

Countering Daesh Propaganda: Action-Oriented Research for Practical Policy Outcomes

February 2016

THE
CARTER CENTER



Countering Daesh Propaganda: Action-Oriented Research for Practical Policy Outcomes

February 2016

THE
CARTER CENTER



One Copenhill
453 Freedom Parkway
Atlanta, GA 30307
(404) 420-5100

www.cartercenter.org

About The Carter Center

The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide. A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, the Center has helped to improve life for people in 80 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; and improving mental health care. Please visit www.cartercenter.org to learn more about The Carter Center.

© 2016 by The Carter Center. All rights reserved.

Contents

Foreword

Ambassador (ret.) Mary Ann Peters4

Introduction

Houda Abadi5

Brand Architecture

“Look, Look; See the Glorious Fighters!": The Visual Persuasion of ISIS and the Fanboys of Terror

David D. Perlmutter9

Visual Images: Distinguishing Daesh’s Internal and External Communication Strategies

Carol Winkler15

Filtering Meta-Narratives: From Global to Local

Aaron Y. Zelin20

Visual Imagery of the Islamic State

Cori E. Dauber24

The Paris Attacks: Terror and Recruitment

Jad Melki and Azza El-Masri28

Engaging With Religion

Religious Diplomacy

Bawa Jain34

Preventing the Synapse: Transmission of Daesh Religious Signals in Search of Receivers

Ebrahim Rasool38

Notes on Religion and Countering Violent Extremism

Muhammad Nuruddeen Lemu43

Grassroots Perspectives: Voices From the Ground

A First-Person Narrative: From Recruiter to Challenger

Mubin Shaikh51

Countering Extremist Propaganda With an Islamic Approach

Manal Omar55

A Dutch Perspective: History, Politics, and Outcomes

Sam Cherribi63

The Settlement House Model of the Arab-American Family Support Center

Ambreen Qureshi72

Kompass–Muslim Youth Education: Empowerment and Prevention Through Education

Misbah Arshad77

HAYAT Germany: A Programmatic Approach

Ava Linea81

Return and Reintegration

Best Practices: Rehabilitating and Reintegrating Foreign Fighters

Rohan Gunaratna84

Nigeria’s Response to Terrorism

Fatima Akilu93

Countering Daesh Recruitment Propaganda Experts Workshop: Participant Biographies97

I Foreword

Daesh, which needs no introduction, currently poses one of the greatest threats to global peace. Daesh has capitalized on conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, including the political vacuum created by failed states, the failure of national governments to address socio-economic grievances, and the increasing alienation of Muslims in the West. An estimated 30,000 citizens from 100 countries have joined Daesh in Syria and Iraq. Libya is increasingly becoming the new destination for foreign fighters. Yet to date, discussions concerning how best to deal with Daesh's violent ideology remain superficial. Increased militarization and the rise of Islamophobia have spread in the wake of this violent group. The debate needs to move beyond military options, and instead, adopt nuanced approaches that will better diminish the allure of Daesh's violent actions and address the emotional appeal that has been attracting foreign fighters.

In the last few months, we have witnessed a series of deadly Daesh attacks outside its controlled territory in Syria and Iraq, targeting Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This marks a new turn in its tactics aimed at diverting attention from its recent battlefield losses and adjusting its military strategies. The first week of July 2016 marked Baghdad's

bloodiest attack since 2003, leaving more than 215 dead. Under pressure and on the defensive, Daesh is intensifying its terrorism campaign by pressuring its followers in the West to carry out attacks in their home countries.

To challenge and defeat Daesh's recruitment propaganda machine, we must adopt nuanced strategies that address the socio-political issues that are critical to the success and operational capabilities of Daesh. At The Carter Center, our mission is to "wage peace" and "build hope." Our initiative to counter Daesh propaganda wages peace by working with grassroots religious and community leaders to provide them with a more nuanced understanding of sophisticated Daesh communication strategies, recommendations to delegitimize Daesh narratives, and effective approaches to engage with alienated youth.

This interdisciplinary guide is a collection of articles written by leading scholars and practitioners who participated in the Carter Center's February 2016 Countering Daesh Experts Workshop. These experts were brought together to identify new approaches to countering Daesh propaganda and to assist governments and religious/community leaders in deterring violent extremism among their youth.

*Ambassador (ret.) Mary Ann Peters
Chief Executive Officer, The Carter Center*

Introduction

Houda Abadi

Associate Director, Conflict Resolution Program, The Carter Center

This report contains articles presented at the Countering Daesh Experts Workshop convened by The Carter Center Feb. 22–24, 2016, in Atlanta, Ga. The workshop brought together 21 leading scholars and practitioners from 10 different countries to discuss Daesh recruitment strategies and its use of social media technologies to appeal to alienated youth. In addition to developing insights into recruitment and social media use, the workshop aimed to develop nuanced counternarratives that engage religious resources, leaders, and institutions in peacebuilding in their local contexts and to promote a deeper understanding of religion in conflict.

The Carter Center’s Approach to Countering Daesh Recruitment Propaganda

Since 2015, the Center has been working to counter Daesh’s recruitment propaganda efforts by undertaking in-depth analysis of its videos, print, and social media publications. The Center has developed a detailed coding methodology allowing for a structured analysis of the range of Daesh’s propaganda and branding efforts. These analytical metrics offer a more nuanced understanding of ways Daesh’s strategies vary by region, race, and language.

The Center is collaborating with media training institutions in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and the United States. In partnership with religious and community leaders, efforts are underway to identify the flaws in Daesh narratives and to develop approaches to discredit

their religious credibility. The Center will assist religious and community leaders in understanding Daesh’s propaganda and in developing ways to counter the Daesh narrative. These efforts will include online and offline activities to raise awareness, social media training, mobilizing youth, and education. Finally, the Center will inform and provide evidence-based recommendations as well as inputs to regional and international government actors for related policy measures and practical approaches to countering Islamophobia.

The project addresses six problems:

1. The increasing use of media for extremist propaganda purposes
2. The information gap on Daesh recruitment strategies
3. The lack of capacity and media resources of religious leaders to discredit Daesh ideology
4. Flaws of existing government measures to address radicalization
5. Women’s roles in prevention and recruitment
6. Return, reintegration, and rehabilitation

The Need for Countering Daesh Recruitment Propaganda

Daesh has capitalized on the political vacuum created by failed states and their inability to address core socio-political grievances. The success of Daesh’s recruiting efforts has become a major challenge for the international community. In its recruitment, Daesh has taken advantage of

young people's feelings of disenfranchisement and marginalization by emphasizing the idyllic notion of "Islamic State" that supposedly addresses Muslim grievances across the globe.

Daesh has developed a modern, technologically savvy brand, enabling its leadership to recruit marginalized youth across borders. For Daesh, the media battlefield is as important as the physical battlefield. The breadth of technology access and rapid communication across social media applications are key components in its recruitment strategy. Increasingly, those countering the Daesh narrative understand the need to tap similar communication mediums to disseminate counter-messages. The development and deployment of well-crafted and localized narratives are critical to countering Daesh recruitment strategies.

Daesh has been systematically misrepresenting religious doctrines and manipulating political grievances to legitimize violence and attract new recruits. Many individuals involved in violent religious extremism lack religious literacy and have no prior connection to Syria. To diminish this trend, radicalization of these youth needs to be understood fully, moving beyond political and religious appeals and looking into Daesh's various branding efforts that have been employed to transcend physical borders.

Daesh's manipulation of religious texts calls for an approach that amplifies the voices of religious leaders. Religious leaders have denounced Daesh and made it clear that their actions and beliefs are un-Islamic. However, they have relied on traditional forms of communication, and as such, have not engaged with marginalized youth. Their response includes nonengaging sermons in classical Arabic, long letters to Al Baghdadi, and responses that do not counter Daesh's main narratives. These responses lack emotional appeal and identification with youth.

Islamophobia and religious violent extremism are two sides of the same coin. With the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment in the West, Daesh creates a perfect breeding ground for recruitment. Both types of extremist ideologies need to be challenged.

Countering Daesh Recruitment Propaganda Experts Workshop

Carter Center workshop discussions centered on the supply of fighters; paths to extremism; and government responses, ranging from security to community engagement models. Academics, practitioners, and policy makers reviewed multiple case studies to illustrate the elasticity of Daesh's appeal with respect to the potential recruit's background, gender, age, culture, or location.

Participants agreed that Daesh-type ideologies will continue to exist under different names, whether it be Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda, or Al Shabab. Furthermore, counterrecruitment measures must engage trusted religious and community leaders. Daesh's use of social media and exploitation of religious texts must be met with countermessages, using the very same communication mediums. However, countermessages must be complemented with "counteroffers" addressing local grievances.

The articles in this guide are organized thematically: Brand Architecture examines Daesh's communication strategies. Engaging With Religion reviews the role of religion in countering violent extremism. Grassroots Perspectives examines factors that may lead to radicalization and the important role of community and religious leaders in countering Daesh. Return and Reintegration offers recommendations on the reintegration of returnees into society. Key findings are summarized in this introduction. The views expressed in the articles of this publication are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Carter Center.

Brand Architecture

In order to promote its brand globally and to expand its caliphate, Daesh has developed an elaborate marketing campaign that utilizes different media platforms to appeal to its intended audience. Daesh highlights the social grievances experienced by marginalized youth, appealing to their emotions and struggles. In order to sustain its campaign and expand its territory, Daesh must

attract fighters, workers, women, and children.

Daesh's communication strategies allow them to recruit foreign fighters as well as maintain the support of their internal audience. Communication efforts differ for each audience and include the use of humor and cultural codes, reappropriation of Western media, tech-savvy videos, and Daesh-created media events distributed through print, visual, and social media.

Daesh utilizes both imagery and graphics for its branding campaign. However, the group relies heavily on visual imagery such as infographics, videos, and images to attract new recruits. Images overcome cultural and linguistic barriers and are more likely to leave a long-lasting impression on a viewer. Daesh has created videos and images that resemble action movies and games, appealing to its younger audience. Youth in traditionally protected environments have access to romanticized Hollywood-style videography, depicting a world with glorified violence, accessible sex slaves, and camaraderie.

Engaging With Religion

The battle against Daesh is a battle of ideologies. While grievances can make a radical cause attractive, misinterpretation of religion is used as a vehicle to justify a call for violent action. The extreme religious rhetoric that Daesh uses is deployed to declare war not only against non-Muslims but also against mainstream Muslims.

The role of religious and community leaders is vital in countering Daesh. Most disaffected youth who have joined Daesh have little religious literacy and no prior connection to Syria, which provides Daesh a blank canvas for their brand of Islam—a “path to jihad” through destruction and desperation. Trust, credibility, and loyalty are qualities that local religious leaders possess in their community; therefore, they are key actors who can effectively counter Daesh's message and manipulation of religious texts.

Recognized religious leaders have strongly condemned Daesh's actions, and they have the power to deradicalize and change Daesh's

narrative. Counterefforts must also include women religious leaders, as women are the gatekeepers of their communities and are essential actors in countering extremism. Additionally, there is a need to confront ignorance, as Islamophobia further fuels extremism.

Grassroots Perspectives: Voices from the Ground

It is important to understand and address the root causes that drive fighters to join Daesh. Social, economic, and political grievances are the main factors that lead to recruitment. Potential recruits often are individuals who have been excluded from their society. Daesh capitalizes on these grievances and offers a space where alienated youth can feel a sense of community and belonging.

Daesh has built a robust infrastructure on nearly every continent, and not just in Syria, Iraq, and Libya, creating a clash of civilizations where the West and the entire Muslim community must confront each other for survival. The Paris attacks committed or claimed by Daesh in November 2015 created a heightened sense of fear and stirred emotions of both Islamophobia and radicalism, further alienating European Muslims living in Western countries.

By emphasizing cultural isolation and the rise of anti-Muslim sentiments, Daesh creates a perfect dichotomy and breeding ground for youth extremism. Gender, as well, is a critical entry point for engaging communities in countering Daesh. Addressing the complexities of gender helps counter Daesh's power on the ground in a more holistic fashion.

Return and Reintegration

Daesh has capitalized on the political vacuum created by failed states to address core socio-political grievances. Yet to date, discussions concerning how best to deal with Daesh's violent ideology have been superficial. The debate needs to move beyond military options and adopt nuanced approaches that will diminish the emotional appeals that have been attracting foreign fighters.

Practitioners who work with defectors and families of radicalized youth urge governments to view returnees as opportunities rather than challenges: They can be a first-hand resource to understand Daesh's ideology and can serve as a powerful voice against violent extremism.

Most governments use quick, short-term solutions in dealing with returnees. This practice has proven to be ineffective in deradicalizing ex-fighters. Long-term solutions must be utilized

in order to fully reintegrate and rehabilitate returnees. Governments, with the help of civil society actors, could provide psychological and societal support through different educational and recreational programs. More importantly, deradicalization efforts cannot succeed without addressing the social and economic grievances that played a role in radicalization.

Keywords: Daesh, countering violent extremism, media, religion, recruitment, reintegration

“Look, Look; See the Glorious Fighters!”: The Visual Persuasion of ISIS and the Fanboys of Terror

David D. Perlmutter

Professor and Dean, Texas Tech University

My interest in the visual propaganda grand strategy and individual persuasion tactics of ISIS has two origins, one dispassionate and scientific and the other intimate and personal.

First, from a research perspective, for 25 years I have studied how institutions, countries, groups, and individuals try to persuade others through visual means (film, video, photos, maps, cartoons, graphics, etc.) and via new modalities of communication such as social media (see Perlmutter, 1998, 1999, 2007, 2011, 2014). ISIS, by any measure, is spectacularly successful in its marketing, especially to the target audience of young males it seeks to recruit to fight and die in its battles in Iraq and Syria and now globally with groups in Libya, Afghanistan, and Nigeria—“pledging allegiance” to ISIS and attacks being carried out in Europe and the United States in its name.

Tens of thousands of such young men, despite obstacles, are giving up literally everything to travel from Saudi Arabia and Toronto, Lebanon and China, to fight under the black flag (Cohen, 2015; Schmitt & Sengupta, 2015). Simply as a case study, the phenomenon is intriguing: Whereas on a 1–10 scale using visuals and social media to convince someone to change his brand of toothpaste might be considered a 2, convincing him to die for you is an 11.

Second, the story of ISIS visual/social media recruiting is written and pictured in the lives of individuals, not just aggregates (Evans & Giroux, 2015). One particular tale illustrated the poignant and horrific to me. A friend of mine is

the president of a university. He is also a respected scientist and one of the most decent, calm, reasonable, intelligent men I know. He is a Muslim, and his parents still live in their native Near Eastern country that borders Syria. Three years ago he went to visit them, taking a country bus. He found himself sitting next to a young man, no more than a boy really, probably 14–16 years old, who was fascinated by a video he was watching on his iPhone.

The boy nudged my friend and said, “Look, look; see the glorious fighters.” It was, of course, an ISIS video showing its combatants riding tanks, blowing up enemy emplacements, firing heavy artillery pieces and machine guns, all to the accompaniment of stirring music and the constant chant, “Allah Akbar!” My university president friend proceeded to lecture this young

Whereas on a 1–10 scale using visuals and social media to convince someone to change his brand of toothpaste might be considered a 2, convincing him to die for you is an 11.

man, making the case emphatically that ISIS was evil, the enemy of all people, and an abomination in the sight of true Muslims. The young man taunted and mocked him, claiming the video was proof that ISIS was not only the “good guys” but exciting and cool to boot. My friend recalls to

this day his frustration at “losing” this argument in front of a bewildered audience. But then, how many of us ever win disputes with even our own teenage children?

The Carter Center meeting on countering Daesh propaganda was revealing of what most people who have been following the ISIS story since its early days know well. Just like every major phenomenon, it is complicated. Among the reasons regularly cited for the rise and success of ISIS—success in propaganda (Kfir, 2015), achieving global prominence (Byman, 2016), and initial exponential growth through combat (Cronin, 2015)—are: The fissuring of Iraq because of the American intervention and the fall of the centralized Saddam Hussein regime

The master truth of understanding the interaction between the brain and visual media: believing is seeing.

(Fishman, 2014); the brutal crackdown by the Assad regime in response to initially peaceful calls for reform and change (Katulis, al-Assad, & Morris, 2015); the terrible drought and desertification of much of eastern Syria (De Châtel, 2014), causing further resource inequities; the rebranding of Saddam’s old guard into a religious movement (Coles & Parker, 2015); anti-Shi’a Iranian sponsorship by Sunnis abroad, including in Saudi Arabia (Crooke, 2015); the Obama administration’s failure to intervene early and decisively to end the Syrian civil war (Kaplan, 2016); and yes, religion—the apocalyptic millenarian brand of Islam that ISIS expounds (or claims to expound).

As causes or influences, the above reasons all have merit, but none can solely explain ISIS and all its attributes. My focus, as a student of political communication in general and persuasion by social, digital, and visual means in particular, is on ISIS’s *visual propaganda*, especially as relates to one of its main target audiences: young men whom it wishes to entice to join ISIS as combatants.

Make no mistake: One overwhelming observation by all the participants in our meeting was that ISIS, at least in the realm of propaganda if not always in battlefield tactics, is one of the most successful persuasion case studies of the modern era. As accounts written just within late 2015 and early 2016 attest, ISIS, despite financing and military failures, is still drawing thousands of recruits who, at least initially, are willing to leave their homes in Toronto, London, Sarajevo, or Beirut and take up arms under the black-and-white flag.

My main argument is one born of my long study of visual persuasion in relation to military recruitment going back to the earliest representational visual images anatomically modern humans created—those of the Paleolithic era (Perlmutter, 1999). I base my research on some fundamental insights of social psychology as well as visual communication. Premier among these is, as I tell my students: The master truth of understanding the interaction between the brain and visual media: *believing is seeing*.

It is the scientific reverse of the popular aphorism “seeing is believing.” In essence, pictures do not affect us as much as we affect what we see and what we think about pictures. To every encounter with a visual image, from a cartoon to a video, we bring a pre-existing set of already-seen imagery and more or less fixed beliefs, attitudes, tastes, sympathies, empathies, inclinations, hypotheses, and theories. We are much more likely to take an image and fit it into what our prejudiced mind already asserts is truth than have an image overturn our believed—sometimes sacred—truths.

Applying this to ISIS persuasion, what any marketing and branding company would do if asked to “sell a product” is, first, identify the target audience (demographics) and second, identify their existing mindset (psychographics). An adept marketing and branding company would conduct a series of surveys and focus groups—generally known as neuromarketing research (Meckl-Sloan, 2015)—and present a detailed report to its client. As Paul Bolls, one of the leading neuromarketing researchers, puts the task: “Marketers first and foremost need to fundamentally understand both the implicit and explicit emotional associations targeted consumers make with their product’s

current design, packaging, and brand messaging.” (Bolls, 2010).

Thus, I would contend that, while there are no doubt cultural differences between an 18-year-old man in Moscow and a similarly aged subject in Nairobi, some of the most important tastes and preferences, and even attitudes and beliefs, cut across national, ethnic, and cultural distances and disparities.

We begin with the sheer breadth of access to information and communications content that almost anyone with a computer—or, more likely, a smart phone—has access to almost anywhere in the world. Yes, individual nations like China and Iran have extensive virtual policing and firewall filters for content they deem objectionable, but trying to stop teenagers from getting access to something online is an almost impossible task anywhere, especially in more open societies. A corollary point worthy of attention by parents and local religious leaders is that this universal access turns upside down the normal instincts of parental and cultural protectiveness. Some parents, for instance—especially those from less educated or more culturally restrictive backgrounds—may still believe that the way to keep their children “safe” or away from “bad influences” is to keep them at home. Most modern parents, though, are at least vaguely aware that the bad influences one can find on an iPhone are far more dangerous than those prowling the local streets or schools.

Next, in terms of actual content, what is a universally popular item of mediated enjoyment? The Hollywood-style action movie, where a hero slaughters innumerable evil enemies, blows up half a city, and wields often absurdly powerful guns, is one that filmmakers know needs little or no cultural translation. A violent action movie, if only breaking even in terms of meeting production and marketing costs in the United States, often makes its profits globally, especially in developing countries (Brook, 2014).

Another escapist fantasy platform that crosses all boundaries, especially for young males, is the first-person-shooter digital game. These include, most notably, Call of Duty, Far Cry, Halo, Battlefield, Half-Life, Red Dead, Counterstrike,

and Arma. They differ widely in the storyline and setting, from the far past to the far future, but all involve the player acting through an avatar, firing weapons, and causing mass destruction, mayhem, and killing. Relevantly, ISIS has masterfully created recruiting videos that mimic the forms of action movies and first-person digital games. At the conference, I presented two examples: the action movie and the first-person-shooter digital game.

Top: ISIS action movie trailer
Bottom: ISIS digital game first-person shooter



It is vital when viewing such imagery to take into account audience and the context of modality. Imagine being a sullen 17-year-old in suburban London—famously, in 2014 it was reported that there were more British citizens signed on to fight for ISIS than there were active-duty soldiers in the British army (Shute & Oliver, 2014). Perhaps you come from immigrant parents whose own culture makes them difficult to communicate with; you feel they and other elders are “stupid” and “don’t respect you.” You may not be materially deprived but you may, like many teenagers, be chafing at the restrictions of your household. You are told by society that to achieve wealth and influence you must put in an

Almost instantly, you can travel to a romantic far-off land and, rather than watch the movie, you can play the starring role. Instead of blowing up virtual tanks and killing avatar enemies, you can ride a tank or fire a machine gun among a band of brothers in thrilling combat for a glorious cause.

incredible amount of work, study hard, and seek the approval of others.

Then, perhaps a “friend” (in person or online) tells you, “Hey, look at these glorious fighters!”, and you watch one of the videos. An alternate reality of your life is now available for projection. You can short-circuit the long, dull, drudgery-laden path your parents and society seem to expect of you. Almost instantly, you can travel to a romantic far-off land and, rather than watch the movie, you can play the starring role. Instead of blowing up virtual tanks and killing avatar enemies, you can ride a tank or fire a machine gun among a band of brothers in thrilling combat for a glorious cause. Moreover, you will be cheered by the ordinary populace and score some sex slaves as additional incentive.

Not a few teenage boys might reply, “Sign me up!” As indeed they have.

It is both an old and a modern romantic fantasy, commonly offered by militaries trying to recruit. ISIS just does it much better—and, I would argue as an American, for a cause that is wholly evil. The reality of being an ISIS fighter in the spring of 2016 may be that you will end up half-starved and diseased or die under American, Iraqi, or Russian bombs, your life thrown away like the proverbial cannon fodder of 19th century armies. But again, try arguing “facts” with your teenage son bent on engaging in some dangerous thrill.

Digital games and action movies sell fantasy and make huge profits, as does ISIS in its own way. So what are the takeaways for governments, secular and religious community leaders, and even parents of the ISIS visual persuasion campaign?

First, most obviously, we need to inculcate an understanding of the new digital social–online world. At the conference, several participants emphasized the need for “media literacy” to be generally taught, and not just in schools. I agree, but I think we have to expand an antiquated

How We Live in the “IDS” Era

Internet + Instant + Interactor

*Everyone can be a producer,
disseminator, receiver*

Blogs, podcasts, YouTube, Twitter,
Facebook, Digital Game MODS, etc.

Digital

Fauxtography, Photoshopping
No “original” photo or document

Satellite

“Live from Ground Zero” – anywhere
to anywhere

“ID” + Self-cast

Expression of inner wants,
needs, ideas, feelings

Personal > Global

Acting out any fantasy virtually

media literacy curriculum that exists in many K–12 schools, if at all, to one that explores the startling revolutions that have occurred, some within recent years, in our online, social media, digital, visual, interactive media world.

One part of this matrix that is absolutely crucial is that audiences do not simply encounter images nowadays without a storm of chatter by those who seek to exploit those images for political purposes. So, in the present case study, we must pay attention to the online fanboys who promote the recruiting message as well as the people who create and consume it.

Second, and somewhat more extensively, we need more directed conversations in vulnerable communities while understanding that no community, even if insular, is truly isolated. Let me give an example from my own activities. For the last decade, I have been honored to collaborate with the Hizmet movement. They are a complicated sisterhood of entities, but basically Hizmet is an alliance of mostly Turkish Muslim groups, inspired by the Turkish religious leader M. Fethullah Gülen, who is as of this writing in political exile in the United States (Gülen, 2010). In brief, the Gülen movement sponsors an incredible number of charities, from math and science schools to interfaith dialogue conferences and publications. Almost half a dozen times in recent years they have asked me to present my work on ISIS persuasion.

Invariably, at these assemblies—conducted in Southwestern and Midwestern cities—the audience would be quite varied, from members of the group and their families to allied professionals and community leaders of other faiths to FBI agents and the curious public. What I saw happen, and was reported to me later as happening, was that the dialogue was both intragroup and intergroup. One mother told me that at her table her son had

mentioned to her that he had watched one of the ISIS videos I was presenting. She promised me that there would be a long conversation on this topic in their home. At another table, religious leaders of different faiths discussed a history of

The basic question of why some individuals fall prey to extremism and willingly give themselves up to a cult of exponential violence is one that is obviously not just academic.

violence in the names of their respective faiths. All to the good, as dialogue is necessary.

In summary, the threat of ISIS is real, if not as substantial as the masterminds of ISIS pretend it to be. I do not particularly think that ISIS is acting in Syria and Iraq with greater evil and destructiveness than, say, the government of Syria or half a dozen groups in the region. But the basic question of why some individuals fall prey to extremism and willingly give themselves up to a cult of exponential violence is one that is obviously not just academic. We in the academy have known for years that big problems require big working groups across disciplines to find a solution. The modern challenge of extremist ideological groups will not be addressed and solved by the leaders of any one faith, any one government, or any one body of research. Hence, The Carter Center gathering should be seen as an introduction to a much bigger project among a much larger interrelated set of communities. The central observation of visual persuasion remains true: To combat images that are deployed to propagate evil, one must study the beliefs that make evil so easily suggestible and not just the technology of distribution.

References

- Bolls, P. "Paul Bolls on the Psychophysiological Assessment of Emotions in Advertising." <http://www.emotiveanalytics.com/emoblog/?p=43>. March 3, 2010. (Retrieved March 12, 2015)
- Brook, T. (Oct. 21, 2014). How the Global Box Office Is Changing Hollywood. BBC. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20130620-is-china-hollywoods-future>
- Byman, D. (2016). ISIS Goes Global. *Foreign Affairs*, 95(2), 76-85
- Cohen, J. (2015). Digital Counterinsurgency. *Foreign Affairs*, 94(6), 52-58
- Coles, I. & Parker, N. (Dec. 11, 2015). How Saddam's Men Help Islamic State Rule. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-islamicstate/>
- Cronin, A. K. (2015). ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group. *Foreign Affairs*, 94(2), 87-98
- Crooke, A. (2015). You Can't Understand ISIS If You Don't Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia. *NPQ: New Perspectives Quarterly*, 32(1), 56-70. doi:10.1111/npqu.11504
- De Châtel, F. (2014). The Role of Drought and Climate Change in the Syrian Uprising: Untangling the Triggers of the Revolution. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50(4), 521. doi:10.1080/00263206.2013.850076
- Evans, B., & Giroux, H. A. (2015). Intolerable Violence. *Symploke*, 23(1-3), 201-223
- Fishman, B. (2014). The Islamic State: A Persistent Threat. Prepared testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, 29
- Gülen, M. Fethullah. (2010). *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*. Paperback
- Kaplan, F. (2016). Obama's Way. *Foreign Affairs*, 95(1), 46
- Katulis, B., al-Assad, S., & Morris, W. (2015). One Year Later: Assessing the Coalition Campaign Against ISIS. *Middle East Policy*, 22(4), 1-21. doi:10.1111/mepo.12154
- Kfir, I. (2015). Social Identity Group and Human (In)security: The Case of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38(4), 233-252. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.997510
- Kulikova, S. V. & D. D. Perlmutter. (2011). "Blogging Down the Dictator? The Kyrgyz Revolution and Samizdat Web Sites." In Eric Freedman & Richard Shafer (eds.), *After the Czars and Commissars: Journalism in Authoritarian Post-Soviet Central Asia*, pp. 263-286. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press
- Meckl-Sloan, C. (2015). Neuroeconomics and Neuromarketing. *International Journal of Business Management and Economic Research*, 6(2), 133-136
- Mielczarek, N. & D. D. Perlmutter. (2014). "Big Pictures and Visual Propaganda: The Lessons of Research on the 'Effects' of Photojournalistic Icons." In Carol K. Winkler & Cori E. Dauber (eds.), *Visual Propaganda and Extremism in the Online Environment*. p. 215-232. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College
- Perlmutter, D. D. (1998). *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Framing Icons of Outrage in International Crises*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood
- Perlmutter, D. D. (1999). *Visions of War: Picturing Warfare From the Stone Age to the Cyberage*. New York: St. Martin's
- Perlmutter, D. D. (2007). *Picturing China in the American Press: The Visual Portrayal of Sino-American Relations in Time Magazine, 1949-1973*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books
- Schmitt, E., & Sengupta, S. (2015). Thousands of Foreigners Enter Syria to Join ISIS; Doubling of Volunteers Shows How Global Efforts Failed to Stop Recruitment. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/27/world/middleeast/thousands-enter-syria-to-join-isis-despite-global-efforts.html?_r=0
- Shute, J. & Oliver, M. (June 25, 2014). Why Britain's Armed Forces Are Shrinking by the Day and Does It Really Matter? *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/10924976/Why-Britains-armed-forces-are-shrinking-by-the-day-and-does-it-really-matter.html>

Visual Images: Distinguishing Daesh's Internal and External Communication Strategies

Carol Winkler

Georgia State University

To maintain and expand its caliphate within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Daesh needs to accomplish multiple objectives simultaneously. It must recruit Muslims to resupply the thousands of fighters lost in its ongoing military campaign. It must attract skilled workers necessary to stand up a functional social infrastructure for territories under its control. It must entice women to join, marry, and have children for the long-term sustainability of the group. It must acquire funds to pay for the salaries and supplies needed for its fighters, families, and social service entities. It needs to effectively subdue its opponents, maintain the loyalty of its own members, defend and expand its territory, and goad opposing leaders into responses useful for encouraging supporters around the globe to become active group members.

In an effort to achieve its multiple objectives, Daesh is implementing a sophisticated, strategic communication campaign comparable to those of many nation states.¹ The group's approach relies on a multilingual, multiplatform propaganda effort that, after the original dissemination of media products, has ubiquitous circulation through social media. Daesh's approach is not uniform across media products, as the group's producers purposefully craft their messages to reach intended target audiences. As a first step toward understanding such nuance, this essay will demonstrate how Daesh distinguishes its media messaging strategy when targeting audiences internal and external to its territories and will conclude by

identifying implications for the crafting of effective response options.

The first 12 issues of Dabiq, the official online magazine of Daesh, serve as the media platform analyzed here for targeting external audiences. Published by Al Hayat Media in Arabic, English, Chinese, French, Russian, and Turkish, among other languages, Dabiq was first released in June 2014 and released its 12th issue in November 2015. The online periodical takes its name from the location specified in a *hadith* for the final battleground for Islam. The first 18 issues of al-Naba, an Arabic-only news magazine Daesh members distribute by hand in the group's controlled territories in Iraq, Syria, and Libya,² will serve as the media platform targeting internal audiences. Named for a chapter in the Quran,

Daesh's approach is not uniform across media products, as the group's producers purposefully craft their messages to reach intended target audiences.

al-Naba released its first issue online on March 31, 2014. Issues 2–9 were not distributed online, but certain pages of those editions have appeared on Telegram. The remaining al-Naba issues in their entirety have been posted online, with the 18th issue appearing first in February 2016.

The most obvious distinction between Daesh's message strategies for targeting internal versus external audiences involves the use of visual images to convey the group's message. On average, each issue of *Dabiq* includes 88 photographs, or a total of more than 1,100 images in the first 12 issues. Conversely, *al-Naba* includes only 18 images on average per issue, for a total of 176 images across the first 18 issues. The relative de-emphasis on visual messaging in the internally targeted publication is consistent with the traditional oral culture of the MENA region. By contrast, the highlighted visual focus in *Dabiq* positions viewers external to the group from a diverse set of language communities to understand the messages in the propaganda.

While many differentiating factors characterize the media products that Daesh aims at internal and external audiences, the remainder of this essay will focus on two prominent areas of distinction.

Each issue of al-Naba typically includes two full-page infographics: one that addresses issues of physical security and the other focusing on topics of psychological security.

Use of Infographics

One obvious difference between Daesh's media content targeting internal and external audiences involves the use of infographics. Infographics are visual elements that display icons, signs, graphics, diagrams, and maps in ways that simplify and summarize information for the viewer. Studies show that infographics make information more likely to attract viewer attention,³ more understandable,⁴ more believable and trusted,⁵ quicker to process,⁶ and more likely to be retained.⁷ Such displays function as stand-alone messages that summarize abstract information to viewers in concrete terms.⁸ Despite their appearance as a transparent vehicle for conveying information, infographics often present embedded persuasive content as if it were factual.

Daesh relies much more heavily on infographics in its publications targeting internal audiences than it does in those aimed at external audiences. In *al-Naba*, 9 percent of the images in the first 18 issues are infographics, with the vast majority appearing as showcased full-page images. In *Dabiq*, less than 1 percent of the online magazine's images in the first 12 issues utilize infographs and, in each case, those cover less than a full page.

For external viewers, the use of infographics in *Dabiq* lacks any clear strategic message. *Dabiq* presents only two infographics, and both of those appear in the first issue. One uses a diagram to visually identify Daesh's enemies through circular cutouts of flags linked to each other by a series of colorful, connecting lines. The other infographic displays the pathway to the caliphate. This graphic stacks a series of five text boxes, ascending from the bottom to the top with the words *hijrah* (immigration), *jama'ah* (group), destabilize *taghut* (destabilizing tyrants), *tamkin* (empowerment), and *khilafah* (caliphate). Upward pointing arrows in each of the stacked text boxes clarify the progression needed for the caliphate. Apparently lacking strategic intent, neither *Dabiq*'s focus on enemy alliances nor the path to the caliphate receives reinforcement through subsequent use of infographics.

By contrast, the infographics in *al-Naba* provide clear strategic messages for Daesh's internal audience. Each issue of *al-Naba* typically includes two full-page infographics: one that addresses issues of physical security and the other focusing on topics of psychological security. These two infographic subgroups are easily distinguishable based on both their content and distinctive design elements.

Infographics in *al-Naba* that focus on topics of physical security work to establish Daesh as a credible entity capable of safeguarding those living within its territories. By providing full-page accounts detailing the number of the suicide bombers, explosions, enemies killed, rockets fired, tanks destroyed, and the like across a range of specific locations,⁹ *al-Naba*'s infographics imply that Daesh's military victories are numerous, widespread, and effective. Heavy reliance on the use of timelines in the infographics invites viewers to see Daesh's military successes as ongoing.

