

# per Concordiam

*Journal of European Security and Defense Issues*

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The origins of radicalization

■ **EMPOWERING WOMEN**

Gender equality a key to security

■ **A DESTABILIZING FORCE**

North Caucasus fighters join ISIS

■ **DIALING UP SUCCESS**

Low-tech radio's big impact

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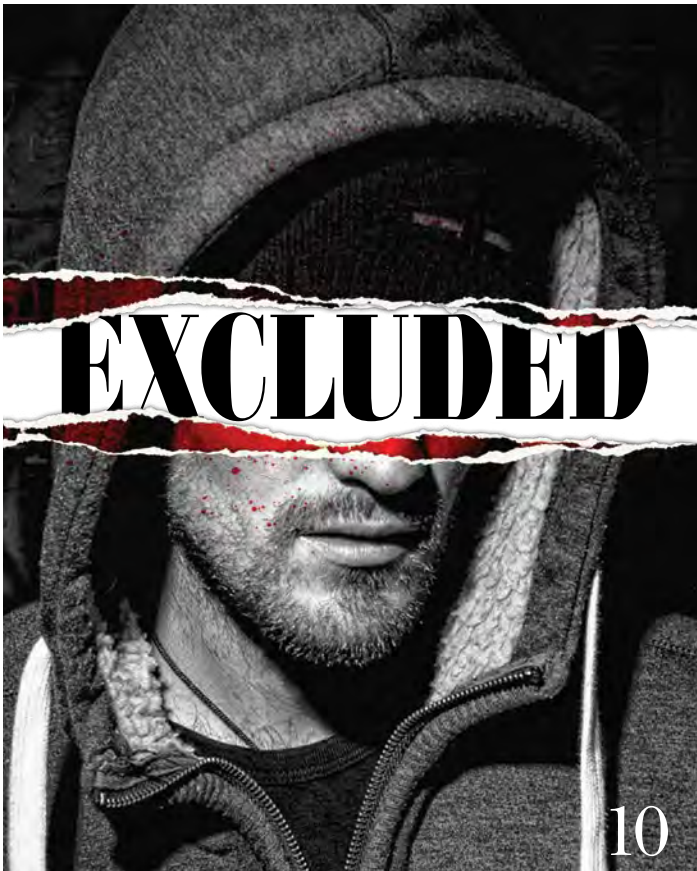
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Only a global response can counter a terror threat that now menaces the entire world.

PER CONCORDIAM ILLUSTRATION



**GEORGE C. MARSHALL**  
EUROPEAN CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES

*Welcome* to the 31st issue of *per Concordiam*. In this issue, with the theme “Building a Global Team Against a Global Threat,” we examine how a cooperative transnational network of professionals and practitioners can help states and organizations combat terrorism around the world. By exploring how best to incorporate whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to national and international counterterrorism strategies, this network can develop practical, comprehensive tools and strategies to defeat local, regional and global terrorist groups.

The Marshall Center’s Program on Terrorism and Security Studies (PTSS) features discussions about how terrorist fighters returning from the battlefields of Iraq and Syria present immediate dangers to their home countries. Darya Nicolson provides an in-depth account of the evolving activities, motivations and allegiances of foreign terrorist fighters from the North Caucasus. Capt. Andrew Upshaw proposes that the key to the long-term resolution of any conflict, especially the Troubles in Northern Ireland, is the effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of those who previously supported violence. Lorand Bodo writes on the challenge of detecting and preventing lone-actor terrorism, discussing the connection between a sense of nonbelonging and violent radicalization.

The PTSS also addresses the importance of both whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to countering terrorism by stressing the critical role, reach and impact of civil society and international humanitarian organizations. The last PTSS devoted special attention to women as security partners in a variety of roles such as policymakers and advisors, lawyers, and law enforcement officials. Julie Arostegui LeMaster argues that human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment are often considered secondary issues, to be dealt with once a state or region has achieved security; however, attention to such issues is a critical precondition for true security.

One of the objectives of the Marshall Center is to develop in our PTSS participants and alumni a shared understanding of the ideologies, strategies and tactics of contemporary terrorist groups around the world, and generate specific recommendations and best practices that effectively address the terrorist threat. We hope you agree that the articles in this edition of *per Concordiam* support and inform this effort.

As always, we at the Marshall Center welcome your comments and perspectives on these topics and will include your responses in future editions. Please feel free to contact us at [editor@perconcordiam.org](mailto:editor@perconcordiam.org).

Sincerely,

Keith W. Dayton  
Director



**Keith W. Dayton**

*Director, George C. Marshall  
European Center for Security Studies*

Keith W. Dayton retired as a Lieutenant General from the U.S. Army in late 2010 after more than 40 years of service. His last assignment on active duty was as U.S. Security Coordinator to Israel and the Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem. An artillery officer by training, he also has served as politico-military staff officer for the Army in Washington, D.C., and U.S. defense attaché in Russia. He worked as director of the Iraqi Survey Group for Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq. He earned a Senior Service College Fellowship to Harvard University and served as the Senior Army Fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Gen. Dayton has a bachelor’s degree in history from the College of William and Mary, a master’s degree in history from Cambridge University and another in international relations from the University of Southern California.



**Julie Arostegui LeMaster, J.D.**, is a lawyer and international human rights, gender and security expert with extensive experience in the issues of peace and security. She serves as an international advocate, advisor, trainer, researcher and writer for the civil society, political, security and justice sectors. She has worked with many nongovernmental and government agencies and has been a guest lecturer at the Marshall Center.



**Lorand Bodo** is a researcher at the consulting firm Ridgeway Information with a focus on the use of open source intelligence to support national and international security. He graduated with distinction from Aston University in England with a master's degree in governance and international politics, and he earned a master's degree in politics with a focus on the governance of innovative and complex technological systems from the University of Bamberg in Germany. He completed his Master of Research degree in security science at the Security and Crime Science Department at University College London.



**John Hutchings** is an expert in broadcast technology and countering violent extremism, with nearly a decade of experience in Somalia working with the United Nations, the African Union and the Somali government. He guided the setup of the U.N.-led Somali radio station, Radio Bar Kulan, in 2009. He is a former military surveillance and communications specialist and has spent over 20 years working with major U.S. and international media organizations in conflict and post-conflict environments. He is a graduate of the Marshall Center's Program on Terrorism and Security Studies and the Countering Transnational Organized Crime program.



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**Darya Nicolson** is a graduate of Amsterdam University College and holds a joint degree from the University of Amsterdam and the VU University in social sciences in international relations and political science. Her areas of academic interest include diplomacy, countering terrorism, conflict resolution, global security, relations between the European Union and Russia and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the former Soviet Union. She is a former intern of the Marshall Center, where she focused on researching counterterrorism cooperation, relations between the European Union and Russia and Russia's North Caucasus.



**Ridvan Bari Urcosta** is a researcher at the Institute of International Relations at the University of Warsaw. He regularly contributes to American and European magazines as an expert on Russian-Turkish relations and Crimea. He is a native of Sebastopol, Ukraine.

**Building a Global Team  
Against a Global Threat**

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**George C. Marshall  
European Center for  
Security Studies**

**Leadership**

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The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies is a German-American partnership founded in 1993. The center promotes dialogue and understanding between European, Eurasian, North American and other nations. The theme of its resident courses and outreach events: Most 21st century security challenges require international, interagency and interdisciplinary response and cooperation.

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# *Vigilance and* **COLLABORATION**

Governments must broaden the gathering and sharing of ISIS intelligence

By **JAMES HOWCROFT**, Director, Marshall Center Program on Terrorism and Security Studies PHOTOS BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**T**hree years after declaring itself a caliphate, ISIS, as an organization that governs territory, is in a death spiral. Its adversaries have slowly but surely squeezed and demolished its economic underpinnings, even as its own simultaneously quixotic and brutal governance attempts in Syria and Iraq have unraveled, as did al-Qaida's in Iraq. The cumulative coalition air campaign, the capture of the iconic town of Dabiq, and now the fall of Mosul have vitiated the core ISIS tenet of "remaining and expanding," crushing its image of surging victory. ISIS can no longer effectively recruit or pay even the few wild-eyed latecomers who may show up.

But even when ISIS' caliphate is extinguished, the problem it represents will not be. It will retain a capability to launch attacks around the world from other sites. The world's security services failed to effectively monitor, record or interdict the travel of their citizens to Iraq and Syria. We should not be caught similarly unaware when ISIS' former fighters come home — as some are already doing. Now is the time to establish a network of measures to record, monitor and, when there is a legal basis, interdict foreign terrorist fighters on their return. The foundation of these measures is accurate, actionable intelligence shared internationally and put into the hands of front-line security first responders.

We are already well aware that foreign fighters returning from Syria and Iraq constitute a domestic security threat. The size of this diaspora is difficult to predict. Many who went have died and some will stay, at least for a while, or go to other Muslim-majority countries. Some who return will have never had combat experience or



U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, center, talks with British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson, right, and Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Jafari during the Meeting of the Ministers of the Global Coalition on the Defeat of ISIS in March 2017 in Washington, D.C. Political will is necessary to break the bureaucratic inertia that hinders effective intelligence sharing.

military training. Some will return to family and social networks that will constrain any impetus to violence — at least for a time. But we do not know these numbers, meaning that the number of genuinely dangerous returnees is also unknown.

For example, European Union Security Commissioner Sir Julian King recently estimated that there are 2,500 European foreign terrorist fighters in the combat zone.



Iraqi Army soldiers celebrate a victory during a military operation to regain control of a village outside Mosul in November 2016. As ISIS loses more ground on the battlefield, returning fighters pose a terrorism threat to Western countries.

He was at a loss to guess how many dangerous returnees there might be. The total number of foreign terrorist fighters who traveled to Iraq and Syria ranges from 30,000 to 40,000, most of them from the Middle East and North Africa. Of the fighters who have returned, some are known to their governments. But many returned undetected. The challenge of tracking returnees is about to grow sharply with ISIS' last urban havens of Mosul and Raqqa disappearing. What should we do?

Three main obstacles must be overcome if the United States and allied governments are to effectively use intelligence to protect citizens against the returnee threat. The first challenge is to fuse the intelligence information we have to produce a single useful file, or target package, on each foreign terrorist fighter. The second challenge is to greatly improve file sharing among global partners. The third challenge is to get these packages into the hands of those who need them most — front-line security professionals at borders and transport hubs. None of these obstacles is insurmountable; nor do they require new or large amounts of money. What we need is political will and leadership to overcome outdated thinking and inappropriate prohibitions limiting sharing and implementation.

Depending on their capabilities and the perceived threat to their nations, most intelligence services have been collecting data to identify fighters and their networks. Most national intelligence services have some capability to intercept foreign terrorist fighters' email and phone conversations. Social media posts by fighters who are proud of their efforts and anxious to recruit others and demonstrate fidelity to the cause, are

invaluable sources for identifying terrorist locations, actions and networks. Interrogations and debriefings of returned foreign fighters sometimes yield valuable information. It is not uncommon for families to contact the authorities with information to help bring their relatives home safely. Photographs, fingerprints and in some cases DNA on identified foreign terrorist fighters reside in government databases if the individuals applied for a driver's license, received social benefit payments, or were ever arrested or convicted of a crime.

Unfortunately, this wealth of information is rarely integrated, connected or coordinated — even within Europe. For example, phone and email intercepts are kept by the organization that does intelligence collection and are classified at a high level, limiting access by others for fear of compromising collection techniques. Debriefings of returning foreign fighters are handled by the ministries or organizations that deal with human intelligence and are highly classified to protect the human sources, again limiting access by other agencies. Social media collection is classified at a lower level, and thus is frequently done by yet another department or agency. Justice ministries or their equivalent, not intelligence services, hold information on people who have been in the domestic criminal



justice system. Photographs and fingerprints of those who applied for licenses or benefits are held at the local governmental level, or by a state's domestic social welfare ministry.

The seriousness of the returnee threat is a compelling reason to break down organizational and international barriers to focus efforts on better fusing and then sharing intelligence. We need to make the intelligence "actionable" — meaning precise enough to be used to take concrete steps to protect citizens. And we need to make it available in a usable format for those who need it most: first-line security and law enforcement personnel who will encounter returning fighters as they move across borders, pass through transport hubs or are stopped for routine traffic offenses. To do this, the intelligence packages must be rendered unclassified so they can be put into the hands of a border guard, customs official or traffic patrolman who doesn't have a security clearance or access to classified information.

Obviously, the various classifications of intelligence sources by different agencies (and sometimes within the same agency) complicate any effort to make a product that can be widely shared. Generally, when different classifications of intelligence are fused into a single product, the entire package assumes the highest, most restrictive classification level. This is unacceptable given the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. If leadership insists, analysts can make packages that strip out the specifics of sources and methods while still maintaining the vital, precise identification data first responders need.

Once allied governments overcome their internal challenges, the second step is for these packages to be shared among as many responsible governments as possible. Of course, there is some risk that certain governments might accidentally leak information. But wide sharing is worth the modest risk. Interpol is uniquely positioned to serve as the global clearinghouse to push these packages to and from its 190 member nations. Interpol routinely coordinates informational exchanges, but it is dependent on member nations to voluntarily provide data on their citizens. According to Interpol, it has only about 8,000 records on foreign terrorist fighters, out of the 30,000 to 40,000 fighters estimated to exist.

Once these packages are received by the relevant government agencies, they must be relayed expeditiously with actionable details to front-line security professionals. The outdated 20th-century methodology of matching names on identity documents to watch lists is ineffective — lists of transliterated names or aliases aren't reliably useful. We can do better: Retina and iris scans, DNA, fingerprints, signature matches and facial recognition software are the 21st-century identification tools of the trade. We must develop and field the capability for an official in the field to quickly match the biometric physical attributes of the person standing in front of him with those in his package.

There are, of course, impediments to this approach. As noted, the first hurdle is to render this data unclassified. The second hurdle is to field simple, rugged, low-bandwidth systems that can access a centralized national database from

a hand-held device in the field. With today's technology, this goal is achievable. If average citizens can access networks from a hand-held device to securely book flights and purchase airline tickets, then it is hardly unreasonable to insist that government officials have the means to access a foreign terrorist fighter database in real time via similar devices.

The hardware and networking hurdles can be surmounted with leadership, but the lack thereof has been precisely the problem. Political leaders and their appointees are usually men and women who are academics or commentators with little experience in running large organizations. They are inexperienced with two truths: First, organizations are extremely conservative and bureaucratic and can be counted upon to resist change; and second, it is extremely difficult to get existing organizations to qualitatively adjust their standard operating procedures to do new things.

Change of this magnitude calls for expedited authority and processes to break through bureaucratic inertia and inaction. For that reason and others, an interagency arrangement needs to be set up, a process that is directive, not built on consensus or lowest-common-denominator outcomes. Given the urgency and high priority of the issue, the president's office is probably the only place where such an effort can be effectively sited. Our processes must be simple, straightforward and applicable to as many international partners as possible. It won't do us much good if the U.S. government manages to get over the bar, but most of our allies and regional partners do not.

An interagency effort, beyond the intelligence community, must in the U.S. include the Justice Department because some of the impediments to effective new protocols are legal. Leaders must drive the effort to permit the sharing of personal information on a limited number of their citizens with other governments. There are legitimate privacy issues and human rights concerns. During this particular window of vulnerability, leaders must acknowledge these concerns but drive the effort to fuse intelligence and share it with partners anyway. One way to address valid privacy concerns could be to designate a temporary "state of heightened security measures," with a specified temporary period of application explicitly indicated, during which international information sharing would supersede privacy concerns. Congress would need to approve; this sort of thing ought not be done by executive order alone, if possible.

There are risks in such an approach, but these need to be weighed against the risks of the status quo. When the next terrorist attack conducted by a returned terrorist fighter or someone influenced by one occurs, the U.S. government and other governments must face their citizens and be able to say with honesty and conviction, "we did all we possibly could" to protect them. At this point, that would be a lie. □

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This is an abbreviated version of an article published in *The American Interest* magazine. To read the original article, visit [www.the-american-interest.com/2016/12/01/dare-to-share/](http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/12/01/dare-to-share/).



**EXCLUDED**

# *A sense of nonbelonging fuels violent radicalization in the United Kingdom*

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By **Lorand Bodo**, Ridgeway Information

**T**hus far, most of the models and theories attempting to explain how and why individuals become radicalized tend to view radicalization as a consequence of some preceding phenomena. In 2015, the scholars Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins summarized the most recent empirical literature on the causes and dynamics of the radicalization of homegrown extremism in the West by proposing a theoretical synthesis. According to their theory, violent radicalization is, metaphorically speaking, a puzzle that is comprised of four pieces: grievances; networks and interpersonal ties; political and religious ideologies; and enabling environments and supporting structures. When these four pieces come together, individuals are said to transform into violent extremists. Although the “ingredients” are (thought to be) known, countering radicalization is still a very difficult and complex task. In fact, up to the present day, a single and universal explanation for radicalization has yet been found, and it seems that searching for one may be a fruitless endeavor.

Dr. Shiraz Maher, a recognized expert on jihadist movements, identifies issues of identity and belonging as the most significant drivers in many radicalization cases. This raises questions about how these issues contribute to violent radicalization. According to an analysis of the Citizenship Survey (2001-2011) for England and Wales by professors Saffron Karlsen and James Y. Nazroo, 90 percent of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Christians felt that they were a part of Britain. In other words, 90 percent identified themselves with British values. Although the percentage is quite high, there are still 10 percent who do

not feel that they belong to the United Kingdom. Given the fact that issues of identity and belonging are crucial drivers for radicalization and that more British Muslims have joined militant Islamist groups than have joined the British Armed Forces, it leads to questions about the extent to which feelings of nonbelonging lead to violent radicalization. This becomes crucial in creating and implementing more effective countermeasures to stop and contain the radicalization of vulnerable British citizens. Therefore, it is necessary to gain a more nuanced understanding of the concepts of identity, belonging and violent radicalization.

It's possible that politicians and policies, domestic situations, society in general, British mosques and the internet all convey a feeling of nonbelonging. Identifying these sources could significantly influence the violent radicalization of a few individuals, especially second- and third-generation Muslims. In this respect, it must be emphasized that the problem of violent radicalization is not that individuals are religiously fundamental in the first place, but that they belong to groups that are strongly determined by their ideology.

## **Social identity theory**

The key assumption of social identity theory (SIT) is that individuals are motivated to enhance and maintain self-esteem and a positive social identity. This leads individuals to make social comparisons between the group they belong to (in-group) and relevant groups they compare themselves with (out-group), with the ultimate aim of achieving both a distinct and positive position for the in-group and above all for their self-esteem, according to authors Donald M.

Taylor and Fathali M. Mogghadam. Nevertheless, if social identity is perceived as unsatisfactory, individuals will strive to leave the in-group and join a more positively distinct out-group. Alternatively, as Polish social psychologist Henri Tajfel found, they could seek to make the existing in-group more positively distinct.

According to authors Davie W. Brannan, Philip F. Esler and Anders Strindberg, SIT is composed of three components: cognitive, evaluative and emotional. SIT postulates that individuals identify with a single or many group(s) to which they belong. The cognitive component here is the knowledge that one belongs to a group. For instance, a young Muslim male identifies, based on his religion, with the Muslim community. Hence, he feels that he also belongs to a particular Muslim community (group of Muslims). The second component evaluates the membership of the individuals. As mentioned earlier, individuals strive to maintain and enhance their self-esteem and social identity. The membership could have a positive or

Consequently, he has two options: He could leave the Muslim community and join a new group, for instance, the Jewish or Christian community; or he could stay in the Muslim community and work to enhance the group's image. This could be achieved by, for example, becoming more religious and developing and executing pro-Muslim campaigns to improve the image of the Muslim community in the wider society. However, regardless of the option he chooses, it is ultimately about enhancing and maintaining self-esteem and social identity.

## Ideology and hate preachers

Ideology can constitute the most important factor in violent radicalization. In this respect, the takfiri ideology must be highlighted, which is understood as the practice of declaring someone as an unbeliever. This strict interpretation has mostly been used to eliminate opponents and achieve greater power. In 1803, for instance, Abd al-Aziz Ibn Muhammad used the takfiri ideology to justify the

slaughter of thousands of Shias in Kerbala (located today in Iraq), including women and children, according to author Karen Armstrong. The use of the takfiri ideology allows individuals to label someone as a nonbeliever (*kāfir*) to justify his or her killing.

