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About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The *CTC Sentinel* harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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The Paris Attack: A Campaign and its Goals

By Brian Dodwell



REGARDLESS OF HOW the debate over the degree to which the perpetrators were directed or inspired shakes out, the tragic attack against *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris on January 7 was not an isolated incident. This event is best understood as being part of a loosely coordinated jihadist campaign against media and journalistic entities in response to the release of cartoons or other material deemed offensive to Muslims.

Previous attacks include the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004, a Danish filmmaker whose 10-minute film about violence against Muslim women earlier that year angered many Muslims. In addition, Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard has survived multiple murder attempts after publishing a controversial 2005 cartoon, and Lars Vilks, a Swedish cartoonist, was the target of numerous plots, including one hatched by three U.S. citizens. Most

similar in aims to the *Charlie Hebdo* attack was the plot against *Jyllands-Posten*, the same Danish paper where Westergaard worked. Ilyas Kashmiri, the al-Qa`ida operative who was directing the plot, wanted the attackers to infiltrate the office, assassinate employees, decapitate them, and then throw their heads out the window.¹

Jihadis have purposefully and repeatedly targeted such provocateurs due to the clear, and in some respects unique, benefits and effects achieved by striking such targets. This article will assess the appeal of this target set to jihadis from a strategic perspective. In doing so, it focuses beyond the obvious emotions the cartoons generated due to their perceived offensive and blasphemous content.

¹ Carrie Johnson, "U.S. citizen David Coleman Headley admits role in Mumbai attacks," *The Washington Post*, March 19, 2010.

Rather, it examines the strategic goals of jihadis to inspire sympathizers to commit violence, to exacerbate social divisions, and to provoke a heavy-handed and counterproductive response.

An Attractive Target

On the one hand, the goals of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack were no different than those of any terrorist attack committed against an adversary's homeland (e.g. to project strength and capability, generate fear and unrest in the broader population, influence government policy and action, and enhance recruitment). But on the other, the selection of this specific target set significantly magnifies these desired effects due to the nature of the target and the degree to which it animates the emotions of both the jihadis' constituency base (due to the perceived attack on Islam) and the broader population of the target country (due to the perceived attack on freedom of speech).

Undeterred by recent failed plots, and presumably animated by the continuing attractiveness of these targets (and the benefits even failed attacks offer), jihadi organizations maintained their commitment to advocating for continued attempts. *Inspire*, the al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) English language magazine, has addressed this topic repeatedly since its inception, devoting eight pages in the inaugural issue in 2010 to "The Cartoon Crusade."² In the context of the Paris attack, the March 2013 edition of *Inspire* featured Westergaard, Vilks, two *Jyllands-Posten* editors, the editor of *Charlie Hebdo*, Stéphane Charbonnier, and six other cartoonists, authors, activists, and provocateurs as prime targets on a "wanted list...for crimes against Islam."³ Although there is some skepticism about the level of AQAP's direct involvement in the Paris attack—despite that group's January 14 claim of responsibility—it appears that at a minimum AQAP played a significant inspirational role.⁴

² *Inspire*, Issue 1, Summer 2010, pp. 21-28.

³ *Inspire*, Issue 10, Spring 2013, pp. 14-15.

⁴ It is unclear whether the Paris plot was hatched prior to the particular issue of *Inspire* cited here, but as described above, AQAP has been advocating for attacks against these targets for years, and travel by one of the Kouachi brothers to AQAP territory clearly points to AQAP's inspirational role, at a bare minimum.

One of the core reasons why jihadis are motivated to attack the producers and distributors of these materials is genuine outrage over their perceived offensive and blasphemous nature. This is likely the most important proximate motivator for the actual attackers themselves, who, goaded by urging from jihadi propagandists, are looking for retribution for what they believe to be direct attacks against Islam and its most sacred principles. As Cherif Kouachi stated in an interview conducted while he was holed up in a printing factory outside Paris following the attacks, "We are not killers. We are defenders of the prophet."⁵

Strategic Goals

For the groups that aim to inspire such attacks, however, there are more strategic calculations in play. While the outrage of senior jihadi leaders over such publications is likely equally as genuine as that of their followers, they can also see the strategic opportunities the publications present. These opportunities are at least three-fold: they are the perfect tool for inspiring action by adherents; they exacerbate social divides; and they invite charges of hypocrisy and repression if the jihadis can provoke their state-actor enemies into reacting with heavy-handed counterterrorism tactics that curtail the very rights their enemies claim to be defending.

Inspire the Believers

The cartoons offer an ideal motivator that jihadis can use to enhance their already ongoing campaign to inspire sympathizers in the West to wage violence. Motivating adherents by convincing them of the supposed evil and duplicitous nature of Western foreign policy is certainly doable (and is historically the most common motivator for homegrown jihadist activity), but it does require at least a rudimentary understanding of global events and a compelling narrative to convince someone to turn against their country. However, a cartoon mocking the prophet offers up a propaganda and incitement slam dunk. Nothing rallies the base like a target that presents such an affront to the values held so dear by the intended

⁵ Emmanuelle Saliba, "Paris Killer Cherif Kouachi Gave Interview to TV Channel Before He Died," *NBC News*, January 9, 2015.

audience of their recruitment efforts. It adds to a pre-existing sense of collective humiliation and feeds into a desire to lash back. Little to no further explanation or justification is required.

In addition, a successful attack on such a target only enhances the reputation (and future recruiting power) of the group that can credibly take responsibility for the action. In the case of Paris, targeting *Charlie Hebdo* allows AQAP and the broader jihadist enterprise to tie the operation to broad-based grievances held by a large portion of Muslims with regard to these cartoons and others like them. Claiming responsibility for the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* allowed AQAP to position itself as a bold, front-line defender of Islam. It projects itself as an organization that was willing to act when others would not or could not, which also instantly increases the group's relevance at a time when it has arguably been eclipsed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. And while it is true that many Muslims, including some Muslim leaders, have firmly denounced the attack,⁶ those are not the Muslims AQAP is speaking to in its statement. Rather, it is focused on jihadi sympathizers and fence-sitters considering, but not yet sold on taking violent action.

Exacerbate Social Divides

This target set also offers a prime opportunity to further another strategic objective of jihadi organizations that target the West, and that is to drive wedges between different communities in the target country and sharpen the dividing line between value systems. Jihadis have historically gone to great lengths, primarily through their propaganda, to tear at the fabric of Western society by highlighting controversial issues and societal divides in an attempt to undermine the multicultural framework that liberal societies champion, and in turn undermine public support for the government.

⁶ It must be noted that while many denounced the attacks themselves, this did not necessarily translate to a defense of *Charlie Hebdo's* right to produce the cartoons in the first place. The widespread protests in the Muslim world in response to the newspaper's first post-attack edition and its depiction of the prophet demonstrate the dividing line between rejection of terrorism and defense of freedom of speech.

Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates have repeatedly done this in the past, targeting via their propaganda, for example, the African American community with references to slavery, civil rights abuses, and more recent flash points in American race relations (to include commentary about the 2014 events in Ferguson, Missouri, by numerous jihadist sympathizers online). In addressing these issues, al-Qa'ida is asking the African American community why it would support a government that has, in its view, repeatedly and consistently discriminated against it. Aymen al-Zawahiri emphasizes this at length in a 2007 interview. He also specifically addresses African American soldiers: "I am hurt when I find a black American fighting the Muslims under the American flag. Why is he fighting us when the racist Crusader regime in America is persecuting him like it persecutes us, and oppressing him like it oppresses us?"⁷

Of course, the primary focus of these efforts at exacerbating societal rifts has been on Muslims in the West. For example, jihadis repeatedly and often deftly seize on opportunities to "demonstrate" how the society many Muslim-Americans think is relatively tolerant of their faith will ultimately turn on them and reveal its true colors as a society in which Muslims are not allowed to prosper. While some of these opportunities for jihadi propagandists came in the form of fringe provocateurs who garnered little sympathy or support from the broader population (see Terry Jones, the Florida pastor who has been involved in several incidents of anti-Muslim activity),⁸ in other cases groups like AQAP were able to weigh in on more mainstream controversies and debates. A notable example of such a debate was the dispute over the placement of a mosque near the Ground Zero site in New York City. *Inspire's* second issue, in Fall 2010, states, "The NY Cordoba mosque issue reveals to us the religious

discrimination that exists in America. The polls show that a majority are against the building of the mosque even though the sponsors of the project profess to being patriotic loyal Americans. Isn't it time that American Muslims wake up to the fact that America is Islam's number one enemy?"⁹

Anwar al-Awlaki, an AQAP leader and prolific propagandist who was killed in 2011, also regularly contextualized current events in this manner in an attempt to convince Muslims in the West that their support for their government was unjustified and dangerous to their own welfare. As was seen time and time again,¹⁰ to include, apparently, in the *Charlie Hebdo* case,¹¹ Awlaki was remarkably successful in this endeavor. His broader message is summed up in a March 2010 statement: "Muslims of the West, take heed and learn from the lessons of history: there are ominous clouds gathering in your horizon. Yesterday America was a land of slavery, segregation, lynching, and Ku Klux Klan, and tomorrow it will be a land of religious discrimination and concentration camps. Don't be deceived by the promises of preserving your rights from a government that is right now killing your own brothers and sisters.... The West will eventually turn against its Muslim citizens."¹² After setting this up, any future perceived discrimination can be claimed as fulfillment of his prophecy.

The benefit of the cartoon publications for those jihadis looking to demonstrate societal divides is that those incidents require even less contextualization and manipulation than these other cases in order to be used effectively as evidence of the West's alleged discrimination against Muslims, due to how starkly they offended the vast majority of Muslims around the world. And there is the added benefit that when looking

to attract media attention, there are few better targets than the media itself, as such attacks prompt a vigorous defense of its brethren and their rights to free speech.¹³

This response is welcomed by jihadis, as it offers yet another opportunity to highlight the polarization of communities and values. The "freedom of speech" defense put forward in the West after attacks of this nature is vehemently rejected by jihadis, notably by Usama bin Ladin. In a March 2008 release, he states that even the U.S. bombing of Muslim lands pales in comparison to the "publishing of these defaming drawings.... This is the greater and more serious disaster, and punishment for it will be harsher." He then argues that the "excuse" of freedom of expression is hypocritical at best due to what he argues is the West's willingness to violate its own laws and stated values when it so chooses. He warns, "If there is no check on the freedom of your words, then let your hearts be open to the freedom of our actions."¹⁴ It was this last phrase that AQAP used to lead off its claim of responsibility for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack.

Strategy of Provocation

By instigating attacks on targets like *Charlie Hebdo*, jihadis achieve a third key strategic benefit through the value such attacks have in successfully executing the classic terrorist strategy of provocation. First popularized and proven effective by the anti-colonial movements of the 1920s to 1960s,¹⁵ this strategy seeks to goad the target government into a response that harms civilians from within the terrorist organization's community (in this case, community in the religious sense), thereby persuading the audience that the target of attacks is evil, untrustworthy, and an enemy that must be vigorously resisted.¹⁶ As one

7 "Interview with Shaykh Aymen al-Zawahiri," As-Sahab Media, April/May 2007.

8 While the actions of Jones were utilized to great effect to incite anger against the United States internationally, his actions are less useful in terms of driving societal wedges domestically in the United States, given that no significant segment of the community would publicly come to his defense due to the extreme nature of his actions and words.

9 *Inspire*, Issue 2, Fall 2010, p. 7.

10 The New America Foundation Homegrown Extremism database reports that 63 of the 258 individuals charged with jihadist terrorism in the United States since 2001 were influenced by Awlaki; see <http://securitydata.newamerica.net/extremists/analysis>

11 Catherine E. Shoichet and Josh Levs, "Al Qaeda Branch Claims Charlie Hebdo Attack was Years in the Making," *CNN*, January 14, 2015.

12 Anwar al-Awlaki, "A Message to the American People," March 2010.

13 See Brian Fishman, "Jihadis Are Not Only Attacking the Media; They are Using It," *War on the Rocks*, January 15, 2015.

14 Usama bin Ladin, "May our Mothers Become Bereaved if we do not Support our Prophet (Peace be Upon Him)," Audio Statement, March 19, 2008.

