



Combatting Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Asia and Europe

From Cooperation to Collaboration

Christian Echle, Rohan Gunaratna,
Patrick Rueppel, Megha Sarmah

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Editors

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Megha Sarmah



The cover of this book is an abstract illustration of the travel route of Mehdi Nemmouche, who conducted the terrorist attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels on 24 May 2014. Nemmouche, a French national, travelled to Syria to join Daesh. The map displays the route he took from Syria to Europe. In order to cover his tracks, he left from Syria for Istanbul and continued to Southeast Asia. He travelled to Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Bangkok before returning to Europe via Frankfurt. Nemmouche then went to Brussels, where he conducted the attack, continued to Amsterdam and was finally caught in Marseille. This case exemplifies the real-life connections between Asia and Europe and the vast network terrorist fighters have established. It further underlines the need for countries in Asia and Europe, but especially between the two regions, to collaborate as better sharing of information and exchanges might have been able to prevent this attack from happening.

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Preface

Over the last months, Daesh has lost most of its territory in Iraq and Syria. Many of its fighters have been killed in combat or fled the conflict zone. Although this might affect its capabilities in the short run, it certainly does not mean the demise of violent extremism and terrorism nor Daesh as an organisation. Daesh was, rather, forced to change its modus operandi and strategy. It could no longer rely on the strong message and glorious narrative which drew fighters into the theatre in the Middle East. Instead, the group had to find new messages and ways to continue its fight. This has direct implications on the threat landscape as well as the preventive and reactive measures taken by states. Additionally, the threat posed by Daesh- and Al Qaeda-centric groups has neither declined nor plateaued but is actually growing. In this context it is important to note that some Al Qaeda-centric groups have been supplanted by Daesh-centric groups, which adds another level of complexity.

The result of the developments in Syria and Iraq is a more diverse, heterogeneous and less predictable threat. Fighters have dispersed to ongoing conflict zones in other parts of the world – not only the immediate region –, travelled to third countries to cover their tracks, returned home or stayed in Syria and Iraq but kept a low profile and blended in with the normal citizens. In addition to this geographic spread of the current and former fighters as well as worldwide expansion of Daesh to Asia, Europe and Africa, we can constitute a second diversification with regard to the characteristics of the perpetrators countries are faced with. Some have left the conflict theatre disillusioned, regretting their initial decision to join Daesh. Others are even more motivated to continue the struggle and want to build upon the momentum created and skills acquired. The latter group is far from being homogeneous as it includes different kinds of perpetrators – individuals, small cells, fighters returning home and fighters moving to new locations. The threat group is further diversified by homegrown violent extremists who have never left the country.

One element that has not changed in this context though, but has even increased in importance, is the connectivity among the groups. Most

of the potential perpetrators are not lone actors since they have some form of connection to other extremists – be it in real life, online or mentally through shared schools of extremist thoughts. Even newly recruited members can establish connections to networks formed in Syria and Iraq, local networks in their respective area or insurgent movements which have in some cases existed since the colonial times.

The evolvement of the threat itself, the *modus operandi* and the networks call for greater efforts at all levels if countries want to prevent and counter violent extremism successfully and sustainably. To counter the terrorist threat both in the physical and virtual worlds, governments and their partners should move from counter-terrorism cooperation to collaboration. Such collaboration has to happen domestically and internationally, horizontally and vertically. It has to be done among different security and law enforcement agencies, with non-state stakeholders from civil society, the business sector and citizens alike. This is often easier said than done, as distrust, unclear divisions of tasks and responsibilities, different working cultures as well as a preference to not share sensitive information hinder the implementation. Yet, political dialogue, exchange of experiences, joint training, establishment of common databases, and holistic programmes addressing all relevant fields of violent extremism can help to facilitate smoother collaboration. Increasingly, the partnership between government and civil society organisations in the rehabilitation of terrorist inmates and detainees is vital. For instance, the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) has been working with the Religious Rehabilitation Group in Singapore and shared their comprehensive rehabilitation model comprising of six modes – religious, social, vocational, educational, creative arts and psychological – with governments in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

With this book, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) provide insights into various fields of collaboration in Asia and Europe. The experts discuss recent developments in both regions with regard to the threat perception and how resilience as well as prevention can be increased by understanding the lone actor concept, narratives, the role of educational institutions as recruitment grounds and the need for human rights to prevail. The final chapter takes a closer look at the improvement of collaboration in the fields of law en-

forcement, border management, detection of radicalisation, promotion of disengagement, de-radicalisation and rehabilitation.

This book is part of the joint “Asia-Europe Counter-Terrorism Dialogue” project of the KAS Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia and ICPVTR at RSIS through which the institutes promote exchange and understanding among leading experts and practitioners in the field of counter-terrorism and violent extremism.



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The Philippines after Marawi

Ma. Concepcion B. Clamor

The “Liberation of Marawi”

On 16 October 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte declared the city of Marawi “liberated” after five months of urban combat. A few days later, on 23 October, Philippine Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana declared that “security forces had cleared the last militants from the city.” The siege left hundreds of government forces and hundreds more militants dead, including Abu Sayaff leader Isnilon Hapilon and at least one of the major leaders of the Maute group.¹ Moreover, according to Task Force Bangon Marawi, it is estimated that the city sustained US\$1 billion to US\$2 billion in damages, which will require numerous funding allocations and construction contracts to repair.²

Seven months later, it could be said that “liberating” Marawi resulted in a significant peace dividend for the Philippine government—the president somehow still maintains high ratings in southern Philippines and the local Moro leaders continue to support security forces in maintaining peace and order in the area. Nonetheless, the militant threat in southern Philippines persists and the underlying grievances providing impetus to militancy have remained unresolved.

It remains uncertain as to how long the goodwill generated by the militants’ defeat will endure and the unsteady peace currently prevailing in Mindanao will be tested in the next few months. The underlying security trends playing out in the area as security forces were eliminating

* This paper was submitted on 5 June 2018.

¹ <http://www.ubquirer.net/News-Info-Inquirer.Net>, 23 Oct 2017.

² Task Force Bangon Marawi was created by the Duterte administration via Administrative Order No. 3; it is composed of various government agencies working together towards the recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation of Marawi City.

the militants in Marawi City remain in place.³ Additionally, in southern Philippines, one of the most fertile sources of recruitment is among those who have lost relatives in the fighting, especially the children of “martyrs” or other surviving family members. Moreover, the demonstration of military strength by these Daesh-linked groups will inspire those who are susceptible to recruitment. Southern Philippines will continue to be vulnerable to the challenges of armed conflicts and violent extremism because of the many issues on self-determination as well as demands for increased autonomy and even independence, despite progress being made on the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). These issues may even outlive Daesh. The Marawi incident also further gives credence to Daesh’s call in a video posted in June last year—that extremists who could not travel to Syria or Iraq could go to Mindanao to wage jihad.⁴

In a speech during the Philippine Army Special Command (SOCOM) Anniversary on 28 May 2018, Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana told the troops that they should prepare for a possible repeat of the Marawi siege in “another city” in the country. Secretary Lorenzana admitted that more foreign terrorists were reported to have entered Mindanao and warned that the troops would again be called upon later or “maybe immediately”. He added, “It is not far-fetched that one of these days they (Daesh-inspired militants) will again hold another city for quite some time.”⁵

The Continuing Threat of Daesh in The Philippines: Groups and Personalities

Although Isnilon Hapilon, the Maute brothers and most of the terrorists involved in the Marawi attack have been eliminated, notorious local and foreign terrorists—who could inspire and re-energize Daesh supporters, the Abu Sayaff Group (ASG) and other terrorist groups and personalities—remain at large. The list includes Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) combatants. As of this reporting, Daesh-inspired groups continue to recruit in several towns in Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, South Cotabato

³ Ben West, “Could Jihadist Militants in the southern Philippines Make a Comeback?,” *Stratfor*, 24 April 2018.

⁴ Steven Rood, *Marawi and Beyond: A Look at Violent Extremism*, The Asia Foundation, 28 June 2017.

⁵ <http://www.dnd.gov.ph/May 2018/press-releases.html>.

and Basilan. Moreover, the arrests last December of 15 Malaysians and Indonesians in Sabah and Sandakan who were poised to join the Daesh-linked local terrorist groups in southern Philippines reinforced assessments that the Marawi siege will continue to inspire and attract local and foreign fighters, particularly Southeast Asians, to join their jihad in Mindanao.

The Abu Sayaff Group

The Philippines is home to the militant group ASG, which operates along the Sulu archipelago. Its members continue to harass security forces at about the same rate as they did before and during the Marawi City siege. The death of Isnilon Hapilon, one of its leaders who played a major role in the siege of Marawi, may “weaken” the group for some time but the ASG is hard to defeat. The splintering of the group into factions a few years after its creation and the fact that the ASG has no central leadership and no hierarchical organisation and mostly operates in ad hoc arrangements render it difficult to operate against.⁶ While most of Hapilon’s faction is assumed to have fought in Marawi, the number of ASG members who participated in the siege is unknown. However, a significant number of ASG’s estimated 400 members stayed behind in their maritime strongholds.

Despite making headway against the ASG, the armed forces has yet to expel the group from the Sulu archipelago, where they continue to carry out kidnappings and piracy attacks that have periodically hampered trade in the area. Joint patrols by the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia have pre-empted these activities in the last few months, but hundreds of militants are still entrenched on the islands of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. Over the years, however, the ASG has been able to regroup and “pick up the pieces” after losing leaders and fighters in battle. Nonetheless, it may not be easy for the ASG to recover in the aftermath of the Marawi siege; the group may be out of commission for months or even years to come. Nevertheless, based on its track record, the ASG will eventually be able to return in one form or another.⁷

⁶ Michael Hart, “Is Abu Sayaff Really Defeated?,” *The Diplomat*, 23 November 2017.

⁷ Ben West, “After the Siege of Marawi, Another Fight Plays Out,” republished from *Stratfor*, 26 October 2017, econintersect.com.

After Marawi, it is highly likely that the ASG will go back to its previous state, an alliance of loosely linked factions and cells whose terrorist activities are triggered by a combination of ideological, criminal and financial motivations. Nonetheless, there is always the distinct possibility that ASG factions inspired by Daesh and its jihadist narrative may join other radical groups anew to plot terror attacks in major cities. Despite the death of Isnilon Hapilon, there are still other commanders who may be willing and able to take on the mantle of leading the group once more on a jihadist mission.

The Maute Group

According to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the remnants of local armed groups with ties to Daesh have scattered into 10 subgroups since their defeat in Marawi. The Maute- Daesh group (The US refers to them as “ISIS Philippines” and designated the organisation as a foreign terrorist group.) has more than 300 fighters remaining. They are thought to be keeping a low profile but continue to retrain and recruit new members.⁸

The Philippine military also said that remnants of the Maute-Daesh group are operating farther north in Lanao del Sur in the rural areas outside Marawi City, including in Basilan, Sulu and even Palimbang in Sultan Kudarat. Brigadier General Bienvenido Datuin, the Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson, on 6 March 2018, said that there was still a possibility of increased terrorist activity in Mindanao and that the security forces were taking all reports of militant groups in the country very seriously. His statement came in the wake of reports that remnants of the Maute group who escaped before the military retook Marawi City in October 2017 were “regrouping, retraining and recruiting for another attack”. Lieutenant General Rolando Bautista, the Philippine Army Chief, earlier said that militants who had escaped the battle in Marawi with huge sums of cash looted from homes were using the funds to recruit new members and re-arm, and to possibly stage similar attacks.

The Philippine Army also pointed out that Maute remnants broke into smaller groups, with some slipping to Manila to carry out bombings. In early March, joint military and police teams arrested Abdul Nasser Lomondot,

⁸ Carmela Fonbuena, “Maute-ISIS Remnants Scatter into 10 sub-groups-Philippine military,” rappler.com, 5 March 2018.

a sub-leader of the Maute group in Manila. Lomondot was reportedly involved in violent activities perpetrated by the militant group, including the planning of the Marawi siege. He was arrested with fellow Maute member Rizasalam Lomondot.⁹

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters

The BIFF may emerge as Daesh's new standard bearer in the region if only by default. Because only a small number of BIFF members participated in the Marawi siege, with the majority of its combatants instead focused on conducting attacks mostly on its home turf in Mindanao, the BIFF was able to conserve its manpower and thus its ability to carry on with the fight.¹⁰ Over the past month, BIFF fighters under Ismael Abdulmalik alias Abu Turaife (who was initially said to be a strong contender to take over from Isnilon Hapilon as the Daesh emir) have tried to raise the Daesh flag over various locations in Maguindanao province.¹¹

With the dispersal of the Maute group during the battle of Marawi City, the BIFF has emerged to be Mindanao's most active militant group with Daesh ties. Its area of operation is concentrated in Maguindanao province, situated between Davao and Cotabato City. The group, with an estimated 200 to 300 members, has carried out regular attacks against security forces. On 11 March this year, government troops killed some 10 BIFF members but two weeks later, the militants responded with an attack on a police station.¹²

Despite military defeats and other setbacks, the BIFF continues to pose a threat in Maguindanao and surrounding provinces. While the BIFF prefers to operate in more rural areas, given the proximity of its area of operation to city centres like Davao and Cotabato, an attack against those cities is highly likely. In the post-Marawi climate of heightened threat awareness, the recent increase in BIFF's activities has garnered renewed attention not only in the Philippines but across the wider region as well. Yet the group has been around for almost 10 years and has long been

⁹ Ellie Aben, "Philippines on alert for attack by pro-Daesh Militants," *Arab News*, 6 March 2018.

¹⁰ Ben West, "After the Siege of Marawi".

¹¹ Bong Sarmento, "ISIS alive and Well in the Philippines," *Asia Times*, 12 March 2018.

¹² "23 IS-Affiliated Groups Operating in Southern Philippines," *asiancorrespondent.com*, 19 April 2018.

implicated in high-profile attacks, notably the Mamasapano clash of January 2015, which left 44 Special Forces soldiers dead and sent shockwaves through the country. The BIFF pledged allegiance to Daesh in late 2014. When the threat from Daesh became visible during the assault on Marawi, the government forces in Mindanao started to consider pledges of allegiance to Daesh by smaller militant groups far more seriously.

The BIFF remains split into three main factions, the largest and most active of which is led by Abu Turaife. Recently, a worrying source of concern is that the military has reported seeing “foreign-looking” combatants fighting alongside BIFF militants in Maguindanao province. This could indicate that terrorist fighters from elsewhere in Southeast Asia may have joined up with the group after the dispersal of the ASG and Maute groups from Marawi. It is possible that surviving Maute group members, including a number of Indonesians and Malaysians, may have joined and bolstered the BIFF’s ranks. At present, the BIFF is seemingly the new group of choice for the region’s militants.¹³ It now constitutes the surviving remnants of Daesh in southern Philippines and has taken over the space vacated by the Mautes with a renewed sense of purpose and authority. Defence Secretary Lorenzana also mentioned in a recent speech that local authorities were monitoring the recruitment activities of jihadist groups in Mindanao and were bracing for another Marawi-style attack. Cotabato has been mentioned as a possible second target.¹⁴

Possible Successor to Isnilon Hapilon as Regional Emir of Daesh

After the Marawi siege, several possible successors to Isnilon Hapilon as Daesh regional emir were named by the military as well as other security officials—ranging from 2 up to 21 personalities, mostly Filipinos, but also a couple of Indonesians and Malaysians. Although still unconfirmed to date, the armed forces is looking at Omayda Abdul Najid alias Abu Dar, a sub-leader of the Maute group, as Hapilon’s possible replacement. Abu Dar was one of those who plotted the Marawi attack but was able to flee, together with other Maute members and leaders, with a large amount of money.

¹³ Michael Hart, “BIFF Assumes IS’ Mantle in the Philippines,” *Troubled South Geopolitical Monitor*, 12 February 2018.

¹⁴ DND press releases, dnd.gov.ph, May 2018.

Abu Dar is reported to have connections with foreign terrorists and is now operating with them in Mindanao, providing assistance to local terrorists.¹⁵

In a related development, an Egyptian national named Fehmi Lassqued was arrested on 16 February 2018 by Philippine authorities. He was said to have been attempting to recruit adherents among Muslim families in Manila. On 22 January, a suspected Spanish terrorist named Abdelhakim Labidi Adib was arrested in Basilan, adding to the foreign terrorist numbers in southern Philippines.

Peace Agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

On 18 July 2018, the 28-member bicameral conference committee approved the final version of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), now called the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). On 23 and 24 July, the Senate and the Congress, respectively, ratified the BOL. In a consultation meeting on 29 July at their main camp in Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, MILF leaders sought support for the law ahead of a referendum on the measure, which creates an expanded autonomous region.¹⁶

The law aims to enforce a historic but fragile 2014 peace deal under which the MILF vowed to give up its quest for independence and lay down the weapons of its 30,000 fighters in return for self-rule. Under the new law, a new political entity known as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region would replace the current autonomous region created following a 1996 deal with another rebel group, the Moro National Liberation Forces (MNLF). The Bangsamoro is set to have more power and covers a bigger area.¹⁷

The Commission on Elections has yet to determine the exact date of the referendum but the Office of the Presidential Assistant on Peace Process (OPAPP) is optimistic the Bangsamoro Organic Law will be ratified by the Bangsamoro people. It is expected that upon the ratification of the Law, targeted to be in December this year, 30% of the MILF forces will undergo the decommissioning process. The plebiscite will also decide what regions exactly will constitute the autonomous region although it is

¹⁵ Strategic Intelligence Service, *Philippine Military Identifies and in Pursuit of ISIS Leader in Southeast Asia popularly known as Abu Dar*, 27 May 2018.

¹⁶ News.abs-cbn.com/focus/07/28/18/ph.muslims-hope-law-to-bring-dream-of-peace.

¹⁷ www.iag.org.ph/index.php/1485-read-bangsamoro-basic-law/2018.

likely to extend beyond the current ARMM borders of Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi provinces.¹⁸

Amidst the prevailing optimism, both the government and the MILF acknowledge that there are still hurdles that need to be overcome, like details that still remain to be worked out, e.g., the implementation of the decommissioning of MILF forces; or what regions exactly will constitute the autonomous region that will be decided by the plebiscite—this was a key issue during the negotiations as to which political entity will control strategic areas such as the Sulu Sea and Moro Gulf.

Rehabilitation

The battle for Marawi caused more than 360,000 displaced civilians who have little or nothing and nowhere to return to as the city now “resembles a pile of rubble”. The devastation that resulted from the “all-out” war against the terrorists and now the difficulty of rebuilding its people, communities and institutions may be exploited by Daesh to the hilt to fuel discontent and drive vulnerable civilians towards violent extremism.

While Marawi’s “liberation” was declared in October last year, the prolonged challenge of reconstruction, recovery and rehabilitation is as important as the battle itself. Most of the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons affected by the fighting have now become long-term refugees, creating security protection issues in evacuation centres and promoting extremism in vulnerable populations. In a move geared towards addressing the persistent threat of radicalisation and preventing a Marawi repeat, the government established the inter-agency Task Force Bangon Marawi to coordinate the joint civilian-military response needed for post-conflict issues.

The government also faces post-conflict community-building difficulties, with the armed forces seemingly losing the communications and propaganda battle. Despite allegations that the militants used women and children as human shields, as well as the fact that their use of improvised explosives devices caused significant damage to the city, the post-conflict narrative has not been handled effectively. The government has in effect failed to impart a counter-narrative and to educate, inform

¹⁸ <https://peace.gov.ph/uploads2018/BBI-Primer>.

and communicate with refugees, who have slowly shifted the blame for their predicament from the enemy to the government. The poor handling of these accusations of the use of excessive force by the military has presented an opportunity for insurgents to manipulate the discontent of the populace.

The economic and institutional recovery in Marawi, where years of corrupt law enforcement had led to weak governance, is equally challenging. Moreover, the only functioning informal sector of the economy had been “underground”, based on trafficking of illegal drugs and firearms, and kidnapping for ransom and other illegal activities which run parallel to the activities of violent extremist groups. There will be a need to work closely with the local clan leaders; but while such collaboration should reap benefits for the citizens of Marawi, it will, ironically, undermine the power of those very clan leaders. Post-conflict rehabilitation efforts will require substantial institutional development, including law enforcement and delivery of goods and services for the citizenry, to avoid a return to a volatile security situation.¹⁹

Regional Cooperation

The Marawi debacle is a wake-up call for Southeast Asia’s security forces, particularly its counter-terrorism authorities. The Marawi siege has been popularly labelled by terrorist experts as a “game changer”. The militants’ seizure of Marawi points to the complicated and homegrown capacity of the Islamic terrorist threat in Southeast Asia and emphasises the need for a more coordinated security approach. The continued inability of regional governments to address the drivers of conflict that resulted in the seizure of Marawi exposes other Southeast Asian states to similar terrorist attacks.²⁰

One of the major worries of regional governments was that the defeat of Daesh in Syria and Iraq would signal the return of fighters from the region to their homelands. However, the Marawi siege illustrated that there are other factors, such as unresolved grievances, that could generate

¹⁹ Samuel J. Cox, *The Philippines: After the Fighting in Marawi*. Australian Institute of International Affairs, 19 March 2018.

²⁰ “ISIS Looks to Rebound in the Philippines and Spread,” Cipher Brief and Analysis, 1 March 2018.

greater potential for violence than a few returning or relocating foreign fighters. The major leaders of the Marawi attack, Isnilon Hapilon and Omar Maute, never went to fight in Syria. Moreover, the foreign fighters in Marawi did not come from Syria but instead flew from Indonesia and Malaysia to Mindanao.

Owing to this prevailing security scenario, there is a need to strengthen existing mechanisms of coordination and collaboration between affected countries, which are mostly members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). While such mechanisms do exist, the effective operationalisation of these instrumentalities is held back by the strong tendency of these governments to avoid “intervention” by other countries. Political analysts have pointed out that ASEAN needs to find a way to prevail over the doctrine of non-interference and develop a capacity to conduct joint security operations.²¹ More importantly, concrete actions must be undertaken to harmonize laws and procedures and increase inter-operability and inter-agency points of contact. Meanwhile, the trilateral security cooperation between the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia has significantly reduced violent terrorist activities within the countries’ tri-border. Nonetheless, there is still much room for improvement as this arrangement has yet to engender concrete actions and results on the ground, where it matters most.

Countering Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asian countries have a long history of initiative programmes that are in synch with Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), which includes countering, preventing, responding to and addressing violent extremism through non-kinetic and preventive efforts. With governments increasingly recognising the need to invest in prevention and community-based approaches, the CVE agenda is designed to focus on preventing all forms of ideologically based extremist violence by addressing individuals at risk of radicalisation and recruitment.²² Countering terrorism and violent extremism is a main concern for the Southeast Asian region, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines.

²¹ “After Marawi, No Room for Complacency,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, 27 January 2018

²² Sydney Jones, *Understanding and Countering Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia*, European University Lecture, 31 January 2018.

For the Philippines, a comprehensive CVE is still on the drawing board. There have been various initiatives towards this end by different groups and government agencies but none has so far been effectively promulgated. In the meantime, existing CVE efforts are limited to ad hoc measures, e.g., programmes to recover loose firearms as part of an AFP program in Western Mindanao; a joint AFP-PNP Civil Relations Committee project on national Youth Leadership Summit and National Indigenous Peoples' (IP) Leadership summit conducted early this year. The Philippines has also implemented a counter-radicalization programme called "Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan" (PAMANA) or Resilient Communities in Conflict-Affected Communities. PAMANA is the government's programme on conflict resolution and development throughout the country and has launched programmes that provide social protection for former combatants and their next of kin as well as support to IP and other marginalized groups.²³

For decades, the Philippine military and the police forces have led government efforts in dealing with terrorism and extremist groups. Taking effect in 2007, Republic Act 9372, also known as "Act to Secure the State and Protect our People from Terrorism" or the "Human Security Act", which acts as a form of counter-extremism legislation in the Philippines, criminalises and defines terrorism and other terms applicable under the law as an accomplice or accessory. This Act created the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC), the lead agency in implementing the Act. President Duterte assigned the ATC the tasks of providing guidance to counter-terrorism agencies and crafting a viable CVE programme, which to date, unfortunately, has not been finalised.²⁴ At present, there are concerns that CVE initiatives will face more fiscal and budgetary constraints due to the demands of the rehabilitation of Marawi. CVE programmes may, for the time being, take a backseat to give way to reconstruction.

²³ <https://peace.gov.ph/2016/payapa.masaganang.pamayanan/pamana///>.

²⁴ Counter Extremism Project 2017, *The Philippines: Extremism and Counter-Extremism*.

Ma. Concepcion B. Clamor retired in June 2017 as the Deputy Director General of the Philippines' National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, a position she held for over four years. Prior to this, she was the Agency Assistant Director General for Production (Research and Analysis) for more than 20 years. Ms. Clamor has been a resource person/speaker on Strategic Issues, Counter-Terrorism, Regional Security Challenges, Terrorism in the Asia Pacific and the Philippines, and other regional issues. Ms Clamor is currently involved in various projects on Countering/Preventing Violent Extremism (C/PVE) in the Philippines.

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Indonesia: The Emerging Daesh-Centric Threat Landscape

Sulastiana

Introduction

In the lead-up to Ramadan, 17 May-14 June 2018, the month of mercy and compassion, Indonesia suffered a season of terror. Indonesia's changing threat landscape was evident in the repertoire of six terrorist-related events that occurred during that period – a 40-hour riot in prison by inmates of terrorism in Kelapa Dua, Depok, near Jakarta, starting on 8 May; the stabbing and killing of a police officer at the Mobile Intelligence Unit in Depok on 10 May; three church attacks combined with a failed bombing and an attack on the police headquarters (HQ) in Surabaya on 13 and 14 May; and a knife attack and running over of a police officer at the Riau police HQ in Pekanbaru on 16 May. While Daesh provided general guidance on the tactics and targets, the attacks were perpetrated by Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), a Southeast Asian branch of Daesh.

Without exception, either the masterminds or perpetrators were known to the authorities but due to Indonesia's previous counter-terrorism legislation – The Law No. 15/2003 – the threats could not be pre-empted. As the support and operational infrastructure of Daesh is still intact, the new counter-terrorism law – the law (Criminal Act of Terrorism No. 5/2018) was passed on 25 May 2018 – should be followed up by a change of mechanism from cooperation to collaboration. If not, more attacks are inevitable in the coming weeks and months. The new law regulates that it is an offence to pledge support to Daesh leaders, promote Daesh propaganda or

* This paper was submitted on 7 July 2018.

raise funds, and even travel to Daesh theatres – Iraq, Syria, the Philippines and others.

Indonesia hosts a few thousand active Daesh supporters and several hundred Daesh operatives, and many of them have links to over 60 Southeast Asian threat groups that pledged allegiance to Daesh leader Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi. The region has constantly underestimated both the al Qaeda and Daesh threat and has suffered attacks periodically since 2001. With the global expansion of Daesh, the governments have no choice but to work together or watch the region descend to chaos. The leaders should go beyond rhetoric and demonstrate the will to fight back to contain, isolate and eliminate the Daesh threat. Especially since having been voted as a member to United Nations Security Council (COP) 2019-2020 on 8 June 2018, Indonesia can encourage a global and comprehensive approach to combating terrorism, radicalism, and extremism.

The Context

As its battlefield shrinks in its heartland of Iraq and Syria, Daesh has expanded worldwide. Contrary to some governments' assessments that the Daesh phase of terror is ending, Daesh has built a state-of-the-art support and operational infrastructure globally. Motivated by the ideology of Daesh, its wilayats (territories), groups, networks, cells and groups present a long-term threat to the West, Caucasus, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Asia hosts 63% of the world's Muslim population. In Indonesia, the county hosting the largest Muslim population, the threat is in a growing phase. Contrary to assessments, with the enhanced coalition operations in Iraq and Syria, the threat in Southeast Asia, including in Indonesia, has neither plateaued nor declined. Although Indonesia's special police detachment, D88, and anti-bombing task force are very capable, they are numerically small compared to the current and emerging numbers of Daesh sympathisers, supporters and operators.

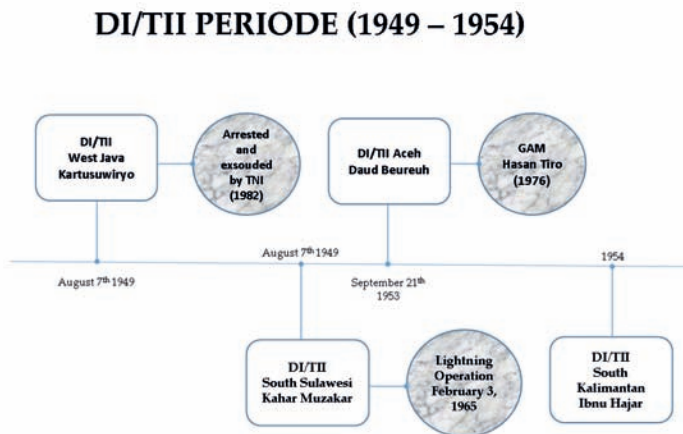
The Daesh threat has proliferated from West Papua to Sumatra despite all efforts by D88 to arrest those preparing attacks. The new Indonesian law includes provisions for the arrest of Daesh/JAD ideologues, propagandists, recruiters, operators and supporters. This is aimed at countering the ideological threat spreading in cyber space and crystallising support and operational cells. The Daesh mastery of technology, especially encryption, constrained governments from detecting some networks, cells and

personalities. Therefore it is necessary to collaborate in order to support comprehensive databases with information obtained by all elements of intelligence, instruments and experts, implement a linear programme and enhance human resource capacities with appropriate legal mechanisms.

Historic Evolution of Islamist Extremism in Indonesia

The genesis of Islamist extremism can be traced back to the year 1942, when Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo led a movement called *Dārul Islām Indūnisiyyā* (DI: Negara Islam Indonesia/NII) to establish an Islamic State. In its first incarnation, DI fought to establish an Islamic State in the period 1949 to 1962 when it was officially dismantled but continued to operate in the underground.

Picture 1: DI/TII PERIOD (1949 – 1954).



The formation of *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) was started by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Baashir in Central Jawa. In 1972 they built the Islamic boarding school Al Mukmin in Ngruki Sukoharjo. Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Baashir influenced and recruited youths through *dakwah* (missionary endeavour) and broadcast. In the year 1979, both men were apprehended and punished according to the subversive law (PNPS Law 1936). Following their release in 1983, both of them escaped in 1985 to Malaysia and built *Madrasah Lukmanul Hakim* in Johor Bahru Malaysia.

The role and activities of its *madrasah* are to prepare and to despatch youths from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore for *tadrihb asy kari*

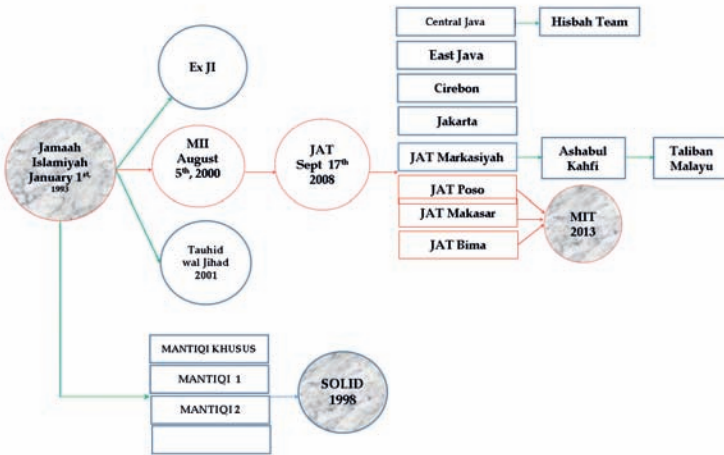
(military training) in Afghanistan. The training was a joint cooperation between Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Baashir with radical figures of Afghanistan like Syaikh Abdulah Azzam and Syaikh Rasul Sayyat – both of whom took part in the anti-Soviet Afghan Mujahidin campaign (1979-1989). In the early 1990s, NII split due to differences between the groups of Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Baashir, and Ajengan Masduki.

On 1 January 1993, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Baashir officially formed JI, with Abdulah Sungkar serving as JI's amir until 1999. JI was next led by Abu Bakar Baashir. JI carried out a series of attacks in the period 1999-2000 in Indonesia. The leadership of JI has since been taken over by Toriqudin Rusdan (2002-2003), Adung (2003-2005) and Zarkasih (2005-2007). After mounting the attack in Bali that killed 202 people, including 88 Australians, on 12 October 2002, JI transformed into Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI). Although MMI was formed in August 2000, MMI absorbed JI after the Bali bombings. Due to differences of opinion between the MMI leaders Irfan Awaas and Abu Bakar Baashir, the latter left the group and created Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) in July 2008. After the proclamation of the so-called caliphate in 2014, the al Qaeda-centric threat landscape, which had dominated Indonesia, was supplanted by a Daesh-centric threat landscape. As the Daesh ideology has since then spread, this presents a long-term threat to Indonesia and the region.

While serving his sentence in prison, Abu Bakar Baashir joined Aman Abdurrahman and they created Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), today's most powerful Daesh group in Indonesia, in November 2015. Aman mentored Hari Budiman alias Abu Musa to unite several pro-Daesh groups under the JAD umbrella – namely Tawhid Wal Jihad established by Aman himself and FAKSI (Forum Aktivis Syariat Islam: Forum of Activists for Islamic Sharia) led by M. Fachry, operating in the greater Jakarta area. A prolific cleric and translator, Aman was deeply influenced by Abu Mohamed al Maqdisi and Abu Musab al Zarqawi, a founding father of the forerunner of Daesh. In November 2015, Zainal Anshori was appointed as Abu Musa's successor. Following Zainal's arrest, he was succeeded by Abu Qutaibah in mid 2017.¹

¹ cf. "The Terrorist Threat in Indonesia: From Jemaah Islamiyah to the 'Islamic State' and Jamaah Ansharut Daulah and the Terrorist Threat in Indonesia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis*, Volume 10, Issue 6, June 2018, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CTTA-June-2018.pdf>.

Picture 2: Expansion JI.

Jl EXPANSION 1993-2013

JAD also created a military wing known as Askariya and appointed Abu Gar as its head. In January 2016, Abu Gar conducted and coordinated simultaneous attacks in Jakarta.² Based on Daesh guidance from Syria and as advised by Aman's deputy, Iwan Darmawan, he mounted a Paris-style attack in Jakarta on 14 January 2016, targeting both a Starbucks cafe and a police post, killing four and injuring twenty-four.³ Indonesian authorities arrested several hundred JAD directing figures, from its supreme leader, Aman, to his deputy, Rois, JAD Amir's Zainal Anshori and Abu Qutaibah, and its military leader, Abu Gar. But many other JAD leaders, such as Abu Musa, live in Syria and others operate in Indonesia both from within prisons and outside, organising attacks at will.⁴ Led by Bahrumsyah, Katibah Nusantara is Daesh's Bahasa-speaking group that spread its influence from Indonesia and Malaysia to the Philippines. Bahrumsyah is a student of Aman Abdurahman and has links to the leaders of Mujahidin of East

² In an interview from an isolated cell in December 2017, Abu Gar said to Rohan Gunaratna, Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Singapore, "More than half of the trainees travelled to Iraq and Syria starting 2012."

³ <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/indonesian-police-foil-jakarta-attack-hatched-by-militant-on-dea-8704090>.

⁴ Kharishar Kahfi, "Police nab JAD E. Java leader Abu Umar," *The Jakarta Post*, 17 May 2018, <https://www.google.com.sg/amp/www.thejakartapost.com/amp/news/2018/05/17/police-nab-jad-e-java-leader-abu-umar.html>.

Indonesia (MIT), led by Santoso until his death in 2016, and Bahrun Naim, who campaigned together with him in Syria. Katibah Nusantara appears to be being prepared by Bahrumsyah and his network to build a Daesh area in Southeast Asia.⁵

This is what Tom Plate said about Katibah Nusantara:

Katibah Nusantara embodies a direct link between the global ideology of IS and its regional aspirations, much as Jemaah Islamiyah, the Southeast Asian offshoot of al Qaeda, once envisaged returning fighters from Afghanistan providing the battlehardened backbone of the militant advance into Southeast Asia.⁶

Bahrumsyah invites many people to come to Syria through social media. Bahrun Naim, who is Bahrumsyah's associate, also coordinated several bombings in Indonesia, either successfully or not. The threat of Katibah Nusantara is not only aimed at the Indonesian government, but also at the Malaysian government. The threat contains: "If you catch us, we will only increase the number of caliphs (caliph)."⁷

The Siege of the Terrorist Detention Centre

In May 2018, terrorist detainees and convicts took control of the National Police's Mobile Brigade (Mako Brimob) detention centre in Kelapa Dua, Depok, West Java. Mako Brimob Detention Centre, one of Indonesia's maximum security penitentiaries, was besieged by the terrorist detainees and convicts for 40 hours. The facility, located within the Mobile Brigade Corps, housed 155 men and women and one baby. The prison, which was jointly managed by Brimob and D88, held some of the most dangerous inmates,

⁵ Thomas Koruth Samuel, "Radicalisation in Southeast Asia: A Selected Case Study of Daesh in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines," *Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia*, 2016, https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2016/Radicalisation_SEA_2016.pdf, p. 42.

⁶ Tom Plate, "Guest Opinion: Why Indonesia's Secular Society Is Endangered By U.S. Indecision About 'ISIS'," *Asia Media International*, Issue No. 87, November 2015, 18 September 2015, <http://Asiamedia.Lmu.Edu/2015/09/18/Guest-Opinion-Why-Indonesias-Secular-Society-Is-Endangered-By-U-S-Indecision-About-Isis/> (retrieved on 2 December 2015), quoted from Thomas Koruth Samuel, "Radicalisation in Southeast Asia: A Selected Case Study of Daesh in Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines," *Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia*, 2016.

⁷ Thomas Koruth Samuel, "Radicalisation in Southeast Asia: A Selected Case Study of Daesh in Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines," *Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia*, 2016, https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2016/Radicalisation_SEA_2016.pdf, p. 35.

such as the JAD leadership and membership. In addition to the JAD Amir, Abu Qutaibah, other significant leaders included Young Farmer and Anggi Indah Kusuma, who led the Daesh propaganda network out of Hong Kong.

On 8 May, one of the terrorist detainees, the Daesh leader from Pekanbaru, Wawan Kurniawan alias Abu Affif, mobilised the other inmates in Block C over an incident related to the delivery of food from a visitor to an inmate. At around 8 pm, when Wawan incited other inmates to break free, there were eight to thirteen D88 and two to four Brimob personnel on duty. The D88 team, which is a special force, negotiated at the early stage in order to prevent the siege from deteriorating. However, various physical and non-physical environment conditions at the location caused the officers to be unable to control the prisoners. The inmates managed to seize weapons and take six D88 officers hostage. They tortured five of them to death and kept one as a hostage to deter a rescue operation. Additionally, three officers were wounded. The inmates who tortured and murdered the D88 officers took an oath of allegiance to death that night itself. The videos of "baiah to martyrdom" were circulated on their mobile phones and distributed on Daesh Telegram channels. Selamat Dunia Akhirat [stay safe on earth and in heaven] and Al-Hujaraat and Ganti Presiden [Change the President] and Daesh Telegram channels also posted videos of detainees, with their faces covered, armed with weapons they had seized, against the backdrop of a Daesh flag; injured detainees receiving treatment; detainees raising their index fingers, threatening the Indonesian authorities; and detainees assembling weapons. A video focused on a member of Abu Afif's team, Abu Ibrahim, who died of his injuries.⁸ On Telegram, Daesh also discussed plans to attack the Provost building of Brimob to free the JAD leader, Aman Abdurrahman.

Besides increasing personnel and preparing for an attack on the prison, the police also developed a parallel strategy to discuss with Aman Abdurrahman, who was held in isolation in a nearby location but within the Brimob complex, and encouraged network leaders to facilitate dialogue with inmates to end the siege on peaceful terms. This strategy was successful and demonstrated that even Daesh inmates' intervention need not always be lethal. The hardcore inmates guided by Daesh ideology instigated all the detainees and inmates to fight but most of them were

⁸ When Abu Ibrahim was arrested, he was planning to conduct a bomb attack and had recruited suicide attackers.

reluctant to do so. A useful circumstance in this case was the good relationships that have been built up by officers with prisoners. Many feared retaliation from D88 and Brimob personnel because a very small number of detainees and convicts had killed the D88 officers. Nonetheless, the agreement reached assured the attackers that it was in their best interest to end the siege peacefully. The decision of the group to surrender was further strengthened by Aman's fatwa.