In addition to the takfiri ideology, the so-called hate preachers add a dangerous element to the radicalization process. "It is sheer madness ... to ignore the fact that divisive preachers are perhaps the single most dangerous element to this whole situation that has been built," a former extremist and recruiter told this author. He emphasized the persuasive qualities of these preachers: "Hate preachers, they make matters worse, they pervert the faith, they corrupt the hearts. ... They are the catalysts, they provide the poison, they are more than fuel, they are explosives." In summary, the takfiri ideol-

ogy and hate preachers are crucial factors that channel the sense of nonbelonging into violent radicalization. The feeling of nonbelonging alone does not necessarily lead to radicalization — nonbelonging is widespread, whereas violent radicalization is not. What is required, therefore, is a mediator who can successfully channel the negative feeling of nonbelonging into the positive feeling of belonging, but belonging to the wrong group — a violent radical group.

## 'Small p' vs. 'big p'

The theme of "small p" politics is of significant importance concerning the sense of belonging. The term refers to a key concept in political geography that classifies politics into two distinct categories — "big p" versus "small p." In a traditional sense, big p politics deals with states and their relations with other states, whereas small p politics is concerned



This mosque is in the neighborhood in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, northern England, where a 17-year-old lived before joining the Islamic State and blowing himself up in a suicide attack in Iraq. REUTERS

negative value. Referring to the first example, the young Muslim male may, for instance, negatively evaluate his membership in the Muslim community.

This evaluation could be explained in several ways. Nevertheless, it leads to the third component of SIT, the emotional component. Based on his evaluation, the individual develops either a positive or negative emotional attachment to the (in-) group. In the previous example, the young Muslim male would develop a negative emotional attachment such as hate, contempt, shame, etc., to the (in-) group to which he still belongs — the Muslim community.

with politics by nonstate actors who tend to work through social movements and other groups, according to the 2008 book *Key Concepts in Political Geography*. Nevertheless, as social and urban geographer Dr. Arshad Isakjee points out, small p politics is not only concerned with politics by nonstate actors, it also deals with politics of identity and belonging. The latter, author Nira Yuval-Davis writes, distinguishes two types of belonging: the emotional belonging that is about personal issues, such as what makes one feel comfortable, at home and happy; and the politics of belonging that is concerned with drawing lines between groups within states — who belongs to “us” and who belongs to “them.” To put it differently, politicians and policies can either convey a feeling of belonging or a sense of nonbelonging that is crucial for one’s understanding of identity. Following from this, Isakjee says, small p politics is as important as big p politics.

An open letter published in *The Guardian* underlines the serious impact that small p politics has when drawing a line between British society and Muslims living in the U.K. In the letter, a British Muslim addresses then-Prime Minister David Cameron’s speech on tackling extremism in the U.K. that had aroused much anger among British Muslims. The letter writer laments, “Despite being born in Manchester, growing up here and being a proud Mancunian (let’s overlook my support for Liverpool FC), for the first time in 37 years I feel as though I don’t belong. And yes, I am Muslim. Just a British Muslim.” This quote highlights two important issues. First, the power of politicians to establish a dividing line in society, or more precisely, to divide British Muslims from the rest of the British people. Second, dividing the British people into separate groups could force the first group to draw in on itself, uniting in solidarity and ultimately, establishing a parallel society, thus furthering the alienation of British Muslims from the rest of the British population.

The following quote by a young British Muslim woman, borrowed from a study by Tahir Abbas and Assmar Siddique, underpins this argument: “[An] increasing number of young Muslim women are wearing the Hijab (headscarf) and men are growing beards and wearing caps. ... I think that this is a form of resistance ... to ... racism and what they, I suppose, see as an attack on their faith. It provides a sense of identity.” If British Muslims are compelled by politicians or policies to adopt “British values” and above all are told directly or indirectly they do not belong to British society, it could have severe implications concerning their radicalization process. If British Muslims no longer feel that they are British, it will make being a Muslim, according to SIT, positively distinct and help enhance and maintain their social identity. Consequently, these individuals could adopt more cultural and religious Muslim values that could result in a stricter interpretation of Islam — in other words, becoming religiously fundamental.

### **Domestic situation**

The alienation of British Muslims is not only caused by politicians and policies, but can also start in the home. According to a former extremist and recruiter interviewed by this author: “What contributes to radicalization is how a person has grown

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*“Hate preachers,  
they make  
matters worse,  
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corrupt the  
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the catalysts,  
they provide  
the poison,  
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than fuel, they  
are explosives.”*

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*— A former extremist  
and recruiter*

up at home without adequate self-esteem.” Family discipline, such as strict obedience and respecting parents, has a striking connection with self-esteem among minority adolescents. According to a 1997 study by J.E. Olsen, B.K. Barber and S.C. Shagle, exerting psychological control within families that emphasize collectivist values, such as interdependence, leads to lower self-esteem in children. Also, a 2000 study by X. Chen, M. Liu and D. Li demonstrates that the family environment has a significant impact on the physical and mental well-being of adolescents. Bearing these two studies in mind, it is clear that an uncomfortable family life caused by excessive discipline and a lack of communication within the family significantly affects young people’s well-being.

The lack of communication within families could lead individuals with low self-esteem to develop psychological distress such as emotional vulnerability. A study by psychology professor Meifen Wei and others examined whether the use of social support concerning racial discrimination could lead to psychological distress for individuals with high or low levels of self-esteem. They concluded that low levels of social support, in other words, lack of communication, may put male students with low self-esteem at risk of developing psychological distress. However, the study was inconclusive regarding female students.

The case study of Omar al Hammami — a young male who joined a Somali terrorist camp — demonstrates the severe impact a domestic situation could have. His radicalization process can be described as incremental and started with his interest in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. *The New York Times* reported that he remarked, “It’s difficult to believe a Muslim could have done this.” He concluded that he did not have enough knowledge of Islam, which led him to search for mentors and teachers. It could be argued that these mentors were hate preachers who used radical, violent ideology to violently radicalize Hammami. The case study does not provide enough evidence to support this assumption, but it could be argued that Hammami’s domestic situation led him to pursue a strict interpretation of Islam, namely Salafism. His friends believed that Hammami’s attraction to Salafism can be attributed to him asserting his differences with his father. Consequently, it could be argued that, according to SIT, Hammami did not feel he belonged to his family and thus was searching for a new group to enhance his social identity. Unfortunately, he joined the wrong group — a Somali terrorist organization.

## Society

Likewise, society can cause susceptible people to become emotionally vulnerable. Racism toward Muslims can severely affect their sense of belonging. There are varying ways in which racism can be conveyed, such as cultural racism (how ethnic groups are portrayed in the media), institutional racism (policies and/or institutional

procedures, e.g., the implications of counterradicalization policies) and interpersonal racism (racism that occurs to individuals in daily life), according to psychology professor Elizabeth Brondolo. A 2012 study by Brondolo and others found that experiencing racism is likely to contribute to the development of symptoms such as depression. Therefore, both the domestic situation and society could be significant contributors to the emotional vulnerability that puts individuals at higher risk of becoming violently radicalized — violent radical behavior could be interpreted as a response to racism. Abbas and Siddique examined the perceptions of the process of radicalization among British South Asian Muslims in Birmingham, England. One interviewee stood out with his statement concerning racism and radicalization: “Radical behavior is a response to many factors I suppose ... a response to oppression, exclusion, racism ... which make young people adopt a radical form of Islam as a form of resistance.” Politicians, policies, the domestic situation and society have the power to convey the message of belonging or nonbelonging. In the case of British Muslims, all these factors could be seen as interlinked and, above all, facilitating the process of violent radicalization by making vulnerable adolescents susceptible to violent radical ideologies.

Similarly, the 2015 British documentary *Exposure – Jihad: A British Story* demonstrates how the feeling of nonbelonging led in two cases to embracing a violent radical ideology. In the documentary, Deeyah Khan investigates the roots of Islamic extremism in the U.K. by speaking to reformed extremists — among others — about the reasons young British Muslims join violently radicalized groups like ISIS. Two answers by two interviewees — Alyas Karman and Munir Zamir — stand out. They share a factor that facilitated their violent radicalization, namely the feeling of nonbelonging conveyed by British society. Karman and Zamir felt rejected by British society because of their ethnic backgrounds and in Zamir’s case because of a disability. Zamir said: “PAKI GO HOME! I heard that religiously like the five times call to prayer for the first 16 years of my life.” These continuous and intense racist utterances deeply affected Zamir and, above all, emphasized that he did not belong to British society. In contrast, Karman said: “I’ve done everything to fit in, I even got the white girlfriend and everything else ... and still you’re not accepted.” Both cases underline the significance of belonging — both were rejected from British society, and that led them to join a more distinct group to improve their social identities. Unfortunately, they joined the wrong group and came under the influence of a hate preacher who channeled their grievances into violent radical attitudes and behaviors.

## British mosques

British mosques should constitute a place of solace that offers guidance and support or, more precisely, a source of belonging. If mosques convey a feeling of nonbelonging,



radical groups will fill that vacuum by providing a violent ideology that appeals to vulnerable adolescents. Half of the British Muslim population is under 25 years old, constituting a large target for radical groups.

Two important factors undermine the role of British mosques. The first is the way British mosques are operated, and the second is the cultural and language barriers of British imams. Imran Süleman, a British-born and trained imam who has worked in mosques across the U.K., told Samira Ahmed for a 2015 British radio report that, in his view, many elder imams from the Indian subcontinent insist on running British mosques as they would be run in India or Pakistan. According to a Quilliam Foundation poll in September 2008, the vast majority of British imams were born abroad, or were trained abroad. Though the statistics are nearly 10 years old, it could be argued that little has changed. If the imams refuse to adopt modern and British cultural values, it results in mosques being run like those abroad, which in turn results in large numbers of adolescents feeling that they do not belong because the imams preach in the manner that is foreign to what is found in a liberal and democratic state.

Consequently, young people search for sources that preach Islam in a context they better relate to. Violent radical groups have the potential to fill this gap. “A lot of young people, when they go to mosques and they see the

Members of the British Muslim Forum and religious leaders from differing faiths pay their respects to the victims of the Ariana Grande concert bombing in England. Images of peace and inclusiveness can discourage youths from radicalizing. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

narrow-mindedness, the cultural baggage, the ceremony in a language that they can’t understand, they tend to go towards extremism or they go to the likes of ceremony preachers whom they see as a lot more articulate and who have a more clear vision,” Süleman, the British imam, said on the radio report. Concerning cultural and language barriers, British imams are unable to address how British Muslims should meet those challenges. This vacuum, Abbas and Siddique argue, is easily filled by violent radical groups who claim to understand the problems of disaffected youths, provide seemingly right answers and, above all, speak a language they understand. Furthermore, the anti-political attitude of British mosques enables and facilitates the spread of radical ideology. The damaging side effect of this attitude is that people who want to discuss political issues have to find secret places where they can talk freely about their thoughts and opinions without fear of being kicked out of the mosque, which according to Isakjee, is in most cases the punishment for doing so. If mosques do not provide a place

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*It could be argued that the internet leads to emotional vulnerability because it constitutes a virtual space for society.*

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where Muslims can discuss political issues, violent radical groups will provide an alternative.

To support this argument with empirical evidence, the radicalization story of a Belgian teenager named Jejoen Botnik is worth mentioning. His “journey to jihad,” as *The New Yorker* magazine called it, began when he was 15 years old and started to perform poorly at school and his girlfriend broke up with him. His father described his mental well-being as “Jejoen fell down in a black hole.” Jejoen himself depicted this period as “one of searching and looking for an alternative to the pain.” At age 16, he started to date a Moroccan girl whom he liked very much. She told him to learn about Islam if he wanted to see her again. Consequently, Jejoen converted to Islam in 2011 at the De Koepel Mosque in Belgium. The crucial moment in his journey to jihad was not converting to Islam, but rather the mosque he visited. The De Koepel Mosque, built in Antwerp in 2005, had become a home for hundreds of converts and second-generation Muslims. The crucial problem was that Friday prayers were conducted in Arabic or Turkish, languages Jejoen did not understand, providing an opportunity for hate preachers to step in. Three months after his conversion, a neighbor named Azzedine invited him to the headquarters of Sharia4Belgium, an organization dedicated to establishing a caliphate in Belgium. Jejoen spent much of his time at Sharia4Belgium and was most likely radicalized there. The highlight of his journey was a trip to Syria to join friends on the battlefield, *The New Yorker* reported. Once again, a sense of nonbelonging — brought about by language barriers, a need to improve social identity and hate preachers — led a vulnerable youth to join a more distinct group. He was interested in Islam but could not understand the imam in the mosque. Sharia4Belgium seized the opportunity and offered him what he wanted — to learn Islam in a language he understood. Unfortunately, the organization preaches a violent radical ideology rather than true Islam.

### **The internet’s role**

The internet is another important factor concerning the sense of nonbelonging. In today’s digitalized world, it is a crucial factor in radicalization. First, it serves as a virtual messenger for society; second, it provides a hub for alienated people. As a messenger, according to Isakjee, the internet, or more specifically the comment sections for online newspaper articles, blogs and on Facebook, all have an especially damaging impact on an individual’s feeling of belonging to society. The online comment sections of, for instance, the Huffington Post or *The Guardian* are full of racist comments against Muslims that say they do not belong to British society. It could be argued that the internet leads to emotional vulnerability because it constitutes a virtual space for society. Furthermore, as reported by Dr. Paul Cornish, the internet serves as a virtual space where anonymity is guaranteed, unlike on the streets where people have to directly confront one another. To put it another way, the internet could be seen as an instrument that allows society to be anonymously racist.

As mentioned earlier, many young Muslims do not feel that they belong at British mosques, and they are not permitted to



discuss political issues within these mosques. The feeling of not belonging, combined with politics, domestic situations and society, could lead individuals to search for an alternative place where they can connect with like-minded people who also feel excluded. The internet offers the perfect place to easily connect. According to Isakjee, the internet has become a hub for alienated individuals. A study by the website [debatingeurope.eu](http://debatingeurope.eu) found that 32 percent of Europeans use the internet to follow politics. Moreover, 40 percent of those ages 15-24 say that they have expressed their opinions on public issues through social media, reflecting a widespread interest in public participation. If Europeans (especially second- and third-generation European Muslims) feel alienated — caused by politics, domestic situations, society, mosques and the internet — violent radical groups could draw upon and channel this interest in participation. In this regard, the so-called Islamic State has been the most successful tech-oriented terrorist organization in history. It understands how to use the surface web, deep web, dark web, social media and even encrypted messaging apps, such as Telegram, to disseminate propaganda, recruit new members and inspire or even direct their followers to carry out terror attacks.

Despite the dominant perception in governments and among academics that the internet factors in radicalization, it should be seen as facilitating the process rather than causing it. The former extremist and recruiter interviewed by this author supports that conclusion. While talking about his past, he stressed that he and his peers became violently radicalized by watching VHS cassettes and not by the internet. The driving force behind their radicalization was the grievance factor. The interviewee and his peers decided to engage in conflict based on the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and their perception of the cruelty toward poor and innocent Afghan victims. In addition, both Isakjee and the interviewee underpin their arguments by pointing out that the majority of people have easy access to violent radical content on the internet; however, not everybody becomes violently radicalized. Furthermore, violent radicalization is a two-way process, which first requires an active contribution from a person interested in radicalization. In summary, the internet provides an easily accessible platform, but people must already be open to the arguments to become violently radicalized.

## Conclusion

The sense of nonbelonging, conveyed by politicians, policies, domestic situations, British mosques and the internet, significantly influences an individual's radicalization. These factors determine the choice of either

staying in the in-group or leaving it and joining a more distinct out-group. In the case of British Muslims, there is a high likelihood that some individuals decide not to belong to British society anymore and instead identify more distinctly as Muslims by adopting more religious attitudes and behaviors. Neglecting his or her citizenship could be caused by politicians and policies for instance. Consequently, becoming more religious — wearing a



A Muslim attends Friday prayers at the Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden, south London. British Muslim youths can find it difficult to connect with traditional mosques. REUTERS

headscarf or growing a beard as a response to racism — furthers the alienation of British Muslims to the wider society. In turn, that could ultimately result in the establishment of a parallel society in which individuals seek to enhance and maintain their social identity and self-esteem by becoming religiously fundamental.

Nevertheless, the problem of becoming violently radicalized is not religious fundamentalism, but belonging to the wrong group. This helps to explain why only a few become violently radicalized, while others might become nonviolently radicalized — violent radicalization, or just radicalization, depends on which group individuals feel they belong to. Individuals who believe they belong to a certain group will naturally adopt its common attitudes, behaviors and values — the group determines the orientation, violent or nonviolent. In the end, each person decides to stay in a group and adapt that group's values or leave it and join another group that is perceived as better for his or her self-esteem and social identity. □



*What About the*

# WOMEN

The importance of gender perspectives in  
countering violent extremism

BY JULIE AROSTEGUI LEMASTER, J.D.

**H**uman rights, gender equality and women's empowerment are often considered secondary issues to be dealt with once a state or region has achieved security. However, there is increasing recognition that these are actually a critical part of security — and that lasting peace and security cannot be achieved without addressing gender discrimination.

Although many states seem to have an inherent instinct to fight extremism with more violence, unless they get to the root causes of radicalization they will continue to perpetuate the emergence of violent extremist groups. Militarized responses can foment support for these movements, and conflict and instability create power vacuums in which extremist groups can operate. Violent extremism thrives where human rights have been degraded and gender inequality prevails. It is a highly gendered phenomenon that requires more nuanced and targeted understanding and efforts.

## INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, adopted in the year 2000, and its companion resolutions UNSCR 1820 (2008), UNSCR 1888 (2009), UNSCR 1889 (2009), UNSCR 1960 (2010), UNSCR 2016 (2013), UNSCR

2122 (2013) and UNSCR 2242 (2016) are collectively known as the women, peace and security framework. The resolutions provide an internationally recognized legal framework for promoting gender equality in peace and security. They ensure the participation of women in all levels of decision-making, protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, improve the prevention of violence against women and integrate gender perspectives into all processes. They stress the need for better security sector responses to the effects of modern conflict and address all aspects of peace and security processes, including peace negotiations, peacekeeping, political participation, response to sexual violence in armed conflict, judicial and legal reform, and security sector reform. Entry points for implementation in the security sector include national and regional security policies and action plans, women's participation in security sector reform processes, defense reform, police reform, transitional justice, justice reform and peacekeeping operations.

UNSCR 1325 calls for all parties in a conflict to respect international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls. It incorporates binding international law, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Geneva Conventions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Rome Statute of

the International Court (which criminalizes sexual violence in conflict), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. It also specifically recognizes the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, an agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment that aims to remove obstacles to women's participation in public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. In addition to the U.N., regional bodies in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas have adopted treaties, laws, policies and action plans in support of women, peace and security.

As peace builders and mothers, women have critical roles to play in countering violent extremism (CVE). While the international women, peace and security framework has long recognized the role of women in international peace and security efforts, little attention has been paid by policymakers and international CVE and counterterrorism actors. However, in 2015 the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 2242, which recognizes these roles and calls on all parties to integrate women and gender perspectives into CVE and counterterrorism efforts.

## GENDER PERSPECTIVES

Gender refers to the different needs, experiences and status of women and men, boys and girls based on societal construction of roles, personality traits and behaviors, as well as the power relations between men and women. Using a gender perspective means identifying the different insecurities facing men, women, girls and boys, and the way in which gender relations and power inequalities fuel insecurity and, in the case of CVE, extremism. This understanding of gender leads to better policies and outcomes. Using a gender perspective also puts a socio-cultural lens on power relationships that incorporates race, class, poverty, ethnicity and age. It helps craft context-specific, socially and culturally relevant responses to extremism because it focuses on the different experiences, needs and priorities of men and women.

Violent extremism typically exploits rigid gender stereotypes. For example, men and boys are generally killed or targeted for recruitment into extremist groups as fighters, while women and girls are more typically recruited for behind-the-scenes support roles or are the focus of sexual violence. Propaganda, information streams, social media and communication have cultivated gender-specific material. Understanding why men and women radicalize and join extremist groups is crucial to crafting effective responses.

In addition, addressing gender dynamics in CVE policies and programs is increasingly important as more women radicalize. Current CVE programming deems women as disempowered and inherently peaceful and perpetuates these stereotypes to harmful effect. Gender has not been integrated into CVE programming because it is generally assumed to target men.

Women's roles in violent extremism and the underlying reasons behind those roles need to be fully understood and reflected in policy and practice. Women have the potential, through direct involvement or as a relative of those involved, to counter radical dynamics. To be more effective, CVE efforts need to consider the multiple roles that women play and take a more holistic view of the drivers and possible solutions to violent extremism.