15 David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11," *Anthropoetics*, Vol. 8 No. 1, Spring/Summer 2002.

16 Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Summer 2006), p. 69.

expert writing on the Basque conflict in Spain points out, “Nothing radicalizes a people faster than the unleashing of undisciplined security forces on its towns and villages.”¹⁷

In the context of these attacks on producers of inflammatory material, and the broader jihadi effort to inspire attacks in the West, one of the goals is to provoke a government response that will exacerbate the social cleavages described above. While today’s Western governments rarely use the brutal tactics that were more routinely employed by colonial powers over a half century ago, there has been a plethora of antiterror legislation, administrative measures, and intelligence collection enhancements enacted in response to terrorist attacks and plots on the homeland. In many cases, these measures are seen by Muslims in the West as unfairly targeting that community and infringing on their civil liberties.¹⁸ This enhances the jihadi narrative of repression of Muslims by the West, and in turn maximizes the recruiting base. And the provocation is not merely targeted at Western governments, but also the broader population. Anti-Islamic protests and vigilantism that often occurs in response to such attacks only serves to reinforce the message that Muslims are not welcome in Western society.¹⁹

Targeting the producers of perceived offensive material to provoke a heavy-handed response has the added benefit of “proving” the hypocrisy that jihadis argue is inherent in Western policy towards Muslims. After such an attack, politicians, media, and the general public alike rightly decry the assault on freedom of speech, and then some

proceed to enact or support measures that members of Muslim minority communities may perceive as limiting their freedoms, such as relaxing restrictions on intelligence collection. To complete the cycle, jihadis then use this perceived hypocrisy to instigate future attacks.

This challenge became evident in the aftermath of the Paris attack. After the assault, the French Ministry of Justice directed prosecutors to react firmly. As a result, prosecutors began to aggressively apply a November 2014 law that prohibits speech that might invoke or support violence. This law was rarely used prior to the attacks, but up to 100 people have been placed under investigation since then, to include several already receiving jail sentences for verbalizing support for the actions of the attackers.²⁰ So the expected jihadi narrative is clear: the right of the majority to disseminate material offensive to a minority must be defended, while members of the minority population will be jailed for saying things deemed offensive by the majority.

This is not to say that enhancing antiterrorism and counterterrorism measures in the aftermath of an attack is not appropriate. States have a right and a responsibility to defend themselves after all. But when it comes to propaganda this is not the point. If there is even a hint of hypocrisy or discrimination in a resulting counterterrorism action, an effective propagandist can exploit it to drive home the repression narrative, regardless of the actual benefit to public safety that may result from such actions or policies. This is not an argument for or against specific antiterrorism or counterterrorism policies, just a call to ensure the effects of each are considered.²¹

Conclusion

While the context and environment has obviously completely changed, one’s mind cannot help but drift back to the French experience portrayed in the

Battle of Algiers, the classic film about the Algerian war for independence over 50 years ago and the lessons the French learned regarding the dangers of using disproportionate and heavy-handed tactics in response to terrorist attacks. Given the persistence of the jihadi threat over the last decade, it is important to remember that the endurance and long-term appeal of global jihadism is as much about how we respond and the actions we take. While a strong and effective response is required, equally as important is that the West does not allow itself to be blindly led down the path by the jihadis.

Given the strategic goals of jihadis to inspire sympathizers to commit violence, exacerbate social divisions, and provoke a heavy-handed and counterproductive response, Western counterterrorism policy must be carefully calibrated to maintain the precarious balance between security and liberty. Getting this balance correct is critically important, lest the West play into the hands of their terrorist adversaries and allow them to achieve those goals.

In the past, the prescribed best response to a terrorist group’s provocation strategy was to focus on enhanced intelligence capabilities in order to avoid collateral damage by the military.²² The events of the last decade suggest this prescription needs to be further refined, as the intelligence collection itself is perceived as causing harm to the community. The focus must be on intelligence and counterterrorism actions that are effective and are mindful of the costs of violating civil liberties, and, above all, avoiding policies that are neither.

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The views expressed here are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 70. The authors are citing: Paddy Woodworth, “Why Do They Kill? The Basque Conflict in Spain,” *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 2001), p. 7.

¹⁸ For examples of such concerns, see Faiza Patel, “Re-thinking Radicalization,” Brennan Center for Justice, 2011.

¹⁹ As examples of such activity, France’s Interior Ministry reported more than 50 violent anti-Muslim acts in the six days following the attack, and an anti-Islam rally held in Germany was attended by 25,000 people. See “Anti-Muslim Acts Escalate After Paris Terrorist Attacks,” *France 24*, January 13, 2015; and Leon Mangasarian and Patrick Donahue, “German Anti-Islam Rally Draws Record Crowd After Paris Attacks,” *Bloomberg*, January 13, 2015.

²⁰ Doreen Carvajal and Alan Cowell, “French Rein in Speech Backing Acts of Terror,” *The New York Times*, January 15, 2015.

²¹ For a comprehensive assessment of the effects of such policies, see J.M. Berger, “Europe Cracks Down,” *Foreign Policy*, January 16, 2015.

²² Kydd and Walter, p. 72.

From Sydney to Paris: The Return of Terrorist Barricade Hostage Incidents?

By Adam Dolnik

ON DECEMBER 15, 2014, at 9:45 a.m., Man Haron Monis walked into the Lindt Chocolate Café in Sydney's central business district and took 17 people hostage. Shortly thereafter, images of the hostages holding up a black flag with Arabic script captured the world's attention, leaving little doubt about the hostage-taker's motives. The self-declared, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) sympathizer managed to gain worldwide publicity for 16.5 hours, until the New South Wales Police Force tactical team eliminated him following an eruption of violence inside the stronghold that also cost two hostages their lives.¹ Then on January 9, 2015, a chain of events that started in Paris with the shooting at the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* led to two simultaneous sieges. The Paris attacks ultimately cost a total of 17 people their lives (not including the three attackers, who also died).²

Both attacks in Sydney and Paris are prominent, recent examples of jihadist barricade hostage sieges, a scenario of very rare occurrence in the Western context over the last three decades. However, the quick sequence in which these attacks have occurred unsurprisingly has raised fears of a new trend, leading to a debate about the preparedness of Western security agencies to deal with such a scenario.

This article will contextualize the threat and response dynamics of barricade hostage incidents through an historical lens, followed by an examination of the characteristics of contemporary hostage sieges and their implications for counterterrorism policy.

Barricade Hostage Sieges in Historical Perspective

Barricade hostages sieges, defined as

situations in which hostage-takers are holding hostages in a known location where containment is possible, have constituted a highly influential terrorist tactic. The live, on-the-scene broadcasts, minute-by-minute updates, dramatic scenes featuring hostage pleas and terrorist threats, and the possibility of instantaneous forceful resolution that they generate keep television viewers gripped. Further, the reality-show-like nature of the coverage, along with the opportunity for the terrorists to explain their grievances fully, are factors that usually succeed in generating a wide public debate about the moral dilemmas inherent in the options available to the responding government.³

Particularly during the era of traditional terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s, when groups carefully attempted to strike a balance between instilling fear, attracting attention, and striving for legitimacy and support, these incidents constituted a highly useful terrorist tactic. The ability of barricade hostage incidents to attract wide, international attention provided terrorists not only with a highly suitable platform for the expression of grievances, but also the capacity to create pressure on the enemy government without necessarily being associated with the politically damaging act of killing civilians. The idea of taking hostages and placing the responsibility for their fate in the hands of the opposing government was a highly effective tool in attracting international sympathy for the terrorists' cause, especially when the possibility existed to appear "merciful" by later releasing the hostages unharmed. Unsurprisingly, the era of traditional terrorism, in which terrorist groups were completely dependent on media coverage to spread their message, was particularly rich in incidents of barricade hostage-takings and airplane hijackings.

The incidents of this era were characterized by a relatively low level of advance preparedness by either side, the inability of hostage-takers to communicate with their commanders once the incident started, a low willingness to kill hostages, and

incremental improvements of response strategies, such as the establishment of rapid response units and hostage negotiation teams. Since publicity has usually been one of the main goals of terrorist hostage-taking operations, the captors could often be persuaded that they had succeeded in their mission and that killing hostages would only hurt their cause in the eyes of the public.⁴ The combination of officials stressing the attention the terrorists' cause had already achieved and guaranteeing free passage has historically been the most common formula for the negotiated resolution of politically inspired barricade incidents. Such an outcome is sometimes called the "Bangkok Solution," a term referring to the 1972 incident in which members of Black September took over the Israeli embassy in Thailand, but after 19 hours of negotiations agreed to release their hostages and drop all other demands in return for safe passage out of the country.⁵

Sieges in the Era of the "New Terrorism"

In the next 20 years, however, the trends in barricade hostage-taking changed with the rise of the so-called "new terrorism," characterized by the dominance of religious ideologies, increasing lethality of terrorist violence, and growing preference for suicide terrorism. Firstly, with the rise of the "new terrorism," barricade hostage incidents assumed a much less prominent role in the tactical repertoire of terrorist organizations. One of the main reasons for this development has been the changing nature of the terrorists' goals associated with the religious nature of their ideologies, which limited the spectrum of demands that could be realistically accomplished via a barricade hostage siege. Secondly, the growing tactical and technological capabilities of hostage rescue teams and intelligence agencies have made the planning and execution of successful barricade hostage sieges an ever more challenging task.

Yet despite this rapid decline in the

1 Michelle Innis, "Sydney Hostage Siege Ends With Gunman and 2 Captives Dead as Police Storm Café," *The New York Times*, December 15, 2014.

2 "Charlie Hebdo attack: Three days of terror," *BBC News Europe*, 12 January 2015.

3 Adam Dolnik and Keith M. Fitzgerald, *Negotiating Hostage Crises with the New Terrorists* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008).

4 G. Dwayne Fuselier and Gary W. Noesner, "Confronting the Terrorist Hostage Taker," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* (1990).

5 Edward F. Mickolus, *Transnational Terrorism: A Chronology of Events, 1968-1979* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 367.

employment of this tactic, the era of “new terrorism” did, in fact, feature several prominent barricade hostage sieges, with the most prominent examples being the 2002 Moscow theater attack and the 2004 Beslan school siege, in which 129 and 334 hostages died, respectively.

Beslan, in particular, represented a nightmare scenario. A team of some 50 to 70 well-trained hostage-takers, who had seized more than 1,200 hostages, most of them children, were strategically positioned around the school along with 127 explosive devices that could be activated by three terrorists positioned in different parts of the building. The situation was intensified by the cold-blooded executions of 21 hostages on the first day and the merciless treatment of hostages who as of the second day of the crisis were denied access to food or water.⁶ In the Beslan aftermath, alarmist pundits predicted the “inevitable” proliferation of similar attacks on targets in the West, but this never materialized.⁷

In fact, barricade hostage sieges all but disappeared from the repertoire of jihadist groups in the Western context, presumably because of the logistical difficulties involved in organizing such planning-intensive operations in the face of the tightened scrutiny of Western intelligence services. A barricade hostage crisis featuring multiple, well-armed attackers requires planning, training, and a great amount of synchronization and foresight. Given the fact that jihadist groups have faced great difficulties in successfully mounting a single, centralized terrorist operation on Western soil for nearly a decade after the 7/7 bombing in London, the general advice given by al-Qa’ida to terrorist sympathizers and supporters has been to conduct autonomous operations and to aim for *less* sophisticated and *less* challenging methods of operation.⁸ This trend has

made large-scale barricade sieges an unlikely tactic in the Western context.

The Mumbai Effect

Another important event that altered threat perceptions about response strategies to barricade hostage sieges was the Mumbai siege of 2008, which featured a seaborne attack on India’s financial capital via a synchronized assault on multiple targets by 10 attackers, who had clear instructions to kill as many people as possible before they themselves are eliminated in the fight. Such *fidayeen* operations are different from barricade hostage sieges in that their objective is not to hold hostages, but rather to buy enough time to achieve the greatest number of casualties.⁹ This was especially evident in Mumbai where the gunmen were deceptively trying to portray themselves as hostage-takers, prolonging the operation to 60 hours and achieving a body count of 166.