The investigation following the incident revealed that the close interaction between the officers and detainees appears to have negatively impacted the former's sensitivity and judgement as they allowed exceptions to the protocol. It shows that prisoners can affect an officer's thought either through ideological means or establishing a personal relationship. The management was also not able to map the situation and study the prisoners as a pre-emptive measure. The potential and tendency of weak supervision and control from the leadership elements in conducting checks on the relevant officers' preparedness in terms of safeguarding technical implementation, especially with regard to terrorist prisoners who have an ideology background, affected the environment and the officers in terms of their discretion with respect to the inmates.

Stabbing a Police Officer to Death

On 10 May 2018, Tendi Sumarno, 23, stabbed 41-year-old Chief Brig. Marhum Prencje of the Mobile Intelligence (IntelMob) unit, before the assailant was shot by a policeman. Marhum was standing guard at the Bhayangkara Police Hospital at around 11 pm when he arrested Tendi, who was acting suspiciously and failed to answer why he was outside the hospital premises. After two officers helped Marhum to arrest the intruder and brought him to the IntelMob police station, Tendi took out a knife that had been kept under his genitals and stabbed Marhum. Whilst attempting to attack another officer, he was shot in the chest and killed. According to D88 investigators, Tendi had joined many Telegram channels and had used Telegram and WhatsApp groups that supported and communicated about Daesh. The attack was apparently inspired by the Mako Brimob riot.

Bombings in Surabaya

In Indonesia, entire families were radicalised into extremism and indoctrinated into violence by Daesh propaganda. Just as with praying, Daesh instilled the belief in men, women and children that it was mandatory for Muslims to kill and die.⁹ Suicide attacks by women and entire families, including children, were unprecedented in Indonesia.

The very first indication of a suicide attack by an Indonesian woman was when Dian Yulia Novi wanted to attack the Presidential Palace in Jakarta in December 2016. This phenomenon was followed by the JAD leaders for Surabaya, Dita Oepriarto, Tri Murtiono, and Anton Ferdiantono, who indoctrinated their own families to stage three attacks, also a first of its case.

In the morning of Sunday, 13 May 2018, the two teenage sons of Oepriarto, aged 16 and 18, drove motorcycles to the St Maria Catholic Church at Ngagel Madya Street in Surabaya, where they detonated bombs at the gate at 7:30 am when a security volunteer prevented their entry. Oepriarto himself drove a van to the Pentecostal Central Church at Arjuno Street, where, from inside the vehicle, he detonated another bomb. Oepriarto's wife, Puji Kuswati, 42, a nurse, and their two daughters, aged nine and twelve, then detonated a bomb at the Diponegoro Indonesian Christian Church. On Sunday evening, another bomb exploded prematurely in the Wonocolo apartments, a low-cost apartment in Sidoarjo, a suburb of Surabaya. Anton Febrianto and his wife, Puspitasari, both 47, and their daughter, 17, were killed in the explosion. Although it was reported that Febrianto had threatened to activate the bomb and that D88 had shot him, he was killed before D88 arrived at the crime scene. Two other injured children, eleven and ten, were taken to hospital by their elder brother, 15. A third family staged a suicide attack on the police HQ in Surabaya at 8:50 am on Monday, 14 May. Tri Murtiono and his wife, Tri Ernawati, and their three children, two sons, 18 and 14, and a daughter, seven, rode two motorbikes. When they detonated their bombs, all died except their daughter, Ais, who was injured and rescued by a police officer. The police recovered

⁹ Charlie Campbell, "ISIS Unveiled: The Story Behind Indonesia's First Female Suicide Bomber," *Time*, 8 March 2017, <https://www.google.com.sg/amp/amp.timeinc.net/time/4689714/indonesia-isis-terrorism-jihad-extremism-dian-yulia-novi-fpi>.

54 pipe bombs in 27 containers at the home of Tri Murtiono. In total, the attacks killed 15 people, the 13 terrorists and injured 57.

The neighbours described the three families as pious but not outwardly radical.¹⁰ They were indoctrinated and socialised through a religious study session, where they watched Daesh videos glorifying violence and death. They limited the exposure of their children by home schooling, and most of them were kept away from Christians and Hindus. To them, serving God was paramount. The three men believed and convinced their families that they too will be rewarded for killing the enemies of god.

This case shows that the Daesh ideology radicalises not only individuals but also families and segments of communities. The Surabaya attacks demonstrated a new development in the terrorist trajectory. *First*, radicalisation of families is a natural progression of self-radicalisation of individuals. If the threat persists, entire communities could be radicalised. *Second*, either the husband or the wife radicalises or compels the family to participate in the terrorist activity or the attack. The belief from either of or both the parents percolates to the children. The children are either indoctrinated or blindly follow parental direction. *Third*, the breadwinner or breadwinners of the family raise the funds and engage in other support activities. The distinction between employing adult male versus female and child fighters is fading. Unless the spread of ideology is contained, the constraint against using entire families will diminish and could very well become a trend. Unless governments work with partners to counter the Daesh ideology, the Daesh subcultures will grow and expand with mass suicide attacks.

Riau Police Headquarters Attack

The multiple suicide bombings in Surabaya were followed by another attack in Pekanbaru, Sumatra where terrorists staged a ramming, knife and suicide bomb attack. In a minivan, the Riau Perpetrators (who were influenced by JAD/Daesh) struck the Riau Regional Police headquarters on Wednesday, 16 May 2018. After ramming the minivan into the police station at high speed, the attackers used katanas (swords) to attack the police.

¹⁰ Kate Lamb, "The bombers next door: how an Indonesian family turned into suicide attackers," *Guardian*, 19 May 2018, <https://www.google.com.sg/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/19/indonesia-blasts-surabaya-family-from-good-neighbours-suicide-bombers>.

One of the attackers wore a suicide belt. After a few of the attackers were gunned down, one attacker fled. The attack left one police officer dead, and two police officers and two journalists injured. The suspect who escaped was later apprehended. Mursalim (48), Suwardi (29), Adi Sufiyan (23), Suparman alias Daud (37) and Pogang (23, death) were residents of Dumai, north of Pekanbaru,¹¹ and members of the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII). The Daesh news agency, Amaq, claimed the attack. The four men and two others, who were previously arrested, had originally planned to take part in the Mako Brimob attack. While they were not part of JAD, they all had pledged alliance to Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi and belonged to the Daesh network.¹²

The NII network itself is a derivative of the DI that was created by Kartosoewiryo. Although the NII movement is not like JI or JAD, it also recognised the Caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The network is never clear and the leaders are never necessarily known because they make moves in their respective regions.

A New Law on Terrorism and Its Implementation

The 2018 revision of the Terrorism Act makes many changes with regard to criminal law, containing 10 new articles, 9 changes of articles, and 1 article of abolition. It penalizes the ownership, trade and distribution of weapons/explosives/components for terrorist acts (Article 10A), recruitment of terrorism members (Article 12A), financing of terrorism and hate speech that leads to terrorism (Article 15A). It also allows the issuing ministry to cancel the perpetrator's passport and withdraw the perpetrator's citizenship. On the formal procedural side, among others, the new law extends the powers of authorities to arrest suspects up to 21 days (Article 28), to examine witnesses for long-distance communication (Articles 32 and 34A) and to protect law enforcement (Article 33). In fact, the revision is not always guided by the addition or subtraction of articles on the Terrorism Act, but rather by the basic principles driving the revision of the Act and its objectives, namely national policies and strategies against terrorism.

¹¹ Densus 88 Data, 2018.

¹² "Riau Police Attackers IS Supporters But not JAD: Police," *Jakarta Post*, 16 May 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/16/riau-police-attackers-is-supporters-but-not-jad-police.html>.

With regard to such changes, one of the enforcement phases during which stakeholders can collaborate is intelligence. The following is a collaborative model that can be achieved without neglecting the main tasks and functions of each institution.

Picture 3: Task Advisory.



Figure 4: Model of Collaboration.



Conclusion

The high number of attacks and counter-attacks throughout Indonesia demonstrate the extent of the emerging threats. The Ramadan period (17 May-14 June 2018) saw the highest terrorist threat level after Daesh struck three types of targets – government authorities such as the police, Christian and Western interests.

The attack by the Kelapa Dua terrorist prisoners shows that the strength of terror groups is still significant, that they effectively network and continue to pose a threat despite being detained. This event reminds all parties not to compromise with radicalism and terrorism as it threatens the security and ideology of the nation, and not to use ordinary standards

when dealing with terrorist prisoners because they are a high-risk category and need special handling. In this respect, the government should provide more support for improving prisons for people who have committed serious crimes. The case of the prison siege also highlights the importance of proper management of detention facilities as it can help to detect possible threats early, increase the preparedness of guards and ensure proper planning to avoid incidents which can be misused by terrorists.

In the future, there is a need for collaboration among stakeholders on handling terrorism, especially intelligence elements to strengthen law enforcement and deradicalisation. In addition to hard approaches of law enforcement, soft approaches need to be in place to guarantee human rights. As the Indonesian law enforcement, military and security and intelligence services are preparing to counter a spike in terror attacks, the new terrorism law provides them with opportunities to encourage counter-terrorism collaboration through public databases, a variety of instruments and expert support, joint exercises and operations, and legal guarantees.

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Impact of the Rohingya Crisis on the Threat Landscape at the Myanmar-Bangladesh Border

Iftekhharul Bashar

Though the Rohingya crisis is rooted in history, its contemporary manifestations have far-reaching impact on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. This restive borderland, located at the northern coast of the Bay of Bengal, is at risk of becoming a new breeding ground for violent extremism. Myanmar's treatment of its Rohingya Muslim minority is the key factor behind the crisis. In 2017 alone, over 6,700 Rohingyas were killed in a controversial military operation. More than 700,000 Rohingyas became refugees and crossed the border into Bangladesh to join about half a million Rohingyas from previous influxes. Rohingyas today constitute one of the largest refugee populations in Asia. This paper aims to map the impact of the crisis while focusing on the threat landscape. The plight of the Rohingyas has evoked strong emotions in the Muslim world which have attracted Daesh and Al Qaeda's attention.

Despite living in what is today's Buddhist-majority Myanmar for centuries, Rohingya Muslims are not recognised as citizens of Myanmar and are largely regarded as outsiders due to ethno-linguistic and cultural differences as well as political reasons. Lack of recognition¹ and legal status limits the Rohingya community's freedom of movement, access to education and other basic human rights. It also makes them vulnerable to racial abuse, structural discrimination, and ethnic violence and creates a fertile ground for their radicalisation. Drawing on available literature, credible reports, review of extremist publications available in the public

* This paper was submitted on 2 August 2018.

¹ The paper uses the theoretical prism of Axel Honneth's idea of *Anerkennung*, meaning recognition. For details, see Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996.

domain, and interviews conducted in Bangladesh and Myanmar, the paper argues that unless the crisis is resolved in a sustainable manner there is a high possibility of a complex and long-drawn-out insurgency along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border and an expansion of a crime-terror nexus in the region.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section gives an overview of the Rohingya crisis, including a brief historical background and its current and emerging manifestation. The second section explains the impact of the Rohingya crisis on the threat landscape at the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. The section critically examines both the local and transnational threats and cautions that a prolonged crisis may create new opportunities for transnational terrorist groups to turn the borderland into a new jihadist battleground. The third section explains how the crisis is possibly contributing to the growth of transnational crime such as narcotics smuggling and human smuggling and to the growth of a crime-terror nexus. The fourth section locates the key areas of bilateral, regional and international cooperation and collaboration on security and provides a set of policy recommendations.

A Protracted Crisis

The Rohingya crisis is the continuation of a post-colonial conflict that still simmers today.² The question of Rohingya identity and quest for recognition remains central to this conflict. Rohingyas are an ethnic Muslim minority living in western Myanmar's Rakhine state (formerly known as Arakan). The community is mostly concentrated in the northern part of the state, bordering Bangladesh, as a result of which there is a linguistic similarity as well as kinship ties.³ Being geographically separated from the rest of Myanmar by the *Arakan Yoma* (Arakan Mountain range), Rakhine state has historically been connected to its western neighbour, what now constitutes Bangladesh. During the pre-colonial period and most of the colonial era, Arakan was a vibrant, plural and syncretic space where various

² For details on Rohingya history, see Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*, Lexington Books, 2002.

³ During the early 1960s, the area was called Mayu frontier district. It included the Rohingya majority townships, namely Maungdaw, Buthidaung Township, and Rathedaung Township.

cultures and religions interacted. One of the key results of the interaction was the development of a Muslim-majority enclave in north Arakan under royal patronage in the late sixteenth century. The Rohingyas are not a monolithic community; rather, most of them have mixed-ancestry, owing to Arakan's trade linkages with the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia.⁴

After the independence of Burma (it was not Myanmar then) the relationship between the north-Arakanese Muslims or Rohingya Muslims and their Buddhist counterparts went through various phases of conflict but was never properly managed. Post-colonial Arakan saw various Rohingya political movements, often with armed wings, for various degrees of autonomy. Eventually, a series of armed rebellions led to some concessions by the democratic regime of Prime Minister U Nu.⁵ Establishing the Mayu Frontier administration is a case in point. Since the 1962 military take-over, the Rohingyas' struggle for recognition was seen with suspicion as a possible form of separatism and was dealt with through use of hard-power. In 1964 Rohingya Independence Front (RIF) was established with the goal of creating an autonomous Muslim zone for the Rohingya people. In 1969 RIF changed its name to Rohingya Independence Army (RIA) and in 1973 it became the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF was largely an ethno-nationalist group fighting for their rights and their military capability was limited. But nevertheless its quest for autonomy was seen by the Ne Win administration as an attempt to secession. This mismanaged conflict eventually led to systematic state-led alienation and de-territorialisation of the Rohingyas. For example, the state first started to deny Rohingyas their identity by portraying them as foreigners, and in 1978, Myanmar launched a military operation known as Operation Nagamin (Operation Dragon King), which killed thousands of Rohingyas and expelled 200,000-250,000 Rohingyas, who took shelter in neighbouring Bangladesh.⁶

In 1982, Myanmar adopted a highly discriminatory Citizenship law that does not recognise the Rohingyas as one of the ethnic minorities, which

⁴ Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas: Responses of the State, Society and the International Community*, Dhaka: The University Press Ltd, 2010.

⁵ There is a long list of groups that emerged and splintered during this period. The groups include The Mujahideen Movement, Rohingya Liberation Party (RLP)/Rohingya Liberation Army (RLA), and Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF).

⁶ Carl Skutch, *Encyclopaedia of the World's Minorities*, London: Routledge, p. 128.

further stripped Rohingyas of their rights as equal citizens and made them stateless. The sense of statelessness, exclusion and deprivation led to a new identity based on religion and attracted the attention of the Islamist charities for relief and resettlement. The Rohingya Patriotic Front dissolved by mid 1980s, as two organizations with more Islamist character emerged in succession. The Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) was established in 1982 and Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF) in 1986. The RSO remained active in Bangladesh until the mid-2000s. The group used Cox's Bazar as its base. The group was also active in Karachi, Pakistan. RSO possessed a significant arsenal of light machine-guns, AK-47 assault rifles, RPG-2 rocket launchers, claymore mines and explosives.⁷ In 1998 a defecting faction of the RSO and remnants of Rohingya Patriotic Front formed the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO). ARNO was formed to organize all the different armed groups into one group. The group was operating in Cox's Bazar and had presence in several parts of Chittagong division of Bangladesh. ARNO had an armed wing named Rohingya National Army (RNA). RNA developed ties with various elements fighting Myanmar's armed forces. The group has also collaborated with a Rakhine Buddhist separatist organization named the Arakan Army (AA) and the alliance lasted till 2001.

Another major exodus was recorded in 1991, when over 250,800 Rohingyas from Rakhine state took refuge in Bangladesh, which left them at the mercy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).⁸ Though many Rohingyas were sent back to Myanmar after an intense bilateral negotiation, many came back to Bangladesh as the situation in Rakhine state was not safe for them and Rohingyas faced severe systematic discrimination. Human smuggling surged and hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas started to leave for the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Until recently, there has not been any major mass exodus of Rohingyas since 1993, but the community continued to live in sub-human conditions in Rakhine state without basic rights such as education and healthcare. Over the years, Buddhist ultra-nationalism surfaced and became more

⁷ Bertil Lintner, Bangladesh: Extremist Islamist Consolidation, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article1.htm>.

⁸ C.R. Abrar, "Repatriation of Rohingya Refugees", <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs/Abrar-repatriation.htm>.

visible during Myanmar's cautious strides towards democracy, marked by political reforms and a renewed peace negotiation with the Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs). Though Myanmar took a reconciliatory approach towards almost all the EAGs, the Rohingyas were side-lined and continued to face discrimination. Decades of military rule and economic mismanagement turned Rakhine state into one of the poorest states of Myanmar, resulting in the growth of anti-Rohingya rhetoric which saw Rohingyas as "foreigners" with ambitions to secede from Myanmar.

The anti-Rohingya rhetoric, coupled with Islamophobia, made Rakhine state more volatile and as a result, 2012 saw a new wave of communal violence. The violence left 57 Rohingyas dead and displaced 100,000.⁹ Many Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh, though it was unprepared and unwilling to receive new refugees, as the country was already burdened with half a million Rohingyas from previous influxes since 1978. Human smuggling swelled again; this time, through the maritime route, and in hundreds of boats bound for Malaysia and Indonesia. Myanmar was criticised by the international community but this made no difference on the ground. The Rohingya crisis continued. Myanmar did establish an investigation committee but this did not change the policy towards recognising the Rohingya community or ensuring their rights. The first Rakhine Inquiry Commission was established on 17 August 2012 under the authority of the then President Thein Sein's Executive Order to discover the root causes of communal violence and provide recommendations for the prevention of recurrence of violence in the future and the promotion of peaceful coexistence.¹⁰ This inquiry commission's report failed to bring about meaningful change as Myanmar could not resolve the root causes of the conflict. After Aung San Suu Kyi came to power there were some more initiatives. In September 2016, following a request from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor of Myanmar, the Kofi Annan Foundation and the Office of the State Counsellor established an Advisory Commission on Rakhine state. The Commission is a national entity and the majority of its members are from Myanmar. It was mandated to examine the complex challenges

⁹ Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Government of the Union of Myanmar, 21 August 2012, [https://www.webcitation.org/6Bj9aSWM5?url=http://www.mofa.gov.mm/pressrelease/Press_Release_Rakhine_State_Affairs_Webversion\(21-08-12\).pdf](https://www.webcitation.org/6Bj9aSWM5?url=http://www.mofa.gov.mm/pressrelease/Press_Release_Rakhine_State_Affairs_Webversion(21-08-12).pdf).

¹⁰ Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/Rakhine_Commission_Report-en-red.pdf.

facing Rakhine state and to propose answers to those challenges.¹¹ Though the Kofi Annan Commission came up with some practical solutions and presented its final report in August 2017, by that time a little-known organisation name Harkat al Yaqeen (Faith Movement) had surfaced under the leadership of Ataullah abu Ammar Jununi, a Rohingya born in Karachi, Pakistan who grew up in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The group renamed itself as Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and claimed to be fighting for the rights of the Rohingyas. ARSA, in its video messages, claimed that it was “not a terrorist group” and that it “does not have any links with any terrorist groups from anywhere in the world.”¹² Despite its claim the group seems to have adopted terrorism as a tactic to gain recognition. The group took responsibility for attacks on Myanmar border posts in October 2016 which left nine border officers and four soldiers dead. The following counter-offensive caused 87,000 Rohingyas to flee to Bangladesh. In this already tense situation, ARSA launched a coordinated attack on 30 police posts in Rakhine state on 25 August 2017, killing 12 security personnel.¹³ The ensuing counter-insurgency campaign left 6,700 Rohingyas dead and 700,000 were forced to leave Myanmar and took shelter across the border in Bangladesh. The Central Committee for Counter Terrorism of Myanmar, in a statement published on 25 August 2017, declared the armed attackers and ARSA as terrorist groups in accordance with the Counter-Terrorism Law of the country.¹⁴ Bangladeshi sources believe ARSA was behind the May 2016 killing of a paramilitary commander and looting of 11 arms from the Shalbagan Ansar barrack near a Rohingya camp in Mochni area under Teknaf upazila of Cox’s Bazar district. Some of these weapons were probably used by ARSA for its operations in Myanmar. When ARSA was chased out of Myanmar they dropped their weapons on the Bangladeshi side of

¹¹ Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, <http://www.rakhinecommission.org/>.

¹² Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJoWeV1DIFM>.

¹³ “Arsa: The Rohingya militants who tipped Rakhine into crisis”, *The Straits Times*, 10 September 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/arsa-the-rohingya-militants-who-tipped-rakhine-into-crisis>, and “At least 71 killed in Myanmar as Rohingya insurgents stage major attack”, Reuters, 25 August 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/at-least-71-killed-in-myanmar-as-rohingya-insurgents-stage-major-attack-idUSKCN1B507K>.

¹⁴ “Exclusive: Is this the final confrontation for the Rohingya?”, *The Dhaka Tribune*, 4 September 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/world/south-asia/2017/08/27/final-confrontation-rohingyas/>.

the border and escaped to India. There is no clear evidence of ARSA's linkage to any terrorist group; however such possibilities cannot be ruled out. Though it is hard to estimate the strength of ARSA, several sources have indicated that it has less than 200 foot-soldiers left. ARSA does not enjoy large-scale support within the Rohingya community. Many Rohingyas perceive them as a cause of their sufferings. However, there exists a niche of support for ARSA, particularly among those who view violence as the only way to get recognition. A prolonged crisis will increase the possibility of the re-emergence of ARSA. The terrain in the Myanmar-Bangladesh-India border triangle is remote, mountainous, often inaccessible and suitable for terrorist and insurgent activities. The area is also known for availability of small arms and light weapons.

A major concern for Bangladesh is the sheer number of Rohingyas in its territory. Bangladesh's population density and resource scarcity does not allow it to accept Rohingyas for permanent settlement inside its territory. Therefore, the country emphasises the safe repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar. Bangladeshi authorities are of the view that unless Rohingyas feel safe enough to go back to Myanmar, they will remain in Bangladesh and a segment of them will inevitably be recruited by terrorist and organised criminal groups and thereby pose a threat not only to Bangladesh but also to the rest of the region.

Impact on the Threat Landscape

The Rohingya crisis has a sustained impact on the threat landscape of the Bangladesh-Myanmar borderland. It has not only heightened the possibility of a prolonged volatility of the borderland but also created opportunities for violent extremist groups to boost their activities, including recruiting and raising funds. The plight of the Rohingya minority has been attracting the attention of regional and international violent extremist groups for a long time. Rohingya militants also tried to adopt Islamist rhetoric in order to get external support from transnational non-state actors.

In the aftermath of the 1991 crisis, Rohingya militant organisations, namely the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation and Arakan Rohingya National Organisation, developed external linkages, particularly with Al Qaeda-centric groups in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. In the post-9/11 period, such linkages became weak and no major incidents

were recorded. Bangladesh has also carried out several operations to dismantle the Rohingya insurgent networks of RSO and ARNO within its territory. It has also arrested three Pakistani citizens who came to provide training to Rohingyas. However, Bangladesh seems to be facing new challenges, especially since the June 2012 communal violence in Rakhine state and more recently since the 2017 violence. Currently, over a million Rohingyas are living in Bangladesh as refugees and illegal immigrants. Most of them are living near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area. There is a growing presence of both local and foreign charities in the camp area and it is not difficult for extremist organisations to infiltrate under a humanitarian banner. Therefore, scaling up the surveillance and policing of such a large number of people is a challenge.

Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda (AQ) has a presence in South Asia and Southeast Asia through a network of local affiliates that emerged in the aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan war.¹⁵ The group, with a sustained presence in the region, seems to be locally entrenched and has a long-game approach as opposed to Daesh. Though Daesh was able to overshadow AQ through the declaration of a so-called “caliphate”, AQ is known to be quietly rebranding and fortifying its various branches.¹⁶ The launching of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) to cover a vast territory that includes Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Myanmar is a case in point.

As AQIS narratives draw heavily on local grievances, particularly of Muslim minorities, it was therefore no surprise that they have been showing renewed interest in the Rohingya issue, particularly since the June 2012 communal violence in Rakhine state. Since then the group as well as its local affiliates and supporters in the region have issued many statements and published audio and video lectures on the Rohingya issue, highlighting the plight of the Rohingyas and the obligation of an armed jihad in Myanmar. These groups include Ansar al Islam, Jemaah Islamiyah, Tehrik-

¹⁵ Iftekharul Bashar, “India’s Leading Role and South Asia’s Security Concerns,” in Rohan Gunaratna and Douglas Woodall (eds.), *Afghanistan After the Western Drawdown*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015.

¹⁶ Bruce Hoffman, “Al-Qaeda’s Resurrection,” Expert Brief, Council on Foreign Relations, 6 March 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/al-qaedas-resurrection> (accessed: 12 May 2018).

e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)¹⁷, Afghan Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)¹⁸, and Jama'ah Ansharut Tawhid. These materials have been spread and shared online and gave the groups widespread coverage and at the same time constructed a moral justification for using violence against Myanmar through recognition of the Rohingyas. There have been repeated calls from an influential AQ-linked ideologue, Abu Zar al-Burmi (a Pakistani citizen with Burmese origin), for armed jihad against Myanmar.¹⁹ Burmi is known to have contacts with TTP, IMU as well as Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which is the key jihadist platform for Uyghurs.

In one of its key publications in June 2017, Al Qaeda identified Myanmar as part of its theatre of operations and specifically identified the Myanmar military as one of its key targets. The group has clearly laid out its three objectives in Myanmar. These are: (1) "Helping and defending" Muslims in Myanmar, (2) "Avenging" the oppression on Myanmar Muslims by the military, and (3) "Retaking" the Islamic Arakan from the "occupying" military.²⁰ The group has expressed its interest to work with jihadist groups in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar in this regard. It is noteworthy that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has urged the AQIS leadership to physically support Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. On 12 September 2017, Al Qaeda Central released a statement calling for revenge attacks to punish the government of Myanmar for the persecution of the Muslim-minority Rohingya population. The group urged Muslims around the world and especially those in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines to support Rohingyas in Myanmar financially and physically. This increases the possibility of Bangladeshi territory being used by both local and foreign militant groups.

Bangladesh has a number of AQ-centric groups which may be instrumental for mobilising support to Rohingya militants. The Ansar al Islam, Jamma'tul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkat ul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) are cases in point. Though all three groups are banned

¹⁷ "Pak Taliban threaten to attack Myanmar over Rohingya Muslims," *The Indian Express*, 26 July 2012, <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/pak-taliban-threaten-to-attack-myanmar-over-rohingya-muslims/979769/> (accessed 12 May 2018).

¹⁸ "Islamic militants take aim at Myanmar", *Asia Times*, 27 July 2012, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/NG27Ae04.html.

¹⁹ "Jihad is my way of life Rohingya mujahed," 19 July 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBEvNeGnRPQ>.

²⁰ As-Sahab Media Subcontinent, "Code of Conduct: Al Qaeda in the Subcontinent," June 2018.

in Bangladesh, they have a substantial operational capacity. Among these three groups, Ansar al Islam is officially recognised by Al Qaeda as part of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and as AQ's representative group in Bangladesh. In the past few years, Ansar al Islam has tried to send teams of fighters to Myanmar but they were not successful as Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies thwarted the attempts.²¹ JMB reportedly carried out an IED attack in Kalchakra Maidan, Bodh Gaya, India to avenge atrocities on Rohingya in Myanmar.²² Ansar al Islam has a significant following in Bangladesh and the group has been mostly involved in target killings. Ansar al Islam is led by a Ziaul Haq, a sacked major of the Bangladesh army.

Al Balagh is a Bengali AQIS magazine first released in September 2016. It also urged Muslims to join their fight against oppression. In 2017, the magazine published a special issue featuring the Rohingya crisis. Through its Bangladeshi affiliate, the Ansar al Islam, Al Qaeda has provided training and support for the Rohingya militants RSO. Ansar al Islam is active in southeastern Bangladesh, bordering northeast India and Myanmar. On 10 December 2016, Al Qaeda's Bengali media platform (known as Titumir Media) released a video in Bengali calling for taking revenge for the persecution of the Arakan Muslims through an armed struggle. If the Rohingya crisis continues, it will not be difficult for Al Qaeda and its local affiliates to recruit from the refugee camps. According to some sources, a AQIS-JMB-ARSA nexus is emerging in the eastern and southeastern regions of Bangladesh, particularly along the Bangladesh-India and Bangladesh-Myanmar borders. There is lack of presence of law enforcement agencies and the terrain is suitable for militant groups to use as a sanctuary as well as a training ground.²³

Daesh

Though the future of Daesh looks uncertain at present, in the context of Daesh's eastward expansion, its interest in the Rohingya issue is signifi-

²¹ Author's interview with a Bangladeshi agency that thwarted the attempt, Dhaka, May 2016.

²² National Investigation Agency, India, "Two main accused arrested by NIA in 'Kalchakra Maidan, Bodh Gaya, Bihar' Case", 7 August 2018, http://www.nia.gov.in/writereaddata/Portal/News/325_1_Pr.pdf.

²³ Author's interview with a Bangladeshi counter-terrorism professional, Dhaka, May 2018.

cant.²⁴ Daesh, from the beginning, used the Rohingya issue in its narrative. In a speech in 1 July 2014 in which he declared the establishment of a caliphate, Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi alluded to the Rohingyas as being among the “oppressed” Muslim populations worldwide that Daesh was looking to lift up.²⁵ In September 2015, Daesh’s Furat Media published an article titled “Bangladesh and the Declaration of the Caliphate”. The article urged Bangladeshis to pledge allegiance to the leader of Daesh, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It demanded the release of jihadists from the country’s prisons and, significantly, called for waging an armed jihad in Myanmar from Bangladesh. It also called for the battle *Gazwatul Hind* – the final battle to bring the Indian Subcontinent under “Islamic” rule. Echoing its strategy in southern Philippines, Daesh has routinely, through its online publication *Dabiq*, claimed that it plans to establish a base in Bangladesh to launch revenge attacks on the Myanmar government over its treatment of the Muslim Rohingyas. For example, *Dabiq*’s 12th issue came out in November 2015. In that article, Daesh revealed its plan to expand in South Asia by establishing a base in Bangladesh. The group expressed its intention to use this base as a springboard for its expansion in India and Myanmar. The article claimed to have found a “new leader” in Bangladesh. The article highly praised JMB’s founder, Abdur Rahman. The 14th issue of *Dabiq* was published in April 2016. This issue carried an interview of Daesh leader Abu Ibrahim al Hanif. The article indicated that the Bangladesh chapter has the ability to work with various chapters/wilayats of Daesh, including Wilayat Khurasan. It called on the Muslims of Bangladesh and neighbouring areas to join Daesh and fight with their wealth and with their life. The article emphasised that Bengal was an important region for Daesh and the global jihad due to its strategic geographic position. It also clearly expressed that having a strong base in Bengal would be useful for carrying out attacks in India and eventually Myanmar. This may result in another longstanding conflict in Southeast Asia, following the siege of the southern Philippine city of Marawi by Islamist militants. Recently revealed details from Malaysia that Daesh-linked groups have recruited Rohingya refugees

²⁴ For details see Rohan Gunaratna, “The Islamic State’s Eastward Expansion,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2016.

²⁵ “Islamic State, Other Islamist Groups Exploit Plight of The Rohingya,” *Benarnews*, 11 May 2015, <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/rohingya-06112015174307.html>.

further demonstrate the risk that the case can be exploited even beyond the Bangladesh-Myanmar border region.²⁶

Aung San Suu Kyi was also singled out by Daesh as a possible target in a “kill list” sent to Malaysian police in August. In November 2016, Indonesian police thwarted an attempt by a local pro-Daesh extremist group to carry out a bombing attack on the Myanmar embassy in Jakarta. If Daesh were to firmly establish a foothold in Bangladesh, it would not be difficult for the group to expand its operations into Myanmar. The porous border between Bangladesh and Myanmar provides a suitable terrain for insurgent operations. Should Daesh declare a new wilayat in South Asia, it is likely to include Myanmar’s Rakhine state. Daesh may capitalise on its contacts with the Bangladeshi militant group known as Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which already has a pro-Daesh faction. In cyberspace, regional online extremists have sought to capitalise on the issue, pledging their support through profile pictures with the Daesh flag and the hashtag “Pray for P_A_R_I_S”, which refers to the conflict areas of Palestine, Africa, Rohingya areas, Iraq and Syria. Online extremists in Indonesia have expressed a desire to mount “jihad” on behalf of the Rohingyas and made reference to their hopes of bringing the “mujahidin” (jihadi fighters) into Myanmar. These online jihadist flare-ups suggest that the Rohingya issue is being hijacked by global jihadism.

Transnational Crime-Terror Nexus

An often under-reported consequence of the Rohingya crisis is the growth of a transnational crime-terror nexus along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. The terrain of the border is conducive for transnational crime as it cuts through hills, forests, rivers, canals and sea, which makes border management difficult for Bangladesh. The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, out of their dire need for livelihood, often get involved in various forms of transnational crimes, such as human trafficking, drugs trafficking and arms trafficking.

The Rohingya crisis is the key reason behind the growth of human trafficking from the borderland. The statelessness and prolonged refugee-life of the Rohingyas is a push factor for them to desperately try to leave the

²⁶ “IS recruiting Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, says anti-terror chief,” *Today*, 27 August 2018, <https://www.todayonline.com/world/recruiting-rohingya-refugees-malaysia-says-anti-terror-chief>.

borderland in search of a better life overseas. According to Bangladeshi sources more than two dozen human smuggling syndicates are known to be active in the coastal region of Bangladesh and Myanmar, bringing boat people to Southeast Asia. According to the UNHCR, thousands of Rohingyas have undertaken irregular maritime journeys in the Bay of Bengal towards Thailand and Malaysia, and several hundred have reportedly died in recent years during the journey.²⁷ Though the crime-terror nexus is not new in the Bangladesh-Myanmar borderland, the vulnerability of the Rohingyas will inevitably make the threat even more complex.

Myanmar is a key producer of narcotics; most importantly, of Ya Baa (Methamphetamine). The Bangladesh-Myanmar border region has been identified by the Bangladesh Department of Narcotics Control as an important entry point for narcotics. There are at least 10 Ya Baa factories in the border area inside Myanmar which produces illegal drugs that are being smuggled into Bangladesh. The Rohingyas are recruited as carriers, intermediaries or traffickers.²⁸

These trafficking networks are also reportedly connected to various militant groups in the region. The militant groups provide security and tax the traffickers in return. Militant groups also depend on transnational crime syndicates for the procurement of weapons. Bangladeshi authorities believe that there exists a nexus between transnational crime and terrorism at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border and that unless the Rohingya issue is resolved, the nexus will manage to survive. It is noteworthy that Bangladesh is carrying out counter-narcotics operations on a regular basis; success, however, is limited.

In light of this, there is a need for Myanmar and Bangladesh to collaborate on aspects such as repatriation and security. The repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar is the key to a sustainable solution. In order to achieve the conditions for return, it is important that refugees feel safe and have assurance of their livelihoods, rights to land ownership and permanent legal status in the form of citizenship and associated rights. Both countries must improve security cooperation, specifically in addressing

²⁷ UNHCR, "South-East Asia Irregular Maritime Movements," January – June 2014, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20-%20Irregular%20maritime%20movements.pdf>.

²⁸ "I carry yaba to survive: Rohingya and Bangladesh's meth trade," Al Jazeera, 20 August 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/carry-yaba-survive-rohingya-bangladesh-meth-trade-180818115319992.html>.

the challenges of drug-trafficking, violent extremism and border control. As a starting point, Myanmar and Bangladesh must revive/implement existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs), including on border liaison offices. It is also necessary to establish hotlines (between both militaries as well as border forces), promote intelligence-sharing and police-to-police exchanges, resume meetings at the highest level of the two respective militaries, further exchanges between the two defence colleges, Ministries of Home Affairs and Defence as well as joint (instead of just concurrent) operations on border control, demining and patrols.

Concluding Remarks

With terrorist groups actively exploiting the Rohingya crisis, the Bangladesh-Myanmar border is likely to see a new resurgence of violent extremism, with implications for regional security. Unless Rohingya grievances are addressed, the extremist narratives will continue to spread and a vulnerable segment of the Rohingya refugees will start perceiving violence as the only means to attract recognition. The changing threat landscape along the common border highlights the need for a sustainable resolution of the Rohingya crisis within a reasonable timeframe. There are three areas where bilateral, regional and international cooperation and collaboration is needed: first, ensuring the safe and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas to Rakhine state. This includes recognition of their identity as well as giving them citizenship of Myanmar. Second, socio-economic development in Rakhine state, with a particular focus on basic human rights and inter-communal harmony. Third, sharing of intelligence and building capacity on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in both Bangladesh and Myanmar.

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The Jihadist Threat in Europe

Lorenzo Vidino and Francesco Marone

Jihadist mobilisation in Europe is nothing new and has historically implied a range of activities: providing logistical and financial support to terrorist groups; planning and executing attacks; and travelling to conflict areas to join armed groups.¹

During the 1990s, groups such as the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Egyptian al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) set up a network of supporters across European countries. For example, in Italy, as early as the first part of the 1990s, various North African networks played a prominent role in the nascent global jihadist movement.²

Similarly, over the last few decades European militants joined jihadist armed groups in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, Iraq, Somalia, and other countries.³

However, jihadist mobilisation has witnessed a sharp increase in recent years—especially after the outbreak of the Syrian conflict, in 2011, and the rapid rise of Daesh, which proclaimed its “caliphate” on 29 June 2014. On the one hand, the number of foreign fighters heading to Syria and Iraq is unprecedented, both from a European and from a worldwide perspective. On the other hand, jihadist attacks in Europe—generally fol-

* This paper was submitted on 1 July 2018.

¹ In particular, Petter Nesser, *Islamist Terrorism in Europe: A History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

² Lorenzo Vidino, *Home-Grown Jihadism in Italy: Birth, Development and Radicalization Dynamics*, Report, Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) and European Foundation for Democracy, 2014, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/EBook/vidino-eng.pdf>.

³ See, among others, Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Bram Peeters, *Fickle Foreign Fighters? A Cross-Case Analysis of Seven Muslim Foreign Fighter Mobilisations (1980-2015)*, Research Paper, The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), October 2015.

lowing a cyclical pattern, alternating between relatively quiet periods and more violent ones—have experienced a spike.

This chapter examines the jihadist mobilisation which has affected European countries over the last few years. In the first section, data and examples on jihadism-related arrests and convictions, terrorist plots and attacks, and foreign fighters are discussed. The second section provides an overview of the motivations and causes behind jihadist mobilisation and radicalisation in Europe.⁴

1. Jihadist Mobilisation in Europe: Data and Examples

To assess the scope of recent years' jihadist mobilisation and radicalisation across European countries, various indicators can be taken into account. We focus on data about arrests and convictions, terrorist plots and attacks, and foreign fighters.

1.1. Arrests and convictions

According to Europol, over the years 2012-2017, 2,880 suspects were arrested in European Union (EU) countries for jihadist terrorism-related offences. This accounts for more than double the figure of the period 2006-2011, with 1,056 arrestees. In particular, the number of arrests has sharply increased after 2012: only 159 individuals were apprehended for jihadist terrorism in 2012, whereas that figure reached 718 individuals in 2016 and 705 in 2017. However, the bulk of this rise occurred in the years 2013-2015, whereas the variation across 2015-2016 was less pronounced (687 arrests versus 718 arrests, respectively).⁵ In 2017, the vast majority of arrests took place in France (373), with a considerable distance from other relevant countries such as Spain (78), Germany (52) and Belgium (50).⁶

In 2017, the majority of verdicts for terrorism in the EU Member States concerned jihadism (352 out of a total of 569), confirming a trend that started in 2015. The highest number of verdicts for jihadist terrorism in

⁴ Cf. Lorenzo Vidino and Silvia Carenzi, *Terrorist Attacks. Youngsters and Jihadism in Europe*, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2018.