The physical security infographics also work to establish the Daesh media outlets as the most transparent, trustworthy source of information regarding the outcomes of the group's military campaign. By supplying only aggregated counts of various aspects of military victories and by including disclaimers when their data might be open to question, Daesh insulates itself from competing, less flattering accounts of the group's military accomplishments. al-Naba's recurrent use of a standard cache of graphics to represent military victories (e.g., a black silhouette of a soldier carrying a limp body to illustrate the number of enemy killed) establishes a visually consistent and credible set of criteria for evaluating the success of future military operations. Finally, by providing infographics that instruct individuals how to empower themselves (i.e., by giving blood or by seeking alternative shelter during and in the aftermath of enemy airstrikes), al-Naba works to establish Daesh as a concerned, trustworthy partner with the logistical knowledge necessary for ensuring the physical well-being of those under its purview.

The remaining infographics in al-Naba focus on the topic of psychological security. A number of these graphical displays work to discredit all information coming from Daesh's enemies, including Muslim governments allied with Western forces (e.g., Turkey), outside media sources (e.g., satellite broadcasts, the internet, etc.), and rumors spread by ignorant Muslims duped by the externally incited rumor campaigns. Using more textual information and fewer graphics than their physical security counterparts, infographics related to psychological security argue that information from outside sources is false, irrelevant, a mockery of the Muslim faith, or otherwise unworthy of the viewer's attention. Other infographics detail the expansive network and programming of Daesh's multimedia platforms as a reliable, trustworthy alternative, accessible regardless of viewer literacy level.

Like physical security infographics, psychological security graphics work to increase Daesh's credibility as an information source by presenting nonverifiable aggregated numbers related to community (e.g., the amount of alms given by

district), repeated use of logos, and graphical presentations of self-help information to empower the citizenry (e.g., how to avoid getting the swine flu, the basic tenets of Islamic faith observation, and best practices for learning). Taken together, the psychological security infographics position Daesh to be a trusted source of information on religion, health, education, and other common state functions.

About-to-die images appear in three forms: certain death, possible death, and presumed death.

About-to-Die Images

A second distinction between Daesh media targeting internal and external audiences is the use of about-to-die images. About-to-die images show impending death in ways that position them to circulate frequently within the online environment. Such photographs invite viewers to use their imaginations to fill in events before and after the snapped moment of the photograph. They evoke unpredictable emotional responses because individual viewers interpret the events preceding and following the snapped photograph in different ways.¹⁰ While both al-Naba and Dabiq use about-to-die images frequently, the relative amount of emphasis is distinct. Forty-three percent of the images in Dabiq qualify as about-to-die, while a full 63 percent of images in al-Naba employ the visual strategy.

About-to-die images appear in three forms. The first is certain death, where the text accompanying the photograph (albeit tagline or story) verifies the subsequent loss of life. The second is possible death, where impending death appears probable, but the viewer lacks sufficient information to draw any definitive conclusion. The final type is presumed death, where the scenic elements of a photograph suggests that future death is at hand because of the appearance of guns, explosions, bombs, or other incendiary devices.¹¹

Daesh's differential use of about-to-die images for publications targeting internal and external audience is evident both in the distribution and content of the image types. Al-Naba, for

other incendiary devices, invite viewers to imagine who will be targeted in the future. Presumed-death images work to bolster emotional responses from viewers in and outside of Daesh territories, given the possibilities of their future use.

Implications

The subjects in al-Naba's certain-death images show Daesh martyrs shortly before their deaths in an apparent effort to model exemplary behavior of Muslims who join the group. Dabiq's certain-death images, by contrast, display Daesh's enemies just before their executions, which arguably works to inspire fear, anger, or delight, depending on the viewer's perspective.

example, uses approximately half the number of certain-death images as a percentage of its total image count than its externally focused counterpart (3.6 percent of the total number of images for al-Naba versus 7 percent for Dabiq). The subjects in al-Naba's certain-death images show Daesh martyrs shortly before their deaths in an apparent effort to model exemplary behavior of Muslims who join the group. Dabiq's certain-death images, by contrast, display Daesh's enemies just before their executions, which arguably works to inspire fear, anger, or delight, depending on the viewer's perspective.

The percentage of possible-death images is roughly equivalent between the two publications (5 percent for Dabiq versus 6 percent for al-Naba), with each periodical using Daesh's enemies as photo subjects. The possible-death images serve a disciplinary function for both internal and external audiences by showing the consequences of failing to pledge allegiance to the Daesh cause. The percentage of presumed-death images are slightly higher for publications targeting internal audiences (91 percent in al-Naba versus 87 percent in Dabiq). Scenic elements, such as guns, bombs, and

- *Effective response options must consider Daesh's target audiences.* Daesh's textual and visual message strategies in print publications differ based on the targeting of internal or external audiences or even subgroups of those two groups. Unique content and design/formal elements of publications targeting particular audiences should be analyzed and incorporated into the production of competing message campaigns.
- *Daesh's internal and external message strategies are suggestive for effective response options.* Use of visual images in limited quantities and use of infographics (or other efficient summaries) appear to attract young audiences from the MENA region interested in joining Daesh. More extensive use of visual images, however, appears fruitful when targeting potential Muslim recruits around the globe
- *Strategic responses to Daesh's infographics should consider the multipurpose functions of the propaganda form.* Rather than simply contradicting data summarized in Daesh's infographics (e.g., military successes, religious guidelines for serving as a good Muslim, or availability of media programming), effective responses need to address why Daesh is not a credible source of military, medical, logistical, educational, religious, or other information and why alternative sources can and should be trusted more.
- *Avoiding use of Daesh's about-to-die images in media coverage and response campaigns is needed.* While traditional media outlets frequently portray about-to-die images to attract viewers, one non-Daesh media outlet has replaced about-to-die images with a full black screen with small white text announcing Daesh killings and offering regrets to family and friends of the executed individual. Such an approach avoids

magnifying Daesh's media campaign without further provoking intense emotional responses.

- *Daesh's differential use of about-to-die image types for internal and external audiences provides opportunities for effective message response.* Reporting certain deaths of Daesh members through means other than martyrdom operations undercuts the

Daesh visual narrative that their members who die in their operations will have preferable afterlives. Further, message strategies emphasizing security and hope, rather than violence and death, convey the needed message that positive alternatives await those who choose not to join Daesh.

1 Alex P. Schmid, Challenging the Narrative of the Islamic State (working paper, The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2015), 1. <http://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ICCT-Schmid-Challenging-the-Narrative-of-the-Islamic-State-June2015.pdf>. Confidential U.S. intelligence assessments; Neville Bolt, *The Violent Image: Insurgent Propaganda and the New Revolutionaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 50

2 Information regarding the distribution of al-Naba was drawn from photo taglines showcasing Daesh members handing out the news magazine Telegram.

3 James D. Kelly, The Effects of Display Format and Data Density on Time Spent Reading Statistics in Text, Tables, and Graphics. *Journalism Quarterly*, 70.1(1993): 140-149

4 Sandra H. Utt and Steve Pasternak, "Update on Infographics in American Newspapers." *Newspaper Research Journal*. 21.2 (2000): 55-66

5 Christopher Toth, "Revisiting a Genre: Teaching Infographics in Business and Professional Communication Courses," *Business Communication Quarterly*, 76.4 (2013): 446-457

6 Becky K. Peterson, "Tables and Graphics Improve Reader Performance and Reader Reaction," *Journal of Business Communication*, 20 (1983): 47-55

7 Mark Snicklas, *The Power of Infographics: Using Pictures to Communicate and Connect With Your Audiences*, New York: Pearson, 2012

8 Toth, p. 448

9 The infographics in al-Naba include summaries of military successes in Ramadi, Sinai, Diyali, Mahin, Faluja, Khanasser, Tunisia, Dawwa, Damascus, Bangladesh, and West Africa.

10 Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010

11 Zelizer, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*

Filtering Meta-Narratives: From Global to Local

Aaron Y. Zelin

Washington Institute for Near East Policy; International Center
for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence

The Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIS, ISIL, and Daesh) provides an unprecedented amount of documentation on its own nature and the messages it hopes will inspire others to join in IS territory or to conduct terrorist attacks in one's home country.

The Islamic State contends that its leaders and members are the only people truly following the original interpretation and practice of Islam.

This paper hopes to shed light on the ways IS transforms its broader meta-narratives into a local message. It will examine three of IS's meta-narratives and provide two case studies on how IS filters these ideas to a local context; in particular, looking at Tunisia and Saudi Arabia. This filtering allows IS to shape its message based on local ideas and conditions that will resonate most strongly in a particular location. It also illustrates the elasticity in IS's ideas, giving insights into why it has become so potent at recruiting individuals from all backgrounds, cultures, and regions of the world.

Top Meta-Narratives

In its messaging, the Islamic State deploys four overarching arguments: 1) the war against Islam, 2) winning [on the battlefield], 3) the caliphate state-building project, and 4) the imminent apocalypse.

First, the Islamic State contends that its leaders and members are the only people truly following the original interpretation and practice of Islam from the time of the Muslim prophet Muhammad and the *sahaba* (Muhammad's companions). Therefore, IS is protecting Islam from a series of enemies that are attempting to destroy it. In no particular order, IS claims these groups of entities are un-Islamic and must be fought to preserve Islam: *rawafidh* (a derogatory term for Shi'a); *nusayris* (a derogatory term for Alawites); *taghut* (tyrants), a term to describe Sunni leaders, whom they view as apostates; *munafiqin* (hypocrites), a term to describe Muslims that do not live up to their religion in the eyes of IS; *murtadin* (apostates), those who have left Islam (since IS has a very narrow definition of Islam, this encompasses many ordinary Muslims); and *sahawat* (awakening), a term that originally referred to the tribal awakening in Iraq against IS's predecessor organization last decade. Further, it has taken on the symbol of any Sunni insurgent faction that goes against IS on the battlefield: *silibiyyin* (crusaders), a reference to Western countries; and *sahyuniyyin* (Zionists), a reference to Israel.

Secondly, the Islamic State displays itself in its propaganda as always winning battles and never admitting when there have been setbacks. Part of this argument is imbued through the slogan it has used, *baqiya wa tatamaddad* (remaining and expanding). The idea originated from a speech by Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi, the leader after the announcement of IS of Iraq (ISI) in October 2006.

In Abu 'Umar's April 17, 2007, speech, which assessed ISI's *jihad* (religious military struggle) after four years of fighting the Americans in Iraq, he concluded with a series of statements that started with *baqiya* that began by saying *wa ina dawla al-islam baqiya* (verily, the Islamic State remains).¹ The exact words were later cited by ISI's official spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, in an Aug. 7, 2011, speech to attempt to convince the troops to remain positive since ISI had been weakened so greatly by the tribal awakening and the American military surge of troops in the prior four years.² From that point on, the term *baqiya* became a rallying cry for its fighters and supporters. The Islamic State and its supporters only later added the term *tatamaddad* after ISI's successor entities, ISIS and IS, began to retake territory in 2013–2014.

The state-building project of IS began to come more into focus after the leader of IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, formally announced the caliphate in his July 2, 2014, speech to usher in Ramadan for that year.³ In it, he said, "We make a special call to the 'ulama (religious scholars), *fuqaha* (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), and *da'i* (callers), especially the judges; as well as people with military, administrative, and service expertise and medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields. We call them and remind them to fear God, for their emigration is *wajib 'ayni* (an individual obligation), so that they can answer the dire need of the Muslims for them."⁴ This call to service highlighted how IS began to bureaucratize and systematize its state-building infrastructure, which it would then show off in its media to illustrate how it was taking care of the affairs of IS and daily lives of its *ri'aya* (subjects).⁵

Lastly, the Islamic State has pushed the idea and importance of the coming apocalypse. One of its main points is related to one of the end-times battles between good and evil (Muslims and the unbelievers) that will take place at Dabiq, a city in northern Syria. IS hopes that the West—or in their vernacular, the crusaders—takes the bait and fight them there to prove the truth of the prophecy. This battle, according to IS, will then bring about the events that will lead to the Day of Judgment where Muslims will be victorious. IS

has even named its English-language magazine after the town of Dabiq. Many of the end-times prophecies are supposed to play out in Syria and the Levant in general, which gives them extra potency.⁶

Since some of these arguments are more relevant to IS's core territory in Iraq and Syria, not all of these messages are fully relevant when distilled for other local audiences for recruitment and inspiration. For instance, IS's governing capabilities are really only on display in Libya, while the apocalyptic messages also have resonance in Afghanistan and Yemen. That said, the war-against-Islam angle works in all cases, allowing IS to discuss its winning under multiple circumstances rather than in a traditional military sense only.

Many of the end-times prophecies are supposed to play out in Syria and the Levant in general, which gives them extra potency.

Messaging in Tunisia

The first two talking points of IS's messaging can be applied to Tunisia. In the Islamic State's first video message directed at Tunisia in mid-December 2014, Abu Muhammad al-Tunisi, a Tunisian foreign fighter based in al-Raqqa, Syria, explained how the *murtadin* leaders of Tunisia oppress Muslims.⁷ This perception is a result of state policies going back to Tunisia's independence when the first president of country, Habib Bourguiba, made a series of legal reforms that pushed Islam to private life. In 1963, he even drank orange juice on live television during Ramadan, the holiest month of the year for Muslims, in which they fast from dawn until dusk. IS, along with many other Islamists, believe that Bourguiba and his successor, Zayn al-'Abidin Bin 'Ali, destroyed and distorted Islam.

In the aftermath of the Sousse beach attack in mid-July 2015, Muhammad al-Baji Qa'id al-Sibsi, the current Tunisian president and leader of the conservative secular party Nida Tunis, said that

Tunisia would never become an Islamic state. In response, an IS-fronted media foundation, Ajnad al-Khilafah bi-Ifriqiyah, retorted by saying, “Those who try to substitute earthly laws for the *shari’a* (Islamic law) are unbelievers who must be killed, illustrating that IS does not take such words lightly.”⁸ Similarly, IS takes issue with the mainstream Islamist political party al-Nahdah, which it sees as giving up on implementing *shari’a* and, therefore, betraying its origins and true aims. The Islamic State also views this giving up as a process of the Christians and Jews co-opting them. It has also argued that this proves that democracy is not a proper vehicle for making true change in society that will bring Islam back to glory; instead one must undertake *jihād*. As Abu Mus’ab al-Tunisi noted in a late January 2016 video message, IS Tunisian members will return and rule Tunisia with *shari’a*.⁹

The Islamic State still views Saudi as directing a war against “true” Islam.

Lastly, the Islamic State even goes after Al-Qaeda and its branch in that region, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghrib (AQIM). It has argued that AQIM has hidden the truth of caliphate and no longer truly follows *shari’a*.¹⁰ All this highlights how—depending on the particular party or faction and even level of religiosity of engagement in prior terrorism—all elements together, according to IS, are conspiring against Islam in an ultimate war.

While the Islamic State has not taken over territory in Tunisia, it has been involved in the deadliest terrorist attacks in the country’s history and is part of the “we are winning” narrative. IS unsuccessfully attempted to conquer the town of Bin Gardan, which is close to the Libyan border to try to make a territorial strip that stretches from there to Sabratha, Libya, a town on the other side of the border. Sabratha is also where IS has based one of its training camps, which includes a number of Tunisian foreign fighters in Libya.

Besides the recent attempted takeover of Bin Gardan, IS has taken responsibility for the

assassination of two Tunisian leftist politicians who were assassinated in early and mid-2013. It also was involved in the 2015 spectacular attacks at the Bardo Museum in Tunis and a beach resort in Sousse, along with smaller, less-reported attacks in the interior of the country on the Tunisian military and police.¹¹ In addition to the Islamic State’s perceived successes, Tunisians represent the highest number per capita of foreign nationals fighting with IS in Iraq/Syria and Libya, up to 6,000 in the former and up to 2,000 in the latter. This showcases the potential projection of power back into Tunisia if IS attempted to exert more activity there.

Messaging in Saudi Arabia

Like Tunisia, Saudi Arabia lies next to a country in which there is an active war zone—Libya for Tunisia and Yemen for Saudi Arabia. Similarly, the first two IS narratives are applicable in this case. Regarding the war against Islam, IS has much to say about Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi Arabia is known for its austere interpretations of Islam, through the teachings of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahab, IS still views Saudi as directing a war against “true” Islam.¹² On the political front, the Islamic State argues that Saudi’s involvement in the coalition bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria against IS exemplifies how Saudi Arabia is fighting Islam not only intellectually but also militarily.¹³

In terms of religious arguments, in a video message in mid-December 2015, a Saudi member of IS based in Anbar province, Iraq, claimed that Saudi Arabia had strayed away from implementing the *hudud* (fixed Quranic and Hadith penalties) within *shari’a*.¹⁴ Moreover, IS called out Saudi Arabia for its hypocrisy in the ways it talks about and relates to Shi’a. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia describes the Huthis in Yemen, a Zaydi Shi’a revivalist movement, as infidels, while on the other, it calls for respect and unity with the Shi’a of eastern Saudi Arabia.¹⁵ Further, IS explains that Saudi Arabia accommodates the practice of Shi’a Islam and the practice of *ashura* within its own borders. IS does this to undermine Saudi Arabia’s Islamic legitimacy and to illustrate that it is the only true bearer of Islam.

Likewise, IS criticizes the interfaith efforts that were started under King ‘Abd al ‘Aziz, which contravenes the Salafi ideas of *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* (loyalty [to the Muslims] and disavowal [of the unbelievers]).¹⁶ Lastly, IS directs its ire at average Muslims from Saudi Arabia—calling them out for a lack of manliness or tribal pride—explaining that in the land of the revelations of Islam, the people are asleep and not fighting for Islam while European Muslims are joining up in droves and helping out the inchoate caliphate.¹⁷ From all of this, IS argues that it is the true heir of the legacy of the original Saudi Islamic State founded with Wahab in the late 18th century.¹⁸

To remedy these issues, IS has since the fall of 2014 conducted what it describes as qualitative military operations against Shi’a, Saudi security forces, and Westerners inside Saudi Arabia. These operations allow it to claim that it is winning on the battlefield because it is opening up the battle and forcing the Saudi state to choose sides. Further, this highlights Saudi hypocrisies related to its public practice and implementation of Islam. By mid-February 2016, according to an IS-front media group, al-Yaqin Media Center, IS conducted nine attacks inside Saudi Arabia.¹⁹ The majority of those targets were against Saudi Shi’a.²⁰

In addition to its attacks inside of Saudi Arabia, IS members from Saudi Arabia based in Iraq, Libya, Sinai Peninsula, Syria, and Yemen—which encompass a few thousand individuals—boast about how they are training to come back home and return the land of the two holy places of Islam (Mecca and Medina) to show intent and also as a way to motivate others to join with the cause and fight against the *taghut* Saudi government.

Conclusion

Showing how the Islamic State manipulates its broader meta-narratives to local environments highlights its flexibility—ways it is able to appeal to those in many locations by focusing on both general ideas with which people are familiar as well as societal debates and ideas people have been exposed to in a particular locale. While this paper only provided examples from Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, this could be equally applied to countries from France, Bosnia, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Malaysia to China. It shows not only the potency with which the Islamic State pushes its messaging but also how effectively it has packaged it to varying audiences with completely different histories and backgrounds.

1 Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi, “Hasad al-sinayn bi-dawla al-muwahidin,” al-Furqan Media, April 17, 2007

2 Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, “Ina dawlat al-islam baqiya,” al-Furqan Media, Aug. 7, 2011

3 To see the evolution and history in IS’s state-building enterprise, see Aaron Y. Zelin, “Experts weigh in (part 3): Is ISIS good at governing?,” Brookings Institution, Feb. 9, 2016. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2016/02/09-experts-weigh-in-isis-governance-zelin-mccants>

4 Abu Bakr al-Hussayni al-Qurayshi al-Baghdadi, “Risalat ila al-mujahidin wa-l-ummah al-islamiyyah fi shuhri ramadan,” al-Furqan Media, July 2, 2014

5 For more on how IS governs, see Aaron Y. Zelin, “The Islamic State’s Territorial Methodology,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Research Notes 29, January 2016. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-territorial-methodology>

6 For more on the apocalyptic ideas and messaging that IS uses, see William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015

7 The Islamic State, “Risala ila ahl tunis,” al-Itisam Media, Dec. 17, 2014

8 Ajnad al-Khilafah bi-Ifiqiyyah Media Foundation, “Hadha biyyan li-l-nas”

9 The Islamic State, “Bilad al-maghrib al-islami: mardin al-jadidah,” Wilayat al-Barakah Media Office, Jan. 21, 2016

10 The Islamic State, “al-Haqq bi-l-rakab,” Wilayat al-Jaza’ir Media Office, Jan. 20, 2016; The Islamic State, “Alaykum ya bini qawmi: risala,” Wilayat Hims Media Office, Jan. 20, 2016

11 The Islamic State, “al-Amaliyat al-amaniyyah fi tunis,” al-Naba newsletter, Issue #7, Nov. 28, 2015

12 For more on comparing the ideology of Saudi Arabia and IS, see Cole Bunzel, “The Kingdom and the Caliphate: Duel of the Islamic States,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Feb. 18, 2016. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/02/18/kingdom-and-caliphate-duel-of-islamic-states/iu4w>

13 The Islamic State, “Qal ini ‘ala bayyinah min rabi,” Wilayat Salah al-Din Media Office, Dec. 16, 2015

14 The Islamic State, “Ikhraju al-mushrikin min al-jazirah al-arab,” Wilayat al-Anbar Media Office, Dec. 17, 2015

15 The Islamic State, “Aal al-salut: al-wala’ wa-l-bara’,” Wilayat al-Janub Media Office, Dec. 17, 2015

16 The Islamic State, “al-Bakhr al-khabithah fi bilad al-haramayn al-asirah,” Wilayat al-Khayr Media Office, Dec. 19, 2015

17 Ibid

18 The Islamic State, “Wa-ina ghadan al-nadharahu qarib,” Wilayat al-Barakah Media Office, Dec. 18, 2015

19 The Islamic State, “Amaliyat al-dawlah al-islamiyyah fi bilad al-haramayn hata 5-7-1437 H,” al-Yaqin Media Center, Feb. 16, 2016

20 For more on why IS chooses to target Saudi Shi’a, see Aaron Y. Zelin, “The Islamic State’s Saudi Chess Match,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch 2432, June 2, 2015. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-saudi-chess-match>

Visual Imagery of the Islamic State

Cori E. Dauber

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The so-called Islamic State (IS), or Daesh, produces an astonishing amount of propaganda materials on a regular, systematized basis.¹ A large percentage of these materials include visual images of some kind. It would be an enormous mistake to attempt to analyze the propaganda of IS without incorporating an analysis of the way their visuals work: The weight of research in multiple academic disciplines (including communication, journalism,

be confronting serious ethical issues, if only for the amount of these materials many of us tend to expose students to in our classes.

Rather, it is a claim that the process of radicalization is a complex one, as yet only incompletely understood. Given how much research has clearly demonstrated images to be extremely powerful, the amount of effort these groups put into their production—and the fact that in virtually every case where someone has been arrested for participation in terrorist violence in Western nations (or conspiracy to commit such acts) these videos have been in their possession—it makes sense to treat these materials as one element contributing to this process. That is more than enough to justify analyzing the visuals produced by IS, particularly their videos—the more since analysis of the text alone when there is a strong visual presence will often produce a distorted analytic result.³

The process of radicalization is a complex one, as yet only incompletely understood.

and mass communication; advertising; psychology; and film and cinema) over many years makes clear that in many contexts the image may well be more powerful than the word.² It is the image that is more likely to draw a viewer's attention, that produces more accurate and longer-lasting recall, and that is processed more rapidly, perhaps because it is more visceral, more emotional.

A Complex Process

To be clear, this is not a claim of causality. It is not the case that someone who watches propaganda videos produced by IS (or any other group), even a large number of videos, becomes radicalized—much less radicalized to the point of violence. Indeed, were that the case, most of us doing this kind of research would not only likely have been radicalized ourselves, we would

Multiple Factors

IS videos must be analyzed for, as has often been noted, they are a generation ahead of every other terrorist group in this area. Effective counter-radicalization will require understanding what drives the persuasive power of these materials. In particular, it is counterproductive in the extreme to look for the singular counternarrative. There will be no such thing, because there is no singular narrative structure in these materials, and never has been.⁴

Furthermore, when looking at the materials produced by IS, there is not a simple question of

an overall difference in vaguely defined “production values” relative to other groups. It is far more complicated than that.

Every aspect of these videos embeds information that must be understood if effective counternarratives are to be developed.

- First, all the elements of composition, lighting, editing, camera angles, special effects, and so forth are used to powerful rhetorical effect.⁵
- Second, visual arguments (arguments that are made implicitly through the imagery) will be more powerful, not less, because while they are there and will have persuasive force, viewers who are not specifically trained to unpack visual materials will not necessarily understand how or why the material is persuasive. That which is argumentatively implicit is much more difficult to stand up against as a viewer.

For example, when the subjective or first-person camera angle is used, putting the viewer directly into the scene and allowing them to imagine themselves in the Islamic State, the effect is a powerful one, but viewers who do not recognize the nature of that camera angle or why it is being used are much less likely to see it as strategically deployed as a mechanism, as artifice. Similarly, if the scene is a well-stocked store, with shelves and bins full to overflowing with fresh produce, meat, and luxury items such as soda, the naïve viewer will not necessarily be aware that the argument being made implicitly (“there is plenty to eat in the Islamic State”) is, in fact, being carefully constructed in order to persuade him or her that this is not something that just “happens.”

Having made a number of videos that appeal to the quality of life in the Islamic State for families, IS is now releasing videos one might call the “Day in the Life” series. These videos purport to take viewers behind the scenes of the most banal aspects of administration and governance in the state—following the traffic police, or fire and rescue, or food inspection services on what is presumably a typical day. These videos, too, make carefully constructed and implicit arguments about the nature of life in the Islamic State: that it is peaceful, orderly, and normal.⁶ These arguments, which are central to IS’s establishing its

legitimacy, are central to its persuasive campaign. They are also central to its theological campaign, because if IS is, in fact, a state, established, with real control over its territory, then those who already are in agreement with its theological position are obligated to concede its demand for obedience and to immigrate to territory it controls.⁷

Effective counterradicalization will require understanding what drives the persuasive power of these materials. In particular, it is counterproductive in the extreme to look for the singular counternarrative.

Government Responses

The problem in responding to these videos, and others like them, is that government-run programs to do so have been utter failures, judging by the numbers who continue to immigrate to IS-controlled territory in order to join the organization. This is no surprise if one considers the American program, run by the U.S. Department of State. Called “Think Again, Turn Away,” it has been managed by the now-defunct Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications and has been recently, mercifully, terminated. (For some reason the Twitter account, at least the English language version, continues, so perhaps rumors of the program’s demise are exaggerated.)

There were never nearly enough U.S. videos produced to compete, just in sheer quantity of output, with ISIS. On every measurable level, a qualitative comparison would, by far, have favored the terrorists: graphics, images, and editing. Every element of production made the U.S. government’s videos look amateur by comparison. And just to make sure no one missed the point, many of the State Department videos featured long clips of IS videos.⁸ It was embarrassing. Even when the videos were professionally produced—when all the State Department was doing was reposting, for

example, network news pieces—they would make sure to downgrade the quality by superimposing graphics far worse than anything IS was doing.⁹

There is no intrinsic reason why only terrorists can produce high-quality videos. Look, for example, at the beautifully produced video, “Happy British Muslims.”¹⁰ This was not professionally shot or produced, and there is no reason to believe it took a particularly large budget.

Evaluation

The question then is, “How can Islamic State videos be properly evaluated so that we can begin to understand their persuasive power and the role visual images play in making them persuasive—and thus begin to develop effective counters?” It helps to ask a series of questions as part of an iterative process in order to build an understanding of what drives any given video. This is an attempt to quickly walk the reader through a complicated process.

- **What language is the video in?** This actually is a more complicated question than it might seem at first blush. There is the language spoken by those in whatever scene is shown on camera. There is the language of any narration. There is the language of any subtitles—and there are often several, sometimes in several different alphabets. What is important to keep in mind is that the language is important—but not definitive—because it’s a clue pointing toward the real question: What audience is the video intended for?

Consider English-language commercials.

Though all in English, TV commercials for mothers may sell toys for infants, for teenage boys may sell first-person shooter video games, or for older men may sell hair loss cures. All are targeted to specific audiences, and what is meant for one group will not be particularly effective on another.

- **What argument is being made?** This is another clue toward determining the audience. If you look at the arguments made in many of the English-language atrocity videos, it is doubtful their primary purpose is recruiting: They are

designed to shock, horrify, even terrify, mainstream Western audiences. Though it is also in English, the video “Eid Greetings,”¹¹ given its arguments about how wonderful it is for Muslims to live in dignity without the corrupting influence of the *kuffar*, is probably not meant for a mainstream audience. It is intended to recruit Muslims living in the West. Many of the speakers explicitly appeal to the viewer to come live in the new state.

- **How are compositional elements used?** For example, how are camera angles used in the video? It is a truism in this type of analysis that filming something from below will make it look larger, more imposing, more authoritative—possibly more frightening. By the same token, filming from above will make a subject look smaller, less threatening, and more vulnerable. The type of camera used can be just as important. A hand-held camera provides a “first person” angle that gives the viewer an immersive perspective. A drone gives a “God’s eye” view that can be used in a number of different ways, and so on. Are subjects lit in warm light, making them look happy, friendly, attractive? Or is the lighting darker, more oppressive, giving the scene a claustrophobic, threatening feel? How are special effects used? Are they obvious—such as using a color filter over the entire scene or superimposing video game-like effects? Or subtle, such as using slow motion for just a few seconds in sync with the music? Is the editing done so seamlessly that it isn’t apparent? Or so poorly that it draws attention to itself and detracts from the overall message of the video?
- **Symbolology:** For an analyst who is not a Muslim—or who is Muslim but is not Salafist—this aspect of analysis poses the most risk. However, it cannot be avoided, particularly when dealing with the Islamic State: Their shots are too carefully composed and, in most cases, the symbolism too rich. It is absolutely essential to have a guide to the use of symbols in this kind of propaganda. The Combating Terrorism Center’s Islamic Imagery Project serves as a kind of codex, a form of visual dictionary that is enormously helpful when doing this type of work.¹²

- **Is all of the footage from a single source?**

The Islamic State is not different from earlier groups in “borrowing” heavily from whatever is available digitally and from whatever strikes them as useful. But earlier groups were happy to use “prorsum” or “mash-up” styles: They had no overall, guiding visual aesthetic. IS does. So while it will borrow and repurpose other material, it will only do so in a way that permits it to retain a consistent look and style. For example, like every other jihadist group, it uses material from earlier groups. However, those videos are almost all of lower quality, and they tend to take *the audio track only*, leaving IS free to use visual material consistent with all its other videos.¹³

A number of conclusions can be drawn from studying the visual imagery of the Islamic State. First, the visual imagery is a key aspect of understanding the persuasive power of IS propaganda. At a minimum, analyzing IS visuals makes clear that no single counternarrative will work, because they are not producing and distributing a single narrative. Second, regarding personal responses to IS propaganda, visual images must be both taken into account and be central to an effective counterresponse. Finally, government responses have so far failed. Whatever the response going forward, it needs to be something different.

1 Charlie Winter, “Fishing and Ultraviolence,” BBC.com, Oct. 6, 2015. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-88492697-b674-4c69-8426-3edd17b7daed>

2 For a survey of this literature, see Cori E. Dauber and Carol K. Winkler, “Radical Visual Propaganda in the Online Environment: An Introduction,” in Winkler and Dauber, eds., *Visual Propaganda and Extremism in the Online Environment* (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, July, 2014): 1–30

3 Doris Graber has written, “Purely verbal analyses not only miss the information contained in the pictures and nonverbal sounds, they even fail to interpret the verbal content appropriately because that content is modified by its combination with picture messages.” Doris A. Graber, “Content and Meaning, What’s It All About?” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 33, no. 2 (1980), p. 145

4 See Cori E. Dauber, “ISIS and the Family Man,” *Small Wars Journal*, July 1, 2015. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrn/art/isis-and-the-family-man> and Charlie Winter, *The Virtual “Caliphate”: Understanding the Islamic State’s Propaganda Strategy* (London, U.K.: Quilliam Foundation, 2015). <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-virtual-caliphate-understanding-islamic-states-propaganda-strategy.pdf>

5 Cori E. Dauber and Mark Robinson, “ISIS and the Hollywood Visual Style,” Guest Post: *Jihadology*, July 6, 2015. <http://jihadology.net/2015/07/06/guest-post-isis-and-the-hollywood-visual-style/>

6 These examples are all taken from Aaron Zelin’s indispensable website: “New Video Message From the Islamic State: ‘Control and Inspection in Wiliyat Ninewa,’” *Jihadology.net*, Posted by Aaron Zelin, Sept. 13, 2015. <http://jihadology.net/2015/09/13/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-control-and-inspection-in-wilayat-ninawa/>; “New Video Message From the Islamic State: ‘Protection and Safety Office – Wiliyat al-Raqqa,’” *Jihadology.net*, Oct. 22, 2015. <http://jihadology.net/2015/10/22/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-protection-and-safety-office-wilayat-al-raqqa/>; “New Video Message From the Islamic State: ‘The Traffic Police in Wiliyat Ninewa,’” *Jihadology.net*, Aug. 30, 2015. <http://jihadology.net/2015/08/30/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-the-traffic-police-in-wilayat-ninawa/>

7 See Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>

8 See “ISIS Inside the Tent,” Posted by “Think Again, Turn Away,” Jan. 22, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqT9gp3yXDo> as an example. Notice that it isn’t a “Think Again, Turn Away” channel – so a wide variety of other material is in between the few videos they do have up.

9 “Daesh Defectors: Yahya,” Posted by “Think Again, Turn Away,” Aug. 7, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5ghRrkKx_Y. This is obviously a ripped Al Jazeera report and a powerful one. The question is whether young people used to high-quality graphics will make it through to the reporting given the disservice the State Department does to the start of the video.

10 “Pharrell – Happy British Muslims! #HAPPYDAY,” Posted by BENIstream, April 15, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVDIXqLqSM>. Note that where State Department videos typically have below 10,000 views, this one has, as of this writing, well over 2 million.

11 “Eid Greetings From the Land of Khilafah,” Posted by Naz Brown, Aug. 7, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nju-cygQ5_g. Accessed Feb. 21, 2015. It has since been taken down for violating YouTube’s terms of service, but it has been taken down before and returned.

