



COUNTERING DAESH EXTREMISM EUROPEAN AND ASIAN RESPONSES



PANORAMA
INSIGHTS INTO ASIAN
AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Countering Daesh Extremism

Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs is a series of occasional papers published by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's "Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia and the Pacific/Singapore". This is a special edition published in collaboration with the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University.

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Publishers:

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Ltd
36 Bukit Pasoh Road
Singapore 089848
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Design, Layout and Typeset:
Select Books Pte Ltd
65A, Jalan Tenteram
#02-06, St Michael's Industrial Estate
Singapore 328958
Website: www.selectbooks.com.sg

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European and Asian Responses



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CONTENTS

Preface	7
The Islamic State’s Eastward Expansion	9
<i>Rohan Gunaratna</i>	
Countering Daesh Extremism in South Asia	27
<i>Ajai Sahni</i>	
Challenges and Prospects for Daesh in Afghanistan and Its Relations with the Taliban	43
<i>Hekmatullah Azamy</i>	
Evolving Wave of Terrorism and Emergence of Daesh in Pakistan	61
<i>Khuram Iqbal</i>	
Daesh Threat in Bangladesh: An Overview	73
<i>Iftekharul Bashar</i>	
Daesh and the Alchemy of Strategy: Southeast Asia Threat and Responses by the Region and ASEAN	83
<i>Jolene Jerard</i>	
Daesh in Europe and Southeast Asia: An Indonesian Perspective	95
<i>Badrus Sholeh</i>	
Countering the Threats of Daesh in Malaysia	105
<i>Ahmad El-Muhammady</i>	
The Influence of Daesh in the Philippines	123
<i>Vanessa Panes</i>	
Singapore’s Approach to Counter Terrorism and Extremism	139
<i>Stefanie Kam</i>	

The EU and ASEAN Approaches in Fighting Terrorism: Collaboration or Cooperation?	153
<i>Céline C. Cocq</i>	
Coordinated Counter Terrorism Responses by the European Union	165
<i>Guenther Sablattnig</i>	
Daesh-Linked Activities and Motivations in Belgium	177
<i>Didier Leroy</i>	
Implications of the Global Jihad in France	189
<i>Yves Trotignon</i>	
Daesh Radicalization and Responses in Germany	205
<i>Marwan Abou-Taam</i>	
Prevention Strategies to Counter Daesh Extremism in the United Kingdom	221
<i>Anthony Glees</i>	
Turkey's Struggle Against the Foreign Terrorist Fighters of Daesh	239
<i>Haldun Yalçınkaya</i>	
Australia's Experience of Daesh-Linked and Directed Extremism	253
<i>Jacinta Carroll</i>	

Preface

Since June 2014, eliminating the global threat of Daesh has been a concern throughout the world. As Daesh continues to expand its presence to more countries and claims responsibility for an increased number of attacks, the need for a shared counter-extremism strategy that includes significant internal and international cooperation, coupled with confidence-building tools, has become more apparent. The measures to be implemented must also include robust stabilization and combine diplomatic, political, security, and information-sharing activities.

Daesh's approach of recruiting geographically dispersed fighters along with inciting lone-wolf attacks has become a pressing concern for European and Asian countries. As the nexus of extremism and terrorism is constantly evolving, counter-extremism strategies should focus on the root causes by countering Daesh's methods as well as the factors that contribute to Daesh's growth. The battle against Daesh recruitment can only be won by addressing local grievances along with engaging religious and community leaders. Since young people in particular are being recruited by Daesh, youth empowerment and community engagement programmes can play a big role in countering the propaganda of Daesh. Media literacy and religious literacy programmes need to be organized and counter-extremism policies must take into account the latest developments in imagery and technology. In addition, the facilitation networks of foreign terrorist fighters need to be interdicted.

In order to meet the multifaceted challenge of Daesh extremism, a multilayered and cooperative approach is required, ranging from legally binding instruments and intelligence sharing to multilateral institutions and regional frameworks. De-radicalization, rehabilitation, and re-integration programmes should be an important part of the counter-extremism strategy. It must be stressed that a "one size fits all" approach will not be effective, and that any rehabilitation programme must be tailored to the individual country's conditions and cultures. There is no silver bullet to defeat every extremist group, but through nesting their efforts within a global framework rather than conducting them as an independent undertaking, countries can increase their chances of tackling this threat successfully.

Countries in Asia and Europe have not only committed to the global coalition in addressing the threat of Daesh but are also taking numerous steps to counter its ambition and claims to legitimacy. Europe has seen various attacks in Paris, Nice and Brussels over the past year. Daesh has also made gradual inroads into Asia by founding a Malay-speaking combat unit in Syria, affiliating with local extremist groups, re-activating old Al-Qaeda-linked networks and carrying out attacks in countries like Indonesia and Bangladesh. It has therefore become imperative to bring together experts from both regions to discuss these commonly faced challenges and to find a joint strategy to counter Daesh extremism.

This issue of *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs* will analyse recent developments concerning Daesh extremism and their implications on societies in Asia and Europe. The papers share and analyse current and possible future threats, identify the target groups vulnerable to extreme militant ideology and examine the various recruitment channels. The counter-measures and de-radicalization and rehabilitation efforts adopted by various governments have also been highlighted. Special attention was given to Daesh-linked activities in the respective countries, reactions by the local Muslim communities, and possible future developments as well as responses.

In order to defeat Daesh's efforts in seeking more innovative and unconventional means to spread extremism, we need to find common lines in strategy and policy and promote enhanced collaboration. With the policies and recommendations presented in this publication as well as inputs from our annual Asia-Europe Counter-Terrorism Dialogue, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University hope to contribute to fostering more cooperation between Asia and Europe to counter this global threat.



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The Islamic State's Eastward Expansion

Rohan Gunaratna

The terrorist attack in Jakarta on January 14, 2016, that killed eight people is just the beginning—part of the Islamic State's (IS) strategy to create chaos and expand into Southeast Asia, complementing its goal of global expansion. Although the arrests in the lead-up to Christmas—including the arrest of Arif Hidayatullah (alias Abu Muzab) and his cell in December 2015—and the prompt response to the attack by the Jakarta Police Chief, General Dr. Tito Karnavian, prevented a “concert” the terrorists had vowed to conduct, the threat has not diminished.¹ In fact, the global expansion of IS will be marked by its declaration of far-flung *wilayāt* (sometimes written as *wilayat*, *wilaa yah* or *wilayah*), also known as governorates, presenting an emerging challenge for both national and regional governments. IS declared 34 *wilayah* in eleven countries after pledges of support from local groups and individuals who take their oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed Caliph, or leader, of IS. Coalition resources are already overstretched and partners are overwhelmed. From Africa to the Middle East and the Caucasus to the Afghanistan–Pakistan border, IS is claiming authority and mobilizing support to defend the “caliphate” in its formative phase, expanding from the Middle East to a global theater of operations.

To sustain the “caliphate” under attack from coalition forces, IS needs to replenish its human losses and material waste. In addition to mobilizing 50,000–60,000 recruits—half of them foreigners fighting the global coalition in Syria–Iraq—IS has started to groom about 20,000 local fighters around the world including in the East to strike coalition and government targets in their homelands.² The local fighters are instructed to remain in their homelands and carry out attacks with IS funds and support. Due to the security environment, IS supporters are advised to create a dedicated “command cell” to attack a specific target. Rather than create structured hierarchical groups, the strategy is to create small, medium, and large teams to conduct low-cost, high-impact attacks.

Even more threatening is IS engaging local groups to unite and appoint their representatives to lead local IS branches. For instance, Arif Hidayatullah, who pledged

* This paper was originally published in *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 39, Issue 1, on 29 April 2016, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0163660X.2016.1170479>.

allegiance to al-Baghdadi, said in an interview that he was a part of IS and was acting on instructions to execute attacks.³ Similarly, another cell leader, Hendro Fernando, acquired nine handguns to carry out IS directed operations.⁴ To different degrees, IS branches enforce IS military and administrative controls over the territory and population. These usually range from wearing Islamic veils to taxing non-Muslims to public executions of enemies. In some cases, IS dispatched its religious ideologues, media experts, combat tacticians, and specialists in explosives to guide and support the “troops of the caliphate.”

In 2016, IS is preparing to declare *wilayah* in the “eastern front of Islam,” which is both Southeast and Northeast Asia.⁵ The first *wilayah* IS is likely to declare in Southeast Asia includes parts of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. This will have enduring implications for regional stability and global security. It is an event that should not be overlooked or underestimated.

THE CONTEXT

The November 2015 carnage in Paris demonstrated a new face of terror. Although an attempt to replicate it in Jakarta was unsuccessful, in the coming months and years we can expect the Paris template to be repeated in the West, Middle East, Africa, and in Asia. The last two decades have witnessed the Afghan blow-back: after the Afghan veterans returned home after participating in the anti-Soviet multinational campaign (1979–1989), they formed three dozen threat groups worldwide.⁶ By providing training, weapons, funds, and ideology, al-Qaeda united and guided these groups to attack the United States, their allies, and friends. In the next two decades, the world will face the Syrian blow-back. Those who travelled to Syria will return home, and those who did not travel but were indoctrinated by the Syrian conflict will strike back with a vengeance. Three types of countries will be vulnerable to attacks.

The first are countries that did not take the threat seriously and failed to develop the laws to criminalize fighting in foreign conflict zones. Foreign fighters posed a threat both in theater and upon their return home and to neighboring countries. They provide support and staged attacks. Second are countries with ethnic and religious enclaves where extremist ideology was not countered and where moderation was not promoted. As terrorism is a vicious byproduct of ideological extremism, it is paramount for governments and their community partners to ensure harmonious relations between communities. In the West, especially in Europe, extremist ideologies grew in the migrant and diaspora pockets. And third are countries that failed to detain, engage, rehabilitate, reintegrate, and monitor the returnees. Most countries have no laws or other governance framework to prosecute or rehabilitate foreign fighters. Unless those radicalized are not deradicalized, they will pose a security threat, infect others with their ideology, and will form a part of the extremist iconography.

Over 800 Southeast Asians (mostly Indonesians and Malaysians and a few Singaporeans and Filipinos) and over 1000 Northeast Asians (mostly Chinese and a few Japanese) have travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight.⁷ Although the numbers of North African (8000), Middle Eastern (8,240), and Europeans (5000) in Syria and Iraq are disproportionately higher, the number of foreign fighters from the Asia–Pacific region are steadily growing.⁸ By 2016, the number of East Asians in Iraq and Syria is likely to exceed 2000.⁹ Several hundred East Asians have formed into fighting units or battalions—the Southeast Asians in IS have formed the Malay archipelago battalion for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ‘katibah nusantara lid daulah islamiyyah.’ Even after the stepped-up bombing campaign in Syria by Russia, the number of Asians traveling to Syria and Iraq has not diminished.¹⁰

With the steadfast growth of IS in real and virtual space, governments should develop a multidimensional response. For strategic prevention, East Asian countries should deter IS influence from spreading and driving foreign fighter recruitment, travel, and return. All the Muslim majority and minority countries in the East Asian region have laws to fight terrorism, but they are not specific to counter the foreign fighter threat. For instance, it is not illegal for anyone in Indonesia to raise funds for IS, disseminate IS propaganda, organize an IS rally, hoist an IS flag, or wear an IS T-shirt or headband. It is essential to develop legislation that explicitly empowers authorities to proscribe IS entities and personalities and take executive action against both IS support and operational activity.

For geopolitical and geostrategic reasons, the West has criticized China’s most recent legislation in December 2015 to fight the IS threat. Similarly, for years, the West criticized the legislation that enabled preventive detention in Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei. But finally, today Western countries are developing similar laws. Similarly, Malaysia is struggling to develop and implement a series of laws that can act as a substitute for a repealed Internal Security Act, which was previously repealed under pressure from human rights groups. Without preventive detention, IS cannot be fought successfully. As IS is a transnational movement, often intelligence and evidence in the target country is insufficient to arrest IS supporters and operatives.

Today, the key is to prevent the next attack by developing counterterrorism legislation and raise capabilities both in the virtual and physical space. With IS use of social media, encryption, and other technologies, governments in East Asia should create new as well as revise existing legislation to meet the challenges in a rapidly changing environment. However, governments should strike that balance between human rights and security. Even more importantly, governments should engage and empower the Muslim communities to fight IS. China in particular should win over the Uighurs and ensure that the Uighur leaders lead the fight.

Unlike in Syria and Iraq, where military force is essential to defeat IS, in East Asia tackling the ideology is more critical. There should be recognition that a mere law

enforcement approach will not resolve the problem of radicalization in the community. Considering the rising threat, it should become mandatory for government and political opposition, religious and educational institutions, the media, and NGOs to promote moderation, toleration, and coexistence. In parallel with robust counterterrorism legislation, a harmony act will be needed to fight both incitement and hatred and to advance unity and peace between communities.

The influence of IS on Southeast Asia is steadily growing. In addition to Southeast Asian groups pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State has already created a Southeast Asian core in Syria and Iraq and a forward operational base of Filipinos and Malaysians in Basilan, Southern Philippines. Isnlon Hapilon, the deputy leader of one militant Islamist group in the Philippines, Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), provides guidance both to Filipinos and Malaysians. Groups such as these are planning attacks in the Philippines and Malaysia.¹¹

Establishing provinces in this way allows IS to disperse its center of gravity, which is currently in Syria and Iraq. If and when an IS base in Syria and Iraq is lost, IS presence in provinces can provide an alternative base to where the core can move and re-establish its headquarters. Thus, IS is creating *wilayah*—governorates or provinces—beyond the Levant in the Gulf and into Africa and Asia. Asia is particularly attractive given its large Muslim population. After consulting with local group leaders, IS announced on November 13, 2014, a variety of new provinces: Wilayat al-Barqah, Wilayat al-Tarabulus, and Wilayat al-Fizan in Libya; Wilayat al-Jazair in Algeria; Wilayat Sinai in Egypt; Wilayat Sanaa in Yemen; and Wilayat al-Haramayn in Saudi Arabia.¹² In 2015, new provinces were also announced in the Wilayat Khorasan in Afghanistan-Pakistan border area; Wilayat Gharb Afriqiya in North Africa; and Wilayat al-Qawqaz in the North Caucasus.¹³

As only one person can provide leadership to a particular Wilayat, IS HQ instituted a process of consultation among the local groups that pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Southeast Asia to select a single leader. On November 21, 2014, in IS's online magazine *Dabiq*, IS acknowledged supporters in "Khurasan [Afghanistan], al-Qawqaz [Caucuses], Indonesia, Nigeria, the Philippines, and elsewhere." It also claimed that it would establish *wilayah* with "either the appointment or recognition of leadership by the Khalifah [leader of the caliphate] for those lands where multiple groups have given *bay'at* [oath of allegiance] and merged, or the establishment of a direct line of communication between the Khalifah and the mujahidin leadership of lands who have yet to contact the Islamic State and thus receive information and directives from the Khalifah."¹⁴ From the Nusantara region—Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore—the steadfast flow of fighters to Syria and Iraq enabled IS to raise an archipelagic battalion known as *Katibah Nusantara Lid Daulah Islamiyah*, commonly known as *Katibah Nusantara* (also known as KN, or The Archipelagic Battalion). Southeast Asians also served in other units side by side with Arabs and South Asians.

While KN defends the “caliphate” in theater, IS will seek to establish a province or provinces of the “caliphate” in Southeast Asia.¹⁵

Southeast Asia had been al-Qaeda’s backyard until the rise of IS in 2014. The genesis of contemporary terrorist networks in Southeast Asia can be traced back to Darul Islam/Negara Islam Indonesia (DI/NII, or the Islamic State of Indonesia), founded in 1949. With members of DI/NII and its splinter Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) traveling to Pakistan to fight the Soviets and the Communist regime in Afghanistan, two members of a splinter of DI/NII, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakr Ba’asyir, built a relationship with Osama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda, in the late 1980s. Sungkar and Ba’asyir subsequently created JI on January 1, 1993. JI proclaimed a caliphate in Southeast Asia in 1999, while al-Qaeda indoctrinated and trained about 400 Southeast Asian fighters (mostly members of JI), but JI failed to establish a safe haven in the region. Al-Qaeda continued to finance terrorist attacks including the bombing in Bali in October 2002, which killed 202 people.¹⁶ With the advent of IS in 2014, JI itself split: its leader, Abu Bakr Ba’asyir, supported IS, whereas his son, Abdul Rahim Ba’asyir, supported al-Qaeda and its branch in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra. JI then dispatched twelve teams to Syria under the cover of humanitarian assistance to support al-Nusra.¹⁷ With the splintering of groups in Southeast Asia, al-Qaeda-centric and IS-centric groups continue to compete with each other for support and resources.

With IS building on traditional al-Qaeda lands, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the al-Qaeda leader, stated: “My Muslim brothers in East Asia, you represent a numerical weight that is considered the largest among the Muslims, and you are the gateway to the eastern lands of Islam.”¹⁸ Zawahiri mobilized them by stating, “Your duty in jihad is to repel the aggression of the Crusaders against the Muslims in the Philippines, and relieve your Muslim brothers from the criminality of the Crusaders in the Maluku Islands and other parts of Indonesia, and as it is also a duty upon you to support your Muslim brothers in southern Thailand.”¹⁹ Unlike IS focusing on creating the caliphate, al-Qaeda’s strategy was to strengthen the groups in the extant and emerging “jihad arenas.” Focusing on Indonesia, Zawahiri said: “...My Muslim brothers in Nusantara, you must expend efforts and energy to show the creed of *Tawhid* [monotheism] to the masses of the Muslim *Ummah* [community], and state for them its opposition to the evil *Pancasila* creed, which calls for believing in the five principles: one god, nationalism, humanity, democracy, and social justice. The anti-Islamic rulers have sought to impose that creed on you with the power of iron and fire, and the carrot and the stick.”²⁰

Despite rhetoric such as this by al-Qaeda and their associates in Southeast Asia, IS successes on the ground, which include battlefield victories in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and off-the-battlefield attacks elsewhere, have greatly influenced disillusioned Muslims. The declaration of the “caliphate,” implementation of Islamic law, and the end-of-times narrative have energized a segment of Muslims worldwide including in East Asia to support and sympathize with IS. Singapore’s International

Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research reports that, during the last decade, the social media user accounts promoting terrorism and extremism in Southeast Asia from IS have proliferated, growing from a handful to over 3000.²¹ Moreover, it is not the IS core that has invested in the local language, Bahasa, but their Southeast Asian supporters and sympathizers. Indeed, both in the physical and virtual space, IS has gained an upper hand.

EMERGENCE OF IS NETWORKS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Originally created in response to Indonesia's attempts to create a secular government, DI/NII subsequently splintered into DI/NII and JI, led by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakr Ba'asyir. JI created *Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI, or the Mujahidin Council of Indonesia) on August 5, 2000. Exploiting the democratic environment in Indonesia, MMI was a conglomerate of different groups to campaign for the establishment of sharia law. Although MMI was not violent, the group prepared Indonesians ideologically to join the extremist and terrorist networks. On September 17, 2008, Ba'asyir created *Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid* (JAT), an above-ground organization to expand its support and sympathizer base by reaching out to the wider Indonesian community. In August 2014, JAT splintered into *Jamaah Ansharusy Syari'ah* (JAS), led by Ba'asyir's son Abdul Rochim, which supports al-Qaeda and al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda branch in Syria. In March 2015, JAT joined *Jamaah Ansharud Daulah* (JAD) under Aman Abdurrahman, which supports IS. From inside Nusa Kambangan, Indonesia's maximum security prison, Aman Abdurrahman communicated with IS in Syria and IS supporters in Indonesia. His followers were responsible for mounting the terrorist attack in Jakarta on January 14, 2016.

In parallel to JAD, Ba'asyir supported an inmate and former JI leader Abu Husna to create *Jamaah Anshorul Khilafah Daulah Nusantara* (JAKDN), another IS support group. Proclaimed in Pekanbaru, capital of the Riau Province on the island of Sumatra, on October 19, 2015, JAKDN coopted from existing groups and built a network of IS supporters both in Sumatra and Java.

In December 2015, JAKDN preparations to mount a major terrorist attack in Jakarta were disrupted by Indonesia's elite counter-terrorism unit, Detachment 88 (D88). Although Abu Husna has not been arrested, a number of his JAKDN operatives in custody have revealed plans and preparations to strike in the name of IS.²² Although the Indonesian Police, led by D88 and the Anti-Bombing Task Force, successfully dismantled some IS-directed attack plans, the police lacked the specialist resources to prevent the Jakarta attacks by JAD on January 14, 2016.

Despite IS losses in Iraq and Syria as well as in Indonesia, IS maintains a strategic reserve of Indonesian foreign fighter recruits and supporters willing to replenish the human and material losses. By early 2016, the IS ideology had spread throughout

Indonesia, with 857 known Indonesians traveling to join IS overseas from the country's west to the east.²³ A week after the Jakarta attacks on January 14, 2016, Indonesian National Police computed 266 Indonesians had joined IS in Syria and Iraq, 233 were deported by foreign governments, 45 returned to Indonesia on their own, 59 died in Syria and Iraq, 24 were prevented from travelling to Syria and Iraq, and 7 foreigners were in Indonesia, and 2 foreigners prevented from leaving Indonesia to join IS.²⁴

The statistics by Badan Intelijen Negara (BIN, or the State Intelligence Agency) are estimates, but the police identified by name the personalities listed. It is very likely that the number of Indonesians in Syria and Iraq is double the figures cited above. Of the Indonesian groups that pledged support to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Indonesian police only examined a third of the groups. As of January 2016, the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) in Singapore identified a total of 23 Indonesian IS support groups, but Indonesian legislation only enabled the police to target those groups that engaged in violence. The Indonesia authorities classified the IS personalities that came to their attention into three categories of “core,” “support,” and “sympathizer.” Prior to the Jakarta attacks, a total of 1,085 personalities were identified. The core group comprised of 543 people, 246 in the support group, and 296 in the sympathizer group.²⁵ Now that the attacks have occurred, a comprehensive reassessment of the IS groups in Indonesia is essential to see how this event has attracted or not attracted further supporters.

While Aman Abdurrahman and Ba'asyir are the IS ideologues in Southeast Asia, the IS motivators are Bahrun Naim, Bahrum Syah (alias Ibrohim), and Abu Jandal (alias Salim Mubarak At-Tamimi). While ideologues radicalize and justify attacks using narratives, motivators guide, support, and facilitate attacks. The three Syrian-based motivators work with remnants of Mujahedin Indonesia West (also known as Mujahidin Indonesia Barat, or MIB), with Mujahidin Indonesia East (also known as Mujahidin Indonesia Timur, or MIT), and other groups. Remnants from both MIB and MIT groups joined IS both in theater and at home. Until he relocated to Syria, Bahrum Syah himself was a member of MIB, and, like the others, a follower of Aman Abdurrahman.²⁶ Bahrun Naim and Abu Jandal continue to provide support to MIT including facilitating weapon transfers from Philippines and southern Thailand. MIT in turn fights the police and military and attacks non-Muslim communities on the Indonesian island Sulawesi.

Under the influence of JAT since 2010, the group JI—under the leadership of a man named Abu Wardah (alias Santoso)—emerged as the most capable terrorist group in Indonesia. With the detection of the al-Qaeda Serambi Mekkah training camp in Aceh, a semi-autonomous Indonesian province on the northwest tip of Sumatra Island, Santoso created two-month training opportunities for several groups in Sulawesi. When Uighur travel through Southeast Asia to Syria via Turkey was disrupted, Santoso also provided training to Uighurs fighting to create an Islamic State in Xinjiang and mount attacks against Chinese interests.²⁷ Based on the al-Qaeda concept of *qital tamkin*

(armed struggle aimed at seizing territories to put under Islamic law), Santoso's plan was to create a secure base for the establishment of an Islamic state in Southeast Asia and support other threat groups.

After the 2014 advent of IS, Santoso aligned his thinking with IS, conducting beheadings, bombings, and other acts consistent with IS methodology. Responsible for several attacks since 2011, Santoso even renamed himself after the founder father of IS, going by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi al-Indonesi.²⁸ MIT, led by Santoso, focused on training and fighting: MIB provided the required funds through robberies to sustain MIT. In addition to bombing the Ekayana Buddhist Temple in West Jakarta in August 2013,²⁹ MIB planned to hit the Singapore Embassy in Jakarta and attack the Shia community to create instability.³⁰ While MIB operating in the urban areas was dismantled by D88, MIT survived in Central Sulawesi. MIT even included a few women, including widows of fighters.

Immediately after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi appointed himself as the Caliph of IS, Santoso pledged allegiance to him. He released this pledge in a video dated July 1, 2014, stating; "This is from Abu Wardah Santoso As Syarqi Al-Indunisi to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as *Emir* [leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria] ... We who are from eastern Indonesia are your soldiers and are waiting for your order and also need your hand to help our jihad in Poso which is still weak and needs weapons. MIT is a part of ISIS because Muslims are like one body ..."³¹ After the police were unsuccessful in dismantling MIT, the Indonesian military deployed on March 31, 2015, but failed to capture or kill Santoso. Indonesia's most wanted terrorist, Santoso styles himself as the commander of the "Islamic State Army" in Indonesia.³²

Like Aman Abdurrahman, Ba'asyir, and Santoso, many Indonesian Islamists who supported al-Qaeda now identify themselves with IS. They want to harness the groundswell of Indonesian support for a caliphate and implement Islamic law. Both from inside prison and in the jungles, the ideologues and operatives agitate, whip up support, and lead IS support groups to create an IS subculture. They have captured the imagination of, and given hope to, Indonesians who believe in the IS story and want to participate in the end-of-times narrative.³³

IS ASPIRATIONS AND PLANS

The successes and failures of al-Qaeda has influenced how the Islamic State structures itself. IS wants to establish a caliphate at its center and provinces in its periphery, eventually uniting them to create a global caliphate. IS has a dual strategy for its supporters: either they perform a migration (*hijrah*) to Syria and Iraq to join the "caliphate," or they take an oath of allegiance (*bay'at*) and operate in the periphery. The *bay'at* is a binding contract in the name of God and establishes a psychological affiliation with IS. The pledge is not only to the "caliph" and to serve the "caliphate" but also an acceptance

of its administrative and military system. In addition to following IS codes of conduct, *bay'at* obligates the individual to participate in the life of IS-governed communities and to “erupt volcanoes of jihad everywhere.” Like the caliphate, the provinces engage in “fighting, and institutes governance, and outreach.”³⁴ Compared to other contemporary threat groups, IS’s capture of territory, declaration of a “caliphate”, implementation of Sharia, and end-of-times narrative has generated a lot of appeal. Up until now, the largest contingent of foreign fighters in the IS ranks come from the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. Asia, where 63 percent of the world’s Muslim population lives, remains largely untapped and has contributed only 4000–5000 fighters from 2014–2016.

To harness and consolidate the IS support and sympathy emerging in the fringes of Asia, IS is preparing to declare provinces in the region. The challenge for IS is that Asian Muslims are moderate and tolerate. Having lived in the shadow of large Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, and other faiths, they value coexistence with other communities. In Indonesia, 79 percent of Indonesians had an unfavorable opinion about IS, while only 4 percent had a favorable opinion.³⁵ In Malaysia, 64 percent had an unfavorable opinion, while 11 percent had a favorable opinion.³⁶

To create a foothold in Southeast Asia, which is the furthest potential province from the core, IS is working with local groups, networks, and cells. Since IS proclaimed a caliphate on June 29, 2014, 32 local groups expressed support to IS and pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi.³⁷ IS is investing significant resources to align those groups with the IS vision—thus creating a global Islamic empire.

The Philippines has been an important arena for domestic, regional, and global terrorist groups for 20 years. Since 1994, when JI established their first training camp in Mindanao, the Philippines emerged as the training ground for Indonesians, Malaysians, Singaporeans, Thai Muslims, and Arabs. Most of the instructors were non-Filipinos: they were either Indonesians or Arabs trained by al-Qaeda. In addition to the Sulu archipelago transforming into a base for training and operations, the area is a strategic bridge linking the Philippines and Malaysia.

With the rise of IS, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) kidnapped Malaysians, Taiwanese, Chinese, and Filipinos from Sabah in Malaysia; Dutch, Germans, Korean, and Filipinos from the Philippines mainland; and a Swiss national from Tawi-Tawi in the Sulu Archipelago. While some hostages escaped, others were released after payment, and others were killed. In one case, even after half a million U.S. dollars of ransom was paid, the Malaysian businessman and engineer Bernard Then Ted Fen was beheaded in November 2015. The latest kidnapping by ASG was on September 2015: a Canadian, Norwegian, and a Filipino were kidnapped in Samal Island and transported by two seacraft to Basilan, an island province in the Philippines.

In addition to IS ideologues inspiring—and even physically moving to the Philippines to implement—the IS brand of Islam, it is very likely that IS will dispatch its explosives experts, combat tacticians, and other operatives. The IS plans to declare

Sulawesi, an island of Indonesia; Sabah, Malaysia's easternmost state in the island of Borneo; and Mindanao, the second-largest island of the Philippines, as provinces or *wilayah* of the caliphate. This presents a very real threat to the stability and security of Asia. The creation of one or several IS provinces where the borders of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines meet is a challenge to the entire region and beyond.

For over a year, IS has consulted amongst Indonesian, Malaysian, and Filipino groups, reviewing "jihadist" credentials to determine which persons would be the best leaders of each IS province. While the groups in Malaysia and Indonesia were prevented by law enforcement and military action from unifying into a single organization that could rally around an individual leader, IS was successful in unifying four groups in the southern Philippines, a pre-requisite to declaring an IS province, and accepted Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) located in Basilan, as the leader of the IS province, the territory, and its branch, the administrative organization, in the Philippines. This presents a long-term threat to the stability and the security of the Philippines and beyond.

It is likely that the IS province in the Philippines will include a part of Eastern Malaysia, given that the Muslim Sultanate of Sulu ruled this area from 1405–1915. Not only that, a number of Malaysians have joined Filipino groups and risen to positions of leadership. For instance, a Malaysian bookshop owner, Mohd Najib Hussein (alias Abu Anas Al-Muhajir), led one of the four groups that consolidated under IS in the Philippines, but was killed by the Philippine military in Basilan on December 16, 2015.³⁸

In Eastern Indonesia, where the Indonesian military has deployed in strength, the IS has chosen Santoso as its leader, but this has not yet been officially announced. The Indonesian military and the police hunt him in the Sulawesi mountains. Within the IS subculture in Indonesia and IS Katibah Nusantara, Santoso is their undisputed leader.³⁹ If he survives, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's choice to lead the caliphate's province in Indonesia is Santoso.

While IS will continue to expand its Southeast Asian contingent in theater, IS external operations Southeast Asia Chief, Bahrin Naim, will motivate those already ideologized to mount attacks in the region. Based in Syria, Naim transmitted a message on Telegram to IS followers in Indonesia on January 17, 2016, calling them to form command cells of seven to eleven people, either decentralized or centralized. As the IS support groups are under watch by government, he recommended building a cell system that includes one cell solely devoted to operations.

Without creating grandiose schemes, he urged IS followers to "determine the target, plan the operation, determine the final outcome either becoming fugitive or achieve martyrdom."⁴⁰ Naim proposed a five-step operation of a) making a team, b) determining the target, c) determining the type of operation, d) determining the type of weaponry, and e) determining the final outcome. His guidance can, at times, be very

specific. He proposed that in a kidnapping operation, for example, “it would be sufficient to use *Aibon* glue which would make the target suffocate and faint.” Similarly, in a food poisoning operation, “arsenic rat poison would be enough to make the target die in 5 minutes.” In a terror operation, “a knife and sword would be capable of cutting down the head of the supporters of the transgressors when walking.” Naim added, “A liter of oil could cause accidents on the roads on [sic] which the supporters of the transgressors often used.”⁷⁴¹

IS leadership promoted the fight as a continuous struggle. “Thus we must also understand that the operation cannot stop. We must continue to carry out all the operations according to what is around us. When caught, then we must be able to carry out operations even while in prison. The operation in prison is the recruitment operation, instigation and provocation towards the supporters of the transgressors, and intelligence operations to find out all the weaknesses of the supporters of the transgressors from within.”⁷⁴²

For now, the foothold for IS in Asia remains in Southeast Asia. The expansion of IS into Northeast Asia will be limited as the only concentration of Muslims live in China. Wilayat Khorasan in the Pakistan and Afghanistan tribal area borders Xinjiang in northwestern China. Over 1000 Uighur and Hui Muslims have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join IS and al-Nusra, and some have linked up with the IS support groups in Southeast Asia. The Southeast Asian–Uighur link is at an early stage, but it could be severed if the Chinese authorities could work with Southeast Asian governments to create a Shanghai Cooperation Organization-type agreement with Southeast Asia. The Uighurs moved from Xinjiang using the Central Asian route, but the Uighurs on transit in Central Asian countries were arrested and deported to China by Central Asian governments. Such an arrangement with ASEAN would enable those Uighur recruits arrested in Southeast Asia on their way to Syria and Iraq to be returned back to China.

Meanwhile, as they could blend in with others in the Far East, Chinese fighters trained, financed, motivated, and directed by IS will pose a threat to Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia in the coming years. Although there is a transit community of a few hundred Uighurs in Southeast Asia, only half a dozen are involved in terrorism in Indonesia, Malaysia, and in Thailand.⁴³

IMPLICATIONS

The Islamic State declaring satellites of the “caliphate” in Southeast Asia will have a ripple effect. In the eyes of IS supporters and sympathizers, IS declaring a province in Southeast Asia makes the existing territorial borders null and void.⁴⁴ IS seeks to annex Muslim territories of Indonesia, Malaysia, or Philippines under a “caliph,” and is likely to start by reclaiming the lands that originally formed the Sultanates of the region. IS will not honor the existing borders or existing arrangements between Southeast Asian

states. The IS will not only harness the porous borders between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines when creating its provinces but exploit the existing border dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah, Malaysia's easternmost state. Moreover, the declaration of the *wilayah* will also result in the Indonesian, Filipino, and Malaysian governments losing legitimacy and control since some disillusioned Muslims will consider Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as their leader. The peace process in the Philippines regarding certain ethnic groups, for instance, will also be harmed since some of the groups will continue to fight under the directives of IS.

IS operations are likely to extend into both the Philippines and Malaysia. The most enduring threat will be the revival of training camps luring not only Southeast Asians but other nationalities—from Australians to Chinese Uighurs—who cannot reach Syria as easily. Creation of an IS base in Asia could even attract segments of vulnerable populations like the Uighurs and Rohingya—Muslim communities without their own territories. As IS propaganda highlight the plight of Muslims in China and Myanmar, a segment of the radicalized look at IS as their saviors, and in turn become the movement's sympathizers. These trainees then pose a threat to their home countries.

The announcement of a *wilayah* will also inspire some Muslims to forcibly implement sharia law, giving more attention and publicity to IS. IS rulings and coercion will create public fear, which is part of its compliance strategy. Punishments will include beheadings, amputations, stoning, and slavery. IS codes and practices would supplant the local culture and traditions. This would likely include the destruction of cultural heritage, historical sites, and museums.

The declaration will make previously dormant groups and individuals proactive. Whenever a local group joins IS, it will assume international status. The synergy between the local groups and IS will give them local recognition and an energy to develop a transnational agenda. Whenever a group has joined IS, it has grown in strength, size, and influence. For instance, when Abu Abdullah al-Libi—the leader of Ansar al-Shariah in Sirte, Libya—pledged allegiance to IS in August 2015, its strength went up from 200 fighters to a few thousand.⁴⁵

The Southeast Asian region will emerge as a hub to channel manpower to the IS core engaged in fighting a war on multiple fronts. In return, IS HQ is likely to provide technology and funds to strengthen the fighter capabilities in the IS province. From a counter-terrorism perspective, the United States and Europe cannot fight on so many fronts since their resources are already overstretched in Iraq, Syria, and Libya. Although a few Southeast Asian governments have built impressive capabilities, most are not fully prepared to deal with the IS threat.

CRAFTING A RESPONSE STRATEGY

The international community's response to IS should be multidimensional. The first step should be to use military force to dismantle IS in Syria–Iraq, the principal theater, and in other theatres such as Libya, Nigeria, Sinai, Yemen, the Afghanistan–Pakistan border, etc. Without boots on the ground, very little is likely to change in the coming months and years. Second, the international community must use law enforcement and intelligence capabilities to dismantle IS support groups worldwide, including in Southeast Asia. Where IS has grown, military forces will have to function side by side with law enforcement authorities. Third, countries must develop a legal framework to counter IS propaganda, especially online. IS was able to generate recruits and support beyond the core area of Syria and Iraq because of its global reach.

Indeed, the group's information capabilities, and its subsequent ability to reach out to potential supporters and sympathizers, presents the most enduring threat. Over 80 percent of IS propaganda is in Arabic, but the non-Arabic IS propaganda is steadfastly on the rise. An examination of the IS videos, visual reports, audio statements, and music produced in the year 2015 reveals that only one out of four IS media organs produced propaganda in the non-Arabic media (ranging from French to Russian, Turkish to English, Urdu to Bahasa, and Bengali to Chinese). The real danger is content produced by local IS supporters and sympathizers. With their mastery of the local context, they have created thousands of sites in support and sympathy. The propaganda on those sites has resonance with the local population.⁴⁶

The response for individual governments to the IS threat must be more specific. There is no better time for the Government of the Philippines to act. If President Aquino procrastinates, IS ideology will spread, gravely damaging the commendable peace process. IS will grow in strength, size, and influence, presenting an enduring challenge to his successors.

Shortly, IS will declare a satellite of the caliphate in the Sulu archipelago. Ideally, President Aquino should pre-empt the IS declaration, and not overreact once it comes. To win Muslim hearts and minds and prevent Muslim support for IS, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) should move not in a role of containing, isolating, and eliminating the ASG, but with a mandate to economically develop the region. To preempt the declaration of an IS *Wilayat* in the Philippines and IS Branch shortly, the AFP should deploy in strength in Sulu, Basilan, and Tawi Tawi. If the Armed Forces of the Philippines can dominate the Sulu Archipelago, IS cannot successfully declare, operate, and expand an IS satellite in the Philippines with implications for Malaysia, the region, and beyond.

In light of the growing IS threat in Southeast Asia, regional governments will need to protect Muslim communities from both IS influence and the wrath of non-Muslim communities affected by IS violence. Most Muslims reject IS violence, but the idea of a caliphate, Islamic law, and end-of-times narratives still has appeal to

some. Governments should manage the reaction of the non-Muslim communities to the Muslim communities, especially if IS groups target non-Muslim places of worship, schools, and other sensitive targets. Harmony will be disrupted and anti-Islamic rhetoric will increase, as seen in Myanmar where misguided Buddhists turned violent against innocent Muslims.⁴⁷

While community engagement both in cyber and real space is essential, investment in counter-terrorism intelligence, investigations, and operations is paramount to contain, isolate, and eliminate IS networks that have already taken root in Southeast Asia. The expansion of IS in different regions shows the urgency for Asian governments to shift from international cooperation to collaboration by creating common databases; exchanging personnel, joint training, joint operations; and sharing of experience, expertise and technology. All of this is necessary to defeat the growing threat.

ASIA'S WAKE-UP CALL

The threat of IS in East Asia is real. The terrorist attack in Jakarta on January 14, 2016, is a wake-up call for the region. The Europeans understood the threat after the Paris attacks of November 13, 2015. Similarly, until the Jakarta attacks, the authorities in Southeast Asia dismissed the threat, saying that the IS center of action is in Syria and Iraq. With the rise of IS in Iraq and Syria, the flow of fighters to theater, and formation of support groups at home, IS influence and capabilities have grown and expanded in East Asia. Both in the physical and virtual space, IS has built support and operational infrastructure to disseminate propaganda, recruit, raise funds, procure supplies, and mount attacks.

Today, the prosperity and stability of Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia is under threat. Slowly and steadily, IS is creating a subculture in the fringes of the Muslim communities. The threat is moving from the periphery to the center, with pockets of support exploited by three to four dozen threat groups in the region. Initially, most governments were in denial, but gradually they have come to understand that IS has established a presence. However, they still do not understand the scale and magnitude of the threat—and East Asian governments and their community partners have not built adequate tactical, operational, and strategic capabilities to fight back.

Asia is on the rise. East Asia is the engine of growth. Without peace, there cannot be prosperity. Asia should not only secure its territory but mitigate the threat by playing an active role throughout the Asia–Pacific region. Rather than perceive China as a challenger, the rest of the Asia–Pacific should work with major powers to fight back against groups like IS. They should work with China and India to stabilize Afghanistan, where IS has already declared a caliphate's province, and preempt IS plans to declare provinces in East Asia.

Just like the blowback of the Afghan war created al-Qaeda, IS, and other groups, the blowback of the Syrian war is shaping the next generation of East Asian fighters. Those who survive the fight and return will be motivated, skilled, and networked to form cells, networks, and groups to carry out attacks. The international neglect in joining the anti-IS coalition will mean the continuous flow of Asian recruits to the IS theater, inspiring and instigating their supporters and sympathizers at home to emulate them. Cognizant of both the push and pull factors, Asia–Pacific countries should contribute both manpower and material to fight IS at its core in Syria and Iraq. To be effective, East Asia’s fight should be multipronged, multidimensional, multiagency, multijurisdictional, and multinational.

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Countering Daesh Extremism in South Asia

Ajai Sahni

Tremendous errors of assessment have afflicted evaluations of the threat of Daesh in various theatres in South Asia—and, indeed, across the world—influenced, in part, by the dramatic success of this terrorist formation’s sophisticated media projections of its most grotesque atrocities as well as its battlefield victories, by the distorted agendas of various ideological and political groups among various intervening states, and by poorly informed media commentary. The challenge of assessment has been further compounded by the very long history of Islamist radicalization and terrorism in this region, imposing multiple and competing overlays of affiliation and opposition.

Contemporary global jihadi terrorism has arisen, in an almost linear evolution, from the US-backed anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan,¹ principally executed through the agency of Pakistan’s military intelligence apparatus, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Thereafter, for nearly 25 years, all Islamist terrorist formations operating in South Asia were proxies of, or graduated to terrorism with the support of, the Pakistani state.² Across South Asia, these organizations created networks that have engaged in widespread and sustained movements of terrorism and, indeed, produced the “Islamist contagion carried by the returning Afghan veterans”³ that spread gradually across the world.

Within South Asia, consequently, while Islamism was instrumentalized, these groups served the nationalist strategic calculus of Pakistani state agencies, and received aid and prominence in proportion to the loyalty and obedience they demonstrated.

* This paper was submitted on 2 August 2016.

¹ Indeed, Abdullah Azzam, the ideologue of the early hordes of foreign fighters who travelled to join the jihad in Afghanistan and inspiration to the successor organizations of the “global jihad”, declared, “This duty (*jihad*) shall not lapse with victory in Afghanistan, and the *jihad* will remain an individual obligation until all other lands which formerly were Muslim come back to us and Islam reigns within them once again. Before us lie Palestine, Bukhara, Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, the Philippines, Burma, South Yemen, Taskkent, Andalusia...” Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, London: I.B. Taurus, 2002, p. 147.

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Pakistan's calculus was relatively predictable, limited and susceptible to strategic counter-measures (though such counter-measures have been adopted rarely and inadequately). Al-Qaeda dramatically altered this calculus, replacing it with the millenarian religious ideology of jihad that sought global domination and offered rewards in the afterlife, rather than any necessary quantifiable strategic gains on earth, though such gains were not outside its vision. Al-Qaeda pursued a strategy of catastrophic terrorist acts to propagate its ideology, unleashing a new scale of terrorism on the world, accepting no limits to its violence, and declaring its clear intent to acquire and use nuclear and chemical weapons. Moreover, within the complex of state-backed terrorist formations, a certain proportion turned "rogue", evolving their own, progressively global, jihadist agenda and, indeed, following Al-Qaeda, declaring the Pakistani state *murtad* (apostate) and a rightful target of jihad.⁴

It was into this troubled environment that the victories and excesses of the Islamic State (IS), and its precursor, Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS), in Iraq and Syria introduced a new element of visible virulence and barbarity, with their aggressive and sophisticated projection across the world through the internet and other media. An exaggerated perception of Daesh's "arrival" in South Asia has been fed by occasional reports of volunteers leaving countries in the region to join the jihad in Iraq and Syria, as well as by a handful of terrorist incidents or conspiracies in which perpetrators claimed allegiance to or linkages with Daesh. The reality, however, is that there has been no significant change in these countries as far as the profile of terrorism is concerned, other than the fact that fragments of groups that were already operating there have declared their allegiance to Daesh—as many had earlier done with regard to Al-Qaeda when that group was dominating the world's imagination. There has been no quantifiable augmentation of capacities, no significant movement of resources, personnel, technologies, or structures of command and control. Indeed, in some cases, particularly in Pakistan and Afghanistan, existing local movements have split and are engaged in fratricidal confrontations as a result of this shift of fealty. These changing affiliations, by and large, reflect opportunistic posturing by weak local formations trying to secure prominence by declaring alliances with what is currently perceived as the most powerful jihadi formation in the world.

This assessment of Daesh power is, itself, based on distortions and deliberate falsification. Daesh has consistently exaggerated both its excesses and its victories. The truth is, it rampaged across regions of disorder and its initial "conquests" were of areas under the control of other non-state armed formations.⁵ Where it confronted state forces it found an adversary terrorised by the wide propagation of videos documenting tor-

⁴ Khuram Iqbal, *The Making of Pakistani Human Bombs*, Lexington Books, 2015, p. 123.

⁵ Zachary Laub, "The Islamic State", Council on Foreign Relations, March 22, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/islamic-state/p14811> (accessed 30 June 2016).

tures, crucifixions and mass executions, and unwilling to defend Sunni majority areas.⁶ The most dramatic instance of this was Mosul, where a state force of two divisions, armed to the hilt with tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery, attack helicopters and a more than sufficient arsenal of small arms, simply abandoned their weapons and fled in the face of a tiny ragtag bunch of possibly under 800 Daesh fighters, who rode into town in open pickup trucks.⁷ However, the moment Daesh hit the sectarian (Shia) and ethnic (Kurdish) fault lines thereafter, its advances stopped, and the performance of Daesh fighters has been far from exemplary wherever they have met with any determined opposition.⁸

The myth of Daesh power was also augmented when an ever-expanding coalition of Western and Arab states engaged in a half-hearted and ambivalent fight against the terrorists, even as it sought to provide various armed formations operational spaces and capabilities to weaken the Assad regime in Syria, and allowed Daesh not only to benefit from these spaces, but also to carry out a lucrative illegal trade in oil through Turkey without impediment.⁹ The Western air campaign against Daesh at this stage was accurately described by one American commentator as “a drizzle, not a thunderstorm”.¹⁰ To distant analysts, however, it appeared that Daesh had the capacity to resist the combined force of a global alliance of some of the most powerful nations in the world. This myth was exploded with the unambiguous entry of Russia into the fight in Syria, and the Daesh legend quickly disintegrated in the face of a relentless succession of reverses.¹¹ A string of Daesh-linked attacks in Europe, most prominently the Paris and Brussels bombings, moreover, combined with the Russian intervention to shake off Western ambivalence, and a more serious effort to contain and neutralize Daesh has since followed, pushing the “Caliphate” into ever-shrinking territories.¹²

⁶ Nussaibah Younis, “A Cross-Sectarian Vision for Defeating the Islamic State in Iraq”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 6, 2015, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/07/06/cross-sectarian-vision-for-defeating-islamic-state-in-iraq-pub-60590> (accessed 30 July 2016).

⁷ Zack Beauchamp, “11 facts that explain the escalating crisis in Iraq”, *Vox*, 13 June 2014, <http://www.vox.com/2014/6/13/5803712/11-things-iraq-crisis-isis> (accessed 28 June 2016).

⁸ Aron Lund, “Why Islamic State Is Losing, and Why It Still Hopes to Win”, The Century Foundation, June 17, 2016, <https://tcf.org/content/report/islamic-state-losing-still-hopes-win/> (accessed 22 July 2016).

⁹ “ISIS, Oil & Turkey: What RT found in Syrian town liberated from jihadists by Kurds”, *RT*, March 28, 2016, <https://www.rt.com/news/336967-isis-files-oil-turkey-exclusive/> (accessed 24 July 2016).

¹⁰ “US Military Pilots: Hands Tied in Frustrating Fight against ISIL”, *Veterans Today*, 29 May 2015, <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2015/05/29/us-military-pilots-hands-tied-in-frustrating-fight-against-isil/> (accessed 22 March 2016).

¹¹ Zack Beauchamp, “How Russian bombing is changing Syria’s war, in 3 maps”, *Vox*, 16 February 2016, <http://www.vox.com/2016/2/16/11020140/russia-syria-bombing-maps> (accessed 30 June 2016).

¹² Suleiman Al-Khalidi, “Islamic State on the defensive, territory shrinking in Syria and Iraq: U.S. official”, *Reuters*, 15 May 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-usa-idUSKCN0Y60TN> (accessed 22 July 2016).

Nevertheless, South Asia has contributed—albeit in disproportionately small numbers in terms of its Sunni Muslim populations and in view of long histories of radicalization and terrorism in the region—to the foreign fighters joining Daesh in Iraq and Syria. In December 2015, the Soufan Group put the number of fighters with Daesh from Pakistan at an official figure of just 90 and “other estimates” at 330; from India at an official 23 and other estimates at 40 to 50; and from the Maldives at an unofficial 200, but an official count that varies between 20 and 100. Bangladesh does not even feature in the Soufan Group’s listing of foreign fighters by country.¹³ While a number of somewhat higher estimates have been projected, even with these, the reality is,

the entirety of South Asia jihadists reported going to the ISIS fight is actually less than those from the UK alone, less than Germany alone, and dramatically less than the flows from North Africa or Central Asia—especially when assessed on a per-capita Muslim basis. Even Australasia has a dramatically greater per-capita jihadist-to-the-ISIS-fight participation rate than all of South Asia.¹⁴

The attention of the Daesh leadership turned fairly quickly to South Asia. Within days of overrunning Mosul and Tikrit in early June 2014, Daesh released its “world domination map”, including South Asia within its imagined *Wilayah Khorasan*. The declaration of a Caliphate by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi *aka* Khalifa Ibrahim shortly thereafter (29 June 2014) caused considerable consternation among South Asian governments, security agencies, the general population and, particularly, among well over 500 million Muslims in the region. Initially, some wild declarations of intent from Sunni groups provoked equally outrageous responses from Shia leaders, raising the spectre of a transfer of the sectarian war in West Asia to the Indian sub-continent.¹⁵ These early portents have, however, failed to produce any sustained disturbances beyond the fitful trends documented below.

¹³ The Soufan Group, “Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment”, December 2015, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate_FINAL3.pdf. The Soufan Group (TSG), headquartered in New York, provides strategic security intelligence services to governments and multinational organizations. TSG released its initial “Foreign Fighters in Syria” report in June 2014, which identified approximately 12,000 foreign fighters from 81 countries. The subsequent revision released on 8 December 2015, calculated that between 27,000 and 31,000 people have traveled to Syria and Iraq to join Daesh and other violent extremist groups from at least 86 countries.

¹⁴ Thomas F. Lynch III, *The Islamic State as Icarus: A Critical Assessment of an Untenable Threat*, Wilson Center Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson Centre, Washington, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/theislamicstateasiearus.pdf> (accessed 21 June 2016), pp. 22-23.

¹⁵ Jacob Campbell, “Tens of Thousands of Shiites Worldwide Join Iran’s Foreign Legion”, The Clarion Project, 29 July 2014, <http://www.clarionproject.org/analysis/tens-thousands-shiites-worldwide-join-irans-foreign-legion> (accessed 28 July 2016).

AFPAK

The AfPak region lies at the heart of potential Daesh mobilisation in South Asia, offering the “conditions of savagery”, the absence of effective state control and collapse of order across wide regions that Islamist extremists seek to establish dominance.¹⁶ It is, moreover, in this region that Daesh has established its most visible *apparent* presence. Within days of the declaration of the “Caliphate” by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on 29 June 2014, a splinter of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) announced itself as the Tehrik-e-Khilafat and declared allegiance to Daesh. Chalkings and stickers supporting Daesh had cropped up in all four of Pakistan’s provinces by November 2014.

In January 2015, Hafiz Saeed Khan Orakzai, a former TTP “commander” and member of its Majlis-e-Shura (governing council), after a protracted leadership struggle within the organization, claimed to have been appointed as the head of Daesh’s Khorasan chapter in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Reports indicated that there were close to 370 Daesh operatives in Pakistan at this stage. (Hafiz Saeed Khan was killed along with 30 other fighters in an airstrike in Afghanistan’s Jalalabad province in July 2015.) Quickly, with no pattern or apparent material support, Daesh supporters in Pakistan announced themselves in Peshawar, Bannu, the Northwest, and Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan. Jundullah, another TTP fragment, also broke away and announced its support for Daesh on 17 November 2014. On 31 July 2015, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), with a powerful presence in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, declared fealty to Daesh. In Afghanistan, various splinters of the Taliban broke away, transferring allegiance to Daesh, including the Heroes of Islam Brigade on 30 September 2014 and al Tawheed Brigade on 23 September 2014.

Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K, also *Wilayah Khorasan*) found initial and substantial support among disaffected Taliban and TTP cadres, establishing dominance in the Nangarhar Province, as well as a significant presence in Kunduz and Helmand, in Afghanistan. Quickly, however, IS-K found itself locked in fratricidal battles for control with its parent, the Taliban, even as it came under disproportionate attacks by Kabul and the US air campaign. Brigadier General Charles H. Cleveland, Resolute Support Mission Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications, disclosed that, in the first three months of 2016, US forces had carried out 100 counter-terrorism strikes across Afghanistan, and that 70 to 80 per cent of these were against Daesh, most of which were concentrated in the Nangarhar Province, which IS-K sought to control.¹⁷ Wilting under

¹⁶ See Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through which the Umma will Pass*, trans. William McCants, John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, 23 May 2006, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf> (downloaded 1 October 2015).

¹⁷ Lamothe, Dan, “The U.S. has launched more than 70 airstrikes this year against ISIS in Afghanistan”, *The Washington Post*, 14 April 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/04/14/the-u-s-has-launched-more-than-70-airstrikes-this-year-against-isis-in-afghanistan/>.

the heat of operations by the Taliban, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), private tribal militias and US air support, IS-K was squeezed out of four of the province's seven districts, retaining a weakened presence in Achin, Nazyan and Deh Bala,¹⁸ and pushing into the neighbouring Kunar District under pressure. Cleveland asserted, "We think we have significantly decreased the footprint that they have in Afghanistan." The US military estimated that there were between 1,000 and 3,000 Daesh fighters left in Afghanistan, although the actual number was "probably on the lower end of that." Three months earlier, Daesh had held between six and eight Districts, but had then become restricted to just two to three. Daesh fighters were seen fleeing to the Kunar and Nuristan provinces along Afghanistan's western border with Pakistan, where they were just "trying to survive."¹⁹

In Pakistan, while Daesh claimed several dramatic attacks, including the worst of these, the slaughter of 43 Shia Ismailis in Karachi on 13 May 2015,²⁰ the government initially sought to deny any Daesh presence on its soil, but eventually banned the group in August 2015.²¹

The activities of Daesh affiliates in Pakistan and Afghanistan have remained locked in long-established patterns of domestic terrorism and extremism, and have had little escalatory impact on the broad trajectory of Islamist violence. Indeed, if anything, their fratricidal struggles with their parent formations will have diminished some of the pressure on state agencies. Daesh offers little to its local affiliates beyond a flag and an identity separate from the more established groups and is, consequently, attractive to weak formations, or to those who are at the losing end of internal power struggles within established formations.

Unsurprisingly, patterns of state response display the same intransigence. In Afghanistan, the combined effort of ANSF and a cluster of tribal militia, backed by extremely effective air support from NATO forces, has decimated the "guerrilla style low intensity warfare"²² Daesh has sought to wage.²³

In Pakistan, with a multiplicity of state-backed terrorist formations mingling with the renegade groups that have turned against the state, Islamabad is waging an uphill,

¹⁸ Johnson et al., "The Islamic State in Afghanistan: Assessing the Threat", *United States Institute for Peace*, 7 April 2016, <http://www.usip.org/publications/2016/04/07/the-islamic-state-in-afghanistan-assessing-the-threat>.

¹⁹ "ISIL in Afghanistan", *GlobalSecurity.org*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/isil-afghan.htm>.

²⁰ Faraz Khan, "43 dead, eight injured in bus attack on Karachi's Ismaili community", *The Express Tribune*, 13 May 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/885511/five-dead-24-injured-in-firing-attack-in-karachi/>.

²¹ Zahid Gishkori, "Islamic State listed among proscribed outfits", *The Express Tribune*, 29 August 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/946859/banned-organisations-is-listed-among-proscribed-outfits/>.

²² <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/30-Sep-2015/kabul-asks-pakistan-to-crack-down-on-terrorists>.

²³ Lynne O'donnell, "Islamic State group loyalists eye a presence in Afghanistan", *Chicago Tribune*, 9 September 2015, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/sns-bc-as--afghanistan-islamic-state-20150908-story.html>.

brutal, but gradually successful strategy of the use of extreme and indiscriminate force in the more remote areas of the country,²⁴ and of mass arrests and selective extra-judicial executions in affected urban centres, particularly Karachi.²⁵ Major strikes against the Daesh leadership have largely come from US drone operations.²⁶ Given the continuing ambivalence of the state towards the instrumentalisation of Islamist terrorism for the objectives of domestic political management and external projection, it is unlikely to secure complete success. The broad environment of radicalization, extremism and armed violence that is actively encouraged by the state creates sufficient spaces in which anti-state formations are easily able to conceal their networks and power.²⁷

BANGLADESH

Despite the very long history of state-backed radicalization through much of the period between 1975 and 2006, and despite the rising crescendo of strident commentary about Daesh in Bangladesh, particularly after the brutal slaughter at the Holey Artisan café (2 July 2016),²⁸ the reality is that the Daesh footprint in Bangladesh has been minuscule.

This is astonishing in view of the deep roots Islamist radicalization and terrorism have in the country. Through 2004–2008, a Bangladeshi “footprint”²⁹ was recorded in almost every major Islamist terrorist attack in India, outside Jammu and Kashmir, particularly involving Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), often in collaboration with Pakistani formations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and Harkat-ul-Mujahiddeen (HuM), among others, as well as with the Indian Mujahiddeen (IM). Indeed, this continued to be the case in at least some major incidents up to 2011. Bangladesh was, moreover, long a major transit route for the smuggling of small arms and explosives into India’s troubled northeast, and remained domestically

²⁴ Ambreen Agha, “FATA: Fatal Flaws”, *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Volume 14, No. 14, 5 October 2015, http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/sair/Archives/sair14/14_14.htm#assessment1.

²⁵ Saher Baloch, “HRCP concerned over extrajudicial killings in Karachi”, *Dawn*, December 28, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1229062/hrcp-concerned-over-extrajudicial-killings-in-karachi>.

²⁶ Farhan Zahid and Muhammad Ismail Khan, “Prospects of the Islamic State in Pakistan”, Hudson Institute, 29 April 2016, <http://www.hudson.org/research/12453-prospects-of-the-islamic-state-in-pakistan>.

²⁷ See Ajai Sahni, “The Core of Islamist Terror”, Written Evidence Submitted to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Commons, UK, 29 October 2006, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmfa/55/55we16.htm>.

²⁸ See Ajai Sahni, “Bangladesh: Radical Escalation”, *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Volume 15, No. 1, 4 July 2016, http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/sair/Archives/sair15/15_1.htm.

²⁹ See Sanchita Bhattacharya, “HuJI-B: Potent Threat”, *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Volume 10, No. 4, 1 August 2011, http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/sair/Archives/sair10/10_4.htm#assessment2.

awash with such weapons.³⁰ These capacities were not domestically deployed; first, because radical Islamist groups enjoyed significant state support under the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-Jamaat-e-Islami (BNP-JeI) regime, and were used to sustain a calibrated campaign of intimidation through low-grade terrorism and street violence; and subsequently, because of the shock of the sweeping measures initiated by the Sheikh Hasina regime since 2009, which decapitated and dismantled most of the established terrorist formations in the country.

Significantly, in the wake of the Holey Artisan café attack, the Bangladesh government suggested that Pakistan and its external intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), were likely behind the incident. Given the record of history, this was a credible thesis, though no more than generalized evidence is currently available to support this thesis.³¹ Pakistan had long meddled in internal affairs in Bangladesh, principally through the BNP-JeI combine, and its affiliate radical formations. Crucially, after US and coalition forces swept across Afghanistan in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan facilitated the transfer of large numbers of foreign and Bangladeshi fighters to Bangladesh, and then fomented an accelerated process of radicalization, creating a measure of instability that inspired some of the more febrile minds of the time to describe the country as “the next Afghanistan”.³²

Bangladesh is a country of more than 160 million, with over 90 per cent Sunni Muslims—the population profile purportedly most susceptible to the Wahabi lunacy that Daesh represents. And yet, the number of Bangladeshis who are believed to have joined Daesh forces in Iraq-Syria is tiny, and the highest unofficial estimates stop at 30.³³ Indeed, Daesh admits to its failure in what it describes as “Bengal”, even while it claims the various domestic terrorist strikes there. Thus, in a detailed profile of its sole Bangladeshi “martyr” in Syria, *Dabiq*, the Daesh mouthpiece, concedes that he is among the very few who have joined its jihad in Iraq-Syria from this country, observing,

Abu Jandal al-Bangali (may Allah accept him) was among the few muwahhidin who emigrated from the land of Bengal to the blessed land of Sham by Allah’s grace...

Abu Jandal grew up in Dhaka and came from an affluent family with deep connections in the Bengali military. His father was a murtadd officer of the taghut

³⁰ Veronica Khangchian, “Arms Trafficking: Residual Networks”, *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Volume 12, No. 52, 30 June 2014, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/sair12/12_52.htm.

³¹ Abhishek Chakraborty, “Pak’s ISI Suspected Of Link To Bangladesh Attack: Top Official To NDTV”, NDTV, 4 July 2016, <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/paks-isi-suspected-of-link-to-bangladesh-attack-top-official-to-ndtv-1427408> (accessed 28 July 2016).

³² Hiranmay Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005.

³³ Simon Tisdall and Anna Ridout, “British Jihadis in Bangladesh fanning flames of extremism, says Dhaka”, *The Guardian*, 16 September 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/16/british-jihadis-bangladesh-extremism-uk-isis-sheikh-hasina>.

forces and was killed during an internal mutiny of “Bangladesh” border guards in “2009”.³⁴

The first significant incident connected to Daesh in Bangladesh dates back to 29 June 2014, when Samiur Rahman, a 24-year-old British citizen of Bangladeshi origin, was arrested in Dhaka for attempting to recruit for the Islamic State in Syria. Between September 2014 and 15 June 2016, at least two dozen Daesh “operatives” were arrested in Bangladesh.³⁵ Daesh has regularly claimed every single incident of Islamist terrorism in Bangladesh, including the succession of hackings/stabbings, since September 2015. However, this series of targeted attacks—against intellectuals, bloggers, atheists, “anti-Islamic” individuals, minorities, and foreigners—began well before Daesh saw a propaganda opportunity in it. Indeed, “lists” of individuals marked for brutal murder were circulated soon after the Shahbagh Movement was initiated in February 2013, and the first killing in this sequence—Ahmad Rajib Haider’s—dates back to 15 February 2013. The early succession of murders attracted fitful attention; but once the local perpetrators began to announce affiliation to Daesh (or, in some cases, to Al-Qaeda), and once foreigners began to be targeted, these supposed acts of “international terrorism” excited great attention in Western capitals and media.

The reality is, the Sheikh Hasina government has decimated the leadership of established Islamist terrorist formations and their sympathetic institutions, and fragmented their remnants. Enormously weakened splinters, most prominently including the Jamaat-ul-Mujahiddeen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ansar ul Bangla Team (ABT), have long been attempting to regroup, but have found few takers for their domestic agenda, despite the enormous proliferation of Islamist fundamentalist and radical institutions in the country over the past decades. In identifying with a global jihadist organization like Daesh, the surviving fractions evidently hope to improve their capacities for local mobilization—and are being enormously aided in this by the Western media and political leaderships who have accepted all claims of such institutional and ideological identity at face value, and compounded the sensation and hysteria around even the most minor acts of terrorism, offering vast quantities of the “oxygen of publicity” to tiny and marginalized groupings. The Sheikh Hasina government has intensified its sustained crackdown against extremist formations after the Holey Artisan café attack³⁶ and the government remains confident that the low-grade terrorist attacks over the past years are executed by purely domestic groups, principally ABT and JMB. A series of arrests

³⁴ “Among the Believers are Men: Abu Jandal al Bangali,” *Dabiq*, Volume 14, 1437 Rajab, pp. 50-51.

³⁵ “Islamic State: Is it here or not”, *Dhaka Tribune*, June 15, 2016, <http://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/jun/15/islamic-state-it-here-or-not>.

³⁶ “Bangladesh Police arrest 194 suspected militants during seven-day crackdown”, *bdnews24.com*, 17 June 2016, <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2016/06/17/bangladesh-police-arrest-194-suspected-militants-during-seven-day-crackdown>.

not only targeting terrorists, but also the criminal infrastructure, including arms and drug trafficking and a large number of fugitives, attempts to strike at the roots of these organisations and the wider network of criminal support they may receive. They have, however, attracted widespread criticism on the grounds that they are intended to strike against the political opposition in the country. Such critiques, however, ignore the reality of the inextricable intermeshing of the principal political parties in the opposition—the BNP-Jei combine—and the processes of radicalization and violent Islamist mobilization in Bangladesh.

INDIA

In May 2016, Daesh released a video featuring a handful of cadres from “Hind wal Sindh”—or India and Pakistan—provoking great consternation in India regarding purportedly increasing Indian participation in the West Asian “jihad”. However, Daesh has had no more than extremely marginal impact on the nearly 185 million Muslims of India.

From an objective counter-terrorism perspective, the reaction to this most recent Daesh video should be one of extreme satisfaction. All the identified Indians were among the listing of some 23 who were confirmed to have joined Daesh in 2014. At least one of the six identified Indians in the video, Mohammad “Bada” Sajid, a former Indian Mujahiddeen terrorist from Azamgarh, was killed in August 2015 at Kobane, suggesting that the video had been laboriously compiled over a protracted period of time, and is not something that taps into teeming hordes of Indians engorging Daesh ranks. Another 21 Indians, from the southern state of Kerala, are reported to have subsequently travelled to Syria.³⁷

The reality is that just 45 persons are confirmed to have joined Daesh—including six women and three children³⁸ among the group from Kerala—in Iraq-Syria from this country, of whom six have been confirmed killed, and two have returned to India. Another 30-odd individuals interdicted in their attempts to travel to Syria to join Daesh have also been detained, counselled and returned to their families. Crucially, much of the information leading to these detentions has come from family or community members, indicating that, while a few individuals have certainly been radicalized, their families and the larger community are under no illusion regarding Daesh’s nature. In addition, there have been 54 arrests of individuals plotting terrorist activities in the

³⁷ Praveen Swami, “From fish curry to war: ‘Indian in Syria’ calls out to his homeland”, *The Indian Express*, 14 July 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/from-fish-curry-to-war-indian-in-syria-calls-out-to-his-homeland-2912568/>.

³⁸ Munish Pandey, “22 from Kerala have already joined Daesh”, *Mumbai Mirror*, September 13, 2016, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/22-from-Kerala-have-already-joined-Daesh/articleshow/54305744.cms> (accessed 16 September 2016).

name of Daesh in India, particularly in a network mobilised by Muhammad Shafi Armar, the surviving leader of the Ansar ul Tawhid fi bilad al Hind (AuT), a breakaway faction of the Indian Mujahiddeen based in Pakistan, which pledged support to Daesh in August 2014.³⁹ Reliable reports indicate that India's Intelligence Bureau officials estimate that Daesh's Indian cell, led by Armar, had engaged more than 700 people "in conversation", and raised more than 20 identified volunteers.⁴⁰ There have also been a few incidents of flag waving, provocative posters and occasional symbolism (such as wearing Daesh T-shirts in one incident in Tamil Nadu in August 2014). Crucially, no single attack, major or minor, linked directly or indirectly to Daesh, has yet been recorded on Indian soil.

Indeed, the levels of Islamist extremist terrorism in India—a movement that has thrived essentially on Pakistani state support—are at low ebb at present. According to the *South Asia Terrorism Portal* (SATP), 4,529 persons were killed across India in Islamist terrorist violence in 2001—the worst year by far—including 4,507 in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) alone; 2015 saw 174 such fatalities in J&K, and another 13 elsewhere in India; in 2016, these numbers stand at 165 and 21 (SATP data till September 11).⁴¹

The Indian case has been a source of much bewilderment across the world, within Islamist extremists, among counter-terrorism experts and people confronted with Daesh terrorism in what were long believed to be safe, infinitely better administered and more prosperous nations with relatively tiny Muslim populations. Though no systematic studies are available on the subject, Daesh's failure in India can be linked back to several factors.

The first of these is, of course, the very long history of Pakistan-backed terrorism in the country, and linkages of all surviving organisations to networks of support based on Pakistani soil and in the Pakistani state. Daesh, itself under tremendous pressure in its heartlands of Syria and Iraq, and with no organisational base in India, offers no operational or resource advantages to any potential affiliates.

The operational environment in India, moreover, has become difficult even for the Pakistan-backed terrorist formations. In the May 2016 Daesh video, one of the interviewees, Abu Rashid Ahmed, concedes, "Following the Batla House encounter, the land of India became hostile to us. The intelligence agencies and the ATS (Maharashtra

³⁹ Union Ministry of Home Affairs, reply to Unstarred Question No. 1404 in the Lok Sabha, Lower House of Parliament, 26 July 2016.

⁴⁰ Kunain Sheriff M. and Praveen Swami, "Delhi: Islamic State-inspired jihadist cell busted was plotting strikes, say police", *The Indian Express*, 5 May 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/islamic-state-inspired-jihadist-cell-busted-in-delhi-was-plotting-strikes-police-say-2785066/>.

⁴¹ "Cumulative Fatalities by Conflict Theatres 2005-2016", *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/Cumulative_Fatalities.htm.

Police Anti-Terrorism Squad) pursued us. It became difficult for us to carry out armed actions.”⁴²

The long and fruitless engagement with Pakistan-backed terrorism that recruited outliers in the Muslim community has also left the larger community disenchanted with the ideologies of extremism, in a sense, inoculating them against the later entrants. This is particularly forceful in a situation where the broader enterprise of Islamist terrorism in India is at a low and seen as failing, and also where Pakistan, with widening disorders and mutual slaughters of Muslims by Muslims, is no longer seen as an aspirational state by those who may have been seduced by its siren call in the past.