⁵ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2018*, June 2018.

⁶ The data provided to Europol by the UK was not broken down by type of terrorism (jihadist or other types) and is therefore not included.

2017 (114) was rendered in France. Overall, in 2017, the vast majority of verdicts was in relation to Daesh or its affiliated groups. However, persons who had engaged with Al Qaeda, the Taliban or Al-Shabaab were also tried.

The concluded jihadist terrorism cases had a very high conviction rate (89%) in 2017, similar to 2016 (92%) and 2015 (94%). In the EU the average prison sentence for jihadist terrorist offences was five years.⁷

1.2. Terrorist plots and attacks

European countries witnessed a boost in the number of jihadist attacks perpetrated on their soil in recent years, especially after 2014. According to the Italian Institute for Political International Studies (ISPI) Database,⁸ 46 terrorist attacks inspired by jihadist ideology were carried out between 2014 and 2017 in Europe: 20 attacks in 2017, 14 in 2016, and 10 in 2015. In the first half of 2018, at least three jihadist attacks were carried out in the region.

During the 2014-2017 wave, the most affected country was France—which saw 23 attacks on its territory since 2014—followed by the United Kingdom and Germany (7 attacks in both cases), Belgium (4 attacks), Austria, Denmark, Finland, Spain, and Sweden (one attack each). These acts of violence resulted in a death toll of roughly 350 victims and over 2,000 injured.

Apart from the “completed” attacks,⁹ a significant number of plots have been thwarted by authorities: for instance, over the period 2014-2016, 24 well-documented jihadist terrorist plots (and an even greater number of vague plans) were foiled.¹⁰

⁷ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2018*, op. cit.

⁸ Database of jihadist terrorist attacks in the West, Italian Institute for Political International Studies. See also Lorenzo Vidino, Francesco Marone and Eva Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor: Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West*, Report, Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) / Program on Extremism at George Washington University / International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), June 2017, https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/radicalization_web.pdf.

⁹ Erik J. Dahl, “Comparing Failed, Foiled, Completed and Successful Terrorist Attacks,” presentation, 18 September 2014, START – National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism; Lorenzo Vidino, Francesco Marone and Eva Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁰ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen and Emilie Oftedal, “Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 10, No. 6, 2016, pp. 3-24; ISPI Database of jihadist terrorist attacks in the West.

Among the major halted plots, there was a terrorist plan envisioned by the so-called “Verviers cell”, dismantled in Belgium in January 2015. It apparently involved the use of TATP (triacetone triperoxide, a non-nitrogenous explosive) and semiautomatic weapons; although the intended target was not clear, it seemed that Brussels’ Zaventem Airport was an option. It was reportedly masterminded by Abdelhamid Abaaoud—a Belgian operative and key figure in Daesh external operations branch, who took part in the November 2015 Paris attacks.¹¹

Another notable example was the Riviera bomb plot, foiled in February 2014 in the Cote d’Azur region, France. The suspect, Ibrahim Boudina, had allegedly trained with Daesh in Syria, and possibly contemplated targeting the Nice Carnival celebrations. He, too, appeared to have been dispatched back to France by Daesh.

With respect to attacks successfully launched in 2014-2017, according to the ISPI Database, most of them (39 out of 46 attacks, i.e., nearly 85%) were carried out by single actors. While in most cases links between perpetrators and members of Daesh were rather weak, in a few instances a more substantial coordination can be spotted. The May 2014 shooting at the Brussels Jewish Museum is a good example: the perpetrator, Mehdi Nemmouche, was initially thought to have acted alone; however, further investigations revealed that he had travelled to Syria and had been sent back to France by Daesh. Conversely, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, the Tunisian citizen who killed 86 people in the July 2016 Nice attack, did not seem to be connected with Daesh operatives, at least according to information disclosed so far.

Another type of connection emerging in recent years’ attacks was “virtual planning” (also known as “virtual entrepreneurship”),¹² where Daesh militants assisted would-be terrorists outside of Syria and Iraq in preparing and committing attacks, by using social media and encrypted online messaging platforms. This is precisely what happened in the Wurzburg, Ansbach and Normandy church attacks, all executed in July 2016.

¹¹ See Guy van Vlierden, “Profile: Paris Attack Ringleader Abdelhamid Abaaoud,” *CTC Sentinel*, Volume 8, Issue 11, 2015, pp. 30-33.

¹² See Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Seamus Hughes, “The Threat to the United States from the Islamic State’s Virtual Entrepreneurs,” *CTC Sentinel*, Volume 10, Issue 3, 2017, pp. 1-8; R. Kim Cragin and Ari Weil, “Virtual Planners’ in the Arsenal of Islamic State External Operations,” *Orbis*, Vol. 62, No. 2, 2018, pp. 294-312.

According to the ISPI Database, only in 7 cases out of 46 (i.e., roughly 15% of total 2014-2017 attacks), a group consisting of two or more actors physically took part in a terrorist act. However, the number of thwarted plots involving a group of militants is higher. This is possibly due to the fact that single-actor plots are less likely to be detected by authorities, in contrast with group-based plans.¹³ The (quite narrow) set of group-led attacks in 2014-2017 includes the November 2015 Paris attacks, the March 2016 Brussels attacks, and—more recently—the August 2017 Catalonia attacks.

As Europol has recently underlined, most terrorist activities with which the EU was confronted in recent years were inexpensive and did not require external sources of funding, in particular attacks committed by single actors using weapons or even everyday objects such as knives or cars. In particular, micro-financing of jihadist groups operating in the EU usually works via the private financial means of group members.¹⁴

1.3. Foreign fighters

Another phenomenon which characterises the post-2011 jihadist mobilisation is the large flow of foreign fighters¹⁵ heading to Syria and Iraq (and, secondarily, other countries such as Libya). At a worldwide level, more than 40,000 individuals may have joined insurgent groups in the Syrian-Iraqi region. An unprecedented figure, indeed—and this holds true for European countries, too, although on a smaller scale. As a matter of fact, no less than 5,000 foreign fighters are estimated to hail from EU countries. The vast majority of these volunteers enlisted in or supported jihadist groups, especially Daesh.

Departures of foreign fighters affected European countries in an uneven fashion. According to recent estimates, France saw the largest number of “travellers” (nearly 2,000), followed by Germany (over 900), the United Kingdom (around 900), and Belgium (over 500).¹⁶

¹³ Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen and Emilie Oftedal, “Jihadi Terrorism in Europe,” op. cit.

¹⁴ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2018*, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁵ Among others, see Thomas Hegghammer, “The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad,” *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2010/11, pp. 53-94.

¹⁶ Richard Barrett, *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*, Report, The Soufan Group, 2017.

In relative terms (that is, in relation to each country's general population), Belgium ranks first (with about 46 foreign fighters per million inhabitants), followed by Austria (33), Sweden (31) and France (28).

In contrast, Southern European countries such as Spain and Italy¹⁷ produce relatively modest national contingents, both in absolute and relative terms: 223 and 129 foreign fighters, respectively, which means about 4 and 2 "travellers" per one million people. The number of foreign fighters is even smaller in Eastern European countries: for instance, as of April 2016, Estonia and Latvia witnessed the departure of just two individuals each.

A common fear relating to foreign fighters has to do with the so-called "blowback effect": namely, the risk that a number of combatants may return to their home countries to conduct or at least support a terrorist attack. This threat was highlighted by Europol as early as 2012: *mujahidin* may take advantage of the training, the experience, the knowledge, the connections and the social status acquired at the front to strike at home. As is well-known, such concerns are not unfounded: in recent years, jihadist veterans took part in various attacks worldwide, including the November 2015 Paris attacks and the March 2016 Brussels attacks. Another example is provided by Rachid Redouane, one of the June 2017 London Bridge attackers, who had reportedly fought in Libya.

Returnees may also be involved in support activities—logistically and/or financially assisting other cells or militants, as well as acting as "radicalising agents" vis-à-vis other members of their community.

What is more, Daesh endured massive territorial losses over the last year, with the risk that an increasing number of jihadist combatants and supporters may return to their countries of origin or move to other states. According to the available estimates, around 30% of European foreign fighters have already returned home.

Nonetheless, various factors mitigate this sort of threat. In the first place, it would be misleading to equate the experience of fighting abroad with the execution of terrorist attacks at home. Not all the militants will head back home: many are already dead (approximately 1,000 from European countries), others could move to other conflict areas. Even returnees may not intend to target their countries of origin. As shown in

¹⁷ On the Italian case, Francesco Marone and Lorenzo Vidino, *Destinazione Jihad. I foreign fighters d'Italia*, Report, ISPI, June 2018 (in Italian; English version forthcoming), <https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/foreignfighter.pdf>.

an influential study written by Thomas Hegghammer in 2013, focused on waves of Western foreign fighters from 1990 to 2010, only 1 out of 9 returned to carry out an attack in their country of origin.¹⁸ According to the ISPI Database, in the period 2014-2017, only 15 out of 66 terrorist perpetrators (23%) were actually jihadist veterans.

2. The Reasons for Jihadist Mobilisation

Many studies have argued that a common jihadist profile does not exist. By contrast, there are significant differences in socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education, and economic conditions. Nevertheless, a few recurring patterns can be pointed out, one of them being the relatively young age of jihadist attackers and foreign fighters

2.1. The role of youngsters

According to the ISPI Database, when analysing attacks carried out in European countries between 2014 and 2017, it emerges that the average age of perpetrators is roughly 27.5 years. The mode, i.e., the most often recurring age, is 29, while the median, i.e., the “central” value, is 27; moreover, the youngest attacker was 15 years old at the time of the terrorist act, whereas the oldest was 54. Indeed, only 6 out of 66 perpetrators (accounting for 9%) were underage at the time of the attack; 20 individuals (30%) were in the 18-24 bracket; 20 (30%) were in the 25-30 bracket, and finally 18 (27%) were over 30 years old.

Individuals aged 30 and younger account for the vast majority (nearly 70%) of perpetrators in Europe in the last 4 years. For example, the jihadists who physically carried out the August 2017 Catalonia attacks were all under 25, and one of them, Moussa Oukabir, was underage at the time.

However, the proportion of over-30 attackers (27%) is far from negligible. In two occurrences—the March 2017 Westminster attack and the June 2017 Linz stabbing—attackers were in their 50s. Moreover, the average age of European perpetrators (27.5 years), though under 30, is not exceptionally low.

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*, Volume 107, Issue 1, 2013, pp. 1-15.

Similar remarks can be made as regards (jihadist) foreign fighters from European countries. The European contingent is highly diversified—so generalisations would be ill-suited—but it is possible to identify some recurrent age patterns. In this case, too, young men between 18 and mid-to-late twenties (at the time of their departure) are over-represented, with differences across countries. In a few Eastern and Southern European countries, foreign fighters tend to be older.¹⁹ For instance, Italy displays a significant proportion of over-30 individuals (40%) and the average age is 30.²⁰

2.2. Main drivers of radicalisation

The ultimate question of “why” individuals become involved in jihadism-related activities—be it in the form of supporting or preparing attacks at home or joining armed groups abroad—has bedevilled policy-makers, security services, scholars, and public opinions alike. All the more so because the pathway towards mobilisation, implying a process of radicalisation, is complex and multifarious, at the crossroads between personal factors and structural drivers, originating from a conducive environment, and often with the contribution of a structured organisation and/or an informal group.²¹ Thus, mono-causal explanations are at best insufficient—if not misleading—when trying to understand the radicalisation and mobilisation of jihadist sympathisers. Yet, potential drivers can roughly be divided into two sets: push factors and pull factors.

Among *push factors*, socio-economic factors are the most recurring explanations. This line of thought looks at the characteristics of the individuals (at the “micro” level), the conditions of their environment (at the “macro” level) or the interplay between these two levels of analysis: for example, lack of social integration, difficult access to education and employment, and economic deprivation. However, clearly, not every terrorist case can be explained with the “poverty/social hardship – extremism” hypothesis.

¹⁹ Bibi Van Ginkel and Entenmann Eva (eds.), *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union. Profiles, Threats & Policies*, The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), April 2016, p. 51.

²⁰ Francesco Marone and Lorenzo Vidino, *Destinazione Jihad. I foreign fighters d'Italia*, op. cit.

²¹ Among others, see Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, “The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 38, No. 11, 2015, pp. 958-975.

Actually, the existence of a strong, direct link between socio-economic deprivation, on the one hand, and violent extremism, on the other hand, has proved to be at least uncertain.²² In the case of Europe, while it is true that jihadists, on average, tend to be economic underperformers (and that is worrying, for the future as well),²³ correlation is not tantamount to causation. The true question relates to the extent of the nature of this potential causal chain and its interplay with other factors.

Other types of individual-related factors have been underlined, including personal frustrations experienced by people at some moment in their lives. Interestingly, Oliver Roy proposed an alternative interpretation. According to this scholar, it makes sense to speak of the “Islamisation of radicalism”, rather than “radicalisation of Islam”: some individuals, usually youngsters, feeling alienated in Western societies, and at the same time experiencing a generational revolt against their fathers, frame this sense of nihilistic rebellion in jihadist terms, with jihadist ideology being one of the few anti-system grand narratives left in the West.²⁴ Thus, Roy argues, the real issue is that these individuals are in search of an extremist cause to embrace, while they overlook the specific religious dimension.²⁵

At the “meso” level, between individuals and their social environment, another important aspect has to be addressed: “radicalisation hubs”²⁶ present in the territory. The “hub” model can complement other interpretations, offering an explanation for geographical discrepancies which, on the surface, seem to be difficult to explain. Actually, the scope and intensity of jihadist activities varies not only across European countries, but even within a given country. A particular city or town, for instance, may stand out for its unusually high number of jihadist sympathisers and militants or foreign fighters, in spite of sharing virtually identical social, economic, and demographic indicators with nearby areas. In this case, the dynamics of hubs may well be at work. Why and how these territorial clusters

²² See, for example, Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

²³ Thomas Hegghammer, “The Future of Jihadism in Europe: A Pessimistic View,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 10, No. 6, 2016, pp. 156-170.

²⁴ Olivier Roy, *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State*, London: Hurst & Co., 2017.

²⁵ See also Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

²⁶ Lorenzo Vidino, Francesco Marone and Eva Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, op. cit.

emerge and solidify is difficult to ascertain: usually due to an interplay of different factors. Among them, there may be the presence of “radicalising agents” (such as a charismatic extremist preacher or a jihadist veteran), but also kinship and friendship bonds may play a huge role. The August 2017 Catalonia attacks are telling in this regard: it is suspected that Imam Es Satty (the ringleader, older than the other plotters, and arguably more experienced and familiar with the jihadist milieu) operated as a radicalising agent, while pre-existing ties between the other members of the cell would do the rest. In other instances, peculiar conditions of a certain area (e.g., high rate of crime, social exclusion, etc.) may provide a conducive environment for the rise of jihadist hubs. In some circumstances, fortuity may be involved, too. The case of Lunel, a French town which is home to less than 30,000 people, and, puzzlingly, “produced” some twenty foreign fighters, is illustrative in this respect.²⁷

With reference to *pull factors*, a variety of elements prompted the mobilisation of European foreign fighters towards Syria and Iraq in recent years. The two most prominent triggers were possibly the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011 (and the ensuing violence) and the proclamation of the so-called caliphate by Daesh, on 29 June 2014.

As a matter of fact, a significant number of volunteers were apparently motivated by the desire to fight the al-Assad regime in Syria and defend local Muslims, considered to be under siege, especially in the first phase of the conflict.

After the establishment of the “caliphate”, further motivations have become more salient: quest for identity; fascination with the narrative skillfully nurtured by Daesh²⁸ and other jihadist groups; adventurism and the wish to evade reality; and willingness to live in a “utopian” place where, according to jihadists, Islamic tenets would be strictly implemented. Additionally, in practical term, for years the Syrian-Iraqi area was relatively easy to reach.

²⁷ Lorenzo Vidino, Francesco Marone and Eva Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor*, op. cit.

²⁸ See, for example, Francesco Marone, “Examining The Narratives of Radical Islamists and Other Extremely Violent Groups: The Case of the ‘Islamic State’,” in Maurizio Martellini and Jason Rao (eds.), *The Risk of Skilled Scientist Radicalization and Emerging Biological Warfare Threats*, Amsterdam: IOS Press – NATO Science for Peace and Security Series, 2017, pp. 64-73.

3. Conclusions

This chapter aimed at outlining the nature and development of jihadist activities in Europe in recent years. Especially the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011 and the rise of Daesh in 2014 favoured a spike in jihadist mobilisation in Europe; a fact which is mirrored by the sheer number of arrests and convictions, terrorist plots and attacks, and foreign fighters' flows.

Jihadist mobilisation, nonetheless, hit European countries unevenly. The most affected country—in relation to arrests, attacks, and foreign fighters' departures alike—was France. Countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, and Belgium have, too, been significantly affected by the phenomenon. In contrast, other nations—first and foremost Eastern European countries, but also, to some extent, Mediterranean countries, such as Italy²⁹—saw a rather low degree of mobilisation. Understanding the exact triggers and drivers which do activate radicalisation and mobilisation is no smooth task. A variety of factors, indeed, are featured in this complex process: individual characteristics, structural conditions and organisational/group dynamics. In the future, it may be beneficial to explore intersections between the different explanatory models, on the basis of empirical analysis.

In conclusion, some important pull factors appear to be less relevant nowadays, especially with the crisis of the “caliphate” in Syria and Iraq, but, in any case, many push factors in Europe are still at work and will hardly disappear soon. For this reason, the jihadist threat in the region is probably destined to remain significant in the years to come.

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²⁹ Lorenzo Vidino and Francesco Marone, *The Jihadist Threat in Italy: A Primer*, Analysis, ISPI, November 2017, https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analisi318_vidino-marone.pdf.

Patterns of Lone Attackers

Jelle van Buuren

Lone attackers have attracted considerable attention from the media, policy makers and academics. This is partly due to the terrorist attacks Europe faced in the last couple of years executed by—seemingly—lone attackers. Academic research has explored topics like the demarcation between lone attackers and terrorist cells or networks, typologies of lone attackers, the motivation of lone attackers, and—lately—the attack patterns of lone actors. This chapter will analyse the changed understanding of lone actor violence and discuss possible preventive approaches.

The risk emerging from lone actor terrorists has triggered a small wave of academic literature trying to capture the essence of the phenomenon, partly propelled by pressing questions raised by security authorities. Lone actor terrorism was considered to be a new and severe threat to societies and hard to prevent by intelligence and security services as lone actors do not communicate with accomplices or operate in detectable networks. Some scholars, however, questioned from the beginning the conceptual relevance of lone actor terrorism. Based on their research into 40 terrorist attacks by right extremists in the United Kingdom, all labelled by the authorities as attacks by loners, Jackson and Gable, for instance, concluded that the phenomenon of lone actor terrorism mostly was a myth.¹ Van Buuren argued that whenever a new term hits the public, political and scientific discourses we have to be aware of the “possible fashion fad of the new concept”.²

* This paper was submitted on 28 May 2018.

¹ P. Jackson and G. Gable, *Lone Wolves: Myth or Reality?* (London: Search Light, 2011).

² J. van Buuren, “Performative violence? The Multitude of Lone Wolf Terrorism,” *Terrorism: An Electronic Journal & Knowledge Base*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2012): 1-25.

Under closer scrutiny what originally seemed to be a clear concept turned out to be a heavily contested concept. No single, universally accepted definition of lone actor terrorism has been agreed on in academics.³ Discussions revolved, amongst others, around the question how “alone” the lone actor actually is, to what extent a political or ideological motivation should be part of the definitional component of lone actor violence and whether the supposed untraceability of lone actors reflects reality. Comparative studies—for an overview, see Liem et al.⁴—contributed to a better understanding of the limitations of the concept of lone terrorist actors. In this chapter, we will offer a summary of the changed academic understanding of the essence of lone actor violence.

The Loneliness of Lone Actors

Conceptual differences plagued the academic discussion from the very beginning, starting with Kaplan’s seminal article on “leaderless resistance”.⁵ Kaplan referred to the strategies of the extreme right in the United States, “a kind of lone wolf operation in which an individual, or a very small, highly cohesive group, engage in acts of anti-state violence independent of any movement, leader or network of support.”⁶ The question whether the concept of “lone actors” exclusively referred to single actors or also could be used for small cells remained throughout the years a contested issue in academics. Spaaij,⁷ one of the first scholars systematically looking into lone actor violence, was and is a strong proponent of a very precise use of the term “lone actors”: it should be restricted to a single individual.⁸

³ R. Spaaij and M. S. Hamm, “Key Issues and Research Agendas in Lone Wolf Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2015): 167-178.

⁴ M. C. A. Liem, J. van Buuren, J. de Roy van Zuijdewijn, H. J. M. Schönberger and E. Bakker, “European Lone Actor Terrorists Versus ‘Common’ Homicide Offenders: An Empirical Analysis,” *Homicide Studies*, Vol. 22, No.1 (2017): 45-69.

⁵ J. Kaplan, “Leaderless resistance,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1997): 80-95.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁷ R. Spaaij, “The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 33, No. 9 (2010): 854-870.

⁸ “Lone wolf terrorism involves terrorist attacks carried out by persons who (a) operate individually, (b) do not belong to an organized terrorist group or network, and (c) whose modus operandi are conceived and directed by the individual without any direct outside command or hierarchy.” *Ibid.*, 856.

Pantucci,⁹ however, broadened the concept to “lone wolf packages”: small isolated groups pursuing the goal of Islamist terrorism together under the same ideology, but without the sort of external direction from, or formal connection with, an organised group or network. The research project “Countering Lone Actor Terrorism” included dyads and triads in the definition of “lone actors”.¹⁰ These differences make the aggregation of research data and comparisons between studies problematic.

A second contested topic was the question whether a lone actor—in its restricted definition—as such existed in reality. The absence of ties to terrorist groups or networks is part of almost all definitions of lone actors. However, some scholars argued that those definitions failed to take into account the changing dynamics between individuals and groups or networks, partly due to the emerging role of social media. Van Buuren, for instance, argued that too much fixation on the apparent “loneliness” of lone actors runs the risk of losing sight of what is also, or even more, important: the changing relationship, and the changing dynamics between individuals on the one hand, and groups, networks or environments on the other hand.¹¹ The shift from groups and networks to individuals should be understood as gradual shifts within a continuum in which individuals are connected in different ways, with different magnitude and with different objectives with their environments in which “ideologies of extremism and validation” flourish.¹²

⁹ R. Pantucci, *A typology of lone wolves: Preliminary analysis of lone Islamist terrorists* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2011).

¹⁰ C. Ellis, R. Pantucci, J. de Roy van Zuijdewijn, E. Bakker, B. Gomis, S. Palombi and M. Smith, *Lone-Actor terrorism: Analysis paper* (Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism Series) (London: Royal United Services Institute, 2016).

¹¹ Buuren, “Performative violence?”

¹² Buuren, “Performative violence?”; J. van Buuren and B. de Graaf, “Hatred of the System: Menacing Loners and Autonomous Cells in the Netherlands,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2014): 156-184.

Empirical research underlined the variety of connections between lone actors and their environment. Sometimes connections to networks or accomplices of what was originally labelled as lone actor terrorism only surfaced after time-consuming police investigations.¹³ Academic research also showed that the majority of “lone” actors had a variety of connections with extremist milieus. Lindekilde et al., for instance, found that 62% of 55 lone actors turned out to have contacts with clearly radical, extremist, or terrorist individuals.¹⁴ 31% were recognised members or participants in radical, extremist, or terrorist groups at some point in their lives. A minority of lone actors even received some assistance in the planning and preparation of their attacks. “Social ties played an important role in the emergence of motivation to commit violence and, in some cases, during the planning and preparation of these attacks,” the authors concluded. “Social settings supportive of radicalism, extremism, or terrorism play an important role in the commission of extremist events, even for those thought of as ‘lone’ actors.”¹⁵

A range of new conceptual terms was introduced to capture the variety of lone actors in relationship to their milieus: the “jihadi wolf”—“an apparently ‘lone’ but continually mobile-connected and (cyber-)jihadi inspired actor”;¹⁶ “Peripheral lone-actor terrorists” versus “Embedded lone-actor terrorists”¹⁷ or “inspired lone-actor terrorists”, “remotely directed single-actor terrorists”, and “remotely directed and facilitated single-actor terrorists”¹⁸—to mention only a few.

Now a new consensus seems to be emerging within academics: The lone actor who is radicalised and operates in isolation “is a myth that—with

¹³ For an overview, see D. Gartenstein-Ross, “Lone Wolves No More—The Decline of a Myth,” *Foreign Affairs*, 27 March 2017.

¹⁴ L. Lindekilde, F. O’Connor and B. Schuurman, “Radicalization patterns and modes of attack planning and preparation among lone-actor terrorists: an exploratory analysis,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (2017): 1-21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁶ A. Antinori, “The ‘Jihadi Wolf’ Threat—The evolution of terror narratives between the (cyber-) social ecosystem and self-radicalization ‘Ego-system,’” Paper presented at the 1st European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) conference on online terrorist propaganda, 10-11 April 2017, at Europol Headquarters, The Hague.

¹⁷ Lindekilde, O’Connor and Schuurman, “Radicalization patterns,” 4-5.

¹⁸ C. Ellis, “With a Little Help from my Friends: an Exploration of the Tactical Use of Single-Actor Terrorism by the Islamic State,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 10, Issue 6 (2016): 41-47.

very few exceptions—has no empirical support”¹⁹ and the real question is “whether it is time to put the ‘lone wolf’ category to rest altogether.”²⁰

Political Motivation

Another recurring discussion is the political motivation of lone actors—and when they qualify as “lone actor terrorists” instead of “violent nutcases”. Most definitions of terrorism refer to political, ideological or religious motivations or goals as a constituting part. However, assigning clear-cut motives to lone actors is difficult.²¹ Further, Spaaij has already signalled that lone actors are influenced by a “complex and evolving personal/political dynamic”, and often combine personal grief or grievances with wider political agendas, as well as personal frustrations and aversion with broader political, social, or religious aims.²²

The very decision to label a motivation as “political” is also not a clear-cut positivist attribution but a social construction. More “personalised ideologies” reflect the diffused state of politics and the fragmented character of society in which guiding ideologies have lost much of their importance²³ and new (quasi) ideological formations are slowly being formatted. It is not so much a question of whether these forms of violence are “political” but a question of whether these “hidden transcripts”²⁴ are recognised as “politics” and by whom.²⁵ Is, for instance, misogyny as shown in the Toronto-attacks where Alek Minassian drove a rented van into pedestrians, killing 10 and injuring 15, an ideology or not? McCauley, Moskalenko and Van Son, after researching the differences and similarities between lone terrorist attackers, school shooters and assassins, argued that lone

¹⁹ M. Crone, “Radicalization revisited: violence, politics and the skills of the body,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (2016): 587-604.

²⁰ B. Schuurman, L. Lindekilde, S. Malthaner, F. O’Connor, P. Gill and N. Bouhana, “End of the Lone Wolf: The Typology that Should Not Have Been,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2018): 1-9.

²¹ Spaaij and Hamm, “Key Issues and Research Agendas,” 174. C. Quillen, “A Historical Analysis of Mass Casualty Bombers,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (2002): 288.

²² Spaaij, “Enigma,” 866. Spaaij and Hamm, “Key Issues and Research Agendas,” 174.

²³ Buuren, “Performative violence?”

²⁴ J. C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

²⁵ Buuren, “Performative violence?”

actor terrorism could be better conceptualised as part of a larger phenomenon of “lone-actor grievance-fuelled violence”.²⁶ A sense of outrage and desperation—a sense of grievance—is more decisive in understanding lone actor violence than an “ideology”.

Closely connected to the motivational dimensions is the question whether or not lone actors are predominantly mentally ill. The odds of a lone-actor terrorist having a mental illness is indeed 13.49 times higher than the odds of a group actor having a mental illness.²⁷ Those findings supported research outcomes by Hewitt.²⁸ “Evidence suggests that psychological factors should be taken into account when investigating lone wolf terrorism.”²⁹ Nesser summarised the problematic aspects of the motivational dimension of lone actor terrorism: “How ‘political’ must a violent attacker be to qualify as a single actor terrorist? When social grievances and psychological problems overshadow political messages there is indeed a fine line between terroristic violence and other types of random violence, such as school massacres.”³⁰

Some argue therefore that motivations should not be the decisive argument to label violent acts as “terrorists” but the societal consequences of their violence. The Dutch authorities, for instance, use the umbrella term of “potential violent individuals”. Within this group a difference is made between “radicalised individuals” and “lone actors” (defined as individuals who are inspired, motivated, and sometimes directed by [virtual] networks of a more or less known ideology or religion) and “fixated persons” (who have no clear ideological motivation for their deeds). Within the group of “fixated persons” a differentiation was made between “confused persons” and individuals who are driven by “hatred of the system” and presumed conspiracy theories. The authorities pointed to the fact that in public

²⁶ C. McCauley, S. Moskalenko and B. van Son, “Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders: a Comparison of Assassins and School Attackers,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2013): 4-24.

²⁷ E. Corner and P. Gill, “A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism,” *Law and Human Behavior*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2015): 23-34.

²⁸ C. Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America: From the Klan to al Qaeda* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

²⁹ M. Nijboer, “A Review of Lone Wolf Terrorism: the Need for a Different Approach,” *Social Cosmos*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2012): 33-39.

³⁰ P. Nesser, “Single Actor Terrorism: Scope, Characteristics and Explanations,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (2012): 61-73.

discourse some doubts about the “intellectual capacities” of these perpetrators existed and consequently there was a tendency to dismiss their acts as isolated incidents. The Dutch government, however, underlined that the targets of these menaces often had an actual or symbolic function as representatives of a social system which the menacing individuals despised.³¹

Untraceable?

A last assumption that has been challenged is the untraceability of lone actors. This was partly due to the new insights that a variety of contacts existed between lone actors and extremist milieus—contacts that can be detected by intelligence agencies and law enforcement agencies. “The idea that lone attackers are totally invisible, hiding in an amorphous mass of individuals, turned out to be false.”³² Research also showed that a majority of lone actors were known to law enforcement for previous criminal behaviour and contacts with extremist organisations. 27% of lone actors were suspected of involvement in terrorism while they were engaged in planning and preparatory activities—and so were already on the authorities’ radar as potential terrorist threats.³³

Further, current research shows that “leakage” is not that uncommon for lone attackers.³⁴ Although based on hindsight knowledge, leakage on social media and/or towards friends and families is not uncommon and offer law enforcement agencies opportunities to detect “weak signals” at various stages in the pre-attack process—especially as the majority of lone-actor terrorists display poor operational security.³⁵ Finally, change in behaviour also can be understood to be a “leaking” signal. Examples of such behaviour include becoming increasingly distant from family mem-

³¹ J. van Buuren, “Fixated Individuals and the state’s response: networked security,” in *Understanding Lone Actor Terrorism. Past experiences, future outlook, and response strategies*, ed. M. Fredholm (London: Routledge, 2016), 160-181.

³² Lindekilde, O’Connor and Schuurman, “Radicalization patterns,” 8.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁴ Ellis, Pantucci, Zuijdewijn, Bakker, Gomis, Palombi, and Smith, *Lone-Actor terrorism*.

³⁵ Lindekilde, O’Connor and Schuurman, “Radicalization patterns,” 2.

bers, and adopting sudden and drastic changes in attitude, as well as more specific ones like changing social groups.³⁶

The early detection, interruption and prevention of lone actor violence is therefore not almost impossible.³⁷ However, this requires, as Fredholm argued,³⁸ a shift from focusing on “motivations” or “radicalisation” towards a focus on concrete and linked actions taken by an individual. A requirement for this is “fused intelligence” on individuals: social media behaviour, criminal records, access to weapons or chemicals, preparations, and operational planning. “The counterterrorism effort should focus on deeds, not thoughts.”³⁹

Networked Security

The combined outcomes of research into lone actors offer perspectives for the prevention of lone actor violence. However, this requires a turn in the application of academic knowledge. Instead of understanding academic knowledge on lone actors in terms of abstract explanations of the phenomenon, the practicality of knowledge should be emphasised—in line with “practice theory”.⁴⁰ As Corner and Gill, for instance, argued: a diagnostic label should not be interpreted as the “master explanation” of a lone actor’s thinking, motives and behaviour.⁴¹ It should instead sensitise authorities to the need to include mental healthcare organisations in the preventive networks.

³⁶ Ellis, Pantucci, Zuijdewijn, Bakker, Gomis, Palombi, and Smith, *Lone-Actor terrorism*, 26.

³⁷ B. Schuurman, E. Bakker, P. Gill and N. Bouhana, “Lone Actor Terrorist Attack Planning and Preparation: A Data-Driven Analysis,” *Journal of Forensic Sciences* (2017): 2-10.

³⁸ M. Fredholm, “Hunting Lone Wolves—Finding Islamist Lone Actors Before They Strike,” Stockholm Seminar on Lone Wolf Terrorism, 2011. See also J. Striegler, “Early detection of the lone wolf: advancement of counter-terrorism investigations with an absence or abundance of information and intelligence,” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2013): 35-53.

³⁹ Fredholm, “Hunting Lone Wolves.”

⁴⁰ V. Pouliot, “The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities,” *International Organization*, Vol. 62 (2008): 257-288.

⁴¹ Corner and Gill, “A False Dichotomy?,” 25.

In other words: the focus should be on the establishment of security networks in which a range of organisations work together to collect and assess signals, establish threat assessments and design tailor-made approaches.⁴² The Dutch experience showed that the collection of different signals from different actors is of paramount importance, as “one signal is no signal.” Only when signals can be combined with other signals and contextualised is it possible to analyse and understand any possible risks. Risk assessment is heavily dependent on the reliability and completeness of the information on which the analysis is based.⁴³ This is the real challenge. Networked security is easy to say but hard to put into practice. Local authorities should have at their disposal the necessary information and network structures as well as the political and administrative will to execute the tasks referred to them. Personalised approaches are a demanding job. In general it is very difficult to supply proof on exactly how intervention by police and other authorities have helped to prevent incidents. This is not only a problem from a financial perspective—organisations have to satisfy performance indicators and have to show that they use their budgets effectively and efficiently—but also in terms of the commitment of all the actors involved.

Further, organisations with different cultures, powers, interests, and objectives have to cooperate closely. In particular, law enforcement agencies and care institutions form two different worlds. Whereas the police is inclined to see “potential violent individuals” foremost as possible suspects, mental healthcare professionals will perceive them primarily as patients in need of care—and intelligence agencies refer to them as “targets”. Since information from mental healthcare institutions, but also from family doctors and other professionals, is of extreme importance to networked security, the willingness of these organisations to work with law enforcement agencies will be a decisive factor. This is partly determined by legal and professional boundaries to the exchange of information—for instance, doctor-patient confidentiality. However, the decisive factor making or breaking cooperation is trust between the professionals engaged. Trust, a shared sense of urgency and a good understanding of the public interests at stake can tear down the walls separating the different organisations.

⁴² A. Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Countering Violent Extremism with Governance Networks,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (2016): 135-139.

⁴³ Buuren, “Fixated Individuals,” 172.

Next to that and partly connected with the trust issues, top-down enforced cooperation runs the risk that not all actors involved understand and appreciate that both organisational and common interests are at stake. Security networks commonly have to balance between the need for a lead organisation model of governance, in which one actor coordinates the decisions and activities of all the actors involved, and a shared model of governance, in which all actors are involved in the internal network governance. While the existence of a leading network actor has the benefit of ensuring that decisions are made and agreements are followed up, the downside is that other actors are not really involved and committed to the shared objectives of the security network. The autonomy and adaptability of networks are being hampered if too much external controls are exercised and local partners are getting the idea that it is not their project. Cooperation then will be more reluctant.⁴⁴ Network governance of complex challenges requires “patient, diplomatic, persistent efforts” to approach a common understanding of the nature of causes behind and possible solutions to the problem at hand.⁴⁵

Lone actor violence will continue to be a challenge for security authorities—for a wicked problem there are by definition no easy solutions. The many “in-between”-cases of lone actor violence—hard to categorise under a political rubric, hard to understand in terms of motivation and objectives—and the variety of connections between lone actors and (digital) extremist environments and criminal milieus question the enduring validity of the concept. More important, social reality—for as far as there is such a thing as social reality—and especially the individual agents living in it, hardly show any interest in or behave themselves according to the definitions, concepts and categories scholars stick onto it.⁴⁶ Spaaij and Hamm correctly concluded that research on lone actor violence still suffers from considerable problems regarding “quality and rigor, including definitional, conceptual, methodological, and inference issues”.⁴⁷ But just as important is the question whether authorities will be able to facilitate flexible, creative, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency professional networks in a security environment hampered by protocols, performance indicators,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Countering Violent Extremism,” 137.

⁴⁶ Buuren, “Performative violence?”

⁴⁷ Spaaij and Hamm, “Key Issues,” 175.

compartmentalisation and sometimes obsolete and artificial conceptions of what constitutes “political”, “social”, “criminal” or “incomprehensible” violence attributed to lone actors.

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The Use of Narratives by Terrorists and How to Prevent Their Resonance: Hedging, Legacy-Nostalgia and Its Counterstrategy Implications

Haroro J. Ingram

The deployment of propaganda by violent non-state political actors is not a new phenomenon. The use of narratives by terrorists to shape target audience perceptions and polarise support offers a relatively simple and cost-effective means by which such actors can seek to compete against typically stronger opponents. While states that confront terrorist organisations and insurgent movements often enjoy significant technological, resource and personnel advantages, it is in the “information theatre” that their adversaries have often had the advantage. The group known as Daesh (Islamic State) has earned a reputation for being particularly adept at deploying propaganda effectively and efficiently towards tactical, operational and strategic ends. Indeed, the group is likely to have a profound impact on how other violent non-state political actors of all ideological motivations construct and deploy narratives now and into the future. This chapter draws on two propaganda strategies deployed by Daesh—hedging and legacy-nostalgia—to argue that a nuanced understanding of terrorist narrative strategies can inform strategic communications efforts, whether from government, private or civil society actors, that are more targeted and impactful. This study begins by examining Daesh’s use of hedging and legacy-nostalgia and its counterstrategy implications before drawing out three overarching lessons for practitioners responsible for preventing the resonance of terrorist propaganda.

* This paper was submitted on 8 August 2018.

Hedging, Legacy-Nostalgia and Its Counterstrategy Implications

The research field has been flooded with studies of Daesh's propaganda campaign¹ especially its use of social media and the Internet.² It is important, however, that the almost endless mix of ways, means and ends that may characterise Daesh's propaganda effort across time does not overshadow the overarching strategic logic at the heart of its campaign.³ Put another way, it is essential that practitioners do not become blind to the forest for the trees. Daesh, like perhaps most modern terrorist groups and insurgent movements, deploys messaging to persuade target audiences—friends, foes and the undecided—to see the world through Daesh's "competitive system of meaning". Driven by this rationale, Daesh propaganda is designed to amplify the impact of its actions and credibility as a politico-military actor while seeking to lessen the impact and credibility of its opponents. As Daesh's propaganda doctrine *Media Operative, You are also a Mujahid* declares:

"The media operative brothers—may Allah the Almighty protect them—are charged with shielding the ummah from the mightiest onslaught ever known in the history of the Crusader *and* Safavid wars! They are the security valve for the *sharia* of the Merciful. They are warding off an invasion, the danger of which exceeds even the danger of the military invasion. It is an intellectual invasion that is faced by the Muslims in both their minds and their hearts, corrupting the identity of many of them, distorting their ideas, inverting their concepts, substituting their traditions, drying the headwaters of their faith and deadening their zeal."⁴

For Daesh, propagandists are as important to their struggle as combatants: "The media is a jihad in the way of Allah. You, with your media work, are therefore a mujahid in the way of Allah (provided your intention

¹ For example see J. M. Berger and J. Stern, *ISIS: The State of Terror*. New York: Ecco (2015); D. Milton, *Communication Breakdown: Unraveling the Islamic State's media efforts*. West Point (NY): Combating Terrorism Center (2016); D. Mahloulou and C. Winter, "A take of two caliphates: comparing the Islamic State's internal and external messaging priorities", *VOXPOL* (2018).

² For example see A. Meleagrou-Hitchens and N. Kaderbhai, "Research Perspectives on Online Radicalisation: A literature review, 2006-2016", *VOXPOL* (2017).

