuss what the group's background and activities tell us about the type of threat it poses, before we conclude with a brief assessment of what could be expected from ASL in the future.

### ***Libya's Post-Revolutionary Political Landscape***

Libya's turbulent post-revolutionary political landscape provides the backdrop for the emergence of ASL, and has been a *sine qua non* for the group's ability to operate openly in the country. The overthrow of Muammar al-Gaddafi in 2011 created a security vacuum in Libya, which made it possible for local militias to carve out fiefdoms largely outside the control of the country's interim government in Tripoli. Since then no governing authority has managed to take control over Libya and establish a monopoly of violence in the country. Instead, rivalling militias with often incompatible agendas have solidified their position as the effective power-holders. This has led to an impasse, where Libyan politics has been held hostage by an ongoing struggle between a multitude of actors including Islamists, jihadis, nationalists, revolutionaries, counterrevolutionaries and ethnic minorities for influence over Libya's future.[3]

After 2012, the security situation in Libya began to deteriorate rapidly. However, a full-scale civil war did not break out until General Khalifa Haftar, a former Libyan officer who had defected in 1987 during Libya's war with Chad,[4] launched Operation Dignity in May 2014. Although the initial crux of Haftar's campaign was focused on Benghazi [5], he quickly extended his operations to other parts of Libya, targeting not only hard-line jihadis such as those from ASL, but also Islamists of a more moderate bent.[6] At that time, a bloc comprised of mainly revolutionaries from the city of Misrata and different Islamist parties dominated the General National Congress (GNC), Libya's interim government. On 18 May 2014, Operation Dignity-aligned forces stormed the parliament in Tripoli and forced GNC to call new elections. The elections turned out to be a disaster for the Misrata-Islamist bloc, which lost its majority in the new parliament.

In response to the political developments and the prospect of Operation Dignity forces taking control of the country, Misratan militias and several Islamist militant groups formed a coalition known as Libya Dawn. The new coalition launched an attack on Tripoli in July 2014 and expelled the Operation Dignity forces from the city. Libya Dawn then took steps to secure political control over Tripolitania, the western part of the country. GNC had been legally dissolved after the elections and ceded its powers to the House of Representatives (HoR), which would function as Libya's new legislative assembly. However, Libya Dawn forced HoR to flee the capital and reconvened the defunct GNC, which would subsequently function as the political wing of Libya Dawn. HoR meanwhile established itself in the eastern city of Tubruq and gradually aligned itself more openly with Haftar, leaving Libya with two rival governments; one located in the west, under the control of Libya Dawn, and the other in the east loyal to Haftar.[7]

Efforts were made over the next year and a half to end the standoff between the two sides and work towards political unity. This work culminated, on 17 December 2015, with the signing of the UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), which announced the Government of National Accord (GNA) as the new unity government of Libya. GNA moved to Tripoli and assumed government functions in late March 2016, and GNC subsequently agreed to disband. However, Haftar and HoR refused to recognize GNA's legitimacy.[8] In October 2016, former members of GNC loyal to Libya's Grand Mufti Sadiq al-Ghariani, who is the spiritual leader of several hard-line Islamist and jihadi groups in the country,[9] made the situation in Libya even more complex by attempting a coup against GNA. This has left the country with three rival governments each dominated by different militias and this situation has severely weakened the UN-brokered peace process.[10]

Before discussing what the broader context of the Libyan conflict entails for ASL and the type of threat the group will pose in the future, we take a closer look at the group's evolution and violent activities in the next two sections.

### ***Ansar al-Sharia in Libya: Evolution, Ideology and Strategy***

ASL arose from cooperation between two groups, the Ansar al-Sharia Brigade in Benghazi (ASB) and Ansar al-Sharia in Derna (ASD). ASB, which was the more prominent of the two groups, was established by

Muhammad al-Zahawi in Benghazi in February 2012, whereas ASD was founded by Abu Sufian bin Qumu, a former Guantanamo inmate, in Derna.[11]

The attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi in September 2012 was a major turning point for ASB and ASD. Although they have not claimed responsibility, the groups are believed to be responsible for the attack, which Ahmed Abu Khattala, a commander of ASB, is alleged to have planned.[12] As mentioned above, the attack brought ASB and ASD into the international spotlight for the first time, and it was crucial in the groups' designation as terrorist organisations by the U.S. State Department and the U.N. in 2014.[13] The attack also had great impact on ASB and ASD's reputation on the domestic scene and served as a catalyst for anger against the two groups. Massive protests erupted against them in the weeks following the attack, forcing them to withdraw from their bases in Benghazi and Derna.[14]

Yet this was merely a temporary setback. Following these events, ASB's leader al-Zahawi initiated a rebranding effort that sought to rehabilitate Ansar al-Sharia in the eyes of the public. The group began to focus more on charity work to alter public perceptions. It also renamed itself Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL), excluding 'brigade' from its name to convey that it was not mainly an armed group while simultaneously giving the impression that it was a national movement [15], although it only had a presence in Benghazi and (probably) Derna at the time.[16]

Exploiting the chaotic political and security situation in Libya, ASL then managed to build up its strength, particularly in Benghazi, and subsequently it proceeded to establish branches in new cities, including Nawfalia, Sirte and Ajdabiya.[17] The group is also known to have had cells operating in some other cities in Libya, such as al-Bayda,[18] Sabratha,[19] and Tripoli.[20]

As for ASL's ideology, it can be characterized as Salafi-jihadi. The group follows a strict interpretation of Islam, believes in the permissibility of declaring *takfir* (the act of condemning someone as an unbeliever) against Muslims who do not agree with its interpretation of Islam, and emphasises the need to purge the *umma* (Islamic community) of *kufir* (unbelief).[21] ASL's primary goal is to establish an Islamic state in Libya with Sharia as the sole source of legislation and the group has on several occasions made it clear that the only way to achieve this is through violent jihad.[22] Importantly, and unlike many other Islamist militant groups and political parties operating in Libya, ASL has from the outset unambiguously disavowed democracy, considering it antithetical to Islam. As Zelin notes, ASL also has "a global dimension and is very much within the ideological milieu of global jihadism." [23] The group has, for instance, on several occasions echoed al-Qaida's claims that the U.S. is Islam's greatest enemy and that the "War on Terror" is in its essence a war on all Muslims.[24]

ASL's leadership has denied having any links to al-Qaida or other militant groups outside Libya,[25] but there is much evidence to the contrary. In addition to sharing much of al-Qaida's ideological outlook, ASL has repeatedly referred to, and expressed support for, al-Qaida ideologues and personalities in its propaganda and public statements.[26] Several high-ranking figures in ASL are known to have been in contact with al-Qaida before joining ASL. Shortly after the death of ASL leader al-Zahawi in January 2015, a senior al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) official published an eulogy for him, disclosing that al-Zahawi had met with Osama bin Laden in Sudan in the 1990s and that he followed Bin Laden's "methodology".[27] In fact, ASL's refusal to recognize its ties to al-Qaida seems to be in line with the latter's "clandestine strategy for building up its presence inside Libya,"[28] whereby al-Qaida affiliated groups operate under different names than al-Qaida in order to avoid attracting international attention and alienating the local population.

Furthermore, there is also evidence of contact and cooperation between al-Qaida, especially its regional affiliate al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and ASL on the ground in Libya. Both AQAP and AQIM members are known to have participated in the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi.[29] Non-Libyan al-Qaida members have also fought alongside ASL against Haftar's Operation Dignity, for example the Algerian

Mohammad Abu Azzah who was killed in Benghazi in 2014.[30] Moreover, ASL has operated training camps inside its territory, where individuals linked to al-Qaida and affiliated groups have received training before carrying out attacks abroad. For instance, twelve of the 24 individuals involved in the In Amenas attacks in 2013 had trained in ASL camps in Benghazi, according to a UN report.[31] There is also evidence that ASL has operated camps within their territory in Benghazi in which foreign jihadis have received training before going to Syria.[32]

While ASL clearly seems to be part of al-Qaida's network in Libya, it has not released any official propaganda threatening to carry out attacks in Western countries. Instead, ASL's activities have mainly focused on Libya and its main goal in the short- and medium-term perspective has been to establish a durable presence and a local support base in the country. In order to garner popular support, it has attempted to appear as a positive force in society by portraying itself as a guarantor of security and provider of social welfare while somewhat downplaying its violent underpinnings. In so doing, it represents a trend where groups associated with al-Qaida have become increasingly focused on portraying a more humane and moderate version of Salafi-jihadism.[33] ASL's efforts to gain popularity, commonly referred to as *da'wa* (proselytizing) campaigns have taken a variety of forms, including provision of aid to the poor, cleaning of roads and public places, and providing security to local hospitals, as well as religious teaching and spreading of ASL's particular understanding of Islam.[34] Although it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of ASL's *da'wa* activities, there are some signs suggesting that they have enabled the group to build up a significantly large degree of popular support in some areas. For instance, in 2014, *Libya Herald* estimated that ASL had between 45,000 – 50,000 supporters in and around Benghazi alone.[35]

### *Ansar al-Sharia After Operation Dignity*

After Haftar launched Operation Dignity in May 2014, ASL has been forced to focus the bulk of its efforts on military activity, and it has therefore been unable to keep the *da'wa* campaigns at the same level. In fact, it is unclear whether or not the group has the capacity to organize *da'wa* in any meaningful way as of the time of this writing (late 2016). While ASL's propaganda from mid-2014 onwards reflects the changes on the ground in Libya in the sense that it has focused on the war against Haftar, there is also continuity in the group's communication strategy. It has continued to push the narrative that ASL is a positive force in society by framing Haftar as an enemy of the Libyan revolution, and a war criminal targeting innocent civilians, while portraying ASL as the defenders of the civilian population and the revolution.[36]

Another change in ASL's modus operandi after Operation Dignity is its involvement in coalitions, known as "Shura Councils", with other Islamist and jihadi groups in its major centres of influence, including Benghazi, Ajdabiya and Derna. As noted previously, Haftar's campaign targeted Islamists of all stripes, without distinguishing between hard-line jihadi groups and more moderate Islamists. The shared threat from Haftar appears to have united these groups, and at first they achieved considerable success on the battlefield, prompting ASL's now-deceased leader al-Zahawi to declare Benghazi an Islamic emirate on 30 July 2014.[37] However, ASL and its coalition partners have suffered significant setbacks since then. Previously, ASL had a significant presence in several cities, but today it would appear that its presence is mostly confined to Derna and Benghazi, where Haftar has conquered the entire city except from the south-western district of Ganfuda and the Sabri and Souq al-Hout areas in the centre of Benghazi.[38]

ASL is part of the Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council (BRSC), which comprises most of the major Islamist militias in Benghazi, including Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups such as Libya Shield 1 and the February 17th Martyrs Brigade, the Raf Allah al-Sahati Brigade, as well as some smaller groups.[39] Although there is little information about the way in which BRSC is organized, several factors suggest that ASL is the dominant group in the coalition. It has frequently been referred to as such in local media,[40] and the fact that ASL leader al-Zahawi was BRSC's first leader gives further indication of this.[41] ASL's relative

strength vis-à-vis the other groups in Benghazi is also revealed by the fact that they appear to have adopted some of ASL's more extreme ideological positions, and that BRSC's political platform in large part reflects ASL's ideology.[42] A case in point is BRSC's 19th communiqué, which is clearly more aligned with ASL's ideology than with the Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups in the coalition. It states that BRSC does not approve of democracy or political parties, neither secular nor Islamist.[43] In Derna, however, ASL appears to have played a less prominent role in the local Shura Council called the Mujahidin Shura Council of Derna and Its Suburbs (MSCDS), where another al-Qaida-linked group, the Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade,[44] has been named the dominant group. Although ASL's first leader in Derna, Sufian bin Qumu, was a former military commander in MSCDS,[45] for the most part ASL seems to have operated independently from this Council since June 2015. At that time, fighting broke out between MSCDS and IS, and, according to Eljarh, ASL has decided to remain neutral in this conflict. [46]

Whereas ASL has retained its separate identity in Derna, it has become increasingly indistinguishable from BRSC in Benghazi. The group appears to have made a conscious decision to frame the bulk of its activities through BRSC. One reason behind this could be that BRSC, to a lesser extent than ASL, has had its brand tainted by association with terrorism. Unlike ASL, BRSC has not been designated a terrorist organisation by the UN, and the other groups operating within the coalition probably allows BRSC to appear less extreme than ASL itself. If ASL has aimed, as previously suggested, to present a more acceptable face of Salafi-jihadism to the public, the group's decision to feature itself through BRSC would appear to be a natural extension of the same line of thinking.

While ASL's involvement in "Shura Councils" allowed for forging closer ties with more moderate groups, it also made the group vulnerable to the ideological challenge represented by IS. A case in point is the 11th issue of Dabiq, where IS' now deceased leader in Libya, Abu al-Mughira al-Qahtani, attacked ASL's jihadi credentials by criticizing the group for uniting with "revolutionary movements linked to the apostate regime of Tarabulus," referring to the GNC government in Tripoli and Libya Dawn.[47] While ASL quickly published a rebuttal of this claim,[48] another statement published by BRSC shortly afterwards shows that ASL and BRSC indeed have cooperated with Libya Dawn.[49] Coupled with the strong ideological pull of IS following its declaration of a "Caliphate" in June 2014, ASL's ties to more moderate Islamists have lost the group numerous members to IS, including its entire branch in Sirte in 2015.[50] However, ASL appears not to have suffered further larger-scale defections to IS since then. In fact, it seems that IS' allure for Libyan jihadis might have decreased as the group's fortunes have fallen in Libya, Syria and Iraq. For instance, more than three hundred IS fighters are reported to have joined ASL in Derna after MSCDS managed to expel IS from the city.[51] In the near future, more IS fighters might calculate that it is better to defect to ASL, due to IS' recent setbacks in Sirte.

All of this suggests that ASL, at least for the time being, has managed to endure the challenges that it has faced since Haftar launched Operation Dignity in 2014, as well as dealing with the ideological challenge from IS. Although ASL has suffered considerable setbacks, having its presence reduced to Derna and Benghazi, the group and its coalition partners might still represent the strongest jihadi faction in Libya[52], particularly after IS' defeat in Sirte in late 2016. While the group is part of al-Qaida's network and has shown great enmity towards Western countries, it has mainly had a local focus. As we shall see, this has also been reflected in the group's violent activities.

### ***Ansar al-Sharia's Violent Activities***

In order to establish the key features of ASL's violent activities, we compiled a dataset of attacks carried out by the group from the attack on the American Consulate in Benghazi on 11 September 2012 until 15 July 2016.[53] We have also included attacks carried out by BRSC, because ASL has become increasingly indistinguishable from BRSC in Benghazi. Attacks attributed to other Shura Councils, such as the one in

Derna, have not been included in the dataset. The decision not to include these incidents comes down to the fact that unlike in BRSC, ASL has not formed the dominant group in other coalitions.[54]

The data is collected from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), and Libya Body Count, which is a database of violent deaths in Libya since the beginning of 2014. The data given in these databases has been corroborated and supplemented with reports from local media, primarily *al-Wasat* and *Libya Herald*, international media outlets, and, in some cases, social media content published by ASL and BRSC.

While GTD, UCDP and Libya Body Count provided a useful starting point for collecting data, they have certain limitations. Neither GTD nor UCDP rely on Arabic sources, which limits the scope and accuracy of both databases to some extent. Both UCDP and Libya Body Count only list incidents in which at least one person has been killed, whereas GTD only includes attacks if they fit, at least partially, into its definition of terrorist attacks.[55] This excludes many of ASL's attacks, giving a less accurate picture of how the group operates. We therefore believe that our dataset, which combines output from these three databases, and supplements with local Arabic-language media, provides a better reference for understanding and analysing ASL's violent activity.

### *Limitations*

Despite our best efforts to compensate for the respective weaknesses of the databases we have collected from, our dataset is hardly immune to inaccuracies. It is solely based on open sources and the actual number of attacks carried out by ASL might therefore be higher than what we have recorded. Due to the complex situation on the ground in Libya, it is often difficult to conclusively establish whether ASL or another group carried out a given attack. With the exception of certain high-profile operations, ASL and BRSC rarely claim responsibility for attacks. One will therefore necessarily operate with some degree of uncertainty when attributing a given incident to ASL or another group. For this reason, the dataset presents a conservative estimate of ASL's activity, meaning that attacks are usually not included unless ASL or BRSC have been specifically mentioned in the sources.

The picture is also complicated by the fact that IS and ASL have cooperated against Haftar in Benghazi, where the majority of attacks that might be attributed to ASL have been carried out. Particularly since late 2015, it has been difficult to distinguish between ASL/BRSC and IS in clashes with Operation Dignity forces in Benghazi. The local media commonly mention both groups, or refer to "Islamist militants" without specifying further when describing these incidents. While the dataset includes these instances, it lists the perpetrators of these attacks as "Islamist militants" to ensure the utmost degree of clarity possible.

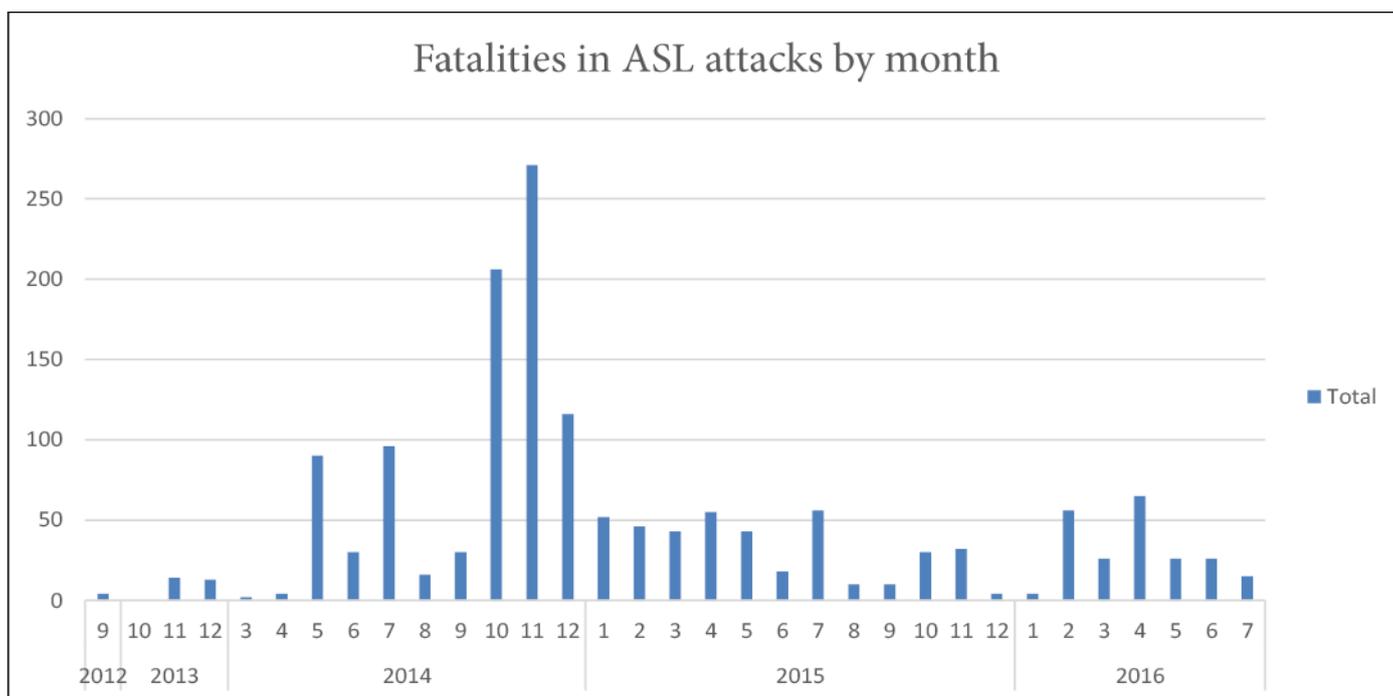
### **Overall Findings**

The dataset includes 329 incidents, which vary significantly in scope. Whereas some incidents are only minor attacks with no reported casualties, others include heavy clashes between ASL and Operation Dignity forces often lasting several days. In total, we have registered 1,509 fatalities in attacks carried out by ASL in the period covered. However, the actual number could be higher, as some deaths might not have been reported due to the chaotic situation in Libya.

The first attack that can be attributed to ASL is the 11 September 2012 attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi (see Figure 1). After this initial high-profile attack, there was a 13-month hiatus in ASL's violent activities, where virtually no attack has been attributed to the group.[56] From October 2013, ASL again started carrying out occasional attacks, targeting both civilians and soldiers. The first spike in attacks and casualty figures occurred in May 2014 with the beginning of Operation Dignity, when 90 people were

killed in ASL attacks. Operation Dignity’s second major assault on Benghazi from October – December 2014 is the deadliest period by far with almost 600 reported dead in ASL/BRSC attacks, which accounts for approximately 40% of fatalities in the entire period. The number of monthly fatalities from January 2015 onwards remained fairly consistent, with an average of 33 people killed each month. A notable spike is seen in April 2016 (65 fatalities), while August and September 2015 (10 fatalities each month) and December 2015 – January 2016 (4 fatalities each month) show periods with comparatively few deadly attacks.

