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Expert Perspectives on How the Islamic State Potentially Shaped the Future of Islamic Transnational Terrorism: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

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Transnational Terrorism: An Exploratory Study

by

Richard Bryant Culp III

MA, Hawaii Pacific University, 2013

BS, Shenandoah University, 2001

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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May 2019

Abstract

Since the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) declared its caliphate in June 2014, there has been an unprecedented amount of terrorist attacks conducted in the West by individuals either inspired by jihadist ideology or linked to ISIS. As evidenced by the number of ISIS-related attacks throughout Europe and North America, the West faces an ongoing and persistent transnational threat from Islamic terrorism. There is an extensive amount of literature on terrorism and ISIS. However, there is a gap in literature on the potential impact of ISIS on the future of Islamic terrorism. This qualitative case study explored how ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory served as the framework for this study. Interviews and one open-ended questionnaire on Islamic transnational terrorism were collected from 15 individuals within the defense enterprise, academia, and individuals working in private defense organizations, using purposive sampling. Analysis occurred by using Braum and Clarke's six phases of coding. The results of this study indicated ISIS has shaped the future of transnational terrorism by demonstrating likeminded extremists no longer have to travel to conflict zones in order to plan or receive guidance on attack targets while using simple attack methods and weapons. Additionally, ISIS empowered and encouraged its members to interact with potential recruits or supporters through social media and open forums, which may possibly be emulated in the future by likeminded groups. The results contribute to positive social change by providing decision makers information on the future of Islamic transnational terrorism, thus allowing for appropriate countermeasures that mitigate terror activities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents and two sisters. This experience has truly tested my time management and determination. I am appreciative of their support and understanding throughout the process.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to several people that were instrumental throughout this experience. First, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Boris Bruk and Dr. George Larkin for their continued support, motivation, and expertise throughout the dissertation process. Secondly, I would like to thank Lucy for the inspiration to finish this project. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my family and colleagues for their encouragement and support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Research

Introduction

Since the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) declared its caliphate in June

2014, there has been an unprecedented amount of terrorist attacks conducted in the West

by individuals either inspired by jihadist ideology or linked to ISIS (Europol, 2016).

While some attacks had a minimal number of victims, others caused significant casualties

such as Nice (July 2016, 86 casualties), Orlando (June 2016, 49 casualties), Brussels

(March 2016, 32 casualties), and Paris (November 2015, 130 casualties). As evidenced

by the tragic events in France in 2015, Belgium in 2016, and dozens of less sophisticated

attacks throughout Europe and North America for which ISIS claimed responsibility, the

West faces an ongoing and persistent transnational threat from Islamic terrorism (Nesser,

Stenersen, & Oftedal, 2016). According to Wainwright (2016), "it's certainly the highest

terrorist threat we have faced for over 10 years and we need to up our game as a

collective counter terrorist community to make sure we can protect our citizens from

this" (para. 3). For the purpose of this study, the West refers to North America (Canada

and the United States) and Europe, including the 28-member states of the European

Union (EU), plus Switzerland, Norway, Australia, and New Zealand (see Appendix A).

There is an extensive amount of literature on terrorism, Islamic terrorism, and

ISIS; however, there is a gap in literature on the potential impact of ISIS on the future

trends in Islamic terrorism. Moreover, the majority of literature addressing future trends

in terrorism is centered on al-Qaida's impact on terrorism. Therefore, the purpose of this

qualitative case study was to explore how ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic

transnational terrorism by examining expert perspectives on ISIS and transnational

terrorism. The implications for positive social change that resulted from this study are aimed toward agencies tasked with a counterterrorism mandate, the U.S. intelligence community, decision makers, and private organizations that conduct research on terrorist organizations. Specifically, this research may assist in saving lives by identifying future trends in Islamic terrorism and the potential short term and long-term implications of such trends for the West, which would allow for the proper mitigation and response by Western governments. In addition to the introduction, background, and problem statement, Chapter 1 includes the significance of the study, research framework, research questions, nature of the study, definitions, research assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and a summary.

Background

On November 13, 2015, ISIS suicide bombers and gunmen conducted simultaneous and coordinated attacks in multiple locations in the 10th and 11th arrondissements (districts), and the Bataclan concert hall in Paris, France. The attacks left 137 dead and injured another 368 individuals (Neiberg, 2017). On March 22, 2016, ISIS operatives conducted another mass casualty attack in Brussels, Belgium, detonating suicide bombs in the Maelbeek metro station and Brussels Airport in Zaventem, leaving 32 dead (Europol, 2016). Such attacks (see Appendix B for a list of attacks) represent decentralized plots and networks, as well as acts of terror.

On July 14, 2016 in Nice, France, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel deliberately drove his cargo truck into a crowd of people celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, France. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack that killed 85 people and injured 434 (Sanchez, 2016). Four days later, Riaz Khan Ahmadzai launched an axe attack on a train in

Germany. Five people were wounded; Ahmadzai was shot dead. Prior to the attack, the

perpetrator made a martyrdom video and stated an ISIS instructor ordered him to commit

the attack (Ulrich, 2016). Six days later, Mohammad Daleel detonated a suicide bomb in

Ansbach, Germany. The bomber pledged allegiance to ISIS's caliph al-Baghdadi prior to

the attack and marked the first suicide bombing in German history (Conner, 2016).

Such examples of lone actor attacks are one part of ISIS's transnational approach

which involves self-radicalization or acts of violence directed by ISIS recruiters on the

Internet. Combined with more complex attacks (see Appendix C for a list of attackers) as

evidenced by the tragic events in France in 2015, Belgium in 2016, Orlando in 2016, and

dozens of less sophisticated attacks throughout the world for which ISIS claimed

responsibility, the international community faces an ongoing and persistent transnational

threat from ISIS, both from centrally organized plots and lone actor attacks. For the

purpose of this research, threat is defined as "a function of capability and intent"

(Fisherman, 2014, p. 7).

ISIS has significantly undermined stability in Syria and Iraq, and to some extent

the larger Middle East, while posing a threat to global security (U.S. Department of State,

2014). To mitigate the perceived ISIS threat, in August 2014, the U.S. military, along

with coalition partners, commenced a series of actions, including airstrikes, designed to

degrade ISIS. Specifically, the coalition included 23 North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(NATO) partners, 28 NATO members, and 8eightindependent countries for a total of 59

nations participating in some form in the counter-ISIS campaign, with the U.S.

conducting the majority of the military operations (Benitez & Maletta, 2014).

In response to the initial U.S.-led airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, ISIS released several official statements publicly and explicitly called for attacks against Western governments that were participating in the counter-ISIS coalition (Levs & Yan, 2014). Moreover, security and intelligence services worldwide are not only troubled by the returned foreign fighter threat, but also concerned with ISIS's narrative using propaganda and social media to inspire homegrown extremists to take violent action in their own country without having traveled to conflict zones such as Iraq or Syria.

ISIS's narrative especially gained traction in Europe, evidenced by several sponsored or inspired attacks, including the November 2015 Paris attacks, March 2016 Brussels bombings, and attack in Nice, France that resulted in 84 killed, along with the significant amount of foreign fighters stemming from Europe (Barnes & Faucon, 2016). Moreover, ISIS educated lone actors on the benefits of using simpler attack tactics on soft targets throughout Europe. The impact of such attacks allowed ISIS to promote its agenda without having to devote a significant amount of resources to the operations. Additionally, such attacks and tactics are designed to overwhelm Western security services and intelligence agencies while straining homeland security resources, possibly setting the stage for bigger attacks in the future. This paper clearly addressed the difference in attacks that are designed, sponsored, and directed by ISIS as opposed to attacks conducted by individuals that are inspired by ISIS's violent narrative.

This paper was authored with the understanding that current events, including international interventions, are taking place all over the world to mitigate the threat from ISIS. At the time of this study, counter-ISIS forces were involved in military efforts to degrade ISIS strongholds in Iraq and Syria, and it is unknown the short and long-term

outcome of such efforts. According to Clarke and Gartesstein-Ross (2016), "as ISIS tries to transition from jihadist state to insurgency or transnational terrorist group and eventually back into a state, a new strategic doctrine will likely be born" (para. 10). Therefore, this study examined how ISIS shapes a possible new strategic Islamic transnational terrorism approach. Currently, there is a gap in literature on future trends in terrorism. This study filled a gap in literature by presenting a qualitative examination into ISIS's potential impact on Islamic terrorism to provide a more nuanced and well-structured understanding of the long-term asymmetric threat from ISIS and potentially other terrorist organizations against the West.

Of note, while ISIS is also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), its Arabic language acronym Daesh, and the Islamic State (IS), this paper addressed the group as ISIS, unless used differently in a direct quote. Moreover, I used the term jihadist throughout the paper. For the purpose of this study, jihadism refers to religiously-motived violence inspired by ISIS or likeminded groups, a concept commonly used by both critics and supporters of the term.

Problem Statement

ISIS presents unprecedented security challenges to the international community as the group controls territory in Syria and Iraq (at the time of this paper), rejects the norms of international law, and recruited over 5,000 Western Europeans to join its cause in Syria and Iraq. It is estimated that over 4,000 foreign fighters have since returned to their country of origin (Bakker & Singleton, 2016; Hegghammer & Nesser, 2015). ISIS's initial gains in Iraq and Syria are credited to innovation and its ability to adapt to its constantly changing environment, which resulted in different organizational survival

strategies to include both centralized and decentralized attacks abroad, thus increasing the threat to Western nations. ISIS recruited thousands of European foreign fighters and leveraged social media with the intent to spread its violent narrative and global ambitions and promote terrorist acts directed at Westerners.

In the wake of the unprecedented number of ISIS-linked attacks conducted globally in 2016, including an emphasis on smaller scale attacks that require less organizational support and direction, ISIS represents a new type of jihadist threat (Hegghammer, 2016). Specifically, ISIS's declaration of a self-proclaimed caliphate, combined with its ability to recruit an unprecedented number of foreign fighters, territorial gains and losses, and manipulation of social media signifies a different approach from the Salafi-jihadist norm (Soufan Group, 2015). According to Hoffman (2006), terrorist organizations that want to survive have an organizational responsibility to learn and adapt their modus operandi amid Western counterterrorism measures in the post-9/11 environment. Terrorist groups that do not learn will eventually be irrelevant, while groups that learn from prior innovation will be more adaptive in circumventing Western counterterrorism measures and have a better chance of organizational survival (Gartenstein-Ross, 2018). Gartenstein-Ross (2018) concluded that the ability of terrorist groups to learn from one another and how one group's modus operandi is adopted by other terrorist organizations is not researched enough within academia. Therefore, it is important to examine and understand how ISIS has potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism in the years to come. While there is current and relevant research pertaining to the political, security, and economic repercussions of transnational terrorism, as well the evolution of ISIS, there is a gap in literature regarding how ISIS has

potentially shaped the Islamic transnational threat, potential implications, and the future of terrorism. Moreover, the majority of studies conducted on terrorism focus on the current state of terrorism, while studies that address the future of terrorism are al-Qaida focused.

According to Lievan and Walton (2013), the civil war in Syria significantly changed the global transnational threat against the West from terrorist organizations and groups like ISIS. SIS represents a transnational threat that can be considered of a gamechanger within the global jihadist front; therefore, it is imperative for the defense enterprise and policymakers to comprehensively understand ISIS's impact on Islamic transnational terrorism and potential implications. Therefore, this study filled a gap in literature by examining how ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism and potential implications for the West. Such insight could contribute to the prevention of radicalization and terrorism.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine an asymmetric conflict between ISIS and the West. This bridged a gap in literature related to the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. Such knowledge is critical in mitigating the threat from Islamic terrorist groups like ISIS. To explore how ISIS has potentially shaped Islamic transnational terrorism, it was necessary to examine expert perspectives on ISIS and terrorism while examining the group's approach (from June 2014 to June 2017) that may impact transnational terrorism in the years to come. By examining the transnational terrorism approaches by Islamic terrorist groups like ISIS, the study provides an improved understanding of the future threats that may face the West and supports the

development of antiterrorism and counterterrorism actions needed to mitigate such threats.

Framework

Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory served as the framework for this study. Specifically, the asymmetric conflict theory centers on asymmetric conflict when the resources between two belligerents (i.e. ISIS and the West) differ and one (or both) belligerents attempt to exploit its opponent's weaknesses (Stepanova, 2008). Moreover, the theory incorporates vital unconventional transnational terrorism concepts (i.e. transnational terrorism modus operandi) that at least one of the combatants (i.e. ISIS) may use to offset its deficiencies in quality or quantity. As Stepanova (2008) said, nation-states generally have conventional military superiority and power over nonstate actors. However, terrorist organizations may have other qualified advantages due to ideologies and organizational structure in their confrontations with states, allowing weaker opponents like ISIS to defeat stronger adversaries (Roberts, 2000; Stepanova, 2008). Therefore, by using Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory as a framework, it allowed for a thorough examination of how ISIS potentially shaped Islamic transnational in the years to come. Chapter 2 examines Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory in more detail.

Research Questions

To bridge a gap in literature and in order to explore and examine the impact of ISIS's transnational terrorism approach, I addressed one central question: How has ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism? Additionally, in order to fully answer the research question, the research answered the following subquestions:

SQ1: How is the nature of the threat from ISIS different than other threats from Islamic terrorist groups in the past?

SQ2: Is ISIS's transnational terrorism approach innovative? If so, how?

SQ3: Will other designated terrorist groups learn from ISIS's transnational approach and adopt similar modus operandi against the West? If so, how?

SQ4: What is ISIS's long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism?

Nature of the Study

To answer the research question, it was appropriate to use a qualitative case study method. Qualitative research permits the researcher to investigate the phenomenon of interest using interviews and questionnaires for empirical research (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, a case study approach allowed for an examination bounded by time of knowledge by exploring, understanding, and explaining expert perspectives on how ISIS has potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism by examining its approach from June 2014 to June 2017. I used semistructured interviews and email questionnaires for data collection and conducted thematic analysis.

This study was considered exploratory in nature due to the lack of data related to the research question. An exploratory approach allowed for an exhaustive collection of data that was used for extensive analysis on how ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism and the possible implications for the West. Moreover, an exploratory approach enabled me to examine a multitude of expert perspectives by including participants in various disciplines which allowed for differing views on the research topic. The exploratory approach permitted me to present a complete depiction of the research topic.

Definitions of Attack Typology

It is difficult to capture the exact relationship between someone who commits a terrorist act and the organization for which the act is claimed. Often, the attacker is labeled connected, linked, influenced, or related and the attack itself as top-down or bottom-up. For example, a rarely-used 9/11-style attack in which al-Qaida leadership groomed the team of attackers and facilitated the travel to the West demonstrated a top-down and bottom-up approach to attack planning and execution. According to Hoffman (2010), labeling a terrorist attack either top-down or bottom-up implies it was sanctioned by organizational leadership, who even possibly provided guidance for the terrorist attack, as opposed to an attack by spontaneous individuals inspired by a violent narrative.

The more traditional process of terrorism involves an organization guiding the recruitment of the fighters, having complete oversight regarding the organization's operational influence, and remaining actively involved in planning, plotting, and implementation of attacks. However, the top-down or bottom-up approach did not fully explain the phenomenon of individuals who are inspired by a terrorist organization to commit an act of violence. Often, those individuals are self-trained and/or self-directed with a limited capacity for committing large scale attacks.

As applicable to this research, many of the attack plots targeting the West were neither clearly bottom-up nor top-down, making the attacker's exact relationship with ISIS difficult to determine. Therefore, this study used the following definitions of attack typology which represents the spectrum of terrorist attacks, including those with substantial leadership involvement (i.e. 9/11) and no leadership involvement (i.e. Riaz Khan Ahmadzai's knife attack on a train in Germany inspired by online ISIS

propaganda). The following definitions are not intended to be used beyond describing transnational attack typology and are listed according to the amount of ISIS involvement.

1. *Training and Top-Level Directives:* The attacker trains in the organization's heartland, is tasked by top leaders to attack in the West and is supported materially by the organization in the planning and preparation process.

2. *Training and Mid-Level Directives:* The attacker trains in the organization's heartland and is encouraged by mid-level cadres to carry out a more or less specified attack in the West, but has little or no interaction with the top leadership and receives little or no material support from the organization.

3. *Training:* The attacker trains in the organization's heartland, but is not specifically instructed by anyone to attack in the West. Instead, he develops the motivation to attack in the West himself, in the belief that he is doing what the organization wants.

4. *Remote Contact With Directives:* The attacker communicates remotely (typically by telephone, email, or social media) and bilaterally with cadres of the organization and receives personal instructions.

5. *Remote Contact Without Directives:* The attacker communicates remotely and bilaterally with members of the organization, but does not receive instructions.

6. *Sympathy, No Contact:* The attacker expresses ideological support for the group through his propaganda consumption, written or spoken statements, or some other aspect of his behavior, but does not communicate bilaterally with anyone in the organization (Hegghammer & Nesser, 2015, p. 21).

For this study, the term ISIS-connected referred to an attacker that met definitions one through four, and ISIS-inspired referred to definitions five and six.

Research Assumptions

Several assumptions were applied to this study. The first assumption was the selection of an exploratory case study was appropriate to understand and explain ISIS's impact on Islamic transnational terrorism. Secondly, the use of interviews was the optimal approach to explore the implications of ISIS's transnational terrorism approach. Moreover, it was assumed the research questions were authored in a way that would accurately explore how ISIS shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. Fourthly, it was assumed the interview data from subject matter experts was accurately transcribed and the study incorporated key concepts. Additionally, it was assumed the number of research participants was enough to adequately form conclusions. Lastly, it was assumed the results of the research would lead to positive social change by possibly providing researchers and decision makers information on the future of Islamic transnational terrorism, thus allowing for appropriate countermeasures that mitigate future acts of terrorism.

Scope and Delimitations

This qualitative case study was restricted to expert perspectives on how ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. The research participants were selected based on their relevance to the research question, and I elected to use purposive sampling, eliminating other sampling techniques. Expert perspectives based on open source information on terrorist organizations can lend insight into the strategic goals of a terrorist group, even if it compromises its operational security (Winter, 2015).

It was beyond the scope of this research to examine all of ISIS's activities, transnational terrorism directed at non-Western countries, and the relationship between ISIS and other terrorist groups. Therefore, transferability will be limited, as this study focused only on ISIS and transnational terrorism targeting the West and did not examine other terrorist organizations or attacks against non-Western countries. More details on transferability are discussed in Chapter 3. Additionally, it was outside the scope and focus of this research to examine the religious narratives that lend justification to ISIS for promoting violence against the West. Therefore, this research strictly focused on how ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism directed against the West in order to fill a specific gap in literature.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was that it relied on interviews and email questionnaires for data to lend insight into the phenomenon. Security and safety issues prevented the opportunity to collect data from individuals directly involved with ISIS who could have possibly provided additional insight into the principle research question. Moreover, the research was limited to open source information and did not include classified information (in accordance with Executive Order 13489), which may have limited the responses from the research participants. I reminded the research participants to limit data to open source information to avoid accidental or unauthorized disclosure of classified information. I understood many of the experts who participated in this study have access to classified material; however, it was assumed their data was unclassified and they had permission to lend insight into the topic. Additionally, I took appropriate

steps to eliminate bias within the study. Chapter 3 includes details on how I eliminated research bias.

Significance

Islamic violence stemming from the Middle East prompted many European governments to revamp security policy and allocate additional resources for safeguarding against terrorist threats (Hegghammer & Nesser, 2015). As the U.S. and many European nations have provided the majority of material and air support to counter-ISIS operations, Western citizens are often singled out in overt and public threats sanctioned by official ISIS media outlets. Specifically, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, ISIS's official English language magazines, make promises of defeating the West. Additionally, issues of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah,* along with other ISIS propaganda highlight and praise successful attacks against the West by ISIS-affiliated individuals, and often encourage attacks directed at Westerners.

According to Hegghammer (2016), the jihadi resurgence after 2011 caught many by surprise, and there was a lack of research on the topic. Moreover, there have been observed changes to jihadist modus operandi (to be described in detail in Chapter 2) and a lack of current literature on the topic and the future of terrorism. This research filled a gap in literature on terrorism directed at the West. Specifically, there is a gap in literature related to the future of terrorism as most terrorism-related research describes the present state of terrorism. Additionally, the majority of literature attempting to forecast Islamic terrorism trends and analysis is al-Qaida-related. As such, there is a gap in literature pertaining to ISIS's potential impact on the future of Islamic terrorism. Therefore, this research will help close the gap in literature by exploring ISIS's potential impact on

Islamic terrorism in an effort to understand terrorism strategically by identifying potential future Islamic terrorism trends. Furthermore, this research will improve understanding within the defense enterprise (to include policy makers) regarding the future of Islamic terrorism by providing findings that assist with forecasting the Islamic transnational terrorism threat. Specifically, understanding how ISIS has potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism carries significant implications for Western military and policy responses, along with counterterrorism strategies.

The implications for social change resulting from this research are intended for the defense enterprise, academia, and the private sector tasked with a defense mandate. By understanding how ISIS has potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism, it provides policy and decision makers additional information on possible strategies that could be employed by Islamic terrorist organizations. Such knowledge should allow security and law enforcement agencies to possibly shift counterterrorism resources in order to prevent future terrorist attacks.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced and explained the problem statement, purpose of the research, research questions, nature of the study, key definitions, research assumptions, research limitations and delimitations, and the significance of the study. Moreover, Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory was identified as the theoretical framework that was used as a lens for the inquiry. Chapter 2 will provide a review of scholarly literature related to the central research question, specifically focused on ISIS's external operations approach related to global jihad directed against the West. Chapter 3 will discuss in detail the qualitative method that will be used, along with specifics related to data

collection and data analysis. Additionally, Chapter 3 will discuss why a case study

approach was selected, as well as the mitigation of ethical and validity concerns. Chapter

4 will present and elaborate on the results of the study. Chapter 5 will discuss the

findings in relation to the literature, as well as explore implications for social change.

Lastly, Chapter 5 will recommend additional research and that could be conducted

relevant to the central research focus.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This study examined an asymmetric conflict between ISIS and the West, while bridging the gap in literature regarding how ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism directed against the West. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the literature as it pertains to the key aspects of the study, including the theoretical framework. Literature related to transnational terrorism, Salafi jihadism, Abu Musab al-Suri, ISIS, and the threat it represents to Western countries will be presented. Additionally, there is a section on the importance of using open source information for this study and terrorism-related research and forecasting.

ISIS is more adaptive in its transnational terrorism approach than other terrorist organization, thus presenting unique security challenges (Europol, 2016). Additionally, ISIS's use of the Internet to spread its violent narrative aided in the recruitment of foreign fighters, lone actor attacks, and radicalizing homegrown violent extremists. Specifically, ISIS's main propaganda themes that this study identified and were relevant to this research were: recruitment, promotion of the caliphate, and encouraging enemy attacks.

There is a wealth of literature on the evolution of ISIS, its propaganda, and transnational terrorism. However, there is a gap in literature regarding the impact of ISIS's transnational terrorism approach and what it means for the future of Islamic terrorism and the West. ISIS employs a terrorism approach not restricted by geographical borders, and this study examined the strategic implications of its methods on the future of Islamic terrorism. Chapter 2 includes this study's literature search strategy, the theoretical foundation used for the study, a brief background on transnational terrorism

and ISIS, and a section on the importance of using publicly available information for terrorism-related research.

Literature Search Strategy

This study used several literature strategies, which included exhaustive searches in all relevant Walden University Library literature and statistical databases. Specifically, the databases included EBSCOHost and ProQuest, as well as the International Security and Counter Terrorism Reference Center, Homeland Security Digital Library, LexisNexis Academic Library, SAGE Premier, and Military and Government Collection, along with Academic Search Premier. Moreover, the literature included publicly available literature discovered from US government websites, reputable think tanks, and peer-reviewed literature retrieved from Google Scholar. To uphold academic standards, peer-reviewed journal articles published within the last 5 years were emphasized. The search terms for this study included *ISIS*, *the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)*, *the Islamic State*, *Daesh*, *foreign fighters*, *Syria*, *Iraq*, *Abu Musab al-Suri*, *Mustafa bin al-Qaidr Setmariam Nasar*, *Umar Abd al-Hakim*, *transnational terrorism*, *Islamic terrorism, terrorist attacks*, *modern terrorism, terrorist propaganda*, *terrorism propaganda, ISIS propaganda, al-Qaida propaganda, lone-actor*, *lone-wolf*, *self-directed terrorism*, *terrorism and the internet*, *Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaida*, *AQI, al-Nusra Front*, and *asymmetric conflict*.

Asymmetric Conflict Theory's Application to Research

Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. Specifically, Stepanova's theory is applicable to this study as the theory centers on asymmetric conflict when the resources between two belligerents (i.e. ISIS and

Western nations) differ and how one (or both) belligerents attempt to exploit its opponent's weaknesses. Moreover, the theory incorporates vital unconventional transnational terrorism concepts that at least one of the combatants may use to offset its deficiencies in quality (weapons and technologies) or manpower.