³ H. Ingram, "The strategic logic of Islamic State information operations", *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69/6 (2015): 729-752.

⁴ Al-Himma Library, *Media Operative, You are also a mujahid* (Al Himma Library, 2017), 26.

is sound). The media *jihad* against the enemy is no less important than the material fight against it. Moreover, your media efforts are considered as parts of many great forms of the rite of *jihad*.⁵ While Daesh deploys a variety of strategies as part of its “media jihad”, this study focuses specifically on hedging and legacy-nostalgia. These strategies were selected for the different insights each offers into the logic of Daesh propaganda and to demonstrate the necessity of an evidence-based, methodical and persuasive approach to developing counterstrategies.

Hedging: Syncing Message and Action Through Boom and Bust

Throughout its history, Daesh’s fortunes have been characterised by a boom-bust dynamic. From its inception in the late-1990s, periods of success (e.g., as an insurgency during the second Gulf War and again through 2014-15 across Iraq and Syria) have been followed by periods of crippling failure (e.g., near decimation at the hands of Awakening and US forces then defeats at the hands of coalition forces through 2016-18). By 2018, Daesh had lost almost all its territorial gains across Syria and Iraq; however, unlike in the aftermath of the Sunni Awakening almost a decade earlier, it had gained a global network of formal and aspiring affiliates across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Analysing Daesh narratives across this tumultuous history suggests that the group deploys a “hedging” strategy in which certain themes are given greater priority during periods of bust versus boom. During periods of success, such as from mid-2014 through 2015,⁶ Daesh messaging tended to be dominated by themes such as statehood, building the ranks, calls for foreign fighters, stories of its conventional politico-military prowess and rational-choice appeals (i.e., messaging dominated by cost-benefit argumentation). The imagery of bustling markets and seemingly unstoppable military operations in the pages of Daesh’s multilingual magazines and its slick videos through 2014-15 would immediately come to mind. In contrast, Daesh messaging during periods of decline⁷ has tended

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ A. Zelin, “The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has a consumer protection office”, *The Atlantic* 13 June, 2014.

⁷ C. Clarke and C. Winter, “The Islamic State may be failing, but its strategic communications legacy is here to stay”, *War on the Rocks* 17 August 2017.

to emphasise themes of struggle and sacrifice, purification of its ranks, the need for “just terror”, its prowess in unconventional politico-military activities and identity-choice appeals (i.e., messaging dominated by identity-based argumentation). This trend highlights the close relationship between Daesh’s messaging and its politico-military activities. Put simply, messaging does not exist in a vacuum but rather it must shape and reflect reality to some extent. What is important to note with Daesh’s deployment of hedging is that so-called bust themes do not completely disappear during periods of boom or vice versa. Hedging gives Daesh propaganda the thematic flexibility to adapt with changing fortunes in the field and, in doing so, imbues its messaging with a sense of consistency over time and despite fluctuating fortunes in the field.

Understanding Daesh’s deployment of hedging as part of its propaganda effort has two significant implications for those seeking to prevent the resonance of such narratives. First, if practitioners can recognise hedging trends then they are better positioned to either respond with effective counter-messaging or, preferably, pre-emptively deploy messaging designed to force Daesh propagandists to respond with counternarratives. After all, highlighting the predictability of Daesh messaging can be a powerful way to undermine the allure of its narratives. Second, trends in the themes prioritised by Daesh propagandists are often indicative of where the group is strategically positioned in terms of its phased politico-military campaign and where it intends to transition next.⁸ This underscores the importance of strategic communications practitioners monitoring both the messaging *and* actions of violent extremist groups to devise better campaign and message designs. The next propaganda strategy is one typically deployed by Daesh during periods of decline.

Legacy-Nostalgia: Daesh’s History War

Given that Daesh is currently in a state of decline, it is useful to consider its legacy-nostalgia propaganda strategy. Daesh has a history of reemerging in cities and communities where it has previously enjoyed successes and there are often very practical reasons for this trend. One of the most

⁸ For more on Daesh’s phased politico-military strategy see C. Whiteside, “New masters of revolutionary warfare: The Islamic State movement (2002-2016)”, *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10/4 (2016). <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/523/1036>.

significant factors is the existence and persistence of Daesh-friendly networks in those areas. After all, the longer Daesh has been in a location, the deeper its roots tend to embed in that society especially if its networks are forged in marriage, friendship, family or tribal ties. This trend is also a product of experience and knowledge as well as a natural inclination to return to places that are known rather than unknown especially during times of vulnerability. Those friendly networks then act as “decisive minorities” for Daesh within the population by acting as the lifeblood of intelligence and resources. Another important factor in Daesh’s tendency to emerge in communities of previous success is that the group often deploys a “legacy” strategy in such areas through “influence operations”, especially propaganda messaging, designed to “re-write” the history of its previous efforts and play upon nostalgia to win back supporters, attract new supporters and, in doing so, lay the foundations for resurgence. Daesh-friendly networks—whether in places where the group has held territory or even in communities from which individuals travelled to become foreign fighters—are key targets of this legacy-nostalgia strategy to keep those “true believers” inspired and mobilised. After all, it is these networks that will act as the chief advocates of that legacy strategy *within* target communities.

Given that Daesh’s legacy-nostalgia strategy is deployed during periods of decline, its messaging tends to be dominated by bust themes (see above) that are augmented by two types of nostalgia appeals. The first is “*caliphal nostalgia*” which are narratives that venerate past politico-military successes especially those resulting in the capture of cities and the implementation of Daesh’s system of governance. The second is “*manhaj nostalgia*” which are narratives that highlight how commitment to Daesh’s methodology brought historical successes and promise future successes. These two types of nostalgia appeals create a self-reinforcing cycle whereby previous successes are presented as realistic goals that can only be achieved, according to Daesh, by adherence to its *manhaj*. In turn, adherence to Daesh’s *manhaj* is presented as a guarantee of either collective success in the form of a caliphate or personal success in the form of martyrdom. Such messaging will look to *synchronise with actions* in the field. For example, as Daesh was laying the foundations for re-capturing cities in Iraq prior to its capture of Mosul in 2014 its charismatic spokesman, Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, released speeches such as “They shall by no means

harm you except with a slight evil”⁹ and “This is not our methodology nor will it ever be”¹⁰, largely rewriting the history of its previous engagement with those populations. For more recent examples, Al Hayat’s *Inside the Caliphate* series (2017-18) contained a mix of nostalgia appeals¹¹ and its *Rumiyah* magazine frequently featured the words of previous Daesh leaders advocating the benefits of remaining committed to the group’s *manhaj* especially during times of hardship.¹²

Given the devastation Daesh has caused in every community that it has controlled, it may be difficult to understand why populations who had previously thrown out the group would, in a relatively short period of time, offer varying degrees of support to it. However, the fields of psychology and neuroscience offer important insights into how and why this may occur. For instance, research into the psychology of memory construction suggests that memory is shaped in the process of retrieval.¹³ Consequently, if new information is added during the process of retrieval the memory itself may change over time. Additionally, extreme levels of stress and uncertainty tends to characterise the psychosocial conditions in communities previously controlled by Daesh and so there already exists a greater susceptibility to adopting simple explanatory narratives through which to understand the world and justify certain actions over others. This suggests that such populations may have great vulnerabilities to legacy-nostalgia messaging.

Several factors may impact the potential efficacy of Daesh’s legacy-nostalgia strategy. First, time is a crucial factor because the more time that has passed the greater the opportunities for memory reconstruction. Second, whether the lives of affected communities have improved since Daesh’s period of control is going to impact whether nostalgia appeals will resonate. Third, the activism of anti-Daesh elements in the community and, fourth, whether Daesh’s legacy-nostalgia strategy is being contested

⁹ A. Al-Adnani, “They shall by no means harm you but with a slight evil”, *Fursan al-Balagh Media Translation Section* (2013).

¹⁰ A. Al-Adnani, “This is not our methodology nor will it ever be”, *Al-Furqan Media* (2014).

¹¹ C. Whiteside and H. Ingram, “In Search of the Virtual Caliphate: Convenient Fallacy, Dangerous Distraction”, *War on the Rocks* 27 September 2017.

¹² H. Ingram, “Islamic State’s English-language magazines, 2014-17: Trends & implications for CT-CVE strategic communications”, *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism—The Hague* 8/15 (2018).

¹³ For example see D. Bridge and K. Paller, “Neural correlates of reactivation and retrieval-induced distortion”, *Journal of Neuroscience* 32/35 (2012): 12144-12151.

are particularly significant determinants. These factors offer some useful guiding principles for designing counterstrategies against Daesh's legacy-nostalgia efforts.

Ultimately, messaging means little if it does not reflect realities on the ground. Pining for the past resonates when the divide between hope and reality in the present is acute. Delivering real world improvements in terms of stability, livelihood and security in the lives of those previously under Daesh control will be essential. Messaging will also be important for amplifying the impact of these actions on the ground. A clear weakness in Daesh's legacy-nostalgia strategy that should be exploited is the fact that Daesh is using nostalgia as a propaganda strategy due to its own failures to sustainably deliver on its previous promises. Using messaging to expose the say-do gaps inherent to Daesh's use of a legacy-nostalgia strategy is an essential means to undermine its resonance. The research into memory construction cited earlier suggests that counterstrategy efforts cannot afford to be ad hoc or periodic in its rollout. Rather, messaging efforts to counter legacy-nostalgia narratives need to synchronise regular short and long-form messages disseminated with persuasive intent and designed to solidify memories of the Daesh reality and not the fantasies the group may seek to portray. The strategic communications guidelines outlined here will be crucial to preventing Daesh from laying the foundations for its survival and future revival.

Conclusion: Overarching Lessons for Practitioners

This chapter used the examples of Daesh's hedging and legacy-nostalgia strategies to explore how an evidence-based approach to understanding terrorist narratives can inform more nuanced approaches to strategic communications campaign and message design. For practitioners responsible for preventing the resonance of terrorist narratives several overarching lessons emerge from this analysis.

First is the need for both state and non-state practitioners to adopt a methodical, evidence-based and persuasive approach to strategic communications.¹⁴ The need for creative thinking around campaign and message

¹⁴ For more on counterterrorism strategic communications see K. Braddock and J. Dillard, "Meta-analytical evidence for the persuasive effect of narratives on belief, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors", *Communication Monographs* 83/4 (2016): 446-467.

design is not an excuse for free-flowing and intuitive over evidence-based and methodical approaches. At the most basic level, using a combination of surveys, focus groups and interviews to establish a “baseline” picture of attitudinal and behavioural trends in a target audience *prior to* rolling out a messaging campaign then repeating those measures regularly is crucial for gauging reach and impact over time. A methodical approach to campaign and message design, augmented by frequent evaluations and feedback loops, makes it easier to identify why certain approaches succeeded and failed as well as where improvements could be made.

Second, a comprehensive approach to prevention requires engagement by the full spectrum of government, private and civil society actors, all of whom must recognise that each may be better equipped and more credible than others to fulfil certain roles. It is the responsibility of each actor then to not encroach into the “space” of others. Of course, governments have an important role to play in counterterrorism messaging but this needs to be appropriately constrained. For example, liberal democratic governments should not engage in counter-proselytising messaging; instead leaving that to civil society groups, especially the religious clerics themselves. Private companies have flexibility where many democratic governments do not. For instance, social media companies can remove users and content from their platform which may normally be protected by free speech laws.

Finally, local community-based efforts are perhaps the most important in undermining the resonance of terrorist narratives. However, these typically small-scale efforts are often poorly resourced and supported. This is due to factors including the preference of governments to fund larger scale projects, the field’s obsession with tech- and social media-centric counterstrategies that results in grassroots efforts being overlooked and the risks and difficulties associated with working in frontline communities, especially those in conflict and post-conflict zones. These disadvantages are magnified when one considers the support that local affiliates of groups such as Daesh and Al Qaeda may receive. At the very least, affiliates of these groups have a broader regional and global perspective (e.g., “lessons learned” from central) that local civil society groups may not have at their disposal. The true frontlines of the struggle to undermine the resonance of terrorist narratives occurs street by street and block by

block within communities and a full spectrum approach demands that grassroots actors receive adequate support.¹⁵

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¹⁵ The Strategic Communications Capacity Building (SCCB) Project provides training and support to civil society groups across Southeast Asia in areas heavily impacted by violent extremists. Most civil society groups supported by the SCCB Project live and operate in conflict and post-conflict zones. The aim of the SCCB Project is to provide strategic and technical training and support to ensure that local grassroots actors have the knowledge and tools to confront violent extremist "influence operations" in their local areas. To learn more please contact the author.

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The Fight against Jihadist Terrorism: Safeguarding Fundamental Freedoms and Human Rights

Eliane Etmüller

“Terrorism is fundamentally the denial and destruction of human rights, and the fight against terrorism will never succeed by perpetuating the same denial and destruction.”¹

- Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, 2017

The latest terrorist attacks were mostly perpetrated with unsophisticated weaponry: trucks—as seen in Nice (2016) and Berlin (2016). At the same time, suicide bombings were carried out by “untypical”, “unsuspicious” agents such as young children (Lake Chad Region²) and entire families (Surabaya in 2018). Since 2013, an unprecedented number of voluntary fighters have travelled to Syria and Iraq in order to join Jihadist militias. Consequently, many states have started to revise and reinforce their home security regulations, introducing new policies to prevent radicalisation. These new measures are a cause of concern among activists in Europe, who fear that they will have a negative effect on society; namely the weakening of fundamental freedoms and the strengthening of sectarian stigmatisation. The history of contemporary Islamist movements shows that human rights violations, especially torture, have increased the determination of thinkers like the Muslim Brethren Sayyid Qutb in Egypt and Sayyid Hawwa

* This paper was submitted on 30 July 2018.

¹ Guterres, Antonio, *Secretary-General's Speech at SOAS, University of London*, “Counter-terrorism and human rights: winning the fight while upholding our values” [as delivered], 16 November 2017, United Nations, Secretary-General, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-11-16/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-speech-soas-university-london-%E2%80%9Ccounter-terrorism>.

² UNICEF Press Release, *Lake Chad conflict: alarming surge in number of children used in Boko Haram bomb attacks this year*, 12 April 2017, https://www.unicef.org/media/media_95571.html.

in Syria to call for violent action. Global Jihadist and Islamist groups such as Daesh or Hizb ut-Tahrir share a discourse that portrays Muslims as perpetual victims and a persecuted minority. Similar to Qutb's concept of *jahiliyya* (the dark age before the advent of Islam), for these groups, *dar al-kufr* (the house/land of unbelief) is to be found everywhere and needs to be brought down, to be then replaced by a perfect virtuous Islamic state or caliphate. Consequently, newly adopted preventive actions in the fight against terrorism that may be considered arbitrary and discriminatory will enhance the Islamist discourse of victimhood and open the doors for more converts to this ideology. Therefore, it is vital for all measures intended to prevent radicalisation to safeguard the fundamental freedoms and human rights in place in most democratic countries. At the same time, prevention policies have to consider the main claims and accusations voiced by Islamists, which seem to be convincing increasing numbers of people around the world. This article intends to explore some of the main lines of argument shared by different Islamist ideologies to argue that their demand of a totalitarian social and political structure cannot be tolerated within liberal democracies and plural societies. The fight against this new form of totalitarianism, however, should not be conducted as an armed "counter-jihad", but rather as a "counter-*dawa*" that opens up the minds of people to tolerance.

Islamist Extremism: A Totalitarian Ideology

The latest empirical studies on Islamist radicalisation have shown that poverty and the lack of education are not the main causes of this phenomenon. One study from Jordan shows that among radicals, the most extremist views were to be found among the more educated and that among the young interviewees without a formal education there were no tendencies towards extremism.³ When poverty levels were taken to be the

³ According to a survey quoted by the International Center for the Study of Extremism, 67% of the Jordanian adult population found al-Qaida to be a legitimate resistance movement. This support fell, according to the same study, to 6.2% in December 2015 after the Amman hotel bombings. Since then, popular support has showed similar extreme fluctuations. However, according to the numbers quoted in the same analysis, the steady support for extremist/terrorist groups seems to be around 7%. These supporters are seemingly young men (18-24 years old) with a middle class background and higher education. Braizat, Fares, Speckhard, Anne, Shajkovci, Ardian, and Sabaileh, Amer, *Determining Youth Radicalization in Jordan*, International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism, 21 November 2017, <http://www.icsve.org/research-reports/determining-youth-radicalization-in-jordan/>.

main indicator of support for extremism, similar results were displayed: the young Jordanians who answered the questionnaires and came from families with higher income displayed more radical ideas than poorer interviewees. Statistics from Germany, based on research analysing the background of people who left the country in order to join Jihadist militias in Syria and Iraq, also highlighted how these men, women and minors came from different social strata and were not necessarily socially deprived people with criminal records.⁴ Not only the new recruits appear to come from educated and diverse social backgrounds, the two present leaders of the most important international terrorist networks, Ayman az-Zawahiri and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, both achieved the second highest level of education possible in their fields: Zawahiri as a surgeon and Baghdadi as a theologian. It could be argued then that giving people more education does not keep them away from radical thinking. This is consistent with data from studies on revolutionary movements which show how students have always been among the most revolutionary men and women throughout history. It is therefore not necessarily the lack of access to education, food and basic needs that makes people rise up, but the belief and the adherence to a specific ideology.

If the migration movements towards Syria and the terrorist attacks perpetrated worldwide are taken into account, it seems obvious that Daesh has been propagating an ideology that can easily be adopted by men, women and minors who come from very different cultural backgrounds and may be Muslims by birth or conversion. One Daesh video features a French convert, Abu Suhayb al-Faranci,⁵ a man in his fifties, softly spoken and clearly educated, who provides a reasoned reflection on how he converted to Islam and why he joined Daesh in Syria. He mentions that, as a young man, he had a spiritual encounter in a church. Since that particular moment, he became deeply convinced that there is a God and only one God. In the video Faranci explains that he then joined a seminar in order to become a Catholic priest but did not find the answers to his existential

⁴ No author indicated, *Analyse der Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien oder Irak ausgereist sind*, Bundeskriminalamt, Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Hessisches Informations- und Kompetenzzentrum gegen Extremismus, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

⁵ Al-Hayat Media Center, *Récits de la terre de la vie, Histoire de la vie de Abu Suhayb al-Faranci*, 7 March 2015, <http://jihadology.net/2015/03/07/al-hayat-media-center-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-stories-from-the-land-of-the-living-abu-suhayb-al-faransi/>.

questions. His quest for truth and his job as a businessman took him to many countries, until he finally found truth in the Quran, went on *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca and met “brothers” who had done jihad. He tried to ask different preachers about the nature and the obligation of jihad. According to Faranci, all of them were afraid to talk and told him that he should be quiet because he could risk a prison sentence for such indiscreet questions. Despite the evasive answers of established theologians, Abu Suhayb became convinced that jihad was an Islamic obligation and travelled to Syria. The film about this French convert clearly shows that the Daesh ideology can very well affect experienced people of a certain age, who are highly educated, have travelled the world and who do not spontaneously decide to seek adventure in Syria. The overall appeal of Islamic extremism suggests that it is a popular ideology with totalitarian features; everyone shall have an essential and clearly defined role in the ultimate ideal Islamic reign.

It is possible to compare the political order that Daesh has put in place with the Nazi and Stalinist regimes, structures that Hannah Arendt found to be those of the ideal totalitarian state. According to Arendt, the main elements of totalitarian rule are the alienation of people through the removal of common social ties, the heavy propaganda machinery, the terror regime, the adulation of one central leader and the bureaucratic structure.⁶ When looking at Daesh through Arendt’s analysis, certain things become clear. For example, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani spoke on various occasions of the need to kill people, even close family members, if they were *kuffar*.⁷ Consequently, the “natural ties” in society were broken in favour of a supreme totalitarian community, the Daesh version of the Islamic *umma*. Daesh propagandists also aimed to seduce Islamists—and were extremely successful in doing so—by using the latest technology and social media. Seventy years ago, Arendt showed how terror became worse in established totalitarian regimes in order to keep people silent and alienated. The same happened in the Daesh caliphate, where executioners slaughtered people in public and crucified or displayed corpses, among many other barbaric acts. There is also an easily recognisable Daesh-“Führerprinzip”,

⁶ Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Penguin Modern Classics, Penguin Books, UK/ USA/Canada/Ireland/Australia/India/New Zealand/South Africa, 2017.

⁷ Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, “Say, Die in Your Rage”, Daesh audio, 26 January 2015, <https://archive.org/details/SayDieInYourRage>.

an obligatory adulation of a central leader, to whom people have to pledge allegiance. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi combines institutional, charismatic and divine legitimacy because he holds a PhD in Islamic law from the University of Baghdad, he is a recognised leader of a Jihadist militia in Iraq and he claims to be a descendent from the Prophet Muhammed. Even the highly bureaucratic structure of the ideal-typical totalitarian regime can be found within Daesh, particularly when it ruled over a big part of Iraqi and Syrian territories. Aymenn Jawed al-Tamimi collected many administrative orders and publications on his blog,⁸ demonstrating that Daesh acted in a highly bureaucratised manner. The organisation issued all kinds of permits and certificates, even one that confirms that the person who holds it is not an apostate.⁹

To declare one's disagreement to totalitarian structures, such as Daesh, is easily done from afar. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, al-Qaida, the Taliban and many more hardcore Jihadists rejected the foundation of a caliphate by Daesh on 29 June 2014. However, are the totalitarian core elements of their ideologies not essentially similar to the ones of Daesh? Is it not all about the establishment of a perfect Islamic state? Sometimes this request comprises more local than global aims in the beginning. However, it never fails to call for the conquest of al-Quds (Jerusalem) for "the Muslims" even when it is voiced in faraway Kandahar.¹⁰ An Islamic state or caliphate shall always favour the perfect Muslims, eliminate the apostates as well as the polytheists and "protect" (i.e., oppress) the people of the book. Sometimes there are nuances when it comes to the decision on how elements that appear to be potentially dangerous to the perfect Islamic community shall be punished or eliminated. Nonetheless, there is a general agreement among Islamists that people who do not comply with the sharia have to be punished severely. For example, most Islamists, unlike Daesh, would not ask for homosexuals to be pushed from rooftops. However, a lot of them agree that homosexuals need to be punished and segregated from the community. Yusuf al-Qaradawi says the following:

⁸ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad, *Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.)*, 11 January 2016, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents-1>.

⁹ Lohker, Rüdiger, *Theologie der Gewalt, Das Beispiel IS*, Facultas Verlags- und Buchhandels AG, Wien, 2016, p. 89.

¹⁰ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, *Part 3 of the Series from Life in Jihad*, June 2018, <https://jihadology.net/2018/06/04/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-empire-of-afghanistan-life-in-jihad-3/>.

“Muslim jurists hold different opinions concerning the punishment for this abominable practice. Should it be the same as the punishment for fornication, or should both the active and passive participants be put to death? While such punishments may seem cruel, they have been suggested to maintain the purity of the Islamic society and to keep it clean of perverted elements.”¹¹

Consequently, even the famous Islamist TV-preacher Qaradawi, who mostly rejects violence (whenever it is not directed against Jews) and the struggle for jihad, asks his followers to “maintain the Islamic society pure”. Is this not exactly the argument which has justified most genocides? The Nazis wanted to keep their perfect Aryan race clean of homosexuals, gypsies and Jews too.

We may conclude that most Islamist and especially Jihadist ideologies show totalitarian tendencies that advocate a complete submission of the individual to an Islamic state, the repeal of fundamental freedoms and the abolition of human rights as man-made regulations, in favour of divine law, which is considered to be all-inclusive, indisputable and eternal.

The Jihadist Cause

In order to establish a working counter-terrorism policy, it is important to understand why terrorists are fighting. In a Daesh publication from 2014, released shortly after the foundation of the new caliphate, the anonymous author writes: “there shall be no more fake nationalistic border to divide the Muslims.”¹² What sounds like a fight for independence against the last remains of European imperial rule later reveals clear imperialist aspirations itself. A picture shows the estimated extension of Daesh territory in 2020 which would include Damascus, Amman, Medina and Kuwait.¹³ In case the picture is not clear enough, the author describes Daesh aspirations of power in the following words: “the aim of the Islamic State is to bulldoze all the Sykes-Picot borders which divide the Muslim world, to remove the puppet-rulers and to establish a global Caliphate.”¹⁴ First, the “puppet

¹¹ English Fatwa Bank, Living Shari’a, *Homosexuality and Lesbianism: Sexual Perversions*, Islam Online, no date indicated, <https://archive.islamonline.net/?p=828>.

¹² The Islamic State, *The Revived Caliphate*, 1435 hijri/2014 CE, p. 76.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

rulers” in the Muslim world will be removed, followed by the seizure of Iran and Europe (Rome is defined as its capital) and finally Jerusalem because: “whoever rules Jerusalem, rules the world.”¹⁵ Finally yet importantly, the Daesh text instigates international conquests based on a hadith taken from Sahih Muslim, which is quoted as follows:

“Allah’s Messenger said: You will attack Arabia and Allah will enable you to conquer it, then you would attack Persia (Iran) and He would make you to conquer it. Then you would attack Rome (Italy/Europe) and Allah will enable you to conquer it, then you would attack the Dajjal (in Israel) and Allah will enable you to conquer him.”¹⁶

Although the ebook—its structure, spelling and grammar—has many defects when compared to, for example, the technically outstanding *Dabiq* magazine, the core message is present. People (“the Muslims”) will fight for the establishment of a global caliphate, understood not only as a requirement from God to men, but also a predetermined outcome of the final battle of *Dabiq*, which will take place by the end of time.¹⁷ In order to achieve this goal, one group may want to start with a small-scale Islamic State first while others may target the “far enemy” directly, mostly defined as “the head of the Crusaders” (the United States).¹⁸ In both cases, the motivation is similar: the foundation of a state where sharia rules and the Muslim *umma* will be united. The main elements of this ideology, which may be defined as totalitarian following Arendt’s concept, have been preached for nearly two centuries.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 81. The following references are provided by the Daesh author: Sahih Muslim—Kitab al Fitan (Book of Tribulations) - Chapter: Conquests Of The Muslims Before The Appearance Of Ad-Dajjal - Sahih Muslim 2900 - <http://sunnah.com/muslim/54/50>.

¹⁷ No author mentioned, “Reflections on the Final Crusade”, *Dabiq, The Failed Crusade*, nr. 4, Dhul al-Hijjah, 1435 (September 2014).

¹⁸ Abu-Yahya al-Libi, in Khansa_Media, *silsila asirat al-umma*, first episode, minute 9:59 and ff.

¹⁹ I therefore only partially agree with Guido Steinberg’s hypothesis in which he claims that the internationalist ideology and scene of the Jihadists only developed after 9/11. The “Pan-Islamist” ideology has been internationalist since its very foundation by Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh in the late 19th century and even if Arabs dominated al-Qaida in its beginning, it already had internationalist aspirations. I do agree that there was a change in strategy of the Islamist movements after 9/11 and that it adapted to exogenous as well as endogenous causes, proving to be very flexible when doing so. I think, however, that the “totalitarian” elements of the ideology have been present since 1884. See: Steinberg, Guido, *German Jihad*, Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013.

Recently, with the global participation of many men and women in the Syrian conflict, it has become clearly observable that the Islamist ideology has borne its fruits all over the world. As highlighted by Emmanuel Sivan and many others, Islamist thought developed in different stages.²⁰ The aforementioned totalitarian elements, however, are strikingly similar to all Islamist movements, whether they first appeared as a Palestinian resistance against Israel or as a social movement whose members were radicalised in jail by their Pan-Arabist-Socialist hangmen. Let us examine Hizb ut-Tahrir, which firmly criticises and rejects the Daesh version of a caliphate. Despite this, the “liberation party” is convinced that the caliphate is mandatory (by God) for Muslims as well as for the rest of the world. Dr. Abdul Wahid states in an article on the Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain Website: “The scope of the *Khilafah*—and Islam generally—is not only the problems in the Muslim world—but also problems that confront the world as a whole, because the scope of the Islam is the whole of humanity.”²¹ What about the Muslim Brotherhood? Hassan al-Banna said: “We believe that Islam is an all-embracing concept, which regulates every aspect of life, adjudicating on everyone its concerns and describing for it a solid and rigorous order.”²² Whereas al-Banna remains vague on what will happen to non-Muslim as soon as true Islam gets to rule, he is very clear about jihad:

“Allah has imposed jihad as a religious duty on every Muslim, categorically and rigorously, from which there is neither evasion nor escape. He has rendered it a supreme object of desire, and has made the reward of martyrs in His way a splendid one, for He has conjoined with them in their reward only those who have acted as they did, and have modelled themselves upon them in their performance of jihad.”²³

He also corrects “young people of his time” who argue that the fight against the enemy has to be considered “the lesser” jihad and that the greater jihad is the one carried out by the spirit,²⁴ saying that there is nothing like supreme martyrdom and the ones who strive for it on God’s

²⁰ Sivan, Emmanuel, *Radical Islam*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2013.

²¹ Wahid, Abdul, *5 Reasons Why We Must Talk about Khilafa*, Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, 25 July 2017, <http://www.hizb.org.uk/viewpoint/5-reasons-why-we-must-talk-about-khilafah/>.

²² International Islamic Federation of Students Organisation, *majmu'at rasa'il al-Imam al-shahid Hasan al-Banna*, no date indicated, p. 83.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

path.²⁵ Consequently, Abdullah Azzam was not the first one to proclaim jihad *fard al-ayn* (a duty for all Muslims) during the fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Hassan al-Banna had said it before him. The struggle for an Islamic caliphate is not a goal “invented” by Hizb ut-Tahrir or Daesh. Right after the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, many Islamist thinkers tried to find a substitute. Rashid Rida proposed an Islamic State ruled by Turkish militias and governed intellectually/theologically by the Arabs.²⁶

The considerable movement of people to the zones of *ribat*, the frontline between *dar al-kufr* and *dar al-Islam*, should please the preachers from the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Saudi-sponsored Wahhabis. Their strategy to work bottom-up to bring people back to religion through massive efforts in *dawa* (proselytism) has proved successful! At least in Germany, all people who travelled to Syria and Iraq became first radicalised in so-called Salafist circles.²⁷ Why is this surprising? Why should people who are open to the reasoning of sects who preach intolerance, religious exclusivity, hatred, war and the blessings of martyrdom not go and fight the enemies of their religion?

Most terrorist attacks are not perpetrated in Europe. According to the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, in 2016, “at least 11,000 terrorist attacks occurred in more than 100 countries, resulting in more than 25,000 total deaths and 33,000 people injured.”²⁸ Three quarters of terrorist attacks are perpetrated in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Nigeria. The highest representative of the UN also stated that “terrorism is fundamentally the denial and destruction of human rights, and the fight against terrorism will never succeed by perpetuating the same denial and

²⁵ Ibid., p. 261.

²⁶ Rida, Muhammad Rashid, *al-khilafa aw al-imamat al-'uzma*, matb'a al-manar, 1922.

²⁷ At the autumn conference of the German Federal Criminal Police, Wiebke Steffen concluded that: “even if within the purist peaceful threads of thought violence is rejected and not legitimised, Salafism endangers the principles of democratic coexistence.” Wiebke, Steffen, *Internationaler Terrorismus: Wie können Prävention und Repression Schritt halten?*, BKA-Herbsttagung, 18-19 November 2015, p. 9. Marwan Abou-Taam voices similar concerns: “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.” Abou-Taam, Marwan, “Daesh Radicalisation and Responses in Germany”, in *Countering DAESH Extremism, European and Asian Responses*, Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, RSIS, February 2016.

²⁸ Guterres, Antonio, *Secretary-General's Speech at SOAS, University of London*, “Counter-terrorism and human rights: winning the fight while upholding our values” [as delivered], 16 November 2017, United Nations, Secretary-General. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-11-16/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-speech-soas-university-london-%E2%80%9Ccounter-terrorism>.

destruction.”²⁹ I am not sure whether terrorism can be simply defined as a denial and destruction of human rights. Most “terrorist groups” call themselves freedom fighters and have clear guidelines on how to treat the “civil population”. Ayman az-Zawahiri issued his *Guidelines for Jihad* in 2013, Hamas amended their *Charter* four years later and the Taliban are proud of their *Layha*.³⁰ Nevertheless, I completely agree with Guterres on his second point; if the fight against terrorism undermines human rights, it will not succeed and it will further strengthen the Islamist discourse of victimhood.

The Discourse of Victimhood

Islamist ideologies strongly rely on a discourse of victimhood. In this worldview, unbelievers have attacked Muslims and Islam ever since the revelation and the Prophet Muhammad’s escape from Mecca to Yathrib (Medina). In contemporary history, all wars and armed conflicts that included Muslims as a party are seen through this lens and interpreted as wars of religion. As Muslim lands are under constant attack, all Muslims have to come together to fight jihad and expel the non-Muslims from their lands. Ayman Az-Zawahiri, the present global leader of the al-Qaida network, said in a recent audio message, in early June 2018:

“Oh Muslim Umma, the battle in Palestine and the battles that are similar to it in Cairo, Riyadh, Grozny, Kabul and ash-Sham [greater Syria] are not battles restricted to local fighters. It is a battle of the Muslim Umma against the big criminal international system headed by such criminal heads of state like the ones in Moscow, Peking and Delhi. And it is a long, multilateral and violent battle.”³¹

In this Islamist worldview, the unbelievers have been assisted by the so-called *tawaghit* (sing. *taghut*), the Muslim tyrants who do not rule according to sharia and oppress Muslims. Since Abu Muhammad al-Maqqdisi’s first

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Such rules established by terrorist groups may be the point of departure for a debate about human rights according to the strategy of certain NGOs and scholars. See: Parker, Tom, “Redressing the Balance: How Human Rights Defenders Can Use Victim Narratives to Confront the Violence of Armed Groups”, in *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 33, nr. 4, The John Hopkins University Press, November 2011.

³¹ Az-Zawahiri, Ayman, *min an-nakba wa-l-naksa li-l-nahda wa-l-'azza*, As-Sahab Media, 1439 (June 2018).

official excommunication of the Saudi royals in the 1980s,³² a lot has been written against different *tawaghit*. Finally, all rulers in the Islamic world were blamed for having rejected their religion and leading their countries away from true Islam. In June 2016, for example, Daesh released a video entitled *Toghut* which showed the Malaysian Daesh fighter Mohd Rafi Udin (called Abu 'Aun al-Malayzi in Arabic) decapitate three alleged spies with two other combatants. The Malaysian Daesh fighter then threatens his home country, especially the police, promising to carry out attacks after his return.³³ The police are understood to be direct representatives of the *taghut* rule in Malaysia and must therefore be attacked according to Daesh reasoning.

The direct attack against the police leads us to consider another two vital elements of the Islamist discourse of victimhood: prison and torture. Zaynab al-Ghazali's *ayyam min hayati* (days of my life) may be considered an early classic of this genre. In the text, the author describes her imprisonment and torture during the Nasser era in Egypt. By doing so, she stresses her resistance as a pure Muslim woman who quotes from the Quran and endures pain heroically.³⁴ Prison narratives, describing the ordeal and torture, are shared on Islamist and Jihadist internet sites on a daily basis. In early June 2018, for example, a pamphlet by al-Hikmah Media (based in the UK) called upon Muslims to fight "the aggression of Hindu fundamentalists."³⁵ The text accused a specific person at Kashimpur Central Jail of torturing the fasting and non-smoking Muslims by placing these prisoners in solitary confinement and forbidding them to pray in congregation. The pamphlet goes as far as to state that not even in Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and Indian prisons have there been such "heinous

³² Wagemakers, Joas, "A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, August 2009.

³³ Editor, "Daesh Announces Asia Pivot in Video Targeting Malaysia, Philippines", *AlahedNews*, <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=33775&cid=551>. Editor, "Malaysian ISIS Fighter From Negeri Sembilan In Beheading Video Warns Bukit Aman On Attacks", *Malaysian Digest*, 24 June 2016, <http://www.malaysiandigest.com/news/618402-malaysian-isis-fighter-from-negeri-sembilan-in-beheading-video-warns-bukit-aman-on-attacks.html>.

³⁴ Al-Ghazali, Zaynab, *ayyam min hayati*, Dar ash-Shuruq, Cairo, 1981.

³⁵ Al-Hikmah Media, *Heinous Aggression on the Fasting-Muslim Prisoners in Bangladesh: A Call for the Muslims to Rise-up*, Telegram, June 2018, <https://jihadology.net/2018/06/01/new-statement-from-al-%e1%b8%a5ikmah-media-heinous-aggression-on-the-fasting-muslim-prisoners-in-bangladesh-a-call-for-the-muslims-to-rise-up/>.

example[s]".³⁶ It seems obvious that the terrible abuse of prisoners by American soldiers in Abu Ghraib is still a popular topic among Islamists. The Daesh ebook about the revived caliphate explains that the leaders of al-Qaida in Iraq were caught and exposed to torture similar to that carried out in Abu Ghraib. To help the reader visualise this, two of the infamous pictures are reproduced: one of a detained person standing on a box with wires tied to his hands and a hood over the head; and one of Lynndie England holding a naked prisoner on a leash.³⁷ I therefore agree with Guido Steinberg that the present-day internationalist form of jihadism is the result of both; foreign intervention in Muslim states and the increasing attractiveness of the internationalist jihadist ideology among young Muslims.³⁸

Within the discourse of victimhood, the plights of male prisoners and their families are vital to the narrative itself. The stories of female prisoners, however, become even more relevant to the call for violent action. Women like Hayla al-Qasir, a Saudi national sentenced for sponsoring al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia, have uncensored fan communities on YouTube who rally for their release and attacks against the prisons where they are detained.³⁹ Even the Daesh poet Ahlam Nasr wrote a poem decrying Hayla al-Qasir's suffering.⁴⁰

In a Daesh video, which recycled a movie by al-Qaida's as-Sahab Media, the fate of another prominent female Islamist detainee is discussed. Abu Yahya al-Libi, one of the most important al-Qaida ideologues and leaders, states that Dr. Aafia Siddiqui was abused physically and mentally by American soldiers in Bagram and sentenced to more than 80 years in prison.⁴¹ The film then introduces a whole series about "imprisoned sisters"

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ It is interesting to note that in its early stages, Daesh still published the full picture of a woman soldier without blurring her face and body. The Islamic State, *The Revived Caliphate*, 1435 hijri/2014 CE, p. 20.

³⁸ Steinberg, Guido, *German Jihad*, Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013.

³⁹ For example, the video *utluqu Hayla al-Qasir*, uploaded on 22 November 2012 by a user with the nickname "kathrful", with 22,994 views on 25 July 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOet2MHAHi8>.

⁴⁰ Ahlam Nasr published a poem also called *utluqu Hayla al-Qasir* on her blog in April 2014, <https://ahlam-alsnasr.blogspot.de/>.

⁴¹ Abu-Yahya al-Libi, in Khansa_Media, *silsila asirat al-umma*, first episode, minute 9:59 and ff.

in Arab countries and the Sind. The terrible fate of Muslim sisters who are allegedly raped and ill-treated in jail are not only discussed by the most important global terrorist organisations. Hizb ut-Tahrir also uses this reasoning to support its call for a caliphate.

Consequently, any preventive strategy against Jihadist terrorism has to respect the rule of law and human rights to be successful. Failing to do so will jeopardise the fight against terror and reinforce arguments of victimhood used by the Islamists and Jihadists. A person who is detained without a court sentence, ill-treated and tortured, and who eventually dies in custody will be venerated as a martyr by his or her followers.

Prevention Strategies

On various occasions, Daesh called upon “Muslims” to either emigrate to the caliphate or kill *kuffar* wherever they may fight them. In September 2014, *Dabiq* published the following announcement: “Every Muslim should get out of his house, find a crusader, and kill him.”⁴² Additional advice is provided. For example, the attack should be kept as simple as possible in order not to raise any suspicion. Daesh seems to label this the “4th generation warfare introduced to Iraq in 2004-2006” where “hidden fighters” are used.⁴³ In the ebook about the revived caliphate, the Daesh author mentions that families would be “the hidden fighters”. The perpetrators of the Surabaya attacks followed this strategy.