**Figure 1:** *Fatalities in ASL attacks, by month*

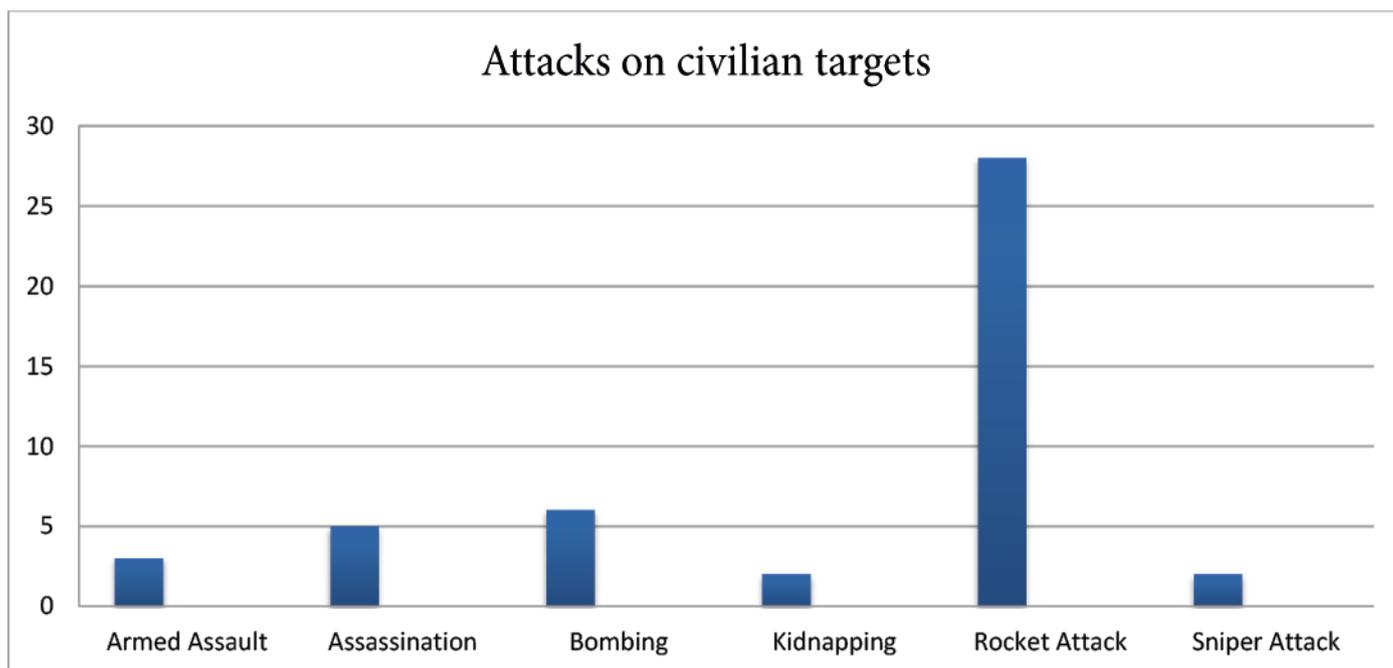


The majority of attacks were directed against military targets (86%), and these attacks also account for the vast majority of fatalities (92%). Most of these casualties come from what we describe as “Regular Clashes”. The sources usually do not give detailed descriptions of weapons used in these incidents, but the material we have suggests that most of these attacks are carried out with various types of small arms, often supported with sniper rifles and rocket launchers. 2016 saw a rise in the number of soldiers killed in landmine and IED explosions. BRSC allegedly employed tanks for the first time in an attack on 1 January 2015, but there have been no subsequent reports about ASL’s or BRSC’s use of tanks. ASL reportedly shot down three Libyan fighter jets in January and February 2016, which suggests that the group has acquired sophisticated ground-to-air weaponry; analysts have reported that the group has portable missile launchers of the MANPADS type in its possession. [57] A total of ten suicide attacks have been attributed to ASL or BRSC from 2013 to 2016, three of which they have claimed responsibility for. All suicide attacks have been against military targets, but civilian bystanders have been killed in some of them. The attacks have all been carried out with explosive-laden vehicles that have been rammed into military bases or checkpoints. There are no examples of suicide attacks being carried out with explosive vests or similar devices.

As for attacks on civilians, the clear majority have targeted individuals that ASL considered its political rivals, such as supporters of Haftar and other Salafis. More than half of the attacks on civilians were rocket attacks (61%, see Figure 2) [58], and these also counted for the largest amount of total civilian fatalities (approximately 70%). Most of these rocket attacks seem to have been retaliatory attacks against pro-Haftar neighbourhoods in Benghazi and the majority of them have been carried out when ASL has been under significant pressure by Haftar’s forces. [59] There are five reported cases of assassinations with civilian targets, but the real number is likely to be higher. Because groups in Libya seldom claim responsibility for

assassinations, it is difficult to prove whether ASL or another group carried them out. Numerous other assassinations have been carried out in the same period, [60] which have not been included in the dataset due to the fact that ASL has not been explicitly named in connection with these attacks in our source material. It should also be noted that there are no examples of ASL claiming responsibility for attacks targeting civilians. The fact that ASL attacks mainly target military personnel and seemingly try to avoid being associated with attacks against civilians supports our previous claim that the group seeks to portray itself as a protector of the civilian population.

**Figure 2:** *Attacks on Civilian Targets*



All of ASL’s attacks were carried out in Libya and the overwhelming majority have targeted Libyan nationals, during the period under consideration. However, attacks against foreign civilians and diplomatic missions feature prominently from September 2012 – May 2014. Although the overall frequency of attacks in this period is very low compared to subsequent periods, it is noteworthy that four out of twelve ASL attacks recorded until May 2014 were directed against foreign nationals and that three of these four attacks targeted Western citizens. This number does not necessarily show the whole picture, as there were several attacks on diplomatic missions in Benghazi prior to the 11 September attack on the U.S. Consulate.[61] While it is not unlikely that ASL carried out, or participated in these attacks, they have not been included in the dataset due to the lack of explicit mention of the group in the source material.

We now turn to a brief discussion of what kind of threat ASL poses, based upon its background, stated goals and violent activities. We then conclude with an attempt at forecasting what might be expected from ASL in the future.

***Ansar al-Sharia: An Enduring Threat***

The extent to which ASL will pose a threat in the future depends on its ability to operate openly and use areas in Libya as a safe haven. As described above, the group has been significantly weakened since declaring an Islamic emirate in Benghazi in mid-2014. However, ASL still has a presence in Benghazi and Derna, and two factors in particular suggest that the group and its coalition partners will continue to be a force to be reckoned with in Libya for the foreseeable future.

First, the political instability in post-revolutionary Libya has been crucial for ASL's survival and ability to prosper, and the prospects for bringing an end to the turmoil look bleak. Libya remains politically divided between three rival governments and the leaders of the largest militias, the real power-holders in the country, are actively undermining the UN-brokered political process aimed at bringing an end to the conflict. Haftar appears determined to continue his military campaign until he has seized control of the entire country,[62] while the Grand Mufti al-Ghariani, the spiritual leader of many of the Islamist and jihadi groups in Libya, continues to incite his followers to reject the UN-brokered process through his *fatwas* (religious rulings).[63]

Second, ASL has been able to develop ever-closer ties to other Islamist and jihadi groups in Libya after Haftar launched Operation Dignity in May 2014. Through its involvement in Shura Councils, ASL has to a large extent managed to integrate itself into the wider Islamist movement that opposes Haftar's campaign to seize control of the entire country. In Benghazi, for instance, ASL and BRSC have become virtually indistinguishable. Even if Haftar's Operation Dignity forces were able to expel ASL from both Benghazi and Derna, this would probably not mean an end to the group's activities. With support from its Islamist and jihadi allies, ASL can probably easily relocate to other areas in Libya and carry on the fight from there. In fact, some fighters from ASL and its coalition partners in BRSC already appear to have relocated to al-Jufra, a district in central Libya. On 2 June 2016, Islamist and jihadi fighters from both Western Libya and Benghazi and its surrounding areas announced the formation of a new coalition group called the Defend Benghazi Brigades and declared their support for BRSC.[64]

### *First and Foremost a Local and Regional Threat*

For now, ASL must clearly be seen as more of a local and regional threat than a global one. The group has neither carried out attacks outside of Libya, nor has it (or any of the coalition groups it is part of) released any official propaganda output in which it explicitly threatens to do so. When it comes to the threat that ASL poses locally, the group has clearly demonstrated its intentions to impede any political process that could bring a peaceful solution to the crisis in Libya. The group vehemently rejects democracy as a legitimate form of government and has explicitly stated on several occasions that it will not lay down its weapons before "a true Islamic state" is established in Libya. While ASL does not have the same manpower as (for instance) Haftar, the group's intentions to act as a spoiler in Libya should not be taken lightly. The fact that Haftar's numerically superior forces have thus far failed to take all of Benghazi, despite having claimed that victory was imminent on numerous occasions since 2014,[65] indicates that ASL and its allies indeed wield significant fighting power.

ASL's main goal has been to establish a durable presence in Libya by winning over the local population. Since its inception in 2012, the group has sought to portray itself as a positive force in society by putting emphasis on its role as a protector of the civilian population and by downplaying its role as a terrorist organisation and the ties to al-Qaida. The group's focus on garnering popular support is to a large extent reflected in its violent activities, as it has mainly targeted military personnel and refrained from carrying out large-scale attacks on civilians in order to avoid alienating the local population. However, a worrying trend is that ASL has increasingly resorted to indiscriminate attacks against civilians living in areas controlled by Haftar's forces when under significant pressure, which suggests that ASL might carry out more such attacks in the near future. The group has also not shied away from politically motivated assassinations of civilians, showing that it is prepared to use violence against civilians when it is in its interests.

Although ASL has not carried out any attacks outside of Libya, the group clearly poses a threat to Western interests. As mentioned earlier, it has carried out at least three attacks against Western civilians and diplomatic missions in Libya since 2012. While ASL has not carried out any such attacks since the beginning of 2014 [66], this does not indicate that the group is no longer interested in striking Western targets. The reason why there have not been more such attacks is related to changes on the ground in Libya, and probably

comes down to the following factors: after 2014 most foreign diplomats were pulled out of Libya due to the worsening of the security situation in the country.[67] In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the fight against Haftar's Operation Dignity has taken precedence the last couple of years. Furthermore, the fact that previous attacks on Western diplomats, such as the one on the U.S. consulate in 2012, have caused a public backlash against ASL might also be part of the explanation why the group has not carried out more such attacks.[68]

Lately, however, there have been signs that ASL and its coalition partners might develop a growing interest in Western targets. In June 2016, France caused a public outcry in Libya, particularly among Islamists, when it confirmed having a military presence in the country after three French soldiers had been killed in a helicopter crash.[69] Subsequently, several Islamists and jihadis including BRSC and the Grand Mufti al-Ghariani issued statements denouncing the French and portraying their presence as an act of war against the Libyan people, as well as asserting their commitment to repel any foreign aggression against the country.[70] More worrisome than this response is that the French involvement seems to have fuelled the sentiment that the West is at war with the Libyan people, and made it more widespread. If this trend continues, groups such as ASL might calculate that the public backlash from carrying out terrorist attacks against Western interests is going to be less severe, thereby increasing the probability of such attacks. Some pro-ASL and BRSC accounts on social media have even called upon Muslims to carry out retaliatory attacks in France.[71] However, the significance of these calls should not be overestimated. They remain calls addressed to potential sympathizers and do not signify that ASL has committed resources to carry out attacks in France.

The most significant threat from ASL to the international community beyond Libya's borders probably stems from its close ties to al-Qaida and the training camps ASL is operating.[72] For the time being, the group's training camps mainly pose a regional threat. Most of the individuals who have trained at these camps have been linked to North African al-Qaida groups, such as AQIM. These groups have prioritized regional operations, and, until now, they have not carried out attacks in Western countries. However, they have targeted Western interests in North Africa. Moreover, they have threatened to carry out operations in the West on numerous occasions.[73] It is therefore not inconceivable that individuals who have trained in ASL's training camps might participate in attacks in Western—and particularly European—countries in the future.

As for their capability to operate in Europe, al-Qaida linked groups in North Africa can draw upon several networks of sympathizers on the continent. Since the mid-1990s, Algerian networks that have had close ties to AQIM (and its predecessor GSPC) have been at the heart of jihadi activities in Europe.[74] If AQIM and ASL, for instance, decide to expand their operational area to Europe, they would therefore likely have the capability to do so.

## **Conclusion**

This analysis suggests that ASL will remain a significant threat for the foreseeable future. By cooperating with other Islamists and jihadis, the group has managed to endure the setbacks it has experienced since Haftar launched Operation Dignity in May 2014. Although ASL has lost most of the territory it once controlled, it still has a presence in both Derna and Benghazi. Even if Haftar's forces manage to expel ASL from these two cities, this would probably not be a deathblow to the group. Unless the unlikely scenario occurs that the major militias agree on a political solution that would bring an end to the turmoil in Libya, ASL can easily relocate to other areas of the country and carry on the fight from there, with support from Islamist and jihadi allies. However, if ASL is forced to relocate to other areas, it is not certain that the group will continue to operate under its current name. A more probable outcome is that ASL will choose to frame the bulk of its activities through different coalition groups, as in Benghazi, to avoid attracting international attention.

As for the nature of the threat that ASL poses, it appears to be more of a local and regional hazard than a global one. The group has neither carried out any attacks outside of Libya, nor has it released any official propaganda output threatening to do so. However, ASL still poses a threat to Western interests, as it has attacked Western targets in Libya, is closely linked to al-Qaida, and operates training camps for international jihadis within Libya.

Over the last couple of years, anti-Western sentiments have become more widespread in Libya, due to Western military involvement in the country. These sentiments reached new heights after France was forced to admit a military presence in the country. Although ASL and its coalition partners have most likely not committed any resources to carry out attacks in Western countries, this could surely change in the future. Coupled with the regional threat that ASL poses both to local and Western interests, it is therefore clear that containing the threat from the group and the wider al-Qaida-network in Libya should remain a priority for the Western counterterrorism community.

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## Notes

[1] See, for instance, Geoff D. Porter, 'How Realistic Is Libya as an Islamic State "Fallback"?', *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 3 (March 2016); URL: [https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/CTC-SENTINEL-Vol9Iss3\\_b2.pdf](https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/CTC-SENTINEL-Vol9Iss3_b2.pdf); Andrew Engel, 'Defeating the Islamic State in Sirte: Secondary Effects and Remaining Challenges', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 8 July 2016; URL: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/defeating-the-islamic-state-in-sirte-secondary-effects-and-remaining-challe>; Ben Hubbard, Eric Schmitt, and David D. Kirkpatrick, 'ISIS' Grip on Libyan City Gives It a Fallback Option', *The New York Times*, 28 November 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/world/middleeast/isis-grip-on-libyan-city-gives-it-a-fallback-option.html>; Frederic Wehrey, 'Libyans Are Winning the Battle Against the Islamic State', *Foreign Policy*, 30 June 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/30/libyans-are-winning-the-battle-against-the-islamic-state/>.

[2] See, for instance, Thomas Joscelyn, 'Libya's Terrorist Descent: Causes and Solutions', *The Long War Journal*, 27 September 2016; URL: <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/09/libyas-terrorist-descent-causes-and-solutions.php>; Thomas Joscelyn, 'Ansar Al Sharia Libya Fights on under New Leader', *The Long War Journal*, 30 June 2015; URL: <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/06/ansar-al-sharia-libya-fights-on-under-new-leader.php>. Both Joscelyn and Aaron Y. Zelin's blogposts on respectively *The Long War Journal* and *Jihadology* have provided us with many of the sources used in this article and we would like to thank them for that.

[3] For more information about the post-revolutionary context in Libya and the key actors in this struggle, see for instance: Mikael Eriksson, 'A Fratricidal Libya: Making Sense of a Conflict Complex', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 5 (2 September 2016): 817–36, doi:10.1080/09592318.2016.1208794; Hanspeter Mattes, 'Libya since 2011: Political Transformation and Violence', *Middle East Policy* 23, no. 2 (1 June 2016): 59–75; Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr, 'Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War' (The Hague: The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, February 2015); URL: <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Gartenstein-Ross-Barr-Dignity-and-Dawn-Libyas-Escalating-Civil-War-February2015.pdf>.

[4] Jon Lee Anderson, 'Libya's New Strongman', *The New Yorker*, 23 February 2015; URL: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/23/unravelling>.

[5] The stated aim of Operation Dignity was initially to break ASL and other Islamist and jihadi militias' hold over Benghazi. See 'Haftar Launches Benghazi Attack on Islamists', *Libya Herald*, 16 May 2014; URL: <https://www.libyaherald.com/2014/05/16/haftar-launches-benghazi-attack-on-islamists/.%E2%80%98>.

[6] Gartenstein-Ross and Barr, 'Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War', 25.

[7] For more information about Operation Dignity and Libya Dawn and the conflict between them, see Gartenstein-Ross and Barr, 'Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War'.

[8] 'Haftar, the Strongman Who Seems Himself as Libya's Saviour', *Al-Monitor*, 12 September 2016; URL: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2016/09/libya-conflict-politics-army-haftar.html>.

[9] See, for instance, Majlis Shurā Mujāhidi Darna, 'Mithāq Darna', 22 August 2016; Sarāyā al-Difā' An Banghāzi, 'Bayān 9', 16 August 2016.

[10] Rhiannon Smith and Jason Pack, "'Coup" Attempt Could Complicate Libya's Fight Against ISIS', *Tony Blair Faith Foundation*, 24 October 2016; URL: <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/commentaries/opinion/coup-attempt-could-complicate-libyas-fight-against-isis>; Libya Analysis, Jason Pack *AJE Libya Political Process*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSEQOzDRppE>.

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- [16] ASL's presence in Derna in late 2012 and early 2013 is difficult to gauge. Some media sources claim that the Ansar al-Sharia branch in Derna had disbanded after the protests in September 2012, suggesting that ASL did not have a presence in the city during this time period. See, for instance, 'Militia Groups in Eastern Libyan City "to Disband"', 'All Benghazi Militia to Be Put under National Army Control, Others to Be Disbanded'. However, it is more likely that ASL managed to have at least a clandestine presence in the city.
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## Research Notes

# Deciphering Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Al-Qaeda's Strategic and Ideological Imperatives

by Sajjan M. Gohel

### Abstract

*This research paper explores the current strategic and ideological agenda of al-Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri. To better understand how al-Zawahiri aims to retain international relevance, survival and sustainability, the paper assesses al-Zawahiri's speeches and actions in recent years that articulate his world-view objectives. Importantly, this paper will argue that although the "Far Enemy" remains a priority, and will not be abandoned by al-Qaeda, al-Zawahiri has renewed the terrorist group's emphasis on the "Near Enemy" and seeks to create safe bases across the Islamic world for al-Qaeda and its affiliates to function and grow. This paper will also illustrate that it would be naive to dismiss al-Zawahiri and al-Qaeda's relevance as a global threat as the Egyptian is laying the foundations for al-Qaeda's future. The paper also compares and contrasts al-Zawahiri's historical motivations and how that fits into his current doctrine. Lastly, this paper dissects al-Zawahiri's paradoxical nature and mixed messaging which could impact on al-Qaeda's attempts to replenish the terrorist group's ranks.*

**Keywords:** Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda, Bin Laden, terrorist organizations, Islamic State, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, Taliban, Egypt, Iran

### Introduction

More than fifteen years after the September 11, 2001, attacks and more than five years since succeeding Osama bin Laden as head of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri has been seen as an increasingly marginalised figurehead of rickety terrorist franchise organization. Lacking bin Laden's charisma, failing to maintain unity within the al-Qaeda affiliates, and unable to launch major international attacks, al-Zawahiri also failed to take full advantage of the security vacuum created by the Arab Spring. In addition, al-Qaeda's current leader appears unable to match the pulling power of his arch-nemesis, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State terrorist group.

Between September 2014 and August 2015, al-Zawahiri did not make any public statements, creating uncertainty as to the direction he was taking al-Qaeda. His 11-months silence was unprecedented, especially as many key figures within al-Qaeda's core and with its affiliates died in counter-terrorism operations. Most notably, this included al-Zawahiri's designated successor Nasir al-Wuhayshi, who headed al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and the U.S.-born al-Qaeda spokesman Adam Gadahn.[1]

Despite all this, it would be unwise to write off al-Zawahiri, whose cunning is unmatched and for more than forty years has been plotting terrorist attacks.[2] Al-Zawahiri has always prioritised his own self-preservation whilst trying to keep al-Qaeda afloat. Despite having a \$25 million bounty placed on him, that leads to his apprehension or conviction, al-Zawahiri remains at large, and has survived several targeted strikes over the years. [3] Furthermore, the trail to locate his whereabouts in Pakistan has gone cold since 2007.[4]

In August, 2015, al-Zawahiri ended his period of silence by affirming his allegiance to the then new head of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Mansour.[5] Since then, al-Zawahiri has displayed a sense of practicality, pragmatism and willingness to adapt to the changing circumstances in the Arab and Islamic world. An

analysis of his statements demonstrates that he has strategically calibrated al-Qaeda's priorities and managed to formulate a plan of action that may allow him to retain relevance amongst jihadists globally.

### ***Far and Near: Al-Zawahiri's Priorities***

On 9 September, 2016 – two days before the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks – al-Zawahiri released his speech *The Defiers of Injustice*, stating that al-Qaeda would “focus on... America and its allies, and to strive as much as possible to transfer the battle to their lands”, calling this “the first priority in the armed jihad today.”[6]

The *Defiers of Injustice* reinforced a message al-Zawahiri had already issued shortly after the 14th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks in 2015. In the second instalment of his Islamic Spring series, al-Zawahiri had stated “*I call on all Muslims who can harm the countries of the crusader coalition not to hesitate. We must now focus on moving the war to the heart of the homes and cities of the crusader West and specifically America.*”[7]

Al-Zawahiri appeared to be calling for lone actor attacks and instructed his followers to take inspiration from “the brave knights of the Paris invasion” – a reference to the Kouachi brothers, Cherif and Said, who had been responsible for the shootings at the Paris office of the satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, on January 7, 2015. [8] The Kouachis claimed to have carried out the attack on behalf of AQAP.[9] Al-Zawahiri's mentioning of them dovetailed with AQAP's reference of the brothers in the 14th edition of its *Inspire* magazine which featured a “military analysis” of their attack on *Charlie Hebdo* by Ibrahim al-Asiri, AQAP's chief bomb maker.[10] It appears somewhat opportunistic for al-Zawahiri and AQAP to closely associate with the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, several months after the incident and as one of the Kouachi brothers last had contact with AQAP in 2011 when Said trained there.[11]

Since the Arab Spring there has been only limited evidence of al-Qaeda directing or planning attacks on Western soil, with a few possible exceptions such as a nebulous plot by the Khorasan group in Idlib, Syria, in 2014, apparently planning to target Western aviation.[12] Currently, if the West features high on al-Zawahiri's target list, then it would be more about hitting them where al-Qaeda and its affiliates have an operational presence. For example, AQAP's intention to attack U.S. embassies in the Persian Gulf in the summer of 2013 and a string of attacks in recent years by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Murabitoun (The Sentinels) on hotels frequented by Westerners in the Sahel region.[13]

In order to understand what al-Qaeda is openly calling for in operational terms, one has to turn to al-Zawahiri's video entitled *Carrying the Weapon of the Martyr*, Episode 3, which was issued on 23 July 2016. [14] In it, al-Zawahiri called on all al-Qaeda branches to kidnap Western civilians and soldiers in the Arab and Islamic world so that these could be traded against jihadists jailed in the West. This clearly contrasts with the practice of Islamic State of executing hostages and videotape their decapitations.

Amongst several well-known individuals that al-Zawahiri called to be released from Western prisons, is the blind Egyptian sheikh, Omar Abdel-Rahman, who is currently serving a life sentence in the United States for being behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York. The fact that al-Zawahiri would openly call for Abdel-Rahman's release is odd, given their past differences. Both men had spent time together in prison in Egypt, following the massive round-up of members of al-Jihad, the group responsible for the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. While al-Zawahiri and Abdel-Rahman shared jail time at the notorious Mazra'ah Turrhah prison, they argued intensely about the best way to advance the cause of al-Jihad in Egypt and who should become its new leader.[15] Personal and strategic differences eventually caused a permanent and consequential split within al-Jihad.[16] Al-Zawahiri would move on and be instrumental in the creation of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) while Abdel-Rahman took control of a faction belonging to al-Gama'a al-Islamiyah (The Islamic Group) and became its spiritual leader.[17] There has never

been any public indication that al-Zawahiri and Abdel-Rahman had healed their rift, especially as Abdel-Rahman died on February 18, 2017.