These proclivities are further reinforced by social and cultural factors, by the profile of Islam and the syncretic streams that have evolved within Indian society, creating systemic resistance within the community. It is significant that virtually every prominent conservative/fundamentalist Islamic organisation in India has been outspoken in its condemnation of Islamist terrorism in general and of Daesh in particular, with only occasional and marginal exceptions.⁴³

Finally, the state response in India has been sensitive and calibrated. The political leadership has been acutely aware of the Daesh potential from the outset, and focused intelligence efforts have been successful in identifying and neutralizing incipient efforts at creating an Indian affiliate—including the virtual neutralization of the Junood-al-Khalifa-e-Hind, the AuT’s recent effort to seed Daesh among the remnants of IM and lone sympathisers in India. The agencies, moreover, have treated those who have attempted to travel to Iraq-Syria to join Daesh, or others in initial stages of mobilisation, with compassion, guiding them through counselling and back to their families and communities, rather than registering and prosecuting criminal charges against them. It is only in the case of latter stages of mobilisation, including conspiracies to engage in terrorist activities and the acquisition of materials to realize these, that criminal charges have been pursued. Significantly, in many of the former categories of cases, information and pleas for help have often come from family, friends and the local community of the “misguided youth”, testimony, again, to the rejection of Daesh and extremist Islam among Indian Muslims.

⁴² Praveen Swami, “UP Police confirm, 2 suspected Indian Mujahideen fugitives in Islamic State video”, *The Indian Express*, 25 May 2016, http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/indian-mujahideen-fugitives-islamic-state-video-ndia-intelligence-services-2816100/?utm_content=buffer3694e&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer.

⁴³ One of the founders of United Democratic Front, Mufti Abdul Sami Qasmi, was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in February 2016 for giving provocative speeches in support of the Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi-led “caliphate”. See Rahul Tripathi, “Former SP minister Quereshi, my political mentor: Pro-IS Mufti Abdul Sami Qasmi”, *The Economic Times*, 7 June 2016, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-06-07/news/73622270_1_udf-ndia-quereshi.

THE MALDIVES

The Maldives have experienced processes of continuous Islamist radicalization and chronic political crises over the past decade. The Pakistani footprint is glaring here. Large numbers of Maldivians have been provided free education in radicalized Pakistani *madrassas*, joined the jihad in Afghanistan and subsequently within Pakistan, and returned to propagate a hardline Islamism significantly at variance with indigenous practices. Indeed, a Maldivian suicide bomber executed a Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan-engineered attack on the ISI headquarters in Lahore (Pakistan) on 27 May 2009, killing 35 and injuring more than 250.⁴⁴ In the wake of Maldives' first terrorist attack in 2007,⁴⁵ then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom observed, "Maldivians are influenced by what is happening in the world. They go to Pakistan, study in *madrasahs* and come back with extreme religious ideas."⁴⁶

But the processes of Islamisation in the Maldives have been complex, involving domestic politics and state-backed programmes of Islamisation that sought to counter, but in fact deepened, radicalization.⁴⁷ There has also been a progressive proclivity toward criminalization of extremist Islamist movements within the country, intermeshing with its gang and drug sub-culture.⁴⁸ The United Nations had emphasised the entrenchment of the gang culture in a study that reported between 20 and 30 different gangs operating in Malé alone, with 50 to 400 members in each group. Gang violence in the Maldives, the report emphasised, was becoming "increasingly commonplace and the nature of violence more brutal" as new types of drugs and weapons are used.⁴⁹

The Islamic State of Maldives, a pro-Daesh group, announced its presence in the country in July 2014. Since then there have been public threats (including one on video

⁴⁴ Ismail Khan and Salman Masood, "Several blasts in Pakistan after Taliban warning," *The New York Times*, 28 May 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/29/world/asia/29pstan.html?hp&_r=0.

⁴⁵ Sudha Ramchandran, "The Maldives: Losing a Tourist Paradise to Terrorism", *The Jamestown Foundation*, 22 January 2016, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45009&no_cache=1#.V5813PI97IU.

⁴⁶ "Maldives fears foreign terror cells as religious tensions rise", *Asia One News*, 22 October 2007, <http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/World/Story/A1Story20071022-31445.html>.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Jeffrey Salim Waheed, "How Extremism began in Maldives", *Freedom Watch Maldives*, (undated), <http://fwmv-blog.tumblr.com/post/21564074592/how-extremism-began-in-maldives> (accessed 28 June 2016).

⁴⁸ Philip Sherwell, "In tourist idyll of Maldives, radical Islam lures some towards very different paradise", *The Telegraph*, 13 September 2015.

⁴⁹ "National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 5 of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 16/21," Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review Twenty-second Session, 4-15 May 2015, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/079/28/PDF/G1507928.pdf?OpenElement>, p. 20. Also see Jason Burke, "Paradise jihadist: Maldives sees surge in young Muslims leaving for Syria", *The Guardian*, 26 February 2015.

released into the social media, where three masked men threatened to kill President Abdulla Yameen⁵⁰), protests in which Daesh flags have featured, and a steady flow of recruits to Syria, where at least seven have died in the fighting.⁵¹

State responses in the Maldives remain uncertain, despite brave posturing. In October 2015, the National Parliament adopted a harsh anti-terrorism law that carries a jail term of between 17 and 20 years for joining a foreign war, and 10 to 15 years for anyone who attempts to leave the Maldives with that intent. According to the Act, encouraging terrorism is defined as “a speech or statement perceived by the public as encouragement of terrorism.”⁵² The sweeping terms in which the idea of terrorism and affiliation are defined have provoked widespread fears that it is intended to be used more against the political opposition than against its declared targets.

While the government has recognized the raising of funds for both domestic and international terrorism in Maldives, authorities conceded a lack of sufficient information to act.⁵³ By and large the orientation of the government is to combine broadly repressive measures with a contestation of extremist Islam with its own fairly radical version of Islamism—an enterprise that is unlikely to inspire any great measure of optimism.

CONCLUSION

Regional and domestic dynamics continue to drive the trajectory of Islamist radicalization and terrorism across South Asia. Weak groups, marginalised fragments of established terrorist formations, and directionless individuals from radicalized pools of the population have been attracted to the Daesh identity, seeking a prominence that would otherwise have been elusive. Crucially, however, such affiliations have not significantly augmented the capacities and capabilities of these groups and individuals and have, in fact, directed disproportionate state responses against them. Indeed, speaking of Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom, the UN’s special envoy to that country, told the Security Council that the Islamic State’s “presence is of concern, but that [its] significance is not so much a function of its intrinsic capacities in the area but of its potential to offer an alternative flagpole to which otherwise isolated insurgent splinter

⁵⁰ “Maldives police raid TV station over ‘threatening video’”, 6 November 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34744831>.

⁵¹ Mohamed Saif Fathih, “Family of four leaves Maldives ‘on Jihad’”, *Maldives Independent*, 30 August 2015, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/family-of-four-leaves-maldives-on-jihad-116870>.

⁵² Ahmed Naish, “Draconian anti-terrorism bill passed into law”, *Maldives Independent*, 27 October 2015, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/draconian-anti-terrorism-bill-passed-into-law-118990>.

⁵³ “Country Reports: South and Central Asia Overview”, Bureau of Counter Terrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism, 2014*, Department of State, USA, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2014/239408.htm>, Chapter 2.

groups can rally.”⁵⁴ This appears to be a fair description of Daesh’s status and function across South Asia.

In the evolution of Islamist extremism and terrorism in South Asia, and indeed, across the world, the role of the state has been critical. It is only in regions and across periods where the state, through acts of commission or omission, has been a significant enabler that radicalization and terrorism have been able to consolidate. This remains the single most significant factor in projecting trajectories of terrorism in the region. Where states have acted with determination and a measure of sagacity, the risks have been contained, unless external state actors have played an intentionally mischievous role. The spaces within which Daesh has found opportunities for mobilisation in South Asia have been created by past or ongoing malfeasance by particular states. However, this is unlikely to aid Daesh’s consolidation in this region. As one observer notes in the Afghan context, “Nobody really wants Daesh in the neighbourhood.”⁵⁵

Further, as Daesh loses ground in its heartland areas, unless it is able to sustain global prominence by other dramatic means, its general attraction as “an alternative flagpole” is likely to diminish. While the processes of Islamist radicalization in South Asia are too deep to admit of any easy or quick solution, Daesh’s future in the region appears doubtful.

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⁵⁴ Samuel Oakford, “The Taliban tells the Islamic State to Get the Hell Out of Afghanistan”, <https://news.vice.com/article/the-taliban-tells-the-islamic-state-to-get-the-hell-out-of-afghanistan>, 16 June 2015.

⁵⁵ Brigadier General Charles Cleveland, spokesman for the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, in Jeff Selden, “US General: IS Losing Its Grip in Afghanistan”, *Voice of America*, 14 April 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/content/islamic-state-losing-grip-afghanistan-us-general-says/3286077.html>.

Challenges and Prospects for Daesh in Afghanistan and Its Relations with the Taliban

Hekmatullah Azamy

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, Afghanistan witnessed major political and security breakthroughs. The country held its third presidential elections since 2001 and for the first time since 1901 there was a peaceful transfer of power. More importantly, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) took over full security responsibility from NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which ended its combat mission on 31 December 2014. Mandated to train, advise and assist, NATO's Resolute Support Mission (RSM) continues to support ANSF beyond 2016. However, the election of the new government and the transfer of the security responsibility did not resolve the conflict in the country.

The drawdown of NATO troops left a security vacuum that the ANSF failed to fill. Operational for more than a decade in Afghanistan, local and transnational militant outfits, including Afghan Taliban, Haqqani Network, Hizb-e-Islami Gulbaddin (HiG), Al-Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM a.k.a. Turkistan Islamic Party TIP), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and their affiliates, continued to pose grave threats to security in Afghanistan and beyond.

Moreover, external developments such as the launch of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in Pakistan's tribal areas in June 2014 and Daesh (aka Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS]) announcing a caliphate also overshadowed the security dynamics in Afghanistan. Fleeing Operation Zarb-e-Azb, foreign fighters associated with Al-Qaeda, IMU, ETIM and TTP were increasingly seeking safe sanctuaries in Afghanistan. In late 2014, a massive influx of foreign fighters crossed the porous border into the Afghan side and entrenched their presence in Helmand, Zabul, Ghazni, Farah, and the eastern and northern provinces of Afghanistan—where Daesh would appear months later.

With the announcement of the caliphate, Daesh quickly found supporters among Afghans. In early September 2014, reports surfaced of Daesh fliers being distributed in Peshawar, Pakistan and nearby Afghan regions soliciting pledges of allegiance to the movement and its self-declared caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Welcoming the group,

* This paper was submitted on 25 July 2016.

former senior Afghan Taliban commander Abdul Rauf Khadim travelled to the Middle East in late 2014 and swore his fealty to al-Baghdadi. In January 2015, Daesh-Central formally recognized the Afghanistan-Pakistan region as part of their Khurasan province and appointed its leadership.

Daesh's emergence in Afghanistan complicated the militancy landscape and rapidly transformed alliances between different local and foreign militant outfits. Elements within the Afghan Taliban and groups like IMU saw Daesh's expansion as an opportunity to rebrand. Support for Daesh for the first time fragmented the Afghan Taliban, which had prided themselves for maintaining unity since its emergence in 1994. Similarly, IMU—long a close ally of the Taliban—shifted allegiance from Taliban founder leader Mullah Muhammad Omar to al-Baghdadi, while its offshoot, called Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), and TIP remained with the Taliban. Sharing an adversary in Daesh, Al-Qaeda, too, reaffirmed allegiance to the Taliban.

Divisions between pro- and anti-Daesh groups were widening as disenfranchised Taliban and those foreign militants with a history of reluctant cooperation with the Taliban were increasingly teaming up with Daesh to counterbalance the Taliban. The shared Salafist ideology, global jihadi agenda, vast financial resources, rapid territorial gains Daesh made in Iraq and Syria and being sidelined by the Taliban leadership, all made Daesh attractive for Taliban and IMU defectors. This fuelled competition between Daesh supporters and the mainstream Afghan Taliban as both appeal to similar recruits.

The Taliban were threatened by losing men, influence and income to the even more aggressive and ambitious Daesh. The Taliban, however, were initially hesitant to directly confront Daesh as it would have undermined the legitimacy of the former's longstanding jihad, making it appear power hungry and motivated by self-interest.

The Taliban's immediate approach was to avoid losing men to Daesh and to attract defectors to return. The group created a "recruitment commission" to reach out to those who had defected to Daesh and to prevent its vulnerable members from leaving to join Daesh. The Taliban were also secretly helping Afghan security agencies to pinpoint Daesh commanders in areas out of the government writ. This worked in Helmand as former Afghan Taliban commander Khadim was killed, resulting in the failure of Daesh to progress in the province. After Khadim's death, Daesh attempted to gain a foothold in Zabul, Ghazni, Logar, Farah and the northern provinces. The Taliban's covert anti-Daesh campaign was proving less effective because Daesh was becoming overstretched in several provinces and was vocal against the Taliban and its invisible leader Mullah Omar. This urged the Taliban to fight the group militarily.

Countering Daesh's influence became an important agenda of the Taliban when the latter launched their annual spring offensive, codenamed "Azam", in April 2015. The Taliban shifted focus from their traditional strongholds in the south and east to northern Afghanistan to prevent Daesh-affiliated IMU from gaining autonomy. Teaming

up with regional countries, including Iran and Russia—also threatened by Daesh in Afghanistan—the Taliban later announced that they were deploying the “special forces unit” the group had created to confront Daesh. The rival groups fought in several provinces, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides.

In the midst of confronting several state and non-state actors, Daesh is struggling to make progress in Afghanistan. After its failed attempt to establish several fronts and to gain a foothold in the southern and northern regions, Daesh has been concentrating on the eastern provinces, particularly Nangarhar and Kunar. Supported by countries like Iran and Russia, the Taliban’s anti-Daesh campaign, coupled with airstrikes as well as ground operations by Afghan forces and private militias and frequent US drone strikes, continues to challenge Daesh’s potency. Nonetheless, the group’s managing to remain operational, though at a smaller scale, is indicative about its future and prospects of imprinting itself in Afghanistan.

Daesh seems determined to build footholds in Afghanistan. Declaring Khurasan as its Wilaya (province) was the first expansion of Daesh-Central outside of the Middle East. For Daesh, the legitimacy of an Islamic State across the Muslim world will be perceived to be defective without its expansion into Afghanistan because of the historical relevance and geostrategic importance of Afghanistan to Khurasan. Being a conflict zone with a history of providing safe sanctuaries to transnational jihadists, Afghanistan also particularly attracts Daesh’s attention. The group aims to turn the country into its “regional headquarters” and to use Afghanistan as a springboard for its operations in the broader south and central Asia regions in the long run. Having a footprint in Afghanistan would allow Daesh fanatics from these regions to go, in relative safety, to Afghanistan instead of the Middle East to get military training. Moreover, Daesh-Central also sees the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region as an alternative safe heaven for its leadership should it be cornered in the Middle East.

Daesh’s future in Afghanistan is directly linked to that of Daesh-Central in the Middle East. Should the former become the recipient of regular and large financial and personnel assistance from its mother organization the group would make unprecedented progress in so-called Khurasan. However, there are many local opportunities that Daesh in Afghanistan is keen to exploit which would allow the group to grow in strength in the face of resistance from its foes.

To boost its influence and legitimacy in the Afghan theatre, Daesh is looking to find sustainable financial sources and is trying to justify its presence by Islamic theology using the Khurasan card. Khurasan has significance in Islam and it is predicted that at the end of time black banners will rise from Khurasan and will free the Muslim land. Contemporary Afghanistan is the heart of Khurasan, which included parts of Pakistan, Central Asia, Iran and China.

Daesh is also attempting to trigger sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia in Afghanistan. Sectarian violence will be the breeding ground for Daesh recruitment and

if there is any response from the Shias, Daesh will use it for their propaganda to recruit more hardcore Salafists—who are growing in number.

Lastly, Daesh seems to be following developments within the post-Mullah Omar Taliban closely. Not only can the Taliban leadership crisis supply more defectors to Daesh, in addition, pro-Daesh Taliban leaders gaining prominence within the Taliban can help to create a conducive environment for Daesh to grow.

EMERGENCE AND STATE OF DAESH IN AFGHANISTAN

Only two days after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared himself as caliph, on 1 July 2014, Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, a former Guantanamo detainee, became the first Afghan to pledge allegiance to him. Later, in early September 2014, reports emerged of Daesh fliers distributed in Peshawar, Pakistan and nearby Afghan regions soliciting pledges of allegiance to the movement and its self-declared caliph, al-Baghdadi.¹

Following the massive flow of foreign jihadists travelling to Syria and Iraq, a high-profile Afghan Taliban leader, Abdul Rauf Khadim, was among the very few Afghans who went there in late 2014. He, however, did not go there to stay and fight but to pledge allegiance to Daesh and bring its branch to Afghanistan.

Although Khadim's pledge of allegiance was not made public, in October 2014, six former Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and a few Afghan Taliban members publicly announced allegiance to Daesh.² Accepting their allegiance, on 27 January 2015, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, the former spokesman for Daesh-Central, declared the Afghanistan-Pakistan region part of its Khurasan chapter, appointing Hafiz Sayeed Khan (former TTP) as the Khurasan head, and selecting Khadim as Sayeed's deputy.³

Khadim had been covertly recruiting former Taliban in his native Kajaki district of Helmand province since late 2014 but he drew Taliban attention when he was announced as deputy for IS Khurasan (IS-K). There were reports of the Taliban detaining Khadim following his appointment. In an exclusive interview with the author on 31 January 2015, Khadim refuted the speculations. He, however, acknowledged receiving a Taliban delegation led by Ibrahim Sadar, Taliban military chief, in his hometown. Khadim said that after several discussions the Taliban asked him to leave Helmand within a week but promised that the group would allow Daesh to operate outside of Taliban territory. Khadim agreed and wanted to relocate in the Afghanistan-Pakistan

¹ "ISIS trying to expand its influence in Pakistan, distributes pamphlets", *The Times of India*, 3 September 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/ISIS-trying-to-expand-its-influence-in-Pakistan-distributes-pamphlets/articleshow/41618755.cms>.

² "Six Pakistan Taliban Leaders Swear Allegiance to ISIS: Spokesman", *NBC News*, 14 October 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/six-pakistan-taliban-leaders-swear-allegiance-isis-spokesman-n225386>.

³ "Pakistani Taliban emir for Bajaur joins Islamic State", *The Long War Journal*, 2 February 2015, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/02/pakistani_taliban_em.php.

border region and settle with his fellow Daesh members. Close to the ultimatum, on 9 February 2015, Khadim was killed during a NATO airstrike targeting his vehicle in Kajaki district. Accompanied by four Taliban of Pakistani nationality and his brother-in-law, Khadim was on his way out of Helmand.

Khadim's death was a huge blow to Daesh and the beginning of Taliban-Daesh animosity. Afghan intelligence officials and a close aide of Khadim's later explained to the author that the Taliban had played a key role in Khadim's elimination by cooperating with the Afghan intelligence service to pinpoint him. This trend continued in eastern Nangarhar province as well, where Daesh lost hundreds of fighters and key commanders due to drone and ground operations.

Since its emergence, world leaders have different views on Daesh's expansion to Afghanistan. President Ashraf Ghani, during a visit to the United States in March 2015, warned that Daesh posed a "terrible threat" to Afghanistan, and the region.⁴ The former UN representative in Afghanistan Nicholas Haysom has testified to the UN Security Council that Daesh has a foothold in the country.⁵ But naysayers also exist. Both former president Hamid Karzai and his intelligence chief Amrullah Saleh described concerns about Daesh as "media hype"⁶ and "psychological warfare,"⁷ suggesting that Afghan circumstances are not conducive to an impactful Daesh presence in Afghanistan.

This creates three prevalent speculations about Daesh's presence in Afghanistan and they are perhaps as important as the Daesh reality. One speculation suggests that the US tolerates Daesh and generally promotes Islamic radicalism in the region to undermine China, Iran and Russia. A second points to Afghanistan supporting Daesh so as to fuel feuds and infighting within the Taliban. Some also accuse President Ghani of exaggerating the Daesh threat to convince the international community to stay in Afghanistan and continue their support to the country. The Taliban make similar claims, saying, "[T]he existence of the ISIS [Daesh] rumour in Afghanistan is an advertisement issue and is used [by the US] to invade Afghanistan."⁸ According to a third speculation, the Pakistani government supports Daesh as its new strategy in Afghanistan, having lost interest and influence over the Afghan Taliban, and wants to replace the latter with Daesh.

⁴ "Afghan president: 'Terrorists neither recognize boundaries nor require passports'", *CNN*, 25 March 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/25/politics/afghanistan-ghani-congress-speech/>.

⁵ "Isis has established a foothold in Afghanistan, says UN envoy", *The Independent*, 17 March 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/isis-has-established-a-foothold-in-afghanistan-says-un-envoy-10112437.html>.

⁶ "Karzai: Islamic State is not in Afghanistan", *CNBC*, 28 March 2015, <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/03/28/karzai-islamic-state-is-not-in-afghanistan.html>.

⁷ "Former Afghan Spy Chief Says Islamic State Is 'Psychological Warfare'", *Gandhara Website of RFE/RL*, 14 April 2015, <http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-spy-chief-islamic-state/26955589.html>.

⁸ "Here's What The Taliban Wants America To Think About ISIS In Afghanistan", *The World Post*, 10 February 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/taliban-isis-afghanistan_us_56ba0bc4e4b08069c7a8d1aa.

The last speculation is more prevalent particularly due to former TTP members—mostly from the Urukzai chapter of FATA—dominating Daesh’s leadership and rank and file. This would be less of an issue with senior Afghans leading the group. The one-legged Khadim stood a good chance to become emir of Khurasan but was probably not appointed due to his poor health and disability.

Rejecting all the speculations and declaring its militancy to be entirely independent of Pakistan, Daesh calls the Taliban puppets of Pakistan’s military intelligence—Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—and apostates of Iran and vows to fight against the Afghan and Pakistani governments.⁹ In January 2016, Daesh carried out a coordinated suicide bombing against the Pakistani consulate in Jalalabad city. In the 13th issue of *Dabiq* magazine, Daesh took credit for attacking the consulate. This attack was the first of its type against any Pakistani diplomatic mission in Afghanistan in the last 14 years. Pro-Daesh militants argue that such attacks indicate that the group does not recognize any boundaries for its activities and fights both the Afghan and Pakistani governments—a clear distinction with the Afghan Taliban who only fight the former.

ACTIVITIES AND TARGETS OF DAESH IN AFGHANISTAN

In addition to the attack on New Kabul Bank¹⁰ and the Pakistani consulate, Daesh in Afghanistan wanted to grab attention by attacking new targets. Shias became the favourite target of Daesh in Afghanistan. In April 2015, IMU fighters affiliated with Daesh were allegedly behind the kidnapping of 31 Shia travellers.¹¹ By kidnapping and attacking Shias, Daesh aims to trigger sectarian divisions in the country. Daesh attacks Shias predominately because of Daesh’s Salafist ideology that believes Shias are apostates and should be killed¹², and secondly due to Afghan Shias fighting in Syria against Daesh. The group also opposed several traditional practices of the Deobandi school of thought—largely followed by the Afghan Taliban—including Muslims visiting shrines and other religious places. In several discussions, respondents from eastern Nangarhar province have told the author that Daesh threatened and in some cases closed shrines that were respected and visited by villagers. A similar incident was reported from

⁹ “ISIS in Afghanistan nothing but a movement formed by Pakistani militants”, *Khaama Press*, August 29 2015, <http://www.khaama.com/isis-in-afghanistan-nothing-but-a-movement-formed-by-pakistani-militants-1453>.

¹⁰ “Afghan President Blames ISIS for a Bombing”, *New York Times*, 18 April 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/world/asia/afghanistan-jalalabad-suicide-bombing-bank.html?_r=2.

¹¹ “Afghan Shiite leader: ISIS behind Shiite kidnapping”, *Al Arabia News*, 04 April 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/04/04/Afghan-Shiite-leader-ISIS-behind-Shiite-kidnapping.html>.

¹² “Questions Rebels Use to Tell Sunni From Shiite”, *New York Times*, 24 June 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/25/world/middleeast/questioning-helps-rebels-tell-sunnis-from-shiites.html?_r=0.

Logar province in February 2015.¹³ Khadim had levelled his brother's grave, saying he made it "Islamized". He had also beaten local Mullahs who were writing amulets, calling it "Kharafat", meaning nonsense acts added by the Mullahs.

In order to spread terror, Daesh operations at its "exploratory" stage also involved executing its hostages—often members of the Taliban.¹⁴ The group released professionally filmed execution videos that included beheadings and shootings to death in a similar manner as those of Daesh in Iraq and Syria. The captives wore orange-colour clothes and were killed by Daesh members—sometimes wearing masks.¹⁵ Daesh employed new tactics of executions that never happened throughout the decades-long violence in Afghanistan. In August 2015, Daesh blew up Afghan prisoners with explosives. In a separate, shocking video Daesh recently released, a child soldier was shown executing Taliban "spies". Daesh described them as "apostates" aligned with the Taliban or the Afghan government. Daesh executions were barbaric even by Taliban standards, and they condemned the act, calling it an "un-Islamic act [that] can never be justified". "No law can ever allow prisoners to be mistreated in such a manner", the Taliban said.¹⁶

Due to losing hundreds of fighters during clashes with the Afghan Taliban and anti-Daesh Afghan and NATO forces operations, there was a relative lull in Daesh activities between late 2015 and early 2016. The lull created the perception that Daesh had been almost crushed in the country. The lull, however, was recently broken after the group's attack on 10 June 2016 killed three Afghan worshippers, including a prayer leader, and wounded more than 78 others during the Friday prayer. A day later, Daesh staged an attack on the Afghan National Police (ANP), killing five policemen, including the district Police Chief, and injuring 11 others. On 2 July, a suicide bomber attacked key anti-Daesh public uprising militia commander, killing two civilians and injuring seventeen others.¹⁷ Security officials believe that Daesh was behind the attack. All these attacks happened in Nangarhar province, which remained a stronghold of Daesh. The latest attack that Daesh claimed responsibility for was on 23 July 2016 in Kabul. The group targeted a protest by Shias demanding a rerouting of the electricity transmission

¹³ "Pro-ISIS militants attack a shrine and homes in Logar province", *Khaama Press*, 23 February 2015, <http://www.khaama.com/pro-isis-militants-attack-a-shrine-and-homes-in-logar-province-8325>.

¹⁴ "Barbaric turf war escalates in Afghanistan as ISIS execute three 'defectors' days after the Taliban warned terror group to stay out of the country", *The Daily Mail*, 19 June 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3131248/Barbaric-turf-war-escalates-Afghanistan-ISIS-execute-three-defectors-days-Taliban-warned-terror-group-stay-country.html>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Taliban Condemns 'Barbarity' Of Islamic State Executions", *Gandhara Website of RFE/RL*, 12 August 2015, <http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/afghnaistan-islamic-state-taliban/27185206.html>.

¹⁷ "2 dead, 17 wounded in Nangarhar suicide bombing" *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 2 July 2016 <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/07/02/2-dead-17-wounded-nangarhar-suicide-bombing>.

via Shia-dominated Bamyan province. The attack killed at least 80 Shia-Hazaras and injured over 200 others.¹⁸

Moreover, there were three attacks—a suicide bombing against army recruits in Nangarhar, killing 12 and injuring 26 others¹⁹; an IED attack killing an MP in Kabul; and another suicide bombing, killing 12 Nepalese and 2 Indian security guards working for a private security firm in Kabul—that both the Taliban and IS claimed to be behind. The Taliban immediately took credit for these attacks that happened on 11 April, 5 June and 20 June 2016 respectively. But in July 2016, Daesh released a video titled “Khurasan: Graveyard of Apostates 2” dispelling the Taliban claims. Daesh included footage of the attack on army recruits and promised to provide a full video of its attack in Kabul.

This may not be the last time that both groups assert responsibility for the same attack because unlike the Taliban who run a website with five languages and have easily accessible spokesmen, Daesh—at least so far—lacks proper communication means, making it difficult for it to claim credit for attacks it carries out. The group largely relies upon videos that are released infrequently.

STRENGTH AND FUNDING OF DAESH

The ideological affiliation of Daesh in Afghanistan to Daesh-Central is certain but it does not appear that the former is the recipient of expertise, manpower support and regular financial assistance from the latter. Intelligence officials informed the author that there are around 20 members from Daesh-Central supporting its branch in Afghanistan. Most of the Daesh fighters are Pakistani nationals formally with TTP and Central Asians with IMU. The number of Afghans in Daesh ranks is currently low but Khadim was able to bring around 400 to 600 Afghan Taliban when he was appointed as deputy commander. Most of those defectors rejoined their ranks while a few from his native Kajaki district have been seen fighting alongside Daesh in Nangarhar.

In December 2015, former NATO Resolute Support Mission commander in Afghanistan General John F. Campbell said Daesh had 1,000 to 3,000 fighters in Afghanistan.²⁰ In discussions with the author, Afghan intelligence officials in early June 2016 said that Daesh’s current manpower was around 4,500 to 5,000, concentrated in the eastern provinces, particularly Nangarhar and Kunar. These officials informed the author that since July 2015, Daesh’s average monthly fatality rate has been 180,

¹⁸ “ISIS Claims Deadly Bombing at Demonstration in Kabul, Afghanistan”, *New York Times*, 23 July 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/24/world/asia/kabul-afghanistan-explosions-hazaras-protest.html?_r=0.

¹⁹ “Bus bombings kill at least 14 in Afghanistan: officials”, *Reuters*, 11 April 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-blast-idUSKCN0X80PX>.

²⁰ “ISIS Building ‘Little Nests’ in Afghanistan, U.S. Defense Secretary Warns”, *New York Times*, 18 December 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/19/world/asia/afghanistan-ash-carter.html>.

with the highest casualties the group suffered being in January, February, and June 2016. Officials warned that despite heavy casualties, the number of Daesh fighters is increasing. Hanif Atmar in September 2016 said at least 12 senior ISIS leaders were killed including Hafiz Sayeed Khan.²¹

During an interview with the author in June 2016, Mullah Amin, a senior Taliban commander, explained to the author that Daesh was putting emphasis on recruiting more Afghans and appointing them at the leadership level. Amin said the group had appointed Sayeed Emarati, a former Afghan Taliban commander, as its de-facto deputy commander to recruit more Afghans and address speculations that Daesh is a Pakistani proxy. Emarati was reportedly killed in July 2016.²² After the killing of Khan and Emarati, Daesh appointed Haseeb Logari as its acting governor. Logari is from Logar province of Afghanistan.²³

The crippled Afghan economy and Daesh being seen as a wealthy terrorist organization also served to the group's advantage in its efforts to make inroads into Afghanistan. Daesh emerged when international aid to Afghanistan was drying up—affecting not only the Afghan government but also the Taliban. Moreover, opium cultivation—one of the main sources of revenue financing the Taliban and other militants—for the first time in six years dropped by 19 percent in 2015 in comparison to 2014.²⁴ The diminishing Taliban resources made Daesh appealing to financially driven fighters. Daesh backed its military ambitions with the extensive financial sources the group received from outside Afghanistan. Khadim was reportedly paying \$500-700 per month to Taliban fighters defecting to Daesh.²⁵ The group also had gold in Nangarhar and local villagers welcomed Daesh because they were not forcing people to feed or house them like the Taliban do.²⁶

An Afghan intelligence official tracking militant finances confirmed the flow of gold and funding from Daesh-Central to Daesh in Afghanistan but he said they were

²¹ “Afghan Security Chief Seeks To Unify Region Against Taliban”, *Gandhara Website of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 4 September 2016, <http://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-nsa-hanif-atmar/27966541.html>.

²² “Isis leader in Afghanistan and Pakistan Hafiz Saeed Khan killed in US drone strike”, *International Business Times*, 12 August 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-leader-afghanistan-pakistan-hafiz-saeed-khan-killed-us-drone-strike-1575809>.

²³ “U.S. Says It Killed Head of Islamic State in Afghanistan, Pakistan”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 August 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-says-it-killed-head-of-islamic-state-in-afghanistan-pakistan-1471040198>.

²⁴ “Afghan opium cultivation drops for first time in six years”, *The Express Tribune*, 15 December 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1010326/afghan-opium-cultivation-drops-for-first-time-in-six-years/>.

²⁵ “ISIS sets up its first base in Afghanistan, run by former Guantanamo prisoner now operating out of Helmand less than three months after British troops left the region”, *The Daily Mail*, 14 January 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2910420/ISIS-sets-base-Afghanistan-run-former-Guantanamo-prisoner-operating-Helmand-three-months-British-troops-left-region.html>.

²⁶ “Exclusive: In turf war with Afghan Taliban, Islamic State loyalists gain ground”, *Reuters*, 29 June 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/29/us-afghanistan-islamic-state-idUSKCN0P91EN20150629>.

not regular. “The level of such flow depends on Daesh-Central’s financial strength back in Iraq and Syria”, he explained. This official informed the author that Daesh in Afghanistan was facing financial hardship. The group is trying to establish a mechanism to receive regular support from Daesh-Central. “The other catch for transferring cash and funds physically is the route via Iran given the country has stricter measures,” the official said, adding that Daesh has recently attempted to send fund raisers to countries, particularly in the Persian Gulf, to collect donations and to find local sources inside Afghanistan to sustain itself economically.

Afghanistan offers five major revenue sources to militants active in this region, including the drug trade, extortion, protection money charged to international and government contracts, the Islamic taxes (Ushr and Zakat) applied to local businesses and smuggling of minerals.²⁷ Daesh may particularly focus on illegally extracting untapped mineral resources and kidnapping for ransom to finance its activities in Afghanistan.

RECRUITMENT AND MOTIVATION TO JOIN DAESH

Daesh rapidly capturing swathes in Iraq and Syria, possessing plenty of financial resources and being a ruthless group appeal to Daesh recruits in Afghanistan. Daesh’s recruitments are from two sources—defectors from other militant outfits and Afghans, including teenagers, who do not have any previous affiliation with armed groups. They joined Daesh for ideological and non-ideological interests.

Afghan Taliban members like Khadim switched to Daesh primarily due to its Salafist ideology and being sidelined by the Taliban leadership. Khadim espoused the Salafist ideology during his detention in Guantanamo Bay from 2002 to 2007. He also felt marginalized by former Taliban de facto leader Akhtar Muhammad Mansur and the two developed strained ties fuelled by tribal politics within the group. Khadim believed in fighting beyond Afghanistan’s border and was in favour of the Afghan Taliban supporting transnational militants and TTP in their campaigns.

For others, joining Daesh was profitable. Confirming this reading, the former Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmad Matawakil cited the example of three Taliban commanders—Sayeed Emarati in Logar province, Mawalwi Najib from Wardak province, and Mawlawi Qahar from Kunar province—who defected to Daesh for financial interests. These defections occurred after the Taliban leadership reprimanded these commanders for their involvement in excessive extortion, kidnapping, and criminal activities.

For IMU it was a combination of all the motivations that brought Khadim and the three other commanders into Daesh’s ranks. The group followed the Salafist ideology,

²⁷ “The Taliban’s Transformation from Ideology to Franchise”, *Foreign Policy*, 17 October 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/17/the-talibans-transformation-from-ideology-to-franchise/>.

felt neglected by the Taliban, believed in transnational jihad and eyed receiving financial assistance from Daesh.

Technologically savvy Daesh unsurprisingly sets new trends with its recruitment and was focusing on training teenage Afghans. In a video titled “Cubs of the Caliphate Camp” released in January 2016, Daesh showcased a training camp for young boys, most likely situated in eastern Nangarhar province. This indicates how Daesh thinks more strategically than its rival group and that the group sees that brainwashing and training these children will ensure its relevance in the Afghan theatre in the long run and take violence and brutality to a far more dangerous level in Afghanistan.

Daesh has also influenced the educated class, including university students and lecturers in Afghanistan. In November 2015, university students in Nangarhar raised Daesh and Taliban flags to protest against the government. “We are tired of democracy, we want Islamic caliphate, we want a fair caliphate and an Islamic system,” a protestor said, chanting anti-government slogans.²⁸ A Kabul University lecturer was arrested in April 2016 for being affiliated with Daesh.²⁹

Daesh uses different propaganda tools for its recruitment. The most effective among them is the group’s radio—*Voice of Caliphate*—that has been broadcasting on and off in Jalalabad city, the capital of Nangarhar and its districts since December 2015. Irfanullah (name changed), a security guard working for a local firm, said he was seduced by Daesh radio propaganda and quit his job to join the group.

DAESH’S TIES WITH OTHER GROUPS

The Taliban

Daesh-Central received allegiances from a number of like-minded Islamist groups from Africa, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. But, it was rejected by the Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan. It is argued that Daesh and the Taliban are rivals because of two main differences. First, like Daesh-Central, Daesh in Afghanistan follows Salafi Tukfirism, an extreme form of the Sunni Wahhabism, which is the state religion in Saudi Arabia and neighbouring Gulf states, while the Taliban follow Deobandism, a puritanical branch of Sunni Islam in South Asia. Second, Daesh wants to establish a global Islamic Caliphate beyond Syria and Iraq, while the Taliban’s ambitions are limited to Afghanistan and focused on recreating the Emirate it ran before the US-led military operation forced its demise in late 2001.

²⁸ “Nangarhar University Students Raise Taliban, Daesh Flags”, *Tolo News*, 9 November 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/22263-nangarhar-university-students-raise-taliban-daesh-flags>.

²⁹ “Kabul University lecturer loyal to ISIS arrested”, *The Nation*, 24 April 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/international/24-Apr-2016/kabul-university-lecturer-loyal-to-isis-arrested>.

The Taliban have similar differences with other transnational groups like Al-Qaeda and IMU in Afghanistan but they enjoyed close working relationships with these groups and the Taliban have offered them safe sanctuaries since the 1990s. Daesh-Taliban animosity exists mainly because the former poses a direct threat to the latter's supremacy, as Daesh is the only international militant group that expects the Taliban to join its global jihad instead of submitting to the Taliban prominence and pledging allegiance to its leader. Meanwhile, the Taliban leadership understands that the presence of Daesh would also threaten Taliban peace talks—if any—with Kabul and fear losing more radical and criminal supporters to Daesh.

The Taliban initially avoided direct confrontation with Daesh. The former was secretly cooperating with security officials to eliminate Daesh members. The Taliban's second approach to Daesh was to prevent its fighters from joining the group. In April 2015, the Afghan Taliban reportedly created a recruitment commission to convince those Taliban who had defected to Daesh to return but apparently this was not successful.³⁰

In early June 2015, Daesh released a video and accused the Taliban of attacking its fighters at the behest of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. In the same video, the group threatened the Taliban that they should either pledge allegiance to Daesh or be ready for a fight.³¹ In mid-June 2015, the Taliban sent an open letter to al-Baghdadi, warning Daesh to stay out of Afghanistan and stating that the fight in the country should be “under one flag and one leadership”.³²

Unable to effectively counter Daesh covertly, Taliban escalated its attacks against the group and mobilized a special forces unit of 1,000 “better equipped and trained” Taliban fighters to crush Daesh.³³ Daesh fought back and clashed with the Taliban in several provinces in Afghanistan. Daesh was also reportedly behind the killing of the Taliban shadow governor for Nangarhar province, Mawlawi Mir Ahmad Gul Hashmi, in Peshawar, Pakistan.³⁴

In addition to military competition, Daesh-Taliban rivalry also involved the two groups defaming and weakening each other economically. The Taliban questioned

³⁰ “Afghan Taliban Scrambling With The Rise of Islamic State”, *Gandhara website of RFE/RL*, 30 April 2015, <http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-taliban-scrambling-with-the-islamic-state/26987259.html>.

³¹ “Islamic State's ‘Khorasan province’ threatens Taliban in latest video”, *The Long War Journal*, 4 June 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/06/islamic-states-khorasan-province-threatens-taliban-in-latest-video.php>.

³² “Taliban in Afghanistan tells Islamic State to stay out of country”, *The Washington Post*, 16 June 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/taliban-warns-islamic-state-to-stay-out-of-afghanistan/2015/06/16/a88bafb8-1436-11e5-8457-4b431bf7ed4c_story.html.

³³ “Why Taliban special forces are fighting Islamic State”, *BBC*, 18 December 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35123748>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Daesh's legitimacy and ideology and attacked the latter's supplies.³⁵ Daesh, in return, called the Taliban puppets of Pakistan's military intelligence, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, and apostates of Iran³⁶ and burned opium fields in Nangarhar province as those finance the Taliban's activities.

It is undisputable that the Taliban's strength is incomparable with that of Daesh. The Taliban's resistance was one of the main reasons preventing Daesh from capturing swathes in Afghanistan and will continue to keep Daesh's expansion in check. Former Taliban leader Akhtar Muhammad Mansur was particularly famous for his zero-tolerance against Daesh and its affiliates. Mansur authorized the killing of Daesh-affiliated IMU leader Usman Ghazi and his Taliban host, Dadullah Mansur. Opposing Akhtar Mansur's leadership as Mullah Omar's successor, Dadullah was with Daesh but kept his relations secret because it was easy for the Taliban leadership to justify the killing of Daesh members.

Mansur's hard stance was due to his fear that divisions in the post-Mullah Omar Taliban might lead to more of their fighters defecting to Daesh. His stance held back several senior Taliban members who thought favourably of Daesh from joining the group. Khadim, before he was killed in February 2015, tipped Abdul Qayum Zakir, Taliban's former military chief sacked by Akhtar Mansur in April 2014, as his potential successor. Both Khadim and Zakir were held in Guantanamo Bay where they embraced Salafism. Both leaders objected to Akhtar Mansur, whom they thought was undeserving of a senior Taliban leadership position and who favoured his relatives and tribesmen for high-level appointments. Moreover, Zakir declined Iranian assistance in favour of support for Daesh.

After Mansur's death on 21 May 2016, the new Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada has struggled to establish himself as the undisputed leader. In June 2016, a Taliban source interviewed for this paper said that Akhundzada was reconsidering key policies of the group in order to "effectively fight" on the ground. He explained that the loss of two leaders in the span of a year and infightings between Taliban factions had weakened the group and Akhundzada's priority was the revival of his group. He said Akhundzada was planning to divert his focus and resources from internal fighting or countering Daesh to fighting the Afghan government. Such a scenario can take Afghanistan into the fiefdoms of violence of Daesh and the Taliban. Pursuing different ideologies, the two groups will each have its own territory in a different geographical area and will fight from two separate fronts against a common enemy, the Afghan government.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "ISIS in Afghanistan nothing but a movement formed by Pakistani militants", *Khaama Press*, August 29 2015, <http://www.khaama.com/isis-in-afghanistan-nothing-but-a-movement-formed-by-pakistani-militants-1453>.

Other Militant Outfits

Like the Taliban, transnational foreign militant groups like Al-Qaeda, IMU, IJU and ETIM (TIP) were also divided over Daesh, resulting in realignment of alliances between these groups. For example, IMU disjoined the Taliban-Al-Qaeda league and pledged allegiance to Daesh in August 2015. IJU and TIP apparently parted ways with IMU and sided with the Taliban. Competing with Daesh, Al-Qaeda, too, announced its branch in the “Indian subcontinent” and renewed allegiance to the Taliban.

IMU served as an umbrella organization for Central Asian and China’s Xinjiang-centric militants, including those of IJU and TIP in Afghanistan. IMU has a history of closely working with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. It contributed men and expertise to the Taliban in their fight against the Afghan government and international forces in return for receiving safe sanctuaries under Taliban territory. The two were also benefiting from the drug trade that IMU facilitated in Central Asia. The Taliban were not keen to support IMU’s militant activities outside Afghanistan. While with Al-Qaeda, IMU had rather ideological and more convergent interests and the latter created IJU to support Al-Qaeda’s global jihad. IMU was also a recipient of Al-Qaeda’s financial support. When the US invaded Iraq, Al-Qaeda, however, abandoned the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and focused on its activities in Iraq. In a discussion with the author in May 2016, Waheed Muzhda, a senior Afghan analyst and former Taliban member who also closely worked with Al-Qaeda, said this affected IMU.

Because of its affinity with Daesh, IMU saw the group as a new but possibly long-term supporter for its operations in Afghanistan and Central Asia. IMU initially expressed support to Daesh in September 2014 but after Mullah Omar’s death was confirmed, IMU officially pledged allegiance to Daesh in August 2015. Its leader, Usman Ghazi, announced in a video, “From now on we are not just a movement, we are a state.” IMU fighters, he said, should henceforth be described as Daesh fighters from the Khorasan region. Ghazi also said that the Taliban “cannot be trusted,” and accused the group of collaboration with Pakistan’s spy agency, ISI.³⁷

While Daesh was important for IMU, the group could not afford losing the Taliban either given the safe sanctuaries it received in Taliban-controlled areas. To court both the Taliban and Daesh, IMU’s offshoot stayed with the Taliban. Understanding this strategy, both groups distrusted IMU and the latter received almost no privileges or a role in the Daesh leadership in Afghanistan. However, IMU paid a heavy price for switching to Daesh, and this resulted in the killing of its leader, Usman Ghazi, in late 2015.

Denouncing Daesh, TIP said IMU’s decision of siding with Daesh and abandoning its traditional allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan was “choosing the path of war” against

³⁷ “IMU Declares It Is Now Part Of The Islamic State”, *RFE/RL*, 6 August 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/imu-islamic-state/27174567.html>.

the Taliban and that it lost many members. TIP's leader, Abdul Haq al Turkistani, who was believed to have been killed in a 2010 US drone strike in Pakistan, in his audio messages released recently, said this led to the collapse of IMU. "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, for which the oppressed ummah had great hopes, disappeared," Abdul Haq claimed. Abdul Haq has been known for having a long history of working closely with Al-Qaeda and receiving support from Osama Bin Laden. Even in his recent public message, Abdul Haq praised Zawahiri.³⁸

Like Abdul Haq, some Taliban welcome Al-Qaeda while others do not. Al-Qaeda's likely intention is that the group wants to revive itself in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and aims to strengthen relations with the Taliban against Daesh. After the Taliban confirmed Mullah Omar's death and appointed Akhtar Muhammad as his successor, al-Zawahiri pledged allegiance to Mansur and this was accepted by Mansur.³⁹ Al-Qaeda once again renewed allegiance to Akhundzada after Mansur's death but he has yet to accept it.

Taliban insiders explain that Mansur accepted the allegiance because he believed it would help him to consolidate his leadership over the group and also because his deputy Sirajuddin Haqqani had inclinations towards Al-Qaeda. Sirajuddin, running the notorious Haqqani Network, was appointed as second deputy to Mansur so that it would help the latter to have wider influence in the eastern region and Kabul city. The Haqqanis have historical and friendly ties with Al-Qaeda and had the ability to manipulate Mansur. The group has called itself part of the Taliban but challenges Taliban leadership and remains operationally independent of Taliban because of its status and resources. After Mansur's death, Haqqani became first deputy to Akhundzada but some Taliban sources inform that the two are not getting along well with each other. This indicates that the Haqqanis are gaining prominence within the Taliban, which would invite more Al-Qaeda to this region. This can fuel tension within the Taliban leadership and Daesh is keen to exploit this.

RESPONSE TO DAESH'S EXPANSION IN AFGHANISTAN

Daesh in Afghanistan has raised the concerns of not only the Afghan government but also those of its immediate and regional neighbours and the US. Iran, Russia (also the Central Asian Republics), India, China, the US and even Pakistan were the most concerned. These countries, however, had different responses to the Daesh threat. Iran and Russia teamed up with the Taliban to counter the Daesh presence. With Daesh's

³⁸ "Turkistan Islamic Party leader criticizes the Islamic State's 'illegitimate' caliphate", *The Long War Journal*, 11 June 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/06/turkistan-islamic-party-leader-remains-loyal-to-al-qaeda-criticizes-islamic-states-illegitimate-caliphate.php>.

³⁹ "New Taliban emir accepts al Qaeda's oath of allegiance", *The Long War Journal*, 14 August 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/new-taliban-emir-accepts-al-qaedas-oath-of-allegiance.php>.

growing influence in Afghanistan, Iran no longer considered US presence in its neighbourhood as the major threat to its security. Iran increasingly hosted Taliban leaders and discussed ways to collaborate. A Taliban source told the author in July 2015 that Tehran worked with the Taliban against Daesh as it understood the Afghan government could not fight Daesh effectively.

Russian special envoy Zamir Kabolav openly said his government was cooperating with the Taliban to eliminate Daesh. Russia said the cooperation was at the level of “exchanging intelligence”.⁴⁰ This makes less sense because the Taliban does not need any intelligence support from Russia as the group has far better access on the ground than Russia. Moreover, the information Russia might be receiving from the Taliban cannot practically be used against Daesh.

Kabul reacted strongly to Tehran’s and Moscow’s relations with the Taliban. President Ghani raised the issue with his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in July 2015 in Russia. In a reference to the Taliban’s visits to Iran, President Ghani asked if Afghanistan were to take similar steps and invited the Mujahidin-i-Khalq—an armed leftist organization in Iran—to Afghanistan, what would be the reaction of the government of Iran. President Rouhani did not directly respond to Ghani’s complaint, but said it was an intelligence mistake that would not be repeated in future.⁴¹ Similarly, Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai protested to Russian Ambassador in Kabul Alexander Mantytskiy and sought an explanation concerning Taliban-Russia relations.

Pakistan is also relying on the Taliban to fight Daesh in Afghanistan. Pro-Daesh militants argue that if Pakistan wanted Daesh to grow in Afghanistan, the Taliban would not “dare” to attack the group. These militants, in several discussions, however, explained that Pakistan—currently an enemy of Daesh—would attempt to hijack the group through making an alliance based on convenience and divert its activities from Pakistan into Afghanistan and India. This is the model of Pakistani relations with Al-Qaeda, which also wages jihad against Pakistan but the country tolerates Al-Qaeda so it can fight against Afghanistan and India.

India, already concerned with the security situation in Afghanistan, was alarmed after reports of an Indian joining Daesh in Afghanistan emerged in early 2016. Ayaz Sultan (age 23) disappeared on 30 October 2015 and boarded a flight to Kabul.⁴² Indian officials informed the author that Sultan was killed later while fighting for Daesh in

⁴⁰ “Russia, Taliban share intelligence in fight against ISIS”, *CNN*, 25 December 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/24/europe/putin-taliban-isis/index.html>.

⁴¹ “Kabul protests Tehran’s backing of Taliban”, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 15 July 2015, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/07/15/kabul-protests-tehran’s-backing-taliban>.

⁴² “Missing Indian man joins Islamic State in Afghanistan”, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 17 January 2016, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/01/17/missing-indian-man-joins-islamic-state-afghanistan>.

Afghanistan. India's National Security Advisor shared his government's concerns with American officials during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US in June 2016.⁴³

The US shared India's concerns. Washington in January 2016 designated Daesh Khurasan as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Coupled with the Afghan government's insistence that the US slows down its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, these concerns prompted the Obama administration to change the withdrawal plan. President Obama granted more authority to the US forces in Afghanistan to increase airstrikes and combat militants on the ground. This comes after reports suggested that the US Air Force dropped more than 250 bombs and missiles in January and February targeting Daesh loyalists, mostly in Nangarhar.⁴⁴

The Afghan government welcomed both the decisions. "We welcome measures taken by the US as our strategic partner to fight terrorism," the deputy presidential spokesman said. However, the Taliban and politicians like Hamid Karzai are against them. An Afghan official who wished not to be named said Karzai's team was secretly advocating for the notion that Afghans question whether US presence was part of the problem or solution in Afghanistan. Karzai, who refused to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement with the US, believes that NATO troops must ensure peace in Afghanistan or they should leave.

THREAT ASSESSMENT/OUTLOOK

There are no signs of militancy subsiding in Afghanistan even after Mullah Omar's death and the Afghan government's efforts to reconcile with the Taliban, who are considered as the main driver of violence in Afghanistan. The presence of transnational militant groups like Daesh, IMU, Al-Qaeda and others is not only a contributor to insecurity but also threatens peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

Rather, the phenomenon is most likely to become multifaceted with the Taliban making territorial gains in Afghanistan and the other militant groups embarking on a process of rebranding, which would result in them shifting their agendas and geographical focus. If not curtailed, militants hiding in Afghanistan may even become strong enough to project their operations to Afghanistan's immediate neighbours, including countries in Central Asia and China.

Daesh is becoming a growing dimension to insecurity in Afghanistan. The group thinks more strategically and longer term than any of its rivals, including the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Unlike in Helmand, Farah, and Zabul provinces, Daesh has managed to

⁴³ "India sees IS as a threat to assets in Afghanistan", *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 12 June 2016, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2016/06/12/india-sees-threat-assets-afghanistan>.

⁴⁴ "Kabul University lecturer loyal to ISIS arrested", *The Nation*, 24 April 2016, <http://nation.com.pk/international/24-Apr-2016/kabul-university-lecturer-loyal-to-isis-arrested>.

gain a foothold in the eastern Nangarhar province and is trying to expand to Kunar and northern Badakhshan province—home of many Salafists.

For the time being, Daesh sanctuaries and training camps will remain in the eastern and northern belts of the country but it is likely to concentrate its attacks on the capital, Kabul, and hit easy targets to spread fear across the country. The group will also work overtime to find sustainable financial resources in Afghanistan and outside. Kidnapping of internationals in Afghanistan will be one revenue source that the group may see as profitable. Recruiting more Afghans, particularly children and educated youth, may remain Daesh's priority but the group will also encourage foreigners to join Daesh in Afghanistan.

Already overstretched and fighting on several fronts throughout the country, ANSF lacks the capacity and resources to effectively counter the threat that Daesh and other militants pose to Afghanistan. These militants with a transnational agenda may use this as an opportunity to project their activities outside Afghanistan. The threat will not only be to the security of the states in the broader region but groups like Daesh will also target regional initiatives, including connectivity projects in the region.

Given the intensity and intimacy of the threat, the Afghan government sees the continued engagement of the US-led international community as crucial in Afghanistan. It is also of utmost importance that countries like Iran and Russia support state instead of non-state actors to fight Daesh and the menace of terrorism.

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Evolving Wave of Terrorism and Emergence of Daesh in Pakistan

Khuram Iqbal

INTRODUCTION

The Asian region is confronted by an array of traditional and non-traditional security threats emanating from natural calamities as well as man-made threats of violent extremism. Whereas non-traditional threats have led to collaborative efforts among the community of Asian nations, a cross-regional consensus on the issue of terrorism is yet to emerge. Rhetorically, Asian nations might have pledged collaborative efforts to fight violent extremism, but practically they differ on the threat definition and prioritization. Take for example the ongoing wave of terrorism in the Middle East region, where a number of regional and extra-regional players are jostling for influence and playing off one terrorist group against another. This policy, however, has backfired and led to the emergence of new and more lethal terrorist organizations such as Daesh. This chapter seeks to examine the trends and shapes of contemporary terrorism in South Asia with a specific focus on the patterns of Daesh's expansion from the Middle East to Pakistan, how local terrorist organizations have responded to Daesh's call for a global holy war and what the future holds for the group in Pakistan. Some specific questions explored in detail are as follows:

1. What is the extent of Daesh's penetration into the Pakistani Jihadi landscape from December 2014 to July 2016?
2. What is the general profile of individuals and groups that have joined Daesh during the aforementioned period?
3. How is Islamabad responding to the threat?
4. Is Daesh on the run or on the march in Pakistan?

To find answers to the above-mentioned questions the study incorporates both primary (interviews with local counter-terrorism experts, and the printed, audio and visual propaganda material of Daesh) and secondary (news archives, and the reports of local

* This paper was submitted on 1 August 2016.

think tanks and law enforcement agencies) resources. The research commenced with newspaper archives on the subject. Past issues of four mainstream newspapers, *Urdu Daily Express* (Islamabad), *Urdu Daily Ummat* (Karachi), *English Daily Dawn* (Web edition) and *English Daily The News* (Web Edition), were screened closely to find comprehensive coverage of any Daesh-related activity in the country. The first publicly known event marking the arrival of Daesh in Pakistan was the audiotaped speech on 28 January 2015 by the head of external operations of Daesh declaring its expansion into the Pakistan, Afghanistan and India region. Further research, however, disclosed that the organization had started making inroads into Pakistan as early as October 2014, three months prior to Abu Muhammad al-Adnani's¹ statement on the creation of the Khurasan branch. Following a detailed screening of the newspapers a master questionnaire was derived from the archives for subject matter specialists to explore the issues requiring more details. Three Pakistani counter-terrorism practitioners were interviewed. By virtue of the author's personal relationships with them, they agreed to be interviewed but insisted on anonymity. Due to time and resource constraints, the author was not able to seek answers for all the questions listed in the master questionnaire.

Findings of the study suggest that the Daesh has had a troubled formative stage in Pakistan, which could hinder her "take-off" phase in the near future. A conservative estimate based on desk and field research puts the total numeric strength of the group in Pakistan at approximately 2,000 individuals with almost half of them migrating to neighbouring Afghanistan. Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has produced the highest number of Daesh fighters (approximately 1,200). Punjab stood second with 54 of its inhabitants either leaving their homes to fight in Syria and Iraq or dedicating their efforts to organizing Daesh in Pakistan. The profile of Daesh supporters in Pakistan is as diverse as it gets in any legitimate occupation. From daily-wage labourers to university professors and from IT experts to aviation engineers in Pakistan International Airlines, the group has successfully penetrated different strata of Pakistani society.

The responses of local militant outfits can be divided into three distinctive categories.² Firstly, those who have openly denounced Daesh (Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent and the core Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan [TTP]); secondly, those who welcomed Daesh with open arms (splinter groups of the TTP such as Jamaatul Ahrar and Jundullah-Pakistan); and thirdly, those who prefer to "wait and see". Kashmir-centric religious nationalist militant outfits, including Lashkar-e-Tayeba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JEM), fall into this category.

¹ Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who is known to be the longest serving senior member of Daesh, was reported to have been killed in an American air strike in Syria in August 2016.

² Abdul Basit "Is IS a threat to Pakistan?", *Express Tribune*, 28 February 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/845316/is-is-a-threat-to-pakistan/>.

This chapter is organized into three different sections. The first section provides an overview of the evolving threat landscape of key theatres in Asia and how Daesh is carving out a space for itself. In the second section, the author discusses the trends and patterns of Daesh's penetration into Pakistan through empirical research and finally, the third section concludes with a number of policy recommendations to counter the threat of Daesh at the regional level.

SHAPES AND FORMS OF TERRORISM IN THE REGION

Global terrorism is evolving at a fast pace with terrorist organizations switching their loyalties and changing their modus operandi to remain relevant in the face of multi-pronged onslaughts by state actors across the globe. In the Asian region, a number of violent anti-state campaigns and groups have either been successfully dismantled or brought to a manageable level. Prominent among the success stories are Sri Lanka's victory against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE), Nepalese efforts to curb the saffron terrorist groups, such as Nepal Defence Army, Indonesian gains against Jemaah Islamiyah, and most importantly Pakistan's Operation Zarb-e-Azb (Strike of the Sword of Prophet Muhammad) against Al-Qaeda and her local allies, including Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) among others. Nevertheless, a new generation of religious zealots has also sprung up with Daesh being the most extreme. More than any other factor, it is the strategic miscalculation and conscious efforts of a number of state actors that have led to the emergence of these neo-fundamentalist organizations. Of these latest developments, however, the birth of Daesh is the most significant from the regional and global security perspective because the group retains the intentions and maintains the capabilities to threaten global security. Daesh has attracted thousands of fighters from as far as Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and many other countries across the globe. The indirect security effects of the emergence of Daesh are felt even more severely in Europe which saw multiple attacks taking place in the past year.

DAESH IN SOUTH ASIA

South Asia is not immune to the penetration of Daesh. A threat assessment using the "Adversarial Analysis" framework confirms the satellite presence of Daesh in South Asia. Adversarial Analysis incorporates a close examination of a group's intentions (gauged through ideological disposition and past activities), capabilities (measured through quality and quantity of fighters, training facilities, financial status and weaponry) and opportunities (assessed through the vulnerability of the targeted community, overall security environment and composition of the support base). Application of this

framework demonstrates that local threat groups hitherto operating under the umbrella of Al-Qaeda seem to be using the Daesh brand to stay relevant after suffering considerable operational and ideological setbacks during the first decade of the global war on terror.

The patterns of Daesh's penetration differ across South Asia but the various states' responses are identical across the region: downplaying the threat. In India, despite there being confirmed reports of some Indian nationals joining Daesh in the Middle East and despite being high on the group's agenda, India considers itself immune to Daesh penetration. According to Suba Chandaran, India has reasons not to be alarmed by the Daesh threat yet.³ He attributes Indian immunity to the global Jihad to the country's democratic system, inclusive version of Islam, representative institutions and the secular outlook of the Indian intelligence apparatus. In Bangladesh, the group has claimed responsibility for some of the most audacious terrorist attacks during the first half of 2016 but the authorities in Dhaka describe these attacks as isolated incidents of violence involving some disillusioned religious extremists. The political tensions in the last few years have led to the rise of a new generation of young educated radical fighters who seek connections to Daesh.

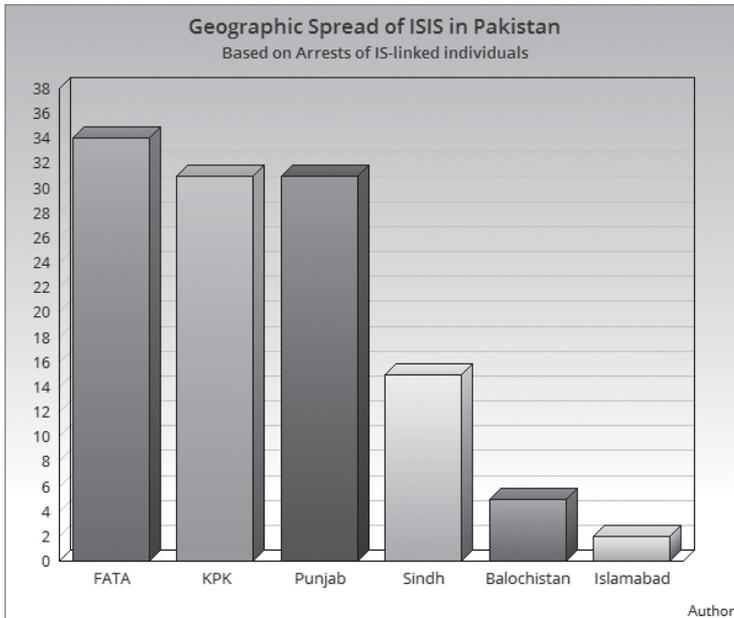
Maldives is yet to experience any Daesh activity. However, approximately 50 Maldivians have travelled to the Middle East to fight on the side of Daesh and six of them have been confirmed killed in action.

DAESH IN PAKISTAN

That Daesh exists in Pakistan is no longer a matter of debate. With more than 150 of its operatives arrested from different parts of the country and approximately 1,200 Pakistanis fighting alongside the group in Afghanistan,⁴ Pakistan has produced the highest number of active Daesh supporters in South Asia.

³ D. Suba Chandaran, "The Islamic State: India is not alarmed, yet", Asian Conflict Reports, The Geneva Centre for Security Policy, August 2015.

⁴ Figure is based on the assessments prepared by Afghan Intelligence officials.



The graph depicts the geographic spread of Daesh in the country. With 34 of its members arrested from FATA, the group effectively manipulated the vacuum created by the physical displacement of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Islam and Al-Qaeda from the tribal region after Operation Zarb-e-Azb. Haji Namdar Group, a Salafi group based in Khyber Agency, has also lost 50 fighters to Daesh. Approximately 1,500 individuals (belonging to FATA) previously working with the aforementioned militant organizations joined Daesh after they fled to neighbouring Afghanistan to avoid the Pakistani military onslaught. The author was informed by Afghan intelligence sources that as of 30 June 2016, more than 400 Daesh fighters of FATA origin have been killed during clashes with Afghan forces and Afghan Taliban. Taking the number of arrests as a yard stick to gauge the extent of Daesh’s geographic spread in the country, the settled areas of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) appear to be the second most affected areas. The majority of fighters who have joined Daesh from Punjab were previously working with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Tayeba and Hizb-ul-Tehrir. In KPK, a number of Afghan refugees fell prey to the group. A total of 15 Daesh operatives have been arrested from Sindh with all of them having urban backgrounds. Militants previously affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Indian Sub-Continent (AQIS) shifted their loyalties to Daesh as they saw the latter as having more influence and resources to achieve the goal of a global Caliphate.

The questions that merit deliberations include: Why is Pakistan in general and Khorasan⁵ in particular significant from the perspective of Daesh? What is the profile

⁵ The area comprising Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and parts of India.

of Daesh-linked groups and individuals in the country, the trends of Daesh-related arrests, and the patterns of recruitment? How is Islamabad responding to the threat? To answer these questions, the author first reviews the existing literature and then incorporates empirical research to augment the findings.

WHY KHORASAN?

Amir Rana's informative piece entitled "What ISIS and the 'caliphate' mean for Pakistan"⁶ discusses the differences between Al-Qaeda and Daesh and why the *Khurasan* region (areas comprising Pakistan and Afghanistan) is so important for local, regional and global Jihadi forces. According to various interpretations of Islamic text, before the end of time an Islamic army with black flags would emerge from this region and inflict the first defeat against non-believers, finally reaching *Eela* (the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem) where they will erect their flags.⁷ The use of black flags by a number of militant organizations operating from this region is, in fact, a well-thought-out decision to seek religious justification for their existence.⁸ Rana argues that territorial gains made by Daesh are serving as a morale booster for Pakistani Jihadi outfits.

Ideological significance aside, Khorasan can also serve to supplant the logistical, human and financial losses suffered by Daesh in the Middle East. The areas comprising "Khorasan" are infested with Islamist extremist movements, contain widespread un-governed areas and most importantly maintain vast networks of the illegal opium trade. The "Golden Crescent" is most likely to become the financial lifeline of the Daesh-led global Jihad should the organization establish its foothold in the region. Multi-billion dollars' worth of poppy-production and smuggling is what the Middle Eastern group might be eyeing in the Khorasan region after losing its oil refineries and banks stashed with gold and dollars in Iraq and Syria.

DAESH-LINKED GROUPS IN PAKISTAN

A number of Pakistani newspaper columnists and counter-terrorism analysts have scaled the level of threat and endorsed that the group is operating through its proxies and that an operational link is yet to be established. Top counter-terrorism practitioners

⁶ Amir Rana "What ISIS and the 'caliphate' mean for Pakistan", Dawn, 3 July 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1116799>.

⁷ *Sunan nisai (The book of Hadith) volume 5*, page 245.

⁸ For a detailed discussion, please see Husain Haqqani, "Prophecy & the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent", Hudson Institute, 27 March 2012, <http://www.hudson.org/research/11167-prophecy-the-jihad-in-the-indian-subcontinent>.

in the country also share the view refuting the presence of a Daesh core in Pakistan: “We haven’t come across any actual Daesh operative in Karachi or the rest of Sindh, but there are people who have pledged allegiance to the organisation and carrying out terrorist activities on their own.”⁹ Many believe that local threat groups hitherto operating under the umbrella of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) seem to be using the Daesh brand to stay relevant after suffering considerable operational and ideological setbacks due to Operation Zarb-e-Azb,¹⁰ a country-wide military, intelligence and law enforcement campaign aimed at eliminating the militants’ infrastructure and support network. Evidences, however, challenge the notion. Daesh did send its official representatives to Pakistan in October 2014 to organize “Wilaya Khorasan”. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi assigned Zubair al-Kuwaiti, Abu Imama al-Muhajir and another individual to hold meetings with like-minded groups and provide financial and logistical support to encourage their defections from Al-Qaeda and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. In October 2014, the first such meeting, with a local militant organization called Jundullah, took place, either in Quetta or somewhere between the Multan and Rahim Yar Khan districts of Punjab province. Jundullah extended a warm welcome to the Daesh representatives and a number of top commanders pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi. En route to Afghanistan, the Daesh delegation held a similar meeting with the leadership of Lashkar-e-Islam (LI), which showed a reluctance to openly join but assured a secure supply route through Khyber (the stronghold of LI) for the newly established bases of Daesh in the eastern Afghan districts of Achin, Nazian and Kot. During the next few weeks, LI would come under strong military pressure from the Pakistani side and moved its bases to neighbouring Afghanistan, where it was welcomed by the Afghan intelligence agency as a strategic asset against Pakistan.¹¹ But soon hundreds of LI fighters officially joined Daesh, further augmenting the cadre base of the Middle Eastern terrorist organization and complicating Afghanistan’s strategic calculations.

Two months had hardly passed when another batch of 50 fighters from Khyber-based Tazeem Amr Bilmaroof Wa Nahi An al Munnkir (Organization for Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil), commonly known as the Haji Namdar group, set off to join the Daesh ranks in Afghanistan. The organization, which was thought to have become dormant after the assassination of its founder, Haji Namdar,¹² in August 2008, had been reorganized by Commander Niaz Gul. Two of his top commanders, Haya Khan and Waheed Khan, led the batch, joining their co-Salafi brethren fighting under the banner of Daesh.

⁹ Salis Bin Pervez, “In Karachi, ISIS present in spirit only”, *The News*, 25 January 2016, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/93457-In-Karachi-ISIS-present-in-spirit-only> (accessed 31 July 2016).

¹⁰ Zarb-e-Azb translates into “Strike of the Sword of Prophet Muhammad”.

¹¹ Muhammad Amir Rana, “Spreading IS tentacles” *Dawn*, 31 Jul 2016.

¹² A staunch believer in the Salafi school of thought who was killed for his anti-TTP actions.

The infusion of disgruntled TTP elements, fugitive LI fighters and fellow Salafi fighters from Khyber, Orakzai, Bajaur and Mohmand agencies served as a force multiplier for Daesh. A few core members of the group assumed strategic posts and created shadow hierarchies to deceive its adversaries. By the end of 2015, the numeric strength of Daesh in eastern Afghanistan had reached 2,200, out of which approximately 1,200 were thought to be of Pakistani origin, followed by Central Asians. In the following year, the operational capabilities of Daesh's Khorasan chapter were significantly dented as the group lost 500 to 700 fighters to successive US drone strikes, operations by Afghan forces and clashes with the Afghan Taliban.

Across the border in Pakistan, Daesh dedicated significant amount of resources for its expansion. Soon after the first meeting of Daesh representatives in the country, an Urdu-language book was published by the organization, which discussed at length the profile of Daesh, its history, leadership, aims and objectives. New recruits were given USD 500 per month, which showed how resourceful Daesh was at its inception. Daesh was also seen by many in Kabul as a proxy to settle scores with Islamabad for the latter's protracted support for the Afghan Taliban. However, events such as the tragic killing of 80 Hazaras in Kabul on 23 July 2016 (perpetrated by Daesh) may push Afghan intelligence to rethink their Daesh strategy.

Since October 2014, Daesh has surpassed the formative phase in Pakistan, focusing less on conducting attacks but dedicating more energies to penetrating the ranks and files of local violent and non-violent Jihadi organizations, including Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Al-Qaeda in Indian Sub-Continent (AQIS), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Lashkar-e-Islam (LI), Jundullah, Jamat-u-Dawah (JuD) and Hizb-ul-Tehrir (HuT). From the outset of Daesh in Pakistan (October 2014) to the time of writing (July 2016), the group's name has been mentioned in six different terrorist attacks. All of these attacks were conducted by Pakistani operatives who previously worked with the TTP, Al-Qaeda and Jundullah. These attacks were neither directed nor supported by Daesh.

Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan involving Daesh

No	Date	Place	Target	Casualties	
				Killed	Injured
1	8 Sep 2014	Karachi	US Naval Vessel	1 Arm ¹⁵ 3 Mil ¹⁶	-
2	4 Jan 2015	FATA	Army Soldier	1 Arm	-
3	23 Apr 2015	Karachi	HR Activist	1 Civ ¹⁷	
4	13 May 2015	Karachi	Isamili Civilians	46 Civ	12 Civ
5	6 Apr 2015	Orakzai Agency, FATA	Army Convoy	3 Arm	4 Arm
6	13 Jan 2016	Islamabad	News TV	-	-

¹³ Army personnel.