The effect of Mumbai has been a questioning of the traditional contain-and-negotiate response to terrorist barricade hostage sieges, with the fear that negotiations only buy more time for the attackers to kill more people. On the other hand, it is important to realize that *fidayeen* attacks are highly fluid and that the scenario can rapidly shift from an active-shooter attack to a barricade hostage siege (if the terrorists panic and chose to survive or if they come across a high value target)¹⁰ or into a suicide bombing (if the attackers are equipped with suicide belts). This fluidity creates tremendous challenges for response, as the dynamic interplay between negotiation and tactical strategies will not always be clear and may change several times during the course of a single incident. In any case, the rapid global proliferation of *fidayeen* tactics

that followed the high-profile Mumbai attacks has marginalized traditional barricade hostage sieges within the tactical repertoires of terrorist groups even more.

In Amenas

Seemingly out of the blue, the above reality changed on January 16, 2013, with the attack on the Tiguentourine gas plant in In Amenas, Algeria, where a four-day siege left 40 hostages dead after the Algerian army stormed the location. During the siege, extensive negotiations took place throughout the first day and a half of the crisis between representatives of Statoil and BP on one side and English-speaking hostage-takers on the other.¹¹ In these discussions, considerable progress was made from a hostage negotiation perspective, but this siege presented another problem—the inability of Western governments whose citizens were among the hostages to influence the actions of the Algerian military on the ground in In Amenas. The Algerian mindset is heavily influenced by memories of a very bloody terrorist campaign during the 1990s, and could be summed up as giving total priority to the elimination of the hostage-takers, with the objective of saving the hostages a distant second.

In the end, the progress made in the talks with the hostage-takers on the phones from London and Bergen, Norway, made little difference as the Algerian military offensive led to the death of at least 40 hostages. And while the exact plan of the In Amenas siege is not yet clear, this attack stands out as a rare example of an al-Qa’ida barricade hostage siege and offers important insights into the group’s negotiating behavior.¹²

Sydney and Paris: A New Trend?

Given the remoteness of the In Amenas siege, it was not until the recent hostage incidents in Sydney and Paris that a change of perception was triggered in the West about barricade hostage sieges making their way back into terrorist arsenals. And even though both events are still fresh and only forthcoming

6 Adam Dolnik, “Negotiating the Impossible? The Beslan Hostage Crisis,” *Whitehall Report 2-07* (London: The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, 2007), p. 46.

7 John Giduck, *Terror at Beslan: A Russian Tragedy with Lessons for America’s Schools* (Golden, CO: Archangel Group, 2005).

8 Adam Dolnik, “13 Years since Tokyo: Re-Visiting the ‘Superterrorism’ Debate,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2:2 (2008).

9 Adam Dolnik, “Fighting to the Death,” *The RUSI Journal* 155:2 (2010), pp. 60-68.

10 This situation existed in Mumbai as well after the handlers in Karachi found out from the media about the presence of a government secretary and three ministers among the guests of the Taj hotel. Following this discovery, the handlers called the attackers in Mumbai and issued the following order: “Find those three, four persons and then get whatever you want from India.” Transcripts of phone calls between the gunmen and their handlers, <http://www.webcitation.org/query?url=http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/132160&date=2011-04-26>.

11 Statoil ASA Board of Directors, “The In Amenas Attack: Report of the investigation into the terrorist attack on In Amenas” (2013).

12 Adam Dolnik, *The In Amenas Gas Plant Siege* (forthcoming 2015).

investigations can reveal details that will be crucial to a more complete analysis, some preliminary observations about the contrasting dynamics of these attacks can be made.

Firstly, while the Sydney incident was designed as an actual barricade hostage siege, the attacks in Paris were most likely a product of improvisation in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, as opposed to a premeditated event. This distinction has important implications for response strategies as premeditation typically complicates both negotiation and tactical approaches when compared to spontaneous incidents, in which the perpetrator, with passing time, is likely to question the rationality of his or her decision to take hostages. While Man Haron Monis walked into the Lindt Café with some level of knowledge and expectation of the situation he was about to encounter, Cherif and Said Kouachi seemed to have barricaded themselves only out of desperation after being cornered, putting themselves in a comparatively weak position. This point of advantage for law enforcement disappeared rather quickly, however, after Amedy Coulibaly, who allegedly trained with the Kouachi brothers in the same terrorist cell, took a group of hostages in a supermarket in another part of Paris, forcing the need to synchronize responses in two different strongholds.¹³ So while it was the Sydney siege that bore more signs of volatility in the beginning, the simultaneity of the two sieges in Paris swiftly turned this dynamic on its head.

Second, there is an important distinction that needs to be made with respect to the radically different motivations among the perpetrators of both attacks. While in both instances there was clearly an ideological dimension, the attack in Sydney was essentially a case of psychopathology in search of a cause, as opposed to a real terrorist incident. Monis was essentially a person in deep personal crisis, having been charged with more than 40 counts of sexual assault and as an accessory to the murder of his former wife.¹⁴ His issues

were deeply personal with important mental health implications, and in this sense the situation was a familiar territory for negotiators, who encounter mental health issues in up to 85 percent of all barricade-hostage incidents they routinely encounter.¹⁵ Monis' desperate attempts to link himself to ISIL were almost comical, given that he could not even secure the group's flag and made its acquisition one of his demands.¹⁶ And although ISIL posthumously embraced Monis in its English-language magazine *Dabiq* as a "Muslim who resolved to join the mujahidin of the Islamic State in their war against the crusader coalition,"¹⁷ Monis had no organizational links whatsoever and was probably driven more by personal mental health problems than by ideology.

In contrast, the Paris attacks were carried out by people with a deep history of involvement in jihadist militancy, who had trained with al-Qa'ida in Yemen, and had allegedly met important al-Qa'ida figures such as Anwar al-Awlaki.¹⁸ This commitment to a cause made negotiation attempts all the more challenging, as did the fact that the terrorists were holding hostages following a murderous rampage, putting them in a position of having little to lose.

Overall, the Sydney siege seems to have been more of a case of a mentally unstable individual acting out his issues through ideological channels, with no actual ties to a terrorist group. As such, the negotiation dynamics in this case did not need to deviate from standard, law enforcement frameworks for managing sieges involving lone and mentally unstable hostage-takers, whom negotiators are used to encountering on a regular basis.

In contrast, the Paris sieges involved lucid, highly radicalized, and ideologically fueled hostage-takers, with whom negotiations were bound to be challenging because they encompassed a subject that negotiators rarely encounter in their work. Further, the hostage-takers' training in al-Qa'ida camps made them a more formidable foe at the tactical level. That being said, the extent to which the Paris attacks were centrally coordinated by al-Qa'ida is questionable.¹⁹ It seems more likely that the planning, target selection, and execution was done by the perpetrators autonomously and that the attack was not originally designed to involve a barricade-hostage dimension. As more details continue to emerge, the Paris siege will present an interesting case study for lessons to be incorporated into further training of negotiators and hostage rescue teams.

Conclusion

Terrorist barricade hostage attacks are seemingly making a comeback with the Sydney and Paris scenarios already being dubbed as the "new normal."²⁰ The fact that both ISIL and al-Qa'ida are praising these sieges and are trying to encourage followers to emulate them²¹ only increases the likelihood of copycat attacks in the future. The good news for Western countries is that unlike the sieges of Beslan or In Amenas, which featured a large number of well-armed hostage-takers ready to repel a rescue operation or die along with hundreds of hostages, Sydney- and Paris-style scenarios represent a much lesser threat with respect to potential loss of life.

charges and accessory to murder," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 16, 2014.

15 Michael McMains and Wayman Mullins, *Crisis Negotiations: Managing Critical Incidents and Hostage Situations in Law Enforcement and Corrections* (Dayton, OH: Anderson Publishing, 2nd edition, 2001), p. 231.

16 Bibby and Hall.

17 Michael Safi, "Sydney siege gunman Man Haron Monis praised in Isis publication," *The Guardian*, December 29, 2014.

18 David Blair, "Charlie Hebdo attack: Anwar al-Awlaki - the al-Qaeda ideologue who may have inspired the massacre," *The Telegraph*, January 9, 2015.

13 Meghan Keneally, "Paris Terror Attack Live Updates: Suspects Killed in Both Hostage Locations," *ABC News*, January 9, 2015.

14 Paul Bibby and Louise Hall, "Sydney siege gunman Man Haron Monis was on bail for 40 sexual assault

19 Al-Qa'ida desperately needs some spotlight in its competition with ISIL. Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) released a video on January 14, 2014, via its official media wing, the al-Malahim Media Foundation, stating that, "We, AQAP, claim responsibility for this operation as vengeance for the messenger of God." The video claimed that AQAP leadership, "chose the target, laid the plan, financed the operation, and appointed its emir." However, no martyrdom videos or other hard evidence were offered in support of their claim, so questions still remain. Also, the fact that Amedy Coulibaly claimed to be affiliated with ISIL while the Kouachi brothers claimed to belong to AQAP casts significant doubt on the attack being centrally planned from abroad.

20 Nancy Youssef, "The Paris Attack Is 'The New Normal,' U.S. Officials Say," *The Daily Beast*, January 9, 2015.

21 Safi.

Quite simply, while barricade hostage sieges receive a lot of attention and involve great drama, they are extremely difficult to carry out successfully, especially for “lone wolves” and small groups of homegrown terrorists with limited resources and experience. The impact of stress and fatigue is difficult for perpetrators to predict or handle; effects of time will wear them down; and controlling a large number of hostages is difficult with only a single attacker or a small number of attackers. Moreover, police negotiation and tactical teams in Western countries have a significant capability in responding to these small-scale incidents. Unlike In Amenas or Beslan, Sydney- and Paris-style scenarios do not represent unfamiliar territory.

In conclusion, the most important recommendation for counterterrorism policy, besides continuing to strengthen negotiation and tactical response capabilities of law enforcement agencies, is to avoid panic and overreaction to the latest wave of attacks. After all, barricade hostage sieges provide *more options to save lives* when an attack is already underway than is the case with any other terrorist tactic. And while several attacks in recent months do not necessarily constitute a trend, in this light, a potential tactical shift away from shooting and bombing attacks toward barricade hostage sieges can be seen as a rather positive development.

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A View from the CT Foxhole: An Interview with Major General Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., Commander, CJTF-HoA

By LTC Bryan Price

A Note From the CTC Director: *The CTC is launching what will be a recurring feature in the CTC Sentinel called, “A View From the CT Foxhole,” in which key counterterrorism practitioners and policymakers are interviewed by CTC staff about their perspective on contemporary issues in terrorism and political violence. We hope you enjoy this new initiative, and we look forward to receiving feedback from our readers on future interviewees and topics. To inaugurate this new feature, we interviewed Major General Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr.*

Biography: Major General Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., assumed command of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HoA) in January 2013. His prior assignments include Director of Army Training on the Army’s G-3/5/7 staff, Deputy Commanding General of Operations for the 1st Armored Division, Director of the Mission Command Center of Excellence, and Director of the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at Fort Leavenworth.

CTC: **Can you briefly describe the strategic importance of CJTF-HoA, its area of responsibility, and the strategic role it plays in both U.S. national security interests and U.S. counterterrorism efforts writ large?**

MG Grigsby: Located in Djibouti, CJTF-HoA is the only permanent U.S. military presence on the African continent, providing regional access and crisis response across East Africa, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Somalia. We also sit just 80 miles from Yemen.

CJTF-HoA sits at the seams, both geographically and operationally. Geographically, we are located just south of the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which is the strategic link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Roughly 5 percent of the world’s oil passes through it each day.

Operationally, we are on the border of U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Central Command, and two additional combatant commands—U.S. Special Operations Command and U.S. Transportation Command—have significant equities here.

CJTF-HoA works by, with, and through our joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational teammates . . . actually, I think we work behind, beside, and below because we enable these regional actors to neutralize violent extremist organizations. We also enable counterterrorism efforts writ large by sharing information and building partner capacity. Ultimately, we are successful if we enable and assist East Africans to solve East African problems, one of which—I repeat, one of which—is combating terrorism.

CTC: **When people think of combating terrorism in East Africa, most immediately think of al-Shabab. What is your current assessment of the group?**

MG Grigsby: You are right. Most people immediately ask me about al-Shabab, but in many ways, one might consider al-Shabab to be a symptom of a larger disease, of larger drivers of instability. The sources of instability are found across East Africa, outside of Somalia and the immediate threat posed by al-Shabab.

