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GEORGE C. MARSHALL
EUROPEAN CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES

Welcome to the 28th issue of *per Concordiam*, themed "Countering Terrorist Narratives: Best Practices From Around the Globe." At a time of unprecedented radicalization and mobilization of terrorism, extremist narratives and propaganda abet the spread of terrorist ideology and recruitment. As a result, the world needs to counter terrorist narratives more robustly within the framework of comprehensive strategies against violent extremism.

In this edition, we present a series of case studies from around the world. Dr. Irina Chernykh of Kazakhstan and Col. Sajiid Chaudray of Pakistan bring perspectives from Central Asia and southwest Asia, respectively, while Dr. Hussein Solomon, Lt. Col. Deo Akiiki, and Maj. Djomagne Didier Yves Bamouni address Africa. Lars Scraeyen focuses on Belgium as it grapples with homegrown terrorism.

The Marshall Center's recent Community of Interest event, as well as the Program on Terrorism and Security Studies, also discussed the topic, which resulted in these conclusions and recommendations:

- **Narratives are weapons.** Terrorists are adept at using narratives in their communications to mobilize support and delegitimize governments. We must understand how narratives are weaponized before we can counter them. Terrorists exploit both online and traditional media, but these media are also important tools for countering violent extremism.
- **Targeting the right audience.** Preventing radicalization is likely a more productive approach than deradicalizing those who have already joined terrorist organizations. A key target audience for counternarrative efforts should be "fence sitters." These people show interest in extremism — or are being targeted by recruiters — but have yet to mobilize.
- **Simplicity of messaging.** Terrorist narratives tend to convey simple yet powerful messages. Tailored to their target audience, these messages are often visually, intellectually or emotionally stimulating. To be equally effective, counternarrative efforts must use similar techniques.
- **The importance of nongovernmental partners.** Regardless of the method of delivery (online or offline, direct or indirect), nongovernmental partners play a crucial role.
- **Timing is everything.** Counternarrative efforts must be dynamic and flexible to respond to rapid changes in the environment. This is a challenge for government bureaucracies.
- **Measuring impact.** Online platforms, in particular, provide some readily available measurements. To identify best practices, it is essential to measure the impact of counternarratives among the target audience in as much detail as possible.

The Marshall Center's goal is to share effective methods, learn from one another and discuss emerging trends, recognizing the need to make greater use of disillusioned former members of terrorist organizations and be more proactive in countering terrorist narratives. I think we all agree that "actions speak louder than words," so counternarratives must be matched by activities in the real world if they are to be effective in developing new policies and strategies.

I hope this issue increases discussion about this complicated but important issue. As always, the Marshall Center welcomes 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

Sincerely,

Keith W. Dayton
Director
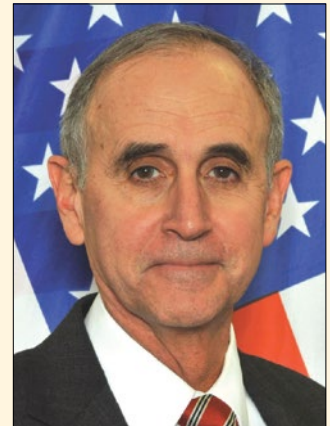
Keith W. Dayton
Director, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

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THE IMPORTANCE OF
IDEOLOGY

Counterterrorism strategies require more soft power to disrupt terror recruitment

By **DR. SAM MULLINS,** Marshall Center

It is well-established that people become involved in terrorism to fulfill a variety of needs, including personal, social, spiritual, practical and even financial. It is also well-known that, for many terrorists, satisfying these motivations may be more important than commitment to ideology. And yet, it is the ideology of terrorist organizations that gives them their unique identity, distinguishes them from their enemies and clearly defines both "good" and "evil." Moreover, ideology forms the basis of terrorists' strategy, dictating their ends, ways and means and providing group members with a set of instructions on how to speak, dress and act. Ideology justifies and even necessitates violence, while simultaneously dehumanizing the enemy, giving the perpetrators a twisted sense of morality that sanctions all manner of atrocities.

Individual terrorists do not need to be experts in the ideology, nor do they need to believe every word that comes out of their leaders' mouths, as long as they adhere to basic ideological principles — what is the problem, who is to blame and what needs to be done about it. In fact, the simplest arguments are often the most compelling, and part of the power of terrorist ideology is that it paints a black and white picture of the world that deliberately dispenses with complexity. This helps explain the broad appeal and seemingly infinite pathways into terrorism, along with the diverse array of profiles and motivations involved.

One thing that terrorists have in common is at least basic exposure to terrorist ideology and propaganda. Along with some form of social contact, whether on- or offline, and practical opportunity, this is one of three necessary conditions for joining a terrorist organization. Indeed, ideology is arguably the "center of gravity" of terrorism. According to Clausewitz, this is "the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act." Ideology is thus crucial to the survival, growth and longevity of terrorist organizations and must be countered as a matter of priority.

Delegates attend an anti-terror conference at the German Foreign Office in Berlin in May 2016. The conference, sponsored by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, dealt with returning extremists. EPA

Counterideology tools and techniques

The need to counter terrorist ideology is hardly a revelation. More than a decade ago, U.S. Army Gen. John Abizaid — then head of U.S. Central Command — observed that "it's a battle of ideas as much as it is a military battle." Others had already come to the same realization, and by 2003 fledgling deradicalization programs were underway in places such as Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Yemen. Since then, efforts to counter terrorist ideology have gradually expanded to include government and nongovernment actors using a variety of tools and techniques aimed at different audiences, ranging from society as a whole to at-risk youth and convicted terrorists. Collectively, these efforts are now referred to as countering violent extremism (CVE).

Under the CVE umbrella, information operations, capacity-building projects and education initiatives, along with specialized counterradicalization and deradicalization programs, have multiplied worldwide. Some approach the problem on an intellectual level, for example, highlighting rational or theological inconsistencies in terrorists' lines of argument. Others take more of an emotional approach, drawing attention to the hypocrisy and lies of terrorist leaders or the impact of terrorism on victims and their families.

There are also growing efforts to showcase the reality of life inside a terrorist organization, which contrasts with the glossy propaganda and naïve expectations of recruits. Yet another technique that is becoming increasingly popular is to ridicule and make fun of terrorists — exemplified by the online campaign to Photoshop ISIS fighters as rubber ducks. Others still have focused on positive messages, such as interethnic or multifaith statements of solidarity that undermine the terrorists' "us versus them" narrative. Finally, practical approaches such as providing education and employment also play an important role in some programs. In reality, of course, different tools and techniques are often combined and adapted to the particular language, culture and circumstances of the target audience.

A Palestinian boy wears a Hamas militant headband during a military parade. Radicalization often begins at an early age. REUTERS

Emerging best practices

Although much is to be learned in this field, several principles of best practice can be identified. To begin with, it is fundamentally important to select an appropriate target audience (such as young people with a demonstrable interest in terrorist ideas/organizations) and develop an understanding of that audience. This will have implications for those likely to be seen as credible messengers and thus be able to exert a degree of influence. Former extremists are an obvious choice in this respect, but can also be problematic and are by no means the only people capable of countering terrorist ideas.

The choice of target audience will also inform decisions about the delivery and format of messages — where and how to engage using what particular method or type of media. Intuitively, imagery and video — featured heavily in terrorist propaganda — are likely to be more effective than long written articles. The tone of interaction with target audiences is also important, as is the timing — few people are likely to be swayed

> There is no guarantee that efforts to counter terrorist ideology and recruitment will be universally well-received.

by a blunt or abrasive approach, nor one that fails to respond and adapt to contemporary events. Finally, it is necessary to tailor approaches to the particular local or individual circumstances in question. What works in one location or with one person may not work elsewhere with others.

Key challenges

The challenges in countering terrorist ideology are many. On a practical level, money, resources and expertise are often lacking, making it difficult to compete with the sheer volume of terrorist activity. Risk assessment of individuals, groups or communities is also far from straightforward, making it difficult to identify the most promising targets for engagement and allocate scarce resources efficiently. Building partnerships can also be tricky. From the government perspective, partners must be reliable, trustworthy and effective; on the nongovernmental side, the need to obtain funding and other forms of support must be balanced against the need to maintain independence. If a particular group or individual is perceived to be working for the government, it can undermine credibility.

There is no guarantee that efforts to counter terrorist ideology and recruitment will be universally well-received. Naturally, terrorists and their extremist supporters often attempt to undermine such efforts. At the same time, some sections of society may feel unfairly targeted, especially when police are involved, and such fears are frequently amplified by an unsympathetic media. This has very much been

the case in the United Kingdom, where the government's "Prevent" strategy has been erroneously branded as an attempt to spy on the Muslim population.

Perhaps most important, however, are challenges associated with evaluation. Although many CVE initiatives draw upon previous knowledge and experience in related areas as diverse as marketing campaigns, social work, criminal rehabilitation, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs, the field in general appears to have developed through trial and error. In addition, indicators of success are often superficial; detailed, systematic evaluations are still few and far between. Establishing the impact of counterideology efforts is a daunting task, yet it will be essential to advancing the field.

Signs of progress

Despite many challenges, efforts to counter terrorist ideology are increasing and there is growing recognition that this is an important and underresourced area of counterterrorism with much potential. Furthermore, although the volume of terrorist messaging has markedly increased in recent years — thanks largely to ISIS — so, too, has the volume of countermessaging. For instance, anti-ISIS online content is now believed to outnumber pro-ISIS content 6 to 1. This is a product of increasing censorship on the part of companies such as Twitter (which has closed down hundreds of thousands of terrorist accounts), as well as a growth in grass-roots anti-terrorist activism.

There are also encouraging efforts to professionalize the CVE sphere by providing platforms for publishing research, such as the *Journal for Deradicalization*, and establishing dedicated institutions designed to facilitate information-sharing and further refine best practices — notably Hedayah, the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, established in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in 2012 and the Counter Extremism Project, which recently developed an algorithm to assist in identifying and removing extremist content online. The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund is another example of the increasing momentum in this area. Established in 2014, it aims to generate about $200 million over 10 years to be used to "support local, community-level initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against violent extremist agendas."

For too long, terrorists have been given free rein to spread propaganda and ideas more or less uncontested. That is no longer the case, and the chorus of voices against violent extremism and terrorism is gradually rising. The road ahead will not be easy, but it is one that we must commit to nonetheless. As we seek to undermine the appeal of terrorist ideology, it is vital that we share information, ideas and experience to learn from one another and progress. The diverse examples presented in this issue of *per Concordiam* are a modest contribution to this line of effort. □

Belgium's Counternarrative CHALLENGE

By **Capt. Lars Scraeyen**

Establishing a strong national identity and assimilating immigrants are critical to fight terrorism

With a population of over 11 million, Belgium stands out among other Western European countries as a source of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) in Syria and Iraq. As of July 2016, 457 FTF were believed to be from Belgium. While this represents only about a third of France's number of FTF, Belgium's per capita share is more than double. Concerned over these disproportionate figures and the involvement of a number of returning Belgian FTF in foiled and successful terrorist attacks — but also due to pressure from heavy international media attention — the Belgian government has, since 2015, intensified its efforts to understand and prevent radicalization. While many different tools are being explored and developed in this field, we shall look at the development of a Belgian counternarrative.

As explained by Henry Tuck and Tanya Silverman in *The Counter-Narrative Handbook*, published by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, counternarrative is a catchall term for a large group of activities ranging from campaigns led by grassroots civil-society, youth or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to government strategic communications. They define a counternarrative as "a message that offers a positive alternative to extremist propaganda, or alternatively aims to deconstruct or delegitimize extremist narratives." A narrative is defined in its simplest terms by Dina Al Raffie in a 2012 article in the *Journal of Terrorism Research* as "a coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories." As she points out, these stories are so deeply ingrained in cultures that they are an essential part of people's identities and their place within any given cultural setting. Al Raffie also noted that studies on radicalization proved that identity is at the forefront of the radicalization process and that their degree of success lies in the radical's ability to provide the radical-to-be with a distinctive identity.

Considering that a counternarrative contains a narrative, and that narratives in turn are an essential part of someone's identity, we will focus on this to discuss the challenges and opportunities for Belgium in developing an identity-based narrative as part of the counternarrative. Is there a relationship between a Belgian national identity and a sense of belonging that might help us understand why the country has produced so many FTF per capita? What might this mean for the development of a counternarrative in Belgium?

Societal security and identities

To guide us through this discussion, we will refer to the Copenhagen School's securitization theory and the notion of societal security, centered on the sustainability and evolution of traditional patterns of language, culture, and religious and national identity and custom. Within this framework, the importance of speech acts, or what we refer to today as a narrative, was already recognized. The securitization theory was a key development in theorizing about security and dates back to the publication of Barry Buzan's book *People, States and Fear* in 1983. The theory continued to evolve, and the Copenhagen School became a label for a collective research agenda from various academics at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute in Denmark. Their work culminated in 1998 with the publication of *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. This work developed in the post-Cold War period within a context that called for the broadening of security to include issues that had been neglected.

Security, as claimed by the Copenhagen School, was not just about states, but related to all human communities; nor could it be confined to an "inherently inadequate" focus on military force. Buzan's approach argued that the security of human communities — not just states — was affected by factors in five major sectors, each of which had its own focal point and method of prioritizing:

- ***Military security:*** concerned with the interplay between the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states and states' perceptions of each other's intentions.
- ***Political security:*** focused on the organizational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them their legitimacy.
- ***Economic security:*** revolved around access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power.
- ***Societal security:*** centered on the sustainability and evolution of traditional patterns of language, culture, and religious and national identity and custom.
- ***Environmental security:*** concerned with maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend.

A common claim among jihadis is that Muslims' societal security (to use the above framework) is threatened. Terrorists often rely on discursively created threat perceptions, through their speech acts or narrative, claiming that the Muslim community worldwide is being threatened by "the West." For instance, in his 1996 declaration of war against what he called the American occupation of "the land of the two holy places," Osama bin Laden called for the entire Muslim community to take part in the fight against the enemy.

States, as well as terrorist groups, tend to act in terms of aggregate security, or as Buzan described it, allowing their activities in one security sector to color another. In this sense, the current discussion on narratives and counternarratives is

the result of transnational terrorist threats to both our political (the ideological foundation and legitimacy of the state) and societal security (culture, customs, identity). For this article, we will focus on the societal security sector, centered on identity.

Buzan relied on a two-stage process to explain how and when an issue is to be perceived and acted upon as an existential threat to security. The first stage concerns the portrayal, part of a narrative, of certain issues, persons or entities as existential threats to referent objects. The Copenhagen School argued in favor of seeing security as a discourse through which identities and threats are constituted rather than as an objective, material condition. This securitization move can be initiated by states, but also by nonstate actors such as trade unions, popular movements or extremist groups. The use of a language of security does not imply that the concern is automatically transformed into a security question. The consensual establishment of the threat needs to be sufficiently salient to produce substantial political effects.

Key to the securitization move is the notion of "speech act." Speech acts are conceived as forms of representation that do not simply depict a preference or view of an external reality but also have a performative effect — much like the narrative we are studying. To a certain extent, the issue of the development of narratives and counternarratives is far from new, but there is now an unprecedented number of different media through which the "speech acts" are performed, many of which governments have no control over.

Belgian Muslims hold national flags and posters stating, "Terrorism has no religion," during a commemoration ceremony for the victims of the March 2016 terrorist attack on Brussels Airport in Zaventem and a metro station. REUTERS

The second stage, crucial to the securitization process, can only be completed when the securitizing actor has convinced its audience (public opinion, politicians, communities or potential jihadis) that a referent object is existentially threatened. The Copenhagen School considers the speech act — the discursive representation of a certain issue as an existential threat to security — the starting point of the securitization process, because an issue can become a security question
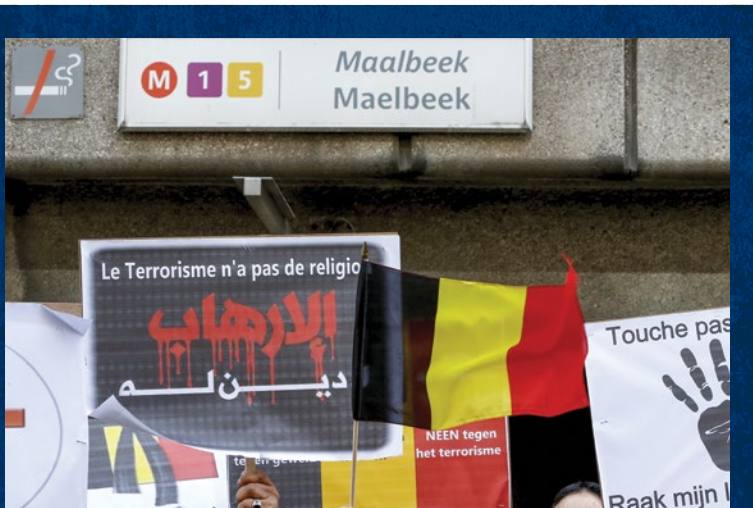
through the speech act alone, regardless of whether the issue genuinely represents an existential threat materially.

Buzan emphasized, however, that a discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object — for instance Islam or the *umma* — does not by itself create securitization, but only represents a securitization move. The issue is only securitized when the audience accepts it as such. Insights from Buzan as well as Lene Hansen's 2013 book *The Evolution of International Security Studies* indicate that security is seen as a discourse through which identities and threats are constituted; "terrorism" and "terrorists" were actually not seen as threats, actions or actors that could be objectively identified, but just as signs that constituted a "radical Other." The anti-American/Western and anti-globalization rhetoric of jihadist opinion leaders and strategists is perceived as threatening to the Western identity (or societal security), which unavoidably results in us paying attention to it. Threats to identity are always a question of the construction of something as threatening to a collective "we." This threat also has the effect of strengthening the construction of this collective "we," as Buzan claimed. The "we" in this case is the West, the globalized or even the non-Muslims, in contrast to the automatically created "Other": the nonglobalized or Muslims.

Stuart Croft, in his 2012 book on securitizing Islam, points out that, at this point, an individual and his attitude toward security transforms through a securitization move affecting both the lives of one group and the "Other." This may lead to the construction within a society of an in-group and an out-group. Croft specifically referred to the way the Muslim identity was caught up in a securitization move in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the London Metro bombings in July 2005, when Britain was directly confronted with jihadi terrorism. Jihadi terrorism, and specifically al-Qaida at its roots, was a concept that gave way to many misconceptions about Islam, Islamism and jihad, in turn leading to more radicalization within the Muslim community based on the development of enemy images.

Within a discussion of surveillance systems in the European Union, Thomas Mathiesen discussed the notion of enemy images in his 2013 book *Towards A Surveillant Society*. He wrote that it was not only images of Muslims that developed among politicians, in the media and among the citizens of Europe, but also images of terrorism, organized crime and of foreign cultures with various Muslim populations up front. These images, he continued, are not pure fiction. Terrorism and organized crime and the increasing number of foreigners on the EU's doorstep are actually real problems. But around these realities were developed images that constituted serious exaggerations of dangers.