¹⁴ Militant.

¹⁵ Civilian.

Although Daesh has succeeded in acquiring the support of hundreds of domestic militants, its overall strategic objective for Pakistan was marred due to two major reasons: first, the swift and efficient response¹⁶ from Pakistani law enforcement agencies, resulting in country-wide raids and the arrest of approximately 118 Daesh supporters; and second, internal differences between Daesh militants of Afghan and Pakistani origin, with each accusing the other of being American or Pakistani agents. The Daesh ideology failed to unite individuals belonging to different nationalities and ethnicities and this could prove detrimental in the future.

FUTURE ASSESSMENT

As of July 2016, Daesh in Pakistan is weak but not out. A number of variables can affect the future trajectory of the group. Infightings and fragmentation within the ranks of the Afghan Taliban following two consecutive changes in the top leadership can pave the way for Daesh's ingress. Hypothetically, an ideological link between Daesh and the TTP may translate into an operational partnership.¹⁷ Such an alliance can pit the Pakistani Taliban against the Afghan Taliban, who are battling Daesh in neighbouring Afghanistan. But the moot question is: why would Pakistani Taliban opt to dump a near and time-tested ally for a far, unpredictable and discredited ally? The Afghan Taliban enjoy more popular support and credibility in Pakistan than Daesh, which is seen by a majority of Pakistanis as a symbol of tyranny, whose violence is mainly directed against fellow Muslims with no clearly defined objectives. As the clashes between Daesh and the Afghan Taliban rage on in neighbouring Afghanistan, the Pakistani Taliban will come under tremendous pressure to clarify their position and reassert their loyalties.

Another potential area for Daesh activities could be Kashmir, where a decades-old separatist insurgency is rejuvenating since July 2016, specifically after the killing of Burhan Wani, a separatist Kashmiri militant. A few scholars, however, contest the possibility. Shujaat Bukhari, a veteran Kashmiri journalist, asks, "Why would the ISIS head to Kashmir?"¹⁸ He is of the view that the Daesh hoax is being used by New Delhi to legitimize the disproportionate presence of the Indian Army in Kashmir and the continuation of the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), and to

¹⁶ From December 2014 till June 2016, Pakistan Army and civilian law enforcement agencies carried out approximately 19,347 intelligence-based operations in different parts of the country, which killed 213 terrorists and led to the arrests of thousands of sleeper cells of terrorist organizations including Daesh. For more details, please see Staff Reporter, "Gains in operations but NAP needs govt action: army", *Dawn*, 16 June 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1265185> (accessed 15 September 2016).

¹⁷ Saima Khan, "Prospect for an ISIS-TTP Alliance", *Express Tribune*, 9 December 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/803590/prospects-for-an-is-ttp-alliance/09-December-2014>.

¹⁸ Shujaat Bukhari, "Why would ISIS go to Kashmir?", *The Friday Times*, 24 October 2014, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/why-would-isis-go-to-kashmir/>.

discredit the Kashmiris' struggle for self-determination. Bukhari's assertion is corroborated by the official Indian response to Daesh's aspirations to acquire a nuclear bomb, possibly from Pakistan, and smuggle it to the US¹⁹, whereas leading observers of global terrorism treat such views as nothing more than a "beggar's belief".²⁰ While the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Daesh is certainly an overestimated issue, Kashmir's critical importance for regional Jihadi outfits should not be underestimated. Daesh is suffering from an image problem in South Asia and Kashmir provides the group with an opportunity to emerge as the protector of oppressed Muslims. For radicalized youth that seek the excitement of war, the lure of Daesh is much stronger than the LeT's, which is now attempting to redirect its cadres' energies towards social welfare services under the banner of Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (Humans Welfare Foundation). If Daesh is able to launch one symbolic attack in Indian-held Kashmir, it would have Lashkar-e-Tayeba and Jaish-e-Muhammad by the throat. Anticipating such a scenario, Kashmir-centric groups are under tremendous internal pressure to resume attacks in Indian-held Kashmir in order to avoid large-scale defections, maintain organizational cohesion and protect their exclusive sphere of influence from Daesh's encroachment.

CONCLUSION

The first decade of the 21st century was marked by a violent clash within the Islamic civilization. But during the last five years or so, the regional threat landscape has transformed dramatically, with new waves of radicalization among major religions emerging to haunt regional peace. Where is South Asia headed to? Will the rise of religiously motivated violence across the region conform to the "clash of civilizations theory"? Or is this likely to evolve into a "clash of fundamentalisms"? The rise of Daesh and other variants of extremism pose some daunting questions to counter-terrorism scholars.

Regarding Daesh, a consensus of sorts exists among Pakistani counter-terrorism experts and policy-makers that the maximum Daesh can offer to local Jihadis is "re-branding" and this is what Pakistani Taliban groups desperately need. These groups had been pushed to the brink of collapse by Operation Zarb-e-Azb, but the arrival of Daesh gave them a chance to rebuild, and rebrand in order to appear strong and relevant. If Daesh establishes footholds in the region, factional bloodshed can rage on.

¹⁹ Jenny Stanton, "ISIS claims it is 'infinitely' closer to buying a nuclear weapon from Pakistan and smuggling it into the US", *Daily Mail*, 22 May 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3093244/ISIS-claims-infinitely-closer-buying-nuclear-weapon-Pakistan-smuggling-US.html>.

²⁰ Anthony Glees, director of the Centre for Security and Intelligence Studies at the University of Buckingham, cited in Jenny Stanton, "ISIS claims it is 'infinitely' closer to buying a nuclear weapon from Pakistan and smuggling it into the US", *Daily Mail*, 22 May 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3093244/ISIS-claims-infinitely-closer-buying-nuclear-weapon-Pakistan-smuggling-US.html>.

Reports hinting of an emerging alliance between Iran and the Afghan Taliban²¹ could also motivate more sectarian elements within Pakistan to support Daesh. But more than the actual presence of Daesh in South Asia, it is the confusion and distrust among the major South Asian nations that will create more space for a group like Daesh to emerge and flourish. Any venture of the Daesh in Indian-held Kashmir can place India and Pakistan on the verge of war and both countries lack the will, level of preparedness and institutional mechanisms to effectively forestall such a scenario.

This chapter has delineated the patterns of Daesh's expansion into Pakistan, how the group threatens regional security and how the governments in South Asia are responding to the threat. A few new relevant research questions have also surfaced. For instance, who were Abu Imama Al-Muhajir and Zubair al-Kuwaiti, the official Daesh appointees tasked to organize the organization in Pakistan; what is the extent of Daesh's penetration into Hizbul-Tehrir; and what is the background and previous group affiliations of more than 200 Daesh supporters arrested from September 2014 to July 2016 in Pakistan? Further research is required to answer these critical questions.

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²¹ Michael Kugelmanmay, "What Was Mullah Mansour Doing in Iran?", *Foreign Policy*, 27 May 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/27/mullah-mansour-iran-afghanistan-taliban-drone/> (accessed 15 September 2016).

Daesh Threat in Bangladesh: An Overview

Iftekharul Bashar

On 1 July 2016, Daesh carried out an attack in a café in the diplomatic zone of the capital city of Bangladesh, Dhaka, killing 20 hostages, mostly foreigners.¹ Though five attackers, all Bangladeshi citizens, were eventually killed in the counterterrorism operation, Daesh reached a significant tactical goal as it made its presence felt in this part of South Asia. Though terrorism is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh, the scale and brutality of this particular attack was unprecedented in the country.² The attack indicated the group's traction and capability in this part of South Asia. It also indicated the country's changing threat landscape and the limitations of its existing approach in countering violent extremism.

This paper aims to give an overview of the threat of Daesh in Bangladesh addressing some critical questions, such as: What are the imminent and long-term threats and risks by Daesh-linked groups in the country? What are the key reasons and motivations for recruits to join these groups? How is Bangladesh responding to the Daesh threat? The paper argues that the spread of Daesh in Bangladesh is increasing by an existing radical milieu both online as well as on the ground. It also shows how Daesh's modus operandi is different from those of other known groups. The paper acknowledges Bangladesh's ongoing efforts in counterterrorism operations and underscores the need to formulate a new strategic approach in countering violent extremism.

The paper draws on credible reporting, relevant academic literature, analysis of primary documents such as Daesh publications including those in the local language, and most importantly key informant interviews conducted in Bangladesh. The paper is divided into three sections. The first section elucidates the trends and tactics that Daesh is adopting in Bangladesh. The second section analyses how the group is recruiting and radicalizing a vulnerable segment of the society. The third section explains the responses of Bangladesh in countering Daesh. The analysis and policy recommendations in this paper are based on data gathered up to mid-September 2016.

* This paper was submitted on 19 September 2016.

¹ The victims included 9 Italians, 7 Japanese, 1 American and 1 Indian, and 2 Bangladeshi citizens.

² For a backgrounder see: Iftekharul Bashar, "Bangladesh", in Rohan Gunaratna and Stefanie Kam (eds.), *Handbook of Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific*, (London: Imperial College Press), 2016.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Bangladesh has seen several waves of terrorism and the emergence of pro-Daesh outfits can be seen as the third wave.

The first wave of jihadist movements during 1999-2005 was led by Bangladeshis who participated in the Afghan mujahideen resistance against the Soviet occupation. A number of groups like Harkatul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) emerged. However, Islamist militancy failed to take its roots due to the lack of popular support and the government's counterterrorism initiatives. It is noteworthy that during 2006-2012, Bangladesh did not face any major terrorist incident. The apparent dormancy of the terrorist groups brought a lax law enforcement atmosphere which paved the way for the second wave of terrorism. The key characteristic of the second wave of terrorism in Bangladesh was dispersal of global ideologies and localization of the issues.

The second wave which started roughly around 2010 was marked by the emergence of Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) which later renamed itself as Ansar al Islam (ABT), which drawing inspiration from Al-Qaeda have been trying to revive the local militant outfits in the country. The emergence of ABT/AI went unnoticed until its first attack in 2013. The emergence of ABT/AI underscored the fact that as the new generation of violent extremists were taking over, cyberspace was increasingly becoming important. It was accelerating the spread of ideology, facilitating networking and proliferating training manuals for terrorist attacks. A section of the Bangladeshi diaspora also started actively promoting it through ideas as well as funding. Above all it narrowed the gap between local and global militant movements.³ The second wave saw more than a dozen machete attacks on secular bloggers, writers and activists. Bangladesh's internal political turmoil, particularly the opening of the trial of 1971 war crimes in which some leaders of the country's largest Islamist political party Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami were implicated, provided further fuel to the fire.

This is the context in which Daesh emerged, which we can categorize as the third wave. There were several early indicators. The emergence of pro-Daesh outfits, their pledge of allegiance to Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and their recruitment drive are cases in point.⁴ In August 2014, a video was uploaded in YouTube with the English title "Muslims in Bangladesh Give Bayah to the Caliph Ibrahim (Hafizahulla)". The video is arguably the first pledge of allegiance to Daesh from Bangladesh. Five masked individuals were seen in the video declaring their allegiance to al-Baghdadi. They pledged that they would follow al-Baghdadi as their spiritual leader. The video appears

³ Iftekharul Bashar, "Violent Radicalisation in Bangladesh: A Second Wave?", *RSIS Commentary*, No. 187/2013 dated 7 October 2013.

⁴ Iftekharul Bashar, "Surge in Violent Extremism: Security Implications of the Rise of ISIL in Bangladesh", 2015, unpublished paper.

to be inspired by Daesh's call to all Muslims to pledge their allegiance to the "Caliphate." In October 2014 another video emerged in which a previously unknown group called Jund At-Tawheed Wal Khilafah (Soldiers of Monotheism and the Caliphate) pledged their allegiance to al-Baghdadi. The second video is significant because it is not limited to the oath of fealty; the video sought to recruit from Bangladesh as well as to raise funds for militant activities in South Asia for creating a new cross-border "Caliphate" which will be called Hind. The video calls on Bangladeshi Muslims to participate in armed jihad, and contribute financially to the cause. The group claimed that it was preparing for what they call "Ghazwatul Hind" or the Final Battle of Hind (Indian subcontinent) to establish an Islamic State which would include Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.⁵ By the end of 2014 it became apparent that a vulnerable segment of the second generation of Bangladeshi diaspora youth had traveled to Syria via Turkey and fought under the banner of Daesh. In September 2014, a British national of Bangladeshi origin was arrested in Dhaka for trying to recruit Bangladeshi foreign fighters on behalf of Daesh. Bangladeshi authorities reportedly stopped more than a dozen youth from traveling to Syria to join Daesh. However, at least 25 did manage to go and some of them died there.⁶ But the major breakthrough for Daesh was to be able to establish a partnership with some younger leaders of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) which enabled Daesh to use the country-wide network of JMB. This is possibly the reason why the country saw an escalation in the number of terrorist attacks in 2015.

DAESH'S OUTREACH IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has been witnessing a new wave of terrorist activities since the declaration of the ostensible Caliphate by Daesh.⁷ The group's influence has brought about observable changes in the modus operandi of terrorist groups in Bangladesh.

First, Daesh has been able to reach out to a relatively wider spectrum of the society. As a result it has been able to recruit both from existing rural based local terrorist groups as well as from urban and affluent areas.⁸ The majority of recruits are men, although recent evidences show that the group is also recruiting women.⁹ Though

⁵ The term Ghazwatul Hind (or Gazwa-e-Hind) appears to have been taken from a book of Hadith called Sunan an Nasa'i. It is interesting to note that this controversial term is frequently used by self-styled jihadi activists in Pakistan for getting public support in Pakistan and raising funds to be used in their attacks in Kashmir with the aim of conquering India and creating what they call Dar-ul-Islam or the abode of Islam.

⁶ Author's interview with Bangladeshi counterterrorism official, Dhaka, May 2016.

⁷ Iftekharul Bashar, "ISIS, AQIS and the Revival of Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh", *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis*, Vol. 7, Issue 6, July 2015.

⁸ Author's interview with Bangladeshi counterterrorism official, Dhaka, May 2016.

⁹ "Women arrested in Azimpur are 'wives of top militants'", *The Dhaka Tribune*, 15 September 2016, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/crime/2016/09/15/women-arrested-azimpur-wives-top-militants/>.

recruitment of women is not a totally new phenomenon, the Daesh recruitment of women in Bangladesh is significant because it is trying to shift women's role from passive supporters to active actors who directly take part in terrorist operations.

Second, it has increased the frequency and intensity of Daesh-inspired attacks across the country. Since October 2015, Bangladesh has experienced more than two dozen attacks across the country. The areas of operation include both rural as well as urban areas including the capital, Dhaka. As of September 2016, the operations in rural areas are higher in terms of frequency. Though such attacks did not get the media coverage as well as follow-up reports they deserved, they were not carried out randomly. The author's field research in Bangladesh shows that all the Daesh-claimed attacks are well planned and well financed. The attackers received at least one month of training prior to the attack. The targets were selected based on their religious or sectarian identity. The majority of the attacks took place in the northern and north-western regions of Bangladesh particularly in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Panchagarh, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, and Dinajpur. A significant number of attacks have taken place in the south-western region particularly in Kushtia and Jhenidah districts. The most high profile attack took place in the central region, particularly in the capital, Dhaka. At least one attack has taken place in the Bandarban district, in the south-eastern part of the country.

And third, it has been able to diversify its targets particularly by adding foreigners, religious minorities and law enforcement agencies to its hit list.¹⁰

Therefore, Daesh can be considered a key factor behind the spike in the number of terrorist attacks in Bangladesh particularly since October 2015. But why is Daesh interested in Bangladesh, a country far away from the group's Middle Eastern heartland? Analysis of Daesh publications shows that Bangladesh as the third-largest Muslim majority country of the world has its unique symbolic significance; Daesh considers Bangladesh's geographic location pivotal for its desired expansion in the surrounding region particularly in India and Myanmar. The group is therefore primarily focused on establishing a foothold in Bangladesh, which it believes will be instrumental in expanding in India (West Bengal, and Assam) and Myanmar (Rakhine state). In this regard it needs to be mentioned that Daesh appears to be aware of the trans-border collaboration among the terrorist groups in the region and it is highly likely that the group will make efforts to take advantage of such networks to increase its footprint in the region.

TRENDS AND TACTICS

In Bangladesh, Daesh took a multi-pronged approach for the expansion of its outreach which combines using established networks at the same time as trying to get new recruits online by spreading its propaganda materials in Bengali, the local language. The

¹⁰ Author's interview with Bangladeshi counterterrorism official, Dhaka, May 2016.

group mostly carried out targeted assassination of religious minorities and foreigners and claimed it through official Daesh media such as Amaq media.

Daesh has been using the extensive network of one faction of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), a terrorist group operating in Bangladesh since 1998. Daesh has in fact praised JMB's late founder Sheikh Abdur Rahman and called for his followers to carry on his legacy by what it called jihad. The ideological similarity between JMB and Daesh is possibly the key reason behind this. Both groups are within the Takfiri spectrum of Salafism.¹¹ It is noteworthy that at present JMB is divided into two major fractions mostly due to disagreement over leadership and strategy. The common point is their wish to establish an Islamic State where hudud laws are implemented and non-Muslims and moderate Muslims are subjugated. But to do this a large support base is required so JMB goes for a long-term plan, to convert as many Muslims as possible to its ideology. However, the new faction, Neo-JMB, thinks it cannot do this forever.

Neo-JMB was possibly created in 2014 almost immediately after Daesh's declaration of the "Caliphate" in Syria and Iraq. The Neo-JMB members are relatively young and keener to take part in violence. Investigations reveal that, in its preparatory phase, Neo-JMB was able to boost its operational capability arranging for manpower as well as funding. In March 2015, they conducted an operation to help three key terrorists escape from a prison van in Mymensing (central region) whilst they were en route to a local court. In April 2015, Daesh robbed a bank in the outskirts of Dhaka.

Daesh eventually found a leader known as Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, a Bangladesh-born Canadian citizen (born in 1986). Chowdhury reportedly traveled to Syria during 2012-2013 and after his stint there he came directly to Bangladesh, possibly in 2015. Chowdhury's leadership was a breakthrough for the Neo-JMB that needed more resources and weapons. It is highly likely that Chowdhury was able to raise some new funding for the group. Most importantly, Chowdhury was able to successfully negotiate with the leaders of the JMB to take control of almost half of the group's resources which includes cash as well as weapons such as AK-22 automatic rifles and a huge quantity of Indian-made pistols. These weapons are known to have entered by a land route via the long and porous border that Bangladesh shares with India.¹²

Between October 2015 and July 2016, Neo-JMB carried out more than two dozen attacks across Bangladesh. Most of the attacks took place in the northern and north-western parts of the country. A significant number of attacks took place in the south-western part of the country in the form of targeted assassinations. Daesh-claimed

¹¹ The Salafi-Takfiris consider all political authorities that do not abide by their [Salafi-Takfiri] ideas about Islam, to be illegitimate. They consider all leaders of states where this occurs to be unlawful usurpers, so that it is permitted—or rather, obligatory – to kill them, and to try to take power from them. For details see Vincenzo Oliveti, *Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahabi-Salafism and its Consequences*, (London: Amadeus Books), 2002.

¹² Author's interview with Bangladeshi counterterrorism official, Dhaka, May 2016.

attacks in Bangladesh can be divided into two general categories. The majority of the Daesh attacks were targeted towards individuals from religious or sectarian minorities and took place mostly in remote areas such as those in the country's north-western region. However, the Dhaka café attack presented a different profile. There were 22 victims and the attack took place in the capital's diplomatic zone which is supposed to be one of the most secure areas of the country.

Though Bangladesh continues to crack down on Daesh, the terrorist group still has a significant capability. The group has access to semi-automatic weapons. In addition the group appears to have a group of bomb makers who are still at large. Therefore it is likely that the group may try to carry out large-scale attacks in Bangladesh. The capital Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong are particularly vulnerable. However, if Bangladesh continues its anti-Daesh operations the military capacity of Daesh will ultimately decline. The bigger challenge is to counter Daesh's propaganda. The group has already built up a significant propaganda capability in the local language. There are numerous local language websites, blogs, Facebook and twitter accounts that are instrumental in the radicalization and recruitment of Bangladeshi youth. Although Daesh's capability is somewhat limited at present, there are indications that the group is trying to unite the different factions of JMB and to emerge as a united front. The group is also trying to recruit members from other extremist groups such as Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT)/Ansar al Islam (AuT), Harkat ul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B). In the future if Daesh is successful in bringing all the different groups under its platform it will be a complex challenge for the law enforcement agencies. In addition, Daesh's ability to forge cross-border alliances with India- and Myanmar-based terrorist groups might pose a threat to the region.

RECRUITMENT AND RADICALIZATION

An analysis of available data on pro-Daesh recruits shows some common patterns in terms of recruitment and radicalization. Most of the recruits are between 18-25 years of age and a significant number of them have mainstream educational background and are from relatively more affluent families. This is notwithstanding the fact that a large number of recruits are still from rural poor families and with a madrassa education. The recruits in most cases are tech-savvy and in most cases, went through a relatively short process of radicalization. Motivating factors differs from person to person; however, a majority of the recruits actually believed that what they are doing is jihad and that they have a religious obligation to participate in it. It is noteworthy that all the recruits seem to have an obsession for what they see as a Caliphate, and they want to be a part of it. It is also noteworthy that Daesh has in fact borrowed and manipulated some ideas from Middle East's Muslim history and used it as a tool for gaining religious legitimacy. Though some of the Daesh recruits have gone to Syria to live in the Caliphate and to

die for it, interestingly a vast majority of Neo-JMB recruits believe that if they cannot travel to Syria, they can work for the Caliphate from Bangladesh. They believe that Daesh is a true caliphate and that they should work to establish what they see as Sharia law in Bangladesh, turning it into a wilayat or province of Daesh.

RESPONSES

Bangladesh has a zero-tolerance policy against terrorism and Daesh-linked groups are no exception. At present Bangladesh's responses to terrorism are mostly operational. There have been some strategic initiatives but these are inadequate, reactive and ad hoc.

For example Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies are carrying out operations to dismantle these groups and their military capabilities. Since the Dhaka café attack there has been a growing awareness within the law enforcement agencies about Daesh-linked groups in the country. The number and frequency of counterterrorism operations across the country has increased. For example, on 26 July 2016, nine alleged Neo-JMB militants were killed during a special drive of the joint forces in a militant den in Dhaka's Kalyanpur.¹³ Pistols, knives and a Daesh flag were recovered from the spot.¹⁴ On 27 August 2016, three militants, including Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, a mastermind of the Gulshan café attack, were killed during a joint forces' raid at a house in Narayanganj Sadar upazila near Dhaka.¹⁵ On 10 September 2016, the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crimes (CTTC) unit captured three suspected female militants during a raid at a militant den in Dhaka's Azimpur area while another killed himself. Four pistols and 15 bullets were recovered on the spot.¹⁶ On 2 September 2016, a military trainer of the New JMB outfit was killed in a counterterrorism operation in Mirpur Dhaka. The killed militant was a 45-year-old retired military personnel who reportedly trained those terrorists who carried out the Dhaka café attack.¹⁷

Bangladesh has put in place strategic responses too. For example, Bangladesh is engaging the Islamic scholars in creating awareness within the society that Islam does

¹³ "9 militants killed in overnight raid in Dhaka's Kalyanpur house", *The Daily Star*, 26 July 2016, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/9-militants-killed-joint-drive-kalyanpur-1259647>.

¹⁴ "Police release photos of what was found in deadly raid on Kalyanpur militant's hideout", *bdnews24.com*, 26 August 2016, <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2016/07/26/police-release-photos-of-what-was-found-in-deadly-raid-on-kalyanpur-militants-hideout>.

¹⁵ "N'ganj raid: 3 among Dhaka attack mastermind Tamim killed", *The Daily Star*, 27 August 2016, <http://www.thedailystar.net/country/cops-cordon-suspected-militant-den-narayanganj-1276288>.

¹⁶ "One militant dead, 3 held in Azimpur raid", *The Dhaka Tribune*, 11 September 2016, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/09/10/police-raiding-militant-den-azimpur/>.

¹⁷ "Militant Tamim's right hand man Murad killed in Mirpur den raid", *The Dhaka Tribune*, 3 September 2016, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/crime/2016/09/03/militant-tamims-right-hand-man-murad-killed-mirpur-den-raid/>.

not approve of terrorism and extremism. Bangladesh's anti-Daesh operations have been effective in creating disarray within Daesh in the country. It is noteworthy that on 27 August 2016, Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury of Daesh in Bangladesh was killed during an encounter with Bangladesh police. It is also noteworthy that Bangladesh police has created a dedicated unit for counterterrorism earlier in 2016. Bangladeshi authorities are working closely with its regional and international partners for capacity building as well as intelligence sharing.

In the strategic domain, Bangladesh's response seems inadequate, even though there has been some significant development such as the issue of a fatwa by the Islamic scholars denouncing extremism and terrorism. The fatwa was endorsed by 100,000 clerics across the country.¹⁸ However, observers are of the view that there needs to be a more systematic and creative use of media and social media for spreading the counter-narrative. This is an area that needs proper policy attention. The counter-narrative messaging should consider the nature of its audience. Bangladesh needs to pay attention to its educational organization and should invest in building resilience among the youth, particularly the students. In this regard Bangladesh must work on improving the quality of education in the country. Bangladesh should also engage all the political parties in its counter-extremism outreach.

At the regional level Bangladesh is engaged with the regional mechanisms such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) to combat terrorism. There is, however, scope to invigorate these engagements.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The rise of pro-Daesh groups in Bangladesh is a major long-term challenge not only for Bangladesh but also for the region. Operational responses may be weakening the group's military capability, but the long-term impact of the group's ideological penetration will be significant in shaping the future threat landscape. Therefore more domestic, regional and international initiatives are needed to counter the long-term threat of radicalization. Bangladesh's ongoing operational response particularly after the Dhaka café attack has attained some commendable success and it needs to be acknowledged. Bangladesh must continue to build its operational counterterrorism capability and focus particularly on training the personnel who are in the frontline. Bangladesh must also make significant investment in building its strategic counterterrorism capabilities. In this regard, Bangladesh should consider formulating a policy for strategic response by effectively incorporating terrorist rehabilitation, after-care and

¹⁸ "Anti-Terror Fatwa Endorsed by 100,000 Bangladeshi Islamic Scholars", *Voice of America*, 21 June 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/a/fatwa-endorsed-by-bangladeshi-islamic-scholars-aims-to-curb-terrorism/3384976.html>.

community engagement. Since Daesh exploits Islamic symbols, it is also important to bring more Muslim scholars on board and engage them in counter radicalization initiatives. At present the major challenge is to prevent radicalization of the youth, particularly in online social networks. Therefore, Bangladesh must formulate a strategy for engaging the youth in its community engagement programmes. Bangladesh should also ensure better inter agency coordination in this regard and bring partners from the private sector. In countering violent extremism the key battleground is the social media. Therefore attention must be paid in understanding the social media trend and its possible impact on the ground. To counter terrorist exploitation of the social media, Bangladesh must implement a creative and dynamic social media response strategy. One unique strength Bangladeshi society has is its secular and syncretic culture, a natural antidote to extremism. Thus attention must be given to the nurturing of Bengali culture and transmitting these cultural values to the younger generation not only in the country but also among its diasporas living overseas.

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Daesh and the Alchemy of Strategy: Southeast Asia Threat and Responses by the Region and ASEAN

Jolene Jerard

Terrorism continues to cast a dark and sombre shadow on the security agenda of states. Since the announcement of the caliphate of al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa-al-Sham (Daesh) on 29 June 2014 by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the steady rise of the Daesh, its influence, continued appeal and growing aspirations have inundated law enforcement, security and intelligence communities around the world. While the threat of terrorism in the Southeast Asian region is not new, the road ahead presents an on-going challenge as governments attempt to manage and mitigate the threat amidst the attempt by Daesh to form a *wilayah* or a governorate in Southeast Asia. There were two countries where the possibility of Daesh having a *wilayah* had surfaced – Indonesia and the Philippines. The death of Santoso alias Abu Wardah of Mujahideen Indonesia Timur (MIT) or the Mujahideen of Eastern Indonesia in Poso Centra Sulawesi has reiterated the growing possibility of the formation of a *wilayah* in southern Philippines. MIT was the first group in Asia to pledge its allegiance to Daesh in 2014. Later in 2015, Santoso appeared in a video footage calling for attacks against police and other targets. In the video, Santoso referred to himself as the “Abu Musab al-Zarkawi of Indonesia.” His death has significantly reduced the possibility of a *wilayah* in Indonesia.

On 21 June 2016, the Daesh media office released its first official video featuring fighters from Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia calling for a two-fold unity under the leadership of the so-called Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and under the Emir of Daesh Philippines, Isnilon Hapilon. Furthermore, calls were additionally made for the conduct of lone wolf attacks in Southeast Asia. Distributed by Telegram and Twitter, the video titled *The Solid Structure* showcased the pledging of allegiance of a further four battalions in the Philippines to Daesh.

This message by the Daesh Philippines media office echoes the calls made by recently deceased Daesh spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani for lone wolf attacks.

* This paper was submitted on 2 September 2016.

The Daesh Amaq news agency reported the death of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who died in Aleppo province on 30 August 2016. He made open calls for attacks first in September 2014 and thereafter in May 2016. The impact of these messages was seen through a number of lone wolf attacks in Europe and Asia carried out by Daesh through the *Junood Khalifah* (Soldiers of the Caliphate). In January 2016, in the central business district of Jakarta, Daesh claimed its first attack in Southeast Asia.¹

There has been an appreciable impact on the way in which states and societies in general have increased their focus on managing the threat posed by Daesh. In the face of the continued scourge of terrorism, governments have steadfastly reinvigorated efforts either with attempts to create a new strategy or to improve current strategies undertaken to mitigate the threat of terrorism and political violence. Southeast Asia has been no different, as regional governments have begun to re-evaluate the present strategies in place against the threat of terrorism. In general, there is a two-tiered response undertaken within Southeast Asia: first, the responses undertaken at the regional level under the ambit of ASEAN as a regional institution and second, responses undertaken individually by countries in Southeast Asia. The notion of a collective response by ASEAN presupposes that all states in Southeast Asia and the members of ASEAN, although one and the same, are engaged with countering terrorism and extremism in the region at the same level. While both efforts are taking place in parallel within the region, there is nonetheless a recognisable deviation in terms of the level of impact between the methods used.

This chapter will first explore the threats posed by Daesh to the Southeast Asian region both at an institutional and regional level respectively and highlight key response strategies that have been undertaken by Southeast Asia to mitigate the threat of terrorism and extremism. The alchemy of strategy in this instance explores the multifaceted notion of strategy that is used by Daesh to further its cause and by the state to counter terrorism and extremism by Daesh.

DAESH'S CALCULATED STRATEGY REAPS DIVIDENDS

The calculated strategy undertaken by Daesh to further its cause can be seen through the planning of Daesh leadership. In mid-2014, using a small force, Daesh captured Mosul, capitalising on the lack of political will of an apparently larger and skilled Iraqi military. Since then, Daesh has grown from strength to strength, changing the threat landscape both within the Middle East and beyond. The claim to territory by Daesh has been a sore point of contention between Al-Qaeda (AQ) and Daesh. Where AQ aimed to garner influence and then territory through its AQ-affiliate organisations, Daesh

¹ "First ISIS attack in Southeast Asia leaves 7 dead, 17 injured", *TodayOnline*, 15 September 2016, <http://www.todayonline.com/world/first-isis-attack-south-east-asia-leaves-7-dead-17-injured>.

aimed to secure territory first and then influence through the formation of its *wilayah* or governorates. While both AQ and Daesh aspire for the creation of *Daulah Islamiyah*, with its ability to successfully secure territory, Daesh has captured the imagination of many terrorists and extremists as having brought to the foreground the utopic vision that AQ and its contemporary terrorist and extremist groups had aspired towards in the past.

Daesh's strategic use of social media has augmented its appeal. Its ability to capitalise on the use of encrypted communication apps has enabled the communication of operational instructions to ground operatives via platforms wherein they are able to evade detection. In Southeast Asia, approximately 46 groups have pledged their allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. There are approximately 1,000 Southeast Asians including women and children in Iraq and Syria, with the largest numbers coming from Indonesia. In addition to the use of social media there are two strategic initiatives undertaken by Daesh that have reaped considerable dividends. The first initiative is the aspiration towards the creation of a system. The second initiative from the operational perspective is the tactical benefits that have arisen from the creation of a diffused structure through a loose network of operatives.

The Notion of a State Enterprise: Creation of a System Not Organisation

Following the work of Spanish-Syrian ideologue and theoretician Abu Musab Al-Suri, Daesh has built on the strategy that AQ's foremost theoretician had earlier written and spoken on. His work underscored the need to establish a system instead of an organization. Abu Musab Al-Suri referred to this in his writings as *Nizam La Tandzim* (System not Organisation). Daesh has embraced this conceptual notion not only in the operationalizing of its strategy on the ground, but also additionally as the means through which Daesh has embodied its means of recruitment. In his writings on the Global Islamic Resistance, Al-Suri had endeavoured to transform AQ "into a resilient decentralized movement."² Furthermore, it was emphasized that "connections and organizational links between the leadership and the units were thus avoided"³, the success of which could most effectively be seen in the strategic formation of Daesh with its decentralized and loose network of operatives spanning Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

This aspiration for the creation of a system is adeptly seen not only through the propaganda videos by Daesh, but by extension in the recruitment strategy, which Daesh

² P. Cruickshank and M. Ali, "Abu Musab Al Suri: Architect of the New Al Qaeda", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30 (2007):1–14, <http://www.lawandsecurity.org/documents/AbuMusabalSuriArchitectoftheNewAlQaeda.pdf>. Zackie Massoud, "An Analysis of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's 'Call to Global Islamic Resistance'", *Journal of Strategic and Security* Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 2013.

³ Thomas Rid, "Small Wars and Telecommunications", *The Ashgate Research Companion to Modern Warfare*, George Kassimeris and John Buckley (eds.), London: Routledge, 2016, p. 447.

aims to recruit individuals who can assist in the formation of state infrastructures. The fear of the insider threat has escalated, with reports of Daesh recruiting and radicalising individuals from within security and law enforcement services.

For instance, in May 2016, it was reported that UK maritime officer Ali Alosaimi's defection to join Daesh shifted the dynamics of the capacity of the group, given the high level of his skills and his knowledge of Britain's shipping fleet.⁴ According to documents of Germany's Military Counter-Intelligence Service, *Militärischer Abschirmdienst* (MAD), which were reviewed by the DPA news agency, it was reported in April 2016 that at least 29 former soldiers from Germany had joined Daesh and 65 serving soldiers were presently being investigated.⁵ Similarly in Southeast Asia, in a spate of arrests in Malaysia, in March 2016, one of the 15 individuals arrested for "fundraising, recruiting, and attempting to purchase and amass bomb-making materials"⁶ included a police officer. In April 2016, Malaysian Defense Minister Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakri, while in a parliamentary session, acknowledged that approximately 70 soldiers had joined Daesh.⁷ The aspiration to form a system features strongly in both its narrative and the manner in which Daesh has envisioned itself as a state with the state structure of a fighting force—*Junood Khalifah* (Soldiers of the Caliphate) and the strategy to recruit individuals with skills to bolster its ability to run a state.

In July 2014, almost immediately after announcing the caliphate, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in line with his mission to run a state, called for skilled professionals, especially "judges and those who have military and managerial and service skills, and doctors and engineers in all fields"⁸, to staff the new caliphate. In April 2015, Abu Saeed Al-Britani, a Daesh member, noted the roles that Daesh needed and that those who did not want to be in combat roles could explore; these included press officers, doctors, chefs, mechanics, bomb-making, individuals who could man checkpoints, religious police, administrative staff, caretakers, prison guards, teachers and fitness instructors. Rather than the creation of shadow and parallel structures depicted by counter-insurgency tactics of the past, Daesh has positioned itself in a more concrete

⁴ "UK-trained navy officer 'joins the Islamic State'", *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 May 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/08/pic--pub-uk-trained-navy-officer-joins-the-islamic-state/>.

⁵ Kellan Howell, "29 German soldiers left to join ISIS; army may have dozens more jihadist sympathizers", *Washington Times*, 13 April 2016, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/apr/13/29-german-soldiers-left-to-join-isis-army-may-have/>.

⁶ Francis Martel, "Malaysia Arrests Police Officer, 14 Other for Allegedly Plotting Islamic State Terror Attack," *Breitbart.com*, 25 March 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2016/03/25/malaysia-arrests-police-officer-14-others-for-allegedly-plotting-islamic-state-terror-attack/>.

⁷ Yuan Meikeng, "Abdul Rahim Bakri: 70 Malaysians involved with IS militant group", *The Star Online*, 13 April 2016, <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2015/04/13/dewan-negara-is-soldiers/>.

⁸ "Caliph' urges skilled jihadists to join ISIS", *Al Arabiya News*, 1 July 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/01/-Caliph-urges-skilled-jihadists-to-join-ISIS.html>.

manner as the governing authority within the territory under its control. Their attempts are directed towards building the necessary structures to support what Daesh perceives as the cause.

Diffuse Structure, Maximum Gain: Loose Network of Operatives

Unlike the hierarchical nature of groups in the past, the present loose network of operatives results in difficulty in identifying the perpetrators of terrorist acts. Amidst the chatter, noise and growing intelligence gathered on terrorist and extremist groups, operatives in loose networks are assumedly in a better tactical position to hide their activities.⁹ In this instance, terrorist leaders act as propagandists and strategists and do not directly participate as ground commanders of operations. Just as AQ has devolved into a less centralised, less hierarchical structure over time, Daesh, through the formation of its various *wilayat* or governorates, aims to devolve its power and use these governorates as a platform to expand the influence of Daesh. In the case of Southeast Asia, the connections between the networks in Indonesia that surfaced in the aftermath of the bombings in Jakarta in January 2016 epitomised this facet of a loose network of operatives with great clarity. From December 2015, in a series of arrests in Indonesia, the presence of smaller tactical cells surfaced. Each of these cells received instruction from Indonesian intermediaries situated in Iraq and Syria. The Indonesian intermediaries Bahrn Naim, BahrumSyah and Abu Jandal had issued instructions to Indonesian cells to conduct attacks in Indonesia.

December 2015—Abu Jundi's Cell

A series of raids in December 2015 saw approximately 13 individuals arrested for their plans to conduct attacks in Sumatra, Java, and Kalimantan. Among the items seized in December 2015 were a map of greater Jakarta area, books on jihad and bomb-making materials—electronic components, fertilizer, nails and ball bearings. The first network was led by Abu Jundi alias Abdul Karim, a former member of Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), who planned to send people to Syria to join Daesh. It later surfaced that this network was linked to former Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) leader Abu Husna, who was in touch with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir while in prison. Shortly after being released from prison, Abu Husna established Kataibul Iman in August 2015. The operational leader of Kataibul Iman was Abu Jundi. Kataibul Iman planned to conduct attacks on Shiite places in Pekalongan (Central Java), Bandung (West Java), and Pekanbaru (Riau). Tasmina Salsabila, an Indonesian migrant worker in Hong Kong, significantly assisted Kataibul Iman's recruitment and funding. Tasmina recruited Riswandi alias Iwan, who is skilled in bomb making, and her husband, Zainal, into Kataibul Iman. She

⁹ Jolene Jerard, "Rise of Islamic State Networks in Indonesia", *RSIS Commentary*, https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/co16011-rise-of-islamic-state-networks-in-indonesia/#.V6Qoxk_AKM80.

additionally recruited Syuhada Umar, a pro-Daesh supporter based in Bekasi, a suburb of Jakarta, into Kataibul Iman. Furthermore, Tasmina funded Kataibul Iman, transferring 8 million rupiah (US\$615) for the group's armament.

December 2015—Arif Hidayatullah's Cell

The second cell that was caught was led by Arif Hidayatullah, who had planned to carry out attacks against Chief of Police Badrodin Haiti, former Chief of Detachment 88 Goris Mere, Head of Intelligence of Detachment 88 Ibnu Suhendra, then Chief of Jakarta Police Tito Karnavian, and Chief of Central Java Police Nur Ali. These networks also targeted Shi'ite places of worship and foreigners. This cell comprised of Abu Muzab alias Arif Hidayatullah alias Abu Muadz online and Ali—an Uighur who was arrested in Bekasi on 23 December 2015. Their accomplices, Nur Hamzah and Andika, were arrested in Solo on 29 December 2015. The cell received their instructions from Bahrin Naim. In August 2015, Bahrin Naim also funded and instructed Hisbah Team members Ibadurrahman alias Ali Robani alias Ibad, Yus Karman, and Giyanto alias Gento. Nur Rohman, the suicide attacker in the Solo police compound, was part of the Arif Hidayatullah network. The recent arrests in Batam connected with a plot to target Singapore were an extension of the network of Indonesians tied to Arif Hidayatullah's cell, with the aspiration of facilitating the movement and training of Uighurs within the Southeast Asian region.

January 2016—Nazaruddin Muktar alias Abu Gar's Cell

The third cell that escaped being detected carried out the Thamrin attacks in January 2016. The cell, led by Abu Gar, received 200 million rupiah (US\$15,384) from an Indonesian Daesh fighter and leader of Katibah Masyaariq, Abu Jandal, in 2015. While in prison, Aman Abdurrahman summoned Abu Gar and instructed him to copy the Paris attack. Aman Abdurrahman noted that the instruction came from Daesh. Rois alias Iwan Darmawan Muntho, who was also incarcerated in Nusa Kambangan, assisted Abu Gar in materialising the plan. This included facilitating the formation of the four-man team for the Thamrin attacks in Jakarta. At present, Rois is on death row for his involvement in the 2004 Australian Embassy Bombing in Jakarta.

February 2016—Hendro Fernando's Cell

Hendro Fernando, who was arrested in Bekasi after the Jakarta attacks, led the fourth cell. Hendro received a total of 1.3 billion rupiah (US\$97,000) from the leader of Katibah Nusantara¹⁰, Bahrumsyah, in several instalments throughout 2015. The money was channelled to the pro-Daesh groups in the region, Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) and Ansharul Khilafah Philippines (AKP), as well as to fund plots to attack

¹⁰ The money sent would help to facilitate operations in Southeast Asia.

Bali and Jakarta's main airport and an international school. It is believed that Hendro's cell stole nine guns from the Tangerang prison facility. He worked with five terrorist inmates, some of whom were from Harakah Sunni Untuk Masyarakat Indonesia (HASMI), a terrorist group led by Abu Hanifah. In 2010, HASMI had planned to bomb the US Consulate in Surabaya, the US Embassy in Jakarta, a shopping mall near the Australian Embassy, the Freeport (US gold mining company) office in Jakarta, as well as the police headquarters in Central Java.

Diffused Organisational Structure

The examples provided above highlights the diffused structure of Daesh. At the centre would be the leadership of Daesh Central led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Situated in Syria and Iraq are the Indonesians Bahrin Naim, Bahrumisyah and Salim Mubarak, who had issued instructions from their locations within the Daesh territory of Iraq and Syria to local cells in Indonesia to conduct attacks in Indonesia. All three men are linked to Indonesian ideologue Aman Abdurrahman, incarcerated in Indonesia. It has surfaced that in total, Daesh Central had sent two billion rupiah (approximately more than US\$169,230) to Indonesia throughout 2015 via these three intermediaries. Bahrumisyah sent 1.3 billion rupiah, Abu Jandal sent 200 million rupiah, and Bahrin Naim sent billions of rupiah to either Santoso (leader of MIT) or Abu Nusaibah, a pro-Daesh cleric who frequently spoke in public, lecturing on Daesh. In addition to the diffused structure of Daesh networks, the revival of old JI networks through the new Kataibul Iman led by Abu Husna further exacerbates the complexity of the networks on the ground in Indonesia.

This diffused organisational structure network exacerbates the challenge posed to security and law enforcement wherein identifying these cells has become an enduring challenge. The recent Daesh-linked attacks at the Movida Bar and Lounge in Puchong, Malaysia on 28 June 2016 and the suicide attack at the Solo police compound in Central Java, Indonesia on 5 July 2016 are cases in point. In both these instances, the attackers were linked to Daesh.

The diffused organisational structure has translated to not only the threat but also the attack spectrum becoming more nuanced. First there are the attacks claimed by Daesh directly. This was seen in the case of the attacks in Jakarta in January 2016. Second, there are Daesh-inspired attacks wherein attacks are mirrored on past operational successes. On occasion the types of attacks overlap. The attacks that were conducted in Jakarta, in addition to being Daesh-claimed, were inspired by the attack in France on 13 November 2015 where the attackers killed 130 people. Third, there are Daesh-linked attacks wherein members of Daesh conduct attacks based on the general direction provided by Daesh messaging strategies. The Daesh attacks conducted in Puchong and later in Solo are cases in point. The necessity to both understand the

nature of the attack and develop a response to the threat in an equally nuanced manner is pertinent.

RESPONDING TO THE THREAT

The impact of the threat of Daesh is different across Southeast Asia. The calculated strategy undertaken by states to mitigate the impact of terrorism and extremism in the face of an increasing threat posed by Daesh can be divided into two distinct tiers. The first tier is through the role of the regional institutional framework of ASEAN. The second tier is through responses undertaken by countries in Southeast Asia within the parameters of the state. This is a nuanced and differentiated response. While all the countries in Southeast Asia are part of ASEAN as an institution, the effectiveness that state responses coupled with select bilateral and trilateral arrangements between and among states have had a dominant impact on strategies to mitigate terrorism and extremism.

As a collective entity, countries within Southeast Asia continue to present a diverse and wide-ranging response to the threat of terrorism. The diversity in the means through which countries in Southeast Asia respond to the threat is often tied to the level through which the countries are in turn affected by the developments. On one end of the spectrum are countries such as Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Brunei. On the other end of the spectrum are Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar, which have not been afflicted by the same level of violence that is faced by countries in the preceding group, such as Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, who have been notable flashpoints of terrorism within the region in the past. Given the diffused organisational structure of Daesh, the threat in turn has affected almost all the countries in the first group to a substantially larger extent. This might warrant a revisiting of present preferred strategies undertaken.

Institutional Response

In the attempt to create a regional response, the ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism and the Declaration on Terrorism were adopted at the ASEAN Summits in 2001 and 2002 respectively. While there had been previous efforts by ASEAN to combat transnational crime, through the 1997 ASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crime, the necessity to undertake a visible show of action in light of terrorist attacks became a rallying call. Both the ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism and the Declaration on Terrorism were seemingly made in reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 2001 and the Bali bombings on 5 October 2002.

Undoubtedly, there was a need for the region to come together in solidarity against terrorism and to present a strong show of force. However, the efforts undertaken had two key challenges. The first challenge faced by ASEAN as a regional institution thus

far has often been expressed time and again as having more bark than bite. In the spirit of ASEAN non-interference, “regional treaties tend to be short and focused on codifying informal interactions among members rather than introducing a complex set of binding rules, and related sanctions.”¹¹ Thus while there was a recognizable need for solidarity for the cause, the treaties eventually manifested themselves in a way that lacked the proverbial bite to ensure there was sufficient compliance through binding mechanisms.

The second challenge is one that arises from consensus decision-making. In this instance, there is a need to ensure sufficient time to negotiate an agreement amongst all parties concerned. The spirit of ASEAN as a regional organization is muted by the need to work with the least common denominator, especially since consensus decision-making is exercised. The ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism for instance aims to provide a “framework for regional cooperation to counter, prevent and suppress terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and to deepen cooperation among law enforcement agencies and relevant authorities.”¹² The convention, while arising from the concern posed by the threat of terrorism, does not factor into consideration the time frame needed for the process of ratification. In this instance the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism was signed by ASEAN leaders in 2007 and was hailed as a significant achievement in the counter-terrorism effort. The convention came into force four years later when the sixth country, Brunei, ratified the convention. The convention was fully ratified in January 2013. The aim of regional groupings such as ASEAN is to ensure a collective response by all parties. While eventually consensus was achieved, the process was seemingly long and arduous, overlaid against an evolving threat of terrorism.

Even while efforts have been undertaken to create regional frameworks, at the heart of the effort undertaken by ASEAN is the principle of non-interference. Respecting the boundaries and parameters of the state while combating the threat posed by a transnational group is indeed the unenviable challenge that faces the region today. In the foiled attacks in August 2016 in Batam, Indonesia the terrorists were allegedly attempting to target Singapore using rockets. In this instance the standoff capability of rockets enables them to be based in another country. The establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, while offering the roadmap towards higher economic integration, raises challenges of managing the openness in terms of possible immigration laws where the security community is concerned. These concerns have to be measured against the general challenges that are facing world economies.

¹¹ Giovanni Capannelli, “Asian regionalism: How does it compare to Europe’s?”, *East Asia Forum*, 21 April 2009, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2009/04/21/asian-regionalism-how-does-it-compare-to-europes/>.

¹² ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism Completes Ratification Process, <http://asean.org/asean-convention-on-counter-terrorism-completes-ratification-process/>.

The ASEAN motto of “One Vision, One Identity, One Community” embodies the common mission of unity in diversity. ASEAN, albeit useful for the countries within the region in different ways especially on the economic front, might offer the notion of solidarity within the region, which is needed. As the world witnessed Britain’s referendum to exit from the European Union (EU), there were fears that there would be similar challenges within the region. The ASEAN Charter unlike the EU’s does not allow for countries to exit per se. Built on the foundation of consensus and non-interference on domestic and national issues, participation is technically voluntary. It is almost with the same spirit of community that the States within Southeast Asia have undertaken responses and strategies to counter the threat of terrorism and extremism at the national and at times both bilateral and trilateral levels. There is the seemingly tacit understanding within ASEAN as a community that is concerned about the rising challenge of terrorism and extremism. The countries will ultimately work together with a unified goal although in diverse ways, epitomising the solidarity amongst the countries as well as the diversity that has come to manifest itself in the ways through which ASEAN as a community counters the threat.

State Response

With the appreciable threat posed by Daesh, the terrorist group has generally been proscribed by ASEAN. This in itself has been a step in a positive direction. At the level of the state, an ideal response would be an effective mechanism that takes into account the kinetic and operational elements of the threat while simultaneously addressing the threats that arise from terrorism and extremism on a strategic domain. The strategic targeting of the threat would encapsulate a targeted response on several frontiers including but not limited to the role of the media, legislation, targeting the ideology, the financial mechanisms used by terrorist groups and even the role that development can be used to mitigate the threat of terrorism and extremism.

The challenge in interdicting these cells, as shown in the aftermath of the attacks in Indonesia and even recently in Malaysia, will continue to afflict the Southeast Asian region. The presence of these operational cells in smaller groups has paradoxically added to the resilience of the group, albeit they are operationally much smaller. The operations conducted thus far begin and end with the small cell. Taking a leaf out of the counter-insurgency strategy, the ability of these small cells to conduct attacks while remaining sufficiently distinct from the main network has placed them in a tactically better position to maintain their secrecy, thus ensuring that future operations are not compromised when a specific cell is interdicted.

The role of intermediaries such as Bahrun Naim, Bahrumsyah and Abu Jandal for Indonesia and Mohammad Wannady Bin Mohammed Jedi for Malaysia showcases a formidable challenge as they attempt to influence groups in the region while being based abroad. Of similar importance is the Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi-sanctioned Amir of Daesh

in Philippines, Isnilon Hapilon. Collectively they are nodes of considerable importance to both the networks in the real world and online, through their efforts in facilitating both funding and attacks. Similar locally based intermediaries can be detected in several countries in Southeast Asia. These intermediaries have been shown to be connected with self-radicalised individuals, teaching lone wolves and forming sleeper cells, undeniably influencing the manner through which the security of the Southeast Asian region is and will continue to be affected in the days to come.

Expanding Legal Frameworks and Soft Approaches within Southeast Asia

The region's counter terrorism capability has grown immensely from its earlier experience in dealing with the threat posed by Jemaah Islamiyah from the early 2000s onwards. In doing so, the importance of legal frameworks within the region has resurfaced in the discourse. On 1 August 2016, Malaysia introduced the National Security Act. After having repealed the Internal Security Act of 1960, this law was replaced by the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act in 2012 and thereafter the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) replaced it in 2015, allowing for preventative detention. The shift in the legislations, while encountering opposition due to the possibility of misuse against political dissidents and fear of extrajudicial force, arose out of the evolving threat of terrorism and in particular that of Daesh. Like Malaysia, Indonesia, too, is presently reviewing its counter-terrorism legislation, much of which had arose out of the attacks in Bali in 2002.

The growing necessity for soft approaches such as rehabilitation and reintegration cannot be over-emphasized. In trying to build upon softer strategies, efforts in countering violent extremism and preventing violent extremism is a needed paradigm to mitigate the threat. Here content creators and content managers need to work hand-in-hand to ensure that the discourses reach the community. Efforts are being conducted within several countries in the region with different degrees of success. ASEAN-wide institutional support to capitalize on regional resources might present a way forward to take these efforts up to the next level.

CHALLENGE FOR GOVERNMENTS: POSSESSING A STRATEGY VERSUS BEING STRATEGIC

While nations and institutions aspire to be strategic, there is an intrinsic difference between being strategic and possessing a strategy. The tactical, calculated means through which decisions need to be made—which at the crux refers to being strategic—is vastly different from the formation of a strategy or plan to mitigate the threat of terrorism. In the search for a comprehensive way forward, it is pertinent to underscore the fact that not all strategies that are undertaken would automatically be strategic. The alchemy of strategy hence refers to the art of a nuanced and calibrated plan that is both calculated

and intentionally positioned to manifest itself with the creation of maximum impact on the ground. The transformational nature of the plan or strategy would translate to increased effectiveness in mitigating terrorist threats and trends.

The challenge today perhaps is not so much of having a multiplicity of plans overlaid one over the other, but to identify gaps and improve the current arrangements to become a more collaborative framework between and amongst agencies and countries. This would require critical and honest assessments of strengths and inherent weaknesses in current measures put in place, well intentioned though they might have been. In light of present developments, the predominant strategy that governments have used is one that has placed emphasis on the use of force. However, the use of force alone is not a sufficient strategy to mitigate the terrorist threat. There is a need to build in the use of soft power strategies to mitigate the threat.

Strategy is indeed a pseudoscience of the attempt to plan and predict in mitigating the threat. The movement from the collection of data, the production of information, translating information to knowledge, application of knowledge to create wisdom in understanding and finally to projecting predictive insight is an uphill battle. Often, it is not so much that there is a need for a new strategy, but that existing strategies undertaken by states needs to be recalibrated against an evolving threat to ensure that they are strategic and bear dividends. There is a need to have a strategy that is not merely a list of plans but an entity that is adaptive, malleable and can be calibrated to meet the challenges of the future. In this instance, it means building not only collaborative and cooperative approaches between and amongst the Southeast Asian countries at an institutional level but additionally bolstering strategies of rehabilitation and reintegration. The hallmark of an effective strategy today is one that places due emphasis on collaborative efforts both at institutional and state-to-state levels, precision strikes and coordinated responses to build resilience within the community.

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Daesh in Europe and Southeast Asia: An Indonesian Perspective

Badrus Sholeh

RADICAL JIHADISM IN INDONESIA

Radical jihadist movements have been present in Indonesia for more than fifty years. It began in 1948 when some veterans of the Indonesian army and militia founded the *Tentara Islam Indonesia* (Army of Indonesian Muslims) and *Darul Islam* (DI, The Abode of Islam).¹ In the mid-1980s, DI sent jihad volunteers to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Union. More than five hundred Afghan veterans constructed a new era of Indonesian jihad. Most of these Afghan veterans joined Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI) in 1993.² The Afghan veterans then consolidated, focusing on strengthening education and training as well as reorganizing the resources of jihadists in Indonesia and Southeast Asia,³ including building a good training centre for jihad in the Hudaibiyah camp of Mindanao in 1994 as a training base for jihadists from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines and the Middle East.⁴ The Afghan veterans became the main trainers for the camp in the southern Philippines as well as other camps in Indonesia. During the Ambon and Poso conflicts, the jihad training camps

* This paper was submitted on 9 August 2016.

¹ From 1948 to 1962, the series of Islamic revolutions under the Darul Islam operated in West Java (later extended to Central Java), South Sulawesi and Aceh. They fought against the central government of Indonesia which they claimed was a secular government. C. Van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia*, Martinus Nijhoff, 1981. Also, Chiara Formichi, *Islam and the Making of the Nation: Kartosuwiryo and Political Islam in Twentieth-Century Indonesia*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012. About Kartosuwiryo, see S. Soebardi, "Kartosuwiryo and the Darul Islam Rebellion in Indonesia," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1993, pp. 109-133.

² Solahudin, *The Roots of Terrorism in Indonesia from Darul Islam to Jema'ah Islamiyah*, translated by Dave McRae, Sydney: the Lowy Institute for International Policy and UNSW Press, 2013.

³ Author's interviews with Farihin aka Yasir in Jakarta, June 2016. Yasir is from Batch 5 of the Afghan Jihad Academy, 1987-1991. He was involved in several Jihad operations in Jakarta and East Java, and helped local fighters in the Maluku and Poso conflicts.

⁴ Rohan Gunaratna, "Islamic State Branches in Southeast Asia," RSIS Commentary No. 004, 14 January 2016; Bilveer Singh, *The Talibanization of Southeast Asia Losing the War on Terror to Islamist Extremists*, London: Praeger Security International, 2007.

flourished, with thousands of new recruits. Afghan, Minadanao, Ambon and Poso veterans are among the middle and upper echelon leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Indonesia. Currently, the number of Indonesian fighters who have gone to join Daesh in Syria is about 500 to 700. More than 200 fighters failed to enter Syria and were deported by the Turkish and other transit countries' authorities. Many of them were attracted by the prospect of earning money when they joined Daesh in Syria. As it turned out, Indonesian and other Southeast Asian fighters only carried out peripheral duties in Syria. Many of them worked as kitchen hand staff, in housekeeping, in farming and on other non-military duties. Some of the Syrian returnees stated that they were disappointed with the discrepancies between the campaign (of recruitment) and the reality in Syria.

There are three main leadership groups in Indonesian Daesh. The first group is the Jama'ah Ansharul Khilafah (JAK), coordinated by Aman Abdurrahman. Other leading figures in JAK are Bahrun Naim and Abu Jandal. This group dominated the movements and discourses among Indonesian Daesh. The second group is led by Abdurrahim, a senior teacher from Al Mukmin School Ngruki; he was released from Nusa Kambangan prison in 2014 and coordinated the young intellectual factions of Indonesian Daesh. The third group is Katibah Nusantara (KN), coordinated by BahrumSyah. KN managed the Southeast Asian fighters supporting Daesh.

This chapter is based on more than twenty interviews conducted from 2013 to 2016 with jihadists, scholars and government officers regarding the development of Daesh and the impact on security in Indonesia, and how the government and civil society have responded to the rise of Daesh. It argues that Daesh will strongly threaten security and that there will be an increase in radical jihadism affiliated to Daesh. In general, the Indonesian government has successfully maintained security and prevented violent threats by Daesh. However, it will be challenged by the threat of Syrian returnees in the next decade.

Indonesian Daesh developed its community relatively fast, taking advantage of digital and social media as well as regular meetings conducted in some provinces in Indonesia. They also published several books that are discussed regularly in their circles. Among these books are *Kupas Tuntas Khilafah Islamiyah Data Ilmiah Berdirinya Khilafah Islamiyah* (Discussing Islamic Caliphate Scientific Data of the Foundation of Islamic Caliphate)⁵ and *Kami Jihadis Kalian Teroris Membantah Tuduhan Musuh-musuh Islam* (We are Jihadist You are Terrorists, Opposing to the claims of the enemies of Islam)⁶.

⁵ Fauzan Al-Anshari, Abu Muhammad Al-Januby, Abu Yusuf Al-Indonesiy and Abu Irhab Al-Bimawy, *Kupas Tuntas Khilafah Islamiyah Data Ilmiah Berdirinya Khilafah Islamiyah* (Discussing Islamic Caliphate Scientific Data of the Foundation of Islamic Caliphate), Ciamis, West Java: Anshorullah, 2014.

⁶ Ro'is Abu Syaikat, *Kami Jihadis Kalian Teroris Membantah Tuduhan Musuh-musuh Islam* (We are Jihadist You are Terrorists, Opposing the Claims of the Enemies of Islam), Pustaka: Shoutul Haqq, 2013.

The main resource for the study of circles of Indonesian Daesh is the personal blog of Aman Abdurrahman, the spiritual leader of Daesh in Indonesia. He is currently imprisoned in Nusa Kambangan. He has published, translated and edited articles and books. These include the main articles and speeches of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The blog provides ebooks and articles to download. Some radical school students have downloaded and used materials from the blog for their own discussion circles. One such group of students from Al Mukmin Ngruki school attacked the police in 2014 after discussing and reading the articles from Aman Abdurrahman's blog.⁷ Indonesian Daesh has begun to develop radical jihadist schools and is attempting to follow the footsteps of JI, which have developed more than thirty schools.

This chapter will begin with the January 2016 Thamrin attacks, followed by an analysis of how the Indonesian government and civil society responded to the attacks. Furthermore, it examines the struggle of Daesh in Indonesia after the attacks and the future threat posed by Daesh in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. It argues that countering Daesh threats needs a solid and comprehensive partnership among state and civil society in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. The partnership should encompass strategic and effective approaches, such as a people-focused initiative to oppose any kind of terror, which was shown soon after the Thamrin attacks, and strengthening moderate groups in Southeast Asia and the world.

DAESH AND JAKARTA ATTACK

After the founding of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in January 2014 and the declaration of the caliphate in mid-2014, some groups of Indonesian jihadists declared that they were joining Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Aman Abdurrahman⁸ led the movement and invited other prominent jihadists, including Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the head of Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT). The young fighters of Jama'ah Islamiyah moved to this camp. JAT leaders were in conflict with each other. Many of them then resigned and created Jama'ah Ansharus Syari'ah (JAS). Although Ba'asyir joined Daesh, his sons Abdurrahim Ba'asyir and Abdurrosyid decided to establish JAS. ISIS, which later changed its name to Daesh, developed dramatically in Indonesia. Aman Abdurrahman is the top leader of Daesh of Indonesia, supported by several field commanders: Bahrun Naim, Bahrumisyah and Abu Jandal. All of them are currently in Syria establishing Katibah Nusantara, the coalition of Daesh of Southeast Asia. Santoso aka Abu Wardah, the commander of Eastern Indonesian Mujahidin, is based in Poso, and has also declared his support for Daesh. From 2014 to 2015, the Daesh group killed some police officers

⁷ Author's interviews with students and teachers at Al Mukmin school, August 2014.

⁸ Aman Abdurrahman aka Oman Rochman aka Abu Sulaiman Al-Arkhabily aka the Lion of Faith was born in Cimalaka-Sumedang, West Java on 5 January 1972.

in Poso. However, after about two years of police operations, Santoso was killed on 18 July 2016, and later Basri, deputy commander of Eastern Indonesian Mujahidin, was arrested on 14 September 2016. Santoso's group is very strategic for Indonesian Daesh. It has battled against the police for quite a long period, about two years.

Media reports on Daesh's Thamrin attacks operation on 14 January 2016 stated that it was organised through Daesh in Syria. General Badroin Haiti, head of Indonesian Police, claimed that the operation was coordinated by Bahrun Naim, head of Katibah Nusantara, in Syria.

Jakarta, one of the busiest cities in Southeast Asia, has become the target of terrorist operations in Indonesia. Among the targets of attacks were: Atrium Senen Mall in 2000, Ritz Carlton-J.W. Marriot Hotel in 2003, the Australian Embassy in 2004, Ritz Carlton-J.W. Marriott Hotel in 2009 and Thamrin Street (Sarinah Mall/Starbucks) in 2016. Jama'ah Islamiyah, Southeast Asian Al-Qaeda and Daesh carried out the violent attacks. They shared the same interests, in that the attacks were intended as a form of revenge for perceived actions against oppressed Muslims. Capital cities or big cities are becoming the targets of terrorist attacks, including New York, London, Tokyo, Bangkok and others. As capital cities, they meet the terrorists' objective of trying to kill as many people as possible with minimal operation.

Daesh confirmed that they were responsible for the 14 January 2016 Thamrin attacks operation. Aman Abdurrahman, the spiritual leader of Daesh of Indonesia, claimed, "[T]he operation is just preliminary. More deadly attacks are currently prepared." The statement was posted about six hours after the attacks, on a Telegram channel called Sabranya Ya Aqsa, which now has more than two thousand members. Although the Telegram channel mostly translates news, speeches, pictures, videos and other materials from Arabic to the Indonesian language, it also facilitates communications among Daesh members.

This article will examine the Thamrin attacks and analyse the responses of the Indonesian state and civil society to the attacks. It argues that Indonesians have gotten used to terrorist operations; however, the business community doubts the seriousness of the police and the government to safeguard the interests of international businesses.

THAMRIN AMALIYAT (OPERATION)

Daesh conducted the amaliyat of Thamrin on 14 January 2016. Four terrorists carried out the attacks, which resulted in seven dead, four of whom were the terrorists themselves. They were Afif Sunakim, 34; Dian Joni Kurniadi, 25; Ahmad Muhazin, 25 and Muhammad Ali, 39. The operations are interesting to analyse. Around a month before the operation, in December 2015, Sunakim visited Aman Abdurrahman at Kembang Kuning Nusakambangan prison to seek approval for the operation. Abdurrahman approved it. Sunakim was a masseur of Abdurrahman when he was in Cipinang prison, in

Jakarta, before moving to Nusakambangan. Sunakim and Abdurrahman were arrested due to their involvement at the Aceh training camp. Sunakim learned weapon training in the Aceh camp in 2010.

Sunakim was released in August 2015. He joined the preparation for about four months, from September to December 2015. The preparation included weapon training, map reading, fund raising, and ideological induction. The targets of the attacks were foreigners and police officers. A Canadian citizen, a police officer and a civilian were killed during the attacks. Two terrorists were killed by the suicide bombings. Two others were shot by the police. 23 people were injured.

However, Detachment 88, the Indonesian counter terrorism squad, said that six others related directly to the attack were arrested a few weeks after the operation. The roles played by these six people were: providing funding, fund raising, and logistic support. Indonesian counter terrorism police claimed to have arrested other cells which were planning to carry out other attacks using weapons.⁹

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Head of Police General Badrodin Haiti responded quickly to the attacks. Around 4 pm, five hours after the terrorist operation, General Haiti said that the Daesh was clearly linked to the attack, and that it was controlled by the commander of Katibah Nusantara, Bahrin Naim.¹⁰ Naim was imprisoned in Solo, Central Java for two and a half years in 2010 for illegal possession of firearms and explosives. He was released in 2012 after serving two-third of his total sentence. Naim joined the group of Aman Abdurrahman, and went to Syria in 2014 to join Daesh.

Some analysts have argued that Naim is actually competing with Bahrumisyah and Abu Jandal to assume the leadership of Katibah Nusantara, Southeast Asian Daesh, comprising Daesh fighters from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

The intelligence service realized that there would be attacks from December 2015 to January 2016. However, they failed to detect the cell of Afif due to there being too many cells.¹¹

⁹ Police of Indonesia, interview by author, 10 February 2016.

¹⁰ General Haiti said: "Based on what we have detected, there were orders and funding from there [Syria]" via Bahrin Naim and Abu Jandal. See: "Police confirm Syrian link to terror," *The Jakarta Post*, 16 January 2016, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/01/16/police-confirm-syrian-link-terror-attacks.html> (accessed 15 August 2016). In addition, Gen. Tito Karnavian, chief of the Jakarta Provincial Police and former head of Detachment 88, said that he identified the ring leader of the Thamrin attack group as Bahrin Naim, "Perpetrators Linked to ISIS Leaders, Police Chief Says," *New York Times*, January 14, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/live/jakarta-indonesia-explosions/police-on-islamic-state-link> (accessed 15 August 2016).

¹¹ Police of Indonesia, interview by author, 10 February 2016.

Reacting to the fact that there was consultation for the Thamrin attacks operation provided by Aman Abdurrahman to Afif Sunakim, the government decided to restrict access to the leaders of Daesh in prisons, such as Aman Abdurrahman and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. Abdurrahman was moved from Kembang Kuning prison to Pasir Putih prison of Nusa Kambangan Island, while Ba'asyir was moved from Batu prison to Pasir Putih prison. Both of them are in isolation, allowed very limited access. Other prisoners that were similarly restricted, following Abdurrahman and Ba'asyir, are Rois (Kuningan Australian embassy bombing), Heri Kuncoro and Abrory.

Pasir Putih prison warden Hendra Eka Putra said that Aman Abdurrahman, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Heri Kuncoro, Iwan Darmawan Mutho alias Rois, and Abrory had been moved to isolation cells in Pasir Putih prison. Hendra stated that "the five convicts were still allowed visitors, limited to five family members, but were not allowed to receive packages from visitors in order to avoid communication with radical groups outside the prison".¹²

Ahmad Michdan, head of Muslim Lawyer Team (TPM), which legally assisted Ba'asyir, argued that the treatment of Ba'asyir, an old prisoner, was not appropriate. TPM will report the unfair policy to the parliament, ministries and civil society organisations.¹³

THE RESPONSE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society organizations (CSOs) such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah have shown various responses to the Daesh operations. NU immediately condemned the attacks as violence is against the value of Islam. The head of NU, Said Agil Siraj, asked the police to investigate the attacks and arrest the networks responsible. On the other hand, former head of Muhammadiyah M. Din Syamsuddin questioned the basis for the attacks and claimed that it was a conspiracy operation. The reason for Syamsuddin's argument was that the government had signed an approval for a Freeport contract on the same day of the attack.

¹² Fedina S. Sundaryani. 2016. "Top Terrorists Isolated on Nusakambangan", *The Jakarta Post*, 19 February 2016. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/02/19/top-terrorists-isolated-nusakambangan.html>.

¹³ Ahmad Michdan has assisted Ba'asyir since the 2002 Bali bombing incident. He founded Muslim Lawyer Team (TPM), a team of lawyers who help terrorists during trials and when they are in prisons. To counter the TPM, the police supported Muslim Lawyer Team (TPM) of Poso, headed by Asludin. In some trials, detainees prefer to choose Asludin of TPM of Poso as their lawyer, so as to receive better treatment from the police and to get lighter punishment. About Michdan's statement, see "Innalillahi, Diisolasi, Sel Ustadz Ba'asyir Gelap, Pengapdan Tak Bisa Shalat Jum'at", 17 February 2016, <http://panjimas.com/news/2016/02/17/innalillahi-diisolasi-sel-ustadz-baasyir-gelap-pengap-dan-tak-bisa-shalat-jumat/>.

The disunity of support from CSOs for the counter-terrorism policy will affect the ability of the counter-terrorism police to effectively overcome terrorist attacks and prevent further attacks.