## DRIVERS OF EXTREMISM

One of the main drivers of radicalization and extremism is a lack of human security. The human security approach broadens the scope of security analysis and policy from territorial security to the security of people. Today's threats to human security are global. Terrorism, violent extremism, nuclear proliferation, gender-based violence, human trafficking, poverty, drugs, HIV/AIDS and other health epidemics, environmental disasters and displacement of populations do not respect national borders. They affect the world. For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security and security from crime: These are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world. This lack of personal security is an important element in the phenomenon of violent extremism. Extremist groups such as ISIS have capitalized on recruitment methods that prey on individuals — people who feel marginalized and oppressed and lack economic opportunities and hope — by distorting religious tenets, playing on religious and ethnic divides, and offering money, food, shelter, cellphones, protection, women and glory in the afterlife.

Many of the drivers of radicalization are the same for women as for men. Extremist groups can provide short-term solutions to improve the security of citizens, such as clinics, schools, food and money. Throughout Africa and the Middle East, radical Islamic movements have been successful in filling voids left by corrupt and inept governments. They are often better organized and better funded than governments. They offer values, economic support and services, and a sense of community — especially to disenfranchised youth — in the face of persistent socio-economic problems, corruption and poor governance. They use grassroots economic development and social welfare programs, such as establishing mosques, schools, health clinics, pharmacies and cultural centers to gain the trust of local populations, and then begin radicalization and recruitment.

Extremist groups such as ISIS have also capitalized on social media and international networks to recruit vulnerable individuals from the West. Many young Muslim men and women experience a feeling of social or cultural isolation and a lack of identity in Western culture. These feelings of isolation leave them vulnerable to radical narratives. Muslim women in Western cultures wearing the hijab or niqab often face additional harassment and discrimination. Many young Muslims believe the Muslim community is being persecuted globally, and that the international community fails to protect them. Those undergoing radicalization, especially women, empathize with Muslim victims of violence. This is being used, for example, to recruit Westerners to join ISIS in Syria — they are lured by images of atrocities committed by Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces



Women gather at the site of a suicide car bombing in Baghdad, Iraq. Women are often the first to see signs of radicalization among local populations. REUTERS | Women in Rome participate in a demonstration of Italian Muslims against terrorism called “Not in my name.” REUTERS

and by the lack of international intervention. Women and men are also attracted to extremist groups by the promise of securing a place in heaven, the allure of building a utopian society, or a sense of belonging to a sisterhood or brotherhood on Earth.

Although it can be difficult to understand why women would join a movement based on harsh ideologies that degrade them, they often find it empowering. For example, despite being subjected to strict and gendered interpretations of Sharia, Western women who join ISIS play critical roles as necessary agents of state building — as wives, mothers, teachers, nurses and active recruiters. Although their tasks are mainly domestic, they glorify violence in order to support and recruit men and women to the movement.

Educating the global community about the importance of human security will lead to a better understanding of the root causes of radicalization and conflict, and to a recognition that the participation of women is crucial to the CVE agenda. While women must be integrated into the government, military, security and defense sectors, the overall focus should be on human security.

## WOMEN AND RADICALIZATION

What women do and how they are treated are indicators of stability in communities. Gender inequality, increases in gender-based violence and the restriction of women’s rights are often early warning signs of impending conflict. As violence looms, their daily routines may be disrupted as they avoid danger. For example, they go to market early in the morning in order to return home before violence erupts. They keep their children home from school as communities become more unstable. Women often possess valuable information about what is happening in their communities. In many instances they are aware of recruitment practices, locations of combatants, and the movement and buildup of arms and other supplies.

In many places women are well-positioned to detect early signs of radicalization because their rights and physical integrity are often the target of fundamentalists. Repression of women is a central feature of extremist movements. Using strict interpretations of religious law, extremist groups tend to restrict women’s legal rights and their participation in civic and political life. This often signifies a shift toward strict conservatism, threatening stability as it clashes with a more secular society. For instance, in Pakistan an increase in honor killings, a prohibition on women’s presence in markets and shops, and the banning of girls’ education by extremist groups restricted women’s and girls’ rights to be in public and signaled an increase in the extremists’ power.

Women also experience great personal insecurity and are subject to harassment, assault and sexual violence. They are targeted with threats and violence. Women who work may be harassed in the streets to the point that they cannot go outside. Women in politics are targeted with threats and assassination. Forced marriages and sexual abuse are used to instill fear and control societies and serve as early indicators of conflict.

## PREVENTING RADICALIZATION

Women have throughout history been powerful peace builders, reaching across ethnic, religious and other divides to build bridges and resolve conflicts. Evidence related to women, peace and security shows that women prevent violence and provide security, moderate extremism, strengthen peacemaking, promote dialogue and build trust, bridge divides and mobilize coalitions, raise issues that are vital for peace, prioritize gender equality, rebuild more peaceful societies by using a more inclusive approach, broaden societal participation, break the conflict trap and reduce the chances of relapse into war.

Because of their roles in families and communities, women can be powerful preventers and participants in shaping policies and programs to mitigate the effects of conflict and violent extremism. They influence familial and social norms and often

promote tolerance and political and civic engagement. Innovative research shows that mothers have a critical role to play in understanding why their sons — or daughters — radicalize. They are often the first line in building resilience in the home and community. In addition, extremist groups often target mothers to support the ideological commitment and desire of their sons to join. Reaching out to mothers and wives of insurgents can help extract and reintegrate them back into society. Women Without Borders has been piloting Mothers Schools in Indonesia, Kashmir, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Zanzibar. The schools aim to equip mothers with the skills needed to counter extremism and build community resilience, starting in the home. This includes building confidence and self-esteem, increasing the knowledge and reflection of parent-child dynamics, and delivering specific training in countering radicalization.

Women can also hold important community positions that help to counter violent extremism. In Afghanistan, women are more involved than ever before in decision-making within their villages and districts. They are members of social development councils, community and provincial councils and women's groups at the village and district level. Women-led Community Development Councils are a mechanism for conflict resolution for women living in rural areas by helping resolve family conflicts, which is important because unresolved issues often lead to greater conflicts and violent extremism.

Women can also fulfill a critical role as civil society leaders. Developing women's socio-economic conditions and political empowerment are essential to building resilience against violent extremism. Civil society organizations have been key to promoting, advancing and protecting women's rights, increasing access to education and health care, and improving their livelihoods and political participation.

Globally, women are mobilizing to counter the impacts of extremism. Women's organizations are directly engaged with communities, expanding awareness of religious tolerance and human rights, and advocating for gender equality.

Women in security and law enforcement also play important



A displaced Iraqi woman carries a child as she returns home to Mosul in May 2017 after government forces liberated the city from ISIS control. AFP/GETTY IMAGES | Because of their family roles, women can be a potent force in shaping policies that mitigate violent extremism. Here, Kurdish women protest airstrikes in Turkey. REUTERS

roles in CVE. In Nigeria, mainstreaming gender and the role of women in CVE brought about a fundamental change in the recruitment of volunteers into the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Women are recruited to conduct bodily searches of other women and girls and gather in areas where men are not allowed in Muslim society. They also work with men at checkpoints to address issues related to young girls and women. Women's participation in the CJTF became even more critical as terrorist groups adapted their strategy to use women to carry out operations. Women are also playing a bigger role in the Nigerian military and are being included in the Nigerian Police Force as part of its counterterrorism team.

The integration of women into the security sector, particularly into law enforcement, can improve the overall effectiveness of forces. In many communities there is a lack of trust and negative experiences with law enforcement. Women

police officers are important in local CVE efforts because they are more likely to reduce human rights abuses, limit the use of excessive force, de-escalate tensions and build trust.

It is important to empower women in peace and security processes and to strengthen their roles in the home and community by educating them on the signs of radicalization and building their capacity to address them. Women should be included in both high-level and community-level conversations about radicalization and violent extremism to build understanding of why individuals — especially youths — are radicalizing.

## SUPPORTERS AND PERPETRATORS

Some take issue with the idea that women are primarily victims or preventers of extremism, arguing that it overlooks women's roles as supporters and perpetrators of violence. It is important to consider women extremists because some choose to radicalize. Some women join for ideological reasons. Others join extremist or armed groups to escape patriarchal structures and empower themselves. Extremist and terrorist groups exploit gender imbalances by enticing women with messages of empowerment. Violent extremism is inherently gendered in the power structures

it is based on, the people it targets and the messages it uses.

Women have increasingly been part of terrorist groups since the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, they were prominent in Latin American and European terrorist organizations. In recent years, women have accounted for 30-40 percent of ethno-separatist groups, serving in a range of positions, and have been active participants in conflict. In liberation struggles in countries such as Colombia, Eritrea, Kosovo, Namibia, Nicaragua, South Africa and Uganda, women have served in guerrilla forces and in military command positions.

Despite their very restricted roles under Sharia, women are radicalizing and joining extremist Islamic groups in greater numbers. When ISIS declared a caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2014, the call for statehood included a direct request for architects, engineers, doctors and women, all seen as fundamental elements for state building. According to the limited statistics made public, up to 25 percent of foreign terrorist fighters joining ISIS from Western Europe are women. In Somalia, women are now serving as insurgents in al-Shabab, an al-Qaida-affiliated group. Al-Shabab has specifically targeted women as recruits, using propaganda tactics such as humanitarian aid, social media and outreach. Women combatants and suicide bombers have an advantage in many countries that require them to dress in cover, as it is easy for them to conceal weapons under robes and veils.

Women also play large supporting roles in extremist movements, supporting insurgents through economic activities such as washing diamonds, smuggling drugs, farming and selling food. Women and girls perform the majority of domestic roles in armed groups, such as cooking, washing clothes and acting as wives or sex slaves for combatants.

Just as mothers can play a vital role in preventing the radicalization of family members, they can also encourage them to radicalize. Women are often targeted by extremist media to raise their children to serve the cause or marry an extremist mujahid.

Whether acting as peaceful citizens or as perpetrators of violence — women play important roles and must be included in CVE and counterterrorism efforts.

## **POLICIES AND PROGRAMS**

Current CVE policies and programs are missing the mark by focusing on men and largely excluding women, both in terms of planning and implementation. Inclusive strategies are more important than ever, especially when many women and girls bear the brunt of extremist violence, while others join extremist groups. It is necessary to understand these dynamics in order to form effective responses. Additional research is needed on the specific roles women play in preventing and countering violent extremism, the adverse effects on women of both violent extremism and counterterrorism policies, and the lack of technical capacity and logistical support for women in CVE programming.

UNSCR 2232 calls on the international community to do more to integrate women, peace and security issues into counterterrorism (CT) and CVE policies. The CT/CVE community needs to recognize that gender is not a marginal issue; it is a central issue in terrorism as more women join terrorist and violent extremist groups. It is necessary to have a better understanding of

how and why women and girls radicalize, how they are targeted and recruited by extremist groups, and how extremist groups use gender-based appeals to recruit men and boys.

Special attention should be paid to the impact of CT/CVE policies on civil society, and especially women's groups. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, the international community prioritized countering terrorism financing (CTF) through domestic criminalization, expanded legal powers to sanction individuals and entities, mandatory counterterrorism clauses in donor funding and partnership agreements, and new reporting for financial institutions. In many contexts, civil society became the target of these CTF rules — whether directly or indirectly — losing critical access to resources and banking facilities. Women's organizations, which are already vulnerable and largely young and dependent on foreign funding, have often been especially affected by these policies.

The CT/CVE community needs to increase efforts to prevent the radicalization and recruitment of women and girls, which means paying more attention to the specific social, economic and political conditions of women and girls who may be susceptible to radical ideologies. In countries such as Bangladesh and Morocco, gendered approaches to CVE programming contribute to the overall success in reducing support for violent extremism. The Bangladeshi government's gendered approach involves empowering women to affect the drivers and catalysts of extremism. The government identifies poverty and lack of economic opportunity as one of the country's main sources of radicalization. The government focuses on empowering women through micro-lending programs, primary school attendance and garment factory jobs. Women are also involved directly in CVE programming conducted by the U.S. Embassy in collaboration with Bangladesh's government.

Moroccan CVE strategy specifically integrates women, recognizing that the effectiveness of its CVE programs relies on the inclusion of women because of their critical role in Moroccan families and communities. After deadly terrorist attacks in Casablanca in 2003, Morocco's king passed revisions to the Moudawana (family code) that empowered women socially and economically. A second initiative focuses on a government program that empowers women in the religious and political spheres, certifying female imams tasked with promoting religious moderation and tolerance to curb radicalization.

CVE policies and programs should fund and support efforts that build technical capacity and logistical support for women into CVE programming; ensure that women are included in CVE policies; and use gender-sensitive conflict analysis to inform the development of CVE strategies that integrate the perspective of women and the differential impact of CVE. Programs and policies must address the underlying social and political causes that drive violent extremism and empower everyone.

Women continue to be overlooked and underrepresented in CVE and CT efforts. It is important to emphasize their roles and scale up their representation. Educated, prosperous, safe, resilient and empowered communities are the best long-term, sustainable deterrent against extremism, and empowering women is critical to building these communities. □

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# THE FOREIGN FIGHTER FACTOR

*How terror groups exert influence in the North Caucasus*

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BY DARYA NICOLSON

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Russian soldiers patrol the Old City of Aleppo, Syria, in January 2017. Russia is allied with the regime of Syrian leader Bashar Assad. REUTERS





“ WE ARE ASHAMED THAT WE ARE GOING TO SYRIA AT A TIME WHEN THE CAUCASUS IS STILL OCCUPIED, BUT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE RETURNING HERE ONCE THEY’VE UNDERGONE A TRAINING COURSE.

~ A BBC source close to Chechen militants

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**I**n September 2014, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2178 concerning the “acute and growing” threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). These are defined as “individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.” FTFs affect the dynamic of conflict — its intractability, duration and intensity, and furthermore pose a threat to their “States of origin, transit, destination, and neighboring zones of armed conflict in which they are active,” according to the resolution.

Since the eruption of the civil war in Syria, and especially after the June 2014 proclamation of the Islamic State (IS) “caliphate,” thousands of aspiring fighters from different regions have traveled to Iraq and Syria to join the IS or other violent extremist groups, according to Global Coalition’s article,

“Foreign Terrorist Fighters — Trends and Dynamics.”

In December 2015, The Soufan Group reported the number of foreign fighters in Syria had reached approximately 30,000 from more than 100 countries. That year, the top three FTF nationalities were Tunisian (6,000), Saudi Arabian (2,500) and Russian (2,300), while there were approximately 4,700 fighters from the former Soviet republics. In October 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that 5,000 to 7,000 fighters from Russia and the former Soviet Union had traveled to Syria to join the IS. Most of these fighters are from the North Caucasus (Chechnya and Dagestan), with others from Azerbaijan and Georgia as well as Central Asia — Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Together they share not only the ability to speak Russian, but also a heritage of grievances stemming from the Afghan-Soviet and the post-Soviet conflicts. The phenomenon of North Caucasian FTFs

Chechen refugees in Turkey protest Russian President Vladimir Putin during a 2014 visit to Istanbul. The signs read, “Russia, get out of the Caucasus!”

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov attends Russia's annual Defenders of the Fatherland Day celebrations on December 12, 2016, in Grozny. Radicalized Chechens have fought for the Islamic State in large numbers. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

has security implications in the North Caucasus, the Russian Federation and worldwide.

Today, there are fewer FTFs in Syria and Iraq because of battlefield losses and the decreased flow of foreign fighters to the conflict. Interpol estimated that there were 15,000 FTFs in the region in 2016. Among other factors, the reduction in FTFs is attributed to increased controls put in place by U.N. members, military pressure and the IS' financial decline. The loss of territory and revenue has caused increasing desertion rates, recruitment difficulties and more internal corruption and theft. FTFs are suffering from low morale, according to Paul Wood's January 2016 article for *The Spectator*. Many of its fighters "are packing it in" and "want to defect." And it's not only the restricted inflow of FTFs that has dropped manpower numbers, but also the reverse flow — FTFs returning home or moving on to a third state. By December 2016, approximately 30 percent of European FTFs were thought to have returned to their home countries, Tanya Mehra wrote in her December 2016 paper for the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism.

Therefore, the relatively high number of North Caucasian FTFs involved in the conflict is a matter of concern. Will these FTFs return home with peaceful purposes or malicious intentions? Will they choose to stay in the conflict area and perhaps join other terrorist organizations as the IS comes under increasing pressure, or will they move to a third state, relocate and participate in a different conflict? Terrorism scholars Colin P. Clarke and Amarnath Amarasingham consider several options in their March 2017 article for *The Atlantic*: The IS' hardcore FTFs may stay in Syria and Iraq, or some could join an underground resistance of an "ISIS 2.0," which may with time

form a covert terrorist organization. Others may change group allegiances on the ground and eventually seek rapprochement with al-Qaida. Other FTFs, who are prevented from traveling to their countries of origin — the independent or "free agents" — could form "a cohort of stateless jihadists" and travel to a third state. Finally, the FTFs who return to their home countries could be either the "disillusioned," the "disengaged but not disillusioned" or the "operational."

North Caucasian FTFs are members of the highly fractured opposition to the Syrian government. The majority are in IS ranks, others are with al-Nusrah, and the rest are part of numerous other factions. Many of the North Caucasian FTFs have previous combat experience — perhaps in Afghanistan, Georgia, Chechnya or Dagestan — and have reputations as fierce fighters. In fact, Chechen fighters (and North Caucasians, generally) seem to be perceived as elite fighters, worthy of respect, according to the blog "From Chechnya to Syria" by Joanna Paraszczuk.

Considering the large number of people involved, as well as the history of conflict in the region, North Caucasian FTFs are likely to constitute a long-term security threat. It is also important to examine their motivations for fighting, the factions/organizations that they fight for, the extent to which they are influenced by pro-jihadist propaganda and additional characteristics such as previous combat experience and ties to other terrorist organizations.

### **MOTIVATIONS TO FIGHT IN SYRIA**

The motivations of North Caucasian FTFs are varied, just as they are for those from other regions. However, an important motivation for this group, Dmitry Shlapentokh notes in his

February 2015 *Middle East Insights* article, is that the civil war in Syria provides an alternative battleground for fighting the Russian state. The conflict in the North Caucasus, especially in Chechnya, has a long history revolving around gaining independence from Russia. This fight can be traced back to Imperial Russia and includes the two more recent, bloody Russo-Chechen wars, as well as instability in the region. The protracted state of conflict (and official attempts at its normalization) produced grave societal issues and left a heritage of immense grievances. These are fuel for the North Caucasian resistance — for militants and extremists. However, the insurgents' ability to continue fighting has been severely limited. In Chechnya, this is due to the pro-Kremlin government under former rebel Ramzan Kadyrov. The inability to continue fighting in the North Caucasus, in combination with Moscow's support of the Assad regime, serve as push factors to join the fight in Syria.

Religion is another prominent motivational factor, writes Emil Souleimanov in his 2014 paper for *Middle East Journal*. Just as during the Chechen/Dagestani/Ingush resistance, when religion served as a force to attract foreign fighters to Chechnya, religion has been used as a unifying force by North Caucasians fighting in Syria. According to Shlapentokh, many young men have been drawn to join the Syrian jihad because they regard the Alawite (a heterodox sect of Shia Islam) Assad regime as not truly Muslim and because the Syrian regime is perceived as Russia's key ally in the Middle East. Souleimanov goes further, explaining that it is not only an opportunity for jihad, but also a duty of Russian-speaking Muslims to join their oppressed brothers in Syria. Most North Caucasian FTFs are Salafist. Others exhibit Sunni solidarity in response to images and propaganda of Sunni Muslims injured, tortured or killed by the "infidel" Alawi regime. Therefore, the battleground in Syria presents North Caucasian FTFs with the chance to fight both the Russian government and its interests, and the enemies of Islam worldwide.

Furthermore, by participating in the Syrian civil war, inexperienced FTFs gain combat experience and establish connections that enable them to engage in domestic insurgency or terrorist activities upon their return home. In addition, participation in the conflict may offer an opportunity for identity reconstruction, stepping out of a life of poverty and unemployment to one fighting for "a brotherhood in arms" and a "noble" cause.

North Caucasian fighters can be divided into two waves, Jean-Francois Ratelle argues in a 2016 paper for *Caucasus Survey*. The first wave traveled to Syria in 2011-2013 because they were unable to fight at home, and the second wave came in 2014-2017 because they openly decided not to fight in the

North Caucasus but "to join an international jihadist front." The contest between the *Imarat Kavkaz* (Caucasus Emirate, or CE) and the IS in some ways shaped the dispersion of North Caucasian FTFs on the battleground. The gradual decline of the CE also made space for the IS in the North Caucasus, which can to some extent explain this dynamic.