These issues include lingering border tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia and Djibouti; weak economies and a lack of jobs for an increasing number of youth; environmental degradation and risk of famine; enormous refugee populations; upcoming elections in Burundi and Uganda; a general lack of institutional capacity; and ungoverned spaces. *These* are the drivers of instability across CJTF-HoA’s area of responsibility. Al-Shabab and other groups like them feed on this instability and exploit it to their advantage.

I think there is an opportunity right now with respect to al-Shabab. The recent victories by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) during Operation INDIAN OCEAN have liberated tremendous swaths of land in southern Somalia and eliminated sources of revenue for al-Shabab’s operations. Godane has been killed (*Editor’s Note:*

Ahmed Godane was the leader of al-Shabab and was killed in September 2014), and al-Shabab's command and control architecture is in flux. In short, al-Shabab is vulnerable. Coordinated, offensive action on the part of AMISOM could significantly degrade its capabilities even further.

That said, the recent horrific and cowardly massacre in Mandera (Kenya) highlights that al-Shabab remains a capable force. Moreover, Godane, while important to al-Shabab, was ultimately only one man. Given sufficient time and space, al-Shabab will reconstitute and reorganize. We cannot take them lightly.

CTC: So how do you expect al-Shabab to react to Godane's death?

MG Grigsby: Think of it in terms of action-reaction-counteraction. Our action was to remove Godane from the battlefield. Al-Shabab will react. The group will go where AMISOM is not. Al-Shabab will go to where there is weakness.

So what's our counteraction? We should continue to assist and enable our partners in order to help East Africans deal with East African problems. We need to continue building those tactical actions at the lowest level that assist them in neutralizing extremists.

But in the long-term, in building this partner capacity, we need to develop a professional Somali national army, to develop East African leaders and teach them what it means to be a part of a profession of arms within the *region*, not just within their respective countries, but *within the region*. There is a difference.

This is important because all of our authorities and all of our capabilities to support and assist are bilateral in nature. All those programs go straight to individual countries. By doing this, we have conditioned our partners—we have incentivized them—to think bilaterally instead of regionally. If *we* go bilateral, then we reinforce our East African partners to *stay* bilateral.

CTC: How do you go about encouraging our East African partners to see these problems through a regional lens?

MG Grigsby: The first thing is through living here on the continent. We wouldn't

be able to do what we do if we didn't live in the same neighborhood as AMISOM's troop-contributing countries. We're here eating, sleeping, and working with our partners, and building relationships. You can't do this virtually. You can't do this via Facebook and Twitter. You need to be here. You have to be on the ground, building relationships with the embassies, the country teams, the chiefs of military defenses, the commanders in the field in Somalia and elsewhere.

We need to be building relationships based on trust, trust that is built through professional military education, mil-to-mil (military to military) engagements, exercises, and emails and correspondence. It is about looking these leaders in the eyes, and picking up the phone when they need help. It is about having the context. They know me, they know my kids, and I know theirs.

The United States is not going to have a large footprint here. If our counterterrorism efforts in places like East Africa are going to have smaller footprints, with small teams, then we need these small teams to have maximum effect. These small teams have to be well chosen and well led. They have to be personable, and they have to know what it means to have two ears and one mouth. They have to work on these relationships. You can't just come in and out. You have to be here.

CTC: Looking beyond al-Shabab and outside of Somalia, what then are some of the more pressing regional issues in East Africa that you feel deserve more of our attention?

MG Grigsby: In many ways, the current situation in Somalia mirrors many of the challenges faced throughout East Africa. In particular, as al-Shabab is cleared from towns, the need for legitimate, reliable government institutions and support systems becomes apparent. Basic services such as access to potable water and food, medical care, impartial police and judicial systems—all the things we all too often take for granted in our lives—are lacking. These voids create the conditions under which extremist ideologies can take root. Somalia is probably the worst in this regard, but these challenges exist throughout East Africa.

So the partnership between the Department of Defense and State (U.S. Department of State) on security, governance, and development is very important. This new way we're going to operate, with the Department of Defense working with and assisting our State Department teammates, is effective. But we need to line up some of the authorities to have a more regional approach and have them pushed down a little bit further so we can react faster down here at the tactical level. That would assist us and make us more effective.

CTC: You have been in the saddle as the Commander of CJTF-HoA for almost a year. What is the most surprising thing you have encountered about our efforts there?

MG Grigsby: When I first arrived in Djibouti and took command of CJTF-HoA, I was surprised to learn that, generally speaking, activities across East Africa were not being coordinated in time, space, and purpose—not only by the Department of Defense but also by the Department of State. As I previously mentioned, our relationships are almost exclusively bilateral, yet our problems are inherently regional.

While this shortcoming is largely structural and requires structural solutions, it can be mitigated through collaboration among interested parties. Accordingly, my Deputy Commanding Admiral Alex Krongard and I immediately made “develop and strengthen the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational team” our primary line of effort, and we spent the next 10 months “beating the bushes” to fill our bench with committed teammates. It has involved tremendous energy and travel, but the effort has been worth it.

We are now positioned to leverage this team in a focused, more coordinated, and collaborative way to address instability in the Horn of Africa. To be sure, we have not achieved a 100-percent solution, and much of what we do is informal and based on personal relationships and energy. Nonetheless, we are trending in the right direction.

CTC: We recently learned that you have volunteered to extend your time at CJTF-HoA for another six months, which more than

doubles the time your two predecessors each spent in the region. As you look ahead, what are the biggest challenges the United States faces in East Africa and what can the United States (and our allies) do to overcome them?

MG Grigsby: For starters, we must immediately understand that our ability to influence, let alone control, tactical actions on the ground will be very limited. It will be limited, and we may not like they way they do it.

Additionally, we will have very little control over the operational tempo, and we must accept this and demonstrate patience as our teammates move according to their own timelines. Of course, after years of directing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, this reality is hard to accept, but it is reality nonetheless.

To overcome these challenges, we must remind ourselves that our way of doing things is not the only way. The alternative would require significant investments of American blood and treasure. Our perspective must be one of thanks for the sacrifices our teammates are making, and we must do everything we can with our limited budget and authorities to enable and assist their efforts.

Seeing the problem through their lens becomes crucial, and this requires building an environment of shared understanding through constant communication, with an emphasis on listening more and speaking less.

CTC: What is one thing that CTC Sentinel readers may not know about counterterrorism in the Horn of Africa but should?

MG Grigsby: Al-Shabab is not constrained by national borders, and, on occasion, it is opportunistically used to explain violence unrelated to its members or ideology. With this in mind, counterterrorism in East Africa requires a regional approach, where we leverage our expertise and resources to augment the nascent counterterrorism capabilities of our partners.

In the short term, this strategy prevents or at least reduces the rate and severity of al-Shabab's attacks. In the long term, it creates an East African counterterrorism capability so that they

can handle the problem on their own.

Over time, the security situation will improve, regional interdependence will increase, and government institutions will strengthen. When this happens economic growth should follow, and the unstable conditions under which al-Shabab thrives should gradually fade away, leaving behind only the most extreme ideologues who can be systematically and judiciously eliminated.

By analogy, and you have likely heard this before, one can think of the counterterrorism situation in East Africa as a swamp, where we deal with the alligators by the boat while simultaneously draining the water.

CTC: What is one underappreciated counterterrorism tenet or practice that is especially effective in the Horn of Africa that you believe can be exploited elsewhere in America's counterterrorism fight?

MG Grigsby: As we build enduring counterterrorism partnerships and capabilities, nothing is more important—*nothing is more important*—than timely and responsible intelligence sharing. Of course, this is not something our systems are designed to facilitate, as information is often passed on U.S. classified networks in a compartmentalized manner. This is a significant issue within our own agencies, and the situation gets progressively worse as we incorporate foreign partners.

Recognizing this, we have spent the past year strengthening our relationships with our joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners. The collaboration and integration of Special Operations Forces with what we call General Purpose Forces in East Africa is the best I have seen in my 31 years of service, including seven years deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Jordan, and now East Africa. It's the best.

Moreover, we have recently flattened our own organizational structure by reorganizing a significant portion of our team into country-focused Fusion Action Cells, or FACs. These FACs operate in a large, unclassified, open workspace without cubicles or walls. They are staffed with foreign liaison

officers from their respective countries.

This structure maximizes information sharing and builds mutual trust and relationships. It allows us to move faster against our adversaries because we have mutual trust and relationships. Our collective knowledge goes up, which allows us to gain, maintain, and exploit the initiative against our adversary as we try to solve problems.

CTC: This approach runs counter to what some perceive to be a risk-adverse, post-Snowden information sharing environment. How do you evaluate your efforts thus far?

MG Grigsby: We've been fully mission-capable since the beginning of November. It's all about education and training. Ignorance gets you in trouble. I don't want my team to train and educate our foreign liaison officers on what they *can't* do when it comes to information sharing. I want them to educate and train them on what we *can* do to share information. Use the heliotropic effect. Go towards the positive.

We have consistently scared people since 2001 by focusing on what they can't do when it comes to information sharing with our coalition partners. If we continue to operate in this manner, we will be shooting behind the duck constantly. It makes us slower and unable to keep pace with our adversaries. We *must* follow the rules, but show me how I can share information more effectively so we can build the team, build relationships based on trust, gain the initiative against our enemies, and take risks where we need to.

CTC: Imagine you were the CTC Sentinel editor for the next issue. What are one or two topics that you feel should be featured?

MG Grigsby: As I mentioned previously, CJTF-HoA is actively working to operate in the unclassified domain. While classified networks and traffic will always be necessary, this push in the unclassified domain allows us to share more freely with our partners and speeds up execution.

Based on my understanding, 98 percent of the CTC's publications are at the unclassified level, and your work has provided tremendous insights that are widely respected. With this in mind, an article on the history, value, and potential

of unclassified counterterrorism sources, data, and analysis would be extremely interesting.

CTC: Can you share with our readers what books, blogs, or journals you are currently reading?

MG Grigsby: I'm always reading about change, on how you change organizations. There's a great book called *Switch* (by Chip and Dan Heath) and books by (John) Kotter about managing effective change. Life is about change and we're in constant change. You have to keep pace with the environment when it changes. I've also been reading the Army Operating Concept and the work relating to the human dimension. I'm also trying to read a lot about Title 10, Title 22, and Title 50 authorities to see how we can shape those to operate better in this environment.

The Causes and Impact of Political Assassinations

By Arie Perliger

POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS HAVE been part of social reality since the emergence of communal social frameworks, as the leaders of tribes, villages, and other types of communities constantly needed to defend their privileged status. In the ancient world assassination featured prominently in the rise and fall of some of the greatest empires.

While many people are familiar with the military victories of Alexander the Great, few today recall that his ascendance to power was facilitated by the assassination of his father (an innovative and talented politician in his own right), who was struck down by a bodyguard as he was entering a theater to attend his daughter's marriage celebrations. In a somewhat more famous incident, Gaius Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BCE by Roman senators who increasingly feared that Caesar would revoke their privileges.

In modern times, political assassinations continue to play an important role in political and social processes and, in some cases, have a dramatic effect. For example, many argue that the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin in 1995 was a major reason for the collapse of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.¹ It is also difficult to deny the impact of the assassinations of figures such as Martin Luther King or Benazir Bhutto on the success of their political movements/parties following their deaths.

Thus, it is not surprising that Appleton argues, "The impact of assassinations on America and the World is incalculable,"² and that Americans cite

the assassination of John F. Kennedy as the crime that has had the greatest impact on American society in the last 100 years.³ Nonetheless, despite the apparently significant influence of political assassinations on political and social realities, this particular manifestation of political action is understudied and, as a result, poorly understood.

This article is a summary of a broader study that will be published later by the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) and aims to improve our understanding of the causes and implications of political assassinations. It makes use of an original and comprehensive worldwide data set of political assassinations between 1945 and 2013. The findings illustrate the trends that characterize the phenomenon and challenge some of the existing conventions about political assassinations and their impact.

Data and Rationale

In order to investigate the causes and implications of political assassinations, the CTC constructed a data set that includes political assassinations worldwide from 1946 to early 2013. After defining political assassinations as "an action that directly or indirectly leads to the death of an intentionally targeted individual who is active in the political sphere, in order to promote or prevent specific policies, values, practices or norms pertaining to the collective," the CTC consulted a variety of resources, including relevant academic books and articles, media sources (especially *LexisNexis* and *The New York Times* archive), and online resources, to identify 758 attacks by 920 perpetrators that resulted in the death of 954 individuals. (Some attacks led to the death of multiple political leaders; however, the death of "bystanders" is not included in this number.)