KATIBAH NUSANTARA

Around 100 Daesh fighters from Indonesia and Malaysia established a group called Katibah Nusantara (*Majmua Al Arkhabiliy*) in Shaddadi, Haraqah in Syria in September 2014. It is estimated that more than 1,000 fighters from Southeast Asia have joined Daesh in Syria and Iraq. About 700 of them are from Indonesia. The rest are from Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. Saud Usman Nasution, chief of BNPT, Indonesian Counter Terrorism Agency, said Daesh recruitment from Indonesia jumped by more than three times in four months, from just about 86 in June 2014 to 264 fighters in October 2014.¹⁴

The establishment of KN (Katibah Nusantara) was urgent not just because it facilitated easier communication among fighters from Malay-speaking countries, but was also a recognition by the headquarters of Daesh that Southeast Asia should be a *wilayat* (province) of Daesh. The Thamrin operation of Daesh on 14 January 2016, the first attack coordinated by Daesh in Southeast Asia, is part of the plan by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to enable Southeast Asian Daesh to achieve global recognition.

KN is divided into three geographical leadership regions. KN Central is led by BahrumSyah, who is also currently a commander of Katibah Nusantara. Katibah Masyariq (eastern region) is led by Salim Mubarak At-Tamimi alias Abu Jandal, based in Homs. Katibah Aleppo is led by Abu Abdillah.

In November 2014, the official magazine of Daesh published a welcoming statement from Daesh to international supporters of the caliphate. It stated:

Prior to the announcement of the new wilayat, a number of groups in khurasan, al-Qawqaz, Indonesia, Nigeria, the Philippines, and elsewhere had pledged their allegiance to the Khalifah, and continue to do so daily. The Islamic State announced the acceptance of the bay'at from all of these groups and individuals—may Allah accept their noble oath and keep them firm upon their covenant, free of falter.¹⁵

The acceptance of the oath and bay'at from Southeast Asian fighters and groups of jihadists strengthened the development of Daesh in the region. This threatens

¹⁴ “Alarming rise in support for ISIS in Indonesia, says Counter-Terrorism chief,” *The Straits Times*, 8 December 2014, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/alarming-rise-in-support-for-isis-in-indonesia-says-counter-terrorism-chief> (accessed 15 September 2016).

¹⁵ “Remaining and expanding”, *Dabiq* Issue 5, Muharram 1436, November 2014, p. 24. <https://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-issue-5-remaining-and-expanding.pdf> (accessed 21 February 2016).

regional security. From 2014 to 2015, Daesh operators in Southeast Asia planned attacks in Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia. Unfortunately, Indonesian security services failed to track the overall movements of terrorists. Detachment 88 has arrested more than a hundred Daesh-related terrorists since Daesh's declaration in Indonesia.

In December 2015, Daesh volunteers planned an operation called "Jakarta concert". It adopted the "Paris concert" concept carried out by Daesh's network in Europe. Sidney Jones¹⁶ stated in November 2015 that Bahrun Naim's blog published a reminder to Indonesian Daesh followers to learn and adopt the Paris attack concept for a Daesh operation in Indonesia.

Muhammad Bahrunnaim Anggin alias Naim, was born in Pekalongan on 6 September 1983. He joined JAT in September 2008. First, he joined the cells of Abdullah Sunata; then he joined the Aceh training camp in 2010. Naim was arrested in Surakarta on 9 November 2010 due to possession of weapons and ammunition. He was imprisoned for two years and six months. He was released in 2012. Two years later, he went to Syria to join Daesh. Naim regularly posted his jihad experiences on his personal blog. On his blog, Naim wrote articles concerning manuals for bomb making and bomb operations, the strategy to fight against infidels and an inspiration to adopt the Paris attack in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia. Sidney Jones argued that this blog is not intended for audiences in the Middle East. He focuses on Malay-speaking audiences.

LEADERSHIP RIVALRIES

Inspectorate General Muhammad Tito Karnavian, the Jakarta police chief, said that the person behind the Jakarta attack is Bahrun Naim, head of Katibah Nusantara. Naim coordinated the operation through Syria. On the other hand, Sidney Jones said differently, that Naim is not the commander of KN. Naim tried to gain a promotion to lead KN. Naim competed with Bahrunsyah who is regarded as the commander of KN. It seems the leadership rivalry between them is increasing.¹⁷

The rivalries between Daesh, KN and other terrorist networks in Indonesia have two major implications. Firstly, it breaks the unity and solidity among radical jihadist groups. Potential attacks are thus less threatening. Al-Qaeda (AQ) and Jabhat Al-Nusra

¹⁶ Sidney Jones is Director of Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict in Jakarta.

¹⁷ Callistasia Anggun Wijaya, "Analyzing the Bahrun 'IS' Naim Movement." *The Jakarta Post*, 16 January 2016. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/01/16/analyzing-bahrun-is-naim-movement.html> (accessed 21 February 2016).

(JN) networks in Indonesia are reluctant to have operations in Indonesia.¹⁸ Umar Patek, a senior member of JI involved in the Bali bombing of 2002, argued, “[T]hey do not want to be associated to Daesh which is having attack operations without significant damage.” Umar Patek called the Thamrin attack and Solo bombing a stupid operation with a premature plan.¹⁹ Daesh attempted to attack police and foreigners following the “instruction” from Syria and Nusa Kambangan prison. On the other hand, this operation provoked other jihadist groups to consolidate and make better preparation. New JI, a group of young jihadists, are attempting to revitalize the JI structure to be more effective and efficient. They collected weapons for a big operation. For example, in November 2015, they planned an operation called “Maluku concert”. They targeted Christians in Maluku. It is a continuation of the revenge of religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in 1999-2005.

Secondly, the rivalries impacted the deradicalization programmes coordinated by the Counter Terrorism National Agency. It is harder now for the Indonesian authority to decrease the number of jihadists and to counter radicalism. The number of radical jihadist followers is growing significantly. Not only did Daesh continue breeding new recruits in about thirty JI and Daesh schools²⁰ but also tactically and strategically used social media and blogging to raise more sympathy and fresh blood. Many Daesh jihad

¹⁸ Asep Jaja and Umar Patek, personal interviews in Porong Prison, 30 July 2016. Asep Jaja joined Mujahidin Ambon operations and attempted to attack the Christian village of Loki, West Ceram, Maluku on 15 May 2005. He was sentenced to life in prison. Asep Jaja claimed he was strongly influenced by Soleh, one of Cimanggis group members, led by Aman Abdurrahman, especially on a takfiri thought. Asep Jaja, personal interviews in Porong prison, 20 February 2016. Asep Jaja was a Jihad volunteer in Ambon under the Darul Islam group. He now actively supports prison staff in the deradicalization programme, transforming terrorist prisoners. Among influential people who helped to change his mind and behavior to leave violent thoughts are his wife and particularly his mother, who asked him to stop joining violent groups as soon as he was imprisoned in 2005. However, some of Loki attackers imprisoned like Abdullah Ummamity and Muhammad Syarif Tarabubun joined Daesh and followed the path of Aman Abdurrahman. They condemned the role of Asep Jaja in supporting the Indonesian government on deradicalization and counter-terrorism programmes. Due to their violent jihadist thoughts and threatening behaviors against prison guards, Ummamity and Tarabubun were transferred from Porong prison to Madiun prison and Pamekasan prison respectively. This is the approach by the Indonesian government to separate and isolate Daesh prisoners to different prisons which is effectively to break the unity of Daesh and to reduce their capacity to radicalize other prisoners. Bambang, Porong prison staff, personal interviews in Porong, 30 July 2016.

¹⁹ Umar Patek, personal interviews in Porong prison, 20 February and August 2016.

²⁰ Daesh schools teach radical-jihadi curriculum. The number of Daesh-affiliated schools are around ten. However, some students of about thirty JI-affiliated schools joined Daesh. For example, Wildan, suicide bomber of Daesh in Syria, studied at Al Islam school Lamongan, East Java. Ibnu Masud School, established in 2012 in a poor village of Sukajaya, Bogor, is affiliated to Daesh. Three teachers and a student of the school, Mukhlis Khoirul Rofiq, 22; his brother Muhammad Mufid Murtadho, 15; Risno, 27; and Untung Sugema Mardjuk, 48, left the school, transited in Singapore and planned to go to Syria in February 2016. Another Daesh-affiliated school is Pesantren Ansharullah, led by Fauzan Al Anshari.

volunteers are not associated with or attached to jihadi backgrounds. They joined Daesh after reading various reports and provocative writings on social media and blogs. Aman Abdurrahman's blog has become a main source for young religious circles and cells to "self radicalize" and follow the steps of Abdurrahman against infidel government (*thaghut*). The Christian priest Medan Church bomb attack on 28 August 2016 was carried out by a lone wolf inspired by Daesh social media's provocative reporting from the Syrian war. New self-radicalized cells will challenge deradicalization programmes which have been managed for more than a decade. The Indonesian government has arrested more than a thousand jihadists, from the Bali Bombing in 2002 to Indonesian Daesh jihad volunteers travelling to Syria in 2014-2015. A further challenge is returnees of the Syrian war from Daesh, JN and other groups who will affect regional security in Southeast Asia, Europe and the world.

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Countering the Threats of Daesh in Malaysia

Ahmad El-Muhammady

1. INTRODUCTION

It is reported that between February 2013 to 2015, Malaysian police have arrested 107 individuals for allegedly attempting to join Daesh or Daesh-affiliated groups in Syria and Iraq. In May 2016, four Malaysians appeared in Daesh media *al-Barakah*, burning their passports and declaring war against the Malaysian government. Malaysian authorities believe that they are members of *Katibah Nusantara* which were responsible for the Jakarta attack on 14 January 2016. In June 2016, one Malaysian appeared again in a Daesh-produced video. This time he openly declared war against the Malaysian police and the *taghut* regime, before proceeding to slaughter three individuals suspected of being spies. The police later identified the person as Mohd Rafi Udin, a former member of *Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia* (KMM) and a former Internal Security Act (ISA)¹ detainee. This alarming trend indicates that the Daesh threat is not diminishing despite the fact that they are losing ground in Syria and Iraq. Given the gravity of the issue, this article essentially attempts to discuss four interrelated issues: (1) threats to Malaysia's national security, 1967-2015; (2) the emergence of Daesh-affiliated groups in Malaysia; (3) motivations for Malaysians to join Daesh; and (4) approaches taken by the Malaysian government and civil society in tackling the Daesh threat in Malaysia.

2. THREATS TO MALAYSIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY, 1967-2015

Terrorism and extremist threats are not a new phenomenon in Malaysia. Besides the communist insurgency in Malaya in the 1940s, Malaysia has confronted various forms of security threats emanating from local, regional and international groups operating on Malaysian soil (see Table 1).

* This paper was submitted on 7 August 2016.

¹ The Internal Security Act (ISA). A preventive law that allows Malaysian police to detain any individuals who are deemed to be threats to national security.

Created	Group
1967	Tentera Sabilullah
1968	Gerakan al-Arqam
1971	Golongan Rohaniah
1974	Koperasi Angkatan Revolusi Islam Malaysia
1977	Crypto
1980	Kumpulan Mohd Nasir Islam
1985	Revolusi Islam Ibrahim Libya
1987	Kumpulan Jundullah
1988	Kumpulan Mujahidin Kedah (KMK) Perjuangan Islam Perak (PIP)
1993	Jama'ah Islamiyyah (JI)
2000	Kumpulan al-Maunah
2001	Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM)
2005	Darul Islam (DI) ² Tanzim al-Qaeda Bahagian Asia Tenggara
2013	Tanzim al-Qaeda Malaysia
2014	Briged Khalid al-Walid Darul Islam Malizia (DIM) Briged Daulah Islamiah Arakan Daulah Islamiah
2015	Fisabilillah Daulah Islamiah Malaysia

Table 1 shows the local extremist groups identified by Malaysian police from 1967 until 2015. (Source: Special Branch, Counter-Terrorism Division E8, Royal Malaysia Police, 2016).

The table above shows that from 1967 to 2015, the Special Branch division has identified at least 22 home-grown militant groups of various ideological orientations and motivations. Based on investigations, it was concluded that the emergence of these groups were generated by numerous factors, namely, radical ideology, dissatisfaction towards the political system (which they considered un-Islamic), socialization, personal problems and the widespread usage of new media in the case of Daesh-affiliated groups. Furthermore, it is also important to note that although the element of militancy has existed since 1960s, they often combined it with deviant teachings as part of their ideology. This is observable in the case of Tentera Sabilullah, which was considered the first Islamic-related militant group in Malaysia, Golongan Rohaniah, Crypto, Muhamad Nasir Islam, al-Arqam and al-Maunah and Kumpulan Jundullah in 1987. All of them coalesced deviant teachings with militancy, which makes them more dangerous from both the security and religious points of view.

However, the elements of militancy and radicalism have become more intense as they have established regional and international networking. Two groups stand out as representative of this trend: Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) and Jama'ah

² Darul Islam was originally created in 1942 in Indonesia. But it opened a chapter in Malaysia and operates actively in Borneo.

Islamiyyah (JI). KMM was founded by a former Afghan veteran who fought during the Afghan War against the Soviets. The KMM founder told the author that he managed to pull together many Afghan veterans “who used to fight in actual war and have paramilitary training in Afghanistan” as the founding members of KMM.³ Similarly, this was the case for JI. Even though militancy had already constituted part of JI’s strategy, their contact with Al-Qaeda gave them more ideological and technical backing in mounting deadlier attacks in Southeast Asia. This trend also makes countering terrorism projects more challenging for the law enforcement agencies.

However, despite facing severe security threats, Malaysia’s Special Branch (SB), whose main responsibility is to collect intelligence and protect domestic security, successfully neutralized the threats using various security measures and legal mechanisms, such as the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960. Due to these effective security measures, all militant-oriented groups, such as JI, DI and KMM, were dismantled and their members were detained under the ISA. However, it is erroneous to assume that their ideology is completely eradicated. As one militant told the author, “You can crush our group, but you can’t kill our ideology.”⁴ It is true; the group may change its name, but the idea that served as the basis for their struggle remains. This ideology may resurface again in future. It was not long after the demise of Al-Qaeda and JI in Southeast Asia that another group emerged on the horizon and posed a greater risk to the world. This is the threat of Daesh in Syria and Iraq.

3. THE EMERGENCE OF “DAESH” (IS)-AFFILIATES IN MALAYSIA

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, a number of Malaysians have travelled to Syria secretly to join the uprisings and the awakening movement (*al-sahwah*) against the Syrian regime. They travelled under the guise of tourists, using various transit points to avoid detection to reach Syria. This activity went on undetected for a few months, until the arrest of two Malaysians in Beirut Airport on 18 October 2012. The duo, Mohd Razif and Muhamad Razin Sharhan, were detained by Lebanese authorities while on their way to join Jabhah al-Nusrah, an Al-Qaeda affiliated group in Syria. Under interrogation, both of them admitted that they had participated in usrah (religious classes) sessions in the residence of Yazid Sufaat, a former member of JI, together with Muhammad Helmi, Yazid’s assistant, and Halimah Hussin, a lady who is now a fugitive. Based on this information, Lebanese authorities notified their counterparts in Malaysia. This led to the arrest of Yazid Sufaat, Muhammad Helmi and Halimah

³ Excerpt from the author’s interview with the founder of Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM), May 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

⁴ Excerpt from the author’s interview with a former member of Jama’ah Islamiyyah, May 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

in February 2013.⁵ Since then, Malaysian police has ratcheted up its operations and discovered more militant cells and arrested more people who intended to join militant groups in Syria.

The central question is: how did the influence of Daesh infiltrate into Malaysia? Malaysian authorities believed that the presence of Daesh-affiliated groups in Malaysia originated from two sources:

- (1) former members of Jama'ah Islamiyyah (JI) and Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM), namely Yazid Sufaat and Lotfi Ariffin. Yazid was a former member of JI and Lotfi was a former member of KMM. Both of them were detained under the ISA in 2001.
- (2) local individuals who were influenced and sympathetic to the struggles of the Syrian people. These individuals took the initiative to create their own groups, to raise funds and to recruit new members using social media.

When the Syrian uprising was escalating in 2012, Yazid Sufaat, a former JI member, started to organize weekly usrah in his house in Kuala Lumpur. Among the attendees of the usrah were two young men, Mohd Razif and Muhamad Razin Sharhan, who appeared to be interested and participated to deepen their understanding of Islam. The subjects discussed were selected Qur'anic verses and global Muslim affairs. They had special discussions on the subjects of faith, nullifier of faith, jihad, democracy, current affairs in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt and the need to return to the original teachings of Islam. After attending the usrah several times, these two individuals decided to travel to Syria to join the Syrian uprising. On 18 October 2012, the duo arrived in Beirut International Airport and were taken into custody. Malaysian police later identified them as members of Tanzim al-Qaeda Malaysia (TAQM) and Yazid Sufaat was named as its leader, according to court documents. The arrest of Razif and Razin in Lebanon, which later led to the arrest of their mentor, Yazid, marked the first operation of the Malaysian police against Daesh-affiliated groups in Malaysia.

Unlike Yazid, Lotfi Ariffin, a former member of KMM, was more indirect in his recruitment approaches. There is no evidence showing that Lotfi organized secret usrah like Yazid and recruited young people to join him in Syria. Lotfi, nevertheless, was an avid Facebooker with a large following. Lotfi updated his status on a daily basis regarding his activities in Raqqa. He often posted pictures, videos and short notes on the development of the Syrian struggle. This made him a "mujahidin celebrity" among young and enthusiastic Malaysians, who often expressed their admiration after seeing what Lotfi was doing for the Syrians. It was through this activity that Lotfi managed to influence a number of Malaysians, such as Zainuri Kamaruddin and Zainan Harith,

⁵ Excerpt from the author's interview with a counter-terrorism officer from the Royal Malaysia Police, March 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

both former members of KMM and ISA detainees, to join militant groups in Syria. It is also important to note that, unlike Zainuri and Zainan, Lotfi did not join Daesh. In the author's communication with Lotfi, he refuted the claims that he was a member of Daesh or Jabhah al-Nusrah. In his word, "I neither belong to Jabhah al-Nusrah nor Daesh. I performed jihad for the sake of the Syrians. I do not belong to any groups."⁶ However, Malaysian authorities believe that he worked for Afnad al-Sham, a local group created to fight for the Syrian regime. It is also possible that Zainuri and Zainan Harith were also members of Afnad al-Sham in the beginning, but later shifted their support to Daesh after the death of Lotfi. Zainuri and Zainan later appeared in a Daesh-produced video entitled "Generasi Petempur"⁷, and threatened to return to Malaysia and to overthrow the government of Malaysia.

The second point of infiltration originates from independent individuals who have been influenced by Daesh propaganda and are sympathetic to the Syrians. They took the initiative to set up a group to raise awareness about the plight of the Syrians, raise funds, recruit people and later send them to Syria to join militant groups. It is observed that they are young and social media-savvy and use Facebook, blogs and smartphone applications to spread information and for recruitment purposes. Malaysian police has identified at least four well-structured groups: Revo group (RG), Kumpulan Briged Khalid al-Walid (KBKW), Daulah Islam Malizia (DIM) and Kumpulan Fisabilillah (KF). In addition to these, there have been groups of youth detained in Gunung Nuang and smaller cells detected in the Whatsapp and Telegram conversations of the individuals detained. The names of the groups are: Daulah Islamiyah Malaysia (2015),⁸ al-Qubro Generation, Perintis and Follow the Sunnah group in 2016.⁹

Revolusi Islam

Revolusi Islam, popularly known among its members as "Revo Group", was established by Rohaimi Rahim¹⁰ in May 2014, and is an example of the second category. Rohaimi Rahim was not a member of any terrorist organization prior to his involvement in Revo Group. He used to work in the banking industry and has his own business. According to the interrogation paper, his interest in the Syrian conflict began when he started to watch Youtube videos about the brutalities of the Syrian regime against ordinary Syrians, especially the senseless killings of children, women and the elderly.

⁶ Author's communication with Ust. Lotfi Ariffin in early 2014 before his death on 14 September 2014.

⁷ This video was uploaded on 17 May 2016.

⁸ Daulah Islamiyah Malaysia (2015) is a new group secretly created by pro-IS individuals in Malaysia. It is different from Daulah Islamiah Malizi created in 2014.

⁹ Excerpt from the author's interview with a counter-terrorism officer from the Royal Malaysia Police, March 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

¹⁰ Rohaimi Rahim, 37, hailed from Baling, Kedah, but resided in Kg. Baru, Kuala Lumpur.

Due to sympathy for and a strong belief in Daesh's struggle, Rohaimi set up a website, "Revolusi Islam", using his own money and started posting articles and videos on the Syrian conflict. He also opened a Facebook account using his actual name to add more friends, with the purpose of "raising awareness" about the suffering of the Syrian people. Through Facebook group "Rakyat Malaysia Bersama Revolusi Islam" (Malaysians together with Islamic Revolution), Rohaimi attracted a large following, raised funds for people who wanted to travel to Syria and made arrangements (documentation, ground contacts in Turkey and in Syria). On 13 October 2014, he was arrested in Shah Alam, Selangor together with eleven followers, two of whom had just returned from Syria and a family of five who planned to follow him in the name of *hijrah* (migration) to Daesh-controlled territory.

Kumpulan Briged Khalid al-Walid (KBKW)

Apart from "Revo Group", the police detected another group known as Kumpulan Briged Khalid al-Walid (KBKW) in 2014, led by Mohd Khairil bin Mi. This group is a completely new outfit and had never been on the police's radar, according to a counter-terrorism official.¹¹ The KBKW has 50 members, mostly between 20-30 years old, who have close connections with former members of JI and KMM. They have close ties with the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines and other militant groups operating in southern Thailand, Indonesia and Myanmar, in addition to close affiliations with Jabhah al-Nusrah, and Daesh in Syria. The police found out that they had conducted paramilitary training in various locations in Kuala Kangsar, Taiping, and Ijok, using home-made pump-guns, .22 rifles and Benelli Army 9mm pistols between December 2013 to April 2014. They also learned bomb-making techniques and tested bombs during their training. On 28 April 2014, Mohd Khairil was detained under Security Offences (Special Measure) pending trial and charged under Section 130G (a) Penal Code (Act 574), which carries a maximum sentence of 30 years imprisonment if convicted.

Daulah Islam Malizia (DIM)

In addition, in 2014, Malaysian police identified another Daesh-affiliated group operating in Malaysia. Calling themselves Daulah Islam Malizia (DIM), this group operates with a small membership of five members and worked with regional partner Kumpulan Arakan Daulah Islamiyyah to establish an Islamic state in this region. DIM subscribes to the same ideology as JI, DI and KMM. They used books written by Abu

¹¹ Excerpt from the author's interview with a counter-terrorism officer from the Royal Malaysia Police, March 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

Bakar Ba'asyir and Abu Sulaiman Aman Abdurrahman as reading materials for their members.

Kumpulan Fisabilillah (KF)

Kumpulan Fisabilillah is another outfit affiliated with Daesh in Malaysia. According to Malaysian police, this group is led by Murad Halimuddin and his son Abu Daud Murad Halimuddin. In fact, Murad was a former KMM member and was detained under the ISA in 2001. The police said this group planned to kidnap high-profile Malaysian figures in order to exchange them with individuals detained by the police. They also planned to carry out terror attacks in Jalan Alur, Bukit Bintang commercial district, a government administrative building in Putrajaya and the Carlsberg brewery factory in Selangor. Part of their plan was to rob army and police armoury stores prior to the execution of the said attacks. Murad and Abu Daud were detained by Malaysian police on 5 May 2015 and sentenced to imprisonment for twenty years.

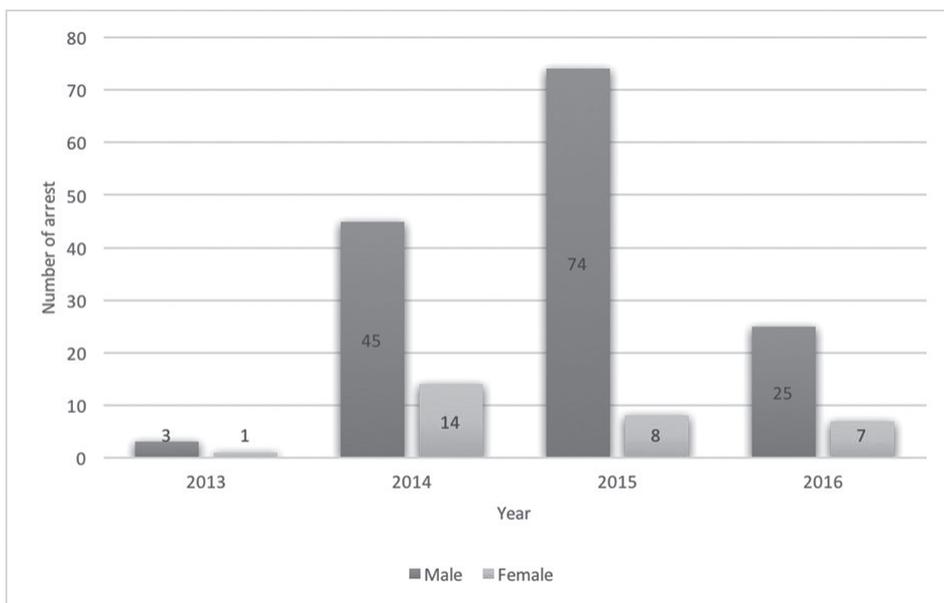
Gunung Nuang Arrest

In April 2015, Malaysian police detected another Daesh-affiliated group, consisting of young people with ages between 17-47. On 25 April 2015, twelve of them trekked Hutan Lipur Gunung Nuang in Ulu Klang with the intention of testing improvised explosive devices (IED). However, their intent was halted when they were ambushed by a tactical team from the counter-terrorism unit in the early morning. Police discovered they were in possession of 27kg of ammonium nitrate, 25kg of potassium nitrate, 40m of black and red wire, two litres of kerosene, a digital weighing scale, a modified motorcycle alarm along with two remote controls, a box of aluminium foil, three PVC pipes, a box full of 2.5cm nails and Daesh flags. Police said the group was capable of making multiple bombs and if all the available materials were combined, it could produce a bomb with a 500m blast radius. Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar said the terror cell was planning to launch attacks on a few strategic locations and government infrastructure in the Klang Valley. He further stated, "We believe the suspects were heeding the call of senior Daesh leaders in Syria for them to attack Muslim countries which are deemed secular. The attacks are also meant as revenge and retaliation for their comrades who have been detained." All the members were detained under Security Offences (Special Measures Act) (SOSMA).¹²

Thus, from February 2013 to 2015, Malaysian police has arrested 107 individuals across Malaysia, 146 male and 31 female (see Graph 1). The majority of them are between 18-40 years old (80 persons), followed by individuals above 40 (15 persons), below 18 (7 persons) and below 12 (5 persons) (see Graph 2). Most of them are working

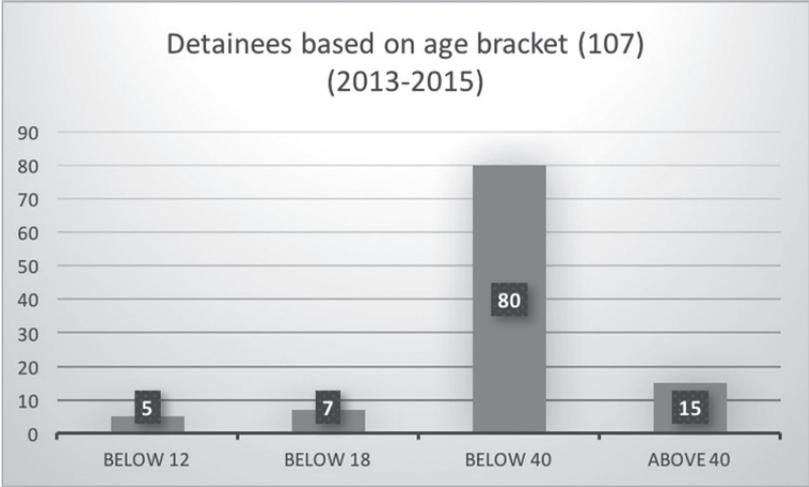
¹² Farik Zolkepli, "Suspected militants nabbed while they were making bombs", *The Star*, 27 April 2015.

in the private sector (41%), followed by unemployed (22%) and self-employed (21%). Students and government officers constituted 8% respectively including civil servants of various positions from the decision-making level to ordinary officers.¹³ The involvement of Malaysians in supporting Daesh-affiliated groups is not only limited to civilians. In late 2015, Malaysian police discovered that some military personnel and one female police officer were involved in supporting militant activities. The Ministry of Defence also confirmed that seven of its personnel were detained by the counter-terrorism squad due to their involvement in militancy. The arrest of security personnel is giving us a strong signal that the Daesh-affiliated ideology has penetrated deeper into Malaysian society.



Graph 1 shows the statistics of arrests from 2013 to April 2016. (Source: Special Branch, Counter-Terrorism Division E8, Royal Malaysia Police, 2016).

¹³ Based on the data made available to the author by the Special Branch, Counter-Terrorism Division E8, Royal Malaysia Police, 2016.



Graph 2 shows the age bracket of 107 detainees arrested from 2013 to June 2015. (Source: Special Branch, Counter-Terrorism Division E8, Royal Malaysia Police, 2015).

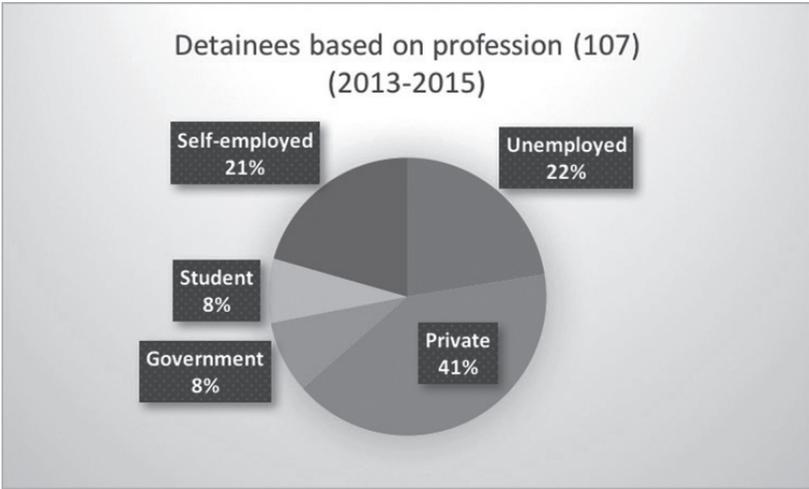


Chart 1 shows 107 Malaysian detainees based on their profession from 2013-2015. (Source: Special Branch, Counter-Terrorism Division E8, Royal Malaysia Police, 2015).

4. WHY ARE MALAYSIANS JOINING DAESH?: THE FOUR NARRATIVES

There have been numerous theories developed to explain the phenomenon of radicalization that has occurred, resulting from the conflict in Syria and Iraq, precisely due to Daesh propaganda. This paper does not employ any theories to explain the radicalization phenomenon in Malaysia. The author believes that the best way to find out why

individuals choose to join Daesh or become radicalized is by interviewing the militant detainees themselves and asking hard questions: why did they choose to join Daesh and how did they get radicalized? Based on the author's interviews with 35 detainees who are still in detention or were released due to lack of evidence, four recurrent themes and narratives emerged from the conversations.¹⁴ Meaning, these 35 individuals cited various reasons, motivations and justifications as the basis for their decision to join Daesh-affiliated groups in Malaysia. These four narratives are: religious narratives, political narratives, personal narratives and supportive narratives.

4.1. Religious narratives

In this context, religious narratives refer to constructed stories used by the detainees to justify their association with militant groups, using Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions (*hadith*), prophetic story (*sirah*), and religious terms as points of reference in their arguments. For instance, when asked the reason why they wanted to join a militant group in Syria, they often argued that it is a religious obligation (*fardhu ayn*) for Muslims to defend the oppressed and weak Muslims (*mustad'afin*), in this case the Sunni Syrians from the tyrant regime (*taghut*) which has killed thousands of Syrians. They argue nobody would be helping them other than Muslims themselves. In addition, they believe that this act is considered jihad in Islam, and jihad defending Islam and Muslims are commendable in the eyes of God.¹⁵ Religious narratives are often used by religious-educated individuals such as Lotfi Ariffin and very much less among the non-religious-educated individuals.

4.2. Political narratives

The second form of narratives employed by the detainees is narratives with political tones. In fact, political narratives become more powerful when they are fused together with religious narratives. Citing the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 as the basis for the disintegration of the Ottoman Caliphate and the creation of nation states afterwards, they argued that in the past, Muslims' ummah was governed by the Caliphate system for more than five hundred years before the arrival of Western colonizers. They often used the narrative that "Western colonizers not only plundered the wealth of the ummah but also flattened the entire caliphate and established nation states upon the ashes of the caliphate's destruction."¹⁶ The nature of domestic politics was also cited as a motivating factor for them to leave Malaysia. For them, the ruling government is not Islamic but

¹⁴ The author was given the opportunity to interview the detainees in the detention centre and during the rehabilitation programme organized by the Malaysian police between 2013-2015.

¹⁵ Excerpt of author's interview with Malaysian detainees in Kuala Lumpur, June-December 2014.

¹⁶ Excerpt of author's interview with Malaysian detainees in Kuala Lumpur, June-December 2014.

purely secular in philosophy and practice, mainly because they failed to implement Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) in the country. Corruption and social ills are rampant. They even go to the extent of accusing the state and anyone who participates in the democratic process as being apostate.¹⁷

4.3. Personal narratives

Another form of narrative that emerged from the conversations is rather personal in nature. Searching for meaning, identity, transition and love in life have been cited by some detainees as the basis and motivation for their migration to Syria. A female detainee was asked by the author regarding the reason for her decision to travel to Syria; to which she responded, “It is personal!” Police later discovered that she had already married a Moroccan fighter in Syria via Skype and was determined to run away from home to be with her “husband”.¹⁸ Personal narratives were used mostly by young people who faced an identity crisis, a family problem, or financial pressures due to unemployment and desired a quick fix to any problem in life. Based on the author’s observations, personal narratives will be more powerful and enriching when they are combined with the religious and political narratives discussed above.

4.4. Supportive narratives

Almost all detainees cited sympathy as one of the main reasons why they wanted to join a militant group in Syria. We can call this trend “sympathetic radicalization”. Images and videos portrayed on the Internet and social media cause significant impact on viewers. These images arouse the sense of solidarity and *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) with their co-religionists in Syria. The fact of Sunni-Shia clashes in Iraq and Syria for example complicates the problem further. Thus, the narrative will always be: “The Shia kill the Sunnis, therefore it is our duty to defend them.” When these four narratives are combined together, it generates a powerful motivation for the affected individuals to make life-changing decisions to travel to Syria or at least to lend their moral support and give financial contributions.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA, THE INTERNET AND SMARTPHONES

Unlike JI, Daesh has capitalized on the Internet and social media to propagate their narratives and project their image as the saviour for Muslims. They went to the extent of developing a new doctrine of jihad which they termed as “jihad media” (*al-'ilam al jihadi*) and called people from all over the world to participate in the global jihad in

¹⁷ Excerpt of author’s interview with Malaysian detainees in Kuala Lumpur, June-December 2014.

¹⁸ Excerpt of author’s interview with female detainee in Kuala Lumpur, February 2015.

social media. Writing in 2012, Abu Sa'd al-'Amili noted, "The internet networks were invented by the enemy as a tool for sorcery...but these invisible soldiers right away seized and triggered those weapons and immediately shot right back at the necks of the enemies of Allah. The invisible soldiers changed the internet network to become a backfired weapon that terrifies the enemies of Allah, changing the activities of the war and killing off the goals proclaimed by their institutions which, despite looking strong in the eyes of the majority of mankind, but in truth are weak."¹⁹

Daesh recognizes the efficacy of the Internet and social media in winning the "war of hearts and minds." For this reason, Daesh has directly and indirectly recruited people from across the world to be their cyber troopers, whose main duty is to propagate and defend Daesh from the continuous attacks of its detractors. In Malaysia, all individuals the author interviewed admitted that they were recruited online before meeting the recruiter in person. As one detainee said, "[A]ll begin with the Internet and social media." This detainee recounted how the recruitment process occurred before the actual meeting took place. He said:

My interest in Syrian issue begin when someone in the Facebook shared picture of a Syrian girl who died as a result of bombing. According to the caption, the girl was killed when Syrian army bombed her village and wiped out her entire family including herself. From that point, I started to read more in the news and follow one Facebooker who always update on the Syrian war. Every time he posted a new picture or news item, I will "Like" the items. Later, the administrator of the Facebook contacted me and asked whether or not I am interested to join "Closed Group" related to Syrian issue. I quickly agreed. In this group, I started to have more friends, like-minded ones and talk openly about the issue. Several weeks later, the admin invited me for a face-to-face meeting to discuss more secretive issue on Syria. I went to the meeting. It is here that I was arrested by the police.

Undeniably, social media, the Internet and smartphone applications play an important role in the recruitment process. Powerful images, videos, and captions that come together with the pictures touch the heart of viewers. What is more worrying is that the majority of the users are the youth. This explains the fact that the majority of the people detained are between 18-40 years old, i.e., 80 out of 107 individuals. It is also reported that some Malaysians who are already in Syria approached young girls via Facebook and persuaded them to go to Syria as part of jihad. They even told the girls to disobey their parents if they disallow them to leave Malaysia. The argument used was: "There is no need to ask permission for things that is already obligatory (*wajib*) such as prayer."²⁰

¹⁹ Abu Sa'd al-'Amili, "Jihādī Media Has Abated, But It Does Not Die", 2012, <http://jihadology.net/2012/04/01/new-article-from-abu-sad-al-amili-jihadi-media-has-abated-but-it-does-not-die/>.

²⁰ Quoted from excerpt of Facebook's Personal Message conversation between IS recruiter with Malaysian girl in author's personal collection, March 2014.

Another statement used was: “Now the Caliph al-Baghdadi has already issued a fatwa asking all Muslims to join him under the new caliphate. This order needs to be obeyed by all Muslims.”²¹

6. COUNTERING THE THREATS OF DAESH-AFFILIATED GROUPS IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia’s approach in countering the Daesh threats is multifaceted. It includes the application of legal, rehabilitative and security approaches, a public awareness campaign for university students, school children and youth leaders, as well as regional and international cooperation. Operationally, Malaysia has adopted the “National Approach”, with wide-ranging participation from all government agencies, civil society organisations, educational institutions, religious authorities, the media, community leaders and the public in general. This approach is very similar to the British’s “united front”, created to fight the communist insurgency in Malaya in the 1940s, which involved security forces and the public in general.²² But, the principal agency in countering the Daesh threat remains the Special Branch (Counter-Terrorism Division E8), which collects intelligence, makes arrests, conducts investigation and prepares investigation papers for the attorney general office for prosecution.

6.1. Legislative approach

Since independence, Malaysia has relied on a controversial law, the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960, to deal with terrorism threats. Despite being criticized as a “draconian law” for its “detention without trial” provision, this law has been used to deal effectively with the communist insurgency, terrorist groups, religious deviants, and racism, including for political purposes. All members of militant groups, such as Jama’ah Islamiyyah, Darul Islam, and Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia, including followers of deviant teachings, were detained and rehabilitated during their detention under this law. However, due to continuous political pressure, this law was repealed in 2012 and has been replaced with a new piece of legislation known as the Security Offences (Special Measure) Act 2012 or SOSMA.

The introduction of SOSMA has taken away the “detention without trial” provision. SOSMA requires the authorities to come up with concrete evidence, and not simply detain a person on suspicion of subscribing to a radical ideology. This makes police work more challenging and time consuming, to find more evidence and at the same

²¹ Quoted from excerpt of Facebook’s Personal Message conversation between IS recruiter with Malaysian girl in author’s personal collection, March 2014.

²² Excerpt of author’s interview with former operative during communist insurgency in Kuala Lumpur, March 2014.

time prevent terrorist attacks. SOSMA was first used in Yazid Sufaat's case in March 2013 on the charge of promoting terrorism against the Syrian people and for being a member of Tanzim al-Qaeda Malaysia. But the Kuala Lumpur High Court freed Yazid and two others due to some technical matters. Yazid and Hilmi were rearrested a week later and charged again under SOSMA, together with Section 130KA (Act 574) of the Penal Code.

Given the limitation of SOSMA, especially after its first use in the Yazid Sufaat case in 2013, the Malaysian government has introduced several pieces of legislation to deal with the emerging threats of terrorism, especially the Daesh threat. On 7 April 2015, the government introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) 2015. It is the law that enables the authorities to detain suspected terrorists for a period of two years without judicial review. The POTA case is being presented in normal court but before the board consisting of five members. It is a powerful preventive law that some claimed mirrors the ISA. The introduction of POTA 2015 coincided with an increased number of arrests in Malaysia for attempting to join Daesh. In 2015, the police detained 82 individuals as compared with 59 individuals in 2014 and only 2 persons in 2013. This move indicates the severity of the Daesh threat and Malaysia's commitment to safeguarding its security against terrorist threats.

In addition to this, in December 2015, the Malaysian government introduced the National Security Council (NSC) Bill. The law empowers the authorities, *inter alia*, with "wide-ranging powers in designated 'security zones' within which authorities would have wide powers of arrest, search and seizure without a warrant."²³ For the Malaysian government, the rationale of this law is to enable it to effectively counter the emerging threats of non-state actors such as Daesh. Despite facing criticism from the opposition and human rights activists, the law was approved by parliament on 3 December 2015.

6.2. Rehabilitative approach

A rehabilitation programme for militant detainees has been implemented since the 9/11 attacks in 2001. In essence, the programme is meant to deradicalize ideologically driven individuals from extremist thoughts and behaviours, and re-educate them with mainstream values suitable for Malaysian society. This programme also includes financial assistance and continuous monitoring after their release from detention. In simple terms, the rehabilitation programme in Malaysia combines the use of hard and soft approaches with the ultimate aim of preventing individuals from getting involved again in terrorist activities and threatening Malaysia's security. Malaysian police claimed that

²³ Prashanth Parameswaran, "Malaysia Passes Controversial National Security Law: The National Security Council bill is another step closer to becoming a reality", December 24, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/malaysia-passes-controversial-national-security-law/> (accessed on 9 June 2016).

this programme was a great success due to a low rate of recidivism. The Malaysian police has identified that only six persons have returned to terrorist activities. Some of them joined Daesh in Syria.²⁴

Furthermore, their involvement in terrorist activities only took place after the repeal of the ISA and the Syrian conflict erupted. This means that there are external and internal factors that pushed and pulled them to rejoin terrorist activities. The majority of militants who went through the programme did not subsequently become involved in terrorism or tried to join militant groups, with the exception of a few. Most preferred a quiet life and distanced themselves from extremist behaviours. The author knows many former militants who went through the programme personally. All of them expressed an unfavourable view of terrorist acts committed in the name of Islam.

Despite many criticisms, Malaysia remains committed to the concept of a rehabilitation programme, because it is a necessity. It is necessary to engage with ideologically driven individuals and offer them an alternative worldview while they are under detention. Admittedly, changing a terrorist mindset is difficult, but it is not impossible. Based on the author's experience rehabilitating JI and DI detainees, they can be classified into three categories.

In the first category are individuals who are very receptive to an alternative worldview and ready to change their behaviour. They demonstrate a willingness to cooperate and a passion to learn the correct understanding of Islam. They are curious, inquisitive and highly engaging in discussions. At the end, they give up extremist thoughts and work together with the authorities to enlighten their terrorist friends. The percentage of this category is extremely low.

In the second category are individuals who are receptive to a moderate worldview, yet at the same time still believe in the legitimacy of their struggle, such as the urgency of jihad in the face of foreign occupation and helping their Muslim brothers in jihad activities. This means they may give up subscribing to terrorism or committing violent acts against others, but still believe in some part of their ideology. The bottom line is that they renounce terrorism and violent acts despite retaining some radical ideologies. This category constitutes the majority of detainees the author has come across. They prefer a quiet life and go about their lives as ordinary citizens. In addition, the monitoring system put in place by the Malaysian police further convinced them that rejoining terrorist activities was not an option. In the author's opinion, they have a fifty-fifty chance of rejoining militancy without proper monitoring or being pulled strongly by external factors.

In the third category are individuals who are totally repulsive to suggestions or discussions. They are the "hardcore" militants who not only reject a moderate worldview, they even try to counter-argue with the rehabilitation panel to defend the correctness

²⁴ Excerpt from the author's interview with a counter-terrorism officer from the Royal Malaysia Police, March 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

and legitimacy of their ideology. This type of militants is “hard to bend”, commented one rehabilitation panel. In their outward behaviour, they prefer to be quiet rather than ask questions during rehabilitation sessions. They talk only when they have a point to counter-argue with the rehabilitation panel. One of them said, “We pretend to accept even though we disagree with them.” This category of militant also constitutes the minority. They have a high likelihood of rejoining militancy. What stops them from rejoining is the legal restraint and constant monitoring by Malaysian police.

The rehabilitation programme is still active today and it has been implemented to deal with Daesh detainees. The introduction of SOSMA in 2012 gives a new dimension to the rehabilitation programme. During the ISA days, rehabilitation was implemented based on “trial and error”. But SOSMA requires a more well-structured programme with proper modules and a rehabilitation team. In January 2016, the Ministry of Home Affairs launched its rehabilitation module, entitled *Integrated Rehabilitation Module for Detainees: Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) 2015*, during the two-day International Conference on Deradicalisation and Countering Violent Extremism held in Kuala Lumpur. This module is considered the most comprehensive rehabilitation module due to the wide-ranging scope covered in the programme. It is also the first time Malaysia has made public this kind of document.

6.3. Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Programmes

Besides tackling the “certified militants”, Malaysia has also taken the initiative to insulate the public, especially the youth, from being affected or exposed to extremist ideologies. To achieve this objective, a public awareness campaign was launched to inform the public about the dangerous ideology and threats of Daesh. In the past, this programme, which is part of the CVE programme, was initiated by the Special Branch (Counter-Terrorism Division E8), given its jurisdiction to deal with terrorism issues. Now, the religious authorities and civil society organisations also participate in the CVE programmes.

At the national level, the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) has set up a cross-agency committee, known as the Jihad Concept Explanation Action Committee, to address misconceptions about jihad. The Jihad committee is made up of representatives from six agencies: the Home Ministry’s Malaysian Civil Defence Department, Prime Minister Department’s National Security Council (NSC), police force, Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), Al-Hijrah Media Corp and Institute of Islamic Strategic Research Malaysia (IKSIM). The state’s religious department and office of Mufti at the state and federal level also participated in the programme to raise awareness on security issues, misconceptions of jihad and the need to embrace mainstream Islam.

Apart from state-driven initiatives, civil society organisations, such as Global Movement of Moderates (GMM), Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM), Malaysia Lifeline

for Syria, and Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) just to name a few, have also come forward to help the authorities in countering extremist narratives. They organize public talks, produce materials, and created posters and short videos with the purpose of raising awareness and prevention. Realizing that Daesh-affiliated groups in Malaysia were also targeting university students, the government has instructed all educational institutions to be wary and to take immediate actions if they find any student involved in any manner with elements of militancy. Eight out of the 177 individuals detained by Malaysian police since 2013 to 2016 were students in private and public universities. One of them attended tahfiz school in Selangor.²⁵

The growing threat of Daesh has become a cause for concern to non-Muslims in Malaysia. Daesh's intolerance of other faiths is a known fact. The recent attack on the Movida nightclub in Puchong in June 2016 is a case in point. Thus, their participation in the CVE programmes is also vital. However, given the sensitivity of the issue, which involves the religion of Islam, their participation in countering Daesh is limited to raising awareness, conducting academic research, organizing talks and engaging with Muslim civil society for a better understanding of the issue. The public talks on Daesh which were organized by Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia, Sunway University and Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) last year are examples of this initiative.

6.4. Security Measures and International Cooperation

Countering terrorism threats needs to go beyond rhetoric and words. More importantly, it requires tangible action and technical capabilities, especially when facing adaptive terrorist organizations like Daesh. Thus, enhancing security measures, especially at the porous borders, are important. There are three phases of the Daesh threat in Malaysia: the first phase is people travelling to the conflict zone; the second phase is the return of Malaysian foreign fighters; the third phase is the actual attack. Now, we are facing the second phase, that is, the possibility of people returning from Syria. Returning to Malaysia requires a passport. The Malaysian authorities are reported to have cancelled the passports of all identified Malaysians in Syria so as to make their return impossible.²⁶ However, it is also possible to assume that they might acquire fake passports and return to Malaysia secretly to stage an attack. Therefore, security measures at the border needs to be tightened, because passport fraud, lax immigration procedures, lack of proper training and limited technical capabilities contribute to creating domestic security threats. Equally important is close cooperation with friendly intelligence services at the regional and international levels. In this aspect, Malaysia has established

²⁵ Excerpt from the author's interview with a counter-terrorism officer from the Royal Malaysia Police, March 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

²⁶ Excerpt from the author's interview with a counter-terrorism officer from the Royal Malaysia Police, March 2016, Kuala Lumpur.

close cooperation with friendly intelligence services at both levels, manifested in the form of intelligence-sharing and technical training with their counterparts. In fact, it was intelligence-sharing with friendly intelligence services that led to the arrest of Yazid Sufaat in 2013.

CONCLUSION

The terrorism threat is not new to Malaysia. Since 1967, Malaysia has confronted various forms of terrorism threats from home-grown, regional and international groups. Despite facing severe security threats, the judicious use of hard and soft approaches has successfully safeguarded Malaysia from being the victim of terrorist attacks. Now, Daesh poses a new threat to Malaysia. Nearly 200 individuals have been arrested by Malaysian police for attempting to join Daesh in Syria since 2013. Daesh's creativity in using social media as a tool of recruitment has been phenomenal. To counter the rise of Daesh-affiliated groups, Malaysia has adopted a multifaceted approach, encompassing legal and rehabilitative approaches, combined with countering violent extremism (CVE) programmes and enhancing security measures and international cooperation with friendly intelligence services. This so-called "National Approach", due to wide-ranging participation from various parties, has curtailed the growth of Daesh domestically. Yet it is too early to call it a success because there is no shortcut to victory against the spectre of terrorism.

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The Influence of Daesh in the Philippines

Vanessa Panes

INTRODUCTION

In Southeast Asia, Al-Qaeda-centric threat groups are being supplanted by Daesh-centric threat groups and the Philippines is no exception. Unless the Government of the Philippines dismantles the insurgent and terrorist infrastructure in its south, Daesh is likely to create a Daesh branch in the Philippines and declare Mindanao a Wilayat (province) in 2016. After a year-long discussion between the local groups that pledged allegiance to the self-appointed Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Ahus Shura (council) appointed Isnilon Totoni Hapilon, the leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Basilan, as the overall leader of Daesh in the Philippines. Referring to him as “Sheikh Mujahid Abu Abdullah Al-Filipini”, a Daesh official organ, Al-Naba, reported the unification of the groups (“battalions”) of god’s fighters (“mujahidin”). According to a commentary from BenarNews in January 2016, Al-Naba reported that Daesh Philippines leader Ustaz Isnilon Hapilon is “one of the senior figures of the Mujahideen in the Philippines. His jihad against the Crusaders began more than 20 years ago when he was a leader in the Abdul Razaq Abu Bakr Al-Janjalani Movement, commonly known as Abu Sayyaf Group. He was the Amir of Abu Sayyaf Group in Basilan for five years before he became the deputy leader for six years.”

Daesh has told other jihadist groups worldwide that they must accept its supreme authority; as in the case of the Philippines, Daesh has been successful in gaining support. Daesh’s choice of a highly experienced and notorious leader to lead the Daesh province in the Philippines presents a long-term threat to the stability and security in the country and beyond.

THE CONTEXT

It has been known that Daesh has already spread ideological and operational influence in Southeast Asia, particularly in Muslim-majority states such as Malaysia and Indonesia. The Philippines, a country known to have a long history of Islamist

* This paper was submitted on 1 September 2016.

extremism carried out by militant entities based mostly in its southern region, is now likely to be deemed next on the list. As portrayed in videos released back in 2014 by threat groups operating in the Philippines, Daesh has followers among the Muslim Filipinos in the country. Several Islamic groups that have performed a Bay'ah, an oath of allegiance, indicated this.

Through the years, Muslim rebel groups have thrived in the Philippines, fighting for their cause. Some hungered for autonomy, while others wanted to establish an independent Islamic State. With Daesh's capability of connecting its ideologies with those of local movements, Daesh has drawn groups to join their cause. As the presence of Daesh in Southeast Asia continues to grow, an association of the terror groups in the Philippines with Daesh would further amplify the already alarming threat posed by the continued global expansion of the group.

Among the Philippine-based jihadist groups that have already pledged allegiance to Daesh are four active terrorist groups in the Philippines; the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Ansar Al-Khilafah which are all based in the southern Philippines. The ASG, headed by the proclaimed Daesh leader in the Philippines, Isnilon Hapilon, pledged loyalty in July 2014 while Ansar Al-Khilafah, BIFF, and JI similarly gave their oath of allegiance in August 2014.

ABU SAYYAF GROUP (ASG)

Considered as the most violent Muslim separatist groups in the Philippines in present times, the Abu Sayyaf Group is known for committing notorious and extremist acts. A militant group headed by Isnilon Totoni Hapilon, its actions have arguably amplified since its pledge of fealty to Daesh. Recently, the group reportedly beheaded a Canadian hostage named John Ridsdel after the lapse in deadline for ransom payment. Ridsdel was abducted by the ASG in September 2015, along with fellow Canadian tourist Robert Hall, Norwegian resort manager Kjartan Sekkingstad, and Filipina Marites Flor. In June 2016, Rappler.com reported that Hall had also been beheaded after the deadline for ransom payment passed.¹

According to a report from Rappler.com in April 2016, the Abu Sayyaf Group continues to hold at least twenty-two foreign hostages in Sulu, Philippines.² The beheadings of the Canadians were strongly condemned by the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs. The security forces made a vow to hunt down and neutralize the criminals in full force, and ensure that the lives of the remaining hostages will not

¹ "Abu Sayyaf beheads another Canadian hostage". 13 June 2016. Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/136282-abu-sayyaf-beheads-canadian-hostage-robert-hall>.

² Emaquel, P. II. 26 April 2016. "Philippines condemns 'inhuman' beheading of Canadian". Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/130834-philippines-condemns-beheading-canadian>.

be put to further harm. Furthermore, in a report from Rappler.com, former Philippine president Benigno Aquino III expressed in a speech the state's devotion to neutralizing the terror group, reassuring the public that the "full resources of the state" were being used in the efforts.³

Aside from the beheadings, the Abu Sayyaf abducted ten Indonesian nationals on 26 March 2016. According to a report from CNN Philippines on May 2016, the local government, with the help of the Moro National Liberation Front—also a militant group—engaged in talks with the Abu Sayyaf concerning the release of the hostages.⁴ The hostages were freed after six days of captivity.

Besides kidnapping for ransom, the ASG is known to constantly engage in fire-fights with military forces. On 9 April 2016 the Abu Sayyaf reportedly ambushed a group of military men on Basilan island, killing nineteen soldiers and injuring fifty more. A report from BBC News on April 2016 said that at least four soldiers were beheaded in the clash with the militants.⁵ Abu Sayyaf Group senior leader Isnilon Hapilon and a Daesh-linked faction of ASG group known as Jundul Khilafah claimed responsibility for the attack.⁶

In August 2016, fifteen soldiers and at least thirty ASG members were killed while 29 soldiers and 11 ASG fighters were wounded within four days in a series of clashes between the ASG and government forces in Patikul, Sulu, according to a report from CNN Philippines. Four clashes between the government forces and ASG fighters occurred from August 26 to 29.⁷ One of the deadly clashes coincided with the Philippines's commemoration of National Heroes Day.

Recently, the Abu Sayyaf Group claimed responsibility for an explosion at a night market in Davao City on 2 September 2016. According to a report from Rappler.com, the ASG through its spokesperson Abu Rami claimed responsibility for the blast that killed 14 people and injured 68 more.⁸ Following the explosion, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte declared a state of lawlessness across the country.

³ "Aquino: Abu Sayyaf plotted to kidnap Pacquiao, Kris". 27 April 2016. Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/130978-aquino-abu-sayyaf-plotted-kidnap-pacquiao-kris>.

⁴ Cahiles, G. 1 May 2016. "Abu Sayyaf releases 10 Indonesian hostages". CNN Philippines. <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2016/05/01/abu-sayyaf-group-asg-releases-10-indonesian-hostages.html>.

⁵ "Philippines: 18 soldiers dead in clashes with Abu Sayyaf militants". 10 April 2016. BBC News. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36008645>.

⁶ ASG has been divided into two factions—Harakatul Islamia and Jundul Tawhid. In March 2016, Jundul Tawhid in a video released online pledged allegiance to Hapilon, the IS' self-proclaimed caliph, under Jundul Khilafah (JK) in the Philippines. See more at <http://www.manilatimes.net/jihadists-own-up-to-basilan-attack/255710/>.

⁷ Santos, E. 31 August 2016. "Heroes Day clashes: 15 soldiers, at least 4 Abu Sayyaf members killed". CNN Philippines. <http://cnnphilippines.com/regional/2016/08/30/Soldiers-Abu-Sayyaf-killed-in-Sulu.html>.

⁸ "Abu Sayyaf claims responsibility for Davao blast—report". 3 September 2016. Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/145045-abu-sayyaf-responsibility-davao-explosion>.

ANSAR AL-KHILAFAH IN THE PHILIPPINES (AKP)

The Ansar Al-Khilafah pledged allegiance to Daesh and to its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, on 13 August 2014 through a video released online. The group, allegedly led by Mohammad Jaafar Maaguid, claims to hold sway in the Saranggani province, and is distinct from the other Muslim groups in central and western Mindanao. According to sources, AKP activities are aimed mainly at generating profits. They extort local farmers using the threat of improvised explosive device attacks. Unlike other Islamist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, AKP is not known to engage in armed activities against either military or civilian targets.

On 26 November 2015, a joint law enforcement operation by the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Marine Corps was carried out in the town of Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat province. Eight members of the AKP were killed. It was then revealed that it was charges of banditry, not terrorist acts, which had led the PNP to launch an operation against the group.

BANGSAMORO ISLAMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS (BIFF)

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters is a breakaway group that has been disowned by its vanguard, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.⁹ It declared that it would continue to fight for a separate Islamic state in the southern part of the Philippines, and denied any possibility of a truce with the Philippine government. Previously headed by its founder Ameril Umbra Kato until his death in 2015, the BIFF pledged loyalty to Daesh in a video released in August 2014, together with the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

The BIFF spokesman later confirmed that the group does have an alliance with the notorious Daesh and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The spokesman was also reported to have said that although the BIFF had no plans to impose a strict brand of radical Islam, it would be willing to help Daesh should the need arise.

The BIFF is known for terrorizing civilian communities. In December 2015, fourteen people were killed when suspected BIFF gunmen launched at least eight attacks on three different provinces on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Mindanao. Aside from this, the BIFF is also known to engage in armed activities against the military. In February 2016, three military personnel were injured while three BIFF fighters were killed in clashes that took place in at least four villages in Datu Salibo, Maguindanao,

⁹ The Moro Islamic Liberation Front is the biggest rebel group in the Philippines. In March 2014, MILF signed a peace agreement with the Philippine government. BIFF, however, refused peace talks and preferred to continue its campaign to set up an Islamic state in the southern region of the country.

according to a report from Rappler.com.¹⁰ The clashes took place after the BIFF members attacked a bridge construction project. Following the clashes, a high-ranking military personnel noted that the government forces were expecting longer firefights with the rebel group.

Also in February 2016, three civilians were killed and three more were wounded in a roadside bomb explosion in Maguindanao. According to Rappler.com, a report from the provincial police said that the explosive device was intended to target military convoys, but detonated when a van with civilians aboard drove through.¹¹

On 4 March 2016, suspected BIFF gunmen detonated a roadside improvised explosive device, injuring two policemen.¹² In July 2016, five BIFF fighters were killed while two military soldiers were injured in clashes that took place when BIFF bandits attacked military forces in Datu Unsay, Maguindanao. In the midst of the clash, a 14-year-old resident of the area was accidentally killed by a BIFF sniper.¹³

JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH (JI)

Jemaah Islamiyah is a militant Islamist group with links to Al-Qaeda. The group operates across Southeast Asia and aims to establish an Islamic fundamentalist state in the region. It has operational cells in Malaysia, Indonesia as well as in the Philippines. According to Terrorism and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), there is a resurgence of JI activity particularly in Indonesia and it seems to be attributed to the Daesh recruitment drive. Allegedly led by Abu Bakar Bashir, the group's spiritual leader and co-founder, JI pledged allegiance to Daesh in 2014, shortly after the creation of the caliphate was announced by its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. JI members are known to be currently hiding with the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Other organizations in the region, Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), Mujahidin Indonesian Timor (MIT), Dawla Islamiyah, and Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM), have also

¹⁰ Cabrera, F. 6 February 2016. "3 BIFF killed in Maguindanao clashes over bridge project". Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/121545-biff-clash-datu-salibo>.

¹¹ Agence France Presse. 17 February 2016. "3 dead in Maguindanao bomb blast as troops, BIFF clash". Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/122766-civilians-dead-maguindanao-clash-biff>.

¹² Fernandez, E. 5 March 2016. "2 cops hurt in blast, gunfight with suspected BIFF men". INQUIRER.net. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/771017/2-cops-hurt-in-blast-gunfight-with-suspected-biff-men>.

¹³ Unson, J. 14 July 2016. "Girl killed, hundreds displaced as BIFF, soldiers clash in Maguindanao". The Philippine Star. <http://www.philstar.com/nation/2016/07/14/1602783/girl-killed-hundreds-displaced-biff-soldiers-clash-maguindanao>.

pledged allegiance to Daesh. Founded in 2008 by former Jemaah Islamiyah emir Abu Bakar Bashir, JAT is known to facilitate recruitment to Daesh for its members.

MIT was formed by Santoso, a former JAT commander and the most wanted terrorist in Indonesia. Santoso was the first Indonesian jihadist leader to declare allegiance to Daesh, and his group had strong links into Syria.

Dawla Islamiyah is a Maute group linked to an Indonesian terrorist who has ties with JI.¹⁴ It has been known to engage in clashes with military forces, particularly in Butig, Lanao del Sur.¹⁵ According to a report from INQUIRER.net in May 2016, 22 members of the terror group were killed while two soldiers were slain in the clashes in Butig from 26 to 28 May 2016.¹⁶ In August 2016, heavily armed militants of the Maute terror group raided the Lanao del Sur provincial jail and freed 8 detained comrades and more than 20 other inmates. According to a report, the militants, armed with assault rifles and rocket propelled grenades, forced the guards to set their detained comrades free.¹⁷ The terrorists detonated an improvised explosive device at the Army fence before they fled.¹⁸

Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao, also known as Black Flag Movement, is an Al-Qaeda-linked militant separatist group that has been fighting for the declaration of Mindanao as a separate religious state. It is described as an “umbrella organization” of local operatives of JI, BIFF and ASG.

Daesh also has followers among Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM), an organization founded in 1991. Composed of Filipino Christians who converted to Islam, the group was allegedly behind the 2004 Superferry bombing that killed 116 people.¹⁹ RSM was also blamed for the 2005 Valentine’s Day explosions, and the 2003 bomb attack at the Awang Airport in Maguindanao.²⁰ Several RSM leaders have been arrested in the past, including RSM leader Ahmed Santos, who was captured in 2005.²¹ With assistance from the ASG and JI, the RSM group has embraced an extremist Islamic ideology.

¹⁴ The Maute group is an Islamist group composed of former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) guerrillas and some foreign fighters.

¹⁵ Dawlah Islamiya means Islamic State in Lanao.

¹⁶ Manlupig, K., Umel, R. 28 May 2016. “Gov’t troops kill 22 terror group members in Lanao del Sur”. INQUIRER.net. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/787973/govt-troops-kill-22-terror-group-members-in-lanao-del-sur>.

¹⁷ Unson, J. 29 August 2016. “Inmates freed as terror group raids Lanao del Sur jail”. The Philippine Star. <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/08/29/1618320/inmates-freed-terror-group-raids-lanao-del-sur-jail>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Alipala, J. 16 April 2016. “Rajah Solaiman Movement leader nabbed in Zamboanga City”. INQUIRER.net. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/779830/rajah-solaiman-movement-leader-nabbed-in-zamboanga-city>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Philippines arrests key militants. (27 October 2005). BBC News. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4377610.stm>.

Some of the above mentioned militant groups have reportedly been flying the Daesh “black flag” for several years, indicating their connection with the notorious caliphate.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In January 2016, Daesh-linked groups in the Philippines announced the unification of four battalions and the allegiance of their leaders to Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in a collective oath-taking in Basilan, Philippines. The four battalions are (i) Ansar Al-Shariah Battalion with its leader, Abu Anas Al-Muhajir, (ii) Ma’rakah Al-Ansar Battalion with its leader, Abu Ammar, (iii) AnsarAl-Khilafah Battalion with its leader, Abu Sharifah, and (iv) Al Harakatul Islamiyyah. At the oath-taking to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the battalions were represented by Ansar Al-Shariah Battalion’s leader, Abu Anas Al-Muhajir. Abu Anas Al Muhajir is Mohamed bin Najib bin Hussain from Malaysia and his battalion is in charge of laws and other matters pertaining to jurisprudence. One of the five Malaysians who joined ASG, Mohamed bin Najib bin Hussain’s face was intentionally not covered in the video, arguably to show his identity. Considering the importance given to a Malaysian by Isnilon Hapilon, Malaysians are likely to travel and join Daesh in Mindanao. Although the leader of the Ma’rakah Al-Ansar Battalion could not attend the event, Abu Ammar sent a representative, Abu Harith. The war battalion led by Abu Harith is from Sulu, where the overall ASG group leader, Radulan Sahiron, is based. This demonstrated a split in the members of the ASG—the Abu Sayyaf mainstream commanded by Radullan Sahiron and a breakaway faction of Abu Sayyaf group which is led by Isnilon Hapilon, who is based in Basilan. The emergence of this break-away faction leads to the creation of a new group which is called Islamic State Philippines. That small but important faction had defected to Daesh. As noted in the discussion of Ansar Al-Khifalah Philippines, AKP has joined Daesh. Based in South Cotabato Province, Sarangani Province, and General Santos City, Ansarul Khilafah Philippines is led by Abu Sharifah, who is also fluent in Tagalog.

The total of 41 armed Filipinos and Malaysians who met in Basilan were led by Isnilon Totoni Hapilon. Prior to the collective oath-taking ceremony in Basilan to the Daesh leader, the four battalions had previously individually pledged to serve Daesh as highlighted in the case of the Filipino groups above.

In addition to members of Ansarul Khilafah Philippines and the Malaysians, most of those present were members of the ASG, and among them were high-ranking members of ASG in Basilan. They included Talha Tanadjalín, an experienced combat tactician and the brother of Suhud Tanadjani, the sniper trainer of the Basilan-based ASG.

After Isnilon Totoni Hapilon and his group pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Daesh reported: “The unification of the Mujahideen under one leadership

and banner of the Caliphate is seen as a huge threat to the tyrants of the Philippines and is an important step in order to liberate areas in Southeast Asia in general. It has a huge significance in the spreading of tawhid (monotheism) in the region, fighting the Christians, Buddhists and other polytheists as well as establishing the religion of Allah in this part of the world. The Philippines is an archipelago that consists of many islands located in the Pacific Ocean. For centuries, it was occupied by the Christian Dutch and Americans who forced many of the inhabitants to revoke Islam and embrace Christianity. Today, the Christians govern the Philippines and its capital Manila. Nevertheless, jihadi movements have spread in the country's various remote islands, and jihad against the Christians has continued for decades.”

DAESH IN THE PHILIPPINES

Earlier in 2016, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a Philippine-based separatist group which is currently holding peace talks with the government, confirmed that individuals linked to Daesh were recruiting young Filipinos in central Mindanao. According to a report from Manila Bulletin in January 2016, MILF chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal reportedly revealed and emphasized that there was indeed an ongoing recruitment of Moro youth in various provinces, particularly those that are components of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).²² According to the same report, Iqbal noted that some groups in particular provinces in Mindanao claimed to have formed groups that were linked to Daesh.

Prior to Mohagher Iqbal's confirmation, twenty-six other Muslim religious leaders had already affirmed that Daesh has already reached ARMM, according to a report from Manila Bulletin.²³ The Muslim leaders also reportedly revealed that the recruiters gained support among young Filipinos who felt deceived by the state as the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), a bill that sought to establish a new autonomous political entity known as Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, did not make it through the Philippine Congress. However, Iqbal stressed that although the MILF leader had confirmed that there was recruitment by Daesh, it could not be confirmed whether Daesh had already planted a foothold in Mindanao.

Despite these indications, the previous Philippine government and military has denied the presence of operational links between the Philippine-based militant groups and Daesh, according to a report from Rappler.com in January 2016.²⁴ Similarly, the

²² Usman, E. 25 January 2016. “MILF confirms IS recruitment in Central Mindanao”. Manila Bulletin. <http://www.mb.com.ph/milf-confirms-isis-recruitment-of-youths-in-central-mindanao/>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ressa, M. 10 January 2016. “ISIS to declare a province in Mindanao?”. Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/118553-isis-declare-province-mindanao>.

present government has also denied the presence of Daesh militants in the country.²⁵ Despite Daesh's recognition of the pledges of terror groups in the Philippines,²⁶ armed forces spokesman Colonel Edgar Arevalo maintained that there was no Daesh in the country.²⁷ It is believed that the pledge of allegiance to Daesh carried out by the militant groups was not aimed at establishing a direct connection between these groups and the caliphate; the pledge was rather seen as propaganda disseminated as part of the groups' opportunistic strategy of attaining distinct goals.

However, a different view was expressed by former president Benigno Aquino III in his statement on the Abu Sayyaf threat in April 2016. According to a report from Rappler.com, he stated that the Abu Sayyaf had plotted and launched attacks in order to "catch attention" from Daesh, and to gain access to the state's funds and resources.²⁸ The statement was in response to the alleged attempt by the terror group to kidnap his sister Kris Aquino and boxing icon Manny Pacquiao, as revealed by the former president himself.

Experts stress that Daesh, in its pursuit of global expansion, poses a global threat that demands immediate concern and appropriate responses. Although the present Philippine government and military has steadfastly denied Daesh's presence in the country, Professor Rohan Gunaratna, head of Singapore's International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, said in an interview with Rappler.com in August 2015 that the Philippines was and remained vulnerable to Daesh and its influence, as some of the Philippines-based terror groups shared similar ideologies with Daesh.²⁹ Such similarities may facilitate agreement and relationships between these groups and the international terrorist group. According to him, although no links between these groups and Daesh have been validated by the government, it is likely that they would be able to establish liaisons should they be given ample time and opportunities to do so.

Recently, it was reported that Daesh of the Philippines has launched its first attack in the Philippines. Nineteen soldiers and thirteen terrorists were killed in a gun battle

²⁵ Reuters. 12 August 2016. "Philippines says taking "Daesh threat" against Miss Universe show seriously". Gulf News. <http://gulfnnews.com/news/asia/philippines/philippines-says-taking-daesh-threat-against-miss-universe-show-seriously-1.1877933>.

²⁶ "ISIS officially recognizes pledges of allegiance from militant groups in the Philippines". 15 February 2016. *The Straits Times*. <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/isis-officially-recognises-pledges-of-allegiance-from-militant-groups-in-the>.

²⁷ Reuters. 12 August 2016. "Philippines says taking "Daesh threat" against Miss Universe show seriously". Gulf News. <http://gulfnnews.com/news/asia/philippines/philippines-says-taking-daesh-threat-against-miss-universe-show-seriously-1.1877933>.