There are several ways to interpret al-Zawahiri's open threats against the West. Firstly, the al-Qaeda leader might be renewing his intention of wanting to launch directed attacks within the United States and Europe as part of his ongoing competition with Islamic State to capture the jihadist mainstream. Secondly, al-Zawahiri is advocating attacks on Western targets in third countries where al-Qaeda and affiliates have a functioning infrastructure. Thirdly, al-Zawahiri's threats might serve as a warning that in the long-term al-Qaeda will want to target the West, when he deems that the operational conditions are restored, but in the meantime he encourages his followers to carry out lone actor attacks. Lastly, al-Zawahiri's messages could be more rhetorical, aiming to satisfy his customary followers while seeking to unify the jihadist ranks in an effort of connecting the Far Enemy with the problems nearer to home in the Islamic world.

Although it would appear that al-Zawahiri and bin Laden had a common strategic outlook, internal correspondence captured during the Abbottabad raid on Osama bin Laden's Pakistani compound in 2011, presents glimpses of cryptic differences of opinion between the al-Qaeda leaders over the group's direction in the post 9/11 environment. In one of the documents written by al-Zawahiri to bin Laden in August 2003, the al-Qaeda leaders appear to be discussing a draft speech on the ideological justification for jihad, accompanied by an explanation of their moral position. Al-Zawahiri wrote, "*The author does not greedily intend to add to his predecessor's works, but rather seeks to clarify several points.*" [18] Al-Zawahiri, albeit very politely, appeared uncomfortable with bin Laden's version of the speech and wanted to rephrase parts of the narrative.

Al-Zawahiri's editing efforts on bin Laden's original text include lengthy verses from the Quran to justify his suggested changes. He goes on to say "*This meaning is very important to highlight to the righteous people of this time, for their hearts to be reassured that they are engaging in the same battles that were conducted by God's messengers and their followers of the faithful people for all time... We hope that this message would enlighten the connection between the internal and external enemies in their goals and in their soldiers.*" [19] The reference to "internal and external enemies" appears to be a reference to the Near Enemy (internal to the Islamic world) and the Far Enemy (external, principally the West) and for al-Zawahiri to ensure that there is a religious justification for al-Qaeda's doctrine and rationale for potential future actions.

Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri first established a co-dependent relationship between their two factions, Maktab al-Khadamat (Services Office) and the EIJ, amongst the melee of the Arab mujahedeen camped in Pakistan in the 1980s.[20] Following the retreat of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, al-Zawahiri tried to convince bin Laden, as a matter of priority, to focus on the need for regime change in the Arab world. However, in the mid-to-late 1990s bin Laden persuaded al-Zawahiri that targeting the United States, and removing its influence from the Arab world, was key to creating the caliphate (Islamic state).[21] Bin Laden was pushing to fight the Far Enemy in both actions and doctrine. More than half of his speeches focused on the Far Enemy compared to a fraction that was directed at unseating Arab regimes, the Near Enemy.[22] On the other hand, al-Zawahiri's communiqués reflect a greater emphasis towards the Near Enemy, although the Far Enemy was by no means excluded from his invective.[23] In other words, al-Zawahiri was not so eager to prioritise attacking the U.S. mainland as bin Laden. Instead he opined that it would be more effective for al-Qaeda to focus its resources on U.S. targets in Afghanistan and Iraq.[24] This was more in line with al-Qaeda's pre-9/11 position and its bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the maritime suicide attack on the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen in the year 2000.

While al-Zawahiri, publicly called for attacks in the West, privately, his instructions to affiliates gives evidence of more flexibility. In a May 2015 interview with al-Jazeera, Abu Mohammad al-Golani, the leader of Jabhat al-Nusra (The Support Front for the People), al-Qaeda's then affiliate in Syria, revealed that al-Zawahiri had ordered him not to use Syria to plot against the West but instead focus on the Near Enemy. Al-Golani recalled, "We received clear orders not to use Syria as a launching pad to attack the US or Europe in order to

not sabotage the true mission against the [Bashar al-Assad] regime.”[25] Al-Golani’s disclosure indicated for the first time that al-Zawahiri was steering al-Qaeda away from Osama Bin Laden’s primacy of targeting the West.

### ***Safe Bases and Un-Coupling***

In September, 2013, al-Zawahiri issued his General Guidelines for Jihad wherein he emphasised the need for self-discipline and restraint, noting that al-Qaeda’s strategy “is a long one, and jihad is in need of safe bases.”[26] He added, “If we are forced to fight [local regimes], then we must make it clear that our struggle against them is a part of our resistance against the Crusader onslaught.”[27] Although al-Zawahiri explicitly delineated Western targets as the first objective, which should never be abandoned, he also believed that until that is attainable, implementing a more developed local strategy against the Near Enemy would help al-Qaeda’s long-term policy against the Far Enemy. However, al-Zawahiri also cautioned that would only be the case as long as the operational space to grow and function, without being under duress or attack, could be safeguarded.[28]

In July, 2016, when Abu Mohammad al-Golani announced that Jabhat al-Nusra was un-coupling from al-Qaeda and changing its name to Jabhat Fateh Al-Sham (Front for the Conquest of Syria). Al-Zawahiri’s trusted Egyptian deputies, Abu al Khayr al-Masri and Saif al-Adel, helped formalise the de-linking.[29] Saif al-Adel’s voice, carries special weight as he was one of the few al-Qaeda leaders who strongly opposed the September 11 attacks because these would, in his view, would put al-Qaeda in the direct crossfire of the United States.[30] Even after 9/11, al-Adel was critical of bin Laden and the main organiser of the attacks on the United States, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, for continuing to plot against the ‘Far Enemy’.[31]

In Syria, al-Qaeda approved Jabhat al-Nusra’s un-coupling so that its forces could concentrate on their fight against the al-Assad regime and form closer bonds with other Islamist groups fighting in Syria.[32] Jabhat al-Nusra is allied with Ahrar al-Sham, an organization that previously had been cautious when it came to develop closer links with Jabhat al-Nusra because of the al-Qaeda connection.[33]

The decision by Jabhat al-Nusra to cease fighting under al-Qaeda’s banner was months in the making and overseen by al-Zawahiri himself. In May, 2016, he released an audio recording saying Jabhat al-Nusra leaving al-Qaeda would not be an obstacle to “the great hopes of the Islamic nation.”[34] Al-Zawahiri’s message was an explicit clearance that enabled Jabhat al-Nusra to un-couple from al-Qaeda without breaking the bay’a (oath of allegiance) to al-Zawahiri.[35] In real terms, Jabhat al-Nusra’s un-coupling from al-Qaeda was more about organisational practicalities and public relations management than based on any ideological conflict. However, there was also a caveat entailed as al-Zawahiri also urged Syria’s jihadists to unify to create a “real caliphate,” in direct opposition to the one of the Islamic State, calling it “a matter of life and death.” [36]

A lesson appears to have been learnt by al-Zawahiri in the amicable way the un-coupling with Jabhat al-Nusra was managed, at least in comparison to his obtuse way in dealing with jihadist issues in Syria in the past. To recall, in April 2013, al-Baghdadi had claimed that Jabhat al-Nusra was subordinate to him. Yet its leader, al-Golani refused to acknowledge al-Baghdadi as his leader and instead swore allegiance to al-Zawahiri. At that time, al-Zawahiri had sent a confidential edict, ruling that al-Baghdadi was wrong not to consult with al-Golani who, in turn, should not have pledged allegiance to al-Zawahiri without first obtaining the green light from al-Qaeda.[37] Al-Zawahiri was ill-prepared to deal with the unfolding events in Syria as became fully apparent by the end of June 2014 when Islamic State, without prior consultation with al-Qaeda, announced the establishment of a global caliphate with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its caliph (Muslim ruler).

Despite the name change, the US-led coalition has not relented in its air strikes against the renamed Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, killing dozens of its fighters, including senior leaders like Abu Ibrahim al-Tunsi, Abu Omar al-Turkistani, Abu Afghan al-Masri, Abu Faraj al-Masri, and Abu Omar Saraqeb.[38] Furthermore, between

February 3-4, 2017, U.S. drone strikes killed several al-Qaeda core members in Syria including the Egyptian Abu Hani al-Masri, in Idlib, where the Khorasan group has been imbedded. [39] Abu Hani al-Masri was a close ally of al-Zawahiri and helped him to establish the EIJ Egypt in the 1980s.[40] In the 1990s, he facilitated the creation of terrorist training camps for the EIJ and al-Qaeda and was tied to the disrupted plot to target the US Embassy in Tirana, Albania, in 1998, which was timed to take place shortly after the U.S. embassy bombings by al-Qaeda in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998.[41] The elimination of Abu Hani al-Masri illustrates al-Qaeda's continuing presence in Syria and signifies the U.S. intention to target individuals that it believes could potentially plot and direct global attacks. How this impacts on al-Zawahiri's strategic calculus remains to be seen especially as he has lost a key Egyptian supporter. If the past few years are to serve as an exemplar, when close allies of al-Zawahiri have been killed in U.S. operations, the al-Qaeda leader has refrained to comment or resort to fiery rhetoric without following it up with terrorist activity.

### ***An Egyptian Obsession and AfPak Sanctuary***

Before he was declared to be one of the most wanted terrorists by the United States, al-Zawahiri had been the most wanted man in Egypt. Whether it was his role in the 1974 plot by the Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Party of Liberation) to take over the Military Technical College near Cairo, the 1981 assassination of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, or the EIJ's series of direct attacks against the Hosni Mubarak regime in the 1990s, al-Zawahiri managed to absolve himself, avoid capital punishment and ultimately escape to Afghanistan and Pakistan.[42]

On August 13, 2016, al-Zawahiri issued the first of a series of Brief Messages to a Victorious Ummah.[43] In the first episode, *Who Protects the Mus'haf* (compiled pages of the Qur'an), al-Zawahiri argued that the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood to take advantage of the Arab Spring symbolised its inability to create an Islamic state in Egypt and across the wider Arab world. Al-Zawahiri stated, "...[Egypt] represents the flagrant pattern of the Muslims' failure if they are disabled and deviated, and it demonstrates the truth of the Crusaders' enmity if they are transgressed upon. What is drawn from Egypt can be applied elsewhere." [44]

Al-Zawahiri argued the Muslim Brotherhood failed Egypt because its leaders kept cooperating with various Egyptian governments and participated in elections which neglected and weakened its founder Hassan al-Banna's original mission of creating an Islamic state. [45] Al-Zawahiri's goal behind his message was to illustrate that Egypt remained a strategic and ideological priority which al-Qaeda would never abandon and they represented a more viable alternative in establishing an Islamic state than the Muslim Brotherhood.

Citing Egyptian colonial history to justify a current ideological position, al-Zawahiri also lays into al-Banna for showing support "for King Fuad [1922 – 1936], who was not only a corrupt ruler...but was also a subservient tool in the hands of the English, the occupiers of Egypt." [46] Ironically, al-Zawahiri ignores the fact that his paternal grandfather, Shaykh al-Ahmedi al-Zawahiri, who was an Imam of Egypt's historic al-Azhar seminary, was very unpopular because he was seen as a close ally of King Fuad.[47]

In the second episode of *Brief Messages to a Victorious Ummah*, subtitled *Be Not Divided Among Yourselves*, al-Zawahiri focused on, and reiterated his support for, the Taliban and called on all jihadists in the world to "rally around the emirate," referring to the Taliban's 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' where al-Qaeda had a safe base before 9/11. [48] On the surface, al-Zawahiri's staunch support for the Taliban is not surprising, as al-Qaeda is still dependent on the Taliban for protection and sanctuary in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Yet, al-Zawahiri's relationship with the Taliban is complex. Prior to 9/11, he was reluctant to endorse bin Laden's pledge of allegiance (*bay'ah*) to Mullah Omar.[49] Al-Zawahiri did not believe that his strategic or ideological priorities were in Afghanistan but instead his eyes were always on the situation in Egypt.[50]

On 12 July, 2015, Islamic State issued an audio statement followed by an article in its *Dabiq* magazine, claiming that the Taliban's leader Mullah Omar was dead. This forced the Taliban to confirm officially Mullah

Omar's death on 29 July, 2015.[51] Noticeably silent was al-Zawahiri, especially when three of al-Qaeda's franchises, Jabhat al-Nusra, AQAP and AQIM, issued a joint eulogy praising the late Mullah Omar.[52]

Eventually in August, 2015, after almost one year of silence from commenting on any issue, al-Zawahiri resurfaced and not only affirmed his *bay'ah* to the new head of the Taliban, Mullah Mansour, but also described him as the *Emir al-Mu'minin* (Commander of the Faithful) instead of usurping the honorific title for himself and thereby challenging Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's claim of *Caliph* directly. [53] Mansour accepted al-Zawahiri's *bay'ah* and reciprocated by describing him as "the leader of international Jihadi organization." [54]

Al-Zawahiri's speech was dated August 1, 2015, and had been recorded only two days after Mullah Omar's death was finally confirmed by the Taliban on July 30, where they admitted that Mullah Omar had died on April 23, 2013, over two years before the public announcement of his death.[55] The Taliban claimed that they kept the death of Mullah Omar a secret for tactical reasons. Al-Zawahiri did not comment on the sensitive issue whether or not he knew that Mullah Omar had died long ago. Had he done so, it could have been interpreted as evidence that he had been deceiving his followers for years, pledging *bay'ah* to a dead person. If al-Zawahiri was not among the few insiders who knew that Mullah Omar had passed away long ago, this would have indicated that he was not as close to the leadership of the Taliban as bin Laden had been. Following Mansour's elimination in a U.S. drone strike on 21 May, 2016, al-Zawahiri pledged allegiance to his successor, Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada, in the hope that this would strengthen the relationship with al-Qaeda.[56] However, it is interesting that as of yet, Akhundzada has not accepted al-Zawahiri's pledge in public.

Al-Zawahiri supports the Afghan Taliban, partly out of necessity to maintain a safe base, but also because the Afghan Taliban is experiencing competition from Islamic State's Afghan affiliate, Wilayat Khorasan (Khorasan Province), a group that has concentrated its attacks in a few districts in the country's eastern provinces, including Nangarhar.[57] Another reason why al-Zawahiri is keen on maintaining a close connection with the Taliban is to strengthen the affiliate al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). [58] AQIS is developing a sanctuary in the Pakistani port city of Karachi and in the Helmand province in Afghanistan which form part of a logistical thread. From Karachi, AQIS can transfer fighters, funds and messages through to the border city of Quetta, which is also where elements of the Taliban are based. From there they can easily cross Afghanistan's porous borders and access its southern provinces.[59] Previously, in July 2015, U.S. forces dismantled an al-Qaeda camp in Kandahar province.[60] Within this context, AQIS could be utilized to revitalise al-Qaeda locally which is why al-Zawahiri was calling for *Ghazwa al-Hind* (Battle to Reunite India) a generic term for all of South Asia. [61]

### ***The Safavids and Opaque Relationships***

In the third part of his *Brief Messages to a Victorious Ummah*, al-Zawahiri urged Sunni Muslim fighters in Iraq to regroup and launch a protracted insurgency against what he described as the conspiratorial "Safavid-Crusader occupation" that supports Shiite militias.[62] In his speech, titled *Allah, Allah in Iraq*, al-Zawahiri claimed that Iran and the United States have a "scheme" to eliminate Sunni Muslims in Iraq under the excuse of fighting Islamic State.[63] The Safavid dynasty was one of the most significant Shiite Persian empires during the 16 and 17th centuries. Al-Zawahiri's use of the term 'Safavid' therefore implies Iran has imperial ambitions to subjugate Sunni Muslims. [64] Al-Zawahiri would later again repeat the "Safavid" reference in *The Defiers of Injustice*. [65] In dealing with Iran, al-Zawahiri was building on his earlier *General Guidelines for Jihad*. In that text he had ordered al-Qaeda to "avoid fighting the deviant sects," a reference to Shiite Muslim civilians.[66] This separates al-Qaeda's policy from the one of Islamic State which has a policy of deliberately attacking unarmed Shiite civilians.[67]

Al-Zawahiri's *Allah, Allah in Iraq* is also a renewal of an idea he had previously articulated in 2009 in an "interview" with as-Sahab, entitled *The Facts of Jihad and the Lies of Hypocrisy*. [68] In that text he had railed against Iran and Shi'ite scholars for not only failing to issue *fatwas* (authoritative legal opinion) against the "invading Crusaders in Iraq and Afghanistan" but also for choosing to become their "preferred partner". [69] Despite such public rhetoric, al-Qaeda has an ambiguous relationship with Iran's theocratic regime. Al-Zawahiri's deputies Abu al-Khayr al-Masri and Saif al-Adel, were both held under house arrest in Iran until being released in March 2015 in a prisoner exchange for an Iranian diplomat who had been abducted in Yemen.[70] This would suggest that there are still direct channels of communications between Tehran, al-Qaeda and its affiliates. There are other pieces of evidence supporting such a view. In July 2011, the U.S. Treasury Department designated six members of an al-Qaeda network as terrorists. Abbottabad also highlighted the importance of Iran to al-Qaeda. One document revealed that bin Laden had sent a message to one of his operatives called Kareem in 2007, telling him not to threaten Iran because "You know that Iran is our main artery for funds, personnel, and communication, as well as for the matter of hostages." [71]

In 2014, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, the then head of external operations of Islamic State, issued a message entitled *Iran's Heavy Debt to al-Qaeda*, during which al-Adnani attacked al-Zawahiri, for preventing jihadists from targeting Iran in the past in order to preserve al-Qaeda's strategic interests.[72] Al-Adnani stated, "Islamic State followed the guidance of al-Jihad sheikhs and symbols, so it did not strike the Shi'ites in Iran since its inception, and left Rafidis [rejectionists] safe in Iran. It reined back its infuriated soldiers despite their ability, at the time, to fill Iran with pools of blood. It swallowed its anger all these years bearing accusations of treachery for not targeting its worst enemies, leaving the Rafidis enjoying security pursuant to al-Qaeda's order to maintain its interests and lines of supply in Iran." [73] Ironically, some years before, when al-Zawahiri succeeded bin Laden in 2011, he had been given the honorific title of "wise man of the *ummah*," by al-Adnani.[74]

Another significant figure who had resided in Iran following the 9/11 attacks was bin Laden's son, Hamza, also known as Abu Moaz.[75] Al-Zawahiri is utilizing the bin Laden brand name to recover al-Qaeda's appeal by summoning Osama bin Laden's charisma through his son whom he appears to be grooming. Together, they have coordinated the simultaneous release of some of al-Qaeda's messages in recent years where they have threatened revenge against the United States for the death of Osama bin Laden.[76] However, there is also a much more personal motive for al-Zawahiri to cultivate bin Laden's son. Hamza is married to al-Zawahiri's daughter and he has two children from her, Khairiah and Saad.[77] Al-Zawahiri is therefore able to keep the bin Laden legacy firmly attached to his own doctrine through a strategic marriage alliance.

In a 2015 speech, Ayman al-Zawahiri presented Hamza bin Laden as "son of the lion of jihad," before calling on al-Qaeda's followers to fight against the "Americans, Jews, and the rest of the West." [78] Hamza bin Laden's speeches have revived the image and words of his father when he said "We [al-Qaeda] will continue striking you and targeting you in your country and abroad." [79] He was eerily direct when he threatened America and the West and promised to avenge the death of his father. Hamza bin Laden has subsequently also been listed as a 'global terrorist' by the United States.[80]

### **The Solid Structure**

On 29 August, 2016, al-Zawahiri released his fourth, and what appeared at the time to be the final message, in the series *Brief Messages to a Victorious Ummah*, entitled *The Solid Structure*. [81] Opportunistically, it was released on the 50th anniversary of the execution of the Egyptian ideologue Sayyid Qutb.[82] Qutb had a close connection to al-Zawahiri's family and also an ideological bearing on him. Al-Zawahiri would often cite Qutb in al-Qaeda's propaganda statements and described him as "the most prominent theoretician of the jihadist movement." [83] Al-Zawahiri's maternal grand uncle, Mahfouz Azzam, had been one of the defence lawyers for Qutb, following his arrest in 1965 after the publication of his provocative treatise *Milestones* which

spoke about the need for violent revolutions through jihad.[84] Azzam was given Qutb's power of attorney when he was sentenced to death for plotting against Egyptian President Gamal Nasser.[85]

In *The Solid Structure*, al-Zawahiri took a page from Qutb's seminal book *Milestones*, by speaking of the need for the "revival" of a *Sharia* (Islamic law) body to arbitrate differences and disputes, and a *Shura* (consultative) Council that would "harness the power of the *Ummah* against the tyrants and invaders." [86] In doing so, al-Zawahiri was asserting the importance of consistency behind the jihadist ideology. However, he did not provide details on how such a *Sharia* body would practically function.

Al-Zawahiri has also viscerally attacked *Islamic State* and al-Baghdadi, accusing them for causing divisions and fragmentation amongst the jihadists with their "innovated *caliphate*." [87] Al-Zawahiri described them as "*neo-Kharijites*" based on the term *Khawarij* (Outsiders), a historical and derogatory reference to a sect, active during the first century of Islam, which had mutinied against the fourth *caliph* Ali whom they assassinated.[88] In labelling *Islamic State* as *Khawarij*, which he had done before on several occasions, al-Zawahiri was effectively calling for their *Qatl Ad* (total extermination).[89]

The historical *Khawarij* pursued *takfir*, the excommunication and killing of Muslims accused of lacking faith or abandoning Islam, a tactic that *Islamic State* currently uses against Iraqi and Syrian Muslims. This strategy was forged by *Islamic State's* predecessor entity, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) whose infamous founder, the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, had introduced excessive brutality towards the Iraqi population as a tool to control and subjugate them.[90] In a 2005 letter to al-Zarqawi, al-Zawahiri had criticized him for killing Muslims, urging al-Zarqawi to stop because his actions were toxifying the al-Qaeda brand and would reduce AQI's support base.[91]

Nevertheless, in August 2015, when al-Zawahiri came out of his 11-month period of public silence, in addition to affirming his *bay'ah* to Mullah Manosur, the al-Qaeda leader also chose to describe al-Zarqawi as one of the "good martyrs." [92] By doing so, al-Zawahiri was offering a veiled criticism of *Islamic State*. Despite his strong differences with al-Zarqawi, al-Zawahiri was claiming the former AQI leader died for al-Qaeda and al-Zawahiri's ideological platform, thereby implying al-Baghdadi has betrayed the original cause.