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, the late official Daesh spokesman, also called upon the “the monotheists” in Europe and elsewhere in the unbelieving “West” to “trigger the crusaders in their own countries, wherever they could find them.”⁴⁴ He concluded, “We will speak up to God against every Muslim who had the opportunity to shed a single drop of crusader

⁴² No author indicated, “Reflections on the Final Crusade”, *Dabiq, The Failed Crusade*, nr. 4, Dhul al-Hijjah, 1435 (September 2014), p. 44.

⁴³ The Islamic State, *The Revived Caliphate*, 1435 hijri/2014 CE, p. 18. He adds that scholars like Yusuf al-Uyayri, the first leader of Al-Qaida in the Arabic Peninsula, gave justifications for “martyrdom-operations” (suicide attacks). Yusuf al-Uyayri justified such suicide attacks with the Sura al-Buruj (Quran, 85) and the “Boy and the King Story” quoted by Sahih Muslim. The Daesh author explains that following Uyayri’s fatwa, men, women, couples, children and entire families were allowed to attack the enemies in “martyrdom-operations”.

⁴⁴ Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, “Say, Die in Your Rage”, Daesh audio, 26 January 2015, <https://archive.org/details/SayDieInYourRage>.

blood and did not do it, be it with a bomb, a knife, a car, a stone or even a boot or a fist.⁴⁵ Consequently, anyone who does not join Daesh or kill people at home has to be considered an apostate and has to be killed, which makes Daesh terror clearly totalitarian, as nobody can trust anyone. Even the Daesh follower who is secretly fabricating a bomb in the basement of his house must fear death by a “lone wolf” determined to kill apostates living among the non-believers.

According to Daesh strategy, everyone can be a terrorist, even the shaved young man in tight jeans and the happy mother of four with the colourful headscarf. This represents a new challenge for prevention and security strategies. The German journalist Florian Flade summarised this in a comment: “the enemy got armed by disarming. Tools of daily use such as kitchen knives or cars have become weapons. Attacks are committed without long planning and without trainings in terror camps.”⁴⁶ The fight against terrorism will therefore have to effectively address this new dimension.

According to Jean-Loup Samaan and Andreas Jacobs, three categories of conventional anti-terrorism policies have so far been implemented: “a military-oriented policy that aims to prevent, deter and retaliate against terrorists; a regulatory policy that strengthens the legal and judicial resources to address the terrorist threat; [and] a diplomatic approach that focuses on negotiations, and sometimes accommodation.”⁴⁷ The authors conclude that Germany has so far opted to sustain its traditional regulatory approach.

Since 2015, different laws have come into force in order to fight terrorism in Germany. There were amendments made to the penal code to penalise travelling abroad to join terrorist organisations. Preventive coercive actions were legalised, such as the confiscation of personal

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “Der Feind hat aufgerüstet, indem er abgerüstet hat. Alltagsgegenstände wie Küchenmesser oder Autos werden zu Waffen. Die Anschläge finden ohne langfristige Planung und oft ohne Ausbildung im Terrorcamp statt.” Florian Flade, “Wir brauchen jetzt Lösungen gegen den islamistischen Terror”, in *Die Welt Digital*, Meinung, 6 June 2017, <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article165257496/Wir-brauchen-jetzt-Loesungen-gegen-den-islamistischen-Terror.html>.

⁴⁷ Jacobs, Andreas and Samaan, Jean-Loup, “Countering Jihadist Terrorism: A Comparative Analysis of French and German Experiences”, in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2018, p. 2, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2017.1415891.

identification documents belonging to people who pose a terrorist threat and are expected to leave the country. At the same time, intelligence services and the police have been reinforced and their remit enlarged. In the world of diplomatic relations, more flexible ways of sharing data with international partners and especially between the European Union (EU) member states are also being attempted. These are all important measures which will enhance the ability of security agencies to fight terrorist plots in the making.

But what about the root causes of Jihadism? Can they be erased with tighter security standards? What about Islamist totalitarian ideologies? Are they addressed by such measures? What will a radicalised student write on the Jihadist forum after having his passport confiscated? Most probably, he will complain that the *kuffar* are discriminating against him as a Muslim and, for this reason, he cannot join the caliphate. He might then open one of the *Dabiq* magazines and find a converted woman from Finland who writes: "As for those people who cannot perform hijrah, I advise you to attack the Crusaders and their allies wherever you are, as that is something you are able to do."⁴⁸

Germany still has no nation-wide prevention strategy. In November 2016, representatives of the Green party submitted a proposal to set up such a strategy, which was discussed in the Bundestag (parliament) in February 2017. The representatives asked the government to develop a concept for such a strategy and demanded the establishment of a national centre for prevention. At the same time, they pressed for an evaluation of the capacity within mosques and religious associations to detect radicalisation. In addition, they asked for official religious education to be introduced in all German schools, more youth-centred social work for Muslims and Muslim religious counselling in jail.⁴⁹ The last three points seem to be especially important and will have to be carried out by Muslim communities who are part of German society and fully respect the constitution, fundamental freedoms and human rights. They are the only ones who may convince their radicalised peers that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance and does not require a totalitarian state.

⁴⁸ Umm Khalid al-Finlandiyyah, "How I Came to Islam", *Dabiq, Break the Cross*, nr. 15, Shawwal 1437 (July/August 2016), p. 39.

⁴⁹ Antrag 18/10477.

German history has shown how important it is to have citizens accept the presence of cultural and religious “otherness” within society. People have to be respected because they are human beings and not because they belong to a specific religious community. At the same time, women and men must be free to make their own choices. As soon as the understanding of the intrinsic value of human life and personal freedom has become a social habitus shared and defended by everyone, no totalitarian ideology will ever be successful. However, as the latest processes of radicalisation and polarisation in European societies have shown, the liberal, democratic concept of freedom truly needs defence.

While the internet was left unregulated, it became a badland where anonymous writers felt free to produce hate speech and share gory videos of torture and executions. Is there an internet user who has not been insulted in ways that would never happen in public, where people have to actually come forward and reveal their identities? The Law for the Improvement of Law Enforcement in Social Media Networks in Germany appears to have been successful,⁵⁰ so much so that an American Jewish woman registered on Twitter using a fake German location to escape anti-Semitic comments in the United States.⁵¹ Consequently, monitoring the internet and shutting down Jihadist and Islamist forums and websites should be the primary goal of all preventive strategies.

Muslim communities, however, remain the most important allies in the fight against totalitarian Islamist ideologies. Liberal and modern Islam has to be propagated massively as a counter-*dawa* to Islamist preaching. Discourses which engage in excommunication and discussions about what level of medieval punishments should be applied to the people who are considered apostates are not leading towards more tolerance or pushing people away from extremism. To give a graphic example, after Daesh published the infamous film showing the immolation of the Jordanian pilot in February 2015, the Shaykh of al-Azhar, Ahmad at-Tayyib, issued an official statement which said people who did such a thing were not Muslims and should be crucified and have their limbs cut off. While the anger is completely understandable, this statement by an internationally respected

⁵⁰ NetzDG, Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Rechtsdurchsetzung in sozialen Netzwerken, in force since 1 October 2017.

⁵¹ Heffernan, Virginia, “In ‘bad wild bad’ fühle ich mich wie im Himmel”, in *ZEIT Wissen*, Nr. 4/2018, 12 June 2018.

representative of Sunni Muslims comes awkwardly close to the arguments of those he wants to distance himself from.

Conclusion

Jihadist terrorism is based on a totalitarian Islamist ideology which is spread by followers who may define themselves as non-violent. The present-day terrorist attacks that have been widely encouraged by Daesh in its inter-cultural, international publications do rely upon “hidden fighters” who may be entire families or people who do not look like Salafists at all. Consequently, the ideology is one of the most important issues to be addressed by any prevention strategy. While it is important to physically protect society against potential aggressors, including the detainment of potentially dangerous plotters, this cannot be done in ways that further increase the claim of injustice against Muslims. It could be argued that Jihadism is the single most important global movement to show how torture and extrajudicial detention do not destroy the movement but clearly reinforce it. The active promotion of radicalism—a Saudi policy since Juhayman al-Utaybi’s siege of the Grand Mosque in 1979—does not seem to have protected countries from terrorist attacks either. The only secure way out of a long spiral of violence and hate, therefore, is the propagation of values such as tolerance and respect. If societies start to polarise, thus neglecting fundamental rights, armed conflicts could arise and push countries towards the desired direction of al-Qaida and Daesh strategists: complete chaos. Violent anarchy, Jihadist strategists reckon, would ultimately favour the introduction of a totalitarian state that promises to bring back order and safety.⁵²

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⁵² Naji, Abu Bakr, *idara at-tawhhush* (management of savagery), 2004.

The Role of Universities and Schools in Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism: Malaysian Experience

Ahmad El-Muhammady

1. Introduction

This essay explores the roles of universities and schools in dealing with the violent extremism phenomenon in Malaysia. In doing so, the article is divided into three parts: firstly, it discusses the recent involvement of lecturers and students in supporting pro-Daesh movements in Malaysia. The second part deals with the question of why universities and schools are being targeted as recruitment grounds. The third part of the essay explores the roles of universities and schools in tackling violent extremism among their communities. The author asserts that universities and schools have a unique function in society to curb the rise of violent extremism. However, these functions are currently undercapitalised and not fully utilised to the optimum level, at least in the Malaysian context. Educational institutions are considered to be “the third force” in countering violent extremism and terrorism, alongside government agencies and the intelligence community. They have multiple roles such as detector, educator, preventer, and producer of ideas in countering violent extremism.

2. Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Educational Institutions

It is very interesting to observe the recent phenomenon of radicalisation and violent extremism in Malaysia. In the process of nation-building,

* This paper was submitted on 29 June 2018.

educational institutions are supposed to play defensive and educative roles against extremism. But, unfortunately, educational institutions turned out to be one of the recruitment grounds for militant groups. In recent cases, we have seen students and teachers being detained by the authorities for promoting and supporting terrorist organisations such as Daesh and planning to stage attacks against soft targets inside the country.

Historically, the involvement of students in militancy is not a new phenomenon in Malaysia. The participation of Malaysian students in the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) and Afghan Civil War (1989-2001) is one of the earliest evidences showing students' involvement in militancy outside Malaysia. From the 1980s until the 1990s, the Malaysian police also detected movements of some Malaysian students into Pakistan and Afghanistan to join jihadi movements against the Soviet occupation.¹ These students, who were either studying in Pakistan or India, are widely known as "Pakindo" students. One of the former Pakindo students told the author:

We came here as students. But, when the war broke out in Afghanistan, we joined the jihad. When summer break was over, we returned back to madrasah. It was fun and a quite unforgettable experience. We learned a lot in the battlefield, much better than in a classroom.²

The exact number of Malaysian students joining the Soviet-Afghan War is unknown. Even the Malaysian Embassy in Pakistan complained that they faced difficulties in keeping track of student movements during this period, because the majority of them never reported to the embassy. When the war was over, some of them returned home and established militant groups such as Kumpulan Mujahiddin Malaysia (KMM). In fact, several founding members of KMM were former Afghan veterans such as its chief Zainon Ismail and Nik Adli Nik Aziz. Both of them fought during the Afghan War. The trend of sending students continued even after the First Afghan War (1979-1989). In 1999, for example, Jama'ah Islamiyyah (JI) sent 13 students to Pakistan as part of its regeneration programme. These students were the members of al-Ghuraba cell, consisting of the children of JI members who were groomed to be leaders of JI in future.³

¹ Counter-terrorism officer, interview with the author, 25 June 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

² Former Pakindo student, interview with the author, 10 March 2018, Pasir Mas, Kelantan.

³ Counter-terrorism officer, interview with the author, 25 June 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

It is also reported that during the Bosnian War (1992-1995), several Malaysian students studying in the University of Madinah, Saudi Arabia were given special permission to join the war in Bosnia, especially during the summer break.⁴ One Bosnian war veteran told the author:

Our lecturers at the university [of Madinah] encouraged us to go. They have donors who funded the trip and many of us went there to fight. When semester break was over, we went back to campus again.⁵

Again, an exact figure is not available because these students refused to be identified for fear of being arrested by the authorities. The involvement of students, and even lecturers and teachers in Malaysia, became more obvious in recent cases involving Daesh-affiliated groups. Since February 2013, over 340 Malaysians have been arrested by the Malaysian counter-terrorism unit for various terrorism-related charges and at least 40 students from schools, colleges and universities have been arrested since the beginning of the operation in February 2013. Among the well-known cases were Dr. Mahmud Ahmad, former lecturer at University of Malaya (UM);⁶ Aishah Atam, a graduate student in UM; and a secondary school student, Hafizi Jusoh.

Clearly, the penetration of the Daesh movement and violent extremism into Malaysia is serious and threatening. Maybe to some people, the percentage of involvement is quite small and such incidents could be considered isolated cases. Thus, there is no need for an exaggeration. In my view, this mindset is dangerous for national security. Extremism and terrorism must be treated seriously at all times for it has an exponential effect. In practical terms, it takes only one person to launch an attack in a country. In June 2016, it took only two men to stage an attack at Movidia nightclub in Puchong, which caused panic nationwide. Thus, in fact, the presence of one extremist in a campus is sufficient reason for the authorities to take preventive measures. One extremist is considered a potential threat. This potential threat may escalate into an actual threat if we do not manage it from the very beginning. Indeed, it is a serious mistake to

⁴ Counter-terrorism officer, interview with the author, 25 June 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

⁵ Former Bosnian veteran, interview with the author, 14 June 2018, International Islamic University Malaysia, Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia.

⁶ Dr. Mahmud Ahmad was a lecturer at the Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya. The UM has immediately sacked him after learning his involvement in militancy.

measure the severity of the terrorist threat based on numbers and statistics. Its existence in our community provides sufficient reason for the authorities to take preventive measures before it escalates into full-blown threats.

Case 1: Dr. Mahmud Ahmad

In the case of Dr. Mahmud Ahmad, it is quite surprising that he managed to pass the university's screening and that his extremist views, radicalisation and militant orientation went on undetected for so long. He managed to become one of the senior lecturers, teaching graduate and undergraduate students until the university was informed. Admittedly, detecting indicators of radicalisation is difficult. It requires certain techniques and expertise. But, in my view, it can be done if certain procedures are performed and thorough analyses are carried out.

In my analysis, Dr. Mahmud had already shown indicators of radicalisation at the beginning of his academic life. In the 1990s, he was in Pakistan's International Islamic University of Islamabad, doing his Bachelor's degree. The Malaysian police believe that during this period, he was in and out of Afghanistan, participating in training and guerrilla warfare, besides getting himself familiar with the extremist discourse. After returning from Pakistan, he enrolled for the Master's programme at the International Islamic University Malaysia in 2011. Therein he wrote a thesis entitled "Ibn Hazm on Christianity: Textual Analysis from Zahiri Perspective", in which he employed Zahiri's methodology to critique discrepancies in the Christian belief. In this thesis, the sign of radicalisation does not overtly manifest. He even asserted that despite the Truth of the Qur'an, it encourages Muslims to practise wisdom and tolerance with regard to other religions.

However, his radical views started to manifest as he embarked on his doctoral studies, when he secretly published a book under the pseudonym "Dr. Abu Hanzalah" entitled *Iman Para Mujahiddin* (Faith of the Fighters). In this book, he discussed in detail the necessity of jihad (armed struggle) as the best solution for today's problems. In my view, the publication of the book indicates the culmination of his belief and it is a form of externalization of his belief system. Besides, the subjects of jihad, the Palestine-Israeli conflict, US occupation of Iraq, conflicts in Mindanao and the like often become part of his discourse during lectures.

There are four indicators of radicalisation which can be identified. The *first indicator* is his exposure to the extremist discourse during his stays in Pakistan. According to Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, the time from 1990s-2000 was considered one of the most important periods in the history of militant movements, which they referred to as a "[consolidation] period for their revivalist movements."⁷ Dr. Mahmud was in Pakistan and Afghanistan during this period. It was the epicentre of militant discourse at that time. The exposure to this environment had a lasting impact on his thinking.

The *second indicator* is his penchant for the "discourse of jihad". In fact, his liking for discussions on "jihad" and his encouragement of them was one of the reasons Aishah Atam was attracted to his thinking.⁸ This is validated by other students who observed that "he is different from other lecturers," as one of his students informed a Malaysian interrogator.⁹

The *third indicator* is the use of a pseudonym for the publication of his book, indicating the development of an idea and his deliberate act to conceal his conviction from his colleagues and the public.

The *fourth indicator* is the use of the pseudonym "Abu Hanzalah", which is also not a coincidence. In Islamic history, Abu Hanzalah was a fighter who fought in the Battle of Uhud. Thus, the choice of "Abu Hanzalah" is not coincidental. It is a representation of a belief system and a source of motivation. In short, the case of Dr. Mahmud Ahmad is a classic example of how a lecturer can play a strategic role as an educator and a recruiter at the same time while working in the environment of a higher-learning institution. Still, the university authority and his colleagues did not raise any "red flag" and he continued to teach and supervise students, including Aishah Atam, his graduate student.

Case 2: Aishah Atam

Aishah Atam was a former student of Dr. Mahmud at UM. During her undergraduate studies, she attended Dr. Mahmud's lectures and gradually became attracted to his unique style and discourse, which she considered

⁷ ŪUmar ŪAbdul ŪĒkim (AbĒ MusŪab al-SĒrĒ), al-Mukhtasar MasĒr al-Ūahwah al-IslĒmiyyah in DaŪwah al-MuqĒwamah al-IslĒmiyyah al-ŪŪlamiyyah, <https://archive.org/details/Dawaaah>, accessed 6 April 2018.

⁸ Counter-terrorism officer, interview with the author, 25 June 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

⁹ Counter-terrorism officer, interview with the author, 25 June 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

nonconventional and different from other lecturers. In his lectures, Dr. Mahmud often discussed issues and problems facing Muslim ummah and the urgency for jihad (armed struggle) in today's world. At the beginning of her graduate studies, Aishah planned to study the caliphate system, considering the caliphate had perished and there had been no successful effort to revive it. However, Dr. Mahmud suggested that she study "jihad" instead, starting with reading the book *Tarbiyyah Jihadiyyah* (Education for Jihad), written by Abdullah Azzam. He further advised her to deepen her knowledge on Muslim contemporary issues, history of jihadi movements and the key figures in jihadi movements. Acting on his advice, she acquired some books considered relevant to her studies. These books were confiscated in her possession and tendered in court as exhibits. Analysis by experts confirmed that these books contained extremist ideology. The titles of the books are as follows:

- *Visi Politik Gerakan Jihad* by Hazim Al-Madani and Abu Mus'ab As-Suri
- *Generasi Kedua Al-Qaeda: Apa dan Siapa Zarqawi, Apa Rencana Mereka ke Depan* by Fuad Hussein
- *Akankan Sejarah Terulang* by Dr. Muhammad Al-'Abdah
- *Deklarasi Daulah Islam Iraq* by Dewan Syariah Daulah Islam Iraq, translated by Abu Hafsh As-Sayyar and Abu Musa Ath-Thayyar
- *Merentas Jalan Jihad Fisabillah* by Shaikh Abdul Qadir Abdul Aziz, translated by Hassan As-Sayyari
- *Misteri Pasukan Panji Hitam* by Muhammad Abu Fatiha Al-Adani, translated by H. Muhammad Harun Zein
- *Turki Negara Dua Wajah* by Shaykh Abdullah Azam
- *Masterplan 2020: Strategi Al-Qaeda Menjebak Amerika* by Fahmi Suwaidi
- *Dari Usama Kepada Para Aktivis* by Syaikh Usamah Bin Ladin dan Syaikh Yusuf Al_Uyairi, translated by Umar Burhanuddin, Abu Hafs As Sayyar and Syahida Man
- *Dari Rahim Ikhwanul Muslimin Ke Pangkuan Al-Qaeda* by Ayman Az-Zawahiri, translated by Umar Burhanuddin

- *Ketika Maslahat Dipertuhankan dan menjadi Taghut Model Baru* by Abu Muhammad Ashim Al Maqdisiy, translated by Abu Sulaiman Aman Abdurrahman
- *Seri Materi Tauhid for the Greatest Happiness* by Abu Sulaiman Aman Abdurrahman

In addition, she was also active on social media and used this as a platform to get connected with wider networks of militancy in Malaysia and Syria. Again, her activity and radicalisation went on undetected by the university authorities until her family reported her to the police.

In my view, there is no doubt that Aishah had shown signs of radicalisation, particularly when she embarked on her graduate studies. The acquisition of extremist literature, her closeness to Dr. Mahmud and her online activities were vital indicators of radicalisation. However, given the fact that she was living in an educational environment, it was hard for people around her to notice that she was undergoing a “mental transformation” from an “ordinary person” to a person who had adopted a “radical ideology”. Nonetheless, it is quite common for students at the graduate level to buy and read radical books especially for research purposes. In fact, there are many radical books and literature available in university libraries. These materials are made available by the university for research and educational purposes. Strict procedures are also implemented to get access to these materials. Thus, this situation makes detection work more challenging. It requires a certain expertise to be able to detect and verify such a transformation.

Case 3: Hafizi Jusoh

The case of Hafizi Jusoh is another example of student radicalisation. Hafizi was a former secondary student in Pasir Putih, Kelantan. He was detained by the counter-terrorism team for possession of three improvised explosive devices (IED), pipe bombs, ball bearings, and pictures, videos and documents related to Daesh. He was also charged for giving instruction to conduct terrorist activities via WhatsApp and for attending training for terrorist activities as preparation to launch an attack. According to the police, the suspect wanted to target the *Octoberfest* (Beer Festival) planned

to be held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2017.¹⁰ The plan was thwarted due to the intelligence-gathering and operation conducted by the Malaysian counter-terrorism team. Interestingly, neither his family nor friends detected Hafizi's radicalisation. In fact, the school reported that Hafizi was a good student and had demonstrated good academic performance for scoring 2.92 point in Sijil Tinggi Pengajian Malaysia (STPM) examination.¹¹ Hafizi's case is another example of failure in detecting and preventing radicalisation in an educational environment.

The above three cases shared similar patterns: (1) radicalisation occurs in the educational environment; (2) the persons involved have already shown overt signs of radicalisation; (3) the institution is unable to detect the signs of radicalisation and therefore fails to take preventive action; and lastly; (4) the persons involved are at the last stage of radicalisation; meaning, they have crossed the "red line" and violated national laws that warrant the police to arrest them.

3. Universities and Schools as Recruitment Grounds

Why have universities and schools become targets? This is another important question that we have to answer. Before we unravel that question, perhaps it is useful for us to understand what makes a recruitment drive successful. In the world of militancy, recruitment is an important art carried out by a recruiter to persuade prospective members to join the group. In my experience of interviewing militants, there are very few effective recruiters. Unfortunately, these very few cause significant problems for security agencies because of their persuasive ability to attract a large number of people. Muhamad Wannady is the best case in point. On 25 March 2016, Wannady, using the name "Akhi Wandy", created a Telegram group called "Gagak Hitam". Despite living in Syria, he successfully recruited more than 30 Malaysian youths to support Daesh. Some of them gave *bai'ah* (pledge of alliance) to him and Daesh. Based on an analysis of "Gagak Hitam" Telegram, there are four elements required for successful terrorist recruitment: (1) effective recruiter, (2) impactful messages, (3) powerful

¹⁰ Counter-terrorism officer, interview with the author, 25 June 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

¹¹ *New Straits Times*, "20-year-old IS supporter who planned attack on Better Beer Festival 2017 to spend 9 years in jail," 21 May 2018.

tools or platform, and (4) vulnerable individuals. The combination of these elements produces an impact capable of changing an ordinary individual to become a militant or a terrorist, or at least to become a supporter or a sympathiser.

An *effective recruiter* possesses charisma, respect, a revered position, and knowledge and is extremely convincing. Being conversant in religious knowledge and possessing a good command of the Arabic language are added values for the recruiter. Muhamad Wanndy embodied these characteristics. Despite living far away from Malaysia, he was capable of facilitating an operation in Kuala Lumpur using his followers who had pledged allegiance to him. The Movida grenade attack was the manifestation of Wanndy's successful recruitment.

Impactful messages are another key element for successful recruitment. The messages comprise of the narratives or "stories" that are weaved together with actual events, experiences and issues to form a bigger narrative. This narrative will be a building block for an ideology and functions as a motive for a struggle. The messages become more powerful and convincing when combined with actual images, videos and dramatic music. These messages are saved and stored in their smartphones and laptops. It is common for militants to save and store thousands of images and videos in their smartphones as a source of reference and motivation.

The impactful messages are transmitted using *powerful tools* such as social media and applications in smartphones. In Malaysia, according to a study by the Institute for Youth Research (IYRES), 85% of 39 militants cited social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Telegram and WhatsApp) as their main source of information.¹² Social media is a very powerful tool for conveying messages and convincing users to take a certain course of action. Terrorist recruiters take advantage of this technology to facilitate their recruitment drives.

Finally, recruiters might be convincing, possess impactful messages and use powerful tools to spread their messages, but these elements are meaningless without having the "right target". The right target is a *vulnerable individual*. The vulnerable individual could be a person who is in the process of change, has family problems, is in financial difficulty and is socially unfit. He or she is the perfect target for recruitment.

¹² Ringkasan Eksekutif Profail Belia Dalam Kegiatan Ekstrimisme (Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Youth Research, 2017), 26.

In the context of our discussion, teachers or lecturers can be highly effective recruiters because they hold a respectable position among students. Students generally tend to be more receptive to their teachers. This revered position, level of knowledge and respect make students more susceptible to recruitment. Thus, it is not surprising that Aishah Atam was easily influenced by Dr. Mahmud, who was her lecturer and later become her supervisor. A former Jama'ah Islamiyyah recruiter, who was well experienced in recruitment work, told the author:

In a class setting, when the lecturer says something, usually the students will easily believe it. So, let's say I have 30 students in my class. Among these 30 students, it is not impossible to convince one or two students. This is more than enough actually. Teachers have great influence upon students and this makes them more effective recruiters.¹³

Terrorist recruiters often take advantage of the university environment, in which students come from different countries, and have diverse social and family backgrounds. Students are often inquisitive, searching for something new, open to new ideas, adventurous and willing to experiment with new ideas, even if they sound radical. These elements provide perfect ingredients for subtle recruitment. A former victim of Daesh's recruitment told the author:

I did not feel that I was being recruited until I realised he was persuading me strongly to travel with him to Syria, in order to join the "caravan of jihad". He was so subtle and patient in building trust and provided me with reading materials, video and references. These are done in the name of knowledge sharing.¹⁴

Searching for students with technical expertise is also one of the key factors for terrorist recruiters in targeting universities. Students who are majoring in medicine, engineering, and information technology and possess technical know-how are the most sought-after individuals.¹⁵ Their expertise is needed in the world of militancy.

¹³ Former member of Jama'ah Islamiyyah, interview with the author, 3 June 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

¹⁴ "Jannah", former victim of Daesh recruitment, interview with the author, April 2016, Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

¹⁵ Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, *Engineers of jihad: the curious connection between violent extremism and education*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016.

4. The Roles of Educational Institutions

Universities and schools have strategic positions and unique functions in countering and preventing violent extremism (CPVE) in society. They can play multiple roles such as detector, preventer, planner and producer of ideas to tackle the threat of violent extremism either in their communities and society at large. However, to what extent have educational institutions played their roles in facing the growing challenges of violent extremism today? In my view, educational institutions, primarily universities, colleges and schools, have a lot to improve on in order to function as the “third force” in countering and preventing violent extremism in Malaysia. Below are some proposed recommendations that might be useful in empowering educational institutions to play their roles in CPVE initiatives.

First, university and school administrators need to be more proactive in detecting extremist elements in their communities. The proactive approach can be translated as a form of aggressive pursuit in identifying whether potential elements exist in their communities and acknowledging the existence of the problem should there be a legitimate case. The education administrator should not sweep the issue under the carpet or try to cover up the matter in order to protect the good name of the institution. Admittedly, protecting the good image of an institution is important. But, they also must bear in mind that when it comes to security issues, it often overweighs other considerations due to the magnitude of the impacts and public interest. Dr. Mahmud’s case should be a lesson to all public universities that a proactive attitude is important to safeguard education institutions from being the target of a recruitment drive.

Second, background checks on prospective lecturers and teachers are one of the vital components in preventing the spread of violent extremism in campuses and schools. Admittedly, this recommendation may invite criticism from some quarters for it may touch upon civil liberties and freedom of expression. However, based on my experience, this policy is an effective method in nipping violent extremism in the bud. Security or background checks involve identifying prior contacts with terrorist organisations, prior involvement in militancy, educational background and ideological orientation. The purpose of this exercise is clear: to prevent the potential extremist and terrorist from spreading their virulent ideologies to students and to safeguard campuses and schools from being the hub of terrorist recruitment. Collaboration with security agencies and experts

enhances the effectiveness of the exercise. In the case of Dr. Mahmud, there is no evidence showing that he went through thorough background checks, especially by the police (Malaysian Special Branch). I believe that his radicalisation could have been detected early if thorough background checks were performed on him by the relevant authorities.

Third, lecturers and teachers provide the best early warning system about students' inclination to extremism. Lecturers and teachers are not only there to impart knowledge, they also can play a detective role and to guide students in dealing with extremist ideologies. Students often approach their lecturers or teachers to ask questions and seek answers. This is particularly true for students who are at the early stage of radicalisation. At this point, their roles are crucial: to steer students away from radicalisation and if necessary to report to the universities authorities for further action. However, it is important to note that in universities, we celebrate academic freedom, diversity of opinions, freedom of expression and individual choice. But, when security issues and public interest clash with individual freedom, the former takes precedence over the latter. Society cannot afford to have certain individuals hijacking the freedom of expression and human rights to spread hatred, radical ideologies and violence in society.

Fourth, institutions should redesign syllabi and incorporate peace studies elements in teaching. Universities syllabi are an important part of the long-term countering and preventing violent extremism strategy. Certain discussions related to the extremist discourse such as the concepts of jihad, democracy, Islamic state, *fiqh al-awlawiyyat* (science of priority), and *wasatiyyah* can be incorporated into existing syllabi as part of intervention programmes. In Malaysia, there is a strong recommendation to public and government agencies to introduce new forms of syllabi to mitigate the spreading of extremist ideologies. The incorporation of a peace studies subject for example, can be helpful in creating a more resilient generation in facing the emerging trend of extremism.

Fifth, universities should capitalise on the relevant expertise available to conduct research on violent extremism issues. Certain universities are known for their expertise such as in the area of security studies, sociology, psychology and Islamic studies. This expertise and discipline can be utilised to better understand the phenomenon of militancy, extremism and terrorism. Adopting multidisciplinary approaches is a good strategy to

understand the nature of the problem in a more holistic way. From this holistic understanding, we are able to produce the best formula to deal with the problem at hand. Universities also need to provide certain incentives, allocate funds and develop expertise in this field in ensuring the participation of academics in terrorism research.

Sixth, countering and preventing violent extremism also necessitates the participation of student bodies, associations and clubs in community-oriented programmes. It is important that universities play a facilitating role to connect student bodies with the communities and civil society at the local level to organise programmes, workshops and social activities that promote peace, tolerance, understanding and moderation. Programmes of that nature are not only useful for the community, they are also beneficial for students in developing their leadership skills and educating them on the issues at hand.

Seventh, while most CPVE programmes are organised in the cities, it is important for CPVE operators to also focus on the low-income group and youth residing in rural areas. In fact, most detainees in Malaysia are not coming from the cities. 32 out of 37 detainees the author interviewed are residing in rural areas. Surely, urban-centric CPVE programmes do not reach the target group. Thus, schools and universities at the local level can play an effective role in engaging these youth, educating and empowering them with positive values and enhancing their capacity to disown extremism and violence.

Eighth, the education community in schools and universities can also benefit from cooperation and collaboration with civil society organisations (CSO) and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), particularly those which are dealing directly with the issue of extremism, interfaith dialogue and promotion of positive values. In Malaysia, there are a number of CSOs and NGOs that have the capacity to work on building resilience against violent extremism. Unfortunately, there is a serious lack of collaboration between government and civil society organisations in the area of CPVE. In this regard as well, there is a serious lack of collaboration between educational institutions and civil society in building resilience against violent extremism.

Ninth, an ideal CPVE project must be inclusive of all stakeholders, particularly ethnic groups and religious communities. In Malaysia, CPVE programmes often focus on Muslim communities alone without the

participation of other ethnic groups and religious communities. In my view, given the multi-ethnic, -religious and -culture nature of Malaysian society, it is important that other religious communities also participate in the promotion of positive values such as tolerance, peaceful coexistence, understanding and promotion of common good. There is a need for the leaders of religious communities to jointly identify universal values, common goods and programmes that promote peace, toleration and moderation in order to create a long-lasting impact on societal resilience-building. Schools and universities can be effective platforms for multi-ethnic- and multi-religious-based CPVE projects given the fact that the education community itself is multi-racial and multi-religious in nature.

Tenth, there is an urgent need for active interaction between parents/families and educational institutions in CPVE programmes. Educational institutions have a limited capacity to detect “early warning signs” of radicalisation. Students and instructors do not spend the majority of their time at university or school. Thus, the work of detecting early warning signs, “mental transformation” and “behavioural changes” is difficult without cooperation from families or parents. In fact, there are at least three cases that the author has come across where the parents were actually reporting to the authorities about the “changes” and suspicious activities of their children. Clearly, the role of families, parents, and siblings is crucial in preventing children from falling deeper into radicalisation and violent extremism.

5. Conclusion

In closing, in facing the emerging trend today, educational institutions need to be more proactive in countering and preventing the wave of violent extremism. They should not adopt a “play safe” or “wait-and-see” approach in dealing with violent extremism threats that have started to penetrate deeper into university and school compounds. The cases of Dr. Mahmud, Aishah, Hafizi and others should be a wake-up call for university and school communities, especially its administrators, that a “wait-and-see” policy and lukewarm attitude is hazardous to students and institutions. Ten recommendations were put forward for consideration by university and schools administrators: university and school administrators need to be more proactive in detecting extremism elements in their communities;

background checks on prospective lecturers and teachers; lecturers and teachers provide the best early warning system about students' inclination to extremism and militancy; designing syllabi and incorporation of peace studies elements in teaching; capitalising on the relevant expertise to conduct research on extremism issues; participation by student bodies in community-oriented programmes; countering and preventing violent extremism (CPVE) should focus on urban and rural areas; collaboration with civil society organisations; participation by other ethnic groups and religious communities; and active interaction between parents and families and universities and schools. Admittedly, this list of recommendations is not exhaustive. However, it may at least guide and empower the educational institutions to be the "third force", alongside the government and security agencies, in fighting against violent extremism nowadays.

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ASEAN's Greatest Counter-Terrorism Challenge: The Shift from "Need to Know" to Smart to Share

Rohan Gunaratna

Introduction

The contemporary threat of terrorism within Southeast Asia is national, regional and global in nature. The threat groups are operationally and ideologically linked and derive support from segments of their vulnerable communities. The current and emerging threat cannot be eradicated by any single state. Due to globalisation, threats that were once international now trickle down to regional and domestic levels. Although there are groups with national agendas, increasingly, Southeast Asian terrorists operate across borders and link up with groups who possess regional and global agendas. Despite progress being made, various legal and political challenges have hampered governments' willingness to exchange personnel, build common databases, conduct joint training and operations, and share expertise, experience and resources. The siege of Marawi in 2017 demonstrated how unprepared the region was.

Currently, the scale, magnitude and intensity of terrorism continue to threaten the region's law enforcement, military and intelligence services. To contain, isolate and eliminate the threat of terrorism, the challenge is for Southeast Asia to work together. Barring this, ideological extremism and violence will grow and expand, thereby affecting the entire region. The threat is most dominant in insular Southeast Asia but is also present in mainland Southeast Asia.

* This paper was submitted on 17 July 2018.

In the last two decades, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has served as an ideal platform for governments and their partners to build counter-terrorism cooperation. The leaders of ASEAN had the vision to look beyond the kinetic and lethal model of fighting terrorism and advocate a comprehensive response against the threat with community engagement and rehabilitation. The countries affected by terrorism continue to work with extra-regional partners to build national and regional capacity, especially to fight threats originating from outside the region. To maintain the stability and security of the region, the law enforcement, military and intelligence services in ASEAN should shift from counter-terrorism cooperation to comprehensive collaboration. Against the backdrop of the changing threat landscape, this paper reviews the progress made so far, presents the challenges, and proposes recommendations to strengthen the region's future counter-terrorism framework.

The Context

Historically, the region has witnessed many leftist and ethno-political movements. In the 1990s, Southeast Asia emerged as one of al Qaeda's (AQ) theatres of operation and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) formed Rabitatul Mujahidin, a coalition of Southeast Asian groups. The al Qaeda-centric threat persisted through the 2000s until the advent of Daesh in 2014. As Daesh's theatre of operation expanded, it attempted to gain a foothold in eastern Indonesia and southern Philippines. However, the ingress of AQ and Daesh has not quashed the pre-existing ethno-political and leftist movements, who continue to operate. The region hosts several thousand terrorists and tens of thousands of terrorist supporters and sympathisers. These groups present a long-term threat to the security of the region and beyond.

With the global expansion of al Qaeda after the United States (US) intervention in Afghanistan, the Southeast Asians ideologised, trained, armed and financed themselves, with the intention to fight the West and their allies and friends in the region. Their targets included both regional governments fighting against them and Western interests. With the threat constantly evolving, the timely response to terrorism in Southeast Asia has mostly occurred at the national and sub-regional levels through bilateral and trilateral cooperation. As it is considered more efficient, Southeast

Asian governments preferred to use bilateral arrangements rather than regional fora.

With the shift in the centre of gravity of economic power from the West to the Asia-Pacific and then to the Indo-Pacific, the geopolitical and geostrategic competition in Southeast Asia has heightened. The economic prosperity of Southeast Asia is contingent on its continued stability and security. As terrorism is a top national security threat to the region, a regional counter-terrorism strategy is central to containing, isolating and eliminating the threat. To counter the deepening ideological influence and the growing operational presence of domestic, regional and international terrorists in the region, ASEAN leaders realised the need to work together within the region and enhance counter-terrorism cooperation between the region and the rest of the world.¹ Against this backdrop, ASEAN members gradually invested in developing counter-terrorism policies, strategies and plans as well as extra-regional, regional, sub-regional, bilateral and national measures. Arising from ASEAN being an inter-governmental organisation, the "ASEAN Way" of policy-making, based on consensus, respect of national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic matters, is among the biggest obstacles to a coordinated strategy.^{2, 3} Due to this ASEAN cooperative model, the production of legislation, ratification process, and implementation are not fast enough to keep pace with the dynamic threat.⁴

Background

Historically, Southeast Asia has suffered from intrastate and interstate conflicts for centuries. The region experienced protracted conflicts – wars,

¹ Tatik S. Hafidz, "A Long Row to Hoe: A Critical Assessment of ASEAN Cooperation on Counter-Terrorism," *Kyoto Review*, December 2009, <https://kyotoreview.org/issue-11/a-long-row-to-hoe-a-critical-assessment-of-asean-cooperation-on-counter-terrorism/?>.

² Benedetta Di Matteo, "ASEAN's Anti-Terror Coordination Problem," *Global Risk Insights*, 16 October 2017, <https://globalriskinsights.com/2017/10/asean-anti-terror-coordination-problem/>.

³ Marguerite Borelli, "ASEAN Counter-Terrorism Weaknesses—Analysis," *Eurasia Review*, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/16102017-asean-counter-terrorism-weaknesses-analysis/>. See also, "Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)," <http://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/>.

⁴ "ASEAN counter-terrorism weaknesses," op-ed, *Independent*, 18 October 2017, <http://m.theindependentbd.com/printversion/details/119314>.

insurgencies and terrorist campaigns. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia, signed at the First ASEAN Summit on 24 February 1976, declared that in their relations with one another, the High Contracting Parties should be guided by the following fundamental principles:⁵

- Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations;
- The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion, or coercion;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner;
- Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and
- Effective cooperation among themselves.