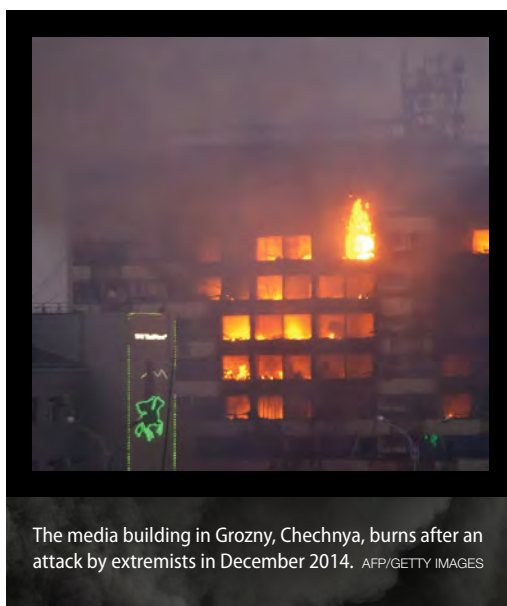
In a July 2016 entry on the "From Chechnya to Syria" blog, Paraszczuk shows that an initial group of North Caucasians (about 15-17) became active in Syria around 2012. Throughout the conflict, the numbers of fighters from the North Caucasus, and the rest of Russia and the former Soviet Union, rose to 5,000-7,000. Why they fight has been discussed, but for which groups do they fight? The fighters can generally be classified as IS-allied or al-Nusrah-allied (i.e., al-Qaida). However, the dynamic is complicated; throughout the conflict factions have switched alliances due to inter-factional dynamics, developments within the CE, and the changing relationship between the IS and al-Nusrah, although most North Caucasian fighters were drawn to the IS in part by very effective propaganda.

### SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

The rate of FTFs coming into Syria has decreased because of increased border controls and high casualties among militant groups, among other factors. Fighters that traveled to Syria and Iraq at the beginning of the conflict, for the most part, could not return to the North Caucasus to fight against the Russian government. Typically, these were fighters with combat experience who were known to authorities. These fighters paved

the way for others by establishing "independent" factions just as Abdul Hakim Shishani and Muslim Shishani did, factions affiliated with the CE or those that later split and were shaped by the IS/al-Nusrah rivalry.

Regardless of which faction they joined, these fighters may pose a serious security threat not only to Russia, but also to neighboring countries and future conflict zones. The combat experience gained and/or refined, training received, networks established and reputations built add to their "danger value," and therefore to their ability to mobilize new recruits. Furthermore, a dangerous new trend may have been set on the Syrian battleground by the emergence of Malhama Tactical, a private jihadist military contractor that provides training and battlefield consulting for al-Nusrah. Some of the independent factions have a stronger political agenda, which may increase their fighters' desire to return, posing a greater danger for the Caucasus. The influence of the war in Syria and, specifically, the ideological reach of the IS into the North Caucasus is a growing concern, despite the heavy security presence in the region.



The media building in Grozny, Chechnya, burns after an attack by extremists in December 2014. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## INSTABILITY IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

In the fight against insurgency and terrorism in the North Caucasus, there are three central actors: the *siloviki* (security forces/law enforcement), the *boeviki* (fighters) — also sometimes known as *lesniye* (“from the woods” where they hide) — and the *peregovorshik* (the negotiator between law enforcement and militants). The latter is a peacemaker of sorts, who “brings people out of the woods” and negotiates between the police and militants. According to Elena Milashina of the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, this is how the authorities know who left Russia to fight in Syria. Furthermore, they “are not worried about those who leave; they are worried about those who may return.”

It is difficult to find official updated statistics concerning the number of returned fighters or the number of terrorist plots or attacks committed by fighters affiliated with the IS. According to estimates, 15-20 percent of fighters (as many as 889) returned to the North Caucasus in 2015. There is not much concrete information in the public domain about counterterrorist measures, operations and progress. According to Alexander Bortnikov, director of the Russian Federal Security Service, 30 terrorist attacks were successfully averted in 2015, and 770 “bandits” and their accomplices were put on trial. In 2016, 42 attacks were averted. Among those tried were defendants charged with terror financing, recruiting new members and leaving the country with the aim of fighting abroad.

According to the Kavkazsky Uzel website, which provides a chronology of events in the North Caucasus, *siloviki-boeviki* fighting has intensified. In 2016, there were 84 armed clashes, 23 explosions, seven terrorist attacks and 287 casualties. By contrast, in 2015 there were 87 armed clashes, 11 explosions, six terrorist attacks and 258 casualties. The efficacy of *boeviki* attacks has also grown. In 2015, for every 10 *siloviki* killed, the *boeviki* would lose 35 in an attack. However, in 2016 the *boeviki* lost only 17 men for every 10 *siloviki* killed during an attack. *Siloviki* failures and fighters returning from Syria have contributed to the escalating situation in Chechnya. As a result of clashes and counterterrorism operations (CTOs) in 2016, 162 *boeviki* were killed (including 22 leaders of the “bandit” underground) and four wounded. These numbers have decreased for the past three years, with 174 killed in 2015 and 249 in 2014. In early 2017, 17 militants were killed in Chechnya and eight in Dagestan. There were 97 law enforcement casualties (32 killed; 65 wounded) in 2016, which is nearly double the number in 2015 (49). Since 2015, in Chechnya alone there have been at least 10 assaults on the *siloviki* (three in 2017, four in 2016 and three in 2015).

Attacks also took place elsewhere in the North Caucasus — in Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan — and the IS is increasingly claiming responsibility. In August 2016, the IS released a video calling for jihad in Russia; however, Chechen leader Kadyrov did not take it seriously, stating that IS *boeviki* have neither the required power nor the capabilities. Nevertheless, back in 2015 the IS took responsibility for its first attacks in the North Caucasus, an assault on the Russian Army barracks in southern Dagestan and a shooting in Derbent. Some of the *boeviki* were fighters who had returned from

Syria. In 2016, there were another five IS-linked attacks in Dagestan and one in Chechnya, and by early 2017 the IS had been linked to at least four attacks, including an assault on a National Guard checkpoint in late March and two clashes with jihadists in Chechnya. The attack that took place in March 2017 may be tied to a video released on YouTube a few days earlier by the “Council of the military jamaat Ichkeria.” It allegedly depicts some of the returned fighters who were part of the Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar (JMA), one of the Chechen-led militant groups based in Syria, according to Russian news agency RIA Novosti’s Dagestan website.

The terrorist attack in St. Petersburg, on April 3, 2017 — a bombing in the metro that killed 16 and left 102 injured — was the first of such a scale since 2013. The suspected suicide bomber was reportedly an ethnic Uzbek born in the Kyrgyz Republic. He had obtained Russian citizenship in 2011 and had been living and working in St. Petersburg. According to the Russian media group RBC, he was deported from Turkey in December 2016. Katiba al-Imam Shamil, an al-Qaida-linked group in Syria, claimed responsibility for the attack, according to the SITE Intelligence Group. The perpetrator may have been tied to one of the leaders of the CE in Kabardino-Balkaria, who, according to Russia’s National Antiterrorist Committee, had been eliminated with four other prominent members during a CTO in St. Petersburg in August 2016.

However, the attacks for which the IS has claimed responsibility were not necessarily carried out by fighters who had returned from Syria or Iraq. The IS has spread to the North Caucasus, and many young people influenced by IS propaganda and the conditions in the region become radicalized without going abroad to fight. The word “*boeviki*” does not distinguish the affiliation of the militant (CE, IS or other) and is used synonymously with “terrorist.” The CE barely exists anymore, due to the CTOs carried out in 2016 by government forces, and the IS has stepped in to fill the void. At least one attack in Chechnya can be tied to fighters who had returned from Syria and used to be part of JMA, and another attack in Dagestan has been linked to a fighter who had returned from Syria.

## COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Over the past three years, Russian counterterrorism and public security legislation have been supplemented with the Yarovaya laws. They broaden terrorism crimes to include criminal responsibility for failing to report crimes related to terror and for committing international terrorism. Moreover, they define data storage regulations for telecommunications and internet providers, and ban extremist activity. The penalties can include life in prison. Some of the laws are the subject of debate over their constitutionality.

The North Caucasus, however, lives according to slightly different laws. How local North Caucasian authorities deal with returned fighters is shrouded in secrecy. Legally, regional approaches draw on Russian counterterrorism legislation (the Federal Criminal Laws of the Russian Federation and other anti-terrorist laws), and security services conduct regular CTOs.

Of particular interest, however, is the concept of collective responsibility and other measures aimed at the general public. The principle of collective responsibility is regarded negatively since it holds responsible a group of innocent people not affiliated with the crime. It is employed in Chechnya to control and repress the population. Through this method — combined with Kadyrov's visits to various Middle Eastern states and the financing of mosques and schools — the Chechen government's influence is increasingly felt by the Chechen diaspora inside and outside of Russia, according to a 2016 report by the news website Kavkazsky Uzel. According to human rights advocates, Chechen refugees never forget that they have relatives in Chechnya who can be pressured into forcing them to return.

The main motivations for invoking collective responsibility are counterterrorism, countering extremism and radicalism, and fighting the insurgency. One of the anti-terrorist Yarovaya laws increases criminal responsibility for terror-related crimes (for those over the age of 14), including the withholding of information about a terrorist action (completed or in progress). The maximum penalty for withholding information is imprisonment for one year. While it is not applicable to spouses and close relatives, they can be held financially responsible for damages inflicted in a terrorist attack. Russian criminal law does not support collective responsibility. Nevertheless, the Russian federal government typically ignores Kadyrov's application of collective responsibility in Chechnya and the rest of the North Caucasus. Kadyrov says the families of militants guilty of crimes will be ousted from the republic and their houses demolished, and he is now pushing to legislate collective responsibility on the federal level, according to human rights advocate Oleg Orlov.

Collective responsibility is not only the preferred official strategy in Chechnya, it is seemingly supported by ordinary citizens (out of fear of the authorities or otherwise) — on various talk shows one might now hear that it is the norm, although only a couple of years ago it was considered barbaric. In December 2016 and January 2017, in response to attacks in Dagestan and Chechnya, government forces carried out mass detentions and questioned relatives and friends of the killed militants. The relatives of militants involved in the attacks in December were fired from their jobs, and their pensions and social subsidies were not paid, according to the author Maaz Bilalov. After the January attacks on Chechen police and the National Guard, some of the militants' relatives endured public penance, sometimes through local television, and were forced to leave their homes in Chechnya, noted Kazbek Chanturiya in a January 2017 post on Open Caucasus Media.

In January 2017, a protest against the IS and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was held in the Chechen capital, Grozny, attended by approximately 2,000 mostly ordinary citizens. Among the speakers were mothers of militants who had joined or were planning to join the IS and who publicly asked for forgiveness for their sons' crimes. Parental responsibility was also discussed; it was agreed that parents should use harsher methods to improve the upbringing of their children. Former fighter Said Mazhaev, who turned himself in upon his return from Syria and had his initial sentence pardoned

in return for working with youth and participating in anti-IS counternarratives, spoke about the dangers of the IS (he had fought for JMA). Reportedly, he managed to convince some not to join the IS, yet his younger brother was involved in an attack in Grozny in December 2016. Other public events such as town meetings, frequently held after an attack or clash takes place, serve as platforms for discussing strategies like collective responsibility.

Such demonstrations aim to provoke fear in the population by showing that there will be consequences for involvement in terrorism, including for relatives. Local authorities and Russian special services have used collective responsibility against insurgency in the past. This frequently involves disappearances, questioning, beatings and torture. It sometimes also involves the use of relatives as human shields to persuade a militant to “come out of the forest,” or cross over to the side of the government. Even though collective responsibility is ineffective at addressing the root causes of underlying social problems (and in fact, it fuels them), the Chechen authorities consider it to be a successful strategy.

## CONCLUSION

These approaches to countering terrorism and extremism in the North Caucasus feed into already existing social instability, grievances and discontent with authorities in the region. The Russian government should develop more soft approaches to counterterrorism. Years of CTOs and counterterrorist strategies — including collective responsibility — have decimated the CE to where it is barely functional; however, this is also due to the increasing influence of the IS in the region. IS propaganda successfully targets North Caucasian (and by extension, Russian) youth, agitating them to seek jihad within Russia or outside its borders. The number of FTFs from Russia and other post-Soviet states, even though currently decreasing, is substantial, and Russian security forces may have contributed to the outflow of fighters in the past. Even though the number of fighters returning from Syria is not known precisely, it could be 15-20 percent. Those that have returned are being prosecuted and incarcerated or have joined underground networks, while the whereabouts of others are unknown.

The number of IS-influenced attacks in the North Caucasus has grown, and some of the recent attacks in the region are linked to ex-JMA fighters and other returnees from Syria. The remaining fighters in Syria and Iraq, and those who still seek to join them on the battleground, pose a threat not only to Russia, but also to neighboring countries. With current developments in Syria and the deteriorating situation and repression in Chechnya and neighboring republics, the threat grows stronger. The first wave of North Caucasian FTFs are potentially more dangerous, having gained skills and experience and built reputations and connections on the battleground. The second wave of fighters was mostly influenced by IS propaganda, which remains influential in the region despite IS setbacks in Syria and Iraq. Regardless of their affiliation, North Caucasian FTFs pose a long-term threat to global security. Given the opportunity, they will likely fight in the Caucasus, but if unable to return home, they may be motivated to strike elsewhere. □

# LOW-TECH

## SOLUTION

*FM radio is a potent weapon  
against extremist propaganda  
in Somalia*

By John Hutchings



PER CONCORDIAM ILLUSTRATION

In today's high-tech environment, social media and digital communications are ubiquitous in almost every sector of society, culture, business and government. Countering violent extremism (CVE) is no different; social media and digital reach enhance the strategic communications elements of CVE. However, the old-fashioned medium of radio maintains many advantages, especially in less developed regions. FM radio can play an important role in a multidimensional, coordinated approach that corresponds with a target audience and uses a combination of digital and analogue.

### *Radio in Somalia*

Radio is on the rise in Somalia. It is far-reaching and technologically easy to start up. It has been used in the past to push narratives relating to the long-running conflict — including efforts both in favor of and, vexingly, in opposition to peace. Radio is a tool available to counterterrorism practitioners, particularly in Somalia where it is important to counter the narrative of the extremely violent dissident group al-Shabab (AS).

AS has become more sophisticated in its strategic communications at the same time the internet has become more prevalent. However, the internet does not have widespread reach or penetration in Somalia. A 2015 survey by the British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) found that although there is widespread availability of cyber cafes and internet-enabled devices, the high cost of accessing the internet, combined with underdeveloped infrastructure, means using it is beyond the reach of most Somalis.

In this context, radio remains the best vehicle for communicating narratives and counternarratives to the general public. It is also important to understand that Somalia is one of the most culturally homogenous nations in the world. The Somali people speak one language (Somali) and nearly all of them are Sunni Muslims. These factors facilitate programming based on a narrative that Somalis can commonly identify with. If the impartiality and integrity of radio are sustained, it becomes a trusted medium and can function as a building block of a civil democratic society that stays true to its ideological, religious and homogenous identity.

Radio has been part of a counternarrative program used by United Nations and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops to take on AS since 2009, when the first U.N.-funded public broadcast service began transmitting

from Mogadishu. Mogadishu was then a city divided — government forces and AMISOM troops controlled one part and AS another. As AMISOM took ground from AS, radio flourished. Radio is prolific in Somalia, and it nestles hand in glove with an inherent culture of storytelling, poetry and music. When the U.N. returned in 2009 after an eight-year hiatus, the effects of the civil war that raged over two decades had led to the denigration of the state and rule of law. Most governance structures had decayed and given way to clan warfare as well as a rise in radical Islamist groups, including the Islamic Courts Union, which spawned AS.

### *Technological ease*

Over the years, AS developed its own media machine and appeared to be ahead of the curve in the media landscape. AS media outlets such as Radio Andulus and AS News Channel still transmit the terrorists' narrative. AS has a strong technological approach to radio, and there is no doubt that it is adaptive. In the past, the group has captured radio station facilities and used the frequencies and equipment to broadcast its own programs, which is easy and

cost effective. Although radio programming can be complex, the basic capability can be easily achieved with a transmitter and rudimentary equipment such as a microphone and basic mixing equipment. This can be an advantage for governments as well as dissidents, but it's important to recognize this ability and use it for maximum effect. AMISOM seized on this, using the highly mobile "radio-in-a-box" system donated by the U.S. State Department. It moves with AMISOM troops and is being used to some effect in Jowhar, Barawe and Marka, Somalia, by Burundi and Ugandan AMISOM contingents.

The station, which transmits in FM and has a 25-kilometer broadcasting range, has programming in Somali and English (English is widely spoken by returning diaspora from Europe and the U.S.). The content includes the impact AMISOM is having in the area, thus contextualizing the "hearts and minds" program, as well as the counternarrative against AS and encouragement for AS members to defect. The content is produced with assistance from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. This collaborative approach is ideal for CVE, utilizing the journalistic, technical and polished production talents imported from the U.N. combined with local talent on a platform in the target area.



## *Al-Shabab's reach*

AS not only uses radio to great effect, it also has reach on the internet to metropolitan areas and the diaspora. However, as highlighted above, the internet does not yet have an extensive saturation in Somalia because of cost, though this could change rapidly as fiber expands available bandwidth and, where there is security, infrastructure grows. Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab, AS' military operations spokesman, produces a prolific narrative and commentary to news agencies. AS' narrative retains a clear, consistent and simple ideology. AS' primary goal is to topple the Somali government, rid the country of "foreign invaders" and establish an Islamic emirate based on a strict interpretation of Sharia. This narrative may not reflect reality, but it is prominent in its messaging, and it can appeal to those with limited perspectives in rural areas and some of the diaspora community. AS has shown simple lines of messaging that resonate with at least some of its target audience, constantly reiterating that the group's members are Somali, religious and capable of providing security.



Bystanders view the wreckage of a car bomb outside the Banadir Beach Restaurant in Mogadishu a day after an attack by al-Shabab terrorists in August 2016. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

One problem with trying to counter the AS narrative is that the group produces high-quality, one-off video products for distribution on the internet through AS' production facility, al-Kataib. The subjects of the videos include the September 2013 attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, and the overrunning of the AMISOM bases at Leego (June 2015), Janaale (September 2015) and El Adde (January 2016). Video and radio programs are produced in Somali, Arabic, Swahili and English, allowing AS to reach beyond Somalia.

Given that AS is prevalent on digital platforms and social media, it is important to understand its motives. One of the main objectives of the digital media campaigns is to appease al-Qaida, with whom

AS is aligned. This is at least partially to ensure remote funding for their military operations and recruiting — specifically in Kenya and Tanzania. It is also a tool for inspiring attacks on the Somali government and its East African neighbors.

## *Understanding the audience*

When considering radio as a CVE tool, it is important to understand how it can impact AS recruits and potential recruits. The literacy rate in Somalia is very low, about 25 percent, and as revealed in UNESCO's "2011 Global Monitoring Report," most AS core members are largely uneducated. The same report found that most young AS recruits were from very remote areas, unemployed and had no access to the communications infrastructure. Many have no idea of the outside world. Many also attended mosques where the clerics, either willingly or by force, allowed AS recruiters to give speeches citing patriotic hyperbole mixed with religious verse justifying violent jihad and resistance to foreign invaders. Ironically, the speeches often use propaganda espousing the rights of children as well as financial incentives.

Importantly, AS recruits are offered a sense of belonging. Many defectors also cite nationalistic reasons for joining and a desire to rid Somalia of foreign invaders (particularly the Ethiopians, regarded as a natural enemy by many Somalis because of the 1977-78 Ogaden War). Other reasons include vengeance, an ideological belief based on doctrines of violent jihad, and the potential for excitement, social status or marriage. Many were also persuaded by security or protection commitments involving their respective clans.

When developing CVE narratives through radio programming, one must consider what impact the message will have and, if possible, how that impact can be measured. Some of the most impactful describe the realities of family separation and emphasize that the intent of AS leadership is not consistent with what is best for Somalia or for Islam. Also effective is informing AS recruits that they can enter disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs.

## *The counternarrative*

AS has lost significant ground in recent years, and its loss of a foothold in Mogadishu in 2011 allowed independent radio to steadily expand. However, under the last government there was draconian and counterproductive media regulation. With this in mind, the most trusted stations, as determined by a 2017 U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) survey, are very much old stalwarts: the BBC and the Voice of America. This may be because they are still viewed as impartial, one asset that invokes trust in many Somalis who are skeptical of government radio.

AS' retreat has opened the way for more dynamic growth in the limited number of radio stations. For





Journalists broadcast at Gool FM radio in Mogadishu, Somalia. The station airs sports only, no politics. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

instance, Gool FM, a newer, local station, is privately owned and dedicated exclusively to Somalia's previously underserved but burgeoning sports culture, which includes the enjoyment of football and basketball, as well as national pride in the sporting achievements of diaspora Somalis such as Mo Farah, the reigning 5,000 meter and 10,000 meter Olympic and world champion. This station was able to flourish only after AMISOM ousted AS from the capital in 2011. With the dismissal of AS, new opportunities to listen openly to radio stations other than AS' Andulus flourished. This may not be immediately relevant to the CVE model; however, it provided an important avenue away from violent extremism and acted as a conduit for a return to "normality."