Transnational terrorism (also referred to as international terrorism) is the fastest growing systematically-used form of modern terrorism in regional asymmetric armed conflicts (Stepanova, 2008). As asymmetric terrorism is a tactic to offset the advantages of the strong, the weaker side often advocates and targets civilians of the stronger opponent. According to Stepanova (2008), the need to target noncombatants and civilians serves as a force multiplier against a stronger opponent; such targets are largely considered the weakest points of an opponent that has conventional dominance. Moreover, such attacks put public pressure on the state to react, thus draining domestic resources and often leading to threat fatigue.

For a conflict to be considered asymmetric, there must be a disparity between the belligerents involved in the conflict. Such disparities are generally classified into economic power and military power. As Stepanova (2008) said, nation states have conventional military superiority and power over nonstate actors. However, terrorist organizations may have other qualified advantages due to ideologies and organizational structure in their confrontations with states, allowing weaker opponents like ISIS to defeat stronger adversaries (Roberts, 2000; Stepanova, 2008).

Additionally, the weaker opponent can exploit the stronger opponent's organic and inherent vulnerabilities that are difficult and take time to fix. For example, a weaker opponent can exploit sects of the stronger opponent's disaffected population by spreading

extremist ideologies that support the weaker opponent's objectives. Such a tactic gains more traction in segments of society that share the ethnicity and religious beliefs of whomever the weaker opponent publicly claims to defend. The weaker opponent tends to publicly encourage, no matter how unrealistic it is, that such segments of society could take up arms against stronger opponents, thus challenging the economic and political systems that are responsible for their perceived societal disadvantages.

ISIS has significantly less economic and military power than its Western adversaries. As such, the economic and military superiority of the Western nations over ISIS represents, by definition, an asymmetrical conflict. Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory has been applied in various terrorism-related research. For instance, Jones and Smith (2010) examined concepts within Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory. Specifically, Jones and Smith (2010) investigated the role of ideology in the development of Islamic terrorism, as well as homegrown violent radicalization, both concepts vital to ISIS's transnational terrorism approach. Moreover, Stepanova's research and asymmetric conflict theory has been cited in research that explores Islamic terrorism trends, studies that examine the reason terrorist groups target civilians, trends and patterns in armed conflicts, and assessments on combating terrorism (Abrahms & Potter, 2015; English, 2013). Therefore, I deemed Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory as an appropriate theoretical lens for this study and relate my analysis with this theory in Chapter 5.

Transnational Terrorism Primer

There are two main varieties of terrorism: transnational and domestic (Rosendorff & Sandler, 2005). Both domestic and transitional terrorism can stem from causes that

include but are not limited to separatism, ethnonationalism, social injustice, single issues (e.g., abortion), nihilism, religious freedom, fundamentalism, leftist ideology, and anticapitalism (Sandler, Arce, & Enders, 2008). This study is focused on transnational terrorism and for this study, transnational terrorism was defined as:

> When such action is intended to influence the attitudes and behavior of a target group wider than the immediate victims and when, through the nationality or foreign ties of its perpetrators, through its location, through the nature of its institutional or human victims, or through the mechanics of its resolution, its ramifications transcend national boundaries. (Mickolus, Sandler, & Murdock, 1989, p. 497)

Transitional terrorism, in some form or other, has existed for over 2,000 years. For example, the Jewish Zealots' battle against the Roman Empire dates back to 48 AD and is one of the first recognized terrorist campaigns (Sandler et al., 2008). Other examples include the Hindu Thugs' attacks against travelers in India (600 AD) and Assassins taking up arms against the Christian crusaders in 1090 AD (Bloom, 2005). According to Hoffman (2006), the modern era of transnational terrorism started in 1968, with the hijacking of an Israeli flight by the terrorist group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. There was an uptick in transnational terrorist acts—primarily by leftists or nationalists—following the hijacking lasting until the late 1980s (Rapoport, 2004). However, religious-inspired transnational terrorist attacks increased in the 1990s (Enders & Sandler, 2000). Examples of modern era transnational terrorism include the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre, Hezbollah's 1983 bombing of the US Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, the 1985 downing of Air India Flight 182 by Hindu extremists, the

bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988, the U.S. embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya in 1988, and the coordinated terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (Sandler et al., 2008). A terrorist attack targeting a country's embassy is considered transnational as embassy territory is considered the targeted embassy's land (Sandler, 2005). In all attacks, terrorists crossed borders to conduct the attack and the incidents were high profile enough to focus global attention to the perpetrators' causes.

As the term implies, transnational terrorism has ramifications for two or more countries. It can range from an incident initiated in one country and terminated in another to spillover terrorism when political grievances (i.e. Middle East) motivate attacks in other countries, evidenced by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S. and the March 11, 2004 terrorist attacks on public transit in Madrid, Spain (Enders, Sandler, & Gaibulloev, 2011). Specifically, in the case of the March 2004 attack in Spain and the July 2005 London bombings that targeted the public transport system, terrorists used such Western targets to generate global awareness for their political grievances by increasing media attention to their cause.

As transnational terrorism is a method of asymmetric conflict and differs from more conventional issues, it generally presents unique security challenges and unwanted security externalities. For example, one country's counterterrorism policies could impact the economic, security, and political environment for another country. If one country increases its homeland security or takes counterterrorism actions abroad, the terrorist attack intended for that country may transfer location to a less-secure environment where targets are softer, impacting that nation's economic, security, and political environment (Rosendorff & Sandler, 2005).

Experts within academia, the defense enterprise, and the U.S. government often suggest post 9/11 security policy and military operations encouraged anti-West agendas by known terrorist organizations, thus endangering citizens worldwide (Chomsky, 2016). A recent example of this is Operation Inherent Resolve, the military component of the coalition to degrade ISIS. In August 2014, the U.S. military, along with 28 NATO members and 23 NATO partners, commenced a series of actions—to include airstrikes—designed to degrade ISIS (Benitez & Maletta, 2014; McInnis, 2016).

Leading the efforts, which largely included weapons, ammunition, training, and equipment, were the U.S., the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Germany, France, Estonia, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Canada, Bulgaria, Australia, and Albania. The U.S. and the United Kingdom provided the vast amount of military support, while the remaining countries provided assortments of military equipment, including aircraft, and sent military advisors to train identified coalition allies in Syria and Iraq (Benitez & Maletta, 2014). Furthermore, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iraq, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. were conducting the counter-ISIS airstrikes intended to degrade the organization (Benitez & Maletta, 2014). As of August 2017, the coalition conducted 11,235 airstrikes in Syria and 13,331 airstrikes in Iraq, for a total of 24,566 airstrikes against ISIS-related targets (U.S. DoD, 2017) The initial coalition counter-ISIS airstrikes, confluent with other criticisms of Western military actions (i.e. drone strikes and civilian deaths) in predominantly Muslim lands, fueled ISIS's narrative to take violent action against Western interests, possibly increasing the global terrorism risk to citizens whose government is participating in the operations (Blanchard, Humud, Katzman, & Weed, 2015).

In addition to the unique challenges transnational terrorism causes to Western governments, guarding against such attacks is resource intensive, both by way of associated costs and intelligence and security service manpower and priorities. Since 9/11, hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on global security (Sandler et al., 2009). Today, governments worldwide fund a vast array of anti-terrorism and counterterrorism measures to mitigate the increased threat posed by transnational terrorism. However, given both the defensive and offensive government policies designed to fight the growing threat of transnational terrorism, several terrorist organizations adapted to the modern security landscape to overcome proactive security measures, evidenced by successful terrorist attacks sponsored or inspired by ISIS. Transnational terrorism presents unique security challenges as it is an effective asymmetric tactic employed by a weaker group against a more formidable opponent.

Salafi Jihadism

In order to understand Islamic terrorism and ISIS's transnational approach and its use of violence, it is important to understand the Salafist jihadi narrative. The term Salafist jihadist was coined in 2002 by Giles Kepel and used to label Islamic foreign fighters participating in Soviet-Afghan War (Kepel, 2003). Moreover, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the term jihadism is generally used in the media and academic discourse to describe radical Islamism (Hegghammer, 2009). Jihadi Salafists are generally adamantly opposed to the perceived Western domination of Islam, to include Western influence and military presence in Muslim territories (Boukhars, 2009). According to Hafez (2010), Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi was credited with being one of the more influential figures of jihadi Salafism. Specifically, al Magdisi's writings promoted the

use of violence against the West and allies of the West. Moreover, the use of extreme violence, to include transnational terrorism, is encouraged to gainer attention to grievances and an attempt to achieve goals (Staunton, 2008). According to Grupta (2009), common grievances against the West revolve around the perception the West is controlling the Islamic world economically, religiously, politically, and militarily. Additionally, Islamic extremists such as Salafist jihadist do not support or agree with Western values (Brinkley, 2013).

While the scope of this study does not permit the investigation into the religious underpinnings of Salafism, it is important to understand some key objectives and grievances in order to understand transnational terrorism directed against the West. According to Hegghammer (2009), the objectives associated with Salafi jihadism are: 1) safeguarding the Muslim community from non-Muslim external threats, 2) identifying and correcting Muslim's moral behaviors that are not in accordance with beliefs, 3) controlling and establishing sovereignty on territory under non-Muslim control, 4) attempting to change the political organization of states to adhere to Islamic state principles, and 5) possibly taking violent action against other Muslim sects. Hafez (2010) concluded Salafism is characterized by the rejection of innovation within Islam, conducting jihad against infidel states, the concepts of takfir (excommunication) and tawhid (oneness with God), and the belief that God's sovereignty is present all the time and supplants human reasoning. According to Jones (2014), the Syrian Civil War (staring in 2011) resulted in the number of Salafi jihadists doubling. Moreover, the number of Salafi jihadist groups have increased significantly (estimates as high as 50%) since 2010 (Jones, 2014).

Of the many Salafist strategists—and one often credited for influencing ISIS's transnational terrorism approach and relevant to this study—is Abu Musab al-Suri, born Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasar. Al-Suri is widely regarded as a leading strategic thinker and theoretician for post September 11, 2001, transnational terrorism (Lia, 2007). Al-Suri's writings provided transnational terrorism organizations his vision of global jihad, while discussing the most effective strategies for conducting terrorist attacks against the West (Nasar, 2004). Specifically, al-Suri's jihadi military theory is largely based on "solo or cellular jihad, the act of individual jihadists organizing and carrying out attacks without any connection to or support from an established jihadist group," and the need for a terrorist organization to establish multiple jihadi fronts which would allow for sustained guerilla and urban warfare (SITE, 2010, para. 3). Al-Suri urged for a decentralized model that would present problems for Western intelligence and security organizations, which included thousands of Muslims worldwide participating in jihad.

Al-Suri's The Global Islamic Resistance Call

Al-Suri is credited for greatly influencing Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, one of the key founders of what is now known as ISIS (Clarke & Gartenstein-Ross, 2016). Al-Suri was born in Syria in October 1958, alleging a genealogy from the fourth Caliph Ali. At the age of 18, al-Suri attended the University of Aleppo with an interest in engineering. Around this same time, tensions in Syria were high, sparked by the ruling Alawite minority and Islamist community over political and social issues. The tensions turned violent and included assassination attempts on high-ranking government officials. It was

at this time al-Suri abandoned his academic studies and possibly had his religious

awakening (Cruickshank & Ali, 2007; Lia, 2007).

Al-Suri is largely credited for being the principle mastermind of 21st century

transnational jihad and was reportedly Usama bin Laden's top aid prior to his arrest in

late 2005 (Lia, 2009). Prior to his arrest, al-Suri published *The Global Islamic Resistance*

Call (hereon referred to as *The Call*), a text that articulated his terrorism ideas on post

9/11 jihad. Specifically, it is believed al-Suri authored *The Call* in an attempt to

transform al-Qaida from a hierarchical terrorist organization—for which al-Suri assessed

it to be more vulnerable—into a decentralized movement (Nasar, 2004).

Al-Suri stated *The Call* was a "comprehensive, doctrinal, political, behavioral,

and education method" published in an attempt to advance the Muslims out of a position

of degeneration and weakness (Nasar, 2004, p. 1,398). Al-Suri's (2004) *The Call*

examined the significant problems that he believed the Islamic world faces. Zehr (2011)

concluded al-Suri's disquietude revolved around three core issues. The first issue is the

majority of Muslims do not practice the correct form of Islam. Al-Suri (2004) blamed

Muslim societies, secular institutions, and Western society for this shortcoming.

Secondly, al-Suri (2004) concluded that predominately Muslim countries abandoned

religion, evidenced by Western military occupation and presence in Muslim lands. The

third concern highlighted by al-Suri (2004) involved how the West (specifically the U.S.

and Europe) made deliberate efforts to partner with predominantly Muslim countries. Al-

Suri- (2004) felt like such Muslim countries were more concerned with global power than

promoting Islam and such countries were subordinate to the West (Zehr, 2011). In his

writings, al-Suri provided recommendations and his strategy to overcome the ills facing

Muslims to lift the Islamic world to a position of power (Zehr, 2011).

To overcome his concerns, al-Suri's (2004) *The Call* provided a blueprint on how

the Muslim world could rise and wage jihad against Western powers. Although deemed

not directly involved in the execution, al-Suri's name has been linked to the 9/11 terrorist

attacks, the 2004 Madrid train bombings, and the 2005 London bombings (Lia, 2007).

Counter-terrorism and antiterrorism experts, terrorism analysts, along with scholars often

make the connection to ISIS's transnational terrorism approach and al-Suri's theory of

jihad (Rej, 2016). It is reported that al-Suri had a close relationship with former al-Qaida

Iraq branch Emir Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Lia, 2007). The two formed a relationship in

Afghanistan, which allowed al-Suri to share his concepts regarding insurgency and

guerrilla warfare. Moreover, al-Suri allegedly discussed a transnational terrorism

approach that involved attacks against the West, specifically Europe. At the time, al-

Zarqawi was described as "uneducated and unsophisticated" (Lia, 2007, p. 329). In 2004,

prior to al-Suri's arrest, al-Suri denied having a relationship with al-Zarqawi, although

evidence suggested otherwise (Lia, 2007). ISIS's origin and construction were rooted in

the ideological approach originally championed by al-Zarqawi in Iraq, who trained many

of the militants that took up arms in the Iraq insurgency during the American intervention

and is largely credited as being one of ISIS's father figures (Clarke & Gartenstein-Ross,

2016; Lia, 2007).

ISIS Overview

ISIS is a transnational Sunni Islamist terrorist and insurgent group that

significantly expanded its presence in northeastern Syria and northwestern Iraq since its

formation in 2011, with the ultimate goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate predicated on its interpretation of Shariah and Islam (Hashim, 2014). ISIS's origin and construction were rooted in the ideological approach originally championed by the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (*Tawhid wal Jihad)* in Iraq in the early 2000s, who trained many of the militants who took up arms in the Iraq insurgency during the American intervention. Originally, the group fought under the moniker of Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad (JTJ), but later swore allegiance to al-Qaida (Al-Tamimi, 2015).

JTJ, comprised of foreign fighters predominantly from Syria, Afghanistan, Jordan, and Pakistan, quickly became operational in 2003, with the intent to drive U.S. and coalition forces from Iraq and to cause disorder to the government transition (Laub & Masters, 2014). JTJ routinely conducted attacks against Shiite targets to incite sectarian conflict, which complicated the government transition. Simultaneously, JTC drew international attention by conducting suicide bombings against non-combatants and released several beheading videos on the Internet (Douglas, 2014). In October 2004, al-Zarqawi officially pledged loyalty to Osama bin Laden and joined al-Qaida, renaming JTJ to Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn Zaraqi, known in English as al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) (Kirdar, 2014).

AQI's tactics, which included targeting Iraqis and Sunni leaders, alienated potential supporters and was criticized by Ayman al-Zawahiri, a leader within al-Qaida, subordinate to bin Laden. Zawahiri requested al-Zarqawi refrain from mass bombings that killed civilians and to nurture a relationship with key Sunni leaders (CTC, 2010). Al-Zarqawi ignored the request and continued mass casualty attacks, which further intensified the violence between Shiites and Sunnis. Due to backlash against it, AQI

joined the umbrella Salafi group Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin (MSC), composed of six jihadi groups in Iraq that attempted to consolidate and coordinate efforts to rid Iraq and U.S. and coalition forces. However, the MSC had little control over AQI operations. On June 7, 2006, al-Zarqawi was killed by a U.S. airstrike (Bergan, Felter, Brown, & Shapiro, 2014).

After U.S. forces eliminated al-Zarqawi, several Iraqi insurgent groups joined together to be viewed as more "Iraqi," for which AQI leadership reflagged as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) (Katzman et al., 2014). Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al Badri al Samarra'I (Abu Omar al Baghdadi), an Iraqi, was announced as the emir of ISI, while Abu Ayyub al-Masri—al-Zarqawi's replacement and Egyptian bomb maker—was appointed the Minister of War. The appointments signified AQI would continue to employ its brand of extreme violence to resist U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, while gaining support from the international jihad community. Additionally, AQI began prepping command and control structures for when U.S. and coalition forces decided to withdrawal from Iraq (Felter & Fishman, 2014). Despite the name change, ISI was widely recognized as AQI and continued to alienate local Iraqis because of the number of non-Iraqis in leadership positions (Laub & Masters, 2014).

The Iraqi resistance to AQI was a significant factor contributing to the Sunnis in the Anbar Province (known as the Anbar Awakening) to cooperate with U.S. and coalition forces to eradicate the region of insurgents, specifically AQI. The Anbar Awakening also assisted in fostering the relationship between the U.S. military and Iraqi security forces. By the end of 2007, AQI had difficulty maintaining territory and implementing its interpretations of Islamic law (Al-Jabouri, Abed, & Jensen, 2014;

Hashim, 2014). Moreover, by early 2008, U.S., coalition, and Iraqi security forces took

8,800 AQI members prisoner and killed approximately 2,400 AQI fighters (Kirdar,

2014). By mid-2009, the U.S. government provided funding to over 100,000 Iraqi Sunnis

to take up arms against AQI, resulting in the death of over 85% of AQI's leaders, leaving

the group in disorder (Lewis, 2014). Both Abu Omar al Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-

Masri were killed in a joint U.S.-Iraqi raid in April 2010 in Tikrit, which capped off

several years in which U.S., coalition, and Iraqi forces significantly degraded AQI

(NCTC, 2014).

In May 2010, and after AQI leadership suffered significant setbacks resulting

from the death of key leadership, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was appointed head of AQI. Al-

Baghdadi immediately appointed many of Saddam Hussein's former military officers to

his leadership cadre, many who spent time fighting against U.S. and coalition forces

during the Iraq war; however, AQI continued to struggle until U.S. and coalition forces

withdrew in late 2011 (Ganor, 2015). Once U.S. and coalition forces withdrew from

Iraq, AQI operated in a more permissive security environment and gradually increased

attacks in Iraq, most notably targeting members of the Maliki government, as well as

freeing its members from prison (known as "Breaking Walls") (Hashim, 2014). With the

absence of a foreign security presence, AQI was able to provoke sectarian violence,

leading to an uprising in Anbar Province which pushed the Iraqi Security forces out and

allowed AQI to expand in Anbar (Laub & Masters, 2014).

Meanwhile, protests directed against the Bashar al-Assad regime gained

momentum in Syria, which allowed AQI to use Syria as a training ground and expansion.

A few months following the initial anti-Assad protests, al-Baghdadi deployed both Iraqi

and Syrian members of AQI to Syria to establish a potential foothold that could lead to organizational growth, a permissive operating environment, and with the intent to establish a fundamentalist Sunni Muslim state in Syria based on its interpretation of Islam (Laub & Masters, 2014). The groups of detached AQI fighters led by Syrian Abu Muhammad al-Julani quickly recruited local fighters that opposed the Assad regime. The group initially comprised of ISI fighters led by al-Julani publicly announced its formation as Jabhat al-Nusra Ahl as-Sham (herein out referred to as the al-Nusra Front) (NCTC, 2014).

In April 2013, AQI leader al-Baghdadi publicly released a statement confirming the establishment of al-Nusra Front. Additionally, al-Baghdadi stated AQI and al-Nusra Front would merge under the moniker of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS). Subsequently, al-Julani publicly denied the merger, which resulted in al-Qaida's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri instructing al-Julani and al-Baghdadi to end the public discourse, but also denied the merger of the organizations. Al-Baghdadi publicly rejected al-Zawahiri's demand and proceeded with the merger while simultaneously conducting combat operations in Syria. In February 2014—5months after al-Zawahiri's request to resolve the conflict between ISIS and al-Nusra Front—al-Qaida publicly withdrew any association with al-Baghdadi and ISIS (Joscelyn, 2014).

Although officially split from AQI, ISIS grew in size and military power and carried out military operations against the governments of Iraq and Syria, as well as tribal and rebel groups in Iraq, Syria, and the Kurdish Peshmerga. In January 2014, ISIS defeated the Iraqi forces and took territorial control of Fallujah and seized control of Mosul 2 months later (Semple & Schmitt, 2014). In June 2014, al-Baghdadi was named

ISIS's caliph and declared a global caliphate, a concept rejected by many within the international Muslim community and changed the name of ISIS to the Islamic State (Hashim, 2014).

In August 2014, following ISIS's capture and control of Sinjar, Iraq, the U.S. began a counter-ISIS bombing campaign targeting ISIS strongholds and infrastructure throughout Iraq. (Barnard, 2014). Simultaneously, ISIS encountered significant non-Sunni villages and militias resistant to its advances, as well as Iraqi security forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga that slowed its territorial gains. The U.S.-led counter ISIS airstrikes largely targeted ISIS-held oil wells and refineries, which significantly decreased the group's revenue. It was estimated that at the time, ISIS's oil revenue was between $1 million to $2 million USD per day (Zahiyeh, 2014). Despite the reported setbacks, ISIS held significant territory and proceeded to seize Ramadi, Iraq.

In 2015, ISIS exploited the instability in Libya and established a presence within the country. Despite military efforts, predominantly Egyptian, to disrupt ISIS expansion into Libya, ISIS continued to establish a stronghold, specifically taking control of Surt (Robins-Early, 2016). According to U.S. government assessments, the number of ISIS fighters in Libya doubled in recent years, with current assessments estimating between 5,000 to 6,500 ISIS fighters located in Libya, to include key leadership (Schmitt, 2016). As ISIS gained worldwide notoriety, several Islamist militant organizations, predominantly located North Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East, declared allegiance and/or support to ISIS. By 2016, ISIS cultivated support from more than 40 organizations and publicly accepted groups in 8 countries—known as *wilayats*, Arabic for "provinces"—that aided with expansion of the self-declared caliphate, global reach,

and strategic depth. As of this research, the following is a list of provinces formally

recognized by ISIS outside of Syria and Iraq: 1) Libya, 2) Egypt, 3) Yemen, 4) Nigeria,

5) Afghanistan and Pakistan, 6) Saudi Arabia, 7) Algeria, and 8) Russia (Rahmani &

Tanco, 2016). In return, ISIS generally provided these provinces funding, training,

foreign fighters, and a professional standard media presence.

ISIS's Information Operations

Vital to ISIS's campaign is the implementation of Information Operations (IO)

within its overall strategy. While the importance of IO is not a new concept evidenced

and documented throughout history, ISIS understood the strategic role of IO (Ingram,

2015). For example, ISIS's IO campaign centered on a means to shape perception of its

objectives, used a political-military apparatus (to appeal to pragmatic factors), and

assisted in influencing individuals to gain support (Ingram, 2015). According to Goode

(2015), "the internet and other cyber assets are effective weapons in this campaign: they

can be used to distribute subversive propaganda and disinformation, publicize attacks,

and recruit" (p. 159).

As ISIS represents a global threat not restricted by borders, the fight against ISIS

is one of the more pressing concerns facing the international community since 2011. A

significant component of combating ISIS is mitigating ISIS's multi-dimensional IO

strategy (Obama, 2015). Since mid-2014—following its capture of Mosul and nationally

broadcasted beheadings of several Western journalists—ISIS's IO campaign significantly

supplemented its sanctioned media units (i.e. al Hayat and al Furqan Media) to act as

instruments of terror and proselytization.

Ingram (2015) examined the strategic logic of ISIS's IO campaign and concluded the purpose of ISIS's messaging is to gain the support of contested populations and to shape perceptions of individuals who are prone to radicalization. To accomplish its IO objectives, ISIS draws on pragmatic factors such as security, quality of living, and stability to promote its political-military campaigns while condemning the actions and inefficiencies of its enemies. Additionally, ISIS uses perceptual factors that provided the audience insight into ISIS as a functional organization, even organizational dynamics. When fused together, the pragmatic and perceptual approach enables ISIS to control its narrative and present itself as the champion of Sunni Muslims, while highlighting the negatives associated with other rival Sunni groups and countering enemy narratives. Since 2014, ISIS produced tens of thousands of sanctioned propaganda products, furthering its IO objectives, ensuring its message endures despite military setbacks in Iraq and Syria.