Many security measures have been adopted by governments in response to perceived threats posed to societal security. One of the common threats to national identities is immigration, and by consequence, immigration policy, is probably one of, if not the most, securitized issue in many
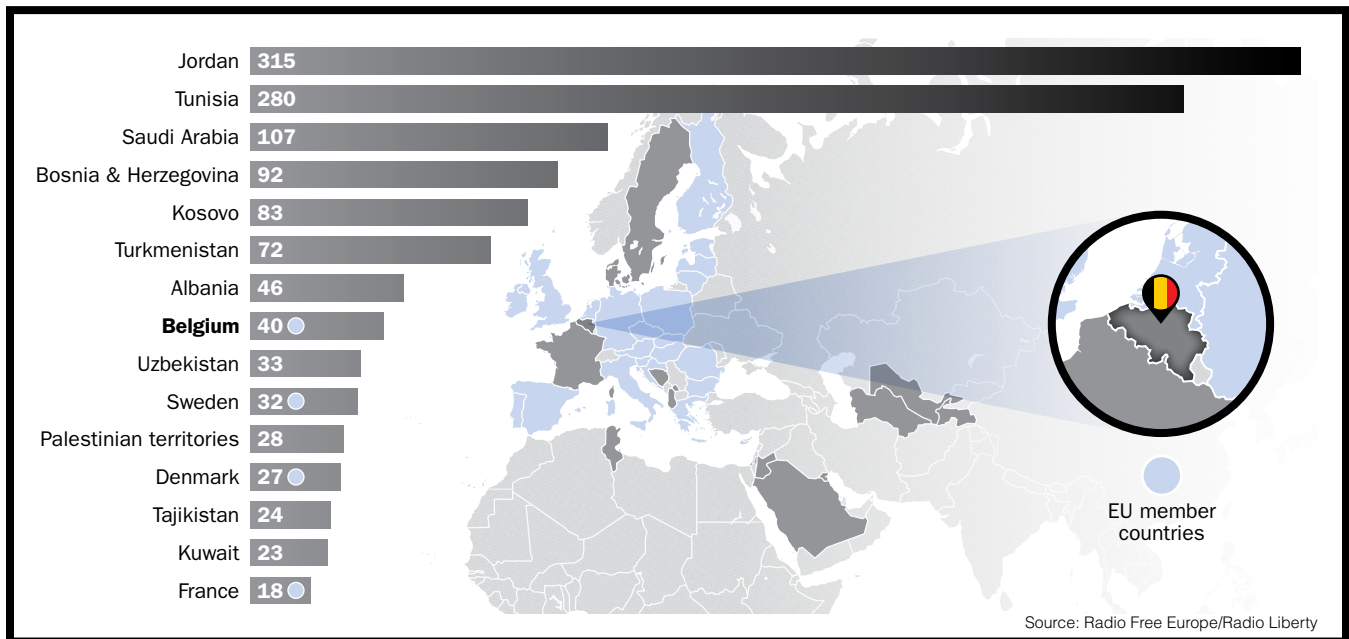
Belgium is the EU 'Capital' For Foreign Fighters
Estimated number of fighters per capita in 2015 (per million people)

Country	Value
Jordan	315
Tunisia	280
Saudi Arabia	107
Bosnia & Herzegovina	92
Kosovo	83
Turkmenistan	72
Albania	46
Belgium	40
Uzbekistan	33
Sweden	32
Palestinian territories	28
Denmark	27
Tajikistan	24
Kuwait	23
France	18

EU member countries

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

European countries, especially since the increased refugee flow in 2014. In this respect, according to Croft, it is useful to look at immigration and population figures of Muslims — considered to be the "radical Others" within this discussion on radicalization. In Europe as a whole, the proportion of the Muslim population is even expected to grow by nearly one-third over the next 14 years, rising from approximately 6 percent of the region's inhabitants today to 8 percent in 2030, the Pew Research Center reported in 2011. Furthermore, "Muslims are even projected to make up more than 10% of the total population in 10 European countries: Kosovo (93.5 percent), Albania (83.2 percent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (42.7 percent), Republic of Macedonia (40.3 percent), Montenegro (21.5 percent), Bulgaria (15.7 percent), Russia (14.4 percent), Georgia (11.5 percent), France (10.3 percent) and Belgium (10.2 percent)," according to the Pew report.

These figures for Belgium might be surprising, but as Milica Petrovic rightly pointed out in a 2012 article for the Migration Policy Institute, Belgium has often been overlooked as a country with a long history of immigration. Since the end of World War II, and especially since the 1960s, Belgium has possessed a large immigrant workforce. Brussels signed a number of labor migration agreements with several countries from Southern Europe (mainly Italy), North Africa (mainly Morocco) and Turkey. These agreements included lenient family reunification rules. From 1974, labor migration was limited by the government, but the reunification of families continued. Over time, migration rules continued to harden. This past has given Belgium a large second- and third-generation Muslim community.

As indicated by Dina Al Raffie, in a 2013 article in the *Journal of Strategic Security*, it has been suggested that these second- and third-generation Muslims face difficulties in balancing religious and national identities for two reasons. On the one hand, unlike their first generation predecessors who follow a more traditional Islam, second- and third-generation immigrants are found to have a more intellectual approach to their religion. The individualization of religious identity creation might also, because of conflicting views within the family, lead to disconnection and alienation from family. On the other hand, socio-economic, structural factors such as unemployment and low social standing might produce a sense of disaffection with the host country, preventing them from fully identifying themselves as a national. In this situation, the individual searches for another identity.

Belgian identity, unity and belonging
Throughout the existence of Belgium, societal security — particularly the linguistic and cultural dimension — has played a prominent role in the political debate. It has resulted in a political structure with six different governments: one federal, three regional (Brussels Capital, Flanders and Walloon regions) and two community governments (the French linguistic community and the German linguistic community). The Flanders region and Dutch-speaking community governments merged over time. The fault lines driving these reforms within Belgium remain important to this day and have led, gradually since the 1970s, to greater autonomy for the different regions and communities. At this point, the federal government remains largely responsible for internal affairs and security, immigration, justice, foreign affairs and defense. Culture, education, health care, unemployment and foreign trade are powers handed completely, or to a large extent, to the regions or communities.

A study by the Walloon Institute of Assessment, Forecasting and Statistics from 2014 on Belgian citizens' identity showed that over the past 10 years, the number of Walloon citizens who feel they are different from Flemish citizens almost doubled, from 35 percent to 65 percent. Nonetheless, almost 8 out of 10 still consider themselves Belgians. A Catholic University of Leuven (Flemish) poll revealed that only 67 percent of the Flemings consider themselves to be Belgians. The ongoing political and public debate on continuing state reforms and the call for greater autonomy hasn't gone unnoticed in the many migrant communities. Muslim migrants might wonder, for instance, why they should adopt a national identity and adapt to Belgian national values if the regional and cultural identities and values of the subregions seem to weigh heavier than national identity.

Police and soldiers guard the entrance to Brussels Airport after terrorist attacks in March 2016. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

While discussing the securitization of Islam in the United Kingdom, Croft studied the impact of the 9/11 attacks on the lives and perceptions of individuals in relation to their different identities and Islam. As with the Belgian example, he also noted that regional identities (English, Scottish or Welsh) were deemed to be of higher importance than an overarching British identity. In September 2007, the British developed a new national motto in reaction to growing nationalism in Wales, Scotland and England and disenchanted ethnic minorities who were damaging the seams of British unity. For a number of reasons, the British identity had been under fire, but the terrorist threat invigorated the debates about identity and the model for minority integration. It was said that the time had come to build bridges instead of walls between the different races and cultures in Great Britain. Lord Taylor of Warwick, cited in Croft's book, considered it vital for people from different communities to feel included in the British identity, alongside their other cultural identity. The situation at that time in Britain — the struggle with different identity issues while addressing immigration and radicalization — is strongly analogous to the Belgian situation.

Although the Belgian federal and regional governments were aware of worsening radicalization, the rising number of Belgian foreign fighters, and the growing domestic terrorist threat since 2012, no significant extra measures were adopted until after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in France in January 2015. Why did Belgium hesitate to respond following the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014? Did it take an attack in a neighboring country and an antiterrorism police action that turned into a shoot-out to persuade authorities to introduce measures to fight terrorism?

Belgium waited for the momentum created by the attacks in France because, even though the threat was apparent in May 2014, the attack in Brussels fell at the worst possible time for Belgium to unite against terrorism. It was a month of strong political division in Belgium fostered by vivid debates in the media and aggressive political campaigning. The attack took place only one day before the combined regional, national and European elections were held. National unity in the face of terror was something that just wasn't feasible then, especially with a rising regional nationalist party calling for more independence.

All political parties agreed to refrain from using the attack in their final effort to influence the electorate. The attack was dealt with in an atmosphere of serenity without being openly politicized, contrary to what has been happening in Belgium since the attacks in France in January 2015. The May 2014 attack was insufficient to unite Belgium in the face of terrorism and reinforce the Belgian identity, as happened in other countries such as France. Nevertheless, the attack took on significant importance when the electorate chose a new government a day later. In the wake of the attack, people were concerned about their security and the limits of a multicultural society. The election outcome and the governmental agreement of the newly elected government were clearly influenced by the attack, multicultural problems and the need for enhanced security.

The commitment to respond to the threat from extremism and radicalization had never been so present in declarations from previous governments. But some of the proposed measures in the new agreement went well beyond the federal government's authority. Even though the May 2014 momentum was only partly exploited, it paved the way for a new direction in counterterrorism policy, though the public needed an incentive to accept the proposals. That incentive arrived in January 2015. Only days after the attacks in France, the government announced efforts to implement the governmental agreement. The combination of the attacks in France and the antiterrorist police action in Verviers delivered the momentum the government needed. Unity, however, was still lacking. Almost immediately after the government announced 12 counterterrorism measures, some coalition members expressed concerns about them.

Most of the measures can only be viewed as repressive. This focus of the federal government shouldn't come as a surprise.

Since the 1970s, Belgium has undergone a series of state reforms and constitutional adjustments, decentralizing power to its autonomous regions and communities. Many powers were passed to the regional governments. The rapid evolution of the security environment after the end of the Cold War, neglected by state reforms, has left the federal government with only a half-filled toolbox to combat extremism and terrorism. Other important tools in the fight against extremism are now allocated to regional and community governments.

After the 2014 attack, several municipalities pointed to the fact that Belgium lacked an integrated approach due to limited powers and flawed coordination with its regions. While the federal government was focusing on repressive measures and monitoring the other measures, the regional governments remained silent. After the January 2015 attack in France, however, both the Flemish and Walloon governments called for attention to their respective preventive measures in the fight against extremism. The November 2015 Paris attacks further reinforced the need for enhanced cooperation and additional measures, leading the federal government to approve an additional 18 measures. But tensions between the different communities remain; while some are calling for more independence for the regions, others are calling for the opposite — a refederalization of some powers.

The lack of a strong national Belgian identity and related positive narrative, together with high rates of unemployment and low social standing within the Muslim migrant community, can be considered factors that help explain why so many Muslim migrants have failed to integrate into Belgian society and have fallen victim to jihadi narratives. Molenbeek, a Muslim majority municipality, has gained a reputation of being a jihadi breeding ground, as evidenced by its closed micro-community. The municipality of about 100,000 people is the second poorest in the country, with the second youngest population, high unemployment and crime rates, and a nearly 10 percent annual population turnover that makes it highly transient. In such an environment, recruiters for jihad make pitches to small groups of friends and family. Residential segregation contributes to the radicalization process. The recruiters tell radicals-to-be that they don't belong in that country, that they are not wanted there, can't live there and certainly can't get a job there. In this respect, it is paramount to assimilate immigrant communities in order to prevent potential radicalization.

Recommendations

To counter terrorist narratives aimed at a Muslim audience, Belgium should first develop a credible and legitimate narrative based on a representative national identity. It is important to create a sense of belonging for different immigrant communities in order to facilitate assimilation. This Belgian national identity faces strong negative pressure from increasing regional nationalism and long-enduring cultural fault lines amongst the native population. This undermines

Flowers and candles bedeck the Place de la Bourse in Brussels to pay tribute in March 2016 to the dozens of victims from attacks just days earlier. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

the credibility and legitimacy of a single national identity on which to build a narrative. Belgium has three different options regarding the development of an identity-based narrative.

One is to delegate the authority to develop the narrative, as part of the counternarrative, to community governments built on their respective identities. The second option, and the least likely in the short term, is to use this opportunity and the need for national unity to suggest a reverse in state reforms and consider refederalizing certain powers previously devolved to the communities, especially those related to today's notion of security. The last option is to enhance and structure cooperation between the federal government and regional and community governments to develop a narrative that contains a strong unique identity while respecting the historical composition of the country. In that case, the diversity represented by the different native communities in Belgium could even be regarded as an opportunity rather than a threat.

The biggest challenge is to build a strong response and partnerships against terrorism based on unity and shared values. Now is the time for Belgium to unite in strength against terrorism. Therefore, let us simply work toward the vision expressed in Belgium's national motto: "Strength lies in unity." □

PAKISTAN COUNTERS TERRORIST NARRATIVES

A PATIENT MEDIA CAMPAIGN, COMBINED WITH DECISIVE MILITARY ACTION, IS CLEARING TERRITORY OF VIOLENT EXTREMISTS

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Narratives, in essence, are stories and have been around as far back as humans learned to communicate. Their role in statecraft is also recognized. The advent of the information revolution ensured that the checks — if not monopoly — on the flow of information enjoyed by states in the past are no longer applicable. Any person or group connected to the internet can tell their own story. Interestingly, the dawn of the information revolution coincided roughly with the rise of global terrorism, bringing into common usage the terms "narratives" and "counternarratives." It is common to hear these terms used in a homogenous sense. What is not well-understood are the complex dynamics behind terrorist narratives and the formulation of a counternarrative. To be successful, any narrative has to be embedded in an already existing "frame." Terrorists normally employ the "religious frame" that is deeply embedded in their target audience.

Pakistan's understanding of this issue has evolved. The country and its Armed Forces have been facing the full scourge of terrorism for about 15 years, resulting in huge losses and suffering. However, after a long and bitterly fought war, the tables have finally been turned upon the bastions of terror. A study of Pakistan's response at the politico-military level clearly reveals that although the terms "narratives" and "counternarratives" were not commonly used at that time, the concepts were understood and successfully applied.

ROOTS OF THE ENEMY'S NARRATIVE

To understand the dynamics of terrorist narratives in our region, it is necessary to understand the historical context. In 1979, two globe-shaking events erupted on Pakistan's western borders, namely the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These events, but primarily the Afghan jihad period of the 1980s, formed the background to Pakistan's domestic terrorist threat and its related ideology.

Occurring at the height of the Cold War, the Soviet invasion was an alarming development for the West as well as for Pakistan (for its own legitimate security reasons). A partnership gradually evolved between Pakistan and the United States — involving a large number of Western and Muslim countries — making Pakistan a front-line state in the effort against the Soviets.

A narrative of jihad with a global outreach against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was espoused. Abdullah Azzam, the chief ideologue of the Jihad Project as well as the later-to-come al-Qaida, was based in the Peshawar region from 1984 until his assassination in 1989. Although the Jihad Project achieved its intended objectives, it also formed the metanarrative of jihad, which later shaped various narratives of terrorism and extremism domestically and globally. Continuation of conflict in Afghanistan ensured that the base narrative remained alive.

The Afghan war period had a profound and lasting impact on Pakistani society. The resistance narrative obtained wide acceptance due to its legitimacy (provided by the state) and length of time (over two decades), and consequently became deeply entrenched, giving rise to extremist tendencies in society. A parallel war economy, including foreign and domestic funding, emerged and later morphed into the terror economy. The most significant effect was the destabilization of the traditional tribal system of governance in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that had served rulers admirably for more than a century. Before the Afghan conflict, Pakistan's FATA was one of its most peaceful and easily governed areas.

With 9/11 and coalition actions in Afghanistan to uproot terrorists, the geopolitical environment underwent a paradigm change. While Pakistan's foreign and domestic policies could be recalibrated to adjust to the changed environment, it was almost an insurmountable task, at least in the short term, to change established narratives and perceptions. The policy shifts by Pakistan's leadership were perceived by the public as political expediency and caving to foreign pressure.

THE REVERSAL BEGINS

Pakistan did not face serious, widespread domestic terrorism until 2001. Therefore, when the state revised its narrative, the greatest challenge it faced when communicating to the public was answering two simple questions: How could the mujahedeen of yesterday be the terrorists of today? And if jihad (holy war) against a foreign invader like Russia was legitimate, then why didn't that apply to other foreign invaders? It was difficult to explain away these questions, and the vacuum formed by this disconnect was filled by counternarratives, propaganda and conspiracy theories that bred societal confusion.

This disconnect also affected military operations. Pakistan's Army moved into the previously peaceful FATA in December 2001, initially to seal the porous border with Afghanistan and carry out selected operations against the large number of al-Qaida operatives who had fled Afghanistan. Major operations were carried out from March 2004 onward, but despite suffering a large number of casualties, the terrorists continued to expand their influence and at their peak controlled about 32 percent of the FATA and Swat, with another 31 percent of the area under contested control. This state of affairs had less to do with the Army's military capabilities and more to do with the politico-military effects of the disconnect between the state's narrative and public perceptions.

THE RED MOSQUE CRISIS

Outside of the FATA, a significant event took place in July 2007 at a mosque complex called the Lal Masjid, or Red Mosque, in the federal capital of Islamabad. Its founder, Qari Abdullah, had preached holy war during the Afghan period, later forming a close association

with al-Qaida. His two sons were clerics in 2007 and started challenging the writ of the government, calling for enforcement of Sharia and the overthrow of the government. The media criticized the government for failing to tackle the issue, and Pakistani authorities besieged the mosque July 3-10, 2007, simultaneously trying to negotiate with the militants to avoid military action. When negotiations failed on July 10, Operation Silence was launched by the Army's Special Service Group (SSG). After intense fighting, the mosque was cleared by July 11. The ferocity of the action can be judged by the 10 SSG personnel killed, the 33 wounded, and the 91 militants killed.

This action triggered an avalanche of terrorism. The same media that had demanded government action now started criticizing it. Narratives about indiscriminate military action were created, and the officers and men killed in action became controversial figures. This was extremely disturbing, because the Pakistan Army enjoys a deep societal respect and such perceptions hurt its morale. The Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, which henceforth would be the leading vehicle of terror, emerged after Lal Masjid.

Before the mosque action, 37 suicide attacks had taken place nationwide from 2002 to 2007, but after this action, in the six months between July 4 and December 27, 2007, 44 suicide attacks took place in major cities. This included an attack on an SSG base that killed 22 commandos. In terms of perceptions, Lal Masjid was the low point in Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts, in which the state, while exercising its legitimate authority, was made to appear as a brutal oppressor while the terrorists were glorified. Lal Masjid formed a key component of the terrorists' narrative until its gradual elimination, when the state's narratives became well-established during Operation Zarb-e-Azb, launched in North Waziristan in June 2014.

After this crisis, due to the huge spike in terrorism, a perception emerged that any decisive action by the state would be met with immediate and terrible reprisals, anytime and anywhere. Taking advantage of these conditions, the terrorists established a hold over the Swat region. Extremist leader Mullah Fazlullah, nicknamed "Mullah Radio," used radio communications to successfully reach the public. He rallied significant support in sections of the local population. The government, having absorbed its lessons from the Lal Masjid crisis, did not opt for immediate military action but rather undertook an elaborate exercise in which it negotiated with the militant leaders and appeared to yield to their demands for Sharia rule by signing a peace agreement on February 16, 2009.

Afterward, Fazlullah and his terrorists unleashed a wave of terror in Swat that received wide media coverage. By showing the true face of the terrorists and exposing what they meant by Sharia rule, public opinion turned against them. In late March 2009, a video emerged of a girl being flogged by the terrorists, which shifted public perceptions. The barbarity of the terrorists was firmly established in the public mind, and there was an overwhelming nationwide demand to clear Swat

Pakistanis rally in Karachi in June 2014 in support of operations against the Taliban in North Waziristan. Pakistan has successfully countered extremist narratives, earning more support from the civilian population for military action. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

of this menace. It was only then, on April 26, 2009, when proper perceptions were established, that the Army moved into Swat.

The operation, code named "Rah-e-Rast," meaning the "the Right Path," was aptly named and was a narrative in itself. Considered a classic in counterterrorism operations, Rah-e-Rast highlighted the importance of narratives and perceptions. After Swat, the Army successfully established control of the various agencies of the FATA until only North Waziristan remained. Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched in June 2014 to clear this last remaining pocket of terrorist dominance. However, by that time, the state's narrative was overwhelmingly dominant.

In the long war of narratives, the state, at great human and material cost, clearly established that this is our war, the Taliban are the enemy, and there was no way they could stand up to the Pakistan Army.