This study is guided by the rationale that the logic of political assassinations is different from that of other manifestations of political violence. Hence, it is important to understand the unique factors that may encourage or discourage violent groups or individuals from engaging in political assassinations.

1 President Bill Clinton, the main sponsor of the Oslo peace process, speculated that if Rabin had not been assassinated, peace would have been achieved in three years. See Atila Shumfalbi, "Bill Clinton: If Rabin Would Have Not Been Assassinated There Would Be Peace Today," YNET News, September 14, 2009: www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3805013,00.html [Hebrew]

2 Sheldon Appleton, "Trends: Assassinations," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64:4 (Winter 2000): pp. 495-522.

3 Zaryab Iqbal and Christopher Zorn, "The Political

Consequences of Assassination," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52:3 (June 2008): pp. 385-400.

Moreover, it seems reasonable to assume that these factors vary among different types of assassinations because in most cases the characteristics of the targeted individual shape the nature and objectives of the assassination. Indeed, this study establishes that different processes trigger different types of assassinations and that different types of assassinations generate distinct effects on the political and social arenas.

General Observations

Although the first two decades after World War II were characterized by a limited number of political assassinations, the number of such attacks has risen dramatically since the early 1970s. This is reflective of the emergence of a new wave of terrorist groups, radical and universal ideologies operating on a global scale, and a growing willingness by oppressive regimes to use assassinations as a tool in their treatment of political opposition. Indeed, while most assassinations of government officials were perpetrated by sub-state violent groups, most assassinations of opposition leaders were initiated by ruling political elites or their proxies. This important observation supports the notion that a growing number of terrorist groups see assassinations as a legitimate and effective tool, and that one of the major obstacles for democratization is the vulnerability of political opposition.

Additionally, our data indicates that assassinations are not limited to specific regions or specific time frames. In fact, the opposite is true. Both regions that are considered politically stable and economically prosperous, such as Western Europe, as well as regions that are considered politically unstable, more prone to political violence, and economically weak, such as sub-Saharan Africa, have experienced similar levels of political assassinations.

In some regions, however, political assassinations have become dominant only in the last couple of decades. In South Asia, for example, 76 percent of the assassinations have been perpetrated since the mid-1980s, possibly a consequence of the growing instability in the region during and after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. And more than 85 percent of assassinations in Eastern Europe were perpetrated after

1995 with the start of the transition to democracy in most Eastern European countries, a process that in many cases was accompanied by growing ethnic tensions and political instability. In terms of targets, the data indicates that most assassinations target heads of state (17 percent), opposition leaders (who are not part of the executive or legislative branch) (18 percent), and members of parliament (21 percent). In rarer instances the targets are ministers (14 percent), diplomats (10 percent), local politicians such as governors or mayors (5 percent), and vice head of states (3 percent).

Causes of Assassinations

The research findings indicate that, in general, political assassinations are more probable in countries that suffer from a combination of restrictions on political competition and strong polarization and fragmentation.

More specifically, states that lack consensual political ethos and homogeneous populations (in terms of the national and ethnic landscape) and include politically deprived groups will face a decline in the legitimacy of the political leadership and the political system and an increase in the likelihood of direct attacks against political leaders. One of the most glaring examples of such a dynamic may be found in Sri Lanka, where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a group that represents the deprived Tamil minority, organized a bloody campaign of political assassinations against the political leadership of the state and the Sinhalese majority from the early 1980s until approximately 2009. And since these issues tend to be present mainly in times of electoral processes or of actual violent strife, one should not be surprised that our findings indicate that election periods or periods characterized by a general increase in domestic violence are moments when a country is more susceptible to political assassinations.

Another interesting finding is that the territorial fragmentation of a country is correlated with an increase in the number of assassinations. When a government loses control over some parts of a country to opposition groups, both sides are more willing to use assassinations to enhance their influence

and to consolidate their status as the sole legitimate rulers of the polity.

When looking specifically at the facilitators of assassinations of heads of state, we can identify some unique trends. To begin with, the polities most susceptible to assassinations against the head of state are authoritarian polities that lack clear succession rules and in which the leader enjoys significant political power. This is true even more so in polities that also include oppressed minorities and high levels of political polarization. Therefore, non-democratic political environments that feature leaders who are able to garner significant power and in which the state lacks efficient mechanisms for leadership change following an assassination, provide more prospects for success in advancing political changes via political assassination. This stands in contrast to democratic systems, in which it is clear that the elimination of the head of state will have only a limited, long-term impact on the socio-political order.

Although heads of state represent what could be considered the crown jewel of political assassinations, lower-ranking political figures also face this threat. In this study, we specifically examined attacks against legislators and vice heads of state. Attacks against the latter are fairly rare and are usually intended to promote highly specific policy changes (related to areas under the responsibility of the vice head of state) or to prevent the vice head of state from inheriting the head of state position. Legislators, on the other hand, are most often victims of civil wars or similar violent domestic clashes in developing countries; in democracies they are almost never targeted.

To illustrate, no less than 34 Iranian legislators were assassinated in 1981, when the new revolutionary regime was consolidating its control over the country. Hence, assassinations of legislators are almost always a result of national-level conflicts rather than local ones, contrary to what some may suspect. Lastly, legislators' assassinations are rarely perpetrated to promote specific policies or to gain access to the political process. In other words, the assassination of legislators should be considered more as acts of

protest against an existing political order than political actions that are intended to promote specific political goals.

One of the unique features of this study, among others, is its focus on assassinations of political figures who are not part of governing platforms. Unlike other types of assassinations, the state is typically a major actor in the assassination in these cases. Consequently, it should not surprise us that opposition leaders are more likely to be targeted in authoritarian systems or in weak democracies, as the political environment in these types of regimes provides a space for the emergence of an opposition while also providing the ruling elites tools and legitimacy for oppressive measures against a “successful” opposition (e.g. Pakistan as well as many Latin American countries). It is also clear that opposition leaders are more vulnerable during violent domestic conflicts, when the number of opportunities, and maybe also the legitimacy, to act against them are on the rise.

Impact of Political Assassinations

The study provides several important insights regarding the impact of political assassinations. In general, political assassinations seem to intensify prospects of a state’s fragmentation and undermine its democratic nature. The latter is usually manifested in a decline in political participation and a disproportionate increase in the strength of the executive branch.

When we looked specifically at different types of assassinations, we were able to find significant variations among them. For example, assassinations of heads of state tend to generate a decline in the democratic nature of a polity and an increase in domestic violence and instability as well as economic prosperity. The latter may sound counterintuitive but could reflect the rise of a more open economic system after the elimination of authoritarian ruler. The assassination of opposition leaders has a limited impact on the nature of a political system, but has the potential to lead to an increase in overall unrest and domestic violence. And assassinations of legislators are often followed by public unrest (illustrated by growing anti-government demonstrations) and

by a decline in the legitimacy of the government.

Policy Implications

This study illustrates that most polities experienced political assassinations at some point in their history. Thus, our ability to improve our understanding of political processes must also include a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of political assassinations. But how can the findings presented in this study help us to understand the potential role of policymakers in the occurrence or prevention of political assassinations?

To begin with, it is evident that governments can promote political and social conditions that may decrease the prospects of political assassinations. For example, while governments in polarized societies sometimes have the tendency to restrict political participation in order to prevent further escalation in intrastate communal relations, our findings indicate that this action will actually increase the probability of political assassinations.

Moreover, in order for electoral processes to become a viable tool for promoting a productive and peaceful political environment, it is clear that they are more effective after ensuring the most intense political grievances have been addressed. Otherwise, electoral competition has the potential to instigate further violence, including the assassinations of political figures. The shaping of stable and regulated succession mechanisms is also highly important, especially in countries that are struggling to construct stable democratic institutions. Interestingly, it seems that while theories of democratization have for a long time prescribed the creation of institutions as a first step to ensure wide representation, followed by stable routines and protocols, the opposite order may be more effective for the promotion of stability and eventually a liberal-democratic environment.

The findings also indicate that more attention needs to be given to the safety of the political leaders during instances of violent domestic clashes or transitions to democracy. Opposition leaders are most vulnerable in the early stages of democratization, so the effort to facilitate a democratic environment

must also include the creation of mechanisms to ensure the safety of opposition leaders. This in turn will enhance the legitimacy of political participation, reduce polarization, and enhance political stability.

Moreover, although civilian victims naturally attract most of the public attention during a civil war, this study highlights the need to evaluate how harm to political figures may be prevented, as this has significant potential to lead to further escalation of a conflict, especially when the assassinated figures are heads of state or opposition leaders.

Lastly, the findings also provide several practical insights for law enforcement. More than half of the assassins (51.3 percent) had been involved in criminal activities prior to the assassination. This may indicate that a group usually prefers one of its veteran members to perform an assassination, probably because of the high stakes involved in these kinds of operations and the relatively high level of operational knowledge necessary to conduct them.

In one extreme example, the leader of the Bangladeshi branch of Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI), Mufti Abdul Hannan, was revealed to have participated actively in the attempted assassination of Sheikh Hasina, the leader of an opposition party in Bangladesh and the former Bangladesh prime minister, in August 2004. Also, because of the particular risks involved in these kinds of operations, groups may prefer to expose members who are already known to law enforcement agencies to conduct an assassination rather than exposing members who are still unknown to law enforcement bodies. (However, this may be problematic since the veteran members are often at higher risk of being under surveillance).

Conclusion

The dearth of research on political assassination represents a crucial oversight, especially considering the frequency of the phenomenon and its implications. Our study highlights the major theoretical and policy implications of assassinations and identifies some promising directions for further research, with the hope that this unique type of political violence will be better understood in the future.

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Britain's Terror Threat from the Levant

By Raffaello Pantucci

ON JANUARY 8, 2014, in the immediate wake of the Paris terrorist attacks, MI5 Director-General Andrew Parker gave his second public speech, during which, among other things, he outlined the nature of the threat that the United Kingdom faces from Syria. As he put it, "Terrorists based in Syria harbour [terrorist] ambitions towards the United Kingdom, trying to direct attacks against our country and exhorting extremists here to act independently."¹ He highlighted how the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has tried to "direct terrorist attacks in the UK and elsewhere from Syria" as well as "seeking through propaganda to provoke individuals in the UK to carry out violent acts here."² He also highlighted how the threat faced was one that comes not only from ISIL extremists, but also "that a group of core al-Qa'ida terrorists in Syria is planning mass casualty attacks against the West."³

So far, there have been five publicly identifiable, alleged plots disrupted in the United Kingdom as well as a number of scares. The alleged plotting dates back to October 14, 2013, when British police in London conducted a series of dramatic arrests to foil what was at the time characterized as a "suspected Islamist terror plot to attack London."⁴ Almost exactly a year later, the trial against the two defendants charged in the wake of the arrests (two other individuals were released without charge) took place, providing Britain with the most detailed look yet into the nature of the threat that Britain's security services see emanating from Syria. Ultimately, one of the men pleaded guilty while the jury could not reach a verdict in the other case. Amplifying the perception of the threat to the United Kingdom, as

the trial was underway, police arrested another group of individuals who stand accused of plotting terrorism,⁵ and the United Kingdom experienced its first reported suicide bomber in Iraq.⁶

This article will examine the current landscape of Islamist terror activity linked to Syria and Iraq in the United Kingdom, examining both recent plotting on the domestic front and the growing role of Britons in Syria and Iraq. It concludes that the lines and links between these two categories of radicalized Britons present a fluid and complicated community that is continuing to produce a steady stream of plots and networks of concern to security services. Both are building on significant challenges that have been extant in the United Kingdom for some time and that were most recently highlighted in a parliamentary report into the May 2013 murder of Lee Rigby by Islamist extremists.⁷ That plot, and the parliamentary investigation, showed the complexity of the lone-actor terrorist threat the United Kingdom faces from both isolated individuals and those already on the radar screen of intelligence services, something that is increasingly also seen among the pool of potential threats emerging from radicalization of Britons in the wake of the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).⁸

The threat from Syria and Iraq is increasingly maturing and following a trajectory that reflects broader trends that have been visible in the United Kingdom for some time. Syria and Iraq and the associated foreign fighter flow is something that British security services expect will occupy their attention for the immediate future.