12 The Combating Terrorism Center, *The Islamic Imagery Project: Visual Motifs in Jihadi Internet Propaganda* (West Point, N.Y.: Department of Social Sciences, U.S. Military Academy, March 2006). <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Islamic-Imagery-Project.pdf>

13 See the very slickly produced, “Islamic State of Iraq and Sham _ Sheikh Osama bin Laden _ Im-1.” In it, when bin Laden speaks in Arabic, what he says is subtitled in English, and when Awlaki speaks in English, his words are subtitled in Arabic. (The original seems to be gone, but a copy has been preserved—identical in content, but not nearly as high in resolution.) See “ISIS: Sheikh Osama bin Laden and Imam Anwar al Awlaki Establishing Khilafah,” TRAC Yemen, posted June 25, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGV0N5m4BRw> accessed May 25, 2014. There is a virtually identical version produced not by Al Hayat Media but by Al Hayat Deutschland. In that version, the graphics that are ordinarily in English in most Al Hayat productions are in German, and Awlaki’s words (only the Awlaki section is used) are subtitled in German only. “al-Hayat Deutschland - Shaikh Anwar al-Aulaqi - Die Etablierung des islamischen Staates Teil 1,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Njt73bS8sjg> posted by al Hayat Deutschland, May 14, 2014. There is an identical version currently posted in which Awlaki’s portion has been cut. See “Sheikh Osama bin Laden Islamic State of Iraq and Sham ISIS ISLAMIC STATE,” Posted by ali abduallah, Feb. 13, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fQ56kmZsFu accessed Feb. 22, 2015

The Paris Attacks: Terror and Recruitment

Jad Melki and Azza El-Masri

Institute of Media Research and Training, Lebanese American University

To many analysts, the Nov. 13, 2015, Paris attacks signaled a shift in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) strategy toward attacking Western targets (Schmitt and Kirkpatrick, 2015), but that largely missed the point. With a continent spiraling into anxiety and all media attention turning toward the group, the elaborate ISIS media machine had actually succeeded yet again in promoting its brand globally. The terror campaign that targeted Paris was not only meant to instigate

The terror campaign that targeted Paris was not only meant to instigate horror but was also utilized as a public diplomacy tool to effectively reach foreign publics.

horror but was also utilized as a public diplomacy tool to effectively reach foreign publics. By questioning mainstream media's extensive coverage of the attacks, this report analyzes the way in which ISIS actually imposes such coverage and uses it to simultaneously attract potential recruits and terrorize its enemies. As a case study, the report chronicles how the Paris terrorism campaign offered the group an opportunity to apply its sophisticated media model, which synergistically uses terrorism, mass and social media, and branding tools to gain recognition, reach potential recruits, and spread fear among its enemies.

The Paris Attacks: Consistent Trends and Narratives

For the purpose of this report, we will define the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as a virtual state (Seib, 2011). This helps us more objectively and rationally examine this nonstate actor's sophisticated military, political, financial, and communication apparatuses and not naively underestimate its abilities by dismissing ISIS as a group of fanatic maniacs with psychological disorders. In a mission to win Muslims' hearts and minds, ISIS has sought to establish its legitimacy through synchronized mediated real-time action built around terrorism spectacles. These violent attacks are justified within an apocalyptic religious narrative, which emphasizes an impending clash of civilizations that will restore Islam's lost glorious days and vindicate Muslims around the world. This report uses the Nov. 13, 2015, Paris attacks as a case study to elaborate the ISIS media-terror model.

On the heels of twin suicide bombings in Beirut that killed 43 people, ISIS struck France's capital in a series of coordinated terrorist attacks. The attacks, which have been described as "the worst [...] since the Madrid bombings in 2004," left 130 people dead and hundreds more injured (Werber, 2015). At 9:20 p.m., six locations were targeted in a series of shootings and suicide bombings—including the Stade de France stadium and the Bataclan, a popular concert hall. At the time, ISIS took no official stance, despite French officials' quick accusations. The speculation spilled

over into social media an hour after police put an end to the Bataclan siege, where 89 people were killed and two gunmen detonated their suicide vests.

In a clear indication of how ISIS takes advantage of crowd-sourcing on social media, numerous pro-ISIS tweets emerged so quickly and so systematically that one suspects at least some of them were preplanned to be part of the terrorism campaign. Indeed, ISIS supporters clamored online to cheer for the group that had committed the Paris *ghazwa* (raid). In parallel with international outcry that condemned the attacks, extremists on social media quickly rejoiced and credited the attacks to ISIS. One Twitter user posted in Arabic: “France, do you think that the Islamic caliphate will forget you. By God, no...” Another also tweeted in Arabic: “Even if the Islamic State does not claim responsibility for this operation, we rejoice when we see the West trembling. God is Great.” Other users changed their profile images to a French flag stamped with a boot’s footprint and included in their posts the hashtag #ParisOnFire, which became a worldwide trending hashtag along with #PrayForParis. This social media activity effectively creating a Twitter storm—a common trend in ISIS media campaigns that are associated with major terrorism campaigns (Stern and Berger, 2015) and that effectively manipulate existing grievances.

The immediate happiness of certain ISIS supporters taps into longstanding resentment toward Western powers, which ISIS has long integrated into its branding strategy in order to attract alienated Muslim youths around the world. For millions of Arabs and Muslims, the colonial legacy that left their regions weak, decades of injustice in Palestine, and the brutality of Arab authoritarian puppet regimes propped up by Western powers remain widely legitimized grievances. Within its propaganda, ISIS’s jihadist narrative is constantly contextualized to reiterate these tropes and paint itself to be the only viable solution, as opposed to Al-Qaeda and the many other extremist groups operating today inside Syria.

ISIS strives to “restore idealized eras of earlier Islamic history,” an idea that still resonates

with some Muslims around the globe (Shane & Hubbard, 2014). By framing this struggle as a religious clash of civilizations, which has seen the rise of a united *ummah* (nation) with the establishment of the caliphate against a Judeo-Christian world order, the group’s extreme violence becomes justified. As such, ISIS has branded itself as the de facto representative of all Muslims, imbuing its brand within a definitive understanding of Islam. Unlike other Islamist movements, the Islamic State’s theologians stress the concept of *ijmaa* (consensus) whereby the group borrows from the four schools of Sunni Islamic legal tradition and uses them as justification in its governance, executions, and attacks (Amarsingam and Al-Tamimi, 2015).

ISIS has branded itself as the de facto representative of all Muslims, imbuing its brand within a definitive understanding of Islam.

For example, the Jordanian pilot’s brutal execution was justified by citing five different instances in Islamic history where burning was an accepted punishment (Al Hayat Media Center, 2015a, p. 7–8). As such, the group’s desire to extinguish what it calls “the gray zone” is essential (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014). Usually understood as an area of uncertainty (Crelinsten, 2002), ISIS’s definition of the gray zone is largely based on a speech by Osama bin Laden in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks. Bin Laden draws the line between Muslims who adopt the jihadist lifestyle and “everyone who treads behind Bush in his plan [who] has apostatized from the religion of Muhammad” (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014, p. 44). ISIS’s branding strategy exacerbates this othering narrative, which has long been utilized in every major ideological conflict, as it ties it into a prophecy signaling the end of time. In an epic battle in Syria’s northern city, Dabiq, the jihadists of the caliphate will rise triumphant against their enemies. In order to do so, it must attract Muslims

of the world to its side by showing it is able to rule through God's laws and its ability to terrorize the enemy.

The Paris attacks, in that sense, fit into this strategy, as they help justify ISIS's cause while also anticipating retaliation from the French government, which had first entered the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS in September 2014. Calling it an "act of war" (Heneghan, 2015), French President Francois Hollande vowed in a live address a day after the attacks to intensify airstrikes on ISIS locations in Syria. At the time, France had only carried limited operations, primarily in Iraq. By justifying its terror within an apocalyptic religious prophecy and playing on Muslims' long-held grievances, ISIS not only uses social media to propagate its narratives but also guarantees that mass media coverage of its terrorist operations will reproduce them.

The extreme violence the ISIS brand relies on also serves to send a warning to those who oppose the caliphate.

The ISIS Brand From Social to Mainstream Media

By opting for a more decentralized strategy built on crowdsourcing, hashtag hacking, and in-house designed apps and bots, ISIS is able to bridge the gap between new and traditional media and target different audiences. Two hours after the French president's announcement on Nov. 14, a statement by ISIS began circulating online and was quickly picked up by different news outlets. In the statement, ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks and hinted that they had been months in the making. Similarly, the stealth and rapidity in which both the group's official media arm, Al Hayat Media Center, and other provincial media centers produced and published media content in the aftermath signaled a coordinated and preplanned media operation. Indeed, a day before the Paris attacks, a widely circulated Al

Hayat video promised "soon very soon, the blood will spill everywhere" (Al Hayat Media Center, 2015b). Only three days after the attacks, the 12th issue of the official Dabiq magazine was released, with the Paris attacks featured on the cover.

On social media, some Twitter users affiliated with the group had already begun circulating a photo that purports to show the inside of one of the locations attacked. The picture, which was featured in several online news outlets' coverage despite its graphic content (Charlton, 2015; Batchelor, 2015), was taken inside the Bataclan. ISIS-linked Twitter users co-opted the rapidly trending topic #PrayForParis in order to diffuse similarly gruesome pictures and advance ISIS's narratives. This strategy, referred to as a Twitter storm (Stern and Berger, 2015), creates a synergy with the online communication campaign and ensures at least brief mass media attention. For those who were sympathetic to the group's cause, the attacks were considered a victory for Muslims worldwide that offered an opportunity to recruit more alienated youth to the ranks of ISIS.

Unlike previous Islamist movements, ISIS provides both real action and a distinct story. The Paris attacks allowed frustrated youths to believe the ISIS brand's promise of extreme adventure, conquest, and revenge. Enticed by Hollywood-like videos, potential recruits are drawn toward the fantasy of earning larger-than-life status as heroes and martyrs and winning a place in history (Spens, 2014; Sachs, 2012). In the propaganda material it would later produce, ISIS exalted the fighters who carried out the attacks in Paris for their bravery and heroism. On the other hand, the extreme violence the ISIS brand relies on also serves to send a warning to those who oppose the caliphate. In that sense, the group is able to promote a simultaneously terrifying and alluring image of itself built on terrorism acts that are synchronized with media acts and both propagated via online and offline media.

Terrorism may ensure a temporary media boost, but it does not necessarily guarantee the perpetrator will win continuous media access. ISIS's media strategists seem to be aware of this matter and often quickly follow up the terror/media-boost campaign with a recruitment campaign. For

instance, a few hours after the Paris attacks, ISIS pushed a recruitment video that targeted French Muslims. Snippets of the official ISIS statement and the recruitment video were continuously broadcast on several news channels, allowing ISIS to reach its audiences and promote its intended news frames. A quick scan of the available digital archive of ISIS media compiled by the Jihadology blog showed that the video was an unedited version of a previous one, released in May. The latter, titled “Pledge Your Allegiance,” included snippets from a blue-eyed French-speaking fighter’s speech that urged French Muslims to migrate to ISIS territories in Syria and Iraq. In the aftermath of the attack, the full video that first appeared on ISIS’s Telegram channel revealed more testimonies. The French fighter, identified as Abu Osama Al-Faranci, taunted French Muslims watching the video: “What are you waiting for?” Joining him were a group of silent, uniformed, and heavily armed men, looking foreboding. Another fighter, Abu Maryam Al-Faranci, encouraged those who couldn’t make *hijrah* (migrate) to “fight the *kafir* wherever you find him” (Al Hayat Media Center, n.d.).

Even seemingly uncoordinated ISIS terror attacks seem to carry this feature of post-attack recruitment media campaigns. ISIS, unlike Al-Qaeda, has largely endorsed lone-wolf attacks as part of its decentralized terror strategy. A year earlier, fresh from the Charlie Hebdo shootings in Paris, an attack on a kosher grocery store east of the city left four dead. In a telephone interview, the assailant, Amedy Coulibaly, told BFMTV that he operated under ISIS’s command. After his death, his *bayaah* (pledge of allegiance) was included in ISIS’s propaganda material, and an in-depth feature appeared in Dabiq’s seventh issue.

ISIS’s Marketing of Terror

The ISIS brand looks to spreading an image of a united caliphate that is strong and prosperous. Yet in order to guarantee continuous promotion, it utilizes spectacular terrorist events to maintain control over access and meaning. In the post-9/11 era, ISIS has been able to capitalize on—rather than be damaged by—the “war

on terrorism” frames that dominate much of global news coverage of the Middle East. In that sense, the group advances a narrative that the press can already place within existing media frames (Wolfsfeld, 1997). As the subject of the Paris attacks dominated all major news outlets, ISIS’s claim of responsibility propelled the group into the spotlight, allowing it to manipulate its double-pronged discourse into mainstream media. Terrorism spectacles such as the latter can often create powerful news frames. Seib and Janbek (2011) described media as “terrorism’s oxygen.” When news institutions cover terrorist attacks, they are simultaneously serving the terrorist attackers by offering them publicity, recognition, and legitimacy. News institutions, particularly in a democratic state, can rarely resist covering terrorism, especially when these attacks target their own compatriots or the interests of their nations (Seib and Janbek, 2011).

When news institutions cover terrorist attacks, they are simultaneously serving the terrorist attackers by offering them publicity, recognition, and legitimacy.

Taking the Paris attacks as a case study, a survey of six news channels—three of which cater to a pan-Arab audience—showed coverage of ISIS spiked just as Europe spiraled into anxiety amid security concerns of some terrorist attackers having fled France. We examined the main YouTube channels of CNN, Sky News, and Russia Today as well as Al-Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Al Mayadeen. A total of 292 televised reports between Nov. 14 and Jan. 18 were surveyed. CNN had the most extensive coverage with 96 reports, 25 of which focused primarily on ISIS. This is contrasted with Saudi-owned Al Arabiya (11), Qatar’s Al Jazeera (10), Rupert Murdoch’s Sky News (8), Beirut-based Al Mayadeen (6), and Russia Today (1).

Simultaneously, the continuous coverage of the group’s recruitment video coincided with different reports speculating on the identities of the terrorist attackers as a European manhunt was

underway. France closed its borders and declared a state of emergency (Gander, 2015); Belgium was in lockdown (Taub, 2015); and British Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the United Kingdom was placed on high alert for an imminent terrorist attack (McTague, 2015). Despite the negative mass media coverage on ISIS, the group enjoyed immense access to a global audience, allowing it to spread its two key narratives: one recruiting and for keeping the support of its domestic audience, and one for an audience it considers its enemy although, in most cases, the same message achieves both aims. Terrorism, therefore, is utilized as a psychological warfare tactic to undermine the enemy and demoralize its fighters (Melchior, 2014) and simultaneously to promote the ISIS brand to potential recruits and sympathizers.

Despite the negative mass media coverage on ISIS, the group enjoyed immense access to a global audience.

With the brutality of the Paris attacks dominating headlines and broadcasts around the world, ISIS also capitalized on the violence “to awaken potential recruits to the reality of the jihadis’ war” (Stern and Berger, 2015, p. 115). This strategy is largely credited to a 2004 document, titled “The Management of Slavery,” penned by the pseudonymous Abu Bakr Naji. In it, Naji offered a blueprint for jihadists to establish a caliphate in which he advocated the escalation of violence in order to attract supporters and effect polarization between enemies and advocates (Stern and Berger, 2015, p. 46). The second section of the document, titled “Path to Empowerment,” explicitly explained how “to attract new youth through... conducting operations that attract people’s attention” (Stern and Berger, 2015, p. 17).

ISIS’s “media model” bases itself on the marketing of savagery while also promoting a utopian, united Islamic front—the caliphate—where all forms of discrimination will not be

tolerated. For alienated and disenfranchised Muslims, the caliphate becomes a response to the incoherence and tensions many recruits face in their lives in Western societies, a response that offers closure, coherence, and a resolution to a deep existential crisis. The caliphate, then, embodies a world where Muslims retake their agency, their power, and their glory.

To balance out the extreme violence, the group also diffused propaganda material that emphasized its unity in celebrating the Paris attacks across its territories. This theme, which succeeds in promoting a successful ISIS brand, is understood through Stengel’s (2011) conception of “fundamental human values” that are used by successful brands. These fundamental values are represented through five fields that improve people’s lives: eliciting joy, enabling connection, evoking pride, inspiring exploration, and impacting society. In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, 16 ISIS-linked videos were released between Nov. 14, 2015, and Jan. 24, 2016, of which 75 percent were released by provincial media outlets. In them, men are seen celebrating the terrorist attacks and praising the attackers across the Islamic State. In a photo report from the ISIS-occupied Libyan city of Sirte, uniformed fighters distributed sweets to citizens in celebration. This brand image is important in ISIS’s recruiting strategy, especially in relation to its potential foreign audiences and supporters. Indeed, the propaganda material emphasizes the harmonious life in the Islamic State despite France’s promise of intensifying airstrikes. The caliphate is, therefore, portrayed as a functioning, better, and viable alternative to the West.

This report summarized the impact of ISIS’s use of terrorism, social media, and branding strategies in the aftermath of Paris’ Nov. 13 attacks. In the post-9/11 era, extremists online have expanded from secretive online communities to take a more prominent role with the advent of real-time news and ubiquitous social media. ISIS, which has sought to tap into this new dynamic, has succeeded in creating a brand that promotes a utopian community in which alienated Muslim youths are encouraged to pursue a dangerous, exciting life akin to the one they’ve grown accustomed to through video games and

Hollywood action films. At the same time, the ISIS brand targets the enemies of the Islamic State and utilizes terrorism as a psychological warfare to thwart its foes' efforts in undermining the caliphate. By taking the Paris attacks and its aftermath as a case study, the paper analyzed the way in which ISIS was able to engage in mediated public diplomacy by framing its narrative for mainstream media. Similarly, ISIS is able to divert mass

media's attention from its territorial losses in order to retain supporters' enthusiasm to their cause. In 2015 alone, the group lost 14 percent of its territories in Syria and Iraq (Hutt, 2015). The physical threat that ISIS poses to the world is undeniably real, and while efforts to curb its territorial gains have proved successful, they must be synchronized with a serious reconsideration of the role of mass media in the group's ideological success.

References

- Al Hayat Media Center. (n.d.) "What Are You Waiting For?" Retrieved Nov. 14, 2015, from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2ti2hHSsEZaUG1BNUh4anpDX2s/view>
- Al Hayat Media Center. (2014). Reflections on the Final Crusade. *Dabiq*, 4, 32-44. Retrieved from <http://jihadology.net/category/dabiq-magazine/>
- Al Hayat Media Center. (2015a). The Burning of the Murtadd Pilot. *Dabiq*, 7, 5-8. Retrieved from <http://jihadology.net/category/dabiq-magazine/>
- Al Hayat Media Center (2015b). "Soon, Very Soon." Retrieved from <https://halummu.wordpress.com/2015/11/12/%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE-%D0%BE%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%8C-%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE-soon-very-soon/>
- Al-Tamimi, A. (2015). The Paris Attacks Reflect Intelligence Failure—Not a Change in ISIS Strategy. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved March 10, 2016, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/aymenn-jawad-altamimi/paris-intelligence-failure-isis-strategy_b_8582708.html
- Amarsingam, A. and Al-Tamimi, A. (2015). Is ISIS Islamic and Other "Foolish" Debates. *Jihadology*. Retrieved from <http://jihadology.net/2015/04/03/guest-post-is-isis-islamic-and-other-foolish-debates/>
- Batchelor, T. (2015). GRAPHIC CONTENT: Horrifying picture shows bloody aftermath of Paris concert massacre. *Express*. Retrieved from <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/619536/Bloodbath-Paris-89-killed-mass-execution-Bataclan-theatre>
- Crelinsten, R.D. (2002) Analysing Terrorism and Counterterrorism: A Communication Model. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 14:2, 77–122. DOI: 10.1080/714005618
- Gander, K. (2015). Paris Attacks: France Declares State of Emergency After Over 100 People Killed in the Capital. *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/paris-attacks-france-declares-state-of-emergency-after-dozens-killed-in-french-capital-a6734321.html>
- Heneghan, T. (2015). Hollande Says Paris Attacks "An Act of War" by Islamic State. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-shooting-hollande-idUSKCN0T30JG20151114>
- Hutt, R. (2015). How Much Territory Has ISIS Lost in 2015? *World Economic Forum*. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/12/how-much-territory-has-isis-lost-in-2015/>
- McTague, T. (2015). Paris Attacks: David Cameron Warns U.K. Terrorist Attack Is "Highly Likely." *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/paris-attack-david-cameron-warns-a-terrorist-attack-on-uk-is-highly-likely-a6734931.html>
- Melchior, J. (2014). ISIS Tactics Illustrate Social Media's New Place in Modern War. *TechCrunch*. Retrieved from <http://techcrunch.com/2014/10/15/isis-tactics-illustrate-social-medias-new-place-in-modern-war>
- Sachs, J. (2012). *Winning the Story Wars: Why Those Who Tell (and Live) The Best Stories Will Rule the Future*. Boston, Mass. Harvard Business Review Press
- Schmitt, E., & Kirkpatrick, D. (2015). Strategy Shift for ISIS: Inflicting Terror in Distant Lands. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/15/world/europe/strategy-shift-for-isis-inflicting-terror-in-distant-lands.html?_r=0
- Seib, P. (2011). Public Diplomacy, New Media, and Counterterrorism. *CDP Perspectives on Public Diplomacy*, 2. Retrieved from http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/publications/perspectives/CPDPerspectives_P2_2011.pdf
- Seib, P. and Janbek, D. M. (2011). *Global Terrorism and New Media: The Post-Al-Qaeda Generation*. London and New York: Routledge
- Shane, S. and Hubbard, B. (2014). ISIS Displaying a Deft Command of Varied Media. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/world/middleeast/isis-displaying-a-deft-command-of-varied-media.html>
- Spens, C. (2014). Shock and Awe: Performativity, Machismo, and ISIS. *E-International Relations*. Retrieved from <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/11/02/shock-and-awe-performativity-machismo-and-isis>
- Stengel, J. (2011). *Grow: How Ideals Power Growth and Profit at the World's Greatest Companies*. New York: Crown Business
- Stern, J. and Berger, J.M. (2015). *ISIS: The State of Terror*. New York: HarperCollins
- Taub, B. (2015). Belgian Terror: Brussels on Lockdown. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/belgian-terror-brussels-on-lockdown>
- Werber, C. (2015). Paris Has Suffered Europe's Worst Terror Attack in 10 Years. Here's What We Know. *Quartz*. Retrieved from <http://qz.com/550169/paris-has-suffered-europes-worst-terror-attack-in-10-years-heres-what-happened/>
- Wolfsfeld, G. (1997). *Media and Political Conflict: News From the Middle East*. U.K.: Cambridge University Press

Religious Diplomacy

Bawa Jain

Founding Secretary-General of the World Council of Religious Leaders

Islam is the fastest-growing faith in the world.¹

In 2010, there were 1.6 billion Muslims, approximately 23 percent of the global population.²

It is estimated that by 2050, the number of Muslims in the United States will more than double, and Islam will become the second largest religious group.³

If current demographic trends continue, the number of Muslims is expected to equal the number of Christians by 2050 and exceed the number of Christians by the end of this century.⁴

For centuries, an overwhelming number of the world's conflicts have been fueled by religious tensions and ethnic differences. How then can we arrive at a sustainable solution without the active engagement of religious leaders? It is time to bring the collective wisdom and resources of religious leaders to bear on key issues that threaten humanity, from global climate change to international terrorism.

Religious leaders have an important role to play in addressing the critical needs of humankind. They can exert enormous influence on public opinion and have the ability to mobilize the masses in a way that transcends national borders and cultural boundaries.

- 84 percent of the world's population considers themselves religious.⁵
- 5.8 billion people follow a faith tradition⁶

Despite its relevance in our lives, religion is rarely used as a positive force in diplomacy — one that complements the political process. As religious hostilities continue to rise in nearly every major region around the globe, we can no longer afford to exclude religious leaders from the process of building an integrated framework for peace.

There is an urgent need for all three pillars of society — political, business, and civil — to work together with the religious component of our lives. It is time to be proactive on these matters rather than allowing tensions to build to the point where we can only respond reactively to a crisis. This is particularly true of the issues confronting Islam, the fastest growing and most misunderstood religion in the world today.

The fundamental mission of every religious tradition is to have peace. There are no sacred texts that advocate the use of violence in any of the world religions. Therefore, the concept of “holy war” is an oxymoron. Yet throughout history there have always been leaders who misinterpret scripture and mislead followers to perpetuate their own agendas. The greatest challenge Muslims face is to isolate those who are trying to destroy their religion. They are the biggest enemies of Islam.

The problem oftentimes is not with the faith but with the faithful.

—Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations

The Supreme Leader of Iran, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, the King of Saudi Arabia (the monarch who serves as custodian of the two holy mosques at Mecca and Medina)—as well as some of the highest-ranking scholars of Muslim religious law—have issued statements strongly condemning ISIL/ISIS/Daesh. In fact, the *ullema* (clergy who are ultimate authorities of both the Sunni and Shi’a) have not only strongly condemned but also issued strong statements and *fatwas* (religious edicts) against Daesh. They are all actively engaged in countering the scourge of Daesh and defeating them. They hold the power of words—a power that can alter perceptions, shape behaviors, and begin to change what is said and done in the name of religion.

The media does not often cover efforts to defeat the ideology of radical extremists. However, these pre-eminent religious leaders are bridging a 1,400-year divide between Sunnis and Shi’as for the greater good. Much needs to be done to bridge the divide among the Sunni and Shi’a if we are to have peace and end the current cycle of heightened tensions and conflict.

Perhaps one can learn from how the Protestants and Catholics overcame their differences and now have active ecumenical relations. One can certainly learn from the Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Hasidic, and Kabbalah sects of Judaism, who set aside their differences to stand united behind the state of Israel. The goal here is

to build an unprecedented collaboration among religious leaders who will commit to cooperate in building more peaceful societies.

In 2000, 1,200 eminent leaders representing the many faith traditions gathered at the United Nations for the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders. They took the historic step of presenting a Commitment to Global Peace to the U.N. secretary-general, declaring their intent “to manage and resolve nonviolently the conflicts generated by religious and ethnic differences and to condemn all violence committed in the name of religion while seeking to remove the roots of the violence.”⁷

If we are to foster a global society capable of achieving peace, one of our tasks is to confront the war of words by creating a new narrative that actively promotes the true meaning of *jihad*. Muslims must convey and practice the true meaning of *jihad*. It is not a violent concept. It is not a declaration of war against other religions. It simply means “to struggle and to strive.” *Jihad* is an inner battle for self-control that must be waged on our own “demons” in order to become better human beings. How can we help to propagate that

If we are to foster a global society capable of achieving peace, one of our tasks is to confront the war of words by creating a new narrative that actively promotes the true meaning of jihad.

message throughout the wider Muslim world and educate the broader community?

Countering Islamophobia

The United States is committed to the principles of tolerance and religious freedom—ideals that lie at the heart of our nation. Yet the overwhelming majority of Americans say they know very little (57 percent) or nothing (29 percent) about Islam. They have no knowledge about core beliefs and practices or even about Muslim holy days and when they are celebrated.⁸

Despite this lack of understanding, many Americans report unfavorable feelings toward the Muslim culture. What's more, they believe the values of Islam are at odds with their own values.⁹ What steps can be taken today to create a future in which we all coexist in harmony? The key is to focus on creating a more inclusive environment instead of relying on individual behavior. There has never been a better time to launch an initiative to improve race relations and ease religious tensions across the nation.

- Invite elected officials, religious leaders, business leaders, and members of the community to a series of town hall meetings.
- Present a program that is designed to educate and inspire interfaith dialogue, fostering a spirit of understanding.
- Encourage communities to participate in local projects that improve a condition or fix a problem they collectively face.

When people from different faiths and diverse backgrounds join together to achieve a common

A majority of Muslim-Americans are assimilating and adopting customs that reflect our way of life.

- U.S. Muslims alerted law enforcement about more terrorism suspects than were discovered through U.S. government investigations.¹⁰
- Only 2 percent of U.S. Muslims are in the lowest income bracket.¹¹
- U.S. Muslims have the second-highest level of education among religious groups in the country. A greater proportion have college degrees (49 percent) than the general U.S. population (29 percent).¹²
- U.S. Muslim women are as likely as U.S. Muslim men to have earned a college or postgraduate degree.¹³
- U.S. Muslims are the most racially diverse religious group in the country. They are predominantly African-American — not Arab — and also include Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian members.¹⁴

goal, they often discover their common humanity. This initiative will dispel some of the myths about a community that is misunderstood.

Statistics are compelling, but they do not paint a complete portrait of any experience. Studies have shown that many U.S. Muslims still feel alienated in their communities. That may explain why Muslim Americans are the least likely of any religious group to take civic responsibility, such as registering to vote.¹⁵ How can we encourage Muslim Americans to feel more patriotic toward the country they reside in and to contribute more fully to public life, particularly when it comes to countering radical extremism?

- 48 percent of all U.S. Muslims believe their own leaders have not done enough to speak out against Islamic extremists.¹⁶
- U.S. Muslims must share in the responsibility of educating their communities about Daesh — who they are, what they believe — and brand this violent organization as the biggest enemy of Islam.

The Global Community

As concern about Islamic extremism continues to grow throughout the global community, there is much that can be done to prevent terrorist organizations like Daesh from radicalizing and recruiting new members. It is essential to confront ignorance head-on to ensure that it does not continue fueling hatred and violence, especially in regions where there is also a rise of Islamophobia. There are initiatives to mobilize this kind of engagement, but they are, at present, too splintered to have a significant impact. Religious leaders have their fingers on the pulse of the communities they serve. They know who is inciting violence and can do more to bring about change.

We need a broader-based coalition of Islamic scholars and religious leaders who are prepared to:

- Provide a strong moral conscience, disavow all violence committed in the name of religion, and work together to increase understanding and tolerance

- Educate Muslims on an ongoing basis about the true tenets of the faith, using traditional tools as well as social media
- Issue *fatwas* (religious edicts) against Daesh and formally denounce extremists as enemies of the faithful—enemies who must not be allowed to dwell under the shelter of Islam
- Actively engage in intrafaith understanding to bridge the differences within Islam

If enough religious leaders begin to address these critical issues on the level of ideas, the *fatwas* will eventually filter down from international scholars to local imams to disaffected youth on the street, gradually reducing the rate of radicalization and recruitment in violent organizations like Daesh.

Migration and Assimilation

We are in the midst of a global struggle centered on religious, racial, and ethnic diversity, and the increasing polarization of popular opinion can turn these into incendiary issues. Nevertheless, it is helpful to remember that these battles have been waged and resolved, previously. The world is full of migrant populations that have successfully integrated into the larger culture, the case throughout American history. As a nation defined by immigration, new religious, racial, and ethnic groups have continuously arrived on our shores.

It is difficult for many Americans to imagine that Catholics, Jews, and Mormons were once the object of prejudice and discrimination—or that President Roosevelt ordered the deportation of more than 110,000 Japanese–Americans to be incarcerated in internment camps during World War II, an act that was later concluded to be the result of widespread racism and hysteria.¹⁷ Can we forget the civil rights movement and the discrimination against people of color? Even today we are witnessing the scars of prejudice and bias.

It is essential to confront ignorance head-on to ensure that it does not continue fueling hatred and violence, especially in regions where there is also a rise of Islamophobia.

It may take generations to sow the seeds of peace, but each new group will assimilate and help change our idea of what America is in ways that, ultimately, strengthen and enrich the tapestry of our society.

1 Pew Research Center, April 2, 2015, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050”

2 Pew Research Center, April 2, 2015, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050”

3 Pew Research Center, April 2, 2015, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050”

4 Pew Research Center, April 2, 2015, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050”

5 Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life, Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

6 Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life, Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

7 Commitment to Global Peace Declaration, Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations, August 2000

8 The Brookings Institution and Public Religion Research Institute, “What It Means to Be American: Attitudes in an Increasingly Diverse America Ten Years After 9/11,” September 2011

9 The Brookings Institution and Public Religion Research Institute, “What It Means to Be American: Attitudes in an Increasingly Diverse America Ten Years After 9/11,” September 2011

10 Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security at Duke University, UNC RTI, “Muslim-American Terrorism in 2013” (published Feb. 5, 2014)

11 Council on Foreign Relations, “Muslims in the United States” by Toni Johnson, Sept. 19, 2011

12 The Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, “Muslim Americans: A National Portrait,” 2009

13 The Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, “Muslim Americans: A National Portrait,” 2009

14 The Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, “Muslim Americans: A National Portrait,” 2009

15 The Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, “Muslim Americans: A National Portrait,” 2009

16 Pew Research Center, Muslim American Survey, 2011

17 Commission on Wartime Relocation of Civilians (1997). *Personal Justice Denied*. Washington, D.C.: Civil Liberties Public Education Fund. p. 459

Preventing the Synapse: Transmission of Daesh Religious Signals in Search of Receivers

Ebrahim Rasool

Former South African Ambassador to the United States

It was Louis Althusser who employed the notion of “interpellation” to explain how ideology embeds itself in a given subject. A subject is “hailed,” “called,” or “interpellated” to assume an identity, to be mobilized to thought or action, or to be pacified. This calling happens when an idea or message (a signal) is transmitted and connects (synapses) with a receiver’s reptilian brain (an ancient memory) that activates an aspiration or amplifies a humiliation.

A century of secularization has not diminished the power of religion to command its core following. If anything, religion has made its fight more dogged and ominous, from the assertiveness of the religious right in the United States to the extremism in the name of Islam globally.

The sender is in control of the big idea and the ultimate agenda, while the subject, the receiver, battles the disparate fragments of memory, experience, and identity competing within. A collection of subjects, individually interpellated, respond diversely to the signal once a synapse is made. Unwittingly for most and wittingly for some, they act to allow or facilitate the realization of the sender’s big idea and ultimate agenda.

The signal finds various means for its transmission. Sometimes it interpellates directly to the subject through personal contact, media (social or conventional), or proxy agents. At other times, it interpellates its intended subjects by harnessing the agency of its intended objects—the institutions or media that it opposes—whose responses often act to strengthen or actualize the signal.

I invoke Althusser’s idea of interpellation to assist us in our understanding of how, for at least the last three decades, religion-based extremism has been able to shape discourses, shift policy, and hold large parts of the world in thrall. We need to find new ways of thinking about this process because, clearly, a century of secularization has not diminished the power of religion to command its core following. If anything, religion has made its fight more dogged and ominous, from the assertiveness of the religious right in the United States to the extremism in the name of Islam globally.

After the last two decades of battling extremism—utilizing a combination of militarism in the Muslim heartlands and moral indignation or Islamophobia against Muslims in the West—we must admit that the chickens are coming home to roost on both strategies. Extremists have been able to feed off these strategies to find recruits, even from the West, and they have exploited the absence of strategy toward the Arab Spring, first in the creation of political vacuums where regime change was pursued and, secondly, in the tacit approvals granted the counterrevolutions to the Arab Spring. We need fresh understandings—even from fading concepts—to inform our

approach to extremism, not by berating religion or Islam or Muslims but by putting on our political thinking caps.

We must accelerate our search for an alternative religious paradigm. Muslims, like people of other faiths and ideologies, are reeling under the cynicism of a postmodern world that proclaims an absence of grounding beliefs and values and the irrelevance of a transcendent source of accountability. This often has the impact of stripping traditional communities of their anchors in life. Fundamentalists and extremists of all faiths are in one way or the other engaging in battle with this, because they do not trust their orthodoxies to rouse themselves for this battle. They see in orthodoxy only inertia, feebly coexisting with postmodernism or impotent against it. Further, they have taken it upon themselves to reassert the fundamentals of faith in society, even nihilistically. This, of course, does not preclude intraextremist battles and wars, some formal and mainstreamed and others informal and on the margins of society.