THE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

The main themes of the terrorist narratives in the period from 2001 onward can be summarized as the following:

- The West had launched a crusade against Islam; jihad was therefore mandatory for each Muslim.
- The Pakistani State is un-Islamic. Democracy is *kufr* (an infidel system) that requires replacement by Sharia.
- Pakistan's government is a U.S. ally and is attacking the Taliban at the behest of the U.S.
- Pakistan's Army is an ally of the U.S., and therefore a *murtid* (out of the fold of Islam) army. Jihad is therefore permissible against it.
- Drone attacks are done with the government's consent.
- The war on terror is a U.S. war; Pakistan is killing its own Muslim citizens.
- Media is a *fitna* (lure) that is misleading the masses.
- Western education is un-Islamic. Educating girls is haram (forbidden).

The terrorist narrative was meant to negate the very basis of the state and its system of governance. These narratives sought to portray the Taliban as true Islamic soldiers, sow confusion among Pakistani security forces and deny education to large parts of society.

In the initial period, the target audience of the terrorists was quite wide: illiterate and semi-literate people who could be easily influenced by religious arguments, literate people with religious leanings who could be persuaded to support the cause of the terrorists, and families of suspects in custody in terror-related cases. Drone attacks (with their collateral damage) were a major theme. Initially, even members of law enforcement and security forces were targeted to sow doubt that they were actually operating against fellow Muslims and ex-mujahedeen.

These narratives were spread through a variety of means. In the FATA and settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, large amounts of hate literature and CDs were easily available. Al-Qaida's sophisticated social media expertise was transferred to the Taliban. In the FATA, "night letters" and pamphlets were a feared form of communication, and noncompliance led to brutal persecution. Radio broadcasts were used successfully by Fazlullah in Swat. In the hinterlands, a new and unregulated media also served to spread the terrorist narrative through the presence of sympathizers or through intimidation. In the pre-Swat and Zarb-e-Azb period, the terrorist narrative found wider acceptance than the state's narrative, which was struggling to adapt to the new conditions. A major reason was the existence of an already established terror narrative. Continuing conflict in Afghanistan meant that the basis for such narratives remained. Perceptions of injustice to the Muslim *Ummah* (Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, the destruction of Iraq, Libya and Syria) was an overall theme that helped propagate the narrative of "Islam under threat."

THE STATE'S COUNTERNARRATIVE

Narratives belong to the cognitive domain, and counternarratives must be formulated in the same domain to be effective. Essentially, there are three psychological approaches to countering terrorist narratives. They are called the "Toward, Against and Away" approaches. In the "toward" approach, the extremist group is provided some recognition and space by engaging in negotiations or accords. This approach was used occasionally to suit tactical objectives. None of the accords negotiated with the terrorists lasted long. In the "against" approach, all-out force is employed to eliminate the terrorist groups. From 2002 until June 15, 2014, we followed a combination of the "toward" and "against" approaches, as was the requirement at the time. With the "away" approach, the terrorists and their sympathizers are treated as being of no consequence or nonentities that simply need to be eliminated. Since Operation Zarb-e-Azb, this is the only approach being followed.

The target audience for the state's narrative or counternarrative is not homogenous and can be divided into various segments. It is pyramid shaped, in which the majority population forms the base and the terrorist sympathizers, supporters, abettors and facilitators form the other end, with the hardcore terrorists at the tip. Between these segments lie the neutral element, which could be swayed either way and is therefore very important. Generally, the bulk of the general population would go along with state action in matters of terrorism. The hardcore terrorists and their facilitators cannot be persuaded by narratives alone, but require the state's deterrent and coercive powers. A defined hierarchy exists within the hardcore terrorists, with the "mastermind" at the top of the pyramid and the "fodder" at the base. The success of any counterterrorism operation can be measured not by the number of terrorists eliminated, but by analyzing which segment of the terrorist organization they belong to. A counterterror operation may eliminate some "fodder," but it wouldn't affect the organization's operations, because the fodder is easily replaceable. Counterterror operations have to hit the upper rungs to damage a terrorist organization's capability. In other words, the battle of narratives may not mean much in isolation. Belonging to the cognitive domain, narratives and counternarratives at some stage require translation into physical

actions to be effective. Inability to transition from the cognitive to the physical means a lack of results.

In Pakistan's evolutionary process of countering terrorist narratives, a clear distinction was made within the two domains. In the cognitive domain, the salient points of the counternarratives were as follows;

• This is our war (not America's war).
• Pakistan's constitution is Islamic.
• Pakistan's society and Armed Forces have made huge sacrifices to crush terrorism.
• Terrorists are foreign-funded Khwaraj/barbarians, with no linkage to Islam, who kill women and children.
• Acquiring education for males and females is an Islamic injunction.

These counternarratives clearly reject the terrorist narratives mentioned earlier. In the battle of narratives, the greatest challenge to overcome was establishing that this is our war. Once that was achieved (partially in Swat and comprehensively in Zarb-e-Azb), the identification of the terrorists as the enemy and the legitimacy of Pakistan's security forces automatically fell into place.

Much work was done to explain how the terrorists misused the Holy Quran by quoting its verses out of context. For example "kill them wherever you meet them" is one of the more well-known verses, but it was used out of context by omitting the operative first part which says "and fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you but do not transgress, surely Allah loves not the transgressors."

These verses, in the correct context, are self-explanatory. The meaning of transgression is also clear since Islam has clear codes about warfare that prohibit any excess in war and make a clear distinction between combatants and noncombatants. Therefore, the soldiers of Pakistan's Army could take pride in being Muslim soldiers and fighting against a fitna that distorted religion for its own objectives.

A boy attends Eid al-Fitr prayers at the Jamia Masjid in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in July 2016. Terrorists' false religious narratives must be countered within a religious domain. REUTERS

WINNING THE WAR

The counternarratives needed to be built upon solid foundations that could turn into convictions. Without true conviction, it was not possible to fight the level of fanaticism among the terrorists. The three main pillars of the counternarrative were the legitimacy of the state's actions, which had public support; the fighting prowess of Pakistan's Army, which left no doubt in the mind of the citizen, the soldier and the terrorist that final victory was inevitable; and finally the relegation of the terrorist as the enemy belonging to an "out group" that was creating *fasad*, or disturbing the peace and tranquility of the land. These cardinal counternarratives were aimed at rejecting the entire terrorist narrative (linked with the "away" approach) and to continually shrinking societal space for them.

Aside from the cognitive domain, the most important aspect is the physical environment, which had to provide the requisite support or authentication to the counternarrative. In the physical domain, the terrorists aimed at creating an environment of terror and fear by indiscriminate acts of killing and maiming civilians, women, children, political leaders and activists, and beheading captured soldiers. But gradually, these acts also created a feeling of revulsion.

Regarding the state's actions, Operation Zarb-e-Azb was the most high-profile response and one that greatly restored security. But there were other facets, too, such as legislation to support law enforcement operations, madrassa reforms, and improving the socio-economic conditions in the FATA through legislation and massive development. After the attack on Army Public School Peshawar on December 16, 2014, the government worked on a comprehensive national action plan to address all facets relating to terrorism. The overall effect of these actions has been that the terrorists' capacity to perpetrate mass attacks has been significantly degraded. As a result, the public's confidence in the state's capacity, especially that of the Army in providing security, has increased. With this increased sense of security, the public not only embraces the state's actions but reduces the support network for terrorists.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE

To disseminate the state's narrative, all possible mediums were and are being employed. After the army school attack, new codes of conduct were formulated for the media. Media space was denied to terrorist sympathizers who had previously confused public opinion. A countrywide network of radio stations has been established to reach distant regions. Prominent religious scholars reject the terrorist narratives and highlight the correct spirit of Islam in their talks and media appearances. The Armed Forces public relations department, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), took the lead in encouraging counternarratives in the field of film and music. After the school massacre, ISPR released a song, *Bara Dushman* (Some Enemy), in which the children challenge the terrorists. The song captured the mood of the nation and became a great hit.

The song created strategic effects in the perceptional domain, as indicated when the Taliban issued a parody of this song; it had little or no effect. ISPR produced another song on the first anniversary of the school massacre on December 16, 2015. It, too, became a hit. The sequel song's theme was "we have to educate the enemy's children." It implies that while the complete destruction of the terrorists and their ideology is certain, the state has no quarrel with their children, whom it wants to educate using the same syllabus declared haram by the terrorists. In each of the two songs, the nation's enemy has been clearly identified and called out. After years of confusion, this was no small achievement.

BEST PRACTICES

For Pakistan, reversing the metanarrative of jihad had been the greatest challenge. It has taken us 13 years and a huge cost in blood and treasure to accomplish. However, the battle of narratives is an ongoing one and requires a constant response to ensure long-term success. Here are some recommendations to keep in mind:

- Ideological or religious narratives can only be countered within their domain.
- Various segments of the target audience have to be analyzed carefully and an appropriate counternarrative designed for them. The mediums for propagation of narratives must have maximum outreach and effect.
- Media is the key to propagate narratives. Media space must be denied to terrorists and their narratives at all costs.
- Counternarratives (cognitive domain) can only be effective in the presence of matching measures/actions by the state (physical domain) and vice versa.
- Terrorism has no religious basis. Portraying terrorists as connected to Islam aids the terrorist narrative while blunting the spirit of a counternarrative.
- Maligning Islam or hurting the religious sensitivities of Muslims (e.g., films, cartoons, etc.) plays into the hands of the terrorists and extremists.
- There should be zero tolerance for extremist activities such as hate-preaching in Muslim communities in Western societies. □

WHY DO THEY JOIN?

UNDERSTANDING ISLAMIST RADICALIZATION AND RECRUITMENT IN AFRICA

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PHOTOS BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

His name was Seifeddine Rezqui, a 23-year-old engineering student from the rather ordinary town of Gaafour, 80 kilometers from Tunisia's capital, Tunis. He had a passion for football and was a Real Madrid supporter. Rezqui also had a penchant for rap music and participated in break-dance competitions. Yet Rezqui went under another name — Abu Yahya al-Qayrawani — and ISIS labeled him a "Soldier of the Caliphate." On June 26, 2015, he hid his AK-47 in an umbrella and proceeded to mow down tourists at a beach resort in Sousse, Tunisia. Thirty-eight were killed — mostly British — and scores more were injured. In the days that followed, investigators uncovered a trail of evidence pointing to the fact that Rezqui was radicalized online by ISIS social media propaganda.

For many commentators, a key to ISIS' ability to spread radical ideology is its savvy approach to social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. By June 2015, ISIS had 90,000 Twitter accounts. The use of rap music in its recruitment videos is especially appealing to young alienated youths and is a far cry from the staid videos in which the older generation of al-Qaida jihadis such as Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri delivered long sermons. To give an idea of the scale of ISIS' social media outreach, consider this: In a single week in 2015, ISIS produced 123 media releases in six languages. Of that total, 24 were videos.

The penetration of ISIS ideology even in far-away South Africa is evident in the writing of an 18-year-old from Johannesburg. Using the pseudonym of Abu Huraya al-Afriki, he wrote: "I joined the Islamic State because their aim is to establish the word of Allah (There is no God, but Allah) as the highest, and the word of Kufr (disbelief) as lowest, and this is what Allah tells us in the Quran to do. So it is a compulsory duty upon all the Muslims around the world to join the jihad." The power of ISIS social media also is evident in Nigeria, where 24,000 young people were stopped from leaving the country between January 2014 and March 2015. The majority of them, authorities feared, planned to join ISIS.

Over the past couple of years, ISIS has spawned local franchises across Africa. In Algeria, al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) commander Grouri Abdelmalik announced that he and his men were breaking away from AQIM, which, he stated, had "deviated from the true path." He sought to position his group as the Jund al-Khilafah, or Soldiers of the Caliphate, and made clear they were aligned with ISIS. In Tunisia, the Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade also split from AQIM and has pledged its allegiance to ISIS. In strife-torn Libya, meanwhile, returning ISIS members from Syria established the ISIS-aligned al-Battar Brigade. With its military successes, as witnessed with the capture of Sirte, the hometown of former Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi, this group has grown increasingly confident and has renamed itself the Islamic State of Libya (ISL). Nigeria's Boko Haram, which casts its shadow across West Africa, has aligned itself with ISIS, and there are disagreements within Somalia's al-Qaida-aligned al-Shabaab as to whether it should be part of the ISIS franchise.

This raises an intriguing question: What accounts for the spread of the radical Wahhabist-Salafist ideology of ISIS, with its emphasis on hatred for other religions and forms of Islam, while the majority of African Muslims are actually Sufi in orientation?

Two young Islamic extremist group recruits in northern Mali read Quranic verses during a press event in 2012.

Sufi brotherhoods (*tariqa* in Arabic) stress the need to bridge the gap between God and man through love and knowledge of the true inner self. This form of the Islamic faith is more personal and more emotional, stressing the love of God as opposed to the fear of God. Moreover, Sufi Islam has long coexisted with the richness of pre-Islamic folk customs, which, of course, added to its popularity.

The answer is that, for years, charities operating in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been funding Islamist extremism in Africa and eroding the appeal of Sufism. Consider the thousands of students who have traveled over the years to further their Islamic studies at such institutions of higher learning as Al-Azhar in Egypt, Al-Uzai in Lebanon, the University of Damascus in Syria and scores of such institutions in Saudi Arabia. It has been noted that most of these students upon their return to their respective countries are more radical than those who remained behind. Indeed, according to John Yoh in his book *Reflections on Afro-Arab Relations: An African Perspective*: "Most of the students from Africa who studied in the Middle East are accused of being behind the religious conflicts that have been going on in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania. … It is this group of students that is considered to be the source of the Islamic radicalism in Africa. Some of these groups are said to be connected with Islamic organizations operating in Africa under the guise of religious agencies."

Students, however, are not the only conduit for radical thought entering Africa. The annual pilgrimage that sees tens of thousands of Africans going to Mecca can serve as a conduit for the spread of radical Islam. In West Africa, the introduction of Wahhabi classics such as *An Explanation of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's Kitab al Tawhid* (The Book about the Oneness of God) by Abd al-Rahman al-Sadi had such a profound impact on al-Qaida-aligned extremists in Mali that they took inspiration from the title of this book to name themselves the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa. Under the circumstances, should we be surprised when groups like Boko Haram rant against secular states, or the extremists of Ansar al-Dine and al-Shabaab violently tear down Sufi shrines in Mali and Somalia? The recent penetration of ISIS ideology into Africa is a logical outgrowth of these developments.

Islamic extremists have exploited the deteriorating economic and political conditions in African countries to expand their reach among the disaffected. Because of their superior organization (relative to the ineptitude and corruption of many government bureaucracies), their use of volunteers, and their access to funds from the Gulf states, Salafists have been able to step in and assist desperate communities across Africa. In Mali, for instance, extreme Islamists and their grass-roots economic development have been able to establish mosques, modern schools, clinics, pharmacies and cultural centers since the 1980s. In the process they have won the loyalty of citizens in these areas.

A good example of a group exploiting economic conditions can be seen in the emergence of the Lebanese terrorist movement and Iranian-funded Hezbollah (Party of God) on the African continent. As U.S. Army Maj. James Love notes in his incisive *Hezbollah: Social Services as a Source of Power* (2010), Hezbollah's tried and tested modus operandi is used on the African continent to great effect. Fledgling Hezbollah cells use subtle infiltration techniques to gain access to an area without drawing attention. They gain the trust of the local populace by conducting charity fundraising activities and other social welfare programs. This resonates with Africa's poor, whose own politicians seem unresponsive to the needs of their citizens and are more concerned with accumulating wealth. Having gained the trust of the locals, the Hezbollah cell commences to recruit from the local population, allowing the cell to begin operations. Cells can operate only after they have built a popular support base.

Another factor undermining tolerant Sufism and bolstering the appeal of radical Islam is the close cooperation between Sufi orders and the respective authorities, with many Sufi leaders receiving financial benefits from government. The proximity of Sufi leaders to generally corrupt and authoritarian governments caused them to lose credibility and popularity in the eyes of ordinary citizens and formed the basis of vehement attacks on them by hardline Islamists. Consequently, moderate Sufi Islam could not serve as a bulwark to radical Islam because the Sufi leadership was perceived to be an extension of a corrupt state.

In similar fashion, other Muslim organizations aiming to foster peace and tolerance between faiths were tarnished on account of their proximity to an often predatory and authoritarian state. In Nigeria in the 1980s, an Advisory Committee of Religious Affairs representing Muslims and Christians was established to mitigate religious tensions. Similar structures came into being across the continent: the Supreme Council of Muslims in Tanzania, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council, the Rwandan Muslim Association and the Muslim Association of Malawi. Few of these have been able to mitigate sectarian strife. Because of their perceived ties to regimes viewed as illegitimate, those Muslims who participate in these structures were viewed as co-opted. The fact that these Muslims often defended the incumbent governments merely served to reinforce this perception. With moderate Muslims discredited, it left the door open for extremists to spread their message of hate.

Looking forward, what can be done to reduce radicalization and recruitment of Africans into the fold of militant Islam? First, more can be done to disrupt ISIS' social media outreach by bringing down

An armed man from the group Ansar al-Dine issues instructions over a bullhorn in the central square of Timbuktu, Mali, before a public lashing.

Twitter accounts and taking off their gruesome YouTube videos, as well as robust efforts at countermessaging. Although efforts are underway to do this, it needs to be more aggressive. Second, more pressure needs to be placed on Gulf countries to stop funding Wahhabist and Salafist forms of Islam on the continent. It is disconcerting that countries in which extremist ideology is allowed to flourish, including Saudi Arabia, continue to receive support from Western countries.

In addition, more needs to be done on the part of African states to strengthen moderate, tolerant Sufi Islam so it can serve as a bulwark to the Salafist juggernaut. However, a Sufi Islam uncritical of the West and serving as praise singers for incumbent governments will only serve to undermine Sufism further and reinforce radical viewpoints. What is needed is a Sufi Islam that articulates the concerns of ordinary Muslims even when those concerns mean criticizing incumbent governments. Where moderate Muslims prop up corrupt governments, it will only serve to further delegitimize moderate forces.

Extremism also spreads on the continent in the context of rapacious state elites who are more concerned about their own personal wealth than about the lot of ordinary citizens. In this context, Islamic extremist groups provide a number of short-term solutions to increase the security of citizens — clinics, schools, food and money. In the process, they gain support for their cause. As the international community aims to assist African governments with training their security forces and providing military equipment to fight the likes of al-Shabaab, so too must it use that assistance to pressure African governments to be more responsive to ordinary citizens' needs, thereby denying extremists the grievances they exploit for their own nefarious ends. □

Countering Terrorist Narratives in Kazakhstan

The Country Employs a Multidisciplinary Approach

By Dr. Irina Chernykh

Chief research fellow, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies

The set of narratives and structure of the discourse in Kazakhstan are shaped by two factors:

- **Kazakhstan's place in the current system of international relations:** Kazakhstan is on the periphery of international relations and is a small state pursuing a multivector policy.
- **Kazakhstan is a weak state:** It lacks a unified discourse space. Rather than follow the center-periphery model, power structures in Central Asian countries are built around a multiplicity of centers that compete with each other to maintain and protect their dominance. Each social group that acts as one of the many power centers, be it an ethnic, religious or pressure group, strives to increase its own security.

Kazakhstan's peripheral position and relatively recent statehood ensure that narratives produced by world and regional powers are superimposed over the local narratives. As a result, many ideas of key importance in Kazakhstan are actually generated abroad and are simply reproduced in the discourses that take place in the country.

TERRORISM IN KAZAKHSTAN

Counterterrorism narratives in Kazakhstan are shaped by its image as a stable nation that has not suffered serious acts of terrorism that would resonate regionally or globally. At the national level, only a handful of events have been recognized as acts of terrorism by law enforcement agencies and the judiciary:

- A number of acts of violence in 2011 (failed bombings in Atyrau on October 31 and the suicide attack in Taraz on November 12 that killed seven).
- A series of Soldiers of the Caliphate videos posted online, containing demands for changes to Kazakhstan's religious activities legislation.