Mumbai-Style Plot

The trial of Mounir Rarmoul-Bouhadjar, a 26-year-old British national of

1 Andrew Parker, "Terrorism, Technology and Accountability," Address by the Director-General of the Security Service, Andrew Parker, to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Thames House, January 9, 2015.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Justin Davenport, "Police foil 'major Islamist terror plot' after armed raids across London," *The Evening Standard*, October 15, 2013.

5 Patrick Sawyer, Nicola Harley, and Tom Whitehead, "Armed police arrest four men amid fears of Islamist Remembrance Day terror plot," *The Telegraph*, November 7, 2014.

6 Martin Naylor, "Suicide Bomber: report claims Islamic State suicide bomber in Kabir Ahmed, of Normanton, Derby," *Derby Telegraph*, November 10, 2014.

7 "Report on the intelligence relating the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby," Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, November 25, 2014.

8 Ibid.

Algerian descent, and Erol Incedal, a 26-year-old of Turkish origin, opened October 8, 2014, at the Old Bailey. Initially, the trial was to be held in secret with the two defendants listed anonymously as AB and CD, but after a media-led battle in the courts, it was decided that only some of the trial would be held in secret and that the two defendants would be named.⁹ On the eve of the trial, Rarmoul-Bouhadjar pleaded guilty to possessing a “document containing information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism, namely a document entitled ‘Bomb making.’”¹⁰ A second charge of improperly obtaining an identity document was dropped.¹¹ Incedal, on the other hand, fought the case, and after a month long trial a jury was unable to reach a verdict. The judge dismissed the jury and the Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) declared it would seek a retrial.

Much of Incedal’s defense was held behind closed doors, while the prosecution was able to lay its case out publicly. Incedal had been in possession of a Secure Digital card taped to his mobile phone, in which the same bomb-making material that Rarmoul-Bouhadjar owned was saved, labeled “good stuff.” According to expert-witness testimony provided during the trial, the instructions contained in the document would have made an extremely sensitive mix of triacetone triperoxide (TATP). As the witness stated on the stand, the document “generally contains correct information that could be used to produce viable devices. However, it lacks detail and further information might be required.”¹² In a further reference to bomb-making, another file on the memory card stated, “The first rule of bomb-making is that your first mistake will be your last.”¹³

9 *Guardian News and Media Ltd vs AB CD*, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, Case No: 2014/02393CI, judgment handed down June 12, 2014.

10 “Defendant in UK’s first secret trial pleads guilty,” *The Telegraph*, October 9, 2014.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Duncan Gardham, “Terror suspect had ‘reasonable excuse’ for having bomb-making plans,” *The Times*, October 27, 2014.

13 Sean O’Neill, “Armed police hunted Mercedes of terror suspect and blew out tires,” *The Times*, October 15, 2014.

Incedal was born to a Kurdish family in Turkey, where his father, an active communist, died when he was six weeks old. His mother, an Alawite, moved to Britain when Incedal was a year old, leaving her children to join her later in the UK. His older sister joined the Kurdistan Workers’ Party¹⁴ and died fighting alongside the group, while his older brother was later sectioned (taken into a secure mental hospital) under the mental health act. As a young man in the United Kingdom, Incedal was involved in gangs and arrested for attempted theft in October 2001. A year or so later he became religious, and soon afterward was drawn to Tablighi Jamaat,¹⁵ enjoying the brotherhood it provided. He traveled with the group to Greece, India, Bangladesh, and New York, and met his co-defendant Rarmoul-Bouhadjar in Tablighi Jamaat.¹⁶ Sometime in 2011 he became connected to the now-jailed sons of cleric Abu Hamza, Hamza, Sufyan, and Yaasir, with whom he was allegedly planning frauds and armed robberies of post offices.¹⁷ It is not clear what became of these plans.

The prosecution’s case centered on the accusation that the defendants were planning a Mumbai-style attack¹⁸ or possibly a targeted assassination of former Prime Minister Tony Blair.¹⁹ In Skype conversations in which he used the name Fatima Hamoodi to communicate with an individual abroad who called himself Zaynab Alawi, Incedal wrote, “These straps are not the little ones, they are like the ones we have here – y knw k 1122aa shhh etc.” “Straps” was believed to refer to guns (a traditional terminology amongst urban youth in London) and “k 1122aa shhh”

14 In Kurdish, Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK).

15 Tablighi Jamaat is a Muslim movement whose name literally translates as “society for spreading faith” and is an off-shoot of the Deobandi movement in South Asia.

16 Duncan Gardham, “Terror suspect had ‘reasonable excuse’ for having bomb-making plans,” *The Times*, October 27, 2014.

17 Tom Whitehead, “Secret terror trial hears Erol Incedal considered joining forces with Abu Hamza’s sons,” *The Telegraph*, November 3, 2014.

18 This refers to the 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai, India, during which teams of Lashkar-i-Tayyiba attackers assaulted multiple targets in Mumbai using small arms and taking hostages, ultimately killing 164 people (including 10 attackers).

19 Sean O’Neill, “Tony Blair was a ‘terror target,’” *The Times*, October 14, 2014.

to Kalashnikov.²⁰ Later in the Skype conversation the two Skype accounts were recorded discussing, “If they’re able to get these type and it works, may want you to MO 88M 55BAY style,” something the prosecution interpreted as being a reference to the Mumbai attacks of 2008.²¹ However, at the time of their arrests the men were not found in possession of any guns, though they were overheard through a police listening device discussing purchasing one in their car, using the slang “sausage” to refer to a gun and “sauce” for bullets.²²

The plotting around the assassination of Tony Blair was far more circumstantial. Incedal was pulled over under the guise of a traffic stop in September, during which time authorities searched his car. In the process they found a Versace glasses case, which contained one of Tony Blair’s addresses. This same case was then later found at a second flat that Incedal failed to report to authorities when he was arrested. They also found evidence of multiple inhabitants and the computer on which Incedal was talking to someone abroad.²³

At another moment during the trial, the two defendants were overheard seeming to refer to their time in Syria. In a conversation recorded in their vehicle Rarmoul-Bouhadjar was heard saying, “In Syria the weather was . . .” before Incedal interrupts saying, “Wallahi [I swear] it was like minus 20 degrees because we were on a mountain.”²⁴ At another moment while the men were overheard watching extremist videos in which men were shooting, Incedal comments “we used that,” while in another moment Incedal reports that ISIL undertakes a lot of “drive by

20 Tom Whitehead, “Erol Incedal secret terror trial: jury discharged and retrial ordered,” *The Telegraph*, November 11, 2014.

21 Sean O’Neill, “Armed police hunted Mercedes of terror suspect and blew out tires,” *The Times*, October 15, 2014.

22 Victoria Ward, “Secret terror trial hears Erol Incedal used code word ‘sausage’ to buy a gun,” *The Telegraph*, October 16, 2014.

23 Victoria Ward, “Tony and Cherie Blair named in secret terror trial as potential targets,” *The Telegraph*, October 14, 2014.

24 Sean O’Neill and Duncan Gardham, “Terror suspect ‘discussed Syria and buying firearm,’” *The Times*, October 17, 2014.

shootings” that he finds inspiring: “They do it a love bruv. And they’ve got this special like machine Uzi gun like and silence on it – its nuts.”²⁵

It is unclear why the jury returned an inconclusive verdict, though likely the absence of weaponry or a clearly defined plan of attack left some major gaps in the prosecution’s case. It is likely that Incedal’s defense will eventually be revealed, though at this point it is being kept behind the veil of secrecy. The retrial is expected to occur sometime this year.

Targeting of Officials

This is not the only plot that British security services believe they have intercepted. In early October 2014, police arrested five individuals believed to be involved in a plot targeting police officers with a Russian-made Baikal machine gun and ammunition.²⁶ Tarik Hassane, 21, a medical student at university in Sudan; Suhaib Majeed, 20, a physics student at King’s College London; Momen Motasim, 21; and Nyall Hamlett, 24, all stand accused of planning to use the gun and a moped to conduct a drive-by shooting of security officers. A fifth man charged alongside them was accused of supplying the gun.²⁷ The men were believed to be inspired by ISIL and had allegedly downloaded ISIL spokesperson Abu Muhammad al-Adnani’s fatwa calling on followers to launch attacks, taken pictures of police officers, discussed ISIL online, undertaken online reconnaissance of a police station in west London, and pledged allegiance to the group.²⁸ Charged with planning a terrorist attack, the men face trial this year.

More recently, on the eve of the 2014 November 11th Remembrance Day celebrations in the United Kingdom, police arrested a further four men in raids that were believed to be linked

to a plot to target security officials at a public event.²⁹ The main suspect in the case, Yousaf Syed, is a 19-year-old who had his passport canceled after security services believed he tried to travel to Pakistan in 2013 for “terrorist purposes” and then in 2014 attempted to go to Syria.³⁰ On November 20, 2014, three men (Yousaf Syed, Yousaf’s cousin Nadir Ali Sayed, and Haseeb Hamayoon) were charged with plotting to behead a member of the public on the streets of Britain.³¹ The men were reported to have “laughed hysterically” as the charges against them were read out in court and were reported in court to have been inspired by ISIL.³² They also face trial this year.

Reflecting a threat picture that from the security services’ perspective has widened beyond networks of people plotting attacks to include “lone actor” terrorists, police separately arrested 19-year-old Brustchom Ziamani and 18-year-old Kazi Jawad Islam. Both men stand accused of planning to launch attacks against government security forces, though in different ways. Jawad Islam was arrested in east London on August 13, 2014, having reportedly given the order to unknown others to kill a British soldier. In court he was reported to have been overheard saying, “When I give the order I want you to kill a soldier.” He is alleged to have searched for materials to help him produce an improvised explosive device as well as possessed a document entitled “How to Make Semtex.”³³

A Congolese-British convert, Ziamani was also arrested in August in the wake of the release of the ISIL video in which the American reporter James Foley was beheaded. Accused of planning an attack similar to the one against British soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich in May 2013, Ziamani was arrested with a knife and a hammer wrapped

in an Islamic flag in a bag on his back. In presenting Ziamani to the court, the prosecution stated that “he is 19 and of previous good character. He said to (a female teenager) he is going to commit a ... terrorist atrocity either on troops or members of the government.”³⁴ He was further accused of wanting to go to Syria to fight alongside ISIL. Both men are due to stand trial this year.

The lone-actor plot, in particular targeting authorities, has become the heart of the threat that British security services currently see. In early December 2014, a threat believed to have come through social media ignited concern that police officers in Birmingham were to be targeted for attack. One man was arrested as a result.³⁵ This concern escalated further around Christmas with armed police standing guard outside prominent locations in London where formal sentries stand to attention in dress uniform (such as Buckingham Palace or the famous Horseguards Parade), while service personnel were told not to wear their uniforms to and from work.³⁶

Britain’s Levantine Connection Strengthens

This escalating number of plots took place against a backdrop of revelations that British fighters were killed in U.S. airstrikes against Khorasan Group camps near Aleppo on September 23, 2014;³⁷ that a number of Britons died fighting alongside ISIL in Kobane, Syria;³⁸ and that a Briton was involved in a suicide bombing attack alongside the group in Iraq. The suicide bomber was Derby-born Kabir Ahmed, who was revealed to have been previously convicted of hate crimes, and had gone

25 “Terror accused ‘praised jihadist battles in Syria and Iraq,’” *BBC News*, October 15, 2014.

26 Fiona Hamilton and Sean O’Neill, “Terror suspects charged with moped plot to shoot police,” *The Times*, October 18, 2014.

27 Fiona Hamilton and Sean O’Neill, “Terror suspects charged with moped plot to shoot police,” *The Times*, October 18, 2014.

28 Victoria Ward and Nicola Harley, “ISIL terror suspect Tarik Hassane offered place at top UK university,” *The Telegraph*, October 8, 2014.

29 Michael Powell and Duncan Gardham, “Teenage suspect in ‘Poppy terror plot’ tried to travel to Syria six months ago to ‘take part in extremist activity,’” *The Mail on Sunday*, November 8, 2014.