An alternative paradigm or mindset cannot be constructed by increasing the dose of secularization or by militarism alone. An alternative must be founded on contesting for the wisdom of religious sources—salvaging values and intents and spurning literalism or originalism. An alternative must be based on reviving the critical regenerative motor of religious intellectualism. (This does not have to be an oxymoron.) Otherwise, we are doomed to those who seek only to imitate their preferred segments of the past or cherry-picked scriptural quotes. But an alternative is also necessarily dialectical: as it fights extremism, it must also fight for justice, the absence of which is the fertile feeding ground for extremism because it bequeaths humiliation and creates perpetual victims.

The Quran calls this alternative the *aqaba*, the steep and difficult path founded on a profound vertical relationship with God. From this relationship emanates broad and inclusive horizontal responsibilities—founded on personal resilience and social compassion—to all creation. It enables a person to navigate complexity despite experiences of injustice and humiliation—and to focus

on the values and intents of faith or ideology despite being tempted to respond to situations instinctively—thus potentially betraying the nobility of the values ostensibly being defended. The *aqaba* has the potential to make the middle ground coherent, purposeful, and mobilized, articulating grievance and humiliation, directing anger constructively, and sometimes securing significant gains. Its strength is that by respecting continuity with history it can authentically induce change and proactively immunize against extremism by embracing complexity and teaching nuance.

Muslims, like people of other faiths and ideologies, are reeling under the cynicism of a postmodern world that proclaims an absence of grounding beliefs and values and the irrelevance of a transcendent source of accountability.

The absence of such immunization, however, shapes the synapse that potentially occurs when the extremist signal is transmitted to its intended receivers. Ideally, the synapse is rejected, as is the case with the overwhelming majority of Muslims receiving the signal. They recoil from the signal, having imbued the higher values of Islam and recognized their perversion in the hands of the sender (the extremists) even though there is an attempted interpellation based on shared grievance, humiliation, and aspiration. For a significant minority, however, the synapse occurs, and the signal—the siren call to extremism—can result in the subject being interpellated.

Such interpellation has as its entry point equivocation: the inability to reject or refuse the signal immediately or unequivocally. When confronted with that which is ordinarily repulsive, horrible, or atrocious, the subject being interpellated does not recoil but equivocates because the filters are disabled and paralysis and ambiguity set in, at the least. At worst, the subject is recruited. The former results in silence or condonation, while the latter

results in one or another form of participation. It becomes crucial, therefore, to identify the sources of equivocation so that we both understand how subjects are interpellated as well as seek appropriate ways to intervene through campaigns to immunize potential subjects to prevent the synapse from occurring.

There are at least three broad sources of equivocation. Hypocrisy and inconsistency are popular sources of equivocation. The West is seen as leading an anti-extremist agenda, yet the West's favorite Muslim allies are both the fountainhead and main exporter of the extremist gene among Muslims. Wahabi interpretation of Islam—the state interpretation of the main Western allies in the Middle East—are intrinsically intolerant of other Muslims (Shi'a, Sufi, and modern) as well as other faiths and ideologies. They invest in such intolerance through building mosques, hiring imams, and exporting madrassah syllabi that propagate intolerance. The products are condemned, and the sources are feted.

The West is seen as leading an anti-extremist agenda, yet the West's favorite Muslim allies are both the fountainhead and main exporter of the extremist gene among Muslims.

This phenomenon is manifested in the inconsistency between decrying the anti-Shiism of ISIS and condoning the anti-Shi'a war in Yemen. A further inconsistency is in the instinctive Western suspicion of any manifestation of political Islam—thus condoning the coup against Mohammed Morsi for potentially being nondemocratic—and yet embracing states in which a version of Islam is politically institutionalized and democracy is spurned as non-Islamic. Similarly, apparently hypocritical discourse on matters like human rights, torture, and dictatorship are cannon fodder for extremists to transmit signals to ignore Western appeals to higher values.

The Muslim sensibility is further roused to equivocation by the abundance of signals extremists draw from the West's political and military engagement with the Muslim world. These signals include:

- Support for Israel's constant humiliation of Palestine and the Muslim impotence in the face thereof
- The fact that Muslim lands have continuously been occupied, initially by the Soviets, and then for three decades by the United States following the spurious War on Terror
- The Western preference for dictators in the Middle East, despite calling Muslims to democracy, human rights, and freedom—and when the response was positive, allowing the counter-revolution to snuff out the yearning
- Rising Islamophobia against Muslim minorities, some already confined to ghettos of dysfunction, in the West

The extremists, in turn, transform these signals to amplify grievance, humiliation, and hatred of Muslims and send them back to search for willing receivers, interpellating them into subjects who either condone or participate in the agenda of the sender.

Muslims have it within their power to work on the religious and theological sources of equivocation. The sources arising from perceived hypocrisy or political grievance lie largely in the domain of the powerful, whereas religious and theological sources of equivocation should be prioritized as areas of endeavor. In a globalized world of ambiguity and uncertainty, in a religious sphere of inertia or nihilism, and in a Muslim community hobbled by identity crises and political impotence, the search for belonging and fixity may instinctively direct an individual's antenna to that which appears familiar in the religious memory and history. This is where the dog whistle is sounded—eloquent to those sharing the frequency and confounding to those witnessing the result.

If we are to deal with this phenomenon with a scalpel rather than the machete, then we need to understand these religious and theological sources

of equivocation in accordance with the following basic ground rules:

- The sender (the extremist) always possesses the big picture and ultimate agenda.
- The receiver (the interpellated subject) starts by possessing a small fragment of memory, grievance, humiliation, and aspiration.
- The objective of the extremist is to widen adherence to the agenda and the scope of participation of the subject.

Confusion about these rules easily results in wielding the machete blindly and accelerating the achievement of the extremist's objective. In our attempts to disable the synapse or immunize the receiver, we must intervene in how religion and theology are activated and, therefore, we must understand why extremists—especially Daesh—have been successful in reaching a small but critical mass of their target market.

The Muslim mind, at the moment of potential synapse, has to reconcile fragments of memory from the Islamic history—something familiar, a recollection from what it has been taught—with a modern sensibility and a new contextual reality. Success of the reconciliation depends on the degree to which the sources of equivocation are managed in relation to the depth of adherence to the values and spirit rather than the rules and the letter of the religion. If the rules have an edge on the values, the literal supersedes the spirit, and the past overwhelms the contextual reality, the Muslim response to the extremist signal could easily be silence, condonation, or even participation. But for this to happen, the extremist needs to have the subject recall the fragment of memory, decontextualize it, strip it of higher Islamic values and intents, and then put it at the service of the extremist's big picture and ultimate agenda.

In this process, some of the most potent issues that have constituted the interpellation, caused the theological equivocation, induced the silence, solicited the condonation, or recruited the participation have been the following:

- When Daesh transmits the signal of living by *shari'a* (Islamic law), the synapse is meant to activate the Muslim for whom *shari'a* simply

means either civil recognition for a marriage officiated by an imam, the availability of *halaal* food, time off for the Friday prayers, the right to wear the headscarf, a place to worship, or any one of the things that would make life livable as a Muslim. Accepting this signal from the extremist may well mean unwittingly subscribing to Daesh's totalitarian vision of *shari'a*.

- When Daesh transmits the signal that violence and killing are germane to their methodology and present this as *jihad*, the synapse is meant to disable Muslim outrage and recoil by associating Daesh violence with the battles fought by the Prophet Muhammad, potentially recruiting those Muslims whose anger may be in search of a violent outlet.

The Muslim sensibility is further roused to equivocation by the abundance of signals extremists draw from the West's political and military engagement with the Muslim world.

- When Daesh and Boko Haram abduct girls and women, enslave them (as they have done with the Yazidis) and then legitimate a variety of sexual abuses, some Muslims may equivocate on such horrors because they cannot point to a definitive verse in the Quran that outlaws slavery. However, they could point to a verse in the Quran that regulates sexual relations with slaves that “your right hand possesses.”
- When Daesh desecrates the Palmyra antiquities and the Taliban bombs the Buddhas of Bamiyan, and Charlie Hebdo is attacked for their cartoons, ordinary Muslim sensibilities shudder about the disrespect for history, other faiths, and freedom of speech. However, the signal sent by the extremists is that they are the true custodians of Islam's uncompromising war on idolatry and depiction, from the earliest aversion when the Prophet refused to pray to the false gods around the Kaaba in Mecca.

-
- When Daesh and all extremists apply sexism and misogyny as the defining features of gender relations, the signal appeals to those who yearn for less complicated times when women were neither educated nor employed, neither seen nor heard. They cling to Quranic descriptions that, while revolutionary in a time of institutionalized femicide, still moved too slowly toward full equality.

Success of the reconciliation depends on the degree to which the sources of equivocation are managed in relation to the depth of adherence to the values and spirit rather than the rules and the letter of the religion.

In our quest to collapse particularly the religious and theological sources of equivocation—thus preventing the synapse from occurring—we need to ensure that we:

- Neither disparage religion as a factor in society nor exaggerate its role in driving extremism: Religion is a shunting ground for other agendas and a dog whistle for recruitment of particular constituencies.
- Simultaneously work to close the space of extremists in the social and political terrains—where hypocrisy, grievance, and humiliation are manufactured—as well as the religious and theological terrains—where equivocation and legitimacy are induced for atrocity in the name of God.
- Engage in a battle for ideas, language, and meaning with extremists to deny them a monopoly of interpretation of the Quran, prophetic tradition, and Islamic history through intervening in learning and scholarship.
- Populate the *aqaba*, the alternative path and mindset, by focusing on values, spirit, and intent; by teaching appreciation of complexity and nuance rather than binaries and judgment; and by preparing for a world of coexistence in shared spaces, where cosmopolitanism will require multiple identities and the exercise of choice and where we must create a world safe for difference.

Notes on Religion and Countering Violent Extremism

Muhammad Nuruddeen Lemu

Director, Research and Training, the Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, Islamic Education Trust, Minna

The Landscape of Violent Extremism

Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon. It has a shared history with various groups and movements across the world. Time and again, violent extremist groups have operated under varying banners—religious, racial, ethnic, national, or political. A growing contemporary phenomenon of clashes of extremisms everywhere—whether secular, religious, racial, ethnic, nationalist, or other—contributes to spiraling intensities and degrees of prejudice, discrimination, abuse, and violence.

There appears to be a consensus that there are many pathways to violent extremism, with numerous push-and-pull factors (or drivers) unique to individuals and causes. It should, however, not be assumed that the push-and-pull factors that radicalize one group are identical to another. There is always an interplay of factors that act in concert to create violent extremists in particular contexts. Consequently, and unfortunately, there is no singular cause or solution.

No doubt, an extremist religious ideology is sometimes an important cause and/or a catalyst toward violent extremism. For some it is a major pull factor, while for others, it is used to complement, justify, or support the need for violence in redressing perceived injustices. Ideology without grievances produces no action. Grievances are the foundation upon which an ideology is built. However, a religious halo grants the ideology easier acceptance by the less critical. The religious terminology of a “liberation theology” is sometimes

the framing of the ideology that allows it to mimic religious orthodoxy and to hijack its narratives for its own purposes. It makes “liberation” from grievances its end and its theology or religious ideology the means.

There is a need for careful diagnosis of narratives, so that the religious vocabulary that is to be used does not act as a distraction or smoke screen that prevents an insight into, and appreciation of, the real underlying grievances and their remedies.

Grievances are the foundation upon which an ideology is built.

The Evolutionary Path to Violent Extremism

Before becoming radicalized and violent, most people pass through a series of evolutionary stages or phases. The first step is usually simple curiosity for answers about extremism and violent extremism, followed by greater interest and preoccupation with learning and discussions on the subject matter. Next comes gradual acceptance of the validity of some of the arguments (but not all or most); then conversion to their side and passive support for/defense of their positions. This is followed by actively promoting the ideology and narratives and recruiting followers. The final stage may be one where violent action is taken or supported.

It is worth focusing significant attention on countering the foundation of the ideology and roots of the narratives instead of countering only the endless and ever-changing narratives.

It should be expected that the number of people involved reduces with each stage or phase in the evolutionary process; hence the need for greater pinpoint-accuracy in the targeting of the messaging with each later stage of radicalization. Countermessaging should also be designed to encourage debate and discussion at each and every phase, to revive curiosity in the heart and minds of those who have taken the extremists narrative as true, and to pose critical open-ended questions that may assist the extremist in sincerely reassessing evidence and assumptions—as many violent extremists have not given sufficient thought to the accuracy of the ideology and narratives they have bought into.

Counternarratives

Development and deployment of well-crafted narratives are critical to the success and recruitment strategies of violent extremists. It is crucial that the extremists' narratives are very well-understood. It is important to know exactly what their “storyline” is and what logic they use to attract, engage, convert, or radicalize and recruit individuals. This understanding is essential for effective debunking and negating the claims of violent extremists and for providing realistic alternative mechanisms to address their legitimate grievances.

As the ideology behind violent extremism can result in numerous narratives to suit various contexts and needs, it is worth focusing significant attention on countering the foundation of the ideology and roots of the narratives instead of countering only the endless and ever-changing narratives. Ideological challenges and counternarratives should be designed to drain the intellectual recruitment capacity of violent extremists. These

challenges make it difficult for such groups to recruit intelligent and charismatic leadership that can sustain and defend the ideology from external or internal challenges. Without intellectual and religious credibility, unity, cohesion, and effective succession by sincere and committed followership are practically impossible.

Preparing Counternarratives and Building a Counternarratives Network

Radicalized youth tend to hide their new identities from their parents, teachers, and community leaders. Therefore, friends or peers are the most important gatekeepers. However, they would often be reluctant to speak up about a friend who is showing extremist tendencies for fear of getting into trouble, getting their friends into trouble, or being identified. The use of more familiar grassroots organizations and groups—nonintrusive, safer, and more anonymous ways of getting in touch, such as having an SMS texting hotline—may be appropriate in some contexts. Consequently, there is the need to empower gatekeepers with the necessary skills in contextually sensitive ways to prevent and counter violent extremism or to refer cases to more competent and appropriate persons. “Nothing about us without us!” Consultation must include those who the resolutions will affect the most or at least those closest to them.

Networking and Information Sharing

The efficacy of counternarratives has to be tested with audiences that have a close cultural affinity and ability to connect with the target groups. After such testing and appropriate readjustment and fine-tuning of messages and arguments, they might be ready for use by credible voices with rational and faith-based arguments.

Violent Extremism and Women

For various socio-cultural, religious, and other reasons, most women would rather socialize

The Nine Pillars of the Ideology of Violent Extremist Muslims

The beliefs that are unique to violent extremists and which make it easier for them to excommunicate other Muslims from the fold of Islam and to justify violence against them (and others) are based on a foundation of at least nine major interrelated ideas, concepts, or beliefs. Together these constitute the major unique ideology of violent extremists.

1. Their very simplistic and literalist understanding of Islamic text related to creed (*aqidah*) such as the concept of *tawhid* (faith in the Oneness of God), which they tie to and regard as necessarily expressed through the political and judicial system (*tawhid al-hakimiyyah*). The extremely literalist understanding of concepts such as *kufr* (disbelief), *shirk* (associating partners with God/polytheism), and *ridda* (apostasy), and all carry the death sentence if committed by Muslims.
2. Their belief that following a political or legislative system other than one that is "Islamic" from their definition is also an act of disbelief (*kufr*) and apostasy (*ridda*).
3. The belief that the most important proof for the genuineness of an Islamic system of governance is the implementation of the prescribed (*hudud*) punishments for theft, adultery, and other crimes.
4. The belief that all Muslims in the world must submit to only one ultimate political leader (imam or caliph) and be united under one caliphate (*imamah*), and that it is compulsory (*fard*) for all true Muslims to migrate (*hijrah*) there and defend and support it, as it is the only temporal authority recognized by God. There is no recognition of any other political or legal authority. To do so is disbelief (*kufr*).
5. Their policy and understanding of "loyalty and disassociation" (*al-wala' wa-l-bara'*), which is understood to consider any actions that show recognition, submission, obedience to, or admiration of any other system of socio-economic, educational, or political life besides their own as an expression of loyalty (*wala'*) to "other than Allah" and tantamount

to "associating partners with Allah" (*shirk*) and hence disbelief (*kufr*).

6. The concept of *jihad* is narrowly defined as fighting and war as the only realistic way of establishing an Islamic state or caliphate. This is also interpreted to permit spreading Islam by coercion and the "sword." They regard suicide bombing as permissible and regard it instead as a "martyrdom operation." They disregard the concept of proportionality in combat and believe that if innocent people have to be killed, they will still go to Paradise, while the guilty will be punished upon resurrection.
7. Their concept of treaties and alliances (*sulh*) regards only their leader or imam as having the authority to make peace treaties with non-Muslims states. All other peace treaties between Muslims and others are declared nullified because those Muslim leaders who agreed on these treaties are guilty of disbelief (*kufr*) because they agreed on constitutions that were not "Islamic."
8. The belief in a siege against Islam and Muslims in which Muslims have been oppressed, humiliated, and not allowed to govern themselves by their own laws, and that only through violent jihad can Muslims regain their pride and right to self-determination. Civil strife (*fitna*) through fighting and loving death is seen as a desirable reality and a test of true faith.
9. The exclusivist definitions of positive terms used in the Quran and *hadith* refer only to themselves. These include *mu'minun* (believers), *jama'ah* or *ummah* (community of believers), *ta'ifatun mansurah* (victorious group), *firqat al-najiyah* (saved sect), and others.

Most violent extremists are not intellectually oriented and do not know or even properly understand all these arguments. But many of them know some of them on a basic level as a source of religious support for their policies and missions.

with other women. Naturally, therefore, women are the greatest and most effective recruiters of one another.

There is an urgent need to nurture religious scholarship among more women and empower them to become more active in public religious

discourse and to be more accessible to other women. There are very few female scholars in most Muslim communities, so even a little scholarship can go a long way and will have a tremendous impact on other women.

The Counternarratives Network and the Trust Factor: Very Few Clean Hands

Trust is the most important currency in countering violent extremism and in the credibility of counternarratives. Therefore, countering violent extremism moves at the speed of trust. The success of a counternarrative argument is based largely on the trustworthiness of its source, its veracity and soundness, the extent of its distance from ulterior motives, and its independence of some “other” authority.

Any program headed by or linked to any government will instantly lose credibility in the eyes of violent extremists or their supporters as soon as the links are known or even suspected.

Violent extremists view governments of all types and especially Western governments and nongovernmental organizations with cynicism and as having dirt (or even blood) on their hands. Any program headed by or linked to any government will instantly lose credibility in the eyes of violent extremists or their supporters as soon as the links are known or even suspected. Loss of credibility equals failure!

The more independent of any government a scholar is believed to be, the more credible he or she is likely to be in the eyes of most youth. Anti-Western and anti-government rhetoric and polemics are often viewed as proof of independence from them and as a sign of empathy toward the grievances of violent extremists. It is important for those who publicly present counternarratives to be people who are also ready to be critical of governments and the leadership.

Packaging the Message

Violent extremists have a very good understanding of youth and their personal identity problems and how global issues hurt most Muslims. The extremist’s narrative often simply focuses on frustrations and injustices that youth can relate to (the problem) and then offer them a way out (the simple solution), albeit violent and potentially tragic (or heroic).

The extremist’s story line for some common narratives can be broken down into two major questions.

1. Can a true Muslim choose to do nothing after witnessing all the injustice taking place against Islam and Muslims—discrimination, Islamophobia, violence, misery, humiliation, suffering, human rights abuses, etc.?
2. What will your response be to the suffering of innocent Muslims and the attack on Islam—if indeed you have faith—especially when no peaceful solutions are practical or realistic?

On Whose Authority Should Counternarratives Be Based?

In countering the simplistic and literal interpretations of texts of the Quran and hadith by violent extremists, the most respected group of scholars to quote are those of the first three generations of Islamic history, starting with the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. Studying and quoting this generation of Muslims are important because most misinterpretations of the Quran (or *hadith*) that are used to justify violent extremism and terrorism were identified and responded to by some of the surviving companions of the Prophet Muhammad and some of the early (Salaf) scholars when they faced a variety of violent extremist groups such as the Khawarij during their times.

Which Voices Should Carry the Narratives?

Tendencies and Inclinations

On the ideological spectrum, the violent extremist is closer to a paradigm of the Salafi than to the Tariqa or Sufi groups among Muslims.

Critical Elements of Counternarratives

Identify and acknowledge what is good and lofty about specific aims of violent extremism – such as liberation from discrimination, restoration of Muslim/human dignity, greater self-determination, a more just world order. Empathize with and do not dismiss legitimate grievances. This also shows sincere readiness for finding solutions.

Show the effect of the strategies adopted by violent extremism groups – whether they have actually helped in furthering the claimed aims of the group or whether they have, in fact, been counterproductive. Show the real and full cost of this type of violent approach to the present and future of Islam and Muslims everywhere.

Show how alternative nonviolent approaches are closer to the prophetic method (*sunnah*) even if such alternative approaches might require more self-sacrifice and discipline, collaboration and unity,

study of Islam and the world, respect for scholarship, compassion and forgiveness of human weaknesses, sincerity of purpose and humility, greater commitment to the *sunnah* and trust in Allah's *qadr* (decree), and patient perseverance and effort (other nonviolent forms of jihad). Show also where these approaches have worked in contemporary society.

Show what is wrong with the methodologies and principles used by violent extremists to interpret specific religious texts to justify violence and give these texts their correct interpretation based on classical juristic principles (*usul al-fiqh*) and objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'a*).

Explore also the issue of whether some extremists have ulterior motives for preferring more indiscriminately violent means and sticking to their ways and mission.

Consequently, the most authoritative counternarratives would have to be developed, presented, and argued by a Salafi who is closer to understanding the heart and mind of the Salafi jihadist or violent extremist.

Charisma and Public Appeal Matter

Charismatic leaders of any age are potentially powerful recruiters within the recruitment field of the general population of Muslims. Therefore, those involved in presenting counternarratives need to have both charisma and sincere empathy for the target audience. “What comes from the heart goes to the heart!”

Need for Criteria for Distinguishing Narratives From Counternarratives

Many who are susceptible to the narratives of violent extremists are very often unable to distinguish between right and wrong, legitimate and spurious narratives once these are couched in religious vocabulary. Messaging should not only counter the narratives of violent extremists, they also should help sharpen faith-based critical thinking so as to assist and empower the audience to identify and counter wrong narratives for themselves. This can be achieved by teaching certain

key topics and concepts related to classical Muslim juristic reasoning and Islamic legal philosophy. These are usually covered when studying the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh* and *maqasid al-shari'a*).

Some of these key topics and concepts include the following:

1. **The specializations of various scholars in the Islamic sciences** — especially Muhaddithun, Mufassirun, Usuliyun, Mujtahidun, Fuqaha, and Muftis. This helps the lay Muslim remain sensitive to every scholar's human and intellectual limitations and more critical of divisive or strange proclamations made by scholars speaking outside their fields of specialization and expertise.
2. **The degrees of certainty (*qat'i*) or presumption (*zanni*) in the authority, authenticity (*thubut*), and interpretation (*dilalah*) of religious texts.** This helps Muslims develop the understanding that there are many texts of the Quran and hadith literature that are open to legitimate alternative interpretations and differences in understanding. It aids in explaining, less simplistically, the boundaries of tolerance and the width of the “straight path” in Islam.

-
3. **Appreciating the various textual and rational sources and principles of Islamic law (*usul al-fiqh*)**, the primary and secondary sources of *shari'a*. This topic is essential for removing the misconception that Islamic law is all divine, eternal, and fixed and not open to critical re-evaluation and reinterpretation and juristic reasoning (*ijtihad*).
 4. **The contexts and prophetic intent on legislations**—i.e., the legal implication of the Sunnah (tradition) versus Seerah (biography): what is binding and what is not. This highlights the contextual role the prophet played as a Messenger of God, but also as a political leader, judge, adviser, mentor, and as an Arab man living and responding to his cultural realities.
 5. **The values and objectives (*maqasid*) of *shari'a***. These fundamental values, purposes, and objectives of Islamic teachings serve as a text-based criteria or standards for assessing the validity and quality of juristic reasoning (*ijtihad*) and religious verdicts (*fatwa*). This subject also emphasizes the importance of fulfilling societal obligations and of constant concern for especially justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahma*), wisdom (*hikma*), and the common good (*maslahah*) in all affairs.
 6. **The implications of the legal maxim (*qa'idah*) of the assumed permissibility of everything:** “Everything is permissible except what is clearly prohibited.” This particular maxim emphasizes the fundamental premise of freedom to act in creative and innovative ways to achieve the objectives of *shari'a* on any issue related to mundane transactions (*mu'amalat*).
 7. **Understanding and applying the five core maxims of Islamic jurisprudence (*qawa'id al-fiqhiyyah al-asliyyah*)**. Understanding the meaning, implications, and applications of each of these five maxims assists the lay Muslim in easily identifying religious positions and rulings that are out of sync with the core principles and spirit of the faith and which are most likely to be extreme or at least suspect.
 8. **What to do when scholars differ on particular issues.** Here, the lay Muslim learns how to make wiser and more relevant choices from diverse scholarly positions and not feel compelled by their “ignorance” to accept clearly harmful or destructive views just because they have been articulated or preferred by a particular great scholar.
 9. **Presenting the Golden Age of Islam**, along with its legacy and contributions to science and subsequent world civilizations, acknowledges the (often-concealed) fact that Muslims and Islam have made indelible positive contributions to human history, which Muslims should also be rightly proud of. It shows that such a period actually did exist in world history, side by side with people of other faiths, and that Islam is not a new kid on the block of human history and development that is yet to prove its worth to humanity. More importantly, it would highlight how different that period of Islam was from the kind of society being propagated by violent extremists today.

Islamic organizations and institutions that teach Islam and Islamic studies should be encouraged to develop and adopt a more maqasid (values-oriented) approach in their curricula.

These nine critical topics or concepts are essential ingredients for an effective “intellectual vaccination” that could contribute toward building resilience and immunity against many extreme ideologies and the hijacking of the religious narrative of mainstream Islam.

The Curricula for Islamic Studies

Islamic organizations and institutions that teach Islam and Islamic studies should be encouraged to develop and adopt a more *maqasid* (values-oriented) approach in their curricula for presenting Islamic teachings. A very useful educational

resource in a similar vein is presented in the paper *Living Islam With Purpose* by Sheikh Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah of the Nawawi Foundation (available online).

Beyond Narratives, Beyond Words

Counternarratives are reactive, not proactive.

While their importance cannot be overemphasized, counternarratives are only reactions to extremist narratives and are defensive in nature. Simply countering the narratives of violent extremists, whether religious or otherwise, will not do away with those underlying drivers or push-and-pull factors (and causes) that lead to violent extremists in the first place. The narratives are effects (the propaganda) and not causes of violent extremism.

The leadership and others in positions of authority have to show youth that it is not to anyone's advantage to live in societies that are resistant to change or societies where meaningful change can only come through violent means. Policy makers have to listen not only to the grievances of young people but also address their hopes and aspirations for the future. They have to provide the enabling environment for young people to actively and collaboratively shape their own future in a pluralistic and globalized world.

Preventive actions. Collaborative networks and social structures need to be designed, implemented, and adequately funded to cater to individuals who are gravitating toward extremism. These should be known and easily accessible to parents, teachers and, especially, friends so that they know what safe actions to take, where to go, and who to speak to if they sense or notice radicalization taking place.

Empowerment and life skills. As many of the push factors are related to economic, political, and social opportunities, it is important to explore, publicize, and support as many alternative career and empowerment pathways as possible, especially for those who are at risk. This underscores the very important role that many community and development nongovernmental organizations can

play in contributing to preventing and countering violent extremism.

The role of interfaith engagement. Besides better mutual respect and understanding, there is important symbolic relevance in sustained dialogue between the various religious group leaders. It shows most people that those in authority are still talking, working with, and are civil or friendly toward each other and will most probably not tolerate or support interfaith aggression or violence.

Where possible, the renovation of mosques and churches demolished by extremist groups (such as Boko Haram) should be done by interfaith organizations. This will change the symbolic message and significance of the church or mosque to one that will be re-established by both Muslims and Christians.

As Islamophobia is now financially self-sustaining and lucrative, it is not likely to die a natural death. It will continue to grow with more aggressive marketing strategies and products. This calls for urgent sensitization of Islamophobia (along with xenophobia, sexism, ageism, and others) as another form of discrimination and should be treated as such, with the same legal implications. If not appropriately dealt with, such aberration will grow into a major push factor for violent extremism.

Religious bigotry with its attendant volatility can easily spiral into hate crimes, potentially causing a clash of extremisms leading to violence and increased support and sympathy for violent extremism and recruitment for such groups.

Interfaith organizations and members of non-Muslim faiths have a greater chance of countering Islamophobia than do Muslims by countering the broad issue of religious discrimination under which Islamophobia falls. Consequently, Muslim scholars and leadership must also be willing and ready to actively counter religious discrimination against others when committed by members of their own faith. They cannot afford to be indecisive regarding whether or not to be against all forms of religious discrimination.

Mediums of Delivery: Specific Projects to Consider

1. Half of the battlefield is the media. There is the need for mass production of diverse high-quality media content that is easily accessible, which responds constructively to the grievances, arguments, and narratives/ideology of extremists, and which also proactively inoculates the general public with faith-based critical thinking skills.
2. There is need to support the training of charismatic resource people (especially among youth) in critical skills and competences for media content production and presentations on preventing and countering violent extremism.
3. The need to support train-the-trainer courses that are managed by credible grassroots nongovernmental organizations or educational institutions, especially for young imams, religious leaders, and activists.
4. The need to support the production, translation, distribution of, and easy access to free well-researched and good-quality literature (and other learning resources) on all subjects relevant to the prevention and countering of especially violent extremism. Literature should not be bulky! Such resources should be made available to all religious scholars, activists, community leaders, religious organizations, teachers, and student-leaders of tertiary and secondary schools.

A First-Person Narrative: From Recruiter to Challenger

Mubin Shaikh

University of Liverpool

Initially, I celebrated the 9/11 attacks.

Extremists are made and not born. I was born in Canada, where two sets of cultural values pulled me in opposite directions. I wasn't bullied or picked on—in fact, we were the cool kids. I was pressured by my community to “become religious” and, on their direction, undertook a trip to the border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan where I would have a chance encounter with the Taliban.

They were heroes from an Islamic Golden Age, a romanticized past of companionship and caliphate. “If you want to bring about change in the world,” they said, “you do it with the AK-47.” I returned to Canada in the fall of 1995 and became a supporter and recruiter of the global jihadist cause. On Sept. 11, 2001, I knew the world would never be the same.

I went to Syria in 2002 for two years, spending time to study the faith with scholars who showed me mercy and love and, verse by verse, debunked my deviant and violent interpretations.

I returned to Canada in 2004 and began working with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service as an undercover operator. I worked numerous classified operations. I then joined the Integrated National Security Enforcement Team of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in what came to be known as the “Toronto 18” terrorism case, which culminated in a series of arrests in 2006. I would spend four years in five legal hearings where seven defendants had their charges “stayed” and 11 individuals either pled guilty or were found guilty by the Superior Court of Ontario.

In 2010, when the hearings were over, I went on Facebook and Twitter to stay abreast of world events. Following the so-called Arab Spring, war broke out in Syria. Suddenly, in late 2012, a group calling itself the Islamic State in Iraq had entered into Syria. I spent at least all of 2013 and 2014 engaging numerous Western youth who had expressed interest in traveling to Iraq, and especially Syria, to fight. Quite a few undertook the perilous journey successfully. Using Islamic scripture, I began engaging them and challenging their interpretations, trying to dissuade them from joining and encouraging those who had gone to come back. Many to whom I spoke were killed.

Extremists are made and not born.

On the basis of this wide spectrum of experience, I have come to give advice and guidance on various topics related to radicalization and violent extremism—including the use of social media for message amplification and recruitment—counter-messaging, deradicalization, and the reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters.

In this context, experts from around the world gathered at The Carter Center. The panel on which I spoke related to social media and Daesh. I highlighted how Daesh was using specific messaging that exploited youth discontent.

Why They Join

Ideology

The term “ideology” implies a number of concepts. At its root, it is the collection of ideas and beliefs that people use to construct the paradigm through which they view the world around them and by which they perceive and receive knowledge. It can also be the source of how a person constructs their identity and how they view their sense of belonging and meaning. It is often difficult to separate the latter from an individual’s thought process where they have been exposed to a comprehensive ideology throughout their formative years.



We have grievances, but no one is acknowledging them or listening to us. Violence is the only way to get that message across.

The specific ideological appeal of Daesh, attracting both men and women, is rooted in the concept of the caliphate, which has been a regular feature of revolutionary Islamist thought since the abolishment of the Ottoman caliphate in the early 1920s. Since then, many Islamist groups have

Why They Join

Ideology

Grievances

Sense of Meaning and Belonging

Peer Grouping and Sense of Family

sought to re-establish a perceived lost Golden Age of socio-political superiority of the Muslim world. This idea of Islam-centric governance based on the laws of the Quran and the *sunnah* (prophetic example) has been continuously promulgated by numerous thinkers and theologians. There has, in effect, been a priming of the Muslim mind to aspire to see this caliphate restored. The announcement by Daesh of having accomplished this has provided a powerful call to the sense of duty to the caliphate. It is for this reason so many have flocked to answer the call of the so-called “caliph.”

Grievances

Ideology without grievances doesn’t resonate, and grievances without ideology are not acted on. The failure to acknowledge feelings of humiliation, deprivation, and political discontent features prominently in extremist narratives. Some grievances can be perceived only—without an actual basis in fact—but others are most certainly real. The desire to alleviate the suffering of members of the aggrieved and/or deprived can drive people to action. This need is accelerated by social media in which images and videos of the said-suffering force viewers to make decisions based on emotions rather than reason. Constant viewing of the suffering of others may also cause posttraumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) to develop, which will compromise rational decision making.

Sense of Meaning and Belonging (Outside of Ideology)

For those who have not been exposed to a systematic ideology that would influence their sense of meaning, belonging, and identity in their formative years, the individual will naturally seek this out using other mechanisms. This search may result in the acceptance of an ideology and

a conversion experience into a new faith. It may give the individual a completely new identity to replace a previous one and may also be accompanied by a new peer group with a completely new set of values.

Peer Groupings and Sense of Family

Another factor contributing to recruitment is peer networks of kinship and friendship. In the case of Daesh, a great many foreign terrorist fighters were encouraged by their colleagues and comrades to make the trip. Those who had already traveled over could then vouch for them and welcome them into the new network of others who shared their ideology and their notion that only violence would suffice as an ideal means of change. This network offered an opportunity to effect immediate and instant change, having rejected nonviolent alternatives.

How to Get Them to Leave

Challenges Related to Deradicalization and Rehabilitation of Returnees

A main area of discourse focuses on foreign terrorist fighters who no longer wish to continue their involvement in the group. They may have become disillusioned for several reasons, including the contradiction of what they thought they would find versus reality on the ground. Disillusionment could relate to the brutality of the group, disparity in the sharing of resources, missing their family, injury, infighting with other Muslim groups, and a change of heart and mind about whether the group was as noble as it presented itself to be.