These events were all somehow linked to the Law on Religious Activities and Religious Organizations, approved in 2011 and designed to strengthen state control over religious activities in the country.

There are also "hidden" activities such as financing of terrorism, incitement of terrorism, measures taken by special forces to prevent acts of terrorism, and so on. These activities normally fly under the radar and do not shape counterterrorism narratives.

Acts of terrorism, with links to Kazakhstan, that take place abroad are also addressed in the discussion of foreign terrorist fighters fighting in Syria (primarily as part of the so-called Islamic State). The subject of terrorist fighters from Kazakhstan took the spotlight in 2013 when photo and video footage of 150 Kazakh militants fighting in Syria was posted online. The total number of militants who left Kazakhstan for Syria is estimated at 250-400. Although these numbers cannot be viewed as significant, militants from Kazakhstan are actively used in Islamic State (IS) propaganda:

- In videos posted online, militants from Central Asia are almost exclusively from Kazakhstan.

• IS highlights the presence of Kazakh women and children to promote the idea that the "state" is composed of multiple generations and capable of imparting its values to future generations.

The fact that a significant number of militants moved from Kazakhstan to the Syrian conflict zone with their families may indicate that they do not intend to return and do not see Kazakhstan as part of their future.

Kazakhstan currently has two main strategies for dealing with extremist violence and terrorism:

1. Use of violent military action to eliminate the enemy physically.
2. Preventive measures to make it impossible for terrorist structures to function properly — primarily preventive population outreach measures.

The Kazakh government's guiding principle is that military action alone, undertaken without additional measures, cannot produce results in the fight against terrorism, and it may lead to even more dangerous outcomes, since it does not eliminate the conditions that produce acts of terrorism. This principle serves as the stepping stone for the country's transition from the concept of terrorism in its counterterrorism narratives to the more encompassing concept of radicalization.

RADICALIZATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

Today, the term "radicalization" is widely used. The concept draws its popularity from its descriptive nature in terms of causes of terrorism and the factors that drive acts of terrorism. Starting in 2004, and especially in 2005, after the Madrid and London attacks respectively, the term "radicalization" took center stage in the analysis of terrorism and counterterrorism policies.

In Kazakhstan, the term radicalization came into relatively systematic use in 2011, when the country was shaken by a series of violent acts, most of which were interpreted as terrorism by the public and experts. For example, on July 4, 2011, the television channel Stan.tv showed a video titled *Kazakhstan: the threat of Islamic radicalization* and dedicated to the attack on police forces in Aktobe. On November 22, 2012, First Deputy Prosecutor General Iogan Merkel highlighted religious radicalization in Kazakhstan during the International Conference on Counter-Terrorism. By the mid-2010s, the term radicalization had secured its place in the political, academic and journalistic vocabulary.

Today, we can distinguish between two groups of factors behind radicalization in Kazakhstan: internal and external. Internal factors may include:

• Issues of identity and the desire to protect it.
• Alienation and marginalization (primarily among youth).
• Social inequality and desperation due to lack of prospects.
• Low quality of life among specific social classes.
• Discrimination and degradation combined with moral outrage and a desire for revenge.
• Low literacy levels (primarily religious literacy).
• Corruption.
• Dissatisfaction with the political situation.

Special forces are part of Kazakhstan's integrated plan to counter terrorism.

External radicalization factors in Kazakhstan play out on two levels:

1. **Global** — Related to the politics and rhetoric of the global superpowers, as well as proliferation of ideologies promoted by global extremist groups such as al-Qaida and IS.
2. **Regional** — Related to the situation in neighboring countries and the ability of radical ideologies to cross the borders into Kazakhstan. Additionally:
   - **The Afghanistan factor:** Although the two countries do not share a border, it is believed that radical ideas could be exported from Afghanistan to Kazakhstan.
   - **Instability in the neighboring nations** of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

The main factor that drives radicalization at the international level is ideological pressure applied by external groups involved in the conflict.

COUNTERTERRORISM NARRATIVES

Counterterrorism narratives in Kazakhstan are constructed on the foundation of pertinent legislation that regulates the country's counterterrorist activities. The laws in this sphere are quite exhaustive and require only a small amount of tweaking. There is also the State Programme on Combating Religious Extremism and Terrorism for 2013-2017, which establishes a set of measures designed to reduce conditions that promote religious extremism and terrorism, and provides a platform for ongoing improvements in the functioning of state agencies.

Institutions that shape counterterrorism narratives in Kazakhstan can be divided into two groups:

1. **Secular** (Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, Agency for Religious Affairs, Anti-Terror Center under the National Security Committee, nongovernmental organizations, Centers for the Study of Religion, secondary and higher education institutions, mass media).
2. **Religious** (Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan, local imams).

Members of other religious structures such as the Kazakhstan Metropolitan District of the Russian Orthodox Church, are not invited to participate in shaping counterterrorism narratives, since it is generally assumed in Kazakhstan that extremism and terrorism are the exclusive purview of Islam.

ASSEMBLY OF THE PEOPLE OF KAZAKHSTAN (APK)

As an advisory body under the president, the APK is among the key structures that shape and promote ideas of spiritual unity, foster and strengthen ties of friendship between nations, ethnicities and confessions, and uphold social stability. In fact, counterterrorism narratives are formed as part of the Concept of Strengthening and Developing Kazakhstani Identity and Unity (2015), which can be boiled down to the following examples:

- Kazakhstani identity and unity are built on the foundation of our shared values based on cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity.
- Kazakhstani identity and unity is a continuous intergenerational process based on the fact that each citizen, regardless of ethnicity, has linked his or her destiny and future with Kazakhstan. Our society is united by a shared past, a shared present and a shared responsibility for the future. We share one nation and one Motherland: an independent Kazakhstan.

COMMITTEE FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

The Committee for Religious Affairs under the Ministry of Culture and Sport designs and implements state policies devised to protect freedom of religion and work with religious organizations, develops proposals for improving relevant legislation, conducts appropriate educational outreach measures, analyzes the religious situation in the country and maintains expertise on religious literature.

Educational outreach groups focused on protecting freedom of religion and preventing radicalization provide channels for disseminating counterterrorism narratives, along with cultural and educational online resource e-islam.kz and a telephone hotline for issues related to religion. Religious experts also monitor internet resources for extremist content and block offending websites. The committee reports that more than 7,000 websites were analyzed in 2015, and 177 extremist resources were discovered and referred to court.

Examples of counterterrorism narratives produced by the Committee for Religious Affairs can be found in statements from Chairman Galym Shoikin:

- "From the very beginning, our country found the only correct answer: secularism, which allows members of different ethnicities and confessions to live in peace and accord."
- "All religious associations have equal rights and equal responsibilities, and regardless of their faith, are equally accountable for unlawful actions as prescribed by law."

SPIRITUAL ADMINISTRATION OF MUSLIMS OF KAZAKHSTAN (SAMK)

Traditional Islam is represented by the SAMK. With its roots in the Soviet period, SAMK currently serves as a national Islamic religious association with branches in every region of the country. The following measures provide channels for disseminating counterterrorism narratives:

- Development of the country's own system of theological education (with 10 madrassas and one university).
- An attestation and further professional training system for the country's imams, which includes clarification of the country's religion legislation and specific steps to prevent dissemination of extremist ideologies (1,400 imams went through this training in 2015).
- National and regional educational outreach groups that work with the country's religious population.
- Publication of religious educational materials (41 titles in 2015) and websites (www.muftyat.kz, www.muslim.kz).

Examples of counterterrorism narratives can be found in

"We cannot file each woman in a hijab and each man with a beard under the label 'potential terrorist.' It's not what's on your head but what's in your head that's important."

Kazakh Muslims pray outside a mosque in Almaty during the Eid al-Adha holiday. Traditional mosques aid in countering radicalization in Kazakhstan.

Security personnel congregate at the site of a shootout in Boraldai, Kazakhstan, that killed five suspected militants and two security officers in December 2011. A series of terrorist attacks that year served as a wake-up call on the dangers of radicalization to Kazakhstan .

the statements of the Supreme Mufti of Kazakhstan Erzhan Kazy Malgazhyuly:

- "We cannot say religion is separate from the state, because the state is made up of society, and society is inconceivable without religion. ... Religion is separate from politics. That's what we must clarify. Religion must not be involved in politics. It must not be used as a means to achieve political goals."
- "Our ancestors ... had only one goal: to preserve the nation."

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Several NGOs focused on preventing and counteracting violent extremism and terrorism operate in Kazakhstan. These organizations work with various focus groups:

- Convicts serving prison terms for participation in religious extremism and terrorism (Akniet).
- Religious Muslims (at the jamaat, mosque and family level; Shapagat, Ansar, Nurly, Bilim).
- Youth (Citizens' Alliance, Association of Centres for the Study of Religion).
- Victims of violence, women (Center for Victims of Destructive Religious Movements).
- Examples of counterterrorism narratives can be found in the statements of the Director of the Association

of Centres for Victims of Destructive Religious Movements, Yulia Denisenko:

- "We cannot file each woman in a hijab and each man with a beard under the label 'potential terrorist.' It's not what's on your head but what's in your head that's important."
- "People don't come to the jihad: They escape into it."

SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

These are the central institutions in the effort to prevent radicalization and violent extremism, as well as to promote counterterrorism narratives. To use this tool effectively, the country is undergoing a shift in the concept of religious education, designed to improve the population's religious literacy. For example, Introduction to Religious Studies, a required secondary school class, has been transformed into Introduction to Secularism and Religious Studies.

Seminars for secondary and higher education students designed to prevent radicalization are held regularly, along with religious education outreach, formation of an academic knowledge base, and inoculation against destructive ideologies presented as religion and critical thinking skills. Today, the most pressing challenge in this sphere is a shortage of qualified experts in the field of religion. To address this problem,

Policemen detain a suspect from an armed attack on a police station in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in July 2016. The attack by Islamist militants killed three policemen and one civilian.

the government has allocated funds for the training of religious studies experts (in 2014-2015, 82 grants were offered for professional education in religious studies, 150 grants for Islamic studies, and 15 for theology).

MASS MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The professional journalism community has developed a code of ethics for media reporting on acts of terrorism and extremism. The general principles outlined in the code are: to support victims of terrorism, the state and law enforcement in fighting terrorism, and to unequivocally denounce the actions of terrorists. The Bloggers' Alliance of Kazakhstan tracks cases of dissemination of extremist and terrorist ideologies on social media, and the results are referred to court to block these destructive internet resources. In addition, a three-part documentary about the situation in Syria was produced based on interviews with former militants from Kazakhstan who fought in the Syrian conflict zone and were convicted for their unlawful actions. The documentary was broadcast several times on TV in Kazakhstan and, judging by feedback from viewers and experts, had a serious emotional impact on the country's population.

CONCLUSIONS

Counterterrorism narratives produced in Kazakhstan are primarily designed to change the behavior of radicalized individuals, rather than their mentality. These narratives are more cost-effective and are aimed at alienating radicalized individuals and encouraging them only to imitate "normal" behavior. On the other hand, no measures can solve the problem of radicalization once and for all. Radicalization, as well as deradicalization, is a process unique to each individual, with different factors influencing each specific case. Therefore, proactive measures designed to change the attitudes and convictions of people in particularly vulnerable and high-risk groups, and consequently prevent radicalization, are more effective in the long run. Some of the areas particularly crucial for a proactive approach to preventing radicalization are:

- Regular analysis of the current situation and continuous monitoring of the level of radicalization in the country, as well as work with particularly vulnerable, high-risk groups.
- Measures designed to assimilate particularly vulnerable high-risk groups into the larger society.
- More active involvement of women's organizations in the campaign to prevent radicalization and promote deradicalization. □
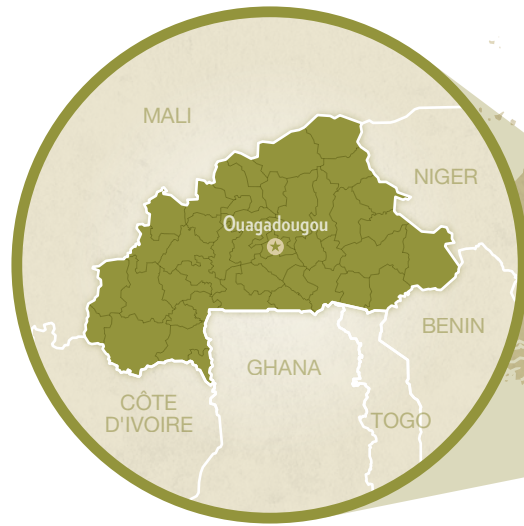
FIGHTING TERRORISM
IN BURKINA FASO

The West African nation seeks to create a comprehensive counterterror strategy

By **Maj. Djomagne Didier Yves Bamouni**

Terrorism and violent extremism have been prevalent in West Africa since the beginning of the Malian crisis in 2012. Among Sahelian countries such as Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Chad, Burkina Faso has remained safe from violent terrorism until recently — which may be attributed to its perceived role as a mediator.

Since 2015, terrorist groups such as al-Mourabitoun and the Macina Liberation Front, located in northern Mali, have started targeting Burkina Faso. The worst attack took place in the capital, Ouagadougou, on January 15, 2016, and claimed 33 people, including the three terrorists. Experts believe that more violent terrorist acts will take place in the region. Consequently, Burkina Faso must adapt its counterterror strategy, to be enforced by a joint counterterrorism agency.

Burkina Faso already uses a variety of kinetic and nonkinetic approaches when dealing with terrorism and violent extremism, employing different instruments of national power and social tools. But these approaches are not part of a comprehensive strategy.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN BURKINA FASO

Terrorism and violent extremism are recent security challenges for Burkina Faso. In November 2014, the country went through a popular uprising that removed President Blaise Compaore

from office. He was concurrently the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mediator in the Mali crisis. The country was then ruled by a transitional body that also lost leverage in the political resolution of the Malian crisis.

Manifestations of terrorism in Burkina Faso have been threefold. First, the number of violent terrorist acts have increased in northern Mali — a development that is now impacting the security of Burkina Faso. In April 2015, a Romanian mining company worker was abducted in the northern part of the country, and a security officer was killed when trying to intervene. In August and October 2015, security outposts were hit in Oursi, in northern Burkina Faso, and Samorogouan, in the west. In January 2016, a restaurant and a hotel in Ouagadougou were stormed by terrorists. More recently, in September and October 2016, other security outposts were attacked in Koutougou, Intangom and Markoye in the north. The al-Mourabitoun group of Moktar Belmoktar and the Macina Liberation Front of Amadoun Kouffa — both affiliated with al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) — are suspected to have conducted these attacks.

Secondly, radicalization hotspots have been found in certain areas. For example, a little sect in Bobo Dioulasso has been practicing a religious doctrine similar to Salafism. And some Sunni mosques practice a strict Islam, including

the rejection of Western culture. However, in both cases, they have not openly called for jihad. So far, one jihadist group has clearly emerged and carried out the attack at Samorogouan. The group is believed to include up to 30 former members of the Islamic police in Timbuktu during the occupation of North Mali by terrorist groups. The group is now dismantled with most of its leaders in custody in Mali and Burkina Faso. The results of a recent study were discussed in June 2016 in Ouagadougou by researchers, security practitioners and civil society. They all acknowledge the structural problems and enabling factors that prevail in Burkina Faso. This radicalization is Islamic and occurs in mosques and the countryside with the assistance of foreign predators who sometimes use money to attract poor people. Since 2013, 425 foreign predators have been registered by the Security Services. There are also reports of the preaching of extremist views in rural areas in the southern and eastern parts of the country. This threat should be taken seriously, considering that 60.5 percent of Burkina Faso's population is Muslim.

Third, there is no evidence of mass recruiting of young Burkinabe fighters by jihadist groups. However, some known jihadist fighters bear names that are common in Burkina Faso. Mainly, they are young Burkinabe who have studied in Arab countries such as Egypt, Sudan and Syria. They return to Burkina Faso after completing their studies, but find few job opportunities, in part because the public administration is not prepared to employ

Arab speakers since the official language is French. Recently, some of these foreign fighters were arrested by the Burkinabe security services while preparing an attack on Côte d'Ivoire soil. Boubacar Sawadogo, another Ansar al-Dine South leader, was arrested in May 2016 by Mali security services.

COUNTERTERROR TOOLS

Burkina Faso does not yet have a well-established and comprehensive strategy for countering violent extremism and fighting terrorism. However, it uses a variety of tools to protect the country. When confronted by the recent attack in Ouagadougou, these tools enabled a stronger security response.

At the diplomatic level, the country is part of the African Union and ECOWAS. Burkina Faso Armed Forces are part of the ECOWAS Standby Force, and multilateral exercises have been conducted under that heading. Additionally, security and military cooperation with neighboring countries is paramount and is specified in Burkina Faso's defense policy. The country, therefore, has excellent security and military cooperation relationships with neighboring countries at both the strategic and local levels.

This strong security cooperation was demonstrated in the investigation of the terrorist attacks in Ouagadougou, Bamako in Mali, and Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire through efficient information sharing that led to the arrest of suspects in all three countries. This cooperation was recently strengthened with the emergence of the G5 Sahel Group — a political grouping of Sahelian countries that includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. This has allowed for improved information

Soldiers investigate the site of a terrorist attack at the Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in January 2016. Al-Qaida terrorists occupied the luxury hotel and took hostages. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

sharing and the creation of joint border operations. Moreover, Burkina Faso has increased security and military cooperation with strategic partners such as France, Taiwan and the United States. This cooperation includes new foreign bases, training, equipment programs and joint operations.

Huge strides have been taken in military and security measures against terrorism since the start of the Mali crisis. The Burkina Faso Army was part of the first African-led International Support Mission to Mali, which aimed to stop armed terrorist, criminal and insurgent groups in Mali and prevent the spread of these groups to southern countries. Currently, Burkina Faso is the largest troop contributor in Mali, with 1,742 troops deployed, excluding the 140 new Formed Police Unit personnel deployed in June 2016 in Gao. In addition, a counterterror task force was deployed in northern Burkina Faso, successfully deterring offensive action against the country and helping to manage a huge number of refugees — 33,000 have poured in from Mali. With the support of strategic partners, Burkina Faso has developed a number of special units within the Army, the gendarmerie and the police. They have improved their hostage rescue, neutralization of explosives and investigation skills. Police controls have also been increased in cities and on roads. As part of community policing, local security initiatives have emerged, including the development of local vigilance groups. These groups, composed of people of mixed ages, have helped provide early warning to the security forces.

Intelligence networks have effectively protected the country. This working information network has helped allied countries rescue hostages and prevent terrorist actions. The liberation of Canadian diplomat Robert Fowler in 2008 and Swiss missionary Beatrice Stockly in 2012 are examples. The intelligence network's effectiveness was proven again in 2014 at the crash

The Cafe Capuccino and the Splendid Hotel, in Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, were attacked in January 2016, leaving 33 dead just weeks after an attack on a luxury hotel in Bamako, Mali. GETTY IMAGES

site of an Algerian airliner in northern Mali. The national intelligence structure consists of intelligence services within the Army, the gendarmerie and the police. In addition, a Homeland Intelligence Coordination Center was created in 2011 with the objective of merging internal intelligence, allowing the ministry of security to be more effective. External intelligence was directed by the office of the head of state. The entire intelligence structure was closely overseen by the office of the president. The president's military chief of staff was in charge of oversight. However, the political instability in Burkina Faso that led to the departure of President Compaore negatively impacted this structure. To fill the gap and centralize intelligence cells, a National Intelligence Agency was recently created. The agency has recently become operational under its newly designated head.

At the legislative and judiciary levels, the 2009 anti-terrorism law was updated in December 2015 to reflect increasing threats. The new law broadened the definition of terrorist acts to include some criminal acts that intend to influence the government and create fear in the population, preparatory acts and activities that support terrorism. Other changes included the lengthening of detention periods, the use of special investigative techniques such as surveillance and the elimination of time restrictions for search operations in cases involving terrorism. A special anti-terrorism court was created in Ouagadougou, but it needs to be operationalized. As part of this process, representatives of the judiciary met in May 2016 to develop specialized anti-terrorism jurisdictions. Other legislative initiatives include the creation in December 2014 of the National Observatory of Religious Events. This body, composed of representatives of the government and the

different religions, was designed to monitor religious discourses and to promote interreligious dialogue and tolerance.