30 Ibid.

31 Martin Evans, “Terror suspects plotted to behead member of the public, court hears,” *The Telegraph*, November 20, 2014.

32 Ibid.

33 “Islam: Teenager Gave ‘Kill Solider’ Order,” *Court News UK*, December 4, 2014.

34 Martin Robinson, “British-born Muslim convert ‘plotted atrocity and had a knife and hammer wrapped in an Islamic flag,’” *Daily Mail*, August 21, 2014.

35 Vikram Dodd, “Man arrested in West Midlands after police warning of security threat,” *The Guardian*, December 9, 2014.

36 Abul Taher and Mark Nichol, “Retreating of the Queen’s Guard: End of an era as palace sentries fall back in face of mounting fears of new ‘lone wolf’ terrorist attack,” *The Mail on Sunday*, December 27, 2014.

37 Secunder Kermani, “Friend of British jihadist Ibrahim Kamara tells of fight,” *BBC Newsnight*, September 25, 2014.

38 Patrick Sawyer and Duncan Gardham, “Portsmouth private school jihadi killed in Syria,” *The Telegraph*, October 25, 2014.

to Syria in 2012.³⁹ Ahmed is the second British suicide bomber to have been publicly revealed as dying in Iraq or Syria, though it is believed more than 30 Britons have died in total during the conflict so far.⁴⁰

Furthermore, British-linked fighters are believed to be rising in the ranks of groups fighting in Syria and Iraq, most prominently in the case of the infamous “Jihadi John,” who is accused of being the executioner in the ISIL beheading videos and separately as the leader of a group called Kateeba al Kawthar. In proscribing the latter group, British Minister James Brokenshire described its leader as an individual with a British accent who is featured in recruitment videos under the name Abu Musab but whose true name was revealed as Rabah Tahari.⁴¹ Tahari’s wife and son were arrested and charged in Birmingham, accused of sending goods to him in Syria.⁴² Ultimately, charges against both of them were dropped, and Tahari is believed to continue to be out of the United Kingdom. All of this presents a worrying picture for security services who are concerned about the fact that British nationals are being radicalized, are fighting alongside numerous different groups, and are taking leadership roles in some cases.

At the same time, the public debate in the United Kingdom has been increasingly colored by and focused on the question of what to do with returning fighters. This debate became livelier with the revelations in early September 2014 that a group of British fighters in Syria contacted researchers at King’s College and asked them to facilitate their return to the UK.⁴³ Other groups of fighters have also allegedly been identified, though it is unclear the degree to which these clusters of individuals are real fighters or are British nationals who went out under the auspices of aid work

and ended up becoming embroiled in the fighting and now find themselves with nowhere to go. The dilemma of what to do with returnees is something that security forces balance against the number of disrupted plots that they have faced. One report to emerge in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris stated that “more than 30 ISIS fighters in the UK have been placed under surveillance by MI5 because they are considered a serious threat” and that “a further 120 who retain ‘extremist’ views but have escaped detailed scrutiny will be reassessed amid fears that they have the firearms training to commit a copycat attack.”⁴⁴

Conclusion

It is not clear whether the plots discussed in this article were directed by foreign groups or networks like ISIL, al-Nusra Front, or the cluster identified as the Khorasan Group on the battlefield in Syria or Iraq. In Incedal’s case, it seems that he was discussing his plans with someone abroad, but in the other cases no evidence of direction from overseas has yet been provided, though clearly the head of MI5 has identified that his service has seen such active plotting. Instead, the publicly identified and detailed plots appear to bear the hallmarks of being inspired by ISIL or potentially loosely linked to individuals with direct experience on the battlefield.

The plots appear to be the product of a fusion of trends, of lone actors and foreign fighters, with some individuals seemingly heeding al-Adnani’s call to “kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be....Do not ask for anyone’s advice and do not seek anyone’s verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling. Both of them are disbelievers.”⁴⁵

Having already experienced the Woolwich incident, in which a pair of radicalized individuals who were longstanding subjects of counterterrorism investigations abruptly decided to run over in a car and brutally butcher an off-duty soldier, British forces are already alert to the possible threat from such small-cell or lone-actor terrorist activity. But given the potential numbers of individuals of concern connected with Syria and Iraq (of whom about 250-300 are believed to have returned home), the threat picture is one that has multiplied significantly.

Distinguishing the fighters who are genuine in their desire to return home to ordinary lives from those who might pose a terrorist threat is a major challenge. However, given the current trend of plots that appear to have loose connections to the battlefield but limited direction, British security forces seem to be dealing with two distinct groups. One group within the United Kingdom seems to be radicalizing and, inspired by narratives that ISIL is broadcasting, is choosing to plot terrorist attacks at home. The other is choosing to go abroad to fight with some possibly returning home to plan attacks. The line between these two groups is unclear, but what does seem clear is that these two parallel trends, and their increasing collision together, will cause major counterterrorism challenges for the next several years at least.

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39 Martin Naylor, “Derby would-be suicide bomber: He is dad Kabir Ahmed with gay-hatred convictions,” *Derby Telegraph*, July 24, 2014.

40 Tom Whitehead, John Bingham, and Sarah Knapton, “Up to 30 British jihadists now dead in Syria but toll will rise with ISIS lure,” *The Telegraph*, October 15, 2014.

41 Hansard Parliamentary record, June 19, 2014.

42 “Tahari: Mum and Son Bailed Over Syria Terrorism Charges,” *Court News UK*, March 17, 2014.

43 Tom Coghlan, “Let us come home, say young British jihadists,” *The Times*, September 5, 2014.

44 Tim Shipman, Richard Kerbaj, Dipesh Gadher, and Tom Harper, “Terror alert over 150 UK jihadists,” *The Sunday Times*, January 11, 2015.

45 Helen Davidson, “ISIS instructs followers to kill Australians and other ‘disbelievers,’” *The Guardian*, September 23, 2014.

German Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq

By Daniel H. Heinke and Jan Raudszus

IN AUGUST 2014, Philip Bergner from the city of Dinslaken in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany, died when he drove a vehicle packed with explosives into a Kurdish military post in Iraq, reportedly killing at least 20 people.¹ He was one of several German suicide attackers fighting for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Numerous German Muslims have traveled to Syria since the war broke out in 2011, many in order to fight. Authorities estimate the current number to be around 600.² This is not the highest per capita number in Europe, but in absolute terms it is a considerable force. According to Hans-Georg Maaßen, head of Germany's federal domestic intelligence service, 60 people from Germany have been killed in Syria and Iraq to date. Around 180 have returned.³

This article assesses what is currently known about the German foreign fighter contingent in Syria and Iraq, who they are, and in what propaganda they are involved. It will also outline the measures German authorities have taken to counter the threat posed by these German fighters.

A Long Line of German Foreign Fighters

Germans and foreigners living in Germany have participated as foreign fighters in many conflicts in the Muslim world. They fought in Afghanistan,⁴ partook in significant numbers in the civil war in Bosnia,⁵ and in smaller

numbers in Chechnya.⁶

There is a personal continuity from these earlier wars. Members of the so-called Multicultural House (MKH), a community in Neu-Ulm in southern Germany, were central to recruitment and logistics for Bosnia and Chechnya.⁷ One of them, Reda Seyam, earned notoriety at that time and remained loyal to the cause even when he moved to Berlin years later. He is said to have subsequently recruited and trafficked fighters to Syria. He reportedly joined ISIL last year, serving as a minister of education first in Mosul and later in the province of Nineveh.⁸ Seyam was reportedly killed in an airstrike in Iraq in December 2014.⁹

The MKH was not the only source of recruits for the global jihad. The al-Quds (later: Taiba) Mosque in Hamburg was the notorious point of departure for the 9/11 attackers. It continued to send potential fighters abroad in more recent years. In 2009 a group of people who had met at the mosque left for Pakistan and those who actually arrived joined al-Qa'ida. In 2010 one of them was arrested by U.S. military forces and held in Afghanistan. During interrogations he confessed to a supposed "Europlot" directed against Germany, the United Kingdom, and France. Subsequently, these countries heightened their security. Several members of this group were sentenced on charges of membership in a terrorist organization when they returned.¹⁰

There was also a low-level stream

ture Direction (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007), p.181.

6 Bruno Schirra, "Erlösender Tod am Kaukasus," *Die Zeit*, November 7, 2002. Bernhard Junginger, "Wird Ulm zur Hochburg des Islamismus?" *Augsburger Allgemeine*, May 24, 2012.

7 "Islamisten aus der schwäbischen Provinz," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, June 21, 2006.

8 Florian Flade, "Deutscher Islamist war ranghohres IS-Mitglied," *Die Welt*, December 16, 2014.

9 Marie Del Haes, Georg Heil, and Volkmar Kabisch, "Von Berlin in den IS-Führungszirkel," *Tagesschau.de*, December 16, 2014.

10 Wolf Schmidt, *Jung, Deutsch, Taliban* (Berlin: Links Christoph Verlag, 2012), pp. 55-82; Guido Steinberg, *Al-Qaidas deutsche Kämpfer: Die Globalisierung des islamistischen Terrorismus* (Hamburg: Korber-Stiftung: 2014), pp. 83-87; and Hanseatisches Oberlandesgericht Hamburg [Higher Regional Court Hamburg], Case No. 3-4/13 OJs 1/12, verdict, February 21, 2014, pp.15-25.

of German foreign fighters to other countries, including Yemen¹¹ and Somalia.¹² However, the war in Syria provided a whole new theater of conflict, which has attracted radicalized Muslims from Germany on a scale previously unseen.

German Foreign Fighters in Syria

The number of Germans immigrating to Syria has risen massively over the past two years. Islamists have tried to recruit German-speaking Muslims in the past,¹³ but now their efforts have grown in both quality and quantity. This is based at least in part on the activities of former members of the now-banned Salafi-jihadi organization Millatu Ibrahim (Abrahams Religion), which formed the nucleus of German foreign fighter activists in Syria.¹⁴

Millatu Ibrahim was founded in November 2011 by Austrian citizen Mohamed Mahmoud (alias Abu Usama al-Gharib) and Denis Cuspert (alias Abu Talha al-Almani). Mahmoud is a former member of the German section of the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), which distributes al-Qa'ida propaganda. For his GIMF activities Mahmoud was convicted and imprisoned in 2007 and released in 2011. Before he joined and became a figurehead in the German jihadi movement, Cuspert left behind a music career as a rapper performing under the name Deso Dogg. He made contact with Reda Seyam and turned from hip-hop to nasheeds praising Usama bin Ladin and denouncing "infidels." The group's name was taken from the book *Millatu Ibrahim* by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, underscoring the group's initial allegiance to al-Maqdisi's thinking. The group organized German jihadists but also served to connect them to the European scene.¹⁵

11 Bill Roggio, "German terrorists pass through Yemen, meet Awlaki, before joining IMU in Pakistan," *The Long War Journal* blog, February 15, 2011.

12 Lars Hallundbaek and Michael Taarnby, *Al Shabaab: The Internationalization of Militant Islamism in Somalia and the Implications for Radicalisation Processes in Europe*, (Danish Ministry of Justice: 2010), p.39.

13 Jörg Diehl and Christoph Sydow, "Islamisten: Die Brüder Chouka," *Der Spiegel*, May 23, 2012.

14 Steinberg, p. 361.

15 Benham Said, *Islamischer Staat. IS-Miliz, al-Qaida und die deutschen Brigaden* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2014), pp.118-125.

1 "Sicherheitskreise: Schon acht deutsche Selbstmordattentäter," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 15, 2014.

2 "Mutmaßlicher IS-Terrorist in Wolfsburg festgenommen," *Die Welt*, January 15, 2015.

3 Manuel Bewader, Florian Flade, and Uwe Müller, "60 Terroristen aus Deutschland für den IS gestorben," *Die Welt*, November 23, 2014.

4 Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), German Edition, p. 281.

5 Michael Taarnby, "Understanding Recruitment of Islamist Terrorist in Europe" in Ranstrop, Magnus (Ed.): *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Fu-*

Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior banned Millatu Ibrahim in May 2012 for its involvement in riots protesting the publication of Mohammed caricatures in media outlets. Mahmoud and Cuspert subsequently left Germany. In March 2014 Mahmoud was arrested in Turkey, most probably on his way to Syria. Cuspert made it to Syria where he apparently made contact with the organization Junud al-Sham (Soldiers of Syria). In April 2014 he announced his allegiance to ISIL.¹⁶ He has become an important linchpin of propaganda activities, starring in several online videos and rumored to be a leading protagonist of these efforts.