### ***Not Bowing to Islamic State***

Since 2014, the rivalry between al-Qaeda and *Islamic State* has not only been based on ideological disputes but was based also on strategic priorities, particularly regarding the question of what are permissible levels of violence against Shiites and other religious minorities, and the order of priorities when it comes to fighting Arab regimes and the West. During this period, al-Zawahiri's doctrine has been plagued by contradictions and shifts. This surfaced again on 5 January 2017, when al-Qaeda released a message from al-Zawahiri, *To Other Than Allah We Will Not Bow*, which was primarily aimed at asserting his jihadist credentials and restate al-Qaeda's operational priorities, whilst at the same time denouncing *Islamic State*. [93]

Curiously, this message was Part Five of al-Zawahiri's *Brief Messages to a Victorious Nation*. Part Four had been issued back on 29 August, 2016, leaving a significant gap between them. It is likely that Part Five was more a defensive reaction by al-Zawahiri who was preoccupied with stemming what he called a campaign to "discredit, intimidate and alienate" al-Qaeda, conducted by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and *Islamic State*. [94] Al-Zawahiri, referred to al-Baghdadi as a "liar" and as being "blasphemous", trying to counter a litany of allegations from *Islamic State*, including claims that al-Qaeda did not condemn un-Islamic regimes; had been praising ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood; willing to let Christians share power as partners; not practicing *takfir* against Shiites and critically, abandoning the goal of targeting the United States. [95]

This appeared to unnerve al-Zawahiri, who aggressively defended his choices and his own reputation, which further implies that Part Five could have been an unintended sequel to the “*Brief Messages to a Victorious Nation*.” Regarding Shiites, al-Zawahiri stated, “*The liars insist upon their falsehood, to the extent that they claimed we do not denounce Shiites*”.[96] Al-Zawahiri claimed that al-Qaeda’s condemnation of the Shiites was reflected in the *General Guidelines for Jihad* which had been sent to Islamic State before it was officially published. Al-Zawahiri also denied he had said that Christians could be partners in the governance of a future Islamic caliphate, “What I have said is that they are partners in the land, such as agriculture, trade, and money, and we keep their privacy in it, in accordance with the laws of our *Sharia*”.[97] Al-Zawahiri insisted he had not called for Shiite Muslims to be spared, but believed there should not be random attacks against civilians but instead attacks should focus on Shiite-led Iraqi forces described by al-Zawahiri as *rafidah* (rejectionists).[98]

In the battle against what he described as the “Secular-Crusader-Safawi-Chinese-Hindu campaign,” al-Zawahiri laid out eleven directives for al-Qaeda, some of which reiterated the group’s original doctrine as well as other aspects that had been revised by al-Zawahiri following bin Laden’s death in 2011:

1. Al-Qaeda is not infallible and can occasionally make mistakes and must listen to advice to establish the correct methodology and methods to support Islam and jihad;
2. Prioritizing the jihad against the United States whilst adapting to the practical reality of the situation based on consensus;
3. Obeying *Sharia* law and uniting the *Ummah* around monotheism;
4. Liberate Muslim lands from indigenous disbelievers and apostate agents;
5. Freeing Muslim prisoners;
6. Stop the systematic looting of Muslim wealth;
7. Support and aid Muslims in their revolutions against the corrupt oppressive tyrants;
8. Uniting the different *mujahedeen* groups and promoting cooperation, collaboration and coordination;
9. The pursuit of a *Caliphate*;
10. Refrain from harming Muslims through bombings, killings or kidnappings;
11. Give victory to oppressed and weak Muslims.[99]

Al-Zawahiri’s message concluded with a piece of polemic prose, reiterating al-Qaeda threats against the United States and blaming the Americans for all the problems across the Middle East.[100] However, despite reiterating to Islamic State and the world that the United States was a priority target, what was significantly missing from al-Zawahiri’s message is that there was no explanation why al-Qaeda had not again in recent years successfully targeted the West, and in particular the United States. It is clear there remains a strong aspirational goal to target the West but aside from the ideology, there is no mentioning by al-Zawahiri of tactics or targets. This stands in stark contrast to Islamic State which clearly lays out its strategy, often through new media, for followers to pursue.

## Conclusion

Al-Zawahiri has shown pragmatism by not only tailoring his remarks to current realities on the ground but also on the realistic will, capabilities, and nature of al-Qaeda and its affiliates. This is why he has prioritised

on courses of action that are local to the Arab and Islamic world, including countering the Iranian sponsored Shiite militias in Iraq, despite the ambiguous relationship; Support the Taliban in Afghanistan, partly out of necessity; Counter and challenge Islamic State and oppose “apostate” regimes like those in Egypt and Syria. All of these strategic priorities have been interspersed by al-Zawahiri with calls for attacks against the West and, in particular, the United States.

However, to achieve these objectives, al-Zawahiri believes that it is not enough to successfully carry out trans-national attacks, which al-Qaeda cannot currently sustain, but there has to be a strategy to win battles which are based on the requirement that al-Qaeda and its affiliates possess safe bases in the heart of the Arab and Islamic world. Despite the fact that Islamic State has similar ideological goals as al-Qaeda, al-Zawahiri is eager not only to condemn Islamic State, and on occasions to be on the defensive, but also present a viable alternative for jihadists that see al-Baghdadi’s project slowly start to wane.

Many of the doctrines about the Near Enemy from al-Zawahiri’s recent speeches are an updated revision from those he had developed in his EIJ days. Consequently, while there is some disconnect between al-Zawahiri prioritising the Near Enemy over the Far Enemy, with his frequent use of the ‘Crusader’ label, it is a small gap in terms of the jihadist community that he is attempting to galvanise because it still serves a purpose in connecting the Far Enemy with the problems in the Islamic world.

Therefore, in al-Zawahiri’s mind, the ensuing battle against the “apostate regimes” of the Near Enemy cannot be considered an entirely regional struggle if the Far Enemy is acting as their security guarantor. For him, the Far Enemy will not change in the near future and therefore the conflict against them can be revisited if the primary objective against the Near Enemy is unsuccessful. This could include targeting the remaining Western military presence in Afghanistan that supports the Kabul government. Equally, if the violent road to regime change is impeded in pro-Western countries, such as Egypt, under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, or if Jabhat Fateh al-Sham and al-Qaeda find their operations in Syria stymied by Western air-strikes, al-Zawahiri may advocate taking the battle to the West once again.

Although it is likely that al-Zawahiri will ideologically react towards U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration with fire and brimstone, on practical terms, the al-Qaeda leader is unlikely to operationally steer away from his cautious approach towards the Far Enemy until he feels al-Qaeda is able to endure any potential backlash. One successful attack in the United States may only result in severe repercussions that could permanently disable al-Qaeda which has still not fully regenerated. Above everything else, al-Zawahiri is obsessed in his self-preservation. After over 40 years of jihadist activity, he has developed a knack for staying alive and despite his desire to die as a ‘martyr,’ he will not voluntarily sacrifice himself. Furthermore, al-Zawahiri has a vested interest in cultivating his family ties to Hamza bin Laden, and to use the name to further the agenda and brand of al-Qaeda whilst ensuring his ideological thumbprint remains attached to the group’s next generation.

In recent years, Islamic State has been more of a threat to al-Qaeda than the West. It is Islamic State that has challenged al-Qaeda’s doctrine, recruited more fighters, expanded its territorial base, exposed al-Zawahiri’s inconsistencies and highlighted al-Qaeda’s opaque relationships with countries like Iran. Therefore, al-Zawahiri will gladly let Islamic State face the focus and brunt of the international coalition in Iraq and Syria, whilst at the same time hoping that any potential breathing space will enable al-Qaeda to reconstitute its infrastructure and networks across the Islamic world.

Al-Qaeda has not abandoned its plans to target the West, but it is not the only priority. In the short-term, al-Zawahiri’s global relevance will remain, albeit in an understated way, which potentially makes him more dangerous in the longer-term, especially as his priority on survival and operational security remains paramount and this longevity enables him to outlast his rivals from Islamic State.

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## An Empirical Analysis of Causes of Islamist Radicalisation: Italian Case Study

By Michele Groppi

### Abstract

*This Research Note is based on a doctoral dissertation to be shortly completed at King's College, London. It presents first results of one of the largest quantitative analyses of possible causes of Islamist radicalization in Italy, based on a sample of 440 respondents from 15 Italian cities. The study investigates Muslim respondents' support for violence framed in Islamist religious terms. After defining "Islamist radicalisation", a large number of models linking support for violence with various predictor parameters were tested. No statistically significant support was found for theories proposing discrimination, economic disparity, outrage at Western foreign policy, oppression of Muslims, traumatic experiences, or any standard sociological variable, including gender and being a convert to Islam, as predictors. Similarly, neither "networks" nor rational choice theory was supported by the data. By contrast, the most significant predictor variables relating to support for violence were taking offense against offenders of Islam and the endorsement of an Islamic, theocratic form of government (ideology). Social difficulties and uncertainty as for the wish to belong to Italian culture (identity crisis) were marginally significant.*

**Keywords:** Islamist radicalisation, causes, ideology, Italy

### Introduction

Ever since European and U.S. officials brought the concept into discussion in 2004, "radicalisation" has been used to explain causes of terrorism. With time, radicalisation firmly entered the political discourse and its supposed relation to terrorism has become a matter of conventional wisdom. At the same time, radicalisation has principally, if not entirely, been associated to "Muslims in Europe" and to converts to Islam.[1] Following the 2004 Madrid and the 2005 London attacks, it was claimed Europe clearly had a problem with radicalisation.[2] A decade later, even prior to ISIS's terror spree in France, Islamist radicalisation in Europe was pronounced an urgent issue.[3] Given ISIS's ability to radicalise and recruit European Muslims, it has been suggested that radicalisation "will be a more or less permanent feature of Western societies"[4] and that, accordingly, "the new wave of Jihadist terrorism has only just begun." [5]

Yet, the very notion of radicalisation as an explanatory factor of terrorism is a source of controversy. As a phenomenon, radicalisation is not fully understood. There is no accepted definition of radicalisation, as "about the only thing radicalisation experts agree on is that radicalisation is a process." [6] The uncertainty as to whom and what is to be considered "radical" is often responsible for contradictory government policies.[7] This ambivalence is rooted in the changing attitudes within societies towards "radical" notions throughout history, because the term "radical", and hence radicalisation, is utterly relative, for it depends on history and context.[8]

Furthermore, terrorists have not always been deemed "radical". For instance, in the past there was no mention of IRA members being radicalised. The terminology has emerged in the post-9/11 era to describe al-Qaeda and its affiliates.[9] Yet, the often-assumed connection between radicalisation and terrorism is problematic. A number of terrorists were never radical in first place, while most radicals never turn to terrorism.[10] Even though radicalisation represents certain individuals' starting point towards violence, others radicalise only after being recruited. Besides, in Europe, if one takes the Europol statistics, in recent decades separatist terrorism trumped religious terrorism, with most terrorism perpetrated by non-Muslims.[11]

### ***The Study's Conceptual Approach to Radicalisation in Historical Context***

Since 2004, multiple attempts have been made to define radicalisation. Various definitions include “the process (or processes) whereby individuals or groups come to approve of and (ultimately) participate in the use of violence for political aims”[12]; “a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and in which the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence”[13]; “the process of progressively adopting more radical beliefs and ideas of Islam”[14]; and “the process of coming to adopt militant Islamist ideology.”[15]

Given the emphasis on “individual” and “personal” in some of the above-definitions, much academic research has been devoted to attempts to link personal circumstances to causes of terrorism. The attempts have been mostly unsuccessful. Though individual biographies certainly matter, the extensive focus on personal variables has produced “false positives”.[16] That is, what enticed certain individuals to radicalise and turn to violence did not apply to others with similar characteristics. The inability to develop profiles or predictive models based on personal circumstances brought the study of radicalisation into doubt.[17] Radicalisation has even been branded a myth created by the media to advance new agendas and certain policies [18], socially constructed to defend Western culture, securitise the Muslim community, and avoid coping with society’s inability to provide universal equality.[19]

Against this background, this study’s contribution is as follows. The research is based on a questionnaire that includes a number of key statements, answers to which are deemed indicative of Islamist attitudes of the respondents. The author modelled the probability of such responses using a wide range of predictive variables that included, as a subset, those studied in the literature (see the next section). A quantitative analysis of each of the potential predictors of radical Islamist attitudes was performed in order to identify the most statistically significant ones that fit the Italian sample the best.

Particularly significant is the distinction between radicalisation in general and “violent radicalisation” based on notions of extremism. As defined by Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen [20], radicalisation is “a growing readiness to support and pursue far-reaching changes in society that conflict with or pose a direct threat to the existing order”, while “violent radicalisation [is] a process in which radical ideas are accompanied by the development of a willingness to directly support or engage in violent acts.” Defined in this way, violent radicalisation is linked to extremism, or the acquisition of extreme views that either justify or trigger acts of violence in response to a state of close-mindedness that leaves no room for tolerance.[21]

Note that the definition above is deliberately more general than the notion of radicalisation as applied to Islamism, al-Qaeda, ISIS, and their affiliates. This study, however, specifically concerns itself with “Islamist radicalisation”, with “Islamism” defined as those visions of Islam (typically, but not exclusively, from the Salafi school) whose “goal [is] the establishment of an Islamic political order in the sense of a state whose governmental principles, institutions, and legal system derive directly from the shari’ah.”[22] It is also recognised that not all Islamists actively seek social change, as they belong neither to the politically militant nor violent jihadist but to the quietist version of Salafism. Within the Western, specifically European, context, we define Islamist radicalisation as:

*The process by which a Muslim individual or a group of Muslim individuals residing in Europe or other parts of the West adopts purist visions and interpretations of Islam or Islamic tenets, mainly, but not exclusively, from the Salafi school of thought, conflicting with mainstream society’s core liberal, democratic values, which may or may not turn into the justification of violence and/or active engagement in actual acts of violence to subvert the democratic system or achieve particular profound political and societal goals.*

This definition covers three intersecting groups of Islamist “radicals”: “religious purists”, “non-violent extremists”, and “violent extremists”.[23] Here, “religious purists” are those individuals who support purist visions of Islam that might or might not be considered radical as these might or might not conflict with

the existing order, but never endorse violence. “Non-violent extremists”, who may or may not be “religious purists”, justify but do not engage in religiously framed violence. “Violent extremists”, who also may or may not be “religious purists”, justify and actually engage in violence.

That specified, this Research Note concentrates on theoretical models of assumed causes of Islamist radicalisation and tests their application to the Italian scenario. The dissertation from which this Research Note is drawn explores the academic debate on radicalisation in depth and delves into the Italian case in regard to Islamist radicalisation, which is the main focus of the study. By doing so, the dissertation features a vast literature on assumed causes of radicalisation, clearly differentiating instances of Islamist radicalisation by both “non-violent extremists” and “violent extremists”. Further, the dissertation includes a detailed statistical methods section, which is constructed on both quantitative and qualitative levels of analysis (440 surveys and 200 interviews/focus groups). After comparing the results from a nearly identical questionnaire aimed at Italian non-Muslims (440 individuals), the dissertation offers a discussion and policy implementation section. A brief summary of these parts of the dissertation is provided here.

### ***Assumed Causes of Radicalisation***

Social and political grievances are among the most mentioned precursors to radicalisation, e.g., according to the relative deprivation theory.[24] It has been suggested that Muslims may fall prey to radicalisation as they suffer from economic inequality, social disparity, discrimination, and acts of Islamophobia.[25] Proponents of the cultural identity theory and the humiliation-revenge theory [26] contend that outrage at Western foreign policy and the oppression of Muslims worldwide trigger radicalisation [27], particularly in light of feelings of collective belonging that are a defining trait of Arab and Muslim cultures.[28]

Studies in Britain illustrate that personal negative experiences such as imprisonment or death of close relatives can foster cognitive openings and extreme visions.[29] Analogously, works in France show how young, alienated Muslims, while trapped between two cultures, find in radical Islam the remedy to their identity crises.[30] Alternatively, one can view an individual as a rational actor making cost and benefit analyses to maximise profits. By this logic, the availability of any kind of incentive (material and spiritual) can push an individual towards radicalisation. Within this framework, Islamist radicalisation would be nothing but the product of a rational choice.[31]

To other analysts, based on notions from the social bond theory—disruption or weakening of social bonds within society can cause criminal behaviour [32]—radicalisation depends on radical networks and their success in recruiting and indoctrinating new members.[33] While occurring in “echo chambers”, personal bonds and pre-existing ties to radical subjects are also instrumental tools for radicalisation to happen.

Without assuming the Islam-radicalisation nexus, various scholars have accentuated the role of Islamist ideology disseminated from the teachings Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam, and others.[34] According to absolutist/totalist theory notions [35], adherents of their ideology picture the world in a perpetual state of war, where true Muslims are antagonised by infidels who must be confronted militarily unless they convert.

Besides facilitating factors (diasporas, public places, prisons, the Internet), Islamist radicalisation can be approached through gender and conversion theories.[36] Based on masculinity theory, Muslim men might endorse and join ISIS to demonstrate their manhood. Likewise, ISIS offers Muslim women a chance to reclaim their position in stern patriarchal communities. Finally, European converts to Islam might be vulnerable to radicalisation as they often fall prey to discrimination, political grievances, and radical preachers.

### *An Italian Case Study*

Given the fact that Italy has yet to experience a major terrorist attack from Islamists, Italy might seem to be different from other major Western countries. But the country is not exceptional in the context of Islamist radicalisation as defined above. Recently, masses of new migrants have arrived on the Italian shores, triggering anti-Muslim sentiments within certain segments of society. This, coupled with harsh economic instability, heated political debate on immigration, and threats from ISIS, has widened the gap between Italy and its Muslim citizens. Further, the country has harboured al-Qaeda/ISIS members and affiliates, has exported fighters to theatres of Jihad, has witnessed 23 known cases of terrorist activity, including thwarted plots and unsuccessful attacks, has imprisoned and expelled dozen of individuals deemed threats to national security, and has been the home to radical preachers.[37]

### *Methodology Utilised*

The investigation is based on a survey featuring 68 questions, administered in 15 Italian cities selected according to Muslim demographics and Jihadist history. Overall, 440 people took part in the survey, while 200 subjects were examined through one-on-one interviews and focus groups. This makes it by far the largest quantitative study of causes of Islamist radicalisation in Italy to date. Individuals were approached at Islamic centres, mosques, or public places such as markets, stores, stations, etc.

The target population was not preselected in any way. The sample includes 303 males and 133 females. 263 respondents were 16 to 30 years old, 155 between 30 and 60, 17 over 60. 117 were Italian citizens, 209 came from Africa, 64 from Asia, 34 from Europe. 108 resided in the northeast of Italy, 195 in the northwest, 81 in the centre, 54 in the south. 212 earned less than 1,000 Euros a month, 133 between 1,000 and 2,000, 16 more than 2,000. 232 had a high school diploma, 113 a university degree, and 88 had neither. 286 always went to the mosque, 133 only took part in religious ceremonies on holidays or were not very observant. 365 were Sunni, 21 Shia, 39 Sunni converts. Thus, the sample is fairly representative of Italy's Muslim population.

Most questions were intended to assess the respondents' views on different issues and were phrased as precise statements from which each respondent could chose one of the following answers: 1) strongly agree, 2) slightly agree, 3) slightly disagree, 4) strongly disagree, 5) do not know, 6) decline to answer. In the quantitative part of the study only the definite responses (the first 4) were taken into account.

We analysed "Islamist outlook", by which we refer to the respondents' views on violence framed in Islamist terms. These visions have been scrutinised through the respondents' agreement or disagreement with four statements: 1) justification of violence in defence of Islam; 2) duty to punish whoever offends Islam and its sacred tenets; 3) support for al-Qaeda; 4) support for ISIS.

Besides these "response variables", other questions corresponded to dozens of potential "predictor variables", many of which stem from previous studies described in the literature. They can be classified (with a degree of vagueness) as "grievances", "psychological factors" "rational factors", and "structural factors", as shown in Table 1. The survey also included standard sociological variables such as age, gender, nationality, occupation, etc.

**Table 1:** *List of Independent Variables Used in the Study.*

INDEPENDENT (PREDICTIVE)	VARIABLES
Variables from the literature on radicalisation	Grievances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic disparity</li> <li>• Social difficulties</li> <li>• Discrimination/racism</li> <li>• Outrage regarding Western foreign policy</li> <li>• Perceived oppression of Muslims</li> </ul>
	Psychological factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traumatic personal experience</li> <li>• Identity crisis</li> </ul>
	Rational factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rational spiritual and material benefits</li> </ul>
	Structural factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social groups/personal bonds ("networks")</li> <li>• Ideology</li> </ul>
Standard sociological variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Nationality</li> <li>• Birthplace</li> <li>• Years of permanent residency in Italy</li> <li>• City of residence</li> <li>• Social status</li> <li>• Number of children</li> <li>• Economic status</li> <li>• Educational attainment</li> <li>• Occupation</li> <li>• Political orientation</li> <li>• Religious participation</li> <li>• Religion</li> </ul>

**Main Findings**

While a significant minority of respondents support violence framed in religious terms, the vast majority of Muslim respondents do not. Counting only the definite answers, 26% of respondents (105/408) strongly or slightly agreed with the justification of violence in defence of Islam, while 74% opposed it. Similarly, 33% of respondents (131/392), agreed with the statement that whoever offends Islam or its sacred tenets should be punished, while 67% disagreed with such belief. Lastly, 12% of respondents (44/380) strongly or slightly supported al-Qaeda, while 88% of the sample opposed it; likewise, 15% of respondents (57/392) supported ISIS and 85% objected to it.

We tested each model linking support for violence with predictors from the literature. Note that this was not to determine causal relations between variables, for statistics, as a matter of principle, is unable to establish causality. We could, however, determine quantitatively the degree of independence between the various variables. Secondly, we ran logistic regression models linking the responses indicative of “Islamist outlook” with the most statistically significant predictors.

No statistically significant support was found for theories proposing discrimination, economic disparity, outrage at Western foreign policy, oppression of Muslims, traumatic experiences, or any standard sociological variable, including gender and being a convert to Islam as predictors. Similarly, neither “networks” nor rational choice theory was supported by the data. In other words, these results challenge theories frequently found in the literature on radicalisation.

By far, the most significant predictor variable in the regression models was the duty to punish whoever insults Islam in relation to violence in defence of faith. Though violence was not directly implied, those who agreed to punish whoever insults Islam also supported the use of violence in general. Table 2 shows that out of 102 subjects who agreed with the right to punish offenders of Islam, 82 (80%) also supported violence in defence of faith while 20 objected it.