However, disillusionment is not equal to deradicalization, and returnees may face a myriad of psycho-social challenges. Most certainly, PTSD would be at the top of that list. Tactical ability—with specific training in urban terrorism, hostage-taking, and kidnapping—is a huge security concern. Additional resources will have to be deployed to continue surveillance (on the ground and online), for police operations to gather evidence of criminal wrongdoing, especially of citizens accused of fighting as a member of Daesh or aspirants thereof. Recent data leaks about the



identities of foreign terrorist fighters will bring raids and arrests, but the ideology will remain in some form.

A long and serious conversation will need to discuss what to do with foreign terrorist fighter returnees. The full spectrum of responses will include public court prosecutions; recirculating some as undercover agents; or giving some level of amnesty based on the intelligence they give regarding people, networks, phone numbers, email addresses, and the like. Some should be encouraged to come forward—with government

No matter your background—especially if you've been rejected on the basis of it—we have a place and a role for you. We can turn it into something positive.

Former extremists are the most important lever for convincing youth not to join Daesh, and street credibility is vital for this effort. Not all returnees are a threat, and we must not treat them this way.



You can re-enact the video games you play, first-person-shooter scenarios in which you are the hero fighting a noble cause. You don't die; you are just reborn in a next life in *jannah* (paradise).

support—to appear in TV and radio commercials or to give speeches at public events. Others can be redirected to work as youth counselors in prisons or as part of social, cultural, and religious institutions. Former extremists are the most important lever for convincing youth not to join Daesh, and street credibility is vital for this effort.

Not all returnees are a threat, and we must not treat them this way. Without a doubt, a strict vetting process will have to be in place as well as a training and counseling component for returnees. Messaging will need to be polished, and teaming up with communications specialists to construct and implement the right message must be embedded from the start of any such reintegration regimen.

Countering Extremist Propaganda With an Islamic Approach

Manal Omar

Acting Vice President for the Middle East and Africa Center at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C.

Since 2015, the Islamic State (ISIS) has spread to nearly two dozen countries, with official branches in 15 of those countries. Hundreds of followers and supporters are recruited every day, expanding the organization and threatening to destabilize communities across the Middle East, Africa, and some parts of Europe. Unlike its early days, where most of ISIS fighters stemmed from Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, ISIS now boasts members from countries and regions as diverse as Pakistan, the North Caucasus, and Nigeria.¹ It is no longer only war-torn states that are vulnerable. Tunisia, known for the success of the Arab Spring, is the largest exporter of foreign fighters, and Belgium is the larger exporter from Europe.² The group's intense and effective recruiting strategies have utilized Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, attracting supporters from the United Kingdom, the United States, Southeast Asia, and other places around the world. Feeding on societal discontent, feelings of marginalization and exclusion, and failed government policies, the ISIS narrative has built a large, strong, and effective propaganda machine that targets youth and the disenfranchised from around the world.

Why are youth drawn to the exceedingly violent tactics of ISIS? What drives people to choose violence instead of nonviolence? Our peacebuilding approach is not working and is not deterring youth from seeking violence as a means of redressing grievances. Rather than concentrating our efforts on identifying the root causes of violence and extremism, we focus heavily on

addressing violence after it has already occurred and center our efforts on bringing warring parties with guns to the table for peace negotiations. The human cost of allowing violence and extremism to escalate to that point is unacceptable and has not led to sustainable peace. Furthermore, by focusing on bringing violent groups to the negotiating table after violence has occurred, we often exclude nonviolent groups from the discourse and the reshaping of society post-conflict.

Our current approach to countering violent extremism, specifically who we target and how we utilize resources, is ineffective and unsustainable. The West's constant demands for Muslim apologies for every single attack, act of violence, or religiously motivated hate incident have not led to decreased violence but rather to a growing frustration among Muslims at being scapegoated for the crimes of thugs and political opportunists.³ Continued profiling of Muslims as a demographic likely to become extremist may lead to the next generation of Muslims being self-haters, embarrassed to be Muslim and constantly apologizing for incidents to which they have no ties. This will create a fertile ground for extremism in the future, when a leader steps in to restore their pride. In the short term, it may lead to further radicalization and the manifestation of the clash of civilizations. This makes them even more ripe for a Trump-like leader within the Muslim community to restore their pride a decade from now or further radicalize, pushing them into ISIS's hands today.

Why Violence?

To effectively counter extremist propaganda, we need to get to the root of why people are choosing violence to solve grievances and societal problems. In my interviews with youth around the world, I have rarely heard Islamic scripture quoted as the justification for young people's decisions to radicalize. In Nigeria, youth spoke endlessly about corruption and how the government has lowered Nigerian pride in the face of the continent. Extremism serves as a means of rectifying societal ills that the government fails to address. In Indonesia, extremist groups often recruit youth who see government corruption and failure to distribute the benefits of economic

Counternarratives aren't enough to combat extremist propaganda: We need to present counteroffers.

growth to the poorest communities in society as justification for violence against the state and minority communities.⁴ There are many issues at the center of violent extremism, not just one. Violence manifests itself in different ways, arising in communities for diverging reasons. Violations of human dignity, lack of democratic processes, local ethnic and religious conflict, corruption, and other factors all feed into the frustration and feelings of helplessness of youth and others who join extremist movements. ISIS has provided a nice quick simple answer to all of the nuanced, contextual problems that communities face. Yet we offer no counter movement that people can join that emphasizes nonviolent solutions. Our counterextremist approach needs culturally and situationally nuanced strategies tailored to local needs and concerns, advocating nonviolent means of redressing grievances and pushing for change.

At the same time, we're not paying sufficient attention to effective nonviolent movements in Muslim communities. In Palestine, there are often youth-led peaceful demonstrations against the Israeli occupation; yet these initiatives are often not covered by mainstream media.⁵ In

Tunisia, youth have been active participants in civil society initiatives to stabilize the country post-Ben Ali.⁶ Across the Middle East, there are countless cases of nonviolent movements: In fact, more people participate in nonviolent initiatives than in radical movements in the region. We aren't giving enough credit or attention to these movements, creating a false perception that there are no alternatives to violence. Furthermore, these nonviolent movements are often disconnected and fragmented, leaving them weaker and less cohesive. We need to connect nonviolent activists around the region and build a support network.

At the same time, we should not wear rose-colored glasses and deny that there is a religious component to the extremist narrative. Islam is being manipulated by ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, and other groups that pick and choose versus pushing a political agenda out of context.⁷ Thus, our approach to countering extremist propaganda must be rooted in an Islamic foundation that provides a multidisciplinary Islamic approach to activism and the redress of grievances.

Forget Counternarratives: We Need to Present Counteroffers

Counternarratives aren't enough to combat extremist propaganda: We actually need to present counteroffers. People want action, not words, and ISIS offers concrete actions that its supporters can take to rectify wrongs and social injustices. Through its extensive and culturally tailored outreach initiatives, ISIS speaks to each potential recruit within his or her local context, appealing to personal frustrations, trauma, and violations of human dignity. Current countering extremism measures focus primarily on rhetoric but fail to offer concrete, nonviolent physical solutions that act as an alternative to the violence promoted by ISIS.

Furthermore, there is growing frustration that non-Muslims in Europe and the United States are more worried about potential security threats in the Middle East than they are domestic terrorist attacks in their own countries, committed by radical xenophobes who use violence to spread

hate and fear. The 2015 shooting of three young Muslim college students at Chapel Hill demonstrates one of many examples in which Muslims have been singled out and targeted for violent attacks.⁸ Muslims grow frustrated with apparent Western apathy at violence conducted against Muslims both in the West and abroad.⁹

Countering extremist narratives requires providing a counter offer that addresses grievances, violations of human dignity, and security threats against Muslim citizens in the United States and Europe. It requires empathy and a contextualized understanding of the underlying concerns and frustrations that Muslims face around the world. Rather than focusing on the rhetoric, we need to offer concrete solutions and steps to rectifying problems, allowing people to have agency and support in addressing social problems in their communities.

Combating Islamophobia

Islamophobia and violent extremism are two sides of the same coin. To fight extremism, you must also fight Islamophobia. Continued assaults on and hate crimes against Muslims in Europe and the United States only add fuel to the fire of the extremist narrative that seeks to recruit marginalized and disenfranchised individuals.¹⁰ The racist and xenophobic rhetoric of right-wing individuals and politicians has provided fodder to ISIS and other extremist groups that the West is engaged in a fight against Islam itself rather than against extremism. ISIS recruiters frequently point to Islamophobic rhetoric to lure in recruits, claiming that the West is unleashing a “clash of civilizations” bent on destroying Islamic values and norms.

To combat extremism, we need to acknowledge that discrimination and ostracism of communities breed resentment and reaffirm the claims of extremist groups that the West hates Islam. Islamophobia is a violation of human rights and human dignity that adds to the grievances of communities. Through institutionalized violence and discrimination—from local anti-*shari’ah* laws to local law enforcement’s failure to prosecute anti-Muslim violence as hate

crimes—Islamophobia launches an attack not just on Muslims but on pluralistic values. Concerted efforts are needed to dismantle the structures that perpetuate Islamophobia, including holding authorities and public figures accountable for racism, discrimination, and hate speech.

Working with the media to combat Islamophobia is also key to successfully countering violent extremism. Changing the way in which the media portrays Muslims requires holding reporters, news anchors, and pundits accountable for stereotyping and racism. We also need to provide a counternarrative, one that emphasizes the contributions of Islam to social justice and peacebuilding, not one that spews Islamophobic hatred.

To combat extremism, we need to acknowledge that discrimination and ostracism of communities breed resentment and reaffirm the claims of extremist groups that the West hates Islam.

What strategies should be employed to effectively counter the ISIS narrative and propaganda? How should we restructure our approach to countering violent extremism?

1. Avoid the Temptation of Religious Reductionism

There needs to be an understanding of the role of religion, secularism, and fundamental secularism in the narrative of violent extremism. Media narratives focus heavily on extremist repression of women’s rights, like the Taliban’s draconian societal restrictions for Afghan women or Boko Haram’s attacks on women’s schools. Yet the media rarely focuses on secular assaults on Islamic values that feed into the clash of civilizations rhetoric of the Islamic State. News outlets ran coverage on the Brussels and Paris attacks for days after the incident but failed to mention the anti-Islamic and socially isolating policies of France and Belgium that fueled extremist reactions against

those two countries. Little coverage is given to the decrepit living conditions of France's Muslim *banlieues* or the discriminatory anti-veil policies that France has enforced on Muslim communities.¹¹ Furthermore, media conglomerates ignored Muslim-on-Muslim violence and terror attacks in Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq that occurred at the same time, further adding to the idea that the West cares little for Muslim lives.

Engagement recognizes that religious leaders play a crucial role in encouraging tolerance, providing moral support, and preventing violence through their outreach to their communities.

ISIS did not create Huntington's theory of a clash of civilizations.¹² However, increasingly xenophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric on the part of American and European citizens allows ISIS to manipulate an existing double standard—the Western implied concept that some lives (non-Muslim lives) matter more than others and are worthy of global outrage and media coverage. The more the West ignores the violence perpetuated against Muslims and frames extremist violence as “Islamic” violence, the stronger ISIS's clash of civilizations narrative becomes.¹³

2. Engage, Don't Instrumentalize Religious Leaders

There is substantial discussion among policy circles of the need to engage religious leaders in countering violent extremism. However, well-meaning efforts to bring in religious leaders and organizations can easily be co-opted by Western governments and policy makers to serve a broader agenda about countering violent extremism that can be counterproductive for communities. Propping up local religious leaders as tools in the fight against extremism causes those leaders to lose credibility and legitimacy in their communities, as people perceive them to be manipulated by politicians for a hidden agenda.

Engaging religious leaders in countering violent propaganda is different from instrumentalizing them. Engagement recognizes that religious leaders play a crucial role in encouraging tolerance, providing moral support, and preventing violence through their outreach to their communities.¹⁴ Instrumentalizing religious leaders capitalizes on the work those individuals are doing in their communities and manipulates it and the leaders to serve an underlying political agenda. Current initiatives around countering violent extremism often do not recognize the nuances between these two concepts. This makes our partners ineffective at best—and targets at worse.

Emphasis needs to be on the contributions religious leaders have made to countering extremism apart from Western assistance. For example, Imam Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's public statements and condemnations of ISIS have inspired hundreds of Iraqi Shi'a to join the fight against ISIS.¹⁵ In the United Kingdom, local imams have taken an approach to countering violent extremism that treats radicalization and recruitment of youth in the same manner that community leaders would address gang influence—through after-school community programs, interfaith dialogue sessions, and community service projects for at-risk youth.

3. Allow Authentic Space for Dialogue on Issues That Concern Communities

Another mistake that counterextremism initiatives make is supporting the creation and dissemination of planned sermons and talking points for imams and other religious leaders across communities. In this digital age of social media, youth are quick to recognize inauthentic sources of messaging and won't accept narratives coming from sources they deem having an ulterior agenda. By planting Friday sermons with anti-extremist messaging in mosques, policy makers and activists strip agency away from religious leaders, weaken potential religious role models, and feed into conspiracy theories (that ISIS spreads) that leaders have been bought by the West to serve an anti-Muslim agenda. In my community, we used to joke about “scholars for dollars”: We knew which leaders were being paid off to push another group's agenda and which leaders were speaking truth.

People tire of hearing the same “don’t fall for extremism!” narratives, which fail to address the underlying societal problems that lead to radicalization in the first place. Muslim communities need to step up and address societal problems that lead youth down a path to radicalism. This means that we need to allow an authentic space for dialogue in communities so people can discuss local concerns and social problems and brainstorm ways in which to rectify those problems. This means including all voices, even those with whom we disagree on principle or who have more conservative approaches to peacebuilding and community outreach. Our approach of only including like-minded partners in dialogue and planning may hurt us in the long run, as we miss opportunities to engage a wider variety of actors and come up with comprehensive solutions that target a wider audience and have a more substantial impact.

The United States and other international actors need to define the nonnegotiables in building a coalition against ISIS. The reality is that defeating ISIS remains a second priority for many of our allies. Other priorities—from the removal of Assad to neutralizing the sectarian proxy wars between Iran and Saudi Arabia—remain at the top of the list. Only by having inclusive, authentic dialogues can we get to the root causes of violence and create appropriate, nuanced solutions to social issues.

4. Understand the Role of Women as Religious Leaders

Women religious leaders remain an untapped resource for combating violent extremism. Women religious leaders are often ignored and excluded by both the secular and faith-based groups in decision-making processes and community; yet Muslim women are crossing red lines daily to change the narrative and emphasize nonviolent, peaceful solutions to community challenges.¹⁶ For example, AltMuslimah—an online forum for Muslim women to discuss issues of faith, family, sexuality, and community—provides an opportunity for Muslim women from around the world to address community concerns and brainstorm ways to solve problems through an Islamic approach.¹⁷

Muslimgirl.com focuses on engaging Muslim youth voices in solving community problems and interpreting Islamic scriptures in a manner that focuses on grassroots social empowerment for change.¹⁸ By not including women religious leaders in our strategies for countering violent extremism and in our peacebuilding initiatives, we are missing a significant demographic that is already contributing to community change.¹⁹

At the same time, women religious leaders have been calling for a mass reinterpretation of the Quran and deeper understanding of Islamic *shari’a* and jurisprudence for decades. Their call for more female interpretation of Islam is a crucial potential strategy to combat ISIS. Rather than reinventing the wheel, Islamic scholars and Western policy makers could tap into Muslim women’s strategy for Islamic revival that builds on concepts such as *ijtihad* (independent thought), *shura* (consultations), and *maqasid al shari’a* (purpose of laws). Women scholars have been using Islamic tradition as ammunition against Islamic extremism. Plenty of organizations, such as Women Living Under Muslim Laws, the Women and Memory Forum in Egypt, and Sisters in Islam in Malaysia have developed a crucial knowledge base for practitioners to refer to when making Islamic arguments for positive change.²⁰ Extracting lessons learned

*Rather than reinventing the wheel, Islamic scholars and Western policy makers could tap into Muslim women’s strategy for Islamic revival that builds on concepts such as *ijtihad* (independent thought), *shura* (consultations), and *maqasid al shari’a* (purpose of laws).*

and strategies of success from women scholars is an essential first step to a broader discussion around the need for Islamic revivalism that brings back pluralism and nonviolence as the center of Islamic teachings.

5. Understand the Power of the Invisible

It is also crucial that we enable actors on the ground to work on their community outreach and nonviolence programs without drawing attention to Western efforts to combat violent extremism. Policy makers and peace builders often desire to draw attention to their own efforts to prevent and combat violence, highlighting their contributions to the counterextremism narrative. Unfortunately, this undermines the credibility and legitimacy of the leaders who we are trying to help, giving the impression that leaders are puppets of non-Muslim actors with hidden political agendas. As policy makers and peace activists, it's crucial that we step back and allow community leaders and

The crisis may be emerging from countries across the Middle East and Africa, but the reality is this is a global crisis that is impacting communities worldwide.

organizations to take ownership of nonviolent counterextremist initiatives. In many cases, our contributions might not be recognized, and the credit may go solely to the grassroots leaders and activists at the heart of the communities. We need to recognize that there are times we need to step out of the spotlight and not receive attribution for the peacebuilding work we've done. We need to acknowledge that our footprint on projects, particularly sensitive projects in which communities are suspicious of ulterior motives and hidden agendas, may not need to be visible.

At the same time, we need to take the cue of visibility of our partners directly from them. Too often organizations, particularly those that are dependent on the donor community, need to document success stories. There are many times when donor-driven agendas push local community organizers into the spotlight prematurely. I have often referred to this practice as “hugging our allies to death.” Some of the most effective strategies

are the ones that are not seen. There need to be avenues to build in support and stronger donor education of the dangers of pushing partners to the forefront.

6. Ownership and Responsibility of the Growth of Extremist Groups

Too often, violent extremism is presented as a problem of the countries in which the extremists have emerged. The crisis may be emerging from countries across the Middle East and Africa, but the reality is this is a global crisis that is impacting communities worldwide. Just as it impacts the global community, it also originates from actions of the global community. That there would be no ISIS without Islam is just as true as the fact that there would be no ISIS without U.S. intervention in Iraq. As the Muslim community steps into their role in combating ISIS, so must the international forces that led to its creation.

In much of the Middle East, people are convinced that ISIS is not theirs—that the movement is not a product of failed governance, sectarian discrimination, and inability of states to provide basic social services and safety nets to local communities. Instead, conspiracy theories from Egypt to Syria to Saudi Arabia frame ISIS as a creation of the United States, a convenient enemy that enables the United States to interfere in MENA politics and the reshaping of the Middle East once more in the tradition of Sykes–Picot.

To combat extremism, we need to take a hard look at the events and policies of the global war on terror that led to the propping up of violent regimes and enabled political leaders to crack down on dissident populations without condemnation. Nouri al-Maliki's discriminatory policies toward Iraqi Sunni Muslims allowed ISIS to take root in Iraq, feeding off of public discontent and suffering under Maliki's government. This came hand in hand with U.S. unconditional support of Maliki.²¹

Support in the war on terror for autocratic regimes was not limited to the Middle East. In China, for example, Chinese officials framed the Muslim Uighur separatist movement in Xinjiang as a terrorist movement designed to undermine

the stability of the state. Ignoring the centuries-long history of discrimination and marginalization of the Uighur people, Chinese officials framed Uighur dissidents as terrorists and used Western support to implement a slew of anti-Islamic policies in the region.²² The same case holds for Russian policies toward Chechnya. The incidences of Western support for autocratic regimes under the global war on terror have created a strong and compelling case to which ISIS can point out global persecution of Muslims. This allows ISIS to carefully construct a culturally and nationally appropriate framework in which the West is portrayed as waging a war on Islam.

However, the fault does not lie solely with the West. Weak civil societies, corrupt elections, mismanagement of public finances, and failure to develop sustainable and strong infrastructure are governance problems that the Middle East itself needs to fix, not the West. By arguing that the West is to blame for ISIS, communities fail to take responsibility for their role in developing good governments and a robust private sector that would allow for growth, stability, and peace. Growing apathy among communities needs to be addressed, and we need to work on a way to help communities recognize and address the radicalism that emerges from poor governance and resource management.

We also need to acknowledge that while ISIS may be the West's primary priority (the Obama administration has identified ISIS as its No. 1 priority), activists and local communities see ISIS as a second-tier priority. High unemployment

rates, rapidly declining oil prices, lack of service provision by weakened governments, and growing crackdowns from authoritarian officials are greater priorities to communities that see ISIS as a Syrian problem or a Western problem rather than a regional problem. Our enemy is occupation. Our enemy is the authoritarian regime. Our enemy is corruption. Our enemy is rise of sectarianism. Violent extremism is merely a product of failed governance.

By arguing that the West is to blame for ISIS, communities fail to take responsibility for their role in developing good governments and a robust private sector that would allow for growth, stability, and peace.

If we want to deter youth from joining extremist movements, we need a more effective, contextual, nuanced approach that recognizes community ownership of projects, the role of religious leaders (including women) in promoting peace, the role that Western media plays in exacerbating grievances, and the root causes of violence that are compelling youth to pursue extremism rather than nonviolence. Only then can we create effective, sustainable solutions to global problems.

The author gratefully acknowledges the contribution of research assistant Rachel Palmer to this project.

- 1 "Spreading Its Tentacles." *The Economist*. July 4, 2015. Print and online. <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21656690-islamic-state-making-itself-felt-ever-more-countries-how-much-influence>
- 2 Sullivan, Kevin. "Tunisia, After Igniting Arab Spring, Sends the Most Fighters to Islamic State in Syria." *The Washington Post*. Oct. 28, 2014. Online. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/tunisia-after-igniting-arab-spring-sends-the-most-fighters-to-islamic-state-in-syria/2014/10/28/b5db4faa-5971-11e4-8264-deed989ae9a2_story.html
- Perper, Rosie. "France, Belgium Largest Exporter of Foreign Fighters to Iraq and Syria, Study Finds." *Jerusalem Post*. April 3, 2016. <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/France-Belgium-named-as-largest-exporters-of-foreign-fighters-to-Iraq-and-Syria-450073>
- Miller, Greg and Joby Warrick. "How Belgium Became the Hub of Terror in Europe." *The Washington Post*. March 22, 2016. Online. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-belgium-became-the-hub-of-terrorism-in-europe/2016/03/22/9b729164-f042-11e5-a61f-e9c95c06edca_story.html
- 3 Blumberg, Antonia. "#Muslim Apologies Highlight the Absurdity of Blaming an Entire Religion for Actions of Few." *Huffington Post*. Sept. 24, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/24/muslim-apologies-hashtag_n_5874840.html
- 4 USAID. *Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Indonesia: A Risk Assessment*. Jan. 7, 2013. Online. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00jsjj.pdf
- 5 O'Connor, Patrick. "The Invisibility of Palestinian Nonviolent Resistance in the New York Times." *Electronic Intifada*. Oct. 23, 2005. <https://electronicintifada.net/content/invisibility-palestinian-nonviolent-resistance-new-york-times/5775>
- Alfred, Charlotte. "Amid a Wave of Attacks, Palestinian Nonviolent Activists Struggle to Be Heard." *Huffington Post*. Oct. 20, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/palestinian-nonviolent-activists_us_562281e1e4b08589ef47ae2b
- 6 Jemal, Donya. "Tunisian Civil Society: From Revolutionaries to Peacekeepers." *The World Bank*. Oct. 15, 2015. Online. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/tunisian-civil-society-revolutionaries-peacekeepers>
- Drissi, Malika. "Tunisia: Breaking the Barriers to Youth Inclusion." *The World Bank*. 2014. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/publication/tunisia-breaking-the-barriers-to-youth-inclusion>
- 7 Kirkpatrick, David D. "ISIS' Harsh Brand of Islam Is Rooted in Austere Saudi Creed." *The New York Times*. Online. Sept. 24, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/25/world/middleeast/isis-abu-bakr-baghdadi-caliph-wahhabi.html?_r=0
- Crooke, Alastair. "You Can't Understand ISIS If You Don't Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia." *Huffington Post*. Online. Aug. 27, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html
- Taleb, Nassim Nicholas. Nov. 16, 2015. "The Saudi Wahhabis Are the Real Foe." *Politico*. Online. <http://www.politico.eu/article/the-saudi-wahhabis-are-the-real-foe-islamic-terrorists-salafi-violence/>
- 8 Talbot, Margaret. "The Story of a Hate Crime." *The New Yorker*. Online. June 22, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/22/the-story-of-a-hate-crime>
- 9 Vidinli, Suna. "Why Brussels Mattered and Istanbul Didn't: The Double Standard on Terror." *Mashable*. March 23, 2016. <http://mashable.com/2016/03/23/double-standards-on-terror-attacks/#U3Q.Uek3kGj>
- 10 Jones, Owen. "Islamophobia Plays Right Into the Hands of ISIS." *The Guardian*. Online. Nov. 25, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/25/islamophobia-isis-muslim-islamic-state-paris>
- Mansour, Nadine. "One Year On: Mapping Islamophobic Attacks Since Chapel Hill." *Al-Jazeera*. Online. Feb. 11, 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2016/02/islamophobia-attacks-chapel-hill-map-160211105352070.html>
- 11 Witte, Griff. "French Muslims Caught Between Islamophobia and Extremism." *Washington Post*. March 22, 2015. Online. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/french-muslims-caught-between-rising-islamophobia-and-growing-extremism/2015/03/22/7359329c-c739-11e4-bea5-b893e7ac3fb3_story.html
- Holland, Joshua. "Islamic Extremism Is Not the Cause of Europe's Terror Problem." *The Nation*. March 30, 2016. Online. <http://www.thenation.com/article/islamic-extremism-is-not-the-cause-of-europes-terror-problem/>
- 12 Naim, Moises. "The Clash Within Civilizations." *The Atlantic*. Online. July 1, 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/07/isis-clash-within-civilizations/397430/>
- 13 Cole, Juan. "ISIS Wants a Clash of Civilizations: Let's Not Give In." *The Nation*. Nov. 25, 2015. http://www.thenation.com/article/isis_wants_a_clash/
- Wright, Robert. "The Clash of Civilizations That Isn't." *The New Yorker*. Feb. 25, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/clash-civilizations-isnt>
- Naim, Moises. "The Clash Within Civilizations." *The Atlantic*. Online. July 1, 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/07/isis-clash-within-civilizations/397430/>
- 14 Nozell, Melissa. "Religious Leaders Countering Extremist Violence: How Policy Changes Can Help." *United States Institute of Peace*. Oct. 31, 2014. <http://www.usip.org/olivebranch/religious-leaders-countering-extremist-violence-how-policy-changes-can-help>
- 15 Reuters. "Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani Urges Global War Against ISIS." *NBC News*. Online. Oct. 2, 2015. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/grand-ayatollah-ali-al-sistani-urges-global-war-against-isis-n437421>
- 16 Couture, Krista London. "A Gendered Approach to Countering Violent Extremism: Lessons Learned From Women in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Applied Successfully in Bangladesh and Morocco." *The Brookings Institution*. July 2014. <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/07/30-gender-conflict-prevention-countering-violent-extremism-couture/women-cve-formatted-72914-couture-final2.pdf>
- 17 AltMuslimah official website. <http://www.altmuslimah.com/>
- 18 Muslimgirl.com official website. <http://muslimgirl.com/>
- 19 Couture, Krista London. "A Gendered Approach to Countering Violent Extremism: Lessons Learned From Women in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Applied Successfully in Bangladesh and Morocco." *The Brookings Institution*. July 2014. <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/07/30-gender-conflict-prevention-countering-violent-extremism-couture/women-cve-formatted-72914-couture-final2.pdf>
- 20 Women Living Under Muslim Laws official site. <http://www.wluml.org/>
- Women and Memory Forum official site. <http://www.wmf.org/en/>
- Sisters in Islam official site. <http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/>
- 21 Jaafari, Shirin. "Film Traces How Nouri al-Maliki's Treatment of Iraqi Sunnis Helped ISIS Get Stronger." *Public Radio International*. Oct. 28, 2014. Online. <http://www.pri.org/stories/2014-10-28/film-traces-how-nouri-al-malikis-treatment-iraqi-sunnis-helped-isis-get-stronger>
- Al-Ali, Zaid. "How Maliki Ruined Iraq." *Foreign Policy*. June 19, 2014. Online. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/06/19/how-maliki-ruined-iraq/>
- 22 Chung, Chien-Peng. "China's 'War on Terror': September 11 and Uighur Separatism." *Foreign Affairs*. July/August 2002. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2002-07-01/chinas-war-terror-september-11-and-uighur-separatism>
- Denyer, Simon. "China's War on Terror Becomes All-Out Attack on Islam in Xinjiang." *The Washington Post*. Sept. 19, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/chinas-war-on-terror-becomes-all-out-attack-on-islam-in-xinjiang/2014/09/19/5c5840a4-1aa7-4bb6-bc63-69f6bfa07e9_story.html

A Dutch Perspective: History, Politics, and Outcomes

Sam Cherribi

Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; Member of Parliament in The Netherlands 1994–2002

In the city of Rotterdam, 9/11 was a turning point that amplified a dormant Islamic debate.

Between 1997 and 2002, a series of incidents had occurred: protests by Muslims against the play “Aicha” (named for the youngest wife of Prophet Muhammad), Imam Khalil El-Moumni, and controversy around gay marriage that culminated in “De Islamisering van Nederland, The Islamization of the Netherlands,” a book by Pim Fortuyn, a sociologist, columnist, and media personality who became a star politician.

Just days before the elections of May 2002, won by Fortuyn’s party, Fortuyn was killed by an animal rights activist in the media park of the city of Hilversum. It was the first political murder in the nation since the assassination of William of Orange in 1584 and was in the most renowned tolerant country in Europe (Jonathan Israel, 2001; Russell Shorto, 2013). Never had so many people voted for a dead man in the history of politics.

Fortuyn—whose real first name was Wilhelmus, set the stage and created the frames and the intellectual foundations for a Dutch Islamophobia. This Islamophobia flourished with two members of the liberal party (the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy or VVD)—one white, Geert Wilders, and one black, Ayaan Hirsi Ali of Somalian origin. Through the political practices of these two men, Fortuyn essentially created a roadmap to full-fledged Islamophobia (Cherribi 2010).

If the Islamophobia—in its Fortuynian outlook—was the product of ethnic and religious tensions in Rotterdam, it was the assassination

of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam that shifted the national debate to its extreme.

This time, it was not an animal rights activist that killed van Gogh but a homegrown Muslim terrorist. Amsterdam, the city of Spinoza, Descartes, and Anne Frank, became the center of Islamic evil.

A simple map of the electoral success of extreme right-wing parties in Europe show the hold of these parties on the political configuration of the continent.

Islamophobia in the Netherlands

This article addresses three questions: What are the characteristics of Dutch Islamophobia? What makes the Dutch Islamophobia different from other forms of Islamophobia? What arguments are used to legitimize hatred against Islam, Muslims, and, especially, Moroccans?

To answer these questions, it is important to look at the time frame of the rise of Islamophobia. This time frame coincides with the emergence and the amplification of key insecurities that characterized European societies post 9/11, such as:

1. The quick enlargement of Europe with new Eastern European countries and the ongoing debate about Turkey’s accession

2. The fear of Eastern Europeans taking over Dutch jobs (Telegraaf, 2004)
3. The Roma, for whom a job moratorium was imposed for a couple of years in many European countries
4. The economic crisis that hit all European countries, especially Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece
5. The rise of far right and anti-European local parties that promoted national identities as the only alternative to the expansion of the European Union and the outsourcing of jobs globally

What makes Dutch Islamophobia different can be summarized in one distinct characteristic: The Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom or PVV) that thrives on Islamophobia is tolerated by almost all political parties.

Islamophobia generalizes state vulnerability at all levels, including cultural, political, and economic. It is impacting European societies, which has allowed single-issue parties to thrive. A simple map of the electoral success of extreme right-wing parties in Europe, even in the most immune countries such as Sweden, shows the hold of these parties on the political configuration of the continent.

Characteristics of Dutch Islamophobia

Classical racism in the Netherlands connected anti-immigrants and *allochtones* (emerging from another soil) with organizations such as the Centrum Democraten (CD) party, led by the uncharismatic and buffoonish leader Hans Janmaat. It metamorphosed under a charismatic, photogenic, and gay leader, Pim Fortuyn, into a more acceptable form of bashing Muslims and Moroccans.

Moroccan migrants and their offspring are the ideal target since they represent the underclass and the stereotype of Muslims, especially the imams who wear *djellabas* (traditional Moroccan gowns). The focus on Moroccans is astounding, illustrated by the fact that a word like *kut-Marokkanen* (cunt-Moroccans) made it to *Het Groene Boekje*, the bible of the Dutch spelling. (The Netherlands and Belgium have joint parliamentary commissions and an institution called the Taalunie (Language Union) that monitors spellings of words. *Het Groene Boekje* defines the official spelling of Dutch words used in the Taalunie for all Dutch- and Flemish-speaking populations.)

Rob Oudkerk, a former politician from the Labor Party (PvdA), coined the word *kut-Marokkanen*. Oudkerk has a show on BNN public radio that embodies the institutionalization of the hatred of a segment of the population—an anti-Moroccan attitude shared across the political spectrum from left to right (Cherribi, 2010). Dutch–Moroccan citizens are an easy target because of their low social position and their overrepresentation in dropout, unemployment, and crime statistics, and they are seen as living on Dutch welfare. Further, any radical imams, who speak Arabic even if they are a different nationality, are labeled Moroccans since they preach in mosques built or attended by members of the Moroccan community. Often, the distinction is ignored. Due to the globalization of Islamic radicalization of youth, the Dutch have their share of Western youth fighting with radical Islamist groups in Iraq and Syria.

What makes Dutch Islamophobia different can be summarized in one distinct characteristic: The Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom or PVV) that thrives on Islamophobia is tolerated by almost all political parties, including allowing the co-signing of motions and amendments in Parliament and municipalities (www.tweedekamer.nl). In Belgium, a *cordon sanitaire*, a kind of official boycott, has been imposed for years on Vlaams Belang and its predecessor, Vlaams Blok. In France, Le Front National is stigmatized by all other parties. However, the PVV is used as *buitenboordmotor*¹ or as an outboard engine to support certain coalitions.

While the former leader of the far-right party Centrum Democraten was not taken seriously, the leader of the Party for Freedom, Geert Wilders, is building on the aura of Pim Fortuyn. This association has propelled him to national fame. In addition, Wilders is *woordvoeder sociale zaken*, spokesman for social affairs with the VVD party, which gave him a standing in the political arena.

Can Islam Be Framed As Race?

Beyond what Jan Mohamed call “fetishization” of racial discourse, Magali Bessone (2013) redefines race beyond the biological reality in order to grasp it as a “racialized social reality.” This complex racialized reality, according to Luc Foisneau (2013), is that being black, white, or Arab in France is having a different social destiny and trajectory. Foisneau, who agrees with Bessone, sees that European countries have a thick screen in front of their eyes through which they look at society, ignoring the complex realities of race. He adds that it suffices to read surveys about social exclusion and its victims to see the size of dysfunction in society.