The economy plays a vital role in countering violent extremism. The country's political leadership announced it would like to distribute wealth more equally through development programs. One noteworthy initiative is the annual development and infrastructure program that coincides with the celebration of Independence Day on December 11. Started in 2008, it consists of the government acknowledging the needs of local communities. For example, the government will consult with the local population and implement a new development project to realize the community's goals. This initiative has allowed the government to develop remote cities and thereby diminish local grievances. As of now, six cities have benefited. Other development projects include youth employment, farm production and empowering women.

The social background of the country plays the most important role in countering violent extremism — this needs to be recognized and strengthened. Burkina Faso enjoys a peaceful social environment driven by social cohesion and dialogue. Burkinabe don't identify themselves through religion, race or color, but rather through ethnicity. Fortunately, many conflict resolution tools exist among ethnic groups. Two, among others, are joking relationships and the predominance of notables. This culture of joking allows two individuals or groups to engage in unusually free verbal or physical interactions. Notables are respected and wise people who traditionally wield large influence in society. Both of these tools can be used to reinforce national cohesion. Education needs to be updated to strengthen the national identity of "upright people," to what it was during the revolutionary period. Burkina Faso actually means "country of upright people."

THE FUTURE

Burkina Faso shares borders with six nations, making cooperation key for its survival and for fighting terrorism. Military and security cooperation already exist but they need to be strengthened. In fact, the G5 Sahel initiative can be extended to other neighboring countries, including Senegal and Nigeria — the whole entity being the first line of defense against the spread of terrorism from north to south. Significant military and security improvements have taken place since the beginning of this initiative. Burkina Faso is more likely to plan and conduct joint operations in areas of interest and share information with other G5 countries. In this regard, the country has developed or resumed previous communications networks at strategic and tactical levels. Quarterly coordination meetings and chiefs of defense staff meetings are each held in rotating capital cities. And most important, G5 militaries now train with counterparts in other countries, building

Roch Marc Christian Kabore, president of Burkina Faso, visits the bomb-damaged Splendid Hotel.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

interoperability and trust. The contribution of strategic partners cannot be overlooked and needs to be reinforced as well.

Education programs should include violent extremism awareness programs and build a sense of human and Burkinabe values, such as uprightness, fighting corruption, hard work and tolerance, and promote Burkinabe history and culture. In that regard, Speaker of Parliament Dr. Salifou Diallo inaugurated the international conference on the prevention of violent extremism held by the West African Organization for Muslim Youth in Ouagadougou from August 16 to 18, 2016. He noted that education is a key to solving violent extremism. Working with families, especially mothers, has proven to be effective in many places and should be adopted in Burkina Faso. It strengthens family relationships and develops a sense of common responsibility. In short, mothers need to be aware of their roles in creating a better society where extremism cannot take root. The department of women's promotion is ideal to run such a project. Development projects need to be reinforced as well. The existing initiative of celebrating Independence Day with development programs should be extended to remote localities after being completed in the 13 regional capitals.

Fighting terrorism and countering violent extremism in Burkina Faso require more than cooperation and strong social cohesion. It requires a unified purpose and a comprehensive action plan. Taking advantage of ongoing security and defense sector reforms, the comprehensive approach to fighting terrorism and countering violent extremism can be strengthened and adopted. This strategy should include establishment of a joint counterterrorism agency with stakeholders ranging from security practitioners to lawyers, civil society organizations, and religious and traditional leaders. This institution will help get government agencies and the population on board in the fight against terrorism and extremism. It will signal to the population the importance of this fight and reassure citizens that the government is taking action. This strategy needs to be publicized so that everyone is included and acknowledges the objectives and courses of action.

In conclusion, although Burkina Faso does not have a well-established and comprehensive strategy to fight terrorism and counter violent extremism, it does use a variety of instruments that have proven to be effective. However, certain areas need attention. The importance of cooperation is paramount, since terrorism recognizes no borders. Development programs should be widened, with more emphasis on the country's youth, which constitute more than half of the population. To achieve long-term security, resilience should be built through strengthening Burkinabe social cohesion and national identity. This goal is difficult or impossible without a comprehensive strategy run by a joint counterterrorism agency. □
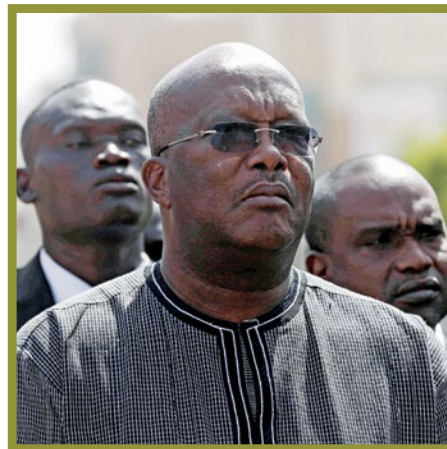
Discussing
JIHAD

Innovative counterterrorism messaging devised by U.S. Army cadets could help change the minds of would-be extremists

By 2nd Lt. Anna Juliano, U.S. Army

Let's Talk Jihad is a counternarrative campaign created and managed by United States Military Academy (USMA) cadets that aims to communicate with would-be radicals before they turn to terrorism. The campaign provides a model for how counternarrative initiatives can use social media marketing principles to reach their target audience. The benefit of these insights is their potential to improve messaging as it relates to two major issues: the volume advantage that terrorist organizations have in online content production, and the difficulty that traditional counternarrative initiatives have addressing populations most vulnerable to terrorist messaging.

THE ISLAMIC STATE'S METHODS

The context of these issues is familiar to counterterrorism practitioners. The Islamic State (IS), the most active and threatening terrorist organization of the day, has a wide reach that has increasingly manifested itself as satellite soldiers acting on behalf of the group to conduct attacks in their respective countries. The IS publicizes violent attacks in support of its ideology, implying that the attacks are prompted by believers' support of truths deemed so critical that they are worthy of self-sacrifice. However, as knowing individuals point out, perpetrators of attacks are often only loosely associated with the IS. An understanding of radicalized individuals' profiles suggests that a propensity to radicalize may actually be the result of the susceptibility of some individuals to "bandwagoning" and the psychological benefits that it provides.

The IS uses a sophisticated online strategy to spread its message and recruit people. As U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden pointed out in a speech at the 2016 USMA commencement ceremony: "The bad thing about advanced technology is that it gives immense power to stateless actors." A centralized IS media branch distributes professionally produced content that is then spread through various social media channels by a network of recruiters. The social media accounts of recruiters have audiences of sublevel recruiters that share the content with their own audiences. In this way, the visibility of the terrorist message can grow exponentially. Reaching massive audiences with a large volume of content is fundamental to the IS recruiting strategy, which is the systematic profiling and exploitation of vulnerable individuals who may ultimately become radicalized in support of the group.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO EXTREMISM

Given that social media is a primary recruiting ground for the IS, as a medium for marketing ideas, it deserves

PER CONCORDIAM ILLUSTRATION

Iraq is trying to halt internet service in areas under Islamic State occupation to suppress its propaganda machine.

equivalent attention in counternarrative efforts. The U.S. Department of State's Peer 2 Peer (P2P): Challenging Extremism competition embraces the notion that counterterrorism should focus on producing a competitive volume of messaging material on the internet. The competition is led by the department with support from other government agencies and managed by Edventure Partners, a private company that specializes in recruiting universities for project partnerships. University students create a simulated marketing agency with Edventure Partners as the client. The agency focuses on researching a defined target audience, creating a plan, and mobilizing a campaign using a real budget of $2,000 over the course of an academic term. The fall 2015 iteration of P2P, in which Let's Talk Jihad was a competitor, had 45 participating schools from around the world. This level of participation means a notable increase in the spread of counternarrative messages online. Another important outcome of the competition is that the competition judges, including representatives from U.S. government agencies, were able to review unique counternarrative strategies from which they could draw ideas.

Let's Talk Jihad shows that the P2P model of interagency cooperation, partnerships with private companies and collaboration with universities can produce real counterterrorism results. The military cadets who created the campaign identified their target audience as American youth at risk of becoming radicalized, whom they termed "fence sitters." This target audience was selected because of its underserved status in most previous counternarrative campaigns that spoke directly to either those who were already against extremism or those who were extremists with deeply rooted beliefs. The campaign was designed to reach a nonradicalized audience that is most vulnerable to terrorist messaging, and to do so in a way that the reasons for their potential interest in the IS were addressed.

How can we prevent at-risk youth from joining the IS? The answer requires a deeper understanding of fence sitters. These are both Muslim and non-Muslim men and women looking for tangible answers to controversial questions during difficult stages of their lives. Loneliness, revenge, depression, and a desire for adventure and purpose are all reasons that someone might sit on the symbolic fence of radicalization. The defining characteristic of fence sitters is their desire for a means to connect and ask questions, which is what makes them so vulnerable to attentive IS recruiters. Fence sitters are often isolated individuals who turn to the internet for answers. With this profile in mind, the Let's Talk Jihad team established four goals for their campaign that they hypothesized would help prevent fence sitters from joining the IS.

1. Create a legitimate opportunity for those at risk to have serious but moderate conversations.
2. Nurture an online community that identifies the needs of individuals and tailors discussion to those needs.
3. Create a space for anonymous discussion that allows autonomy to explore, ask and learn.
4. Encourage healthy alternatives to radicalization by providing expert mentorship along with freedom of expression.

COUNTERNARRATIVE STRATEGY

Let's Talk Jihad determined that an unconventional approach to marketing would be necessary to accomplish the outlined goals. The team's research led them to select inbound marketing as their strategy for reaching fence sitters through search engines and social media. Inbound marketing is a principle that was described by Harvard Business School and popularized by the marketing company Hub Spot. In the context of the Let's Talk Jihad counternarrative campaign, fence sitters who were otherwise difficult to identify independently chose to become part of the campaign audience. This was accomplished by creating a community with some of the same benefits that fence sitters might receive through interactions with the IS, but without the extremism.

To illustrate this principle, imagine that a young person is frustrated with his life and desires change. He goes on the internet and spends time on Facebook and Twitter, in particular. He has few friends online but even fewer within his own community. He is looking for excitement, to feel wanted and important. Having heard about the IS in the news, this young person may go to a search engine to type "What is life like in the Islamic State?" or "What is jihad and what does it mean?"

Search results will likely include stories about failed attempts to radicalize and programs that protest the violence of extremism. However, beyond messages from anti-extremists telling the fence sitter "no," he is not likely to find many anti-extremist communities where he can receive the answers he is really seeking. Let's Talk Jihad uses search engine optimization to ensure that it is a prominent result offering a community with answers. Let's Talk Jihad

runs social media pages populated by people who practice Islam, featuring comments in multiple languages, including Arabic, having factual discussions about religion and jihad. Social media pages lead to a website with even more information and discussion. Comments are anonymous so anyone can contribute comfortably. The primary Let's Talk Jihad website is a community in which stories can be shared without fear of judgment, but offers predominantly moderate beliefs within the community that help lead to the conclusion that extremism is undesirable compared to other interpretations of jihad. The counterterrorism message on this website is unassuming, and users don't realize the campaign is supported by the government. This was the vision of Let's Talk Jihad.

Once an audience was engaged on social media, individuals with an interest in furthering the discussion of violent extremism, which theoretically includes fence sitters, were organically funneled to a website designed to serve fence sitters' needs.

To achieve the inbound marketing vision, the campaign creators had to ensure that they established favorable first impressions with fence sitters on social media. They had a three-element social media strategy designed to ensure that the campaign came across as attractive and credible. The first element was to speak frankly about jihad and use Arabic in the dialogue to create a sense of legitimacy. Second, Let's Talk Jihad's use of social media mirrored IS tactics for reaching new audiences. Third, the content posted on social media by the campaign creators was intriguing and controversial, intended to spark debate among community members. Pro-Western content that would instantly turn fence sitters away was avoided, as was rhetoric and vocabulary that would expose government association. For example, the IS was always referred to as ISIS, rather than ISIL or Daesh, titles the U.S. government uses when referring to the organization. Working in combination, these elements resulted in a

The "Let's Talk Jihad" campaign won second place in the Peer 2 Peer: Challenging Extremism contest held at the U.S. Department of State in February 2016.

social media space where followers were willing to engage each other and answer one another's questions. The cadet campaign managers were not teachers, but rather facilitators of discussion.

The keys to Let's Talk Jihad's success on social media were posting unbiased, open-ended questions about current events, and consistently targeting new followers from the desired core audience using carefully timed, paid-post promotion on Facebook. Mimicking IS online recruiting techniques also helped to increase the reach of the campaign beyond targeted posting. The IS attaches popular and trending hashtags to its posts. Let's Talk Jihad also used trending hashtags to reach people it otherwise wouldn't have reached and relay the message that jihad and Islam encompass more than extremism. Modeling the IS approach in counternarrative campaigns can help put alternative voices like Let's Talk Jihad into the same space as IS messages.

Once an audience was engaged on social media, individuals with an interest in furthering the discussion of violent extremism, which theoretically includes fence sitters, were organically funneled to a website designed to serve fence sitters' needs. The IS targets the need for information, the need for community and the need for purpose. In response, the Let's Talk Jihad website used a three-pronged approach represented by the slogan: "Learn, Talk, Join."

The campaign website's Learn Jihad page was a place for users to access links to articles about current events concerning the IS, the Middle East and Islam. Articles were selected to provide information from a variety of sources and viewpoints. Talk Jihad provided a forum where site members could post their own questions and receive answers from community figures, imams and refugees who were recruited by Let's Talk Jihad to create accounts on the website. The IS recruiting process involves extensive opportunities for fence sitters to participate in personal discussions, which draws isolated individuals to the organization. Talk Jihad was an essential element of the campaign for the alternative to IS recruitment that it provided fence sitters. This section of the website relied on the contributions of vetted site members who could answer questions moderately and attentively. Finally, Join Jihad sought to provide the most critical alternative, an alternative to radicalization. Join Jihad encouraged site users to express themselves creatively to challenge the common misunderstanding that jihad always equates to violence.

Exposing fence sitters to the Let's Talk Jihad website strategy through social media inbound marketing supports all of the campaign goals. "Learn, Talk, Join" ensures the continued prioritization of individuals' personal needs. Giving fence sitters an autonomous voice in a community where they feel valued is critical to nurturing engagement. Every element of the campaign was deliberately created with the intent that fence sitters would not feel ignored or

judged. In theory, this community could be self-sustaining. Those who have their questions answered by experts can re-engage with the community to answer the questions of other potential fence sitters.

RESULTS

How was the success of the campaign measured? Let's Talk Jihad was launched in November 2015 and was active for slightly less than a month. The Facebook analytics generated during that time help provide an understanding of the effectiveness of the campaign. Using Facebook ads and promoted posts, Let's Talk Jihad gained over 5,000 page likes during the campaign. This number alone doesn't tell the whole story. Additionally, 74,000 people engaged the content by liking, commenting on and sharing the campaign's posts. It is important to recognize that each time someone engaged, it appeared in their friends' news feeds. Consequently, over 836,000 people saw Let's Talk Jihad content. The 836,000 figure constituted a global community of Muslims and non-Muslims living across six continents who spoke 25 languages. Anecdotal evidence supports the hypothesis that conversation, community, autonomy and alternatives can help prevent people from adopting extremist views. Social media community members asked serious questions, debated one another with moderate outcomes, and wrote the Let's Talk Jihad campaign managers to thank the campaign for helping them learn.

The campaign revealed four essential strategy elements that can be used as guidelines for future counternarrative efforts. First, counterna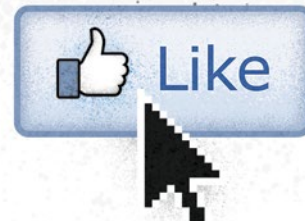rrative campaigns should seek to create authentic online communities that independently generate positive messages. In this way, the volume of moderate voices can begin to compete with the thousands who log on to internet accounts every day to promote terrorism. Next, counternarratives need to actively involve community and religious leaders online. Experts should be available to personally engage with fence sitters who have questions in the same spaces that at-risk individuals are reached by IS recruiters.

Youths walk under an Islamic State flag in Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon, southern Lebanon, in January 2016. Youths are targeted for recruitment by extremists. REUTERS

The third strategy element that should be incorporated is the idea that fence sitters can't be told what to do. The choice to turn away from radicalization is a personal one that can occur through talking, learning and feeling connected in a judgment-free environment. Finally, feelings of connectedness have to be sustained. Once fence sitters are reached, it is essential to present a tangible alternative to radicalization, such as the call for creative interpretation of the definition of jihad in the Let's Talk Jihad campaign.

FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Despite the confidence with which these recommendations can be made based on the experience of creating and managing Let's Talk Jihad, the campaign also raised unanswered questions. One question is whether fence sitters were actually reached, and if they were reached, did the campaign impact their decision-making? While qualitative data and assumptions were used to measure success for Let's Talk Jihad, more advanced sentiment analysis technology may provide a better metric for understanding peoples' opinions in the future. Network science and the ability to study how people are related online may also help identify fence sitters.

However, attempts to use these or other methods will undoubtedly encounter uncertainties that accompany advancing technology. Chiefly, concerns about data privacy and government operations online will have to be addressed through legal channels. Still more questions exist. What if a site like Let's Talk Jihad is co-opted by an extremist group? What if people discover that the campaign is supported by the government? The consequences of these events can only be speculated, but the success of the Let's Talk Jihad campaign provides encouragement that these potential problems could have solutions.

This campaign model has the potential to produce an effective counternarrative. Knowledge of human psychology and an understanding of the reasons past programs have failed show that addressing fence sitters is crucial. As a product of the competition, Let's Talk Jihad also illustrates how effective strategies can emerge from collaboration between governments, universities and the private sector. Consideration or implementation of these models and recommendations can only benefit counterterrorism professionals as they work to make the internet a balanced space no longer dominated by the terrorist narrative. □

THREATS

TO PEACE IN IRELAND

Belfast, Northern Ireland ISTOCK

Political radicals with criminal connections could re-engage in terrorism in Northern Ireland

BY CAPT. CHARLES A. UPSHAW

Almost since the beginning of its history, Ireland has suffered seemingly endless conflict. In the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries, this manifested itself in the Home Rule movement; later, more violently, in the Easter Uprising of 1916; and subsequently in the Irish War of Independence. It was the violent suppression of the Easter Uprising that fanned the flames of republicanism from sporadic violence to open rebellion.

The British, who were more focused on fighting World War I, postponed further devolution and Home Rule, leading to further tensions. Discontent was exacerbated by the fact that tens of thousands of Irishmen died in the trenches fighting in the British Army. Soon after the conclusion of the war, Home Rule was achieved, albeit after the violent and bloody War of Independence between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and British and Loyalist forces. In 1922, the British government signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty that established the Irish Free State while also stipulating the six remaining predominantly Protestant counties of Northern Ireland could choose to remain in the United Kingdom.

The treaty was narrowly approved by the Irish Parliament, but stark differences of opinion regarding this document created the conditions for continued internal conflict within the newly formed Republic of Ireland. The signatories of the Anglo-Irish Treaty were then viewed by more radical republicans as "sell-outs" who had abandoned the goal of a truly free and independent Ireland. This led to the Irish Civil War between pro- and anti-treaty forces — consisting of the newly formed armed forces of the Irish Free State — and the IRA. It was ultimately won by the Irish Free State, but the desire for the reunification of the entire island has never ceased, especially among the defeated radical republicans, who have always viewed violence as a legitimate means of achieving this goal. Ultimately, John Morrison notes in his book *The Origins and Rise of Dissident Irish Republicanism: The Role and Impact of Organizational Splits*, political divisions were cemented with the creation of the Fine Gael (pro-treaty) and Fianna Fail (anti-treaty) political parties. These two political parties continue to shape the political landscape of Ireland today. Though these historic divisions remain, the desire for reunification remains a prevalent concern for many across the island.