**Table 2:** Contingency Table for Right to Punish Whoever Insults Islam and Violence in Defence of Islam

	Whoever insults Islam and its tenets deserves to be punished			
Violence in defence of Islam can be justified		Agree	Disagree	Total
	Agree	82	46	128
	Disagree	20	237	257
	Total	102	283	385

Out of 283 people who rejected the duty to punish offenders of Islam, 46 supported violence and 237 (92%) did not. Among those who supported the duty to punish offenders of the faith, supporters of violence outnumber non-supporters by a factor of more than 4 (82/20), while for those who opposed the duty to punish offenders the ratio was about 1/5 (46/237). The difference between the two groups was highly significant. This is consistent with the intuitive expectation that Islamist purists would be considerably more likely to take offense and accept violence if Islam is insulted than those who do not share their same beliefs.

The second most significant predictor in the regression models was support for an Islamic government (ideology). Table 3 shows that, out of 109 subjects who preferred theocratic rule, 54 also supported violence and 55 opposed it, i.e., the sub-sample was split evenly with respect to justification of violence.

**Table 3:** Contingency Table for Ideology (Theocratic Government) and Violence in Defence of Islam

	In the Middle East, an Islamic government is better than a democratic one			
Violence in defence of Islam can be justified		Agree	Disagree	Total
	Agree	54	37	91
	Disagree	55	211	266
	Total	109	248	357

In contrast, out of 248 subjects who opposed Islamic government, 37 justified violence, while 211 rejected it. That is, this subsample was split roughly 6 to 1 (211/37) against violence. Again, the contrast was highly significant. Similarly, in comparison to respondents who did not support an Islamic government, those who did were also considerably more likely to endorse punishment of offenders of Islam (67/44 vs. 50/190 ratio), al-Qaeda (35/67 vs. 5/234), and ISIS (44/64 vs. 8/236). The differences between the subgroups for all these questions were also highly significant. This is consistent with the intuitive expectation that Islamist purists would have, as a group, a higher rate of support for religiously framed violence than those who do not share the same religious views.

We also tested the predictive properties of social difficulties at school or at work and uncertainty as for the wish to belong to Italian culture (identity crisis). Those who suffered from social difficulties were slightly more likely to endorse violence in defence of Islam and punishment for those who offend its tenets than those who did not (53/86 vs. 49/209; 68/59 vs. 57/197). Those who suffered from an identity crisis were slightly more likely to endorse ISIS than people who did not (32/153 vs. 17/162). The difference between the subgroups were only marginally significant and provide weak support of the intuitive expectation that those who suffer from social difficulties and identity crises are more likely to accept violence.

It should be noted that this is not to claim all Islamist purists who support an Islamic government or the punishment of Islam offenders ultimately endorse violence. Nor it is argued that ideology, social difficulties, and identity crisis cause support for religiously framed violence. We contend that for those who supported violence in defence of Islam, being a person who agreed with the right to punish those who insult Islam mattered immensely. For those who supported religious violence, punishment for Islam’s offenders, al-Qaeda, and ISIS, being an Islamist purist considerably counted. For those accepting religiously motivated violence and the punishment of offenders, being a person experiencing social difficulties somewhat mattered. For those backing ISIS, being a person suffering from identity crisis also mattered slightly.

**Conclusion**

Based on an Italian case study, this analysis attempts to shed light upon the causes of Islamist radicalisation as offered in the literature. We have found no significant evidence in support of discrimination, economic

disparity, outrage at Western foreign policy, oppression of Muslims, “networks”, rational choice theory, and traumatic experiences as predictors of justifying religious violence. None of the standard sociological variables, including gender and being a convert to Islam, was statistically significant either. By contrast, duty to punish offenders of Islam was, by far, the most significant variable in the whole study. Ideology (support for Islamist government) was also of considerable significance, while social inequality and identity crisis were at best marginally significant.

These results might suggest that Italy is witnessing an inner confrontation within its Muslim community, with ideological factors playing a very considerable role in rejection or justification of an “Islamist outlook”. Yet, avoiding any absolutist generalisation, this study does not aim to universally reject existing causal models of Islamist radicalisation, since the results are solely the product of the Italian scenario. However, the results of this Italian case study suggest the desirability to conduct similar investigations based on the same variables in other European countries in order to gain a more holistic understanding of radicalisation.

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## Special Correspondence

### De-Radicalising Militant Salafists

by Nina Käsehage

#### **Editor's Introduction**

*In the framework of research on Salafism for a doctoral thesis at the Department of Religious Studies at Göttingen University, the author of this Special Correspondence conducted, between 2012 and 2016, a total of 175 interviews with Salafist preachers and their followers in ten countries. What started as an academic investigation soon became also a humanitarian rescue effort as 38 of the interviewees were preparing to go to Syria in order to join the jihadi group Jabhat al-Nusra (more recently renamed Fatah as-Sham). In collaboration with the interviewees' parents, the author managed – by channeling existing destructive potential into more constructive paths – to prevent the departure of 35 of them [Those radicalized militants where her crisis intervention was not successful got killed shortly after their arrival in Syria]. In the following contribution to Perspectives on Terrorism, the author shares some reflections on her conversations with three militants – two girls and one young man – each representing a different type of vulnerable person.*

#### **Introduction**

An 'outsider' not used to the militant way of thinking may see those radicalized young men and women as being caught up in an all-encompassing ideology. Yet they themselves do not feel like they are being orchestrated; on the contrary, they might be "feeling free for the first time in [their] lives." [1] However, they are not all of one type. Here are short sketches of three types of radicalized militants.

#### **Type One Militant: 'All-or-Nothing' Perspective**

*"If you want to stop me from joining the jihad, you have to kill me at once. The pathway of jihad is my predetermined way. I adore Allah, I want to live next to his residence, my death will be the key to my truthful new beginning."*[2]

This quote from Umm Safia (not her real name), a 21 year-old female student, living in a German city, illustrates her determination: if she could not follow the pathway to jihad, she would rather want to die. This kind of interviewee can be categorized as a "Type One Militant." It would appear that there exists nothing in between for her, no alternative life perspective, that living means either opting for jihad or nothing. The specific mental frame that Umm Safia has internalized by following the jihadi ideology is one of a readiness to make sacrifices, and includes sacrificing her own life for a 'higher cause' to show her devotion. [3] The question 'what could be of higher value than her own life?' remains outside her consideration, being consumed by the jihadi ideology.

A possible approach toward the Type One Militant is to question its stereotypical position and ask 'why is it better to die than to stay alive? Did Allah not prohibit the killing of other human beings?'[4] To use the term 'human beings' implies not to assess another person in terms of having the 'correct' or 'wrong' religious status, but relates to behavior toward others. Showing such a Type One Militant the different ways to interpret the Qu'ran can change their point of view.

### ***Type Two Militant: Falling in Love with a Jihadi Groomer***

*“My future husband dearly loves me. He knows which way I have to choose, because he can gauge my skills correctly. Allah, peace upon him, has sent him to me, to guide and to protect me.” [5]*

These words of Umm Nour (not her real name), an 18 year-old girl, who wanted to travel to Syria to marry a jihadi fighter ten years older whom she only knew from her correspondence via social media platforms, reflects his strong influence on her. This young woman did not question the motives or objectives of a complete stranger, when he reached out to groom her. How could he gain such a comprehensive control over Umm Nour? A few months before they met each other online, Umm Nour’s twin sister died in a tragic accident. Losing her closest relative placed Umm Nour in a situation that Quintan Wiktorowicz has described as ‘cognitive opening’: a distressing event leading to a personal crisis and the questioning of all familiar values suddenly opens the door to a new perspective. [6] In this moment of crisis, she got in contact with her “future husband” who managed to take total control over her life. Her situation is comparable with the one of vulnerable girls falling under the influence of so-called ‘Lover-Boys’ – young males who make minor girls dependent by initial acts of kindness in order to make them compliant and ultimately force them into prostitution. [7] Type Two Militant women are attracted by the attention and care they initially receive from *mujahedeen* (fighters) on the jihadi online platforms.

One possible approach to save them for going down the paths of personal ruin and to bring them back to reality is to interrupt the 24/7 influence of those militant online seducers by taking away the girl’s smart phone or her Internet access on the computer for a prolonged period of time. If the continuous impact of brainwashing on those vulnerable girls is cut off, there is the chance to open their eyes and expose the real intentions of those dangerous online seducers.

### ***Type Three Militant: Negative Sympathy***

*“Watching my enemies die, makes me feel great. The sound of their screams feels as sweet as honey to my ears. There is nothing better than to see the kuffar [infidels] suffer!”[8]*

In addition to those wishing to sacrifice themselves in a jihad, there are also those who like to see others suffer. One of them is Abu Said (not his real name), a 24 year-old Muslim, who was part of a ‘bunch of guys’ in Germany who wanted to join the jihad in Syria. To make himself feel good and increase his self-importance, the Type Three Militant has a need to feel the fear and often also the pain of others over whom he likes to exercise power. Several psychiatric examinations of radicalized militants have identified a connection between certain mental health problems and a preference for violence directed towards others. [9] In the case of Abu Said, it became obvious that he might have sadistic tendencies, as he appeared to enjoy the humiliation and the pain of his chosen enemies. Type Three Militants can be found not only in the sphere of a militant religious milieu, but also in other social milieus where they experience satisfaction by humiliating other people. Depending on how pronounced such sadistic tendencies are, it might be possible to wake the Type Three Militant up to reality, for instance by showing him that inflicting pain harms not only victims but also perpetrators in their own mental well-being. In principle, militants with this type of personality disorder are difficult to bring back from the brink and professional assistance of a psychologist or a psychiatrist might be required when dealing with Type Three Militants.

### ***Sketching Alternative Life Pathways***

In general, it is important to show the good and bad facets of life to radicalized militants in a realistic way, because many of those young adults have lost their faith in either family or their wider societal environment; they are desperately searching for something new they can believe in. Unfortunately, jihadism is often one of the first things they come across on the Internet when searching for information on Islam. Until not so long

ago, when people were googling the word 'Islam' in Germany, Salafist websites (e.g. the one of the Salafi-group 'Die wahre Religion' [The true religion], which is outlawed since the 15th November 2016), turned up on top of the Google list. In the meantime, government interventions have brought about a change to this and people are directed to websites which do not contain radical Islamist content.

By showing radicalized Salafists all the possible individual, social, political, religious and professional opportunities open to young men and women in open societies, there is a chance to reach those who have given up on their societies. Often it comes down to two things: how many arguments does a radicalized person need to be able to deconstruct the jihadi-narratives and how much time does that take? This depends on the individual and the situation itself. Sometimes my dialogues with those who wanted to travel to Syria took only two to three hours to have a positive effect; in other cases the discussions lasted more than twelve hours. Often getting genuine person-to-person interaction for such prolonged periods of time appeared to be almost as important as the substance of the deconstruction argumentation itself.

### ***Conflict Prevention–Business as Usual?***

Unfortunately, preventing vulnerable youth from joining the jihad is not the end. Often it is just the beginning of a de-radicalization process. After preventing the departure of radicalized militants, they might be safe for the moment, but no one knows what tomorrow will bring. Therefore parents and others concerned about radicalized militants ought to get in touch with de-radicalization institutions like GIRDS (German Institute on Radicalization and De-radicalization Studies – [girds.org](http://girds.org)) or EXIT (<http://www.exit-deutschland.de/english/>), which can offer professional expertise and services. Moreover, stepping out of the jihadi milieu might not automatically mean that someone will leave the Salafist environment. To be prepared for the option that a former would-be jihadi militant wishes to continue life as a quietist Salafi (as opposed to a jihadi one) might avoid disappointments on the side of parents and others concerned about him or her. More important than quitting an individual religious movement is leaving behind a destructive and life-denying way of thinking. This is possible, if civil society is supportive and fights for the life of every member at risk of going down the path of jihad.

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### **Notes**

[1] Quote from an interview with a male militant in a city in the west of Germany in the summer of 2014; he stood on the point of travelling to Syria in order to join the Jabhat al Nusrah.

[2] Quote from an interview conducted in the spring of 2014 with a female student in a city in northern Germany; the girl wanted to travel to Syria in order to join Jabhat al Nusrah.

[3] Cf. Qu'ran 2:94.

[4] Cf. Qu'ran 5:32.

[5] Quote from an interview in the spring of 2014 in a city in the east of Germany; the girl wanted to travel to Syria in order to marry a *mujahid*.

[6] Quintan Wiktorowicz (Ed.), *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, p. 20.

[7] Cf. Günther Bubenitschek; Bärbel Kannemann; Melanie Wegel: Die "Loverboys"-Methode, Ein neues Phänomen in der Jugendprostitution, in: *Kriminalistik* (8-9/2011), pp. 537-542. Cf. URL: <http://www.stoploverboys.nu>.

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## Resources

### Bibliography on Islamist Narratives and Western Counter-Narratives (Part 2)

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

[Bibliographic Series of Perspectives on Terrorism–BSPT-JT-2017-1]

#### Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on narratives employed by terrorists and their opponents. It mainly focuses on Islamist terrorism. 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, narratives, counter-narratives, alternative narratives, counter-messaging, Islamists, Jihadists

NB: All websites were last visited on 22.01.2017. This subject bibliography is the second part of a two-part bibliography ([Part 1](#) has been published in Issue 8[4]). To avoid duplication, this compilation only includes literature not contained in Part 1. However, meta-resources, such as bibliographies, were included in both parts.– See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

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**Note**

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

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

Compiled and Selected by Berto Jongman

### *Introductory Note by the Editor*

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

*All the items included here surfaced online in the period mid-December 2016 thru mid-January 2017.*

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

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

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

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## Book Review

**By Joshua Sinai**

**Marc Sageman**, *Misunderstanding Terrorism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 224 pp., US \$ 24.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 9780812248890.

This relatively short book is a challenging assessment of what the author considers to be the limited magnitude of the threats to the West posed by “global neo-jihadi” terrorism—as opposed to what he criticizes as being, by mostly U.S. Government assessments, overly exaggerated threats – posed by groups such as al Qaida, the Islamic State, and their American Muslim adherents. This book is of special interest because it updates Sageman’s research and insights on these issues which were published in his earlier two books, *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004) and *Leaderless Jihad* (2008) – both of which were considered at the time highly innovative in the field (including by this reviewer, whose blurb on the latter book is featured on this book’s back cover).

To cover these issues, the book’s five chapters examine the nature of the actual terrorist threat, “probability theory and counterterrorism,” “misunderstanding radicalization,” the author’s model of radicalization into political violence and his proposal for “ending political violence in the West.”

One of the most interesting chapters is the introduction, which provides a biographical background of Sageman’s political, medical and sociological career and how he came to study how some members of social movements are radicalized and recruited into terrorism. He calls them “neo-jihadis” because real jihad is declared by legitimate authorities, not by individual perpetrators who “target innocent noncombatants without sanction from any legitimate government”. (p. 5) He found that radicalization and recruitment into such terrorist organizations are similar to “the growth of cults, like that of gangs, [which] is based on friendship and kinship, what I call ‘a bunch of guys.’” (p. 6) He also found that “the path to political violence was a collective journey, not an individual one, even for so-called lone wolves.” (p. 6) This led him to propose four prongs in the process of radicalization: “...moral outrage at recent political events, a warlike ideology [i.e. believing that the West is at war with Islam – JS], personal experiences that resonated with this ideology, and mobilization through existing militant networks.” (p. 11) Looking back at the evolution of the jihadist threat, he finds that “the threat was even less organized and more fluid than I had previously appreciated: militants imagined that they were part of a large global neo-jihadi community linking them all together,” (p. 12) Sageman also formulates what he terms the “‘blob theory’ – that terrorists mostly emerged from this loose, fluid, and amorphous political protest community.” (p. 13)

Sageman ends the introductory overview with a polemic of what he terms “the cause of stagnation in terrorism research,” (p. 20) which he blames on “in-house [U.S.] government analysts, who [while having] access to most classified information, lack the sophisticated methodological background to fully and accurately analyze their data.” (p. 21) Academic analysts, on the other hand, “understand everything but know nothing [due to the unreleased classified nature of such data - JS], while government analysts know everything but understand nothing.” (p. 21) Since he does not provide concrete examples of such methodologically unsophisticated work or identify such “in house government analysts” or even identify any academic analysts “who understand everything but know nothing” such an argument comes across as unfair. This section on the book is based on his earlier polemic on ‘The Stagnation of Terrorism Research’ which was published in the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Vol. 26, 2015) where a number of leading authors took issue with some of his generalizations, e.g. Sageman’s facile equation of terrorism with political violence in general. Moreover, later on, Sageman not only contradicts himself by criticizing his fellow academics as misinformed – aren’t they the ones who supposedly “understand everything”? – but then, perhaps out of a professional reluctance to criticize academics he knows personally, he deliberately fails to mention in

the book's main text the identity of academics whose theories he finds lacking, but only lists them in the endnotes, which makes it cumbersome to look them up.

Even if one might disagree with Sageman's overly restrictive six factor-based criteria in the first chapter on "The Actual Threat," for inclusion in his survey of global neo-jihadi plots/attacks in the West, readers will find his survey of 66 plots or attacks in the West from the period of September 11, 2001 to September 10, 2011 highly useful for its methodology and data, which is compiled in a timeline distribution table (pp. 30-33) and other graphs. However, one might disagree with his view that such perpetrators conduct their operations in Western countries "as retaliation for victims of Western killings in the Middle East" (p.54) This is an oversimplification of their diverse motives.

The second chapter, "Probability Theory and Counterterrorism," is a useful application of Bayesian probabilistic theory to estimate the likelihood of an individual to carry out a future terrorist act, based on calibrating "an appropriate 'signal-to-noise' ratio" in matching their characteristics against a template of what are considered to be behavioral indicators signaling risk. (p. 61) This conceptual approach is applied to a critique of the U.S. government's use of such "derogatory information" about individuals of concern in various official watchlists. Sageman argues that such nominating procedures are "in fact no more than mere guesses or hunches couched in secrecy." (p. 86) Such sweeping assertions might well be contradicted by U.S. government officials involved in populating such nominating systems if given the opportunity to demonstrate the validity of their methodology and information in a public forum.

The third chapter, "Misunderstanding Radicalization," begins with Sageman's proposal to formulate a new definition of terrorism as "a public's categorization of political violence by nonstate actors during domestic peacetime." (p. 91) This is one of the vaguest definitions proposed to date, although it is reminiscent of an earlier definition proposed by Alex Schmid in 1992; Schmid had suggested that acts of terrorism should be defined in legal terms as 'the peacetime equivalent of war crimes.' Disregarding much of the ongoing debate about radicalization models, Sageman concludes that government analysts have reached a consensus "around a two-step model of the turn to violence" based on individuals' being radicalized into joining a political protest community, and then being mobilized into violent action. (p. 108)

In the fourth chapter, "Militants in Context," Sageman presents his model of how political protest communities turn to political violence (which he, problematically, equates with terrorism while the latter is only one specific manifestation of the much broader former category). It consist of "escalation of hostility between the state and their community, which includes a cumulative radicalization of discourse; their disillusionment with nonviolent legal tactics; and moral outrage at new state aggression against their community;" (p. 130) and what appears to be the fourth and fifth prongs in the form of "activation of a martial social identity" (p. 143) and "social isolation," with these "self-categorized soldiers" going underground to escape arrest (p. 148), due to continued "state repression". (p. 159) I had to come up with my own interpretation of Sageman's five pronged model because he does not clearly delineate it analytically or outline it in a diagram, which would have been useful to the reader. Another problem with Sageman's formulation is that it appears to equate the emergence of left-wing terrorist groups such as the American Weather Underground or the West German Baader Meinhof group in the late 1960s, which came out of genuine protest movements, with the more recent rise of the "global neo-jihadi" groups such as al Qaida or the Islamic State. However, in the view of this reviewer, the root causes for their formation, radicalization and mobilization are of a rather different nature.

Sageman's prescription in the final chapter on "Ending Political Violence in the West" is similarly problematical, as it appears to focus on measures to counter and resolve threats posed by "both nonviolent protestors and potentially violent ones," (p. 167) rather than transnational modern-day terrorist groups whose agendas are vastly different.

While Sageman's two earlier works have been ground-breaking and given rise to fruitful debates (e.g. with Bruce Hoffman), the present volume is, in this reviewer's view, unlikely to change our understanding of radicalization and terrorism substantially. Nevertheless, it makes for thought-provoking reading.

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**Terrorism Bookshelf:****23 Books on Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects****Reviewed by Joshua Sinai**

*This column consists of capsule reviews of books from various publishers. The reviews are listed in three sections: "Terrorism – Global", "Radicalization, Islamism, and al Qaida/Islamic State", and "Reference Handbooks and Textbooks".*

***Terrorism–Global***

Bjoran Brenner [Foreword by Magnus Ranstorp], *Gaza Under Hamas: From Islamic Democracy to Islamist Governance* (New York, NY: I.B. Taurus, 2017), 256 pp., US \$ 35.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-78453-777-7.

This account is based on the author's extensive fieldwork from 2009 to 2012 in Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and addresses the nature Palestinian Hamas's rule in the Gaza Strip, primarily from 2006 (when Hamas gained control over Gaza) to the present. As explained by Ranstorp's Foreword, three themes permeate this book: (i) the rivalry between Hamas and Fatah [which Hamas had evicted from Gaza-JS], (ii) Hamas' relations with the Palestinian Salafi elements and jihadi fringe groups that had been growing in popularity in Gaza, and (iii) the way in which Hamas re-established order, which was expressed in its reform of the judicial system. What makes Brenner's account especially valuable is its focus on how Hamas has managed to create a functioning government in Gaza – a subject that is little known – as opposed to Hamas's behavior towards Israel, which the author explains is not discussed in this book as it has been extensively studied by others. The author concludes that, with regard to democratic procedures, "Hamas does not question the concept of democracy as such, rather it has been concerned to advance its own idea of democracy – an Islamic democracy. However, Hamas's actions on the ground have often clashed with liberal principles." (p. 198) Although Brenner's account can be criticized for being uncritical with regard to Hamas' rule, for instance, there is little mention of the widely publicized personal corruption by many of its leaders and the enormous poverty of Gaza's population, this book is recommended for providing other insights into the nature of its rule which, due to the author's access to Hamas leaders and operatives, will not be found in other studies. The author is Lecturer at the Swedish Defence University in Stockholm, Sweden, and Research Fellow at Institut Français du Proche-Orient in Amman, Jordan.

Andrew Fitz-Gibbon, *Talking to Terrorists, Non-Violence, and Counter-Terrorism: Lessons for Gaza from Northern Ireland* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 92 pp., US \$ 54.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-3-319-33836-1.