To create a peaceful region, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand founded ASEAN on 8 August 1967. After its independence in 1984, Brunei Darussalam too joined the association, followed by the Indochina countries and Myanmar post the ending of the Indochina conflict and the Cold War respectively. The threat of interstate conflict in Southeast Asia declined but the rise of ethno-political and politico-religious movements at the turn of the century created a new set of challenges. As a region known for its diversity, the region's cultural and civilisational fault-lines were challenged and the harmonious living came under threat. While terrorism by the leftist groups persisted, with transnational terrorism taking root in the region, the ethno-nationalist conflicts took a politico-religious turn, presenting implications for neighbouring countries. The threat of terrorism persisted throughout the 1990s and was highlighted at the International Conference on Terrorism in Baguio City in the Philippines in 1996. The ASEAN-Japan Forum in Tokyo was held in May 1997 to establish a network for information exchange on combating terrorism.⁶ With threat groups linking up across borders, and terrorism emerging as a serious

⁵ "Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)," <http://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/>.

⁶ S. Pushpanathan, "ASEAN adopted the Declaration on Transnational Crime in 1997 and an ASEAN Action Plan to Combat Transnational Crime in 1999 to implement the Declaration." "ASEAN Efforts to Combat Terrorism," Phuket, Thailand, http://asean.org/?static_post=asean-efforts-to-combat-terrorism-by-spushpanathan.

cross-border challenge, law enforcement authorities, military forces, and national security agencies realised the need to coordinate and cooperate across national borders. Since December 1997, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) has brought together the respective home affairs ministers and has constituted the core of ASEAN's counter-terrorism collaboration.⁷ Special areas for discussion included intelligence sharing, law enforcement, airport security, bomb detection, and others.⁸

However, obstacles continued to plague ASEAN's work in counter-terrorism cooperation. For example, although the ASEAN Chiefs of National Police (ASEANOPOL) meetings are also aimed at promoting operational cooperation, they could not collaborate across law enforcement, national security and military lines. Due to the regional and political obstacles faced by ASEAN in its counter-terrorism cooperation, the pattern has been and to a certain extent still is to cooperate at the sub-regional level within the ASEAN framework.⁹ For example, the Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication Procedures was signed in 2002 in Kuala Lumpur between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, and later joined by Thailand during the eighth ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh. At the 2002 Summit, ASEAN leaders also released a Declaration on Terrorism in response to the Bali bombing. Nevertheless, regional progress has been reactive and slow compared to the speed at which the threat is growing in the region. The Southeast Asian governments had drafted individual frameworks to fight terrorism and insurgency. Most were developed on an ad hoc basis to supplement structured security approaches. Assessing the challenges of developing a counter-terrorism treaty accurately, Rose and Nestorovska wrote in 2005: "The institutional weakness of ASEAN and the particular political sensitivities posed by Islamic terrorism in the region suggest that a legal formula for regional counter-terrorism coopera-

⁷ Kankana Debnath, "The Role of Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Combating Terrorism in Southeast Asia," *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, Vol. 14, Issue 4, December 2017, and Ralf Emmers, "The Fight against Terrorism: What Role for ASEAN?," RSIS Commentary, November 14, 2007.

⁸ Ralf Emmers, "The Fight against Terrorism: What Role for ASEAN?," RSIS Commentary, 14 November 2007.

⁹ S. Pushpanathan, "ASEAN Efforts to Combat Terrorism," Second APEC Counter-Terrorism Task Force Meeting, Phuket, Thailand, 20 August 2003, ASEAN, online: <http://www.aseansec.org/15060.htm>.

tion will not mature in the short term.¹⁰ Yet, we anticipate that within the medium term (five years) a regional or sub-regional treaty on terrorism is likely to be adopted.”¹¹ The need for a counter-terrorism legal framework was deemed essential, both to prevent and disrupt attacks.

As terrorist crimes continued to be committed across borders, governments felt that mutual legal assistance was vital to investigating and prosecuting these crimes. Similarly, information exchange, financial controls and movement of goods and people are essential to preventing attacks. In addition to a broader extension of mutual legal assistance and efficiency gained through sharing of expertise and experience, the benefits of harmonising are transnational mechanisms to support cooperation and promoting best practices in national laws and other arrangements.¹² While some of this was done, there was still a need to work on other aspects. The affected countries believed that the crafting of a convention would benefit from multilateral treaties adopted under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and regional treaties.

The Crafting of the Convention

After the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the severity of the threat was apparent. Nonetheless, some believed that the terrorist threat was a phenomenon restricted to the Middle East and would not affect Asia. As terrorism is controversial, not all understood or agreed on how to manage the threat. Although the region had a long history of addressing the problem of terrorism, the scale, magnitude and intensity of the attacks worldwide that followed 9/11 were sources of concern for the regional leaders and their governments. The discovery of the JI network in Southeast Asia led the governments to zero-in on the threat to the region. In December 2001, Singapore was the first country in the region to detect the existence of this al Qaeda-supported and -funded terrorist network in

¹⁰ D. Wright-Neville, “Prospects Dim: Counter-Terrorism Cooperation in South East Asia,” Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Asia Program, Asia Program Special Report, No. 112 (2003) 5, 8-9.

¹¹ Rose, G. and Nestorovska, D., “Towards an ASEAN counter-terrorism treaty,” Singapore Yearbook of International Law, 9, 2005, 157-189, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=lawpapers>.

¹² Ibid.

the region and in Australia. Behind the scenes, Singapore worked tirelessly with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Australia to disrupt the network.¹³ As terrorism emanated from the networks in its neighbourhood, Singapore did not take the lead but instead supported its neighbours, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, to take the lead in countering the threat. In January 2002, US intelligence operators and special forces started working in the southern Philippines to assist Manila in fighting the Abu Sayyaf Group. However, the turning point was the Bali attack on 12 October 2002. The Bali bombing killed about 200 individuals, almost half of whom were Australians, and injured 200 more people, making it the worst terrorist attack since 9/11. The thorough Indonesian National Police (INP) investigation following the Bali attack revealed that Jemaah Islamiyah was behind the bombing. The carnage in Bali framed Southeast Asia as the second front in the fight against terrorism. A series of intermittent bombing and attacks – Marriot Hotel in Jakarta (August 2003), the Australian Embassy in Jakarta (September 2004), the restaurants in Bali (October 2005) – provided the impetus for concerted intra- and extra-regional responses.¹⁴

The suggestion that a regional counter-terrorism treaty should be developed was first put forward by Indonesia at the ASEAN Government Legal Officers' Programme meeting in August 2003¹⁵ and based on the Indonesian police, specifically the team that was brought together to investigate the Bali bombing. Referring to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' collaboration with INP, Ngurah Swajaya, Director, ASEAN Political Security Cooperation (2005-2009), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, said: "We developed the idea. We were busy debating the definition of terrorism as it was a debate at the UN. We decided not to debate – that is the first issue we addressed."¹⁶

¹³ "The Jemaah Islamiyah arrests and the threat of terrorism: white paper," Ministry of Home Affairs, 2003, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/printheritage/detail/2125a7b0-9a25-47ca-bf7f-a74a41a4261b.aspx>.

¹⁴ Simon Butt, "Anti-Terrorism Law and Criminal Process in Indonesia," ARC Federation Fellowship Islam, Syari'ah and Governance—Background Paper Series, 2008, http://law.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1547786/butt_final_forwebsite2.pdf.

¹⁵ Rose, G. and Nestorovska, D., "Towards an ASEAN counter-terrorism treaty," Singapore Yearbook of International Law, 9, 2005, 157-189, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=lawpapers>.

¹⁶ Simon Butt, "Anti-Terrorism Law and Criminal Process in Indonesia," ARC Federation Fellowship Islam, Syari'ah and Governance—Background Paper Series, 2008, http://law.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1547786/butt_final_forwebsite2.pdf.

The idea for a convention was promoted at the inter-agency meetings of AMMTC and SOMTC (Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime). There were bilateral consultations before the idea for the convention was tabled at SOMTC. While some supported the idea, others needed further explanation as they believed that the existing declaration issued at the 2002 ASEAN Summit was sufficient. As they hosted Muslim populations vulnerable to terrorist recruitment, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore felt the threat of terrorism, said Ngurah Swajaya.¹⁷ But he added, “Cambodia and Laos felt they were immune from terrorism until the investigations showed that the JI operations chief Hambali wanted to establish citizenship and live close to the US embassy in Phnom Penh.”

The ASEAN leaders agreed to work towards a convention in 2004 and soon, negotiations on a draft started in 2006. Ngurah Swajaya was appointed to chair the Working Group to draft the ASEAN convention on counter-terrorism. Ngurah Swajaya said, “We formed a working group to draft the convention. Each country appointed their chief negotiators. Singapore was represented by the AGC [Attorney-General’s Chambers] and accompanied by colleagues from MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs].¹⁸ Most member states were represented by legal people assisted by MFA.” The last meeting of the Working Group was held in Cebu, the Philippines during the 2007 ASEAN Summit, which saw the signing of the final document – the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism (ACCT). Following Brunei’s ratification as the sixth country on 28 April 2011, the ACCT came into force on 27 May 2011. On 3 May 2011, the then-Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan remarked, “We are determined to continue to cooperate not only in the prevention and suppression of extremism and terrorism but to address and remove root causes and conditions giving rise to these threats to humanity.” Dr. Surin Pitsuwan also added, “The road to ending violent extremism, terrorism and global cultural discords might very well run through the ASEAN region.”¹⁹ On 11 January 2013, Malaysia became the tenth and last country to ratify the ACCT. A framework for regional

¹⁷ Rohan Gunaratna’s interview with Ambassador Ngurah Swajaya, chair, drafting committee of the ASEAN convention on counter-terrorism, 9 March 2018.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ “SG welcomes imminent entry into force of the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism,” Jakarta, 3 May 2011, <http://asean.org/sg-welcomes-imminent-entry-into-force-of-the-asean-convention-on-counter-terrorism/>.

cooperation to counter, prevent and suppress terrorism and deepen counter-terrorism cooperation, the ACCT's introduction is a watershed in the security history of ASEAN.²⁰ ACCT is Southeast Asia's foremost instrument on counter-terrorism. It covers crucial grounds, ranging from definition issues to the concept of deradicalisation. Similarly, Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) defence was included but cyber weapons was not as it was not a real issue at that time. The ACCT is the cornerstone in enhancing the region's strategic role in the global strategy on counter-terrorism and its capacity to confront terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It is further complemented by the 2009 ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter Terrorism and formed a landmark towards the drafting of the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025.

Even after the signing of these two documents, counter-terrorism features prominently and frequently in ASEAN meetings. On 20 September 2017, the Philippines hosted the Eleventh ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (11th AMMTC) to consolidate and further strengthen regional cooperation in combating transnational crimes, including terrorism. A day before the AMMTC, the Second Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2nd SAMMRRVE) exchanged views and best practices in combating the rise of radicalisation and extremism.²¹

Extra-Regional Partners

In addition to regional capacities, the convention provided many opportunities to build national and international capacities to fight the rising threat of terrorism. Even prior to that, ASEAN members had built partnerships with the US, China, Europe and Australia.²²

²⁰ Abdul Razak Ahmad, "The Asean Convention on Counter-Terrorism 2007," *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and Law* 1 and 2, 93 (2013). Signed by ASEAN leaders on 13 January 2007 in Cebu, the Philippines.

²¹ Benedetta Di Matteo, "ASEAN's Anti-Terror Coordination Problem," *Global Risk Insights*, 16 October 2017, <https://globalriskinsights.com/2017/10/asean-anti-terror-coordination-problem/>.

²² "The ASEAN-United States of America Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism in 2002," <http://www.aseansec.org/7424.htm>.

The Regional Ministerial Meeting on Counter-Terrorism held in Bali in February 2004 was attended by ASEAN foreign ministers as well as those from Australia, Canada, China, Fiji, France, Germany, India, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South Korea, Russia, Timor-Leste, the United Kingdom (UK), the US and the European Union (EU). Two working groups were established. First, enforcement officers came together to share operational experiences, formulate best-practice models, develop an information base and facilitate a more effective flow of criminal intelligence. Second, senior legal officials met to report on the adequacy of regional legal frameworks for counter-terrorism cooperation and to identify areas for improvement of cooperation and assistance. At a bilateral level there were several arrangements. The first of which was a Memorandum of Understanding on counter-terrorism cooperation between Australia and the Philippines signed in March 2003 and another between Australia and Cambodia on 18 June 2003. The US and Australian authorities helped the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia to respond to the threat. The extra-regional engagements and arrangements brought resources to build capacity, thus enabling the region to fight back effectively.

A New Wave of Daesh-Centric Threats

With Daesh supplanting al Qaeda as the leader of the global jihadist movement, the evolution of the global threat landscape has affected Southeast Asia. With the rise of contemporary terrorism, Southeast Asia faced two waves of threat – the al Qaeda-centric wave in the 1990s and 2000s and the Daesh-centric wave in the 2010s. Following the training of Southeast Asian recruits by al Qaeda and its affiliates, in Southeast Asia notably JI, Southeast Asians participated in the insurgent and terrorist campaigns in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. The region dealt with this al Qaeda-centric threat only reactively in the 2000s. Until the siege of Marawi in 2017, the governments in the region fought the Daesh-centric threat using the same foundation created to battle the al Qaeda-centric threat.

Today, Southeast Asia's military forces, law enforcement authorities and national security agencies are assessing the impact of Daesh transforming from a caliphate-building group to a global terrorist movement. Despite its defeat in Mosul, Iraq on 9 July 2017 and Raqqa, Syria on 17

October 2017, Daesh is evolving into a deadly movement by linking up with local groups worldwide. In Southeast Asia alone, 63 groups have pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi and they are resilient to government action. With a depleting strength of an estimated 5,000 Daesh fighters in Syria today, down from 50,000 fighters in 2015, the group is no longer capable of holding territory in its heartland in Iraq. However, to compensate for its battlefield losses, Daesh is reinventing itself and expanding globally, in both the cyber and physical spaces. In Southeast Asia, Daesh has evolved from a semi-conventional force in Marawi to an underground terrorist network elsewhere in Mindanao, with a refocus on striking overseas. With its continuous recruitment in both the real and virtual spaces, Daesh will endure. Due to the continuing support from thousands of its followers and sympathisers, Daesh will survive and be able to mount sporadic bombing, assassinations, ambushes and other forms of hit-and-run attacks. Although the number of foreign recruits entering Iraq and Syria from Southeast Asia is diminishing and Daesh is unable to replenish its core battlefield losses, every month, Indonesians and Malaysians continue to travel to the Philippines to join Daesh-centric groups.

The threat in Southeast Asia has always been an extension of the developments in South Asia and the Middle East. During the anti-Soviet multinational Afghan Mujahideen campaign, several hundred Southeast Asians participated and returned to their countries to create terrorist and extremist groups. Similarly, those who travelled to Iraq and Syria since the year 2011 to join Daesh or al Qaeda influenced the creation of similar organisations in the region. Today, with the Daesh centre of gravity shifting from Iraq and Syria to overseas, Daesh is decentralising and is building ideological and operational affiliations with regional cells, networks and groups. With Daesh fragmenting, multiple centres of Daesh power are emerging in the Middle East, Africa, the Caucasus and Asia, including in Southeast Asia. In addition to consolidating the groups that pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr Baghdadi, Daesh and its network will survive in the established external wilayats (provinces) in Libya (Barqa, Fezzan and Tripoli), Egypt (Sinai), Nigeria (Gharb Iriqiyyah), Afghanistan and Pakistan (Khorasan), Russian Caucasus (Qawqaz), Yemen (Al-Yemen), Algeria (Al-Jazair) and Saudi Arabia (Najd, Hijaz and Bahrain). Operating out of these hubs, foreign fighters are likely to operate across borders and strike the enemies of Daesh. Currently, more than 50 foreign fighters are operating

in Southeast Asia, many originating from these Daesh bastions. Although Daesh is primarily an Arab movement, Arabs are only 20 percent of the Muslim world and Asia hosts 63% of the global Muslim population. To establish itself wherever Muslims live, Daesh-designated as well as unofficial propagandists are reaching out to vulnerable segments of Muslim communities. Exploiting encrypted communication platforms and harnessing its returnees, Daesh is making inroads into existing and emerging conflict zones. Asia is no exception to this. After networking and uniting disparate groups, Daesh has created groupings and appointed their leaders. While Daesh is in a consolidation phase in some theatres, it is in an expansion phase in other theatres. Although Libya was identified as the new Daesh HQ, Afghanistan and Yemen are likely to emerge as alternative bastions for Daesh to recuperate and re-emerge.

Yet, Daesh has not fully replaced al Qaeda in Southeast Asia, a region which has been the traditional playing field of the group. In 2017, al Qaeda in Syria created a coalition – Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) – and Southeast Asians continue to serve in its ranks. Led by the former al Qaeda in Syria commander, Abu Mohammed Al-Julani, HTS maintains a strength of at least 20,000 fighters and shows the again-rising significance of this threat group. Although HTS is at discord with al Qaeda central, led by Aymen al Zawahiri, it rivals both Daesh and the Assad regime. Especially since the loss of territory, HTS and its constituents thus present a threat to Daesh.

The Marawi Siege as a Push Towards Greater Collaboration

Against the backdrop of the rising terrorist threat, Daesh launched the siege of Marawi on 23 May 2017. The Marawi siege demonstrated how unprepared the region was to counter the rising threat of Daesh. It took five months of fighting to dismantle Daesh in Marawi, where nearly 1,500 people were killed. The number of local and foreign fighters killed came up to at least 900, including the designated Daesh East Asia leader, Isnilon Hapilon.

When Daesh fighters launched the Marawi siege, ASEAN governments understood that the level of cooperation between the countries was insufficient and not as comprehensive as it should have been. Until the Marawi siege, the Philippines did not publicly acknowledge that Daesh had taken

root in Mindanao and regional governments did not share intelligence on the developments adequately. As Daesh planned to replicate Mosul or Raqqa in Asia, the siege of Marawi was a wake-up call to all ASEAN countries and a warning that the devastation in Iraq and Syria could be replicated in Southeast Asia. The affected countries called for enhanced regional efforts to combat terrorism and other related emerging threats so as to maintain peace and stability in the region. At the highest levels of leadership, there was concern that the region was ill-equipped to fight the new wave of terrorism and extremism that required more collective efforts as no country can single-handedly manage the threat.

When the fight in Marawi commenced, the military took the lead in the Philippines. To support the Armed Forces of the Philippine (AFP), a number of countries from the region and beyond came forward. ASEAN leaders reiterated that strong leadership within the region was essential to fighting back to prevent Daesh from expanding into the region. At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on 4 June 2017, the US, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia offered assistance to the Philippines. As a consequence, Indonesian Defence Minister Ryamizard called for a shift from counter-terrorism cooperation to collaboration and proposed a regional intelligence-sharing alliance – “Our Eyes”. The genesis of “Our Eyes” occurred when Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu was briefed on the build-up of Daesh, especially the foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) threat in Marawi, at the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue. Addressing the Dialogue, his counterparts and the media, Minister Ryamizard spoke about Daesh, its fighter strength of 1,200 in the Philippines and the FTF, including the presence of 40 Indonesian nationals in the Philippines.²³

Minister Ryamizard met with Philippine Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on 21 June 2017 to offer support, including military assistance by deploying Indonesian troops, and discuss cooperation in the Sulu Seas. To contain the threat, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines launched joint trilateral maritime and air patrols off the Sulu archipelago in Mindanao and Sabah on 19 June 2017. When the Trilateral Maritime Patrol was inaugurated at Tarakan Naval Base, Indonesia, the ceremony was attended by Minister Ryamizard, Malaysian Defence Minister Hishammuddin

²³ Eileen Ng, “1,200 IS militants in Philippines, says Indonesia defence minister,” *Today Online*, 4 June 2017, <http://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/philippines-has-1200-is-militants-indonesia-defence-minister>.

Hussein, Defence Secretary Lorenzana, Singapore Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs Dr Maliki Osman, and Brunei's Deputy Defence Minister Abdul Aziz Haji Mohammad Tamit. The joint patrols by Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines disrupted the operation of Daesh, Abu Sayyaf and other threat groups, dramatically reducing the number of maritime attacks, including kidnappings at sea. The success of the patrols highlighted the potential for greater cooperation in the intelligence domain within the region to fight terrorism and extremism.

When the Philippine Department of National Defence hosted the 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)²⁴ and 4th ADMM-Plus on 23-24 October 2017 in Clark Field, Angeles City, the defence ministers pledged to work together to identify ways to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation among ASEAN defence establishments, to share more information on terrorist networks across Asia, to step up surveillance of threat groups, and to promote public awareness about radicalisation.²⁵

“Our Eyes” Initiative

The soft launch of “Our Eyes” was held in Bali on 25 January 2018, hosted by Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu. Each participating country agreed to share strategic intelligence on terrorism, starting in 2018. The defence representatives of countries affected by terrorism, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Brunei, were determined to expand the alliance within the region to include other ASEAN countries as members and extra-regional countries as partners. The US, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand have been identified as the first set of partners. The Our Eyes alliance received widespread support, including from US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis during his visit to Jakarta on 23 January 2018. Our Eyes was signed during the retreat of the ADMM in Singapore on 5-6 February 2018 and modelled on the post-World War II Five Eyes alliance AUS-CAN-UK-US-NZ (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States, New Zealand), established to counter the Soviet threat until 1989,

²⁴ Established in 2006, ADMM is the highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN, and ADMM Plus includes eight of its dialogue partners: Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the US.

²⁵ Angaindrankumar Gnanasangaram, “The ASEAN approach to counter-terrorism,” *Aseanpost*, 25 October 2017, <https://theaseanpost.com/index.php/article/asean-approach-counter-terrorism>.

and transnational security threats, especially terrorism, after 2001. The Our Eyes Working Group of each country met in Jakarta from 30 November to 1 December 2017, and in Bali on 24 January 2018 to develop mechanisms for its operationalisation. The cooperation mechanism comprises the collection, processing and presentation of strategic information on terrorism, radicalism and violent extremism. The members will exchange information utilising the ASEAN Direct Communication Infrastructure. It is envisaged that the member countries will establish Our Eyes centres in each country in 2018 to fuse national intelligence and share it with their counterparts. These centres will maintain communications, share counter-terrorism intelligence and discuss operational cooperation. Initially this will be strategic intelligence but later it will expand to operational and tactical intelligence.

At the ADMM retreat in Singapore in February 2018, where Singapore had assumed the chairmanship of ADMM, ASEAN defence ministers recognised several challenges, ranging from the troubled South China Sea to the North Korea dispute, but they identified terrorism as the single biggest threat. They discussed three key thrusts: (1) shift from regional counter-terrorism cooperation to collaboration, (2) grow collective capability to address chemical, biological and radiological threats, and (3) promulgate the use of practical confidence-building measures in the aviation and maritime domains. As the scale, magnitude and complexity of the threat in the region continued to grow and deepen with the relocation and return of foreign fighters, and the flow of propaganda, funds and technology, the region needed an additional strategic framework to deal with counter-terrorism. Singapore thus proposed a “three R” framework of “Resilience, Response, Recovery” during the ADMM retreat. The framework to build up the region’s ability to deter and prevent terrorist attacks is aimed at co-ordinating ASEAN’s responses to address ongoing threats, and to recover from any terrorist attack. Thus the framework would include the Resilience element to counter radicalisation, a continuing challenge in the region; a Response element, notably the Trilateral Patrols involving Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines; and the intention to Recover from attacks, arising from the need to restore Marawi, a city besieged by Daesh for five months.

Since the threats covered are not just from conventional terrorism but also from chemical, biological and radiological weapons, the integration of

the military to the overall counter-terrorism framework of nations is vital. In March 2018, Singapore hosted meetings of the chiefs of defence forces, military intelligence and military operations to deliberate on the current and emerging Daesh-centric threat. The chiefs of defence forces took part in the 15th ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces' Informal Meeting (ACDFIM) and reaffirmed their shared commitment and the collective responsibility of the ASEAN militaries to address regional security challenges, which included both traditional and non-traditional security issues. They proposed to do this through building capacity, trust and confidence at a pace comfortable to all through dialogue, and military-to-military interaction to deepen defence cooperative ties between and amongst ASEAN defence establishments. In addition to emphasising counter-terrorism cooperation among ASEAN militaries and with the dialogue partners of the ADMM-Plus in order to contribute to global and regional peace, security and stability, ACDFIM reaffirmed the commitment of the ASEAN member states' militaries in support of and participation in ADMM-Plus Expert Working Groups' exercises conducted from 2018 to 2020 to further practical cooperation, including in counter-terrorism, co-hosted by Thailand and the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, ACDFIM adopted the recommendations of the chiefs of military intelligence at the 15th ASEAN Military Intelligence Informal Meeting (AMIIM) and the chiefs of military operations at the 8th ASEAN Military Operations Informal Meeting (AMOIM) held in Singapore on 6 March 2018. It also commended the efforts of the ASEAN Military Analyst-to-Analyst Intelligence Exchange (AMAAIE) in developing the 365-Platform to facilitate information sharing in order to build up resilience and combat terrorism. There were other collaborations in the maritime and CBRN arenas, especially with the continuity of terrorists operating in the maritime space and terrorist interest in CBRN weapons, including acquisition of weapons from North Korea. Considering the threats, the meetings in Singapore by the defence, intelligence and operations chiefs of the armed forces of Southeast Asia were timely but there was very little effort to collaborate with non-military agencies.

Conclusion

After 9/11 and regional attacks, particularly the Bali attack, terrorism in the region became the top priority in ASEAN's political agenda. ASEAN declared the need to fight terrorism together with dialogue partners and also spoke of the need to strengthen the political declaration with a legal treaty as ASEAN nations had different legal systems. It was important to bridge the differences to effectively cooperate and collaborate. ASEAN rose to the challenge of countering terrorism but the entire process of operationalising an idea took a decade after 9/11. Nonetheless, the drafting of the landmark convention was swift. Ngurah Swajaya said: "The counter-terrorism convention is the fastest ever convention drafted in ASEAN, from the drafting to the signing by the heads of state in less than a year."²⁶

Within the ASEAN space, Muslims are moderate and tolerant and value coexistence, but a tiny percentage have embraced foreign ideologies from the conflict regions of South Asia and the Middle East. ASEAN leaders knew that terrorism was a vicious by-product of extremism and they were determined to fight both terrorism and extremism. As the region hosts a large Muslim community, ASEAN considered managing the threats of extremism seriously. Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan said: "The road to ending violent extremism, terrorism and global cultural discords might very well run through the ASEAN region."²⁷

Several challenges prevented effective counter-terrorism cooperation and collaboration. Multilateral intelligence-sharing is exceptionally rare in the region as governments prefer to exchange threat information bilaterally. Within the region, the defence, military, law enforcement and national security agencies collected intelligence but there was a level of reluctance to sharing, both nationally and regionally.

As this article has shown, so far, some amount of cooperation does exist. However, there is a need for even greater collaboration. Unless the guardians of security in the region move from counter-terrorism cooperation to collaboration, the threat of ideological extremism and its

²⁶ Rohan Gunaratna's interview with Ambassador Ngurah Swajaya, chair, drafting committee of the ASEAN convention on counter terrorism, 9 March 2018.

²⁷ Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, "SG welcomes imminent entry into force of the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism," Jakarta, 3 May 2011, <http://asean.org/sg-welcomes-imminent-entry-into-force-of-the-asean-convention-on-counter-terrorism/>.

operational manifestations – insurgency and terrorism – will persist and even grow. To fight the Daesh-centric threat, regional military, law enforcement and intelligence services should exchange personnel, create common databases, conduct joint training and operations, and share expertise, resources and experience beyond what is already in place.

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Securing Borders Collaboratively to Prevent the Movement of Foreign Terrorist Fighters

Simon Deignan and Thomas Wuchte

The Collaborative Challenge

The phenomenon of terrorism is not new, although it has taken a new significance and magnitude over the past several years. Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Nice...the list can go on. Terrorists continue to avoid detection while crossing our borders. Since 2014, one of the major issues for international and national security has been the threat posed by Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs). FTFs are defined as individuals who travel abroad to a State other than their State of residence or nationality to engage in, undertake, plan, prepare, carry out or otherwise support terrorist activity or to provide or receive training to do so. As Daesh lost territory, manpower, and finances, the flow of FTFs to conflict zones reversed. It is estimated that approximately 40,000 FTFs left their homes to fight for Daesh – although many have been killed or already returned home, over half of these are still unaccounted for today. Returning FTFs can pose a new terrorist threat to their home or third countries, including transit countries. The challenge for United Nations (UN) Member States is to ensure that these returnees are identified and detected. The international community continues to grapple with addressing the complex set of challenges posed by this threat and unanimously adopted UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2396 in December 2017. With the adoption of this Resolution, the UN Security Council identified a series of measures that will help States deal with the challenge of returning and relocating FTFs. UNSCR 2396 has three

* This paper was submitted on 10 June 2018.

key border security elements: (a) appropriate screening measures at the borders and enhancing identity management; (b) increasing the collection and use of passenger data and biometrics; and (c) improving our sharing of information, both among States and within States. This chapter will look at these three areas, where more efforts are required. It explains several issues counter-terrorism experts must address through promoting policy dialogue, exchange of experiences and capacity-building, all while upholding human rights and the rule of law to ensure measures are proportional to the threat.

Improving Risk-Based Border Screening and Identity Management

UNSCR 2396 obliges States to strengthen border security through more thorough checks on forged documents and enhanced identification management.

In January 2017, 14 people were convicted by a Belgian court of producing fake identity documents (IDs). Some of these documents had been sold to individuals who were involved in the November 2015 Paris attacks and in the 2016 Brussels bombings. This small group managed to forge more than 2,000 passports and IDs. Organised crime is actively involved in the production and distribution of fraudulent or stolen documents, some of which are at such a high level that they can only be detected using forensic equipment. Coupled with the 11,000 blank Syrian passports that were stolen by Daesh, there is an ever-present threat of such documents being used to carry out terrorist attacks.¹

It is therefore of the utmost importance that States set up effective measures at the border to assess whether a traveller is using a fake identity or not, and whether a travel document is fraudulent or not. This is particularly relevant since at some border crossing points of certain States there are no passport readers or even electricity. In these areas, border security is totally reliant on the border guard's ability to assess the traveller and the travel document to recognise a fake.

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/isil-holds-11100-blank-syrian-passports-report-170910090921948.html>.

Risk Assessments

A traveller's identity goes beyond the document they are carrying. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency has seen a marked rise in look-alike or impostor fraud – this increase is not just a European phenomenon but can be found globally.² The border official's role is not simply procedural and document-based, it requires investigation skills. The primary objectives of border officials are to ascertain whether the person presenting themselves at the border is who they claim to be, has authority to enter the territory by visa or otherwise, and does not represent a threat to the territory or anybody within it. Therefore risk-based assessments are required. In the context of borders this may include understanding the likely travel patterns of terrorists (the outbound route may differ from the inbound route), identifying suspicious travel activities, e.g., unnecessarily protracted routes and/or use of legitimately held or illegitimate multi-national passports, knowing the "hot-spots" for false and stolen travel documents and being able to recognise the signs. Where this information is not known, clearly defined "Intelligence Requirements" should be issued and disseminated to those who may be able to fill in the knowledge gaps.

UNSCR 2396 is clear in emphasising that risk assessments and screening procedures must be done without resorting to profiling based on any discriminatory ground prohibited by international law, and States have consistently reaffirmed that terrorism should not be associated with any nationality, religion or ethnicity. This is important because there is no single profile of a terrorist. Counter-terrorism measures that rely on broad profiles – which are based on stereotypical assumptions that a person from a certain national, ethnic or religious background is more likely to be involved in terrorism – are problematic for many reasons. They are contrary to equality and non-discrimination principles, which are cornerstones of the international human rights framework. They are counter-productive because they reinforce stereotypes, foster marginalisation and stigmatisation, create "suspect communities" and thereby undermine trust between those communities and the authorities; and they may even contribute to the terrorist radicalisation of individuals who perceive themselves to be unfairly targeted. But practice has also shown that discriminatory profiling

² https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2017.pdf.

is ineffective in the short term because it can be easily circumvented. Indeed, terrorist groups have proven their ability to reduce the likelihood of detection, for example, by recruiting people who do not conform to the pre-determined profiles or by adapting appearance and behaviour accordingly.

The use of technology can support border guards to move from their own subjective opinions, which may be subject to bias, to a more rules-based objective analysis of a traveller, based on their route, travel history, and contact information. The subsequent section on Passenger Data will go into more detail on the use of such information.

Improving Identification Management

A couple of years ago, a United States (US) investigator managed to obtain four genuine US passports using fake names and fraudulent documents. In one case, he used the Social Security number of a man who had died in 1965. In another, he used the Social Security number of a fictitious five-year-old child created for a previous investigation, along with an ID showing that he was 53 years old.³ The investigator then used one of the fake passports to buy a plane ticket, obtain a boarding pass, and make it through a security checkpoint at a major US airport.

In 2016, it was discovered that thousands of Indian citizens had paid a criminal gang for false birth and marriage certificates from the former Portuguese colonies of Goa, Diu and Daman. In Portuguese law, Indians born in these areas before 1961, or their children and grandchildren, can apply for Portuguese passports because these were colonies of Portugal until that year.⁴ However, British and Portuguese police learned that this loophole was being systematically abused to obtain a genuine EU passport using false breeder documents.

Border controls are tightening, and we have highly secure passports with biometric chips, but the processes to acquire a genuine passport remain open to abuse by criminal and terrorist groups. Identity deceptions are particularly prevalent when there are disconnects between passport and civil registry identity management systems – with civil registry systems often being the weaker link. So-called breeder documents, such as

³ <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/US/03/14/passport.security/index.html>.

⁴ <http://www.ipsnews.net/2004/02/portugal-india-crime-rings-sell-fake-portuguese-passports/>.

birth/marriage/school certificates, are far easier to falsify than a travel document. However, building a false identity using such fraudulent breeder documents can allow for the fraudster to acquire a real passport under a false identity – making the falsification almost impossible to detect.

States have woken up to this reality and are now looking at ways to standardise security features in breeder documents. However, the gaps remain and will for some time to come.

Increasing the Collection and Use of Passenger Data and Biometrics

Both commercial and security priorities have led to great technological advances being made at formal points of entry to facilitate bulk movement of travellers and to detect potential threats. Although the technologies exist, they were often viewed as nice to have rather than necessities. UNSCR 2396 has changed that by mandating that all States collect Advance Passenger Information, Passenger Name Record, and biometric data.

Advance Passenger Information (API)

On 24 May 2014, four people were killed at the Jewish Museum in Brussels by a man armed with a Kalashnikov rifle. This man was Mehdi Nemmouche, the first Daesh returnee to carry out an attack in Europe. He managed to do so despite being on several terrorist watch-lists. Because his data was not checked against these watch-lists before he travelled, he managed to fly back to Europe undetected.⁵ If his API data had been checked in advance against these watch-lists, he would likely not have been allowed entry.

But what is API? It is the biographic data contained in a passenger's travel document that is submitted to the airlines during check-in, as well as the flight information of that airline. When it is received in advance of a passenger's arrival it allows law enforcement authorities the time to do two things. Firstly, to check the name, date of birth, nationality and other travel document information in the MRZ (Machine Readable Zone) against watch-lists and databases. If the traveller appeared on one, like Mehdi Nemmouche, they would be stopped at the border for further questioning. Secondly, it allows law enforcement authorities to compare the traveller's

⁵ <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/mehdi-nemmouche>.

details against risk profiles. For example, a young male, travelling alone, with no luggage, from Algeria to Madrid via Kiev, would be more suspicious than an old French couple travelling to Spain for the weekend.

Put simply, API allows States to check travellers against known suspects and known risks, as well as unknown suspects and known risks. API has been a global requirement since September 2014 when the UN adopted Resolution 2178 to prevent the movement of FTFs. Since then, ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, has established API as a binding standard, and many international and regional organisations are supporting States to overcome the technical, financial and legal issues to establish national API systems.

Passenger Name Record (PNR)

A second, more detailed type of border screening involves PNR, passenger name record data. This is the information a traveller gives to an airline when booking a flight – phone number, email address, home address, credit card details and so on. It is much more detailed information; hence there are more concerns regarding data privacy, particularly in Europe. Although the information is not backed by a government-issued travel document, like API, PNR data can be very useful for intelligence, analysis and border security because it can identify suspicious travel patterns by examining what other flights that person has booked using that credit card. This can flag threats that otherwise might have escaped attention. With the adoption of UNSCR 2396, all States are required to collect passenger data in advance and cross-check this information against watch-lists and databases.

Probably the most valuable use of PNR is to illuminate hidden connections between known threats and their unknown associates – the unknown unknowns. For example, if a flight for an unknown person is booked using a credit card that was previously associated with a known suspect – the person travelling immediately becomes a person of interest. Taking the example one step further, if that person uses a home address previously unknown to law enforcement officials, the other people living in that house may also be associated with a crime.

The United States Counter Terrorism Coordinator gives the real-life example of Faisal Shahzad. Faisal was a US citizen who had received explosives training in Pakistan. In 2010, he arrived at the US on a one-way ticket

from Islamabad. He matched a PNR targeting rule based on his travel pattern, and so was stopped but subsequently released. Three months later, a car bomb failed to detonate in Times Square. Investigators linked Faisal to the car, through his credit card. An alert for him was placed in its system. When he booked a flight to flee the country, the system flagged it.⁶ He was arrested and is now serving a life sentence.

Biometrics

In November 2017, US authorities arrested Naif Abdulaziz M. Alfallaj, a Saudi citizen residing in Oklahoma who trained with Al Qaeda in late 2000. The FBI was able to identify the man when they matched his fingerprints against those taken from an application form for the terrorist group's Al Farouq training camp that was seized in Afghanistan.⁷

Biometrics can be a valuable tool for verifying that individuals are who they say they are. Terrorists and organised criminals will try to mask their identities in several ways: whether by using a fake passport or taking on another identity. However, it is a lot harder to fake, for example, fingerprints. Face recognition, eye recognition, fingerprints, all the way up to DNA – these are ways to identify someone using human characteristics.

The technology for biometrics already exists and is moving fast. The majority of countries in the world are now issuing biometric passports, which contain a photo and a fingerprint – when a traveller uses an e-gate, a live image of the traveller's face is compared with the photo in their passport. Apple uses fingerprint recognition technology in its iPhones, the United Kingdom uses fingerprints instead of library cards and even Disney World uses face recognition to ensure a three-day pass is not transferred to someone else. Some States have begun to collect fingerprints and facial scans of travellers to their country. This data can be used to validate the traveller's identity and their travel documents. Some States also have watch-lists with biometric data of known and suspected terrorists.

UNSCR 2396 mandates that all States “develop and implement systems to collect biometric data, which could include fingerprints, photographs, facial recognition, and other relevant identifying biometric data, in order to responsibly and properly identify terrorists, including foreign terrorist

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/19/times-square-bomber>.

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/06/us/naif-alfallaj-qaeda-camp-oklahoma.html>.

fighters". Most States do not yet have the capacity or the means to do this; therefore, assistance from both international organisations and other States will be necessary.

Data protection considerations

The routine gathering, storing and sharing of large amounts of the personal data of potentially everyone who travels across borders may have a substantial impact on the enjoyment of individual human rights of ordinary people too – their right to privacy and freedom of movement or even their right to liberty and security.

In accordance with international privacy and data protection standards, the collection, storing and processing of personal information must be prescribed by law, strictly necessary for a legitimate purpose and proportionate towards that purpose. The information gathered must not be used for other purposes than those for which it was collected; and the law must also provide for appropriate procedural safeguards against abuse.

For API and PNR, there is a human rights backstop in place, as airlines, European ones, will not send the data to a country that does not first have the correct legal provisions in place to safeguard data privacy. However, more work will be needed to ensure that biometric information is collected responsibly for counter-terrorism purposes as this effort expands.

Improving Our Sharing of Information, Both among States and within States

In the aftermath of the November 2015 Paris attacks, we learned that Belgian intelligence services had known about the jihadi backgrounds of Salah Abdeslam and some of his associates for some months before the attacks. Unfortunately, this information was not shared among other European intelligence services.⁸ Dealing effectively with transnational threats like terrorism requires constant cooperation and intelligence sharing between law enforcement authorities. This is the reason why UNSCR 2396 stresses the need to increase information exchange both within States and among States.

⁸ <http://www.newsweek.com/belgium-shelved-investigation-abdeslam-brothers-paris-attacks-460687>.