After being injured in an airstrike, Cuspert appeared in an hour-long interview that provided significant insight into his thinking. He perceives death as a martyr as the highest goal for Muslims and calls upon them to join him in Syria and take their families with them: "What shall a family do alone in the land of kuffar and you are alone in the Land of honor? I advise you: If you emigrate take your family with you."¹⁷ Cuspert then addresses several questions Muslims in the West may have when contemplating supporting ISIL. He describes life in Syria as comfortable and points out that there is no necessity to fight but one may support ISIL in other ways: "Every grown man with a healthy mind is able to leave. Some might stay behind for religious teaching and missionary work (dawa)."¹⁸

Cuspert postulates that jihad is an obligation and calls it the peak of Islam: "There will be jihad until the day of judgment. Because as long as there is fitna¹⁹ on this world and people who are fighting Islam and not fearing Allah and praying only to him, there will be jihad."²⁰ He concludes that because jihad is an obligation, it is unnecessary to know the Arabic language or a lot

about the religion in order to join the fight, thus undermining some of the reasons potentially voiced by people reluctant to support the jihad actively.

Many people formerly close to Millatu Ibrahim have likely joined ISIL.²¹ In April 2014 a video appeared online that showed Cuspert reciting a nasheed, accompanied by 12 masked and armed German-speaking men singing the chorus.²² He has also appeared in a video posing with mutilated bodies of enemy fighters.²³ The Washington D.C.-based Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) assesses Cuspert as an integral part of the ISIL propaganda effort through its media service al-Hayat.²⁴ The media outlet has published other German language material, including a nasheed by another German²⁵ and a video of a German fighter visiting a hospital in which he urges people to join him in Syria.²⁶ In addition, the ISIL media outlets al-Ghurb²⁷ and al-Hayat²⁸ have also produced some of their publications in German, including the first issue of the ISIL magazine *Dabiq*. This obviously indicates that German speakers are involved in some capacity.

Most German jihadists in Syria have

joined ISIL,²⁹ which is of little surprise since the most prominent German foreign fighters have done so. Because those who actually leave Germany are the most radicalized, ISIL is the logical choice, especially since it already has many German foreign fighters in its ranks.³⁰ According to a media report in the summer of 2014, the Germans in Syria have created their own brigade within ISIL.³¹

Who Are the Jihadists?

We know quite a bit about the demographics of Germans who have traveled to Syria. The current total estimated number of people who have traveled is 600. Of these, security authorities have collected and analyzed data on 378 cases, and produced a study summarizing their analysis.³² Although this data is patchy and not comprehensive in some cases, it is an interesting approximation. While the results are not necessarily surprising, they provide an empirical confirmation of anecdotal reports.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of the travelers are men (89 percent). The average age is 26.5 years and about two-thirds are younger than 26 years. Nearly two-thirds of the travelers were born and raised in Germany. About half of them are married, and 104 have children.³³ Women who travel to Syria are on average three years younger than their male counterparts and are also more likely to be converts.³⁴ There is evidence that some families have taken their children with them to Syria.³⁵

Information about educational level is

16 Said, pp.131-133.

17 A Special Interview with the brother Mujahid Abu Talha Al-Almani: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rm5CQOUrhYo>

18 Ibid.

19 *Fitna* can be translated as a hard test by times that might threaten one's faith. It is also used as a word for internal Islamic wars.

20 A Special Interview with the brother Mujahid Abu Talha Al-Almani: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rm5CQOUrhYo>

21 Said, p.144.

22 German group of fighters from ISIS together with Abu Talha al-Almani are singing a song for Angela Merkel [Eng. subs]: http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=68c_1397923701

23 18+ Brutal Beheading of a Member of the al-Shaitat Tribe with Translation: http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=108_1415124887

24 The Middle East Media Research Institute, "New ISIS Media Company Addresses English, German and French-Speaking Westerners," *MEMRI Jihad & Terrorism Threat Monitor*, June 23, 2014.

25 "The Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Shaam Al-Hayat Media Centre (HMC) presents Mujatweets Episode #1," May 31, 2013: https://archive.org/details/HMC_MJT1

26 German Visiting The Injured: https://ia902503.us.archive.org/24/items/GermanBrotherVisitingTheInjured/German_brother_visiting_the_injured.mp4

27 Shaykh Abu Hammam Bakr bin Abudalziz Al-Thari, "Das Ausstrecken der Hände zur Bayah an al-Baghdadii:" https://archive.org/stream/Das.Ausstrecken.der.Haende.zur.Bayah.an.Al-Baghdadi/Das.Ausstrecken.der.Haende.zur.Bayah.an.Al-Baghdadi_djvu.txt

28 Islamic State News Magazine-Issue 1 (German): <https://archive.org/details/ISNEdition1DE>; HMC Al-Hayat Media Center, Islamic State Report Issue #1 (German): <https://archive.org/details/ISRIssue1FinalPDF>

29 Presentation in Bonn, Claudia Dantschke, Salafism expert, July 2014.

30 Said, p.145.

31 "Immer mehr Deutsche kämpfen in Syrien und Irak," *Die Welt*, June 15, 2014.

32 "Analyse der den deutschen Sicherheitsbehörden vorliegenden Informationen über die Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischen Motiven aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien ausgereist sind" (Analysis by German security authorities of current information on background and radicalization processes of those persons who have left Germany to Syria out of Islamist motivation), December 12, 2014, p.5.

33 Ibid., pp.8-11.

34 Ibid., p.25.

35 Jan Raudszus, "Grüne fordern Verbot von Salafisten-Verein," *Weser-Kurier*, October 24, 2014.

available in less than half of the cases, but of the data available, the study notes that the educational level is below that of the average population. Out of 378 persons, 249 had committed criminal acts before they left the country. Before they turned to Islamism the majority of the offenses were violent acts and offenses against property. During their radicalization, these offenders would commit more so-called politically motivated offenses³⁶ (i.e. criminal acts directed against political or ideological opponents or constituting unlawful support of a political or ideological organization).

Ultimately, while the demographic data in this study are useful and interesting, the diversity across the categories confirms the findings already established in other studies that analyze Islamist homegrown terrorists in the Western world: There is no reliable socio-demographic profile of jihadists.³⁷

While converts gain a lot of media attention and apparently are used by the jihadist groups in Syria for propaganda targeting new, potential German-speaking recruits, they only comprise 18 percent of jihadist travelers to Syria. Importantly, travelers were almost exclusively followers of the Salafist brand of Islam.

The study also provides additional insight into the radicalization process. Of the individuals assessed, 72 percent had some connection to the Salafist scene from the beginning of the radicalization process. The internet as a sole impetus of radicalization was present in only 13 cases. This data indicate that social contacts are a major factor when it comes to the path of radicalization. The percentage of people for whom offline social contacts played no role fell to 3 percent.³⁸ The study concludes that the “self-radicalization by internet” hypothesis is undermined

by the results. In fact, people who were influenced by the internet were more likely to propagate Salafism publically or were noticed by security services.³⁹

The study also contains information on the duration of the radicalization process for 128 persons. Less than half (42 percent) radicalized within 12 months. In only 12 cases do we see three months or fewer between radicalization and traveling to Syria. However, while the majority of cases exceeded 12 months, the average has fallen from 3.3 years to 1.2 years since the war in Syria started. The percentage of those who have been radicalized within a year prior to their leaving has risen from 25 to 50 percent.⁴⁰ The internet had no apparent influence on the speed of the radicalization process.⁴¹

In 196 cases the motivation to travel to Syria was apparently jihadist, with 42 openly stating that they wanted to fight.⁴² About half of the 120 people who have returned to Germany are still active in the extremist scene.⁴³

Government Measures Against Prospective and Returned Fighters

In the face of the growing number of German residents who have traveled to Syria, the government has taken measures to address the problem. Authorities pursue a three-pronged approach.

The first sphere of activity comprises *criminal investigations*, which are conducted when individuals prepare for travel to Syria or Iraq; attempt to recruit fighters or conduct other forms of support for ISIL or another Islamist organization; or actually become involved in such an organization’s activities. All three situations are actionable under German criminal law. Several investigations have been launched by the Federal Prosecutor General and the states’ public prosecution departments, depending on crime and jurisdiction. One 20-year-old fighter who returned to Germany was recently sentenced to three years and nine months of imprisonment under juvenile law after having confessed to

participation in combat for ISIL.⁴⁴

The second approach concerns measures under *administrative law*. These are mostly directed against attempts to leave the country in order to join ISIL or other Islamist organizations, and include provisions such as the withdrawal of passports and other identification documents and the prohibition of leaving the country. Administrative measures also include the obligation to report to a specific police station at regular intervals. Though not watertight, these measures have played an important role in reducing the number of militant Islamists traveling to the Middle East.

A particularly relevant instrument in this context is the possibility of banning organizations that the authorities consider a threat to public security. In early December 2014, the Bremen state authorities outlawed a Salafist group and closed its attached mosque. This group was the first identified as playing a significant role in facilitating recruitment for ISIL in Germany.⁴⁵ Through administrative measures like these, authorities believe it is possible to counter the establishment of radicalization nodes, thus hampering attempts to influence more people. Additionally, the police are prepared to assess the possible threat posed by returned fighters—namely, by monitoring them, if necessary, in cases with insufficient evidence to achieve a criminal conviction. Though some returned fighters may be disillusioned by their experience in the conflict area, others—desensitized by and indoctrinated to accept and support ISIL’s brutal tactics, and still clinging to this ideology—pose a serious menace to the public.

Equally important, though, is the attempt to *counter-radicalization efforts* before they produce a significant impact. The German ministers of the interior both on the national and state levels recently agreed to a coordinated set of prevention and intervention measures directed

36 “Analyse,” pp.11-13.

37 Daniel H. Heinke and Ryan Hunter, “Radicalization of Islamist Terrorists in the Western World,” FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin 80.9 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation: 2011), p. 25-31; Daniel H. Heinke and Ryan Hunter, “Radikalisierung islamistischer Terroristen im Westen,” Die Polizei, 2011, pp. 293-297.

38 “Analyse,” pp.13-16.

39 Ibid., p. 22

40 Ibid., pp.17-18, 27.

41 Ibid., p. 22.

42 Ibid., pp.18-19.

43 Ibid., p.20.

44 “IS-Kämpfer zu mehrjähriger Haft verurteilt,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 5, 2014.

45 Jan Raudszus, “Innensenator verbietet salafistischen Verein,” *Weser-Kurier*, December 6, 2014, p. 1.

Disclaimer: Author Heinke was in charge of the respective investigation.

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against Islamist violent extremism.⁴⁶ With local concepts adjusted to their respective community requirements and coordinated by information centers at the state level, the approach aims to provide information to prevent radicalization, and to utilize proactive social work to take care of people already influenced by jihadist ideology. The goal of this type of approach is to encourage and assist non-governmental organizations in providing low-threshold access to information on Islam in a Western society, thus reducing the influence of jihadist sites with regard to this topic. Several regional non-governmental organizations already provide information and support to families in the attempt to intervene in radicalization processes or even facilitate demobilization of German fighters in Syria, a concept that recently has started spreading internationally.⁴⁷ Additional non-governmental, but government-funded organizations in Germany have been founded lately, and more will likely follow.

These three approaches are complemented by the ongoing monitoring of jihadists by the domestic intelligence services and the police intelligence divisions on the national and state levels.

Conclusion

Germany is a considerable source of Islamist foreign fighters who participate in the war in Syria and Iraq. Most have sworn allegiance to ISIL. They present a clear and present threat to Western societies and, despite the efforts by authorities in Germany, will likely continue to do so for years to come.

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⁴⁶ "Innenminister setzen ein klares Signal: Pegida muss demaskiert werden—Wir wollen ein friedliches Zusammenleben—IMK beschließt außerdem bundesweites Präventionskonzept gegen gewaltbereite Salafisten," Joint Press Release, December 15, 2014.

⁴⁷ Klaus Jansen, "German program triggers international deradicalization network," *Deutsche Welle*, September 3, 2014.

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