In this short book the author argues that the peace process that successfully resolved the Northern Ireland conflict can be applied to bringing about Israeli-Palestinian peace, although, in a twist, he believes that this peace process should focus on Israel and the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip as its initial partners to the peace process. To be fair, the author admits that "I am mindful that Gaza is only one issue among many in Palestine," and that "I am aware that any solution for Gaza must ultimately be a viable solution for all Palestinian people." (pp. viii-ix) The book's second chapter offers a general account of terrorism, responding to terrorism and state terrorism, while the third chapter offers a discussion of the Northern Ireland peace process. Also insightful is the fourth chapter's discussion of how the seven components of the Northern Ireland peace process can be applied, at least in a general sense, to "the situation between Israel and Gaza: retelling an empathic narrative, using back-channel negotiations to begin the conversation, finding a suitable, honest broker, disarming and rejecting violence, employing the principle of self-determination, repatriating political prisoners, and affirming the plasticity of religious tradition in a pluralist society." (p. 45) What is missing from the author's discussion, however, is awareness of an initiative advanced by Israeli moderates

following the 50-day Israeli-Hamas War in July-August 2014 when Hamas found itself significantly weakened (and, supposedly, willing to moderate its position), for Israel, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia to provide massive socio-economic aid, as a first step in re-starting an Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This initiative was not accepted by the Benjamin Netanyahu-led coalition government, thereby dooming chances for re-starting a significant peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, with strong Arab state support. The fact that this initiative is not mentioned in the book makes the author's argument for a Northern Ireland-type peace process to be applied to the Israeli-Hamas arena appear too utopian to be accepted as a realistic solution to the conflict. Also unrealistic is the author's suggestion that "it is time to revisit bi-nationality" as a possible end-state, (p. 67) and that, as part of this solution, "in a pluralistic state, with no one religious idea at the center, there would be room for the practice and growth of all religious visions and none" (p. 74) – which neither any Israeli government nor Hamas would realistically ever accept. Despite the author's naïve utopianism on possible solutions to the conflict, this book is recommended for its analysis of the Northern Ireland peace process and the components required in an effective peace process in general. The author is Professor and Chair of Philosophy, and Director of the Center for Ethics, Peace and Social Justice, at the State University of New York College at Cortland.

Charles Brossman, *Building a Travel Risk Management Program: Traveler Safety and Duty of Care for Any Organization* (Cambridge, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann/Elsevier, 2016), 222 pp., US \$ 42.46 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-12-801925-2.

This handbook is an authoritative and comprehensive account of applying what are considered industry best standards for an organization's travel risk management (TRM) program framework and metrics. It also contains numerous case studies. TRM is aimed primarily at ensuring the safety of business travelers in foreign countries, whether politically stable or unstable (i.e., threatened by politically-motivated terrorism and criminal violence). The volume's chapters cover topics such as planning for travel risks; the duty of care organizations need to follow in ensuring their business travelers are as safe as possible; examples of potential risk exposures and incident types, such as biohazards and pandemics; coping with medical emergencies and natural disasters; the potential for kidnapping and ransom incidents and how to avoid or mitigate their consequences when they occur. It also assesses an organization's approach to TRM, including conducting a risk assessment (with risk defined as the magnitude of a threat minus the resources required for mitigation). Furthermore it discusses the components involved in building an organization's TRM program; managing crisis response when an incident, such as terrorism, occurs; how to ensure hotel safety from a traveler's perspective; and tips for procuring the services of private-sector TRM companies. The author, based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a veteran practitioner expert in travel risk management.

T. E. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert* [An Abridged Edition of "Seven Pillars of Wisdom"] (New York, NY: Tauris Parks Paperbacks, 2016), 352 pp., US \$ 19.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-84885-665-3.

Thomas Edward (known as "T.E.") Lawrence was a British military officer who became renowned for his role as liaison to the Hashemite dynasty. The Hashemite dynasty (at the time ruler of the region that would later become part of Saudi Arabia), had agreed to join Britain in spearheading the ultimately successful Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the First World War (1916-1918) in return for a general promise of "Arab independence." A full 700 pp. account of Lawrence's role in the Arab Revolt was published in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in 1922, while *Revolt in the Desert*, its abridged edition, was first published in 1927. This book is a reprint edition of the publisher's revised edition, published in 2011. In addition to being considered as classic work of literary writing, the guerrilla tactics that Lawrence promoted in this military campaign are considered classics in guerrilla warfare.

Alex S. Wilner, *Deterring Rational Fanatics* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 264 pp., US \$ 65.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-8122-4668-1.

In this important and well-organized account the author seeks to expand the scope of traditional deterrence theory by “pairing it with a more nuanced understanding of contemporary terrorism.” (p. 2) As he explains, “When tailored appropriately, states can use the logic of deterrence to influence, coerce, and deter terrorist groups, delimiting the type and ferocity of the violence those groups are willing to use, and influencing their behavior more broadly.” (p. 2) The end state and the metric of success in counterterrorism, the author points out, “requires diminishing a group’s ability to organize and orchestrate acts of violence, as well as undermining a group’s motivation to use violence.” (p. 14) One of the virtues of this book is the application of its conceptual approach to the examination of targeted killings by state actors. It explores its effectiveness in eliminating the threat posed by a specific group, forcing its leaders to hide from possible drone strikes; leaving the targeted group in disarray by eliminating a crucial professional cadre; forcing them to engage in “power struggles and internecine conflicts”, following the killing of their leaders (p. 103), and lowering overall morale. Targeted killings do not succeed, the author argues, when they lead to civilian casualties and miss their targets, provoke international condemnation for violation of international law or retaliation by the targeted terrorist group, while there is also a risk of the emergence of “unknown successors” who may be worse than the ones killed. A separate chapter examines the effectiveness of American targeting of Taliban leaders in Afghanistan during the period of 2007-2008. The author concludes that a fully-fledged deterrence approach can empower a counterterrorism campaign to compel “terrorist organizations to change their behavior, to limit the scope of their attacks, to reorganize their internal structures, or to shift tactics...” (p. 187) The author is Assistant Professor of International Affairs at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, in Canada.

### ***Radicalization, Islamism, and al Qaida/Islamic State***

Martha L. Cottam and Joe W. Huseby, With Bruno Baltodano, *Confronting Al Qaeda: The Sunni Awakening and American Strategy in Al Anbar* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 158 pp., US \$ 45.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-44226-485-4.

This book, as described by the authors, “is a study of decision-making process and the political psychology of the Sunni Awakening in al Anbar and the change in American military strategy that has made the Awakening a collaboration between the Sunni tribes and the US forces. We describe the change in the tribal leaders’ perspective and the change in American military strategy as two vectors with different origins that came together successfully to defeat AQI [al Qaida in Iraq-JS] in al Anbar.” (p. 2) To explore these issues, the authors conducted field work in Iraq in which they interviewed Iraqis and Americans involved in the Awakening, and then utilized concepts from “political psychology, specifically, the effects of changing perceptions, of images, of one another, and the dynamics of social identity” in order to frame their response. (p. 2) This framework is applied to the book’s chapters which discuss tribal make-up and interactions in the al Anbar Province, the political-military strategy employed by the United States at the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the expectations by the Sunni tribes about their roles in the future of Iraq, the shift in the mutual images that enabled the Americans and the tribal leaders to collaborate in fighting AQI, and the lessons learned from this case, including whether such successful cooperative strategies could be applied elsewhere. The concluding chapter examines the current situation in the relations between the Sunni tribes and ISIS in al Anbar. Although the Anbar Awakening, which began in September 2006, proved successful at the time in containing AQI, the authors conclude that “In al Anbar today we see again signs that ISIS is building ties and networks with some tribes in the region as their perception of threat from an Iranian-controlled Baghdad grows.” (p. 134) This was caused, the authors add, because “if the tribal identity is threatened, the tribes will seek allies to preserve that identity and to promote their own interests.” (p.

134) Thus, it is “Only by providing security, and meeting the social and cultural standards of the tribes, and helping to promote a sense of involvement in the political fate of Iraq, did the United States make headway into al Anbar politics and improve security. Current evidence provided above suggests that these security and political needs are not currently being met.” (p. 134) It is realistic insights such as these that make this book an important contribution to the literature on counterinsurgency. Cottam and Huseby are professors at Washington State University, and Baltodano is professor of political science at Florida Southwestern State College.

Jessica Davis, *Women in Modern Terrorism: From Liberation War to Global Jihad and the Islamic State* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 192 pp., US \$ 70.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 35.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-44227-498-3.

This is a well-written, empirically-based account of the role of women in modern terrorism. Following an introductory overview on women in modern-day terrorism [the role of women in earlier terrorist struggles, such as the 19<sup>th</sup> century anarchists, is not discussed]. The author discusses women’s roles in terrorist organizations and the role of gender in the radicalization processes into terrorism. Five chapters examine the roles of women in the Lebanese Hizballah, in Palestinian organizations such as Fatah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers (LTTE), the Workers’ Party of Kurdistan (PKK), al Qaida, Chechen groups, the Nigerian Boko Haram, the Somali Al-Shabaab, female suicide bombers in Iraq, and the Islamic State (IS/ISIS). Drawing on the author’s extensive database, these chapters examine why susceptible women are drawn to such terrorist organizations; how such organizations, ranging from secular to religious, employ them, whether as combat operatives (such as suicide bombers) or in tactical support roles (with groups such as the Lebanese Hizballah never using them in combat roles or even publicizing their support roles at all, while the Islamic State publicizes their roles extensively, including attracting substantial numbers of women as foreign operatives, including as wives for their male fighters), and future trends. Interestingly, the author points out that in all terrorist groups examined in this study, none employ women in leading organizational roles. Women also constitute only a tiny fraction of lone wolves. The author concludes that “In essence, while women are frequently seen as an aberration in terrorism, it is time for researchers and counterterrorism practitioners to view them as they are: a permanent and important feature of modern terrorism.” (p. 145) The book’s Annex includes a useful dataset on women in terrorism incidents. The author is an Ottawa-based writer who has worked in the Department of National Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Jean-Pierre Filiu, *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and Its Jihadi Legacy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 224 pp., US \$ 24.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-19026-406-2.

This is a critical account of what the author terms the ‘Arab counter-revolution’ – the response of ‘the Deep State’ (*dawla ‘amiqa*) to a democracy-seeking Arab Spring, with “the repressive dynamics designed to crush any hope of democratic change...” (p. x) This framework is then used to examine the repressive responses to the Arab Spring by ‘Mamluk’ and ‘police state’ governments—some of which began themselves as revolutionary movements. It covers events in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. Their regime responses are contrasted with a more enlightened and successful response by the Tunisian government, which the author explains, “highlights a democratic way out of the Mamluk impasse.” (p. xiii) The author concludes on a pessimistic note that “Four years into the Arab revolution, the depressing realization prevails that, with the significant exception of vanguard Tunisia, the whole democratic uprising is at best a failure, at worst a fraud.” (p. 249) He adds that “The massive surge of the jihadi menace is ... not to be blamed on the Arab democratic uprising, but on its worst enemies, the dictatorships that played with jihadi fire to deny any substantial power-sharing. More democracy should be the answer, not a new ‘war on terror’ that would ultimately feed more terrorism.” (p. xv) The author is Professor of Middle East Studies at Sciences Po in Paris, France.

Phil Gursky, *Western Foreign Fighters: The Threat to Homeland and International Security* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 224 pp., US \$64.00 [Hardcover], US \$ 32.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4422-7380-1.

This insightful, practitioner-based account by a retired Canadian government intelligence analyst examines the challenges facing Canada and its Western allies from homegrown Islamist extremists “who see violent jihad as a divine obligation.” Using his background, his approach is to “seek to collect information, analyze that information, and provide advice to the government of the day” to which he adds “a chapter on what we are doing about foreign fighters and what else we could do to deal with this phenomenon.” (p. 3) This framework is applied, first, in a chapter on the nature of war and why nations resort to conflict, which sets the stage for an examination of personal motivations by Canadians and other Westerners to volunteer to join military forces in past wars in which their governments were involved, such as World War One and the Vietnam War, as well as ‘unsanctioned’ conflicts where the democratic governments were not directly involved, such as the Spanish Civil War. This provides the book with a comprehensive context in which to understand why several thousand Western Islamists have decided to join groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The rationales for these Islamist foreign fighters, the author explains, include their sense that the *Ummah* (Islamic nation) was at risk, a duty to embark on *hijrah* (migration) to the Islamic State, “disgust” with Western nations, anti-Shia and anti-Assad sentiments, but also to be part of the “apocalypse” in which such “end-of-days” events will usher the arrival of a Muslim messiah and the “Armies of Khorasan.” (p. 83) This is followed by a chapter that discusses the motivations and roles of women in the jihad, with the Islamic State ushering a new era in which more Western women than heretofore have been encouraged to join the organization, including forming “an all-female cohort known as the Khansaa Brigade.” (p. 100) With regard to the possible threat posed by the estimated 10 percent (or so) proportion of the foreign fighters who return to their Western countries of origin, the author writes that this threat needs to be examined as threefold: the threat before their travel, the threat they pose during their travel, and the threat they pose after returning. The nature of the threat by the returnees is categorized as fivefold: “nothing”, “returning as ‘broken men’”, “acting as radicalizers”, “making preparations to leave again”, and “executing terrorist acts at home”. (pp. 108-110) The author then discusses what he considers to be effective security services’ responses to these categories of threats, such as investigating and monitoring radicalization, early intervention to counter radicalization, placing them on ‘no-fly’ lists to prevent their travel, seizing their passports, arresting them based on solid leads prior to their travel, or “doing nothing.” In case such Islamists succeed in traveling to Syria and joining groups such as IS, the author examines the effectiveness of counter-measures such as revoking their citizenship, arresting and trying them in a criminal court, or using them in “anti-radicalization” programs. (pp. 122-125) The author concludes that “There is no quick and easy solution to the problem of what to do with returning foreign fighters. As with radicalization to violence, each case must be examined individually to determine, where possible, what the intentions of the returnees are. This is not an easy task: those with violent intent will not openly declare.” (p. 129) This book is recommended as a secondary textbook in courses on terrorism and counterterrorism, with each chapter beginning with a chapter abstract and concluding with a summary. The Appendix includes useful excerpts from leading Islamic texts, including the Quran, which illustrate how the Islamic religion and ideology are used by foreign fighters (and others) to justify their resort to violent jihad and join terrorist groups. The author heads Borealis Threat and Risk Consulting, in Gloucester, Ontario, Canada.

David Kilcullen, *Blood Year: The Unraveling of Western Counterterrorism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 312 pp., US \$ 24.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-1906-0054-9.

This book, as explained by the author—a leading counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism expert—is “about what the emergence of ISIS tells us about the broader War on Terrorism since 2001. This is linked to

the rise of the Islamic State, to be sure, but is also connects the Arab Spring, the resurgence of confrontation with Russia, the Iranian nuclear deal, and the European refugee crisis.” (p. ix) There is much to commend in this important book. This includes his innovative categorization of the evolution of terrorism by groups such as al Qaida and ISIS as “expeditionary terrorist operations” (where a terrorist group will invest considerable resources to train and deploy a combat team to conduct an operation in another country, such as 9/11 and Mumbai in 2008); “guerrilla terrorism” (where a terrorist group will train a foreign operative to return to his country to lead a combat cell in an operation, such as the London 7/7 transportation attacks); and, in the latest evolutionary development, what he terms as “remote radicalization” (where a terrorist group, such as ISIS, will exploit the Internet’s social media connectivity to radicalize adherents in other countries and provide general guidance to carry out attacks on their own in their own countries, such as the Boston Marathon bombers). (pp. 118-122) With much of this account covering the years 2014-2015, the author finds that the Western “War on Terrorism” has failed: “we need a complete rethink. That rethink... needs to start with a threat analysis,” (p. 201). These threats he categorizes as fourfold: the first threat he defines as “home grown terrorism” (the insider threat presented by extremist adherents of groups such as al Qaida and ISIS in their own societies); the second threat, which is closely related to the first, is that of “foreign fighters” from such countries who travel to Iraq and Syria, with an estimated 10 percent returning to their countries to engage in terrorist-related activities; the third threat concerns “the effect of the rise of ISIS on other terrorist groups”; and the final threat is the “most military element of the ISIS threat: the catastrophic war that the rise of the Islamic State and the regional and global response to it, is inflicting on the Middle East and North Africa – primarily Iraq and Syria, but with destabilizing effects radiating to Europe and North Africa, as well as Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.” (pp. 202-211) To counter the final threat, the author proposes a “full-scale conventional campaign to destroy ISIS” (p. 215) that would be based on the ability to “translate battlefield victory into enduring and stable peace.” (p. 231) The author is Chairman of Caerus Associates, a consulting firm, and a Senior Fellow in The Future of War Program at New America Foundation – both in Washington, DC.

Jeremy Kowalski, *Domestic Extremism and the Case of the Toronto 18* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), XLIX + 245 pp., US \$ 129.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-349-94959-5.

As the author explains, “Using the case of the Toronto 18, this book attempts to identify and deconstruct the conditions that make the emergence of particular types of extremist actors probable in place-specific contexts.” (p. xiii) Finding ‘conventional’ explanations of the causes of homegrown terrorism to be “constrained and limited by the manacles of state intellectualism,” the author offers a different methodological approach, one that he believes is devoid of “an analytical ossification” to “help escape from the epistemological and ideological narrowing engendered by dominant discourses and authorized narratives.” (p. xiii) Following an introductory overview that discusses the author’s approach to analyzing terrorism, which is influenced by the discipline of critical terrorism studies’ favorite theoreticians (such as Nicos Poulantzas, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and others), the book’s six chapters discuss, first, the issues involved in analyzing “domestic extremism of the Islamitic type”; second, “the extradiscursive movements” that make “dominant and subversive discursive formations possible” (i.e., in plain English, the conditions that make it possible for radical movements to emerge); third, the “dominant and subversive discursive formations and ideological positions” that influenced the Toronto 18 group; fourth, “the role transnational information flows and ideational connectivities served in the ideological conditioning and political transformation of the members of the group”; fifth, the role of the Canadian state’s policies and practices in contributing to the conditions that make such extremist groups possible; and, sixth, the role of such actions and practices contributing to the “ideological conditioning and political transformation of various members of the [Toronto 18] group.” (p. xxxvi) The concluding chapter discusses the author’s experience as a court observer of their trials. An epilogue outlines the outcome of the criminal proceedings against members of the group. The author concludes that “In the case of the Toronto 18, three distinct yet interconnected and mutually reinforcing spheres of influence served a vital role in the ideological

conditions and the political transformation of the group: the transnational sphere of influence, the state sphere of influence, and the group sphere of influence.” (p. 209) As demonstrated by this brief overview, this is a difficult book to read for those who favor clearly-written, non-jargon laden prose, which is unfortunate because the author’s discussion of the nature of the Toronto 18’s group members, including the role of the government’s informant and the trials’ proceedings, provides new information that would be of interest to those studying this subject. The author is Adjunct Professor at York University, Toronto, Canada, specializing in terrorism, geopolitics, and geography studies.

Charles R. Lister, *Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 540 pp., US \$ 24.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-19046-247-5.

This is an exhaustively detailed, chronologically organized account of the roles played by Sunni jihadists and their Syrian Salafist allies in the Syria-based insurgency against the Bashar al-Assad-led regime during the years 2011 to 2015. Specifically, as described by the author, “This book will tell the story of how this unfortunate state of affairs came to be. Where did the jihadists come from in the first place? How did they establish themselves, and what was their role in the revolution? What role did external actors play in facilitating the rise of jihadists and how might US-led and Russian intervention impact their status in Syria?” (p. xiv) While the book’s general discussion is authoritative and well-informed, some of the author’s conclusions can be questioned. These include arguments such as that “The current Western focus on countering terrorism in Syria in both understandable and ill conceived” because it does not address the “socio-political conditions in which extremists can thrive” (p. 385) [in this reviewer’s opinion, Western governments are justified in attempting to defeat the Islamic State which has no interest in any peaceful compromise]; that “it appears all but inevitable that Syria’s Islamists will have to be acknowledged as necessary partners in any future peace and political process” (p. 391) [will mainstream Muslims accept to live in such an autocratic theocracy?]; and his characterization of the al Qaida-affiliated (even if loosely) Jabhat al-Nusra as “limiting the extent of its extremist behaviour and behavioral expectations across Syria, combined with its particular effectiveness on the battlefield and willingness to cooperate with a broad spread of opposition groups, has placed it in an ideal position to continue to exploit the ongoing conflict.” (p. 392) [which has been proven false, given the primacy of the Islamic State]. The author is a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Doha Center in Qatar and a Senior Consultant at the Dubai/UAE-based The Shaikh Group, where he supports their Track II initiative to mediate the Syrian civil war.

Simon Mabon and Stephen Royle, *The Origins of ISIS* (New York, NY: I.B. Taurus, 2017), 256 pp., US \$ 15.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-78453-696-1.

This is a well-written and informed account of the fragmentation of the Iraqi state since the U.S. invasion in March 2003, which was caused by internal and external factors. These factors, the authors write, “created the conditions necessary for violent extremism to thrive. Indeed, from this chaos, ISIS was able to present an image of strength and security, drawing support from people struggling to find this elsewhere. As a consequence, understanding these conditions will help to understand how best to defeat the group.” (p. 11) What makes this book especially important is the authors’ discussion, which takes the form of a table, of possible solutions for restoring stability to Iraq. These are based on the attainment of conditions such as creating an “environment for local interaction,” allowing “for patterns to emerge naturally,” and continuous “adaptation.” (p. 158) The authors conclude that “Stopping ISIS militarily is not a cure for Iraq’s ills, and therefore a more holistic approach will be required if the violence is to subside.” (p. 162) Simon Mabon is Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Lancaster, and Stephen Royle is a Research Fellow at the Richardson Institute, Lancaster University, Lancashire, England.

Flagg Miller, *The Audacious Ascetic: What the Bin Laden Tapes Reveal About Al-Qa’ida* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 459 pp., US \$ 34.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-19026-436-9.

In late 2002, more than 1500 audiotapes were uncovered by U.S. troops in a house previously occupied by Usama bin Laden and his entourage, in Kandahar, Afghanistan. This rich archive of recordings of speeches by bin Laden and other al Qaida leaders, to which the author had unparalleled access, form the basis of his account of al Qaida as a “discourse”. He explores “bin Laden’s rise as both an ascetic adversary of Western globalization and an important rationale for expanding America’s transnational security commitments within Arab and Islamic worlds especially.” (p. 4) While others might not agree with the author’s main argument, terming it as too uncritical of al Qaida’s expansionist and genocidal ideology, his translation of these audiotapes and inclusion of large excerpts of them in the volume’s chapters, make this book especially important as a primary source for researchers studying AQ’s leadership’s ideological and theological underpinnings and evolution over the course of more than two decades. In the book’s Epilogue, the author writes that “Al-Qa’ida is less a single organization, network, or set of affiliates united by a common ideology than it is a tactic for winning battles within Muslim-majority societies.” (p. 276) The author is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Davis.

Peter R. Neumann, *Radicalized: New Jihadists and the Threat to the West* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 256 pp., US \$ 17.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-78453-673-2.