ISIS Propaganda

Terrorist propaganda is not a recent occurrence; however, the usage and tools evolved over time (Injac & Dojcinovski, 2015). For the purpose of this research, and a widely used definition among experts on terrorist propaganda, propaganda is defined as "the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influencing the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends and through psychological manipulation" (Ellul, 1973 p. xi-xii). The modern era of terrorism leverages the Internet, social media, and the expansion in global media to garner public support for its grievances and strike fear in the public (Injac & Dojcinovski, 2015). According to Wilkinson (1997), terrorists use the media (as an outlet

for propaganda) for the following reasons: 1) radicalization and recruitment for the purpose of resources, 2) create fear and promote their violent narrative, 3) gain support for their goals, and 4) circumvent security services.

ISIS's effective use of online propaganda directed at Western audiences attracts global appeal from disenfranchised individuals. According to Shameih and Szenes (2015), ISIS's propaganda strategy represents a new era for how terrorist groups incorporate the Internet to further its agenda. The Internet allows ISIS to publicly announce—through its official websites—its strategy and accomplishments while inspiring home-grown violent extremists to take violent action in their own country without traveling to conflict zones such as Iraq or Syria.

Through its official media production companies and media departments for its official branches, ISIS produces online propaganda translated in over 23 languages, including English, Russian, German, French, and Turkish, to spread its narrative and the recruitment of foreign fighters. A few examples of media groups associated with ISIS are Al-Ajnad, the Al-Furqan Foundation, Amaq, Bayan Radio, and Al-I'tisaam (SITE, 2017). Specifically, ISIS uses its propaganda as a force multiplier, encouraging radical individuals to conduct violent acts outside of Syria and Iraq (Zelin, 2015).

ISIS propaganda has several main themes to frame its message. Specifically, Zelin (2015) concluded the six main types of ISIS themes delivered through its media are: 1) military, 2) governance, 3) da'wa, 4) hisba, 5) promotion of the caliphate, and 6) enemy attack. Moreover, Gartenstein-Ross, Barr, & Moreng (2016) determined ISIS's use of propaganda was designed to promote several core arguments:

1) IS successfully restored the caliphate, which functions effectively as a state and

adheres to Sharia as it was practiced during the time of al-salaf al-salih, making it

the only authentic Islamic state in the world.

2) To the extent, from a theological, legal, and political standpoint, IS is the only

legitimate Islamic organization in the world. It annuls existing governments,

political Islamist groups, and rival jihadist organizations.

3) IS constantly grows in strength and is more capable and unified than al-Qaida,

which, IS claims, is on the verge of fragmentation and disintegration.

(Gartenstein-Ross et al., 2016, p. 14).

To advance its core arguments, Gartenstein-Ross et al. (2016) concluded propaganda

narratives very similar to Zelin's (2015) study. Specifically, the narratives focused on: 1)

ISIS projecting strength, 2) undermining rival jihadist organizations, 3) discrediting

political Islamists that were outspoken against ISIS, 4) spreading misinformation to rival

groups, 5) exploiting sectarian strains, 6) promoting the caliphate as a utopia, 7) joining

the caliphate for a sense of brotherhood and adventure, 8) promoting violence against the

West, and 9) obligation as a Muslim to join the caliphate.

When ISIS promoted its military narrative, the media releases focused on

defeating the enemy and conquering territory. ISIS promoted successes on the

battlefield, mainly on defeating the Iraqi Army, the Free Syrian Army, and military

operations targeting Kurdish forces. Additionally, ISIS military messaging focused on

the recruitment of future fighters, promoting the skills new recruits would learn when

attending its training camps. When promoting its governance and hisba (moral policing)

activities, ISIS attempted to illustrate its state-building capabilities, even though they are

in constant conflict. The official media releases focus on functioning hospitals, schools, critical infrastructure, and judicial systems (Zelin, 2015). ISIS's hisba-related media promotes punishing—either with corporal or capital punishments—those who do not live up to its identified precepts. This governance and hisba-related media are an attempt to demonstrate to locals and potential foreign recruits that ISIS can provide social services for its controlled territories. ISIS's da'wa media campaign focus on its narrative and interpretation of Islam. Specifically, ISIS's da'wa related online media aims to educate individuals to return to the one and only true Islam, which ISIS concluded many people abandoned or interpreted incorrectly (Zelin, 2015).

Three main propaganda themes, recruitment, the promotion of the caliphate, and enemy attacks, are most significant to this research. While the overarching narrative of ISIS's media is promotion of the caliphate, it specifically illustrates an idyllic and pristine environment of its controlled territories. Zelin (2015) concluded this theme resonates with ISIS supporters, especially young supporters not living in Iraq and Syria. The media also focuses on new pledges of allegiance to ISIS, giving an appearance of momentum despite losing territory in Iraq and Syria. ISIS's official media often depicts attacks from the enemy by illustrating attacks against ISIS infrastructure and the killing of Muslims. The illustration of attacks against the infrastructure is an attempt by ISIS to promote how the international community is destroying everything ISIS builds to help its supporters. Moreover, the attacks against Muslims stress the point that the international community will never allow Muslims to live in a flourishing society and will kill Muslims whenever possible. The majority of ISIS-related propaganda occurs on the Internet; however, ISIS

also distributes printed media, CD/DVDs, and/or USB thumb drives within its controlled territories.

ISIS's Use of the Internet and Social Media

Terrorist groups use the Internet as a low-cost instrument to distribute propaganda, communicate, and organize (Kohlmann, 2006). The U.S. Department of State (2006) concluded that terrorists—especially homegrown violent extremists—do not always have a relationship with a terrorist organization. According to Woods (2007),"the Internet bridges this gap between organizational disconnectedness by allowing for the global dissemination of terrorists' extremist views and promoting a larger transnational community of terrorists" (p. 271). Terrorist and terrorist groups use the Internet in the following ways: 1) coordination and planning, 2) psychological warfare, 3) recruitment, 4) propaganda, 5) fundraising, 6) data mining, 7) sharing information, and 8) networking (Weimann, 2004).

While terrorism existed long before the Internet, the Internet assists in the transformation of terrorism, allowing groups like ISIS to spread its violent narrative, recruit and radicalize supporters, and even encourage violent attacks (Farwell, 2014). As of this paper, about 25 percent of the world population has access to the Internet. Of which, over two billion users have active Facebook accounts (Statista, 2017). Therefore, the Internet allows terrorist organizations to spread a violent narrative to an unprecedented amount of people. The Internet allows groups like ISIS a platform to communicate violence and spread propaganda, central components to and drawing attention to its cause, thus potentially attracting more supporters and recruits (Farwell, 2014). Social media allows ISIS a platform to communicate in a convenient, effective,

and a near real-time method. As of this paper, ISIS members used social media

applications and file sharing platforms such as Twitter, Telegram, Facebook, Ask.fm,

WhatsApp, kik, Viper, Tumblr, Instagram, and JustPaste.it (Klausen, 2015).

     ISIS's use of the Internet represents a something of a game-changer when

compared to how other jihad groups typically utilized such a vast platform. According to

former U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta (2012) "the Internet is open. It's highly

accessible as it should be. But that also presents a new terrain for warfare. It is a

battlefield of the future where adversaries can seek to do harm to our country, to our

economy, and to our citizens" (para. 24). ISIS's online strategy is sophisticated and

utilizes a modern approach (Aly, MacDonald, Jarvis, & Chen, 2017). Not only does ISIS

capitalize on the use of social networking, it also posts official publications and high-

quality videos. As some content is deemed too violent or unacceptable by conventional

media outlets, ISIS can disseminate the propaganda (electronic magazines, videos, and

audio recordings of speeches) through social media and jihadi websites. Additionally,

jihad groups such as ISIS can use the Internet for operational planning, strategic

communications, and virtual training (i.e. firearms). Such information can be used by

supporters for attacks and even terrorist cell construction (Gray & Head, 2009).

     Social media is vital to ISIS's global operational strategy. Historically, jihadist

typically used password-protected web forums to communicate; however, ISIS members

predominantly use (at the time of this research) Twitter for communication since it is

accessible on cellphones, and relatively inexpensive (Klausen, 2015). ISIS members

routinely "tweet" images and pictures in-line with ISIS's overall propaganda strategy that

included links to other ISIS-related information. While Twitter reacted by closing

accounts, ISIS responded by creating official ISIS dissemination accounts resulting in

multiple accounts broadcasting the propaganda; therefore, closing Twitter accounts does

not interfere with its propaganda campaign. For example, if one official account is

closed, the other accounts would tweet the new Twitter handle, thus allowing followers to

track official ISIS media on a daily basis (Zelin, 2015).

According to Klausen (2015), ISIS employs website managers that integrate

ISIS's fighters and supporter's social media content, combined with YouTube uploads to

disseminate propaganda to larger audiences. Website managers can perform these tasks

from anywhere in the world, not just the combat zones, making the processes unique and

challenging to defend against. Additionally, social media allows for real time

communication. Some media outlets habitually reference Twitter information for what is

happening in places reporters have difficulty accessing, advancing it as a convincing and

reliable source. This allows ISIS to control the narrative in some areas of Iraq and Syria

about its progress on the battlefields. However, ISIS attempts to limit the jihadists

allowed to post updates on social media; only trusted fighters are allowed to post on

battlefield results (Klausen, 2015).

ISIS's Commitment to Terrorism Targeting the West

ISIS's violent transitional rhetoric raised concern of attacks directed at Europe

and North America. Such rhetoric is instrumental in Western government military

decision-making when developing counter ISIS- strategies as the transactional nature of

the threat potentially alters the timetables for defeating ISIS. According to Fishman

(2014), ISIS represents a severe threat to Western interests and personnel worldwide.

Moreover, the permissive operating environment in Syria and Iraq under ISIS control

significantly increases the threat to Westerners as it may allow other groups with a transnational terrorism agenda safe-haven. However, according to Hegghammer and Nesser (2015), it is difficult to determine the threat to the West, as ISIS does not speak with one voice (i.e. foot soldier vice ISIS leadership). However, from 2014 through 2017, many public statements made through multiple official ISIS media platforms likely reflect the official stance of ISIS leadership of a violent anti-West agenda.

Additionally, ISIS officially sponsored videos and magazines that directly call for attacks against the West during that time period. Specially, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, ISIS's official English language magazines, made promises of defeating the West. In October 2014, *Dabiq* (issue 4) states "at this point of the crusade against the Islamic State, it is very important attacks take place in every country that has entered into the alliance against the Islamic State, especially the U.S., U.K., France, Australia, and Germany" (Dabiq, 2014, p. 44). Subsequent issues of *Dabiq* articles highlighted and praised successful attacks against the West by ISIS-affiliated and inspired individuals.

In addition to *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, ISIS made public statements instructing followers to attack Westerners. Specifically, one month after the initial counter-ISIS strikes in Iraq, al-Adnani (2014) stated:

If you kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and

filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the

disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a

coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any

manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not

seek anyone's verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military (para. 67).

Subsequent public statements from al-Adnani hinted at ISIS-directed plots and continued to identify potential targets such as the White House (al-Adnani, 2015). In addition to al-Adnani's statements, al-Baghdadi had publicly called for ISIS sympathizers to attack in his or her homeland if unable to travel to Iraq or Syria. Specifically, al-Baghdadi stated in late 2014 "if you are not able to find an IED or bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman, or any of their allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him" (al-Baghdadi, 2014, para. 70).

However, Hegghammer and Nesser (2015) researched ISIS's commitment to attack the West and highlighted several key points. First, a call for sympathizers to attack the West is not actually ISIS putting the time, resources, and commitment to orchestrating the attacks. The public pleas for attacks did not commit the organization to conduct attacks. While it is evident ISIS leadership views the West as the enemy, and overtly supports and encourages attacks directed at Westerners, the public speeches did not promise an ISIS-sponsored terrorism campaign. Secondly, the preferred first course of action for sympathizers is still to join the self-proclaimed caliphate; attacking in one's home country is only if the individual could not travel. Lastly, the public statements by al-Adnani and al-Baghdadi do not distinguish between attacking in Europe vice the U.S. When ISIS's leadership identified potential targets through its public statements, both European and U.S. targets (i.e. the White House, Big Ben, and the Eiffel Tower) were referenced in the same speech.

In addition to public statements and ISIS publications like *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, ISIS has released videos calling for attacks, five of which specifically addressed attacks against the West (Hegghammer & Nesser, 2015). The video encouragement for attacks differed slightly from the public statements and from *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*.The videos stressed attacks against the West are justified as retaliation for the Western involvement in Iraq and Syria. However, the majority of ISIS-sponsored videos were released shortly after the initial U.S.-led airstrikes targeting ISIS in Iraq in August 2014.

As previously stated, the majority of ISIS-related plots occurred after the declaration of its caliphate, along with the U.S.-led counter-ISIS airstrikes in Syria and Iraq (Europol, 2016). However, the exact number of ISIS-related attack plots are unknown to the research community. While many terrorist plots have been claimed by ISIS or connected to ISIS by security services or law enforcement, there are limitations associated with connecting a terrorist attack to ISIS outside of those establishments (Hegghammer & Nesser, 2015). Specifically, studies are largely based on open source information and researchers cannot examine the specifics of plots that were not reported in the press. Even if an incident is declared an act of terrorism, it could take some time, up to years in some cases, for the details to be revealed during a trial or legal process, thus altering statistics and research on the topic. Additionally, the media may report details of the incident that are inaccurate or require verification that only the legal process can corroborate. Moreover, researchers are not always privy to information on foiled or disrupted terrorism plots, making it difficult to provide assessments on the exact number of ISIS-related plots that have been mitigated since the declaration of its caliphate.

Hegghammer and Nesser (2015) concluded the 30 plots linked to ISIS were an indication ISIS surpassed al-Qaida as the chief provider of motivator for attacks against the West from 2011-2015. Specifically, of the 30 ISIS-linked plots, 11 (37%) were consummated, which is 16% higher than non-ISIS-related plots over the same period. Furthermore, the ISIS-linked plots caused an average of 1.4 deaths per incident, compared to 2.9 deaths for consummated non-ISIS-linked attacks. The lower casualty rate is likely an indicative that ISIS-connected plots generally involved non-complex attack methods and/or weapons such as handguns and stabbings. The number of ISIS-related plots and the deaths per attack increased since the conclusion of Hegghammer and Nesser's (2015) study, along with the sophistication of coordinated attacks. For example, on March 22, 2016, three coordinated suicide bombings occurred in Brussels, Belgium. Two suicide bombers detonated suitcase bombs at the Brussels Airport in Zaventem; approximately one hour later, a third attack occurred on a train at Maalbeek metro station. In all, 35 people were killed, including 3 perpetrators, and more than 300 people were injured. The attackers were members of the same terrorist cell involved in the November 2015 Paris attacks. ISIS claimed responsibility shortly after the attacks, stating the worst is yet to come. The attacks that were possibly directed by ISIS leadership in Syria (Europol, 2016) were the deadliest terrorist act in Belgium's history (Chad, Boyle, & Knoll, 2016). According to Europol (2016), in 2016 alone, there were over a hundred ISIS-related terrorist plots targeting the West.

Foreign Fighter Threat

The concept of recruiting and employing foreign fighters to support conflicts is not a new concept, evidenced by the high number of Muslim foreign fighters that took

part in Afghanistan (1980-1992), the Bosnian War (1992-1995), and the Iraq War (since

2003) (Hegghammer, 2010). According to Cordesman (2005), foreign fighters are

sometimes more experienced fighters and possibly introduce new fighting tactics to the

conflicts they join. Moreover, foreign fighters are important to terrorist organizations

that are looking to broaden the scope of the conflict outside of its battle space in an effort

to increase its resources, thus increasing its chances of victory (Malet, 2013). Therefore,

foreign fighters are an essential component to a terrorist group looking to employ a

transnational terrorism approach. Specifically, a terrorist organization can train a foreign

fighter in attack methods and execution in places like Iraq and Syria, then instruct the

fighter to return to his home country to conduct a terrorist attack (Hegghammer, 2010).

For example, on May 24, 2004, returned foreign fighter and French citizen Mehdi

Nemmouche shot and killed four individuals at the Jewish Museum in Brussels, Belgium.

Nemmouche was an ISIS foreign fighter who recently returned from Syria (Duyvesteyn

& Peeters, 2015).

Foreign fighters are essential for ISIS to achieve its goals (Byman, 2015).

Hegghammer (2010) defines a foreign fighter as "an agent who (1) has joined, operated

within the confines of an insurgency, (2) lacks citizenship of the conflict state or kinship

links to its warring factions, (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and

(4) is unpaid" (pgs. 57-58). Since 2011 and coinciding with the commencement of the

Syria conflict, foreign fighters began traveling to Syria at record numbers to take up arms

against the Assad regime, many of which used facilitation routes established during the

Iraq War to gain entrance into Syria.

According to Nicholas Rasmussen, former Deputy Director of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, Syria is an attractive location for foreign fighters with radical leanings and/or to further a political agenda. As such, ISIS and other aligned jihadist groups can recruit, train, and provide equipment to a record number of foreign fighters, many who the U.S. government assessed would seek to conduct attacks in the West. (Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2014).

The number of European and U.S. foreign fighters joining ISIS is of concern to the Western governments. As of this paper, over 30,000 foreign fighters joined Sunni militant groups in Syria and Iraq, with the majority pledging allegiance to ISIS (Duyvesteyn & Peeters, 2015; Gates & Podder, 2015). Of the 30,000 foreign fighters, it is estimated that over 4,000 Westerners joined ISIS in Syria (Hegghammer & Nesser, 2015). However, such estimates are largely based on open source information and analysis.

Like with other foreign fighters, Westerners in Syria and Iraq are likely separated into groups based on language, skills, and the current needs of the group (Bakker & de Bont, 2016). According to the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center Director, Nicolas Rasmussen (2014), the number of Westerners traveling to conflict zones are historically unmatched (to include conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and Iraq), with the majority of the individuals joining ISIS vice other Sunni militant groups such as al-Nusra Front. At present, the exact number of Westerners who died fighting alongside ISIS in Iraq and Syria is unknown; however, estimates range from 1,000 to 1,500 (Reed & Pohl, 2017).

There is a debate as to the threat foreign fighters pose when returning to their home country after fighting in conflict zones. For example, the May 2014 attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels, Belgium was allegedly conducted by an extremist who spent a year fighting alongside ISIS in Syria. According to research conducted by Carfarella and Zhou (2017), returned foreign fighters were responsible for the majority of ISIS-related coordinated attacks in Europe from 2014 to 2016, and assessed there would be additional coordinated attacks in the future as more foreign fighters return to Europe. As of late 2017, European Union's counter-terrorism coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, stated there were as many as 2,500 Westerners still fighting alongside ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Moreover, at least 1,500 Western foreign fighters returned to their home countries, some of them could provide ISIS organizational links into Western nations (Carfarella & Zhou, 2017). According to Hegghammer (2013), 1 in 9 Muslim foreign fighters that are linked to a terrorist group are somehow involved in a terrorist attack after they leave the conflict zone. Such a number suggests that a significant percentage of foreign fighters will be involved in terrorist attacks outside of Syria and Iraq, regardless of sanctioned direction from ISIS leadership.

Foreign fighters may gain valuable military experience in Iraq and Syria and possibly learn bomb-making techniques, marksmanship, and tactical maneuvering, all of which could be useful in consummating terrorist attack in the West. However, the returnee rate is difficult to determine since foreign fighter data likely is underreported or inaccurately reported in the media. Additionally, many European nations take preemptive measures that likely prevented attacks by foreign fighters. For example, the United Kingdom arrested individuals and charged them with crimes based on their

involvement in the Syria conflict, thus possibly preventing an act of domestic terrorism (Ledwith, Pendlebury, & White, 2016).

In addition to the threat foreign fighters pose to Europe, the group does represent a threat to the U.S. (Fishman, 2014). Specifically, U.S. government officials expressed concerns because of the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP), which allows visa-free travel to the U.S. for a significant number of European citizens (Archick et al., 2015). Specifically, 30 European countries are eligible for the VWP (see Table 1 below for a list of VWP countries) and many of those countries are assessed to have a considerable foreign fighter presence in Iraq and Syria. Once those individuals return from Syria and Iraq, they are not monitored by host nation security services and could enter the U.S. under the VWP. As the threat posed by returned foreign fighters is largely a security issue for Europe, the 113th and 114th Congress held hearings specifically addressing the threat it represents to the U.S. (see Appendix E for a list of hearings).

Table 1

U.S. Visa Waiver European Countries

Andorra	Finland	Ireland	Malta	Slovakia
Austria	France	Italy	Monaco	Slovenia
Belgium	Germany	Latvia	Netherlands	Spain
Czech Republic	Greece	Liechtenstein	Norway	Sweden
Denmark	Hungary	Lithuania	Portugal	Switzerland
Estonia	Iceland	Luxembourg	San Marino	United Kingdom

From "Visa Waiver Program" by the United States Department of State. Retrieved from https://travel.state.gov.

Inspired Lone Actor Threat

The threat of ISIS-directed and returned foreign fighters are just two tactics in ISIS's broad approach to transnational terrorism. Inspiring lone actor attacks is another

terrorism tactic employed by ISIS which involves self-radicalization and acts of violence where the perpetrator did not receive personal instruction from ISIS. Since ISIS declared its caliphate, the number of lone actors targeting the West increased significantly (Europol, 2016). According to Ellis (2016), "IS has produced a hybrid threat from individual attackers, detached from the broader network, but able to benefit from its guidance" (p. 41). Again, for the purpose of this research, an inspired lone actor refers to an individual attacker inspired by ISIS's violent narrative through messaging and propaganda. In order to meet this definition, an attacker may have remote contact with ISIS members, yet receive no unique (or personal) direction from the group.

Inspired lone actor terrorism is not a new phenomenon and is one of the earliest forms of terrorism employed by non-state actors (Pantucci, Ellis, & Chaplais, 2015). As previously mentioned, ISIS's narrative instructs followers who share its ideology and support its caliphate to conduct violence without support or direction. According to Barnes (2012), lone actor attacks are a tactical adaptation in order to circumvent counter-terrorism efforts. For example, a complex terrorist attack (networked plot) can leave an operational footprint that law enforcement and intelligence agencies can identify and disrupt. However, an inspired lone actor can attack with little to no notice using simple methods, thus making it difficult for security agencies to detect. ISIS's use of public speeches, social media, online publications, and propaganda videos makes it easier to radicalize supporters that do not travel to conflict zones and provide generic guidance and targets for inspired lone actor attacks.

Inspired lone actor terrorist tactics and targets are diverse. Tactics range from suicide bombings, knife and small arms attacks, and vehicular attacks (Pantucci et al.,

2015). For example, on July 14, 2016, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel intentionally drove a 19-ton truck into a crowd of people celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, France. The attack injured 458 people and resulted in 86 deaths. Shortly after the attack, ISIS claimed responsibility for inspiring the attack and that Bouhlel answered its calls against people in France. The investigation into the attack revealed Bouhlel was radicalized and inspired by ISIS propaganda (Europol, 2016; Sanchez, 2016). A thorough investigation into targets and methods identified by official ISIS propaganda will be conducted in Chapter 4.

Open Source Intelligence

It is necessary to examine publicly available information to gain valuable insight and investigate the concepts that may serve as the framework for ISIS's transnational terrorism approach. To properly understand the applicability of Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) in regard to terrorism research and assessments, it must be understood it derives from Open Source Information (OSINF). According to Lowenthal (1998), OSINF is:

> Any and all information that can be derived from overt collection: all types of media, government reports and other documents, scientific research and reports, and commercial vendors of information, the Internet, etc. The main qualifiers to open source information are that it does not require any type of clandestine collection techniques to obtain it and that it must be obtained through means that entirely meet the copyright and commercial requirements of vendors where applicable. (para. 2).

As the definition of OSINF encompasses all available unclassified information, OSINT is the product that originates from applying analytical tradecraft to such

information. Specifically, OSINT is employing "the proven methods of the intelligence community to open source information, and transforms volumes of information into an unclassified intelligence product that represents judicious source discovery and validation, multi-source integration and subject matter expertise" (Lowenthal, 1998, para. 2). When comparing OSINT to more traditional forms of intelligence, OSINT offers many advantages the others do not; however, there remains unsupported skepticism on the inclusion of OSINT into assessments. The following is a discussion on the history of OSINT, the advantages of OSINT, and the myths that typically foster skepticism.

OSINT offers vital historical background information and the geopolitical context for operations by providing wide array of tactically useful information (Moshirnia, 2013). The concept of OSINT originated in the late 1930s when analysts at Princeton University monitored foreign short-wave radio transmissions. Subsequently, in 1941, the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service (FBIS) identified the importance of collecting on such radio transmissions that radio became the primary source of intelligence during World War II (Mercado, 2001). In a declassified report by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) about the role of collecting open source information during World War II, an unnamed naval intelligence officer observed, "there is very little confidential agents can tell that is not accessible to an alert analyst who knows what he is looking for and knows how to find it in open sources" (Mercado, 2001, p. 11).