One of the great things about Gool FM — which again is perhaps counterintuitive from a CVE perspective — is that it rarely has politicians on the airwaves. Instead, the station concentrates on the sport of the day and has prizes for guessing the correct football scores. When young people have an emotional, almost tribal attachment to a sport or team, it helps fill the hole that disenfranchisement and unemployment cause, mitigating one of the push factors toward violent extremism. It can also be argued that a sports attachment mitigates pull factors in that one can have a sense of belonging as a supporter of a certain football team. It is impossible to walk the streets of Mogadishu without seeing the football jerseys of

English Premier League or Spanish league teams. Gool FM's relevance is greater because of the limited digital reach. Internet penetration was estimated at 1.6 percent in 2014, according to the International Telecommunication Union and, though this has increased recently, it is still expensive.

### *Challenges*

To win the information war the government must: **Control the narrative:** AS has had numerous tactical successes and is very quick to highlight these, while also playing down its losses. The federal government of Somalia tends to be sluggish and quite often off message in its response. This may be due to the lack of experience of its Ministry of Information, but it is also because of a stubborn unwillingness to admit it has been caught off guard by AS. The government's responses have improved over the past few years, and more statements are being issued — mostly condemning AS attacks, especially after civilian casualties occur. The U.N. and AMISOM have different policies: The U.N. rarely responds to incidences unless it's supporting a government message, while the AMISOM counternarrative all too often highlights its own shortcomings.

Press restrictions, poor infrastructure, insufficient security and the lack of a strategy and cohesive, dedicated radio content limit radio as a CVE medium in Somalia. There are also issues with what independent radio stations will carry. In recent years, the U.N. has delivered plenty of public service announcements (PSAs) but has had to pay stations to play them. PSA content has ranged from encouraging participation in the electoral process to the role of women in the community and has included messages to AS members encouraging defections and reintegration into society. Many fighters have stated that they felt there was no bridge back to their own community and a normal life. Assurances from society and government that defecting AS fighters will receive fair treatment and be reintegrated to live a normal life have been effective, and surveys by USAID have found that more than half the population supports these measures. Educating and informing society must remain a goal of a CVE-based radio program. If former fighters do not get societal acceptance, they could drift to other groups such as ISIS, now in northern Somalia.

**Protect journalists:** Journalists are the backbone of radio news; without them the stories would have no real substance. Journalism provides informed comment, which helps listeners challenge some of the misconceptions they may have about governance, assistance from the U.N., AMISOM or the larger world. Journalists in Somalia have to work in very

hostile conditions — Somalia was ranked 172 out of 180 in the Reporters Without Borders 2015 World Press Freedom Index. Though Somalia is largely unregulated since the collapse of the Said Barre regime in 1991, most journalists view laws passed in 2014 as prohibitive and draconian. Viewed against a backdrop of extreme violence against journalists — that may or may not be related to extremism — it is clear that journalism in Somalia is dangerous; indeed, it is the most dangerous place in Africa for jour-

nalists, making it difficult to get good, impartial news.

Despite these challenges, the level of professionalism of many Somali journalists and their sense

CONTENT HAS RANGED FROM ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS TO THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY AND HAS INCLUDED MESSAGES TO AL-SHABAB MEMBERS ENCOURAGING DEFECTIONS AND REINTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

of fairness and commitment to impartial, accurate reporting is impressive. The National Union of Somali Journalists' campaign for fair reporting and transparency has helped to highlight the plight of journalists in the country. Transparency in journalism is key for effective CVE because it engenders trust in the media — and if it also exposes some of the corruption in government, then it tackles some of the issues that can lead to violent extremism.

**Expand the digital arena:** Infrastructure in Somalia is improving due to many factors, one being the extended peace achieved in certain areas by AMISOM's kinetic approach to AS, as well as foreign investment in roads, electricity and structures. This new infrastructure will improve the digital footprint. As shown in recent surveys by the BBC and USAID, access to TV is expanding, but mostly for those better off financially and urbanites. Similarly, last year's World Bank study shows that more Somalis are getting the internet but, as already noted, access remains too expensive for most. Radio has the best reach and remains the best communication asset, other than face-to-face interaction. There is a danger that CVE professionals could become besotted with digital media. Making videos and using Twitter tends to be more appealing than the analogue machinations of producing radio — not least because it is easy to quantify tweets and "likes." And although mobile phone usage has increased exponentially over the past few years,



REUTERS

not all phones can access 3G or 4G digital systems — indeed, 3G and 4G facilities are prohibited by AS in their controlled areas — but nearly all Somalis have access to an FM radio.

CVE messaging will benefit from greater frequency regulation, not just for radio stations but for all media across all spectrums. This allows for fair allocation of frequencies and a certain amount of order. There is a lot of saturation in the radio arena and more diverse, open stations are needed to keep the medium fresh and relevant. Young people are the largest demographic in Somalia and also the most vulnerable to the push and pull of violent extremism. Radio must be regulated, but not suffocated by overzealous and restraining policies.

### **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that radio is one the most vibrant and dynamic mediums for communication in Somalia. CVE practitioners must make better use of this tool for narrative and counternarrative. Imagination is key: Young radio listeners need to be engaged in a way that they are not lectured to, nor barraged with political rhetoric. Regulation with a soft hand is needed and so is a whole-of-government approach. The government, through intelligent regulation, could ensure the diversity of radio and work alongside the U.N. and AMISOM to provide useful content that promotes peace and stability, including a message of acceptance and empathy for those in AS who might defect. Music, poetry and theatre may also be used to communicate an understanding of self

Abdiaziz Mohamed Ali Haji, a Somali journalist with Radio Shabelle in Mogadishu, was killed by unidentified gunmen in September 2016. Somalia is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists.

African Union Mission in Somalia peacekeepers from Burundi patrol after fighting between insurgents and government soldiers erupted on the outskirts of Mogadishu.

and identity, often described as important issues by those who have joined terror groups. One should also look at the successes and try to mirror those. For instance, the positive effect of Gool FM is a valuable learning experience. Inspiring young Somalis to be more like Faisal Jama Aden, who played college basketball in the U.S., may prevent some of them from becoming a soon-forgotten suicide bomber.

Looking to the future, there is no denying that social media is slowly growing in importance and may naturally tie-in with the significance of clan and family in Somali culture. However, for now FM radio is the most appropriate tool for reaching the intended target audience of potential defectors, as well those who may influence defectors, such as family and religious leaders.

Finally, security is needed to ensure that radio broadcasts continue to expand and be heard. Therefore, CVE efforts must work hand in glove with more traditional kinetic counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. The go-to tool for CVE differs by country — in Somalia, it is the radio.

So tune in and rock the Kasbah! □



HOW

# PEACE

## *Came to Northern Ireland*

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts were shaped to fit the situation

BY CAPT. ANDREW UPSHAW, U.S. ARMY

**T**he effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of groups that previously supported violence is key to the long-term resolution of any conflict, especially the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The DDR process is meant to give breathing room to political actors by taking violence — and the means to carry out violence — completely out of the equation. In Northern Ireland, the intent was to disarm paramilitary organizations and to take previously violent individuals and reintegrate them peacefully, economically and politically. As described by Alpaslan Ozerdem of the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University, the official end of hostilities to a conflict does not guarantee a lasting peace, but rather it signals the beginning of

a long and complex peace-building process. The process creates a significant number of former combatants who must be reintegrated into society, and many societies, including Northern Ireland, lack the economic strength to successfully reintegrate such large numbers into the workforce. Ozerdem also states that if left without a job or a new role in post-conflict society, restless former combatants can threaten stability and increase the possibility of the resumption of hostilities. This is especially valid in Northern Ireland, given the large number of former combatants compared to the relatively small population. The danger of failing to reintegrate former fighters is evident in conflict zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

## DDR IN NORTHERN IRELAND

In Northern Ireland, the decommissioning process was negotiated and implemented through the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD). This organization was established in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and in subsequent legislation by the Irish and United Kingdom governments. It was headed by retired Canadian Gen. John de Chastelain, Finnish Brig Gen. Tauno Nieminen and Ambassador Donald C. Johnson of the United States. The IICD monitored the implementation of DDR in Northern Ireland from 1998 until the final report was submitted on March 28, 2011.



Former Irish Republican Army paramilitary fighters walk out of Northern Ireland's Maze Prison on July 28, 2000, under terms of the Good Friday Agreement, which freed more than 80 convicted terrorists from both sides of the conflict. REUTERS

Prior to the IICD's creation, weapons decommissioning was a major obstacle to progress, as loyalist parties — the Ulster Unionist Party, the Democratic Unionist Party and the United Kingdom Unionist Party — demanded decommissioning prior to continuing negotiations, according to George J. Mitchell in his book *Making Peace*, and remained an obstacle in the negotiations prior to the Good Friday Agreement. Mitchell was a former U.S. special envoy for Northern Ireland and major architect of the agreement. The incentive to keep talking prevailed, given the threat of resumed large-scale violence. Decommissioning remained an obstacle because possession of weapons was in itself one of the greatest negotiating tools. Without them, groups would lose leverage. Neil Jarman, director of the Institute for Conflict Research, found this

was especially valid in the case of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), which was arguably more resistant to decommissioning than other paramilitary groups because their weapons, along with their demonstrated capability to inflict violence on targets both in Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K., were very effective bargaining tools that could not be replaced. The PIRA also wished to keep its weapons to ensure that the peace agreements were in fact stable and permanent and that other parties were equally committed. Turning in weapons too soon could leave them vulnerable to attack. Similar logic applied to other republican-affiliated groups, such as the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), as well as to loyalist groups. However, unlike the PIRA, these groups were not closely tied to a political party such as Sinn Féin, so the likelihood they would join any future government was low to nonexistent.

Verifying the quantity and location of paramilitary-held weapons was problematic for a number of reasons, including the passage of time and the splintering of groups. The lack of accountability for weapons represents a continued challenge, especially in regard to ongoing violent dissident republican (VDR) activity. According to the IICD's report in 2011, "Decommissioning is still incomplete in that armed and active paramilitary groups still possess a variety of arms." In addition, there are differences between republican and loyalist groups and their ability to effectively account for weapons remaining in their possession. As stated by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and a former member of the PIRA, much of republican paramilitary groups' weaponry was supplied by the regime of former Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, and could therefore be more easily inventoried and accounted for. Loyalist groups did not enjoy the same sort of state sponsorship, and members often had to acquire their own weapons and munitions. Loyalist Colin Halliday, a former Ulster Defence Association (UDA) member told this author: "Before we went to disarmament, we had to get together and talk to people ... because we had units and weapons all around the country. It wasn't like the British Army. You didn't know what people had. People were able to acquire things on their own."

The PSNI and former members of both republican and loyalist paramilitary groups have confirmed that weapons remain in Northern Ireland. Remaining arms serve not only as a potential future insurance policy for the groups that have them, but also could inadvertently fall into the hands of violent dissident groups, posing a significant security challenge. This is not to say that decommissioning was done in bad faith, but rather that to decommission the totality of weapons stockpiles from the conflict was not entirely possible or necessary to move the DDR process forward. Instead, decommissioning, though incomplete, served as the first step that enabled the rest of the process.

Though weapons remain in the possession of various paramilitary groups, the development of trust between all conflict participants is arguably more important than the complete success of decommissioning. According to Michael Culbert, a former member of the PIRA and now director of Coiste na nArchimí, a community-based organization, many republicans thought, “What’s the big deal with the weapons? We can get more. For over 30 years we constantly got weapons in ... RPGs, SAM missiles, heavy machine guns. There is no issue getting weapons, but the issue is using them. This is where trust comes in. So the British government trusted the republicans they were dealing with.” This sentiment was echoed by former members of the INLA, Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and UDA, who all stated that weapons were in fact quite easy to acquire, even if original stockpiles were decommissioned or forgotten over time, as each group had cultivated lasting networks and simple know-how that would not be eliminated by any peace agreement. Furthermore, many former paramilitaries stated that though, in their opinion, weapons were not as significant as many believe, they were and remain significant to those who risked their lives and imprisonment to maintain and protect the weapons stockpiles.

In addition to trying to decommission entire weapons stockpiles, the IICD made great efforts to respect the wishes of individual groups as to their public exposure in the decommissioning process:

- Whether the group wished to carry out decommissioning in public or in private.
- Whether the group wished cameras or witnesses to be present.

- Whether the group or the commission should be the first to announce an act of decommissioning publicly (noting that we had an obligation to inform the two governments when such an act took place).

All but one of the groups chose to decommission privately, according to the IICD. A high priority was placed on the safekeeping of information. Given the fact that weapons stockpiles remained, the continued activity by dissident groups and potential for renewed violence, the IICD felt that providing this information could potentially lead to attacks on groups that had risked participating in the peace process, deterring future decommissioning efforts.

Five years after the Good Friday Agreement, the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) was created to assist in the DDR process — to address issues unresolved by the Good Friday Agreement. The IMC was founded by the British and Irish governments in April 2003, following a joint declaration, and began operating at the beginning of 2004. There continued to be relatively high levels of violence, a lack of trust in the newly established institutions and genuine questions regarding the long-term realization of the agreement. Additionally, as of 2004, paramilitary groups had still not decommissioned their weapons. The IMC essentially served as a

way to push the DDR process forward and instill confidence in the Belfast Agreement. Over the course of its existence, the IMC issued 26 reports divided among two categories — paramilitary activity and security normalization. Ultimately, a final peace agreement was not signed until 2007.

Though the situation that necessitated the IMC was dire, not all of the events that took place were negative. For example, both republican and loyalist groups largely accepted and carried out decommissioning, and accepted the judicial and policing legitimacy of the Northern Irish government. Sinn Féin’s statements regarding this matter in January 2007 were especially significant. Despite these positive steps, violence remained; however, its nature seemed to change, as sectarian violence by paramilitary groups was redirected toward individuals deemed to be involved in “anti-social” behavior, such as drug dealing. In this regard, measured levels of violence were higher among loyalist groups than republicans, and the violence was focused within their own communities, rather than outside. The IMC also observed a difference between loyalist and



Members of the International Commission on Decommissioning, who were responsible for overseeing the disarmament process in Northern Ireland, announce on September 26, 2005, that the Irish Republican Army had destroyed all its weapons. From left are Finnish Brig. Gen. Tauno Nieminen, Canadian Gen. John de Chastelain and Ambassador Donald C. Johnson of the United States. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Doves are released in Belfast on December 2, 1999, in celebration of the new power-sharing government formed as a result of the Good Friday Agreement. EPA

republican groups in how they adjusted to the new environment, with the loyalists, in effect, less able to adapt to change than many republican groups. Former loyalist paramilitaries confirmed these findings, describing the difficulties of adapting to new realities after the Troubles ended.

To a large degree, the IMC's observations were consistent with the facts on the ground. The political wing of the republican movement — specifically Sinn Féin — enabled the PIRA and associated groups to effectively rechannel their efforts into the political process. Their military structures made this easier to execute and maintain. Many loyalist groups did not have the same political “off-ramp,” into which the energy and efforts of its disaffected members can be

channeled, nor did they have the community sympathy, at least not on the same scale as the republicans. Therefore, rechanneling energy into politics failed, or was never attempted, leading many groups to divert into crime or vigilantism. In addition, local executive powers were re-established via devolution, which the IMC noted was largely due to the large-scale decrease of violent paramilitary activity, which by default lessened tension among Northern Irish political parties.

When the IMC was founded, the British Army still maintained vast powers in Northern Ireland — associated with counterterrorism and the maintenance of public order — not afforded it in the rest of the country. In 2003-2004, there were more than 14,000 soldiers stationed in Northern Ireland, occupying 24 bases. In addition, Army personnel were

stationed in multiple police stations, manned watch towers and communication monitoring stations, and the Army had Northern Ireland-specific counterterrorism powers. This was particularly unique, as the Army maintained a combat posture within its own country and possessed powers associated with wartime status, an obvious distinction from its status elsewhere in the U.K. Special judicial powers were granted whereas paramilitaries arrested for crimes committed during this time would be subject to trials without juries, by a single judge. Though it is not clear whether this method was unfair, interviews conducted with former paramilitary members of the PIRA, UVF, UDA and ILNA found that the lack of jury trials exacerbated feelings of unfairness on both sides of the conflict, as emphasized by the former UDA prisoner Halliday, who stated that if he “went in there with 12 ordinary people, [he] might have had a chance.”

The security normalization program was monitored by the IMC and was conducted between August 2005 and July 2007. Through this process, the nature of the British military’s presence and counterterrorism role in Northern Ireland fundamentally changed. Rather than mirroring a combat deployment, the nature of the military presence normalized, both in appearance and operational execution. Most observation points and towers were removed, and frequent helicopter overflights lessened or stopped altogether. Security normalization was probably one of the most significant positive developments in the DDR process because real authority to combat paramilitary and terrorist activity finally transitioned into civilian hands, namely the PSNI (formally known as the Royal Ulster Constabulary). In the end, this was the longest British Army operation in its history, and though widely thought vital to the counterterrorist fight, it had fueled many grievances that contributed to the Troubles and later to the security situation.

Following ratification by referendum of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, paramilitary organizations were generally expected to decommission. Given the PIRA’s connections to Sinn Féin — and because of the political landscape — there was generally more pressure on them to decommission than on other groups. That being said, the PIRA also recognized that their weapons stockpiles were a very useful negotiating tool that they were reluctant to give up, in addition to the fact that it had the semblance of surrender. Therefore, the PIRA did not officially accept decommissioning until 2005 — seven years after the Good Friday Agreement. Until this time, no other group had effectively begun decommissioning their weapons stockpiles either. Later, however, in accordance with an agreement struck with the British government, all groups were given a deadline of February 2010 to decommission — with the concession that these weapons would not be used in ongoing forensic investigations associated with crimes committed during the Troubles. In addition to the PIRA, groups included under this agreement were the UVF, UDA, LDA, INLA and the Official Irish Republican Army. All weapons found after the February 2010 deadline were subject to be used as forensic evidence in ongoing and future criminal investigations.

Given the very real possibility of nondecommissioned weapons stockpiles being discovered, this remains a cloud over the head of many former paramilitaries on both sides of the conflict — both those incarcerated and those never convicted of a crime — as the PSNI continues to investigate past crimes. This was best summarized by Halliday, who said: “How can you go through the full spectrum of DDR when in two years’ time, someone is gonna come around and knock on your door saying, ‘We got you for something 40 years ago.’ That’s not helping the process.”

Though decommissioning was conducted on a large scale by groups primarily associated with the Good Friday Agreement and the ongoing peace process, the fact that paramilitary organizations continued to exist and retained their membership, command structures and overall military nature was not addressed. There was no formal requirement in these agreements for the various paramilitary organizations to disband and, according to Jarman, no incentive for them to do so because the primary focus was on decommissioning. And even if an organization claimed to disband, it is difficult to prove and easy to hide from the authorities. This was confirmed by the PSNI and the British domestic counterintelligence and security service (MI5) in their October 2015 report on paramilitary activity. Though the report confirms the continued existence of paramilitary organizations and their structures, it also states that this does not necessarily translate into capability or combat power, as organizations are likely “unable to resurrect the capability demonstrated at their peak.” Additionally, a group’s ability to generate combat power is affected by its overall cohesion and ability to control and direct its members to action or inaction. This cohesion and secure command and control also affect a group’s ability to commit its members to peace initiatives, which was done successfully in varying degrees from group to group. This is summarized by the PSNI/MI5 report: “There are differing levels of cohesion in the structures of these groups. However, none of the leaderships has complete control over the activities of its members; there is regular unsanctioned activity including behavior in direct contravention of leadership instruction.”

Though the continuing existence of organized command structures might seem a bad thing, they could serve a useful purpose in a DDR process. In the case of Northern Ireland, the PSNI and MI5 think that these structures enabled many groups to ensure their members adhered to the peace process and disarmament. Furthermore, mainstream paramilitary groups are able to address dissent within their organizations and therefore prevent most members from reverting to violence and joining VDR splinter groups. Had the command authority and ability to influence its members been nonexistent, the current threat would likely be much higher. An interview with Police Constable Tim Mairs found that although paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland remain proscribed organizations, the PSNI no longer classifies them as a threat to the peace and therefore does not prioritize resources against them. This amounts to a de facto acknowledgement of these organizations’ role in the maintenance of the peace.