This is an insightful account of the nature and magnitude of the new wave of Islamist terrorism within the overall context of the waves of global terrorism that had preceded it. To examine these topics, the book is divided into two parts: a discussion of David Rapoport’s notion of the four historical waves since the 19th century to categorize the evolution of modern terrorism (i.e., “Anarchist”, “Anti-Colonial”, “New Left” and “Religious” waves), with each lasting 25 to 30 years, and with each “inextricably bound up with a radical political movement,” (p. 4), and the nature of the current wave, which is “inseparably linked to the Arab Spring and – very particularly – to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.” (4) While al Qaeda still remains a viable terrorist “entity”, particularly in the form of its Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) affiliate, the Islamic State, according to Neumann, is the fifth wave’s penultimate manifestation as it has succeeded, unlike al Qaeda, in controlling – and, most importantly, in governing – territories in Iraq and Syria and in exploiting social media to appeal to adherents around the world to become foreign fighters on behalf of its “Caliphate-in-the-making. The Islamic State’s effectiveness is explained in sections on its philosophy, organization, military, “state apparatus”, and the author’s projection for its likely future.

What makes this book especially important is Neumann’s utilization of his research center’s empirically-based investigative work on the makeup and motivation of the foreign fighters who have joined the Islamic State, and the tasks they perform once in the Caliphate. Also discussed are the factors that motivate some of them to return to their countries of origin, whether due to disillusionment or with the intention to carry out further terrorist attacks. A separate chapter discusses the Salafist characteristics of the Islamic State’s supporters who remain in their countries of origin. Prof. Neumann insightfully differentiating between “fighters”, “cheerleaders”, and “fans” – which, he explains, also requires differentiated counterterrorism response measures, whether surveillance and arrest or countering extremism programs. This is followed by a chapter on Islamist radicalization and terrorism in America, with the author concluding that “In the end, becoming a lone wolf appeared to be the only option in a country where the security agencies are (hyper) vigilant and Muslim communities resilient.” (p. 151) Following a highly informative chapter on the current state of al Qaida and its affiliates, the book’s final chapter provides the author’s suggestions for creating building blocks of effective counterterrorism. He writes that “The success of counterterrorism depends on how well the security services can distinguish between (actual) terrorists, the counterculture and the rest of the population, and on how efficient and precisely targeted their measures are for each of those groups.” (p. 178) This volume is highly recommended as a general textbook for courses on terrorism and counterterrorism, as well as a stand-alone account of the nature of the Islamist terrorist threat facing the West, in particular. The author is Professor of Security Studies at King’s College London and Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR).

Alison Pargeter, *Return to the Shadows: The Muslim Brotherhood and An-Nahda since the Arab Spring* (London, England, UK: Saqi Books, 2016), 304 pp., US \$ 24.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-86356-144-3.

With the Arab Spring, which intensified in 2011, expected by many to herald a profound shift in the nature of Middle Eastern regimes from harsh and repressive authoritarianism to popular and moderate Islamic governance, the Muslim Brotherhood movements in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia were regarded as ideally suited to bring about such political reforms. As the author of this excellent study demonstrates, however, all three movements – in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Libyan Brotherhood, and the An-Nahda movement in Tunisia – have failed to achieve their original objectives in these countries. In this account, the author seeks to answer the questions of “What went wrong? And why did it happen so quickly?”, as well as whether, as she cites the *Economist* magazine, these failures “represented a bigger, more existential crisis related to the end of political Islam itself,” with “Islamism no longer the answer.” (p. 4) The author’s answer is that “political Islam – or at least the version of it articulated by the Brotherhood and its counterparts – turned out to be an empty vessel comprising little more than slogans and generalities that could not be translated into tangible or meaningful political outcomes.” (p. 7) One of the results of such a political vacuum, the author points out, has been the rise of violently extremist movements such as Daesh (or ISIS), which these Muslim Brotherhood movements regard “as hot-headed youths who have become carried away with their religion” (p. 252), but which they are still unable to effectively counter and defeat. One of the reasons for these failures, the author concludes, is the Middle East “is still caught up in the same old dilemma it has been facing for decades – namely, how to confront modernization and Westernisation, and how to map out a sense of itself and its identity.” (p. 253) The author is a UK-based veteran writer on Middle Eastern and Muslim Brotherhood issues.

Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* [Reprint edition] (New York, NY: Anchor, 2016), 384 pp., US \$ 28.95 [Hardcover], US \$ 16.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0804168939.

This is an authoritative account of the rise of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who eventually became the leader of al Qaida’s branch in Iraq. It covers conflictual relations with al Qaida’s top leaders due to Zarqawi’s use of mass atrocities in his terrorist operations, and how, following al-Zarqawi’s assassination by the U.S. counterterrorism campaign that had targeted him and his deputies in June 2006, his group and other Iraqi military factions that had joined it, eventually resulted in the emergence of the equally brutal, yet more militarily successful Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi-led Islamic State (IS/ISIS). What makes this book so valuable as a top resource on this subject are the author’s extensive contacts in U.S. and Jordanian intelligence communities, which provide it with documentary-like information and detail that would be difficult for academic researchers to obtain, as well as his terrifically clear writing. The author is a veteran reporter for *The Washington Post* and the author of the highly-regarded *The Triple Agent: The al-Qaeda Mole who Infiltrated the CIA* (2011).

Graeme Wood, *The Way of the Strangers: Encounters with the Islamic State* (New York, NY: Random House, 2017), 352 pp., US \$ 28.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-8129-8875-8.

In this largely theology-driven journey into the mindsets of the Islamic State’s adherents around the world, the author, an American journalist, attempts to find answers to questions such as “What do you want? Who are you? Why, among all the versions of Islam, did this most ruthless one attract you?” (p. xxiv) To answer such questions, the author travelled to Australia, Egypt, Norway, the Philippines, as well as the United States. What he found through his interviews with some of the leading jihadi spokesmen and studying their movement’s “essays, fatwas (religious rulings), films, and tweets” is a “coherent view of the world rooted in a minority interpretation of Islamic scripture that has existed, in various forms, for almost as long as the religion itself. This version of Islam bears only passing resemblance to the Islam practiced or espoused by most Muslims.” (p. xxvii) The author then adds that “The Islamic State’s followers revel in their minority status. They see it as evidence of the majority’s error, not their own,” and “They just prefer their

violent interpretation over their critics' peaceful one." (p. xviii) Their "violent interpretation" is part of an "apocalyptic game plan," which the author argues "can, at the strategic level, provide clues about why they do what they do – and what they may do next. Certain events must happen, and certain events must not, in a particular order." (p. 263) As part of their "apocalyptic game plan" is a "final battle...an armed conflagration, not a gentle prodding to follow the one God." (p. 263) The author concludes, however, that while the Islamic State's strategy is to forge partnerships with like-minded extremist Muslim groups around the world and to exploit such regions of unrest as "potential niche[s] for the Caliphate," (p. 278) "After two years of listening to the group's followers, I have come to think of them as sick romantics, a visionary company whose longing for meaning was never matched by an ability to distinguish good from evil, or beauty from horror...[who] will never be able to undo the misery they have inflicted on so many others." (p. 279) Focusing on the Islamic State's theological underpinnings presents only a partial picture of its true nature, which limits this book's relevance in explaining it as a political-military organization that engages in brutal and genocidal terrorist and guerrilla warfare to achieve its extremist Islamist objectives. Nevertheless, it is recommended for shedding light on the nature of its jihadist theology as explained by its adherents around the world. The author is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* and teaches in the Political Science Department of Yale University.

### **Reference Handbook and Textbooks**

David Brannan, Kristin Darken, and Anders Strindberg, *A Practitioner's Way Forward: Terrorism Analysis* (Salinas, CA: Agile Press/An Imprint of Agile Research and Technology, Inc., 2014), 158 pp., US \$ 23.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-98307-456-4.

This textbook focuses on the importance of understanding two primary components of terrorism analysis: "the analytical frameworks that surround any given subject matter, and the vast variety of sources from which they must draw the facts in order to produce analysis." (p. x) This is done by explaining the "principles from cognitive science and learning theory," which enable "the reader to more easily transfer what they learned here to their workplace." (p. xi) These analytical principles are explained in the book's six chapters, which cover topics such as (1) challenges to analysis (e.g., how to define terrorism, preventing bias, checking the validity of primary and secondary sources, and managing the issue of access to foreign language sources); (2) how to use structured analytical frameworks, including psychological explanations and rational choice models, to think about terrorism, whether secular or religious; (3) applying a sociological perspective to the study terrorism, particularly through Social Identity Theory (SIT) which the authors' recommend as "an effective framework for cross- and multi-cultural analysis of sub-national violent groups." (p. 41); (4) how to understand analytical cultural markers to explain how terrorist groups operate (such as the interaction between terrorist groups and counterterrorism response agencies, and the role of mafia-type patron-client relationships and "honor-shame" cultures that shape the conflict over limited resources); (5) how to understand the role of religion in certain terrorist groups (e.g., the importance of religious texts and whether or how religious ideologies impact terrorist action); and (6) understanding how to use a variety of sources for information (e.g., understanding the overall context of information items that are used, and the importance of being aware that terrorism is not static but a dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon). The authors conclude that "Better analysis makes a better foundation for our operational and policy decisions, which is an important building block in the ongoing effort to improve our homeland and national security." (p. 133) As a textbook, each chapter consists of an overview and list of focus questions, "Just in time" set-aside boxes that define key terms, drawings that visualize concepts, and chapter summaries that identify central ideas for review. An Appendix provides a listing of reference sources employed in the book. Brannan and Strindberg are affiliated with the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS), in Monterey, California. Darken, previously affiliated with CHDS, is co-founder and Creative Director at Agile Research & Technology.

IEP, *Global Terrorism Index 2016: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* [IEP Report 43] (New York, NY: The Institute for Economics & Peace, November 2016), 104 pp., No Price [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-9942-4564-9. This publication is available for downloading at: <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>.

This 4th edition of the *Global Terrorism Index (GTI)* provides a comprehensive and authoritative overview of key global trends in terrorism for the year 2000 to 2015. The GTI's incident data is derived from the Global Terrorism Database, produced by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), at the University Maryland. One of the report's findings is that the "overall GTI score deteriorated by six per cent" in 2015 "as many moderately affected countries experience record levels of terrorism." (p. 2 Overall, the GTI report "reinforces the fact terrorism is a highly concentrated form of violence, mostly committed in a small number of countries and by a small number of groups. The five countries suffering the highest impact from terrorism as measures by the GTI are Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria, accounted for 72 percent of all deaths from terrorism in 2015. Similarly, only four terrorist groups were responsible for 74 percent of all these deaths: ISIL, Boko Haram, the Taliban, and al-Qa'ida." (p. 3) These findings are detailed in the report's five chapters on "Results," "Trends," "Terrorist Groups," "Economic Impact of Terrorism," and "Correlates & Drivers of Terrorism." A final chapter provides expert contributions on subjects such "Why Preventing Violent Extremism is the Private Sector's Business," "Jihadist Hotbeds and Local Radicalisation Processes," and "Mapping the New Global Criminal Terrorist Networks." The Appendices provide data on the GTI's ranks and scores for the year 2015 and the GTI's methodology.

Gus Martin, *Understanding Homeland Security* (Los Angeles, SAGE, 2017), 456 pp., US \$ 86.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-105063-4613-7.

This is an updated and expanded new edition of the author's comprehensive, authoritative, and well-organized textbook on the components of homeland security, with a particular focus on the establishment of homeland security agencies in the United States. The volume is divided into four thematic parts. Part I, "Foundations of Homeland Security," defines homeland security, including its historical origins in the post-9/11 era; how homeland security approaches all-hazards, ranging from terrorism to natural disasters; its legal foundation; the balancing of civil liberties and the requirement for security; and the agencies that carry out homeland security missions. Part II, "Threats and Vulnerabilities," examines new trends in the terrorist threat environment facing a nation, ranging from religiously-driven, mass-casualty terrorism to cyberterrorism. Part III, "Preparedness, Response, Recovery," discusses the components required to defend a nation's critical infrastructure, responding to a terrorism incident, and recovering from such incidents. Part IV, "Homeland Security: An Evolving Concept," analyzes near-future trends in terrorist threats facing a country, including the deployment of 'sleeper agents'. As a textbook, each chapter begins with a series of learning objectives, "chapter perspective" boxes that include discussion questions, tables and figures to further illustrate the accompanying text, photos, a chapter summary, key terms and concepts, recommended websites for additional resources, web exercises, and recommended readings. Also included are web-based student study guides and instructor guides. The author is Professor of Criminal Justice Administration at California State University, Dominguez Hills.

Gus Martin, *Essentials of Terrorism: Concepts and Controversies* [Fourth Edition] (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2017), 336 pp., US \$ 82.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-5063-3097-6.

This is an updated and expanded fourth edition of the author's highly regarded textbook on terrorism and counterterrorism. The volume is organized into three thematic parts, with each consisting of several chapters. Part I, "Understanding Terrorism," discusses how to define terrorism, presents a historical perspective on ideological origins, analyzes the causes of terrorism, and examines the types of violence committed by terrorists and how incidents are covered by mass media. Part II, "Terrorist Environments," covers topics such

as state terrorism, the use of terrorism by insurgents, religiously extremist terrorism, transnational terrorist groups, and domestic terrorism in the United States. Part III, “The Terrorist Battleground,” examines the components of counterterrorism, the role of homeland security in protecting the United States, and future trends in terrorist warfare. As a textbook, each chapter begins with an introduction; side boxes that present various perspectives on the subjects covered, including questions for discussion; tables and figures to further illustrate the accompanying text, including incident chronologies; key terms and concepts, recommended readings, and additional Web-based resources for additional materials. For course instructors, the volume includes a website that provides resources to supplement the book’s materials, including PowerPoint lecture slides and discussion questions. The author is Professor of Criminal Justice Administration at California State University, Dominguez Hills.

Henry W. Prunkhun, Jr., *Shadow of Death: An Analytical Bibliography on Political Violence, Terrorism, and Low-Intensity Conflict* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 432 pp., US \$ 127.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-8108-2773-8.

With the academic discipline of terrorism and counterterrorism studies more than 50 years-old, it is important to peruse earlier published volumes for background information to provide a wider context to understand current terrorism threats and challenges. One such important earlier volume is Prunkhun’s annotated bibliographic handbook, published in 1995 (and one of the last solely annotated bibliographic handbooks published over the past 20 years), which fortunately is still available in print from the publisher. Beginning with a Preface that explains the handbook’s objective and organizing principles, the volume is divided into two parts. “Part One – Political Terrorism: A Selected Review of the Literature,” provides an overview of the history of terrorism, types of terrorism (e.g., ranging from civil disorders, quasi-terrorism, political terrorism, to official or state terrorism); defining terrorism; and the purpose, objectives, and tactics of terrorism, including the important insight that terrorists prefer to target innocent civilians because “attacks on military or police forces would not generate the disproportional fear so vital to the terrorist offense.” (p. 13) “Part Two – An Analytic Bibliography” – the handbook’s major section – provides annotated bibliographic listings of books and articles on the various types of terrorist and guerrilla groups that have operated since historical times, significant civil wars characterized by episodes or campaigns of terrorism, terrorists’ areas of operations, terrorist philosophies, terrorist weapons and tactics (e.g., bombings, assassinations, aircraft hijackings, maritime terrorism), counterterrorism, and state terrorism. Several chapters provide bibliographic information on terrorism databases, journals, and “book dealers and sellers”. The author is Associate Professor at the Australian Graduate School of Policing and Security, Charles Sturt University, Manly, NSW, Australia.

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

## Words of Appreciation from the Editors

*Perspectives on Terrorism* is entirely the product of volunteers – academics, professionals and practitioners who for ten consecutive years have been giving their time and providing their expertise to keep this free and independent online journal alive and increasing in circulation to nearly 7,000 subscriptions today.

While the main burden of producing six issues per year rests on the shoulders of the Editorial Team and those of the Editorial Board members, who do most of the reviewing, there are many others who assist us in producing timely Articles and Research Notes six times a year. The seven members of the Editorial Team and the twenty Editorial Board members alone would not be able to handle and review the growing number of articles that reach us now on an almost daily basis. We could not cope without the selfless help of our esteemed external reviewers who read and critique the articles that reach us.

Once a year we wish to thank these anonymous reviewers publicly by listing their names. For reviewing article submitted to *Perspectives on Terrorism* in 2016, we sincerely thank the more than 50 individuals listed here:

Max Abrahms	Philip Holtmann	Elizabeth Pearson
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Marcus Binder	Haroro Ingram	Donald Petersson
Sergei Boeke	Ely Karmon	Tom Quiggin
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### THANK YOU, Peer Reviewers for *Perspectives on Terrorism* (2016)!

We also wish to thank our not so anonymous regular members of the Editorial Board:

Shazad Ali,	Leah Farall	John Morrison
Joost Augusteijn,	Paul Gill	Assaf Moghadam
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These members of the Editorial Board were approached most often and asked again and again to give us their professional assessment on the quality of submissions reaching our journal. Many authors submitting manuscripts have benefitted from their constructive criticism.

## ***A Big “Thank you” to Our Crowd-Funders***

We also wish to thank all those who answered our 2016 crowd-funding appeal for financial support of *Perspectives on Terrorism*. There were altogether 35 donations made, ranging from US \$10 to US \$200 – all of which are significantly helpful for defraying the costs of publishing our journal. While 11 donations were made anonymously, 24 were made by identifiable donors—(family) members, friends and well-wishers of the Editorial Team of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, including authors who have contributed articles to our journal in the past. We would like to thank here all those whose names are known:

Andrea Ammendola	James Forest	Rick Ramsey
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The kindness of 11 anonymous strangers is also recognised here; donating to the journal without expecting to be appreciated by name is a high form of altruism.

To both the known and the unknown donors we say: **Thank you!** You belong to that very special group of readers of *Perspectives on Terrorism* who realise that a free and independent scholarly journal can only exist when a few are willing to sacrifice either time or money or both so that the many can enjoy that freedom and independence. If others should be interested in contributing, the crowd-funding site remains open at: <https://www.gofundme.com/perspectivestri>

## ***And “Thank You” to Departing Members of the Editorial Team***

Last but not least we wish to thank Eric Price and Joseph Easson who, after more than seven years of faithful services, have left our journal.

*Eric Price* was a professional information specialist at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) when Alex Schmid first met him during his period as Officer-in-Charge of the UN Terrorism Prevention Branch in Vienna (UNODC/TPB). After retirement, Eric continued to provide a wealth of information to Alex and he became his Editorial Assistant, contributing more than forty in-depth bibliographies to *Perspectives on Terrorism*. Eric Price retired for health reasons and we wish him the very best for the future.

*Joseph Easson* was hired as Data Manager for the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV, University of St. Andrews, Scotland) when Alex Schmid became its director in 2006. A scholar of classic languages by training, Joseph holds also a degree in computer sciences. From 2009 onwards, he took charge of the IT tasks associated with our electronic online journal. He not only transformed our Word Files, Tables and Graphs into beautiful journal pages but also kept track of our subscribers and contributors. Only when he began to pass on his skills to his successor, did we fully realize just how big his workload had been during all these years. Joseph leaves us for happy personal reasons.

We owe both of them, Eric and Joseph, a big ‘THANK YOU’ for services so freely and fully rendered over so many years.

Finally, from Alex P. Schmid & James J.F. Forest (Editors) and the other members of the Editorial Team—Joshua Sinai, Judith Tinnes, Jennifer Dowling, Jared Dmello and Jodi Pomeroy—a sincere thank you all for keeping *Perspectives on Terrorism* as a free and independent journal alive and well!

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

Prepared by Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn

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

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

### Ph.D. Theses in Progress in the Netherlands and Dutch/Flemish –speaking Part of Belgium:

#### Aerds, Willemijn

- Residual threat in the context of security and intelligence
- Willemijn Aerds, [w.j.m.aerds@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:w.j.m.aerds@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs
- Expected date of completion: 2020

#### Berge, Wietse van den

- Examining decision-making within the conflict between Islamic State and the Kurdistan Region in Iraq by using Graham Allison's paradigms of foreign policy analysis
- Wietse van den Berge, [w.van.den.berge@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:w.van.den.berge@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker, Prof. Beatrice de Graaf
- Expected date of completion: November 2020

#### Boeke, Sergei

- Terrorism in Mali
- Sergei Boeke, [s.boeke@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:s.boeke@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker
- Expected date of completion: end 2018

#### Bötticher, Astrid

- Radikalismus und Extremismus. Konzeptualisierung und Differenzierung zweier umstrittener Begriffe in der deutschen Diskussion [Radicalism and Extremism. Conceptualisation and Differentiation of two Contested Terms in the German Discussion].
- Astrid Bötticher, [astridboetticher@web.de](mailto:astridboetticher@web.de)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid, Prof. Edwin Bakker

- Completed; expected date of defense: March 2017

**Dokter, Annemieke**

- Indonesia in historical perspective–Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Darul Islam en Jemaah Islamiyah and the waves of Rapoport
- Annemieke Dokter, [adannemiek14@gmail.com](mailto:adannemiek14@gmail.com)
- Universiteit Utrecht; De Nederlandse Defensie Academie; Prof. Bob de Graaff
- Expected date of completion: unknown

**Frissen, Thomas**

- Violent extremist ideation and the influences of (mediated) communications
- Thomas Frissen, [Thomas.frissen@kuleuven.be](mailto:Thomas.frissen@kuleuven.be)
- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; Institute for Media Studies; Prof. Leen d'Haenens
- Expected date of completion: October 2019

**Gans, Ben**

- Nonlinearity, Complexity and Randomness in Civil-Military Interaction; Understanding Conflict Resolution in the New World Disorder
- Ben Gans, [B.Gans@uvt.nl](mailto:B.Gans@uvt.nl)
- Tilburg University; Research School on Peace and Conflict (Norway); University; Prof. Piet Ribbers, Prof. Paul van Fenema, Dr. Sebastiaan Rietjens
- Expected date of completion: December 2017

**Heide, Liesbeth van der**

- Explaining Processes of Involvement in Terrorism
- Liesbeth van der Heide, [e.j.van.der.heide@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:e.j.van.der.heide@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker; Dr. Marieke Liem
- Expected date of completion: December 2018

**Klem, Wouter**

- Securing Europe, fighting its anarchists. Transnational police networks in the struggle against terrorism, 1881-1914
- Wouter Klem, [w.m.klem@uu.nl](mailto:w.m.klem@uu.nl)
- Universiteit Utrecht; Department of History and Art History; Prof. Beatrice de Graaf
- Expected date of completion: November 2018

**Kowalski, Michael**

- Ethics of counterterrorism
- Michael Kowalski, [m.kowalski@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:m.kowalski@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker

- Expected date of completion: 2018

**Mansoury, Elly**

- The Relationship between School-Attending Adolescents' Social Cohesion and Extremisms"
- Elly Mansoury, [elly.mansoury@vub.ac.be](mailto:elly.mansoury@vub.ac.be)
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel; Department of Political Science; Prof. Dimokritos Kavadias
- Expected date of completion: December 2020