²⁸ "Aquino: Abu Sayyaf plotted to kidnap Pacquiao, Kris". 27 April 2016. Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/130978-aquino-abu-sayyaf-plotted-kidnap-pacquiao-kris>.

²⁹ Ressa, M. 25 August 2015. "Q&A: ISIS in Southeast Asia". Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/world/specials/southeast-asia/103566-isis-southeast-asia>.

in Tipo-tipo, Basilan, on 9 April 2016. Although the attacks were led by Isnilon Totoni Hapilon of the Abu Sayyaf Group, Gunaratna noted that Daesh, and not the ASG, was responsible for the attack.

The terrorism expert suggested that it is imperative that the Philippine government carries out the necessary responses and work with other governments that face the same threat in order to not only contain but also effectively eliminate Daesh's influence. It has also been emphasized that the countries must work together in preventing Daesh from gaining a foothold in Southeast Asia, and in stopping Daesh's pursuit of global expansion dead in its tracks.

A GROWING THREAT

Daesh has engaged the terrorist groups in the Philippines to build an ideological and operational capability since 2014. Once a Daesh branch in the Southern Philippines is proclaimed, Daesh's influence and ideology is likely to grow, affecting both Southern Philippines and Eastern Malaysia. Furthermore, Daesh is likely to create a safe haven in Basilan and mount operations from the Sulu archipelago into both the Philippines and Malaysia. In addition to enforcing the Daesh brand of Islam to supplant the local Islam, Daesh-type beheadings and mass-fatality and -casualty attacks are likely. The most enduring threat will be the creation of terrorist training camps in the Philippines that will lure not only Southeast Asians but other nationalities as well. Recent developments indicate that Uighurs who could not travel to Syria to join al Nusra, a radical Islamist group established on the territory of Syria, or Daesh travelled to Indonesia instead. A similar development could take place in the Philippines. The nationalities that would be trained in the potential Daesh province to be proclaimed in the Philippines will constitute a threat to their home countries. Since 1994, when Jemaah Islamiyah established their first training camp, Hudaibyah, the Philippines has become the training ground for Indonesians, Malaysians, Singaporeans, Thai Muslims and Arabs. Most of the instructors were non-Filipinos trained by Al-Qaeda.

In addition to sending its officers to implement the Daesh brand of Islam, it is very likely that Daesh will dispatch its explosives experts, combat tacticians and other operatives. In the Philippines, there has been a history of experts from foreign countries moving in and training moro insurgents based particularly in the country's southern region. Malaysian bomb maker Zulkilfi AbdHir, Southeast Asia's most wanted terrorist and a top leader of the Al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah had roamed freely in Mindanao and had trained some 300 bomb makers, among them Abu Sayyaf members, before he was confirmed to have been killed by Philippine police on 25 January 2015.³⁰

³⁰ Unson, J. 30 January 2015. "Marwan leaves behind 300 bomb makers in Mindanao". The Philippine Star. <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/01/30/1418391/marwan-leaves-behind-300-bomb-makers-mindanao>.

Daesh's plans to declare a state in Mindanao presents a very real threat to the stability and security of Asia.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

In response to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, the Arroyo administration developed a National Internal Security Plan (NISP) to maintain the security of its people. This is outlined in the 16-Point Counter-Terrorism course of action of the Philippine government, which includes the following:

1. Organization of a whole counter-terrorism enterprise and the delineation of clear areas of responsibility and accountability with the Cabinet Oversight Committee under the Executive Secretary to oversee and supervise the anti-terrorism campaign and to call upon all government agencies to support its functions and responsibilities;
2. Efficient and effective anticipation of events through intelligence and intelligence fusion. Consolidation and sharing of information from all sources relevant to the country's response in the war against terrorism;
3. Strengthening of the country's internal focus on terrorism through the active participation of local government units down to the barangay level to prevent, interdict and contain terrorist acts;
4. Cleaning the government of terrorist and criminal coddlers;
5. Holding accountable all private groups abetting or aiding terrorism;
6. Synchronization of internal efforts with the global outlook to be spearheaded by the Department of Foreign Affairs;
7. Combined policy of tactical counterforce with the set of strategic legal measures. The Department of Justice should set up a special team to serve the special requirements of the war on terrorism including the speedy prosecution, deportation and extradition of suspects;
8. Strengthening the peace process to isolate terrorist groups from the moderates;
9. Pursuit of broader inter-faith dialogues to promote Christian and Muslim solidarity;
10. Recognition of the political, social, and economic underpinnings of terrorism. Under this, the President urged the conduct of special community development projects in areas where extreme poverty makes residents vulnerable to the courtship of terrorist groups;

11. Vigilance among all law enforcement agencies and local government units, particularly against the movements of suspected persons, firearms, explosives, raw materials of explosives, toxic materials, and biological materials;
12. Close coordination of preparations and actions in the event of catastrophic terrorist attacks, even if remote;
13. Comprehensive security plan for critical infrastructure including power plants, power transmissions and distribution facilities, oil and gas depots, key public works infrastructures, vital communication facilities, public and private buildings and facilities in the nerve center of commerce and industry;
14. Protection of security, welfare, and interests of overseas Filipino workers;
15. Continued modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, taking into consideration the threats of terrorism; and
16. Media support in the implementation of policies and programs in enlightening the public of the rationale behind their actions and in promoting consensus and even constructive criticism.

The Philippines National Police is one of the key players in countering terrorist activities in the Philippines. Some of the programmes related to their counter-terrorism efforts are the following:

1. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on Border Cooperation

The MOA on Border Cooperation between the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) and the Philippines National Police (PNP) was signed on December 14, 1996. The MOA tackles the border crossing issues, recognition of possible entry points, exchange of information and joint anti-crime projects.

2. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Philippine Law Enforcement Community (LEC) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP)

Formalised on 14 July 2013, this MOU enables both parties to cooperate fully on issues related to trans-national crimes. The Australian government has embarked on a three-year counter-terrorism capacity building of law enforcement agencies; strengthening Philippine border control capability; and, enhancing port security.

3. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Transnational Crimes

This is between the Indonesia National Police (INP) and the PNP. It expired in 2010 and is now in the process of renewal.

4. Association of Southeast Asian Nations Chiefs of Police (ASEANAPOL) Database System Project

This was launched during the ASEANAPOL conference in May 2006 and is not fully operational. The electronic ASEANAPOL Database System Project

or eADS is a central database system similar in concept to the one being maintained by International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). The major stakeholders are the 10 national police forces of ASEANAPOL which will be sharing equally all the expenses that may be incurred in the development and maintenance of the project.

5. Case Management and Intelligence System (CMIS)

This is part of the Philippines-Australia Counter Terrorism Capacity Building Project. The CMIS is a completely integrated database system which has the capability to store and manage criminal terrorism-related cases. The system interconnects subordinate units of the PNP as well as the Philippine Centre on Transnational Crime (PCTC) and National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). The project is a major milestone in the strong relationship and coordination existing between the PNP, NBI, PCTC and Australian Federal Police (AFP) in the field of countering crime and terrorism.

6. PNP Bomb Data Center

The PNP Bomb Data Center was established to provide the necessary technical expertise in the investigation of bomb blasts and related incidents. It maintains a data bank of all post-blast investigation reports, technical data, photographs and other pertinent documents. The center also operates a research and development center and conducts training and other skills and competency building activities.

7. PNP Forensic Explosives Laboratory

The PNP Forensic Explosive Laboratory complements and supports the efforts of the Bomb Data Centre. The capability of the PNP Crime Laboratory was enhanced with the donation from Australia of forensic equipment for explosives testing. The unit now has a special laboratory dedicated to chemical analysis of explosive materials among others.

8. Area Police Intelligence Fusion Centres

This was intended to bolster the system of coordination, mutual support and cooperation, and integration of efforts between and among the PNP intelligence units and their counterparts in the AFP and other law enforcement agencies.

9. Multi-National Operational Support Team (MNST)

The MNST, which is based in Jakarta, Indonesia, was conceptualised during the Regional Law Enforcement Head of Counter-Terrorism Conference in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia on 1-2 July 2004. It is composed of representatives from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Australia. The purpose is to address the development of a concept for a multi-national team that will provide operational support in the areas of technical, investigative, and analytical cooperation among its members in the provision of assistance to one another with respect to terrorism issues and incidents.

The Government of Philippines made significant gains by engaging the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in a successful peace process. In August 2016, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte ordered an all-out offensive against the relentless Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG),³¹ ruling out negotiations and promising the army modern equipment to aid them in the war.³² The President said that if ASG was not destroyed, the country would face the risk of being “contaminated by the ISIS disease”.³³ In conformity with the President’s order, about 7,000 government troops have been deployed to Sulu to fight ASG fighters, the biggest force tapped against the terror group.³⁴ Despite these advancements, the ASG continues to fight back.

On 2 September 2016, an explosion at a night market in Davao City, Philippines killed 14 people, and injured 67 more.³⁵ The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) later claimed responsibility for the attack.³⁶ Following the deadly incident, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte declared “a state of lawlessness” or “a state of lawless violence” across the entire country.³⁷ Among the primary purposes of the declaration was to counter terrorism. The state of lawlessness meant that more soldiers and policemen will be deployed, more checkpoints will be set up and necessary curfews in certain areas will be imposed.³⁸ Prior to the Davao blast, army operations against the ASG were intensified as ordered by the President himself.³⁹ Arguably, the Davao bombing incident could be the terror group’s retaliation. Considering that the ASG is just a portion of the insurgent and terrorist infrastructure that has inhabited the southern part of the country for quite a significant period of time, dismantling the infrastructure would require the military and the government to put in even greater efforts.

³¹ CNN Philippines Staff. 11 September 2016. “AFP to ‘accept’ Abu Sayyaf members who surrender, release hostages”. CNN Philippines. <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2016/09/11/afp-to-asg-surrender-or-suffer-consequences.html>.

³² Reuters. 10 August 2016. “Duterte orders Army to destroy Abu Sayyaf”. ABS-CBN News. <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/10/16/duterte-orders-army-to-destroy-abu-sayyaf>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Santos, E. 2 September 2016. “AFP taps 7,000-strong force vs. Abu Sayyaf”. CNN Philippines. <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2016/09/02/AFP-vs-Abu-Sayyaf.html>.

³⁵ “Abu Sayyaf claims responsibility for Davao blast—report”. 3 September 2016. Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/145045-abu-sayyaf-responsibility-davao-explosion>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ De Jesus, T. 3 September 2016. “Duterte declares ‘state of lawlessness’”. INQUIRER.net. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/812368/duterte-declares-state-of-lawlessness>.

³⁸ “What’s a state of ‘lawlessness?’”. 3 September 2016. Rappler. <http://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/145048-davao-explosion-state-of-lawlessness>.

³⁹ See Reuters. 10 August 2016. “Duterte orders Army to destroy Abu Sayyaf”. ABS-CBN News. <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/10/16/duterte-orders-army-to-destroy-abu-sayyaf>.

Daesh initiated the merger of the fighting formations. The unification of the leaders will present an unprecedented challenge to the Manila government. The “soldiers of the Caliphate” in the Philippines are likely to mount operations that will increasingly mirror those in Daesh’s core area in Syria and Iraq. The Government of the Philippines needs to further amplify its efforts before Daesh can institutionalize itself in Mindanao. The Philippine government cannot afford to let Daesh’s ideology reach and spread over the country’s southern region, as it would gravely damage the peace processes. The four “battalions” of Daesh will grow in strength, size and influence and present an enduring challenge to his successors. Ideally, the present administration should pre-empt the Daesh declaration and not overreact after a Daesh declaration. To win Muslim hearts and minds and prevent Muslim support for Daesh, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) should operate not in a role of containing, isolating and eliminating the ASG, but with a mandate to economically develop Basilan.

To pre-empt the declaration of a Daesh Wilayat in the Philippines and a Daesh branch, the AFP should further deploy strength in Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-tawi. If the Armed Forces of the Philippines can dominate the Sulu archipelago, Daesh cannot successfully declare, operate and expand a Daesh satellite in the Philippines, with implications for Malaysia, the region and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The West and East are under a sustained and severe threat from Daesh. Against the threat of Daesh, no country, including the Philippines, is immune. According to a report from International Business Times, over 15,000 foreign jihadists have joined Daesh.⁴⁰ The Daesh threat is global and it is expanding. Daesh’s influence is spreading beyond the core area of Iraq and Syria, touching the hearts and minds of radical Islamists globally, especially the youth. Some power-hungry political and militant leaders have embraced the Daesh ideology as there is currently greater support for Daesh than Al-Qaeda. Driven by its successes, Daesh is growing despite its losses. The death of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani on 30 August 2016 is the most significant loss Daesh has suffered since the declaration of the so-called caliphate. A master in instigating Daesh support groups, networks, cells and personalities to mount attacks, he was one of the most senior leaders of Daesh. According to Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi relied on him for Daesh’s global operations. He also oversaw the external operations wing of Daesh and was close to the Southeast Asian fighters. If the anti-Daesh coalition can maintain the momentum they achieved in 2016, the quality of experienced Daesh leaders will diminish and Daesh will not be able to replenish the

⁴⁰ Ross, P. 30 October 2014. “ISIS Recruitment Reaches ‘Unprecedented Scale’ With 15,000 Foreign Jihadists Joining Militant Fighters”. *International Business Times*. <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-recruitment-reaches-unprecedented-scale-15000-foreign-jihadists-joining-militant-1716684>.

human losses and material wastage. Daesh might then move from a caliphate-building group to an operation-based group, relying on its associate groups outside the Daesh heartland of Syria and Iraq to conduct operations.

As Asia is on the rise, governments in the Asia-Pacific region should share their best practices in the region to build an effective counter-terrorism capability. The training provided by Australia and Singapore in the region as well as by the US and the UK has assisted the region to check the threat. The financial support of Canada and Japan has helped to build long-term capacities to fight the threat. Governments in the region that are advanced in counter-terrorism will need to strengthen their existing partnerships with emerging counter-terrorism agencies in Southeast Asia and expand their relationships with counter-terrorism agencies in the Middle East and Africa. With extensive travel and communication between the Middle East and North Africa and Asia, the threat is proliferating. In addition to developing and strengthening operational capabilities to hunt terrorists, strategies should be seeded in community engagement and terrorist rehabilitation. Governments in the region should invest more in countering extremist and terrorist propaganda online. Despite the reversals Daesh has suffered, its ideology is sprinting when governments are crawling. The Daesh ideology will continue to resonate with a tiny segment of Muslims until Daesh is dismantled in its heartland and its ideology is countered worldwide. In the Philippines, on the ground, little progress has been made by the government and their international and domestic partners to create an anti-Daesh environment.

As the threat posed by Daesh influence is furthered, the impending danger of Daesh's tentacles extending over the country continues to grow. The insurgent and terrorist groups in the country's southern region have taken significant steps toward establishing links with Daesh; pledges of allegiance have been made and an effective leader has been proclaimed. The Philippines government is thus urged to give an appropriate response to the growing threat. Surely, failure to prevent Daesh from establishing a province in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Philippines, would have grave repercussions for the entire region.

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Singapore's Approach to Counter Terrorism and Extremism

Stefanie Kam

Major transformations to the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East, coupled with the establishment of the so-called caliphate in June 2014, have contributed to the rise in transnational terrorist attacks carried out in the name of religion. In the last two years, terrorist attacks inspired or directed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (aka Islamic State (IS), ISIS, ISIL or Daesh) have occurred in many cities, including Nice (France), Istanbul (Turkey), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Medina (Saudi Arabia), and Jakarta (Indonesia).¹ As with the rest of the world, Singapore also faces a serious terrorist threat from Daesh supporters and sympathisers. In early August 2016, Indonesian authorities arrested six terror suspects planning a rocket attack against Singapore's Marina Bay from the nearby Indonesian island of Batam. The plot was hatched with the help of an Indonesian militant, Bahrun Naim, who operates in Syria and who was linked to the Jakarta bombing in early January 2016. In 2001, Singapore narrowly averted several terrorist bombings by the Al-Qaeda linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) regional group (Singapore had previously suffered from terrorist attacks by communists and Indonesian saboteurs and others).²

RISE OF DAESH: REGIONAL TRENDS, TACTICS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The present terrorist threat in Southeast Asia can be traced to JI, which originated from Darul Islam (DI), an anti-colonial movement of the 1940s that sought to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia after its independence. JI expanded this aim further with its objective of establishing an Islamic state across Southeast Asia. In the 1990s, several Singaporeans and other Southeast Asians made their way to Afghanistan and Pakistan

* This paper was submitted on 11 August 2016.

¹ Channel NewsAsia. 2016. "Shanmugam condemns Istanbul, Dhaka, Puchong attacks during Ramadan", <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/shanmugam-condemns/2929496.html> (accessed 11 August 2016).

² AsiaOne. 2015. "Terror's evolving threat to Singapore", <http://news.asiaone.com/news/asian-opinions/terrors-evolving-threat-singapore> (accessed 11 August 2016).

to train alongside seasoned militants of Al-Qaeda. Shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks, Al-Qaeda operatives and Singapore JI cell members planned to detonate six truck bombs in Singapore. Targets included embassies, a train station, water pipelines and government buildings.³

The attrition of JI in the region coincided with the rise of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, resulting in many militants in Southeast Asia switching sides and pledging allegiance to Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Daesh's emergence was accompanied by a series of terrorist attacks, especially in the last one year when it began suffering military setbacks. In this region, a Daesh-linked terrorist attack took place on January 2016 in Jakarta, killing 8 and injuring 24 others, making it the first successful terrorist attack mounted by Daesh-inspired elements in the Indonesian capital. In April 2016, Daesh-linked elements engaged in a fierce gun battle that killed at least 18 soldiers in Basilan, the first major attack in the Philippines. In June 2016, Daesh claimed responsibility for a grenade blast at a nightclub in Puchong, near Kuala Lumpur, in what authorities referred to as "the first successful ISIS attack on Malaysian soil."⁴ These attacks demonstrate Daesh's deep penetration into Southeast Asia, and its ability to radicalise and recruit existing militants and vulnerable groups. In April 2016, Daesh launched its first online Malay language newspaper, entitled *Al-Fatihin*, to further expand its reach and ideologically appeal to more segments within the region. Daesh also provides coverage on the fighters of the Islamic State in the Philippines through A'maaq News Agency and the *An-Naba* newspaper.

Since Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the so-called caliphate in 2014, a number of extremist and terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Jabhat Al Nusra (in Syria) have rejected and condemned the organisation. Nonetheless, its global plans for expansion have to some extent succeeded in Southeast Asia; as of July 2016, it has formed a Southeast Asian Malay-speaking brigade named Katibah Nusantara Lid Daulah Islamiyah (also known as the Malay Archipelago Unit for the Islamic State). Headquartered in Al Shahadi, the Syrian province of Hasaka, the combat unit has approximately 1,000 Southeast Asian fighters; it also assists families in Indonesia and Malaysia whose

³ Gordon, D and S. Lindo. 2011. "Jemaah Islamiyah". Center for Strategic and International Studies, http://csis.org/files/publication/111101_Gordon_JemaahIslamiyah_WEB.pdf (accessed 10 May 2016); Gunaratna, Rohan, Pavlova, Elena and Haniff, Muhammad Hassan. 2004. "A Preliminary Analysis of the General Guide for the Struggle of Jemaah Islamiyah," unpublished paper, Singapore: International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies; International Crisis Group. 2003. "Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous", <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/063-jemaah-islamiyah-in-south-east-asia-damaged-but-still-dangerous.aspx> (accessed 16 October 2014); Magouirk, J. and Scott Atran. 2008. "Jemaah Islamiyah's radical madrassah networks", *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* vol. 1, no. 1 (March): 25-41, http://www.artisresearch.com/articles/Atran_Jemaah_Islamiyahs.pdf (accessed 10 May 2016).

⁴ CNN. 2016. "Islamic State launches first successful attack in Malaysia", <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/04/homepage2/islamic-state-attack-malaysia/> (accessed 11 August 2016).

husbands or children are in Iraq and Syria. Daesh has also accepted pledges of allegiances from supporters in Southeast Asia, and appointed an Emir for what it called the Islamic State Philippines. On 7 July 2016, Daesh released a video entitled “The Structure of the Khilafah”, claiming that there are currently 35 provinces or wilayat. Militants who have pledged allegiance to Daesh have been identified as “Junud Al-Khilafah” (Soldiers of the Caliphate).⁵

The Daesh video and online newspaper *Al-Fatihin* are among Daesh propaganda materials being used to influence and win more converts to its cause. Daesh also has its own online magazine, *Dabiq*, and an official media outlet, Al-Hayat Media Centre, that produces content in foreign languages. Other media outlets include the A'maaq news agency which is affiliated to Daesh; Al-Furqan, a media outlet that produces Arabic-language content; An-Naba', which produces newsletters (e.g., the weekly An-Naba' newsletter) and infographics, mainly in Arabic; Maktabah Al-Himmah, a publishing house that produces pamphlets, booklets, e-books, articles, etc.; and Ajnad, a media outlet that produces audio content, mainly Nasheeds and Qur'anic recitations. All these mostly propaganda materials are distributed online and easily accessible to millions of Muslim online users in Southeast Asia.

Daesh has also established a new battalion to continue its extremist struggles. The new battalion, called the Katibah Al-Muhajir (KaM) (Battalion of Migrants), is made up of Malaysian terrorists in southern Philippines, and was created to persuade supporters and sympathisers to join Daesh, as well as to serve as a unit for those recruits who are unable to travel to Syria and Iraq.⁶ Southern Philippines, with its porous border areas with Indonesia and Malaysia, is emerging as the epicenter of jihadist activities in the region; it threatens to serve as a transit point for terrorists as well as a launchpad for Daesh to stage terrorist operations in Southeast Asia.⁷ Competition between militant groups seeking recognition from Daesh, and groups subordinating themselves to Daesh and following its instructions, may result in an escalation of terrorist acts in the region.

⁵ Zelin, Aaron Y. 2016. “New video message from The Islamic State: ‘The Structure of the Caliphate’”, <http://jihadology.net/2016/07/06/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-the-structure-of-the-caliphate/> (accessed 6 August 2016); Zelin Aaron Y. 2014. “The Islamic State’s Archipelago of Provinces,” The Washington Institute, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-archipelago-of-provinces> (accessed 6 August 2016).

⁶ Singh, Bilveer and Ramakrishna, Kumar. 2016. *Islamic State’s Wilayah Philippines: Implications for Southeast Asia*. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/CO16187.pdf> (accessed 29 Jul 2016).

⁷ Singh, Jasminder and Muhammad Haziq Bin Jani. 2016. “The Tri-Border Area: Jihadi Epicentre in Southeast Asia”. International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Singapore, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/CO16186.pdf> (accessed 29 Jul 2016).

Daesh has recruited more than 500 Indonesians, including women and children, into its fold. As of 2015, Daesh has recruited between 60 and 150 Malaysians. The use of social media platforms by Daesh, including Twitter, Facebook and encrypted mobile messaging platforms (e.g., Telegram), is a hallmark of Daesh's radicalisation and recruitment strategy as it seeks to spread its influence and reach in the region.⁸

The motivations to join or support Daesh appear to be several. These range from moral consequentialist justifications (to avenge those oppressed under Assad's Alawite regime and the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government), to existential grievances (the need for violence as a redress to alleviate their economic frustrations), to more adventure-seeking reasons.

DAESH RECRUITMENT AND RADICALISATION IN SINGAPORE

Investigations revealed that a handful of Singaporeans had travelled to Syria after being radicalised online by the ideology of Daesh and other radical ideologues.⁹ One of them was a 47-year-old Singaporean who left for Syria with her husband and three children and is believed to have gone to different locations to fight alongside jihadists or support them.¹⁰

In 2015, a 19-year-old youth was arrested for making plans to join Daesh and engage in armed violence. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Press Statement, the youth became radicalised "around 2013 after he started viewing terrorist propaganda online."¹¹

More recently, in April 2016, a 26-year-old man, Muhammad Fadil bin Abdul Hamid, was re-detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for a period of two years as he "became attracted to radical online material, like the teachings of radical ideologues such as Anwar al-Awlaki and the propaganda of Daesh" and intended to join a terrorist group like Daesh, to engage in armed violence in Syria (Al-Awlaki was an Al-Qaeda-linked extremist preacher who was killed by a US-led drone strike in Yemen in September 2011). Fadil was previously detained under the ISA from 2010 to

⁸ Bin Jani, Muhammad Haziq. 2016. "Urgent need to counter Malaysia's 'Cyber-ISIS'", *The Straits Times*, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/urgent-need-to-counter-malysias-cyber-isis> (accessed 13 May 2016).

⁹ AsiaOne. 2015. "Radicals in Singapore, Malaysia 'had no prior terror links'", <http://news.asiaone.com/news/singapore/radicals-singapore-malaysia-had-no-prior-terror-links> (accessed 13 May 2016).

¹⁰ *The Straits Times*. 2016. "SAF to send medical support team to Iraq, Army Deployment Force to protect the team", <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/saf-to-send-medical-support-team-to-iraq-army-deployment-force-to-protect-the-team> (accessed 11 August 2016).

¹¹ Ministry of Home Affairs. 2016. "Detention and Releases Under the Internal Security Act", <https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/press-releases/Pages/Detention-and-Releases-under-the-Internal-Security-Act.aspx> (accessed 2 August 2016).

2012 when he was self-radicalised and had the intention to engage in armed violence in Afghanistan.

In July 2016, Singapore detained a 44-year-old man, Zulfikar Mohamad Shariff, for involvement in terrorism-related activities; according to MHA, he had made numerous Facebook posts that promoted and glorified Daesh and exhorted Muslims to take up arms and wage militant jihad.¹²

Between 16 November 2015 and 1 December 2015, Singapore arrested 27 radicalised Bangladeshi construction workers for their support of the “armed jihad ideology” of Daesh and Al-Qaeda. This was the first case of a foreign jihadist terror cell in Singapore. Although they were not planning a terrorist attack on Singapore soil, 26 of them were members of a close religious study group that subscribed to extremist beliefs and teachings of radical figures like Anwar al-Awlaki. Reportedly, the group “took measures to avoid detection by the authorities” and “shared jihadi-related material discreetly among themselves” during their weekly meetings, where they also discussed armed militancy and recruitment efforts.¹³

Among the 26 repatriated to Bangladesh in 2015, 14 were subsequently sentenced by Bangladeshi courts to jail under the anti-terrorism act. On 31 May 2016, four radicalised Bangladeshi nationals were prosecuted in Singapore for providing or collecting money in Singapore to fund terror attacks in Bangladesh; they pleaded guilty to terrorism financing and were sentenced to 2-5 years jail.¹⁴ In February 2016, Singapore arrested Wang Yuandongyi, for attempting to fight in Syria under ISA and was placed on a two-year Restriction Order (RO) in March 2016.¹⁵

SINGAPORE’S RESPONSES TO THREAT OF TERRORISM

Singapore views terrorism as a serious threat to national security. Its zero tolerance approach to terrorism can be seen in its various domestic kinetic and non-kinetic responses, ranging from arrests and detentions and imposition of restriction orders under

¹² Ministry of Home Affairs. 2016. “Detention and Releases Under the Internal Security Act”, <https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/press-releases/Pages/Detention-and-Releases-under-the-Internal-Security-Act.aspx> (accessed 2 August 2016).

¹³ Channel News Asia. 2015. “27 Bangladeshi nationals arrested in Singapore and repatriated for terror links.” <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/27-bangladeshi-nationals/2440886.html> (accessed 2 August 2016).

¹⁴ *The Straits Times*. 2016. “27 radicalised Bangladeshis arrested in Singapore under Internal Security Act: MHA”, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/27-radicalised-bangladeshis-arrested-in-singapore-under-internal-security-act> (accessed 20 January 2016).

¹⁵ Ministry of Home Affairs. 2016. “Issuance of Orders of Detention and Restriction Orders under the Internal Security Act”, <https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/press-releases/Pages/Issuance-of-Orders-of-Detention-and-Restriction-Orders-under-the-Internal-Security-Act.aspx> (accessed 2 August 2016).

the Internal Security Act (ISA) as mentioned above, to deportations, protective security measures, counter-ideology, terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement.¹⁶

Enhancing Protective Security Measures

Singapore's protective security measures can be grouped according to land, aviation and sea counter-measures. Preventive measures on land include the use of electronic surveillance methods such as the installation of surveillance cameras at critical infrastructures, like power stations and water networks. Armed personnel, including Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) troops, are stationed around Jurong Island and Singapore's petrochemical hub to increase security. Close-circuit televisions (CCTVs) are also installed in many places to monitor critical access points.

In 2016, the Singapore government announced that the police would extend police cameras to public areas in public residential estates, which include town centres, neighbourhood centres and pedestrian walkways linking housing estates to bus stations and train stations. The PolCam 2.0 programme is a "key plank in the counter-terrorism and crime-fighting strategy." The significant expansion of CCTV coverage is aimed at providing the country with greater security vigilance, deterring terrorism, granting the police better sense-making, and increasing situational awareness of the surroundings. As of 2016, plans to develop the analytical capabilities of the Home Team (MHA departments and agencies) to allow for real-time monitoring and analysis of the CCTV data are underway; this will enable the planning and execution of responses and shorten the time taken to identify, apprehend and prevent perpetrators from carrying out terrorist attacks to fruition.¹⁷

Aviation counter-measures include the installation of bulletproof doors and surveillance cameras for the cockpit and entry areas on the airplanes of Singapore's main airline carriers. Baggage screening systems equipped with explosive-detection capabilities serve to screen departing baggage at Singapore's airline terminals. In 2016, the MHA announced that with the opening of Changi Airport Terminal 4, the government has also made plans to provide self-service immigration facilities powered by technol-

¹⁶ Ministry of Home Affairs. 2003. "Singapore Government Press Statement on the Detention of 2 Singaporean Members of the Jemaah Islamiyah Karachi Cell," <https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/press-releases/Pages/Singapore-Government-Press-Statement-on-the-Detention-of-2-Singaporean-Members-of-the-Jemaah-Islamiyah-Karachi-Cell.aspx> (accessed 2 August 2016); Ministry of Home Affairs. 2003. "White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism", http://www.mha.gov.sg/publication_details.aspx?pageid=35&cid=354 (accessed 16 October 2014).

¹⁷ Ministry of Home Affairs. 2016. "SPF Workplan Seminar 2016—Speech by Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law", <https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/speeches/Pages/SPF-Workplan-Seminar-2016-Speech-by-Mr-K-Shanmugam,-Minister-for-Home-Affairs-and-Minister-for-Law.aspx> (accessed 2 August 2016).

ogy, enhancing operational effectiveness and “to free up manpower resources to be redeployed to more critical areas.”¹⁸

To guard against a potential maritime terrorist attack, especially along the Malacca Straits, Singapore has adopted the use of high-tech tracking systems for oil tankers, strengthened security at sea chokepoints, deployed navy ships as escorts for selected merchant ships, marked out specific routes for ferries and commercial vessels to avoid contact with sensitive anchorages and installations, as well as deployed radiation-detection installations at border entry points to screen containers and personnel for the presence of radiological materials. As a littoral state, Singapore has also worked with its regional neighbours to jointly protect the critical shipping lanes of the Straits of Malacca from piracy or terrorist attacks. Singapore is part of the Eyes-in-the-Sky (EiS) coalition with Indonesia and Malaysia, which was created in partnership with ground agencies to monitor activities in territorial waters.¹⁹

In addition, Singapore has also implemented the Harbour Craft Transponder System (HARTS), an electronic surveillance system that requires small harbour and pleasure craft to install a small tracking device. HARTS, along with the other tracking systems already in place, enable Singapore’s port authorities to track the movement of almost all vessels around Singapore.²⁰ In dealing with a potential attack by radiological weapons, Singapore’s Civil Defence Force (SCDF) officers are trained to deal with “dirty bombs” and there is a team to handle biological attacks. As a participant of the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), Singapore has worked with the US to combat the illicit trafficking and spread of weapons of mass destruction to and from states and non-state actors. Singapore has participated in maritime exercises under the framework of the PSI and has implemented the CSI (Container Security Initiative) to screen high-risk containers before their arrival at US ports.²¹

¹⁸ *The Straits Times*. 2016. “Parliament: Automated clearance for motorcyclists at land checkpoints as MHA ramps up technology use”, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/automated-clearance-for-motorcyclists-at-land-checkpoints-as-mha-ramps-up> (accessed 2 August 2016); MINDEF. 2016. “SAF steps up counter-terrorism efforts: Dr Ng”, https://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/resourcelibrary/cyberpioneer/topics/articles/news/2016/apr/07apr16_news.html#.V6wloVt96M8 (accessed 11 August 2016).

¹⁹ MINDEF. 2005. “Launch of Eyes in the Sky (EiS) Initiative”, https://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2005/sep/13sep05_nr.html (accessed 11 August 2016).

²⁰ Maritime and Port Authority of *Singapore*. “Harbour Craft Transponder System”, <http://www.mpa.gov.sg/web/portal/home/port-of-singapore/port-operations/licensing-of-craft/harbour-craft/harbour-craft-transponder-system-harts> (accessed 11 August 2016).

²¹ Ministry of Transport. “Singapore To Be First Pilot Port In Asia Under US Container Security Initiative”, <http://www.mot.gov.sg/News-Centre/News/2002/Singapore-To-Be-First-Pilot-Port-In-Asia-Under-US-Container-Security-Initiative/> (accessed 11 August 2016).

Singapore has merged all border controls into a clear, coordinated border system under the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA); recent enhancements include the introduction of biometric passports for identity authentication as well as the establishment of the Protective, Analytical and Assessment Facility (PAAF), fusing technology with border protection. The PAAF “will allow the ICA to conduct more stringent and prompt checks on suspicious cargo.” This move is seen to enhance the country’s ability to detect chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) materials, and to equip border laboratories with analytical capabilities.²²

Counter-Ideological Response

The Singaporean Muslim community constitutes a very important front in Singapore’s counter-terrorism efforts. Muslim scholars and leaders work closely with the Singapore government on various counter-ideological initiatives to inoculate the larger community from perverse and dangerous extremist ideologies. Direct and indirect counter-ideological initiatives, including counter-ideological work and community engagement efforts, reflect Singapore’s view that the battle against terrorism cannot be fought by the authorities alone, and that it is necessary to nip extremist and terrorist ideologies in the bud before they take root.²³

Several Muslim organisations and scholars are playing a major role in spearheading Singapore’s counter-ideological efforts.²⁴ They include the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), a statutory body formed in 1968, the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), a volunteer group of religious scholars, and members of the Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (PERGAS).²⁵

MUIS has launched various initiatives to counter religious extremism in Singapore. The texts of many of its Friday sermons remind Muslim congregations of the misinterpretations and distortions of extremist ideologies. One of MUIS’s key initiatives is the Harmony Centre which was established in An-Nahdhah mosque in October 2006. Through various programmes conducted between mosques and community organisations, the centre seeks to promote interfaith awareness, dialogue and engagement and bring about better understanding between the different religious groups. MUIS and

²² Channel NewsAsia. 2016. “New facility to help detect dangerous materials at Singapore’s ports”, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/new-facility-to-help/2959104.html> (accessed 11 August 2016).

²³ *The Straits Times*. 2016. “Parliament: Muslim community stepping up efforts to counter extremist influences online”, <http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/singapolitics/parliament-muslim-community-stepping-up-efforts-to-counter-extremist> (accessed 11 August 2016).

²⁴ AsiaOne. 2014. “Muis’ Harmony Centre drawing interest from abroad”, <http://news.asiaone.com/news/singapore/muis-harmony-centre-drawing-interest-abroad> (accessed 11 August 2016).

²⁵ Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Organisation (PERGAS). “Vision and Mission and Strategic Niche”, <http://www.pergas.org.sg/about-us/visionmissionstrategic.html> (accessed 11 August 2016).

RRG are also working together to develop both print and online material to provide guidance in countering hard-line ideologies. MUIS's part-time religious education programmes for children, youth and adults include lessons to "help inoculate learners against online radicalisation". It is also actively engaging parents on cyber safety for their children so that they are more critical of what they read online, and "better protected against radical teachings".²⁶ For students pursuing Islamic religious education overseas, MUIS's Student Resource Development Secretariat provides guidance and the necessary support on selecting the appropriate overseas institutions for Islamic studies. MUIS has also launched the Singapore Muslim identity project, which aims to promote religious practice that is progressive, inclusive, and contextualised to Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious society. MUIS and PERGAS are making efforts to extend and enhance the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) under which religious teachers are registered.²⁷ The scheme was started to provide the Muslim community with a reliable source of reference as only qualified religious teachers are given recognition. The ARS is a further effort to prevent the spread of extremist and deviant teachings within the community, and dangerous foreign influences.

Terrorist Rehabilitation

In 2002, a group of Muslim clerics set up the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) to provide religious rehabilitation to terrorist detainees, by offering expert advice on correct Islamic teachings. Two-thirds of Singapore's terrorist detainees who were arrested since 2001 have reportedly been released after undergoing religious rehabilitation. The rehabilitated detainees who have been released have not strayed back into terrorism and they continue to attend a rehabilitation programme that aims to inoculate them against radical ideas.²⁸ Members of the volunteer group also produced counter-ideological materials and conducted public education programmes to expose terrorists' misinterpretation of religious texts and prevent the spread and influence of extremist and deviant teachings.²⁹ In 2015, RRG launched a helpline with trained counsellors and volunteers on the phone. RRG also uses its own website and mobile application to provide members of the public with quick and easy access to clarifications on religious and doctrinal issues.

²⁶ REACH. "Range Of Measures To Counter Extremist Influences", <https://www.reach.gov.sg/participate/discussion-forum/2016/04/14/range-of-measures-to-counter-extremist-influences> (accessed 11 August 2016).

²⁷ Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Organisation (PERGAS). "Asatizah Recognition Scheme", <http://www.pergas.org.sg/asatizah-recognition-scheme.html> (accessed 11 August 2016).

²⁸ International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation. 2009. Inaugural Address by Mr. K. Shanmugam, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Report-International-Conference-On-Terrorist-Rehabilitation.pdf> (accessed 8 August 2016).

²⁹ Religious Rehabilitation Group. "About the RRG", <https://rrg.sg/about-rrg/> (accessed 8 August 2016).

In addition to the RRG, a group of community organisations, also known as the Inter-Agency Aftercare Group (ACG), works on ensuring the socio-economic wellbeing of ex-detainees' and their families. Over the years, the ACG has worked with detainees' families, helping them to cope better during the detention of their main breadwinner, and assisting ex-detainees to reintegrate into society after their release. ACG was set up by leaders of the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP), En-Na'em Mosque, Khadijah Mosque, MENDAKI, and Taman Bacaan.³⁰

Community Engagement

A key objective behind terrorists' attacks is to sow discord and hostility between Muslims and non-Muslims and bring about ethnic tensions and conflict. To counter this, the Singapore government has launched the Community Engagement Programme (CEP) to ensure that the people are well prepared to maintain Singapore's social cohesion and harmony, and stay united in a crisis. CEP aims "to bring together Singaporeans from different communities, to strengthen inter-communal bonds, and to put in place response plans to help deal with potential communal tensions after an incident, e.g. a terrorist attack".³¹ The programme took its present shape after the London 7/7 attacks, in response to the trend of homegrown terrorists and hate crimes against Muslims. Five CEP clusters have been developed in the fields of traditional grassroots organisations; the tripartite group of businesses, unions and government; schools; clans and associations; and the media. At the national level, confidence-building platforms, such as the Inter-racial and Religious Confidence Circle and the Harmony Circle, have been formed to promote better understanding between the different communities and enhance communal harmony and social cohesion.³²

³⁰ Home Team News. 2015. "Committed to preventing self-radicalisation", https://www.hometeam.sg/article.aspx?news_sid=20150829Ztc9nMqiT3bc (accessed 8 August 2016).

³¹ Ministry of Home Affairs Singapore. "Community Engagement Programme (CEP)", [https://www.mha.gov.sg/join-mha/volunteers/Pages/community-engagement-programme-\(cep\).aspx](https://www.mha.gov.sg/join-mha/volunteers/Pages/community-engagement-programme-(cep).aspx) (accessed 8 August 2016).

³² Ministry of Home Affairs. 2016. "Speech by Mr K Shanmugam: The 12th Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) Retreat", [https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/speeches/Pages/The-12th-Religious-Rehabilitation-Group-\(RRG\)-Retreat---Speech-by-Mr-K-Shanmugam,-Minister-for-Home-Affairs.aspx](https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/speeches/Pages/The-12th-Religious-Rehabilitation-Group-(RRG)-Retreat---Speech-by-Mr-K-Shanmugam,-Minister-for-Home-Affairs.aspx) (accessed 11 August 2016); Ministry of Home Affairs. 2016. "Speech by Mr K Shanmugam: Ministry of Home Affairs Committee of Supply Debate 2016", <https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/speeches/Pages/Ministry-of-Home-Affairs-Committee-of-Supply-Debate-2016---Speech-by-Mr-K-Shanmugam,-Minister-for-Home-Affairs.aspx> (accessed 11 August 2016).

Singapore has also strengthened its community response through a new national movement, called SG Secure, to build on the foundation established so far, as part of CEP. As a movement, it focuses on maintaining and enhancing social cohesion and harmony, with a sharper focus on vigilance, and on preparing the community to respond appropriately to potential threats. SG Secure also aims to bring Singaporeans onboard to take a more active role in understanding the security and threat landscape; to be equipped with the right skills and to help spread messages of vigilance, cohesion and resilience to friends, families and colleagues.³³

Emergency preparedness exercises will also be upgraded significantly. At a parliamentary session, Mr. K. Shanmugam, Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law, also remarked on the importance of sensitivity in the community's messaging against terrorism, in order to make it clear that the "fight is against extremism and violence, and not against any particular race, ethnicity or religion."³⁴ In the wake of terrorist attacks during the holy month of Ramadan in 2016, government leaders and religious leaders condemned the attacks, and made calls for Singaporeans to remain united and resilient in the face of terrorist attacks. Singapore's Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs, Yaacob Ibrahim, said the attacks were "against Islam and do not represent Muslims all over the world."³⁵

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Singapore has cooperated and collaborated with its regional and international partners to deter and disrupt terrorist networks. Information shared between regional partners led to the disruption of the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist network in the 2000s³⁶ and most

³³ Ministry of Home Affairs. 2016. "SG Secure in the Neighbourhood: Building a Community of Prepared Citizens", <https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/press-releases/Pages/SG-Secure-in-the-Neighbourhood-Building-a-Community-of-Prepared-Citizens.aspx> (accessed 2 August 2016).

³⁴ *TODAY*. 2016. "In a terror attack, it may not be enough for S'poreans to 'Run, Hide, Tell'", <http://www.todayonline.com/world/terror-attack-it-may-not-be-enough-sporeans-run-hide-tell> (accessed 11 August 2016); *TODAY*. 2016. "Threat of terror is hotter than it has ever been, says DPM Teo", <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/threat-terror-hotter-it-has-ever-been-says-dpm-teo> (accessed 11 August 2016).

³⁵ *The Jakarta Post*. 2016. "Radicalism rising in region: Singapore's Shanmugam", <http://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2016/07/05/radicalism-rising-in-region-singapores-shanmugam.html> (accessed 11 August 2016).

³⁶ Gordon, D and S. Lindo. 2011. *Jemaah Islamiyah*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. http://csis.org/files/publication/111101_Gordon_JemaahIslamiyah_WEB.pdf (accessed 10 May 2016); Congressional Research Service. 2009. "Terrorism in Southeast Asia", <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL34194.pdf> (accessed 21 October 2014).

recently to the prevention of a rocket attack on Singapore's Marina Bay.³⁷ Singapore has also shared resources and knowledge to create a strong regional counter-terrorism environment. At a recent international counter-terrorism meeting in Bali in August 2016, Singapore and Malaysia agreed to the exchange of biometric information—including fingerprints—of known fighters and those convicted of terrorism offences.³⁸

In December 2014, the Singapore government announced that it would be sending a team of 50 to 60 Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) personnel to Iraq to join the coalition effort against Daesh. As with previous deployments to Afghanistan, the units will not engage in frontline combat roles, but will provide a supportive role through the provision of an air-to-air refuelling tanker as well as an imagery analysis team. More recently, Singapore has announced that it is sending a medical team to Iraq to take care of injured soldiers and civilians. It will also send soldiers from the Army Deployment Force together with the medical team for force protection.³⁹

CONCLUSION

Daesh has been experiencing serious losses of territory, commanders, fighters and sources of revenue in recent months as a result of coalition offensives.⁴⁰ However, the group's continuing terrorist attacks worldwide indicate that it has not been sufficiently weakened to prevent it from mounting attacks and expanding its reach and appeal in places beyond the Middle East. Southeast Asia is no exception. Daesh's establishment of the so-called caliphate and vigorous online propaganda have aroused interest among some segments of the population in Singapore as well as in Southeast Asia. Close monitoring and various preventive actions must therefore continue in earnest to neutralise any potential threat posed by Daesh supporters in the region. Counter-terrorism measures must include working in close partnership with religious and community leaders to counter the spread of extremist ideas, as well as raising the level of awareness of the terrorist threat among citizens. Continued regional collaboration and cooperation, as well as increased surveillance and intelligence-sharing, particularly with Singapore's

³⁷ *The Straits Times*. 2016. "Batam terror suspects who planned attack on Singapore flown to Jakarta for police probe", <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/batam-terror-suspects-flown-to-jakarta-for-police-probe> (accessed 8 August 2016).

³⁸ *The Straits Times*. 2016. "World terror experts vow to fight terrorism together at Bali meeting", <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/world-terror-experts-vow-to-fight-terrorism-together-at-bali-meeting> (accessed 11 August 2016).

³⁹ *The Straits Times*. 2016. "What is S'pore doing to counter ISIS?", <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/what-is-spore-doing-to-counter-isis> (accessed 8 August 2016).

⁴⁰ *The Guardian*. 2016. "Islamic State has lost grip on 12% of territory in six months—study", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/11/islamic-state-has-lost-grip-on-12-of-territory-in-six-months-study> (accessed 8 August 2016).

neighbours, will also be crucial for thwarting any attacks emanating from overseas. Beyond these, the world itself, governments as well as industries dealing with technology, armaments and banking, will need to take more serious and concerted action against online dissemination of extremist and violent propaganda, the international flow of arms and money to terrorists, and cross-border movements of extremists.

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The EU and ASEAN Approaches in Fighting Terrorism: Collaboration or Cooperation?

Céline C. Cocq

1. INTRODUCTION

Because States cannot deal with terrorism alone, the international community has developed common objectives and States have worked together in order to reach them.¹ International and regional legal instruments and declarations urge States to “collaborate” and/or to “cooperate” together and to “coordinate” their effort. These terms, undefined in international and regional instruments, seem to be often used interchangeably. It should not be the case. These terms represent different ways of contributing to a common purpose. Despite some similarities, each one involves a specific dynamic and power relation.

In collaboration and cooperation cases, the group works together in order to achieve a common result. Specifically, in a cooperative relation, members of a group do not necessarily carry out the same task. And, coordination ensures the best ordering of tasks to enhance the effectiveness of cooperation. By contrast, in a collaborative relation, members usually work separately to achieve the shared goal(s). They may work together in a more collective manner when it is necessary to achieve their goal but they may also work individually.²

Focusing on collaboration and cooperation, two main discrepancies shall be noted. First, the cooperative approach is more structured than the collaborative approach. The latter is more flexible; members have more freedom to adopt the measures they consider the most appropriate to them. In this respect, a cooperative approach demonstrates a certain form of maturity in the relations between Member States compared to a collaborative approach. Second, the interaction between members varies. In a cooperative

* This paper was submitted on 16 August 2016.

¹ See, e.g., United Nations (UN), Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, annexed to General Assembly (GA) Resolution A/RES/49/60, 9 December 1994; UNGA Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the UN, 40th plenary meeting, A/RES/50/6, 24 October 1995; and other following resolutions and conventions.

² France Henri and Karin Lundgren-Cayrol, “Coopération ou collaboration—Quelles différences?”, <http://outils-reseaux.org/ContenuCooperationCollaboration> (accessed 2 August 2016).

relation, the complementarity of the tasks creates a form of mutual interdependency; interactions are strong. By contrast, in a collaborative relation, the development of shared views and goals takes precedence over the interactions. These interactions can be qualified as associative relations.

As a consequence, with a cooperative approach, the goal(s) can only be achieved with the accomplishment of the different tasks carried out by the members. It is the group as a whole that achieves the goal(s). On the other hand when adopting a collaborative approach, each member uses all means at its disposal to achieve the goal. In this sense, a collaborative approach could be seen as more democratic than the cooperative one.

Two regional organisations, namely the European Union (EU) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), have clearly stated their ambitions to ensure the cohesion and harmonisation of their Member States' responses against terrorism, especially Daesh. Because the level of integration and the associated rights and freedoms differ from one to another, the anti-terrorism responses may consequently differ as well. For instance, the freedom of movement of persons is not conceptualised the same way in the EU and ASEAN. In the EU, it was constitutionally integrated into the Lisbon Treaty. In ASEAN, the ASEAN Agreement on the Movement of Natural Persons that entered into force recently on 14 June 2016 aims at facilitating the movement of natural persons but only those engaged in the conduct of trade in goods, trade in services and investment.³ Terrorists use this freedom to travel from one country to another within the regions to commit crime. Today, this freedom is particularly challenged as people's travel arrangements are increasingly reduced or strictly regulated in terrorism-related cases.

In this context where States and regional organisations strongly promote collaboration and cooperation, this contribution aims to examine *whether the terminology used respectively by the EU and ASEAN reflect accurately the dynamics in the two regions in preventing and combating terrorism and therefore whether Member States comply with the engagements so declared*. This contribution does not pretend to answer the question of effectiveness of each regional approach in preventing and combating Daesh. However, it will analyse the regional legal framework and associated mechanisms established to match States' objectives in preventing and combating terrorism in general and Daesh in particular. This paper will demonstrate that although collaboration and, most importantly, cooperation is increasingly required in the regional norms, establishing real mechanisms corresponding to what is stated seems more complicated, especially in ASEAN.

³ Art. 1(b) ASEAN Agreement on the Movement of Natural Persons, Phnom Penh, 19 November 2012.

2. COLLABORATION AND/OR COOPERATION? A NORMATIVE SITUATION MORE OR LESS CLEAR DEPENDING ON THE REGIONS

Collaboration and cooperation are not defined in any international or regional instrument, which makes unclear the authors' intentions when using these terms and their implications. It may lead to potential misuse and create illegitimate expectations in external partners.

Surprisingly, collaboration is not written as often as cooperation in international instruments.⁴ The international community agrees to take the necessary steps to enhance cooperation in order to prevent and combat terrorism⁵, especially through regional cooperation⁶. In fact, States undertake:

[t]o cooperate fully [...], in accordance with [their] obligations under international law, in order to find, deny safe haven and bring to justice, on the basis of the principle of extradite or prosecute, any person who supports, facilitates, participates or attempts to participate in the financing, planning, preparation or perpetration of terrorist acts or provides safe havens.⁷

In this respect, coordination is required to ensure the effectiveness of the mechanisms of cooperation.⁸

Interestingly, there is no notable evolution of the vocabulary in the international instruments. Cooperation has always been more requested than collaboration. Whereas cooperation was required in the first resolution on terrorism, namely the Security Council resolution 1368(2001), collaboration was mentioned only later in the resolution 1377(2001) of 12 November. More recently, the first UN resolution related to foreign terrorist fighters does not refer to collaboration at all but require States to act cooperatively to prevent and combat this threat.⁹

⁴ For instance, collaboration between States is required in UN Security Council (SC), S/RES/2199(2015), 12 February 2015; S/RES/2253(2015), 17 December 2015 but not in UNGA, A/RES/60/288 or in the UNSC resolutions (taking only the year 2015) S/RES/2220(2015); S/RES/2250(2015); S/RES/2255(2015) in which "only" cooperation is required. Similarly, the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, New York, 15 December 1997, 2149 UNTS 256; International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, New York, 9 December 1999, 2178 UNTS 197; and International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, New York, 13 April 2005, 2445 UNTS 89 only refer to cooperation and not to collaboration.

⁵ Recital, A/RES/60/288.

⁶ Pt. II(13), Plan of Action, Annex of A/RES/60/288.

⁷ Ibid., Pt. II(3).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ UNSC, S/RES/2178(2014), 24 September 2014.

Thus, it is interesting to observe that the more flexible approach that collaboration represents was not preliminarily adopted in the international instruments. In relation to combating terrorism and, more specifically, foreign terrorist fighters, cooperation was directly chosen.

In this international framework, the writing of the regional instruments dedicated to the fight against terrorism has evolved. This evolution is more prominent in the EU than in ASEAN documents.

Similarly to ASEAN, the construction of the European Community and its progressive integration focused originally on economic strengthening.¹⁰

Collaboration was used in the Treaty on the European Economic Community of 1957 to qualify, on the one hand, the relation between Member States and international actors, including the institutions of the Community and, on the other, the relation between national authorities.¹¹ By contrast, cooperation does not appear in the text.

Throughout regional integration, the use of the term “collaboration” almost completely disappeared whereas the term “cooperation” proliferated. The last and only reference to collaboration in the Treaty on the EU and the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU signed in 2007 refers to the relation between the Council and the Commission when conducting evaluations of the implementation of Union policies.¹²

Following the current writing of the two Treaties, cooperation is clearly associated with integration. This is characterised in Title IV that allows Member States to establish enhanced cooperation mechanisms in order to comply with the objectives of the Union, to protect its interests and to reinforce its integration.¹³ Member States cooperate in all domains of competences of the EU including in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, which is a shared competence between the EU and EU Member States.¹⁴

In this particular area, the EU aims to prevent and combat crime through coordination and cooperation measures between police and judicial authorities and other competent national authorities.¹⁵ For this purpose, the EU adopts norms to harmonise national legislations and facilitates this cooperation. Focusing on terrorism, the EU adopted two consecutive framework decisions in 2002 and 2008. The latter amended the former by adding public provocation, recruitment and training for terrorism.¹⁶ After adoption of the Lisbon Treaty and the attacks in Paris, the European Commission proposed a new Directive aiming to integrate provisions criminalising travelling abroad for

¹⁰ Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (TEEC), Rome, 25 March 1957, 298 UNTS 11.

¹¹ See, e.g., Arts. 49, 54, 105 and 118, TEEC.

¹² Art. 70, Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), 26 October 2012, OJ 2012/C 326/01.

¹³ Art. 20, Treaty on the European Union (TEU), OJ 2012/C 326/01, 26 October 2012.

¹⁴ Art. 4 as well as 3 and 6, TEU on respectively the exclusive and supporting competences in the EU.

¹⁵ Art. 67(3), TFEU.

¹⁶ Art. 1, Council Framework Decision 2008/919/JHA of 28 November 2008 amending Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism, OJ L330/21.

terrorist purposes and ensuring the protection of the rights of victims.¹⁷ These progressive modifications and additions adjusting to the evolution of the terrorist threat did not change the vocabulary used by the EU legislature. Collaboration does not appear in any of these instruments. Only cooperation and coordination between competent national authorities is required.¹⁸

Going even further, the EU instruments mention operational cooperation.¹⁹ Operational cooperation involves practical actions such as exchange of information²⁰ or joint investigation teams²¹. Europol, Frontex, Eurojust and other EU agencies are examples of institutionalised operational cooperation.

Therefore, a clear and quick change of vocabulary must be noted in the EU instruments. This change is very representative of the integration process that has been taking place in the region for the past 70 years. By setting aside collaboration to focus on cooperation and coordination, EU Member States complied with international requirements and decided to adopt a more interdependent and reinforced method.

Unlike in the EU, decision-making in ASEAN is based on the strong principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, non-interference, consultation, consensus and unity in diversity.²² This significant discrepancy has an impact on the choice of words in regional instruments but also on the nature of the relations between Member States. Indeed, collaboration may logically be the primary choice of Member States when working together to reach common objectives. However, cooperation is increasingly used in norms dedicated to fighting transnational crime, including terrorism.

The constitutive Declaration of 1967 already requires Member States to collaborate and cooperate together in order to reach the shared objectives. Based on this Declaration, Member States aim, among other things, to “promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural technical, scientific and administrative fields [and to] collaborate more effectively

¹⁷ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism, COM(2015) 625 final, Brussels, 2 December 2015.

¹⁸ Art. 9(2) Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA of 13 June 2002 on combating terrorism, OJ L164/3; Art. 21(2), Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism, COM(2015) 625 final.

¹⁹ Art. 71, TFEU.

²⁰ See, e.g., Council Framework Decision 2006/960/JHA of 18 December 2006 on simplifying the exchange of information and intelligence between law enforcement authorities of the Member States of the European Union, OJ L386/89. In this framework decision, only closer cooperation is promoted.

²¹ See, e.g., Regulation (EU) 2016/794 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and replacing and repealing Council Decisions 2009/371/JHA, 2009/934/JHA, 2009/935/JHA, 2009/936/JHA and 2009/968/JHA, OJ L135/53 (Europol Regulation).

²² Preamble and Art. 20, ASEAN Charter, 13th ASEAN Summit, Singapore, 20 November 2007.

[...].” Not only was collaboration promoted, close cooperation was also introduced as a method to reach common purposes.

Ten years later, at the Bali Summit in February 1976, Economic Ministers met to consider ways to implement economic cooperation.²³ At this time, Member States proclaimed the need to intensify cooperation on “ASEAN large-scale industrial projects”. In fact, “[c]ooperation in many field has grown in variety and scope.”²⁴ Although security issues are increasingly of concern to Member States, ASEAN norms have not focused on non-traditional security issues, including terrorism, yet.

It required almost thirty additional years for Member States to adopt the ASEAN Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (MLACM).²⁵ This multilateral treaty—not an ASEAN instrument—only mentions “cooperation” once in the preamble as a means to combat crime beside mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. Ratified by all Member States, this treaty specifies how this cooperation should take place. Although not particularly highlighted, this treaty is therefore a step towards effective cooperation.

In the latest relevant instruments, collaboration is used to qualify the relation between States and external organisations such as the UN or other regional actors/bodies.²⁶ ASEAN Member States will work with them when it helps them to reach their objectives. In these instruments, this collaboration is not framed in any way, which gives Member States and these partners the opportunity to develop their collaboration as they see fit.

Qualifying the relation between States, collaboration is not used alone but is associated with cooperation.²⁷ In the recently adopted Blueprint 2025, ASEAN stated that it was continuing “to enhance cooperation against terrorism”²⁸. This Blueprint lists prac-

²³ 15th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Post-Ministerial Meeting with the Dialogue countries, Singapore, 14-18 June 1982 (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 1982); 25th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Post-Ministerial Conferences with the Dialogue partners, Manila, 21-26 July 1992 (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 1992).

²⁴ Opening Address by His Excellency General Carlos P. Romulo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, in 15th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Post-Ministerial Meeting with The Dialogue countries, *ibid.*, 25.

²⁵ ASEAN Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, Ministers of Justice/Law Attorneys-General, Kuala Lumpur, 29 November 2004.

²⁶ Pt. 2(h) and 8, ASEAN Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Transnational Crime, Manila, 25 March 1998; Art. 15, ASEAN Charter; Pt. D. and D. h) ASEAN Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 27th ASEAN Summit, Kuala Lumpur, 21 November 2015.

²⁷ B3.1. iv), ASEAN Political-Security Community, Blueprint 2025, *ASEAN 2025 Forging Ahead Together* (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2015).

²⁸ B3.2., ASEAN Political-Security Community, Blueprint 2025.

tical obligations.²⁹ Similarly, coordination is associated with cooperation to ensure that the different entities competent to prevent and combat terrorism combine their efforts.³⁰

Thus, reference to cooperation among competent national authorities has grown over time in ASEAN documents.³¹ As the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism (2007) and its Comprehensive Plan of Action (2009) demonstrate, cooperation and its format are increasingly developed. Notably, a list of areas of cooperation was added in Article VI of the Convention. After proclaiming the common objectives in Article I, this list may be seen as the next step towards effective cooperation. The Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOM-TC) Working Group on Counter-Terrorism ensures coordination and implementation of the Plan through the development of specific plans and mechanisms of cooperation. SOM-TC gathers representatives of the ten Member States, which demonstrates that ASEAN as such is not an organisation independent from its Member States. Moreover, there is no enforcing mechanism. The SOM-TC may only propose adaptations for Member States depending on their level of development in the matter at stake.

The multiplication of issues of concern including non-traditional security issues led to the strengthening and restructuring of the ASEAN Secretariat and of the association itself.³² Nonetheless, it is clear even today that ASEAN Member States are not going to trade their constitutive principles to reach their objectives soon. Therefore, although changes must be noted in ASEAN, collaboration remains the preferred method of Member States to cope with terrorism. There is no interdependence, no specific coordination and no institutionalised structure between them. The term cooperation does not seem to be very accurate in qualifying the situation in ASEAN.

²⁹ B3.2. x), ASEAN Political-Security Community, Blueprint 2025.

³⁰ See, e.g., B1.2. v), B3.1. iv), B3.2. x) and B3.7. ii), ASEAN Political-Security Community, Blueprint 2025. This association can also be found in the ASEAN Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2015).

³¹ Preamble, Arts. 8 and 10 ASEAN Charter aiming at closer cooperation and integration in the three Communities. Specific to cooperation, the preamble and Arts. I and VI develop Member States' obligations in the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism, 12th ASEAN Summit, Cebu, Heads of State/Government, 13 April 2007 and in the ASEAN Comprehensive plan of action on Counter Terrorism, Nay Pyi Taw, 30 June 2009; it may also be noted that the preamble of the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 27th ASEAN Summit, Kuala Lumpur, 21 November 2015, provides that "cooperation is imperative to the successful investigation, prosecution and elimination of safe havens for perpetrators and accomplices of trafficking in persons", also Art. 1(1) c), Convention against Trafficking.

³² Closing Statement by H.E. Mr. Raul S. Manglapus, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, at the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, 20 July 1991, in 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Post-Ministerial Conferences with the Dialogue Partners, Kuala Lumpur, 19-24 July 1991 (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 1991) 37. See also the 2007 ASEAN Charter and the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the Association of South East Asian Nations, Cha-Am, 25 October 2009.

Thus, collaboration and cooperation seem to be used in a more interchangeable way in ASEAN than in the EU. The use of one or the other term hardly corresponds to the facts. Because of the lack of definition in the international and regional instruments, it is in the facts and in the institutional developments that clues to evaluate the accuracy and level of collaboration and cooperation may be found.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL NORMS: CONVERGENCE OF THE EU AND ASEAN IN COLLABORATION AND DIVERGENCE IN COOPERATION

Although regional norms express specific objectives in the fight against terrorism, the means needed to achieve these objectives are clearer in the EU than in ASEAN. The EU has gone further than ASEAN in implementing effective regional means of cooperation.

In the EU, terrorism is considered a serious crime.³³ Norms have been enacted in order to harmonise national legislation and to give Member States tools such as the European Arrest Warrant or the Schengen Information System (SIS)³⁴ to respond in an effective and cooperative manner against terrorism. Based on these instruments, information and intelligence are regularly exchanged between competent national authorities to prevent and combat serious crime. For instance, the SIS allows competent authorities to enter and consult data related to border control and immigration management. Because of the open borders within the region, these permanently available databases are necessary. Used by the relevant authorities, they facilitate the fight against transnational crime.

The seriousness and transnational character of the crime also involves the active participation of EU agencies, such as Europol³⁵ and Eurojust³⁶. Terrorism is clearly listed as a serious crime of concern to Europol, the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation³⁷, and Eurojust, in charge of facilitating coordination and cooperation

³³ Art. 83 and ff, TFEU.

³⁴ See, e.g., Council Framework Decision 2002/584/JHA of 13 June 2002 on the European arrest warrant and the surrender procedures between Member States, OJ L190/1; Council Framework Decision 2006/960/JHA; Regulation (EC) 1986/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 regarding access to the Second General Schengen Information System (SIS II) by the services in the Member States responsible for issuing vehicle registration certificates, OJ L381/1; on the other SIS-related norms.

³⁵ Art. 88, TFEU.

³⁶ Art. 85, TFEU.

³⁷ Art. 3(1) and Annex I, Europol Regulation.

between competent judicial authorities³⁸. Both agencies facilitate cooperation between Member States in offering secure channels for information and intelligence sharing, in providing authorities with regional strategic and operational analysis and in supporting joint investigation teams. While a specific department of Europol was already dedicated to the fight against terrorism, a new European Counter Terrorism Centre was established in January 2016 in response to the attacks in Paris in November 2015. This Centre should become a central information hub in the fight against terrorism in the EU, “providing analysis for ongoing investigations and contributing to a coordinated reaction in the event of major terrorist attacks”³⁹. Through Europol, competent national authorities cooperate and coordinate their actions in such a way as to ensure an efficient and effective response to terrorism.⁴⁰ This is a clear example of regionally institutionalised means aiming to make sure that cooperation required in EU instruments becomes a reality.

The situation differs in ASEAN. The blurry choice of words in the regional instruments offers the advantage of flexibility for States. In this respect, there is no particular regional example of effective and institutionalised methods of cooperation in this region.

Some might think that Aseanapol would be the equivalent of Europol but this is not the case. The primary difference lies in the fact that Aseanapol is not an entity of either ASEAN or the ASEAN Secretariat. Aseanapol and the ASEAN Secretariat are dialogue partners. Although in the first Aseanapol meeting in October 1981 the chiefs of police agreed to enhance collaboration and cooperation in the fight against transnational crime, including terrorism⁴¹, no particular means have been implemented since then. It is true that Aseanapol created a database called e-ADS that should be nourished and used by chiefs of police. However, it is not really used by those who are supposed to be its end-users. Some do not even know it exists. Operational cooperation is therefore ineffective. Aseanapol constitutes a forum for discussion rather than an effective cooperation entity. The annual Aseanapol conferences facilitate the sharing of

³⁸ Art. 4(1) Council Decision 2009/426/JHA of 16 December 2008 on the strengthening of Eurojust and amending Decision 2002/187/JHA setting up Eurojust with a view to reinforcing the fight against serious crime, OJ L138/14; and in the future, Art. 3(1) and Annex I, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), COM(2013)0535 final.

³⁹ Europol, “Europol’s European Counter Terrorism Centre Strengthens the EU’s Response to Terror”, 25 January 2016, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/ectc> (accessed 13 August 2016); see also Europol, “Annex 4: Europol Counter-Terrorism Activities”, *TE-SAT 2016* (The Hague: European Police Office, 2016) 49 and ff.

⁴⁰ Examples of supporting activities: “Europol condemns Attacks in Belgium”, 22 March 2016, https://www.europol.europa.eu/latest_news/europol-condemns-attacks-belgium (accessed 13 August 2016); and other joint activities: https://www.europol.europa.eu/latest_press_releases.

⁴¹ Resolutions, 35th Aseanapol Conference, Borubudur Hotel, Jakarta, 3-7 August 2015.

best practices and knowledge about terrorist trends and activities and the coordination of joint operations and activities.

Actually, Aseanapol's and the chiefs of police's actions correspond to ASEAN norms in focusing on collaboration rather than on cooperation. Regional cooperation mechanisms between competent national authorities need to be further developed and most importantly implemented in order to match Aseanapol's objectives.

Although regional cooperation between competent national authorities is quite deficient, peer-to-peer cooperation is more effective (police to police cooperation, also called "P2P cooperation", or immigration to immigration cooperation, also called "I2I cooperation"). However, this method of cooperation remains bilateral, unofficial and non-institutionalised. ASEAN Member States prefer bilateral operational cooperation to regional cooperation. Trust remains a serious issue in the region.

Beside law enforcement cooperation, it is noteworthy that the relation between judicial authorities is almost non-existent. In particular, prosecutors tend to use this peer-to-peer cooperation between law enforcement agencies in order to exchange information. Although they have the Treaty on MLACM, this legal framework is not used often enough and takes too long compared to the speed needed to prevent and combat terrorist offences.⁴² This is the reason why peer-to-peer cooperation is preferred. Looking at another regional forum in ASEAN, the SOM-TC gathers the ten Ministers of Foreign Affairs. SOM-TC, and especially the Working Group on terrorism, is in charge of adopting the policy and guidelines. These meetings usually require Member States to collaborate and cooperate together but, unlike EU institutions, it has no power to impose any specific action. Cooperation at this level remains of a policy nature. In practice, States use this forum to collaborate, by adopting common objectives to achieve without being too specific. States are free to act together or separately to achieve these objectives and to adopt measures depending on their own legal and institutional frameworks. Typical of a collaborative approach, the accent is on the objectives rather than on the methods used to achieve them.

Because of the sensitiveness of the subject, it is not always easy to quantify or qualify the interstate relations. For instance, the exact amount of data shared among Member States of the two regions is not available. Nonetheless, the analysis of the authorities' actions and of the mechanisms established to facilitate the fight against terrorism serves to clarify the state of the art in both regions. While the EU's actions can be qualified as a combination of collaboration, cooperation and coordination, the actions of ASEAN Member States are once again not so clear. ASEAN Member States work on two different levels. On a regional level, their actions are more representative of a collaborative relation. On a more sub-regional level, ASEAN Member States co-

⁴² See, e.g., Interview, Peter Ong, Senior State Prosecutor in the Philippines, 19 April 2016.

operate together on a bilateral basis when exchanging information and setting up joint operations.

The evaluation of these approaches' effectiveness is not an easy task, especially when focusing on prevention. In the prevention phase, it is always very complicated to identify which crime has failed or was foiled by the action of competent national authorities. However, the existence of regional systematic and constantly available mechanisms of cooperation necessarily helps. In this perspective, the EU is a step ahead of ASEAN, whose actions seem blurrier.

4. CONCLUSION: GOING BEYOND THE REGION

States should not underestimate the impact of an inaccurate choice of terms. This analysis demonstrates that collaboration and cooperation are required in both regions but the realities in the two regions differ. These terms have legal consequences only when they are associated with control mechanisms. However, they are broadly framed and not associated with any guarantees in ASEAN. This may explain the impression of interchangeability. Most importantly, the use of one term or another also impacts on international relations. It creates legitimate expectations on the external partners' side. Talking about cooperation when collaboration is actually implemented by one party can constitute an issue.

Working together is essential to the prevention, investigation, detection and prosecution of terrorism-related cases. The EU has perhaps been more active in implementing effective regional means of cooperation while collaboration prevails over cooperation at the regional level in ASEAN where effective means of cooperation remain bilateral. The objectives are very similar in the two regions, but different approaches are implemented.

These differences may be explained by the nature of the two regional organisations. One is a union while the other is an association. States involved in the union work together jointly under a constitutive act, this being the Lisbon Treaty, giving the EU institutions and agencies some competences over States' actions. In contrast, States involved in the association develop their relations on a subject of common interest. In the association, States decided to preserve more strenuously their sovereignty. Because of their different natures, a different type of interstates relation exists.

Based on these elements, the interregional relation between the EU and ASEAN should be qualified as collaboration. The lowest common denominator principle should apply. Once again the terminology used is not clear. The EU and ASEAN say to col-

laborate and cooperate in the fight against terrorism.⁴³ However, the EU and ASEAN collaborate more than they cooperate. They share common objectives and they share best practices but they do not cooperate on specific cases and do not exchange specific information. This type of cooperation only exists on a bilateral basis between States of the two regions, and not between the regional organisations. The terminology is not always accurate, and this inaccuracy should be resolved.