Militant murals in Belfast served as a reminder of historical sectarian violence as parties began talks in September 2015 to save the power-sharing government. REUTERS

As before, both camps see different means to best achieve that end — either political participation in the institutions of Northern Ireland or violent struggle. This stark contrast is clearly articulated by Feargal Cochrane's book *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace:*

"One strand has sought 'constructive engagement' with Britain and attempted to use the political system to achieve change. … The other strand of Irish nationalist opinion has adopted a more radical strategy — ignore the formal system, rigged by the powerful to maintain their interests come what may; break the rules; fight dirty if necessary; and build networks from the ground up — networks that will eventually become more powerful and relevant than the former political system."

This description of the two camps within the republican movement of the 1920s is equally fitting when understanding the various factions that constitute Northern Ireland's political landscape today. Those who have disavowed violence to achieve change — Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA (PIRA), now participating in the government — and those who have not, have pursued violence in the past as a means to an end.

The violence and bloodshed that followed the formation of the Irish Free State did not cease with its victory against the more radical republican factions. It merely set the conditions for the continuation of the conflict later in the 20th century — namely the "Troubles" of the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, until that time, the Northern Irish government acted primarily to serve the interests of the Protestant majority and its desire to preserve union with the U.K. In that effort however, discrimination against the Catholic minority undercut the very "British values" they claimed to be defending. This, Cochrane writes, enabled republicans to question the legitimacy of the union that loyalists so passionately defended. When the government failed to respond to these grievances, the opportunity for a peaceful resolution passed, and violence persisted until the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998.

Groups associated with the current conflict are divided along ethnic and political lines — republican and loyalist. Republicans are predominantly Catholic, and loyalists are predominantly Protestant. Within these two camps are additional divisions based on commitments to the Good Friday Agreement, in which involved parties disavowed violence in pursuit of political goals. The republican groups who still use violence can be described as "violent dissident republicans" (VDR). The primary VDR groups are the Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA); Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH), or Volunteers of Ireland; the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA); and Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD). On the loyalist side are the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defense Association (UDA). In addition to extrajudicial killings, many of these groups are involved in money laundering, smuggling and extortion to fund military capabilities over the long term. Essentially, this is how they have been able to maintain and build capability following the large-scale disarmaments after the Good Friday Agreement.

It is important to note that Catholic paramilitary groups previously associated with the PIRA were reportedly tied to the primary republican political party, Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein leadership has repeatedly denied the relationship, but few in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland or the U.K. accept the denial. The Protestant paramilitary group UVF is associated with the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), and the UDA and the Ulster Freedom Fighters are associated with the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP). In contrast to Sinn Fein, the Protestant political parties have openly confirmed their association with these paramilitary groups, former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell recalled in his book *Making Peace* on his role in the peace process. On the surface, it appears that Catholic VDRs are more inclined to use violence to achieve their means than their Protestant counterparts. It is important to note, however, that while the intent and actions of Protestant paramilitary groups have been more peaceful in comparison, they still maintain the capability to carry out operations. Furthermore, while the Good Friday Agreement stands, along with continued union with the U.K., the incentive for Protestant groups to conduct attacks is significantly lower.

Though on the surface the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 has seemingly brought sustained peace to Northern Ireland, the statements and actions of many groups — especially offshoot IRA groups — seem to paint a different picture. In essence, they do not view any of the peace agreements nor institutions founded as a result, as legitimate; therefore, they remain targets. They view them as illegitimate republican efforts to achieve unification through peaceful participation in the government institutions — namely the Northern Irish government, which shares power between Protestant and Catholic parties, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). As John Horgan and John Morrison say in their 2011 article in the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence:*

"All of the dissident groups (including the non-violent dissident groups) reject both the Good Friday and St. Andrews agreements. They also reject the acceptance of the PSNI as a legitimate policing force for the six counties of Northern Ireland. Their stated beliefs are that any political settlement short of British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and an independent united Ireland fall too far short of their Irish Republican goals and therefore cannot be used as a justification for the permanent cessation of violence."

In addition, the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion has increased pressure for VDRs to remain relevant. Since the Good Friday Agreement, the improvement in the daily lives of Irish citizens on both sides of the border is undeniable. Tourism, foreign direct investment and overall confidence in Northern Irish institutions are up, Morrison says. This creates a sort of "peace dividend" for the political parties who govern Northern Ireland by enabling them to demonstrate the real value of cooperation and dialogue as opposed to the violence and chaos that preceded it. This dividend threatens the legitimacy of VDRs because it questions the fundamental value of continued armed struggle. Citizens can ask themselves: Is it worth it to keep fighting? Radical VDR associated groups such Republican Sinn Fein, a

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) was formed in 2001 as a successor to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The PSNI is one of the new power-sharing institutions established as part of the peace process. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

political organization associated with the CIRA, clearly believe in continued armed struggle as shown in their April 2016 statement commemorating the 1916 Easter Rebellion:

"For Republicans, 1916 remains unfinished business until the last vestiges of British Rule have been removed and the historic Irish Nation is restored to its rightful place among the nations of the earth. … We pledge our resolve to continue the struggle against British Rule. The Volunteers of the Continuity Irish Republican Army will continue to strike at will at the British forces of occupation. That is the most fitting tribute we can make to the men and women of 1916."

Based on this statement, the intent of the CIRA and associated organizations is clear — they will continue to use political violence. Furthermore, the "British forces of occupation" described in this statement include the Northern Irish government, which is also composed of republicans who have disavowed violence. VDRs seemingly disregard the fact that successive Northern Irish governments have been elected and supported by a majority of Northern Ireland's Catholic citizens — an inconvenient fact when trying to justify continued armed struggle as the mantle of true republicanism. Since the Good Friday Agreement, the stark divide between republican elements who joined the peace process and those who do not accept it is ever more evident.

Armed struggle versus peaceful participation in Northern Ireland's institutions are two strikingly different means to an end that can be demonstrated to the voting public. Furthermore, the pressure of anniversaries along with the continued relatively successful power-sharing agreement between opposing parties increases the pressure of VDR groups to either lay down their arms or increase activity and resume kinetic operations.

When analyzing levels of terrorist-related activity post-Good Friday Agreement, there are two opposing assessments.

Mourners attend the funeral of murdered prison officer Adrian Ismay in March 2016 in Belfast. He died of injuries after a booby-trap planted by the "New IRA" exploded under his van. GETTY IMAGES

The first is that the agreement brought overall peace — and more specifically a significant drop in terrorism. Alternatively, other studies show significant increases in activity among VDR groups. The first viewpoint is clearly evident in data collected by the Global Terrorism Database, which shows a significant drop in activity as peace negotiations commenced in the mid-1990s. This is consistent with the widely held view that the peace process has an overall net-positive effect on lowering the violence. Following this drop in activity, data collected indicate that residual terrorist activity still exists, albeit conducted primarily by splinter groups not associated with the PIRA or Sinn Fein. Who conducted the attacks is not what is in contention — what is, however, is the overall level of activity, which is drastically higher in other studies.

Irish Republican Terrorism 1970–2014
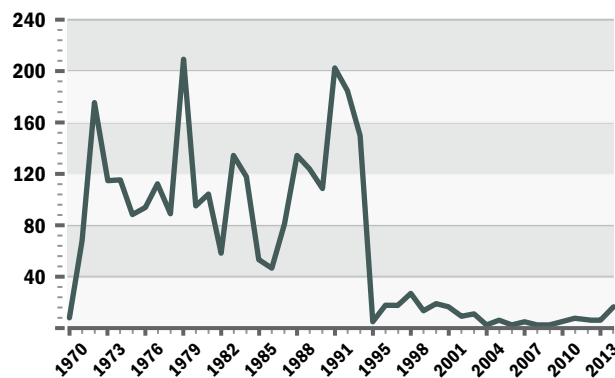
Source: Global Terrorism Database, 2016

Contradictory to these trends, data collected through the Violent Dissident Republican Project by Dr. John Morrison and Dr. John Horgan identify sharp increases in violence toward the end of 2009-2010. According to Dr. Horgan, data collected by the Global Terrorism Database, along with information generally cited by the U.K. and Northern Irish governments, are not complete and do not truly reflect the level of VDR activity. In addition, the scope of activity reflected by most government figures is more than 400 percent lower than what was found through other research. Detail Data, a Belfast-based research organization, has released figures indicating that between 2006 and 2016, VDRs were responsible for over 1,700 violent acts and over 4,000 reports of local citizens being forced to flee their homes.

These analyses also contradict statements made by U.K. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Theresa Villiers. Following a government review of paramilitary activity, she told the House of Commons in 2015 that while the IRA and VDRs were still organized militarily, they posed no real threat to the peace process and were probably not able to reconstitute the capability they once held. According to an October 2015 article in *The New York Times*, these conclusions were drawn from assessments by MI5, the U.K.'s domestic intelligence service, along with Northern Ireland's top police official, Chief Constable George Hamilton.

Violent Dissident Republican Activities 1997–2010
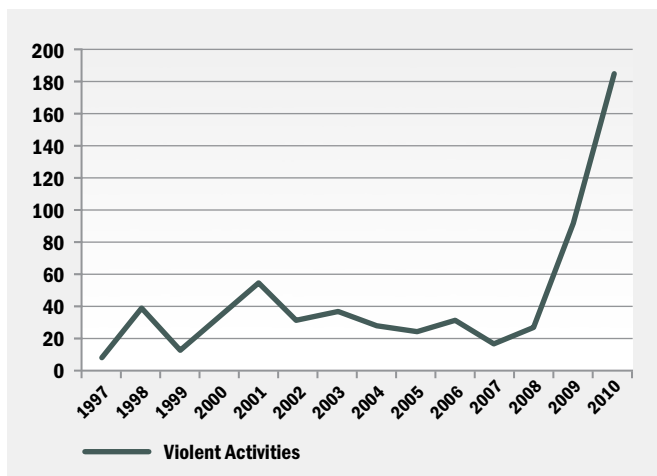
Source: Violent Dissident Republican Project, Dr. John Morrison and Dr. John Horgan

The types of activity analyzed in the VDR Project research include:
- Shootings and punishment attacks
- Defused bomb incidents
- Hoax incidents
- Detonated bomb incidents
- Petrol bomb incidents
- Assaults
- Violent riots
- Arson incidents
- Violent robberies

Furthermore, based on statements by leaders within Northern Ireland's government, calls for dialogue and discussion with VDR groups elevate their status above criminals. For example, Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland Martin McGuinness, a former PIRA member, told U-TV News in April 2016:

"I don't know how many times in the past I have offered to meet with them, and none of them have so far had the courage to come into a room to meet with me. … I'm up for that conversation; people who are involved in these groups have to have some semblance of recognition that the very limited activities that they're involved in are totally futile."

Based on these statements, the government clearly views these groups as terrorists regardless of their involvement in criminal activity. In addition, it demonstrates the government's view that their activities do in fact threaten national security, perhaps existentially, if they are successful in hindering the peace process and the successful shared governing arrangement of Northern Ireland. The threat of continued VDR violence brings the two mainstream camps together — republican and loyalist. This in turn reinforces the perception among VDRs that Sinn Fein and mainstream republicans have sold out on "true republicanism" and become agents of the "British occupation." This is compounded by the fact that Sinn Fein has accepted the PSNI as a legitimate state institution. This is key to understanding because, based on the analysis conducted under the VDR Project, activity by radical groups is essentially tied to action taken by mainstream republicans.

The more committed mainstream republican parties are to the peace process and Northern Irish institutions, VDRs become more committedly opposed to them and inclined to assert claims as the legitimate heirs to the Easter Uprising. The less represented by mainstream republican leaders they feel, the more easily they are able to separate themselves and demonstrate how different they actually are — both in terms of rhetoric and action. This creates a situation where mainstream republicans could be outflanked by these more radical groups, similar to when political parties in any country are outflanked by more conservative or liberal challengers, forcing more moderate candidates to react or risk losing their base of support. Were this effect to happen within Northern Ireland's republican political movements, it could not only endanger the current power-sharing agreement, it could also legitimize the actions of more radical VDR groups. Already, many VDRs and like-minded individuals view Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams with disdain equal to that directed at former British conservative Prime Minister David Cameron. This level of ill-will toward the two standard bearers of the Irish republican movement is significant and could be capitalized on to expand the support base of VDR groups.

Though more mainstream republican groups laid down arms and participated in the Good Friday Agreement, large-scale organized crime has seemingly continued, both within them and the VDRs. This serves as a key financier of

operations both north and south of the border. According to *Forbes* magazine, in 2014 the IRA was rated one of the top 10 richest terrorist organizations, with an annual income of $50 million per year. This puts it in the same league as Boko Haram, al-Shabaab and ISIS in terms of criminal activity and networks. Morrison assesses some VDR groups as having in excess of $500,000 in their operating budget with an annual income of over $2 million. Recent activities have reportedly included smuggling, fuel laundering, drug dealing, tobacco and alcohol smuggling, and armed robbery, in addition to continued international financial support from sympathetic diaspora communities in the United States and elsewhere. According to the U.S. State Department, advanced weaponry has been also acquired through criminal networks in the Balkans — a potentially dangerous development if any VDR plans a significant buildup of military capability intending to conduct a spectacular attack. Though criminal activity by VDRs is conducted under the mantle of republicanism, it is often not the case, Morrison points out. Rivalries between paramilitary groups and gangs have led to violence, fueling further divisions and continued violence. Furthermore, involvement in widespread criminal activity has enabled rival VDRs to disparage each other to declare themselves as "true" republicans such as when a CIRA member told Morrison: "The only difference between the Continuity IRA and the Real IRA: With the Real IRA, all the top men, all they were doing all their life was smuggling diesel and cigarettes."

This situation also exacerbates the competition between mainstream republicans and VDRs. Sinn Fein has taken this opportunity to highlight the difference between itself and VDRs. Former PIRA leader and current Northern Ireland Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness said in a 2013 speech to a Sinn Fein party assembly: "Whatever else about those groups responsible, it is obvious that they have now been swamped by ruthless criminal elements with an island-wide network." Furthermore, Ireland has seen the rise of additional criminal vigilante groups such as Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD), a Derry-based group that claims to fight illegal drug dealers in predominantly republican areas. In their fight against the drug dealers, they have employed similar tactics to those used in the paramilitary violence of the Troubles, such as kneecappings, banishment, assassination and attacks on the homes of suspected drug dealers with weapons such as pipe bombs. These actions make RAAD the most consistently violent of any VDR group, which Morrison says enable it to undermine and claim the authority vested in the PSNI as the protectors of the population.

Through the centenary of the Easter Uprising, there has been a concerted effort to unite VDRs under an overarching republican movement nonaligned to the mainstream groups adhering to the Good Friday Agreement. The intent is to focus the divided groups on a single effort to sustain the armed campaign against mainstream republicans and the U.K. In 2012, the groups formed a single "Army Council" that claims to speak for the united front. In its statement, the intentions of the group are clear:

"Following extensive consultations, Irish republicans and a number of organisations involved in armed actions against the armed forces of the British crown have come together within a unified structure, under a single leadership, subservient to the constitution of the Irish Republican Army. The leadership of the Irish Republican Army remains committed to the full realisation of the ideals and principles enshrined in the Proclamation of 1916. In recent years the establishment of a free and independent Ireland has suffered setbacks due to the failure among the leadership of Irish nationalism and fractures within republicanism. The root cause of conflict in our country is the subversion of the nation's inalienable right to self-determination and this has yet to be addressed. Instead the Irish people have been sold a phony peace, rubber-stamped by a token legislature in Stormont. Non-conformist republicans are being subjected to harassment, arrest and violence by the forces of the British crown; others have been interned on the direction of an English overlord. It is Britain, not the IRA, which has chosen provocation and conflict. The IRA's mandate for armed struggle derives from Britain's denial of the fundamental right of the Irish people to national self-determination and sovereignty — so long as Britain persists in its denial of national and democratic rights in Ireland the IRA will have to continue to assert those rights. The necessity of armed struggle in pursuit of Irish freedom can be avoided through the removal of the British military presence in our country, the dismantling of their armed militias and the declaration of an internationally observed timescale that details the dismantling of British political interference in our country."

This is significant because it indicates a concerted effort to unite various splintered groups into a single command capable of carrying out violence in the name of republicanism. This not only would enable VDRs to share resources, but it could also minimize rivalries and the inter-VDR violence that has plagued many groups in recent years.

The situation in Northern Ireland remains complex with the potential to erupt into violence once again. The more successful the power-sharing arrangement between mainstream republicans and loyalists is, the incentive for VDRs to act to destabilize the situation rises, as their legitimacy depends on action. Furthermore, the convergence between VDRs and criminal networks allows these groups to gain access to more deadly weapons and equipment, enabling them to build capability to conduct large-scale attacks. Though, since the Omagh bombing of 1998, this has not materialized, the capability and intent remain and must be taken seriously.

Furthermore, smaller VDRs have unified their command structures into a single "Army Council," with the intent of pooling resources — a dangerous development if action matches the rhetoric. Though differing assessments of overall activity make it difficult to determine the true level of terrorist threat in Northern Ireland, based on statements from VDRs, along with their residual paramilitary capability and capacity to acquire weapons and material, it is more likely that terrorism will rise in the future. □

People of mixed ethnic backgrounds attend a tribute in July 2016 honoring a French priest murdered by terrorists associated with the Islamic State. One way to counter extremist messaging is to de-emphasize religious conflict in the media. REUTERS

Fighting the Islamic State

Defeating this global menace will require a finely tuned information operations campaign

By **Bryant Wu**

Although the Islamic State (IS) is relatively new to the general consciousness, its history and lineage trace back to the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003. The power vacuum left by the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime resulted in a power struggle that evolved from civil war to insurgency. By 2004, the Iraq War had spawned a subsidiary of al-Qaida calling itself al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) and led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. AQI quickly gained a reputation for aggressive action and chilling brutality, prompting coalition forces in Iraq to devote enormous resources to pursue its leader and mastermind. In 2006, al-Zarqawi was killed by a U.S. airstrike, and AQI soon disappeared from the limelight of Western media coverage.

AQI, however, did not die with its leader; it rebranded itself as the Islamic State in Iraq and later as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. By 2014, the organization had renamed itself again, now simply the Islamic State (IS), and under this name it reclaimed the attention of the world with an aggressive and brutal campaign that claimed large swaths of Iraq and Syria.

In addition to the physical military campaign, the IS launched an equally aggressive information campaign though social media outlets on the internet. YouTube, Facebook and Twitter were all co-opted to spread IS propaganda and used to develop sympathizers and recruit fighters for the cause. The effectiveness of IS information operations seemed to surprise U.S. and European governments, and they struggled to understand and contain the IS in the virtual world. Its methodology was nothing particularly new — al-Qaida had also used the internet to spread its message. So why was the IS more effective?

One part of the problem may have been doctrinal; governments and the media misidentified and mislabeled the IS, resulting in a fundamental flaw in how the West attacked the group. The other aspect was an information environment that had changed significantly over the previous decade and had become a breeding ground for inflammatory anti-Islamic rhetoric. Combined with democratic principles of free speech, they created a fertile and permissive environment for IS information operations. In 2016, however, the IS appears to have lost momentum, both in the physical world and the virtual world. This article will examine potential reasons for the early success of IS information operations and its apparent recent decline.

Evaluating the IS

First, let us briefly examine how we define the IS and how that definition influences how we fight it. In official government statements and in the mainstream and alternative media, the IS was, and still is, referred to as a terrorist organization. Unfortunately, the application of this term to the IS is legally and doctrinally inaccurate. It would be more accurate and appropriate to call the IS an insurgency. The

question of what differentiates terrorism from insurgencies has received its share of consideration, though the lack of consensus on how to define terrorism makes answering the question somewhat problematic. For the purposes of this discussion, we will use several definitions from the U.S. as well as from the international community. The Code of Laws of the United States (henceforth referred to as the U.S. Code) defines terrorism as "activities that — (A) involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State" and "appear to be intended — (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping." The U.S. Department of Defense defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political," while NATO defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."