**Milosevic, Ana**

- Understanding the social meanings of spontaneous memorials after the Brussels attacks
- Ana Milosevic, [ana.milosevic@kuleuven.be](mailto:ana.milosevic@kuleuven.be)
- KU Leuven; Faculty of Social Science
- Expected date of completion: 2018

**Romagna, Marco**

- Hacktivism: Honourable cause or serious threat?
- Marco Romagna, [m.romagna@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:m.romagna@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker, Dr. Bibi van den Berg
- Expected date of completion: June 2020

**Roy van Zuijdewijn, Jeanine de**

- Societal responses to terrorist attacks in Western Europe
- Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn, [j.h.de.roy.van.zuijdewijn@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:j.h.de.roy.van.zuijdewijn@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker
- Expected date of completion: 2020

**Sikkens, Elga**

- Family and upbringing dynamics in radicalization and de-radicalization
- Elga Sikkens, [e.m.sikkens@uu.nl](mailto:e.m.sikkens@uu.nl)
- Utrecht University, Department of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences; Prof. Micha de Winter, Dr. Marion van San, Dr. Stijn Sieckelinck
- Expected date of completion: December 2017

**Sterkenburg, Nikki**

- New radical right and extremist right in the Netherlands
- Nikki Sterkenburg, [nikkisterkenburg@gmail.com](mailto:nikkisterkenburg@gmail.com)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker
- Expected date of completion: unknown

**Terpstra, Niels**

- Why do Civilians Comply with a Rebel Group? Towards a Better Understanding of Rebel Governance and Legitimation Processes During Civil War
- Niels Terpstra, [n.m.terpstra@uu.nl](mailto:n.m.terpstra@uu.nl)
- Universiteit Utrecht; Department of History and Art History; Prof. Georg Frerks
- Expected date of completion: February 2020

**Van Ostaeyen, Pieter**

- The usage of social media in the ideological battle between al-Qaeda and The Islamic State
- Pieter Van Ostaeyen, [pieter.vanostaeyen@gmail.com](mailto:pieter.vanostaeyen@gmail.com)
- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; Faculty of Arts, Near Eastern Studies; Prof. Gino Schallenberg
- Expected date of completion: 2019

**Vernimmen, Jonas**

- The right to cultural identity: a legal analysis of value-based education as a means to prevent radicalization
- Jonas Vernimmen, [Jonas.vernimmen@kuleuven.be](mailto:Jonas.vernimmen@kuleuven.be)
- KU Leuven; Leuven Centre for Public Law, Education Law; Prof. Kurt Willems
- Expected date of completion: June 2020

**Volders, Brecht**

- Nuclear Terrorism: organizational dynamics in constructing the bomb
- Brecht Volders, [brecht.volders@uantwerpen.be](mailto:brecht.volders@uantwerpen.be)
- Universiteit Antwerpen; Department of Social Sciences; Prof. Tom Sauer
- Expected date of completion: September 2019

**Weggemans, Daan**

- Digital Risk Profiling
- Daan Weggemans, [d.j.weggemans@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:d.j.weggemans@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker
- Expected date of completion: 2018

**Whittaker, Joe**

- Online Radicalisation
- Joe Whittaker, [922288@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:922288@swansea.ac.uk)
- Swansea University; Universiteit Leiden; Prof. Stuart MacDonald, Lella Nouri, Dr. Alastair Reed, Sergei Boeke
- Expected date of completion: September 2019

**Wittendorp, Stef**

- European Union and counter-terrorism, 1975-present
- Stef Wittendorp, [s.wittendorp@rug.nl](mailto:s.wittendorp@rug.nl)
- Rijksuniversiteit Groningen; Department of International Relations and International Organization; Prof. J.H. de Wilde, Prof. A.J. Zwitter
- Expected date of completion: Summer 2017

**Recently Completed Ph.D. Theses:****Buuren, Jelle van**

- The influence of conspiracy constructions on political legitimacy and national security
- Jelle van Buuren, [g.m.van.buuren@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:g.m.van.buuren@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker; Prof. Beatrice de Graaf
- Completed: November 2016

**Hijzen, Constant**

- Images of the enemy: the security services and democracy, 1912-1992
- Constant Hijzen, [c.w.hijzen@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:c.w.hijzen@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Institute of History; Prof. B.A. de Graaf, Prof. B.G.J. de Graaff, Prof. H. te Velde
- Completed: November 2016

**Noorda, Hadassa**

- Thinking War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Introducing Non-State Actors in Just War Theory
- Hadassa Noorda, [h.a.noorda@uva.nl](mailto:h.a.noorda@uva.nl)
- Universiteit van Amsterdam; Department of Law; Prof. Marc de Wilde, Dr. Roland Pierik
- Completed: October 2016

**Schuurman, Bart**

- Becoming a European homegrown jihadist: A multilevel analysis of involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005
- Bart Schuurman, [b.w.schuurman@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:b.w.schuurman@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)
- Universiteit Leiden; Institute of Security and Global Affairs; Prof. Edwin Bakker, Dr. Quirine Eijkman
- Completed: January 2017

**Waele, Maarten de**

- Angry white rebel? The mechanisms and processes of participation in extreme-right groups
- Maarten de Waele, [Maarten.dewaele@vvsg.be](mailto:Maarten.dewaele@vvsg.be)

- Ghent University; Department of Criminology, Criminal Law and Social Law; Prof. Lieven Pauwels and Prof. Marleen Easton
- Completed: January 2016

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**Announcement:****Award for Best Ph.D. Thesis 2016 -  
31 March 2017 Deadline for Submissions Approaching Fast**

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) seeks to enhance the quality of research in the field of Terrorism Studies. For this purpose, it has established an Annual Award for the Best Doctoral Dissertation on Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism. Among the incoming submissions of Ph.D. theses, the TRI Award jury identifies three finalists and from these the winner. The Award for the best thesis submitted in 2013 went to Dr. Tricia Bacon (American University, Washington, D.C., USA); the winner of the 2014 Award was Dr. Anneli Botha (Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa), while the 2015 Award went to Dr. Erin Miller (START, University of Maryland).

With the present announcement, a call is being made for sending to the jury Ph.D. theses submitted or defended at an academic institution in the year 2016. Doctoral theses in the field of terrorism- and counter-terrorism studies can be submitted either by the author or by the academic supervisor. Theses should be sent in electronic form as a Word document to the chairman of the jury, Alex P. Schmid, at < [apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com](mailto:apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com) >, together with a cover letter (1-3 pp.), highlighting the merits of the submitted Ph.D. thesis. Submissions must be in English (or translated into English).

The deadline for entries is **31 March, 2017**. The TRI Award jury—consisting of Prof. Edwin Bakker, Prof. Clark McCauley, Prof. James Forest and Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid—will evaluate and compare the submissions, based on criteria such as originality in terms of introducing new data, theory or methodology, novelty and uniqueness of findings as well as degree of in-depth research.

The chairman of the jury will inform the three finalists identified by the jury's evaluation process before the end of July 2017. The winner among them will be announced during the summer of 2017 and can expect an Award of US \$1,000 plus a certificate of achievement, signed by the President of the Terrorism Research Initiative, Robert Wesley, acknowledging the granting of the TRI thesis Award. The other two finalists will receive a certificate of achievement. For all three finalist theses, TRI will assist the authors in finding a publisher for their theses. The winner of the 2017 TRI Award will also be invited to submit an article for publication in *Perspectives on Terrorism*, summarizing the winning thesis' main findings.

## Announcement about Organisational Changes of *Perspectives on Terrorism*

by Alex P. Schmid and James J.F. Forest

For ten years, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has been an independent scholarly journal run and maintained by volunteers. These professionals have donated their time (in many cases, hundreds of hours each year), despite their usual responsibilities at various universities, institutes and think tanks. The journal has been produced on a shoe-string budget: while its production costs (for server use, software, etc.) have been modest, these have not been insubstantial. For most of its existence, these operating costs have been covered by the editors themselves. We have been approached by potential advertisers, whose financial support could be helpful, but we have continually declined those offers for the sake of keeping this open source journal completely independent.

In an attempt to broaden our financial support base, we explored crowd-funding and launched in June 2016 an online drive to raise US \$5,000. After more than half a year, this has resulted in donations amounting to US \$2,375—a significant amount to be sure, and for which we are very grateful, but not quite enough cover current and future expenses (including support needed to continue our annual TRI Thesis Award). Thus, we have been looking into other solutions to ensure the journal's long-term viability.

After exploring various options, the two editors of *Perspectives on Terrorism* devised a solution involving the transfer of the journal from one institutional affiliation (the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies at the University of Massachusetts Lowell) to a new one: the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA – Leiden University, Campus The Hague). Prof. Edwin Bakker, the Scientific Director of ISGA, has made a significant commitment of support to the journal—both in staff and material—for the next five years.

This move has also led to a restructuring of the directorate of the Terrorism Research Initiative, the non-profit parent organisation behind *Perspectives on Terrorism*. Prof. James J. F. Forest has resigned from TRI's directorate to make room for Prof. Edwin Bakker, the Scientific Director of ISGA who has (as of January 2017) joined Robert Wesley and Alex Schmid as directors of TRI. However, Professor Forest will continue to serve as co-editor of *Perspectives on Terrorism* next to Editor-in-Chief Alex Schmid (who is also part-time Associate Professor at ISGA). Thus, the administrative/production home of the journal has now moved from Massachusetts to The Hague Campus of Leiden University. The journal's other office will remain in Vienna, Austria, where Alex Schmid and Robert Wesley, founders of the journal, are located.

Another change that has occurred is that Joseph Easson—who for the last seven years took care of the journal's information technology matters from St. Andrews, Scotland—has moved on. Joseph was instrumental in every phase of formatting, finalizing and distributing each issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, and his efforts have played a critical role in ensuring our success each of those years. Jennifer Dowling at ISGA has now joined the journal as Associate Editor for Information Technology, and we look forward to working with her for many years to come.

Given the growing volume of manuscript submissions received by *Perspectives on Terrorism*, the editor and co-editor have also decided to expand the Editorial Team, and have invited four scholars to join us as Associate Editors this year:

- Dr. Gregory D. Miller (Associate Professor, National Defense University, Washington, D.C.);

- 
- Dr. John F. Morrison (Director of the Terrorism and Extremism Research Centre [TERC] at the University of East London);
  - Dr. Bart Schuurman (ISGA & Research Director of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague); and
  - Aaron Y. Zelin (Richard Burrow Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and founder of the [jihadology.net](http://jihadology.net)).

To complete this process of expansion, the editors are still seeking two more Associate Editors to join our team, so that each of the six annual issues of *Perspectives on Terrorism* can be produced by a collaboration between an editor and associate editor. Alongside this expansion of the Editorial Team, the journal is also in the process of enlarging its Editorial Board, members of which form the the core reviewers of articles submitted to the journal. Most recently, Dr. Brian J. Phillips (Dept. of International Relations, CIDE, Mexico, D.F.) has joined us in that capacity, with others to be announced later.

With these changes, *Perspectives on Terrorism* and its editors enter a second decade with renewed confidence to be able to provide the academic and professional community in the field of terrorism studies with a free, independent scholarly platform where different perspectives on terrorism can be presented in line with the mission of the Terrorism Research Initiative: enhancing (human) security through collaborative research.

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## Two New Positions Available at *Perspectives on Terrorism*

### 1. *Associate Information Resources Editor*

*Perspectives on Terrorism* is seeking an additional Information Resources Editor to expand its Editorial Team. This Associate Information Resources Editor will serve as an integral part of our Resources Section Staff. He or she is expected to compile three resources per year for publication in *Perspectives on Terrorism*. Relevant resources can encompass:

- bibliographies (listing references to journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, and other resources) on specific terrorism-related subjects identified by the Editorial Team
- other research-support resources (e.g., website, database, or researcher inventories)
- statistics (compiling figures and graphs on a particular terrorism-related aspect, e.g. foreign fighters)

This job opening (which, like all other positions at TRI and PT, is not remunerated) provides valuable experiences, particularly for a young scholar by

- allowing him/her to gain insight into the state-of-the-art in (counter-) terrorism research (including, which topics are of high interest and which ones are under-researched)
- making a valuable contribution to the research community, while constantly improving his/her own information retrieval skills, and finding new resources for his/her own research
- raising his/her profile by publishing in a leading high-impact, open-access journal in the field

### **Requirements:**

- Master's degree (ideally: Ph.D.) in Terrorism and Security Studies or a related field
- Experience in information retrieval (particularly, literature search with academic full-text or reference retrieval systems, such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, or SCOPUS) and familiarity with search methods/strategies

This part-time, voluntary position as *Associate Information Resources Editor* at *Perspectives on Terrorism* can be filled from home. To apply for this position, please email your application and resume to the Editor-in-Chief of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid at [apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com](mailto:apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com) not later than March 31, 2017.

## **2. Associate Theses Research Editor**

*Perspectives on Terrorism* is seeking an *Associate Editor for Theses Research* to expand its Editorial Team. The Associate Theses Research Editor will become an integral part of our Resources Section Staff. He or she is expected to monitor the academic output in doctoral dissertations and master theses. From this monitoring effort, s/he will be selecting and compiling three times per year bibliographies (reference lists) of Master's and Doctoral Theses and prepare these for publication in *Perspectives on Terrorism*. S/he will be responsible for:

- conducting systematic searches with theses retrieval systems, such as OATD, NDLTD, or DART-Europe, as well as other search engines (e.g. Google Scholar) to find theses on terrorism-related subjects
- identifying universities with a high research output with regard to theses of topical relevance for terrorism studies and harvesting their open-access research output

This job opening (which, like all other positions at TRI and PT, is not remunerated) provides valuable learning experiences, particularly for a young scholar by

- enabling him/her to obtain an overview of the research activities of new generations of researchers in the field (including, which topics are well-covered and which ones are under-researched)
- making a valuable contribution to the research community by helping post-graduates to improve the visibility of their research and by supporting graduate supervisors by identify research desiderata
- raising his/her profile by publishing in a leading high-impact open-access journal in the field

### **Requirements:**

- Master's degree (ideally: Ph.D.) in Terrorism and Security Studies or a related field
- Information retrieval skills (particularly, literature search with academic search engines; ideally: experience with thesis retrieval systems)
- Experience in serving as a graduate supervisor and/or knowledge of the international university landscape are a plus.

This part-time, voluntary position of an *Associate Theses Research Editor* at *Perspectives on Terrorism* can be filled from home. To apply for this position, please email your application and resume to the Editor-in-Chief of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid at [apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com](mailto:apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com) not later than March 31, 2017.

## About *Perspectives on Terrorism*

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

PoT seeks to provide a platform for established scholars as well as academics and professionals entering the interdisciplinary fields of Terrorism-, Political Violence- and Conflict Studies.

The editors invite researchers and readers to:

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

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

The journal’s Research Notes, Special Correspondence, Op-Eds and other content are reviewed by members of the Editorial Board, while its Articles are peer-reviewed by outside academic experts and professionals. While aiming to be policy-relevant, PT does not support any partisan policies regarding (counter-) terrorism and waging conflicts. Impartiality, objectivity and accuracy are guiding principles that we require contributors to adhere to. They are responsible for the content of their contributions and retain the copyright of their publication.

### *The Editorial Team of Perspectives on Terrorism consists of:*

Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid, Editor-in-Chief,

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

Jennifer Dowling, Associate Editor for IT,

Prof. Gregory Miller, Associate Editor,

Dr. John Morrison, Associate Editor,

Dr. Bart Schuurman, Associate Editor,

Aaron Y. Zelin, Associate Editor,

Joshua Sinai, Books Reviews Editor,

Judith Tinnes, Information Resources Editor,

Jared Dmello, Editorial Assistant,

Jodi Pomeroy, Editorial Assistant.

### About the Terrorism Research Initiative

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

#### International Advisory Board of the Terrorism Research Initiative

**Adam Dolnik** is an International Consultant on Hostage and Kidnap for Ransom negotiations and former Professor of Counterterrorism at the George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies in Germany.

**Javier Jordán** is Professor of Political Science at the Universidad de Granada, Spain.

**Gary LaFree** is a Professor of Criminology at the University of Maryland and the Director of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START).

**David C. Rapoport** is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of California at Los Angeles and Founder and Editor of the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence*.

**Marc Sageman** is a Forensic Psychiatrist Consultant on transnational terrorism with various US governmental agencies and foreign governments.

**Michael Scheuer** served in the CIA for 22 years where he was the Chief of the bin Laden Unit at the Counterterrorist Center from 1996 to 1999. Currently he is an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University's Center for Peace and Security Studies.

**Yoram Schweitzer** is a Senior Research Fellow at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

**Michael Stohl** is Professor of Communication at the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) and Director of the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies.

**Jeff Victoroff** is an Associate Professor of Clinical Neurology and Psychiatry at the Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California.

**Peter Waldmann** is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Augsburg, Germany.

**Leonard Weinberg** is Foundation Professor of Political Science at the University of Nevada and Editor of the journal *Democracy and Security*.

#### Consortium of Participating Institutions

**Center on Terrorism**, John Jay College, New York.

**Center for Terrorism and Security Studies (CTSS)**, University of Massachusetts, Lowell Campus.

**Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV)**, University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

**Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention (CTCP)**, University of Wollongong, Australia.

**Consortium for Strategic Communication**, Arizona State University, USA.

**Defense & Strategic Studies Department**, Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

**Global Terrorism Research Centre (GTReC)**, Monash University, Australia.

**International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR)**, Singapore.

**International Center for the Study of Terrorism (ICST)**, Pennsylvania State University, USA.

**Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism**, Syracuse University, USA.

**Institute of International and European Affairs, (IIEA)**, Dublin, Ireland, Think Tank with a branch in Brussels.

**Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA)**, The Hague, Leiden University.

**Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)**, Islamabad, Pakistan.

**Research Institute for European and American Studies (RIEAS)**, Athens, Greece.

**Research Unit, Political Violence, Terrorism and Radicalization**, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS).

**School of International Studies**, University of the Pacific, USA.

**Oshkosh Institute for the Study of Religion**, Violence and Memory, University of Wisconsin, USA.

### TRI's Individual Participants

**Mahan Abedin** is an analyst of Iranian politics and Director of the research group Dysart Consulting.

**Gary Ackerman** is the Director of the Unconventional Weapons and Technology Division at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland at College Park.

**Shaheen Afroze** is Research Director and Head of the Peace and Conflict Studies Division at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS).

**Abdullah Alaskar** is Professor of History at the King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

**Mustafa Alani** is Senior Advisor & Program Director in Security and Terrorism Studies at the Gulf Research Center, UAE.

**Rogelio Alonso** is Professor in Politics and Terrorism at Rey Juan Carlos University, Madrid.

**Ramiro Anzit Guerrero** is Professor at the University del Salvador and the University del Museo Social Argentino.

**Victor Asal** is Professor of Political Science, University at Albany and Chair of the Department of Public Administration.

**Omar Ashour** is Senior Lecturer in Security Studies and Middle East Politics and Director of Doctoral Studies at the University of Exeter.

**Scott Atran** is an American anthropologist and Director at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris.

**Edwin Bakker** is Professor in Terrorism and Counterterrorism and Scientific Director of the Institute of Security and Global Affairs at Leiden University's The Hague Campus and one of the three Directors of TRI.

**Daniel Baracskay** is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Valdosta State University, USA.

**Michael Barkun** is Professor Emeritus of Political Science in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

**Shazadi Beg** is a Barrister in the United Kingdom and an acknowledged expert on Pakistan.

**Gabriel Ben-Dor** is Director of the National Security Graduate Studies Center at the University of Haifa.

**Jamal Eddine Benhayoun** is a Professor of Cultural Studies and Director of the Research Group on Culture and Globalisation at the Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Tetuan, Morocco.

**Andrew Black** is Managing Director of Black Watch Global, an intelligence and risk management consultancy in Washington, DC.

**Mia Bloom** is Professor of Communication at Georgia State University.

**Randy Borum** is a Professor and Coordinator of Strategy and Intelligence Studies in the School of Information at the University of South Florida and a behavioral science researcher/consultant on National Security issues.

**Anneli Botha** is consultant on terrorism and radicalization with the UN Development Programme and winner of the TRI Thesis Award 2014.

**Amel Boubekeur** is a French-Algerian researcher on the Maghreb at the University of Grenoble.

**Jarret Brachman** is a member of the faculty of North Dakota State University and an independent Al-Qaeda analyst.

**Jean-Charles Brisard** is a French international consultant and expert on terrorism and terrorism financing.

**Francesco Cavatorta** is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, Laval University, Quebec, Canada.

**David Charters** is Professor of Military History and Senior Fellow at the Gregg Center, University of New Brunswick, Canada.

**Erica Chenoweth** is Professor and Associate Dean for Research at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver.

**David Cook** is an Associate Professor of Religion at Rice University, specializing in apocalyptic literature and movements.

**Victor D. Comras** is a retired US career diplomat and consultant on terrorism-financing, sanctions and international law.

**Maura Conway** is Professor at the School of Law & Government, Dublin City University.

**Steven R. Corman** is Professor and the Director of the Center for Strategic Communication at Arizona State University.

**Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen** is Director of the Institute for Strategy at the Royal Danish Defense Academy.

**Luis de la Corte Ibanez** is Professor of Social Psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

**James Dingley** is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Gibson Institute, Queen's University, Belfast.

**Vera Eccarius-Kelly** is Professor of Political Science and Associate Dean, School of Liberal Arts, at Siena College in Albany, NY.

**Rodney Faraon** is a former intelligence professional and founder of the Crumpton Group's Research and Analysis practice.

**Shabana Fayyaz** is Assistant Professor with the Defense and Strategic Studies Department at the Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad.

**James Forest** is Co-editor of *Perspectives on Terrorism*. He is Professor at the UMass Lowell School of Criminology & Justice Studies, Visiting Professor at the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, and Senior Fellow at the U.S. Joint Special Operations University.

**George J. Michael** is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Westfield State University and at the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

**Jennifer Giroux** is a Senior Strategy Consultant with ReD Associates in New York City.

**Beatrice de Graaf** is Professor in the History of International Relations & Global Governance at Utrecht University, The Netherlands.

**Bob de Graaff** is Professor of Intelligence and Security Studies at the Department of History of International Relations, Utrecht University.

**Stuart Groombridge** is an analyst at the NSW Government in Australia.

**Rohan Gunaratna** is Professor of Security Studies at the S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University and Head of the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore.

**Dipak K. Gupta** was, until his retirement, Distinguished Professor in Political Science, San Diego State University.

**Abdulhadi Hairan** is a Kabul-based journalist, writer and researcher on security, governance and terrorism currently working with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies in Kabul.

**Irm Haleem** is Assistant Professor and Manager of Research at ICPVTR (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

**Muhammad Haniff Hassan** is a Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

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