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⁴³ See Joint Declaration on Cooperation to Combat Terrorism, 14th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting, Brussels, 27-28 January 2003; European Council of the EU, “Council Conclusions on EU-ASEAN relations”, 22 June 2015, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/06/22-fac-asean-conclusions/> (accessed 13 August 2016); ASEAN-EU Post-Ministerial Conference, Vientiane, 25 July 2016, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/7170/asean-eu-post-ministerial-conference-vientiane-laos-25-july-2016_en (accessed 13 August 2016). Also, Céline Cocq and Sarah Teo “Countering Terrorism: Challenges and Opportunities in ASEAN-EU Cooperation”, in Mario Telo, Louise Fawcett and Frederik Ponjaert (eds.), *Interregionalism and the European Union. A Post-Revisionist Approach to Europe’s Place in a Changing World* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

Coordinated Counter Terrorism Responses by the European Union

Guenther Sablattnig

The fight against terrorism, prevention and countering of extremism as well as identification and reintegration of potential foreign terrorist fighters is high on the political agenda of the European Union (EU). Several attacks in recent months on European soil but also attacks on passenger planes targeting European travellers underline the terrorist threat Europe is currently facing. Estimates suggest that around 5,600 European terrorist fighters have been or are still active in Syria and Iraq. Most of them joined Daesh. Moreover, approximately 400 European children live or have been born in the caliphate. Because of increasing pressure on Daesh in Syria and Iraq in recent months, many fighters are moving to other war-torn places around the globe or are returning back home.

HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?

Youngsters who grew up in EU Member States turned their backs on European societies and the universal values of freedom, equality and free speech to join a terrorist ideology. Discussions are on-going about how this could happen. Drivers of radicalization can be marginalization or failed integration of migrants and citizens with migration background. Therefore, the European Union undertook great efforts to push integration and provide equal opportunities. However, many—particularly second- and third-generation citizens with migration backgrounds—still feel excluded and live in migrant communities rather than among the majority population.

The external influence of radical religious scholars, particularly the extremist Salafi ideology, also plays a role in radicalization. The European Union is based on fundamental principles such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Therefore, restricting ideologies that act under the guise of religion is a highly sensitive and difficult topic.

* This paper was submitted on 5 August 2016.

Radicalization through the internet can serve as an additional driver and reaches vulnerable groups across the globe. The “virtual caliphate” has become more and more important, also because of the successful fight against Daesh on its self-proclaimed territory in Syria and Iraq. Promoting the idea of this caliphate through the virtual space allows Daesh to expand its global network and to mount attacks outside of the physical caliphate. This further increases the threat posed to the European Union.

Another challenging aspect of the current threat is right-wing radicalization across Europe. The migration crisis that had its previous peak in 2015 has fuelled right-wing resentment and populist right-wing parties in Europe, particularly in those countries which have been most affected by the influx of illegal migrants but also in several eastern EU Member States where the number of illegal migrants and asylum seekers still remains very low. In Germany, the number of right-wing-motivated offences increased in 2015, compared to 2014, by 30 percent (Tagesschau.de, 11 February 2016). The total number of complaints about right-wing offences in Austria increased from 1,201 in 2014 to 1,691 in 2015 (Die Presse, 2 May 2016).

The current challenges for the European Union are therefore threefold:

- (1) The European Union needs to prevent and combat radicalization, particularly at the local level and through the internet.
- (2) Due to an expected increase in the number of returnees from Syria and Iraq, the European Union needs to develop reintegration measures and solutions for local communities as well as prisons.
- (3) The European Union needs to increase cooperation among Member States as well as with third states to exchange information on terrorist travel, and on good practices in prevention and reintegration and to enhance capacity-building in the European Union and in affected third states so as to provide efficient tools to prevent terrorist attacks, combat terrorist groups and orderly prosecute terrorist cases.

KEY ACTORS

Within the EU, several stakeholders are active in combating terrorism and countering violent extremism. According to the Treaty of the European Union, national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State (Art. 4(2) TEU; OJ 2016/C 202/01). However, internal security, including the fight against terrorism, is a shared responsibility of the European Union and its Member States. Close economic and social ties among all Member States and the fact that there are no border checks within the Schengen zone (comprising 26 European countries, not all of which are EU Member States) means that there is a need for close cooperation to combat terrorism. The Treaty

of the European Union even provides room for cooperation related to national security, since article 73 states that Member States are allowed “to organise between themselves and under their responsibility (...) cooperation and coordination as they deem appropriate between the competent departments of their administrations responsible for safeguarding national security” (OJ 2016/C 202/01).

In 2015, the **European Commission** published “The European Agenda on Security”, which defines the Commission policy-framework for 2015 to 2020. A strong EU response to terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters is mentioned as first priority (COM(2015) 185 final). On 2 August 2016, Commission President Juncker announced his intention to assign a new Commissioner responsible for the Security Union portfolio (European Commission, 2 August 2016).

The **European External Action Service** recently published “A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy: Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe”. This strategy stresses that the EU will “further develop human rights-compliant anti-terrorism cooperation with North Africa, the Middle East, the Western Balkans and Turkey, among others, and work with partners around the world to share best practices and develop joint programmes on countering violent extremism and radicalisation”. As part of the EEAS, the **EU Intelligence Analysis Centre** (EU INTCEN) serves as the intelligence body of the European Union, providing in-depth analysis for EU decision makers. Its analytical products are based on intelligence inputs from the EU Member States’ intelligence and security services (EU INTCEN, 5 February 2015).

At the operational level, to support national law enforcement and security services cooperation, several EU agencies, such as Europol, Frontex and Eurojust, have strongly increased their counter-terrorism capacities over the last months. **Europol** launched the European Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC) in January 2016, following a decision from the EU Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in November 2015. The ECTC serves as a central information hub for EU Member States as well as operational partners and combines all relevant Europol databases and tools, including the EU Internet Referral Unit to combat terrorist propaganda and related violent extremist activities on the internet (Europol, 25 January 2016).

Frontex, the recently reformed European Border and Coast Guard Agency, plays a key role in ensuring the implementation of integrated border management at the EU level and overseeing an effective functioning of border control at the external borders. This includes first- and second-line checks of illegal migrants, on suspicion on terrorism among other considerations, in close cooperation with Europol and in support of the EU Member States at whose borders Frontex is active.

On the justice aspect, **Eurojust** supports EU Member States on operational judicial cooperation, investigations and prosecutions. Eurojust regularly brings together the national correspondents for terrorism matters of the EU Member States, analyses

terrorism-related convictions and publishes them in “Terrorism Convictions Monitor”, a document with limited distribution for the use of practitioners (Eurojust, 11 July 2016).

Moreover, the **EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)** plays an important role in advising on issues related to fundamental rights and principles that have to be taken into account when developing counter-terrorism policies across the EU (FRA, January 2015).

Finally, the **EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (EU CTC)** coordinates, in close cooperation with the Commission, the European External Action Service and relevant EU agencies, internal and external aspects of the counter-terrorism work of the EU, keeps an overview on counter-terrorism-related developments and regularly reports to the Justice and Home Affairs Council. The EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator regularly liaises with external stakeholders such as third-state representatives, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and the private sector to learn about recent trends and developments on terrorism-related issues.

As a consequence of the terrorist attacks in Spain in March 2004, the European Council had decided to establish this position to “co-ordinate the work of the Council in combating terrorism and, with due regard to the responsibilities of the Commission, maintain an overview of all the instruments at the Union’s disposal with a view to regular reporting to the Council and effective follow-up of Council decisions” (European Council, 25 March 2004). Since then, the mandate of the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator has been reaffirmed and extended several times and today, the EU CTC serves as a link and often mediator between the political and the operational level as well as between EU institutions and Member States, foreign governments, think tanks, research institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and private companies.

Outside of the formal EU framework, the **Counter-Terrorism Group (CTG)** serves as a platform for cooperation among the security services of the EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland. During the Dutch EU Presidency in the first half of 2016, the CTG set up a platform to improve information-sharing practices, aiming to simplify the exchange of operational intelligence, particularly as it relates to terrorist fighters (Dutch EU Presidency, 25 January 2016). The CTG is located outside the formal EU framework because the Treaty of the European Union defines national security to remain the sole responsibility of each Member State.

Moreover, the **I.C.P.O. INTERPOL** supports EU Member States in global law enforcement cooperation, particularly through its Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database and the foreign terrorist fighters database. The operational agreement between Europol and Interpol complements the framework and allows exchange of personal information between the two organizations.

A JOINT EU RESPONSE TO TERRORISM

After the attacks in Paris in January 2015, Heads of State or Government met in Brussels on 12 February 2015 to set the framework for the current, enhanced counter-terrorism work in the European Union. The statement by the members of the European Council focuses on three areas: (1) ensuring the security of citizens, (2) preventing radicalization and safeguarding values, and (3) cooperating with international partners (SN 10/15). These areas address the challenges currently faced by the European Union and build upon the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy of 2005, which remains valid (doc. 14469/4/05).

1. Ensuring the security of citizens

Since February 2015, counter-terrorism cooperation within the EU has strongly improved in the area of operational information sharing via Europol, Eurojust and the Schengen Information System. In addition, expert contacts to share good practices on prevention work further increased. Today, all EU Member States are connected to the counter-terrorism configuration of Europol's SIENA network to exchange counter-terrorism-related information directly among the responsible authorities. This system currently works up to the level "restricted" but will soon be updated to operate with classified information up to the level of "confidential", if Member States choose to do so and to implement the technical standards necessary at the national level.

Besides operational counter-terrorism cooperation via Europol, the Schengen Information System (SIS II) is key for law enforcement cooperation and is constantly being improved to meet the requirements of national law enforcement and border authorities and to promote more coherent use of the system.

In their statement of 15 February 2015, EU Heads of State or Government agreed that "full use...of the existing Schengen framework to reinforce and modernize external borders' control" has to be made. They agreed "to proceed without delay to systematic and coordinated checks on individuals enjoying the right of free movement against databases relevant to the fight against terrorism based on common risk indicators" (SN 10/15, 12 February 2015).

In addition to operational cooperation at the EU level, a lot of information is shared at the bilateral and multilateral levels, using bilateral police liaison officers, security attachés, the Interpol channel and intelligence channels such as the CTG.

At the policy level, the Commission is working on a number of initiatives, such as illicit firearms and explosive devices, terrorism financing, protecting critical infrastructure, illicit use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) material, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), network and information security (NIS) and cyber terrorism, which are related to counter-terrorism.

2. Preventing radicalization and safeguarding values

Mainstreaming “soft” measures to prevent radicalization and violent extremism has become the other central task of the European Union. With the Commission supporting and promoting initiatives such as the EU Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), the Syria Strategic Communication Advisory Team (SSCAT; new project title: European Strategic Communication Network), the EU Internet Forum and initiatives in education, combating racism and xenophobia and promoting tolerance, the service clearly proved its leading role in setting initiatives and developing new, innovative policies.

The **EU RAN** started as an EU-funded project in 2011. In October 2015, the RAN project was transformed into a new RAN Centre of Excellence based in Amsterdam. The Commission continues to finance the centre and chairs the RAN Steering Committee. RAN operates nine working groups where first-line practitioners gather to address local challenges or specific issues related to violent extremism and tackling radicalisation. The different working groups deal with Communication and Narratives (RAN C&N), Education (RAN EDU), Exit (RAN EXIT; de-radicalisation and disengagement programmes that help individuals to move from a radicalised and violent mindset towards mainstream society), Youth, Families and Communities (RAN YF&C), Local Authorities (RAN LOCAL), Prison and Probation (RAN P&P), Police and Law Enforcement (RAN POL), Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism (RAN RVT; maintaining a network of victims of terrorism), and Health and Social Care (RAN H&SC) (European Commission, 16 June 2016). The centre primarily services EU Member States but is also engaged in selected third states that are particularly relevant to the security situation in the European Union.

Terrorist organisations use communications to radicalise and recruit. The **Syria Strategic Communication Advisory Team (SSCAT)** was set up to develop best practices in the area of strategic communication with a view to preventing and countering terrorist crime and violent extremism. The project has been implemented by the Belgium Ministry of Interior in joint cooperation with the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) of the United Kingdom Home Office. The first project phase was conducted from January 2015 until June 2016 and has been co-funded by the European Commission. The upcoming second phase of this initiative will run under the new title “European Strategic Communication Network” (ESCN).

The **EU Internet Forum** was established by the Commission in December 2015 with the aim of combining the forces of the private and public sectors to tackle Daesh and other extremist groups who are exploiting the internet to spread propaganda, seek new recruits and encourage acts of violence (doc. 6785/16). One of the results of this initiative is a code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online that has been

concluded between the European Commission and Facebook, Microsoft (Microsoft-hosted consumer services), Twitter and YouTube (European Commission, 31 May 2016). With this code of conduct, the IT companies commit themselves to reviewing the majority of valid notifications for removal of illegal hate speech in less than 24 hours and to remove or disable access to such content, if necessary.

To identify and refer relevant online content to concerned internet service providers and support Member States with operational and strategic analysis, Europol set up the **European Union Internet Referral Unit** (EU IRU) in July 2015 (Europol, 1 July 2016). The EU IRU is part of the recently established European Counter Terrorism Centre at Europol and is currently developing a centralised concept for social media monitoring and to decipher the functions of jihadist networks across social media (doc. 6785/16).

On the **criminal justice** aspect, the Commission has undertaken several initiatives, including one for prison staff, and adjusted its funding programmes to target projects addressing the fight against terrorism by preventing radicalization. Moreover, initiatives in the area of education, youth, culture, sports as well as combating xenophobia and racism are being implemented or developed with the aim of reducing the threat of radicalization (doc. 6785/16).

3. Cooperating with international partners

The external dimension is a key element in all aspects of the EU's counter-terrorism work. The EEAS, in close cooperation with the Commission and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, leads on third-country cooperation. The recently published *Global Strategy* outlines the need to “further develop human rights-compliant anti-terrorism cooperation with North Africa, the Middle East, the Western Balkans and Turkey” and to “work with partners around the world to share best practices and develop joint programmes on countering violent extremism and radicalisation” (EEAS, June 2016). Moreover, on the thematic aspect, terrorist financing, border controls and aviation security are high on the current external counter-terrorism agenda (EUCO 28/15; SN 10/15; doc. 6785/16).

In addition, the EU cooperates with and supports the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa, West Africa, South and Central Asia as well as Southeast Asia in various international initiatives, including the framework of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). The STRIVE for Development programme aims at strengthening resilience to violence and extremism. Cooperation with Asian states also takes place in the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The next ARF workshop on mainstreaming the prevention of violent extremism in the ARF region will be jointly organized by the Philippines and the European Union during first half of 2017.

Finally, there is extensive cooperation at all levels between the European Union's agencies and their counterparts in the United States. At the operational level, there are currently 24 US staff from different departments and agencies posted to serve as liaison officers to Europol. This is, by far, the highest number of representatives of a single third state working at Europol (Europol, December 2015).

Cooperation formats include strategic and political dialogues as well as operational capacity building and other operational cooperation formats. Several EU Member States have close bilateral contacts with third states and undertake direct action both at strategic and operational levels. The European Union closely coordinates its external engagement with the Member States so as to achieve maximum coherence and to engage in activities that provide an added value for strategic and operational counter-terrorism work.

A POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD

Recent security-related developments in Europe, including the migration crisis and the growing threat of terrorism, makes it necessary to reflect on possible options for future EU security cooperation. Security is one of the areas where a majority of citizens expect the EU to deliver (in the latest Eurobarometer, 82 percent of those polled called for stronger EU action to counter terrorism).

In their joint statement of 27 June 2016, the leaders of Germany, France and Italy mentioned security and counter-terrorism, including integration aspects, as one of the three areas where the EU should step up its efforts.

Difficult political discussions at the EU level, not least because of the recent referendum in the United Kingdom and its consequences for security cooperation inside the European Union, will allow little room for manoeuvre for EU Member States and the Commission. Since a treaty change is currently not envisaged, the European Union will need to develop solutions to overcome the challenges to its security architecture. This includes the fact that internal security is a shared responsibility of the European Union and its Member States. However, in practice, the bulk of the responsibility lies with the individual Member States.

This creates a disproportionality, with high EU visibility but limited practical responsibility and thus little room for influencing the implementation of security and preventive measures on the ground. Although after the terrorist attacks the Ministers of Interior often meet in Brussels to decide about joint actions, it is up to the Member States to implement the agreed measures. The Commission and the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator are able to moderate, support and push Member States to better cooperate, introduce new policies or reform certain systems. However, the final decisions on how the measures are implemented are taken at the Member States' level. Only

in the case of breach of EU law, can the Commission (or a Member State) sue a Member State at the European Court of Justice.

Even without a treaty change, there are several initiatives that could be further promoted in order to make counter-terrorism work more effective at the EU level. **Interoperability of databases** is one element that the EU is currently pushing. Maintaining Schengen and therewith open borders inside the Schengen area requires the full protection of external Schengen borders. The Commission recently established a task force on interoperability to connect the dots and to use available data to the best possible extent. Access to relevant information by Frontex and Europol is key. Besides being interoperable, EU information systems can be sources for the production of actionable police-related intelligence, like the US “fusion centres”. This would allow Member States’ law enforcement and security services to see the full picture, based on national and European sources of information.

Frontex could be asked to address issues such as smuggling of arms, since Frontex staff is directly deployed at external border posts together with the national border guards of the respective Member States.

Another challenge is counter-terrorism-related **judicial cooperation** where Member States, the Commission and Eurojust are asked to demonstrate how effective Eurojust can be in influencing the quality of national criminal proceedings.

Despite limitations to full EU cooperation on national security, cooperation within the **Counter-Terrorism Group** could be better connected with Commission and Council activities to build trust and better understanding of the positions and views of security services. Promotion of EU-facilitated training for counter-terrorism officers of security services might help to promote cooperation across national borders.

On the “**soft**” aspect, the Commission will most likely continue its efforts to mainstream Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and promote tolerance, non-discrimination, fundamental freedoms and solidarity across the European Union. More could be done to support Member States in coping with the current migration crisis and quickly integrating those who are eligible for asylum in the EU to avoid frustrations and thereby reduce the number of people who are easy targets for radical ideologies.

Besides improving intercultural exchange with young people in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey, engagement with local communities in Europe should be further strengthened. Empowering European religious leaders of Islamic faith that share common European values and acknowledge European democracies as fertile ground for all faiths, including non-believers, could lead to the development of a strong, self-confident European Islam that offers a new home to those who have left behind political regimes that abuse religion and limit personal freedom, including the freedom of religion.

One of the biggest challenges will be **returning fighters** and how not only EU Member States but also neighbouring states, such as Turkey and states in North Africa and in the Western Balkans, address this issue. Due to the increasing success of the international coalition against Daesh, many fighters might soon want to return to their home countries or move to other countries outside of the conflict zone. Not addressing the Mujahideen issue after the end of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan led to several problems, including the many veterans who afterwards engaged in other wars in the Western Balkans, in Algeria or in Chechnya. Besides effective information sharing regarding foreign terrorist fighters, EU Member States will need to develop effective tools to reduce the threat deriving from potentially militarily trained, radicalized and/or psychologically disturbed persons who return from war-torn places.

In many cases, it will not be possible to convict returnees due to a lack of sufficient evidence that the person has actually committed a crime while abroad. Some might face minor or more severe convictions while others might not even be detected as a person who has been in Daesh-controlled territory. The challenges are therefore both inside prisons and outside. The controlled return of a massive number of foreign terrorist fighters within a certain timeframe could be one option, provided that Member States are ready to cope with such a situation. This would need sufficient rehabilitation programmes, including psychological counselling and support to build a new life for returnees and their families.

The authorities will need to ensure that radicalized persons do not further spread their ideology and influence others. In order to get as much information as possible about the situation inside the Daesh caliphate, including about key figures and crimes committed by Daesh, the authorities could encourage former fighters to desert and become informants.

Cooperation within the European Union and also with neighbouring regions will be key. Harsh measures against returnees without differentiation about backgrounds and actual crimes committed might lead to further stigmatization. Fighters might choose not to return but to move to other countries where they live undetected and this might pose an additional threat.

Terrorism and radicalization will continue to be on the European and national agendas for years to come. Past incidents have shown that the isolated actions of states do not lead to success; instead, the international community and in particular states that are closely linked to each other, like the EU Member States, need to cooperate in order to successfully prevent and fight terrorism. The steady further development of EU measures, as described in this text, and clear proof of the success of this work for the people in Europe will lead to an enhanced security union as has been recently proposed by the European Commission (European Commission, 20 April 2016).

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Daesh-Linked Activities and Motivations in Belgium

Didier Leroy

1. INTRODUCTION

Since its sudden rise in 2012 and subsequent swift expansion across swathes of Iraq and Syria, Daesh has triggered a global unprecedented flux of migrating foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) joining its self-proclaimed “Caliphate”. While several EU Member States have been severely affected by this phenomenon, Belgium has become more specifically the focal point of media attention since most of the members of the commandos that targeted Paris in November 2015 and Brussels in March 2016 came from the Belgian capital.

The “heart of Europe” had previously been finger-pointed as having provided the largest contingent of European FTFs *per capita* to the Syrian battlefield, but these latest attacks further associated municipalities like Molenbeek-Saint-Jean to major hubs of home-grown European jihadism. This article will attempt to (1) synthesize Daesh-linked activities in Belgium, (2) analyze the major features which characterize the “Belgian foreign fighters” and their motivations, and (3) comment on the national response that has been given so far to this ongoing threat at home and abroad, before concluding with future perspectives.

2. DAESH-LINKED ACTIVITIES IN BELGIUM¹

The first European departures for Syria probably occurred in March 2012, when a few Frenchmen decided to join the Free Syrian Army in the region of Homs that had been shelled by Bashar al-Assad’s army. The Syrian civil war had begun, projecting a horrific picture of civilian casualties, ravaged holy shrines and poorly organized rebel forces. Other Europeans soon followed suit, and during the summer of 2012, the first Belgians

* This paper was submitted on 1 August 2016.

¹ For more details on the data provided in this paragraph, see Coolsaet, R., “Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave. What drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian case”, Egmont Paper 81, Royal Institute for International Relations, Brussels, March 2016.

arrived in Syria. By March 2013, FTFs had become front-page news in Belgium and the rest of Europe. An estimated 70 Belgian youngsters were then said to be active in Syria. Almost all were members of “Sharia4Belgium”, a radical Salafi organization created in early 2010 and particularly active in the northern city of Antwerp. In February 2015, the group was designated a terrorist organization by a Belgian judge, and its front man, Fouad Belkacem, was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Terrorism-related activities really started to escalate after the shooting by Mehdi Nemmouche at the Jewish Museum in Brussels on 24 May 2014, killing four civilians and injuring another one. This was the first attack in Europe linked to the Syrian turmoil. In the following months (December 2014), a survey carried out by the University of Milan stated that Belgium was the European country proportionally generating the most important pro-Daesh online propaganda. For its sampling, the analysis had taken into account more than 2 million messages in Arabic from social networks, blogs and forums written between 1 July 2014 and 22 October 2014. The conclusion was staggering: 31% of the messages were sympathetic to Daesh, and Qatar and Pakistan were the only two other studied countries that had produced even more worrying results.² The stage was set, but the “show” was only about to begin.

Indeed, January 2015 marked the start of a year-long series of Daesh-linked terrorist attacks across the world and more specifically in Western Europe. On 7 January 2015, the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris saw Saïd and Chérif Kouachi kill twelve civilians and injure eleven in an alleged attempt to “avenge Prophet Mohammed” due to cartoons deemed blasphemous. Although the siblings’ ideological affiliation seemed to lean more toward Al-Qaeda in Yemen, a coordinated attack by Amedy Coulibaly on the very next day killed four and injured nine at a kosher superette in Porte de Vincennes (20th district of Paris) and was conducted in the name of the Islamic State. These attacks had been executed with weaponry notably coming from the black market of Charleroi, located in the Belgian southern region of Wallonia.

Only a week later, on 15 January 2015, the Belgian federal police—helped by French GIGN³—raided a small house in Eastern Belgium in order to neutralize the “Verviers cell”, assessed to be on the brink of launching attacks on Belgian soil. Although this hideout was located far from the capital, all members of this cell were inhabitants of the deprived Brussels district of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, except for two Syrian citizens who had been dispatched by the cell leader: the now sadly notorious Abdelhamid Abaaoud. Also a resident of Molenbeek, Abaaoud was a former petty criminal who became “radicalized” and joined the ranks of Daesh in 2013 to become a member of its intelligence services in Raqqa, and later became the most famous face of French-speaking jihadism. Shot by the French police in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis on 18 November 2015,

² See http://www.rtbf.be/info/belgique/detail_etat-islamique-la-belgique-terre-de-propagande-privilegiee-pour-daech?id=8501700.

³ Groupe d’Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale.

he is retrospectively considered to be the operational commander of the three commandos that killed 130 people and injured 413 at the Stade de France, the Bataclan theatre and several other Parisian bars and restaurants two days earlier.

Abaaoud was certainly not the only link between Belgian and French jihadism, as most members of the commandos were also from Molenbeek. Given the magnitude of the aftermath, the Paris attacks triggered numerous house searches and police arrests in Belgium and more specifically in Brussels throughout November and December 2015, which capped a busy year for Belgian counter-terrorism efforts. The most noticeable arrest was that of Salah Abdeslam—the only survivor of the Paris commandos who did not detonate his suicide-belt—in Molenbeek on 18 March 2016 after a manhunt of 125 days. Among the nine attackers was Salah's brother Brahim, Abdelhamid Abaaoud and six other assailants. Salah Abdeslam was recently transferred to the French Justice and many blurry elements about his role will hopefully be revealed soon.

Four days after Abdeslam's arrest, another traumatizing event took place when Ibrahim and Khalid El-Bakraoui, along with three other suspects (Najim Laachraoui, Mohammed Abrini and Osama Krayem) detonated three coordinated bombs in Brussels: two at Zaventem international airport and one inside Maelbeek metro station. While the first two explosions occurred close to the check-in desks for travellers heading to the US, Russia and Israel, the third obviously targeted EU civil servants as Maelbeek is located at the heart of the EU institutions. In these attacks, 32 civilians and three perpetrators were killed, and over 300 people were injured.

The arrest of Mohammed Abrini in the Brussels district of Anderlecht on 8 April 2016 marked a threshold: all publicly wanted individuals from the “Belgian-French network” in connection with the Paris attacks had either been arrested or were dead. But other incidents, alerts or arrests in relation with Daesh-linked activism are unfortunately still being mentioned in the Belgian daily press and Prime Minister Charles Michel was recently accused of being responsible for the Brussels attacks and threatened in a hip-hop style “*nasheed*” (Muslim musical poem) video uploaded on the Internet in July 2016.⁴ It is scientifically impossible to determine whether the peak of Daesh activities in Belgium is behind us, but there is a wide consensus among observers to consider this threat a long-term one.

⁴ <http://www.7sur7.be/7s7/fr/36487/Attentats-a-Bruxelles/article/detail/2788908/2016/07/06/Menace-par-Daesh-Charles-Michel-n-entend-pas-se-laisser-intimider.dhtml>.

3. FEATURES OF THE “BELGIAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS” AND THEIR MOTIVATIONS

So far, Daesh has reportedly managed to attract an unprecedented 30,000 FTFs from more than one hundred countries with a polished and prolific online recruiting drive.⁵ Since early in the Syrian crisis, EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove has briefed the media and other audiences about the profiles of FTFs and the reasons leading EU citizens to “leave for *Sham*”⁶ and “join the *Dawla (State)*”. Basically, the first findings from returnees highlighted that there was no transversal profile. Nevertheless, one could summarize the most common reasons for picking up arms as follows: (1) The West has not done enough to help the Syrian people, especially in contrast with the swift NATO intervention in oil-rich Libya only months before. (2) A true will to wage jihad against the Western world in a new battle arena that bears unprecedented eschatological symbolism for Muslims.⁷ (3) A feeling of Sunni victimization facing a growing Shia “threat” in the Levant.⁸ (4) Socioeconomic grievances of European Muslims. (5) Identity issues and/or a quest for adventure, money, etc.

In January 2016, some 470 Belgians travelled to Iraq or Syria according to Rik Coolsaet from the Egmont Institute. Among these, some 60 individuals had attempted the trip but never made it to the battlefield, another 130 persons had returned to Belgium (of which a third had been arrested and jailed) and roughly 80 had reportedly been killed, which lead to an estimated total of 190 Belgian fighters still active in March 2016. As Coolsaet explains, “the departures from Belgium proceeded in phases. The first stage (between April 2012 and July 2013) concerned a limited number of municipalities, especially from Antwerp and Brussels, as well as Vilvorde. The second stage (August 2013 to July 2014) saw an overall reduction in the number of departures (with the exception of Brussels), but the geographical scope started to widen, as more municipalities were affected. Finally, from the summer of 2014 onwards, the number of departures further decreased, while some new locations came up (Ghent in the north and Liège in the south of the country). Overall, the monthly average of new departures

⁵ Speckhard, A., “How do we defeat ISIS? Less bombs, more social”, The Hill, 6 August 2016, <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international-affairs/286476-how-do-we-defeat-isis-less-bombs-more-social>.

⁶ “Bilad al-Sham” in Arabic refers to Greater Syria, a region encompassing the current territories of Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Jordan and parts of southern Turkey.

⁷ Eschatological Islamic literature allocates special meaning to certain places in Daesh-controlled territories. It is notably the case for “Dabiq” (where the armies of Rome are supposed to have been inflicted their first major defeat by the armies of Islam shortly before Judgement Day), which explains the name of the organization’s English magazine.

⁸ Strongly encouraged by most Gulf States, this feeling—hard to get in the sole light of regional demographics showing a Sunni ocean—can find some explanation in recent political events: the downfall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Hezbollah’s ever-bolder behaviour in Lebanon, Iran’s growing regional influence, etc.

has thus gradually dropped from its peak of some 15 per month (in 2012-2013) to an average of five per month in the year 2015.”⁹

At the time of writing, the Belgian watch list of potentially radicalized persons encompasses roughly 900 individuals.¹⁰ It would be incorrect to evoke a truly transversal profile for Belgian FTFs, in as much as the list includes both men and women, youth and older persons, isolated individuals and family groups, Arabs and non-Arabs, “native” Muslims and converts, and so on. Beyond this preliminary but important remark, we must nevertheless mention certain bearing lines which can help triangulate a majority of “at-risk individuals”: (1) Flanders and Brussels each account for some 45% of the departures, with the rest coming from the Walloon region. This tends to invalidate the common assumption that socioeconomic grievances and poverty may be driving radicalization, since the economy in the north of the country is significantly stronger. (2) The average age range of Belgian FTFs is typically 20-24 and the vast majority are males, which tends to point to another influential factor often neglected: testosterone. (3) Muslim converts are reported to represent less than 10% of the total, which is significantly different from the French contingent, where it is at least 20%.¹¹ (4) Their educational level is generally below that of the average population. Syria travellers with college degrees exist, but they constitute a small minority, as far as Belgium is concerned. (5) Most were known to the police and intelligence services, often for petty crimes, before their departure. (6) While almost all have Belgian nationality, Belgians of Moroccan descent are significantly overrepresented among the Belgian FTFs, accounting for up to 80% of the contingent.

This “Moroccan specificity”, given its staggering proportion, has logically triggered the most numerous question marks in relation to Belgian FTFs. An analysis grid based on the following theoretical factors, if empirically tested, could provide a preliminary key to understanding this phenomenon.

(1) The socioeconomic factor: Belgium has one of the largest Moroccan minorities in Europe, as many as 500,000 of its 11.2 million population. A lot of these families originally came as workers in the 1960s and 1970s, and thus suffered from the economic circumstances associated with the oil crisis in the early 1970s. Other immigrating communities like the Italians or the Spaniards arrived earlier in Belgium and probably started to ascend in the social scale under clearer skies. Fewer opportunities led to more ghettoization in a certain way. A survey published by the King Baudouin Foundation also highlighted a lack of social cohesion among plural and divided Moroccan communities in Belgium, a trend apparently less present within the Turkish—likewise Sunni

⁹ See Coolsaet, R., *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Interview with a member of the “Foreign Fighters Task Force” of the Belgian Federal Police, Brussels, June 2016.

¹¹ Statement by renowned specialist Olivier Roy during a conference at the Fondation Universitaire in Brussels, 18 April 2016.

Muslim—community of Belgium which numbers 250,000 individuals...and almost no FTFs.¹²

(2) The integration/identity factor: While the Belgian responsibility in failed integration policies can rightfully be pointed at to some extent, it cannot explain everything. Moroccan integration into the Belgian society has worked very well in a vast majority of cases; otherwise, Brussels would be facing many more problems on a daily basis. Yet, a certain number of “Moroccan Belgians” from the second or third generation of immigrants are clearly facing an identity crisis. Though born in Belgium, they feel discriminated in their everyday lives because of their Arabic surnames, North-African looks, or Islamic religious beliefs. When they are in Morocco to visit relatives, they probably do not feel Moroccan either, because they are not perceived and thus treated as such for a number of reasons. This dilemma probably explains, at least partially, a need to belong to something else beyond family, community, or society—something bigger, with better opportunities or promises for the future. This is the type of configuration the “re-Islamization” process can hope to exploit.¹³ While these persons have usually been culturally Islamized through family education and in official mosques, some of them can develop the need to “be born again” and look for more radical sources of inspiration via the Internet, in improvised *da‘wa* (proselytism) circles, or in jail. Internal rifts can then appear at the core of certain families where the older generations practising the traditional “Maleki” Sunni rite (typical of the Maghreb region) are confronted by a growing “Hanbali” influence—in particular the Wahhabi tradition from the Gulf region, known for its puritanical, or Salafi, approach to Islam—promoted by the younger generation. In recent years, the Salafi brand has visibly gained some momentum in certain neighbourhoods of predominantly Moroccan municipalities of Brussels like Molenbeek: you can notice it by the type of veil worn by some women, the type of untrimmed beard (often without moustache) preferred by men, and so on.

(3) The historical-political factor: Most “Moroccan-Belgian” members of terror cells nowadays can be traced to having had contact with key figures of previous Islamist activism, such as Khalid Zerkani.¹⁴ Digging deeper and taking a few steps back, we can discern a “genealogical pattern” of North-African political activism linking the GIA¹⁵-associated attacks from the 1980s to the present-day troubles. Daesh

¹² See Torrekens, C. and Adam, I., “Belgo-Marocains, Belgo-Turcs: (auto)portrait de nos concitoyens”, Fondation Roi Baudouin, 2015, <https://www.kbs-frb.be/fr/Activities/Publications/2015/316644>.

¹³ See the literature of Samir Amghar for in-depth theoretical elements on the re-Islamization process.

¹⁴ Khalid Zerkani, a 42-year-old Belgian citizen born in Morocco, is considered as the most important recruiter of Belgian jihadists since the beginning of the Syrian war. He was taken into custody as early as February 2014 and is reported to be behind most of the departures from Molenbeek-Saint-Jean. In April 2016, he received the maximum penalty of 15 years of imprisonment.

¹⁵ An offshoot of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS), the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) was an Algerian Islamist organization that led a series of terrorist attacks, notably in France, during the 1990s.

has furthermore emphasized its struggle to advance a political agenda which typically defends the interests of Sunni Arabs, notably by fighting Sunni Kurds and Shia Arabs in the Middle-Eastern region, a cause which Belgian-Moroccans can easily relate to. While most Moroccans from Brussels are not totally corresponding to those features in as much as they are coming from the north-eastern region of Rif (predominantly Berberic from an ethnic and linguistic point of view) it seems worth mentioning that this region has been historically the most hostile one towards the Moroccan monarchy, thus potentially vehiculating a politically revolutionary stance from one generation to the other.

(4) The institutional factor: Oil money from Gulf countries has significantly affected the landscape of “Moroccan mosques” in Belgium over the last few decades, as it has done in many other regions across the globe. Many places of worship have indeed fallen more and more under the sway of Saudi imams or of Moroccan-Belgian citizens who have been trained in and funded by Saudi Arabia and who are spreading the Wahhabi doctrine. This is notably so in the case of the Great Mosque of Brussels, located in Cinquantenaire Park.¹⁶ Most Turkish mosques, in contrast, are centrally financed and managed by the “*Diyanet*” (Religious Affairs Directorate), largely associated with the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.

(5) The linguistic factor: Language has probably played a role too, insulating—or at least limiting the exposure of—the Turkish community from important waves of Wahhabi proselytism in Arabic, in comparison to the Moroccan one.

While they can help us to understand certain social evolutions, all these factors fail to excuse the gravity of the recent attacks and other associated behaviours emanating from certain Daesh-supportive youth. Indeed, the media has covered several cases of class unrest in secondary schools across Brussels following pro-jihadist claims expressed by young students. Worse, Salah Abdeslam’s arrest in Molenbeek led to minor—yet real—clashes with the police, contributing to triggering a march by nationalist hooligans in downtown Brussels on 27 March 2016. Right-wing political parties such as “*Vlaams Belang*” have of course feasted on these incidents, and tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities have inevitably worsened in the post-March 22 context. In an attempt to quieten the mood, official Muslim representatives, such as Salah Echallaoui, presiding the “*Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique*”, have obviously and repeatedly condemned all recent attacks claimed by Daesh¹⁷; yet the diversity of “Belgian Muslims” and the scarcity of sociological quantitative studies on the topic prevent us, at this stage, from commenting with accuracy on the internal reactions within local Muslim communities. A global and reassuring trend—which *a priori* seems to

¹⁶ In 1967, King Baudouin lent the building to King Faisal ibn Abd al-Aziz of Saudi Arabia with a 99-year rent-free lease, on an official visit to Belgium as part of negotiations to secure oil contracts.

¹⁷ See <http://www.embnet.be/>, the official website of the *Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique*, for the detailed declarations.

fit the Belgian case—can be sensed in most North-African families through the very sporadic signs of sympathy for Daesh emanating from the younger generation, signs particularly dwarfed when compared to the prior consensus towards the Palestinian cause within the same milieu. Briefly put, fighting for Palestine makes Mommy and Daddy proud while fighting for Daesh leaves them puzzled.

4. RESPONSE SO FAR

The Belgian response to the polymorph Daesh threat has tried to be as wide and as diversified as possible. Indeed, it encompasses multi-level efforts abroad and at home and implies collaboration with a wide range of actors.

Abroad, the Belgian fight against Daesh is foremost symbolized by its participation in the “International Coalition against ISIL”. Based in Azraq in Jordan, the Belgian forces initially contributed up to 5.5% of the coalition, sending six F-16 fighter jets to join the air campaign targeting Daesh in Iraq between October 2014 and July 2015. Over those nine months, the Belgian air force executed 796 flights and led 163 attacks, which contributed to preventing the once-plausible fall of Baghdad. To enable Iraqi military troops to ensure their sovereignty over their territory in the long term, the Belgian Armed Forces have also participated in the “Partner Capacity Building” programme, allocating thirty Baghdad-based soldiers as counsellors and trainers. Finally, a Belgian “Protection Force” also ensured the security of their Dutch allies during that same period. From July 2015 till July 2016, the roles were switched with Holland based on a rotation logic, and the Belgian F-16s are now back in the region and are scheduled to stay there until 1 July 2017. Through this presence, Belgium is sending a strong and defiant message to Daesh, but is at the same time taking the risk of nurturing feelings of grievance and hatred among Arab Sunni populations in the region and in Belgium. Everybody should bear in mind that the military lever only affects the symptom of a sickness, and that parallel diplomatic efforts will need to multiply in order to work on the real causes of it: the Sunni Iraqis’ political exclusion, the Iraqi army’s disintegration, the local socioeconomic grievances, the spreading of hateful Wahhabi doctrine, the repression wave against the Muslim Brotherhood and the Kurdish question. At home, the Belgian fight against Daesh covers very diverse aspects: increasing police and judicial cooperation, tracking financing networks, promoting and implementing measures to protect citizens and infrastructure against terrorist attacks, notably by deploying the Army, particularly in relation to transportation, understanding and struggling against radicalization and recruitment, as well as improving support to victims of

terrorist acts.¹⁸ A description of the “Federal Strategy against Violent Radicalization”¹⁹, launched in 2014, could be summarized as follows:

(1) A prevention programme against violent radicalization, involving all fields of civil society—Imams included—and all levels of political power (with special focus on the municipalities), that promotes a better understanding of the phenomenon, seeks ways to alleviate social frustrations and increase resilience, proposes various types of support to different actors, and notably works on online counter-discourse and “de-radicalization” in jail.

(2) A plan to fight against violent radicalism and terrorism, reinforcing the coordination between the different intelligence agencies, the police, the judiciary, the Armed Forces and Foreign Affairs, has notably led to the creation of specific “task forces” working together on a “joint Information Box” under the supervision of the Coordination Office for the Threat Analysis (OCAM)²⁰.

(3) An active role in international cooperation, notably through the launching of a “like minded” group (accelerating channels between the nine most affected EU Member States: France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, UK, Holland, Ireland and Spain). Belgium is likewise mobilizing the European Union within the framework of the “Strategy against Terrorism”²¹, adopted in December 2005 by the EU and based on four pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution and response. Transatlantic cooperation has furthermore materialized through exchanges of “good practices” with American security agencies such as the CIA and the FBI as early as April 2013 and with Canadian authorities more recently. Last but not least, a strengthened relationship has been encouraged with other key countries such as Morocco (as an important matrix of FTFs) and Turkey (as an important crossing point for FTFs).

The implementation of all these preventive and repressive measures has significantly suffered from the complexity of the institutional landscape in Belgium, often and rightly depicted as a “political lasagna”, which predominantly finds its origin in the linguistic divide between the Dutch-, French- and German-speaking communities. Beyond this important drawback, the discussions have more recently drifted towards a debate revolving around the elusive concept of “radicalization” itself.²² Initially triggered by a Europol statement emphasizing that religion seemed to no longer be the

¹⁸ http://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/politique/themes_politiques/paix_et_securite/terrorisme/lutte_contre_le_terrorisme.

¹⁹ See the website of former Belgian Interior Minister Joëlle Milquet: <http://www.joellemilquet.be/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/1406-annexes.pdf>.

²⁰ The OCAM (Organe de Coordination pour l'Analyse de la Menace) notably determines the national threat level, currently set at 3 on a scale of 4.

²¹ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2014469%202005%20REV%204>.

²² Coolsaet, R., “All radicalisation is local. The genesis and drawbacks of an elusive concept”, Egmont Paper 84, Royal Institute for International Relations, Brussels, June 2016.

main driver behind the phenomenon²³, this ongoing debate suggests more and more that the unfolding development of a whole “de-radicalization industry”— at the local, regional and national levels in Belgium—might turn out to be just another example of a mountain giving birth to a mouse.

The real problem probably lies in the fact that there still is no thorough understanding of what “radicalization” actually is, and that Belgium is just another national laboratory trying to find a cure to a worldwide epidemic: political violence. Most theories on the topic usually focus on the “usual risk factors”: (1) political, (2) religious, (3) socioeconomic, etc. I personally stress that an under-analyzed—yet crucial—risk factor in the radicalization process is the psychological one.²⁴ Many people can (1) feel injustice when a (Western) military superpower is bombing a (Muslim) developing country, (2) be attracted to online jihadi-Salafi propaganda, or (3) become angry due to daily social and economic discriminations. But the real question is: Why do all these potential triggers affect individuals in such different ways? Why will certain individuals keep on struggling to deal with these issues in their personal development, while others throw their whole lives away and pick up arms? My guess is that these influences mobilize their emotions differently. A wide consensus in psychological literature states that the emotional architecture of an individual is predominantly shaped in the early years of childhood and has to do with the quality of the parental relationship. The quality of this bond will dramatically affect the way a person will be sensitive to other subsequent influences. It is worth pointing out that more and more terrorist attacks have involved siblings in recent years: the Tsarnaev brothers from the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, the Kouachi brothers from the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in January 2015, and more recently the Abdeslam brothers from the Paris attacks and the El-Bakraoui brothers from the Brussels attacks. Studies on the subject have started to emerge²⁵, but we should keep in mind that it is extremely difficult to investigate this aspect of things as it involves breaking into family privacy and touches real taboos such as the ultra-sensitive status of parents. Unveiling histories of family violence might shed some new light, in the future, on numerous kinds of extremist behaviours.

²³ See “Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorist attacks”, a review carried out by experts from member states and Europol on 29 November and 1 December 2015. The Hague, Europol, 18 January 2016. Available at: www.europol.europa.eu/content/ectc.

²⁴ Numerous Daesh-related attacks, including those which recently took place in France (the lorry massacre of Nice on 21 July 2016 and the Normandy Church attack on 26 July 2016) and in Germany (the axe attack in Würzburg on 18 July 2016 and the suicide bombing in Ansbach six days later), involved psychologically ill individuals, according to media reports.

²⁵ See the literature of Mia Bloom. See also Kin, K., “Brussels Terrorist Brothers: Why Does Jihad Run in the Family?”, *The Daily Beast*, 24 March 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/24/brussels-terrorist-brothers-why-does-jihad-run-in-the-family.html>.

5. CONCLUSION

Daesh unequivocally represents the most hazardous threat to Belgium in both the short and long terms. As a country modest in size, a challenging proportion of its Muslim citizens—especially within the Moroccan community—represents a potential pool of jihadist recruits. Furthermore, its capital, Brussels, hosts highly symbolic targets for potential large-scale terror attacks (the European Institutions and NATO headquarters among others).

While Daesh has lost important military battles and thus significant portions of its Middle-Eastern territory in recent months (notably in the areas of Falluja, Mossul and Manbij), it is clearly trying to maintain its image of a “winning team” through a demonstration of its capacity to strike its enemies abroad. In this framework, Western Europe (and more specifically France, Germany and Belgium) has become the organization’s primary target during the first half of 2016. With Belgium and France having provided particularly important contingents of FTFs to its ranks, we must fear upcoming projects of attacks in our region at least for another couple of months, and probably for another couple of years, before the fading of the “Daesh generation”. In as much as Daesh has become a “brand” rather than just being an armed force, we can thus expect its decline to be partially a matter of “falling out of fashion”, so to speak. This may sound passive, but Daesh’s worst enemy is probably the passing of time.

The Belgian security apparatus has a 45-year-strong experience in counter-terrorism²⁶ but has been overwhelmed by an unprecedented watchlist of 900 at-risk individuals to monitor 24/7, an unfeasible task. The current situation does not necessarily require new tools, but more means to reinforce old tools. FTFs have always existed and will always do; the current wave is just unprecedented in its magnitude, a phenomenon partly due to the accelerating effects of social networks. In the context of a “worldwide lab” trying to find the ultimate shield against the Daesh phenomenon, “national sub-labs” are experimenting with differentiated strategies involving several fields (judiciary, political, security, etc) and at different paces. At home, the Belgian strategy seems a rather balanced one within the European spectrum: not as hard as the French one (sending almost all returnees straight to a judge) nor as soft as the Danish approach (sending almost all returnees to a social worker). Abroad, Belgium has toughened its stance since the Brussels attacks by sending its F-16s to strike Daesh in Syria (and not only in Iraq anymore). In consequence, the country is attempting a tricky balancing act, trying to promote an appealing future in Belgium to the very same population it infuriates through its foreign policy.

²⁶ Renard, T., “Why Belgium is not Europe’s jihadi base”, Egmont Commentaries, 31 March 2016, http://www.egmontinstitute.be/publication_article/why-belgium-is-not-europes-jihadi-base/.

Only time will tell if Daesh fighters will shave their beards, blend in, and form an underground guerrilla movement once the territory of the so-called “Caliphate” can no longer serve as an operational safe haven. In light of the recent attacks which took place in France and Germany in July 2016, Belgium can only fear more than ever its returnees and hope to find reliable defectors among them to help in this long-term fight.

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Implications of the Global Jihad in France

Yves Trotignon

1. THE FRENCH JIHAD

The first police operations in France against radical Sunni Islamists took place in the early nineties, a few months after the start of the Algerian Civil War (spring 1992). They were directed at cells suspected of supporting underground members of the Armed Islamic Group¹ (GIA) and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the armed faction of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). When French citizens were murdered in Algeria, the security agencies increased pressure on these logistical networks, sensing a growing threat that had not yet become a priority for them. The hijacking of an Air France flight in December 1994 was the first violent incident of Algerian Islamic terrorism in France, and it was not until the campaign of terror attacks in the summer and autumn of 1995 that French authorities truly grasped the terrorist threat that Algerian jihadist groups represented.

A. The sources of jihad

From a strictly operational standpoint, this threat was disconnected from the emerging global jihadist movement and was initially viewed as another illustration of the principle whereby France, as a host country with close links to the Middle East and the Maghreb, would regularly feel the impact of crises in those regions or even become an arena for settling scores. As networks were dismantled and the first channels emerged² through which volunteers (who were either French or departing from France) travelled to conflict zones to fight (Chechnya, Afghanistan), train (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen) or become fully radicalised (Syria, Egypt, Yemen), it became apparent that GIA-linked terrorist networks in France actually reflected a much more deep-seated phenomenon. By 1998, the presence of non-GIA-related jihadist networks with Al-Qaeda leanings in

* This paper was submitted on 4 July 2016.

¹ Cf. *Brothers in Arms: The Story of Al-qa'ida and the Arab Jihadists*, Camil Tawil, Saqi Books, 2010.

² Cf. "Des réseaux terroristes très mobiles et autonomes", Jacques Amalric and Patricia Tourancheau, *Libération*, 6 December 2002, http://www.liberation.fr/evenement/2002/12/06/des-reseaux-terroristes-tres-mobiles-et-autonomes_423815.

France, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Germany indicated that while the Algerian jihad may have been the original cause, it had been replaced by more complex motivations.

Observing this from afar, US security agencies believed that the jihadist movement active in France was above all the result of a post-colonial crisis stemming from the economic, social and political problems in France's former North African colonies. While the analysis was apt³, it assumed that all the jihadists who were French or present in France were drawn to violence solely by the situation in their countries of origin. A more typical interpretation was soon added to this initial theory, positing that the vast majority of French jihadists had performed poorly at school, were excluded from the job market and any form of upward mobility, and were fighting back against a system that had failed them. It was a tempting analytical framework but one that failed to ask some equally important questions. What was the jihadists' political agenda? What gave them their sense of identity? What were their political and religious motives⁴?

In 2000, the foiled plot to bomb the Strasbourg cathedral and Christmas market made it clear that while French-speaking jihadists had been initially mobilised by the Algerian jihad, they had since become part of internationalist circles and were fighting the global battle between Al-Qaeda and Western governments and their allies. As various intelligence and security agencies came to the same conclusion, the idea that socio-economic factors were the only explanation became unsustainable. Cases going through the judicial system also disproved the theory.

B. Momentary rebellion or structural crisis?

The Beghal case in the late summer of 2001 confirmed that the ranks of the complex, protean French jihadist scene contained young men on the verge of delinquency as well as members with gainful employment, new recruits and veterans. This blend of middle-class individuals with those from underprivileged neighbourhoods showed that the French jihadist scene was identical in its complexity to the British, German and Italian ones and undermined the overly simplistic explanations offered by some observers. Moreover, its clannish organisation with multiple international ramifications⁵ was no different from what was being seen in the Maghreb or in Southeast Asia.

When the United States and its allies invaded Iraq in March 2003, networks channelling volunteers into Iraq appeared, giving new impetus to jihadist circles in France and elsewhere. New converts to the cause arrived alongside GIA or Salafist Group for

³ Many GIA militants were sons of Harkis and hated the Algerian regime as much as they hated France for its attitude after 1962.

⁴ This bias has been extensively pointed out since then, notably by Jean Bimba in *Un silence religieux: La gauche face au djihadisme*, Seuil, 2016.

⁵ Cf. *Guerre sainte, multinationale*, Peter Bergen, Gallimard, 2002. (*Holy War, Inc.*, Free Press, 2002).

Preaching and Combat (GSPC) veterans, some just out of prison, and the initial theory of post-colonial resentments became even more unlikely. It had probably been relevant in the early 90s but ten years on, with more and more jihadists without any connection to the reality in Algeria or other French ex-colonies, this theory was no longer able to answer all the questions. Likewise, while socio-economic grounds should never be excluded, they did not explain these networks' developments.

Although the GIA and AIS networks of the mid-90s already had the fluid and at times indecipherable aspects typical of jihad, they did have some form of operational structure. Most importantly, they had clearly defined goals (to supply the underground, move fighters in and out of the country, and for the GIA, perpetrate terrorist attacks) making it possible to predict some of their actions. From 1997 onwards, the Algerian groups were in a deadlock, depriving dozens of their supporters of any immediate goal. These groups progressively withdrew to Europe, including France (hit in 1995 then 1996), while Al-Qaeda grew increasingly powerful in Pakistan and Afghanistan under the Taliban's protection. Hundreds of pro-jihad militants without any specific affiliation remained within the movement, awaiting new leaders.

By 1999, it was evident that the status of Europe was shifting from that of refuge zone to theatre of operations. By 2000, Londonistan⁶ had begun to empty and flow towards the Taliban emirate and the terrorist threat became more pressing. Networks established in Western Europe were increasingly drawn to and supported by Al-Qaeda and now appeared to be acting as part of a more global struggle. When the jihad became truly global after the September 11 attacks in 2001, individuals without clear links to any specific conflict joined the cause. They were clearly driven by broader motivations that were difficult to attribute to a given conflict.

This change revived an interest in studying the radicalisation process. The terror attacks in Madrid (March 2004) followed by Theo Van Gogh's assassination in Amsterdam (November 2004) placed this question at the centre of counter-terrorism policies. All over Europe, security chiefs attempted to understand the roots of a process that had transformed hundreds if not thousands of people into members of an increasingly menacing global jihad.

C. A major domestic challenge for France

This was a key question for French authorities. France had been fighting jihadist networks for more than twenty years and counted growing numbers of jihadists and sympathisers of combatant, radical Sunni Islamism among its citizens and foreign residents. Despite their increased human, technical and financial resources, since the early 1990s, the security agencies had never managed to achieve anything more than brief operational pauses, and the recruitment process continued unabated.

⁶ Cf. *Le Londonistan: la voix du jihad*, Dominique Thomas, Michalon, 2003.

In this context, the start of the Syrian jihad⁷ in spring 2011 provided a major boost to the movement and revealed a deep crisis, not just in the Middle East but also in Western societies. The thousands of Western volunteers leaving to join the ranks of Al-Qaeda and later Daesh⁸ (then known as ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) were not driven by economic reasons. The intuitive explanations put forward by some (that the jihadists were marginalised outcasts) simply did not correspond to reality. Similarly, invoking psychological reasons (like pathological tendencies or the alleged influence of certain video games) proved insufficient to explain a phenomenon the scale of which seemed to point more towards a profound crisis of values mixed with identity issues.

If we study the biographies and motivations of the hundreds of French citizens who have joined Al-Qaeda, and later Daesh, the troubling conclusion is that far from being bloodthirsty lunatics or outcasts, most volunteers are seeking a set of values, rules and answers⁹ and appear to be on a sometimes subconscious quest for meaning. Obviously, Daesh is not a mystical or philosophical experiment but, whether we like it or not, it has an overarching goal whose appeal extends beyond the tensions and conflicts that initially nourished it.

The sheer scale of the phenomenon—over 10,000 people in France are flagged with a “fiche S” or S-file because of their more or less close links to jihad—means that any simple explanation must be set aside¹⁰. Those who claim that jihadists have simply joined a cult or who continue to be stunned by their level of violence are forgetting some relatively recent examples of collective violence (the civil war in the former Yugoslavia) and, more generally, European and world history. The challenge is substantial, since the number of dangerous individuals in France (around 2,000) augurs more terror attacks and a lasting threat.

The jihadists are pursuing a political and social agenda opposed to that of the French Republic. The fact that this remains taboo points to the powerlessness and lack of understanding of certain decision-makers. On this issue, while deradicalisation programmes may occasionally convince some individuals to renounce violence, they never directly address the question that is being put to French society and to Western societies as a whole. There is a veritable French jihad which, like in the Sinai, Indonesia or Tunisia, has sprung from the meeting of local crises and a global struggle. As a result, we can expect more violence for many years to come, unless indispensable security and

⁷ *The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency*, Charles Lister, C. Hurst & Co, 2015.

⁸ Cf. *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon and Related Security Trends in the Middle East*, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), 1 January 2016, <https://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/pblctns/wrldwtch/2016/20160129-fr.php>.

⁹ Cf. *Les Français jihadistes*, David Thomson, Les Arènes, 2014.

¹⁰ Cf. *Comprendre le djihadisme*, Stéphane Taillat, DSI, HS No. 47: *Terrorisme. Organiser une réponse efficace*. April-May 2016.

military action is combined based on a genuine strategy, which itself must be built upon the cold if not disturbing recognition of what Daesh, Al-Qaeda and the jihad really are.

2. DAESH, A NEW EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL JIHAD AND A NEW SECURITY THREAT

An entirely new combination of known phenomena brought together on an unprecedented scale¹¹, by 2014, Daesh had emerged as the most visible and most threatening player in the jihadist movement. With a coalition of Western powers and Middle Eastern states fighting against it, this was a major new step in the global jihad launched by Al-Qaeda in the early 1990s.

A. Daesh, terrorist organisation and proto-state

As a terrorist organisation hosted by the Taliban in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, Al-Qaeda never expressed territorial ambitions. Its political agenda (to fight the United States and its allies, overthrow Middle Eastern regimes and reinstate the caliphate) was vague and remote enough to justify both a long-term struggle and a shifting strategy. Its regional branches in Saudi Arabia, Yemen or Algeria initially merely applied this strategy at the local level without expressing any real plan to govern¹². Its latest creation, Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent¹³ (AQIS), is extremely conventional in that it appears to be a typical jihadist movement with a subversive strategy of political assassinations¹⁴ and ambitious attacks¹⁵.

Daesh was at one time the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda¹⁶ and it began insurgency activities in 2003, but its territorial aims make it clearly different from Osama Bin Laden's organisation¹⁷. Bolstered by its success against government troops in Iraq, and with the Syrian conflict adding fuel to its fire, Daesh saw a unique strategic opportunity and chose to break with the rules that more or less prevailed in jihadist circles and

¹¹ Cf. Stéphane Mantoux, "Militairement, Daesh est un objet inclassable", *Le Point*, 27 June 2016, http://www.lepoint.fr/monde/militairement-daech-est-un-objet-inclassable-27-06-2016-2049951_24.php.

¹² Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali managed to seize territory and govern local populations, but this happened almost by accident.

¹³ Cf. "Al Qaeda opens branch in the 'Indian Subcontinent'", Bill Roggio, *The Long War Journal*, 3 September 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/09/al_qaeda_opens_branc.php.

¹⁴ In Bangladesh, for example.

¹⁵ Like the attack on the Karachi naval dockyard in Pakistan on 6 September 2014.

¹⁶ Cf. "L'Etat islamique", Olivier Moos, *Cahiers de l'Institut Religioscope*, No. 13, August 2015; "The Believer", Will McCants, *The Brookings Essay*, 1 September 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2015/thebeliever>.

¹⁷ Cf. *Le Piège Daesh. L'Etat islamique ou le retour de l'Histoire*, Pierre-Jean Luizard, La Découverte, 2015.

proclaimed its own state. By unilaterally reinstating the caliphate, a goal that many jihadists thought was beyond reach, Daesh established itself as the main force of the jihad.

This development definitively severed Daesh from Al-Qaeda and led to the polarisation of the jihadist community¹⁸. Movements like AQAP, AQIM and Jabhat al-Nusra with a sworn allegiance to Al-Qaeda consolidated around its central command (Al-Qaeda Senior Leadership—AQSL). Jihadist movements with looser ties to Al-Qaeda gathered around Daesh, where they saw new ambition and impetus.

Daesh calls itself a state¹⁹ and has chosen to organise its territory into *wilayahs* (provinces or governorates). By extension, it also decided to turn loyalist groups located outside its zone in Syria and Iraq into *wilayahs*. Some of these are virtual and do not designate regions but simply groups of terrorists or unlawful combatants. For example, Daesh calls Barqa, Fezzan and Tarabulus its three provinces in Libya, a name that does not correspond to the reality on the ground. Similarly, on 24 June 2016 Daesh announced the establishment of a province in the southern Philippines²⁰ named Wilayah Al-Filibin. The most spectacular allegiance to Daesh occurred on 7 March 2015 when Boko Haram, once inspired by AQIM, announced it was joining Daesh as the Islamic State West Africa Province.

As when joining Al-Qaeda, a pledge of allegiance is made to the movement's leader, in this case the self-proclaimed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The jihadist system is largely one of vassalage. As these groups are inherently clandestine and subject to intense police and/or military pressure, personal relations play a particularly essential role. Trust built on close ties born of pledges sworn and experiences shared is of the utmost importance.

Joining can be politically or operationally expedient and also reflects real similarities in the groups' ideologies. While it has been noted that Boko Haram's allegiance to Daesh was beneficial to both partners but that there was no real political convergence, the emergence of pro-Daesh cells in Bangladesh is widely recognised as being fuelled by the sectarian ideology of the Syria/Iraq-based organisation. Much as Al-Qaeda did in the 1990s, Daesh is expanding by taking advantage of areas in crisis and exploiting tensions.

With hindsight, it has now been established that jihadist movements do not appear *ex nihilo* but that they take advantage of deteriorated domestic or regional environments. They develop under such circumstances thanks to their rhetoric, which is a more

¹⁸ J.M Berger has described this phenomenon on his website, *Intelwire*, in a series of charts: "Al Qaeda fractures, ISIS gains", 8 April 2015, <http://news.intelwire.com/2015/04/chart-al-qaeda-fractures-isis-gains.html>.

¹⁹ Cf. *Etat islamique, le fait accompli*, Wassim Nasr, Plon, 2016.

²⁰ Cf. "Islamic State officially creates province in the Philippines", Caleb Weiss, *The Long War Journal*, 24 June 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/06/islamic-state-officially-creates-province-in-the-philippines.php>.

or less skilful blend of local demands and international recriminations. The emergence of jihadist groups or even cells is symptomatic of deep political, social or identity crises in the countries concerned. While this is an obvious conclusion to draw in countries facing severe domestic unrest or even civil war (Iraq, Syria, Libya), it can be more difficult to admit in countries that are seemingly prosperous and peaceful. Certain societies like Tunisia even deny the obvious²¹. France, whose jihadist phenomenon is over twenty years old and still growing, is not exempt from this conclusion.

As the sheer scale of the flow of Western volunteers to Syria²² first became perceptible in 2012, authorities soon began to raise questions. Already during the nineties, when small numbers of European jihadists travelled to Bosnia, and then to the Caucasus, Egypt or Afghanistan, security chiefs never managed to obtain any convincing answers to their questions. After the US-UK invasion of Iraq in 2003, the number of volunteers increased so quickly that simplistic explanations²³ for this uncontrollable phenomenon had to be set aside.

B. Daesh's thinking

Daesh is not the only force at work in jihadist circles but it is the most dynamic. Using the same operational practices that Al-Qaeda once boasted of, and inspired by its communication practices, Daesh managed to channel most of the Western volunteers flowing into Syria and Iraq into its ranks. Unlike Al-Qaeda, it was not initially targeting Europe and the United States but it soon developed significant capacity there. The current security situation seems to stem from the conjunction of two phenomena: the growth in Europe and especially in France of local jihadist circles with their own motivations but increasingly mobilised by the Syrian conflict, and an Iraqi jihadist group with regional ambitions that has risen thanks to the same conflict.

The continuum between the jihad in countries at peace and the jihad in war zones is above all symbolic, and it fuels what security agencies call the “global jihadist movement”, for lack of a better term. The main difficulty that authorities are facing is determining what should be their priority focus in fighting this phenomenon. It is a well-known paradox: fighting a jihadist group abroad in order to reduce its offence capacity can cause a rapid increase in the threat it represents at home. In the best case scenario, this increase will be short-lived but it will be politically costly²⁴. If the main

²¹ Cf. “Le terrorisme en Tunisie est-il importé ?”, Noufissa Charaï, *L'Observateur du Maroc et d'Afrique*, 24 October 2015: <http://lobservateurdumaroc.info/2015/10/22/le-terrorisme-en-tunisie-est-il-importe/>.

²² Cf. “Foreign fighters in Iraq & Syria. Where do they come from?”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 27 June 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/infographics/foreign-fighters-syria-iraq-is-isis-isil-infographic/26584940.html>.

²³ Cf. *Quand Al-Qaïda parle: Témoignages derrière les barreaux*, Farhad Khosrokhavar, Grasset, 2006.

²⁴ Cf. “L'Empirisme contre-attaque”, Michel Goya, *La Voie de l'Épée*, 15 September 2015, <http://lavoiedelepee.blogspot.fr/2015/09/lampirisme-contre-attaque.html>.

objective of fighting against the group is to protect national security, then pragmatism must prevail.

Continuing the struggle Al-Qaeda has fought since it was established and adapting it to its own logic, Daesh is primarily pursuing a regional agenda, one of whose objectives is to establish a territorial entity in the Middle East. This agenda constitutes a direct threat to countries in the region and thus to their Western partners, but does not automatically require terrorist attacks to be perpetrated outside the zone. While Al-Qaeda never disguised its strategy of striking the West in order to produce effects in the Middle East²⁵ (the distant enemy concept)²⁶, Daesh has chosen to focus its efforts directly where its ambitions lie. A study of the movement's terrorist activities in Europe and North America shows that their successful or foiled attacks there follow a different model from those perpetrated in the immediate vicinity of its operations in Syria and Iraq.

In France, Belgium and the United States, the attacks Daesh has claimed since 2015 were perpetrated by isolated individuals acting in the group's name and/or by cells with deep, local ramifications²⁷. Investigations have revealed the complexity of the networks involved, and the fact that their members wanted to act well before Daesh emerged as a global force. Daesh has taken advantage of pre-existing cells, agreeing to integrate and support them and claiming their plans and attacks. This opportunistic strategy has not prevented it from sending forth its own operatives²⁸, making the threat particularly complex because of these different angles.

3. AN ELUSIVE STRATEGY

Long engaged against the jihadist phenomenon, the certainties France once had are now being shaken by the unrelenting rise of the terrorist threat. This complex continuum be-

²⁵ Cf. *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat—From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's Death*, Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares, Columbia University Press, 2014.

²⁶ Cf. *Al-Qaida dans le texte: Ecrits d'Oussama ben Laden, Abdallah Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri et Abou Moussab al-Zarqawi*, Gilles Kepel, Jean-Pierre Milelli, Thomas Hegghammer and Stéphane Lacroix, PUF, 2008. (Al Qaeda in Its Own Words, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

²⁷ Cf. "Du Caire au Bataclan, la même nébuleuse?", Willy Le Devin, *Libération*, 14 April 2016, http://www.liberation.fr/france/2016/04/14/du-caire-au-bataclan-la-meme-nebuleuse_1446307, and *Les connexions terroristes franco-belges*, Pierre Alonso, Willy Le Devin and Alexandre Léchenet, *Libération*, 25 March 2016, <http://www.liberation.fr/apps/2016/03/terroristes-france-belgique/>.

²⁸ Cf. "Des 'combattants étrangers' menacent l'Europe de nouveaux attentats", AFP, 19 April 2016, <http://www.ouest-france.fr/faits-divers/attentat/des-combattants-etrangers-menacent-leurope-de-nouveaux-attentats-4172250> and "ISIS Spreading in Europe, U.S. Intelligence Chief Warns", Eric Schmitt and Alissa J. Rubin, *The New York Times*, 25 April 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/26/us/politics/isis-spreading-in-europe-clapper-warns.html>.

tween foreign crises and domestic tensions is challenging security organisations whose very architecture is constrained by these cast-iron beliefs.

A. From domestic counter-terrorism to global counter-insurgency

The jihadist threat that had been held in check, sometimes only barely, since 1996, struck France again in March 2012 with the Merah shootings²⁹ and it has not stopped intensifying since then. Appearing on 16 June 2016 before the parliamentary committee of inquiry into the government's counter-terrorism response since 7 January 2015³⁰, Juliette Méadel, junior minister for aid to victims, informed members of parliament that "since the January 2015 attacks, 151 people have lost their lives on our soil. That is one and a half times more than since 1945". These figures illustrate a deterioration of the national security climate that cannot be linked solely to the crises in the Middle East.

The French jihadist movement has its own history, admittedly influenced by international affairs but also driven by a logic of its own that defies linear reasoning. The French intervention in Mali in January 2013 did not provoke attacks in France. Similarly, individuals questioned since 2003 for having joined networks of foreign fighters did not seem unduly impressed by France's refusal to join the United States in invading Iraq.

When questioned by security services and investigating judges, jihadist sympathisers expressed exasperation not only about the current crisis. Palestine is rarely mentioned. The grounds given are a mixture of communitarian resentment, a desire to shake up what is perceived as Western control of the Middle East or, more generally, of the Muslim world, and the need to act. France's stand on Iraq does not count for much when weighed against developments in France's social and political affairs, increasingly focussed on questions of national identity. Various laws "against the Islamic veil" or to promote secularism have fuelled jihadist propaganda³¹ and above all an ominous degree of incomprehension and resentment.

Like other targets of jihadist circles and especially of Daesh, France is in the crosshairs as much for what it does as for what it is. The idea that the terrorists are simply attacking a way of life they disapprove of fails to account for the recriminations

²⁹ Cf. *Merah: l'itinéraire secret*, Alexis Jordanov, Nouveau Monde, 2015.

³⁰ Cf. [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/autres-commissions/commissions-d-enquete/moyens-pour-lutter-contre-le-terrorisme/\(block\)/28447](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/autres-commissions/commissions-d-enquete/moyens-pour-lutter-contre-le-terrorisme/(block)/28447).

³¹ Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)'s magazine, *Inspire*, and Daesh's *Dabiq* (in English) and *Dar Al Islam* (in French) are constantly attacking secularism: "La laïcité et la démocratie, ces fausses religions dont nous avons précédemment amené des preuves de leur caractère de mécréance," ("We have already proved that secularism and democracy are of the infidel") we read, for example (p. 15) in issue No. 7 of *Dar Al Islam* devoted to the 13 November 2015 attacks. These magazines can be consulted on the website <http://jihadology.net/>.

frequently formulated in propaganda videos and magazines. France has been active against jihad for years in various theatres and in the diplomatic arena. When it confronts radical Islamist groups, it does so in the name of the country's "values"³² and has always been openly determined³³.

This position, akin to that of the United States, has led some observers to suggest that Paris acts as a client state of Washington and that this is why France is facing such a growing terrorist threat. In reality, both countries act in similar but separate ways. French diplomats began using forceful moral references in their statements before the State Department did, and the French Foreign Ministry sometimes justifies its actions by invoking France's "unique responsibilities". Ever since 2001, Paris has participated in operations against Al-Qaeda and its allies in Afghanistan and the Sahelo-Saharan strip³⁴, followed by those against Daesh in Syria, Iraq and Libya, while pursuing an (at least publicly) ambitious policy of supporting countries attacked by Al-Qaeda or Daesh. It would be absurd to qualify such activism as "French-style neoconservatism", when it is simply a new extension of Paris's usual interventionism whenever its interests are threatened.