While decommissioning helps reduce the combat power of paramilitary groups, other factors such as aging must also be taken into consideration. It affects the willingness and motivation of fighters to pursue armed conflict not only physically, but mentally, as the toll of years of violence, loss of friends and family, and the negative effects on their communities has decreased their desire to fight. According to Jarman, many former fighters are simply tired of fighting and this will continue to reduce violence — at least in terms of the original paramilitary groups from the Troubles. In addition, many younger people in Northern Ireland are less inclined to violence than their forefathers. They are less likely to have had personal experiences that would inspire them to take up arms and have seen firsthand the benefits of peace as opposed to war. During conflicts, younger people are often motivated to join causes due to personal experiences or true commitment, but without an ongoing conflict this incentive naturally decreases. This does not mean that these organizations have not retained status in their communities — because they have — but the violent aspect has been mostly dismantled. Jarman further notes that instead of pushing young people to join the armed struggle, most organizations now focus on political activity, rather than the criminal or paramilitary activity that is more common among dissident groups.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

Multiple themes and conclusions can be drawn from the implementation of DDR and the situation in Northern Ireland. DDR happened in Northern Ireland, though not necessarily how it is doctrinally designed to be executed. Rather than in order — disarmament, demobilization, reintegration — it occurred concurrently or simultaneously following the peace accords and follow-on agreements. It was uniquely applied in a way that fit this particular situation.

In Northern Ireland, DDR was applied to a struggle that was never declared an armed conflict in the sense that many thought it should have been. Former political prisoners, who were not afforded the rights and privileges of prisoners of war during the conflict nor after — as outlined in the Geneva Conventions — felt strongly that they should have been classified as insurgent forces involved in a recognized civil war, rather than as criminals in an internal disturbance. Though this concern continues to resonate within the community of former paramilitary prisoners, it has not reached a threshold to threaten progress made over the last 20 years, and based on the aging population in question, it is unlikely to do so.

Disarmament occurred to a degree acceptable to all parties involved in the peace negotiations, but this definitely did not mean that all weapons were turned in. On the contrary, arms stockpiles maintained by former or active paramilitary organizations remain. More importantly, disarmament — to the degree that it occurred — served more as a trust-building measure rather than a way to decrease the real combat effectiveness of the conflicting parties.

Though fighting occurred in multiple countries, the majority of the action took place in Northern Ireland. This generally meant that the majority of the combatants fought

in the same neighborhoods in which they grew up. In this sense, “reintegration” did not really occur as it would in a conflict where fighters return from a combat zone. For former prisoners, reintegration was different depending on which side the individual was from. Republican prisoners enjoyed a much higher status within their own communities, as well as in the Sinn Féin political machine, which enabled them to redirect their energy into the political process. Loyalist prisoners did not enjoy widespread acceptance by their communities and were often shunned by their families upon release for not pursuing a more legitimate profession such as the army or police. Though they differ, both sides experience frustration with an inability to gain employment, purchase insurance or travel freely due to criminal convictions, which ties into their universal desire to be classified as prisoners of war rather than as criminals.

Acceptance of the peace process was heavily affected by the status of prisoners on both sides. According to Jarman, the total number of political prisoners numbered 400-500, out of an estimated 25,000-30,000 people imprisoned during the entirety of the Troubles, though the vast majority were not classified as political prisoners. Considering Northern Ireland’s population is around 1.8 million, 25,000-30,000 prisoners would affect nearly every family in the country. In addition, those subsequently convicted of crimes committed prior to the Good Friday Agreement received a maximum punishment of two years — no matter the offense. However, they could be released on suspended sentences with the understanding that if they were later convicted of a sectarian-related offense they would be immediately imprisoned for the full term. This has been particularly effective in preventing former paramilitaries from revanchism. Since the creation of the early-release program, very few have committed crimes and had their suspended sentences reinstated. It is important to note, however, that this program is by no means an amnesty. The PSNI still investigates crimes when it becomes aware of them or encounters new evidence — DNA or otherwise — so crimes committed but as yet unprosecuted still hang over the heads of many former prisoners, hindering their full reintegration into society.

In interviews, the former prisoners discounted the VDR threat and the potential for a general resumption of hostilities. Most referred to them as amateurs who were “posers” at best, and not seriously committed. VDRs and dissident loyalist groups are considered to be little more than criminal gangs masquerading as political paramilitaries to gain legitimacy. On all sides of the conflict, it seems that the desire for peace still outweighs everything else — no matter how passionate the political feelings.

Indeed, DDR was executed in Northern Ireland and carried out for this unique security environment. The region enjoys unprecedented peace since the end of the Troubles, and this is certainly due to the process and the hard work of the men and women who sought peace over conflict. Though time will tell, the foundations for peace that were laid through the DDR process will likely endure whatever destabilizing forces come in the future. □



**MALI'S  
TERROR  
FIGHT**



# CONFRONTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

By Mohamed Keita

**R**educing terrorism and violent extremism in Mali seems technically and tactically difficult, owing to the asymmetric nature of the threat and the growing complexity of the Sahelo-Saharan geostrategic environment.

Since 2012, internal and external stressors have engendered two security trends. First, the number of armed groups in Mali has increased, and the spread of intercommunal violence is jeopardizing the Algiers' Comprehensive Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (CPRA). Second, terrorist cells have proliferated throughout the territory as the threat's epicenter has moved from the North down to the center and the South with sporadic attacks occurring in the Mopti, Koulikoro and Sikasso regions, targeting security posts, local administration facilities and intimidating the people. The capital city, Bamako, has not been spared.

The bottom line is that control over the nation's borders has not been tightened despite the intensifying presence of the international community since 2013. This includes the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for the Stabilization of Mali (MINUSMA) and efforts by the European Union, the African Union (AU), the United States and the French military's Operation Barkhane to combat transnational terrorism in the Sahel. Within such a volatile environment, knowing the multifaceted enemy is necessary but not sufficient; nowadays, knowing how to collaborate with allies and coordinate agendas is pivotal. The best way for the Malian government to coordinate regional and international initiatives is to develop a holistic national strategy to combat terrorism and violent extremism.

## UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT

The Malian government's top security challenge is to make and consolidate peace with the former separatist movements of the North — through the CPRA — to preserve the country's territorial integrity, protect core constitutional values such as the secular and indivisible form of the republic, and restore the state's full authority over the country. Terrorism and violent extremism constitute the government's second most important priority. To understand the scope of such a threat in Mali, it is relevant to explore its nature and dimensions.

Terrorism in Mali has a religious nature, based on a violent interpretation of the Quran and the call for jihad against the “unfaithful” and their regional allies. Indeed, terrorists' goals in the Sahel in general, and Mali in particular, are clearly to combat Western values and so-called African puppet governments to, ultimately, create an Islamic state, or caliphate, that would be ruled by Sharia. It is believed that many terrorist sympathizers have been recruited among adherents of the Dawa Tabligh brotherhood, which has been implanted in Mali since 2000 and has functioned as an incubator for radicalism and violent extremism.

Terrorism in Mali has a transnational dimension and a local one. On one hand, transnational terrorism refers to those terrorist organizations whose agendas and criminal activities are not limited to Mali. Such organizations are represented by three major groups: al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and al-Mourabitoun. The latter, founded by Mokhtar Bel Mokhtar, has been the most active



Security forces respond to a hostage situation in Bamako, Mali, in November 2015. Al-Qaida claimed credit for the attack. EPA



of late, claiming responsibility for attacks in Mopti, Menaka and Gao against MINUSMA, the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA), Operation Barkhane, and in Bamako against the Radisson Blu Hotel, as well as the Hotel Nord-Sud, which hosts the headquarters of the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM).

On the other hand, Ansar al-Dine, led by Iyad Ag Ghali and whose combatants are predominantly Tuaregs, epitomizes local terrorism in Mali. Ansar al-Dine's strategy consists of spoiling the ongoing peace process, which does not favor its interests, and extending its extremist ideology to the rest of the country. To do so, Ghali created two affiliated cells in 2015, Katiba Ansar al-Dine Macina and Katiba Khalid Ibn Walid (Ansar al-Dine of the South). Katiba Ansar al-Dine Macina is led by Hamadoun Kouffa, a former radical preacher of the Mopti region. Operating in the center of the country, the group is mainly composed of former MUJAO fighters and sympathizers from the Peul community. Katiba Khalid Ibn Walid was led by Souleymane Keita, a former member of the Islamic police in Timbuktu during the AQIM and Ansar al-Dine siege in 2012, who was arrested on March 5, 2016. In June 2015, the group claimed responsibility for attacks against Malian military and administrative facilities in the villages of Fakola and Misseni, in the Sikasso region near the Ivorian border.

It is clear that transnational and local terrorist organizations have reorganized and become more dangerous since January 2015, with subversive actions increasing against Malian defense and security forces and international partners deployed to support Mali's stabilization efforts. In this regard, a U.N. secretary-general report assessing important security developments points out that terror attacks are becoming more complex and sophisticated, combining improvised explosive devices, mortar fire and ambushes.

## THE MALIAN APPROACH

The Malian government's approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism is based on prevention and collaborative policing. In terms of prevention, the government is implementing a five-year strategy called the Governmental Actions Program 2013-2018 (GAP), aimed at addressing the root causes of the 2012 security and institutional crises, including the insecurity of northern Mali, the disintegration of public institutions, rampant corruption, the degradation of living conditions and loss of moral values in society. The desired result is to ensure that all Malians work together as a nation for the

reconstruction of their state. Based on a whole-of-government approach, the GAP consists of six strategic concepts:

- Putting in place strong and credible institutions.
- Restoring the security of people and property nationwide.
- Implementing a proactive national reconciliation policy.
- Rebuilding Malian schools.
- Building an emerging economy.
- Implementing an active social development policy.

Moreover, to effectively counter radicalism and violent extremism, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Worship (MARC) was established in 2012 to train imams. A major achievement was the 2013 Agreement for Islamic Cooperation with the Moroccan Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs. The aim of this so-called Islamic diplomacy is to promote an enlightened way of practicing Islam based on tolerance. As a result, 500 Malian imams are expected to complete two years of training in moderate Islam.

Simultaneously, the MARC has collaborated with the Islamic High Council and the Malian Association of Imams to launch a counternarrative campaign, *Mali Kuma Ka*, in the local language (Mali's Voice) that is aimed at undermining transnational and local terrorism recruitment, especially among susceptible youths. Short counternarrative videos are broadcast in local dialects on TV, YouTube and Facebook. They begin with shocking images of extremists terrorizing civilians to prove how destructive and harmful they can be. Malian religious leaders, speaking in the local language, then explain how such actions violate the tenets of the Quran. After conversations with mutilation victims from the 2012 terrorist occupation of northern Mali, the videos end with core messages, such as "In Islam, the human being is sacred" or "In Islam, killing a human being is like killing the entire humanity."

Mali's approach is mainly based on collaborative policing, which could be defined as the process of law enforcement agencies working together, cooperating with allied units at the national or regional level, and building trust with the community to ensure a safe and secure environment within and outside of national borders. As a result, communities benefit from an improved policing service that is based on responsiveness, collaboration, mobilization and problem-solving. In other words, collaborative policing is all about security-shared governance between state actors, civil society and communities, a concept developed and promoted

through the media by the Malian government in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). It operates within the legal framework of the 2008 law punishing terrorism and has led over the past three years to the arrest of many terrorists either by the National Police Force or the gendarmerie supported by other national or international partners. In the North, presumed terrorists are mostly apprehended through search and destroy or search and sweep operations led by the EUTM-trained and better-equipped FAMA units alongside Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA.

As a response to the lack of clear leadership and coordination between security special intervention units during times of crisis, in December 2015 the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection (MSCP) adopted a Protocol for the Use of Special Intervention Units, which are composed of the police, the gendarmerie, the National Guard and Civil Protection. As a result, leadership becomes situational, and the distribution of responsibilities among the units becomes clearer when a crisis breaks out, be it in urban, rural or desert areas. Another innovative measure is the creation of the MSCP Centre for Operations as a core element of the protocol for crisis management. The center is responsible for:

- Designating the intervening unit and directing it to the intervention area.
- Briefing the unit commander on the situation.
- Activating the means and resources necessary to support the intervention unit.

The protocol also contains a plan to secure Bamako to mitigate the consequences of terrorist attacks, including measures to protect critical infrastructure.

## REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Mali has taken part in a number of regional initiatives that address terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel. In 2010, the regional Joint Military Staffs Committee (CEMOC) was created, bringing together Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The major objective was to strengthen military and security cooperation among these states by enabling cross-border hot pursuit and intelligence sharing through the Fusion and Liaison Unit. Unfortunately, the CEMOC has had very limited results to date; it has been reduced to a “talking shop” and has never been able to coordinate efforts effectively on the ground.

Since March 2013, the AU has been implementing a strategy for the Sahel region called the Nouakchott Process, which aims to strengthen regional security through intelligence sharing and joint surveillance measures. Additionally, the AU

Mission for Mali and the Sahel, a political mission led by Burundi's former president Pierre Buyoya, is mobilizing states to implement the Nouakchott Process and is helping coordinate various regional initiatives.

New regional initiatives also include the creation of the G5 Sahel, an organization with five members: Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. The G5 was created in 2014 to reduce poverty and crime. It enables members to improve coordination in developing beneficial programs and on security policies, such as intelligence sharing, joint border patrols and joint military training. With financial support from the EU, the G5 adopted an ambitious program for high-priority investments (totaling \$14.8 billion) in a number of developmental programs in the region.

Last but not least, in 2015 the G5 adopted a strategic framework to combat radicalization and violent extremism in the Sahel through a number of measures, including countering extremist speeches directed at vulnerable groups; building religious leaders' capacities to counter radicalization; promoting the roles of women and civil society in preventing and combating violent extremism; developing socio-economic insertion opportunities for unemployed youth; and structuring religious education.

At the national level, in 2016 the Malian government organized a two-day national conference to elaborate on the National Combating Terrorism Strategy (SNLT). Supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the UNDP, the event was aimed at combining whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches by bringing together key components of civil society, national security, the defense sector and international partners to make strategy recommendations for combating terrorism and violent extremism. The conference included five thematic panels:

- Terrorism and violent extremism: concepts, types, causes and possible responses.
- The Malian education system and the radicalization issue: What are the solutions?
- Radicalization in a prison environment.
- The importance of intrafaith and interfaith dialogue, the training of imams, and the control of preaching and the media in countering terrorism and violent extremism.
- The protection of at-risk populations.

The event did not end with a draft strategy but rather with key recommendations from each panel.

These legal and institutional reforms should be initiated. It should be noted that the SNLT would not be effective without revising the 2008 law for the punishment of terrorism in Mali. Indeed, according to many experts, this law needs to include more provisions, notably regarding foreign terrorist fighters. An important step was taken in 2013 when the



A soldier wears a patch denoting France's counterterrorism Operation Barkhane in Africa's Sahel region in Gao, northern Mali.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

National Assembly created a Special Judicial Pole for Terrorism and Transnational crimes. This new structure is operational today and consists of a specialized prosecution, a specialized investigating cabinet, and Special Investigating Brigades composed of gendarme and police officers dedicated to combating terrorism. The new judicial architecture is beneficial, as it confirms law enforcement's role and helps centralize and coordinate prosecutions.

Finally, as envisaged by the CPRA, the government should push for adoption of the law establishing a territorial police force, as well as the decree instituting Local Consultative Committees for Security, both at the regional level. Both institutions would play key roles in preventing and repressing terrorism and violent extremism by enabling greater collaboration between the police and communities, and by producing the conditions for more robust social cohesion.

In conclusion, it appears that to be effective in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, the Malian government should fulfil three conditions. First and foremost, all political, security

and social arrangements envisioned by the CPRA should be implemented to create a national front against terrorism, violent extremism and all forms of criminality, especially in the North. Second, to succeed, the National Combating Terrorism Strategy must be flexible and able to adapt its objectives, strategic concepts and national instruments of power to the changing nature of global and domestic environments. However, for now, the key priority for the government should be to get it drafted, approved by all key stakeholders — including civil society — and finally adopted at the national level. Third, the way to success is inevitably collaboration and coordination at the national, regional and international levels among all stakeholders involved in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahelo-Saharan region. □

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The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency of the Malian government. Thus, assumptions made within the analysis are not reflective of the position of any Malian government entity.





# CAPITALIZING ON

# CHAOS

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## IS RUSSIA CREATING THE 'EURASIAN TRIUMVIRATE' WITH IRAN AND TURKEY?

From the fall of the Berlin Wall until 2014, the West and the international community were crucial pillars in settling international disputes. But it seems the old rules of international politics are re-emerging these days. As a result, something uncontrollable and incomprehensible is happening in the world, making the future far less predictable. A post-World War II state has been partitioned, and geopolitical influences are shifting. Chaos is becoming reality.

Consider: Russia is taking leadership in the eastern Mediterranean; China is taking a more aggressive stance in the South China Sea and other areas, stressing the stability of the international order; the current

relationship with Brussels and other EU member states, such as Germany and France.

Historically, when countries seek new alliances or nonaggression pacts, it signals a change in international politics. Russia, in particular, wants to inject a tectonic change into the international system. As with any tectonic transformation, it requires a severing of the peace underlying the existing order, something Russia seems willing to undertake. Its current strategic aim is to reshape the regional system. By doing so, Russia believes it can achieve the ultimate goal of reshaping the larger international system. Its deleterious activity in the Middle East is designed to create alliances with two regional powers, namely Iran and Turkey. The eventual aim is to create the first working coalition in Eurasia, which would serve along with the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) as an alternative to Western security systems. The CSTO was created to act as a "security belt" along Russia's southern frontier. A new alliance with Iran and Turkey would be created to upend spheres of influence in the Middle East. Even if the Kremlin is unable to establish these new

social and political climate in the United States may cause Washington to focus more on domestic problems than international disputes; and finally, Europe is facing internal geopolitical perturbations from the immigration crisis, Brexit and Poland's altered

A Russian Defense Ministry photograph shows a pilot in a Russian Su-25 bomber being refueled at Hmeimim Air Base in Syria in 2016. Russia waged a five-month air campaign in Syria.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



alliances, it will still try to change the security sphere by signing nonaggression pacts with neighboring states.

### NEGOTIATIONS IN ASTANA

The recent negotiations in Astana, Kazakhstan, represent a test run of Russia's vision, which is on display in Syria. From the beginning of its military campaign in Syria, Russia has managed to adjust its own geopolitical goals to coincide with the national interests of Iran. However, its relations with Turkey over Syria are more dramatic. Ankara and Moscow have experienced periods of stress and periods of bromance. As a result, they have been surmounting grievances and establishing close connections.

It should be noted that until now deep suspicions overshadowed their frequent attempts to create an alliance. But Russia does not give up easily. Sergey Karaganov, head of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, says Russia possesses a "strategic vision and strategic patience" lacking in the West's grand strategy.

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has attempted to implement its own international agenda. It represented a diplomatic triumph in 2016 for Russia, Iran and Turkey, and a disaster for Europe and the U.S., when the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 2336. Consequently, Russia and its allies developed several documents:

- A statement establishing a cease-fire regime in the Syrian Arab Republic;
- An agreement on the mechanism to record violations of the cease-fire regime;
- An agreement establishing delegations to launch negotiations for a political settlement.

The final document is actually aimed at starting pre-negotiations with Turkey. According to these documents, Iran, Turkey and Russia act as guarantors of territorial integrity in Syria. To date, the only notable achievement by the new "Eurasian triumvirate" after meeting in Astana is the establishment of a trilateral mechanism to observe and ensure full compliance with a cease-fire in Syria, the results of which are unclear. But it marks the first time since the end of the Cold War that Russia is taking a leading role as an "engineer" of the regional security system. Before the Astana negotiations, it was clear that Russia wanted high-ranking officials from Washington to participate, indicating the Kremlin was uncomfortable taking the lead. But Moscow will now try to conclude the peace processes it initiated. The Kremlin is ready to reach beyond its immediate national interests and offer Iran and Turkey a package of proposals, which mostly aim at dividing Syria into several spheres of influence involving Turkey, Iran and Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime. In practice, the approval of a new constitution in Syria will enshrine a form of federalization.

### PRAGMATIC ALLIANCE

The repercussions around the possible creation of a Moscow-Ankara-Tehran geopolitical axis are remarkable; the national interests of the three countries collide, as do their historical ones. Russia is pushing hard for the new geopolitical alliance, but its success will depend on the willingness of all three to recalibrate national interests for common denominators.

For instance, until now Russia has pursued its own objectives: First, preserving the authoritarian regime of Assad.



A Turkish Coast Guard boat escorts the Russian Navy's landing ship Azov in the Bosphorus Strait on its way to the Mediterranean Sea in May 2017.