Racism in society is responsible for all forms of exclusion and social tensions. The merit of the work of Bessone is to redefine race as a more inclusive notion in order to solve the enigma of exclusion. So the discourse of the far right introduces a process of rationalization in society, and the discourse of Geert Wilders re-Islamizes this racialization process or even sometimes Moroccanizes it.

The efficacy of Wilders’ exclusionary discourse lies in the fact that the visible minorities in large cities happen to be Moroccans and Muslims. Interestingly, he never mentions the Turks by name and just calls them Muslims, even though the debate about Turkey’s accession to the European Union was the watershed moment between him and his former Liberal party, the VVD. His stance against Turkey led to the creation of his own party, the PVV—perhaps because Moroccan youth figure more in crime and maybe also because Turkey is a member of NATO and has a stronger economy than many European countries while still a potential member of the European Union.

The Seagull and the *Geblondeerde Beethoven*

Geert Wilders’ favorite subject is: Muslims, Moroccans, and Islam. He legitimizes his extreme hatred with the following arguments. First, Islam is a totalitarian ideology, has the same characteristics as cancer, and should be eradicated from its roots. Second, the European Union and naïve politicians are culprits, inundating the Netherlands with Muslim migrants and asylum-seekers. Remedies for both problems are easy according to Wilders: restore the physical boundaries (borders) of the country in order to be free.

The seagull symbol is not neutral. It has a historical meaning anchored in a fascist tradition that dates back before the Second World War.

Freedom is the key to every effective solution, according to Wilders. Therefore, the logo he chose for his party is a seagull, the two blue wings outlined with white, the red plumage of the tail also white outlined, and the breast white. This seagull is not neutral. It has a historical meaning anchored in a fascist tradition that dates back before the Second World War. According to historian Gjalt Zondergeld² the seagull of the PVV has a striking resemblance to the seagull of the National Socialist Movement of The Netherlands (NSB), a Dutch fascist movement that went through a transformation and became a national socialist party from the 1930s until the end of WWII. Since the Netherlands is a seagull-rich country, the bird symbolizes freedom and national unity. Zondergeld sees similarities between the seagull logo, which is placed next to the word “freedom,” just like the poster of 1941 on which the NSB put the word “freedom” next to the seagull.

The political manifesto of the PVV is titled “Hún Brussel, óns Nederland” (Their Brussels, Our Netherlands), with an emphasis on the “u” for *hun*, which means “theirs” and the “o” of *ons*,

which means “ours” (2012–2017).³ According to the manifesto, the European Union is misleading its members in order to take away their sovereignty. The manifesto begins with a broken Greek one-Euro coin. The PVV legitimizes its Euro-skeptic attitude by making an analogy to the attitude of Willem Drees, one of the great national figures, the historic leader of the socialist party, and former prime minister of the Netherlands. The

The Party for Freedom argues in its manifesto that Islam is not a religion but a totalitarian political ideology with a religious touch.

manifesto asks whether Drees was xenophobic and populist from behind the dykes. Of course not, says the manifesto, he was patriotic: He didn’t want to sell out the power of the Netherlands and to export the well-being of the Netherlands to Greece and European countries, mainly Bulgaria and Romania.

The Euro-phobic attitude has to do with what the PVV called “the many nightmares of Europe”—that the “Islamic Turkey” will be the biggest country in Europe after Germany in terms of population. The other nightmare will be the flocking of the Turks to our country. The manifesto has four maps of the Netherlands: 2010, 2020, 2030, and 2040. Coloring that shows percentages of non-Westerners in the Netherlands is confusing on the maps. The 2040 map looks like a total invasion of non-Western migrants. Immediately after the four maps, you see a big picture of a trash bin with the European flag in it, suggesting that the solution for the problems of migration is leaving the European Union.

The PVV has reclaimed the sovereignty of the Netherlands, replacing the European Union with a new treaty for free trade. On page 34 of the manifesto, there is a picture of the Taiba mosque in Amsterdam with four minarets and two domes. On the domes and the minarets, a half-moon with

a pentagonal star is placed. Under the picture, the page is titled “Our migration policy,” linking Islam to immigration as a double outsider-ness in the country or the two sides of the same coin.

The manifesto contraposes two statements: one by the slain filmmaker Theo van Gogh, who was shot by a young Dutch Moroccan radical Islamist; and one by the former mayor of Amsterdam and former leader of the labor party, Job Cohen. Cohen said to Moroccans, “You belong here” (*jullie horen bij ons*). The PVV rejects his statements and attitude and agrees with the one of Theo van Gogh, who asked himself “*wat doen jullie eigenlijk hier?*” (what are you actually doing here?). The PVV elaborates on the statements of Van Gogh by asking, “Who let the Moroccans come to this country?” The answer, according to the PVV, is that the generation of “politically correct politicians” are responsible. “The floodgates were open for hundreds of thousands of Muslims who were lured here with jobs, benefits, housing, and education. The consequences are disastrous. By now, everybody understands that.”

The PVV argues in its manifesto that Islam is not a religion but a totalitarian political ideology with a religious touch. According to the manifesto, non-Western *allochtones* cost 7.2 billion Euros a year; therefore, the Netherlands has to stop immigration from Muslim countries. Here again, the presence of non-Western citizens is equated with the presence of Islam as if all immigrants in the Netherlands are Muslims, which is misleading.

Again, a picture of a colossal minaret is printed. Then comes a list of the measures to stop immigration. The measures related to Islam are:

- Islam should not be considered a religion. Therefore, Muslims should not benefit from arrangements that other religions enjoy.
- No single new mosque should be built. Further, a ban should be imposed on mosques in urban areas and on minarets.
- Any mosque where violence is signaled should be closed.
- Financing mosques from outside sources should be banned.
- All Islamic schools should be closed.

- No headscarves should be worn in healthcare, education, municipalities or government buildings, or any subsidized organization.
- Not even a single headscarf should be worn in the Parliament, “the heart of our democracy,” not by the Cabinet, civil servants, members of Parliament, or even visitors to the Parliament—“by no one.”
- People who have dual nationality have no voting rights.
- The burqa and the Quran should be banned, and headscarves should be taxed.
- People who don’t speak Dutch or who wear a burqa should not receive social benefits.
- Multicultural grants should be banned. (The PVV uses the word “multi-culti” in a pejorative sense.)

Tweeting Hatred: Islamophobia and Europhobia

Wilders is becoming the most famous member of Parliament who uses Twitter, and surprising tweets are becoming almost a daily talk of the town. One of his famous tweets that has also been a subject on his website is “insane.” It says, “If you can’t deal with Zwarte Piet, then leave The Netherlands.” Wilders blurs the lines between color, race, and religion, which makes the interchangeability of the categories of stigma and objects of racism a salient argument. A picture of a blacked face with a white and blue beret with red feathers and a 17th century collar was posted. The PVV is targeting Amsterdam, the largest multicultural city in the country, blaming the mayor, Eberhard van der Laan, of changing the Dutch tradition of Zwarte Piet and turning Sinterklaas into a “negative stereotype.” According to the PVV, the mayor belongs to the generation of politically correct politicians.

On April 13, 2014, Wilder wrote an open letter to the prime minister about Moroccan street thugs. Linking political murder to the Moroccan community, he said, “In a decent country, Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh could have lived

as free men. The prime minister is disconnected from the people.” He asked the prime minister to close the borders from “mass immigration and mass Islamization.”⁴

The PVV put the government and the police force under pressure because they, according to the PVV, deny the Moroccan problem. According to the PVV, 65 percent of the Moroccan youth between 12 and 23 years old were accused of criminal offenses,⁵ an exaggerated interpretation of available statistics. The PVV asked in written questions in the Dutch Parliament to clarify what the PVV calls *Marokkanen gemeenten* (municipalities with a lot of Moroccans) in order to proceed to territorial racialization of locations with bigger concentrations of ethnic groups.

On the website of the PVV, there is a link to an article in English from the NL Times stating, “Half of all Dutch people agree with Geert Wilders’ opinion that there should be fewer Moroccans in the country.”⁶ Anti-Moroccan tweets went viral after a YouTube video showed a crowd chanting “less, less Moroccan” at one of Wilders’ rallies in The Hague before the European parliamentary elections. The video went viral around March 19, 2014. From Jan. 19, 2014, until March 19, 2014, there were a total of 17 tweets with a negative tone against Moroccans. From March 19 to May 19, 2014, there were more than 60,000 negative tweets. The tweets were composed of insults such as *Rif-apeen* (apes of the Rif, the Berber region in Morocco) *zand negers* (sand negroes), and *kut-Marokkanen*. Most of denigrating and discriminatory tweets came three days after the video went viral. On March 22 alone, there were 4,489 denigrating tweets (De Telegraaf, May 20, 2014).

Moroccans are the key to the European Union hatred. In order to demonstrate its anti-European attitude, on May 20, 2014, Geert Wilders cut off one of the European stars from the European flag next to the European Parliament building, symbolizing the rejection of the European project and the European Union. Wilders said, “I take this star back with me to the Netherlands, and Brussels will never get it back from us.” He also said that the Netherlands must get out of the European Union.

“We don’t like Brussels; we are not the boss in our own country, our own money, our borders, our budget; and it costs us a lot of money” (De Telegraaf, May 20, 2014).

The Netherlands: the Largest Islamic Empire in the World?

The PVV obsession with Islam goes beyond the presence of Muslims in the Netherlands. This obsession colors and influences every single discussion or issue in politics; that is, the PVV sees Islamic imagery and uses words that describe political phenomena through an Islamic lens.

A. Klimaatminaretten

To show their rejection for the wide, long, steel windmills, with three or four rotor blades, wind-energy parks were labeled “climate-minarets.” PVV sees Islam in everything—even in wind energy—just like Don Quixote de la Mancha (PVV Brabant Tegen Klimaatminaretten, De Telegraaf, Aug. 15, 2014).

This obsession colors and influences every single discussion or issue in politics; that is, the Party for Freedom sees Islamic imagery and uses words that describe political phenomena through an Islamic lens.

B. Christian Identity

The party made a plea to stop the funding of the Vrije Universiteit (University in Amsterdam), one of the landmarks of Christian identity in the country. The reason was that the university decided to open a space for prayer for Muslims, usual in many American universities where you have chapels for all faiths, even in the most secular universities. Those chapels are an expression of religious pluralism in America and the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam is a mirror

example of the tradition of tolerance that created new Amsterdam New York. (Russel Shorto, Amsterdam the most liberal city in the world). The Vrije Universiteit explained that the space for Muslims is not new; they have had it for years as part of the university tradition. One of the questions asked by members of Parliament of the PVV was, “Is it true that a Christian prayer space was moved to the basement?” The framing of the question was to show that Christianity is losing ground in its own institution that represents its own cultural Christian identity.⁷

C. ISIS-tuig/ISIS-thugs

The mayor of The Hague, Josias van Aartsen, is the party leader who ousted Geert Wilders from his own caucus in Parliament in 2004–2005. The mayor issued a protest ban after pro- and contra-Gaza riots in the Schilderswijk (a nationally stigmatized neighborhood in the Dutch political capital, The Hague). According to the PVV, some of the protesters chanted slogans that were pro-ISIS. The story was contested in the media because of a right-winged framing of the issue. After these protests, the mayor issued a protest ban for the neighborhood. Leon de Jong, the PVV spokesman and leader in the municipal council, said, “The mayor kneels for ISIS thugs, Islam, and jihad,” and he added that the ethnic neighborhood the Schilderswijk forms the caliphate of the thugs in the Netherlands.

The PVV wants to respect the right to protest “except for the ISIS-thugs.” However, the PVV itself wanted to organize its own march in the ethnic neighborhood in order to protest the presence of what they call the fundamentalist Islam in the Netherlands. After stirring up a lot of controversy in the news, the PVV put the demonstration on hold for security reasons.⁸ Muslim leaders saw the march as a provocation in a neighborhood where a Muslim majority exists. Muslim leaders rejected any link to fundamentalist Islam or the radical jihadi group ISIS. The situation became more complex when right- and left-wing groups wanted to claim part of the Transvaal neighborhood to protest. Mayor Van Aartsen postponed the decision.

D. Boycott Saudi Arabia

Another controversy—around whether Geert Wilders and his party represented the government—brought institutions of economic governance in the Netherlands, including trade unions, to write articles in Arabic newspapers such as Asharq Al Awsat, Al Riyadh, and Al Youm asking the Saudis not to impose economic sanctions on the Netherlands. At issue was an anti-Islam sticker in the form of the flag of Saudi Arabia as background, with the following text: “Islam is a lie, Muhammad is a crook, and the Quran is poison.”

Prime Minister Mark Rutte argued that any sanctions against the Netherlands would cost a lot of jobs (nu.nl, May 22, 2014). The volume of trade between the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia is in the billions of Euros (roughly, 4.7 in imports and 2.2 in exports in 2012). The issue of Saudi Arabia played out in the Netherlands on May 22, 2014, around the time of the European parliamentary elections. Timing may be one of the reasons the PVV did not win the elections. Another reason could be that the ally of Wilders, the National Front in France, made a statement that the Ebola virus could “eradicate the immigrants from Africa to Europe” (De Telegraaf, May 21, 2014). Many Dutch-Moroccan organizations in the Netherlands asked Saudi Arabia not to impose sanctions on the Netherlands.

E. Road to Salvation: Hope for the Muslims

Wilders sees one solution to the Moroccan problem in the Netherlands. He believes that integration has a chance of success only if Dutch Moroccans choose to vote for the PVV.

In sum, Wilders thrives on cutting any links to the great traditions of Islam in the Netherlands. The Dutch University of Leiden hosts treasures of Islamic civilization and Indonesia, the largest Islamic country that was once part of the Dutch empire. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, the erudite Dutch scholar of Oriental cultures and languages and adviser on native affairs, believed in the integration of Islam in the modern world (Cherribi, 2010). Wilders denies any link by doing two things: According to some investigative

journalists (NRC Handelsblad), Wilders dismissed his own Indonesian heritage by selecting former professor Hans Jansen, an Arabist from the University of Leiden, to join his caucus in the European Parliament. Jansen doesn’t hide the fact that his essential interpretation of the large Islamic tradition reduces the diverse corpus of Muslim traditions to the contested notion of jihad. Also, Wilders denies any contribution by Moroccans to the well-being of the Netherlands. Many Moroccan soldiers of the French army during WWII fought for the Netherlands against Nazi Germany, and Moroccan tombs in Capelle (Zeeland) are the visible archives of their heroic contribution to the Netherlands.

The Dutch University of Leiden hosts treasures of Islamic civilization and Indonesia, the largest Islamic country that was once part of the Dutch empire.

Framing Fatigue: Boomerang of “Fewer Moroccans”

When the media feel that an incitement to hatred can turn into potential physical elimination (fewer Moroccans), restraint is advised. When words start to have fascist connotations—a kind of authoritarian bite such as “I will make it happen”—the goal of having fewer Moroccans if Wilders party is voted in becomes more real. It is embarrassing for the media to experience déjà-vu from World War II when members of the Jewish community were deported to concentration camps. Hatred is tolerated but not suggesting extermination. Otherwise, what is the meaning of fixing the call to fewer Moroccans? To their credit, even some politicians of the PVV took distance from the statements of Wilders about “less Moroccans.” Some members of the European Parliament couldn’t deal with the level of Wilders’ discrimination. His words resonated as fascist. How would Wilders achieve the goal of “fewer Moroccans”? Does he plan to deport

them or put them in prison, or does he have other means in mind?

The impact of Wilders' words such as "fewer Moroccans" on Moroccan youth and Muslim children is enormous. Many stories were reported of little children scared to death to be deported or to be killed, reported Fatima Elatik, former alderman of the Oost district in Amsterdam. The reaction of the Dutch media to Wilders "fewer Moroccans," including in the populist newspaper *De Telegraaf*, was more robust than during the year that followed the killing of Van Gogh. The statements of Wilders were critically covered by the Dutch media. It seems like the Dutch media learned from the criticism they were subjected to after the period of Fortuyn and after the killing of Van Gogh.

If citizenship is inclusive, then all citizens should be equal; no one should be excluded from belonging to the Dutch "nation."

The statement about "fewer Moroccans" triggered more critics than ever. But it is not the critical tone about Wilders that counts: It is his almost daily appearances and coverage in the media, which hang on his every word. Wilders succeeds in setting the tone in the media and political debate. Wilders continues to make the headlines. It is almost like the media are secret admirers of somebody who helps the media industry generate more readership and income. Muslims and Moroccans are becoming interchangeable in this discourse. These categories are stigmatized and refer to an underclass in society that is defined not by race but by religion. Therefore, religion—and also ethnicity and country origin—becomes substitutes for racial characteristics.

The discourse of Wilders turns the existing predispositions—possible discrimination on basis of the visibility of Muslims and Moroccans—into permanent dispositions in the public sphere. These durable dispositions do not function as

racial labels but function as mechanisms of exclusion and shame as if being Muslim or Moroccan is something to be ashamed of. Being Moroccan in the time of Wilders, in the Netherlands, is to belong to the lowest of the low ranks in society. The discourse of Wilders legitimizes and reproduces segregation into a society based on religion and country origin. As a result, the neighborhood of Schilderswijk in The Hague becomes quickly labeled as the center of the Islamic caliphate, something mythical and imaginary that draws its saliency from the news in the Middle East mainly after the disintegration of Iraq and the start of the civil war that is ravaging Syria. Every neighborhood with a Muslim majority or ethnic majority is a potential territory for jihadists, according to the PVV. In parallel, Schilderswijk becomes the new Gaza of the political capital of the Netherlands according to the PVV.

This authoritarian drift on the level of free speech doesn't bode well for the future of democracy. If citizenship is inclusive, then all citizens should be equal; no one should be excluded from belonging to the Dutch "nation." Moroccans and Muslims in the Netherlands are just the name of the hatred phenomenon that is widespread in Europe. In some places, they are called *Roma*, or *Beurs* in the *banlieus* of France, or *Türken* in Germany. Even in Scandinavia, far-right parties rose after they discovered the new migrants.

That which characterizes the new far right in Europe is the touch of erudite exclusive populism, with leaders like the former Austrian leader Jörg Haider, the Belgian Philip Dewinter of *Vlaams Belang*, the French Marine le Pen of the *National Front*, and the Dutch Geert Wilders of the PVV. European extreme right populist parties discovered an ethnic religious difference that they framed as race and as an expression of a complex reality. All the categories of race, ethnicity, and religion (specifically, Islam) were simplified and put in one-size-fits-all categories. As such, because of their religious and ethnic belonging, they are not ready for assimilation and will remain outsiders forever.

The United States is much more pronounced about its secularity, being inclusive of all religions; therefore, it accepts religious pluralism as a fact of

life. Geert Wilders, who made a furor in European media with his short documentary *Fitna*, didn't receive much attention in the United States. It could be concluded by drawing on the *Dignity of the Working Man*, the work of Michele Lamont in her comparative study about the United States vs. France, that it is easier to be Muslim in the

United States than Muslim in Europe. According to Essed and Hoving, "The Netherlands echoes, if not leads, a wider European trend, where offensive statements about Muslims are an everyday phenomenon (Essed, Hoving, 2014–9). The authors argue that "the moral rejection of racism seems to be losing ground in Europe" (Ibid).

1 Term used by Frits Bolkestein, former Euro Commissioner and former leader of the Conservative Liberal Party (VVD) in interview on the political talk show *Buitenhof* in 2011 (VPRO TV)

2 Bas Kromhout (accessed Sept. 6, 2014)
<http://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/nieuws/10749/wilders-gebruikt-besmet-logo.html>

3 Wilders party program (accessed Sept. 6, 2014)
<http://pvv.nl/index.php/visie/verkiezingsprogramma-2012.html>

4 Accessed Sept. 1, 2014
<http://pvv.nl/index.php/36-fj-related/geert-wilders/7566-open-brief-geert-wilders-aan-minister-president-mark-rutte.html>

5 Accessed Aug. 4, 2014
<http://pvv.nl/index.php/in-de-media/persberichten/5721-schrikbarende-criminaliteitscijfers-niet-westerse-alloctonen-funest-voor-integratie.html>

6 Accessed Aug. 10, 2014
See more at <http://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/component/content/article/87-news/1858-pvv-43-percent-agree-fewer-moroccans#sthash.MIUfw7jO.dpuf>

7 Accessed Aug. 20, 2014
PVV Wil Financierings Stop. Vrije Universiteit om Gebedsruimte, *Het Parool*, Aug. 18, 2014

8 Accessed Aug. 19, 2014
Nieuwe mars in Schilderswijk is erg riskant, *De Telegraaf*, Aug. 13, 2014

References

Bessone, Magali. "Précis de Sans distinction de race? Une analyse critique du concept de race et de ses effets pratiques." In *Philosophiques*. Vol. 40, No. 2, Autumn 2013, p. 457–460

Cherribi, Sam. *In the House of War: Dutch Islam Observed*. New York: OUP, 2010

Essed, Philomena and Isabel Hoving. *Dutch Racism*. Amsterdam, Rodopi BV, 2014

Foisneau, Luc. Comments on Magali Bessone book in *Philosophiques*. Vol. 40, No. 2, Autumn 2013, p. 479–485

Janmohamed, Abdul. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn 1985, p. 59–87

Rodrigues, Peter & Jaap van Donselaar. *Racisme & Extremisme* (Anne Frank Foundation, Ninth Report) Anne Frank Stichting/Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2010

Shorto, Russell. *Amsterdam: A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Doubleday; First Edition. 2013

The Settlement House Model of the Arab-American Family Support Center

Ambreen Qureshi

Arab-American Family Support Center, Brooklyn, New York

The Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, nonsectarian organization. Established in 1994, AAFSC is the first and largest Arabic-speaking, trauma-informed social service agency in New York City. As a settlement house and member of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), AAFSC has taken the initiative in providing culturally and linguistically sensitive services to the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) immigrant communities throughout the five boroughs.

The Arab-American Family Support Center operates out of five sites and has 35 full-time and 12 part-time staff who are as diverse as the communities it supports.

Grounded in the history and methodology of the settlement house movement that began in the late 19th century, AAFSC presents a model of community engagement and youth empowerment as a strategy to help with efforts to prevent violent extremism as detailed in this paper.

The Settlement House Advantage

Settlement houses are multiservice, neighborhood-based organizations that provide services designed to identify and reinforce the strengths of

individuals, families, and communities. Settlement houses flourish nationally, with over 450 organizations, and internationally, with over 3,400 organizations. In New York City alone, 37 settlement houses exist, including AAFSC. All are a part of UNH, a membership organization founded in 1919 that currently provides services to over half a million New Yorkers each year.

The settlement house model incorporates four core principles: embeddedness, multiple points of entry, reciprocity, and community building. Guided by these principles, the work of the settlement houses generates three outcomes known as the Settlement House Advantage for participants: a sense of belonging, a sense of efficacy, and a sense of possibility.¹

For more than a century, settlement houses have, and continue to this day, to be a vital part of neighborhoods and communities across the United States and globe by staying true to their historic mission and model while reinterpreting it for present-day concerns. For AAFSC and others, one of these present-day concerns is preventing violent extremism and the rise of Islamophobia that often comes hand in hand with it.

Settlement House Model in Operation at the Arab-American Family Support Center

The Arab-American Family Support Center adopted the settlement house model and officially became a settlement house (and member of UNH) in 2009. Through our trauma-informed, culturally

and linguistically competent social services, we provide a model of community engagement, integration, and youth empowerment that can help in efforts to prevent violent extremism by offering a viable, supportive path for those who might be targets of Daesh recruitment propaganda for violent extremism.

Over the last 23 years and counting, we have helped countless AMEMSA (Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian) immigrants emerge out of isolation (i.e., overcoming language barriers, employment challenges, financial hardships, and racial or religious discrimination) and acclimate to their newly adopted communities in New York City. AAFSC operates out of five sites and has 35 full-time and 12 part-time staff who are as diverse as the communities we support. Our staff are competent in 13 languages: American Sign Language, Arabic, Bangla, English, Farsi, French, Hindi, Nepali, Pashto, Punjabi, Spanish, Tibetan, and Urdu and understand the cultural nuances necessary in serving immigrant communities.

Many of our clients must cope with the trauma and unrest that comes from flight, migration, and resettlement in a new place, along with the everyday challenges that many low-income individuals across New York City face. AAFSC became a trauma-informed organization in 2014 and invests heavily in ongoing trainings for staff members at all levels of the agency. We build resiliency through community support and engagement using cultural humility as one of our core tenets.

The Arab–American Family Support Center serves over 6,000 people each year through six main programs designed to empower and strengthen AMEMSA communities, while creating an environment of tolerance and understanding for all nationalities and beliefs. AAFSC's mission is to empower new immigrants with the tools they need to successfully acclimate to the world around them and become active participants in their communities.

The Adult Education and Literacy Program has been providing English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Basic English in the Native Language (BENL), and Civics ESL services to AMEMSA immigrant communities of New York City since 1995. Our literacy classes help recent

When I first came to America, I didn't know a single word of English. I was like a lost leaf from its tree. I was lonely and had no place to go for friends. Until my classmate L., who was also Arab, helped me with my English. She brought me to this place called the Arab-American Family Support Center. It was like starting a new life in a new place. I met many people there, and that place became my second home and family. I never loved a place this much. They help me with homework, and we go on trips. They would always try for us to have a smile on our faces. No matter what the problem I always smile. I learned many things at the AAFSC, and the biggest thing I ever learned, was to never forget the family I have here.

—F., age 16

immigrants learn English, adjust to a new culture, and successfully adapt to life in the United States. Our BENL classes provide literacy skills to women in English and Arabic simultaneously. Our Civics ESL course focuses on American history, government organization, civics, and ways to successfully attain American citizenship. Our program's core objective is to transform our students into future and active actors in their respective communities. Through our program, AAFSC empowers new immigrants by ensuring that they understand and are equipped to exercise the civil liberties and rights before and after their naturalization process. AAFSC students have a 100 percent pass rate on the U.S. citizenship exam.

The Youth Program encourages students, ages 7 to 18, to excel academically, prepare for college, develop positive leadership skills, participate in the community, and work with students of other

Principles of the Settlement House Model

Embeddedness. Settlement houses are entrenched in the social fabric of their communities and become a trusted and safe space. They are “of, by, and for” the neighborhood or communities that they serve, and many settlement house staff come from these communities.

Multiple Points of Entry. Settlement houses offer many different activities, programs, and services as part of their comprehensive and holistic approach. Programs often serve as gateways to each other. Participants and their families may access these across their life span and across generations as part of a settlement houses’ provision to provide services “from the cradle to the grave.”

Reciprocity. Settlement houses fundamentally believe that all participants have strengths and talents to build on to advance the programs, the organization, and the community. Guidance, feedback, insight, and other contributions are actively sought from participants by settlement houses and incorporated into all aspects of their work.

Community Building. Settlement house programs foster connections and bonds among participants across generational, cultural, and racial divides. These healthy interactions build a sense of community by creating new networks, renewing the spirit, celebrating diversity, fostering civic engagement, and championing social justice.

Outcomes of the Settlement House Model

Sense of Belonging. The sense of belonging is one of the most fundamental of human needs and a key outcome of the settlement house model. This outcome positively affects short- and long-term mental health, increases self-efficacy and self-esteem, reduces stress, and improves coping abilities. It lessens the sense of feeling alone or isolated. Settlement house participants feel that they fit into and add value to the settlement house and their neighborhood or community.

Sense of Efficacy. Cultivating the sense of efficacy empowers settlement house participants to foster a greater interest in activities, feeling confident and equipped to overcome hurdles and to bounce back swiftly from difficulties and disappointments along the way.

Sense of Possibility. Settlement house principles are grounded in the Progressive era traditions of optimism and hope. Individuals with a strong sense of possibility tend to adapt better to adverse incidents, learn from negative situations, and focus on problem-solving. Settlement House participants have shown that hope and the sense of possibility can be learned.

Source: “Overcoming the Odds: The Settlement House Advantage.” United Neighborhood Houses. December 2014.

nationalities to learn to embrace diversity, tolerance, and peace. The program offers a wide range of free services including after-school homework help and tutoring, ESL instruction, college access counseling, educational excursions, a six-week summer camp, and SAT preparation courses. Last year, 99 percent of our students successfully transitioned to the next grade, and we saw one of our students improve his SAT score by 500 points after completing our program.

In January of 2014, we began a partnership with the New School’s Engage Media Lab to create “I Need to Be Heard!”, a youth participatory media project in which students learn and implement the technical and creative tools of filmmaking as a method of expressing and exploring their lived

experiences. Our youth have created over 35 short films to date, some of which can be viewed on our YouTube channel, and three of our youth had their films selected for various film festivals.

The Legal Program provides family-based immigration services for immigrants throughout New York City by our staff attorney. Services include guidance and counseling in the areas of immigration law; a full range of immigration services, including visa assistance and adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident; and citizenship and naturalization services. Last year we served approximately 1,250 clients—over 90 percent from Arab communities.

The Health Program enrolls low-income individuals and families across New York City in free

or low-cost health insurance. The program also provides referrals to low-cost culturally competent health care providers and conducts workshops on health-related issues. As a New York State of Health IPA/Navigator Site, AAFSC is part of a consortium of organizations that works closely with our lead sponsor, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, to facilitate the implementation of the Affordable Care Act within the AMEMSA communities. Last year we signed up 1,004 clients for health insurance, 91 percent of them low-income individuals.

The Anti-Violence Program provides culturally and linguistically competent prevention and intervention services to survivors of domestic violence, teen dating violence, stalking, and sexual assault. The program equips survivors with the tools they need to heal and empower themselves. In addition to crisis intervention and individual counseling, the program also offers support and empowerment groups, information and referrals to service providers, court accompaniments and translation assistance, community outreach and education, and trainings for professionals. We operate out of three satellite offices in partnership with the Family Justice Centers in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. Last year, AAFSC served over 400 individuals through this program.

The Preventive Services Program aims to ensure the safety of children in homes where there have been allegations of child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment. AAFSC strengthens families by offering assistance and services that lead to improved familial relationships and more effective problem-solving skills and coping mechanisms. The program offers a wide range of services, including individual and family counseling and crisis intervention as well as education efforts about relevant laws and norms around issues such as truancy and corporal punishment. The program consistently receives high marks from the NYC Administration for Children's Services. We offer parenting classes in English, Arabic, Urdu, and Bangla. Last year, 99.5 percent of children in our program stayed in their homes and out of foster care.

Furthermore, AAFSC is the lead community partner for the Khalil Gibran International

Academy (KGIA), a public high school in Brooklyn that concentrates on Arabic language and culture. Open to all New York City youth, KGIA offers a competitive, world-class education as an International Baccalaureate school with over 230 students currently enrolled.

Youth Engagement and Preventing Violent Extremism

In his address "The Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace" to the U.N. Security Council in 2015, anthropologist Scott Atran, director of research at France's National Center of Scientific Research, offers three conditions from a social sciences perspective that youth at risk need in order to prevent them from taking the path of violent extremism. These conditions align with the Settlement House

Our further recommendations include continued and elevated advocacy on behalf of settlement houses and their communities, investment in community-led programs, engaging additional stakeholders, and creating new partnerships as well as maximizing further involvement and furthering knowledge development in this area.

Advantage and AAFSC's programming:

1. Offer youth something that makes them dream of a life of significance through struggle and sacrifice in comradeship. This is an example of community-building and sense of belonging.
2. Offer youth a positive personal dream, with a concrete chance of realization. This is an example of a sense of possibility and a sense of efficacy.
3. Offer youth the chance to create their own local initiatives.² This is an example of reciprocity, community-building, and sense of efficacy.

Youth engagement has been a cornerstone of AAFSC's work since its founding and we have

Settlement House History

Middle class social reformers in Britain in the late 19th century began the settlement house movement with the creation of Toynbee Hall, the first settlement house, in East London in 1884 to provide social services and education to low-income workers in the area.³ Settlement houses are multiservice, neighborhood-based organizations that provide services designed to identify and reinforce the strengths of individuals, families, and communities.

Galvanized by the British reformers and in response to the burgeoning industrial poverty in the United States, the movement quickly picked up stateside in major urban centers, especially New York, Chicago, and Boston in the late 1880s. The first settlement house in the United States, Neighborhood Guild, was founded in 1886 in New York City's Lower East Side and was later renamed University Settlement. There were 74 settlement houses across the United States in 1887, and that number dramatically expanded to over 400 in the next three years.⁴

The most well-known settlement house in the United States, Hull House in Chicago, was established during this time by Jane Addams, a prominent reformer of the Progressive era. Women played many important leadership roles in the establishment of settlement houses in the United States during a time when it was rare for women to have leadership roles in any sector of society. The British reformers also promoted the idea of different classes working and coming together. They advocated that people of means "settle" in low-income neighborhoods to become part of the community and work with their neighbors to improve their shared community together.⁵

Settlement house staff traditionally lived in the same neighborhood (and sometimes even the same building) where they worked, and this continues in many settlement houses today. The original settlement houses were primarily located in predominantly immigrant neighborhoods. They worked to help ease the transition of immigrants into their surroundings and advance the local standards of living.

a successful track record of positive results over the last 23 years and counting. Our work as a settlement house presents a model of community engagement, integration, and youth empowerment as a strategy for the prevention of violent extremism in line with research culled by leading experts in the subject matter.

Conclusion and Recommendations

By shedding light on the settlement house movement, history, and model; the work of the Arab–American Family Support Center; the network of other settlement houses nationally

and internationally; and the cumulative impact and multiplier effect of the Settlement House Advantage, we present a strategy that can aid in efforts to prevent violent extremism. Our further recommendations include continued and elevated advocacy on behalf of settlement houses and their communities, investment in community-led programs, engaging additional stakeholders, and creating new partnerships as well as maximizing further involvement and furthering knowledge development in this area—all while being mindful of and addressing Islamophobia, xenophobia, and structural racism at every level.

1 "Overcoming the Odds: The Settlement House Advantage." United Neighborhood Houses. December 2014

2 Scott Atran, "Here's What the Social Science Says About Countering Violent Extremism." The Huffington Post. Accessed March 18, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/scott-atran/violent-extremism-social-science_b_7142604.html

3 "Settlement House Movement." Open Collections Program: Immigration to the U.S. Accessed March 18, 2016. <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/settlement.html>

4 Ibid

5 Retrieved March 18, 2016. <http://www.unhny.org/about/history>

Kompass-Muslim Youth Education: Empowerment and Prevention Through Education

Misbah Arshad

Founder and Director, Kompass-Muslim Youth Education

German Muslim youth live in a social environment in which they have to cope with major challenges. Young Muslims are not only confronted with anti-Muslim prejudices but also have to deal with the ideas of religious radicals and extremists—ideas they hear not only in the media but also in school, on the job, in peer groups, and in family environments. I often feel that we Muslims have to fight on two fronts: We are forcibly confronted with both extremes and, whether we want to or not, we have to take a stand for our faith.