Military operations in the Sahel against Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and in Syria, Iraq and Libya against Daesh can clearly be understood as a continuation of already long-standing practices, with one important difference. These interventions, especially against Daesh, are being presented by the authorities as capable of generating national security. The mirroring here is quite fascinating. The French or the Americans are fighting jihadists overseas in order to obtain a result at home, just as Al-Qaeda would strike targets far away from the Middle East to obtain a ricochet effect back there.

B. New challenges, old methods

Militarisation is one of the most spectacular developments in counter-terrorism since the September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001. France was initially reticent and for a long time it led with its national security architecture built on a combination of state intelligence and the criminal process. This position progressively evolved as the threat intensified.

³² Cf. "Combattre là-bas pour nos valeurs, vaincre ici par nos valeurs", General Jean-Pierre Bosser, Chief of Staff of the French Army, *Le Figaro*, 21 March 2016, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/2016/03/21/31003-20160321ARTFIG00018-defense-combattre-la-bas-pour-nos-valeurs-vaincre-ici-par-nos-valeurs.php>.

³³ Cf. Government white paper *La France face au terrorisme – Livre blanc du Gouvernement sur la sécurité intérieure face au terrorisme*, (coll.), La Documentation française, 2006.

³⁴ Cf. the French Ministry of Defence's official communiqué: <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/sahel/dossier-de-presentation-de-l-operation-barkhane/operation-barkhane>.

These changes were inevitable, given the very nature of jihad, a warlike approach authorising the unlimited use of terrorism. The changes are not pre-emptive, they are a reaction to an intensified threat and they illustrate how traditional counter-terrorism measures have progressively become unsuited to that threat.

More than twenty years after the French jihad first emerged, security and intelligence agencies have gradually lost the upper hand, and their organisation has not really evolved. In 2008, the DST (Directorate of Territorial Surveillance) was merged with the DCRG (Central Directorate of General Intelligence) to create the DCRI (Central Directorate of National Intelligence), which then became the DGSI (General Directorate for Internal Security). This merger marked the victory of a purely repressive approach designed to produce impressive prosecutions, rather than a more subtle, complex strategy that would have included a public dimension. The failure of this reform was formally recognised in 2012, leading to the establishment in 2014 of the SCRT (Central Department of Territorial Intelligence), an organisation that discretely resumed the missions abandoned by the DCRG. To date, there has been no real conceptual revolution in the overall French security architecture.

The French authorities are imprisoned in outdated analyses and truly struggling to accept that jihadism has complex political causes and an agenda³⁵. The only measures taken involved increasing resources, without reviewing the foundations of the policies being implemented. Decisions like adopting new legislation³⁶, allocating new budgets or increasing manpower have only partially compensated for shortcomings in the security and intelligence services. There has been no impartial assessment of the various failures that have occurred since 2015³⁷, and personnel and government administrations appear to be insufficiently mobilised.

Security agencies now admit that they are “overwhelmed³⁸” by the unprecedented scale of the threat, by how dispersed it is and by the infinite number of potential points where it could strike. Increased domestic tension combined with growing international turmoil has created a climate conducive to individual radicalisation, which is literally out of control³⁹, giving the jihadist leaders the isolated terrorists that Osama Bin Laden,

³⁵ As extreme and unrealistic as it may be.

³⁶ Such as legislation known as the “Intelligence Act”, <http://www.vie-publique.fr/actualite/panorama/texte-discussion/projet-loi-relatif-au-renseignement.html>.

³⁷ Cf. “Les failles du renseignement français, ou le syndrome Shadok”, Yves Trotignon, *The Conversation*, 9 December 2015, <https://theconversation.com/les-failles-du-renseignement-francais-ou-le-syndrome-shadok-51832>.

³⁸ A term used by a senior police officer. Cf. *Attentats: les suspects jihadistes ont appris la discrétion*, AFP, 15 January 2016.

³⁹ Cf. “Selon M. Valls, le nombre de jihadistes partis de France pour rejoindre la Syrie et l’Irak est en forte hausse”, Laurent Lagneau, *Zone Militaire*, 21 March 2016, <http://www.opex360.com/2016/03/21/selon-m-valls-le-nombre-de-jihadistes-partis-de-france-pour-rejoindre-la-syrie-lirak-en-forte-hausse/>.

and then other ideologists, had been calling for since the end of the 1990s⁴⁰. The jihadist threat has evolved in two ways. There are more individuals, cells or networks than previously, and more of these players are acting alone⁴¹. Security agencies designed to detect the hostile actions of structured groups with a traditional *modus operandi* are doomed to become less and less effective in the face of such developments. Since 2012, the specialised French agencies have been falling behind. They are still capable of action but security chiefs are openly expressing concern⁴². Their ability to tackle what is as much a socio-political phenomenon as a security issue is now being called into question.

Aware that prevention is urgent and in an effort to limit the spread of the jihadist phenomenon, the authorities have been trying to implement a complementary, non-repressive strategy for years, aimed at detecting and responding to cases of Islamist radicalisation. This resulted in a series of measures whereby families can alert authorities to any suspicious cases⁴³ and a fledgling policy to deradicalise the individuals identified. This, however, is not without difficulties.

The very concept of radicalisation⁴⁴ is disputed within the scientific community⁴⁵, which sees it as the state projecting social norms onto the perpetrators of violent acts, thereby avoiding the political questions it should be asking itself. For now, public and private deradicalisation projects are under intense criticism for their superficiality⁴⁶ and lack of tangible results. Counter-terrorism does not leave much room for error. Even if they are very few, supposedly deradicalised individuals who again resort to violence

⁴⁰ Cf. “Terrorisme: quelles menaces pour l’Europe?”, Yves Trotignon, *Les Grands dossiers de Diplomatie* No. 32, April-May 2016.

⁴¹ Cf. “Al Qaïda et le jihad aujourd’hui”, Yves Trotignon, *Lettre du RETEX* No. 7, Centre de doctrine et d’emploi des forces (CDEF), 4 December 2013, http://www.cdef.terre.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/4946/68161/file/07_Al_Qa%C3%AFda_et_Jihad.pdf.

⁴² Cf. 10 May 2016, DGSI Director General Patrick Calvar appearing before the Parliamentary Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces: “Let me turn now to the state of the threat. France is clearly the country the most under threat today. Let me remind you of the front page headline of one issue of Daesh’s French-language magazine *Dar al Islam*: ‘May Allah curse France’. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), successor of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) of the 1990s, still considers France its number one enemy, and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) stigmatises us in a similar fashion. As a result, the threat level is, I emphasise, very high, as shown by the attacks in January and November 2015. It is also very high abroad, as we have seen with the attacks in Bamako, Ouagadougou and most recently in Grand-Bassam in Ivory Coast.” <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/cr-cdef/15-16/c1516047.asp>.

⁴³ This includes the launch of a dedicated website, <http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr>, as well as awareness-raising sessions in the workplace and pilot deradicalisation programmes.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Radicalisation*, Farhad Khosrokhavar, Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 2014.

⁴⁵ Cf. for example the journal *Liens social et politiques*, <http://www.lsp.inrs.ca/spip.php?article394>.

⁴⁶ They are far from demonstrating the same effectiveness as, for example, those in Canada, which has established the Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV), <https://info-radical.org/fr/>.

only serve to create more insecurity. Meanwhile, the security services hope that these programmes will help free up their resources by reducing the number of potentially dangerous individuals.

Counter-propaganda efforts such as *Stop Djihadisme* on Twitter have proved ineffective. Attempts to oppose Daesh in the public sphere have been systematically twisted and mocked by the jihadists themselves, showing that they are the ones with innovation on their side. Just as sending forth official imams to argue against radical Islamist terrorists has so far proved pointless, trying to defy Daesh on social media has done nothing more than highlight how slow government agencies inevitably are compared to revolutionary forces. Hiring advertising agencies with no particular expertise to design anti-jihadism campaigns has not helped produce anything particularly relevant, nor has involving the Inter-Ministerial Task Force to Monitor and Combat Abuse by Cults⁴⁷, which is wholly unsuited to the task by its very nature. Neither Daesh nor Al-Qaeda constitutes a cult.

Dealing with the reasoning and vocabulary of radicalisation is especially challenging in prisons, where authorities must manage a growing number of prisoners without being able to control them as much as they would like⁴⁸. Proselytizing by certain prisoners represents a real threat. Past decades have clearly shown that prisons are places where vocations are born and where terrorists from different networks form ties. Plans for detention centres were considered but eventually rejected, mainly on legal grounds⁴⁹.

C. In search of a plan of attack

The scale of the attacks and intensity of the threat finally convinced French authorities that Al-Qaeda and Daesh's war against them was not mere rhetoric. Other tougher and more visible measures were added to those already in place.

Unlike Al-Qaeda, which is a clandestine organisation almost exclusively devoted to terrorism, Daesh is a political-military movement for which terrorism is only one of its modus operandi. France therefore decided to tackle it directly in Syria and Iraq, and launched Operation Chammal⁵⁰ on 19 September 2014. The operation is a combination of airstrikes as well as training and support for Iraqi forces and certain Kurdish factions. By its military engagement against Daesh in Iraq, and then in Syria, Paris is

⁴⁷ MIVILUDES, <http://www.derives-sectes.gouv.fr/>.

⁴⁸ Cf. "Vers un big bang du renseignement pénitentiaire", Jean-Baptiste Jacquin, *Le Monde*, 4 July 2016, http://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2016/07/04/vers-un-big-bang-du-renseignement-penitentiaire_4963058_1653578.html#Q1qBKpPIwxGpSK7j.99.

⁴⁹ Cf. "Valls ferme la porte aux mesures d'exception réclamées par la droite", AFP, 15 June 2016, http://www.liberation.fr/france/2016/06/15/valls-ferme-la-porte-aux-mesures-d-exception-reclamees-par-la-droite_1459542.

⁵⁰ Cf. Official communiqué, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/irak-syrie/dossier-de-presentation-de-l-operation-chammal/operation-chammal>.

pursuing several objectives: to effectively reduce the group's potential to cause harm; contribute to stabilising the situation in the region; and remain a military-diplomatic player in the crisis. Yet some have been quick to point out the inconsistencies in this strategy.

France's intervention in the Middle East as part of the US-led coalition⁵¹ is deemed too small-scale to make a real difference to the situation⁵². Above all, it appears to be more of a counter-terrorism operation targeting individuals than an airstrike campaign to attack military capacity. As such, it could have remained covert, much like France's action in Libya is supposed to be, but the need to communicate about what is being done precluded this. The authorities need to show their determination to the public in more than just words, and had no choice but to go public about an operation that would probably have been more effective if it had remained covert. Some observers even believe that France's intervention has encouraged closer ties between French jihadists and Daesh conspirators and accelerated actual terrorist attacks.

On top of this engagement overseas, whose aims are as much political as operational, after the January 2015 attacks the decision was made to deploy over 10,000 personnel, from all three components of the armed forces, across French national territory. Operation Sentinelle⁵³ is a stepping up of the Vigipirate system⁵⁴ and is designed to provide support to the police and gendarmerie, equipping all the main cities across the country with forces capable of dealing with a terrorist attack comparable to those of 13 November 2015. By its visibility, Sentinelle also addresses the public's apprehensions, but it generates certain risks as well.

Specialists have deemed it ineffective, inappropriate and tremendously costly⁵⁵. Their main concern since the state of emergency was introduced on 14 November 2015 is that transforming the country into a theatre of operations for the French army could have serious political and social consequences. The authorities themselves continue to defend the measures but have not ruled out the possibility of a change in this situation, which is weighing ever more on Paris's commitments abroad. Somewhat paradoxically,

⁵¹ *Operation Inherent Resolve*, http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0814_Inherent-Resolve.

⁵² Cf. "Quand on décide de faire la guerre, il faut la faire sérieusement ou pas du tout", Michel Goya, *Le Monde*, 2 July 2016, http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/07/02/quand-on-decide-de-faire-la-guerre-il-faut-la-faire-serieusement-ou-pas-du-tout_4962413_3232.html#rExdXqbCgHikf0QL.99.

⁵³ Cf. Official communiqué, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/france/sentinelle>.

⁵⁴ Created in 1978, <http://www.risques.gouv.fr/menaces-terroristes/le-plan-vigipirate>.

⁵⁵ Cf. *La Sentinelle égarée? L'Armée de Terre face au terrorisme*, The French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), Elie Tenenbaum, June 2016, <http://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/etudes-de-lifri/focus-strategique/sentinelle-egaree-larmee-de-terre-face-terrorisme>; and "Opération Sentinelle, cette histoire piégée que l'on raconte aux Français", Bénédicte Chéron, *The Conversation*, 28 June 2016, <https://theconversation.com/operation-sentinelle-cette-histoire-piegee-que-lon-raconte-aux-francais-61471>.

Sentinelles, conceived to fight against the Daesh threat, is being accused of draining France's capacity to act.

As an illustration of how France is struggling to define its priorities and stick to them, it has soldiers deployed in the streets plus a not insignificant level of military engagement in the Middle East since September 2014, as well as its role in a long operation to stabilise the Sahel. France is torn between continuing to have an influence in the Middle East and the need to protect its own national territory. Slow to truly adjust its stance to the new challenges, it is now forced to improvise responses, which so far are not producing any lasting effects.

Operation Sentinelles is fiercely backed by Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian⁵⁶ but is hitting the armed forces increasingly hard⁵⁷. Its ambition is to intercept terrorists who are about to act or as soon as they begin. It internalises the fact that security agencies are now systematically overwhelmed by the threat and that each target needs defending. However, this is a completely unrealistic ambition. The recent murders in Magnanville⁵⁸ confirmed that the solution lies in early detection of the perpetrators and not in hypothetically intercepting them as close as possible to their targets.

Similarly, the fact that France like other countries is at war with Daesh should not automatically transform its national territory into a theatre of operations where armed forces have police powers. This confusion of theatres, which is what the jihadists want, is a trap that democracies must avoid. When intelligence-gathering resources were reinforced, as they needed to be, investigative and analytical resources should have been given at least the same level of reinforcement. This lost ground, while not irreversible, has already come at a cost to security and therefore had political consequences. It is also evident in the lack of any real understanding of the jihadist phenomenon, as shown by the absence of an ambitious strategy. Responding only with more capacity is hardly relevant against an ever-evolving adversary.

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⁵⁶ Cf. *Qui est l'ennemi ?* Jean-Yves Le Drian, CERF, 2016.

⁵⁷ Cf. *La Dernière bataille de France*, General Vincent Desportes, Gallimard, 2015.

⁵⁸ On 13 June 2016, a jihadist who was under security surveillance murdered a police officer and his partner in their home in Magnanville (Yvelines) and credited Daesh with the murders.

Daesh Radicalization and Responses in Germany

Marwan Abou-Taam

Al-Qaeda and its followers caused a deep cut in world security. They caused a geopolitical shift in the issue of security policies. This terrorism based on the jihadi ideology is a central threat to the stability of nation states. This is because it is an enormously heterogeneous phenomenon with strong diversity in terms of its manifestations, its structural nature and its consequences. Moreover, it has, under the condition of strong interdependencies, direct implications with respect to the classic separation between internal and external security.

By using social media, they disseminate their propaganda so that millions of people witness their attacks and the fate of the victims. A network of like-minded terrorists, organized on the basis of a religious ideology, can cause thousands of civilian victims by the simplest means, like we saw during the 9/11 attacks, which traumatized so many countries. Their fighters are jihadists who have been inspired by religious narratives and want to die as a martyr for God.

That which was started by Al-Qaeda has been more and more professionalized by Daesh. The so-called “Islamic State” is more than a terrorist group. On the basis of a radical interpretation of Islam, the terrorist group installed a political and military order and is trying to impose its worldview by force on Muslims and non-Muslims by claiming to be the legitimate ruler of all Sunni Muslims worldwide. Daesh proclaimed the Islamic State as a militant movement that has conquered territory in western Iraq and eastern Syria.

The repoliticization of the sacred in Arab Muslim societies is more or less the result of a failure of the state in most of the Arab countries, especially those in which social upheavals resulted in civil wars, like Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen. The disintegration of governmental support and security structures gave rise to a power vacuum in which jihadist forces are persistently developing into resolute players.

Deregulated violence by non-state actors like Daesh and its branches can be understood as a “war of the Third Kind”¹. There are no more distinctions between combatants and non-combatants. They destroy communities and cause great human suffering and put refugees on the move. Daesh proclaims that it provides a renewed path to realization

* This paper was submitted on 18 July 2016.

¹ Holsti, Kalevi J. (1996), *The State, War, and the State of War*, Cambridge.

and transcendence . It will not only fight over territory, but also over ideologies and worldviews. Daesh's war is a declared war against *al hulul al mustawrada* (imported solutions). Their concept of a religious ideology allows them a certain transcendency, in which it is not the intent to kill but their self-sacrifice and willingness or readiness to die for higher goals that will prevail.² Based on their belief, they do not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, but between *Mu'minin* (believers) and *kafirun* (infidels). In the case of Daesh, religious loyalties and attitudes are deep rooted and that is why they use religion as a mobilization platform. Led by a religious worldview, the violence of Daesh denotes Jihadism as the *direct action* of Islam and creates the perception of Islam as a security challenge in Western thought by equalling religion with ideology.

The jihadists' success is traceable, among other causes, to their ability to allure followers of the Muslim faith from all over the world—including Germany—to their ranks.

DAESH AS A CHALLENGE—RADICALIZATION IN GERMANY

While it has long been assumed that Islamic radicalism is an imported commodity, lessons learned in the category of “Islamic terrorism” in recent years attest that the causes of radicalization processes can also be found in European societies. The number of “foreign combatants” who have travelled from the EU to Syria and Iraq is estimated at 7,000. This number is relative, however, as counting is not uniform in the various EU countries. Most of these combatants come from Western European countries with a large Muslim community and, prior to their respective departures, were in active contact with the respective Salafi community. Eight hundred and sixty individuals, with ages between 13 and 63, have left Germany for Syria, with the vast majority of them being in the 16-25 age group.

Hormonally charged, revolutionary, seeking justice and solidarity, they identify very strongly with the suffering of the victims of the Syrian war and pursue the objective of overthrowing the systems in Syria and Iraq in order to establish an Islamic commonwealth based on the precepts of Islamic Shari'ah law. Most combatants are third-generation Sunni Muslim Germans, children of immigrants from the Middle East.³ Others are young converts from the native population, without immigrant backgrounds. While most foreign combatants are single men, the number of women moving to the war zone has increased tremendously; even children are evermore drawn by their

² Van Creveld, Martin (1998), *Die Zukunft des Krieges*, Munich, S. 278.

³ On the subject of Salafism in Germany, see Scheider, Thorsten Gerald (2014), *Salafismus in Deutschland. Ursprünge und Gefahren einer islamisch-fundamentalistischen Bewegung*, Bielefeld. Therein, especially El-Mafaalani, Aladin, Salafismus als jugendkulturelle Provokation. Zwischen dem Bedürfnis nach Abgrenzung und der Suche nach habitueller Übereinstimmung, p. 355 ff.

parents into the undertow of jihad. The majority of the individuals involved are classic school dropouts. However, the outbound also include educated young men who have abandoned their studies in order to join Daesh. There are many causes for radicalization. It is not a question of gender or social background, and it occurs at all levels of society, regardless of economic circumstances or level of education completed. Although radicalization is an individual process, biographic similarities can be detected, at least in the German activists: the departing individuals are often youth with identity issues who are seeking powerful group adventures and meaning in life. They want to have a role in society which is often—as they perceive it—denied to them. Their parents admonish them for “being like Germans,” and society problematizes them as “Muslims”. Thus many break from their present social surroundings in the course of their radicalization. Disengagement from family and former friends ahead of the departure is usually accompanied by growing involvement with a Salafi group.⁴

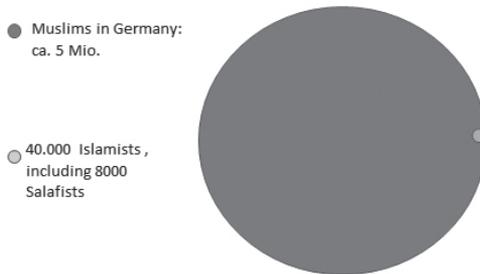
SALAFISM AND GERMANY—STRUCTURES AND RATIONALITIES

Salafism is in clear contradiction to the German constitution, which includes respect for human dignity and guarantees the equality of all people regardless of their religious beliefs. Here, Salafism is similar to far-right extremism, whose terrorist acts also create a threat to social peace. The German Salafists put the emphasis on Islamization from below by proselytizing. They see the “German” way of life as godless and decadent and want to save Muslims from the bottom of the German society. They are oriented by other European Salafist scenes and want to prove themselves as a learning network working for Dawa⁵ in Germany (in addition to the concepts of “Street-Dawa” and “Dawa from the bag”). In this context, they try to provoke conflicts with the state and want a harsh government response so as to present Muslims as victims of state repression.

⁴ See Wiedl, Nina (2012), *The Making of a German Salafyya: The Emergence, Development and Missionary Work of Salafi Movement in Germany*, Aarhus, p. 32, et seq., and Steinberg, Guido (2012), *Wer sind die Salafisten? Zum Umgang mit einer schnell wachsenden und sich politisierenden Bewegung*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP-Aktuell 2012/A 28, May 2012, p. 6, et seq.

⁵ Literally, it is a calling to come closer to religion. Dawa as an invitation is the summons to the way of Allah and means the effort to spread the teachings of true Islam.

Salafist in Germany



Significant developments have taken place since 2005 within Salafism in Germany. They range from the establishment of a local scene over the creation of a functioning Salafist infrastructure to large mobilization successes. In the different phases, propaganda channels have been created and optimized in order to attract recruits, to strengthen trailers ideologically and to protect them from the majority in society. In return, the Salafist propaganda proved to be a useful tool. Salafists keep provoking and always want to draw attention to themselves, last seen through the missionary action “Sharia Police” in Wuppertal⁶. In Germany, the Salafists have few recognizable structures and is practised as a belief in clubs, mosques, on the internet and in small groups and individuals. The followers operate a veritable cult centred on their preacher. Salafi preachers have a flat hierarchy between the preachers and between the preachers and the trailers relative to each other, maintain mutually close relationships and organize virtual as well as real Islam seminars. These Islam seminars with Salafi content are the most important institution of the German Salafists.

The Salafist scene is characterized by dynamic network developments. In Germany, the Salafist scene is organized in independent, mostly unregistered, associations, with informal groups of people, websites and initiatives. Da’wa and publicity on the Internet represent the largest and most effective area of action of Salafism. Furthermore, Prisoner’s Aid⁷ and public appearances of “star preachers” should be mentioned. The latter are the drivers and the links of mobilization. At the same time, vanities and conflicts among these preachers regularly lead to divisions and enmities within the group.

⁶ Young Salafists patrolled in September 2014 the streets of Wuppertal in an attempt to enforce a strict interpretation of Islam. Wearing orange vests, emblazoned with the words “Shariah police”, the defendants allegedly demanded people at nightclubs to stop drinking alcohol and listening to music. A YouTube propaganda video from the German Salafist scene was posted online showing a poster with the English headline “Shariah Controlled Zone”, followed by images of Salafists recruiting young people and visiting gambling halls.

⁷ Prisoner’s Aid is a salafi organisation that offers support to salafi prisoners and their visitors.

In recent years, the groups “Millatu Ibrahim”, “An-Nussrah”, the missionary network “DawaFFM”, and “Tawheed Germany” were banned by the Federal Ministry of the Interior with the accusation of being directed against the constitutional order. Millatu Ibrahim had called for a fight against the state and its representatives. Most of the aid workers went to Syria and established a German jihadi group there. The most prominent person is Denis Cuspert⁸, a former rapper, who joined the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2013 and asked German Salafists to join the Califat.

RADICALIZATION AND THE FIGHT FOR DAESH

Radicalization processes and the decision to move to jihad venues are promoted by various, often complementary, factors. They have ideological, political, psychological and sociological dimensions. Which of these dimensions is determinative depends on the particular individual concerned. The individuals can be grouped into four rough categories based on the motive for radicalization, with mixed motives being the rule:

- persons with ideological convictions;
- adventurers and their followers;
- “born-again,” many of whom want to atone for a criminal past;
- and those who believe that they can act out their violent and homicidal fantasies unpunished in the civil war.

Such individuals see violence as a justifiable instrument for achieving higher objectives in jihad. The ideological indoctrination needed for this primarily takes place in small groups in the context of “Islam Seminars” and in Salafi reading and discussion groups.⁹ Here the “Holy War” against all types of “infidels”, Muslim and non-Muslim, is taught, and an ideologically closed, Salafi worldview is conveyed. This worldview prescribes radical, binary, black-and-white thinking: every conflict is reduced to a contest between good and evil. This simplification of the world creates a habitat in which the individuals concerned feel very much at home. In considering the discourse about the causes behind the radicalization of the outbound individuals and the associated debate concerning the proper governmental and social response thereto, it must be stated that, despite all efforts, no conclusive theory exists which is capable of explaining the

⁸ Denis Mamadou Gerhard Cuspert, also known by his stage name “Deso Dogg” and his nome de guerre “Abu Talha al-Almani”, is an Afro-German member of Daesh and a former rapper. The United States Department of State added Cuspert to its list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists on 9 February 2015 and the United Nations Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee designated him on 11 February 2015. There was some information that he was killed in a recent attack but we have no evidence that Deso Dogg has really died.

⁹ See Wagemakers (2012), *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi*, p. 29, et seq.

majority of cases. Existing theories point merely to certain aspects of a radicalization process, only to note later that the approach is unsuitable for analyzing other groups of people.

Jihadi Salafists champion an Islamic ideology which is oriented on the role model of the founding fathers of the Islamic religion and which wants to create a supposedly ideal Islamic society. The basic sources of Islam—the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (Sunnah)—are their immutable foundations. Differing from the majority of Muslims, Jihadi Salafists categorically reject any adaptation of the interpretation of the authoritative sources to altered social and political circumstances as “un-Islamic innovations” (Arabic: *bid’ah*). According to Salafi perceptions, such innovations inevitably result in “disbelief”. They also espouse a dualistic worldview, which consists only of believers and unbelievers (Arabic: *kuffar*). Along with the “usual” atheists, Jews and Christians, such unbelievers also include non-Salafi Muslims.¹⁰ Associations with such people are to be limited and, if possible, avoided altogether because they discriminate against “true” Muslims. Precisely these feelings of discrimination are fomented and exploited to recruit followers. The Jihadi Salafists justify their campaigns through religion, present the position that militaristic jihad is a duty for every Muslim and, in principle, recognize no restrictions in the selection of means. This applies until the goal of universal implementation of Islamic ideological principles has been achieved. Jihadism is therefore a clear battle doctrine which obligates every believer to take up the battle for establishing and preserving an Islamic state.

Considering Daesh’s mode of operation and recruiting strategy, it can be observed that the instilling of ideology and polarization constitutes the primary element of its success strategy. Daesh is increasingly fighting for regime change in the Middle East. The people mobilized for this are those who are disposed to be antagonistic toward the West and who are ready to transform their hostility into action. The recruiting propaganda is therefore targeted at individuals who already feel rage, but are unable to articulate their rage politically.¹¹ The arch-enemy or constituting element in the view of Daesh is the decadent West that bleeds the Muslim Ummah to death and marginalizes Muslims. Western values must be rebuffed accordingly and one’s own Islamic identity defended. Most people travelling to Syria state that they are primarily motivated by the unjust violence towards the Sunnis in Syria and hold the “Western” interventions in the Muslim world responsible for it. They allege that the West brought the conflicts to the Middle East and it now looks on as the Sunnis in Iraq and Syria are “butchered” by the Shi’a. They further claim that Sunnis are excluded in Western societies based on their

¹⁰ Haykel, Bernard, (2009), “On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action” in Roel Meijer (ed), *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, London, p. 39.

¹¹ On this, see the annotated edition of the speeches of Osama Bin Laden in Abou-Taam, M., and Bigalke, Ruth (2006), *Die Reden des Osama Ben Laden*, Munich; in this, especially the chapter “Die Wegweisungen”.

religious identity.¹² These groups also have the unyielding impression that politicians in their respective country have conspired against Islam and left them no option other than to assert their identity and religion by force. They feel unrepresented by the political elite and denied the opportunity to participate politically. Outwardly, they feel obligated to dedicate themselves to the rights of Sunni Muslims. In the process, they fail to consider that the majority of victims of Daesh are Sunni Muslims.¹³

Daesh profits from various socio-psychological elements within the Muslim diaspora. Connected to their ancestral countries through the media, many young people think about and live through domestic conflicts. They identify with the tribulations there and define their conflicts through the transnationality of the religion along an ethnic-religious dividing line.¹⁴ However, these conflicts are combined and interpreted among and within their own diaspora. The fathers of the affected generation of Syrian refugees are very frequently described as weak and cowardly, but the role of the father is central in a patriarchally structured society, especially when, in one's own perception, the father is seen as the only legitimate authority. If it happens in such complex relational systems that the father as protector of the family fails in his traditional role, a feeling of rejection can arise. If the familial structure with the father at the top cannot offer protection, children in a patriarchal society experience a feeling of disappointment that expresses itself in forms of material and existential anxieties. Such experiences leave a mark on children and adolescents and make them especially sensitive to alleged injustices. It is possible to speak of a cannibalistic narcissism with regard to this complex process. A continual debasement of the existing power relationships is taking place. That is a disastrous automatism, because one's own "magnificence" can only be rescued through the debasement of others.¹⁵

The negative narratives on the perception of Islam in the West begin here to have deep implication on the identity of young Muslims. One is no longer Turk or Arab and not yet German. Affiliation with Islam is the basis of identity. The debate over Islam greatly attacks this. It must be noted here that collective identities are strategic social constructs that are comprised of tightly interwoven ideas, worldviews, religions and ideologies as well as sociocultural values.¹⁶ Precisely at this juncture, Salafism delivers

¹² Concerning hostility toward Islam, see Heitmeyer, Wilhelm (2011), *Deutsche Zustände. Das entscherte Jahrzehnt: Folge 10*, Bielefeld.

¹³ On this, see the study by Peters, Till Hagen (2012), *Islamismus bei Jugendlichen in empirischen Studien: Ein narratives Review*, *Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Religionswissenschaft und Religionspädagogik 2*, Bremen.

¹⁴ On identity and crisis, see Erikson, E. H. (1968), *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, New York.

¹⁵ See Schmidbauer, Wolfgang (2013), "Der pharisäische und der kannibalische Narzissmus", in id.: *Der Mensch als Bombe. Eine Psychologie des neuen Terrorismus*, Reinbek, p. 64, et seq.

¹⁶ Finnemore, Martha and Kathryn Sikkink (1998), "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", *International Organization* 52, No. 4, pp. 887-917.

the longed-for interpretation of the world and actively structures a historical reality.¹⁷ The distinction becomes superfluous in Salafi dualism. The more complex the world, the simpler its interpretation must be. This is complemented through Daesh propaganda with the objective of producing a collective madness.¹⁸

Radicalization processes frequently take place in Salafi groups. The group thereby delivers a group identity that overshadows the individual identity with all its weaknesses.¹⁹ The inner dynamics and sociocultural values of the Salafi group explain not only the recruiting power, but also the staying power and loyalty of the members. The Salafi group has its own group culture with specific traditions and values that are principally totalitarian and demand that the individual shows absolute solidarity with the group as a whole, not necessarily with the individual person. Here, external contact is vehemently opposed and radically sanctioned, as it is only to be conducted in accordance with strategic precepts by specially designated group members who are steadfast in their ideology.²⁰ No group member expresses his own opinion, as there is only the collective. Migration to the group isolates the individual psychologically and very often also physically from his “normal” environment. Relationships of trust exist only with other group members.

The forces that are developed through this can also be observed in cults. The more a person integrates with the group, the more alienated the individual is from his or her original world. Integration into the group means the complete dissolution of the individual in favour of the group identity and thus leads to hierarchical, one-way, absolute control by the group. From other religious cults, we know that not only are social contacts regulated, marriages with group members are also dictated. We can observe similar structures in Salafi groups. In the course of time, existential bonds develop between the group members.²¹ This gives rise to the reality that esteem and reputation

¹⁷ Muhammad Saeed Salim Al-Qahtani (2003), *Al-Wala' Wa Al-Bara' Fi Al-Islam Min Mafahim Aqidah Al-Salaf* (Loyalty and Disavowal in Islam According to the Belief of the Salaf), Al-Maktabah Al-Taufiqiyah, Cairo, p. 186.

¹⁸ Q. Wiktorowicz, (2006), “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): pp. 207-239.

¹⁹ See Fuhse, Jan A. (2001), “Unser »wir« - ein systemtheoretisches Modell von Gruppenidentitäten”, *SISS: Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Sozialwissenschaften der Universität Stuttgart* No. 1 /200, p. 18. Here, Fuhse asserts, with reference to Coser, that conflict with other groups contributes to the creation and stabilization of the group identity and maintains the boundaries with respect to the social environment. This permits a group “to structure and continually restructure...its system boundaries in the course of the conflict with negative reference groups.”

²⁰ See Straub, Jürgen (1998), “Geschichten erzählen, Geschichten bilden, Grundzüge einer narrativen Psychologie historischer Sinnbildung”, in Straub, Jürgen (1998), *Erzählung, Identität und historisches Bewußtsein. Die psychologische Konstruktion von Zeit und Geschichte, Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität*, Frankfurt am Main, p. 81, et seq.

²¹ See Schwonke, Martin (1999), “Die Gruppe als Paradigma der Vergesellschaftung”, in Schäfers, Bernhard, *Einführung in die Gruppensozioologie. Geschichte, Theorien, Analysen*. Wiesbaden, pp. 37-53.

within the group, hierarchical ascension, and acceptance by the members are vastly more important than external perception. Religious texts are of great importance for religiously motivated groups.²² To be well versed is simultaneously fascinating and bonding. Religious indoctrination is therefore simultaneously the goal and the means.

GERMAN SECURITY POLICY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

From the state-theoretical perspective, security is a public good that is provided simultaneously to all members of society and to the same extent. Basically, the task of the security sector is to prevent real and potential hazards. In this context, security management is determined as a link between security policy and security politics, the policy-making measures of security actors. In this context, the state must serve both the subjective and the objective level of security. The objective dimension of security can be recognised in the area's status, security, legal certainty and institutional arrangements, and the likelihood of repelling internal and external threats. This implies for the modern state the following tasks²³:

- a) minimization of uncertainties
- b) elimination of hazards
- c) reduction of risk
- d) prevention
- e) protection from disasters
- f) punishment of violations of the law

The subjective level of security is only indirectly and mostly influenced by socio-psychological instruments.

The fight against religiously motivated terrorism began at the legal level on 30 November 2001 with the so-called "first safety package". In summary, the law revokes the religious privilege from the association law. Further, Article 129a of the Penal Code, which provides that the formation of terrorist groups is punishable, is supplemented by § 129b of the Criminal Code, so that now, membership in terrorist organizations and declarations of sympathy are punishable, even if the terrorist group has no infrastructure in Germany. Furthermore, the legislation provides that all institutions whose

²² On alternative dealings with texts of the Koran, see Kermani, Navid (2009), "“Und tötet sie, wo immer ihr sie findet”: Zur Missachtung des textuellen und historischen Kontexts bei der Verwendung von Koranzitaten", in Schneiders, Thorsten Gerald (2009), *Islamfeindlichkeit*, Wiesbaden, pp. 201-207.

²³ See Peter J. Katzenstein, "Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security", in Katzenstein, Peter J. (Hrsg.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York, 1996, S. 1-32.

members or conductors are mainly foreigners from countries outside the European Union (foreigners' associations) can be banned in the future (newly created § 14 Law on Associations) if their purposes or activities are contrary to the principles of the Basic Law. Another component of the security package was the change of the law on security clearance. According to the law, a security check has to be conducted for all persons working in safety-sensitive areas. Even employees of hospitals, broadcasters and energy producers have to be subjected to a security check. The second security package is the Law²⁴ for the Fight against International Terrorism (Terrorism Act), which was installed in 2002, and which included the insertion and modification of a hundred provisions in 17 laws and ordinances, with the aim of achieving early detection of threats (the Act on

²⁴ A list of German laws with references to security issues:

- Foreigners Central Registration Act (1994, amended 2009) (excerpts)
- Insurance Supervision Act (1901, amended 2010)
- Introductory Act to the Judicature Act (excerpt: section on blockage of contact) (1977, amended 2006)
- Passport Act (1986, amended 2009) (excerpts)
- Asylum Procedure Act (1992, amended 2008)
- Banking Act (1998, amended 2010)
- Customs Administration Act (1992 amended 2009)
- Customs Investigations Service Act (2002, amended 2009)
- Federal Act on Displaced Persons (1953, amended 2009)
- Federal Border Guard Act (1972, amended 2009)
- Federal Constitution Protection Act (1990, amended 2009)
- Federal Intelligence Service Act (1990, amended 2009)
- Federal Office of Criminal investigation Act (1997, amended 2009)
- Military Counterintelligence Service Act (1990, amended 2007)
- Money Laundering Act (2008, amended 2009)
- Security Monitoring Act (1994, amended 2008)
- Telecommunications Act (2004, amended 2010)
- Telemedia Act (2007, amended 2010) (excerpts)
- Residence Act (2004, amended 2009) (excerpts)
- Personal ID Card Act (1986, amended 2007)
- Criminal Procedure Code (1950, amended 2009)
- Criminal Code (1971, amended 2009)
- Act Governing Private Associations (1964, amended 2007)
- Act implementing the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (1978)
- Act implementing the Treaty of Prüm and the Council Decision on Prüm (2006, amended 2009)
- Act of 13 August 1968 on Restrictions on the Secrecy of the Mail, Post and Telecommunications (2001, amended 2009)
- Act on State Security Documents of the Former East Germany (1991, amended 2009) (excerpts)
- Anti Terror Database Act (2006, amended 2008)
- Law for the Prosecution of Preparation of Serious Crimes Against State Security (2009)
- Law on the Fight Against Terrorism (2002)
- Law Supplementing the Law on the Fight against Terrorism (2007).

the Military Counterintelligence Service [MAD Act], the Federal Intelligence Service Act [BNDG], and the Aliens Act.)

The Counter-Terrorism Act also provided the basis for collecting biometric data, such as fingerprints, hand shape and the shape of the iris; created conditions to improve information exchange and to prevent the entry of terrorists into Germany; and introduced measures to establish identity forms. In that context, changes took place in the fields of security clearance, the Passport Act, the law on identity cards, the Law on Associations, the Civil Aviation Act, the Federal Central Register Act, the tenth book of the Social Code and the Energy Security Act. The objective here is to allow a security check of staff in key institutions. The observation mission of the Federal Agency for State Protection was expanded, so that now “efforts which are directed against the people” justify an observation.²⁵ The work of the Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution (BfV, the domestic intelligence service) should take place well in advance of terrorist efforts so as to enhance the security of the Federal Republic. To fulfil its tasks the constitution protection authority has the right to request from banks, airlines and postal services customer data. In addition, the Military Counterintelligence Service (MAD, the military intelligence service) and the Federal Intelligence Service (BND, the foreign intelligence service) have the right to obtain, through a similar procedure, information on telecommunications and teleservice operators and financial services providers.²⁶ Another adaptation of the intelligence services is that the communications and travel routes of focused persons can be easily understood by the so-called G-10 action.²⁷

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the Foreigners’ Registration Offices automatically transmit in suspected cases the data of the respective aliens to the authorities. This also applies to cooperation with foreign partners and law enforcement agencies. The establishment of the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ) in December 2004 in Berlin is a further step to organize quick access to existing information. In the GTAZ, all intelligence information as well as information from the police come together so that they can be evaluated with reduced personnel expenses and from different perspectives. The Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre, which brings together specialized and analysis units of more than 40 security policy-relevant organizations of federal states of Germany, assists the security agencies and fuses information from different authorities. In addition to a daily joint briefing, continuous and intensive cooperation takes place in the task areas of risk assessment, operational exchange of information, case analysis, structural analysis, and reconnaissance of Islamist terrorist persons’ potential pooling of resources. Accordingly, the anti-terror database was put

²⁵ BVerfSchG § 3 (1)/ § 8 (5)4, MADG § 1 (1)/ § 2 (1a).

²⁶ Vgl. BVerfSchG § 3 (1) 4, MADG § 1 (1), sowie BVerfSchG § 8 (5), BNDG, § 2 (1a).

²⁷ BVerfSchG § 8 (9), BNDG § 2 (1a), § 8 (3a).

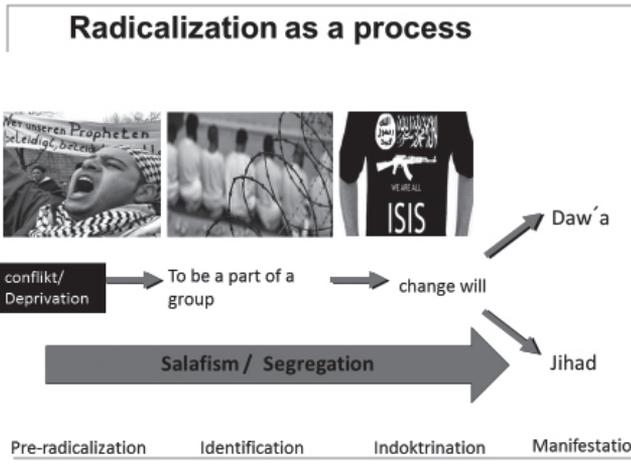
into operation on 30 March 2007. The legal basis for this is the law for establishing common files of the police and intelligence agencies of the federal and state governments. There the records of all police authorities and intelligence services from federal and state governments are merged.

The sharpest addition is the introduction of offences under § 89a, 89b and 91 of the Criminal Code on 8 August 2009²⁸. Accordingly, preparation of heavy seditious acts of violence, contact for the purpose of training to commit acts of violence and the spreading or acquisition of guidance for such an act are punishable. Another controversial measure is the change in the identity card law, which came into force on 30 June 2015. The new law makes it a crime to travel outside the country with the intent to receive terrorist training, adds a new section on terrorism financing to the Criminal Code, and creates national identity card and passport restrictions on foreign fighters. This legislation implements the “Foreign Terrorist Fighters” resolution of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Resolution 2178 (2014) (24 September 2014)).

PREVENTING DAESH EXTREMISM

De-radicalization is, on the one hand, an individual process in which a radicalized person gives up his or her commitment and dedication to extremist thinking and behaviour, in particular the advocacy of violence to achieve his or her goals. On the other hand, it describes specific measures aimed at encouraging and supporting persons or groups to free themselves from the extremist environment and extremist acts and to abandon (disengagement) the corresponding mindsets. The best form of de-radicalization is to win back young people’s desire for democracy. Tolerance and peaceful resolution of conflicts are core competencies of the modern society. It must be made clear to young people that these provide a satisfactory framework for self-expression and that their conflicts are not associated with any religion. It is not a contradiction to be a Muslim and a democrat. Thus, it is necessary to deconstruct the universal notions of role reversal and reconstruct the concept of citizenship along the fundamental rights guaranteed by the German Constitution. This does not happen through a directive of the political authorities; rather, civil society-oriented groups have to change the narratives of hate and to implement a political discourse on citizenship.

²⁸ Law from 30 July 2009, BGBl I, 2437 (Nr.49).



For the successful implementation of de-radicalization projects, networking competencies (police, youth welfare offices, Integration Ministry, etc.) are important prerequisites. This also applies to the integration of Muslim partners. The various stakeholders will therefore bring different experiences in the Islamic milieu and develop synergies, which, in times of scarce financial resources, are of particular importance. The starting point of radicalization is often youth identity problems, the search for belonging to a group and the search for the meaning of life. On the one hand, the German approach to countering salafi-jihadi activities prohibits representatives of the German state from working with Islamist groups. On the other hand, counter-radicalization programmes have been introduced in nearly all German states. A main constituent of all these projects is the dialogue with Muslims as part of trust-building initiatives. German authorities are sure that Muslims have to be a main factor and partner for de-radicalization. A second constituent is cooperation with educational and social projects to support vulnerable individuals. Therefore a nationwide hotline has been installed as a first-contact possibility for teachers, parents and affected young people.

DEALING WITH SYRIA RETURNEES—BETWEEN REPRESSION AND REINTEGRATION

About one third of the persons who have left the country for Syria have returned. For German authorities, the jihadists who return from the “Holy War” constitute, above all, a special threat because they bring with them experiences in combat missions, in the use of firearms, in bomb-building and in the recruitment of new members. Some of the returnees are traumatized and disillusioned. But, others are also radicalized and are returning with the assignment and the desire to bring terror to Germany. Their inhibition threshold for active violence could be much lower. In accordance to the present

laws, returnees from Syria must therefore expect that investigational proceedings will be commenced against them for suspicion of preparation for a serious act of violent subversion against the state. The returnees are viewed as an incalculable risk and hence the federal prosecutor's office desires to employ the resources of terrorist criminal law as effectively as possible in order to protect the population against possible attacks. In this context, resources were increased for the Federal Police, the Federal Criminal Police Office and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and 750 new positions were created.

Despite investigational proceedings, in the case of many returnees, it is frequently unknown whether they actually received military training. It is also very difficult to prove in accordance with the rule of law that they were involved in war crimes and to what extent. This is especially the case as the legal basis for a war crimes conviction is not absolutely certain. The courts are therefore dependent on the statements of those affected.

A different philosophy prevails in the city of Aarhus in Denmark. There, it is argued that jihadists who have fought in Syria or Iraq may be a danger after returning to their home countries if they are ostracized. A special programme was therefore introduced there to integrate the affected persons into society when it cannot be proven that they participated in terrorist campaigns and therefore cannot be convicted. Reintegration into society includes psychological and medical assistance and support with the search for a job and an apartment. In addition, returnees are given a mentor.

This approach in Denmark makes it clear that reintegration of these persons is essential in the context of a culture based on the rule of law. Even if it is possible to prove that these persons have violated the law, immediately after the conviction, questions arise as to whether it is possible to prevent these persons from radicalizing other inmates while in prison and whether the affected persons can be de-radicalized. It must always be kept in mind here that resocialization—in other words, reintegration of convicted persons into the social structure of the society—is one of the goals of imprisonment. Turning away from radicalism and extremist tendencies is a lengthy learning process and requires intensive social work. Despite the many cases and the increasing number of convictions, we have no comprehensive projects for resocialization in Germany.

Those who are not convicted for want of evidence after returning present a special challenge for the parties involved, both in terms of the security policy as well as in preventive work. For the police and the intelligence services, these returnees are to some extent clearly a burden that overextends their capacities. 24-hour surveillance consumes so much personnel and resources that it appears illusory. On the other hand, prevention work depends on the voluntary participation of the individuals. There is no legal leverage that compels them to participate in the measure. Prevention and de-radicalization work with these groups of individuals are time-consuming and protracted. There is currently a lack of projects and qualified personnel.

CONCLUSION

As the new face of Al-Qaeda and the largest radical Islamist movement, Daesh has become a major challenge for the German society. Within a few months, Daesh took control of a vast swath of territory. Based on its success, Daesh recruited more than 60,000 citizens from 100 countries, including more than 5,000 Europeans youths, for their terror activities. Countering this phenomenon means on the one hand stopping the military success of Daesh in Syria and Iraq. On the other hand we have to understand why young people, bought up in western societies, joined Daesh. A violence-legitimizing version of Salafism is the ideological frame of Daesh. As a type of radical political Islam, salafism has become a contagious youth movement in Germany as well as in many other countries. That rebellion against western values makes it clear that any counter-terrorism policy must be more than the elimination of potential terrorist actors. It is the prevention of future violence through social integration of young people within their societies. Finding them a positive role is the real challenge.

As Daesh is using Islam to radicalize young people and to recruit them, it is very important to engage religious actors and to identify problems and solutions, and to recognize the particular role that they can play in providing psycho-social support to those vulnerable to recruitment. A new peace-oriented reading of Islam is the biggest part of the solution.

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Prevention Strategies to Counter Daesh Extremism in the United Kingdom

Anthony Glees

It is a little over ten years since the London Bombings of 2005 when four young British Muslims killed 52 people and wounded more than 700. Since then, and right up to the time of writing, there have been numerous further Islamist- and Daesh-planned and directed plots and bloody attacks in Europe, alongside other attacks which appear to be Daesh-inspired but without specific direction from this terrorist regime that holds sway in parts of Iraq and Syria. No one can deny that the whole of Europe faces a grave threat posed by a relatively small but highly dangerous collection of jihadis.

In order to contain the growing threat of Daesh and Islamist-inspired terrorism it is plain that Western states need to both attempt to prevent young Muslims from turning to extremism in the first place as well as to find means of disrupting terror plots and bringing terrorists to justice, optimally before any acts of terror are executed. The means to be employed must always be lawful and must range from the prevention of radicalisation and training possibilities to *intelligence-led* collection and analysis of information about potential and actual jihadis.

A preliminary analysis of the current situation in Europe indicates not just differences in the approach taken by policy-makers in discrete states but the distinctive national circumstances confronting policy-makers. Nevertheless, the case made here is that the threat is a common one, facing all Western states, and that it follows that the best method of addressing it must also continue to be developed in common by all affected states, jointly exploiting best practice and best policy.

If such a common approach is to be successful individual nation states must be prepared to teach as well as learn from each other without reservation and to devote sufficient resources to preventing plots from being carried out, and preventing individuals from turning to extremism.

In order to construct an ever-stronger policy culture that can build on what has already been achieved, it will be necessary for Western governments, first, to continue to work from a full audit and rich analysis of the latest attacks, based on full information about them, with speed as well as with care. Second, more resources should be

* This paper was submitted on 9 August 2016.

provided to establish an increasingly powerful and credible intelligence-led response to Daesh terrorism, one which is appropriate to what appear to be different conditions in different states but transferring knowledge and practice ever more fully. This response should bring together a raft of preventive measures, ranging from counter-radicalisation to lawful suppression and repression of violent extremism. Third, intelligence and security cooperation between states under attack, both on the traditional bilateral basis that governs such cooperation and also on a more integrated EU level, must be rapidly strengthened and extended.

The starting point for considering how to prevent and counter jihadism is to understand that the Islamist extremists who wage it are *ideologically* driven. In this sense they are equivalent to earlier waves of revolutionaries and urban terrorists who coalesced around a particular ideology (Communism, Fascism and so on) which was grounded on the justification of extreme violence for political purposes and to which they sought to convert any fellow citizens considered ripe for recruitment.

Islamism is distinctive, however, in that it exploits a wrong and extreme interpretation of the *religion* of Islam in order to justify violence and murder, revolutionary political change and the establishment, as the only permitted form of government, of a caliphate or the rule of Islam. Of course this is, it is contended here, about *politics* and not about religion: Islam is used as a cover to hide the straightforward exercise of political power. It follows that policies and political strategies are required to combat it rather than religious arguments. Where individuals are radicalised by coming into contact with this ideology, they should be confronted with counter-radicalisation measures.

Prior to 2013-4, jihadist attacks in Europe were inspired and organised by Al-Qaeda, its various sub-groups, contractors and agents. Today such extremism is most fervently given concrete form by Daesh, in Iraq and Syria. This ideology, which too many young Muslims find alluring and motivates them to launch attacks, is in essence brainwashing. It was first imprinted on their minds by a number of “radical preachers”, better-termed extremist demagogues. Today it seems most are drawn to Islamism via the internet in one form or another although human agency may still play an important role.

Yet to become an actual terrorist, an individual needs both to acquire an “intention” to become one (via radicalisation and recruitment) and a “capability” to carry out an act of terror (via training). The subject, in other words, needs first to become an extremist and then either receive weapons and/or explosives training and, of course, gain access to weapons or be encouraged to use as weapons the ordinary tools of everyday life, a car, or a kitchen knife. The best means of training a terrorist is through personal instruction and in a space that allows for firing and explosions to be undertaken without fear of discovery by the counter-terrorist authorities.

Those recruited to the Islamist cause who wished to participate in Islamist terror attacks were, in an age of cheap jet travel, easily able to visit Pakistan and Afghanistan,

later other countries in the Horn of Africa and Arab North Africa, to gain the necessary training in handling explosives, building bombs and firing weapons without which effective terror was much more difficult (though by no means impossible as the beheading of Drummer Lee Rigby in London in 2013 made plain). At a time, before 2005, when the Islamist threat was ignored, such training could even take place in Britain's picturesque Lake District!¹

Western military intervention in Afghanistan in particular, together with much better monitoring by security agencies of those from Europe travelling to Iraq and Syria, made it much harder for would-be jihadis to take this road to terrorism. Subsequently, the virtual (web-based) road to terrorism gained traction, via the social media and the internet. But it was into this communication and exchange network that Daesh has been able to penetrate and assume leadership of the transnational jihadi culture. The countries of the West were confronted with a serious threat when in September 2014 Daesh, having consolidated its hold on a land mass the size of the UK in Iraq and Syria, issued an appeal to Muslims to come to Daesh to be trained to attack the West (and also settle in the polity). As we have learned to our cost, its vigorous encouragement of young European Muslims did not go unheeded.

The training opportunities that suddenly presented themselves in a region that could be reached by European Muslims with relative ease represented a major challenge to Western policy-makers and security communities. It is widely believed that some 20,000-27,000 young European Muslims have followed Daesh's call, perhaps 2,000 in 2015. Some 5,000 are believed to have returned to Europe, according to Rob Wainwright, the head of Europol. It is understood that the number of those travelling has reached a plateau: about 1,700 are estimated to have gone from France, 1,000 from Germany and 700-800 from the UK (of whom more than 400 are said to have returned). Per capita, Belgium has generated the most travellers to Daesh.²

At the same time, Daesh is increasingly using the internet as a powerful brainwashing tool as well as a means for supplying instructions to recruits who cannot travel to its territory. The Al-Qaeda online magazine called *Inspire* (which has featured lessons on bomb-making and the use of weaponry) also pushes Islamism as a way of life (the San Bernardino Islamist killers are known to have followed the instructions contained in this magazine and it has also featured in several UK terrorism trials).

However, there is more to Daesh's power over its supporters than the internet: on 4 August 2016 UK newspapers reported that credible intelligence derived from an alleged jihadist operative named Harry Sarfo, currently awaiting trial in Germany, pointed to the existence of a Daesh unit named "Emni" which it was claimed was directing attacks

¹ Lake District training of July 21 terrorists, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1566281/July-21-bombers-trained-at-Cumbria-camp.html>.

² <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/radicalisation-report-published-16-17/>.

on Western Europe from within Daesh. *The New York Times* was told that Daesh had “loads of people living in European countries and waiting for commands to attack the European people”.³ Sarfo also said that Abu Muhammad al-Adnani,⁴ alleged to be the head of Daesh intelligence, had established branches dealing with various countries and that Germany was proving a difficult target for Daesh because potential recruits “got scared, got cold feet, same as in England”. Sarfo’s information suggests that UK intelligence, in particular, keeps Daesh recruits at bay; that human as well as virtual connections remain an important part of Daesh operations; and that communicating with its supporters via the internet as well as in person makes perfect sense to Daesh.

In respect of measures to combat recruitment, lawful suppression is one important option for governments to consider, whether by limiting access to radicalising individuals or sweeping away Islamist websites and offering counter-propaganda on the web. However, whatever measures are employed, the one thing they must all have in common is that they be intelligence-led. It is only through the collection and analysis of intelligence that Western nations can stand a good chance of defeating Islamism propagated by Daesh, at any rate for as long as Daesh exists as a political and physical entity.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The threat posed to the West by Daesh jihadism has recently been set out in stark clarity in a report of the US’s House Homeland Security Committee. The report argues that the US must be regarded as Daesh’s “top target”. Since its emergence, Daesh has launched 101 plots against Western states, of which 41 (40 per cent) were directed at the US, twice as many as those directed at the second most important target, France.

However, the highest casualties (those killed and wounded) have been in Europe (480 in Paris in November 2015, 335 in Brussels on 9 April and 22 March 2016, and 286 in Nice on Bastille Day, 14 July 2016). In 2016 alone, to date, there have been 38 Daesh plots against European nations and in North America, at least 8 in July 2016, compared to 48 for the whole of 2015, and 19 in 2014. Since the beginning of January 2016 to July 2016, 875 people have been killed by Daesh, compared with 750 in 2015 and 2014 combined in Europe and United States. Almost half of these plots (47 per cent) are believed to have been physically directed by Daesh commanders, the other half (53 per cent) by those who were inspired by Daesh and its ideology but had, it would seem, not been trained or been working together with them.

For those living in northern Europe, the highly dangerous position in which the various states today find themselves is only too real. It is no exaggeration to say that

³ Sarfo Quote in *The Times*, 4 August 2016.

⁴ Abu Muhammad al-Adnani was killed on 30 August 2016 in an airstrike in Syria.

Islamist terrorism stalks them, striking, apparently at will, against those perceived as already weakened by earlier attacks, but also other lesser-known and smaller towns.

It is sometimes, and in a sense not unreasonably, pointed out that many more people in Northern Europe die in traffic accidents (in 2015, 25,000) than from terrorism (in 2015, 175). However, because the government of a democratic state is always responsible for providing security, any indication that it has ceased to be capable of doing so must cause political repercussions, even major ones. Indeed, it is not far-fetched to suppose that a fundamental interest of Daesh is not just to provoke conflict between the non-Muslim and Muslim citizens of Western states but by doing so cause a crisis of confidence in the ability of democratic governments to deliver security.

This is because the delivery of security is one of the very few core duties of governments and in a democracy it is the citizens of the state who are the targets of terror and they who have the duty of holding their national governments to account when judging the success or otherwise of their security activity. It is a mark of the political maturity of Western states that those who believe all Muslims are collectively responsible for jihadism have so far had little impact; instances of retaliation are thankfully very few and far between even if polls show an increasing amount of public frustration. Support for extreme views that equate Islamism with Islam does, however, seem to be increasing and is given voice by some Western political leaders. It will need to be observed with care.

In general, once a jihadist attack has taken place the public response has been to express solidarity with the victims. Whilst this can be striking and indeed moving, in hard security policy terms it does little to contain terrorism, still less to prevent them. The same can be said of the massive armed police and military interventions that have been ordered after an attack. They may reassure the public but that is about all they do.

Currently the focus of attention is on France, Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany. At the time of writing, France has seen seven serious Islamist/Daesh-inspired attacks since 7 January 2015; Germany has seen at least four attacks in recent weeks. Significantly, as will be argued here, the UK has seen a number of plots but none have been successful from the terrorists' point of view since the beheading of a British soldier in 2013.

The UK situation is at present volatile. The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre located in MI5 has determined the threat level as "severe", meaning an Islamist attack in the UK is highly likely. Following the Paris attacks of November 2015 the UK government funded a 15% increase in security and intelligence staffing, from 12,700 to 14,600. In March 2016 some 22,000 Daesh files were passed to the German intelligence service, the BND, and shared with MI5. They revealed, inter alia, the existence of an official Daesh "gatekeeper" for UK recruits, Ifthekar Jaman, from Portsmouth, one of the "Pompey Lads" who left the UK in October 2013 as early Daesh followers, and renamed themselves the "al-Britani Bangladeshi Bad Boys".

The UK security service, MI5, is thought to know the identities of virtually all of the 700-800 British citizens who have travelled to Daesh although it is plainly hard to say with certainty what identities each of them might use if they chose to return or indeed into which EU country they would try to gain entry.

Two sets of recent UK terrorism convictions should be regarded as significant, both for revealing the current strategies and targets of Daesh in the UK, and those it had recruited. In February 2016 Junaid Khan (25) and Shazib Khan (23) were convicted of plotting to murder US servicemen stationed in the UK at RAF Lakenheath and RAF Mildenhall. Their laptops contained instructions on how to make bombs downloaded from an Al-Qaeda online magazine. In March 2016 Tarik Hassane (22), a medical student, and Suhaib Majeed (21), a physics student from King's College, London, were convicted of planning to fire on police, soldiers and civilians at random in "drive-by" raids. These events demonstrated that Daesh was now seeking to exploit small groups, often of highly educated individuals, to attack the forces of law and order as well as ordinary citizens, doubtless in an attempt to intimidate the state. But they also showed, very importantly, that Britain's security community had the wherewithal to disrupt such plots, and put their perpetrators behind bars (incidentally increasing anxieties about the large number of Islamists now in UK prisons and their proselytising activities there). At the time of writing two apparent plots against service personnel at RAF Marham and Aldershot were not foiled by the authorities but proved unsuccessful.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND DE-RADICALISATION STRATEGIES

Rational counter-terrorism policy-making in respect of Daesh-inspired or directed jihadism needs to take many factors into account if it is to meet with success.

Any analysis of the threat facing northern Europe today and any attempt to formulate preventive measures must start by underlining the fact that it is not individual nation states as such that are in the cross-hairs of Islamists but the whole of the West. Not only does this emphasise the extent of the common danger but it highlights the fact that since jihadism is transnational in its ambitions, in addition to formulating their own specific responses, individual states must also use transnational tools in countering terrorism.

In respect of EU states (of which the UK is still a member) the Lisbon Treaty regulating the relationship between the Member States of the Union and the Union itself makes it very clear that the provision of national security is the sole prerogative of the individual nations within the Union. That said where working together has helped, or can help, national governments provide better security, both the political will and the institutional means exist to do so.

Furthermore, despite the existence of the European Union, each state has its own construct of laws, politico-cultural norms and security and intelligence communities. At the same time, the EU itself is developing significant intelligence-sharing capacities which will prove increasingly important in delivering security.

THE MEASURES EMPLOYED TO ADDRESS THIS THREAT

Counter-radicalisation: “fire prevention”

Counter-terrorism measures in the United Kingdom, known generically as “Contest” and developed in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, have combined policies designed to prevent the spread of violent extremism (known as “Prevent” measures) with intelligence-led activity to disrupt terrorists and bring them to justice known as “Pursue” measures. Its stated main purpose is to “stop terrorist attacks”, in other words, to disrupt, through intelligence-led activity, an imminent attack. It aims also “to increase covert detection and investigation capability and capacity; to improve the effectiveness of the UK prosecution process; to improve the capability to disrupt terrorist activities overseas; to enhance inter-agency coordination”⁵. “Prevent” policies are regularly updated by the government (in 2006, 2007, 2008 and most recently in 2015) and these updates may safely be assumed to have some impact although precisely how much is hard to say: radicalisation and Islamist-inspired terrorism persists to this day.

Over many years, MI5 has come to conceive of itself as a “fire-fighting” agency, not a “fire-prevention” service: where it receives intelligence of an imminent attack or a plot that threatens national security, it will mobilise all its resources to disrupt such an event and bring those planning it to justice. Where a jihadi or a jihadi group is or are primed by “commander” and MI5 gets knowledge of this, intervention will follow swiftly.

Although MI5 was successful in foiling attacks, it does not concern itself with the collection of intelligence about radicalisation but leaves this to the counter-terrorist police and the police force more generally.

Although the police do get involved in a counter-radicalisation procedure and prevent measures known as “Channel” (Prevent Measures), they do not always meet with success, as the large number of those going off to live, fight and be trained in Daesh over the past three years has demonstrated. The case of three school girls, two aged 15 and one aged 16 (and all under the age of legal consent), from one class in an East London school with which the police had already been involved, serves to underline the failures here.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-counter-terrorism/2010-to-2015-government-policy-counter-terrorism> (8 May 2015).

Furthermore, the government argues that preventing extremism should, increasingly, be a duty carried out by educators, within schools, colleges and universities, and by Muslim religious groups themselves.

The focus of the government policy “Prevent” rests on a variety of measures⁶, which include building “resilience” to Islamist extremism within Muslim communities, information and intelligence collection by police forces and, since May 2015⁷ a duty on educational institutions at secondary, further and higher education levels, to challenge extremist narratives amongst students, monitor outside speakers and ensure what is said in schools and on campus is consistent with the law. The involvement of the Muslim community also bears the danger of potential repercussions such as that the Muslims feel being put under general suspicion and become a closed community with even lesser access for outsiders. Thus, the programmes have to take these unintended effects into account and design the activities accordingly.

More recently, the new British Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, has announced a major review of “Contest”. She said, “[T]ogether with our allies around the world [a new formulation to take account of post-Brexit Britain’s self-perception] we must continue to act with urgency and joint resolve [after] the horrific attack in Nice and the attacks earlier this year in Belgium”. She pointed out that to date, 850 “radicalised individuals” had travelled to Daesh of whom 58 per cent had returned (some 15 per cent, 130, had been killed according to Rudd). In 2015, some 4,000 young Muslims had been referred to the preventative counter-radicalisation scheme “Channel”. She said the government would now push for further measures to promote de-radicalisation.⁸

There are significant differences between the kinds of people involved in Islamist activity, depending on their countries of origin, the kinds of political culture and the

⁶ The stated goal of the Prevent strategy is to “respond to the ideological challenge from terrorism and aspects of extremism and the threat we face from those who promote these views”. It is not concerned with imminent attacks (these fall under the Pursue strategy) but instead seeks to “provide practical help to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. The words “practical help” are important: they mean that resources will be used to pay for professional skills. As a result Prevent officials will work alongside “a wide range of sectors, including education, criminal justice, faith, charities, online and health where there are risks of radicalization” and the partners are local authorities, government departments and community organisations. The police also play a key role in the delivery of Prevent (something that can give rise to problems, as is discussed below). It is worth pointing out that the law makes it plain that Prevent covers all forms of terrorism, not just Islamism. The aim, then, is that different agencies will work together to “identify individuals at risk at an early stage” [of the process]; it assesses the nature and extent of the risk and develops “the most appropriate support plan” for those concerns. It relies on Sections 36-41 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to set out the various duties that fall on discrete partners. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-guidance>.

⁷ The most recent update of Contest took place in May 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-counter-terrorism/2010-to-2015-government-policy-counter-terrorism>.

⁸ Amber Rudd’s major update of Contest on 18 July 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretarys-oral-statement-on-nice-attack>.

violence they experienced in them. A significant number of UK-born or raised jihadists have been well-educated (and therefore have reasonable life chances), with perhaps more than 55 per cent having a higher or further education background, whereas in France or Belgium, jihadis seem mostly undereducated and from areas of high unemployment and social deprivation.

Attempts to de-radicalise Muslims must take into account their different milieus and their different levels of educational attainment. It is plainly the belief of the UK government, for example, that given the large number of educated jihadists, sites of education are not merely places where potential jihadists may be found, indeed where academic “freedom” may be exploited to radicalise young, clever Muslims, but could also be locations at which counter-radicalisation could be undertaken via education and teaching. The 2015 update of “Prevent” has specific provisions to address problems in higher and further education. Of particular note was Section 26 which, with effect from September 2015 placed a “duty” on “specified authorities” to have “due regard to the need to prevent young people from being drawn into terrorism”. Discussion of the May 2015 update of Contest and of Prevent in particular has focused on a number of significant issues. They are explored in the Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee report⁹.

In places where early preventive intervention using education produce fewer results—like in France and Belgium given the educational background of extremists—it will prove necessary to monitor the communications of educated young Muslims and under-educated Muslims alike. In addition, systematic intelligence gathering on Muslim communities in the big conurbations and suburbs could alert the authorities to any radicalisation underway or to communications between students and Daesh or with Daesh websites, bringing with it the possibility of intervention.

There are, however, good grounds for believing that the security service should devote more resources to combating radicalisation. The 1989 Security Service Act in fact placed upon MI5 the duty of “protecting national security...from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political...or violent means.”¹⁰ If MI5 were to exercise this role fully, it would require a large increase in its budget and in those it employs.

It can also be argued that MI5 needs to be open to new fields of terrorism, not simply the traditional ones. Muslim-on-Muslim violence is endemic in countries from which Britain has derived a large immigrant population and, given modern communications and ease of travel, deadly feuds within Muslim communities in, say, Pakistan can only too easily be transferred onto Muslim communities in the UK. The recent slaying of an Ahmadi Muslim in Glasgow by a Deobandi fanatic alerts us to this danger, one

⁹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/radicalisation-report-published-16-17/>.

¹⁰ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/5/contents>.

that is to date ignored by MI5 (its definition of terrorism does not include Muslim-on-Muslim violence).

Lastly, the modus operandi of the attackers has evolved and requires new observations. We should be mindful of the fact that whether or not a direct instruction from Daesh (in this case in May 2016 mediated by Abu Mohammed al-Adnani), to individual terrorists in Europe, including Austria,¹¹ has been delivered, Daesh leaders have for some time delivered general instructions to their followers to kill Westerners with “knives, cars, bombs, poison” and so on, just as Osama Bin Laden’s *fatwas* provided non-specific orders to all Muslims to kill Westerners. However, it seems likely that the *fatwas* were acted on after human intervention in the form of radicalisation and then direction, something we should not lose sight of today.

Developing Intelligence-led “Fire-fighting” to Counter Radicalisation and Disrupt Daesh-Inspired and Directed Plots

Background briefings from EU security officials indicate that Daesh-inspired or directed networks are now well established in both France and Belgium (as Sarfo’s testimony discussed above indicated), offering both clear direction to fighters and even possibilities for the acquisition of weapons, ammunition and training. To date there is no evidence of this in Germany; and in the UK extensive intelligence-security activity appears to have disrupted networks that existed in the past.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of intelligence-sharing institutions within the EU whilst at the same time believing that they must quickly develop additional capacity and skills in order to present an ever-strong security “shield” for all European states. Although national security is a matter for individual nation states, countries should cooperate closely. The EU should clearly facilitate such cooperation through institutional arrangements.

Even though national intelligence and security agencies are, on the whole, highly resistant to the idea of sharing operational intelligence and even more opposed to sharing sources, the sharing of strategic intelligence-based assessments is now widely seen by agencies as being of mutual benefit. This is now even the case for UK agencies which are anxious about sharing for a variety of reasons, ranging from the “special relationship” with the US to the UK’s self-perception as a global power.

Strategic assessments are currently shared within INTCEN in Brussels, which has a staff of 100 officers in four divisions recruited from all EU states. The analysis division adopts an “all sources” approach, exploiting both secret intelligence-driven analysis from Member States and its own open source work (it also receives information from the EU Satellite Centre). Its Situation Room monitors events on a 24/7 basis.

¹¹ “The man who witnessed the birth of Islamic State”, <http://www.theworldweekly.com/reader/view/magazine/2016-08-16/the-man-who-witnessed-the-birth-of-islamic-state/8870>.

INTCEN expects all its members to be EU citizens, something that begs the question about the UK's future in this body. All that can be said currently is that the importance of security must outweigh anti-EU sentiment in the UK and anti-UK sentiment in the EU both because the threat is a common one but also because the UK's intelligence and security assets are fundamental to security everywhere in Europe. Britain's agencies are not merely some of the best in the world but they are sustained by laws which allow them to go well beyond what is permitted in other EU nations. This means that British intelligence can provide, legally, capabilities denied to its allies and partners.

With effect from the summer of 2016, EU states have also established the "Counter-Terrorist Group", composed of domestic intelligence-led security agencies' personnel from all 28 EU states but including Norway and Switzerland (who are not part of INTCEN). It aims at the rapid exchange of information, particularly in respect of so-called "lone wolves", including the sharing of bank details and other private activity which could alert the authorities to a terror attack.

In this context, it is necessary to consider briefly the "lone wolf" phenomenon and how, or if, preventive and disruptive intelligence-led measures can be taken against them, given that individuals are harder targets than larger networks

"Lone Wolves"

One objection that is often raised when more extensive and intrusive intelligence-led security measures are advocated is that many terrorists are "lone wolves". The implication is that such people are not locked into larger networks or receiving instructions and orders from Daesh or some other authority and, as a consequence, are much harder if not impossible to detect (and perhaps impossible to distinguish from deranged psychopaths who simply want to kill people¹²).