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) disbanded the FBIS immediately following WWII, though the U.S. government recognized the value of OSINT during peacetime, where a naval officer approximated that 95% of peacetime intelligence (immediately following WWII) derived from open source material such as

foreign literature, the information travelers report after visiting countries, and foreign radio broadcasts (Zacharias, 1946). Consequently, the FBIS, as part of the CIA, became the Foreign Broadcast Information Service. In the 1950s, the CIA used OSINT to monitor adversaries such as China and the Soviet Union, specifically the Sino-Soviet split. Following WWII, the U.S. confiscated unclassified documents from the Japanese, Germans, and Russian governments and militaries. The CIA was particularly interested in analyzing such documents (primarily books and periodicals) to gain insight into Soviet technical capabilities. An unnamed analyst estimated that by the early 1960s, aggregated open source material furnished the majority of the U.S. military knowledge on the Soviet Union (Moore, 1963). Additionally, the U.S. military monitored North Vietnamese radio and press in order to provide intelligence reports to commanders.

While the practical applicability of OSINT originated in WWII and has been used as a major source of intelligence in every conflict since, as well as peacetime, open source information increases expeditiously as technology advances. In today's global environment, an analyst can access open source information with greater ease and with very little cost to the government or organization. According to Mercado (2004), advances in technology catapulted the value of OSINT, which subsequently transformed threat assessments pertaining to terrorism.

Since OSINT incorporates unclassified information, it often can be timely and highlight current global issues. According to Mercado (2007), collecting intelligence over the years changed dramatically given advances in commerce and technology. Moreover, Fairclough (2004) concluded OSINT might be more helpful when making assessments on closed societies or organizations. For example, ISIS communicates

ideological concerns, priorities, and significant personnel changes on websites and

through its sponsored publications that allows analysts greater coverage of exploitable

data than if ISIS did not make such information public. As such, the advent of the

Internet allows access to extremists' websites, international press, satellite photography,

and commercial databases and tools accessible to organizations that produce defense

assessments that rely solely on publicly available information (Weimann, 2004).

　　　According to Robert Steele, head of the Open Source Solutions Network INC,

"Everything we needed to know to prevent 9/11 was either known to elements of the U.S.

Government but, not shared across agency boundaries, or openly published in foreign

language media we chose to ignore" (as cited in Vlahos, 2005, para. 3). As quality

OSINT includes the absorption of value-added data, it involves foreign sources of

publicly available information. Moshirnia (2013) concluded that failure to monitor

foreign production of terrorism-related publicly available information would be

detrimental to the safety of citizens worldwide.

　　　Since 9/11, new methods of information gathering have changed the way

professional and scholarly practices use OSINT. According to Benavides (2011),

scholarly organizations use OSINT to collect, process, integrate, and share in order to

analyze social behavior and trends, to include terrorism-related issues. OSINT helps

defense analysts and academics understand the global threat environment and assists in

predicting transnational threats which could allow security and intelligence organizations

to address potential terrorism trends (Smith, 1989). It is estimated that OSINT has the

potential to provide up to 80 to 95 percent of information that can be utilized by the U.S.

Intelligence Community (Pallaris, 2008). For example, the U.S. Senate Select Committee

(2012), when reviewing the attack in 2012 on U.S. facilities in Libya, concluded "the intelligence community failed to emphasize on collection intelligence and ignored open source information from social media and blog posts by Libyan nationals, that could have warned the potential security threats to the U.S. facilities" (p. 2).

As it pertains to countering transnational terrorism, the use of OSINT in trend and predictive analysis may reduce the overreliance of classified information. This would allow for a wider distribution of threat information. However, much of the quality of analysis derived from OSINT is a result of incorporating quality data into the analysis, as well as applying valid analytical techniques when analyzing the data. According to Martin (2014), there is usually a significant amount of misinformation and invalid data that must be sifted through before quality data is discovered. For example, the Internet allows for anyone with access to post information and there is no regulation over content accuracy. Content inaccuracy can potentially cause misinformation which can subsequently result in assessments that are rooted in false information. However, analysts and academics that rely on OSINT in defense assessments can reduce such concerns by determining the reliability of the sources by comparing the different resources and data.

The evolution of the Internet allows agencies and organizations not cleared for classified information to make security assessments. According to Pallaris (2008), there are a wide range of tools that non-intelligence agencies can utilize that assists in collecting, analyzing, and distributing its findings. To assist and focus the effort, organizations that base analysis off of OSINT would benefit from forming a research question prior to collecting the publicly available information to reduce the time required

to sift through the data and to incorporate the correct data sets (Holland, 2013). It is important to note that OSINT does not include illegal information such as leaks of classified information or proprietary information. The use and analysis of OSINT does not require special government permission. Many non-government organizations are considered superior regarding their resources and capabilities for providing defense assessments based on OSINT, thus contributing to national security (Pallaris, 2008).

Summary and Conclusions

In 2014, ISIS burst on the international stage when it seized large amounts of territory in Iraq and Syria. Moreover, in June 2014, ISIS declared the establishment of a caliphate and commanded Muslims worldwide to swear allegiance to its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and for supporters to travel to its controlled territory. In addition to recruiting tens of thousands (estimates as high as 32,000) of foreign fighters to ISIS-held territory, the group also instructed other jihadist groups globally to accept its supreme authority. In all, over 60 jihadist groups worldwide pledged allegiance to ISIS and has operational branches in an estimated 18 countries (Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing, 2015). Moreover, ISIS focused on inspiring lone actor attacks and planning and conducting attacks against the West. Such an approach was designed to garner attention to its cause and publicly demonstrate its resilience in the face of Western military action.

Some experts argue the increase in frequency of attacks is a direct reflection of ISIS losing territory in Iraq and Syria (Watkins, 2016). However, other experts dismiss that theory and argue that ISIS modified its tactics in response to new security obstacles and has been working for years to cultivate such attacks. According to Hoffman (2016), ISIS has "put in place an infrastructure across Europe to facilitate the movement of

people to and from Iraq and Syria, but also to provide a bedrock of both inspirational and operational support for terror attacks" (para. 8). In addition to coordinated attacks, ISIS—through its media and propaganda outlets—inspired hundreds of lone actor attacks outside of Iraq and Syria. In an effort to understand ISIS's transnational terrorism approach, the writings of al-Suri possibly reveal a blueprint on how the group strategized and encouraged the types of attacks that would bring it the most success.

Chapter 2 included the literature search strategy, the research application of asymmetric conflict theory (theoretical foundation), a brief background on transnational terrorism, Salafi jihadism, ISIS, Musab al-Suri, as well as literature on ISIS propaganda and its use of the internet. Moreover, it explored ISIS's commitment to attacking the West and the importance of publicly available information in making terrorism-related assessments. Chapter 3 will include the research methodology and design, rational for instrumentation and data collection, role of the researcher, data storage, verification of data, and address ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will include data collection, data analysis, results, and summary. Chapter 5 will include the explanation of findings, the limitations of the research, recommendations for follow-on research, implications, potential social change impact, and conclusion.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Since the terrorist attacks on 9/11, jihadism evolved and terrorism became a global issue, with a significant amount of attacks directed against the West. While Islamic transnational terrorism is not a new phenomenon, ISIS emerged and developed a transnational terrorism agenda outside of Iraq and Syria, evidenced by the attacks in France, Belgium and several other Western countries (Europol, 2016). Regardless of the fate of ISIS, the organization challenges traditional methods of terrorism, leaving many countries extremely vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

In an attempt to understand the evolution of terrorism, specifically ISIS's potential impact on Islamic transnational terrorism, this exploratory qualitative case study examined an asymmetric conflict between ISIS and the West from June 2014 to June 2017. June 2014 is significant as that is when ISIS declared its caliphate. The decision to focus on attacks against the West was due to unprecedented amount of ISIS-related attacks that occurred against the West from 2014 to 2017. The results of this study provide defense policymakers additional data on the potential short-term and long-term counterterrorism ramifications resulting from ISIS's impact on transnational terrorism.

The focus of Chapter 3 is centered on the research design and methods used for the study. This chapter is organized into the following sections: introduction, research questions, research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, permission, data storage, and a summary.

Research Questions

In order to explore and examine the impact of ISIS's transnational terrorism approach, I addressed one central question: How has ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism? Additionally, in order to fully answer the research question, the research answered the following subquestions:

SQ1: How is the nature of the threat from ISIS different than other threats from Islamic terrorist groups in the past?

SQ2: Is ISIS's transnational terrorism approach innovative? If so, how?

SQ3: Will other designated terrorist groups learn from ISIS's transnational approach and adopt similar modus operandi against the West? If so, how?

SQ4: What is ISIS's long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism?

Research Design and Rationale

To answer the research question, it was deemed appropriate to use a qualitative case study method that was exploratory in nature. Qualitative research permits the researcher to investigate the phenomenon of interest in effort to describe, clarify, and provide descriptive analysis about said phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, a qualitative approach allows for an examination (bounded by time and location) of knowledge through exploring, understanding, and explaining expert perspectives on how ISIS potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. Before selecting the qualitative method, I considered other research methodologies such as the quantitative and mixed methods approach. However, after reviewing those methodologies, I concluded a qualitative study was the appropriate method to answer the research questions as it allowed for a more nuanced and complex understanding of the

phenomenon. A quantitative or mixed-methods research approach was deemed

inappropriate because of a lack of available quantifiable data, which would have limited

the exploratory nature of the study.

I reviewed the five main qualitative approaches (phenomenology, grounded

theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative) and determined a case study research

design was appropriate. The case study approach allowed for an exhaustive description

of the issue using comprehensive sources of data. According to Yin (2003), "evidence

for case studies may come from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews,

direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. An investigator must

know how to use these six sources, which call for knowing different methodological

procedures" (p. 83). Moreover, a case study required me to provide detailed analysis on

the case and its setting.

This study was considered exploratory in nature due to the lack of data related to

the research question. This allowed for an exhaustive collection of data that were used

for extensive analysis while including information from participant interviews,

questionnaires, and literature that provide external factors related to the research topic.

The exploratory case study approach allows researchers to present a complete depiction

of the research topic and research questions (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Additionally,

exploratory research is an effective way for building a foundation for further research

studies on the phenomenon of interest.

Role of the Researcher and Bias

I was fundamental in the qualitative data collection process and subsequent

analysis. According to Creswell (2012), the researcher is often the main data collection

instrument in qualitative research. I had direct contact with the research participants during the process, which included face-to-face interviews and email questionnaires. All research participants were presented with the same questions. I was responsible for transcribing, coding, analyzing, and interpreting the data.

I have experience working within the intelligence community, which had the potential to create bias if proper steps were not taken. To eliminate any bias associated with this study, I ensured data collection and interpretation was relative to the research questions, and provided a transparent audit trail, including the reasoning in methodological and analytical decisions. I took appropriate steps to eliminate bias and to safeguard the study so personal views or opinions did not adversely influence the study. For example, research participants were able to review the transcripts from his/her interview to ensure my interpretations were representative of their perspective. Additionally, I used other reputable sources of data (triangulation) related to the research questions and my interpretations of the data, and such sources supported my interpretations. If I would have identified bias that I could not have adequately eliminated, I would have sought guidance from the dissertation committee. Moreover, the dissertation committee had oversight on the study and would have assisted should they have concluded any bias into the study.

Methodology

This section is organized using the following subsections: participant selection and recruitment, instrumentation and data collection, and data analysis plan. Adequate depth will be provided in order for other researchers to replicate the study.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

This study used a qualitative case study approach and the target population for the research were experts on Islamic terrorism within the defense enterprise, private organizations, and academia, which allowed for thorough and diverse perspectives. Research participants were identified using purposive sampling. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), when conducting purposive sampling, a "researcher [must] use their subjective judgment and attempt to select sampling units that appear to be representative of the population" (p. 168). I sent out 35 participation emails (see Appendix F) and had conversations with 18 individuals asking for participation in the study. Eighteen individuals originally agreed to participate; however, due to various reasons, three individuals canceled their interviews, leaving me with 15 research participants. According to Mason (2010), the sample size is generally small in qualitative studies when compared to quantitative studies.

Participants were selected from the fields of academia, private organizations, and across the defense enterprise. This allowed for perspectives from a range of experts who have studied, taught, investigated, or authored papers on Islamic transnational terrorism. Data collection concluded when new data did not contribute additional insight on the phenomenon under investigation, also known as saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Bernard (2012) said there is not a specific number of interviews that need to be conducted in qualitative research for data saturation to occur. Rather, the researcher needs to be consistent with the interview questions and questionnaires by asking the research participants the same questions.

I gained access to the research participants by using the connections made while working in support of the defense enterprise. As previously stated, the goal of this research was to explore, understand, and explain expert perspectives on how ISIS has potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. The research participants were selected based on their expertise on Islamic terrorism and security-related issues. The research participants were able to provide an assessment on the kind of threat the West faces in the years to come from Islamic terrorism.

As stated, I recruited potential research participants by sending an introductory email message for whom I had an email address, as well as face-to-face conversations. The email contained the following information: the purpose of the research, the options for participating in the study, my contact information, and an attached research consent form. If the participant agreed to participant in the research, he or she was asked to electronically sign and return the consent form. A complete examination of the consent form is found later on in this chapter.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Some of the potential research participants were located worldwide, so I used the option of email interviewing as well as face-to-face in-depth semistructured interviews. Individuals participating by email were emailed a questionnaire to complete and asked to email the questionnaire back to me. According to Creswell (2012), open-ended questionnaires are an appropriate means to collect qualitative data from participants who are unable to be interviewed because of geographic constraints. Individuals that participated in email questionnaires were informed the questionnaires would take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Individuals participating in face-to-face

semistructured interviews were informed the interview will take approximately 45 minutes and would be audio recorded. The interviews took place in a location the participant felt comfortable and away from distractions.

Interviews. One method often employed in qualitative research is the use of interviews (Merriam, 2009). Interviewing can take many forms, so it is important a researcher employs an appropriate interview technique that will allow for an examination of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, I selected the use of semistructured interviews using open-ended questions as my interviewing technique. According to Merriam (2009), a semistructured interview allows the researcher to ask predetermined questions that are flexible in the wording while working within an interview protocol. The use of semistructured interviews allows for further inquiry regarding the participant's response. In order to ensure semistructured interview data is accurate for analysis, I considered the following key points throughout the interview:

- avoid dominating the conversation

- don't ask open-ended questions that are too restrictive and avoid yes/no responses

- try and keep participant's focus on the research questions while still allowing flexibility in their responses

- keep-in-mind there are no right or wrong answers and avoid presenting a question with bias

- if the researcher does not fully understand the response, ask the participant additional questions about his or her response to aid in subsequent analysis of the data (Adams & Cox, 2008).

I used appropriate interview protocols (see Appendix G) and estimated the interviews would take approximately 30 minutes. Specifically, I reviewed the informed consent form with the participant and obtained permission to record the interview. Moreover, I asked foundational and demographic questions that will be provided in the analysis in chapter 4. As the interview concluded, I asked permission to contact the participant again if needed to provide clarification or further insight into his or her responses. Additionally, I provided the research participants my contact information should questions arise after the interview. At the conclusion of the interview, I placed the recording device, consent form, and notes in a locked case until the time I could convert them to a computer for storage. Merriam (2009) concludes audio recordings of interviews should be transcribed to written documents. Therefore, I transcribed all audio interviews into Microsoft Word documents, saved on a password-protected computer.

Open-ended questionnaires. Research participants were recruited from a global geographic area so in addition to face-to-face interviews, I conducted email interviewing using open-ended questionnaires (see Appendix H for interview questions and example questionnaire). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research can be conducted with open-ended questionnaires. Therefore, this research incorporated in-depth questionnaires with open-ended questions delivered via email to participants. According to Meho (2006), email interviewing is a viable option when face-to-face interviewing is difficult because of geographic location or the participant is not easily accessible. Email interviewing using questionnaires afforded the research participant time to think about the question that could provide more insight into the phenomena being researched. Moreover, the use of questionnaires allowed for a relaxed outlet for the participant, who

may otherwise be uncomfortable answering the question in a more formal setting. I estimated the questionnaire would take the research participant approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Email interviewing is not without fault and I acknowledged the limitations. In particular, email interviewing does not allow for direct probing and can lead to the misinterpretation of the questions, meaning that the respondent must select a provided answer and, in most cases, not have the ability to clarify any questions about the research question, which can alter the response of the participant (Meho, 2006). However, the use of open-ended questions allowed the participant the flexibility to respond to the question based on his or her interpretation of the research question. Additionally, I was not there to answer inquiries about certain questions or responses immediately; however, I could be reached via telephonically or email to clarify questions should they have arose. In order to alleviate concerns and limitations regarding the research questions, the questions (for the interview and questionnaire) were based on the analysis of literature and modified until I was comfortable the questions were reliable and provided valid data. This provided the opportunity to rephrase, refine, and clarify the questions prior to using in the main study, increasing the reliability and validity of the research instrument (Dikko, 2016).

Data Analysis Plan

According to Stake (1995) and supported by Creswell (1998), a case study needs to be grounded in: 1) detailed description, 2) categorical aggregation, 3) direct interpretation, 4) pattern matching, and 5) naturalistic generation. This study used face-to-face interviews, as well as email questionnaires in order to obtain the data needed for

analysis related to the central research question and sub-questions. This study involved

systematic procedures to assist with the accurate interpretation of data, to include the

identification of trends, themes, and conclusions in order to ensure the trustworthiness of

the findings.

NVivo 11 software was used to compile and analyze the data for word themes and

trends. NVivo 11 software allows Portable Document Formats, Microsoft Word

documents, spreadsheets to be uploaded (and exported) for ease of organization,

categorization, and coding. The data was categorized using open coding. The open

coding method was selected since it allowed for more flexibility and for the opportunity

to gain information not previously researched. Moreover, open coding allowed themes to

be identified from raw data without restraints (Thomas, 2006). Coding enabled me to

segregate and group the data in order to understand meaning and explanation (Saldana,

2012). According to Bushaand Harter (2008), a researcher must be consistent in the

coding and recoding of data over the course of research to safeguard the study's

reliability. Therefore, in order to establish intracoder responsibility, I assured the coding

of data was consistent and accurate to ensure reliable thematic analysis, which provided

validity to the study. In order to assist with the coding process and subsequent thematic

analysis, I adhered to the Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of coding:

- Phase 1: The familiarization of collected data

- Phase 2: Generating the initial codes

- Phase 3: Searching for themes

- Phase 4: Reviewing the themes

- Phase 5: Defining and naming the themes

- Phase 6: Producing the report (p. 16-23).

Familiarization of the data permitted me to code based on data relevant to the central research question and sub-questions. Once the data was coded and entered in NVivo 11, I identified themes (phase 3). This study involved thematic analysis, which required examination and interpretation, so I could elicit meaning and gain an understanding of the data in order to develop empirical knowledge (Braun & Clark, 2006). Moreover, thematic analysis was useful in capturing subtle meanings within a data set that can be used to explore a phenomenon. The themes or patterns that emerged were then used for analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). While thematic analysis is flexible, it did allow for an accurate analysis of data (Braun & Clark, 2006). When using thematic analysis, a researcher must give consideration to the relationships between themes using either a deductive or an inductive approach to analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research incorporated an inductive approach to thematic analysis which allowed for inferences from a collection of data related to the research question and phenomenon.

Consistent with data analysis that is inductive by nature, themes were developed by continually reading and studying the concepts presented in the interviews and questionnaires from experts on Islamic terrorism. Once the themes were identified, I was able to add a second layer of analysis to find trends and patterns. When no new themes emerge, I surmised all major themes were identified (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Additionally, software such as Microsoft Excel was used to create tables and graphical mapping to aid in describing trends and themes that resulted from the collected data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness (also known as reliability and validity) is important to ensure the highest standards of integrity, accuracy, and quality within a qualitative research project. According to Lincoln and Guba (1990), trustworthiness refers to the truthfulness and accuracy of the research findings and conclusions. Moreover, I achieved research trustworthiness by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1990).

Credibility

Credibility, often synonymous with internal validity, refers to the study's findings and conclusions to be truthful or agreeable with reality (Shenton, 2004). While there are several methods used to establish credibility such as persistent observation, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement and member checking, this study employed triangulation (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010). Triangulation involved data collected from multiple sources and studies conducted by other researchers specific to ISIS (Yin, 2012). Specifically, I compared secondary source information related to the central research question and sub-questions and examined the commonalities and differences in the findings. Comparison of such data aided in triangulation, a strategy to verify accuracy of the research findings (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Secondary data sources consisted of scholarly journals articles, publicly available data from reputable think tanks and intelligence/security organizations, biographical content related to ISIS leadership and organizational structure, case studies on ISIS attacks, and government sources and testimony related to research questions. The use of secondary resources is a reliable

method to investigate a phenomenon and assist with triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Transferability

Transferability, often referred to as external validity, pertains to the extent to which the research findings can be applicable in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). In an attempt to achieve transferability, this study used a technique known as thick description. According to Merriam (2009), thick description involves describing a phenomenon, as well as the research setting and participants (while protecting anonymity) in enough detail that should allow a researcher to judge the extent to which research findings and conclusions are applicable to other cases. Additionally, thick description is a way of achieving external validity.

Dependability

Dependability, regularly referred to as reliability in research, requires the researcher to conduct the study in a manner the findings are consistent and repeatable; however, the findings may not always be the same (Creswell, 2013). This study established dependability through the use of audit trails by way of documentation about all elements of the research (Rodgers, 2008). Specifically, documentation consisted of detailed transcriptions of the audio recordings from the interviews and the participants' email responses to the questionnaire. Therefore, a researcher not involved in the study can examine the process and transcripts to evaluate interpretations and accuracy (Creswell, 2013).

Conformability

Conformability is often referred to as objectivity in research. According to Malterud (2001), conformability pertains to the extent to which the research findings and conclusions are shaped by research participants and not the researcher's bias or interest. I expressed all biases at the beginning of the research study. Reflexivity and audit trails are two methods of establishing conformability. This research used a transparent audit trail that included a description of all the steps taken from when the research began to the conclusion of the study, to include data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. As previously stated, I took appropriate steps to eliminate bias within the study.

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Ethical Considerations

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As ethics are an important part of a research study, research ethics must be considered across all stages of the research process. It is essential that a researcher considers and identifies what ethical issues might arise during study. Research ethics are defined as "the application of moral standards to decisions made in planning, conducting, and reporting the results of research studies" (McNabb, 2008, p. 20). Not only are research ethics significant to the accuracy of the study, they assist in safeguarding the research participants against harm. In order to ensure ethical guidelines while conducing this research study, I adhered to the following ethical principles of research created by American Psychological Association (2016): Beneficence and Nonmaleficence, Fidelity and Responsibility, Integrity, Justice, and Respect for People's Rights and Dignity.

I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) training to ensure the ethical protection of human research participants and adhered to all NIH and Walden University IRB guidelines regarding the use of human research participants (certificate number

2592255). For example, the purpose of the study and data collection methods were fully

explained to the research participants. Moreover, I preserved the anonymity of the

participants and did not include the names in the study. The research participants were

only identified with participant ID codes, job title, and years of experience. The

confidentiality of the research participants is imperative to ensure the research

participants answer the questions freely regarding their perspective on the respective

question. As previously stated, the research participants were asked to sign a consent

form. Specifically, the informed consent form included the purpose and procedures of

the research and a statement the research was voluntary. Moreover, the statement

included that the participant could decline the invite to participate and withdraw from the

study at any time and there was no monetary compensation for participation. The

participant was guaranteed confidentiality and provided instructions and contact

information should the participant have questions regarding the research and his/her

rights as a research participant. Furthermore, the statement included instructions for

submitting the research consent form, the option to participate either through the use of

an email questionnaire or face-to-face interviews, and a statement informing the research

participant the need to retain the consent form for his/her records. Lastly, the form

contained a statement that participation in the study could lead to positive social change.

Permission

All research participants were asked to sign a consent form. The potential

research participant could consent to participation in one of two ways. First, the potential

participant could sign the consent form and email the signed consent form back to me.

The second option the participant had was to send me an email indicating consent. After

I received the consent from the research participant, each participant was contacted by phone or email to set-up an interview. This is when I determined the feasibility of a face-to-face interview or if an email questionnaire was more appropriate. I adhered to Walden University's International Review Board (IRB) ethical research standards set forth by the APA, the NIH and Walden University, and any applicable U.S. federal regulations. Walden University's IRB provided an additional layer of protection to ensure the study meets the highest standards of ethical research practices, while safeguarding the research participants. The IRB approval number for this study is 001-612-312-1210.