Inter-State information sharing

INTERPOL, Europol and many national and international law enforcement and border agencies gather, collate and disseminate a broad range of data relating to stolen and fraudulent travel documents, watch-lists of suspects, and notices requiring actions, ranging from reporting sightings to immediate detention of individuals. As with all forms of information, the data coming out of the system is only as good as that going in. If States are not populating these databases with relevant and up-to-date data, their usefulness is severely diminished. A second problem is that not all border control points have access to these databases – some INTERPOL members have previously had no connection at their air, land, and sea ports of entry to the Stolen and Lost Travel Document (SLTD) and other databases, potentially allowing known terrorists and criminals to travel more freely.⁹

UNSCR 2396 also encourages States to share information through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. The level of information sharing before and after the Paris attacks demonstrates the contrast in how effective the response can be. As pointed out above, the main protagonists were known to intelligence services beforehand, but this information was not shared outside of national borders. In contrast, after the Paris attacks, States actively cooperated and shared operational intelligence with one another much greater, leading to the arrest of many associates of the attackers across Europe.

Of course, this principle of sharing assumes that all States value privacy equally and do not misuse information to target individuals outside of the rule of law; and that information practices, including integrity, anonymity, and destruction as appropriate, are rule-of-law-based. In addition to sharing this information with one another, States need to ensure that appropriate safeguards against abuses in bilateral and multilateral information exchange and law enforcement cooperation are strengthened. States should also put in place appropriate safeguards to ensure that information received from other countries has not been obtained in contravention of international human rights standards, and that information shared with other countries is not used for purposes that do so. Those who are arbitrarily included in terrorism watch-lists or databases will face

⁹ https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/20170405_INTERPOL-Statement-Panel-1-Mr.-Gottlieb.pdf.

serious consequences, including arrest and detention, when travelling across borders. Practice has shown that this is not a theoretical question; but remains a problem for too many human rights defenders, journalists, political activities and others who have been unfairly labelled “terrorists” by their governments.

Intra-State information sharing

Many State agencies still treat information as need to know rather than need to share. This results in multiple information silos where nothing comes in or out, leading to resource duplication and missed opportunities to identify potential terrorists. The US learned this after September 11 and progressed to a model where information is shared among a host of security agencies. Many European agencies are now following suit, although in most countries there remains more work needed to form interagency information sharing. Inadequate interagency processes severely impede a country’s ability to provide frontline screeners and law enforcement agencies access to terrorism information, and to screen against this information and other key data at borders and ports of entry. Without such up-to-date operational information, a frontline border officer may allow the entry or exit of a terrorist being sought by another security agency.

In addition to information sharing between state agencies, we should look to increase information sharing with the private sector. In many countries the private sector owns and operates a vast majority of the nation’s critical border infrastructure, such as information and communication technology (ICT), energy and traffic and transportation. There is then a further need to strengthen the sharing of best practices with the private sector on countering terrorism. Partnerships between the public and private sectors are essential to maintaining security and resilience. These partnerships create an environment to share critical threat information, risk mitigation, and other vital information and resources. In many countries, businesses have understood and taken responsibility for cooperating and collaborating with state security agencies.

“Intelligence-derived knowledge shared more widely beyond intelligence circles” is one of the Step Changes highlighted in the UK Anderson

Report.¹⁰ Support and interaction among States, the public and private sectors, as well as international and regional organisations is paramount in tackling threats posed by terrorism. Recognising each other's roles and responsibilities and stronger collaboration will benefit all stakeholders in countering terrorism in all its forms.

Conclusion

Land, sea, air borders offer great opportunities to deter, detect and disrupt criminal and terrorist threats. This is particularly relevant in the current era of heightened international crime and terrorism threats and the transiting of borders by terrorists and returning fighters seeking safe havens or fresh terroristic opportunities. Firstly, the mindset of those personnel engaged in border and immigration roles should be investigative, i.e., to make no assumptions, accept nothing at face value but challenge and check everything. Secondly, they should be guided by being "intelligence-led", thus ensuring that resources are focused and utilised against prioritised threats. The sharing of intelligence-derived knowledge not only benefits first responders directly, but also can be used to raise awareness at borders where specialised personnel are not always present. Finally, border officials should be assisted in this task through awareness of, and access to, updated and enhanced technological tools and to specialist national and international support.

Terrorism remains a largely transnational phenomenon. Terrorists can move funds, fighters, and weapons across international borders, and can now enable, direct and support terrorists located in another country – the so-called homegrown terrorist. This means that countries must work together to prevent and defeat terrorism. Daesh's military defeats in Syria and Iraq means there will be an increase in the number of FTFs returning to their countries of origin or travelling to other regions. Fortunately, we see now with UNSCR 2396 that there is a corresponding reaction to: (a) improve appropriate screening measures at the borders and enhance identity management; (b) increase the collection and use of passenger data and biometrics; and (c) improve our sharing of information, both among States and within States.

¹⁰ Published in December 2017 – focused on attacks in London and Manchester, March-June 2017 respectively.

Countering terrorism requires strengthening the security of not only travel documents, but also related issuance processes, their inter-linkages to modernised civil registries, and the use of travel documents as part of comprehensive and integrated border solutions. This is the ethos of UNSCR 2396. Terrorism is also about risk management. Managing a risk to which our societies are particularly averse. This is, after all, the aim of terrorists – manipulating public opinion and influencing policy by instilling fear. The temptation may therefore be very high to take drastic measures and impose blanket restrictions. Governments should take the time to weigh options and consider the long-term impact, not only the immediate security benefits but broader implications on society, human rights and cohesion. There is no doubt that data and intelligence gathering and surveillance are necessary to fight terrorism at our borders and to protect the right to life. The challenge is to ensure these operations are targeted, proportionate, and non-discriminatory. In the end, only through outstanding collaboration will we be able to find the right balance between security and the right to live with open borders.

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Multi-Stakeholder Engagement in Rehabilitation

Malkanthi Hettiarachchi

The recruitment and grooming of a terrorist occurs at multiple levels. Terrorist groups radicalize vulnerable communities. These communities become a recruitment base that provides a steady stream of recruits to sustain the group's membership. Vulnerable youth connect with grievance narratives projected by charismatic messengers and seize the opportunity offered by terrorist groups to redress these grievances. Once recruited the individual is groomed into a culture of terrorism involving a series of rationalisations and justifications for violence. Reversing the process of radicalisation within a rehabilitative environment therefore also has to be conducted at multiple levels. Sri Lanka's rehabilitation and reintegration programme used the very components the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)¹ manipulated and denied civilians, to groom them into terrorism, to reverse the process of violent radicalisation in order to reintegrate the former terrorists back into the community.

Multi-stakeholder involvements in nurturing terrorism and in reversing this process through rehabilitation are two vital aspects in counter-terrorism. Terrorist groups involve and enlist the support of several agencies in the recruitment, sustenance and mobilisation of its members. Media platforms, non-government organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations, educational institutions, financial systems, businesses, transport services, communication systems, families, civil society groups, advocates,

* This paper was submitted on 6 August 2018.

¹ The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was a terrorist and insurgent group that invented the suicide belt, and whose preferred modus operandi was suicide bombings. The LTTE was militarily neutralised in May 2009, after a 30-year war. Approximately 12,000+ members of the LTTE handed themselves over or were apprehended for rehabilitation.

vocational trainers, psychosocial strategies and creative therapies such as art, music, drama, and cartoons are manipulated and abused by terrorist groups. These very same aspects must be engaged in counter-terrorism efforts, because if governments do not engage these organisations, institutions, and platforms, the terrorists will engage and occupy these spaces. Multi-stakeholder engagement has benefits and challenges that will be discussed in this paper.

Sri Lanka's Deradicalisation Programme

Sri Lanka's commitment to terrorist rehabilitation was founded on a presidential directive, that the members of the LTTE were "misled by the terrorist leadership into engaging in terrorist activity" but were "citizens" who would be given a second chance to re-engage in civilian life (DMHR, 2009).² The way forward was therefore to rehabilitate the former Tamil Tigers and reintegrate them into society.

Rehabilitation was an imperative, as it was a matter of national security. The state set up a dedicated Bureau for the Commissioner General for Rehabilitation (BCGR) for the rehabilitation, reintegration and aftercare of the former members of the LTTE. The BCGR was resourced by Ministry of Defence staff, under the Ministry of Prison Reforms and Rehabilitation. The BCGR worked in partnership with multiple government and non-government stakeholders: the security sector; and the Ministries of Defence, Justice, Prisons and Rehabilitation, National Reintegration and Reconciliation, Skills Development and Vocational Training, Women and Children, Health, Agriculture, Education, Sports, Cultural Affairs and Social Services. The BCGR was involved in the process of selecting and managing stakeholders, to ensure that the rehabilitation programme functioned effectively. Stakeholders included local non-government organizations (NGOs), international non-government organisations (INGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), community volunteers, professionals, religious personnel, the media, and the public, private and business sectors. Given the level of influence and resources within these organisations, stakeholder management was crucial for the success

² Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, 2009, "National Framework Proposal for Reintegration of Ex-combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka", Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Colombo: DMHR.

of the programme. Some stakeholders can be supportive and others critical, therefore it was essential to win over and engage critical stakeholders for the success of the programme.³

The rehabilitation model was based on a holistic approach that included restoring six essential components in the lives of the beneficiaries of the rehabilitation programme. The six modes of rehabilitation and the community engagement component were referred to as the 6+1 Model (BCGR 2013).⁴ This included educational, vocational, spiritual/religious, psychological, sports/extra-curricular, and social/cultural/family rehabilitation.

To manage such a holistic programme for over 12,000 detainees and inmates, there was no other agency with the capacity and commitment other than the security sector.⁵ The BCGR resourced by the security sector collaborated with a range of partners/stakeholders to conduct over 48 programmes to rehabilitate and reintegrate the former LTTE members. The beneficiaries of the programme were accommodated in Protective Accommodation and Rehabilitation Centers (PARCs) in the northern and eastern regions of the country.

Multi-Stakeholder Participation

Sri Lanka's deradicalisation programme tapped into a range of skills, competencies and knowledge within the government and non-government sectors to deliver its programmes. The BCGR identified the needs, strengths, difficulties, vulnerabilities and risks of the beneficiaries through a variety of assessments. Interventions were then prioritised and targeted based on need. The BCGR decided on the parameters of involvement and interaction of state and non-state actors within the rehabilitation programme. The response by the public, private, civil society and other

³ See: www.bcgr.gov.lk to view the several public and private sector organisations that resourced the rehabilitation programme.

⁴ BCGR, 2013, *Rehabilitation of Ex Combatants*, compiled by D. Hettiarachchi, The Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation (BCGR), Colombo: Department of Government Information.

⁵ Study conducted in March 2018 with former members of the LTTE and 19 practitioners and experts highlighted the effectiveness of rehabilitation when managed by the military engaging multiple stakeholders. P. Ranasinghe, 2018, "The significance of the military role in rehabilitation of child soldiers with special reference to the right to education", Master's Thesis: University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

non-governmental agencies was overwhelming. The BCGR enlisted the support of these agencies after vetting the agencies and individuals, examining their curricula, and ensuring that their agenda were in keeping with the ethos of the rehabilitation center and served the best interest of the beneficiaries to ensure reintegration. To date, Sri Lanka has rehabilitated and reintegrated approximately 12,206 former Tamil Tigers into the community. According to Kohler (2017), the “Sri Lankan rehabilitation and reintegration program can be counted among the most successful and best designed programs in the world”.⁶

A holistic deradicalisation programme requires multi-stakeholder participation and collaboration, due to the skill and knowledge base contained within these organisations. The Sri Lankan deradicalisation programme enlisted the support of the sectors listed below.

Figure 1: Partnerships with Agencies in the Sri Lanka rehabilitation and aftercare programme.⁷



⁶ D. Köhler, *Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violence*, Contemporary Terrorism Studies Series, New York: Routledge, 2017, pp. 247-248.

⁷ NGO = Non-Government Organisation, INGO = International NGO, NPO = Not for Profit Organisation, Svcs = Services, UNICEF= United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund.

Terrorist groups aim to create a rift between the state and the people. They project the state as unfair and unjust, and attempt to secure the support of civil society agencies for their cause. When some of these civil society agencies sympathise with the terrorists' cause, they adopt an anti-government stance, thereby lending credibility advertently or inadvertently to the terrorists' agenda. Given that civil society and non-government organisations are powerful entities, in terms of influence, media backing and funds, nation states should identify the agenda of these organisations prior to enlisting their support. This is particularly the case as they are often financed by external agencies and interest groups—both domestic and overseas ones—that expect them to fulfil the terms and conditions of funding. It is vital that the programme does not become financially dependent on any civil society or non-government agency, because with financial control comes the authority to manipulate the rehabilitation programme. It is therefore imperative that the state sets up an entity that is able to manage the process of rehabilitation, provide sound leadership, enlist the support of civil society agencies and collaborate with multiple stakeholders to enrich the rehabilitation programme.

Soft Approach to Counter-Terrorism

The soft approach to counter-terrorism is aimed at (1) preventing radicalisation from taking root in the community by inoculating the community, starting from schools, sports clubs, youth groups, etc.; (2) preventing those radicalised from becoming violent by actively engaging in dialogue with university students, youth movements, etc.; and (3) deradicalising the violent extremist offenders through rehabilitation and reintegrating into society. The space for well-planned multi-stakeholder engagement is extensive within this three-pronged framework (Figure 2).

Figure 2: A three dimensional approach to prevent radicalisation and re-radicalisation.⁸



This paper focuses on one aspect of the soft approach to counter-terrorism, "Rehabilitation". Deradicalisation in rehabilitation is the downstream management of the violent radicals or extremists after they became actively engaged. If rehabilitation is to succeed, the focus must also include the reintegration and aftercare processes. It is rehabilitation, reintegration and aftercare that ensure that each beneficiary of the rehabilitation programme is sustained in the community. Sri Lanka's BCGR ensured the seamless transition of staff and services from rehabilitation into the community. Well-managed multi-stakeholder engagement was invaluable in all three phases of this rehabilitative process.

⁸ Hettiarachchi, M., 2018, "Assessment and Evaluation of Terrorist Rehabilitation Programs", chapter 8, in R. Gunaratna and S. M. Hussin (eds.), *Deradicalisation and Terrorist Rehabilitation: A framework for policy-making and implementation*, Routledge.

Figure 3: Three-pronged approach to rehabilitating and sustaining the change.⁹



The influence of state and non-state actors within the rehabilitation, reintegration and aftercare phases may vary based on the aims and objectives of the programme. The level of engagement that former terrorists are willing to accept is a challenge due to social stigma. There appears to be greater overt acceptance of non-state actor involvement once beneficiaries are reintegrated. However, with regard to Sri Lanka's programme, the beneficiaries continued to maintain contact with the BCGR staff of the Sri Lanka Army and Air Force involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration processes. This was evident during follow-up community assessments of radicalisation conducted by the author. Beneficiaries of the rehabilitation programme in 2007 voluntarily attended follow-up assessments in 2018, almost a decade after they had left the rehabilitation centers.¹⁰

Good Practice Guidelines for Effective Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Several guiding principles formulated in the past seven years have highlighted the importance of the multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach to rehabilitation and reintegration. Experts in the field have come together

⁹ Developed by author.

¹⁰ Beneficiaries who had attended the Thelippalai and Pallekele rehabilitation centers in 2007 continue to maintain contact with the BCGR staff and attend events related to the BCGR.

to share effective and ethical principles used within current terrorist rehabilitation and reintegration programmes across the globe. Organisations such as the International Center for Counter Terrorism (ICCT), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF), Hedayah in Abu Dhabi, and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJ) have taken leadership in bringing experts together to draft several Good Practice Guidelines (GPG) documents that provide guidelines for emerging programmes.

Practitioners currently use the Rome Memorandum of Good Practices, containing 25 practice guidelines, and the Addendum of six additional principles for the rehabilitation and reintegration of terrorists (ICCT and UNICRI, 2011; GCTF, 2015).¹¹ The Rome Memorandum outlines the importance of including cross-disciplinary services and training stakeholders: Training for stakeholders (GPG5), integrating Cross-disciplinary services (GPG7), inclusion of Psychologists (GPG8), Religious scholars (GPG10), Law enforcement (GPG11), Victims and Advocates (GPG12), Former rehabilitees (GPG13), Charismatic and Influential community members (GPG14), and Families of beneficiaries (GPG23). The addendum cites the need for a *legal framework to allow an effective integrated multi-stakeholder approach* to rehabilitation and reintegration.

The Additional Guidance on the Role of Psychologists/Psychology in Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programmes is a guideline on *how psychologists as stakeholders can work effectively* in the rehabilitation of terrorist detainees and inmates (Hedayah and ICCT, 2013).¹² The Additional Guidance on the Role of Religious Scholars and other Ideological Experts

¹¹ ICCT and UNICRI, 2011, "Rome Memorandum of Good Practices", International Center for Counter Terrorism (ICCT) and United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), December, <https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/A/GCTF-Rome-Memorandum-ENG.pdf>. Also see: GCTF, 2015, "Addendum to the Rome Memorandum of Good Practices for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists", September, Global Terrorism Forum (GCTF), accessed 26 March 2018, <https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Toolkit-documents/English-Addendum-to-the-Rome-Memorandum-on-Legal-Frameworks.pdf>.

¹² Hedayah and ICCT, 2013, "Good Practice Guidelines for Psychologists/Psychology in Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs", Hedayah and International Center for Counter Terrorism (ICCT), Abu Dhabi, May, accessed 26 March 2018, https://toolkit.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/En/Hedayah-ICCT_Psychology_Good_Practices.pdf.

in Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programmes is a guideline on *how religious scholars as stakeholders can work effectively* (UNICRI, 2013).¹³

The Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism contains 26 principles that can be used by practitioners in the field (GCTF, 2014).¹⁴ The Abu Dhabi Memorandum identifies a *range of stakeholders and emphasises the need for training*: Multi-sectorial Training (GPG1), Collaboration between Educational sectors (GPG2), Trauma services (GPG10), Schools (GPG12), Training of teachers as stakeholders (GPG14), Private sector (GPG19), Media technology (GPG20), Gaming Technology (GPG21), Youth (GPG22), Community Leaders (GPG23), Families (GPG24) and Sports Arts Culture (GPG26).

The Malta Principles for Reintegrating Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) consists of 22 principles (Hedayah and IJ, 2016).¹⁵ The Malta Principles identify the different roles of a broad range of *cross disciplines in working together*, such as psychologists, social workers, religious scholars, law enforcement, family and community (GPG7), including victim voices (GPG12), formers (GPG13), and Charismatic members of the community (GPG14). Of much importance is the need for training multiple agencies to coordinate closely with reintegration officers (GPG11), training stakeholders not to undermine the reintegration process (GPG9), and conducting aftercare in close partnership with civil society agencies.

The Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism consists of 19 principles.¹⁶ These principles address the need for a multi-agency approach (GPG5), with a shared understanding (GPG6), cooperation (GPG7) and coordination

¹³ UNICRI, 2013, "Guidance on the Role of Religious Scholars and other Ideological Experts in Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs", United Nations Crime and Justice Research Institute, Madrid, October, http://www.unicri.it/topics/counter_terrorism/UNICRI_SPAIN_Religious_Scholars_in_Rehab.pdf.

¹⁴ GCTF, 2014, "Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism, Abu Dhabi, September, accessed 26 March 2018, https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/159880/14Sept19_GCTF+Abu+Dhabi+Memorandum.pdf.

¹⁵ Hedayah, 2016, "Malta Principles for Reintegrating Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs)", Malta, October, accessed 26 March 2018, <http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-26102016223519.pdf>.

¹⁶ GCTF, 2013, "Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism", Antalya (December 2012) and Ankara (March 2013), accessed 6 August 2018, https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/72352/13Sep19_Ankara+Memorandum.pdf.

(GPG8). Public-private partnerships are discussed in GPG 9-13. Socio-economic collaboration is discussed in GPG14-17 including women as stakeholders. Building Trust and Training is highlighted in GPG 18 and 19.

These principles and policies were designed based on existing practices within programmes, in order to help those setting up rehabilitation programmes learn from other programmes. According to General Douglas Stone, "Sri Lanka practises all these aspects listed in the (Rome) memorandum, and it was before the memorandum was put together" in 2011 (Stone 2013).¹⁷

Stakeholder Enlistment and Management

The success of any rehabilitation programme is in managing the programme to ensure that beneficiaries can be reintegrated safely into the community. This task requires multi-stakeholder and multi-agency engagement. The Sri Lanka rehabilitation programme enlisted and managed stakeholders by following a set of principles to minimise failure and enrich the programme.

Identifying suitable stakeholders

Careful selection of agencies and professions for the programme will help protect the beneficiaries, the programme, the organisation, and national interests.

Partners need to be identified based on the need for their knowledge and skills. The need is based on the gaps in expertise, and for input at the optimal time. It is important not to duplicate the role and work carried out by the stakeholders.

Optimising stakeholder input

It is important to minimise duplication of stakeholder input, evaluate if there is an overlap between different roles and consider if one agency can fulfil several roles. Next, gaps in the services need to be identified and enlisting the support of state or non-government actors, especially those that are most suitable to augment and improve the rehabilitation

¹⁷ Stone, D., 2013, "Rome Principles in Action", Hedayah Conference, Abu Dhabi, 3 June. Opening remarks by General Dr. Douglas Stone.

programme, should be considered. The government also needs to identify those stakeholders that can provide the best educational and vocational training for inmates, as well as staff, and can best engage with the beneficiaries. Finally, the timing of the engagement has to be determined since the intensity and frequency of engagement needs to be optimal.

Vetting stakeholders

Stakeholder agenda and goals should be aligned to the ethos of the facility because they need to work together as a team, towards agreed goals, and focus on completing the task undertaken. Stakeholders should not have competing interests or undermine the rehabilitation process. It is thus important to identify if the stakeholder has difficulty with working with the lead body in the rehabilitation programme or attempts to undermine other stakeholders. Stakeholders must possess an understanding of the contextual factors, values and work ethic, access training, and develop skills and knowledge in managing the particular terrorist population.

Managing conflicts

Stakeholders with competing agendas, difficulty working together, a need to drive the rehabilitation programme, or aspirations for power and recognition are likely to create conflicts. Therefore training of stakeholders to work together towards common goals in the interests of the beneficiaries and national security is essential. All state and non-state agencies identified as suitable for the rehabilitation programme following the vetting process need to be collaborative partners in the entire initiative.

Role of External Agencies

The Good Practise Guidelines for Effective Stakeholder Collaboration highlight the importance of a variety of external actors who can resource the programme. Sri Lanka's rehabilitation programme and other global rehabilitation programmes secure the support of external agencies. The skills and knowledge base within the external agencies are an invaluable resource when managed carefully as outlined in the previous section. The rehabilitation programme coordinators need to collaborate with these stakeholders to maximise their input.

Psychologists conduct programme design and evaluation. They can also train and supervise others in assessment and intervention, professional ethics, rapport building, and overcoming resistance. Psychologists can help address cognitive aspects such as ideological components, challenging cognitions, Socratic-method of therapy, assess justifications, challenge, and consolidate an alternative view.

Academics and Researchers function as external evaluators who can add to the cumulative knowledge on the efficacy of rehabilitation programmes. For example, Sri Lanka's rehabilitation programme was subjected to an external academic evaluation that produced strong indicators of a positive impact on participants' ideological convictions through the programme.¹⁸

Religious scholars can engage beneficiaries, provide correct theological knowledge, counter misconceptions, and possess skills in cognitive transformation.

Social workers focus on the wellbeing of the beneficiaries and their families, provide advocacy, ensure the families are supported while the beneficiaries are in rehabilitation and provide ongoing support upon reintegration.

Community aftercare experts help to identify early warning signs, continuously engage beneficiaries and their families, network with agencies, identify suitable specialised stakeholders, access the support of professionals and agencies, liaise with professionals and stakeholders, and monitor beneficiary and family progress.

Victims of terrorism provide an alternative perspective to the beneficiaries. This helps to reframe the moral justifications for violence, reassess suppression of norms, and creates an emotive impact on the beneficiaries when they are faced with the victims. The depersonalised distant and faceless victim is humanised, causing the perpetrator to experience dissonance and guilt, resulting in remorse and repentance, setting the beneficiaries on the path to engage in restorative justice.

Former terrorists' testimonies are powerful narratives that help dissuade individuals from joining terrorist groups and create a doubt in the

¹⁸ Kruglanski, A. W., Gelfand, M. J., Bélanger, J. J., Gunaratna, R., and Hettiarachchi, M., 2014, "Deradicalising the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)", in A. Silke (ed.), *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform*, London: Routledge, pp. 183-196.

mind of the active terrorist. Beneficiaries are able to relate to why the “former” left the group. Such testimonies are impactful and provide an alternative realistic narrative to what is preached by radicals.

Families provide an emotive perspective that reflects the emotional suffering, shame, guilt and sadness, which is likely to resonate with active terrorists, creating guilt and remorse.

Community provides support to families of incarcerated members, which exposes the families to the community perspective of the impact of terrorism. These perspectives shared by the families with their detained family members are likely to create a shift in perspective.

The narratives of victims, formers, families and the community, if they resonate with their audience, are likely to create a cognitive opening to disengage. For example, Women without Borders is a non-profit organisation (NPO) that utilises the narratives of former terrorists, their families, and victims of terrorism to dissuade individuals from joining terrorist groups and to facilitate individuals to leave the groups. These aspects can be included within rehabilitation programmes, with caution.¹⁹ When using external actors for therapeutic purposes, risks to the individuals and the organisation, and potential benefits to the beneficiaries must be considered. It is necessary to evaluate the anticipated change, protect both parties, time the intervention, and ensure the content is not reinforcing further radicalisation (of the perpetrator) or trauma (to the victim).

Conclusion

Terrorist groups depend on the community to sustain their membership and the support of several agencies to project themselves as a better alternative to legitimate governments. Governments thus need to actively engage government and civil society partners to reverse this process. While caution needs to be exercised when selecting stakeholders as partners, the value of government and non-government stakeholders have the capacity to enrich the rehabilitation, reintegration and aftercare programmes. Good practice guidelines emphasise the importance of multi-agency, multi-sectorial, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. These recommendations are made with emphasis on the need for trainers of

¹⁹ Edith Schlaffer, Non-Profit Organisation, www.women-without-borders.org.

stakeholders to work together with rehabilitation authorities, build trust between agencies and collaborate to achieve a common goal to ensure safer communities.

Rehabilitation programmes used in different countries are based on a variety of models.²⁰ The various programmes set their aims and objectives based on the capacity to manage this essential task. Some countries utilise a larger number of civil society organisations (NGOs, NPOs, academics, businesses, and media), with state agencies having minimal participation. Other countries utilise primarily state services. Still others use a blend of both government agencies and civil society agencies. However, the most effective programmes today are managed by the state and the state engages a range of civil society agencies after vetting them thoroughly. There is little benefit in programmes that are unsupported by the state, or have excessive civil society and non-government involvement.

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²⁰ D. Köhler, 2017, *Understanding Deradicalisation: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violence*, Contemporary Terrorism Studies Series, New York: Routledge, pp. 241-276.

The Role of Families and Civil Society in Detecting Radicalisation and Promoting Disengagement from Violent Extremism

Michele Grossman

The role of families and broader civil society networks and resources has increasingly been hailed as a cornerstone of efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE).¹ This approach is part of a broader conceptualisation of P/CVE as the strategic mobilisation of a range of “soft power” initiatives designed to pre-empt or complement more security-oriented counter-terrorism frameworks by policing and security agencies that aim to disrupt, interdict and destabilise terrorist networks and activities.

This in turn reflects the current emphasis in international CVE policy and thinking on not only of “whole of government” but also “whole of society” efforts,² both to identify and act on early warning signs of radicalisation to violence at the micro-level of families and social networks, and also to address pre-emptively some of the enabling conditions that erode social cohesion and community resilience, leaving people vulnerable to

* This paper was submitted on 4 July 2018.

¹ Global Counterterrorism Forum (2016) “The role of families in preventing and countering violent extremism: Strategic recommendations and programming options”, <https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Toolkit-documents/English-The-Role-of-Families-in-PCVE.pdf>; The Commonwealth (2017) Supporting Families in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), <http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/ComSec%20CVE%20and%20Families%20Presentation.pdf>.

² Rosand, E. (2017) “Fixing CVE in the United States requires more than just a name change”, Brookings Institution (“Order from Chaos” Blog), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/02/16/fixing-cve-in-the-united-states-requires-more-than-just-a-name-change/>; Levitt, M. (2017) *Recent Trends in Terrorism and Counterterrorism: National Practices in Countering Violent Extremism*, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/8-Statement-as-delivered-by-Mr.-Matthew-Levitt-The-Washington-Institute.pdf>.

terrorist appeal and recruitment strategies. It also reflects developing sophistication in how we understand the dynamic processes of radicalisation to violence, which have successfully resisted efforts to uniformly profile terrorist pathways, throwing into sharp relief the importance of tailored, localised programmes for early identification and support of those at risk of violent radicalisation.

Finally, the focus on the role of families and civil society reflects a heightened understanding of the limits that inhere in more security-oriented logics and strategies for dealing with terrorist threats. It is not possible, as various commentators have pointed out, to arrest or censor our way out of terrorism;³ a more holistic approach that builds resilience across the entire spectrum of radicalised violence, from prevention to disengagement from violent extremist ideologies, has the greatest chance of success.

The Youth Factor

Champions of P/CVE models that foreground the role of families and civil society in addressing the risks and impacts of violent extremism are right to highlight a number of contemporary issues and challenges in support of this approach.

One of these is the prominence of adolescent and young adult involvement in violent extremist groups, reinforcing the fact that violent extremist action has become a young person's game. This was a particularly pronounced feature of foreign fighters and supporters who, responding to the precipitous rise of Daesh in 2014, either travelled or tried to travel to Syria and Iraq to join the cause. The average age of Swedish foreign fighters, for example, was 26,⁴ while the average age range of foreign fighters from

³ Hewitt, S. (2015) "Canada should learn from UK: You can't arrest your way out of terrorism", *The Globe and Mail*, 29 January, updated 12 May 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-critical-counterterror-tool-of-skepticism/article22710643/>; Holt, T., Freilich, J. D., and Chermak, S. (2017) "Can taking down websites really stop terrorist and hate groups?", *The Conversation*, <http://theconversation.com/can-taking-down-websites-really-stop-terrorists-and-hate-groups-84023>.

⁴ Gustafsson, L. and Ranstorp, M. (2017) *Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: An analysis of open-source intelligence and statistical data*, Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies, Swedish Defence University, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1110355/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

across Western countries was 18-29.⁵ In Australia, the Director-General of Security testified in 2017 that approximately 40% of identified “persons of interest” in relation to Islamist-based terrorism in Australia were 15-24 years of age in 2015,⁶ a point graphically illustrated by the 2015 terrorist-inspired “Parramatta Shooting” of New South Wales Police civilian employee Curtis Cheng by 15-year-old Farhad Jabar.⁷

The nature of both youth-based support for violent action and youth-based capacity to undertake such action (coupled with the hypothesis that aging correlates with a decline in violent extremist involvement),⁸ has seen renewed emphasis on the role that families and peers can play in detecting early signs of radicalisation and on the importance of early intervention and diversion for young people who may be at risk. This has been accompanied by enhanced understanding of the life-stage vulnerabilities that young people in particular can experience, such as identity-negotiation, family relationships, experiences of discrimination and social exclusion, and precarious employment and study opportunities, combined with increasing exposure to digital networks and echo chambers that can enhance a sense of grievance and the need for remedial action.

Taken together, these issues suggest that P/CVE approaches are trending toward greater recognition of the inherently social nature of processes that support or enable radicalisation to violence. As a recent article by Day and Kleinmann (2017) notes, if radicalisation to violence is a social process, then so too is the process of preventing or countering that radicalisation, which needs to account more fully for the role of “affective bonds, social

⁵ Briggs, R. and Silverman, T. (2016) *Western Foreign Fighters: Innovations in responding to the threat*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ISDJ2784_Western_foreign_fighters_V7_WEB.pdf.

⁶ Testimony by Duncan Lewis to Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, Official Committee Hansard, Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee Estimates, 28 February 2017.

⁷ Ralston, N. (2015) “Parramatta shooting: Curtis Cheng was on his way home when shot dead”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/parramatta-shooting-curtis-cheng-was-on-his-way-home-when-shot-dead-20151003-gk0ibk.html>.

⁸ LaFree, G., Jensen, M. A., James, P. A., and Safer-Lichtenstein, A. (2018) “Correlates of violent political extremism in the United States”, *Criminology* 56(2): 233-268, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12169>.

practices and friendships” in either strengthening or weakening ties to violent extremist ideology and action.⁹

Assumptions About the Role of Families

Families and other civil society actors – such as the education, community service and health and wellbeing sectors – become especially critical in this context because they are seen as the people most likely to have day-to-day contact with young people and to notice small or incremental changes in behaviour, attitude or orientation that may signal heightened risks for young people’s wellbeing. This model has given rise to a plethora of initiatives – ranging from the United Kingdom’s (UK) legally mandated “Prevent Duty” for schools, higher education institutions, childcare providers, law enforcement and corrections officers and health practitioners¹⁰, to information and resilience-building initiatives¹¹ – that seek to educate and promote greater awareness about early signs of radicalisation to violence. However, there have been a range of unintended consequences resulting from some of these initiatives, particularly in response to the UK’s Prevent Duty, and it is timely now to ask whether we need to refine our understanding of the issues and challenges – and not merely the opportunities – that can arise when seeking to deploy family and civil society members in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Looking across a range of international efforts on the P/CVE front, three key underlying assumptions emerge in relation to engaging families and other civil society actors in C/PVE activities. These are:

First, that families and key civil society institutions play a vital role in influencing and shaping young people’s attitudes and responses to the world as they explore independence and autonomy, but where they may

⁹ Day, J. and Kleinmann, S. (2017) “Combatting the cult of IS: A social approach to countering violent extremism”, *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 15(3): 14-23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2017.1354458>.

¹⁰ HM Government (2015) *Prevent Duty Guidance*, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/978011133309/pdfs/ukdsiod_978011133309_en.pdf.

¹¹ A brief set of examples includes the UK NSPCC’s information website on “protecting children from radicalisation”, <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/protecting-children-from-radicalisation/>; France’s “Stop djihadisme” list of early warning signs, www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr; and Australia’s “Community Awareness Training” programme (<http://amf.net.au/entry/elearning>), based on The Radicalisation Indicators Model developed by Monash University and supported by the Australian Government.

also encounter harmful influences through both online and offline violent extremist rhetoric and propaganda. Families and civil society influencers can provide guidance, support and context for young people's questioning of and seeking in the world around them that is crucial in shaping and sustaining the values by which youth interpret and respond to broader social and cultural influences. In particular cultural contexts, mothers are able to draw on key cultural, religious and social narratives that enshrine the importance of women's guidance and wisdom on issues of how to behave and what values are better or worse to live by.

Second, that families and civil society actors are essential building blocks in the key task of fostering community resilience to violent extremism, especially in the very early stages of prevention and resistance to the appeal of violent extremist ideology and rhetoric.

Third, that both families and civil society actors are a front line of defence in relation to detecting early signs of radicalisation, especially amongst young people – children, brothers, sisters, other close relatives, friends, teachers, doctors; and that those closest to someone are often the first to see very early or subtle changes in behaviour, attitude, social networks or emotional responses.

However, there are significant challenges and blind-spots, especially in relation to the first and third assumptions, that have been evidenced empirically by a series of recent research studies. Few people are likely to argue against the centrality of family in shaping young people's values and general orientation toward the world and their place in it. However, this narrative of "family influence" does not sufficiently account for young people's desire to individuate, to engage in risk-taking behaviours and attitudes, and to seek to demarcate themselves as autonomous individuals, particularly in adolescence.

Difficulties in Interpreting Early Warning Signs

More to the point, it assumes that families will, fairly unerringly, be able to pick up the signs when a young person is diverging from the values and behaviours that have been normalised in specific family- or culturally-based contexts. However, this assumption is not well supported by empirical evidence for three reasons: first, because it assumes that families themselves are unified, consensus-based sources of "influences", "values" and

“behaviours”; second, because many of the behaviours that are seen as indicative of rejecting pro-social values can be misconstrued or actually read as *conforming to* rather than rejecting those values; and third, because the “early warning signs” of radicalisation are (like the symptoms of some medical conditions) frustratingly vague and diffuse.

For example, guidelines from both the UK’s National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and France’s “Stop Djihadisme” (SJ) CVE web resources (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/protecting-children-from-radicalisation/>; www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr) cite “warning signs” such as “isolating themselves from family and friends/sudden break with the family and long-standing friendships” (NSPCC/SJ); “changes in attitudes and behaviour towards others” (SJ); “unwillingness or inability to discuss their views” (NSPCC); “antisocial comments, rejection of authority, refusal to interact socially, signs of withdrawal and isolation/sudden disrespectful attitude towards others” (SJ/NSPCC); “increased secretiveness, especially around internet use” (NSPCC).

These are such broad “warning signs”, potentially indicative of so many different causes and challenges for young people undergoing developmental and life-stage transitions, as to be almost impossible to pinpoint in relation to specific risks for radicalisation to violence. Australia’s “Community Awareness Training” resource for promoting awareness of radicalisation to violence acknowledges this problem, taking a broader approach in its e-module and “cyber-parent” apps by noting that many of these early warning signs can also connote other kinds of adjustment, developmental or social difficulties across a broad spectrum of challenges leading to anti-social or maladaptive behaviours for young people.

However, many of these “early warning signs” can be – and are – read in varied and uneven ways by actual families and civil society actors on the ground, and their accounts of what proved to be, in retrospect, early warning signs for their young people’s radicalisation to violence can both overlap with and diverge from such checklists. For example, in recent research¹² with the families of young Australians who had become involved in either foreign violent extremist conflict or home-grown terrorist activities

¹² Gerrand, V. and Grossman, M. (2017) *Interviewing the families of young people who have joined or attempted to join violent conflict*. With Victorian Arabic Social Services. Melbourne: Research Institute on Social Cohesion, State of Victoria.

in Australia, the most common “push factors” identified by families were *anger* about social injustice; *black and white or obsessive thinking*; and *media targeting and stereotyping leading to feelings of isolation and discrimination*.¹³ Only the first factor tends to appear on “early warning” checklists for radicalisation, but the others were also seen as crucial signs by families who had experienced first-hand the shift toward violent extremism of their young people.

In addition, most families and civil society actors would not think that “anger about social injustice” – a feature shared by many people in many different societies – was a warning sign for radicalisation to violence; they would only become alarmed if there were other behavioural or attitudinal indicators that suggested that someone was moving toward support for violence as a solution to anger at injustice. This highlights the way in which such checklists isolate “symptoms” or “signs” of radicalisation to violence without sufficient attention to the importance of how a range of factors and influences must converge¹⁴ to support migration toward violent action.

Moreover, extended family members (in-laws, uncles) were identified in two cases as being the *agents* of their young people’s radicalisation to violence, rather than helping them desist from violent extremist pathways; similar findings have occurred in relation to the influence of siblings and other relatives on trajectories toward violent radicalisation in other studies around the world.¹⁵ As Simon Copeland has noted, “The focus on parent-child transmission [of beliefs and ideologies] often mitigates the importance of other familial relations.” He goes on to add that “families are often sites of ideological contestation” rather than the unified unit of values and norms that CVE theory currently posits them to be.¹⁶

Most compelling, however, was the evidence provided on how families actually “read” what they see when observing or picking up signs of change

¹³ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁴ Tahiri, H. and Grossman, M. (2013) *Community and Radicalisation: An examination of perceptions, ideas, beliefs and solutions throughout Australia*. Melbourne/Canberra: Victoria Police/ANZCTC.

¹⁵ See for example Harris-Hogan, S. (2014) “The importance of family: The key to understanding the evolution of jihadism in Australia”, *Security Challenges* 10(1): 31-49; Hafez, M. (2016) “The ties that bind; How terrorists exploit family bonds”, *CTC Sentinel* 9(2), <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-ties-that-bind-how-terrorists-exploit-family-bonds>.