But before moving to exonerate security agencies and governments from any responsibility for gaining warnings about alleged loner attacks, it is important to be sure that the perpetrators were truly acting alone. Where the perpetrators are genuine loners, acting alone without a network of supporters and trainers, and not carrying out an explicit order, operational intelligence about their intentions may be hard if not virtually impossible to gain and thus, disrupt their plans. Even if the psychotic loner is receiving medical help and may have mentioned an urge to kill, there may be no opportunity to predict that they are about to kill unless the medical profession can be relied on to communicate the risk to the security authorities.

However, it is clear that a number of those who were initially said to be lone wolves were actually not lone actors at all. If someone's networks or links to Daesh may not be known about prior to their attack, it does not follow that these networks or links do not

¹² Several European countries argue in specific cases that individual attackers were not real terrorists, but rather mentally ill people who had no proven links to Islamist extremism.

exist. An absence of evidence, as Carl Sagan wrote many years ago, is not evidence of absence.

The Nice killer, for example, was initially described as a lone wolf, only for the French authorities to concede after further investigation that he had been planning the Bastille Day attack for a year and had apparently been supported by a ring of others. The planning here will have implied the purchase of a gun, ammunition and the hiring of a suitable vehicle, all things requiring the killer to communicate his intentions in part with others. In theory, these communications made him vulnerable and potentially detectable by alert intelligence and security agencies. Indeed, without human sources of intelligence about jihadists, agencies have no option but to rely on their ability to intercept and analyse communications that might point to possible jihadist attacks.

Relevant communications are not simply those between the jihadist and his or her support group but between the jihadists and Daesh. Whilst there is a difference between Daesh reaching out to individuals, in order to brainwash and recruit them, and individuals who reach out to Daesh for a belief system they find attractive (and perhaps to justify a psychopathic urge to kill) the potential threat is in both cases the same and in both cases it is the finding of evidence of communications that is absolutely vital, for they provide the opportunities to identify and disrupt any operations that may be planned.

Psychological Issues

An important question is how much attention should be paid to the psychology of loners because there are far more of these in society than there are Islamists. A recent report on the “Behavioural Science Unit” at MI5 (7 August 2016) established that 60 per cent of those referred to as “lone wolves” unwittingly provided clues that they were intending to strike (an example was that of Roshanara Choudhry, who attempted to assassinate a Labour MP and had closed her bank accounts and repaid loans for which her parents would have been liable). MI5’s psychologists however cast doubt on the extent to which terrorists may suffer from mental disorders: one is reported as saying that only 2 per cent of them are ill in this way compared to some 30 per cent in the general population. Above all, the Unit seeks to focus on risk: to assess the risk factors which can relate to extremist views, violence, travel to conflict zones and imprisonment and then work out the extent to which intervention is required.

There have also been claims that the existence of lone wolves means we are safer today than we were previously (a thesis advanced by Dr Raffaello Pantucci of RUSI in 2014). His argument was that whilst terrorist groups might continue to want to attack the West, sole attackers “find it increasingly hard to do so”. In this way, “the security services have managed to reduce the threat down to lone wolf terrorists or deranged individuals”; thus his belief that “things are not necessarily as bad as they seem” (“Stand

Firm, the lone-wolf strike is a sign of reduced terror”, *The Sunday Times*, 28 December 2014).

In reality, this theory has little to commend it. The security communities of France and Germany are considerably less effective than that of the UK; yet there are more lone wolf attacks in both than in the UK. Indeed it is perfectly plausible to suppose that whilst a true loner will be detected only with luck or intrusive collection, this is equally true when it comes to detecting networks, whether large or small, and since the UK employs intrusive intelligence gathering to a greater extent than either France or Germany, the existence of lone attackers has nothing to do with the extent of intrusive intelligence gathering. There is no evidence that strong intelligence activity drives jihadists into acting as lone wolves rather than working together in networks. Loners and networks strike with more success (in the eyes of the jihadists) in France than in the UK and we must assume this is in part because they are less likely to be disrupted and because there are more of them. In Germany, on the other hand, it seems to have been harder for Daesh to build up networks, making attacks by loners the easier option. Whether terrorists act together or singly it is likely to be not only a matter of individual terrorists’ choice but also the extent to which terrorist networks exist and can be joined with relative ease.

THE INTERCEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS AS A VITAL SOURCE OF INTELLIGENCE

Without doubt the most important source of intelligence about Daesh’s and Islamist aims and ambitions is to be found in electronic communications, whether via mobile phones, laptop computers in the form of emails, web searches and the use of the “dark web” or voice over internet protocols, such as Skype. Human sources of information are, of course, of great importance but the future of intelligence surely lies with intercepted communications (where intelligence means “secret information, secretly acquired and secretly exploited”, the British definition of intelligence, rather than the broader description of intelligence as “information”). Clearly a secret email or text message from one Daesh supporter to another is different from the classical definition of a state secret to which an intelligence agency is seeking access. But in hard security terms it is not only of equal significance but probably of greater import.

An important new development is the establishment by the UK government of a counter-Daesh propaganda platform, called “UK Against Daesh”¹³. The UK leads a coalition of 66 partner states to deliver a constant stream of factual information about Daesh, what it does and what is being done to combat it in order to disrupt, openly, Daesh and Daesh-inspired propaganda mediated via the social media.

¹³ Full details may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/daesh>.

The British government's proposed new law on the regulation of investigatory powers, currently going through parliament (though in effect concealed from much public interest by the acrimonious debate on the UK's membership of the European Union), will give the UK's intelligence community and especially Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and MI5 massively intrusive powers in respect of the interception of communications. These powers must be exercised lawfully and only against the backdrop of the UK's adherence to European and international norms when it comes to human rights, not least of privacy.

These powers should be used not just to intercept and disrupt jihadi recruitment processes and plots but also monitor the use of computers and smartphones to detect searches for particular sites (for example, beheading videos released by Daesh or downloads of the Al-Qaeda journal, *Inspire*). Given that a significant number of jihadis are aged between 18 and 28, and that students in further and higher education form a significant proportion of these individuals, institutions of higher and further education should attract much greater interest on the part of intelligence agencies.

Furthermore, if Muslim communities in the UK (and the EU) become more vulnerable to the increasingly violent extremist ideologies, promoting Muslim-on-Muslim attacks, it must be assumed that this kind of terrorist activity will also spread to the UK in particular given its high proportion of Muslims. Currently Whitehall sources indicate that Britain's security community does not regard such attacks as terrorism and does nothing to monitor what may be going on within the various Islamic sects in the UK. This is lamentable: both human and electronic sources should be exploited in order to contain and roll back the spread of Islamist intra-Muslim violence.

CONCLUSION: DEVELOPING THE WEST'S ELECTRONIC EYES AND EARS

Western states should not be defeatist about the current, serious threat posed by Daesh and Islamism. The way to confront them is first and foremost to develop and improve the delivery of intelligence-led security, particularly to increase the number of intelligence-led officers and police to know, in respect to Muslim extremism and potential sympathisers, who is doing what in Europe.

It will be key to develop ever-more sensitive electronic "eyes" and "ears" and to use the intelligence derived from this to screen suspect individuals. Where there is strong evidence of sympathy with Daesh then, if necessary, the individual should be tracked/tagged electronically. If the situation were to deteriorate further, it would be necessary to intern individuals, either electronically or physically. Security policy is not a "switch", it is a "dial", and when times demand it, the dial has to be turned up; when they improve, the dial can be turned down again.

In short, this chapter makes the case for greater intelligence-led intervention in the “Prevent” suite of policies, outlined here as further exploitation of human as well as electronic sources of intelligence. The conclusion that is reached here is that despite some public misgivings, this proposed future course would be wholly compatible with current demands for accountability on the part of secret agencies and for as much “translucency” and “transparency” that secret activities allow. At the same time, the *sine qua non* is that the UK retains its commitment to a sixteen-year tradition of Human Rights legislation and the protections that it offers, both to citizens and to those undertaking the interception, analysis and dissemination of the intelligence that is to be acted upon.

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Turkey's Struggle Against the Foreign Terrorist Fighters of Daesh¹

Haldun Yalçınkaya

Terrorist groups, especially those with Salafist jihadist motivations, have expanded their presence and influence in Syria and Iraq in recent years, due to the on-going civil war in Syria since 2011, and the developments in Iraq since 2003. The threat posed by these groups, particularly the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS/Daesh) and the al-Nusra Front (ANF), has become a concern for the security and stability of not only the countries of the region but also different parts of the world where the violence spread by these groups has triggered radicalization and violent extremism.

Turkey, as a neighbour to the conflict zone, has been facing an increased risk and threat to its security at many levels. The risk is essentially caused not only by the geographical proximity to the conflict zone but also by its border neighbours, which include such non-state actors as Daesh, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), and various opponents to the Syrian regime, as well as the Assad regime itself. Although there are many other concerns for Turkey caused by Daesh, this article focuses only on the Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) of Daesh and their effects against Turkey. It also needs to be highlighted that there are other non-state actors whose foreign terrorist fighters create security problems for Turkey, but they are not the focus of this article.

Foreign Terrorist Fighters, in general, were described as illegal by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178, on 24 September 2014. Prior to this, foreign fighters were not assumed to pose a threat to civilization; rather they were seen simply as volunteers who were ready to sacrifice their lives. However, the foreign fighters wave

* This paper was submitted on 15 August 2016.

¹ This article was published previously and the editor has given permission to publish it in this book: Haldun Yalçınkaya, "Turkey's Struggle Against the Foreign Terrorist Fighters of DAESH," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 21, No. 1, Spring 2016. In addition, the article was extracted and updated from the author's two policy briefs and an analysis report at ORSAM (Center for Middle East Strategic Studies), which were published in 2015 and 2016. "International Cooperation against Foreign Terrorist Fighters: The Experience of Turkey", *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs* No. 22, February 2015. "Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Turkey: An Assessment at the First Year of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178", *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs* No. 31, October 2015. "Analysing the ISIS Attacks in Turkey and Turkey's Struggle", *ORSAM Foreign Policy Analysis*, 22 March 2016.

in the first decade of the 21st century with the emergence of Al-Qaeda raised concerns about such individuals. Subsequently, as Daesh emerged, the UN Security Council duly responded to their actions with Resolution 2178, describing them as illegal. The main problem concerning foreign terrorist fighters is their role in spreading violence outside of conflict zones, all around the world.

In this perspective, this study initially explains the evolution of foreign fighters, especially the most recent generation associated with Daesh. This will lead to the articulation of theoretical explanations of foreign terrorist fighters, established with the Al-Qaeda experience of the last decade. Later, the article argues for international efforts to tackle the phenomenon in general. Within this framework, the theoretical approach will be applied to Turkey to describe the threat potential against the country specifically. Subsequently, a data set encompassing the Daesh terror attacks against Turkey between March 2014 and March 2016 will be used to analyse the effects of foreign terrorist fighters on Turkey. Consequently, Turkey's strategy against foreign terrorist fighters will be discussed. In the conclusion, the article argues that foreign terrorist fighters have a contagious effect for violence spreading to the rest of the world and the case in Turkey is an indicator.

EMERGENCE OF THE FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS PHENOMENON WITH DAESH

Foreign fighters have been seen on battlefields since the emergence of nation states in the 19th century. Until the 21st century, history witnessed devoted foreign fighters on battlefields such as in Greece, the United States, Spain, Palestine, Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Al-Qaeda began recruiting foreign fighters for terrorism, thus leading to these foreign fighters being seen as terrorists instead of volunteers ready to sacrifice their lives to save what they saw as the weak side in a war. This was the start of a second generation in the evolution of foreign fighters. At this point the international community still did not establish a judicial regulation against them due to the fact that their number was relatively low. With the emergence of Daesh in Syria and Iraq, however, the United Nations added the title "terrorists" and declared them illegal. This allows us to now talk about the third generation of foreign fighters.

On 24 September 2014, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2178² and defined foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) as:

individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in,

² The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178, paragraph 8, http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf (accessed 20 April 2016).

terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.

With Resolution 2178, the UN Security Council urges member states to take necessary measures to prevent the actions of such FTFs. The reason for defining any individual as an FTF because of their travels to conflict zones or because they are found to have intentions of terrorism, is a result and reflection of the level of security threat being faced. Admittedly, that approach encompasses a high potential to raise discussions among judicial scholars; however, this issue is not within the scope of this study. Because of the difficulties involved in any de-radicalization process for such fighters, and their contagious effect in spreading violence throughout the world, third-generation FTFs have started to be taken as a serious threat to the civilised world and thus received a reaction at the highest level, resulting in being defined as illegal.

Since the FTF phenomenon is still being conceptualized, there are different attempts to create models for understanding the FTFs' pathways. In this context, a model developed by the International Centre for Counter Terrorism in The Hague provides a useful framework to understand this phenomenon. According to this model,³ an FTF will eventually: either, first, be killed in the conflict zone, or, second, stay in the conflict zone permanently, or, third, leave the conflict zone. The potential threat of FTFs to the rest of the world begins, ironically, if they want to leave the conflict zone. Essentially, they might either return to their home or travel to a third country. In the first option, they can be either integrated into the society peacefully, or may decide to join other conflicts. Or else, in a very detrimental scenario to the world, these returnee FTFs might engage in terrorist activity in their home country. The last option for the returnee FTFs tops the threat list for the rest of the world.

As stated, before UN Security Council Resolution 2178, scholars preferred the term “foreign fighters” instead of “foreign terrorist fighters.” There are a number of studies on Al-Qaeda's foreign fighters covering the first decade of the 21st century within this perspective.⁴ Regarding the motivation of Al-Qaeda, namely a Salafist jihadist interpretation of Islam, these studies established the theoretical approach for foreign fighters. Regarding the continuation of the Salafist jihadist movement from Al-Qaeda to Daesh, or alternatively from foreign fighters to foreign terrorist fighters, the theory has the capacity to explain the current wave. Having stated that, the main concern for foreign fighters is the “blowback effect.” The blowback effect states that foreign fighters have

³ Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdwijn and Edwin Bakker, *Returning Western Foreign Fighters: The Case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Somalia*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism Background Note, The Hague, June, 2014, p. 10.

⁴ The broadest research on it was conducted as the Harmony Project. Brian Fishman et al., *Bombers, Bank Accounts, & Bleedout: Al-Qa'da's Road in and out of Iraq*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, New York, 2008.

the potential to spread the violence to different geographies.⁵ In essence, the blowback effect portrays the threat capacity of foreign fighters when they return from conflict zones. The theoretical approach also shows us that *one out of nine* foreign fighters will engage in further terrorist activity after they return.⁶ As for Daesh's foreign terrorist fighters, I argue that this proportion may no longer be valid because of their evolution. This proportion also fails to show the level of their contagious capacity for violence to the rest of the world. At this stage, the theoretical approach follows previous studies which have found out that the battlefield experience of returnees makes their lethal capacity twice as much as before they went to the conflict zone.⁷

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH THE FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS PHENOMENON

Essentially, there are three institutional fora for international efforts against foreign terrorist fighters and, by implication, against Daesh: the Anti-ISIL Coalition, the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF), and the United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee (UN CTC). The Anti-ISIL Coalition takes hard power measures against Daesh; the GCTF creates a platform to decide on principles against the threat, as well as pave the way for international cooperation; and the UN CTC aims to establish internationally harmonized national regulations. It needs to be noted that the conceptualization process of the FTF phenomenon is an on-going process, and the international community has been seeking to understand the phenomenon in order to tackle it. Therefore, the efforts of the GCTF and the UN CTC encompass some theoretical attempts, such as defining and regulating international travel standards, etc.

Admittedly, Daesh has the initiative and it can easily abuse the liberal international system, especially travel regulations. In other words, the international efforts are only responsive to the actions of terrorist organisations, and these organisations have the upper hand in setting the terms of the debate. The effectiveness of the international efforts is another question, and so far they have not proven capable of meeting this challenge.

Currently, we have some reports published by the United Nations,⁸ in addition to some academic assessments of the subject. In addition, real-time media releases, including social media sources, give us some hints on how to conceptualize this phenomenon.

⁵ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004.

⁶ Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting", *American Political Science Review* Vol. 107, No. 1, February 2013, pp.10, 13.

⁷ Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting", *American Political Science Review* Vol. 107, No. 1, February 2013, pp. 10, 13.

⁸ For all UN CTC reports on FTFs: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/resources/>.

As mentioned above, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2178, which defined foreign fighters, under specific circumstances, as terrorists, and provided a road map for its members to deal with the phenomenon. Essentially, UN Security Council Resolution 2178 is the cornerstone to deal with the problem, and has created a capacity for enabling the international cooperation to become more effective. Before the Resolution, neither international cooperation nor national mechanisms had a reference point for dealing with the problem. Resolution 2178 has since then paved the way for a global response to the FTFs challenge. Previously, even the lack of a definition for FTFs was itself an obstacle for efforts to address this problem. We now have a tangible criteria and a roadmap at the national and international levels for tackling FTFs, which used to be a huge gap for international coordination, cooperation, or even collaboration.

On 14 May 2015, the UN Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate released a report entitled “Implementation of Security Council 2178 (2014) by States affected by foreign terrorist fighters”.⁹ The report underlines that foreign terrorist fighters are a growing threat against (i) their states of origin; (ii) the states they transit; (iii) the states where they are active; and (iv) those states’ neighbouring zones. In particular, in the long term, FTFs pose a risk for their home countries or third countries where they decide to reside as they become returnees, named as “alumni” in the report. The UN CTC identifies 67 most-affected member states and mentions the presence of up to 30,000 FTFs in the region.¹⁰ Previously there were reports that relied on limited sources, such as interviews, social network analyses, estimations or gatherings through media. This UN report is the first report that relies on extensive data based on the accumulation of member states’ official approvals. At this point, it needs to be noted that previous analyses and the UN CTC report are in accordance with each other and the international community is on the right path to conceptualize this phenomenon. Essentially, the UN CTC report identifies five urgent measures that need to be taken by member states: (i) preventing inter-state travel of FTFs; (ii) law enforcement; (iii) countering incitement to terrorism, including through the Internet; (iv) criminalization; and (v) financing of foreign terrorist fighters. These five points pass on “what needs to be done” instructions to the international community to prevent FTFs and their travels.

In a nutshell, the UN CTC states that the world has been caught unprepared to prevent FTF travels. Although there have been some improvements, there is still a need for effective international cooperation to overcome this problem. Essentially, globalization has been encouraging individuals to travel around the world. The global system, which reflects this understanding, lacks effective instruments to prevent mobility of individuals. Hence, the principle of freedom for travelling allows the FTFs to

⁹ For the full text of the report: http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/N1514129_EN.pdf.

¹⁰ “Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) by States Affected by Foreign Terrorist Fighters”, *the United Nations Security Council Report S/2015/338*, 14 May 2015, http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/N1514129_EN.pdf (accessed 20 April 2016).

benefit from considerable mobility around the world. As for the other above-mentioned measures, namely law enforcement, countering incitement to terrorism including through the Internet, criminalization, and financing of the FTFs, there are only clues for improvement because of the fact that there have not yet been significant official public statements on them. According to the clues, law enforcement is still ineffective although most countries have criminalized FTFs' activities. The countering measures on the Internet and financing of terrorism are two popular subjects that are being discussed in public. In 2016, the main perception is that the flow of FTFs has decreased to some extent.¹¹

TURKEY'S CHALLENGES WITH FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

As for the application of the abovementioned model to Turkey, the threats are three times as severe as those faced by the rest of the world. Turkey, theoretically, perceives exactly the same threat as do her Western allies, in the sense that a Turkish FTF who decides to come back to her/his home might, like any other FTF returnee, engage in a terrorist activity within the country. In addition to that, Turkey's threat perception encompasses two additional dimensions. Turkey's concerns begin when any foreign terrorist fighter decides to leave the conflict zone, as he/she will likely use Turkey on the way back to her/his home, thus creating the first threat to Turkey. For instance, in March 2014, three Turkish citizens, including one police officer and one military personnel, were killed during the return of some foreign terrorist fighters.¹² As this event underscores, even a transiting FTF can create an additional threat for Turkey. As for the third dimension, a foreign terrorist fighter who decides to leave the conflict zone might prefer to reside in Turkey as a third country due to the fact that Turkey is a Muslim-majority country where she/he can blend relatively easily into local society, as well as among Syrian refugees residing in Turkey, the numbers of which reach millions. Alternatively, returnees might be stuck in Turkey due to policies aimed at revoking their passports or cancelling their citizenships by their home countries. This particular model shows us therefore that threats against Turkey have two additional dimensions compared to those of its western allies.

Turkey is a Western state which is located at the very edge of the current conflict in the Middle East. Undoubtedly, this reality creates not only threats against Turkey in itself, but also raises its vulnerability as a transit country for FTF mobility. In fact, FTF travel through Turkey to Syria has been triggered by Turkey's liberal visa regime and

¹¹ A report revealed by the White House on 4 February 2016 claimed that Daesh had as many as 25,000 fighters in Syria and Iraq, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-fighters-idUSKCN0VD2ZO> (accessed 20 April 2016).

¹² Haldun Yalçınkaya, "Analysing the ISIS Attacks in Turkey and Turkey's Struggle", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 22 March 2016, <http://orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4577?c=orsam|english> (accessed 4 August 2016).

the porous Turkish land border with Syria. Turkey receives more than 35 million tourists annually from all around the world through its land borders, ports and especially airport gates. Its attempts to have a more liberal visa regime are not only aimed at supporting its tourism industry but also to facilitate its economic and trade interests, which are very legitimate necessities in a globalized economy. In the meantime, Turkey's long—more than 900km—border with Syria has historically been a problematic issue for Turkey. The border, cutting across from rural and urban areas, dividing towns, families, and tribes, has long been a matter of concern in terms of terrorist infiltrations from Syria, particularly by the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistanê). Furthermore, the border area has been known to be an arena for smuggling networks that are connected on both sides of the border. Last but not least, it is a well-established fact that securing borders requires constant sustained effort and can never be guaranteed.

Turkey is an active member of the international coalition against Daesh in Syria and Iraq. Institutionally, both at the national and international levels, Turkey has been fulfilling its responsibilities to fight against violent extremism and terrorism. Turkey's experience in fighting against the PKK terrorist organisation for more than 30 years makes it an active contributor to the efforts against terrorism around the world, as shown by Turkey's role in Afghanistan soon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In fact, one can argue that Turkish citizens' participation in the militant Salafi movements, especially Al-Qaeda, has been very limited¹³, considering that 98 per cent of Turkish society is comprised of Muslims. Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) has been an important mechanism in preventing extremism in the country. Nevertheless, as stated in the Soufan Group report with reference to Turkish authorities, 2,100 FTFs have joined terrorist organisations in Syria and Iraq, counting those who are alive, dead or returnees.¹⁴ This number represents an enormous increase of Turkish FTFs compared with the number which participated in previous violent extremist movements motivated by religious reasons. In other words, the current foreign terrorist fighters wave has changed the tendency in Turkey, thus creating a high-risk threat to the country. The atrocities in Syria have reflections in Turkey and the hostilities between groups in Syria feed terrorist activities in Turkey in the shape of a two-front terrorism threat. It could be argued that the two terrorist fronts in Turkey, namely the PKK and Daesh, have reflections from the conflict between the PYD and Daesh in Syria. Thus, one could

¹³ Clinton Watts, "Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan: what Foreign Fighter Data reveals about the Future of Terrorism", *Small Wars Journal*, 17 April 2008, pp. 2-4.

¹⁴ The last estimate on Daesh foreign terrorist fighters recruitment states that the number reached to between 27,000 and 31,000. The number by region is as follows: Western Europe: 5,000. Former Soviet Republics: 4,700. North America: 280. The Balkans: 875. The Maghreb: 8,000. The Middle East: 8,240. Southeast Asia: 900. Richard Barrett et al., *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, The Soufan Group, December 2015, p. 5, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf (accessed 20 April 2016).

argue that the Salafist jihadist recruitment in Turkey has increased due to the atrocities against the PKK in Turkey.

Turkey's other dilemma started after the Daesh threat to the Syrian and Iraqi people became more visible. Becoming involved in a military operation, in other words opening a ground front against Daesh, was out of the question because of the difficulty of performing military and humanitarian operations simultaneously. The almost three million refugees within Turkey increased the country's vulnerabilities for several reasons, not only because of the potential infiltration of terrorist organisations. According to official statements, Turkey has spent over USD10 billion on refugee operations.¹⁵ In every sense, the scale of the relief operation for refugees is no less than a military one. In essence, with its humanitarian operation, Turkey focused on saving three million people fleeing from the Assad regime, Daesh, and other non-state actors. The alternative would have been fighting against the Assad regime and Daesh. However, this option was out of the question when public opinion in Turkey was taken into account, in particular, Turkish society's sensitivity toward military casualties. The loss of almost 30,000 people over 30 years due to PKK terrorism still shapes public perceptions. It is safe to assume that the public would not tolerate more deaths caused by terrorism, including by Daesh terrorism. Additionally, the Turkish public would not support ground operations against Daesh considering the on-going PKK terrorist attacks within the country. In contrast, the Turkish public, interestingly, has not reacted openly against the USD10 billion bill spent on Syrian refugees, or in other words, on the humanitarian operation.

DAESH TERROR ATTACKS AGAINST TURKEY AND THE ROLE OF FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

So far, the conceptual framework and the status of Turkey against the FTFs have been explained. Now it is also necessary to analyze the terrorist attacks executed in Turkey that are connected to Daesh. These terrorist attacks, conducted between March 2014 and March 2016, killed a total of 163 and left more than 766 people wounded in Turkey. Just looking at these terrorist attacks and casualties would be insufficient, however, to assess the true Daesh threat against Turkey. To get a complete picture, it is necessary to analyze the wave of attacks in order to understand Daesh's stance in general, and the effects of the FTFs specifically toward Turkey. During the above-mentioned period, one of the attacks was an armed clash at a road checkpoint, five were cross-border assaults, and six were suicide bombings.

¹⁵ "World Needs New Ways to end Human Suffering: Turkish FM", Anadolu Agency, 21 May 2016, <http://aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/world-needs-new-ways-to-end-human-suffering-turkish-fm-/576189> (accessed 23 May 2016).

In this regard, one can observe four different categories for Daesh attacks against Turkey. First is the threat caused by the FTFs passing through Turkey as transit terrorist fighters. Second are the suicide bombings against selected targets in Turkish territory. Third are the rocket attacks on Turkish soil as a response to Turkey's artillery fire conducted as part of the anti-Daesh coalition's attacks against Daesh in Syria. The fourth category involves the attacks against Bashiqa Camp, where the Turkish military trains local forces against Daesh in Iraq. Undoubtedly, Turkey's relocation of the Suleiman Shah Tomb to an area nearer to the border has prevented a similar confrontation in Syrian territory. The last two categories, the attacks along the border, which were mainly against the border town of Kilis, and those in Iraq, which have been immediately responded to by the Turkish side, are outside the scope of this analysis.

A closer look at the attacks in the first and second categories suggests that the suicide bombings, which killed 156 people and injured 755, are the bloodiest of the various attack types. FTFs were the perpetrators of suicide bombings and the transit passing attacks. The threat posed by FTFs particularly stand out in Daesh's terrorist attacks against Turkey. According to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178, everyone recruited by terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq is considered as an FTF. In other words, all individuals recruited either from Turkey or from third countries are similarly considered as FTFs. The definition matters because of the combat experience of the FTFs and the level of threat they pose, which gets amplified upon their return as compared to the level they posed when they first departed from their home countries. In sum, Daesh terrorist fighters, whether from Turkey or not, pose a serious threat against Turkey when they return.

Three of the Daesh FTFs' suicide bombings took place in Sultanahmet and Taksim, while the other three attacks were carried out in Diyarbakır, Suruç and Ankara. A close assessment of the attacks and their timing shows that Daesh has a high capacity to select its targets in Turkey in accordance with the agenda of the time period. Undoubtedly, Turkey's high proportion of Muslim population is definitely a factor. Daesh has not yet executed indiscriminate attacks in Turkey because it has not yet been able to recruit as many people from Turkey as it desires.

Daesh leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, through his spokesperson, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, invited the group's sympathizers to travel, in Islamic glossary "Hijrah," to the so-called Islamic State.¹⁶ He added that, alternatively, sympathizers can fight for Daesh in their home countries if they do not have any access to travel. Following his words, some Daesh sympathizers have been executing terror attacks in the West.¹⁷

¹⁶ For the full text translation of his statement in English: <https://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2014/09/25/abu-muhammad-al-adnani-ash-shami-indeed-your-lord-is-ever-watchful/> (accessed 20 April 2016).

¹⁷ Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West", *Perspectives on Terrorism* (Online Journal) Vol. 9, No. 4, 2015, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/440/html> (accessed 20 April 2016).

Meantime, in Turkey, Daesh's returnee FTFs have been executing terror attacks as well. Since Turkey is geographically next to the conflict zones and, thus, Syria is relatively accessible for them, instead of Daesh sympathizers, it is the returnee FTFs with battle-field experience that have been executing more lethal terror attacks in the country.¹⁸ Therefore, in accordance with the theoretical approach, in reality, the FTFs are creating a high threat to Turkey.

In addition, as the media reports indicate, the suicide attackers responsible for the bombings in Turkey had participated in Daesh activities in Iraq and Syria as well. In other words, it is the returnees who have carried out the attacks, and their high battle-field experience has increased their capability to execute more lethal terrorist activities. Daesh suicide bombings in Turkey have caused a terrifying average number of 31 deaths and nearly 151 wounded individuals per attack. This proportion clearly demonstrates the lethal impact of the experienced FTFs. It should be emphasized that Turkey is facing terrorist attacks because it shares borders with conflict zones and these attacks have a high potential to spread to the rest of the civilized world. In other words, the attacks between March 2014 and March 2016 against Turkey would be an initial indicator for the potential spread of violence caused by Daesh terrorism to the rest of the world through FTFs.

TURKEY'S STRATEGY AGAINST FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

In order to grasp Turkey's strategy to counter Daesh, a significant point must be taken into consideration. With the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Turkey started sharing borders with non-state actors. As of 2016, Turkey faces the PYD, Daesh and the Syrian opposition groups. Sharing a border with non-state actors, which are also fighting each other, further triggers Turkey's security concerns. In addition, the situation becomes further complicated as Turkey is also neighbouring the Assad regime, against which Turkey repeatedly uttered its rejection in diplomatic platforms. It needs to be noted that most of the Syrian refugees in Turkey fled from the Assad regime.

Turkey's position against Daesh can be elaborated at two levels: international and domestic. At the international level, the anti-ISIL coalition, the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and the UN Counter Terrorism Committee (UN CTC) are the main pillars of the international efforts against Daesh, as well as against FTFs. Turkey is a member of the anti-ISIL coalition and was the co-chair of the GCTF. Turkey has also opened its air bases to the anti-ISIL coalition since 2015 and has begun taking hard power measures against Daesh, in addition to the on-going humanitarian operation of sheltering almost three million refugees in the country. This greater involvement

¹⁸ Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting", *American Political Science Review* Vol. 107, No. 1, February 2013, pp. 10-12.

raises Turkey's vulnerabilities, raising the possibility of terrorist engagement risk to the top level, compared to that of other members of the coalition. Turkey's activities in the GCTF, as co-chair, were remarkable and led to the establishment of some tangible mechanisms relying on international cooperation, such as the no-entry list and programmes for countering radicalism. At the same time, as a member of the United Nations, Turkey is making contributions to the UN CTC at both the state and society level. The UN CTC report released in May 2015 defined Turkey as one of the most-affected countries worldwide.¹⁹

At the domestic level, Turkey's strategy against Daesh involves four different phases. First, Turkey opted for preventing the travels of the FTFs at the beginning of 2014. The main instrument for Turkey to prevent their passage through Turkey is a no-entry list of potential FTFs established through international cooperation. Essentially, the UNSCR 2178 has paved the way to accelerate work toward improving the no-entry list. The second instrument, the Risk Analysis Groups, has been established by Turkish security units to identify potential foreign terrorist fighters at borders, ports, and airports.²⁰ Any individual who fits the profile might be prevented from travelling through the country and swiftly deported back to her/his country. According to information that has been made public, the number of people on the no-entry list reached 38,624 persons from 128 different countries as of March 2016.²¹ This number was around 5,000 during summer 2014, around 7,000 by fall 2014, 9,915 in January 2015, and around 19,000 persons in March 2015.²² The rapid acceleration of international cooperation is welcome, but also shows the failures of the past, which had put the total estimated number as up to 30,000. It needs to be stated at this point that every case of FTF travel to Turkey, as well as to other neighbouring countries, is a failure of international cooperation regarding information sharing. In addition to that, thanks to the no-entry list, in the course of four years, 3,335 individuals from 95 different countries were deported from Turkey as suspected foreign terrorist fighters.²³

¹⁹ *The United Nations Security Council Report S/2015/338.*

²⁰ "The State of Affairs in Foreign Terrorist Fighters Research Workshop" held by ORSAM on 23 January 2015 in Ankara.

²¹ According to the foreign fighters statistics regularly announced by the Republic of Turkey, the Directorate General of Migration Management as of 31 March 2016, http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/foreign-fighters_915_1024_4750_icerik (accessed 20 April 2016).

²² "Measures against Foreign Terrorist Fighters," Presentation of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey, at "The State of Affairs in Foreign Terrorist Fighters Research Workshop" held by ORSAM on 23 January 2015 in Ankara.

²³ According to the foreign fighters statistics regularly announced by the Republic of Turkey, the Directorate General of Migration Management as of 31 March 2016, http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/foreign-fighters_915_1024_4750_icerik (accessed 20 April 2016).

As for the Risk Analysis Groups, as of February 2016, they had interviewed 5,734 individuals and described 1,748 of them as inadmissible.²⁴ This shows that the Risk Analysis Groups is functioning to some extent as an innovative tool to address possible shortfalls of the no-entry list.

In the second phase, Turkey has started from summer 2015 onwards to reinforce its Syrian border controls in order to prevent border-crossings and has started to get positive results. As a first priority, Turkey has erected a wall and fortified its border against Daesh. As has been reported through the media releases by the Turkish military,²⁵ the border fortification made it almost impossible for foreign terrorist fighters to cross from the end of 2015 onwards. It was necessary to analyse Turkey's efforts to improve security on its borders with Syria and Iraq due to the fact that the border was porous. Historically, the Syrian border of Turkey was subject to illegal crossings and smuggling. Moreover, the superficial demarcation of the border had split tribes and towns during the first quarter of the 20th century, when the Ottoman Empire disintegrated. Hence, the divided families and tribes have traditionally been crossing the border regularly, which made it hard to prevent and control the passes because of its humanitarian nature.²⁶

The measures for the third and fourth phases are yet to be developed. The third phase is about preventing attacks by FTFs returning to and travelling through Turkey. It will definitely be a very difficult and arduous task. However, it will not be enough and the fourth phase has to involve the de-radicalization of these people.

CONCLUSION

Daesh is a terrorist organisation with a Salafist jihadist ideology that threatens the world. However, the foreign terrorist fighters of Daesh create yet another threat to the civilized world, just like a contagious agent of a cancer cell to the rest of the body. Even if the world could overcome Daesh itself as a threat, the FTFs can still spread the violence out of the conflict zone. In fact, they have already begun spreading the violence, and the case of Turkey is an indicator of their potential.

The FTFs are a growing threat against their states of origin, the states they transit, and the states they are active in, as well as their neighbouring zones. Turkey falls under all these categories. While 159 individuals lost their lives in Turkey between March

²⁴ "Türkiye'nin Yabancı Savaşçılarla Mücadelesi", a public announcement by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye_nin-yabanci-terorist-savascilarla-mucadelesi.tr.mfa (accessed 20 April 2016).

²⁵ "Suriye Sınırlarında Tedbirler Artırıldı", *Anadolu Agency*, 22 July 2015, <http://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/suriye-sinirinda-tedbirler-arttirildi/23734> (accessed 20 April 2016).

²⁶ Murat Yeşiltaş, "İç Savaşa Komşu Olmak: Türkiye'nin Suriye Sınır Güvenliği Siyaseti", *SETA Analiz* No. 136, August 2015, http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20150827110513_sinir-guvenligi.pdf.

2014 and March 2016 because of terror attacks executed mostly by returnee FTFs, the Daesh terror attacks in Europe and, in one case, the US, were mostly executed by sympathizers in Europe and in the US. This has meant that Turkey has been facing more lethal terror attacks compared to the West. I would argue it was because of Turkey's proximity to the conflict zone and one might expect that the wave will spread to other regions.

As the experience on FTFs' travels has increased, the international community has witnessed some positive improvements, thanks to international collaboration through no-entry lists. This collaboration should extend to other measures. However, national concerns might prevent the development of thinking beyond national borders, whereas this kind of threat does not have any border. In other words, the foreign terrorist fighters of Daesh pose a serious threat to the world, showing that local violence might harm international security, and this necessitates a way of thinking that should move beyond national borders so as to be globally effective.

It is obvious that UNSCR 2178 does not only describe Daesh's foreign terrorist fighters as illegal; it also describes all terrorist organisations' foreign members as illegal. Additionally, the resolution urges all member states to take specific measures against them.²⁷ That is to say, there is not any good or bad foreign terrorist fighter dichotomy. The others, such as the foreign terrorist fighters of the PYD, also spread their violence to the rest of the world.

In conclusion, this article argues that while Turkey has experienced the brunt of the initial wave of terrorist attacks by returnees, foreign terrorist fighters might cause a metastasis to the rest of the world. Moreover, the contagious effect of foreign fighters creating further violence is not limited to Daesh and it needs to be examined for other terrorist organizations as well.

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²⁷ Adam Rawnsley, "Meet the Americans Flocking to Iraq and Syria to Fight the Islamic State", *Foreign Policy*, 26 August 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/26/meet-the-americans-flocking-to-iraq-and-syria-to-fight-the-islamic-state/>.

Australia's Experience of Daesh-Linked and Directed Extremism

Jacinta Carroll

ABSTRACT

This article examines Australia's experience of Daesh-inspired and directed extremism and terrorism. It studies how Australia's experience of terrorism and approach to counter-terrorism has changed in the decade and a half since 9/11, with particular focus on the more recent impact of Daesh. It finds the group has targeted Australians for radicalisation and recruitment, focusing on both Muslim and non-Muslim members of the community, particularly young people. Social media features prominently in Daesh's approach to Australia, supported by person-to-person links. The Australian approach to counter-terrorism is found to be balanced and appropriate for the most part, but more work needs to be done to direct and coordinate activity across government agencies and jurisdictions, and to work more closely with the broader community and international partners. Countering violent extremism activity is in early stages and requires more work to understand how to best harmonise community and government involvement in programmes, and how to measure success, but these challenges are similar to those experienced in other countries.

INTRODUCTION

A year before the attacks of 9/11, Australia hosted the Olympics in Sydney, its largest city. Terrorism was hardly on the radar. Counter-terrorism planning for the Olympics was a sideline affair: an attack was considered unlikely and response planning was focussed largely on 1970s-style aeroplane hostage scenarios.

Yet by September 2001, Australia was on the alert—like other countries—to understand what this new form of terrorist threat looked like, and how to defeat it.

Since then, Australia's experience of terrorism has featured attacks and disrupted plots, both at home and abroad. Australians have been targets and victims. Australians

* This paper was submitted on 16 August 2016.

also number amongst the supporters and perpetrators of violent extremism and terrorism.

Australia's response has covered the spectrum of diplomatic, military, intelligence, investigations, humanitarian, social policy and legislation. Its approach to counter-terrorism has been comprehensive.

The advent of Daesh's particular form of Islamist extremism and terrorism, including taking territory in Iraq and Syria, has however sharply increased and accelerated the threat of violent extremism and terrorism to Australia, its interests, and its citizens. It has also propelled an exponential increase in the involvement of Australians as supporters and active proponents of Daesh's view of terrorism.

Countering this threat has been demanding for agencies, whose investigative resources are challenged as never before, but it has also brought them closer together.

Australia's experience of terrorism: 2001-2014

Since 9/11, Australia has featured both as a target of terrorist plots, and the origin of terrorists and terrorist supporters. But the roots of the threat go back further.

Australia's geography may have contributed to it being a lower priority target for Islamist extremist attacks, although Al-Qaeda and others had expressed intent for "mu-jahidin brothers" to initiate attacks on Australia and Australians.¹

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the Indonesian terrorist group and Al-Qaeda affiliate led by Abu Bakar Bashir, is reported² to include parts of Australia in its plans for a Southeast Asian caliphate³. Bashir had visited Australia a number of times from 1988 onward to preach an Islamist extremist message that included calls for attacks on Australia.

The group succeeded in 2002 in undertaking a terrorist attack on the tourist resort area of Kuta Beach on the island of Bali, with Australian tourists specifically targeted, according to a later audio release from Osama Bin Laden⁴. Eighty-eight of the 202 killed were Australian, and it remains the single largest loss of Australian life from terrorism. JI also bombed the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in 2004.

Undertaking attacks in Australia, however, was much harder to do than extremist leaders would have liked. A small number of radical groups formed on the fringes of mostly Lebanese-Australian mosques and bookshops in the suburbs of Lakemba, Sydney and Preston, Melbourne. While the talk was extreme, these groups—composed

¹ <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/alqaeda-urges-firebombing-australia-20120505-1y62t.html> (accessed 18 June 2016).

² Chukov, M. (2008). *Australian Jihad*.

³ Shuja, S. (2005). "Gauging Jemaah Islamiyah's Threat in Southeast Asia", *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume 3, Issue 8.

⁴ Parkinson, Tony (2002). "Bin Laden Voices New Threat to Australia", *The Age*, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/11/13/1037080786315.html> (accessed 16 June 2016).

generally of unemployed men—appeared to have limited ability to translate intent into action.

This changed with the plot uncovered as part of Operation Pendennis in 2005-2006. While ultimately unsuccessful, this demonstrated a level of planning and organisation not previously seen.

The plotters aimed to simultaneously attack multiple targets across Sydney and Melbourne, including sports stadia and government buildings. The targets were both symbolic and had the potential for mass casualties. Planning for the attacks included sourcing materials to make explosives and attempting to obtain firearms. Australia's gun laws meant that obtaining firearms and ammunition was challenging, and obtaining semi-automatic weapons even more difficult.

The disruptions followed an 18-month investigation by Australia's security intelligence service, and federal and state police. Authorities gathered sufficient evidence to sustain prosecution of 13 conspirators⁵.

During this period a small number of Australians also made their way to join Islamist terrorist groups overseas. While some were of Arab-Muslim background, just as many were male Muslim converts; women sometimes featured but primarily as wives and partners. Destinations included Indonesia, the Philippines and the Middle East, but Afghanistan and Pakistan were the Australian foreign fighter's destinations of choice.

The numbers were small, and tended to travel on an individual basis. While some returned to Australia, most stayed. Returnees include Jack "Jihad Jack" Thomas, whose travel home was funded by Al-Qaeda and led him to become the first Australian to be convicted of terrorist financing, although this was subsequently overturned on appeal.⁶

AUSTRALIA'S EXPERIENCE OF DAESH-INSPIRED AND DIRECTED EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

Daesh and Australia: since 2014

An Australian Muslim convert living in central Philippines played a significant role in spreading word of Daesh to the English-speaking jihadi community in the early days of Daesh. Roberto "Musa" Cerantonio was assessed to be, in mid-2014, the second most

⁵ Commonwealth Directorate of Public Prosecutions (2008), "Operation Pendennis Case Report", <https://www.cdpp.gov.au/case-reports/operation-pendennis> (accessed 19 June 2016).

⁶ Thomas was convicted in 2006 of intentionally receiving funds from a terrorist organisation, but this was overturned on appeal due to inadmissibility of evidence. Supreme Court of Victoria Court of Appeal (2008), *R v Thomas* (no 4), VSCA 107 20 June, <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/vic/VSCA/2008/107.html>.

influential Daesh-related foreign fighter recruiter⁷. He broadcast his allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his “caliphate” immediately after the fall of Mosul and thereafter exhorted others to “make *hijra* (migrate)” and join Daesh.

Cerantonio’s second claim to fame was announcing his intention to travel to Syria himself to join Daesh, followed soon after by announcing his arrival “in the land of al Sham”, only to be later outed as never having left his home in the Philippines⁸. After being extradited to Australia, he next appeared in the public eye with his arrest in Queensland in May 2016, along with fellow radicaliser Shayden Thorne and three others, apparently attempting to illegally travel from Australia via Indonesia to the Philippines, and thence to Syria to fight⁹.

Australia as Daesh target

Australia was named as a target in one of the earliest and most widely broadcast proclamations by Daesh’s media spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani. On 22 September 2014, just three months after Daesh came to international attention with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s proclamation of a so-called “caliphate” from the Mosul Grand Mosque, al-Adnani listed Australia amongst other Western countries that had incurred the wrath of Daesh and would be attacked:

If you can kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be.¹⁰

⁷ International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (2014). *Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks*, <http://icr.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ICSR-Report-Greenbirds-Measuring-Importance-and-Influence-in-Syrian-Foreign-Fighter-Networks.pdf> (accessed 19 June 2016).

⁸ Murdoch, L. and S. Howden (2014). “Australian Islamic Preacher Musa Cerantonio Arrested in the Philippines”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/australian-islamic-preacher-musa-cerantonio-arrested-in-the-philippines-20140711-zt4zy.html> (accessed 19 June 2016).

⁹ ABC News (2016). “Preacher Among Five Arrested Over Alleged Plan to Join IS”, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-11/preacher-among-five-arrested-over-alleged-plan-to-join-is/7403344> (accessed 14 June 2016). The five travelled thousands of kilometres from Melbourne on the southern tip of Australia to the tropical northern coast of Queensland in a utility vehicle towing a boat. There is some speculation that the lengthy journey across some of the busiest highways and populated areas of Australia suggests the group may have intended to be seen to be travelling rather than seeking to undertake the journey.

¹⁰ Site Intelligence (2014). “IS Spokesman Rallies Fighters against U.S.-Led Coalition, Threatens Enemy and Calls Individual Muslims to Launch Attacks”, 21 September, <http://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Multimedia/is-spokesman-rallies-fighters-against-u-s-led-coalition-threatens-enemy-and-calls-individual-muslims-to-launch-attacks.html> (accessed 16 June 2016).

The pattern of naming Australia broadly conforms with that for other Western countries, with Australia being mentioned in some Daesh lists of Western countries, and those countries contributing to coalition operations in the Middle East.

Australia has received most focussed attention where Australian Daesh members have attempted to direct specific attacks on Australia. The most high profile of these was Neil Prakash, also known as Abu Khaled al-Cambodi¹¹. A convert to Islam, Prakash had limited involvement with Australian terrorist groups while in Australia, but once in the Middle East, played a role in seeking to direct young people to commit terrorist acts. He directed the 2015 and 2016 ANZAC Day plots, as well as unsuccessfully inciting the murder of an Australian journalist.¹² Prakash also took the Daesh lead in seeking Australian recruits following the death of Mohamed Al Baryalei.¹³ US authorities reported in May 2016 that Prakash was likely killed in a targeted strike, although this is yet to be confirmed.¹⁴

While only a small number, individuals such as Baryalei, Prakash and Thorne have had a disproportionate impact in inciting attacks and drawing recruits. As noted by Sageman, this reflects the important role of facilitators in communicating how to go about actively supporting the terrorist cause.¹⁵ But it also provides some positive indicators for counter-terrorism officials, as the loss of an individual through imprisonment or death can also remove some of their agency in the Daesh threat to Australia.¹⁶

Australians in Daesh

Australians have been attracted to Daesh in greater numbers than seen with previous Islamist groups. It has one of the highest proportions of foreign fighters of any Western population, although the overall actual numbers remain low, peaking at around 110 in the past year¹⁷.

¹¹ Calligeros, M. (2016). "From Buddhist to jihadist: Melbourne man Neil Prakash's journey to Islamic State", *The Age*, 23 April, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/from-buddhist-to-jihadist-melbourne-man-neil-prakashs-journey-to-islamic-state-20150422-1mrb4j.html> (accessed 13 June 2016).

¹² Maley, P. (2016). "Neil Prakash, ISIS Terrorist, 'Tried to Crowdfund my Murder'", *The Australian*, 12 March, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/life/weekend-australian-magazine/neil-prakash-isis-terrorist-tried-to-crowdfund-my-murder/news-story/1a2a4e4452769fd0dbf3801116e41234>.

¹³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-08/australias-most-senior-is-member-funnels-fighters-onto-frontline/5728734>.

¹⁴ <http://www.news.com.au/world/middle-east/neil-prakash-could-still-be-alive-despite-reports-he-was-killed-earlier-this-year/news-story/a0d1afc92c5dabcf9dac81853b0bb53>.

¹⁵ Sageman, M. (2008). *Leaderless Jihad: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*.

¹⁶ Carroll, J. (2016). "Combatting Islamic State: the Impact of High Value Targeting", <http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/combatting-islamic-state-the-impact-of-high-value-targeting/>.

¹⁷ Munich Security Conference (2016). *Munich Security Report 2016: Boundless Crises, Reckless Spoilers, Helpless Guardians*.

The impact of Daesh can be attributed to a range of factors.

As noted by commentators such as McCants, one of the main differences in the relative attraction of Al-Qaeda and Daesh is the latter's apparent and advertised willingness to accept all comers¹⁸. The early days of Daesh's success in Iraq and Syria bore this out, appearing to provide a community base requiring all skills and occupations, not just fighters.

The group's focus on the online environment and in particular its heavy use of social media at a time when these communications and their use have exploded, particularly in Australia, has played a role of vital importance in spreading Daesh's name, notoriety, and message.¹⁹ Physical distance and isolation now presented no barriers to those with a smartphone. Person-to-person links remain, however, essential; almost all Australian terrorism cases involve familial and friendship links.²⁰

Australians interested in the jihadi message and potentially seeking to join Daesh overseas or take part in actions at home now had easy access to the group and its enlists.²¹ Unlike previous radical groups, those seeing to commit terrorist acts also had an existing *fatwa* allowing any act of violence, thereby removing a religious requirement that had restricted those of the previous era.

Foreign Fighters

Daesh has used Australians and other English-speaking members to recruit Australians to its cause. As seen with the experience of other nationalities, such as Briton "Jihadi John" and Canadian "Abu al-Kanadi", targeting these audiences, Cerantonio and Prakash have featured in videos as well as direct communication with Australian supporters.

Now-deceased Australian teenage jihadis such as "Ginger jihadi" Abdullah Elmir and Jake Bilardi have also featured in Daesh propaganda focussed on Australian and other English-speaking audiences. Turkish-Australian doctor Tareq Kamleh briefly rose to public notoriety in Australia in April 2015 when he appeared in Daesh video

¹⁸ McCants, W. (2016). *ISIS Apocalypse*.

¹⁹ The 2015 Deloitte mobile survey estimated 79% of Australians over 55 years own a smartphone. Deloitte Australia (2015). *Mobile Consumer Survey: The Australian Cut* deloitte.com.au/.../deloitte-au-tmt-mobile-consumer-survey-2015-291015.pdf. Market estimates in early 2016 indicate overall smartphone usage had increased to around 86% of the population, <https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Australia-Mobile-Communications-Smartphones-Tablets-and-Handset-Market>.

²⁰ Jake Bilardi appears to be the only Australian case presenting as exclusively or predominantly online recruitment and radicalisation. See discussion of Bilardi's recruitment in Winter, C. (2016). *An Integrated Approach to Islamic State Recruitment*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra.

²¹ Ibid.

propaganda.²² Calling himself “Abu Yusuf”, Kamleh extolled the virtues of the so-called caliphate from a ward of the Raqqa hospital and called on other professionals to join Daesh.

Other Australian foreign fighters include Khaled Sharrouf and Mohamed Elomar, who became notorious for sharing photos of themselves and Sharrouf’s seven-year-old son in the conflict zone with severed heads, and taking Sharrouf’s family to Syria. These individuals were well known to Australian authorities.

At the peak of Daesh’s military and territorial success in Iraq and Syria, in mid to late 2015, Australian counter-terrorism officials were investigating around 400 individuals in relation to terrorism in Australia, while around 90 Australians had joined Daesh in the Middle East²³. A year later, with Daesh retreating with the loss of around 40% of its territory, these figures are around the same.

While the attraction has somewhat diminished, it remains.

In addition to the 110 Australians known to be with Daesh overseas, and at least 60 who have been killed while there²⁴, around 200 have been prevented from travelling overseas to engage in terrorism either through passport cancellation or arrest.²⁵

And with the ongoing draw of the Islamist conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as other zones, combined with unregulated social media as a powerful tool of propaganda for Daesh and other groups, it is difficult to envisage this threat being defeated in the near term.

The threat at home

But the overall numbers still remain low. Less than 1,000 active supporters amongst a population of 24 million speaks to an extremely low rate of popularity. But the notion of 1,000 individuals, mostly young and disaffected males in the large cities of Sydney and Melbourne, who want to commit or support vicious crimes against members of the public, provokes fear amongst the public in a free and open society. It is a serious concern for the governments and agencies responsible for countering the terrorist threat.

Two of the biggest changes in the Australian terrorist environment in the past two years have been the high number of active plots, and the short turnaround times

²² Maiden, S. et al. (2016). “Perth doctor joins ISIS medical team in jihad for Islam against the west”, *Perth Now*, <http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/perth-doctor-joins-isis-medical-team-in-jihad-for-islam-against-the-west/news-story/0e14b8918151a50cd5c947ca4ef98e5e> (accessed 13 June 2016).

²³ Commonwealth of Australia (2015). *ASIO Report to Parliament 2014-2015*, Canberra.

²⁴ Deputy Director-General Cook, ASIO, presentation to the 2nd Counter Terrorism Financing Summit 2016, 10 August 2016.

²⁵ Brandis, G., Attorney-General for Australia (2016). “Opening Statement International Meeting on Counter-Terrorism”, 10 August, <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/Speeches/Pages/2016/ThirdQuarter/Opening-statement-International-Meeting-on-Counter-Terrorism.aspx> (accessed 15 August 2016).

associated. In speaking of this phenomenon, the Director-General of Security, Duncan Lewis, has observed that the investigative tempo is higher than it has ever been, and is stretching counter-terrorism resources²⁶.

Of the terrorist attacks, disrupted plots and arrests that have occurred in Australia in the 15 years since 9/11, 75% have occurred in the two years since September 2014, when Australia's terror threat alert level was raised to "Probable: a terror attack is likely". This is a direct result of Daesh. While Daesh as a group will be ultimately defeated, this represents a step change in Australia's terrorist threat operating environment, and it is unlikely Australia will return to pre-Daesh 2014 levels. The experience of Operation Pendennis, when the nation's resources could be applied to one investigation for 18 months, is unlikely to be repeated.

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin noted in late 2015 the concerning trend of younger people featuring in terrorism cases, "Where the profile of an Australian terrorist two years ago was aged in their 20s, then their late teens. Now we are finding people in their early teens."^{27, 28} This reflects two features of the current terrorist threat picture: Daesh propaganda being focussed at young and impressionable people and Islamist groups being forced to look for "cleanskins" as authorities maintain coverage of older persons of interest through investigations. Another factor may be that Daesh is losing its attraction amongst older Australians.

The trend of young people is most apparent in two of the three terrorist attacks in Australia in the past two years. In the first attack, 17-year-old Numan Haider stabbed two police officers in Melbourne, after being called in for an interview in relation to ongoing terrorist associations. Haider was killed in the incident. A second, larger, knife and a pre-recorded video associating the attack with allegiance to Daesh were later found on him. The attack occurred the day after al-Adnani's video calling for individual attacks using whatever was available.

Farhad Jabar was 15 years old when he shot police employee Curtis Cheng outside the New South Wales Police Parramatta headquarters, using a revolver. While Jabar was unknown to counter-terrorism investigators beforehand, his brother, sister and brother-in-law were all associates of Daesh who later became foreign fighters and died in the Middle East. The two men who provided the weapon—sourced from a local Middle Eastern organised crime gang—and the target were known to authorities for terrorist associations.

The other attack during this period was the Sydney siege, where Man Haron Monis claimed the attack for Daesh as he took 18 people hostage in the Lindt Cafe in Martin

²⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (2016). Senate Estimates.

²⁷ *The Guardian Australia*, <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/oct/15/police-monitoring-12-year-old-boy-suspected-terrorist-activity>.

²⁸ Wroe, D. "Young terror suspects make up bulk of ASIO's work", *The Age*, <http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/young-terror-suspects-make-up-bulk-of-asios-work-20160511-gost4e.html>.

Place, in the Sydney central business district. Fifty-two years old at the time and known to authorities for a range of low-level security incidents and more serious non-terrorism-related crimes, Monis appears not to have had any particular prior association with Daesh, other than claiming allegiance to the group a few days earlier. But, as with Haider and Jabar, Daesh was more than happy to claim Monis's action for its cause, and celebrated all three in its online publications and fora.

These three attacks were relatively simple in execution and had limited physical impact. Haider used a knife and his victims survived; Jabar, a handgun killing one person; Monis, a shotgun and killed one hostage with another dying from a ricocheted police bullet. All three attackers died. Two of the attacks targeted police and only one targeted the general public. But the fear of successful attacks—particular the Sydney siege which was broadcast live as it played out—had a significant impact on Australians, and thereby considerable propaganda value for Daesh

In addition to these three well-known attacks, in the past two years Australian authorities have disrupted nine Islamist terrorist plots, all in advanced stages of planning. The 2016 ANZAC Day plot for example, was disrupted via the arrest of Prakash's 16-year-old co-conspirator just a day before the attack was to take place²⁹.

AUSTRALIA'S APPROACH TO COUNTER-TERRORISM: 2001-2016

Australia has taken a comprehensive approach to counter terrorism in the years since 9/11, characterised by consistent commitments to international actions and coordinated arrangements across jurisdictions and agencies at home.

National arrangements

By comparison to similar jurisdictions, Australian policy can be characterised as broadly bipartisan at the Commonwealth or national level throughout the period, and collegiate in cooperation across the state and territory jurisdictions.

As Australia is a federation of states, counter-terrorism arrangements including legal and police powers are split between the national and state authorities. Having this number of players involved in counter-terrorism has proven challenging at times, particularly at the tactical level in working through how the federal police and intelligence agencies could work jointly with state and territory police. The experience of Operation Pendennis assisted agencies to work together in onshore multijurisdictional investigations; the sharp increase in counter-terrorism investigations in the past two years, fostered in particular by Daesh, has honed the interoperability of these agencies further still.

²⁹ AAP (2016), <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2016/04/25/nsw-anzac-day-terror-plot-thwarted-police>.

Australia has had formal bodies to manage federal counter-terrorism arrangements since the 1970s. These have changed and developed since 2001, with a senior cross-jurisdictional committee established in 2002 to oversee coordination and interoperability between the Commonwealth government and those of Australia's seven states and territories. The National Counter-Terrorism Committee focussed primarily on harmonising capability across jurisdictions and maintaining a National Counter-Terrorism Plan. The body changed its name to the Australian-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (ANZCTC) in 2012 when New Zealand became a full member.³⁰

Under the auspices of the ANZCTC, counter-terrorism legislation has been harmonised across Australian jurisdictions, and together with New Zealand, information-sharing mechanisms have been enhanced and interoperability progressed.

While Australia has useful mechanisms to share information and coordinate across agencies and jurisdictions, it does not have a shared vision and strategy directing national and international counter-terrorism efforts and capability. A counter-terrorism strategic plan would explain the terrorist threat, what the government is doing and what it plans to do, and provide a structure to guide future activity. The Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) 2015 Counter-Terrorism Strategy document provides a foundation for this work, as it describes a shared vision of the problem and work that's underway.³¹ A counter-terrorism strategic plan would take that further to direct and frame future shared activity and provide guidance to all stakeholders—the Commonwealth, states and territories, businesses, community—on a full programme of activity.³²

Legislation

A particular strength of Australia's approach to countering Daesh has been its considered review and implementation of counter-terrorism legislation. Since 2014 the Australian Government has introduced five tranches of counter-terrorism legislation; all have been passed or are in progress through parliamentary committee. While the legislation has come at a time when it is needed to counter Islamist extremists such as Daesh, the initiative predates the rise of the group, coming from a 2013 report by COAG into counter-terrorism legislation.³³ Some legislative amendments have been

³⁰ <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/WhatAustraliaIsdoing/Pages/Australia-New-Zealand-Counter-Terrorism-Committee.aspx> (accessed 13 June 2016).

³¹ Council of Australian Governments (2015). *Australia's Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Strengthening our Resilience*.

³² Carroll, J. (2016). "Counter-Terrorism", in M. Davis et al., *Agenda for Change 2016: Strategic choices for the next government*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

³³ <https://www.ag.gov.au/consultations/pages/COAGReviewofCounter-TerrorismLegislation.aspx> (accessed 20 June 2016).

criticised—such as allowing cancellation of citizenship for naturalised Australians who support terrorism and reducing the minimum age for control orders to 16 years—but the process behind these reviews has been considered and evidence-based, which has added to their success.³⁴

While Australia's counter-terrorism policy and legislation is characterised by a considered, lengthy and collegiate approach, it is not clear whether Australia would be able to quickly respond to a dramatic change in the terrorist threat environment, such as the multiple mass-casualty incidents that have been experienced by countries such as Turkey and France in the past year.

Australia has no formal process to review terrorist incidents. The default mechanism for reviewing attacks is the state coronial review, which is focussed on determining the cause of death but has, in practice, expanded to cover a broad range of matters. There is a need for dedicated and timely review of terrorist acts and counter-terrorism actions.³⁵

International response

Australia has been actively involved in international efforts to counter terrorism throughout the period, including being party to UN proscriptions, addressing terrorist financing, developing counter-terrorism capability in Southeast Asia, and contributing to military operations to deny terrorist safe havens, such as in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Responding to Daesh

Daesh's arrival on the terrorist scene, along with its outsourced and delegated “anything goes” approach to terrorist activities, has accelerated and broadened some of Australia's counter-terrorism efforts.

The first and most obvious sign of the change was the high-profile raising of Australia's terror alert level in September 2014, three months after the proclamation of the Daesh “caliphate”³⁶. This was followed a few days later by the biggest counter-terrorist operation in Australia's history. Operation Appleby saw simultaneous raids by the federal and state police, and security intelligence organisation in Sydney and Brisbane, followed later by raids in Melbourne, targeting what authorities described

³⁴ Carroll, J. (2015). “Sorting fact from fiction in the citizenship debate”, *ABC News Drum online*, 3 December, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-03/carroll-sorting-fact-from-fiction-in-the-citizenship-bill-debate/6994556> (accessed 13 June 2016).

³⁵ Carroll, J. (2016). “Terrorist attacks in Australia need a more agile response, like those in Europe”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March.

³⁶ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-12/australia-increases-terrorism-threat-level/5739466>.

as planning for imminent, multiple-venue, mass-casualty attacks.³⁷ Two people were arrested, but later released without charge.

The Appleby raids signalled a change in Australia's counter-terrorism action; unlike previous cases, there was no time to investigate and collect sufficient evidence to support prosecution. This had to be sacrificed to protect the public.

This action has been criticised by some as the authorities overreaching their remit, using excessive force and impinging on human rights. In a free and democratic society, these are important matters and need to be kept in the balance in countering terrorism.

Since the raids, however, 15 of the original 18 targeted have been arrested and charged on terrorism offences.

A few weeks before the raids, in August 2014, the Commonwealth Government also announced additional funding of AUD\$630 million to further bolster counter-terrorism capability.³⁸

While the actions and achievements of Australian governments and authorities are impressive and considered, it is unlikely that these will prevent further terrorist attacks in Australia. And this presents a dilemma.

The Australian public is not used to terrorist attacks, and has not experienced a mass-casualty terrorist attack on its shores; the additional legal powers and funding for counter-terrorism may have inadvertently created a public expectation that any terrorist attack can be prevented. If so, even small attacks made in Daesh's name could have a disproportionate impact on public perceptions of Australia's counter-terrorism capability while bolstering Daesh's propaganda machine. And a successful larger-scale attack would have even greater effect.

The challenge for Australian authorities now is to get the balance right between pre-emptive action to continue to disrupt plots—as they have done so well to date—and ensuring it has the appropriate powers and arrangements to remove this threat. In other criminal matters, this would be addressed through evidence-based post-crime sentencing regimes. But disrupting before an attack to save lives makes prosecution and sentencing problematic under current arrangements.

In one initiative to address this challenge, the Australian Government is examining options to keep imprisoned those people convicted of terrorism offences who demonstrate ongoing support for terrorism.³⁹ While this offers one mechanism to protect the public, and has precedents in relation to some other violent offender groups, it only partly addresses the problem. In the meantime, terrorists such as Daesh and its supporters will continue to exploit legal protections.

³⁷ Stewart, C. (2014). "The order to kill that triggered Operation Appleby", *The Australian*, 19 September.

³⁸ Abbott, T. and G. Brandis (2014). "Joint Press Release: New Counter Terrorism Measures for a Safer Australia", 26 August.

³⁹ <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/the-age-editorial/indefinite-detention-risks-balance-of-rights-20160727-gqf0py.html>.

Fighting Daesh beyond Australia's borders

Since 2014, Australia has deployed military advisers and air force strike capability to support coalition operations against Daesh in the Middle East. These commenced in August 2014 under Operation OKRA and have been calibrated to accord with Australia's national interests, including limiting operations to advisory and supporting roles as well as air strikes, and to date, limiting direct operations against Daesh.⁴⁰ Australia has continually provided military and other defence support to international coalition operations to counter terrorism in Afghanistan and the Middle East since 2001, and will likely continue to do so.

Australia could benefit, however, from better explaining the counter-terrorism purpose of its military activities, and linking these actions more explicitly to counter-terrorism actions within Australia. This would counter Daesh and other Islamist propaganda about coalition military operations in the Middle East which, according to the simplistic and flawed logic of the terrorist groups, are stated as justification for targeting Australia and Australians.

Other significant new actions include a joint initiative with Indonesia to lead an Asia-Pacific Counter-Terrorism Financing Summit, bringing together public and private sector representatives from across the region to better understand the operation of terrorist financing and how to work together to address it⁴¹. At the second Bali Summit in August 2016 the world's first regional risk assessment of counter-terrorism financing was produced⁴², along with agreements to progress intelligence analyst exchanges across Southeast Asia and Australia, and to develop and share a variety of education and training tools.⁴³

The focus on Southeast Asia is profoundly important for Australia. While Daesh's main effort is in the Middle East, its imminent loss of the "caliphate" in that region is already leading to more attacks and calls for both attacks and establishing *wilayats* outside the Middle East, including Southeast Asia, Australia's neighbours.

JI has not only pledged allegiance to Daesh; it is also using the conflict in the Middle East to provide recruitment, training and re-establish networks. Sidney Jones estimated in early 2016 that JI membership has risen to around 2,000, numbers not seen

⁴⁰ <http://www.defence.gov.au/operations/okra/>.

⁴¹ <http://austrac.gov.au/about-us/international-engagement/counter-terrorism-financing-summit-2015> (accessed 13 June 2016).

⁴² <http://austrac.gov.au/news/world%E2%80%99s-first-regional-risk-assessment-launched-ctf-summit-2016> (accessed 10 August 2016).

⁴³ The 2nd Counter Terrorism Financing Summit: The Nusa Dua Statement, <http://austrac.gov.au/news/2nd-counter-terrorism-financing-summit-nusa-dua-statement> (accessed 11 August 2016).

since its high point at the time of the Bali bombing.⁴⁴ While Indonesian authorities are making some headway in counter-terrorism efforts, and the actual numbers, capability and potential of the group remain unclear, a re-established JI would pose a threat to Australia.⁴⁵

AUSTRALIA'S APPROACH TO COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The “softer” end of the counter-terrorism spectrum, countering violent extremism (CVE), has proven to be a challenge for Australia. In this the Australian experience is not dissimilar to others’.

CVE initiatives in Australia to date can be described as community-based activities focussing on at-risk groups, research, and deradicalisation. The first two categories of activity are supported by government grants programmes, at both the Commonwealth and state level. These have experienced some challenges, particularly initially, with allegations of some community grants being misused, and some of the national “Living Safe Together” CVE initiative learning aids being ridiculed as unhelpfully politically correct for using a case study of environmental activism rather than Islamist extremism⁴⁶. But the coordination and communication have gradually improved, and further useful initiatives are being progressed.

Deradicalisation activities are those focussed on individuals who have been involved in or associated with terrorist views. To date in Australia these have primarily involved individuals who have come in contact with the police, including particularly vulnerable youth as well as those who have been imprisoned for terrorism offences or have been radicalised in prison. Deradicalisation programmes are generally designed around the requirements of the individuals and their circumstances; some are based around a government programme involving social workers, religious counsellors and educators, while others may be run entirely by a mosque or other community group.

The effectiveness of both general CVE and focussed deradicalisation programmes are difficult to measure. For privacy and other reasons, success stories are rarely publicised, while failures are attributed back to the government authorities. The 16-year-old arrested in relation to the 2016 ANZAC Day plot had recently completed a deradicalisation programme.⁴⁷ CVE programmes cannot guarantee success, and there is a need to

⁴⁴ Reuters, (2015). “As Indonesia hunts down Islamic State, homegrown jihadis regroup”, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-indonesia-security-idUKKCN0VN12A> (accessed 13 June 2016).

⁴⁵ Fealy, G. (2016). “Indonesian and Malaysian support for the Islamic State”, *Global Security*, January, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2016/PBAAD863.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2016).

⁴⁶ <http://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/pages/home.aspx> (accessed 20 June 2016).

⁴⁷ <http://www.news.com.au/national/nsw-act/courts-law/anzac-day-terror-plot-teen-16-failed-deradicalisation-program/news-story/74c04cb943f78406ce13b48ec263bdfd> (accessed 20 June 2016).

manage public expectations of what CVE can achieve as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes.

One of the inadvertent consequences of any CVE programme countering Islamist extremism is that it may be interpreted as attacking or vilifying Muslims in general; experience in Indonesia and Malaysia indicates this is the case in predominantly Muslim countries affected by extremism as well as in countries such as Australia where there are relatively small Muslim communities.

This has caused some difficulties for Australia's Muslim community, as its leaders have been required to talk publicly on the issue of Islamist extremism and attempt to answer the broader community's concerns while being under pressure from extremists themselves.

CONCLUSION

Australia's approach to counter-terrorism is balanced and appropriate for the most part and has solid foundations through interjurisdictional committees, effective joint operational activity and international engagement. More work could be done to direct and coordinate activities across government agencies and jurisdictions, and to work more closely with the broader community and international partners. Developing and maintaining a counter-terrorism strategic plan to direct both national and international activities is a necessary first step.

Australia also needs a dedicated capability to review terrorist and counter-terrorism actions in a timely manner to learn lessons and institute change.

Countering violent extremism activity is in early stages and requires more work to understand how to best harmonise community and government involvement in programmes, and how to measure success, but these challenges are similar to those experiences in other countries.

Australia has played and continues to play an important part in countering Daesh extremism. Daesh is under significant pressure in the Middle East from the coalition, including Australia, and Australian authorities have continued to significantly hamper violent extremists at home. But the threat of violent extremism and the desire to inflict damage in Australia and elsewhere means that counter-terrorism efforts must be continually renewed and ongoing.

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ISSN 0119-5204