Data Storage

The collected data was stored electronically on a password-encrypted computer in a secured area. I was the only individual that knew the password to the computer. I adhered to the following principles outlined by Creswell (2013): all data was backed-up electronically by a password-encrypted external hard drive, a master list of the types of information gathered was developed, the protection the anonymity of the data by masking the research participant's name in the data was completed, and I developed a data collection file structure that assisted in locating files relevant to the study. All the research documentation was maintained on a password-encrypted computer and external hard drive for five years to comply with auditing protocols.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research design that was implemented for the study, to include the methodology that was employed. Additionally, the chapter provided the reason why a qualitative exploratory case study was appropriate, the research questions, an outline of the processes used for participant recruitment, data

collection, analysis, and storage, along with the methods utilized to ensure the highest

standards of data trustworthiness. Chapter 4 will provide additional detail on the data

collection procedures and evidence of trustworthiness, in addition to the research results.

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings as they relate to the literature and recommend

additional research that could be conducted relevant to the central research question.

Moreover, chapter 5 will provide the implications for positive social change resulting

from this study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This study bridged the gap in knowledge by examining the perspectives of 15 American counterterrorism experts within the defense enterprise regarding how ISIS has potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. Chapter 4 presents the data, data analysis, and findings related to the central research question and subquestions. The central research question explored how ISIS has potentially shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. Additionally, supporting subquestions were examined and centered on how ISIS is different from other Islamic terrorist groups, ISIS's innovation, other designated terrorist groups learning from ISIS's modus operandi, as well as ISIS's long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism. Data were collected for this study through 12 face-to-face semistructured interviews, two telephonic semistructured interviews, and one questionnaire. Chapter 4 presents the research setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis and findings, evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary.

Setting

Research participants were identified using purposive sampling and data were collected using face-to-face semistructured interviews, semistructured telephonic interviews, and an open-ended questionnaire for a total of 15 experts who have studied, taught, investigated, or authored papers on Islamic transnational terrorism. All 15 research participants were U.S. citizens. The 12 face-to-face interviews were conducted in a location and at a time that was convenient for the research participants. The two telephonic interviews took place at a time that was convenient for

participants and were conducted using Skype. One participant selected to answer an open-ended questionnaire and returned the questionnaire via email. Of note, at the time of this study, I resided overseas. There were no conditions that influenced participation in the study or influenced the interpretation of the data and subsequent findings.

Demographics

From the 53 experts who were contacted, 18 initially agreed to participate. However, on followup, three were unable to participate for various reasons, including moving and traveling for work. Therefore, a total of 15 individuals participated in the study. The 15 participants were experts on Islamic transnational terrorism. The research participants included 13 males and two females. All 15 research participants were U.S. citizens; 11 resided overseas and four resided in the United States. Participants worked in the fields of law enforcement, homeland security, the intelligence community, and academia. The research participants' differing backgrounds allowed for thorough and diverse perspectives (see Appendix I).

Data Collection

Fifteen experts on Islamic transnational terrorism within the defense enterprise, private organizations, and academia participated in the study. Based on research participants' availability and location, 12 individuals participated in face-to-face semistructured interviews, two participated through telephonic semistructured interviews, and one participated by answering an open-ended questionnaire. All telephonic and face-to-face interviews were audiotaped, allowing for subsequent transcription, and lasted approximately 20 to 35 minutes. The one individual who selected to participate using the questionnaire emailed me the completed questionnaire. After each interview, I

transcribed the recorded interview into a Microsoft Word document. Once all transcriptions were complete, I imported the transcriptions into NVivo 11 to assist with data organization and analysis. Third parties were not present during any of the interviews. Moreover, research participants were assured no identifying information would be included in the study and their identities would remain confidential. All interview recordings and transcriptions along with participant biographical data were saved on a password-encrypted computer.

Data Analysis and Findings

In this case study, the collection of data and subsequent analysis was critical in addressing the central research questions and subquestions. The results present each major theme, along with important experiences regarding the central research question and subquestions. Both major themes and important experiences were supported by direct passages from the research participants. The following section is organized by thematic analysis and findings.

Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke's six-phase process for thematic analysis was used. Braun and Clarke''s (2006) six-phase process included: familiarization of collected data (phase 1), generative the initial codes (phase 2), searched for themes (phase 3), reviewing the themes (phase 4), defining and naming the themes (phase 5), and producing the report (phase 6) (p. 16-23). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the first step in thematic analysis is getting familiar with the data. The objective of this step is for the researcher to have in-depth working knowledge of the collected data. During this phase, I immersed myself in the data, searching for patterns and meanings. Additionally, this step involved

the transcription of the research participant interviews. I performed this step and transcribed all interview data into Microsoft Word documents. This step also allowed me to become familiar with the data as I started to search for meanings after reading and rereading the data several times.

Braun and Clarke's second phase in thematic analysis is the generation of initial codes. After I completed step one, I was familiar enough with the data and produced initial codes as this step was vital to subsequent data analysis. I organized the data into meaningful groups using NVivo 11. The codes were data-driven and entered manually (tagged and highlighted) into NVivo 11 to assist with organization. At this point, I selected to code for as many themes and patterns as possible to assist with Braun and Clarke's phase three (searching for themes) of thematic analysis (see Appendix J).

The third phase in Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis process is searching for themes and is to be initiated once all data has been initially coded. I began looking and generating broader themes during this phase by organizing the codes into tentative themes. Specifically, I analyzed the codes and combined relevant codes in order to form overarching themes. This process allowed me to generate both main themes and subthemes.

Phase four of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis process is reviewing the themes generated in phase three. This phase allowed me to eliminate initial themes that the data did not support. Moreover, I was able to combine separate themes into one theme in addition to breaking down an initial main theme into subthemes in order to provide meaningful analysis (see Appendix K). I made sure the themes were clearly identified and there were distinctions amongst the themes. The first step involved

reviewing the initial coded extracts to identify a coherent pattern and ensure the data supported the candidate themes. The second step involved scrutinizing the candidate themes individually across the data set and ensuring that the themes correctly echo the meanings noticeable with the data set at large. While limited recoding was needed, I was able to identify the main themes, how they integrated with other themes, and an overall initial assessment at the conclusion of this phase.

Braun and Clarke's fifth stage in the thematic analysis process is clearly defining and labeling the identified themes. During this phase, I refined the themes in order to prepare for analysis. Specifically, for each theme, I wrote a detailed analysis, while considering the broader research question and subquestions. This also allowed for the elimination and subsequent refining of overlapping themes, as well as the creation of subthemes. I also finalized the theme and subtheme titles during this phase.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) final phase in the thematic analysis process is producing the report. During this phase, I authored a concise and logical write-up of the data and analysis, and provided relevant data extracts to support the named themes and sub-themes. The data extracts provided examples and supported my analysis without convoluting the analytical narrative. Moreover, this phase allowed for final analysis and I was able to relate the analysis with the central research question, subquestions, and literature.

Findings

This section is organized by SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4, followed by the central research question.

SQ1: How was the nature of the threat from ISIS different from Islamic terrorist groups in the past?

Theme 1. ISIS has leveraged social media to empower supporters outside of Iraq and Syria to conduct external operations without direct guidance from leadership.

The first major theme that materialized from subquestion 1 on how the threat from ISIS was different from other Islamic terrorist groups in the past indicated ISIS, unlike no other previous terror organization, leveraged social media and Internet open forums to empower supporters outside of the conflict zones to conduct attacks and operations without direct guidance from ISIS leadership. Specifically, ISIS used social media to publicly announce attack strategy while inspiring home-grown violent extremists to take violent action in their own country using simplistic attack methods and weapons. It was deduced from the highest number of occurrences with 14 out of the 15 total sample population (93%) referencing ISIS's use of social media differentiates them from other terrorist groups and the organization's use of social media has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. According to participant 15:

But post 9/11, the US, UK and the rest of Europe clamped down, empowering, using social media and those types of tactics gave ISIS more reach I guess into the places where security was much tighter. And they couldn't smuggle in people that have been in training camps. So, the way to do it was to empower and radicalize (personal communication, September 25, 2018).

Participate 13 stated social media was vital in the recruitment of younger supporters and did not require ISIS to devote a significant amount of resources to transnational attacks:

Social media obviously, and having a younger cadre, they were able to do that

fairly rapidly. Like any terrorist group, the actual attacks were not sophisticated

in that it didn't have to devote a lot of resources. From technology and using it,

they really took advantage on their younger groups to take advantage of the social

media platforms and technology that was already out there (personal

communication, July 17, 2018).

Participant 11 stressed the importance social media had on the recruitment of

supporters who were rejected by other groups or unable to travel to the conflict zones to

fight on behalf of ISIS. Specifically, ISIS authorized anyone willing to take up violence

on its behalf, tapping into violent disenfranchised individuals. Participant 12 concluded

ISIS's use of social media to attract lone wolves for attacks against the West is how the

threat from ISIS was different to terrorism threats from the past.

Second important experience. The second important experience from SQ1

indicated the declaration of the caliphate that defined an objective and desired end state

was vital to foreign fighter recruitment. It was deduced from the number of occurrences.

Twelve out of 15 research participants (80%) stated the importance of declaring the

caliphate, something that could be emulated in the future by a like-minded terrorist

organization. As participant 4 highlighted, the declaration of a caliphate was not

unprecedented; however, ISIS was able to publicize its caliphate worldwide while

promising riches to supporters. Participant 9 described the importance of such:

It becomes attractive. If you are just saying come fight and you don't have an end

goal, I think you wouldn't get as much traction. But by saying there is an end

goal. Hey, the end goal is to control a piece of land and then we get to own it and

run it, then you put yourself in a place of power (personal communication, August 31, 2018).

Moreover, participant 10 indicated the caliphate identified a clear end-state, which gave supporters a tangible objective and end-goal and stated "It also helped reach out to disenfranchised individuals that are on the fringe of everything and gave them something to look forward to with the promise land" (personal communication, date). Participant 6 concluded the ISIS's declaration of the caliphate was able to sway potential recruits who were frustrated with al-Qaida's perceived lack of operations:

I do think they was key to maybe people sitting on the fence of ideology. Almost the lack of AQ type operations or actions. People sitting on the fence that were disgruntled, that could relate to what the message was. And again with territory and the actions taking. They could make that decision and it moved in that direction. I think that was pretty critical to their recruiting message (personal communication, September 19, 2018).

Participant 5 also concluded ISIS's declaration of the caliphate gave the organization an advantage over al-Qaida:

It gave them the central rod for everyone to follow. One of the biggest issues with AQ is their lack of ability to respond and keep a leader out front since Bin Laden went into hiding all those years ago. But having the Caliphate and Baghdadi as kind of a focal point as something they could drive people towards. The lightning rod for people to follow behind (personal communication, August 14, 2018).

Moreover, in regard to the importance of the caliphate on ISIS recruitment, participant 12 stated:

Tens of thousands of people flooded into Iraq and Syria from all over the world. The announcement of the caliphate had a catalyzing effect on the global Sunni world, drawing people from just about every nation on earth…ISIS rapidly swelled, even though most of the Sunni leadership in Cairo and Mecca, did not consider that legitimate. It was enough to make ISIS a serious force to be reckoned with for a short period of time. There were people who were waiting for ages for the caliphate restored and I think there were many other Sunni's worldwide that probably weren't 100 percent sure it was legitimate or not. But it was enough to excite and energize and spur volunteers for donations. All of that is incredibly hard to track. Tens of thousands of volunteers and tens of millions of dollars flooded into Iraq and Syria. And if it hadn't been for the international coalition, had a very good chance of taking over Iraq and Syria and moving the governance there (personal communication, September 13, 2018).

SQ2: Was ISIS's transnational terrorism approach innovative? If so, how? This section includes theme 2, second important experience, and third important experience.

Theme 2. The use of small-scale attacks using simple weapons by single attackers will become a more frequent course of action for terrorist organizations. The second major theme that materialized from subquestion 2 regarding the innovation of ISIS's transnational terrorism approach found ISIS shaped the future of transnational terrorism by employing or encouraging less sophisticated attacks on symbols of Western targets and authorities, requiring less preparation, decreasing the chance of law

enforcement or security service interdiction. It was deduced from the highest number of occurrences with 12 out of the 15 total sample population (80%) referencing ISIS's external operations strategy as innovative. According to participant 5 and regarding ISIS's transnational approach:

It is the most likely attacks going forward. There will still be plans by guys like AQ and larger planning by ISIS or AQAP or whomever for the kind of grander 9/11, Madrid, London type attacks. But I just think with the ease of access and the inability of security services to identify every single one of these guys will make lone actor attacks just more common (personal communication, August 14, 2018).

Participant 4 concluded ISIS's transnational terrorism approach that encouraged lone actor attacks requires very little resources and less operational risks. Participant 4 stated:

It costs them nothing. Or next to nothing. They have very little operation risk. The risk is focused in on only an individual or maybe a very small group of just a few people, so I think it is they wave of the future when it comes to attacks outside of a conflict zone. For all of those reasons, it works. It is effective. It is cheap. It is low risk. All of those things. And once they have decided their brand is brutality and death, then they have nothing to lose (personal communication, August 13, 2018).

Both participant 6 and participant 9 concluded the lack financial cost associated with inspiring lone actors to conduct an attack in their own country will likely be a future trend in terrorism as it gainers significant media attention. Participant 5 stated the biggest impact ISIS had on Islamic transnational terrorism is the acceptance of authorizing lone

actors to attack on its behalf, using simple attack methods. Participate 3 noted that the lack of attack sophistication serves as a force multiplier:

> So, that is another way they have affected the future. They are telling people you don't need to know how to build a bomb. You don't need to know how to fly a plane. You don't need to know how to make a chemical or biological substance. You just need to be able to drive a car. So, they have taken it from sophisticated, complicated, high impact attacks and driven into the low impact, but lower impact, but anyone can do it (personal communication, August 12, 2018).

Second important experience. ISIS's ability to author official publications and interact with supporters in multiple languages on social media by native speakers allowed for international recruitment and operations. The second important experience that emerged from subquestion 2 indicated ISIS's ability to interact with supporters in multiple languages by native Western speakers, while authoring publications in multiple languages allowed for operational support and international recruitment was considered innovative by participants of this study. This received out 5 out of 15 occurrences (33%) from the sample population. While the concept of terrorist groups posting online publications in multiple languages is not exclusive, ISIS took it beyond the traditional scope, capitalizing on advancements in social media and technology. According to participant 2:

> Inspire was an English language vehicle, but ISIS with all its foreign fighters is able to create a lot of different periodicals, whether this inspired them or not that were not only focused in English, but in French, North African dialect Arabic and many other languages, German and stuff. Written by Germans, fluid, native

language speakers even in Indonesian and stuff like that. Which resonated, and that is part of propaganda is having a native speaker speak to us. Everyone knows, trying propaganda, and trying these nuanced things to motivate people, if you don't have local references, when you are trying to appeal to the global scale, but also talking the types of local references in the way they say it in the native language, then that is the most attractive way (personal communication, August 12, 2018).

Participant 14 stated that online communication in multiple languages was innovative and allowed ISIS to spread its message to a wider audience. Participant 5 talked about the difference between AQAP and ISIS publications and concluded "even the use of language, AQAP was using multiple languages especially English and Arabic, but ISIS was able to use a lot of their recruits to develop the multilingual platforms to target the different places" (personal communication, August 14, 2018). Participant 7 concluded when ISIS started losing ground in Syria and their multi-language media decreased, it resulted in less inspired attacks against the West.

Third important experience. ISIS's employment of women and kids in recruiting and operational roles may impact the future of Islamic transnational terrorism strategy. According to research participants, ISIS employed a strategy for the recruitment of women and for the purpose of online recruitment; however, women have been used in operational roles as well. Moreover, ISIS may capitalize on the children of foreign fighters when they return to their home country for future attacks as they face less scrutiny. It was deduced from the number of occurrences with 7 out of the 15 total

sample population (47%) referencing ISIS's external operations strategy using women and children as innovative. Participant 7 stated:

> There are more and more studies that are coming out by people who were conducting research inside Syria that are saying that women have this major operational impact. They were acting as recruiters. They were the recruiters. They were the ones thinking very strategically and influencing all of this. So, if you think about that, okay, you are going to have, and a lot of them too, especially from Europe, saying that is was women pushing the male fighters to go fight…you have women and children returning from the war zone, they are under a lot less scrutiny, especially, children. What can you do? Women are just under less scrutiny (personal communication, August 16, 2018).

Participant 9 and participant 10 concluded ISIS used women and children because they undergo less scrutiny by law enforcement and security services. Participant 3 stated she thought it is possible the returnee women would take an operational role as the women "went through training. They know how to operate a suicide vest. They know how to operate weapons" (personal communication, August 12, 2018).

SQ3: Will other designated terrorist groups learn from ISIS's transnational approach and adopt a similar modus operandi against the West? This section includes the third theme, followed by the second important experience.

Theme 3. Designated terrorist groups have likely learned from both the successes and failures of ISIS's transnational terrorism approach (social media, tactics and techniques) and may employ a similar external operations approach.

The third major theme that emerged from subquestion 3 on terrorist group learning revealed that like-minded terrorist groups may emulate ISIS as it pertains to ISIS's use of social media and its transnational attack approach (inspiring lone actor actors using simple methods). This received the 13 out of 15 occurrences (87%) from the sample population. Participant 4 expects newly formed groups to possibly adopt ISIS's transnational attack approach but warned such as approach comes with strategic risks to the groups. Additionally, participant 3 concluded:

> Killing seven people in New York City is a win for them. It is not 3,000 people and two major buildings coming down. But it is still a win. So, they are willing to take quantity over quality, I think. And I think other groups are watching what they do, and they realize once you have that increase in operational tempo, which is attack after attack after attack, or attempt and attempt after attempt. It doesn't matter how successful you are. You are a) having attacks and projecting power externally, but b) you are getting all this media attention, so your brand starts to build. And when you build a brand like that, you have all the people watching and every time there is an attempt or an attack, somebody with a like mind for whatever reason takes notice. And they then have that precedent. So, hey that guy did that attack with that car, I can do that too. So, it starts to build itself. So, I think that is another way which they are affecting the future of terrorism (personal communication, August 12, 2018).

Additionally, research indicated that ISIS's use of the internet (mainly social media) will be emulated by other terrorist organizations. Participant 6 concluded using multi social media platforms and communicating in multiple languages with supporters

will be adopted by like-minded groups. Participate 11 stated ISIS's use of Internet open

forums will be a lesson learned by other terrorist groups (as opposed to password

protected forums) and such will be implemented by other groups in the future. Moreover

participate 3 concluded the use of open forums is an example of one thing ISIS learned

from al-Qaida, where al-Qaida typically operated in password protected forums, limiting

its audience.

    Second important experience. Al-Qaida will not follow a similar model

transnational terrorism approach, deduced from the comments of 9 out of the 15 research

participants (60%). Participate 9 concluded:

> I think AQ's model has always been and will always be a longer trajectory where
>
> it is win the hearts and minds of the people slowly adapt them into your version of
>
> sharia law, your understanding of Islamic texts. And, you know, I feel like AQ
>
> does attacks and they promote attacks against the West, they are also much
>
> focused on local operations and getting people to adhere to what they believe in. I
>
> don't think AQ will follow the same ISIS model and I do think they will learn
>
> from it (personal communication, August 31, 2018).

Participant 3 stated that al-Qaida charts is own course and may take on some of

ISIS's ideas. However, al-Qaida likes to control its global message, brand, and methods

of attacks more than ISIS has demonstrated. Moreover, participant 5 commented about

al-Qaida wanting to control its narrative:

> I would not expect somebody like AQ be willing to take on more of the allowing
>
> some guy to do an attack in their name. Which is something they have always

wanted and to control the message of their attacks much more closely than ISIS has (personal communication, August 14, 2018).

SQ4: What is ISIS's long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism? This section includes the 4th theme, the second important experience, and the third important experience.

Theme 4. ISIS will survive as transnational terrorist group in the virtual world and continue to inspire lone actor terrorism directed against the West.

The theme that emerged from subquestion 4 revealed that ISIS will likely survive in the virtual world, regardless of its success or failures in Syria and Iraq. Seven out of the 15 (40%) of the research participants indicated that ISIS would survive long-term in the virtual world and continue to inspire lone actor terrorism and that was its long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism. Specifically, participant 11 stated:

The virtual world where their message is circulating is going to inspire people in the real world. The small guys, they people who can't get into other groups. The ones that want to be authorized by anybody to be so violent and act out their revenge fantasies. That's what ISIS really tapped. Is people's powerlessness and their willingness to subjugate themselves to any ideology or authority that licenses them to act out? So that is what ISIS has got going (personal communication, September 14, 2018).

Participant 10 thinks ISIS will change form and continue to survive in the cyber realm and inspire virtual jihad long-term. Participant 6 concluded ISIS is counting on virtual world survival and is constantly establishing its brand on a global scale in order to remain relevant and endure the loss of physical territory.

Second important experience. The second important experience that emerged from the subquestion identified North Africa as a potential growth area for ISIS operations. Eight out of the 15 research participants (53%) highlighted Africa as the most likely growth area for ISIS. Participant 9 stated that the Sahel is prime for ISIS growth; however, may have difficulty recruiting fighters to the Sahel. Participant 4 identified the Sahel as a potential growth area for ISIS, and also identified Egypt because of the unrest and poverty. Participate 10 and participate 14 concluded significant ISIS expansion into North Africa.

Third important experience. The third important experience that emerged was ISIS-associated returned foreign fighters potentially increases the threat to the West, deduced from the comments of eight out of the 15 (53%) research participants. Specifically, ISIS could have trained and provided operational guidance to a foreign fighter in places like Iraq and Syria, then instructed the foreign fighter to conduct a terrorist attack. Participant 12 stated:

> Those folks coming home are going to be dangerous. They are going to be especially dangerous in soft liberal places…that doesn't have the tools and doesn't have the right mentality to handle that. Somebody coming back from Iraq and Syria might know how to go to their local Home Depot and build explosives. Those people are going to be incredibly dangerous for a long period of time because they have been radicalized, they have the knowhow. And they are probably thinking well, the caliphate, the wheel of time turns, the caliphate is on the decline, but in time, especially in Europe, our populations are going to rise

and we will come out on top. There is significant danger there (personal

communication, September 13, 2018).

Participant 10 concluded some foreign fighters returning from Iraq and Syria will

have a hard time adjusting and may resort to criminal activity and violence. Participate 6

stated that wittingly or unwittingly, the returned foreign fighter may aid in the

recruitment of ISIS supporters, thus increasing the threat to the host country. Participant

5 commented that some returnees will adhere to the radical ideology despite being back

in one's home country and pose a significant long-term threat.

RQ: How has ISIS shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism?

Based on the findings from the four subquestions, ISIS has shaped the future of

Islamic transnational terrorism by its ability to promote attacks conducted by individuals

unable to travel to conflict zones which creates significant challenges for the defense

enterprise. Specifically, ISIS has effectively demonstrated on a large-scale extremist no

longer have to risk travel to conflict zones (lessening the risk of interdiction), in order to

plan or receive guidance on attack targets and methods as ISIS has identified such in its

official publications and social media postings. Methods likely adopted by like-minded

groups or individuals include soft Western targets utilizing simplistic attack methods

such as stabbings or vehicular attacks, thus presenting difficulties for Western security

agencies tasked with a counterterrorism mandate.

Additionally, ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism

specifically related to leveraging social media platforms at an unprecedented level to

inspire terrorist attacks (virtual jihad) against the West. Specifically, ISIS has

demonstrated an effective way to interact with supporters through social media and open

forums. ISIS empowered its supporters to interact with one another, sometimes in the language native to the supporter (i.e. French foreign fighter in Syria communicating with a French speaking supporter), which allows the nuance needed not typically associated with computer generated translations or nonnative speakers. Related, ISIS demonstrated the recruiting power (especially in Western nations) of declaring a caliphate, with an identified objective and end state. It is possible other like-minded groups interpreted this as a success and could attempt to emulate in the future. Such western recruits potentially increase the long-term threat to the West once they return to their native country. Furthermore, ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism by its use of women and children. While the exact threat from either the woman or child returnees arriving in Western countries is currently unknown, they likely pose unexpected and unprecedented challenges to security agencies as such agencies have little experience with this threat to assist in their decision making.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Evidence of trustworthiness was established through transferability, credibility, dependability, and conformability in this qualitative case study. Transferability, occasionally referred to as external validity, was achieved using a technique known as thick description. I established transferability by describing not only the phenomenon in detail, but also the research setting and participates in detail. Such detail will allow another researcher the ability to evaluate to what extent this study's findings and conclusions are applicable to other studies and cases.

In this study, credibility was established through triangulation (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010). Specifically, triangulation involved examining credible secondary sources related

to the research topic which assisted in verifying the accuracy of the findings. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2014), the use of secondary sources is a reliable method in a study to assist with triangulation. The secondary sources consisted of publicly available data from intelligence and security organizations, reputable think tanks, scholarly literature on ISIS and Islamic transnational terrorism, and government testimony.