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The U.S. Code lacks any definition of insurgency; the closest it comes is to define sedition. The Department of Defense, and the U.S. government in general, define insurgency as "the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region." NATO defines insurgency as "the actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement that seeks to effect or prevent political change of a governing authority within a region, focused on persuading or coercing the population through the use of violence and subversion."

Within these definitions we can identify three points of differentiation between terrorism and insurgency: scope of intent, the role of violence and the relationship with the population. Regarding the first point, scope of intent,

terrorism merely seeks to coerce and influence behavior while an insurgency seeks political control by replacing the existing government in what is typically referred to as regime change. A 2007 training manual from the U.S. Military Academy echoes these conclusions, stating "each of the five goals of an insurgency — the violent arm of a given resistance movement — centers on attacking regimes. In comparison, the goals of terrorists are not specific to governments but rather focus on broader ideological intentions. Furthermore, we see that terrorists may not even feel the need to target governments. Instead they may choose to attack societies directly to achieve a particular end state. Hence, by definition terrorists are not concerned with regime change, reallocation of power, or challenging existing social orders." So while terrorism and insurgency are both inherently political in nature, terrorism is more limited in scope.

Within these definitions of terrorism and insurgency, we can also see a difference in the role of violence. In terrorism, violence is the primary tool used to instill fear and apply pressure on the government. An insurgency, however, combines violence — either terrorism or armed uprising depending on the phase of the insurgency — and subversion, which the Cambridge dictionary defines as "the act of trying to destroy or damage an established system or government." Terrorism is then only one of several methods available to the insurgent, so to label the IS as a terrorist organization implies that it employs no other methods to achieve its desired end state, yet the widely acknowledged information campaign clearly demonstrates a methodology that seeks to undermine IS' enemies through propaganda and recruitment from within their populations.

This leads us to the organization's relationship with the general population. Looking back to our definitions, we can see that they imply very different relationships. The definition of terrorism implies a hostile relationship with the general population, where violence is used "against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies." The definition of insurgency, however, implies a different relationship as it is "focused on persuading or coercing the population." Since an insurgency ultimately seeks to govern, it must establish some degree of political legitimacy and therefore cannot rely on violence to sway popular opinion. Although the IS terror tactics are its most visible aspect, we can't ignore that they have also established a governing regime and have managed to draw adherents and sympathizers with appeals to religious values.

Defining the fight

After examining the IS according to these definitions, it seems clear that it is not simply a terrorist organization, but an Islamist insurgency on a transnational scale. But does it matter? Isn't this distinction just a matter of semantics and doctrinal hair splitting?

The distinction between a terrorist organization and an insurgency matters because it changes how you fight.

The Islamic State uses social media to spread its toxic message.
PER CONCORDIAM ILLUSTRATION

When we look at the intent of terrorists and their methodologies, we can see that their relationship with the general population is essentially adversarial. Terrorists use the general populace as leverage against the government in an effort to bend the government to their will. Therefore, aside from the terrorists' constituent minority, there is neither the need nor the desire for popular support. For the counterterrorist, this means that attacking the terrorist organization's operational capabilities with military or paramilitary force is sufficient because the general population is assumed to support the government and will therefore tolerate limited collateral damage (unintended casualties and damage or destruction of private property). In doctrinal terms, the center of gravity for a terrorist organization is its capability; attack and destroy that center of gravity and the terrorist is rendered ineffective.

In an insurgency, however, the center of gravity is the population. As noted earlier, since the insurgent ultimately seeks to govern, it must receive the consent of the general population; otherwise the new regime may eventually face an insurgency of its own. This requirement means that while an insurgency may use terrorism to coerce the population, it cannot be the only tool the movement employs. At some point, the insurgency must convince the population that it is a better option than the existing government, which means a less adversarial relationship with the population. In other words, the insurgent must conduct a "hearts and minds" campaign to generate sympathy and establish legitimacy.

That difference in the relationship with the general population means that the counterinsurgent is faced with a far more complex problem set; the counterinsurgent must neutralize the operational capability of the insurgency's combat forces while maintaining the support of a population that may be ambivalent, or even hostile, to the government. Therefore, the counterinsurgent cannot simply rely on lethal force to defeat the operational capability of the insurgent; the counterinsurgent must use information and influence operations to undermine the legitimacy of the insurgency and its ideas.

Even when the counterinsurgent force does use lethal means, it must do so without damaging the government's legitimacy or at least the perception of legitimacy. In short, both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent are battling for the hearts and minds of the general population, and in order to do so, both sides must employ information to influence and persuade, rather than rely on lethal, kinetic methods to simply coerce or destroy.

The role of social media

By defining the IS as a terrorist organization, the West relied on military force to win while information operations were virtually ignored. This allowed the IS to seize the initiative and control the message in the information war, and ultimately it was the information war that spawned the phenomenon that created considerable anxiety in the West: the defection of young men and women born and raised in North America and Western Europe to the ranks of the IS. Al-Qaida and the Taliban also managed to recruit from the West, but mainly from Europe and almost never from North America, and the reported numbers were lower than with the IS. So why was the IS able to achieve greater success with essentially the same methods?

One of the simpler answers is technology. When al-Qaida first made its presence felt in 2001, social media was still in its infancy. To spread its message, al-Qaida had to rely on a website that was essentially a centralized distribution system. In the mid-2000s, three social media platforms emerged that would change the distribution dynamic — Facebook in 2004, and Twitter and YouTube in 2006. As these platforms exploded in popularity, they provided new opportunities for information operations.

First, information producers were no longer dependent on a centralized distribution system via a website. Now, in addition to a producer's home site, whether it was a website or social media account, they could employ an army of proxies to spread the message. Every employee, sympathizer and agent had the ability to become a distribution node for the producer. This also meant that producers no longer had to "pull" consumers to their website; every node in the distributed network could actively push the message to other members of their subnetwork. So when the IS re-emerged in 2013, it had social media tools that were not available to al-Qaida in 2001, which gave the IS a wider reach and also allowed it to push information continuously. Finally, the technology meant that the IS didn't have to rely on a blindly cast net to find recruits; IS recruiters could scour Facebook and Twitter looking for prospects and selectively target individuals they deemed vulnerable.

The evolution in social media also helped IS information operations by changing the tone of the information

environment. In a general sense, the internet has helped to radicalize the information environment by democratizing the dissemination of political and social ideas. In the pre-internet world, the vectors by which ideas could spread were limited to radio, television and print media. All of these required significant capital, so the means of dissemination were largely controlled by mainstream media organizations that were reasonably constrained by professional standards and ethics. This meant that before information reached the public, it had to pass through a professional filter that tended to remove inaccurate information and unsupported ideas, creating a moderating effect on the information environment. The internet, however, makes it possible to disseminate any idea by virtually eliminating capital costs. In the United States, the cost to buy a domain name and website is less than a fast food meal, and social media accounts are free. In fact, the most significant cost is probably internet access, but even that is minuscule compared to the capital costs of traditional media. The result has been a proliferation of information media outlets referred to as "new media" or "alternative media." Often unfettered by professional standards or ethics, these information outlets cater to specific demographics with information that can be skewed or manipulated to support a specific political perspective. In other words, you can say virtually anything on the internet, and not only will you find someone to believe you, but there will be virtually no consequences for disinformation.

This media revolution has contributed heavily to an information environment in the U.S. that is critical of Islam. In 2001, the information environment in the U.S. relative to Islam was fairly benign. Although it was one of the world's three biggest religions, Islam barely intruded into American public awareness, and then only because of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the U.S.' simmering relations with Iran. The September 11 attacks triggered a shift in public perception and opinion of Islam, and by 2013, after more than decade of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan with thousands of Americans killed and wounded, the information environment had become consistently hostile toward Islam. That hostility found its outlet in social media. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter all became platforms for anti-Islamic rhetoric, and while broadcast media was littered with negative, and sometimes inflammatory, coverage and editorials on Islam, it was still relatively restrained when compared to the roiling cauldron of social media. Unconstrained by professional standards or ethics, social media outlets bloomed with expressions of hostility, hate and vitriol. The nature of the content, whether reasonable or not, is largely irrelevant; what is essential is the perception of almost unrelenting animosity toward Islam.

This perception almost certainly helped create fertile recruiting ground for the IS, especially among young Muslims. A paper written by Efraim Benmelech and Esteban Klor titled "What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?" published in 2016 by the

National Bureau of Economic Research of Cambridge, Massachusetts, revealed that poverty did not drive participation in the IS. In the abstract, the researchers stated that "our results suggest that the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS is driven not by economic or political conditions, but rather by ideology and the difficulty of assimilation into homogeneous Western countries," which seems to support the idea that the IS' success is not simply a product of its own information operations, but rather the cumulative effect of its information operations augmented by information environments that are hostile toward Islam and Muslim population groups.

Waning support for the IS?

In 2016, however, the IS internet recruiting machine seemed to be in decline. In a U.S. Department of Defense briefing on April 26, Maj. Gen. Peter Gersten, deputy commander for operations and intelligence for the coalition fighting the IS, stated that the number of foreign fighters joining the IS had dropped to about 200 a month, down from over 1,500 a year ago. A week earlier, James Comey, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, stated that the number of people attempting to leave the U.S. to join the IS had declined for nine months.

Other officials and experts, however, noted that the IS territorial setbacks did not tell the whole story. Dr. Jonathan Schanzer, vice president for research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, noted that "you can defeat ISIS in ISIS-controlled territories, but you're not going to defeat ISIS itself. The ideology of jihadism continues to evolve and continues to exist."

Planned, coordinated attacks in France and Belgium — and more recently in Turkey, Iraq, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia — are keen reminders that the IS not necessarily limited by its territorial setbacks. Dr. Schanzer's sentiment was echoed in a briefing to Congress on April 12, when U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated, "to be fully effective, we must work to prevent the spread of violent extremism in the first place — to stop the recruitment, radicalization and mobilization of people, especially young people, to engage in terrorist activities." From this perspective, it is not enough to destroy the IS' physical body and its capabilities; the West must also defeat the ideology and prevent it from gaining a grip on the hearts and minds of young people around the world.

The way ahead

To win hearts and minds, the information campaign must consist of two fronts. First, the U.S. and its allies must develop a strategic message that provides a meaningful alternative to the IS' jihadist rhetoric. This will require a delicate balancing act, because not only must the strategic message appeal to Muslims, it cannot alienate other segments of the population. This may be problematic; the U.S. has a significant evangelical Christian population, many of whom report negative views of Islam, while some European countries have social and cultural structures

Families displaced by the Islamic State gather north of Baghdad, Iraq, in July 2016. The author argues that the group's habit of capturing territory suggests members behave more like insurgents than traditional terrorists. REUTERS

that create tension with their Muslim minorities. To further complicate matters, the messaging campaign cannot rely on reason and logic; it must also take into consideration that young adults are more susceptible to appeals to their emotions and values rather than logic and reason, and that hate and revenge can be more potent motivators than compassion, patience and compromise. Finally, the strategic message must be echoed at the local level by centers of influence, such as pop culture figures and organizations, and it must be transmitted across multiple platforms, with special emphasis on outlets that appeal to young adults.

Sometimes, however, what is not said is just as important as what is said. This means that an effective information operations campaign must find a way to curtail provocative and inflammatory attacks on Islam. Taken to the maximum extent, such a campaign would include any event or publication that mocks or pokes fun at Islam and its symbols, especially Mohammed and the Quran. Any such curtailment may prove difficult because Western democracies value the principle of free speech and any attempt to curb anti-Islamic rhetoric would surely be considered an infringement on this right and, at least in the U.S., viewed as a capitulation to political correctness. Furthermore, the shift in American politics exemplified by the election of Donald Trump may embolden anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and racist elements in the U.S. and Europe, making restraint less likely.

There are, however, legal precedents in the U.S. that support attempts to curb hate speech, though they tend to restrict it based on race rather than religion. It might also be noted that Article III, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution considers treason acts that "aid the enemy's recruiting efforts," but even if the U.S. government had the courage to apply the treason clause, political opponents would certainly contest the connection between anti-Islamic speech and IS recruiting. In the end, we must find a way to reduce the sense of social and cultural isolation that creates the negative messaging that drives young adults to the IS, otherwise any positive strategic messaging may become irrelevant.

Ultimately, if the U.S. and Europe hope to defeat the IS they must abandon the politically expedient course of referring to the IS as terrorists and embrace the reality that they are fighting an Islamic insurgency that is able to appeal to and recruit from a global human resource pool. They must also accept that military power by itself is inadequate and that to beat the IS, they must engage key parts of the population with messaging and politics that persuades them, logically and emotionally, that it is in their best interests not to support religious extremists that want to drag the Islamic world back to the Middle Ages. Finally, they must acknowledge the role that free speech plays in democracies in creating an environment that facilitates IS recruiting and information campaigns.

Although difficult and requiring careful thought and patience, these guidelines are probably our best hope to defeat the IS and mitigate potentially long-term bloodletting that may have severe and unforeseen costs to our societies. ☐

Information
OPERATIONS *in*
AFRICA

African Union forces must use counternarratives to unravel terrorists' false narratives

By **LT. COL. DEO AKIIKI, Ugandan military**

PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY

As a military officer who has spent the largest part of his career in communications and information management and operations in Uganda and Somalia — where the African Union (AU) has fought to defeat al-Shabaab for close to 10 years — I have seen tremendous efforts put forth to fight terrorism by my country and by the AU. I'm writing to strengthen an already growing notion around the world that it is high time that information operations — and indeed counternarratives — are given priority as the only remaining powerful weapon to deal with the menace of terrorism.

The East African region has been a hot spot for terrorist activities. Some of the terror groups in the region include: al-Qaida, al-Shabaab, the Allied Democratic Front, the Lord's Resistance Army, al-Ittihad al-Islamiyah and al-Muhajiroon. All of these groups use narratives as their weapons of choice. These narratives target citizens in East Africa, the East African diaspora, the terrorists' own forces and disengaged terrorist fighters.

It is evident that all terrorists are weak, while we, and other coalition forces, are kinetically strong. This presents us with the challenge of assessing from where the terrorists derive their strength. Their strength emanates from how, when and what they communicate to their target audiences. There are several examples across the world in which terrorists from al-Qaida, ISIS and al-Shabaab in Somalia have recruited and mentored their fighters simply through the power of information operations. In Barawe, Somalia, an American-born terrorist confessed to being recruited online. Additionally, over the past 10 years, captured al-Shabaab members have confessed to consuming al-Shabaab narratives, leaving them ignorant with no alternative information to rely on. This situation could be duplicated in Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey and other areas where terrorism has taken root.

Today, terrorism has heavily affected the minds, attitudes and behavior of the world's population, be they friend, foe or uncommitted.

This has ultimately determined the outcome of conflicts, leading to high levels of terrorism, jihadism and extremism. It is on this basis that the fight must either improve or shift as quickly as possible toward changing attitudes and behaviors of terrorist target audiences.

The world must accept that terrorists have been playing this game successfully for a long time. It is time that the information war is seriously reconsidered. For example, the Somali conflict is a contest of wills that has taken place in Somali minds as much as on the battlefield, targeting the attitudes and behavior of citizens. Most terrorist acts are committed based on this foundation. Al-Shabaab has fostered an environment that is permissive to terrorist activities in Somalia.

Makerere University students in Kampala, Uganda, hold a vigil in April 2015 for 148 people killed by al-Shabaab.

To counter such a phenomenon, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) must not only attack and degrade al-Shabaab leadership and capabilities, but also delegitimize and counter the appeal of al-Shabaab ideology as well as address the underlying conditions that the terrorists exploit to spread extremist ideology to gain support and recruits.

For AMISOM and the Somali Army to continue shaping current peace enforcement operations in Somalia, perceptions must also be shaped to affect the will of those involved by persuading them to accept the desired outcome. Counternarrative campaigns designed to convey messages to target audiences and promote particular themes that will result in desired attitudes and behavior will go a long way in the fight against terrorism in this region, and indeed the world.

THE BASIS FOR TERRORIST NARRATIVES

Terrorist narratives may appear implausible, but because they are tailor-made for individuals that have little alternative information, they are believed. Let's look at just a few of the lies they spread:

- *The need to reverse the marginalization of Muslims:* Terror groups have worked hard to propagate the notion among the Muslim community that members are marginalized by the central government. Every government action must consider Islam first or else it is worthless.
- *The need to establish an Islamic state:* They continue to assure their adherents of victory and heavenly rewards. This, they say, can only be attained through a regional Islamic state that is pure and free from lesser humanity.
- *The need to defeat "the Satanic Western" influence:* Terrorists tout that Western powers are exploitative and manipulative, thus the need for militants to fight for the sovereignty of their states.

TERRORIST TARGETS IN SOMALIA

Over the years, the dreaded al-Shabaab terrorists have pinpointed audiences in Somalia for their precisely crafted messages. They have streamed their activities in real time and posted information or passed it on to their target audiences, using their narratives as their weapon of choice. They mainly target Somalia, the East Africa region and the diaspora.

Their efforts mostly mobilize against the so-called infidels, who in this case are AU troops from non-Muslim countries. The language used is supposed to portray a religious fight, a sort of legitimate jihad. They divert their audience's attention from their heinous acts and refocus them on an area that appeals to them. Such a narrative takes nonkinetic efforts to defeat, despite the fact that al-Shabaab has built it over time. To dilute terrorist messaging, counternarratives should be well-crafted and circulated in equal measure or beyond what the terrorists have done.

To a large extent, al-Shabaab has succeeded in portraying AMISOM as an occupation force. No country or individual national would feel comfortable with an occupying force on their territory. Countries that have been occupied have sacrificed all they could to rid their land of foreign forces. Such an allegation was easily consumed by al-Shabaab's audiences and indeed did damage the legitimacy of AMISOM forces in the minds of the Somali people and the diaspora.

Religion has been widely used as a propaganda tool, not only by al-Shabaab, but by terrorists across the world. Terrorists broadcast propaganda insinuating that the global fight against terrorism is meant to destroy Islam. This narrative becomes more pronounced when terrorists commit grave acts that are anti-Islamic. They try to cover up these acts that bring shame to Islam so that their audiences do not reject them.

Narratives that focus on recruitment of both local and foreign fighters, especially using online platforms, have been the norm and the easiest method of attracting potential fighters. Today, youths access the internet and are the biggest population using social media. Consequently, they are most targeted by terrorists.

Ugandan Allied Democratic Front leader Jamil Mukulu is arraigned in July 2015 in Jinja for crimes including terrorism and murder. Uganda links the rebel group to al-Shabaab and al-Qaida.

In a bid to control and refocus the minds of their troops, terrorists — especially al-Shabaab in Somalia — have not spared their own forces from their propaganda machinery. They promise heavenly rewards such as those promised in holy teachings and encourage them to fight to restore Islam. They are encouraged to fight and defeat Western influence and fake success to boost the morale of their forces. This, to a large extent, keeps fighters fighting for what is assumed to be a "just" cause.

On the contrary, those who have disengaged from terrorist activities, were captured or have surrendered are always labeled as traitors. They and their families are threatened with painful death. Such threats have discouraged former terrorists, kept them in hiding or left them in fear of their lives instead of actively participating in the development of their countries or participating fully to defeat terrorism.

AMISOM, local government troops and other participating forces, not only in Somalia but across the world, have been targets of terrorists' propaganda.

Attempts have been made to malign African peacekeepers and governments as tools of Western nations rather than liberators fulfilling their pan-African responsibility. They are labeled as occupational forces, encouraging troops to look at their leaders and governments as selfish and fighting for an unjustified cause. In such a situation, if troops are not well-grounded and briefed, it may affect their morale and favor their adversaries.