If youth have no solid identity, they may be confused by such a confrontation, because they cannot respond appropriately to questions or established theses. This uncertainty may not only project anti-Muslim racism but also could prepare a breeding ground for religious radicalization. Kompass-Muslim Youth Education wants

to empower young Muslims against anti-Muslim racism and religious extremism. I founded the program in 2013 and am offering it with my colleague Mustafa Cimsit in mosques in the cities of Mainz and Wiesbaden, Germany.

Can Islam Belong to Germany?

Since I can remember, there has always been a debate on this issue, and Germany is still divided on the question. On the one hand, some people say that, of course, Islam belongs to Germany, because Muslims have lived in Germany since the middle of the last century. On the other hand, some try to show that Islam in Germany has no historical roots and that Europe is only rooted in the so called Judeo-Christian culture and tradition. Although this thesis does not make sense from a scientific and historical perspective, it has an

Biographical Remarks

At the age of 2, I migrated with my family from Pakistan to Germany. Although I grew up in the very international and multicultural city of Frankfurt, the question of whether I'm German or Pakistani was central for me in my youth. At home it was a taboo to say that I felt German, although I had mastered the German language as a child better than my mother tongue. And moreover, in comparison to my cousins in Pakistan, I felt better off as a young girl in the German culture. On the other hand, outside the family I was always perceived as a foreigner and stranger. Even today I'm still asked where I come from and get the

compliment that I speak German so well. Meanwhile, I got used to saying: "Thanks, but your German is not bad either." As a teenager I had so much to fight. I always had the feeling that I had to decide whether I want to be Pakistani or German. And no matter how I decided, there would always be someone who would be displeased with me.

Later, when I started to identify myself more and more with my religion and started to study Islam as an academic, a bigger trouble began. Suddenly it was no longer about nationalities but whether a particular national identity can be compatible with Islam.

Program Modules

1. **We are Muslims.** Goal: to become mature in the own cultural and religious identity.
2. **We all are Germany.** Goal: to learn intercultural and interreligious skills and to promote tolerance and respect for people of a different belief, culture, way of life, or other creed, and empower for a peaceful discourse.
3. **We belong to Europe.** Goal: emphasize the multicultural heritage of European history and show to our young participants how Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars worked together in Europe. Yes,

Muslim scholars also took part in the shaping of the European and Western cultural heritage in historical times. I try to offer a space for the teenagers where we are deconstructing stereotypes like Occident and Orient.

We are Muslims!

We are at home in Germany!

We belong to Europe!

impact on identity discourses in Muslim communities. Even though many Muslims have now lived in Germany for four generations, by such debates they remain foreigners in their own country, a country where they were born and grew up and that is their home.

For the Muslim refugees who now mostly come from Syria to Germany, social inclusion is not easy. And with the rise of the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, PEGIDA) movement, anti-Muslim racism arrived in the middle of German society.

- Both divide the world into a Muslim and non-Muslim sphere, in which one is good and the other is evil.
- Both share the conviction that there are people who are worth more than others.
- Both work only through the discrimination against other groups of people.
- Both think that there is a clash of civilizations in which the West and the Muslim world face each other and have to fight each other. If need be, even by force.

In my opinion, anti-Muslim racism and religious extremism are both built on the same basic mechanism and have the same world view. We must combat both extremes at the same time, and we have to resolve this dichotomy in our minds if we want to live in a peaceful world without racism and terror. This is a major task for our societies, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. And as a practicing Muslim, I feel religiously committed to counter both extremes and to find the middle path.

Kompass is a platform for a critical and reflexive analysis of different forms of discrimination and their defense. It wants to encourage the opposition to prejudice and discrimination. Further, it enables Muslim youth to counter anti-Muslim racism and offers an orientation between emancipatory and oppressive elements of religious beliefs to prevent radical and extremist tendencies. Here, the criteria of life affirmation and promotion of personal development serve as correctives.

Anti-Muslim racism and religious extremism are both built on the same basic mechanism and have the same world view. We must combat both extremes at the same time, and we have to resolve this dichotomy in our minds if we want to live in a peaceful world without racism and terror.

Empowering Young Muslims

The Kompass program started in 2013, and it empowers young Muslims against anti-Muslim racism and religious radicalization. I think it makes great sense to tackle both at the same time, because both extremes share similar viewpoints:

Kompass is also religious education to convey Islamic values, with the aim of taking responsibility for justice and peace in society and for the integrity of creation. Of course, intercultural education is not absent. We embedded it to promote tolerance and respect for people of a different belief, culture, way of life, or creed, and we empower to dispute by peaceful means. At the end of the program, youth have learned how to engage in their communities, raise awareness of their existence in social contexts, and engage in solidary action.

Furthermore, we try to encourage our youth in our workshops to accept their hybrid identity. They can be Muslims and Germans and Arabs or Turks, for example. They are more than a single-identity feature. We try to stop the dynamic of “othering” in their minds.

Kompass consistently follows a perspective from the individual and provides spaces for the development of a personality to open up ways in which young people bring their own cultural and religious affiliation and develop a reflective and self-determined identity.

An important conceptual basis of Kompass is the principle of holism as “learning with head, heart, and hand” as well as the Socratic method of “teaching through self-knowledge,” an approach that is also reflected in the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. In this spirit, Kompass links methodological learning content with group-dynamic processes, enabling cognitive, emotional,

and social learning. Such a holistic approach is an effective complement to forms of individualized learning. Besides theoretical mediation, the program is distinguished by a high proportion of practical exercises—learning by doing—which also ensures a fun factor and is offered in the form of process-oriented seminars and workshops.

Kompass provides a safe space for personal development and for addressing the religious needs and questions of young Muslims. Logically consistent, we refuse fundamentalist readings of the Quran and Sunnah. We contextualize the history of the Quran and the life of the Prophet Muhammad to show youngsters how they can integrate spiritual knowledge and religious role models into their own daily lives. We also convey Islamic values with the aim to take responsibility for justice and peace in society and for the integrity of creation.

We try to encourage our youth in our workshops to accept their hybrid identity. They can be Muslims and Germans and Arabs or Turks, for example.

We are working in mosques, and we refuse gender segregation—a big issue in German mosques. We insist on teaching girls and boys together. We talked to the communities and to the imams in the mosques to help them understand that Muslim girls and boys don’t have to be ashamed to sit and to learn together. Their daily life is not separated into male and female genders at school, so we try to overcome gender-based stereotypical role models.

The diversity of Islam is also a big issue for us: In our work, we feature the diversity and the cultural heritage of Islam. We are not deputies of “Turkish Islam” or “Pakistani Islam.” We encourage our teenagers to recognize how multifaceted the history and the cultures of Islam actually are. We work together on theological issues and questions that result from daily life or from problems in families. We also analyze

Goals

- To encourage to counter prejudices and discrimination
- To empower to deal with anti-Muslim racism
- To concern oneself with internalized aspects of dominance and suppression and options for change
- To stimulate critical thinking about prejudices and the awareness that no one is free from prejudices
- To offer an orientation between emancipatory and oppressive elements of religious beliefs to prevent radical and extremist tendencies. Here, the criteria of life affirmation and promotion of personal development serve as correctives

propaganda videos from German Salafi groups and discuss the impact of these groups in German Muslim and non-Muslim society.

Kompass-Muslim Youth Education wants to empower young Muslims to realize their personal and social living conditions in order to participate proactively in society. With empowerment, they can participate and cooperate in the shaping of

social life in Germany to include their cultural and religious identity. Only if we empower Muslim youth and help them find a solid identity and enable them to become responsible citizens, we can prevent fundamentalist and extremist thinking. To achieve this goal, we need good cooperation between Muslim and non-Muslim communities and societies.

HAYAT Germany: A Programmatic Approach

Ava Linea

HAYAT (Turkish and Arabic for “life”) is the first German counseling program for people involved in radical Salafist groups or on the path of a violent jihadist radicalization, including those traveling to Syria and other combat zones. Established in 2011, the program works directly with radicalized people to demonstrate the prerequisites and possibilities of desisting from radical behavior, ideologies, and groups. HAYAT is available to parents, siblings, friends, teachers, employers, and anyone else who has a relationship to a person potentially on the path of a (violent) radicalization.

How We Work

HAYAT is one part of the umbrella organization Center for Democratic Culture, which includes the following initiatives: ZDK Gesellschaft Demokratische Kultur (deradicalization, prevention, family counseling, research, education); EXIT-Germany (first deradicalization program for right-wing extremism in Germany); HAYAT (family counseling and deradicalization in realm of Islamist extremism); Institute for the Study of Radical Movements; and the Journal for De-radicalization and Democratic Culture.

Since 2012, HAYAT has been the partner of the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, which established a national counseling hotline on deradicalization. Taking calls from relatives and other concerned people, the hotline provides a first-line assessment to redirect the calls to local, nongovernmental partners. HAYAT is

responsible for Berlin and East Germany as well as for international, high-security cases.

HAYAT also provides its own hotline and can also be contacted directly via email. Its method is based on a passive-approach system, which means that the initial contact to HAYAT needs to come from respective families or the individuals themselves. During the first contact, HAYAT experts will conduct an analysis and risk assessment of the respective situation to determine the counseling demand and to answer the most important questions in the beginning: Is the relative in danger of becoming (violently) radicalized? Or is it a harmless case of conversion to Islam? Once the counselor gains a clear picture of the concrete situation, an individual counseling process and step-by-step plan will be designed, including various measures to prevent further radicalization or to stop and reverse the process. The counseling is systemic, situational, problem- and solution-oriented. All services are free, confidential, and available in German, English, Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi.

Three Pillars of Our Work

Pragmatic Level. On the pragmatic level, one major goal is to disrupt the respective infrastructure. It is important to get people out of their isolation and to reintegrate them into a “normal” life. Some people might seek advice regarding lawyers, new apartments, new work, or education. The counselor has to support the social

environment to do anything needed to stabilize the situation in real life. The most important thing is to find new attractive perspectives for the future.

Ideological Level. HAYAT tries to coach families to dismantle the radical ideology and deconstruct the narratives. Because it is difficult to talk with radicalized family members without getting into conflicts, HAYAT counselors help families with communications skills and practical advice. Family members have to learn how to counter narratives and how to try to set doubts or reinforce doubts the person may already have.

Affective Level. The counselor attempts to stabilize the social situation: for example, by renewing social contacts. It is also important to improve the relationships with family and friends. The goal is to offer opportunities for social contacts outside the ideological group. The social environment is an emotional anchor in real life. On this level, family and friends should be very emotional and authentic in order to strengthen emotional bonds and form an effective alternative to the radical group.

Germany's Salafist Scene

Young people called Salafists are teenagers born and raised in Germany with or without immigrant background. We identify four groups of young individuals: with Muslim background, with non-Muslim immigrant background, of German origin, and with bicultural families.

Within the Salafist scene, the third generation of jihadi preachers is active. Most of them have relatively little religious knowledge, and they are doing mission and recruiting via the internet. For youth, social groups and networks in the background are real and could play an important role on the path to radicalization.

The main fascination for young people is that this third generation of jihadi preachers seems to act authentically and always refer to their own lives and experiences with faith. They argue mostly in a political—not theological—way. They also often discuss political problems and ideas in an emotional manner. Actually, some could be called “pop jihadists”: They act like pop

Case Load

Since 2012, HAYAT counseled 266 cases. In 176 cases, counseling is still ongoing, while 90 cases are considered closed. These 266 cases include 63 cases with high-security relevancy. This means that they are related to conflicts in Syria and Iraq, including potential departure, supporting militant groups, departure, death, and return.

stars on YouTube, have groupies in the Salafist scene, and make use of symbols and elements of Western pop culture.

Salafist Groups in Germany

The Salafist scene in Germany is very diverse. It is a heterogenic movement, recruiting openly since 2004. We distinguish four different groups within the Salafist movement, and HAYAT works with groups 3 and 4.

1. Puristic Salafists. The puristic Salafists live parallel to society and live in an orthodox and strictly religious way. They might be compared to the Amish people in the United States.
2. Political missionaries (majority). They reject violence and only do mission in a religious way.
3. Political missionaries (nonviolent). They legitimize militant jihad with their ideology and in a religious way.
4. Jihadist (minority; smallest group). These are militants.

Why Salafist Groups Are Attractive

Salafist groups seem to offer many answers and solutions to young men and women. They provide **religious knowledge** (supposedly the “truth and the real and only Way to Islam”); **values** about what is right and wrong; **obedience** in the form of strong leaders and role models who provide structure in their lives; **community and identity** that provide acceptance and acknowledgment; and **justice** (“helping” oppressed Muslims).

Girls and Women in Daesh

Girls play an active role in supporting the Daesh organization and other groups. They might, for instance, translate papers or do social media work. They actively recruit other girls via social media such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and Facebook. They build networks and help to organize travel routes, housing, and money transfer.

To join Daesh, underage girls often travel with an older female. They receive concrete instructions about how to leave the country. They often travel to Syria across the Turkish border. In Turkey, most of them have a hotel reservation. Underage girls have a written permission from “their parents.” They were prepared intensively prior to their travel. Transport from Turkey is organized, and the girls are picked up in small groups. If girls begin to have doubts and don’t want to enter into Daesh territory, they are forced by

other girls. Upon arrival, Daesh controls every step, takes away the documents and cell phones, and takes the girls into housing for women. Later they might get married with a fighter they “choose,” although we know that some girls go there to look for a groom.

Girls who join Daesh might want to be one of the first women in the “Islamic State,” to be the “mothers of the first caliphate,” to help people (perhaps by working in a hospital), to marry a strong fighter, and other reasons. The reality on site however, is completely different from what they originally expected.

Women are allowed to fight, but they don’t have to. Daesh does not recruit them for fighting purposes. They have a “calm down function” for the fighters – to stabilize them, to eventually give birth to the next generation of mujahedin, and also to control the men inside the Daesh system.

One example from a German militant Salafist website provides insight to the women’s perspective on the jihadist narrative. Some “Western” girls or young women feel they would be able to live an emancipated life just as they learned in Western societies.

Here in Latakia, there are only a few sisters who are fighting actively. Alhamdulillah (praise to God); there are a lot of muhajerin who settled down with their families. There are also many unmarried brothers who would like to start a family in the secure areas. The mujahedin are willing to take honorable women as second, third, or fourth wives.

Since young men and women feel they have found these answers, they can separate and delineate themselves from society and protest against

the mainstream. They also obtain maximum attention from parents, teachers, the media, and others.

Best Practices: Rehabilitating and Reintegrating Foreign Fighters

Rohan Gunaratna

Professor of Security Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technology University; Head of International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore

The world faces an unprecedented global insurgent and terrorist threat with the rise of the so-called Islamic State (IS). With fighters from nearly 100 countries, IS is the largest insurgent, terrorist, and extremist movement the world has witnessed. Governments have built operational capabilities to fight IS in the core theaters of Iraq and Syria, but government and partner capabilities to rehabilitate and reintegrate both surrendered and returnee fighters are unstructured, ad hoc, or nonexistent. A full-spectrum response—from anti-terrorism to counterterrorism and from community engagement to rehabilitation—is paramount to fighting current issues as well as emerging capabilities.

If we do not rehabilitate those in custody, what will happen? When released from prison, they will (a) pose a security threat, (b) infect others, and (c) join the iconography of the terrorist groups. This will lead to loss of lives and property, regenerate the threat, and bolster the terrorist group. If terrorists reflect, repent, and express remorse, they will reenter society as productive citizens. To support the transformation of a terrorist from the extreme to the mainstream, governments—in partnership with civil society and business firms—can play a pivotal role. This article assesses the global threat and discusses the nonkinetic and nonlethal options to the foreign fighter threat.

The Islamic State is estimated to be between 50,000 and 100,000 members and at least a million supporters and sympathizers.

Today, the threat is not only from IS, Al-Qaeda, and their associates but from other groups. As ideology is the center of gravity, governments and their partners should build deradicalization programs to engage recruits and returnees. Such programs aimed at mainstreaming the fighters will bring together a range of government and civil society partners for religious and spiritual counseling, educational instruction, vocational instruction, social and family services, psychological counseling, creative arts therapy, and recreational rehabilitation.

Understanding the Foreign Fighter Threat

Compared to Al-Qaeda, which enjoyed a numerical strength of 2,500 members at its peak, IS presents a much larger foreign fighter threat. Today, the numerical strength of Al-Qaeda has diminished to 200, but its overseas branches enlist a membership between 20,000 and 25,000. Al-Qaeda operated together with both the Afghan Taliban (40,000) and the Pakistan Taliban (20,000). In contrast to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, IS's strength at its core and in its branches is estimated to be between 50,000 and 100,000 members and at least a million supporters and sympathizers. An estimated 50,000 fighters and 20,000 noncombat employees serve IS in the core areas of Iraq and Syria.

Although 10,000–15,000 fighters perished fighting the Russian, U.S., and Syrian–Arab coalitions, IS’s strength in 2016 is estimated at 30,000 Iraqi and Syrian fighters and 20,000 foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria. According to Western security and intelligence estimates, IS’s strength grew from 30,000 fighters in 2014 to 50,000 fighters in the core areas of Iraq and Syria in 2015. According to Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian intelligence estimates, an additional 20,000 Iraqis and Syrians serve in the security and administrative structures of IS in the core areas. When their area is under threat, even noncombat members are mobilized to serve and support IS armies.

Today, IS’s headquarters in Al Raqqah supports eight overseas IS branches. Of IS branches, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiya is the strongest with 9,000 members and IS Wilayat al-Haramayn has about 100 members. About 30,000 serve in the eight overseas branches. Between November 2014 and September 2015, U.K. authorities recorded IS having staged 270 attacks. Of these, 117 were in West Africa, 47 in Libya, 58 in Sinai, 28 in Yemen, six in Saudi Arabia, one in the Caucasus, eight in Khorasan, and five in Algeria.

With IS iconography spreading both in the virtual and real space, creating pockets of self-radicalized and militarized supporters worldwide, the number of attacks will soar. After reclaiming territory and proclaiming the caliphate, IS strategy is to govern the areas it controls in Iraq and Syria and expand in Muslim territories from Morocco to the Philippines. IS declared branches after it accepted the pledges of allegiance from local groups. With more groups pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, IS is likely to accept and declare additional branches in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. IS Khorasan, the first IS branch in Asia, is largely staffed by Afghani and Pakistani nationals. Located in the border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan, IS Khorasan competes with Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the government of Afghanistan. With IS’s declaration of new provinces in southeast and northeast Asia, the number of branches will increase and membership will grow in the coming years.

The current IS strategy is to (1) establish control of territory and administer the caliphate, (2) expand the caliphate into permissive areas, and (3) exploit and destabilize areas. By proving the caliphate concept, IS is generating more resources, including manpower. By undermining

Between November 2014 and September 2015, U.K. authorities recorded IS having staged 270 attacks. Of these, 117 were in West Africa, 47 in Libya, 58 in Sinai, 28 in Yemen, six in Saudi Arabia, one in the Caucasus, eight in Khorasan, and five in Algeria.

competing groups and co-opting like-minded groups, IS is creating support, resources, and capability for future expansion. IS co-opted like-minded groups and inspired individuals to attack both coalition and domestic targets. With recruits traveling to Syria and Iraq to join the caliphate, IS strategy in the coming years will be both vertical and horizontal—from building the caliphate in Syria and Iraq to global expansion into regions where there are support and recruitment. IS has succeeded in recruiting and generating support from all the subregions.

Can We Kill to Victory?

By killing insurgents and terrorists, capturing their supporters and sympathizers, and disrupting their planning and operations, stability and security cannot be restored. To end terrorism and insurgency, governments should dismantle the entire infrastructure producing the fighter. The propaganda, recruitment, fundraising, procurement, safe houses, transportation, travel, communication, training, and other support networks should be relentlessly targeted. Furthermore, governments should work with civil society and business communities to rehabilitate and reintegrate captured or surrendered terrorists to civilian life. Success in the fight depends on the ability and willingness of military, law enforcement, and national security agencies to work in partnership

with a range of actors to build capacity to deliver a full-spectrum response. At the hard end of the spectrum, lethal and kinetic forces should blunt the operational edge of the terrorists. Unless terrorists and insurgents are killed or captured, they will continue to harm society. At the soft end of the spectrum, communities vulnerable to extremist ideas should be engaged. Most importantly, surrendered insurgents or captured terrorists should be made to repent, regret, and express remorse and rejoin mainstream society as productive citizens. If all these are not done, terrorist and insurgent groups can still replenish their human losses and material wastage because the means with which they can replicate and regenerate will still exist.

When a terrorist surrenders or an insurgent is captured, the government has a narrow window of opportunity to transform him. Otherwise, he will be both a source and carrier, transmitting, replicating, and multiplying the ideological virus. Even if incarcerated for life or held incommunicado, he can influence and reinforce others both from inside and outside the wire. Even if quarantined, he still comes into contact with prison staff or visitors, and the contact provides him with the opportunity to radicalize others. Unless he is put to death, sooner or later, most terrorists and insurgents are released. The vicious cycle of violence

The world's most pivotal conflict theaters, Afghanistan and Iraq, offer important lessons in government failure to rehabilitate and reintegrate their fighters.

will persist, and the threat will grow if nothing is done. The ideas of extremism and ideology of violence will continue to create a landscape of instability and insecurity. In this regard, both terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement are powerful tools in deradicalization and counterradicalization, respectively. Considering the recent developments in the Middle East and the changing global threat landscape, governments

and their partners should invest in building global rehabilitation capabilities and capacities.

Background

The world's most pivotal conflict theaters, Afghanistan and Iraq, offer important lessons in government failure to rehabilitate and reintegrate their fighters. Al-Qaeda (previously Maktabal-Khidamat) was the child of the anti-Soviet multinational Afghan mujahedin campaign (1979–1989). When the Soviets were about to withdraw, the U.S. visionary leader Charlie Wilson, who supported the fight, proposed to the U.S. Congress to fund the rehabilitation of the Afghan and foreign fighters. Having spent \$3 billion to fight the Soviets, the U.S. Congress lacked the foresight to invest with a fraction of the amount to rehabilitate the foreign fighters and their families.

Furthermore, many Arab countries were reluctant to bring back their nationals, fearing they would seek to replicate the Afghan experience in their home countries. Many became destitute, and their anger was harnessed by terrorist groups to fight in Kashmir, Chechnya, Bosnia, and other conflict zones. The Palestinian ideologue Abdullah Azzam, also known as the Father of Global Jihad, envisioned creating “a pioneering vanguard of the Islamic movements,” and his Saudi protege Osama bin Laden brought together foreign fighters to create Al-Qaeda in Peshawar on Aug. 11, 1988 (Bergen, 2001 and Jacquard, 2002).

After the Al-Qaeda operational cell led by Khalid Sheikh Mohamed, another Afghan veteran, attacked America's most iconic landmarks, the threat proliferated. In Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, another Afghan veteran, founded the forerunner of ISIS. Although some governments built rehabilitation capabilities, the United States failed to build such capability. The failure to build rehabilitation capabilities in Bagram and Guantanamo Bay resulted in those released forming new groups or joining or supporting existing groups.

Belatedly, the United States started to invest in the strategic approach (Stern 2010, 95–108). The United States had built a credible rehabilitation

program in Iraq but not a reintegration program. The United States withdrew from Iraq in 2010 and handed over the prisons to the new Iraqi administration. The failure to continue to rehabilitate and reintegrate the fighters by the new Iraqi administration led to their return to join the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and other terrorist groups. After their release or prison breaks, these experienced fighters joined or were recruited into the terrorist rank and file. With the depletion of experienced fighters, ISI and its successor the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) turned their attention to those who spent time in custody. For instance, Abu Umar al Baghdadi, the leader of ISI, and Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, were previous detainees of Bucca detention center near Umm Qasr in Iraq. Today, the leadership of IS includes a significant proportion of detainees who served either in terrorist groups or in Saddam Hussein's Baathist administration.

Even before 9/11, a few governments invested in rehabilitation of their terrorists. Working with clerics from al Azhar, Egypt was the first country to rehabilitate Muslim terrorists and extremists. A few governments built their own rehabilitation initiatives—Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Oman. Only a few programs were comprehensive, with multiple modes of rehabilitation. With the state failing to fund the program in Egypt, the program collapsed, and without state patronage, the program in Yemen collapsed. The program in Indonesia was ad hoc and not structured. There was an attempt to build a program in Afghanistan, but it met with partial success as the U.S. military leadership did not understand and support it. There were efforts in the U.K., Maldives, Morocco, and Australia to send clerics to engage terrorists and extremists, but these countries failed to build national programs sufficiently to make an impact. Most countries, such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Bangladesh, have visions for rehabilitation initiatives, but few have leaders with the willpower to build and sustain comprehensive programs. There are a few countries that had built capabilities in custodial rehabilitation but failed to build capabilities in reintegration. The aftercare component was either

absent or lacking in most programs (Horgan and Altier, 2012, 83–90).

The Challenges of Rehabilitation

Insurgents and terrorists are not born but created. Nonetheless, most governments dispense with the idea of strategic counterterrorism or countering violent extremism. They prefer quick fixes. The lethal and kinetic response, the dominant strategy of the West to manage the threat, has had only

Insurgents and terrorists are not born but created. Nonetheless, most governments dispense with the idea of strategic counterterrorism or countering violent extremism.

partial successes. Although such operational countermeasures are effective, they are not the most efficient. Traditionally, practitioners continue to prefer the shorter route. Most governments lack the visionary leadership, knowledge, and resources to invest in strategic initiatives of counterradicalization, deradicalization, reradicalization, reintegration, and promoting moderation. As counterterrorism is the domain of government, military, law enforcement, and intelligence services, they focus on operational measures of catch, kill, and disrupt rather than building an enterprise with a range of actors.

Governments should work in partnership with civil society and business firms to counter the ideology and message and rehabilitate the insurgents, terrorists, and extremists. However, most civil servants are uncomfortable developing a whole-of-society approach to the challenges facing the country. The twin approaches to fight terrorism strategically are to develop community engagement initiatives to build community resilience and rehabilitate and reintegrate insurgents, terrorists, and extremists. As such, governments have yet to build the capabilities to counter

the threat strategically. There should be three stages: Countries with no rehabilitation programs should develop a vision to build rehabilitation capabilities. Countries with ad hoc rehabilitation programs should transform them into permanent rehabilitation programs. Countries with rehabilitation programs should build community engagement programs.

The twin approaches to fight terrorism strategically are to develop community engagement initiatives to build community resilience and rehabilitate and reintegrate insurgents, terrorists, and extremists.

No custodial rehabilitation program will succeed without an effective reintegration program. Post-release monitoring and aftercare determine the success of custodial rehabilitation. If the beneficiary of rehabilitation comes into contact with insurgents, terrorists, and extremists, he will relapse. In parallel with deradicalization efforts, there should be an investment in countering the radicalization of the masses. Counterradicalization creates an environment that is hostile to operatives and unfriendly to supporters by immunizing the general public. Effective counterradicalization prevents ordinary citizens from being transformed into extremists and extremists into terrorists and insurgents. Unless ideological capabilities that empower and motivate terrorists and insurgents to legitimize and justify violence are countered, the threat will linger and manifest violently when an opportunity arises (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies and The Religious Rehabilitation Group, 2009).

When to Rehabilitate?

When an insurgent, terrorist, or extremist is arrested or surrenders, he or she must be treated with the intention of reintegrating them back into society sooner or later. The initial shock

of arrest should be exploited to gain a cognitive opportunity to both investigate and transform him. The investigators should be trained in motivational interviewing. Every offender in custody is an invaluable source on leadership, organization, ideology, and operations. As security is paramount and a priority, the focus during the initial se should be to determine what the threat is and how to prevent the next attack.

Although investigations precede rehabilitation, investigators should be mindful of the strategic intent of eventual reintegrating the suspect or accused. As rehabilitation is a two-way process, the offender should agree to be rehabilitated. An offender who accepts rehabilitation should be referred to as a beneficiary and not as an insurgent, terrorist, or extremist. There should be provision in the legal and administrative framework of rehabilitation for early release of those who cooperate and genuinely repent, express remorse, and embrace peace versus those who are uncooperative and unable or unwilling to reject violence, condemn extremism, and contribute to harmonious living.

Where to Rehabilitate?

As most prisons and detention centers worldwide are overcrowded, rehabilitation of terrorists is ideally conducted in a rehabilitation center with dedicated areas for living and dining, meeting rooms and lecture halls, and recreation and creative arts halls. However, most governments lack the monetary resources to build a specialist center. As such, prisons and detention centers can be converted into rehabilitation platforms by inviting the public and private sector to invest in changing inmates' and detainees' lives.

Prison staff need to be integrated with the rehabilitation staff. Guards should be trained and retrained in ways to work with inmates and detainees professionally to ensure that the beneficiaries are treated with care. If prison staff slap or torment a beneficiary undergoing a critical stage in rehabilitation, the gains made by the rehabilitation staff to transform him will be lost. When a beneficiary is visited by a religious

cleric, psychological counselor, social worker, or his family members, there should be a room dedicated for such visits. Such a room should be comfortable, with an ambiance to help transform the beneficiary. Although the beneficiary is no longer the breadwinner and head of his household, he is still the father to his children. A beneficiary should be presented in civilian attire and without handcuffs when meeting his parents, brothers and sisters, wife, children, grandchildren, and other loved ones.

Who Will Rehabilitate?

The government should enlist the support both of the public and private sector to build a rehabilitation program. The talent in the private sector—from the entertainment industry to the creative arts community—is huge and should be tapped on by government. Rehabilitation is an enterprise in which experts and specialists from diverse fields come together to form a common platform. As mentors, they seek to bring back members of their society who have left the social mainstream and gone to the extreme.

Rehabilitation is conducted by psychologists, counselors, social workers, teachers, vocational instructors, sports instructors, artists, religious clerics, and others passionate about transforming lives. They will come from government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, academia, community organizations, religious bodies, business communities, and others. To anticipate and achieve success, rehabilitation staff should assess each beneficiary. Together with case officers, specialists and experts should meticulously plan and prepare a series of interventions vis-à-vis each detainee and inmate. Assessments on progress in rehabilitation by the case officers, counselors, clerics, prison/rehabilitation center, and other staff will be forwarded to the review board that will determine release. All staff who work on rehabilitation need to be trained and retrained on handling terrorists and extremists. Otherwise, there is a risk that the unrepentant terrorist will deceive or even try to convince the rehabilitator to embrace his ideology.

No custodial rehabilitation program will succeed without an effective reintegration program.

How to Rehabilitate?

To transform captured terrorists to be productive citizens, government should partner with a range of actors to create a rehabilitation enterprise. To win their hearts and minds, there should be three distinct but interrelated components. The components of a comprehensive rehabilitation enterprise are providing services in (1) custodial rehabilitation to the beneficiary, (2) aftercare services to their families, and (3) successful reintegration back to the community. To administer the different modes of rehabilitation, there should be a resource panel with dedicated staff that will implement the rehabilitation interventions. The seven modes of rehabilitation are (1) religious and spiritual rehabilitation, (2) educational rehabilitation, (3) vocational rehabilitation, (4) social and family rehabilitation, (5) psychological rehabilitation, (6) recreational rehabilitation, and (7) creative arts in rehabilitation. Each mode of rehabilitation should have a manual of instruction and an accompanying guide of administrative instructions on how to implement the interventions.

All modes of rehabilitation are important but to engage Muslim terrorists, religious rehabilitation is the magic weapon. It is a process of deradicalization that involves theological refutation and ideological debate between religious scholars and their beneficiaries. For extremist and violent Muslim groups such as Al-Qaeda and IS, religious concepts such as *jihad* (struggle), *hijrah* (migration), and *al-wala' wa-l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal) are used as key doctrines in the movement ideology. According to the Religious Rehabilitation Group of Singapore, these concepts are manipulated and their interpretations are being twisted to justify the actions of the politico-religious movements. Since they base their actions on manipulated or misunderstood Islamic concepts, there is a critical need to address these misunderstandings for a more effective rehabilitation. Ultimately, the

religious rehabilitation will effect change in their mental paradigm, which will open the doors for them to repent from wrongful acts and to prevent them from future violent acts. By correcting the misinterpretation of these religious concepts, the rehabilitated offender can be guided not only to refrain from committing violent acts but also to recognize and accept the deeds as wrong.

Primacy of Reintegration

To ensure maximum success during the custodial rehabilitation phase and to prevent relapse in the community phase, rehabilitation interventions should be comprehensive. Otherwise, upon release, terrorists and their families may go back to old ways, once again participating in, supporting, and advocating violence. Similarly, terrorists who surrender should also be enlisted and engaged both in the custodial and community phases. Without going through a comprehensive rehabilitation program, complete transformation is unlikely even for terrorists who have surrendered after leaving

A case officer should facilitate, support, and guide the beneficiary to overcome any obstacles he may face due to his incarceration. There should be periodic visits by the case officer to ensure that the beneficiary is not harassed and does not come into contact with terrorists or extremists. Similarly, the case worker should remain in contact with the family, notably the wife and children, to ensure that the beneficiary adapts to the work, family, and community environment. Both the case officer and case worker should ensure the smooth transition of the beneficiary and the family into the community and society (Stern 2010).

Digital Rehabilitation

In parallel with rehabilitating and reintegrating terrorists, governments should build capacities and capabilities to engage communities. By educating communities, they become immunized against extremist ideas and ideologies. By empowering communities to better understand the threat, they become the eyes and the ears of the state. By building trusted networks, community leaders emerge as stakeholders and protect community constituents. In parallel to working in the physical space, a new capability should be built to win in the virtual space.

With the rise of Al-Qaeda and IS, the online threat has proliferated, creating tens of thousands of supporters and hundreds of thousands of sympathizers. To counter terrorist influence on communities through the internet, governments should work with community and other partners to counter the online threat. To counter their attempts to replenish their rank and file, the online counterideology platforms should engage in digital rehabilitation. Governments working with their community partners should invest in vulnerable communities that visit the extremist, terrorist, and insurgent platforms by creating attractive counterideology platforms. With the rise of social media in 2005, threat groups worldwide use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and other platforms. With IS mastery of social media, the worldwide threat is shifting to IS-inspired and -instigated attacks worldwide. From Ottawa to

The rehabilitation process should continue from the custodial phase into the community phase, where the beneficiary is constantly engaged at the work-place, in the family, and in the community.

the group for personal rather than ideological reasons. When in custody, the government should lead; when reintegrated, society should lead. Custodial and community rehabilitation are golden opportunities that the government and society must not let go to herald change in a person's thinking and behavior from the extreme to the mainstream.

Terrorist rehabilitation starts from the point of capture but does not end with the point of release. The rehabilitation process should continue from the custodial phase into the community phase, where the beneficiary is constantly engaged at the workplace, in the family, and in the community.

Paris, Copenhagen to Sydney, those vulnerable to IS ideology killed, maimed, and injured civilians. Although the threat of IS- and Al-Qaeda-directed attacks persist, the dominant threat outside IS core areas and provinces is by self-radicalized homegrown cells and individuals. A new frontier in the fight against online extremism, terrorism, and insurgency should be digital rehabilitation to bring back those from the extreme to the mainstream.