Dependability was established in this study through the use of audit trails. Specifically, I documented all elements of the research and provided accurate transcriptions of the audio recordings from the participant interviews and an exact transcription of the one email response to the research questionnaire. This will allow a researcher not involved in this specific study the ability to examine the process and transcripts (with the proper approvals) to evaluate the study's accuracy.

Conformability was achieved through the use of a transparent audit trail. The transparent audit trail consisted of detailed description of all the steps taken from the beginning of the research to the conclusion of this study, to include in-depth description of the data collection method, data analysis, and data interpretation. Moreover, the research results and conclusions were shaped by the research participants and not my bias or interest. I took appropriate steps to illuminate bias within the study.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to perform analysis of the information provided by the 15 research participates considered experts on Islamic transnational terrorism. The findings were analyzed and explained in detail on how the ISIS shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. This study employed a qualitative case study approach and used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process as the analytic method.

Four main themes resulted from the four subquestions of the study, along with other important experiences from the data. The study's findings indicated that ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism in several ways. Specifically, ISIS has successfully leveraged social media to inspire lone actor attacks in Western nations using simple attach methods and civilian targets. ISIS's declaration of the caliphate was an important recruiting tool, one that could possibly be emulated in the future by another like-minded terrorist group.

Additionally, ISIS's ability to interact with supporters in their native language and publish propaganda in up to 23 languages was considered innovate as it took it beyond the typical scope, which resonated with supporters to join the fight in Syria or Iraq, or possibly conduct violence in one's own country. Other like-minded terrorist organizations may adopt a similar approach as they have likely learned from the success and failures of ISIS's transnational terrorism methods. Moreover, the results of this study indicated ISIS will survive in the virtual world (and encourage virtual jihad), while possibly gaining an operational foothold in North Africa. Lastly, ISIS-associated returned foreign fighters potentially increase the long-term transnational terrorism risk to Western nations, as those fighters may have received attack training and operational guidance prior to leaving the conflict zones.

The central research question was answered based on the findings from the four subquestions. Specifically, in regard to the central research question on how ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism, a main finding was ISIS's methods and ability to promote attacks conducted by individuals unable to travel to conflict zones. ISIS was able to provide attack guidance and targets through its

multilingual official publications, open internet forums, and social media postings. Additionally, the use of simple attacks methods (vice complex attack methods) has potentially shaped the modus operandi and strategies of like-minded terrorist groups that conduct transnational terrorism.

Chapter 4 included the research setting, research participate demographics, the data collection method, data analysis and findings, evidence of trustworthiness, and concluded with a summary. Chapter 5 will include the interpretation of the research findings, limitations of the study, recommendations and ideas for future research, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to bridge the gap in literature by examining and explaining the perspectives of 15 experts on Islamic terrorism regarding how ISIS has shaped the future of transnational terrorism. Data were collected for this research through semistructured face-to-face and telephonic interviews, along with one participant electing to use an open-ended email questionnaire. This study was intended and designed to answer one central research question and four subquestions. The central research question addressed how ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. The subquestions centered on terrorism innovation and ISIS's impact on other like-minded Islamic transnational terrorist groups.

The results of the study indicated ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism in many ways, which is discussed later in this chapter. Specifically, ISIS's ability to promote small-scale attacks by individuals unable to travel to conflict zones has shaped the future of transnational terrorism as likeminded individuals no longer have to travel conflict zones to receive operational guidance or approval. ISIS has demonstrated an effective strategy of identifying attack targets and methods in its official publications and allowed supporters to act on its behalf, thus presenting unique security challenges for Western law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Chapter 5 includes the interpretation of findings, limitations of this study, research recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

In order to explore and explain the perspectives of 15 experts on Islamic terrorism regarding how ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism, this qualitative case study addressed one central question and four subquestions. This section is organized into the following subsections: central research question, SQ1, SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4.

Central Research Question

The central research question was as follows: How has ISIS shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism? Based on the results of the four subquestions, ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism in several ways. Specifically, ISIS's ability to promote attacks conducted by individuals not directly involved in battlefield conflicts has possibly changed the future of transnational terrorism. ISIS has successfully demonstrated likeminded extremists no longer have to risk travel to conflict zones in order to plan or receive guidance on attack targets and methods as they have identified in their official publications, audio messages, and social media postings. This scenario presents unique challenges to Western security services and law enforcement as it possibly lessens the risk of interdiction once the foreign fighter returns to his or her homeland.

Additionally, ISIS has demonstrated a powerful way to interact with supporters through social media and open forums. ISIS empowered its supporters to interact with one another and potential recruits, sometimes in the language native to the supporter or recruit. This allows for a more nuanced conversation not typically associated with computer-generated translations or nonnative speakers.

ISIS demonstrated the effectiveness of declaring a caliphate as it relates to Western foreign fighter recruitment. Specifically, the caliphate identified an objective and end state, which were possible effective recruitment tools that other likeminded groups and could attempt to emulate in the future. The Western foreign fighters potentially increase the long-term threat to the West once they return to their native country. Additionally, ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism through its use of women and children in operational and recruitment roles. While it is unknown what exact threats from either female or child returnees arriving in Western countries is, they likely pose unexpected and unprecedented challenges to security and law enforcement agencies. Such agencies have little to no experience with this threat to assist in their security-related decision making.

The central research question findings aligned and connected with Stepanova's asymmetric conflict theory, which was used as the theoretical framework for this study. As Stepanova (2008) highlighted, Western nations have conventional military superiority and power over nonstate actors. However, terrorist organizations like ISIS may have other qualified advantages, due to ideologies and organizational structure in its confrontation with states, which allows them to compete against stronger adversaries (Roberts, 2000; Stepanova, 2008). Moreover, asymmetric terrorism is a tactic to offset the advantages of the strong, and the weaker side often advocates and targets civilians of the stronger opponent, which has been effectively demonstrated by ISIS. According to Stepanova (2008), the need by groups like ISIS to target civilians serves as a force multiplier against a stronger opponent. Such attacks were encouraged and employed by

ISIS and put public pressure on the state to react, thus draining security resources and often leading to threat fatigue.

SQ

SQ1 was: How was the nature of the threat from ISIS different than other threats from Islamic terrorist groups in the past? The results of SQ1 indicated ISIS has successfully leveraged social media to empower supports outside of conflict zones to conduct attacks and operations without direct guidance from ISIS leadership. ISIS used social media to publicly announce strategies and accomplishments while inspiring homegrown violent extremists to take violent action in their own country. Additionally, ISIS's declaration of the caliphate that articulated an objective and desired end state was vital to foreign fighter recruitment.

SQ1's theme and important experiences identified that ISIS resorted to unconventional transnational terrorism concepts in an attempt to offset the strength of Western nation states. Specifically, ISIS was able to exploit sects of Western society's disenfranchised populations by spreading extremist and violent ideologies that support the weaker opponents' objectives by encouraging attacks against civilians and noncombatants (Abrahms & Potter, 2015; English, 2013). ISIS's effective use of social media directed at Western audiences attracted global appeal from disenfranchised Western individuals. Shameih and Szenes (2015) who stated ISIS's propaganda strategy represented a new era for how terrorist groups incorporate the Internet to further its operations and agenda. Furthermore, Gray and Heard (2009) concluded terrorist groups often use the Internet through social media for attack guidance and terrorist cell construction.

SQ2

SQ2 was: Was ISIS's transnational terrorism approach innovative? If so, how?

The results of SQ2 indicated the use of small-scale attacks using less sophisticated attack

methods by lone actors will become the likely modus operandi for likeminded terrorist

organizations in the future. Moreover, Western targets will likely consist of civilians and

symbols of authority. Encouraging less sophisticated lone actor attacks requires less

preparation, lessening the risk of law enforcement or security service interdiction and is

seen as a cost-effective method for creating violence. Lone actor terrorism is a method

and tactical adaptation often employed by terrorist groups in order to avoid operational

scrutiny and circumvent counterterrorism efforts (Barnes, 2012). Often, lone actor

terrorism occurs with little to no warning, making it difficult for law enforcement or

security services to detect and mitigate.

Additionally, ISIS's ability to author publications, as well as interact with

supporters in multiple languages allowed for operational support and international

recruitment which was considered innovative by participants of this study. While the

concept of terrorist groups posting online publications in multiple languages was not

unique, ISIS took it beyond the traditional scope, often capitalizing on advancements in

the reach of social media. According to Klausen (2015), ISIS employed individuals to

manage its social media content and assisted in the wider dissemination of its violent

narrative. ISIS published its online propaganda in over 23 languages and used its

propaganda as a force multiplier, both for recruitment and attacks (Zelin, 2015).

The theme and important experience from SQ2 indicated ISIS's ability to publish

in Western languages resonated with its supporters, while serving as a platform for

encouraging external attacks by lone actors. According to Kohlmann (2006), terrorist groups use the Internet (and social media) as a low-cost and effective way to communicate with supporters and organize, allowing for a transnational approach for violence. Additionally, ISIS often organized fighters in Iraq and Syria based on languages, possibly employing individuals from those groups to interact with supporters online in their native language (Bakker & de Bont, 2016).

SQ3

SQ3 was: Will other designated terrorist groups learn from ISIS's transnational approach and adopt similar modus operandi against the West? The results of SQ3 revealed other designated terrorist groups have likely learned from both the failures and success of ISIS's transnational terrorism approach. Furthermore, it is possible other groups may employ similar transnational terrorism modus operandi. ISIS demonstrated an effective method of promoting lone actor attacks, using simplistic weapons targeting civilian and soft Western targets (i.e. Christmas market).

The theme and important experiences for this subquestion revealed that experts expect other like-minded terrorist organizations to emulate and promote similar attack methods in order to draw attention to its cause. However, the majority of research participants did not assess this method to be adopted by al-Qaeda, as core leadership would want more control over external operations. According to Barnes (2012), simple transnational terrorism attacks like those demonstrated by ISIS leave a smaller operational footprint, thus presenting unique security challenges for intelligence agencies and law enforcement. Therefore, inspired lone actor attacks using simple attack methods

(i.e. knife) is possibly ISIS's long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism, and one that might be adopted by other terrorist organizations.

SQ4

SQ4 was: What is ISIS's long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism? The results of SQ4 revealed that ISIS will likely survive in the virtual world, regardless of its success or failures in Iraq and Syria. Research participants indicated that ISIS would inspire virtual jihad that that was a long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism. Additionally, research participants identified North Africa as a potential growth and operational area for ISIS.

Lastly, the theme and important experiences from SQ4 indicated that ISIS-associated returned foreign fighters potentially increase the terrorism threat to the West. This aligns with literature as foreign fighters are likely to be more experienced than lone actors and potentially introduce the attack methods they learned in the conflict they participated in (Cordesman, 2005). Specifically, ISIS could have trained a foreign fighter in attack methods in places like Syria and Iraq, then provide the fighter operational instruction to conduct a terrorist attack before returning to his home country (Hegghammer, 2010). According to expert perspectives, it is possible ISIS has orchestrated such a plan, thus having long-term impact on transnational terrorism and security policy. According to Carfarell and Zhou (2017), it is estimated at least 1,500 Western foreign fighters have returned to their home countries, some of which potentially provided ISIS organizational links into Western countries.

Reflections

I was motivated to conduct this research in order to close the gap in literature by identifying future Islamic terrorism trends. This research should assist with forecasting transnational terrorism modus operandi, allowing decision makers additional information for counterterrorism strategies and policy responses. Additionally, I have over 16 years within the defense enterprise working counterterrorism issues and this research will increase my knowledge on Islamic transnational terrorism, assisting in my professional development.

As previously stated, terrorist groups that do not adapt and "learn" will ultimately become irrelevant. Conversely, terrorist groups will have a better chance of organizational survival if they learn from innovation and be adaptive. According to Gartenstein-Ross (2008), terrorist groups do learn from one another; however, this phenomenon is not researched enough within the academic community. Moreover, the research on the future of terrorism is dated (predominantly published immediately after 9/11) and focused on al-Qaida (Bakker, 2012). There is an abundance of literature on terrorism, the present state of terrorism, and ISIS. Nevertheless, the post 2011 jihadi resurgence caught many experts by surprise and it was apparent there was a lack of research on the topic (Hegghammer, 2016). Therefore, this study closed a gap in literature and academia by examining ISIS's potential impact on Islamic transnational terrorism, which should assist defense enterprise decision making and possibly the shifting of security resources in order to prevent future acts of terrorism.

Limitations

As outlined in Chapter 1, there are several limitations associated with this study. First, this study incorporated perspectives from 15 experts with the defense enterprise, government, and academia selected using purposive sampling. While 15 research participants were an adequate representation, the unique experiences from the research participants may not be generalized beyond the scope of this study to other populations outside the study. Additionally, each participant provided his or her perspective based on their access to information and various experiences. Future research could scope the research by looking at the central research question and subquestions from unique government perspectives (i.e. Department of Justice, Department of Defense, etc...) or perspectives solely from academia or the private sector, or across a career field regardless of the employer.

Another limitation of this study is that it relies on interviews and an email questionnaire (one participant) for data to lend insight into the phenomenon. Security and safety issues prevented my ability to collect data from individuals directly involved with ISIS which could have provided additional insight into the central research question and subquestions. Moreover, this study was limited to open source information and did not include classified information (in accordance with Executive Order 13489), which likely limited the responses from several of the research participants. Lastly, it is assumed all research participants answered each question honestly and to the best of their ability based on their knowledge and lived experiences.

Recommendations

This study was conducted as there was a gap in literature on the relationship between post 9/11 transnational terrorism strategies and the organizations that might employ said strategies against the West, and how ISIS has shaped such strategies. As a result, several recommendations for future research became evident. First, the scope of this study was limited to the relationship between ISIS and transnational terrorism. Thus, in future studies, researchers could expand the breadth of cases by exploring other like-minded Islamic transnational terrorist group's writings, speeches, and actions. The findings from those research studies could then be compared to the conclusions from this study. Moreover, ISIS's blueprint for terrorism could be examined with other terrorist groups that employ a non-Islamic transnational terrorism approach.

Additionally, future studies could include strategies outlined by other post 9/11 jihadist strategist for their possible impact on shaping ISIS's terrorism approach. Future research on the relationship between various terrorism strategists and terrorist organizations could add to the literature by focusing on the key narratives that "guide" terrorist group's transnational terrorism methods and targets. Finally, this research focused on the relationship between ISIS's transnational terrorism approach against the West. Future researchers could identify a different target group other than the West. For example, a researcher could examine ISIS's transnational terrorism approach directed against the Middle East.

Implications

There is an abundance of literature on terrorism, Islamic terrorism, and ISIS; however, there is a gap in knowledge on the potential impact ISIS may have on the future

of Islamic transnational terrorism directed against the West. The majority of literature on future trends in Islamic terrorism was published shortly after 9/11 and focused on al-Qaida. Therefore, the potential impact ISIS had on Islamic terrorism needed to be researched in order to understand its effects on terrorism, both strategically and operationally, in order to provide decision makers valuable and credible data needed in any effort to degrade and possibly defeat ISIS and like-minded groups.

Accordingly, the implications for positive social change resulting from this study are aimed toward Western agencies tasked with a counterterrorism mandate, to include Western law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as well as decision makers and private organizations that conduct research on terrorist organizations. Such knowledge should allow such agencies to shift counterterrorism resources in order to mitigate future terrorist attacks. According to Hedges (2008), agencies tasked with a counterterrorism mission must familiarize itself with future terror trends and respond accordingly and faster than terrorist groups. Ideally, this research will inform decision makers on possible future trends in terrorism so they can effectively respond in a timely manner with specific policies that improve the security of their respective homeland.

Conclusion

This study bridged the gap in knowledge by investigating and explaining the perspectives of 15 Islamic terrorism experts on how ISIS has shaped the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. The central research question and subquestion findings indicated ISIS shaped the future of transnational terrorism as it relates to external operations, social media and online communication, and home grown violent extremism. Specifically, ISIS has demonstrated the ability to promote attacks by individuals unable to travel to conflict

zones, which may have a significant impact on transnational terrorism in the years to come. Instead, ISIS has leveraged social media and other internet platforms to communicate its message and violent narrative (attack targets and methods) in an effective and cost-efficient manner, while lessoning the operational risks associated with foreign fighter travel. Moreover, the use of simple attack methods and the encouragement of lone actor style attacks presents policy and security challenges for the defense enterprise.

ISIS has identified an effective way to interact with like-minded supporters, a behavior that could be possibly emulated by other terrorist organizations. Contrary to groups like al-Qaida who significantly communicated with supporters through private channels or password protected websites, ISIS had success using publicly accessed websites and social media platforms to communicate with supporters, much of the time in the supporter's native language. This likely improved support and aided in recruitment, confluent with declaring a caliphate with a clear objective and end state. Recruiting Western foreign fighters and using them to assist in the publishing of literature proved a successful tactic and will be possibly replicated in the future by other like-minded groups. Moreover, ISIS foreign fighters have shaped the future of transnational terrorism as they return back to their home country, possibly radicalized, presenting unique policy and security challenges to the country of return. Regardless of the fate of ISIS as an organization, it has challenged "traditional" terrorism methods while shaping the future of transnational terrorism, thus presenting unique security challenges to the international community.

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Appendix A: Western Countries

For the purpose of this research, the West refers to the 28 Member States of the

European Union (EU), North America (Canada and the United States), plus Switzerland,

Norway, New Zealand, and Australia.

Countries	European Union
Australia	
Austria	X
Belgium	X
Bulgaria	X
Canada	
Croatia	X
Cyprus	X
Czech Republic	X
Denmark	X
Estonia	X
Finland	X
France	X
Germany	X
Greece	X
Hungary	X
Ireland	X
Italy	X
Latvia	X
Lithuania	X
Luxembourg	X
Malta	X
Netherlands	X
New Zealand	
Norway	
Poland	X
Portugal	X
Romania	X
Slovakia	X
Spain	X
Sweden	X
Switzerland	
United Kingdom	X
United States	

Note. Definition of Western Countries. Adapted from "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West" by Hegghammer & Nesser, 2015, *Perspectives On Terrorism*, *9*(4), 14-30.

Appendix B: ISIS-Related Attacks (June 2014 – June 2017)

	Date	Attack	Location
	2014		
1	September 24	Oklahoma Vaughan Foods Beheading	Moore, OK, USA
2	October 20	Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu Vehicle Ramming	St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, Canada
3	October 22	Parliament Hill Shooting	Ottawa, Canada
4	October 23	Hatchet Attack on New York Police Officers	Queens, NY, USA
5	December 18	John Bailey Clark Jr. Shooting	Morganton, NC, USA
6	December 20	Joue-les-Tours Police Station Stabbing	Tours, France
	2015		
7	January 7-9	Charlie Hebdo Newspaper Shooting	Paris, France
8	January 7-9	"Shooting of Montrouge Police Officer, Fontenay-aux-Roses Jogger Shooting, and Porte de Vincennes Supermarket Siege"	Paris, France
9	February 3	Jewish Community Center Stabbing	Nice, France
10	February 14-15	Krudttonden Cultural Center and Krystalgade Great Synagogue Shootings	Copenhagen, Denmark
11	April 19	Woman Shot and Killed in Connection with Suspected Church Terrorist Attack	Villejuif, France
12	May 3	Curtis Culwell Center Muhammad Art Exhibit Shooting	Garland, TX, USA
13	June 26	Herve Cornara Beheading	Saint-Quentin-Fallavier, France
14	July 16	Navy Reserve Shootings	Chattagnooga, TN, USA
15	August 21	Thalys Train Stabbing	Arras, France
16	September 17	Stabbing of Spandau Policewoman	Berlin, Germany
17	November 4	University of California, Merced (UCM) Stabbing	Merced, CA, USA
18	November 13&14	Paris Attacks: Stade de France, Restaurants and Bataclan	Paris, France
19	December 2	San Bernardino Shooting	San Bernardino, CA, USA
20	December 5	Leytonstone Subway Stabbing	London, United Kingdom
	2016		
21	January 1	Mosque and Soldier Vehicle Attack	Valence, France

22	January 7	Shooting of Philadelphia Police Officer	Philadelphia, PA, USA
23	January 11	Jewish Teacher Machete Attack	Marseille, France
24	February 11	Restaurant Machete Attack	Columbus, OH, USA
25	February 18	Bangladeshi Imam Bludgeoning	Rochdale, United Kingdom
26	February 26	Train Station Stabbing	Hanover, Germany
27	March 22	Brussels Bombings - Airport and Metro	Brussels, Belgium
28	April 16	Sikh Temple Bombing	Essen, Germany
29	June 12	Orlando Nightclub Shooting	Orlando, FL, USA
30	June 13	Police Stabbing and Livestream Hostage Taking	Magnanville, France
31	July 14	Nice Bastille Day Vehicle Attack	Nice, France
32	July 18	Train Axe Attack	Würzburg-Heidingsfel, Germany
33	July 24	Wine Bar Suicide Bombing	Ansbach, Germany
34	July 26	Normandy Catholic Church Attack	Saint Etienne du Rouvray, France
35	August 6	Charleroi Machete Attack on Police	Charleroi, Belgium
36	August 10	Explosive Detonation in Taxi	Strathroy, Ontario, Canada
37	August 20	Roanoke Double Stabbing	Roanoke, VA, USA
38	September 4	Osny Prison Attack	Osny, France
39	September 17	Minnesota Mall Stabbing	St. Cloud, MN, USA
40	September 17&19	New York-Chelsea Bombing, Seaside Park Bombing	Manhattan, NY and Sea Side Park, NJ, USA
41	October 5	Double Stabbing of Schaerbeek Police Officers	Brussels, Belgium
42	November 28	Ohio State University Campus Stabbing	Columbus, OH, USA
43	December 19	Berlin Christmas Market Attack	Berlin, Germany
	2017		
44	January 6	Ft. Lauderdale Airport Shooting	Ft. Lauderdale, FL, USA
45	January 31	Denver Transit Officer Shooting	Denver, CO, USA
46	February 3	Louvre Knife Attack	Paris, France
47	March 18	Orly Airport Attack	Orly, France
48	March 22	Westminster Vehicle Attack	Westminster, United Kingdom
49	April 7	Stockholm Vehicle Ramming	Stockholm, Sweden
50	April 20	Shooting of Champs Élysées Police Officer	Paris, France
51	May 22	Manchester Arena Bombing	Manchester, United Kingdom

Note. Data is from June 2014 to June 2017. Adapted from "Fear Thy Neighbor.

Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West,"by Vidino, Marone, & Entenmann,2017,

The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. Milano: Ledi Publishing.

Appendix C: ISIS-Related Attackers (June 2014 – June 2017)

	Name	Description of Attack
1	Alton Nolen	Vaughn Foods Beheading
2	Martin Couture-Rouleau	Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu Vehicle Attack
3	Michael Zehaf-Bibeau	Parliament Shooting
4	Zale Thompson	New York Police Officer Hatchet Attack
5	Justin Sullivan	John Bailey Clark Shooting
6	Bertrand Nzohabonayo	Joue-les-Tours Police Stabbing
7	Cherif Kouachi	Charlie Hebdo Shooting
8	Said Kouachi	Charlie Hebdo Shooting
9	Amedy Coulibaly	Shootings at the Porte de Vincennes Supermarket, Fontenay-aux-Roses Jogger, and the Montrouge Police Officer
10	Moussa Coulibaly	Jewish Community Center Stabbing
11	Omar Hamid el-Hussein	Krystalgade Synagogue and Krudttonden Cultural Center Shootings
12	Sid Ahmed Ghlam	Murder of AurélieChâtelain; Alleged Planning of a Terror Attack Against a Church in Villejuif, France
13	Elton Simpson	Curtis Culwell Center Muhammad Art Exhibit Shooting
14	Nadir Soofi	Curtis Culwell Center Muhammad Art Exhibit Shooting
15	Yassin Salhi	Herve Cornara Beheading
16	Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez	Navy Shooting
17	Ayoub El-Khazzani	Thalys Train Knife Attack
18	Rafik Mohamad Yousef	Spandau Police Stabbing
19	Faisal Mohammad	University of California, Merced Stabbing
20	Bilal Hadfi	Paris Attacks - Stade de France
21	Ahmad al-Mohammed	Paris Attacks - Stade de France
22	Ali al-Iraqi	Paris Attacks - Stade de France
23	Ismael Omar Mostefai	Paris Attacks - Bataclan
24	Foued Mohamed-Aggad	Paris Attacks - Bataclan
25	Samy Amimour	Paris Attacks - Bataclan
26	Brahim Abdeslam	Paris Attacks - Restaurants
27	Chakib Akrouh	Paris Attacks - Restaurants
28	Abdelhamid Abaaoud	Paris Attacks - Restaurants
29	Tashfeen Malik	San Bernardino Shooting
30	Syed Rizwan Farook	San Bernardino Shooting
31	Muhaydin Mire	Leytonstone Subway Stabbing
32	Raouf el Ayeb	Mosque and Soldier Vehicle Attack
33	Edward Archer	Philadelphia Police Officer Shooting

34	Unidentified Minor	Jewish Teacher Machete Attack, France
35	Mohamed Barry	Ohio Restaurant Machete Attack
36	Mohammed Abdul Kadir	Murder of Bangladeshi Imam in England
37	Safia Schmitter	Train Station Stabbing, Germany
38	Ibrahim el-Bakraoui	Brussels Airport Bombing
39	Najim Laachraoui	Brussels Airport Bombing
40	Khalid el-Bakraoui	Brussels Metro Bombing
41	Unidentified Minor	Sikh Temple Bombing, Germany
42	Unidentified Minor	Sikh Temple Bombing, Germany
43	Omar Mateen	Night Club Shooting, Orlando
44	Larossi Abballa	Police Stabbing Attack, France
45	Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel	Nice Bastille Day Vehicle Attack
46	Riaz Khan Ahmadzai	Train Axe Attack, Germany
47	Mohammad Daleel	Suicide Bombing, Germany
48	Abdel Malik Petitjean	Catholic Church Attack, Normandy
49	Adel Kermiche	Catholic Church Attack, Normandy
50	Khaled Babouri	Machete Attack on Police, Belgium
51	Aaron Driver	Taxi Bomb, Canada
52	Wasil Farooqui	Stabbing, Virginia
53	Bilal Taghi	Prison Attack, France
54	Dahir Adan	Mall Stabbing, Minnesota
55	Ahmad Khan Rahimi	Bombing, New York and New Jersey
56	Hicham Diop	Police Officer Stabbings, Belgium
57	Abdul Razak Ali Artan	Stabbing at Ohio State University
58	Anis Amri	Christmas Market Attack, Germany
59	Esteban Santiago-Ruiz	Airport Shooting, Florida
60	Joshua Cummings	Transit Officer Shooting, Colorado
61	Abdullah Hamamy	Louvre Knife Attack, France
62	Ziyed Ben Belgacem	Orly Airport Attack, France
63	Khalid Masood	Vehicle Attack and Stabbing, England
64	Rakhmat Akilov	Vehicle Attack, Sweden
65	Karim Cheurfi	Champs Elysees Police Officer Shooting, France

Note. Data is from June 2014 to June 2017. Adapted from "Fear Thy Neighbor.

Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West," by Vidino, Marone, & Entenmann,

2017, *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague.* Milano: Ledi

Publishing.

Appendix D: Schengen Zone Countries List

The Schengen Zone has 26-member states, plus 3countries that do not have

border controls with surrounding Schengen countries.

Austria	Iceland	Poland
Belgium	Italy	Portugal
Czech Republic	Latvia	San Marino* (de facto)
Denmark	Liechtenstein	Slovakia
Estonia	Lithuania	Slovenia
Finland	Luxembourg	Spain
France	Malta	Sweden
Germany	Monaco* (de facto)	Switzerland
Greece	Netherlands	Vatican City* (de facto)
Hungary	Norway	

*Not official Schengen Zone members; however, these countries have open borders with

Schengen countries.

Appendix E: 113th and 114th Congress Hearings Related to the Visa Waiver Program

Congress	Session	Committee	Subcommittee	Topic	Date
114th	1st	House Homeland Security		A Global Battlefield	3/24/2015
114th	1st	House Homeland Security	Boarder and Maritime Security	Combating Terrorist Travel	3/17/2015
114th	1st	Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs		Visa Waiver Program	3/12/2015
114th	1st	House Homeland Security Committee		Countering Violent Islamists Extremism	2/11/2015
113th	2nd	House Foreign Affairs Committee	Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade / Middle East and North Africa	ISIS and the Threat from Foreign Fighters	12/2/2014
113th	2nd	House Foreign Affairs	Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats	Islamists Foreign Fighters	9/19/2014
113th	2nd	House Homeland Security Committee		Worldwide Threats to the Homeland	9/17/2014
113th	2nd	House Homeland Security Committee	Boarder and Maritime Security	An Examination of the Threat Posed by ISIS Terrorists and Western Passports	9/10/2014
113th	2nd	Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee		Cybersecurity, Terrorism, and Beyond	9/10/2014

Note. Data is from 2014 to 2015. Adapted from "European Fighters in Syria and Iraq:

Assessments, Responses, and Issues for the United States," by Archick, Belkin,

Blanchard, Humud, & Mix,2015, *International Journal of Terrorism and Political Hot Spots, (10)*1, 1-43.

Appendix F: Invitation to Participate Email

Mr. or Ms.___

The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in my doctoral study that focuses on ISIS's impact on the future of Islamic transnational terrorism. Your participation will be vital and contribute to the body of literature and knowledge available on this phenomenon and may lead to positive social change.

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Richard "Bryant" Culp and I am a Doctoral student in the Public Policy and Administration program at Walden University, located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Moreover, I have over fifteen years working counterterrorism issues in support of the U.S. Department of Defense. This study will fulfill my dissertation requirement within the Public Policy and Administration program. Dr. Boris Bruk serves as my dissertation Chair and Dr. Dick Larkin is a secondary committee member.

The proposed study will use either a face-to-face interview or a questionnaire with open-ended questions, both of which should take approximately 45 minutes to complete. If you agree to the research, the researcher will contact you to either schedule and interview or send you a questionnaire to be completed at your earliest convenience. Your participation is voluntary and if you choose, you may withdraw from this study anytime during the process and your confidentiality will be assured. The attached Informed Consent form includes more detailed information about the study, as well as how you can participate, your rights as a research participant, and the measures taken to maintain confidentiality and protect your identity.

As previously stated, if you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview or complete a research questionnaire. Additionally, I may have to contact you after I receive the questionnaire or after the completion of the interview to ensure I have interpreted your responses accurately.

If you have any questions after reading the Informed Consent form or about this study, you may contact me. You may also contact the Walden University faculty member identified on the consent form.

If you agree to participate in this study, please maintain a printed copy of the consent form for your records.

I would value your participation in this study and am available to discuss this further should you have any questions. I appreciate your time and consideration for participating in this request.

Sincerely, Richard "Bryant" Culp

Appendix G: Interview Protocol

Opening Statements (paraphrased)

1. Hello, I am Richard Culp and I am working on my PhD in Public Policy, focusing on terrorism-related research. This study is a required portion of my PhD program.

2. This information you provide will be used within this study to fill a gap in literature on ISIS's impact on the future of Islamic transnational terrorism.

3. You have already signed an informed consent form, but I want to highlight some key points.
      a. You may decide at any time to excuse yourself from this interview.
      b. You may decide to withdraw your participation from this study at any time.
      c. You identity within the study will remain confidential and I will not use any information that you provide that will risk identifying your participation.
      d. You may skip any question that you are uncomfortable in answering.
      e. With you permission, I would like to audio record the interview.
      f. You can request a copy of the transcript of this interview.
      g. At this time, do you have any questions?

4. This interview should take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Are you ready to start the interview?

5. [Start Audio Recording]

6. Demographic questions:
      a. Age
      b. Professional Field
            i. Defense enterprise
            ii. Academia
            iii. Private organization
      c. Position
      d. Area of expertise
            i. Years of experience

7. That concludes demographic questions. Let's move on to the research questions. Do you have any questions at this time?
      a. What is your perspective on how ISIS has impacted the future of Islamic transnational terrorism?
      b. What is your perspective on how the nature of the threat from ISIS is different than other threats from Islamic terrorist groups in the past?
      c. What is your perspective on whether or not ISIS's transnational terrorism approach is innovative? If so, how.

d. What is your perspective on other designated terrorist groups learning from ISIS's transnational approach and adopting similar modus operandi against the West?

e. What is your perspective on ISIS's long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism?

8. Thank you for participating in this interview. Do you have any questions? Should any questions arise, please feel free to contact me at richard.culp@waldenu.edu or +44 7507 906 823. I appreciate you taking to time to participate in this study.

9. [End Audio Recording]

Appendix H: Interview Questionnaire

This questionnaire comprises of biographical questions and five open-ended questions for written responses. Please write as much as you like and note that written responses will not be analyzed for writing skills. Only the information provided will be used for this study.

1. Gender: _____

2. Age: _____

3. Professional Field: ☐ Defense Enterprise   ☐ Academia   ☐ Private Organization
   Mark all that apply.

4. Position: _____

5. Area of Expertise: _____

6. Years of Expertise: _____

7. What is your perspective on how ISIS has impacted the future of Islamic transnational terrorism?

8. What is your perspective on how the nature of the threat from ISIS is different than other threats from Islamic terrorist groups in the past?

9. What is your perspective on whether or not ISIS's transnational terrorism approach is innovative? If so, how.

10. What is your perspective on other designated terrorist groups learning from ISIS's transnational approach and adopting similar modus operandi against the West?

11. What is your perspective on ISIS's long-term impact on Islamic transnational terrorism?

Appendix I: Participant Table

Participant	Gender	Age	Professional Field	Position	Area of Expertise	Years of Experience
1	Male	64	Academia	Professor	Terrorism Finance	44
2	Male	38	Defense Enterprise	Counterterrorism Expert	Islamic Transnational Terrorism	13
3	Female	40	Defense Enterprise	Counterterrorism Expert	Islamic Transnational Terrorism	9
4	Male	39	Academia	Counterterrorism Finance Consultant & Presenter	Terrorism Finance and Operations	14
5	Male	38	Defense Enterprise	Counterterrorism Expert	Islamic Transnational Terrorism	20
6	Male	52	Private Organization	Counterterrorism Advisor	Sunni Terrorism	33
7	Female	32	Defense Enterprise	Counterterrorism Analyst	Islamic Transnational Terrorism	9
8	Male	50	Private Organization	Counterterrorism Advisor	Islamic Transnational Terrorism and Finance	16
9	Male	31	Private Organization	Counterterrorism Analyst	Islamic Transnational Terrorism	13
10	Male	45	Private Organization	Counterterrorism Advisor	Sunni Terrorism	17
11	Male	64	Private Organization	Counterterrorism Expert	Islamic Transnational Terrorism	33
12	Male	37	Defense Enterprise	Strategic Security Advisor	Sunni Extremism	15
13	Male	46	Academia	Lecturer & Consultant	Transnational Terrorism	25
14	Male	32	Private Organization	Counterterrorism Expert	Sunni Extremism	11
15	Male	44	Private Organization	Counterterrorism Expert	Islamic Transnational Terrorism	26

Appendix J: Coding

Name	Occurrences	References
2014 violence		
Didn't care	4	6
On purpose	6	8
Too violent	5	5
Underestimate	3	3
Importance of caliphate		
End state	4	5
Recruitment	12	15
Innovation and impact		
Apps	2	2
Drones	2	2
Encryption	4	4
External Operations	12	27
Finance	7	11
No	1	1
Professionals	5	7
Social Media	14	22
Violence	4	7
Women and kids	7	7
Yes	7	8
Other groups learning		
AQ	6	6
Yes	13	21
Potential growth areas		
Africa	8	13
Europe	6	7
Israel	1	2
Philippines	6	8
Russia and Caucasus	1	3
South America	1	1
Yemen	2	2
Returnees strengthen domestic jihad		
No	5	6
Yes	8	10
Types of attacks	1	1
Will ISIS survive		
No or will struggle	5	6
Virtual	6	6

| Yes | 11 | 18 |

Appendix K: Participant Data

2014 Violence

Name: Didn't care

Participant 9

I don't think it was a mistake on their part. Even though they did some atrocities things. I think it was more like a media stunt. How do you get in the news? You do something absurd, right. And it started in 2014, but their atrocities continued throughout, since we are talking through 2017 since we are talking about the beheadings. We have the beheadings Egypt, the drowning in cage, the burning alive, throwing homosexuals off the roof, the heads on spikes in Syria in the town center.

Participant 11

I think they didn't care about the Western response. I don't think they realized it. They didn't calculate the possible responses as part of their decision to do the beheadings I don't think.

Participant 15

I think in 2014, they probably didn't care. But I think a part of them not caring was also the underestimation of how the West would respond to their own citizens being beheaded.

So, I think ultimately people like al-Baghdadi don't care what the West thinks. He's got his goals, he's got his ideology, and consequences be damned.

Participant 12

Not entirely sure they cared about the Western response.

Certainly, they probably didn't see Operation Inherent Resolve being put together in the scale and scope of the airstrikes. The fact that virtually every country on earth united against them to kick them out of Iraq and Syria. And the human rights abuse they were committing. Even if they had foreseen it, as long as they thought they were following in the path of the law in their caliphate was legitimate, I don't think they would have cared. Because they thought that one was going to help them overcome any and all opposition and obviously that didn't happen.

Name: On purpose

Participant 9

I think it was like almost like a draw. The group obviously wants hardened fighters, so put out the message that we are willing to do whatever it takes for jihad, and you are going to attract those types of people. You are going to attract the kid of guys who are

willing to go to that level. Versus that if you put out a softer message about following the laws, you might not get that fighter, that draw, the young men that are full of the spunk.

Participant 6

I think it was intentional to solidify their position as a caliphate and legitimate power. So, it seems from the outside, a calculated objective of theirs. To invite the response.

But, I do think to legitimize their status, they believe was the established caliphate, they had to decisive actions that would not only shock the world, but promote their cause in prove they were legitimate to their followers.

Participant 5

No, I think Isis was going for a different narrative than what you saw with AQ, where they were trying to be in more control and more viewed, legitimate is not the word, more of a something that everyone that could get behind.

I don't know if they estimated that much but the apocalyptic narrative, of the West coming into Syria was definitely in their calculus. So, some sort of response was absolutely what they were expecting and hoping. And it probably drove a good bit of their recruitment as they were able to sell it as the crusaders are coming back into the Levant. SO come join the fight.

Participant 14

I think they knew the impact was going to be. I think they underestimated their recruitment numbers. So, even though using social media was a new thing and there was a lot of communication, these ISIS guys talking, getting people come through social media and stuff, I don't think the numbers were there to sustain the movement.

The recruitment numbers seemed almost so low for some countries. Consider hot spots like Kosovo, there was an infinitive amount, so if you died you died. It wasn't the recruitment numbers to keep because of the sustained Western bombing campaigns.

Participant 8

I think of that time in 2014, they were very, moving very swiftly to establish not only the notion of the caliphate, but also a lot of what they were looking to do as I understood it is to create the mechanism for the next generation, and the next generation after that to have their successors. So it is not just todays fight, but breeding future generations of Islamic State ground troops, families, followers of the caliphate, so part of that process was not only stripping the identities of these people, but having the women to bear the children. But also, to offer reward to attract fighters outside of Iraq and Syria so they can offer a fighter from Belgium or someplace else a bit of a trophy or some reprieve. As unpleasant at that sounds, that was the way it was in Syria. To be able to offer them a woman for days fighting or weeks fighting. So, I think they probably made some short term gains out of doing so.

Participant 7

I think they did it intentionally, but I think they probably didn't do it to draw the West in either. They just wanted to kill those people. It think that was just there acting the foundation of their ideology.

Name: Too violent

Participant 4

Destroy the organization and stuff. When has that ever happened before? And so I think the backlash to their brutality and their open attacks and stuff like that has worked against them in the end.

Participant 10

Yeah, I think

Participant 1

Let's cut off a few heads. Now they miscalculated. It was too horrific. And so you see an immediate, oh shit, maybe we ought to stop that. And you saw the videos stop almost immediate. They did a study, survey, oh boy, we are losing even our Muslim brothers, a chunk of them. You see that. The Jordanian pilot was horrible.

Participant 3

As you know, AQ broke ties with them for a bunch of reasons, but mostly because they felt that ISIS was too brutal, too aggressive, not methodical enough. And you can see that in a lot of plotting. Right, so AQ's 9/11 plot was very planned out. There was one plot and it was fully approved by everyone involved and the financing was cleared.

Participant 7

I don't know because that is their ideology. They believe that. And I think they believe it still. Some of the leaders have become a little more strategic. But I think ultimately they are victim to their own ideology that is very violent.

Name: Underestimate

Participant 10

Yeah, I think they underestimated, ISIS underestimated the response from Western and coalition forces. They didn't think they were going to get hit with air strikes

Participant 15

But I think a part of them not caring was also the underestimation of how the West would respond to their own citizens being beheaded.

Participant 7

I do think that. Because even though a lot of those guys who were involved in that or advising that, or involved in different roles, they knew what the US and coalition could do in Iraq. They knew because they had experienced that. But it was also a time where, they are not stupid, they understood US policy I think saw we were trying to not be more involved. We were trying to be less involved, I think they did it underestimate that. I think they possibly only thought about key westerners. Maybe only what the US, maybe the UK. I think, putting my Iran hat back on, I think they ultimately also underestimated Iran. Iran had a major role in that. Some argue larger than then US did. And I think they really underestimated that. Same with Russia. They did not think about those other entities. Had a huge impact.

Importance of the Caliphate

Name: End state

Participant 9

It becomes attractive. If you are just saying come fight and you don't have an end goal, I think you wouldn't get as much traction. But by saying there is an end goal. Hey the end goal is to control a piece of land and then we get to own it and run it, then you put yourself in a place of power.

Participant 10

It basically gave them a clear end-state

It gave people fighting an end goal of what they were looking for.

Participant 2

And that is where ISIS did a really good job of it. And, basically turned AQ's strategy on its head. Where they said, no, it is here and now. The caliphate is now.

Participant 8

Basically pressed to service, they had to have that brand and that appeal. We are going to be the ones that in Dabiq. We are going to be the ones left standing. So, you are probably going to want to be on our side kind of thing. So the caliphate was a very important part of that message.

Name: Recruitment

Participant 9

We are going to make a spot where we can make the rules and if you come, you can be a part of this brand new caliphate, which they call it the Islamic State. Let's call it a state. They wanted to make their own operational area that they controlled all the rules and controlling these young men. We are going to pay you and you can make the rules with us.

Participant 4

I think that the lifestyle, money is a huge part of that. And these kids living in the slums, they see this so called lifestyle, and they might have even sometime even referred to it that way. They want to go there, they get to kill the infidels, have wives, and money, what else does this poor kid from the suburbs in Paris actually want. That is what he wants. But I think that is a huge part of the recruiting process, was actually controlling territory and having the hope of the actual caliphate that was wealthy and have all these benefits for these people.

Participant 10

It also helped reach out to disenfranchised individuals that are on the fringe of everything and gave them something to look forward to with the promise land.

Gives them monies and riches and wives, land

Participant 6

I do think they was key to maybe people sitting on the fence of ideology. Almost the lack of AQ type operations or actions. People sitting on the fence that were disgruntled, that could relate to what the message was. And again with territory and the actions taking. They could make that decision and it moved in that direction. I think that was pretty critical to their recruiting message.

Participant 11

That changed everything for them. Until then, I think they had some popularity. They also had a lot of detractors for their violent activities, but once they declared the caliphate, that was their cross over event that made people take them seriously regardless of anything else.

Participant 5

It gave them the central rod for everyone to follow. One of the biggest issues with AQ is their lack of ability to respond and keep a leader out front since Bin Laden went into hiding all those years ago. But having the Caliphate and Baghdadi as kind of a focal point as something they could drive people towards. The lightning rod for people to follow behind.

Participant 15

I think recruitment wise, it probably had a much bigger impact in the West,

I much bigger impact in the West among disinfected Muslims in Western populations than it did within Middle East itself. Certainly, bigger impact than it had on Middle Eastern governments. It gave them no legitimacy among the Jordanian government, Saudi government. But, that call seems to be very strong disinfected, poor, majority

Muslim populations in places like the UK and Belgium, and France. And I think that is where it had the bigger impact.

Participant 13

This perception of legitimacy was a victory for them and definitely an image the West wished to dissolve as quickly as possible.

Participant 12

There were enough people that did. Tens of thousands of people flooded into Iraq and Syria from all over the world. The announcement of the caliphate had a catalyzing effect on the global Sunni world, drawing people from just about every nation on earth.

The ranks of ISIS rapidly swelled, even though most of the Sunni leadership in Cairo and Mecca, did not consider that legitimate. It was enough to make ISIS a serious force to be reckoned with for a short period of time. There were people who were waiting for ages for the caliphate restored and I think there were many other Sunni's worldwide that probably weren't 100 percent sure it was legitimate or not. But it was enough to excite and energize and spur volunteers for donations. All of that is incredibly hard to track. Tens of thousands of volunteers and tens of millions of dollars flooded into Iraq and Syria. And if it hadn't been for the international coalition, had a very good chance of taking over Iraq and Syria and moving the governance there.

Participant 2

No, part of our strategy will be attacking the West as well, it is here and now, the caliphate. And, that appealed to generation of jihadist that are younger, have less of an attention span with modern day social networking communications and stuff like that, was allowed them to attract the tens of thousands of foreign fighters from across the world. So, more than anything that AQ attracted, even during the Soviet jihad.

Participant 14

I think they underestimated their recruitment numbers. So, even though using social media was a new thing and there was a lot of communication, these ISIS guys talking, getting people come through social media and stuff, I don't think the numbers were there to sustain the movement.

So at first I think that the impact of declaring a caliphate was a positive act for recruitment. It brought back old thoughts on restoring caliphates from the past. That probably did help with the recruitment drive as people wanted to see a unified Muslim nation.

Participant 7

So that establishment of the caliphate is also what sort of made them different than AQI and their former brand. So, I think it was important even though it was only a little bit

different than what they had been doing before, it made a big impact especially to people who were outside the war zone, in Europe, the America's, or Asia. Especially in Asia who were like this is not just another terrorist group. This is the caliphate that is establishing from their perspective.

Innovation and Impact

Name: Apps

Participant 9

Also, the use of different apps, instead of using text messaging and phone calls, they immediately went to apps that they knew might be end to end encrypted. They pushed for innovation.

Participant 7

But I think if you look at other terrorist organizations, they are not utilizing those same tools. As they could for their own purposes. Especially things like telegram and encryption and like there are other apps and email that are encrypted, they use those things on purpose. So, because they know.

Name: Drones

Participant 9

Not only in their weaponry, have you known using the most advanced weaponry out there. In open source, they talk about the use of drones, they are trying to be forward leaning

Participant 12

You can see it in the way they have adapted commercial technology like drones to drop grenades and things like that.

Name: Encryption

Participant 9

They immediately went to apps that they knew might be end to end encrypted. They pushed for innovation.

Participant 10

And they are one of the few groups that use point to point encryption for communication.

Participant 3

So, first of all, that is one of the ways that ISIS developed in a way that AQ never did. It was there use of online communication. Everybody kind of knows the going dark problem in using encrypted apps. That is going to continue to be an issue. So, there is

that problem. They have found a way to communicate in a way that doesn't get them caught.

Participant 7

But I think if you look at other terrorist organizations, they are not utilizing those same tools. As they could for their own purposes. Especially things like telegram and encryption and like there are other apps and email that are encrypted, they use those things on purpose. So, because they know.

Name: External Operations

Participant 9

Yes, it is successful. And it gets in the news. Here in Africa there is, 100 people die it doesn't make the news. You kill one French guy and the whole media social media is on fire. So it's easy publicity, cheap publicity. Why not. It is kind of like the Islamic State promote the idea of jihad by yourself anywhere. You don't need to be under our sharia laws. Just do it in your own way. It is like self-made jihad if you will. And they promote that.

Participant 4

They have encouraged anybody to do anything they can.

They funded, they decided, they facilitated different attacks and planned these things, whereas ISIS. They don't even know what attacks are in planning until they happen, and then they claim credit. And their people that do these attacks in Europe or the United States, they do their videos and stuff like that giving the credit to ISIS. Even though ISIS didn't even have to expend any risk or resources. None of that. It is brilliant in a way, but then it is also brought the wrath of the world down upon then.

Well, focusing on their external attacks, yes, I do. Like we mentioned before, it costs them nothing. Or next to nothing. They have very little operation risk. The risk is focused in on only an individual or maybe a very small group of just a few people, so I think it is they wave of the future when it comes to attacks outside of a conflict zone. For all of those reasons, it works. It is effective. It is cheap. It is low risk. All of those things. And once they have decided their brand is brutality and death, then they have nothing to lose as far as "oh shoot, they killed a bunch of kinder garners." Great you know. AQ might not have wanted that, but ISIS does. So it works perfectly for them. As long as that is their brand and they are not worried about backlash or other casualties apart from a target. Then it completely works.

I think we are seeing it across the board. Even people without a cause, like the mass shootings in the States. They don't even have a cause and they are doing that. And so, with causes like ISIS or other things like that, sure, I think that is what we will see in the future.

But I would almost say that the mass casualty, but attacks, they were already rare. But they will continue to be rare, and even more rare than they were in the past, because you have this other method that is tried and true. And doesn't come with all of the baggage, the expense and risk and everything. And it works. And it generates all this fear because you never know when some dude is going to come crashing through the crowd in a pickup truck or a delivery truck or something versus, "well, I am not in New York, I am probably good."

Participant 10

Another big seller was they decentralized attacks. They empower the people to attack and it is random. It is not the centralized attack at home type of deal.

Participant 6

I think right now, it is unique to ISIS.