Fake defections and captures have also been used to portray the terrorists as victorious, and even when such incidents occur, their numbers are exaggerated and widely circulated to damage morale, discourage troops and their commanders, or even erode the will of participating countries so that they might consider withdrawing their contingents. It's no wonder that whenever AMISOM troops cause a significant number of deaths in Somalia fighting al-Shabaab, the first narrative from the media and other platforms is a call for the withdrawal of coalition troops. This line of reasoning comes from al-Shabaab propaganda and not from the home countries of the contributing troops.

DEFEATING THE NARRATIVES

As global actors against terrorism, we need to fully use media and exhaust all debates, foster community engagements and discover new ways of countering terrorist narratives. Security information operations should be used abundantly by different militaries and indeed by AMISOM. Carefully selected speakers should deny the terrorists an information monopoly over their intended audiences.

The Somalis must craft and own information through their government and security sector. All actors should participate in this counternarrative fight tailored to expose the illegitimacy of terrorist leaders and their sponsors.

The following are suggested techniques to be used with AMISOM concepts of operation to counter al-Shabaab psychological operations. They can be used individually or in combination, depending on careful analysis and factual information about al-Shabaab and those remaining in areas controlled by them; for example, to determine the populace's general perception of and attitudes toward al-Shabaab, as well as toward the Somali government and government/AMISOM cooperative political and military initiatives.

Serious point-by-point rebuttals of terrorist narratives must be displayed online and by other means to completely discredit the message and, by implication, other messages originating from the source. Messages should be crafted so that the audience's attention is swayed away from the issues raised by terrorists. Insulate citizens from outside influences by preconditioning them against indoctrination, and they will automatically dismiss messages from terrorists.

Based on the capabilities and resources available, terrorist narratives can easily be countered to reorient our people and neutralize those narratives. Efforts to reach foreign terrorist fighters need to focus on legal, religious, social, diplomatic and other spheres.

Finally, countering terrorism is a "war" characterized by ideas, perceptions and the mind. We often think the narratives of terrorists have been a decisive weapon for their side. These narratives are the competing story lines that, as a small country, we have attempted to counter at home in Uganda and while fighting terrorism across most of the region.

Global cooperation in countering these narratives would degrade the terrorists' power to justify indiscriminate violent tactics, propagate radical ideologies and win over new recruits and sympathizers. □

PROTECTING *EUROPE'S CRITICAL* INFRASTRUCTURE

By Benedikt Hopfner

A new EU cyber security directive aims to improve sharing of threat information across national borders

A train arrives in Erstfeld, Switzerland, after passing through the NEAT Gotthard Base Tunnel, the world's longest and deepest, in June 2016. The 57.1-kilometer tunnel is part of a 23 billion Swiss franc infrastructure project.

REUTERS

This article is based on a paper I wrote trying to identify the effects of a European Union legislative proposal. I am an engineer, not a lawyer with any affiliation to EU legislation, so this may have been a bold undertaking. But nourishing discussions sometimes require a little boldness.

In December 2015, the European Parliament and the European Council made the first proposal for an agreement on the first EU-wide legislation on cyber security and finally released it in July 2016. This Network and Information Security (NIS) Directive could lay the foundation for a future framework of cooperation and multilateral regulation within Europe regarding information and communications technology (ICT). The new legislation requires every country to establish a national NIS strategy. It also postulates the formation of a "Cooperation Group" to foster trust and the exchange of information among participating nations, as well as best practices and the creation of a network of national Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs) to improve coordinated incident response.

Further, the NIS Directive mandates reporting for significant disruption of "essential services." A look at those essential services shows a remarkable overlap with sectors that are regarded as critical infrastructure, as shown in Table 1. Implementation of this new directive will affect existing regulations regarding critical infrastructure.

To protect potentially critical infrastructure, the EU has established a framework of directives and regulations. But according to a 2014 *Contemporary Security Policy* article by Krzysztof Sliwinski, due to the sensitivity to national security issues and questions of sovereignty, there has always been a reserved attitude toward more than minimalistic EU regulation. Nevertheless, it has been commonly accepted that the closer economic ties in Europe make it necessary to protect critical infrastructure on an EU level. Therefore, the EU needs a suitable overarching national critical infrastructure protection (CIP) system, as can be concluded from Javier Argomaniz' paper in 2015 for the journal *Intelligence and National Security*.

By changing the rules of information distribution, ICT has permeated virtually every facet of modern life. This new paradigm has also led to increasing cross-border interdependencies, and critical infrastructure is not excluded. To the contrary, there is an apparent "digitalization" of critical infrastructure through the use of modern information and control systems and tightening interrelations among different entities, resulting in growing complexity and the possibility of cascading disruptions. Without a supporting policy framework that helps unify various perspectives on ICT and critical infrastructure, it will be difficult to develop resilience against future threats in the cyber-physical domain. The regulation of critical infrastructure, the field of cyber security and the related field of critical information infrastructure have been regulated separately until now.

The growing interrelation of critical infrastructure in the digital environment and the interdependence of European

Overlap of EU critical infrastructure sectors and essential services

Table 1

Critical Infrastructure	Essential services
Energy	Energy
Information and communication technologies	Digital infrastructure
Water	Drinking water supply and distribution
Food	
Health	Health sector
Financial	Banking/financial market infrastructures
Public & legal order and safety	
Civil administration	
Transport	Transport
Chemical and nuclear industry	
Space and research	

Sources: Commission of the European Communities and Council of the European Union

countries' infrastructures have created a need to harmonize these two sectors to enhance security and ensure European competitiveness. The new NIS Directive could be an important starting point for a harmonized CIP program and support the governance of critical infrastructure in an EU environment.

Initiatives in the new directive are helpful to a certain point, but are not sufficient to establish an effective framework to ensure critical infrastructure resilience. The NIS Directive does not emphasize a holistic enough view, including the private sector. We must examine the directive's potential benefits and shortcomings in light of these challenges.

Defining CIP and critical infrastructure framework

The abstract idea and understanding of critical infrastructure and how it is defined are very similar in most countries; it can be reduced to infrastructure that ensures the continuity of society. However, national points of views diverge when it comes to defining which infrastructure is critical. In 2005, the EU published a list of 11 indicative sectors of critical infrastructure. As seen in Table 2, there is only partial agreement within the EU as to what constitutes critical infrastructure. The list contains only 17 EU member states and Switzerland, because the relevant information was made available in the English language to the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) only for these states.

Out of 11 sectors, only energy and transportation are uniformly regarded as "European Critical Infrastructure" by the Council Directive 2008/114/EC that defines the European Program on Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP). These

The energy sector is among Europe's most critical infrastructure.
REUTERS

are the only transnational infrastructure sectors that are considered to fulfill the criteria for "critical infrastructure located in Member States the disruption or destruction of which would have a significant impact on at least two Member States," as defined by the Council of the European Union. Further, ICT is not even regarded as critical infrastructure in Luxembourg and Italy, although it is explicitly mentioned in the directive as a potential European critical infrastructure sector.

This means that only the energy and transportation sectors are regulated through the EU. To facilitate further exchange on potential threats and establish an optional cross-sectional information sharing and coordination network, the Critical Infrastructure Warning Network was established. But according to Raphael Bossong, in his 2014 article in the journal *European Security*, thanks to the lack of mandatory information provisions, this network has lagged behind expectations in supporting situational awareness. In their 2015 article for the *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, Marjolein van Asselt, Ellen Vos and Isabelle Wildhaber point out that potential participants are concerned with the confidentiality of provided information, and this is a major problem facing this network.

The European Reference Network for CIP was founded to provide scientific support for EPCIP and to improve the standardization and harmonization of technology. But this network lacks influence and exchange with private industry, which Bossong says is crucial to the effective establishment of operational security governance. ICT is not included in the existing critical infrastructure frameworks, so parallel structures have been established within the EU to support the advance of critical information infrastructure.

ENISA, which according to its website "was set up to enhance the capability of the European Union, the EU Member States and the business community to prevent, address and respond to network and information security problems," and is an independent European community agency. Neil Robinson states in the book *Cybersecurity: Public Sector Threats and Responses* that ENISA provides expertise and advice to the European Commission and EU member states regarding information technology (IT) security and risk management and supports public-private partnerships. ENISA is essentially seen "as a hub for exchange of information, best practices and knowledge in the field of information security," according to Sliwinski, and does not have any real directive power apart from advising the European Council. Bossong contends that there is still no leading agency that has the capability to coordinate and influence policy in support of CIP. Nevertheless, in its independent role ENISA recognizes the problem of the growing convergence between industrial control systems, IT and their functional elements. Therefore, it has put forward several recommendations and guidelines for mitigating the problem on technical and practical levels, but there is no legal obligation for member states to follow those recommendations.

The European Union Public Private Partnership for Resilience was focused on the telecommunications sector but was closed down in April 2014. Robinson explains that the goal of this public-private partnership was to provide a platform for information sharing and exchange of best practices between public officials and industry and to establish mutual comprehension of priorities and objectives. Its effectiveness was considered only partially satisfactory, and therefore it shall be succeeded by a new Public Private Partnership on Cybersecurity. The European Union Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-EU) was established in 2012. CERT-EU says it "cooperates closely with other CERTs in the Member States and beyond as well as with specialized IT security companies." (The terms CERT and Computer Security

and Incident Response Team [CSIRT] are used synonymously in the literature; the NIS Directive uses the term CSIRT).

Previously, success in establishing a coordinated approach to protect critical infrastructure from emerging threats has been limited.

The NIS Directive — changes to CIP

Because the European Commission narrowly defines critical infrastructure to include only the energy and transportation sectors and defines "essential services" broadly, the NIS Directive can have a more extensive impact on EU-wide CIP than the EPCIP, if only from a cyber security aspect.

The identification of operators of essential services (OES) is defined by each member state, although the Council of the European Union recommends that the "definition of operator of essential services should be coherently applied by all Member States." Friction over the definition can be expected, as was already seen regarding the definition of European critical infrastructure. But, as all OESs have to report security incidents to their national CSIRTs, the individual states and the companies within these states will have sufficient interest to form a common baseline defining essential services and relevant incidents for all. Mandatory incident reporting for all OES, will encourage private firms to improve their cyber security capabilities and comply with basic technical security standards, although it should be guaranteed that the notification shall not necessarily expose the notifying party. The legal obligation to publicly admit security flaws, even if anonymously, will raise risk awareness.

The requirement that each state establish a national NIS strategy is fundamental to future collaboration between states, as it demands "measures relating to preparedness, response and recovery." The U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology's 2014 Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity provides a similar, more detailed approach toward CIP: "The Framework Core consists of five concurrent and continuous Functions - Identify, Protect, Detect, Respond, Recover." These functions correspond to the CIP life cycle, as described by Bernard Hämmerli and Andrea Renda in their 2010 report for the Centre for European Policy Studies. The effective and coherent establishment of such frameworks across Europe should raise awareness and improve overall performance in countering cyber threats to critical infrastructure.

However, the effectiveness of NIS strategy implementation may vary from state to state without formal corrective support from the EU. A formal strategy that is too static would be counterproductive regarding a highly dynamic digital environment. And while essential services must be identified and reported within a certain time-frame, there is no explicit time limit for the implementation of the NIS strategy.

Critical Infrastructure sectors as identified by EU countries

Table 2

Sectors	Energy	ICT	Water	Food	Health	Financial	Public & Legal Order	Civil Admin.	Transport	Chemical & Nuclear Industry	Space & Research	Other
AT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
BE	✓	✓				✓			✓			
CZ	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓			Emergency services
DK	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓			
EE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Rescue services
FI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
FR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	Industry
DE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			Media & Culture
EL	✓								✓			
HU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			Industry
IT	✓								✓			
MT		✓				✓	✓					
NL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
PL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		Rescue system
SK	✓	✓		✓					✓			Industry/Postal
ES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
UK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			Emergency services

Source: ENISA 2014

These factors can obstruct effective implementation, because without the beneficial exchange of practices and information for all parties there will be little incentive to participate above the minimum required. This is especially true when taking into account the different starting points regarding capabilities and the significance of this problem in different nations. Collaboration between states, as well as with private industry, is essential, but can be effective only if all participants benefit.

Although the importance of cooperation with the private sector is explicitly stated in the NIS Directive, it does not address how this should take place or which institutions should be responsible at the EU level. This could be a lost opportunity, because ENISA recommended in its closing report on the European Public Private Partnership for Resilience initiative that simple but formal rules of governance be defined at the earliest stage of future public-private partnerships. There is seemingly no platform to exchange information among member states and with the private sector apart from reports to the national CSIRTs. It is dangerous that no formal cooperation organ or forum for information exchange for private entities, such as the Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs) established in the United States, is actively promoted on a European level, considering how much critical infrastructure is privately owned.

The NIS Directive states that a supportive framework for fostering risk management could be initiated by providing a clear mandate for national CSIRTs to cover essential services and establishing a CSIRT network for "the development of confidence and trust between the Member States and to promote swift and effective operational cooperation." Cooperation within such frameworks can also foster progress toward common understanding and standards. This is necessary for effective operations regarding CIP, as Hämmerli and Renda determined. Sharing of incident reports can certainly help improve overall situational awareness of advanced threats within the EU, though herein lies a potential problem, as these incidents are shared only voluntarily. If no real, trustful cooperation is established between sharing CSIRTs, the threat picture won't be valuable. However, it is not clear how big this group will be, because each state defines which national CSIRTs will participate in the network and, therefore, how trustful the environment will be. The question of how to integrate the private sector into the process also remains. There is no mention of the process by which the OES will profit from this information sharing and, therefore, improve resilience.

The directive also lacks differentiated coordination among the various critical infrastructure sectors. The specified tasks assigned to the cooperation group seem to imply a "one size fits all" strategy, implying that this group will be the focal point of information and best practices. This design cannot keep up with demand, because the variety of essential services is enormous. Banking and financial services have much different agendas and needs than water utilities; there is no general option for effective risk management. A risk information overload could result from a lack of information exchange capabilities on a more horizontal level, between sectors.

It is useful to have a high-level institution to achieve a unified, overarching vision of potential risk, but there is no formal provision to ensure the demanded effectiveness in the implementation of this vision, nor does it prioritize risks. It is questionable that the needs for information exchange, experience and risk-management approaches among different stakeholders can be assured within this cooperation group. Further, the situational picture will miss important pieces without the direct insight of the mainly private OESs. Of course, it is not productive to integrate single companies into such a group — such an unwieldy expanded group membership would destroy trust. However, there is a clear need for direct input from a panel representing the different sectors of critical infrastructure in the private sector.

Conclusion

The EU has a clear need to consolidate its approach to protect different critical infrastructure sectors, but it's been lacking so far. Evolving technology and rapid information transmission beyond national borders has caused the fusion of critical infrastructure and ICT, even though the original requirements of these two sectors were different.

The approach of the NIS Directive to merge major aspects of critical infrastructure and ensure visibility by requiring national regulations across the entire EU will certainly help raise awareness of the issue and is a major capstone for consolidation. The establishment of national NIS strategies as well as mandatory reporting of disruptive incidents can help countries focus on improvements, but this won't be enough to achieve effective long-term protection.

To meet the challenge of managing the emerging complexity, the EU needs a culture of threat awareness and flexible adaptation. And with the transnational interconnection of critical infrastructure, information must be shared across borders to manage risk effectively. The CSIRT cooperation network will support information sharing, but will not ensure a complete information picture or effectively support an overall risk management strategy for critical infrastructure sectors on an EU level. The cooperation group has similar handicaps. To ensure successful information sharing and risk management, the private sector needs to be included in the process.

Here, the new NIS Directive has shortcomings. It creates no formal interfaces with the cooperation group or the CSIRTs. The creation of a representative construct for individual critical infrastructure sectors and its integration into the NIS Directive would help ensure that insights on potential risks and industry influence on future policies are formally channeled into a cooperative framework. This could be addressed as part of the still-to-be-defined Public-Private Partnership on Cybersecurity, but nothing regarding cooperation between the private and public sectors, on the EU level, is mentioned in the NIS Directive apart from its importance and necessity.

The innovations of the new NIS Directive represent a positive step toward establishing a common understanding and laying the groundwork for future collaboration, but they are insufficient to meet the challenges ahead. The lack of close and integrated collaboration between individual states within the EU or with the private sector reduces the ability of stakeholders to synergize efforts to protect European critical infrastructure. □

COUNTERING EXTREMISM
AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES
Series Editor: Stuart Croft

New Approaches to Countering Terrorism

Designing and Evaluating
Counter Radicalization and
De-Radicalization Programs

Hamed El-Said

Book author: Hamed El-Said
Published by Palmgrave Macmillan, 2015
Reviewer: Clare Calvert

As the number of countries dealing with the threat of foreign terrorist fighters increases, the book *New Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism* will become an ever more important read for policymakers when assessing deradicalization programs and counterradicalization measures. It's an appropriate second volume to *Deradicalizing Violent Extremists: Counter-Radicalization and Deradicalization Programmes and their Impact in Muslim-Majority States*. El-Said produces further case studies from Muslim-majority states while incorporating case studies in Muslim-minority countries such as Australia. This progression reflects the spread and increasing awareness within Western countries of the use of "soft" measures to counter violent extremism. This book serves as an insightful and invaluable guide for governments creating and reforming their counter-terrorism strategies.

El-Said insists it is time for countries to stop mishandling their fight against terrorism and begin investing in soft approaches. He argues that kinetic efforts such as airstrikes and military operations encourage, rather than discourage, radicalization. In his view, the main premise of countering violent extremism is the realization that radicalization is a process and not an event. Therefore, radicalization is something that can be reversed or mitigated.

El-Said examines the conditions for radicalization and how they differ in developed and underdeveloped countries. States that promote a good relationship between security forces and civil society are less likely to suffer from violent extremism. The author highlights how the actions of Australian police after 9/11 encouraged radicalization within the Lebanese community living there. A thorough analysis compares this relationship to that during the era of multiculturalism in Australia from the 1970s to John Howard's government in 1996, which took a different, more negative view of immigrants. While pointing out the different conditions for radicalization in developed and underdeveloped countries, El-Said produces common factors for radicalization and integrates these throughout the country case studies. This chapter sets out a valid framework for understanding the reasons for radicalization.

EL-SAID INSISTS IT IS TIME FOR COUNTRIES TO STOP MISHANDLING THEIR FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM AND BEGIN INVESTING IN SOFT APPROACHES. HE ARGUES THAT KINETIC EFFORTS SUCH AS AIRSTRIKES AND MILITARY OPERATIONS ENCOURAGE, RATHER THAN DISCOURAGE, RADICALIZATION.

Furthermore, the book's case studies provide an extensive history and context of each country before they share details of national strategies to counter violent extremism. El-Said insists that understanding is the key to countering the problem. There is no set program for countering violent extremism, but strategies are shaped by a country's history, demographics, culture, population, economy and other factors. A lengthy chapter on Mauritania, for example, explains the long and undocumented history of the West African state. It's a much-needed precursor to explain how Mauritania is dealing with violent extremism.

Beyond simply examining deradicalization programs, the book evaluates results and uses in-depth case studies to compare programs in different countries. The author uses these comparisons to make recommendations and explains why programs in one country might not work in another. For example, he notes how intensely families are involved in the Saudi Arabian deradicalization program. On the other hand, families play a smaller role in Australia. Turkey and Singapore are singled out for running successful efforts.

The author's work is supported with strong and thorough research and interviews from officials implementing their countries' programs, providing important information from primary sources. It is from research such as this that we learn that Australia struggled to find imams for its program. This enables further comparisons between programs in Muslim-majority and minority countries and provides guidance for countries just beginning to create deradicalization programs.

El-Said's assertion that deradicalization comes in various national forms is confirmed toward the end of the book. For example, what one country may call deradicalization could be seen as better prison management in another country. The book makes a clear case for country-specific programs as opposed to simply applying the program of one country to another, highlighting misguided attempts by some nations to copy the Saudi Arabian model. This approach to the study and implementation of deradicalization programs provides an insightful read from which practical lessons can be drawn and implemented.

This was an excellent second volume, and further examples from Muslim-minority countries should be welcomed, not only by governments embarking on softer measures to counter extremism, but by those aiming to evolve and become more effective in countering violent extremism. □

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January						
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April						
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June						
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