The Future

With the rise of IS, a new global-threat landscape is emerging. The Al-Qaeda-centric threat landscape is eclipsed by an Al-Qaeda-IS hybrid global threat. The four components of the Islamic State are 1) IS theater of Iraq and Syria; 2) IS's 24 provinces overseas; 3) IS-associated groups in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Caucasus; and 4) IS homegrown cells. Western security and intelligence services estimate the number of Sunni foreign fighters in the theater of operations at 20,000 from nearly 100 countries. While Afghanistan attracted about 10,000 fighters in the 10 years of war, Syria attracted double that number in its first five years. IS becomes a global threat because the caliphate as an Islamic idea has global resonance and is being propagated through its social media content and attractive presentation featuring the foreign fighter population who are willing to conduct attacks in the Syrian-Iraqi theater, at home, and in third countries (Islamic State Dabiq magazine). In addition to IS's vast resources, its graphic violence appeals to a segment of radicalized and militarized youth. Based on frequency of traffic to IS digital platforms, IS has politicized, radicalized, and mobilized tens of thousands of fighters and millions of supporters and sympathizers worldwide. The scale and magnitude of threat posed by IS have surpassed Al-Qaeda in terms of its associated groups and homegrown cells. It is not surprising that for guidance and direction, terrorist groups and extremist cells look up to IS and not Al-Qaeda. IS now is eclipsing Al-Qaeda as the leader of the global terrorist movement.

IS, its associated groups, and homegrown cells present an unprecedented threat. Like the threat posed by Al-Qaeda, a much smaller group with lesser resources that lasted for decades, IS's threat is likely to grow and affect regions beyond the Iraqi-Syrian theater. In Egypt's Sinai, Libya, northern Nigeria, Russia's Dagestan, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and in East Asia, IS has established robust infrastructure. To mitigate the growing threat, a global strategy is needed to dismantle IS in its theater of operation, provinces overseas, associated groups, and homegrown cells. To complement the efforts of the military, law enforcement, and national security agencies, there should be a parallel strategy of counterradicalization, deradicalization, and reradicalization.

It is impractical for hundreds of thousands of terrorists and hundreds of thousands of supporters to be put to death or prosecuted. By countering IS ideology, it will disrupt IS indoctrination of the masses, and by deradicalizing those terrorists and extremists, they can be rehabilitated. Their successful reintegration into society will ensure that they remain with the mainstream and prevent reradicalization. In addition to non-IS fighters, governments, in partnership with civil society and business firms, should build an enterprise to rehabilitate the four categories of fighters: IS fighters, IS-associated fighters, IS homegrown fighters, and IS supporters.

The four components of the Islamic State are:

- *IS theater of Iraq and Syria*
- *IS's 24 provinces overseas*
- *IS-associated groups in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Caucasus*
- *IS homegrown cells*

Conclusion

The success in the fight against terrorism depends on the integration of hard power and soft power. Operational counterterrorism is the most effective strategy targeted at terrorists. However, operational counterterrorism is not the most efficient strategy to defeat terrorist ideology. To defeat terrorism, governments should work in partnership with civil society and businesses to counter terrorist ideology and message and rehabilitate the terrorists and extremists. Upstream counter-radicalization and downstream deradicalization are

While hard power is essential to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and decapitate leaders and operatives, soft power is essential to engage communities vulnerable to radicalization and deradicalize captured and surrendered extremists, terrorists, and insurgents.

game-changers in counterterrorism. Most governments are yet to build the capabilities to counter the threat strategically. The twin approaches to fight insurgency, terrorism, and extremism are to strategically develop community engagement initiatives to build community resilience. Government should get the strategy right by thinking and acting beyond the catch, kill, and

disruption paradigm. The international community should develop the will to address both reality and ideality of the challenges confronting the world. The legitimate grievances of those fighting should be addressed, and their perceived grievances should be challenged. Kinetic and lethal operations weakened Al-Qaeda, but its associates and affiliates, including IS, emerged stronger. While hard power is essential to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and decapitate leaders and operatives, soft power is essential to engage communities vulnerable to radicalization and deradicalize captured and surrendered extremists, terrorists, and insurgents.

In the life cycle of a terrorist and an insurgent, the government has only two opportunities to neutralize him: for security forces to either kill or to capture and rehabilitate the terrorist. The cost of rehabilitation and reintegration is a fraction of fighting the threat kinetically and lethally. With governments facing a hard time fighting the threat, civil society and business leaders should come together to play a role to mitigate the global threat. Community leaders, especially faith leaders, should work with government to influence and shape the community. There should be greater emphasis on upstream intervention, where the role of family, friends, and community is engaged by government to identify early indicators of radicalization. Considering the inherent community mistrust of government in some countries, it is paramount for civil society to build partnerships with the private sector to fund and formulate initiatives to counter extremism, the precursor to terrorism, both online and offline.

References

Bergen, Peter L. 2001. *Holy War, Inc: Inside the Secret of Osama Bin Laden*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Horgan, John and Mary Beth Altier. 2012. The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalization Programs. *Conflict and Security*, 83-90

Islamic State (ISIS) Dabiq Magazine. Ramadan 1435H. Issue 1

Islamic State (ISIS) Dabiq Magazine. Ramadan 1435H. Issue 2

Islamic State (ISIS) Dabiq Magazine. Shawwal 1435H. Issue 3

Islamic State (ISIS) Dabiq Magazine. Dhul-Hijjah 1435H. Issue 4

Islamic State (ISIS) Dabiq Magazine. Muharram 1436H. Issue 5

Islamic State (ISIS) Dabiq Magazine. Rabi' Al-Awwal 1436H. Issue 6

Islamic State (ISIS) Dabiq Magazine. Rabi' Al-Akhir 1435H. Issue 7

Islamic State (ISIS) Dabiq Magazine. Jumada Al-Akhirah 1436H. Issue 8

Jacquard, Roland. 2002. *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden: Global Terrorism and the Bin Laden Brotherhood*. Durham and London: Duke University Press

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies and The Religious Rehabilitation Group. 2009. *International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation (ICTR)*. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University

Stern, Jessica. 2010. Mind Over Matter: How to Deradicalize Islamist Extremists. *Foreign Affairs* 89, 1:95-108

Nigeria's Response to Terrorism

Fatima Akilu

Executive Director of Neem Foundation, Nigeria

Advancements such as technology and science that have come with modernity have opened up the world in ways that our ancestors could not imagine. But with these advances have also come existential threats that require us to come up with innovative solutions. As our world becomes smaller, problems are no longer isolated by region, state, or even neighborhood. The same technology that allows us to communicate with relatives thousands of miles away—and to witness events unfolding in distant shores as they happen—is also used to transport extreme ideas that entice youths to pick up arms against their country and fellow citizens and, in some cases, abandon their homes to help others fight a war in a distant land.

Nations that have been directly affected by terrorism—whether the IRA in Britain, the FARC rebels in Columbia, the ETA in Spain and, more recently, Daesh in Iraq—have shown us how difficult terrorism is to eradicate. The terrorist lacks neither imagination nor capacity for evil; they operate outside the bounds of conventional morality, while states must be guided in their responses by rules, the law, their own values, and respect for civilian lives and property.

Any response to terrorism must be long-term, holistic, and robust enough to address its root causes. A military approach can be only part of a solution. More importantly, states must begin by understanding the causes of youth anomie, disillusionment, need for adventure, and search for meaning that is at the heart of many radicalization narratives while also addressing more structural societal defects that make it difficult for some

youth to access jobs, education, or social security. While there is no defined pathway to terrorism, poverty, lack of opportunities for self-actualization for youth, political and social marginalization, poor understanding of religion, and the pull of a charismatic leader all play a role.

Nigeria's countering violent extremism program is both vertical – involving three tiers of government: federal, state, and local; and horizontal – involving civil society; academics; and traditional, religious, and community leaders.

A decade-old movement commonly referred to as Boko Haram, predominantly domiciled in Nigeria's northeast, began peacefully but has morphed into one of the world's most deadly insurgencies. In the last year, the group has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, further internationalizing the conflict.

The Nigerian insurgency has in the last three years alone caused the death of more than 10,000 people. Hundreds more have been kidnapped, and almost 2 million have become displaced, their homes and communities destroyed. Nigeria has had to innovate to meet the challenges posed by this deadly group. Terrorism has provided the state with unexpected opportunities to reform its criminal justice system, broaden its legal

frameworks with the introduction of new bills that address terrorism and money-laundering, and create a counterterrorism center with an intelligence fusion unit.

Beginning in 2012, the federal government adopted a broader approach to counterterrorism that encompasses peace, security, and development. This was a nonmilitary approach that involves actors within and out of government, civil society, and religious institutions.

Nigeria's broader counterterrorism approach was designed to sit within civilian institutions and have reach into civil society while at the same time complementing the military approach, an encompassing-all-of-society approach. While the program is currently undergoing restructuring

The Nigerian deradicalization program was implemented in two prisons.

due to the change in the government occasioned by the 2015 elections, I was privileged to be in government for three years, and I developed the Nigerian countering violent extremism program known as the Soft Approach.

Nigeria's countering violent extremism program is both vertical—involving three tiers of government: federal, state, and local; and horizontal—involving civil society; academics; and traditional, religious, and community leaders. It consists of four streams with different layers of partners: ministries, departments, agencies, and civil society. Rather than creating new structures that will not be sustainable in the long run, the program utilizes existing structures within and outside government to deliver targeted programs and activities that further the overall goal of stemming the tide of radicalization. This was designed to ensure the institutionalization of the program and to guarantee sustainability. It sought to do four main things: engage people already radicalized, prevent others from becoming radicalized, counter extreme narratives, and provide psychosocial support for traumatized victims of terror.

Deradicalization

This stream aims to reintegrate convicted violent extremist offenders into society by developing targeted programs delivered by imams, psychologists, therapists, and prison staff who are capable of challenging radical thought and behavior while respecting human rights.

The purpose of deradicalization is to create a pathway for violent extremists to grow into peaceful citizens. The bulk of this stream is based on the formation of a multidisciplinary, prison-based treatment team trained to manage terror suspects. This team was responsible for developing specialized curriculum and training in religious re-education, cognitive behavior therapy, anger management, relapse prevention, empathy, risk management, and risk assessment. Additionally, imams were trained to deal with ideologically driven conflict. The Nigerian deradicalization program was implemented in two prisons and was able to:

- Train relevant prison staff on countering violent extremism, to professionally handle terror suspects and issues of rehabilitation
- Develop a range of expert psychologists and counselors to pioneer rehabilitation efforts
- Introduce a more holistic approach to the rehabilitation of prisoners in the country, using in-depth psychological analysis and research to understand the root causes of extremism and other criminal ideologies
- Utilize religious scholars to counter extremist narratives by training them on aspects of dialogue and counseling
- Offer vocational training for inmates to ensure they have a basic level of education and acquire skills to assist their reintegration into society
- Institutionalize the rehabilitation of suspected terrorists within the prison system

It was expected that with this stream, radicals will realize that certain forms of behavior are incompatible with both their faith and the society to which they belong, enabling them to eventually transition into law-abiding citizens

through a community-based aftercare program. This program would be composed of government and civil society working together to develop and implement community-based reintegration interventions.

In addition to prison-based programs, the deradicalization stream also worked on the following:

National Security Corridor. In 2015, a partnership between the military, some civil society groups, and the Office of the National Security Adviser resulted in setting up a safe corridor for Boko Haram members who wanted to give themselves up voluntarily. This program included a comprehensive categorizing of Boko Haram members as well as the development of a comprehensive risk assessment, risk management, and reintegration plan. In the first two months of the program, 47 members of Boko Haram gave themselves up voluntarily, and the program was aware of at least 500 more who had expressed interest in laying down their arms. Once in the program, the former terrorists underwent the same kind of deradicalization and disengagement process afforded to those in custody. The program included ideological engagement, psychological counseling, art therapy, vocational and educational skills-building, and social work support to reconnect with family and community.

Women and Children in Battle. This program was designed to offer comprehensive psycho-social support and rehabilitation for women and children kidnapped by Boko Haram and held in Sambisa forest. We were able to develop and run a program for 318 of the very first set of such special victims to be rescued in May of last year. All underwent medical, psychological, and religious counseling. Eighteen females between ages 14 and 18 gave birth while in the program as a result of rape they had endured.

A community-based counterradicalization team was set up to track and reunite families. Out of a total of 318 families, we were able to trace about 150. The long-term plan was to assign case workers—who would continue to monitor and provide support for women and children in their own homes—to each victim.

Female Suicide Bombers. We designed a program that would help deradicalize and support failed suicide bombers—mostly teenage girls. We had one such survivor in a specialized program that entailed dedicated one-on-one support from a psychologist, social worker, and education specialist. Detailed interaction with this victim pointed to the fact that many female suicide bombers used by Boko Haram were themselves victims, often introduced to the group by family members.

Strategic Communication. This stream worked to produce counternarratives by presenting moderate views as a stark contrast to violent extremism while promoting core national values. Extremist Islamist views are based on ignorance, misconceptions, willful misinterpretation, and twisted ideology. The government worked with religious leaders and scholars to research existing narratives that informed design of counternarratives targeting those who hold radical views (not necessarily violent) and the population at large. This stream aimed to further diminish tolerance for extremist rhetoric. Media content for TV, radio, and the internet was developed in order to raise public awareness of the illegitimate claims of the terrorists.

Additionally, a project to strengthen the public diplomacy efforts of government through the institutionalization of strategic communication capabilities across the civil service was conducted. Working with the Public Service Institute, 225 public servants across government were trained in strategic communication. It is envisioned that this will provide long-term strategic communication capabilities for both public servants and the armed forces, giving them greater capabilities in their fight against terrorism. Efforts in this area have led to the development of a comprehensive strategic communications strategy across all government agencies, which is being mainstreamed and harmonized with the ultimate objective of creating a one-voice information platform. Additionally, credible voices on various platforms addressing national identity, tolerance, and community resilience are being amplified to communicate Nigeria's core values.

Counter Radicalization. This program focuses on community engagement and education-based projects. It was designed to stem the flow of recruits and reduce the potential for radicalization. The Society Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) project, created in the office of the national security adviser, was responsible for this stream. Its focus is preventive and involves a whole-society approach. Working in six states and 18 local governments, the project aimed to link government interventions with civil society efforts, expanding the reach of both. The SAVE project had the following objectives

- Countering the drivers of radicalization
- Encouraging action around countering violent extremism in communities, civil society, and government institutions
- Building community engagement and resilience
- Using education as a tool for countering violent extremism by promoting critical thinking and logical reasoning in schools
- Promoting intra- and interreligious tolerance

Framework for Psychology. Terrorism has caused wide-ranging trauma across northern Nigeria, providing the state with an opportunity to develop a comprehensive trauma response. The response has included a new policy for the provision of posttraumatic stress disorder care nationally through the National Primary Health Care Development Agency. It is envisioned that the

nation would need to train upward of 7,000 health care providers and counselors to meet this demand over the next five years.

In what is a first for the Nigerian military, they have recently developed their own policy on PTSD and mental health support for members of the armed forces. They currently have three PTSD units for soldiers who have been in the front line against Boko Haram.

Terrorism forces us to reinvent, reflect, and come up with solutions that are not only audacious but innovative. We must outthink, match, and surpass the terrorist capacity for imagination. States facing terrorism must design approaches that complement its military campaign by connecting all government agencies, civil society, community leaders, traditional and religious leaders—an all-of-society approach. To defeat terrorism, we must remake our societies by eliminating both the push and pull factors that have been so appealing to youth. Security, peace, and development must be linked in a way that promotes inclusion, social justice, and spaces for youth to self-actualize, all within a human rights framework.

While it is premature to assess the contributions of this program to achieving national peace and stability, the strategy is predominantly focused on the Boko Haram-led insurgency at a time when more Nigerians are joining Daesh. It does offer hope and could become a model for dealing with other conflicts.

Countering Daesh Recruitment Propaganda Experts Workshop: Participant Biographies

Fatima Akilu

Fatima Akilu is the executive director of Neem Foundation, Nigeria. She is also a university educator and an advocate for marginalized groups, working in the area of psychology and health for more than two decades. Akilu was head of communication for the senior special assistant to the president on the Millennium Development Goals, and she was chairwoman of the editorial board of the Leadership Newspaper Group. Until recently, Akilu was the director of the Behavioral Analysis and Strategic Communication unit at the Office of the National Security Adviser, which has developed a multipronged approach to countering violent extremism. Also, she designed Nigeria's program for countering violent extremism. Akilu is a children's writer and hosts a weekly radio show, Radio Psych. She holds a bachelor's degree in English, a master's degree in research methods in psychology, and Ph.D. in psychology from Reading University in Berkshire, United Kingdom. Akilu has authored more than 17 children's books and has published articles on homelessness and mental health.

Misbah Arshad

Misbah Arshad is the founder and director at Kompass-Muslim Youth Education. She also serves as the prison chaplain for Muslim women in Frankfurt. Arshad is a freelancer at Leitplanke, Salutogenetic Prevention of

Religious Radicalization, Rheinland-Pfalz and a board member at the Institute for Intercultural Pre-Primary Education. Arshad studied religious studies and education at Goethe-University, Frankfurt, and is a Ph.D. candidate in Islamic education at Osnabrück University in Osnabrück, Germany.

Sam Cherribi

Sam Cherribi is a senior lecturer at Emory University, Atlanta, Ga., in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies and directs the Emory Development Initiative, working with faculty in Emory's Institute of Human Rights. He has been a visiting senior lecturer and interim director of the Center for the Study of Public Scholarship at Emory. Prior to moving to Emory in 2003, Cherribi was a member of Parliament in The Netherlands for two consecutive four-year terms (1994–2002), during which time he also represented The Netherlands in the Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Assembly of the West European Union. He conducts research on European politics; Islam in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East; and development in low-income countries. His most recent book, "In the House of War: Dutch Islam Observed," was published in paperback in 2013 by Oxford University Press. Cherribi holds a Ph.D. from the University of Amsterdam.

Cori Dauber

Cori E. Dauber is professor of communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is also a research fellow at the Triangle Institute for Security Studies. She is co-editor of “Visual Propaganda and Extremism in the Online Environment” (2014) and “YouTube War: Fighting in a World of Cameras in Every Cell Phone, Photoshop on Every Computer” (2010). Dauber has been the visiting research professor at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College. Her research focus is the communication strategies of terrorist groups, with a particular focus on their use of visual imagery. Dauber’s research has been published in journals such as *Military Review*, *Armed Forces and Society*, and *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, and she has presented her research to the Canadian Forces College, the John Kennedy School for Special Warfare, the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies of the National Defense University among others. Dauber holds a Ph.D. and B.S. from Northwestern University and an M.A. from UNC–Chapel Hill, all in communication studies.

Rohan Gunaratna

Rohan Gunaratna is a professor of security studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technology University and head of the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore. He is a former senior fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. In June 2014, Gunaratna received the Major General Ralph H. Van Deman Award for advancing international security cooperation. He was invited to testify on the structure of Al-Qaeda before the 9/11 Commission and is the author of 15 books, including “Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror” (University of Columbia Press), for which he interviewed terrorists and insurgents in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and other conflict zones. Gunaratna received his Ph.D. from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where he was a British

Chevening Scholar, and a master’s degree from the University of Notre Dame, where he was a Hesburgh Scholar.

Bawa Jain

Bawa Jain is the founding secretary-general of the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCORL), which successfully launched at the United Nations in Bangkok in June 2002. Jain spearheaded WCORL’s Religious One-on-One Initiative and serves as a co-founder of the Religious Initiative of the World Economic Forum (WEF). By request, he integrated a religious dimension into WEF in 2001 and 2002, creating a strategic partnership between WCORL and WEF delegates. He is also a founder of the World Youth Peace Summit and founded the Gandhi-King Award for Nonviolence. Jain served as vice chair of the board of the Council for the Parliament of the World’s Religions in 2000. From 1998–2000, he was a co-director of the Season for Nonviolence and from 1997–2000 served as the vice president of the Interfaith Center, where he created an annual interfaith service that continues to mark the opening of the United Nations General Assembly. Jain conceived and led a 3L—Look, Listen, and Learn—initiative of WCORL to Israel and Palestine in 2004. Jain coined the term “religious diplomacy,” actively pursues it, and speaks about it extensively. He is a part of global think tanks and works with leading corporations on current critical issues promoting responsible leadership.

Nuruddeen Lemu

Nuruddeen Lemu is the director of research and training at the Da’wah Institute of Nigeria. He also serves as the assistant general secretary of Islamic Education Trust in Minna, Nigeria, and the technical adviser for the Nigerian Environmental Society of the Niger State branch. He is a director of several organizations, including Lotus Capital (Halal Investments) Limited, Prostart Consultants Limited, the Development Initiative of West Africa, and the Inter-Faith Activity and Partners for Peace. Lemu was nominated by the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs to represent Nigerian Muslim leaders at

the national conference, CONFAB 2014. Lemu is a fellow of the Africa Leadership Initiative of West Africa and of the Aspen Leadership Institute in the United States. He develops and conducts train-the-trainers courses in understanding the principles and objective of Islamic jurisprudence: enhancing interfaith dialogue and engagement, intrafaith cooperation, clarifying misconceptions about Islam, and countering various forms of religious extremism. Lemu holds a M.Sc. in resource management from Edinburgh University, the United Kingdom, and a bachelor's degree in agriculture from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

Jad Melki

Jad Melki is associate professor of journalism and media studies and chairman of the Department of Communication Arts at the Lebanese American University as well as visiting faculty at the Salzburg Academy. His research is at the intersection of digital media literacy, media, war and terrorism, and gender studies and focuses on Arab media and journalism education. Melki was founding director of media studies at the American University of Beirut and has taught at the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, and Towson University. As a former broadcast and digital journalist, Melki was part of the team that won a Webby Award and a National Press Club Award for covering the 2006 Lebanon–Israel war. In 2015, he won the UNESCO–UNAOC International Media and Information Literacy Award for advancing media literacy education in the Arab region through founding the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut, which he chairs. Melki received his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, where he was also research director of the International Center on Media and the Public Agenda.

Manal Omar

Manal Omar is the acting vice president for the Middle East and Africa Center at the United States Institute of Peace. She is on the advisory board of Peaceful Families Project, the Prosperity

Catalyst, and Women's Voices Now. Omar was named to the top 500 World's Most Influential Arabs by Arabia Business Power in 2011 and 2012, top 500 World's Most Influential Muslims by Georgetown University and The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center in 2009, and top 10 young visionaries shaping Islam in America by Islamic Magazine in 2007. Previously, she was regional program manager for the Middle East for Oxfam–Great Britain, responding to crises in Palestine and Lebanon. Omar served as a regional coordinator with Women for Women International for Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan and as an international adviser for the Libya Stabilization Team in Benghazi in 2011. She spent three years with World Bank development economics groups, running training programs in Yemen, Bahrain, Afghanistan, Sudan, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Kenya, and more. Omar has had articles in the Washington Post, Foreign Policy, Azizah magazine, and Islamica magazine. Omar holds a master's degree in Arab studies from Georgetown University and a bachelor's degree in international relations from George Mason University.

David D. Perlmutter

David D. Perlmutter is a professor and dean of the college of media and communication at Texas Tech University. Perlmutter is the author or editor of nine books on political communication, war, and persuasion. He has also written several dozen research articles for academic journals and more than 350 essays for U.S. and international newspapers and magazines such as Campaigns & Elections, Christian Science Monitor, Editor & Publisher, the Los Angeles Times, MSNBC.com, the Philadelphia Inquirer, and USA Today. Perlmutter has been interviewed by most major news networks and newspapers, from the New York Times to CNN, ABC, and The Daily Show.

Ambreen Qureshi

Ambreen Qureshi is the deputy executive director of the Arab–American Family Support Center (AAFSC). Previously, she served as the director

of development and communications. Prior to AAFSC, Qureshi was the program director of the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality. She has worked for the Jordan Red Crescent Society, where she organized a summer arts and education program for low-income and refugee youth in East Amman. Qureshi has extensive experience in developing and managing international campaigns—from independent initiatives, such as “Friends of Jassim” that helped targeted Iraqi fixers, to global awareness campaigns, including “The End of Polio” with the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization and “Chasing the Dream: Youth Faces of the Millennium Development Goals” project with the United Nations Population Fund. Qureshi has a master's degree in international affairs from the New School in New York and a bachelor's in biology from the City College of New York.

Ebrahim Rasool

Ebrahim Rasool is the former South African ambassador to the United States. Prior to serving as an ambassador, Rasool served as member of Parliament in the National Assembly, special adviser to the state president of the Republic of South Africa, and premier (governor) of the Western Cape province. Ambassador Rasool has a long history of involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle, including leadership in the United Democratic Front and the African National Congress. He spent time in prison and was under house arrest. He has been involved in both the Islamic movement and the interfaith movement. He has been active in mobilizing Muslims and the broader faith communities toward a deeper understanding of Islam and faith under conditions of oppression (under apartheid) and currently under conditions of globalization. Ambassador Rasool has extensive experience in government, having led various departments such as health, welfare, finance, and economic development. For his contribution to South Africa, Ambassador Rasool has been the recipient of a number of

leadership awards. He is founder of the World for All Foundation that rethinks the intellectual tools available to Muslims and faith communities and creates cooperative relations between faiths, cultures, and communities at a global level. After serving as ambassador, Rasool became a scholar-in-residence at Georgetown University in Washington D.C.

Mubin Shaikh

Mubin Shaikh is considered a subject-matter expert in radicalization, violent extremism, and countering violent extremism to the United Nations Center for Counter Terrorism, Interpol, Europol, Hedayah Center, U.S. Department of State—Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, National Counterterrorism Center, U.S. DOD Strategic Multilayer Assessment Team, U.S. Central Command—Special Operations Command (as an expert on ISIS), NATO, and others. As a fully deradicalized supporter of the global jihadist culture, he has worked undercover with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Integrated National Security Enforcement Team). Shaikh was an integral component of what became known as the “Toronto 18,” resulting in the conviction of 11 aspiring violent extremists. He is also co-author of the acclaimed book “Undercover Jihadi.” Shaikh holds a master's degree in policing, intelligence, and counterterrorism from Macquarie University and is a Ph.D. candidate in psychological sciences studying radicalization, deradicalization, and violent extremism at the University of Liverpool with the Tactical Decision-Making Research Group. Shaikh was born and raised in Canada and has returned home following over a decade of travels in Asia and the Middle East.

Carol Winkler

Carol Winkler is an associate dean for the humanities and professor of communication at Georgia State University in Atlanta. She serves as co-executive director of the National Debate

Project, where she is expanding access to the benefits of debate training into traditionally underserved populations. Those programs have been named the signature school program for the Bush White House's Helping America's Youth initiative, and they serve as part of the technical assistance program for the Obama administration's Youth Engagement and Violence Prevention Toolkit. She is a scholar of presidential foreign policy rhetoric, argumentation and debate, and visual communication. Her recent book, "In the Name of Terrorism" (2006), won the outstanding book award in political communication from the National Communication Association. Her research appears in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Controversia*, *Argumentation and Advocacy*, *Political Communication and Persuasion*, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, and *Terrorism*. She has won the National Communication Association's Visual Communication Commission's Award for Excellence in Research for her work on linkages between visual images and ideology. Winkler holds a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland.

Aaron Y. Zelin

Aaron Y. Zelin is the Richard Borow Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Rena and Sami David Fellow at the International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence. He is also a Ph.D. candidate at King's College London, where his dissertation is on the history of the Tunisian jihadi movement. Zelin is the founder of the widely acclaimed and cited website *Jihadology.net* and its podcast *JihadPod*. His research focuses on global jihadi groups in North Africa and Syria. He is also the author of the New America Foundation's January 2013 study, *The State of the Global Jihad Online*; the June 2014 Washington Institute study, *The War Between ISIS and Al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement*; and the January 2016 Washington Institute study, *The Islamic State's Territorial Methodology*.

Carter Center Staff

Houda Abadi

Associate Director, Conflict Resolution Program

Houda Abadi was born and raised in Morocco. She holds a graduate certificate from Duke University–University of North Carolina in Middle East studies; an M.A. in international relations and diplomacy, with a concentration in Middle East studies and conflict resolution; and a Ph.D. in political communication and media studies. She is a recipient of the Transcultural and Conflict Transformation Presidential Fellowship. Abadi has been active in writing, presenting, and organizing events related to Arab Spring, political Islam, propaganda, terrorism, Muslim women's issues, and aesthetic forms of resistance. She has taught courses in conflict resolution and mediation, social movements, cultural diversity, and social media. She is fluent in English, French, Arabic, and Spanish. Prior to joining the Center, Abadi served as the director of education in two nonprofit organizations that facilitated dialogue between Jewish and Muslim youth, working on curriculum development and youth interfaith dialogue. She also served as a researcher, translator, and writer for Muslim women's issues at the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality. While in graduate school, she was the Middle East and North Africa intern in a human rights organization and acted as a liaison between the U.N. Institute of Research and Training and Arab diplomats.

Nancy Azar

Program Associate, Conflict Resolution Program

Nancy Azar joined The Carter Center in January 2016 and supported implementation activities of the Daesh project from the Center's Atlanta headquarters. Prior to joining the Center, Azar coordinated all aspects of regional drug prevention programs in more than seven Arab countries for Mentor Arabia, the regional branch of Mentor International Foundation, established and presided

over by Queen Sylvia of Sweden. Azar holds a bachelor's degree in political science and public administration from Université Saint Joseph in Beirut. Her professional and academic interests include the role of youth, women, and religion in peacebuilding. She was born and raised in Lebanon and speaks Arabic, French, and English.

Hrair Balian

Director, Conflict Resolution Program

Hrair Balian joined The Carter Center in 2008, where he oversees the program's efforts to monitor conflicts around the world and coordinates the Center's cross-program efforts in the Middle East. He is also an adjunct professor at the Emory University School of Law, teaching an advanced international negotiations seminar. Since 1991, Balian has worked in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the independent states emerging from the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and Africa, serving in intergovernmental organizations (the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and nongovernmental organizations (International Crisis Group and others). He has worked on elections, human rights, and conflict resolution. Balian received his J.D. degree from Golden Gate University in San Francisco. In May 2009, the New England College awarded him the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, for his "lifetime commitment to the dignity, respect, and self-determination of all people" and for his "uncompromising effort to resolve international conflicts." He was born and raised in Lebanon and is fluent in English, French, and Armenian, with a basic knowledge of Arabic.

Tom Crick

Associate Director, Conflict Resolution Program

Tom Crick joined the Center in 1994 as a research assistant in the Conflict Resolution Program, becoming executive assistant to the director of the Peace Programs and assistant director of the Center's China Village Elections Project prior to his current position. Crick has worked on numerous Carter Center election and conflict resolution projects, primarily in Africa, including

the Carter Center-brokered 1995 Guinea worm cease-fire in Sudan, the Great Lakes peace initiative (1995–1997), and the Center's mediation between Sudan and Uganda. Most recently, his work has concentrated on peacebuilding issues in Liberia. Crick received his bachelor's degree from Bristol University and his master's degree from the Queen's University of Belfast, and he has conducted doctoral research at the London School of Economics and at Emory University. Prior to joining the Center, he lectured in political science at a number of polytechnics in the United Kingdom and worked as a journalist and a project leader at an interdenominational youth project in Northern Ireland. Crick is a licensed mediator in the state of Georgia and an adjunct faculty member at Emory University School of Law.

Jordan Ryan

Vice President, Peace Programs

Jordan Ryan assumed his duties at The Carter Center in June 2015. He was named an assistant secretary-general for the United Nations in 2009, serving as the assistant administrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery until his retirement in September 2014. Ryan had a long and distinguished career with the United Nations, where he brought a wealth of development experience, including in post-crisis settings. From 2006 to 2009, Ryan served as the deputy special representative of the secretary-general (Recovery and Governance) and as the U.N.'s resident and humanitarian coordinator in Liberia. From 2001 to 2005, he was the U.N. resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative in Vietnam, where he was one of the key inspirations for the U.N.'s "Delivering as One" initiative. Prior to that assignment, Ryan served as deputy director, and then director, of the office of the UNDP administrator in New York. Earlier in his career, Ryan held the positions of UNDP deputy resident representative and senior assistant resident representative in Vietnam. He was also the UNDP assistant resident representative in China. Before joining the United Nations, Ryan worked as an international legal consultant

in China and Saudi Arabia as well as an attorney in California, New York, and Washington, D.C. Ryan holds a master's degree in international affairs from the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University; a J.D. degree from the National Law Center, The George Washington University; and a B.A. in anthropology from Yale University. He was a visiting fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 2001.

Mary Ann Peters

CEO, The Carter Center

Ambassador (ret.) Mary Ann Peters joined The Carter Center as its chief executive officer Sept. 2, 2014. As CEO, Ambassador Peters provides vision and leadership for the Center and oversees all operations.

Ambassador Peters was provost of the U.S. Naval War College from 2008 to 2014. Previously, she was dean of academics at the College of International and Security Studies at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

Ambassador Peters spent more than 30 years as a career diplomat with the U.S. Department of State. From 2000 to 2003, she was U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh, leading the mission's efforts in support of the war on terrorism and other U.S. foreign policy goals. Prior to Dhaka, Ambassador Peters was deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, Canada.

Previously Ambassador Peters served as deputy chief of mission in Sofia, Bulgaria, as economic counselor in Moscow, and as the last U.S. consul in Mandalay, Burma. From 1988 to 1990, she was the deputy director of the Office of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh Affairs in the State Department.

Ambassador Peters holds a Bachelor of Arts from Santa Clara University and a master's degree in international studies from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and Women in International Security.

Karin Ryan

Senior Policy Adviser on Human Rights and Special Representative on Women and Girls

Karin Ryan joined the Carter Center's human rights initiatives in 1988. As senior policy adviser, Ryan works with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter on a range of issues, including assisting their efforts on behalf of victims of human rights violations through personal interventions with heads of state. She has represented the Center in many international negotiations, including the International Criminal Court, the human rights of women, the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and most recently, the establishment of a U.N. Human Rights Council. Ryan has worked closely with the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to organize expert consultations designed to strengthen the role of the OHCHR within the U.N. system. She has coordinated the Carter Center's Human Rights Defenders Policy Forum since 2003. Ryan earned bachelor's degrees in political science from Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., and in contemporary writing and production from Berklee College of Music in Boston, Mass.

Berkeley Teate

Graduate Assistant, Conflict Resolution Program, Countering Daesh Project

Berkeley Teate is a master's degree candidate at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Ga., where she is studying public policy. She is scheduled to graduate in fall 2016 with a concentration in planning and economic development. Teate received her bachelor's degree from Georgia Southern University, where she majored in political science and international studies. Following graduation, she spent the fall of 2012 in Washington, D.C., working for the chairman of the Republican National Committee during the general election. She returned to Atlanta to begin graduate studies, while serving as a policy adviser for undergraduate students in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. Teate has worked in the Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs at the state of Georgia's governor's office, where she focused on education and child welfare reforms for the 2016 legislative session.

THE
CARTER CENTER



One Copenhill
453 Freedom Parkway
Atlanta, GA 30307
(404) 420-5100

www.cartercenter.org