REUTERS

Second, legitimizing Moscow's military presence in Syria. In January 2017, Russia and Syria signed a significant agreement that extends access for Russian warships at Syria's Tartus naval base and military aircraft at its Hmeimim Air Base for 49 years with the possibility of extensions for successive 25-year periods. With the extensions, Russia is effectively establishing a client state in the Middle East. After obtaining a geopolitical fulcrum in the region, Moscow could become more pliant in negotiations with Ankara and Tehran. The third objective is to drive the West from the Middle East or at least diminish its dominance in the region.

The three states have similar histories. All were former empires and, as such, each has a history of conflict with the others. Iran, Turkey and Russia have specific attitudes toward the West. Anti-Western grievances in those countries are deeply rooted, and Russia is effectively manipulating the political elite and the media in those countries to stoke those grievances. In the first decades of the Cold War, when Turkey and Iran (from 1955-1979) were members of the Central Treaty Organization, they were aligned against the Soviet Union to contain its ambitions along its southern frontier.

In the 21st century, something is happening that would have been hard to imagine years ago — a NATO member-state (Turkey) having military drills with Russia and executing a common military operation against a common enemy, the Islamic State. Tellingly, it is the first joint operation between Ankara and Moscow since the end of the 19th century, when Ottomans and Russians fought against Napoleon. Interestingly, a Turkish fighter plane shot down a Russian attack aircraft near the Syria-Turkey border in 2015 while both countries were participating in the Syrian

conflict. Contradictions and paradoxes in this alliance are everywhere, while pragmatism is off the charts.

Putin's envoy to the negotiations in Astana, Alexander Lavrentyev, hailed the talks as a new day in the search for peace in Syria. But Russia's international stance as a broker between belligerent actors in the conflict could end as an awkward misunderstanding. Moscow tirelessly criticized the West, and particularly the U.S., for its inability to bring peace to the Middle East. If Russia fails to resolve the conflict in Syria, it will be a blow to its prestige and its long-held claim of being a great power. It is questionable whether Russia has enough political, economic and military might to accomplish such a grand mission. Russia feels its power is limitless in its own back yard. or "near abroad." But to deal with a region as complicated as the Middle East, Russia needs a surplus of resources. With its strategy of creating the triumvirate, Russia is trying to extend its reach beyond its own back yard.

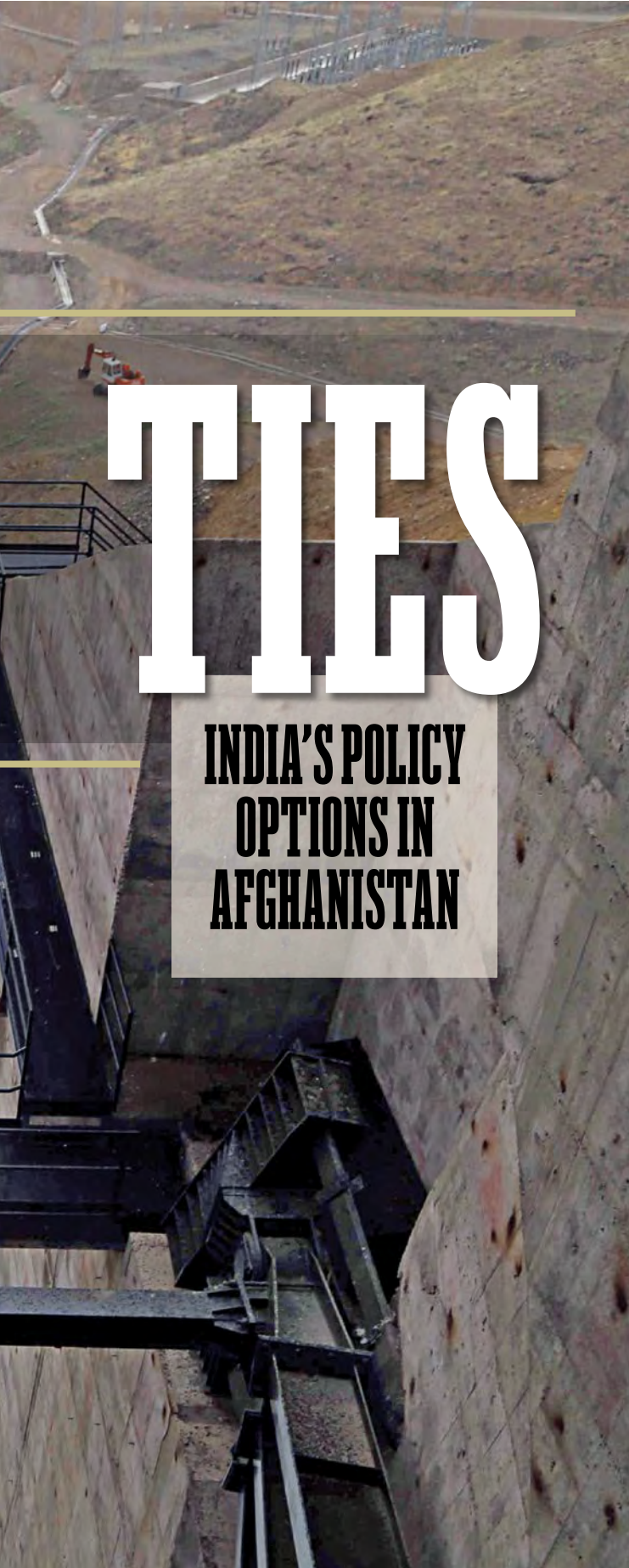
Pragmatism is guiding these three nations to join forces in the Middle East. Iran is preserving its national interest in Syria by enhancing the Shias' influence in the eastern Mediterranean while at the same time allowing Russia to fulfill its expansionist ambitions. Turkey hopes to contain the Kurds through this alliance and is gaining access to negotiations over the future of Syria. Turkey's exclusion from negotiations over the Iraqi city of Mosul might explain why Ankara is joining an alliance with Tehran and Moscow. Iran and Russia need Turkey in order to appease the Sunni military groups in Syria. Without Ankara, it will be impossible to achieve a lasting cease-fire. Neither Turkey nor Russia wants the creation of an "Iranian land corridor," which could connect Iran with Shias in Syria and Lebanon. Such plans can undermine the national interests of Turkey and Russia. Russia needs Iran, though it can be troublesome to join with Tehran in the conflict. The alliance with Turkey opens a much broader space for Russian maneuvers.

Russia's grand strategy — in addition to gaining permanent access to the eastern Mediterranean — also protects Russia's southern frontier if a military confrontation erupts with NATO. Another reason Russia is pursuing the triumvirate is to derail Turkey's membership in NATO. Russia aims to create a strong geostrategic axis; however, a more realistic outcome would be the signing of legally binding nonaggression agreements with Iran and Turkey. Russia, like the Soviet Union before WWII, is attempting to encircle itself with alliances to prevent conflicts from all directions.

To challenge Russia's plans in the Middle East, the U.S., with their allies and partners, should develop a strategy that entices Turkey to continue to be a close ally of the West. Without Turkey, Moscow is destined to be bogged down in a long-term confrontation with ISIS in Syria. If the West succeeds in improving relations with Turkey, it will degrade Russian aims to create a strong geographic axis between Moscow, Ankara and Tehran. Russia has masterfully leveraged disconnections between U.S. and Turkish strategies regarding the Syrian conflict, using the weaknesses of Washington and the West to manipulate the conflict, and will continue to use these and any future divides to further its interests. □

# REBUILDING

The \$300 million Afghan-India Friendship Dam, built by India, opened in Herat province, Afghanistan, in June 2016. EPA



# TIES

## INDIA'S POLICY OPTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

By Dr. Vinay Kaura

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**A**fter the Taliban was overthrown in 2001, India renewed ties with Afghanistan and began providing Kabul with substantial assistance for development and reconstruction. Bilateral relations were further strengthened in 2011 by the Strategic Partnership Agreement, through which India provides assistance in rebuilding Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, as well as support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. The agreement also advocates for a sustained commitment to Afghanistan by the international community. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has given special attention to Delhi-Kabul ties. The delivery of Mi-25 attack helicopters to Afghanistan — with approval from Russia — marks a new beginning; an Indian role in strengthening Afghanistan's combat capability has been a sensitive topic because of Pakistan's strong opposition. U.S. President Donald Trump's much-awaited Afghan policy announcement in August 2017 — which cleared the way for more troops in Afghanistan, did away with arbitrary timelines for withdrawal and upped the pressure on Pakistan — also affirmed India's enhanced profile in peace and development of Afghanistan.

The Pakistan factor in the Afghan conflict is a significant national security concern for India. Pakistan believes its national interests would be better served by the rehabilitation or even takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan, while India remains apprehensive of likely Taliban hostility and its undesirable impact on Indo-Afghan relations. India has one critical strategic imperative in Afghanistan: to foil the return of a radical and hostile regime. Therefore, drawdowns of American troops in Afghanistan and efforts to legitimize and reintroduce the Taliban into the Afghan power structure are detrimental to India's security environment. These actions have far-reaching implications for Indian interests in Afghanistan and in the Kashmir valley.

The United States has listened to India's concerns about America's attitude in the region, yet remains noncommittal. Notwithstanding Trump's announced policy shift toward Pakistan, India is not oblivious of the enduring impulses by previous administrations in Washington to forgive Pakistan's transgressions in Afghanistan. Although India is also discussing conflict resolution in Afghanistan with China, Indian policymakers realize Beijing's concern is limited to the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement in the Afghan-Pakistan border region. Neither can India ignore Russia's interest in strengthening its relations with Pakistan. It is essential for India to mobilize its own resources and reorient its policy in Afghanistan while closely working with the Trump administration to secure its interests in the volatile region.

India continues to oppose integrating an armed Taliban into the Afghan government. Before that could happen, the Taliban would have to follow all internationally accepted red lines and give up all violence and terrorism. However, if Washington continues to rely on Pakistan and Russia and decreases its hostility toward the Taliban, India might find itself regionally isolated.

At a high-level trilateral meeting in Moscow in December 2016, representatives from Russia, China and Pakistan discussed security in Afghanistan. According to a statement: “The Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, as the U.N. Security Council permanent members, confirmed their flexible approach to delisting Afghan individuals from the U.N. sanctions lists as their contribution to the efforts aimed at launching peaceful dialogue between Kabul and [the] Taliban.” The absence from the meeting of an Afghan representative created a controversy over Russian intentions. Kabul firmly objected to being left out, and the U.S. also questioned Russia’s motives in organizing the talks. The criticism prompted Moscow to include Afghanistan and India in a February 2017 meeting, during which India’s ministry of external affairs, in an indirect reference to Pakistan, supported denying “safe havens or sanctuaries to any terrorist group or individual in countries of our region” as essential to stabilizing Afghanistan.

Moscow views the Taliban as a useful partner in its fight against ISIS. Russian President Vladimir Putin has long worried about jihadists from former Soviet republics joining ISIS in Syria. For this reason, Russia sees ISIS as the greater threat. In January 2016, Putin’s special representative to Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, candidly acknowledged, “Taliban interests objectively coincide with ours. Both the Afghan and the Pakistani Taliban have said they don’t recognize ISIS and they don’t recognize the ISIS leader al-Baghdadi as the caliph; that is very important. We have communication channels with the Taliban to exchange information.” In a September 2016 address to the U.N. Security Council, Russia’s permanent representative to the U.N. stressed that the U.S. and NATO were responsible for the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and added that killing Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansoor paved the way for extremist groups such as ISIS to become stronger in Afghanistan. Brushing aside accusations of collaboration with the Taliban, Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan Alexander Mantzysky said that American and Afghan officials “are trying to put the blame for their failures on our shoulders.” Kabulov described the Taliban as “local, Afghanistan-based” and “predominantly a national military-political movement.” While Russia’s peace efforts are appreciated, its overt contacts with the Taliban have led to skepticism in Kabul and New Delhi. However, Russia maintains its “limited contacts with the Taliban...are aimed at ensuring [the] safety of Russian citizens in Afghanistan and encouraging the Taliban to join the national reconciliation process under the leadership of Kabul and on the basis of three well-known principles: the recognition of the IRA Constitution, disarmament, break-up of its ties with IS, al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.”

Attempts by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s government to find a political settlement with the Taliban have been unsuccessful. American attempts at pressuring the Pakistani government to deny safe havens to insurgent groups destabilizing Afghanistan, especially the Afghan Taliban and its brutal ally, the Haqqani network, have similarly failed. U.S. troops numbered 8,400 in July 2017, the lowest level since the

mission began, though Trump promises to increase the troop levels by an unspecified number. The Ghani government welcomes the promise of more assistance, as the rise in attacks on Afghan civilians, security forces and state infrastructure points to the increasing strength of the Taliban and other terror groups. The Afghan Army and police lost 6,200 men in 2016, and it is believed that police casualties are averaging two to four times higher than recruitment. According to a U.N. estimate, there were 3,498 Afghan civilians killed and 7,920 wounded during 2016. Although the Afghan government has attempted to reform the security forces, those efforts have been overshadowed by political disputes between President Ghani and his government’s chief executive, Abdullah Abdullah. Inept command, poor training standards, endemic corruption and insufficient air support have made it very difficult for the Afghan security forces to hold territory without the help of foreign troops. That is why increasing the number of American troops in Afghanistan is essential.

Presently, India is a peripheral player in Afghan political affairs, focused on reconstruction and developmental activities. Lacking any traction with Pakistan and the Taliban, India is on the sidelines of the current peace talks. And Trump’s public criticism of Pakistan’s double-dealing is merely words. Turning the words into action on the ground will be extremely difficult. The new U.S. administration is not likely to favor ending the pretense of cooperation with Islamabad because it believes that doing so would undermine American interests in Pakistan. Given the resilience of the Taliban insurgency and the inability of the Afghan government to support itself, such a break is unlikely to happen anytime soon. Moreover, Russia’s decisive Pakistan-Afghanistan policy shift presents crucial challenges for India in the long run. Because of Afghanistan’s fast-deteriorating situation and changing strategic dynamics, India should frame its policies by looking at all available options. The following factors should be considered:

- Because Pakistan has built its national identity narrative around Islam, Pakistani rulers have remained consistently committed to concepts of pan-Islamism. Pakistan is unlikely to abandon jihadism without a fundamental reorientation of its core ideology. Thus, expecting a radical change in Pakistan’s strategic orientation toward terror groups will only produce frustration in Afghanistan, India and the U.S.
- There is no evidence that China’s increasing economic and political involvement in Afghanistan might eventually motivate Beijing to place pressure on Pakistan to disengage its security establishment from ties with terrorist groups. Pakistan is unlikely to face united international pressure regarding its policies, as sharp divisions are emerging among the large powers on how to deal with the Afghan problem.
- The U.S. is unlikely to abandon Afghanistan easily because Washington has spent an unprecedented amount of human and financial resources there. However, the Trump administration has taken no concrete actions to prevent Russia, China and Pakistan from taking the Afghan issue into their own



An Afghan soldier examines a Russian-made Afghan Air Force Mi-25 helicopter. Afghanistan acquired four of the helicopters from India. EPA



Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, left, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meet in New Delhi in September 2016. Under Modi, India has improved ties with Afghanistan and increased security and development aid. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

hands. It is, therefore, in India's interests to remain engaged diplomatically with Russia and China, despite their lack of interest in India's concerns regarding Afghanistan.

- Pakistan's crucial geo-strategic location makes it in U.S. interests to maintain friendly relations. The American agenda of exiting Afghanistan with Pakistan's support has indeed contributed in the latter becoming the most important player in Afghanistan. Although the Trump administration is considering a harder stance against Pakistan, it is not clear whether it will continue Obama administration policies or implement a markedly different approach to Pakistan's role in Afghanistan.
- New Delhi must continue to counter the oft-repeated Pakistani argument that India's pressure on its western border distracts the Pakistan Army from taking decisive action against insurgents on its eastern border with Afghanistan. This argument helps Pakistan to avoid punitive measures for its complicity with the Afghan Taliban.
- Some in Pakistan argue that its motivation for accommodating Afghan-oriented terror groups is to avoid retaliation by those groups. India should forcefully counter this misguided claim because it is intended to deceive the international community.
- If Pakistan wants an influential role in Afghanistan, it must make a decisive shift in its traditional Afghanistan policies. Pakistan needs to pay more attention to reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan. Since Pakistan's support is also required for security and stability, focus on reconstruction projects would earn greater acceptance among Afghans.

India should convey through official and unofficial channels that if Pakistan is sincere in providing aid to Afghanistan, it will find a reliable partner in India.

Because of Pakistan's centrality to U.S. war efforts and the significant presence of Western troops in Afghanistan, India has limited its exposure in the Afghan conflict. Because these conditions will change sooner rather than later, India should clearly map out its future posture in Afghanistan. In his August 2017 policy announcement, Trump called on India to do more in Afghanistan, especially with economic assistance and development. While focusing on building the capacity and cohesion of the Afghan state and its security forces, Indian policymakers should seriously reassess their traditional opposition to rehabilitating the Taliban and integrating it into the Afghan power structure because it has become clear that the Taliban insurgency cannot be defeated by military means alone. Additionally, some Taliban elements are keen to open a channel of communications with India; it would be consistent with India's Afghan interests to make secret and discreet contacts without conferring legitimacy on the group.

Changing policy so dramatically will be difficult. However, Indian leadership would be strategically deficient if it continues to pursue a strategy that has not worked. It is important for India to understand the merits of a broader political approach in Afghanistan that includes talks with the Taliban. If the Russia-China-Pakistan troika succeeds in turning the ongoing talks into a settlement with the Taliban without Indian concerns being addressed, it will certainly affect India's interests — but those interests will come under greater risk if the Taliban insurgency continues to gain ground after U.S. troops eventually leave Afghanistan. There is much that India and the U.S. can do together to create durable security in Afghanistan, rather than working on parallel but separate tracks. □



# A NEW SECURITY STRATEGY

## Croatia adapts to a changing world

By Damir Krstičević, Anita Perešin and Anto Zelić

PHOTOS BY REUTERS

Croatia's new National Security Strategy outlines major national security interests and how to deal with them. The previous strategy was adopted in 2002, when Croatia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace as a first step on the path to joining NATO and the European Union. Despite new security challenges, major changes to security and defense systems, the strengthening of Croatia's international position, and new obligations that followed the country's accession to NATO (2009) and the EU (2013), the National Security Strategy had not changed for 15 years. This can be attributed to a lack of political consensus on the main issues to be addressed and that the updating of such an important document wasn't given the attention it deserved, though there were failed attempts to make changes in 2010 and 2012.

The emergence of transnational threats such as terrorism, irregular migration, hybrid warfare, along with more frequent natural accidents and disasters (especially floods and major fires), demanded that Croatia's national security system be redefined, its national interests and strategic goals more clearly

determined, and the very concept of security adapted to match the new security challenges. For those reasons, in November 2016 the Croatian government initiated the process of making a new National Security Strategy that would analyze the national and international security environment, redefine Croatia's long-term vision, establish national interests, strategic goals and the mechanisms for their achievement, and build the foundation for a more efficient homeland security system. This process was followed by a request to develop a Homeland Security Act that would bring together all the national forces necessary for the efficient and coordinated management of security challenges and crises.

With that request, the National Security Strategy gained additional importance as a document that would set the foundation for Croatia to achieve its national security goals, but also to keep it prepared at all times — as a responsible member of NATO and the EU — to take part in joint activities and operations with partner states when responding to common security challenges.



## Development

Developing the new National Security Strategy began with a steering committee in November 2016 and a process divided into two phases. The first phase started with an analysis by ministries and state authorities within the national security system to identify security trends and challenges on different levels, from global and regional to internal. For that purpose, an interagency analysis was conducted to identify gaps and weaknesses in the current national security system and to propose the best ways to cope with challenges, threats, risks and opportunities.

Additionally, an exploratory interagency discussion was held, in which more than 150 experts from other ministries and state authorities, the private sector, civil society and academia exchanged views. They expressed ideas on how to solve security issues in their fields of expertise. Many stayed involved throughout the process, and their recommendations were considered at all stages of the strategy development. Based on the analyses by the ministries and other state authorities and the recommendations from the nongovernmental sector and academia, long-term national interests and midterm strategic goals were defined, and the mechanisms for achieving those goals were identified.

A task force formed in February 2017 began the second stage, which was focused on designing the main concept, the methodology and the structure of the National Security Strategy. Ten people — representing the Office of the National Security Council; the Security and Intelligence Agency; and the ministries of defense, interior, and foreign and European affairs — created the first draft of the new National Security Strategy, which would be revised four times before adoption.