¹⁶ Copeland, S. (2017) “Transmitting terrorism: A family affair?”, CREST Comment, 22 March, <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/comment/transmitting-terrorism-family-affair/>.

in their young people. In our study, a range of contextual explanations were used to ascribe changes in behaviour and attitude, none of which included the possibility of radicalising to violence: for example, in one case, an uptick in “jumpy” behaviour was ascribed to problems at work, not to planning for foreign travel. In many cases, family members said they had no idea at an early point that their young person was radicalising until intervention by police and security agencies. In some instances, family members suspected something was “not right”, but did not want to acknowledge the reality of what was occurring; others read the emergence of more religiously devout behaviours as a positive sign that a young person was maturing or coming out of a developmental or identity crisis. Most families did not become aware that their young family member had joined overseas conflict until after they had left Australia.

In fact, many families noted that there were no significant behavioural changes at all, catching families completely unaware until they were contacted by law enforcement or by the young person who had left the country. One male participant reported that the young family member who joined conflict appeared to be “*his normal self – he didn’t isolate anyone from his life – a normal guy doing normal things...*” A female participant noted that her husband “*looked normal – nothing out of the ordinary.*” And many participants focused on how difficult, ambiguous or open to interpretation some of the signs of change can be for young people, especially in relation to appearance, behaviour or orientation:

With me, I’d see him a lot, he’d talk about his work, what he was up to. He did used to party a lot, and I thought, “Good”, this is a good thing. He did start speaking to me about haaj and the mosque. I had a cousin who changed like this too and it was all fine. I thought he was giving up his bad boy ways and becoming a bit more devout. I thought he was just maturing, coming out of a phase. (Male participant)

Another participant, whose husband’s religious piety had dramatically increased, continued to support her husband going to the mosque because she felt it would help fix his attitude towards marriage. She failed to connect his behaviours to radicalisation to violence.

These accounts from the families of people who have demonstrably radicalised to violence call into question some of the current uncritical assumptions being made about the role of families in early detection of radicalisation to violence. The research evidence across many

studies supports the idea that those closest to someone are often the first to spot signs of change that may indicate the need for intervention, diversion or support, and this is supported by our research. It thus is not a question of *whether or not families* (or indeed other civil society actors) *see early changes or warning signs*, but of *how they interpret* such changes, and the opportunities they have to contextualise or explain such shifts well outside awareness of, concerns with or links to violent extremist orientation.

Moving Beyond Stereotypes – the Influence of Mothers

A second challenge to these assumptions converges on the role of mothers in influencing their children away from violent extremism. In our recent Australian study on the roles of women in both supporting and opposing violent extremism,¹⁷ the literature we reviewed suggests there is a strong international evidence base for identifying positive aspects of the role that mothers can play in P/CVE efforts.¹⁸ Indeed, the role of women as agents of prevention is seen as so important by some P/CVE practitioners that a specific counter-terrorism campaign, the “Syria Awareness Campaign”, was launched a few years ago in the UK, focussing on women as preventers of young people travelling to join Daesh or being radicalised.¹⁹

Schlaffer and Kropiunigg²⁰ also report on the crucial role mothers can play in countering violent extremism in their children. They discuss related research showing that mothers’ willingness to hinder their children’s involvement in violent extremism was matched only by their lack of confidence and skill in the area. A notable feature of their study, which involved more than 1,000 women in several different countries, is the issue

¹⁷ Grossman, M., Carland, S., Tahiri, H. and Zammit, A. (2017) *The roles of women in supporting and opposing violent extremism: Understanding gender and terrorism in contemporary Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government.

¹⁸ See for instance Briggs, R. and T. Silverman (2014) *Western foreign fighters: innovations in responding to the threat* (Research Report). London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue; Saltman, E. M. and R. Frenett (2016) “Female radicalisation to ISIS and the role of women in CVE” and Safi, M. (2016) “Afghan women and CVE: What are their roles, challenges and opportunities in CVE?”, in N. Chowdury Fink, S. Zeiger and R. Bhulai (eds.) *A man’s world? Exploring the roles of women in counter terrorism and violent extremism*. Abu Dhabi: Hedayah/Global Center on Cooperative Security.

¹⁹ Briggs and Silverman, op. cit.

²⁰ Schlaffer, E. and Kropiunigg, U. (2015) *Mothers Against Terror*. Vienna: Women without Borders.

of whom mothers of children involved in violent extremism feel they trust most when looking to source help and support for diverting their children from this path. Revealingly, 94% of women responded that other mothers were those they trusted most in this context. Fathers were next at 91%, followed by other relatives at 81%. In a crisis situation, the family circle is clearly seen as the first port of call and primary source of support, and women's first choice is other women whom they feel can identify with their situation and concerns.

Given the crucial family "insider" role that mothers play, coupled with their strong desire to prevent their children being involved in violent extremism, the question of whom mothers do and do not trust is especially relevant when planning and implementing policies and programmes and policies on this issue. If CVE programmes rely solely on government-led programmes, for example, there may be serious obstacles around trust, even for a group of women who are otherwise very willing to take up the services being offered. However, by the same token, if mothers are uncritically vaunted or idealised as the key to addressing early signs of radicalisation they may then, as a logical consequence of this, be blamed for failure to prevent their children from radicalising should this occur. Such finger-pointing will almost inevitably have a chilling effect on the willingness of other women to act, since they are unlikely to want to risk shame, censure or disapproval for their efforts if they are ultimately unsuccessful.

As a result, caution needs to be exercised when making assumptions about the role of mothers (and indeed of families more generally) in countering violent extremism. Families can and do have a powerful role to play in shaping their children's resilience and sense of social wellbeing, factors shown to be protective against the uptake of violent extremism.²¹ However, in relation to women, it is as important to move beyond the stereotype of the all-nurturing, all-influential and all-powerful mother as it is to move beyond that of the jihadi bride or fan girl when thinking about women's roles in violent extremist movements. All of these stereotypes, regardless of which end of the social spectrum they fall on, dismiss or downplay the complexity of women's influence and experience by either trivialising or romanticising their status and their impacts.

²¹ See Grossman, M., Ungar, M., Brisson, J., Gerrand, V., Hadfield, K. and Jefferies, P. (2017) *Understanding youth resilience to violent extremism: A standardised research measure*. Canberra: Australian Government.

In fact, our Australian study suggests that while many Australian mothers have become concerned about the potential radicalisation of children and youth since the emergence of Daesh, and the precipitous drop in the age of those participating both online and through foreign travel, they are still comparatively isolated, uninformed and lacking the social or technical resources with which to intervene with confidence and knowledge. There is urgent work to be done to skill up and better resource women in communities to be able to engage, in safe and meaningful ways, with the complex challenges and issues they face around countering violent extremism in families and in communities.

However, there is also an urgent need to recognise the important work that is already being done by many women, in many communities and in many different countries, in the CVE space. In Australia, our data suggest that much of this work is being done outside of the public gaze, whether through fear of community backlash, resistance to negativity, or simply based on personal or cultural styles and preferences. Many of our study participants felt that a key task in prevention terms is strengthening awareness and the voices of such women in ways that allow them to continue their efforts while minimising any existing or potential sense of embattlement. However, the tensions between public and private action in CVE contexts remains a vexed area for women in Australia, as does the issue of women's marginalisation by men and by government within some community settings. More needs to be done to explore, in close consultation with women community members and activists on the ground, how some of these tensions and barriers might be resolved.

Stigmatisation of CVE Efforts

And indeed, the problem is not limited to issues of gender. Many of the agencies and community groups that constitute strong entry-points for civil society activism on countering violent extremism – including networks focused on youth work, social work, community development, health and wellbeing and community education – are fearful of either being stigmatised or of losing existing clients and funding support if they are overtly identified as providing intervention and support services, as a recent study mapping the willingness and capacity of Australian ser-

vice providers to become active in this space suggests.²² Eliminating the stigma of CVE activities means tackling complex and difficult issues around uncertain or compromised trust flows, the integrity and viability of government-community partnerships to address violent extremism,²³ and the capacity to conduct safe, open and meaningful dialogue around the issues and how they can be addressed. These remain ongoing challenges not only in Australia but in many other national and regional settings. In particular, the issue of understanding and improving trust flows between government and communities is crucial. Lack of trust in institutions designed to keep us safe and well is an identifiable social harm²⁴ that creates risks and vulnerabilities for communities and for the institutions charged with community wellbeing. Trust is a hallmark of social resilience in times of disaster and crisis, including terrorism risks and events.²⁵ However, lack of trust and confidence between communities and law enforcement personnel and institutions persists and therefore impedes the resilience needed to develop meaningful, sustainable partnerships to identify and prevent violent extremism and other social harms from taking hold. While substantial research exists on trust and legitimacy gaps in how communities perceive police in CVE contexts,²⁶ for example, little attention has been given to the reverse question of the grounds and dynamics for mistrust by law enforcement when working with communities. Understanding the social ecology of trust as a process of interdependent dynamic flows between communities and law enforcement is a current knowledge gap that impedes innovation in developing CVE policies, tools and frameworks through civil society-government partnerships and cooperation.

²² Cherney, A., Sweid, R., Grossman, M., Derbas, A., Dunn, K., Jones, C., Hartley, J. and Barton, G. (2017). "Local service provision to counter violent extremism: perspectives, capabilities and challenges arising from an Australian service mapping project", *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 10(3):1-20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2017.1350735>.

²³ Ellis, B. H. and Abdi, S. (2017) "Building community resilience to violent extremism through genuine partnerships", *American Psychologist* 72(3): 289-300, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000065>.

²⁴ Pemberton, S.A. (2015) *Harmful societies: understanding social harm*. London: The Policy Press.

²⁵ Longstaff, P.H. and Yang, S.U. (2008) "Communication management and trust: their role in building resilience to 'surprises' such as natural disasters, pandemic flu, and terrorism", *Ecology and Society* 13(1): 3. <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol13/iss1/art3/>.

²⁶ Cherney, A. and Hartley, J. (2015) "Community engagement to tackle terrorism and violent extremism: challenges, tensions and pitfalls", *Policing and Society* 27(7): 750-763.

Dilemmas of Early Detection and Reporting for Families and Communities

A final challenge presented by Australian and UK research to the governing assumptions around family and civil society actor P/CVE engagement focuses on what people actually do in cases where they serve as “early detectors” of violent radicalisation for someone within their family or community circle. Two separate studies using the same research design and methods in Australia²⁷ and the UK²⁸ investigated the thresholds for community reporting to authorities by “intimates” such as family members, spouses and partners, or close friends in cases of suspected or known violent extremism. The findings from these studies showed just how far the empirical evidence can travel from the assumptions held by policy makers and system designers when it comes to human behaviour in P/CVE contexts. While the UK has a well established policy and programme architecture through its Prevent, Channel and Safeguarding initiatives, including the controversial Prevent Duty, Australia does not mandate reporting, nor does it have a clear set of mechanisms and guidelines for sharing concerns about someone at early potential risk of radicalised violence outside the National Security Hotline (mirrored in the UK by the Anti-Terrorism Hotline). While there is a well-developed Australian policy and practice framework for intervention, diversion and support for people at various stages of the radicalised violence spectrum, including disengagement programmes in several Australian states, these policies and mechanisms are not familiar to the majority of ordinary community members.

When we investigated reporting issues, concerns and behaviours amongst both community members and counter-terrorism practitioners in each country, we found that, unsurprisingly, reporting to authorities is a last resort. Almost all of the 99 respondents across both studies suggested that they would mobilise a range of other options, such as direct intervention, seeking support from other family members or friends, local

²⁷ Grossman, M. (2015) *Community Reporting Thresholds: sharing Information with Authorities Concerning Violent Extremist Activity and Involvement in Foreign Conflict*, Canberra: Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee.

²⁸ Thomas, P, Grossman, M., Miah, S. and Chistmann, K. (2017) *Community Reporting Thresholds: Sharing Information with Authorities Concerning Violent Extremist Activity and Involvement in Foreign Conflict – A UK Replication Study*. Lancaster, UK: Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (UK Economic and Social Research Council Award ES/N009614/1).

community or religious leaders, or local service providers before going to police. More surprising was the clear preference in both countries for face to face reporting that was confidential but not anonymous. This was associated with the desire for increased accountability, relatability, and a persistent lack of trust in online or phone-based reporting mechanisms, including the anti-terror hotlines in each country. Also concerning was the lack of knowledge and awareness of where to turn to for help, advice and support when trying to “read” or interpret behaviour or attitude changes that were causing concern. While people suggested they wanted to locate and utilise “known faces in known places” to help guide them in seeking information or confirmation about someone’s potential radicalisation to violence, there was little awareness of who those places or faces might be, and very little structural support outside law enforcement or government-sponsored agencies for providing such assistance.

Our research suggests that reporting is a process, rather than an event, in which people make a series of non-linear decisions and choices against the backdrop of often severely conflicting emotions, loyalties, anxieties and concerns. This returns us to the question of what it is that families and civil society actors actually *do* when they are confronted with suspicions or concerns about someone who may be radicalising to violence – rather than what we want or expect them to do. If we do not provide clear information and support pathways, mechanisms and opportunities for families and civil society actors, then we are asking them to respond in ways that have little grounding in reality, arguably create a series of risks for those who come forward, and provide little in the way of support and guidance for those who do. Family members in particular face significant obstacles in coming forward to authorities because they do not want to cause further trouble for a loved one, or do not want to accept that their concerns are grounded in fact. The result is often delayed reporting, beyond the point at which early intervention or diversion would be an option. This damages not only efforts to counter or prevent terrorism and its impacts, but also family and civil society willingness to come forward in future because of the trauma they experience when things have reached crisis point for someone they know.

Improving the Environment for Family and Civil Society Involvement

So, what do these challenges to some of the assumptions we make about the role of families and civil society actors suggest as a way forward?

First, they suggest that our efforts to engage families and civil society actors must be grounded in empirically based *evidence from families and civil society participants* themselves. The human terrain of CVE is more complex, and more conflicted, than many current engagement models would suggest. They do not take sufficient account of the stigma, sense of uneasiness or discomfort, anxiety and lack of confidence that many families and civil society actors experience when thinking about how they might become involved in helping prevent or counter violent extremism.

Second, and following on from this, we have yet to overcome the social stigmas attached to confronting radicalisation to violence at family and community level. There remains little prospect of doing so without creative solutions for making spaces in which *meaningful and open dialogue* on the risks and impacts of violent extremism can occur. Currently, families and many civil society actors are being asked to assume a series of social and sometimes material risks themselves in order to prevent risks to others or to society at large. This calculus needs to shift if we are to make headway in meaningful family and civil society engagement.

Third, there is very little genuine engagement of families and civil society actors at the *disengagement and desistance end* of the violent extremism spectrum. Involving families and civil society has been conceptualised internationally as almost entirely in terms of prevention and early intervention. By contrast, disengagement and desistance has become institutionalised by law enforcement and clinical practitioners, at least in Australia, although in other countries, such as Singapore, there is far greater emphasis on mobilising community-based resources to facilitate successful reintegration of former extremists. To date, this has meant that former violent extremists are largely denied the very forms of support and social engagement that could help re-build their sense of social connection, and that families and communities in turn have been left without the resources to understand, cope with, support and defend reintegration processes.

This final point speaks to the importance not only of building resilience in families and communities to help prevent violent extremism – which

is indeed a “whole of community” undertaking – but also of *re-building resilience* for violent extremists, their families and their communities, all of whom need guidance and understanding throughout the process. As we enter a new phase of developing policies and models for dealing with returned foreign fighters and their families from conflict zones at unprecedented levels, involving families and civil society actors in meaningful and effective disengagement and reintegration processes, as well as prevention and intervention efforts, is the next vital frontier. Our success in this, and in engaging families and civil society more generally on P/CVE matters, will depend on how well we listen to what they have to say, and how well we validate and support their needs and capacities in response.

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Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: The Singapore Approach

Sabariah Hussin

Background

Although the Daesh terrorist group has been severely defeated in Iraq and Syria, its affiliates have made inroads in Southeast Asia where over 60 groups¹ have pledged their loyalty to Daesh leader Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi and are planning to set up an “East Asia wilayat”. The region has seen a rise in the number of terrorist attacks that included a spate of suicide bombings in the Indonesian city of Surabaya in May 2018, and the five-month-long armed occupation of Marawi, a city in the southern Philippines in 2017². With the loss of Daesh territories in the Levant, some of the 1,000 battle-hardened and ideologically-committed Daesh foreign fighters who went to Iraq and Syria have returned along with militants of other nationalities, further raising the threat level for all countries in Southeast Asia. To address the continuing terrorist threat from Daesh and also Al Qaeda (AQ), which remains active and committed to global jihad, Singapore has adopted a raft of kinetic and non-kinetic measures, ranging from pre-emptive arrests and detention to protective security and counter-violent extremism (CVE) programmes. This article focuses on Singapore’s CVE

* This paper was submitted on 6 June 2018.

¹ Gunaratna, R. (2015). “The Rise of Islamic State: Terrorism’s New Face in Asia”. In: Wilhelm Hofmeister et al., ed., *From The Desert To World Cities*, 1st ed. Singapore: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, pp.9-19.

² Mokhtar, F. (2018). *Looking Ahead to 2018: Even as IS weakens, evolving terror threat looms for S’pore*. [online] TODAYonline. Available at: <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/looking-ahead-2018-even-isis-weakens-evolving-terror-threat-looms-spore>, accessed 24 September 2018.

approach and its emphasis on counter-ideology, community engagement and the active promotion of racial and religious harmony.

The Present Terror Threat Situation

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)'s terrorism threat assessment report released in June 2017, the terror threat level in Singapore was at its highest level in recent years³. According to government figures, between 2007 and 2014, six restriction and five detention orders under the Internal Security Act were issued. But since 2015, seven restriction and 12 detention orders have been handed out. Last year, authorities apprehended the first woman believed to have been radicalised – a 22-year-old pre-school assistant who wanted to be a martyr's widow – as well as a 34-year-old managing director of a logistics firm who tried to join Daesh twice⁴.

The most recent case involved a 33-year-old engineer who was detained in August 2018 after he was radicalised by Daesh propaganda. According to security officials, he was attracted to the teachings of radical ideologues such as Anwar al-Awlaki and "grew to believe that the use of violence in the name of religion was justified"⁵. By late 2016, he was convinced he should fight and die as a martyr for Daesh in the terror group's self-proclaimed caliphate in the Middle East.

The radicalisation of such individuals and the circumstances that led to their support for Daesh and, in some cases, plans to travel to Syria, reveals three broad ways in which they were radicalised: social media posts and online material; radical preachers – online and over the radio; and "influencers" or radicalised persons who win over others to their point of view⁶.

³ Koutsoukis, J. (2018). *Terms of Service Violation*. [online] Bloomberg.com. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-30/terrorism-threat-highest-since-9-11-singapore-minister-warns>, accessed 24 September 2018.

⁴ Mokhtar, F. (2018). *Looking Ahead to 2018: Even as IS weakens, evolving terror threat looms for S'pore*. [online] TODAYonline. Available at: <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/looking-ahead-2018-even-isis-weakens-evolving-terror-threat-looms-spore>, accessed 24 September 2018.

⁵ Yuen-C, T. (2018). *Radicalised Singaporean engineer detained under Internal Security Act*. [online] *The Straits Times*. Available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/radicalised-singaporean-engineer-detained-under-internal-security-act>, accessed 24 September 2018.

⁶ Hussain, Z. (2018). *How 15 Singaporeans were radicalised by ISIS ideology*. [online] *The Straits Times*. Available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/radicalised-in-singapore>, accessed 24 September 2018.

To prevent radicalisation and counter the spread of extremist ideas, Singapore has developed a wide range of policies and programmes that began in 2002 after the 9/11 terror attacks in the US by AQ and the discovery of a local branch of the regional terrorist organisation and AQ affiliate – the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) – in Singapore in December 2001. JI operatives had planned to execute multiple bombing operations against Western targets in Singapore before they were apprehended. CVE initiatives were intensified as the terror threat persisted in and outside the region, especially after the establishment of Daesh in Iraq and Syria in 2014 and the aggressive exploitation of social media to disseminate more false and distorted Islamic doctrines.

Singapore's CVE Strategy

Singapore's CVE strategy involves strengthening social resilience to prevent racial and religious tension and conflict. This is necessary firstly because Singapore is one of the most religiously diverse country in the world.⁷ Its 5.6-million population comprises Buddhists (33.9%), Christians (18.1%), Muslims (14.3%), Taoists (11.3%), Hindus (5.2%) and others (0.7%); some 16.4% are categorised as atheists. The country is also ethnically diverse, comprising Chinese (74.3%), Malays (13.4%), Indians (9.0%) and Others (3.2%)⁸. Singapore has also experienced serious outbreaks of communal violence in the past viz. the Maria Hertogh riots in 1950 and the racial clashes in 1964 and 1969. Although there have been no similar communal outbreaks since, the potential for conflict in a multi-racial and multi-religious country is ever present. The growing religious fervour and assertiveness of religious groups since the 1980s have sometimes raised tensions between different religious communities.

Secondly, terrorist groups are known to have deliberately mounted terrorist attacks to provoke strong anti-Muslim backlash and heighten Islamophobia. This is evident from Daesh attacks in several European cities such as London, Paris, Brussels, Nice, Berlin and elsewhere. In the

⁷ "Global Religious Diversity". 2014. *Pew Research Center*. <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/04/04/global-religious-diversity/>.

⁸ Singapore in Figures 2018. (2018). [online] Singapore: Department of Statistics Singapore, p.6. Available at: <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/-/media/files/publications/reference/sif2018.pdf>, accessed 24 September 2018.

Berlin Christmas market attack in December 2016 for instance, the attack was purposely timed to coincide with Christmas festivities. The series of terrorist attacks in Western countries have led to a significant rise in hate crimes against Muslims as well as bolstered the electoral fortunes of right-wing and far-right political parties and politicians with strong anti-Islamist and anti-Muslim immigration agendas.

To prevent terrorists from sowing discord between Muslims and non-Muslims and undermining racial and religious harmony, Singapore has developed a comprehensive set of CVE measures involving counter-ideology, terrorist rehabilitation and re-integration, and community engagement. These measures are to ensure that in the event of a terrorist attack in Singapore, the different racial and religious communities would remain calm and united and not react emotionally and launch reprisals. As stated in a government White Paper issued in 2003: "Terrorism in the name of religion will cause enormous harm to inter-religious and inter-racial ties. Unlike material loss, such damage to Singapore's social fabric will take many years to heal."⁹

Counter Ideology

Countering terrorist ideology is a critical plank of Singapore's CVE strategy because of the systematic dissemination of erroneous, distorted and extremist teachings by terrorist ideologues and leaders. Terrorist propaganda claimed that it is obligatory for Muslims to wage armed *jihād* against Christians and Jews and migrate (*hijrah*) to theatres of conflict to establish or defend an Islamic state. They also claim that suicide attacks are permissible and that it is legitimate to excommunicate (*takfir*) and kill Muslims who do not share their beliefs and opposed them. Other false and misleading interpretations of Islamic texts and doctrines include the permissibility of killing civilians and non-combatants, torturing prisoners, forcing conversions, mutilating corpses and practising slavery.

Singapore has invested considerable efforts at exposing and refuting such distorted teachings and preventing them from taking root in Singapore. This is done at three levels – individuals arrested for

⁹ Ministry of Home Affairs (2003). *White Paper - The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and The Threat of Terrorism*. [online] Singapore: Ministry of Home Affairs, p.24. Available at: <https://www.mha.gov.sg/docs/default-source/others/english.pdf>, accessed 24 September 2018.

terrorism-related activities, their families and the community. At the forefront of these efforts are the Muslim scholars and community leaders working together with the government. A volunteer group of Muslim clerics came forward to form the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) in 2002 to provide religious counselling to terrorist detainees and their families, offering expert advice on the correct interpretations of Islamic texts and practice, and dispelling the extremist doctrines they have been indoctrinated with. Together with psychologists and counsellors, the RRG has successfully rehabilitated many detainees who have been progressively released since the early 2000s¹⁰.

At the community level, the Singapore Islamic Religious Council or MUIS, a statutory board which administers matters relating to Muslims in Singapore, has taken several measures to inoculate the larger community from extremist ideologies. MUIS, together with the Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (Pergas), a well-respected and premier Muslim NGO, have developed a scheme called the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS)¹¹ to ensure that religious teachers have the necessary qualifications and training and that the community has a credible source of reference to turn to. Launched in 2005, the registration of Muslim religious teachers under ARS was made mandatory in 2017. Religious teachers interviewed commented that the move “will ensure that religious teachings imparted will not divide society or lead to extremist ideologies”¹².

MUIS has also produced texts for Friday sermons that remind mosque congregations of the dangers of religious extremism and the importance of practising religious tolerance and moderation and ensuring peace and harmony in Singapore. These sermons also refute terrorists’ violent propaganda and misinterpretations and emphasize the importance of reading Islamic texts contextually.

MUIS outreach efforts include the Asatizah Youth Network (AYN) where religious teachers offer counselling and address queries on

¹⁰ Religious Rehabilitation Group. (2018). *RRG*. [online] Available at: <https://www.rrg.sg/about-rrg/>, accessed 24 September 2018.

¹¹ Muis.gov.sg. (2018). *Muis: Asatizah Recognition Scheme*. [online] Available at: <https://www.muis.gov.sg/ARS-and-IECP/About/About-ARS-IECP/More-info-on-ARS>, accessed 24 September 2018.

¹² MCI REACH. (2018). *Support to Expand Asatizah Recognition Scheme*. [online] Available at: <https://www.reach.gov.sg/participate/discussion-forum/2016/08/21/support-to-expand-asatizah-recognition-scheme>, accessed 24 September 2018.

terrorism-related issues.¹³ In a media statement issued in May 2018, MUIS announced that “Drop-in Sessions” are available at a designated mosque “to counsel and address queries about exclusivism and armed conflict”. It added that trained *asatizah* will enhance their online presence to offer support and guidance to youth on social media. MUIS is also promoting a Singaporean Muslim identity to build a Singapore Muslim Community of Excellence. It has identified “ten desired attributes focusing on knowledge, principle-centredness, progressiveness and inclusiveness”¹⁴.

In respect of outreach programmes, the RRG has also broadened its scope beyond counselling detainees and their families to build social resilience. It publishes counter-ideology materials and conduct public education programmes for Muslims and non-Muslims. It also runs a website that carries articles debunking extremist teachings, and a Resource and Counselling Centre for members of the public seeking clarifications on extremist ideology. Religious scholars working in the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) also contribute to the community-wide counter-ideology effort by publishing articles countering terrorist propaganda that promote a violent agenda and an intolerant and destructive worldview. Articles promoting tolerance, religious moderation, inclusivity and pluralism are regularly published in the mass media. The scholars also engage the community through talks and school visits.

Related to the counter-ideology work for detainees and their families are the social re-integration efforts of the community to help former detainees reintegrate into mainstream society. This is an important component of the counter-terrorism effort to secure peace and stability in the longer term. A group of community organisations, also known as the Inter-Agency Aftercare Group (ACG), focuses on ensuring the socio-economic well-being of detainees and their families. It is a volunteer group set up in January 2002 by leaders from several community organisations, viz. Taman Bacaan (Singapore Malay Youth Library Association), Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP), Yayasan MENDAKI (Council for the development of the Malay/Muslim), Khadijah Mosque and En-Naeem Mosque. They

¹³ MUIS, “Media Statement on detention order announced by MHA under ISA,” <https://www.muis.gov.sg/Media/Media-Releases/11-May-18-Media-Statement--Detention-Order-Announced-by-MHA>, no. 4.

¹⁴ Muis.gov.sg. (2006). *Risalah for Building a Singapore Muslim Community of Excellence*. [online] Available at: <https://www.muis.gov.sg/-/media/Files/OOM/Resources/Risalah-eng-Ir.pdf> p. viii, accessed 24 September 2018.

provide a range of family support services that include financial help and counselling.¹⁵ In addition to assigning a case worker to each family to help them obtain the relevant aid from existing social service programmes, efforts are also undertaken to help the families enhance their academic and vocational skills to improve their employment prospects. All these efforts are to ensure that the families remain functional and not vulnerable to the influence of extremist and deviant teachings. It is worth noting that the ACG also reaches out to non-Muslim organisations for support, and many have responded generously. For example, the Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society, a non-profit welfare group, provided trained counsellors to the detainees' families on a pro bono basis.

Community Engagement

Besides countering extremist ideology and implementing social reintegration efforts, another major initiative in the CVE effort is community engagement. Terrorists seek to sow discord between the different racial and religious communities by disseminating violent and divisive ideologies and perpetrating terrorist attacks. To preserve and strengthen communal harmony and ensure that Singapore's social fabric can withstand such challenges, the government embarked on a Community Engagement Programme (CEP) in 2006 to build up social resilience. This came in the wake of the London bombings in July 2005 which reinforced the threat of home-grown terrorism and the hate crimes against Muslims that followed¹⁶. (Three of the four terrorists involved in the bombings were second-generation immigrants who were born and bred in the UK.)

The 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"¹⁷. It aims to ensure that society remains strong and united

¹⁵ Teo Chee Hean, "Strengthening Social Resilience", in *Inter-Agency Aftercare Group*, 2016, p. 6.

¹⁶ Latif, A. (2011). *Hearts of Resilience: Singapore's Community Engagement Programme*. 1st ed. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 2.

¹⁷ Kam, S. (2018). "Singapore's Approach to Counter Terrorism and Extremism". In: Beatrice Gorawantschy et al., ed., *Countering Daesh Extremism*, 1st ed. Singapore: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, p. 148.

after a terrorist incident so that Singapore can recover quickly and people can continue with their daily lives in peace and harmony¹⁸.

The CEP involves five clusters comprising (a) religious groups and ethnic and welfare organisations, (b) educational institutions, (c) media and the arts, (d) businesses and trade unions, and (e) grassroots organisations. Various organisations in each of these clusters would “work among themselves and with those in other clusters to strengthen the networks and bonds within and between their respective communities”¹⁹.

Some components of these clusters were formed in the wake of the 9/11 and JI arrests. In 2002, the Inter-Racial Confidence Circle (IRCC) (later renamed Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle) was formed in each of the country’s constituencies as a platform to promote inter-faith dialogue and confidence-building among the different communities. A National Steering Committee was also established to provide broad guidance for IRCCs to deepen inter-racial and inter-religious rapport within communities through activities such as heritage trails, interfaith talks and various other celebrations. The IRCCs are also trained to respond appropriately to racial and religious tensions during crises. They will also assist in the recovery process following a calamity, to help their communities and the nation return to a state of normalcy²⁰.

Besides the IRCCs, several other organisations are also involved in the promotion of inter-faith relations. The Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO), founded in 1949 to inculcate a spirit of friendship and cooperation among the leaders and followers of different religions²¹, conducts inter-faith prayers and blessings at both private and public events such as in times of national mourning. The IRO also organises exhibitions and seminars such as “Promoting Peace through Faith”. Each event is organised by members of a different faith group. It also publishes several books and pamphlets such as *Religions in Singapore* and *Religious Customs and Practices in*

¹⁸ Latif, A. (2011). *Hearts of Resilience: Singapore’s Community Engagement Programme*. 1st ed. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹ Latif, A. (2011). *Hearts of Resilience: Singapore’s Community Engagement Programme*. 1st ed. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 24.

²⁰ Chua, G. (2009). *Singapore’s Approach to Counterterrorism – Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. [online] Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. Available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/singapores-approach-to-counterterrorism/>, accessed 24 September 2018.

²¹ *Inter-Faith* Vol. 1, No.1, March 2014, MCI (P) 163/10/2013, an official publication of the Inter-Religious Organisation, Singapore.

Singapore, and works with the government and private institutions on capacity-building efforts and other inter-religious-related issues.

The Harmony Centre is another initiative to promote greater understanding between religious communities. Established by MUIS at the An-Nahdhah mosque in 2006, the Harmony Centre encourages inter-faith dialogue and promotes greater understanding of Islam. It had received nearly 40,000 visitors between 2006 and 2013, including many foreigners²².

In 2007, Onepeople.sg was founded as a national body²³ for promoting greater inter-racial and inter-religious understanding in Singapore. It provides community engagement programmes that build capacity among educators, and community, religious and grassroots leaders, and members who have a significant influence on community relations. These programmes are tailored towards improving the understanding of issues, trends and developments concerning community integration, religious diversity, conflict resolution, ground-sensing and new media engagement to enhance ground efforts. It also trains and develops youth to ensure that the next generation takes ownership of the responsibility of maintaining Singapore's racial and religious harmony²⁴.

Another major initiative to strengthen Singapore's community response to counter the terror threat is the SGSecure²⁵ national movement. Launched in 2016, SGSecure aims to sensitise, train and mobilise Singapore's community to play a part to prevent and deal with a terrorist attack by being vigilant ("community vigilance"), staying united ("community cohesion") and staying strong ("community resilience"). Part of SGSecure's counter-terrorism effort is the establishment of the Harmony in Diversity Gallery (HDG) developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs in collaboration with community partners and organisations. The Gallery features common values and practices among religious groups. It "aims to promote an appreciation of Singapore's rich religious diversity" and "highlights the importance of seeking common ground to build mutual respect and

²² Mohamad Salleh, N. (2014). *Muis' Harmony Centre drawing interest from abroad*. [online] AsiaOne. Available at: <http://www.asiaone.com/singapore/muis-harmony-centre-drawing-interest-abroad>, accessed 24 September 2018.

²³ "About - Onepeople.Sg". 2007. *Onepeople.Sg*, <http://www.onepeople.sg/about/>.

²⁴ "About - Onepeople.Sg". 2007. *Onepeople.Sg*, <http://www.onepeople.sg/about/>.

²⁵ Sgsecure.sg. (n.d.). *SGSecure*. [online] Available at: <https://www.sgsecure.sg/>, accessed 24 September 2018.

appreciation for the beliefs of others, and the need to protect and expand our common spaces”²⁶.

Legal Instruments

In addition to counter-ideology and community engagement efforts to strengthen communal harmony, Singapore has relied on legislation to prevent disruptions to harmonious relations between the different races and religions. Well before the current religious-based terrorism emerged, Singapore already had in place a number of laws to prevent acts that could lead to racial and religious conflict. These include the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA), the Sedition Act, the Penal Code and the Undesirable Publications Act.

Enacted in 1990, the MRHA²⁷ provides for the maintenance of religious harmony and the establishment of a Presidential Council for Religious Harmony. The Act allows the government to, *inter alia*, issue a restraining order against any religious leader who commits or attempts to commit acts which cause “feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will or hostility between different religious groups”. The person can be restrained from addressing orally or in writing any congregation or group of worshippers, or publishing any publication, or holding office in an editorial board of a religious group without prior government approval²⁸.

The MRHA was enacted after the issue of a White Paper²⁹ which details instances of religious activism and disputes during the 1980s that led to inter-religious tensions. These include complaints of aggressive and insensitive proselytization, disputes over the funeral of Muslim converts, intra-religious tensions among Hindu and Christian communities, mixing of religion and politics, and exploitation of religion for political ends. So far, no restraining orders have been issued but a number of religious leaders

²⁶ Harmonyindiversitygallery.sg. (n.d.). *Harmony in Diversity Gallery*. [online] Available at: <https://www.harmonyindiversitygallery.sg/>, accessed 24 September 2018.

²⁷ Sso.agc.gov.sg. (2018). *Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act - Singapore Statutes Online*. [online] Available at: <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/MRHA1990#legis>, accessed 17 August 2018.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ White Paper - Maintenance of Religious Harmony. (1989). [online] Singapore: Ministry of Home Affairs. Available at: <https://thir.st/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MRHA-white-paper.pdf>, accessed 24 September 2018.

and activists have been called up and warned for denigrating other faiths or mixing religion and politics.

The Sedition Act provides for the prosecution of any person whose words or actions “promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races or classes of the population.”³⁰ Similarly, the Penal Code contains several sections which make it an offence to (a) wound the religious or racial feelings of any person; (b) promote enmity between different groups on grounds of religion or race; and (c) commit acts prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different religious or racial groups. Several offenders have been prosecuted and convicted for denigrating other religions in recent years

The Undesirable Publications Act³¹ aims to prevent the importation, distribution or reproduction of publications that *inter alia* “cause feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will or hostility between different racial or religious groups”. In 2016, *Al Fatihin*, a Bahasa Indonesia language newspaper linked to Daesh, was gazetted as a prohibited publication under the Act. In 2017, the government banned nine publications which promote extremist and exclusivist views and denigrated other religions.

The Government has also relied on other legislation to bar foreign religious preachers from entering Singapore or from giving lectures if they are known to have expressed views that are divisive and promote disharmony between the religious communities. All the above-mentioned statutes have empowered the Government to take prompt and effective action against persons whose words or actions threaten to disrupt religious or racial harmony in Singapore.

Conclusion

Given the current terrorism landscape in Southeast Asia and continuing spread of terrorist propaganda online, efforts to counter terrorist ideology and strengthen community engagement will need to be stepped up. Vulnerable individuals continue to be misled by false and distorted interpretations of Islam on social media platforms. Rehabilitating such

³⁰ Sso.agc.gov.sg. (2018). *Sedition Act - Singapore Statutes Online*. [online] Available at: <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/SA1948?Provides=legis#legis>, accessed 17 August 2018.

³¹ Sso.agc.gov.sg. (2018). *Undesirable Publications Act - Singapore Statutes Online*. [online] Available at: <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/UPA1967>, accessed 17 August 2018.

self-radicalised individuals is also proving to be more challenging today compared to those arrested in the early 2000s. These self-radicalised individuals “have more complex social and psychological issues”.³² They absorb and hold on to what they see and read online due to their limited understanding of Islam. The radicalised individuals are also getting younger and therefore more vulnerable to manipulation.

On what more needs to be done, the Minister for Home Affairs has suggested the need to encourage greater integration among citizens, and also to get young people to listen to accredited preachers to further their understanding of Islam. In respect of the latter, an RRG Awareness Programme for Youth was launched in March 2018 to help youth understand the dangers of extremist thoughts and ideology³³. The RRG Vice-Chairman suggested that the approach to teaching Islam has to change – heads of families need to teach their children “the importance of practising Islam in the context we are living today”³⁴. Indeed, family members and relatives play an important role in providing guidance and in preventing their loved ones from being radicalised; they should also be on the lookout for vulnerable family members and refer them to the relevant authorities if they display signs of radicalisation. At the national level, the government and communities must persist in their collaborative efforts to strengthen inter-racial and inter-religious harmony and social resilience.

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³² *The Straits Times*, “Self-radicalised people harder to rehabilitate: Shanmugam,” 14 March 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/self-radicalised-people-harder-to-rehabilitate-shanmugam>.

³³ *The Straits Times*, 14 March 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/self-radicalised-people-harder-to-rehabilitate-shanmugam>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Combating Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Asia and Europe

From Cooperation to Collaboration

“The Philippines after Marawi” - *Ma. Concepcion B. Clamor*

“Indonesia: The Emerging Daesh-Centric Threat Landscape” - *Sulastiana*

“Impact of the Rohingya Crisis on the Threat Landscape at the Myanmar-Bangladesh border” - *Iftekhharul Bashir*

“The Terrorist Threat in Europe” - *Lorenzo Vidino and Francesco Marone*

“Patterns of Lone Attackers” - *Jelle van Buuren*

“The Use of Narratives by Terrorists and How to Prevent Their Resonance: Hedging, Legacy-Nostalgia and Its Counterstrategy Implications” - *Haroro Ingram*

“The Fight against Jihadist Terrorism: Safeguarding Fundamental Freedoms and Human Rights” - *Eliane Etmüller*

“The Role of Universities and Schools in Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism: Malaysian Experience” - *Ahmad El-Muhammady*

“ASEAN’s Greatest Counter-Terrorism Challenge: The Shift from “Need to Know” to Smart to Share” - *Rohan Gunaratna*

“Securing Borders Collaboratively to Prevent the Movement of Foreign of Terrorist Fighters” - *Simon Deignan and Thomas Wuchte*

“Multi-stakeholder Engagement in Rehabilitation” - *Malkanthi Hettiarachchi*

“The Role of Families and Civil Society in Detecting Radicalisation and Promoting Disengagement from Violent Extremism” - *Michelle Grossman*

“Singapore’s Approach to Countering Violent Extremism”
- *Sabariah Binte Mohamed Hussin*