It should be emphasised that each draft of the National Security Strategy was submitted to all the relevant ministries and state authorities for comment. Special roundtable sessions were organized for the expert groups; members of the task force presented the proposed text, provided explanations, received comments and exchanged professional opinions related to the amendments. Presentations were given to members of the Parliament Committee for Domestic Policy and National Security and other interested members of Parliament, as well as to military attachés and diplomatic representatives of NATO members and other partner states, editors-in-chief and journalists from the most influential Croatian media, representatives of the Association of the Croatian Security Managers and the Croatian Private Security Chamber, civil society and nongovernmental organization representatives, academia and veterans' associations. The purpose of the presentations was to include as many experts and practitioners

as possible. The professional opinions, comments and recommendations made a great contribution to improving the new strategy and to achieving other important goals, such as attaining the support of future security partners and reaching a national consensus for adopting the National Security Strategy.

By conducting such a collaborative process, the Croatian government succeeded in winning broad support from the public, the media, civil society, opposition forces, the private sector and future security partners. The Croatian government understands that it takes a joint effort by all of society to provide an efficient response to today's security threats and challenges. The model used in developing and adopting this security strategy showed that such collaboration can be achieved.

The analyses showed that Croatia's existing national security system required significant reform and that it



Croatia's Parliament unanimously supported efforts to write a new National Security Strategy. Members are shown meeting in Zagreb, in May 2017.

was necessary to establish and develop a new concept of homeland security to ensure a joint and coordinated security effort by government and the public and private sectors. It was concluded that the Homeland Security System required the involvement of state agencies, internal and foreign affairs, civil protection, finance, health care and justice, as well as security and intelligence bodies, public and private companies, citizens and associations. The system will be regulated by the new Homeland Security Act, which marks the beginning of the construction of a new national security system based on partnerships and the concept of homeland security.

The development of the new National Security Strategy took less than seven months and was passed by the Croatian Parliament in July 2017 without a single



A migrant waits to cross the border into Slovenia near Trnovec, Croatia. Migration is among the transnational threats addressed in Croatia's new National Security Strategy.

opposing vote. It set the foundation for a new homeland security system and introduced new standards for creating national strategies for responding to security challenges, threats and risks.

## Content

This National Security Strategy sets a new security paradigm based on human security and national interests. It describes Croatia's security environment and identifies strategic goals and the instruments and mechanisms for their implementation. National interests are viewed as long term, whereas the strategic goals, instruments and mechanisms will be the subject of a midterm evaluation and adaptation.

The security environment is divided into four levels:

1. Global — geopolitical competition, technology development, climate change, rapid change of the security environment, and less predictable, more complex and rapidly transforming security threats.
2. Europe and the European neighborhood — the zone of instability around Europe and EU internal challenges.
3. Croatia's southeastern neighborhood — the main

challenges and opportunities for Croatia.

4. Security threats, risks and challenges for Croatia.

The modern concept of security — which focuses on the security of individuals and threats to the rule of law and democracy that reduce the quality of life and create the sense of insecurity among the citizens — guided the efforts to define security threats, risks and challenges.

The likelihood of traditional threats, such as the danger of a direct conventional military threat, was assessed as very low. The assessment was the same regarding the probability of terrorist attacks although, clearly, no country is entirely safe when it comes to terrorist threats. However, it was underlined that Croatia is facing political challenges, intelligence threats and hybrid activities that are unconventional and include cyber elements. For instance, the activities of extremist groups and individuals and the violent behavior among some sports fans can damage Croatia's reputation internationally, among other consequences. Also highlighted as a significant challenge was public-sector corruption at

the state and local levels, which has numerous adverse economic and other effects and causes a loss of confidence in public institutions. It also fosters organized crime, which may endanger the rule of law, economic and financial stability and public security. Special emphasis was placed on negative trends, such as young people leaving the country, high foreign debt, insufficient investment in new technologies and knowledge, exposure to the negative impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and exposure to natural and man-made accidents and disasters.

It is the nontraditional threats that present the greatest security challenges. Based on analysis of the security environment and the defined challenges, threats and risks, the main structure of the National Security Strategy has been developed with four national interest categories:

1. The security of the population and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Croatia are the basic preconditions for the existence of the state in all its functions.
2. The well-being and prosperity of citizens are the most important indicators of a successful state, a democratic political system and a stable society.
3. National identity, international reputation and influence enable Croatia to participate in international processes and in shaping a favorable international environment.
4. Croatian people outside the country's borders enjoy the special attention and protection of the Croatian government.

It also incorporated nine goals:

1. Achieving the highest level of security and protection of the population and critical infrastructure.
2. Establishing and developing the homeland security system.
3. Developing and sustaining a strong defense.
4. Developing an ecological Croatia and a strong and sustainable economy.
5. The demographic renewal and revitalization of Croatian society.
6. Developing a citizen-friendly public administration and strategic communication system.
7. Protecting, strengthening and promoting the highest constitutional and national identity values.
8. Increasing the international reputation and influence of Croatia.
9. Protecting the existence, identity and political subjectivity of Croats as a constitutive people in Bosnia and Herzegovina; protecting and supporting Croats in other countries.

The security strategy is considered a continual process that internalizes fundamental values, national interests and strategic goals, and provides a simultaneous response to threats, challenges and risks.

## Conclusion

The adoption of the new National Security Strategy is very important for Croatia and its national security. Because of the changed security paradigm and security environment, the national security system must be adaptable, and it requires constant upgrading to respond to modern threats and challenges. The analyses have shown that Croatia needs a more efficient system that will be proactive, more responsive, and able to implement the defined national interests and strategic goals, which will be achieved by introducing the new Homeland Security System.

Croatia's main aim is to direct all its instruments toward the promotion and protection of its national interests and the achievement of strategic goals through an all-encompassing approach. It should include a coordinated effort of all state authorities, private and public sectors, and an active citizen involvement in creating and implementing security policies that are properly coordinated, cost-effective, sustainable and efficient.

The new security strategy also contains mechanisms that should ensure the implementation of its goals and the regular updating of its main determinants. This will be achieved through the Croatian government's submission of annual reports to the Croatian Parliament on the strategy's implementation. In addition, each newly elected government is required to conduct at the beginning of its term the necessary analyses and sustainability studies set out in the strategy document, and propose the necessary changes in accordance with the new security circumstances and objectives.

The benefits of the new Homeland Security System are:

- Ensuring clearer strategic guidelines, the consideration of all relevant security threats and risks at the national level, and making joint decisions on coordinated responses to security threats and risks.
- Avoiding a duplication of efforts or a failure to react to a threat because the responsibilities of state agencies are not clearly defined.
- Ensuring decision-makers in ministries and other state bodies have timely and relevant information, analyses and assessments of security risks.
- Ensuring proactive roles by the state, citizens, nongovernmental organizations, public companies, private companies and other interested parties.

This new security system — based on the paradigm of human security — gives confidence to citizens and allies that Croatia is capable of reacting and responding firmly, strongly and clearly to any threat or danger at any time. □

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Retired Maj. Gen. Damir Krstičević, deputy prime minister and defense minister of Croatia, chaired the Steering Committee for the development of the new National Security Strategy. Dr. Anita Perešin, senior advisor at the Office of the National Security Council, was a member of the National Security Strategy Task Group. Col. Anto Zelić, Croatian defense attaché in the United Kingdom and Ireland, chaired the National Security Strategy Task Group.

## SECURITY

A U.S. Air Force F-35 Lightning II flies to the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force base in Lakenheath, England, in April 2017.

SENIOR AIRMAN CHRISTINE GROENING/  
U.S. AIR FORCE

# *Lightning*

# OVERVIEW



R

# EUROPE

By per Concordiam Staff

# *Cutting-edge F-35A Strike Fighters train with Eastern NATO allies*

F-35A Lightning II aircraft land at the Royal Air Force base in Lakenheath, England, in April 2017. Their arrival marked the first F-35A fighter training deployment to an overseas location.

TECH. SGT. MATTHEW PLEW/U.S. AIR FORCE

On April 25, 2017, two U.S. Air Force F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters touched down at Ämari Air Base in Estonia. Three days later, two other F-35As arrived at Graf Ignatievo Air Base in Bulgaria. The planes were part of the first training deployment to Europe for the new fifth-generation fighters. The multirole F-35 platform can perform missions traditionally carried out by several specialized aircraft, such as air-to-air combat, close air support, surveillance and reconnaissance. The four planes were among eight that began the deployment by flying from Hill Air Force base in Utah to the Royal Air Force (RAF) base in Lakenheath, England.

These new planes with advanced stealth technology can be used in training exercises with allies and partners, helping to integrate with NATO infrastructure and enhance interoperability. The deployment shows the United States' commitment to Article 5

of the NATO Treaty — the defense of all members of the Alliance. “This deployment clearly demonstrates our nation’s contribution to the security and collective defense here in Europe,” said Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, commander of the U.S. European Command, while welcoming the Joint Strike Fighters’ arrival at RAF Lakenheath.

Ämari Air Base is in northwestern Estonia about 40 kilometers from the capital, Tallinn, and about 240 kilometers from the Russian border. The U.S. Air Force said the deployment had been in the works for some time — closely coordinated with the Estonian hosts — and had no connection to heightened tensions in the region. Estonian Defense Minister Margus Tsahkna was clearly heartened by the dynamic display of solidarity. “The introduction of the newest fighter to Europe, with its state-of-the-art systems, will help the Alliance maintain the fundamental sovereign rights of all nations,” he said.



“You’re always welcome here. Enjoy your stay in Estonia and in our skies.” Twenty U.S. ground support airmen also made the trip to Estonia to support the two Joint Strike Fighters.

While in Estonia, the Lightning pilots trained with U.S. and Estonian special forces to communicate and coordinate activities with aircraft and demonstrate the elite tactical forces’ capabilities. The U.S. Special Operations troops were already in Estonia, training with their local counterparts as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve, an effort to bolster the defense of NATO’s easternmost nations and to reassure NATO allies and partners in the region after the Russian intervention in Ukraine.

Later that week, at Graf Ignatievo Air Base near the central Bulgarian city of Plovdiv, another F-35A contingent conducted training with the Bulgarian Air Force. “I have to say that for us, this makes us very proud,” Bulgarian Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Tsanko Stoykov said during a reception ceremony at the airfield. “Our efforts have been appreciated, and we are trusted as a reliable ally and it immensely contributes to the development of the bilateral relations between our two countries and our two air forces.”

Also at Graf Ignatievo, as part of the Thracian Eagle 2017 exercise, were a dozen F-15 Eagle fighters belonging to the 122nd Fighter Squadron of the 159th Fighter Wing of the Louisiana Air National Guard. The U.S. units are training with Bulgarian Air Force MIG-29s, SU-25s and L-39s and ground-based air defense units, including integrated flying scenarios that prepare the allied forces for joint combat operations if needed. “The United States and Bulgaria have a strong and enduring friendship,” Lt. Gen. Richard Clark, U.S. 3rd Air Force commander, confirmed. “We routinely train through

joint and combined initiatives like Operation Atlantic Resolve and in flying exercises like Thracian Summer and Thracian Star. Our commitment to Bulgaria is but an example of our unwavering support to all allied nations.”

After the forward deployment to Estonia and Bulgaria, the F-35As returned to RAF Lakenheath to continue the training mission. The deployment is an important milestone in the Joint Strike Fighter program, according to the U.S. Air Force. The

F-35As worked on interoperability by planning and coordinating operations with the RAF and conducting flight operations with United Kingdom F-16s.

In addition to enhancing integration and interoperability, the deployment allows the U.S. Air Force to demonstrate the operational capabilities of the new aircraft and helps refine the beddown requirements at RAF Lakenheath in preparation for the eventual permanent stationing of F-35s there and elsewhere in Europe. Lakenheath is scheduled to become home to two Joint Strike Fighter squadrons beginning in 2021. To support the three-week deployment, 250 airmen from Hill Air Force Base accompanied the Strike Fighters to England. The troops and the planes belong to the 388th Fighter Wing.

Operation Atlantic Resolve also provides, according to U.S. Army Europe, “continuous, enhanced multinational training and security cooperation activities with

allies and partners in eastern Europe,” which aims to “improve interoperability, strengthen relationships and trust among allied armies, contribute to regional stability, and demonstrate U.S. commitment to NATO.” Atlantic Resolve was implemented in April 2014 and includes multinational training and security cooperation in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Hungary, in addition to Estonia and Bulgaria. □



Estonian and U.S. Special Operations joint tactical air controllers watch as an F-35A Lightning II takes off at Ämari Air Base in Estonia in April 2017.

STAFF SGT. CHARLENE MOLER/U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND EUROPE

An F-35A Lightning II takes off from the Royal Air Force base in Lakenheath, England, in May 2017. Eight F-35A aircraft trained with other Europe-based aircraft during a three-week deployment. AIRMAN 1ST CLASS JOHN CRAWFORD/U.S. AIR FORCE

# ISLAM'S REVIVAL IN CENTRAL ASIA

Book author, editor:  
**Pauline Jones**

Published by:  
**University  
of Pittsburgh  
Press, 2017**

Reviewer:  
**Diana Clark Gill**

Civil violence is worrisome no matter where it originates or where its proponents strike. But in the case of Central Asia, it is a bit of a puzzle. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the newly independent Central Asian states — Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — underwent an “Islamic revival” as indigenous beliefs resurfaced after a long winter of Soviet repression. Such a revival led many to assume that Central Asia would join the larger Islamic bloc, leading, it was also assumed, to the same forms of social unrest and political power grabs seen in the 1970s and ’80s when similar Islamic revivals swept across the Middle East. That this did not happen to any great extent has caused scholars to analyze Central Asia and its relationship with Islam as perhaps a unique phenomenon.

Pauline Jones, author and editor of the anthology *Islam, Society and Politics in Central Asia*, states that “we still lack a thorough understanding of: (1) the extent, nature, and meaning of Central Asia’s Islamic revival, and (2) its social and political impact over time.” Her intention is “to shed light on both of these major questions by bringing together an international group of scholars from a variety of disciplines who offer a fresh perspective based” on their own academic pursuits and their on-the-ground observations in Central Asia. These 12 contributors include orientalists, anthropologists, a journalist and independent scholars of Islam.

Each chapter is devoted to a contributor’s special interest. These range from unregistered religious figures in Central Asia to a study of Islamic financial institutions. Jones, director of the International Institute at the University of Michigan, divides the book into four overarching areas of study: “The everyday practice of Islam”; the changing nature of “state policies” in regard to Islam; the actors on the local religious stage; and an examination of how exposure to the Islamic world outside of Central Asia is affecting the Islamic revival in this region and, consequently, how states are responding.

To understand the hunger for spirituality in this area of the world is to appreciate the physical reality of its inhabitants. What contributor Tim Epkenhans says of the Tajiks can, with little variation, be said of the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Uzbeks: They all endure a



“daily struggle with economic deprivation, exploitation ... violence ... endemic corruption, a collapsing education and health care system, political and social marginalization as well as the absence of the rule of law.” Indeed, contributor Vera Exnerova points out how “some scholars have argued that Islamic revivalism ... has been a strategy for coping with an increasingly ineffective central state.”

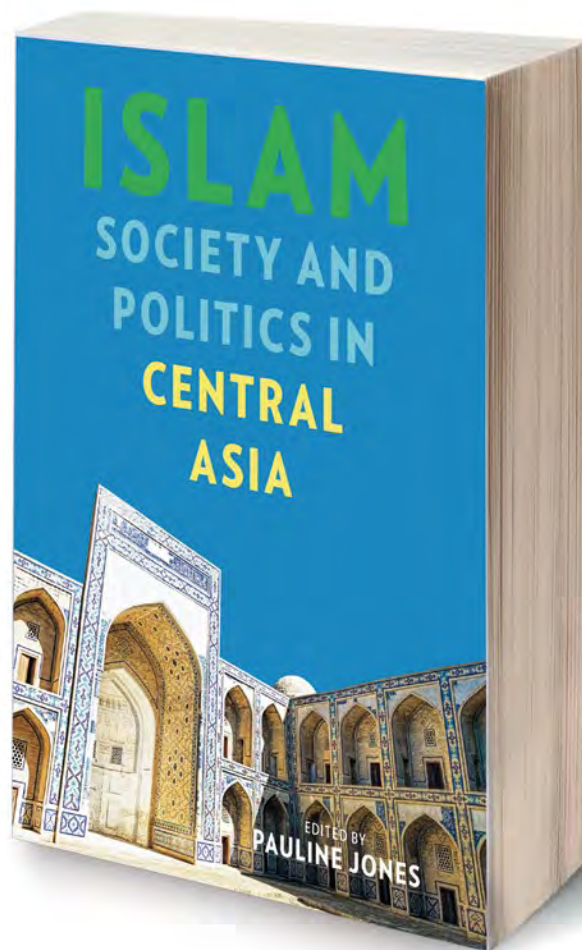
Authoritarian leaders in Central Asia maintain power in such a milieu by controlling expressions of revolt. For example, they concede the importance of Islam in the lives of their people, but rather than allow their people unfettered access to Islamic scholars, they have instead officially repackaged Islam in a way they deem acceptable. The trouble with such a state-sanitized religion is that it can lead the dissatisfied to fulfill their spiritual needs underground. Contributors David Abramson and Noah Tucker are quick to point out that this does not necessarily mean turning to violent extremist groups. “Much more often,” they write, “Central Asian Muslims turn to other forms of spiritual authority, often outside the mosque or madrasa,” such as the internet, sacred sites or nonclerical religious leaders.

Jones explains that this impulse of the state “to regulate the dominant religion stems primarily from the fear that Islam will serve as an alternative ideology that diminishes loyalty to the regime, and hence, a potent source of political mobilization against the regime.” She cautions though that this attempt “to control the potential for religion to mobilize opposition ... [can have] the perverse effect of fostering popular resistance in a variety of forms that challenge the stability of Central Asian governments.”

This snake continues to eat its tail as “popular resistance” then triggers the state to exaggerate “the threat of extremism ... [and creates] an environment in which thousands of people have been imprisoned under brutal conditions,” write Abramson and Tucker. But the question remains, why then “has tension between the secular state and religious communities been more pronounced in some geographic areas than in others?” Contributor Alisher Khamidov suggests a simple and home-grown answer: “Violent confrontations between the state and religion are not necessarily a result of political repression, ethnic discrimination, foreign

involvement or a clash of civilizations.” Rather, they are the result of a state enforcing unpopular policies without first negotiating with local power brokers. The use of indigenous power brokers can soften bitter transitions and avert violence. “Clannishness, tribalism, regionalism, and localism are often depicted by government officials and some scholars in a negative light,” Khamidov writes. “But the study ... shows that under certain circumstances, informal structures can play a powerful role in mitigating conflict.”

Where Jones shines in *Islam, Society and Politics* is in weaving the accounts of these contributors into a cohesive whole — giving readers a multidisciplinary exploration of the subject. My only reservation is that by using such a chorus, the narrative is robbed of the clarity of a single voice making a concise argument. □



# Resident Courses

Democratia per fidem et concordiam  
*Democracy through trust and friendship*



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The Marshall Center's flagship resident program provides graduate-level education in security policy, defense affairs, international relations and related topics such as international law and counterterrorism. A theme addressed throughout the program is the need for international, interagency and interdisciplinary cooperation.

**PASS 18-16**

Sept. 5 -  
 Nov. 15, 2018

**September**

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**PROGRAM ON COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)**

This resident program focuses on the national security threats posed by illicit trafficking and other criminal activities. The course is designed for government and state officials and practitioners who are engaged in policy development, law enforcement, intelligence and interdiction activities.

**CTOC 18-07**

Apr. 5 - 27, 2018

**April**

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**CTOC 18-14**

Aug. 2 - 24, 2018

**August**

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**PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)**

This program is designed for government officials and military officers employed in midlevel and upper-level management of counterterrorism organizations and will provide instruction on both the nature and magnitude of today's terrorism threat. The program improves participants' ability to counter terrorism's regional implications by providing a common framework of knowledge and understanding that will enable national security officials to cooperate at an international level.

**PTSS 18-05**

Feb. 14 -  
 Mar. 15, 2018

**February**

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**PTSS 18-12**

June 27 -  
 July 26, 2018

**June**

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## PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

The PCSS focuses on ways to address challenges in the cyber environment while adhering to fundamental values of democratic society. This nontechnical program helps participants appreciate the nature of today's threats.

### PCSS 18-02

Dec. 5 - 21, 2017

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## SEMINAR ON REGIONAL SECURITY (SRS)

The seminar aims at systematically analyzing the character of the selected crises, the impact of regional actors, as well as the effects of international assistance measures.

### SRS 18-04

Jan. 18 -  
Feb. 8, 2018

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## SENIOR EXECUTIVE SEMINAR (SES)

This intensive seminar focuses on new topics of key global interest that will generate new perspectives, ideas and cooperative discussions and possible solutions. Participants include general officers, senior diplomats, ambassadors, ministers, deputy ministers and parliamentarians. The SES includes formal presentations by senior officials and recognized experts followed by in-depth discussions in seminar groups.

### SES 18-11

June 4 - 8, 2018

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