I think so just because of the economic impact of doing them. They get the media attention they want. And it doesn't cost them a lot. So, that being financially equal. They can convince somebody to drive a truck into a crowd of such people. It will garnish, at least in the short term, the same media attention as a larger attack.

Participant 5

I would say they definitely more efficient and willing to do some of the things the inspired attacks. Working one on one with people in the conflict zones with people in the West, Australia and those sorts of things to do attacks.

And ISIS willingness to give up some kind of control I guess or willingness to accept some risk in what the outcome of the attack would be was different that AQ and somewhat innovative. But they were just perfecting I guess the technique AQ had shown.

And I think that will be the biggest impact from ISIS will be kind of the acceptance and justification for lone actors to do some sort of small scale attacks anywhere in the world without ever having contact with, traveled to, or anything with ISIS or any other terrorist organization, but will just be more willing to act.

Because a lot of these guys will be looking for stuff they can drive up on a sidewalk somewhere. A small arms attack in a café like we saw in Australia and stuff like that. And in the West, there is less of a calculus for the target containing Muslims. Obviously, something in Turkey or the Middle East is going to have that calculus that comes into it. But in the West, I think that will be much less from a lone actor perspective short of attacking a mosque. They are unlikely to find large concentrations of Muslims that would be involved in the targeting.

Participant 15

They had a very hierarchical structure (AQ). I think that is more of reactionary tactic to increase security. I mean, AQ had the ability to be more centralized and structured because the West was much more lax and things like 9/11 were happening because it was possible. But post 9/11, the US, UK and the rest of Europe clamped down, empowering, using social media and those types of tactics gave ISIS more reach I guess into the places where security was much tighter. And they couldn't smuggle in people that have been in training camps. So, the way to do it was to empower and radicalize.

Participant 13

The long-term impact is the TTP's for other groups seeking to establish themselves on an equal platform, i.e. being recognized internationally, gaining traction in its movement, and galvanizing a large segment of a population that threatened Iraq's newly established infrastructure.

Participant 1

Lone wolf, driving a car down the road and running people over. Talk About morphing into efficient killing machines. We don't have to find explosives. We don't have to find suicide bombers that are willing to do that. When is the last time you hear of a suicide bomber. Who ever thought they would take over a plane with box cutters. Who ever thought somebody would rent a car and drive it and watch and see when people are out to lunch and fire that bad boy up and drive it as fast as you can hitting and killing everything that moves? Who in the hell is going to go into Aria Grande concert and do something stupid. And one person can cause that mass terror and say that it is. And now everybody is scared and it's great. It is one person. With a hundred dollar a day car rental.

Participant 2

But then declaring calls they put out to others, were similar to what AQ did, but it was more effective because ISIS model was much more present and much more persuasive if you are saying you can't come here, do something in the service. And what you are going to do something in the service of is on the verge of happening, not some future thing 100 years in the future, for no immediate gain. These people, who want to drive trucks into Nice and can connect their action to something they believe was going to be on the verge of happening.

Participant 14

I agree. I think a lot of countries in the Middle East, there typical militaries don't empower the lower soldier. ISIS did change that model a little, empowering the individual to conduct attacks. At the lower level too, and their actual military.

You have three guys conducting a mass attack. That is three dudes less conducting further attacks.

Participant 3

And they knew exactly what they were going to target and when they were going to target it and how they were going to do it. And ISIS has taken that, and adapted it in a way that not only allows them to conduct and claim more attacks, but also beat counterterrorism measures that were targeting these groups.

So, you can see that in Paris, Brussels Ataturk. That happened in quick succession, three major terrorist attacks in 6 months. We have never seen that operational tempo before. So I think ISIS has shown other groups that they can have a much quicker operational tempo.

And they have done that in a couple of ways. The first being opportunistic targeting. So, if they have members or associates who have access critical infrastructure, mass transportation, the West. Any targets of interest, they will coop that person and knowledge and they will use it to their advantage. It doesn't matter to them if they hit that specific building or that particular train. One particular flight. They just want a successful attack to happen. So, they are giving autonomy back to their operatives. Yes, they want spectacular attacks. Yes, they want them to operatives to follow through with the plans set in motion, but they are giving them that freedom to say, this isn't working or hey, our guy here is compromised.

How do we change our plan? And that happened with Brussels as well. So, opportunity targeting. A little autonomy with their operatives. And they are also completely outsourcing. I think that is what you mean by decentralizing and a lot of people call it that. But like they are basically saying hey, you want to conduct an attack in our name, you are free to do so. You can pledge to us, you can say you did it for ISIS, whatever, but we want you to just go out and conduct an attack in our name. Here are the ways you can do it.

That took on a life of its own, that article did. It was printed, and reprinted, and reprinted again. And by printed, I mean published on the internet. It showed up in a million different formats. And what they learned from that was if we give people specific guidance, if we give them a recipe, give them exact targets to go after. The type of target we want to go after. If we tell them exactly what to do, there is a better chance they will do it. So, it is no accident that they said hey, take your truck and drive it into a crowd. And then Sayfullo Saipov, and then takes a truck and drives it into a crowd. So, when they give that specific guidance, they take out the element needing an expertise, or needing even a network of people to help you get things done. Anybody can go to a U-Haul store, rent a truck and drive it into crowd. So, whenever I brief that topic, I always ask the group who here owns a car. And of course, everybody raises their hand. So, I mean you have your deadly weapon in your possession. So, that is another way they have affected the future. They are telling people you don't need to know how to build a bomb. You don't need to know how to fly a plane. You don't need to know how to make a chemical or biological substance. You just need to be able to drive a car. So, they have taken it from sophisticated, complicated, high impact attacks and driven into the low impact, but lower impact, but anyone can do it.

There was a whole lot of opportunity for advancement for a short period of time within ISIS. And you just had to get in with one really good guy, and then he would give you his information and his sort of historical knowledge of whatever he was working on. And then you took it over if he got killed in whatever manner. And so it was always really fascinating to me because it seems like they pretty strictly adhere to that. So like everybody first job was to pick their successor. Who is the guy you are going to trust. Who is the guy you are going to tell all your secrets to so they can continue on.

And it happened. Not only the new guys never told anybody else. So, you still have that compartmentalization that is so critical to their plotting because if one part of it goes down, the rest of it doesn't necessarily fall. It just goes to the next guy. So, it is fascinating the way they built their hierarchy in that respect. And they are not stupid. They know as CT pressure increases, soon as there is public rhetoric of defeating ISIS and they put a timeline on it. The group moved its most important elements to safety. So, media and external operations were preserved in large part by ISIS.

Participant 7

But I think it is really dependent on what a stronger wants to get. So for the past year, they haven't had a Rumiyah in a year or something. I think maybe September was the last one. Their news outlets went out. A big blow was when they stopped putting out French radio things for a really long time. So, if they had those things. I think people underestimated the impact of those things because you had all those inspired attacks that were happening. And their media was really strong. And people were like sympathetic to this thing. I think it is too early to tell. Is it a coincidence that the media drastically dropped because of their capabilities when they were losing ground in Syria? And, their folks were being targeted. Is it a coincidence then inspired attacks drastically dropped in Europe when they lost that language ability?

But I think for home grown terrorism, I think I am not sure that would be the wave of the future because a lot of times, people ultimately want to make a political statement. Terrorism is for a violent political change.

So, if you run a car, that is going to be on the news for a day or two in England, maybe, but if you want to make a really big impact, you are going to do something a little more advance. You are going to do something like Barcelona or Manchester. Where you are going to have news for a really long time, for years later. And you are going to take up a lot of resources investigating. I think that is more of the future. People are going to stop and think and I'm upset about this thing. All of this propaganda is out there, in Rumiyah and other publications. How to build a bomb. How do something that is very complex. And do that. I think we are going to see less of the knife attacks and truck attacks. Those seem like frustrated people to me.

Name: Finance

Participant 4

I think that it completely changes the game. If they are able to self-finance then it frees them from a lot of considerations. They can brand themselves anyway they like. And the world be damned in their opinion because they have their own money and their own people. And so, that completely changes the game.

Participant 10

And it self-financed with what they take over they can tax everything and bring everything up to speed.

Participant 13

The financial support received for the movement was also significant.

Breaking away from the conventional operations, ISIS's effective command and control was also exhibited in the funneling of funds and support using global interconnectivity.

Participant 1

The first thing that shocked me is that they were not depend on anyone else's money. That was the big takeaway. They are a whole piece was an are going to generate their own dollars. If someone was earning money to us that's great. Other terrorist models prior to that relied heavily heavenly on donations and the Saudi regime. Very wealthy people and Osama bin Laden putting a lot of his own wealth. They were very successful. If that wouldn't have happened on that day it would have lost everything.

They earn their own money. They are self-sustaining. They have mimic a nation state. They have a leader. They have courts. They have everything you want to have and on top of that they have a propaganda machine second to none.

Straight line versus the circular piece. There is not a lot written on it. That is me. So, straight line is a classic terrorist theme. Raise the money, move the money, store the money. And use them. We talked about BSA and how that gets put in there. So, you raise the money. How do they raise the money? They raise the money from donations, store it until they can use it. And initially they put it in banks, they use the stock market, and they were able to multiple the money expediently.

One of the things with ISIL is that they developed accounts, just like the cartels did. They can't do it, so they have people that can do it. You pay them a whole bunch of money or you develop your own people. Put them through law school. Put them through and make them CPAs. Somebody that is for the cause, put them in college and develop them. They have the money to do it and they have nothing but time.

Participant 2

That is a key lynch pin, key component of their land grab. That is absolutely critical. And, why I think the model of controlling and seizing territory is so important, because it comes with the benefits of self-sustain benefits of independent revenue generation.

Taxing people, the people who they will control, or taking control of whatever resources are there at the time. And that's a big deal. I don't think that you always are going to have donors, Saudi Arabia has its own problems to fight these days. Obviously, the money from the family is legit and is sustainable. And that is why it is so important and that is why ISIS paid a premium on some territory and were able to command.

Near state like resources. Which perpetuate and sustain themselves. SO, I think it is absolutely important.

Participant 8

They are going to have to turn to, and they are turning to other types of funding. It is the criminality aspect, the organized crime is the insular part of their organization. We are probably going to continue to see the impact.

Participant 3

And they first thing they go after are banks and prisons. Why, people and money. And that is how in an oil rich environment, they still sell oil on the black market. They are still generating revenue.

Front companies are another way too. I know there are a lot of people and this is where crosses is over into cyber stuff. Using front companies. People don't know what they are paying for.

Name: No

Participant 5

I don't know that any of it was innovative.

Name: Professionals

Participant 5

The recruitment of Westerners, again a lot of what they did, AQ had done in the past. Just not on a wide scale.

Even the use of language, AQAP was using multiple languages especially English and Arabic, but ISIS was able to use a lot of their recruits to develop the multi lingual platforms to target the different places.

Participant 1

Absolutely. You have a doctor that has debt, it is just time before a doctor from the us or nurse from the us gets involved, if they haven't already. So, their ability, the money gives them the ability to be more flexible than AQ. It is run like a fortune 500 company, and fortune 500 companies that have gone under. The ones that have been unsuccessful, look at the auto industry. We don't build a superior product the United States. Why? Because

they haven't learned. A United States guy that goes to japan after the war, he went to all the auto companies and I am going to teach you a new philosophy on how to build things.

One of the things with ISIL is that they developed accounts, just like the cartels did. They can't do it, so they have people that can do it. You pay them a whole bunch of money or you develop your own people. Put them through law school. Put them through and make them CPAs. Somebody that is for the cause, put them in college and develop them. They have the money to do it and they have nothing but time.

Participant 2

Inspire was an English language vehicle, but ISIS with all its foreign fighters is able to create a lot of different periodicals, whether this inspired them or not that were not only focused in English, but in French, North African dialect Arabic and many other languages, German and stuff. Written by Germans, fluid, native language speakers even in Indonesian and stuff like that. Which resonated, and that is part of propaganda is having a native speaker speak to us. Everyone knows, trying propaganda, and trying these nuanced things to motivate people, if you don't have local references, when you are trying to appeal to the global scale, but also talking the types of local references in the way they say it in the native language, then that is the most attractive way.

Participant 14

So with those initial people coming in with a doctorate, and knowledge in engineering. Once they were gone, they were gone. And the populations there couldn't sustain the innovation that was initially brought forth. So, you have the guys who show up the doctors and stuff, once they are dead, they are gone.

Participant 3

But also in terms of virtual jihad, I think ISIS is starting to use, we have seen a lot of hackers get on board the ISIS philosophy. And we have seen in some of the ISIS plotting efforts to compromise websites. For the most part, they were probably using it to get names or phone numbers or whatever.

Because they were putting out this kill list for quite a while. But I think there is the potential, if they were to regroup and advance there cyber efforts. That they could conduct denial of service attacks or other ways of disrupting life online.

Name: Social Media

Participant 9

If you look at their media, they had the best. I've read their magazines, the image quality, the editing of the magazine, are phenomenal. Something you could see printed in a store. And then if you read some of the religious messaging in there, it invokes emotion. They use a lot of poetic language.

So, I think it drew on the modern technology of today with media, and then bringing in the historical stuff.

Islamic State took over Mosul I Iraq, they implemented laws, taxation, and they had a long term plan. They used current technology to get there. They reached out across the world via twitter, YouTube, and sensationalized videos that were high quality and high definition, and I don't feel like they ever. They reached back to their roots of Islamic Jihad to tell the story, but they used modern day communication means to do it.

Participant 4

Where, they are doing these propaganda videos inside their own controlled areas where all the beheadings and all these other things they are doing. The Jordanian pilot, that kind of stuff, it is so brutal that it worked on one side.

I think that has been key to their success. It is very empowering, it is very egalitarian and democratic. I don't know if that is the right word, but it is evolved to the group more. Free to join, not money wise, but free for people to join and take part. It is the same model they have with their attacks.

Same thing with getting access to propaganda and everything else.

Participant 10

They also use social media as a recruiting platform.

Participant 6

Social media obviously, and having a younger cadre, they were able to do that fairly rapidly. Like any terrorist group, the actual attacks were not sophisticated in that it didn't have to devote a lot of resources. From technology and using it, they really took advantage on their younger groups to take advantage of the social media platforms and technology that was already out there.

Participant 5

And, if anything their innovation came in the use of social media and those sorts of things. But again, those are things like Al-Awlaki were doing, but it was not the platforms themselves weren't as developed so he didn't have the options and just wasn't as good at it. He was more in the AQ mindset as opposed to what these ISIS were guys were doing.

Participant 15

I think they were a bit of innovative in their use of technology and social media. But that may have been just a consequence of the technology being available.

Multilingual, and in a way, ISIS learned it from AQAP with Inspire Magazine and with AQ.

Participant 13

The boundless opportunity the internet offers is a medium they continue exploiting in order to spread their message and acquire support for their cause.

Participant 1

It is propaganda. It is advertisement

Participant 12

Well, they are certainly innovative in a sense they figured out how to do things that AQ never really did. AQ has a media wing. It didn't end up being as nearly successful as ISIS's media wing. Maybe it was the slick, professional quality of their publications. Maybe it was their use of social media to find and attract lone wolves that have been conducting attacks all over Europe, America, and elsewhere. Like you said, knowing how to put together a nice online magazine, people have been doing that for decades. But they were the first ones to do it really well, really slick, polished, and professional.

Participant 2

I think it is both an improvement upon AQ's model that basically at its best, started with AQAP and the Inspire magazine. And, its improvement upon that they used it much more effectively. They used new social networking sites and technology and other things for the better effect. For the most part, it was an extension and vast improvement on that model of Inspire attacks in places, smaller scale attacks trying to do.

Inspire was an English language vehicle, but ISIS with all its foreign fighters is able to create a lot of different periodicals, whether this inspired them or not that were not only focused in English, but in French, North African dialect Arabic and many other languages, German and stuff. Written by Germans, fluid, native language speakers even in Indonesian and stuff like that. Which resonated, and that is part of propaganda is having a native speaker speak to us. Everyone knows, trying propaganda, and trying these nuanced things to motivate people, if you don't have local references, when you are trying to appeal to the global scale, but also talking the types of local references in the way they say it in the native language, then that is the most attractive way.

Participant 14

That was unheard of. I can't remember how many languages. Very innovative, great at the time, good idea. And able to hit a wide market quickly. Again, they had the first push for that technological innovation. If they have the one guy who knows Bosnian and is doing it, and is gone, that cuts those numbers down. They had the innovation initially, but not the staying power to keep it going.

I think the publications that were put out in the past by other terror groups have always been there. Same things, how to make a bomb, how to do this, I just think the ease of

access to the information is what made ISIS stand out. Things weren't hidden in the dark web. It was social media, you can post everywhere, how to make a bomb.

Participant 8

It is become, not necessarily random, but with the proliferation and use of the internet, that has been able to garner the attention and attract otherwise people that were probably not going to subscribe to the religious aspects of the organization or the ideology necessarily. Still see the connection or want to join and be a part of it or contribute or otherwise support. That is the very random or very difficult thing to detect and interdict.

Participant 3

They are outsourcing that. And they are doing that through propaganda. So, they learned, I think from. You have to look back to look forward. Right. So, ISIS has looked back at some of the particular propaganda that has come out and if I. From my point of view, they have learned from things like Inspire and Inspires' article on how to build a bomb in the kitchen of your mom.

The other thing ISIS did that AQ never did is that they started using public forums for their propaganda. So, you didn't need to be part of those private subscription based forums where everybody has to have a legit email address. You just need a twitter account basically and you can get that stuff. So, they have made it more publicly available. But also in terms of virtual jihad, I think ISIS is starting to use, we have seen a lot of hackers get on board the ISIS philosophy. And we have seen in some of the ISIS plotting efforts to compromise websites. For the most part, they were probably using it to get names or phone numbers or whatever.

Participant 7

You have them trying to recruit, trying to communicate on social media who have never gone to Syria.

That is another thing that is available to them. If you think of Osama bin Landen when they put out the videos that was a really unique thing. That took a lot of resources on their part to do that. Now, anyone can do that anywhere and put that out there. And ISIS can have it immediately and literally have no ties to them.

Name: Violence

Participant 11

They are only innovative at the level of their violence is dramatically greater than anything before. They are also innovative in the sense of how they sort of shamelessly publicize themselves, publicize their agenda. AQ would never done things like that.

I heard this theory from somebody. That each new generation of terrorist and terrorist groups attract attention. Survive and grow by a radical increase, and exponential increase

in their violence. So, AQ, 3,000 people in the twin towers. That was beyond belief. Then you got ISIS with randomly killing as many people as possible by amateurs. Just terror, just killing for killing sake. I mean, that is how they have changed terrorism. Because whatever comes along in the future, is going to have to start with that as their baseline, and then come up with a new wrinkle or extend it somehow. Maybe nobody will, but.

Participant 5

From a propaganda standpoint, again their willingness to accept risk in things like beheading. So we saw with Pearl years ago when AQ. SO we had seen that happen before, but AQ the saw the impact and the reaction and pulled back from those sorts of things. ISIS was willing to blow through that stop sign and go more forward.

Participant 15

Their big innovation is the level of barbarity I think.

Certainly, their innovation was to up the violence level above what previous groups have done. Just the brutality.

I think in order to shocking, the next group, in order to take the oxygen out of the room as it were and to steal the front page and to be the lead story in Western media, they are going to have to up the level of violence.

Participant 12

You can see how innovative they are in the way they torture and execute people, in a savage, psychotic, barbaric sort of way. Worst then most other global Sunni terrorist groups are. But are localized Sunni terrorists groups around the world are.

Name: Women and kids

Participant 9

Yeah, faking it. Making a man dress up like a woman, to do operations. I wonder if it is because women are not really considered part of the jihad. And in a paternal sense of hierarchy. There is the cubs to caliphate as well. So, ISIS has the program to indoctrinate and brainwash children. I think they really had a long-term goal and a long-term plan.

Participant 10

Yes, I do. The use of women and kids. There is less operational scrutiny. They are better recruiters, the women are.

Participant 6

Like any terrorist group, the actual attacks were not sophisticated in that it didn't have to devote a lot of resources. From technology and using it, they really took advantage on

their younger groups to take advantage of the social media platforms and technology that was already out there.

Participant 11

Yeap

But I think that's not new in terrorism, but to the degree and the openness and to the degree to which they exploit that. Exploit everything. That is new in terrorism.

Participant 14

Use of drones, women and children.

Participant 3

So, they are telling their people yes we are going to lose because the Westerners will always try to kill us. Which is why we have to kill them first. Why we will come back and do it again. Why they train children. You hear all about cubs of the caliphate.

Kids as young as boys 7, 8, 9, but then a lot of teenage women who may have come from other countries who wound up with ISIS became teenage brides and whatever. Also went through training. They know how to operate a suicide vest. They know how to operate weapons. Everyone that is part of this organization is trained in how to keep it alive by fighting and killing. So, like I said, unless you kill every single person who has been part of this, you just don't kill off the group.

Participant 7

Operational it is general enough it can evoke multiple answers from whatever the perspective of the person. If you think about like ISIS using women and children, using in air quotes. Again, it goes back to some of the propaganda them by saying, yeah that was us. They had the only all-female jihadi cell. From the UK that were arrested a couple of months ago.

So, I think you are going to see a little bit of that. I don't think that will be a thing. There are more and more studies that are coming out by people who were conducting research inside Syria that are saying that women have this major operational impact. They were acting as recruiters. They were the recruiters. They were the ones thinking very strategically and influencing all of this. So, if you think about that, okay, you are going to have, and a lot of them too, especially from Europe, saying that is was women pushing the male fighters to go fight. So a lot of statistics are coming out and that will be whatever it ends up being but it is really interesting.

So you think even you have women and children returning from the war zone, they are under a lot less scrutiny, especially, children. What can you do? Women are just under less scrutiny.

So when they are coming back. At the same time too, even if you are a country that has very proactive counterterrorism laws or capabilities, if you were a recruiter that is not a lot of evidence to bring you up on terrorism charges. You are going to have to have some kind of smoking gun online. It will be very difficult. So these people are going to be here and they are probably even more pissed off because people they knew and loved died and died in airstrikes possibly by a country they are going back too. So I think that is going to be a major, again not an immediate issue, but, mid to long term issue. Especially with the kids that are coming back, who were even born there with hearing about the good old days? Even when they come back to their communities and in their mosque or where ever people are talking about the good old days. Oh you look just like your father. He was such a good fighter. He was such a good man. There are movies they make about kids that get pissed and like start fighting for that kind of thing. I think long term children, but I think midterm is going to be returning women, because they are going to be under a lot less scrutiny and they going to be the recruiters. You can have one guy who wants to ram a vehicle. And he either does and he is arrested forever. You can have women who can recruit a lot of people to do that and not be under the scrutiny.

Name: Yes

Participant 9

I think they changed the nature of terrorism.

Participant 4

That they have played the game fast and loose, rather than AQ. Where AQ seemed to have a lot more control. They kept things in line and they had a certain strategy that they wanted to keep things within that scope. And they didn't allow certain things to happen. They didn't want to let it out of their prevue.

Participant 10

Yes, I do.

Participant 15

They are probably innovative in a modern context.

Participant 13

The long-term impact is the TTP's for other groups seeking to establish themselves on an equal platform, i.e. being recognized internationally, gaining traction in its movement, and galvanizing a large segment of a population that threatened Iraq's newly established infrastructure.

Participant 14

Yes, I consider them innovative.

Utilizing old traditional beliefs prevented any further innovation from happening.

Participant 8

Yes, I think what they did masterfully well was combine everything from the blitzkrieg type attacks and military operations combined with holding ground and putting in place ministries and the notion or resemblance of having a legitimate functionally governance.

Other Groups Learning

Name: AQ

Participant 9

I think AQ is going to learn from this obviously. They are going to go okay, we can't just take over a city because, like you said, thirty nations response. So, I think AQ's model has always been and will always be a longer trajectory where it is win the hearts and minds of the people slowly adapt them into your version of sharia law, your understanding of Islamic texts. And, you know, I feel like AQ does attacks and they promote attacks against the West, they are also much focused on local operations and getting people to adhere to what they believe in. I don't think AQ will follow the same ISIS model and I do think they will learn from it. As soon as they declared the caliphate everyone in the world was like all eyes on you buddy. So, I think AQ is learning from that.

Participant 4

I would say that it would be unlikely for AQ to change in that way.

Participant 10

I think they are set in their ways. There is a clear divide between the two groups of attacking, the near attack and the far attack.

Participant 5

I would not expect somebody like AQ be willing to take on more of the allowing some guy to do an attack in their name. Which is something they have always wanted and to control the message of their attacks much more closely than ISIS has.

Participant 8

I think it is almost been in some sense a way for AQ to distinguish themselves that we are the true base. And we are still known as upholding an ideology as opposed to these barbarians. It is not necessarily think that AQ would adopt that strategy or tactics.

Participant 3

From my perspective, AQ charts its own course, right. As they build the new generation of leaders, they might take on some of the ISIS qualities or ISIS ideas. But AQ kind of

does things their own way and that is why they are sort of in bed with Iran right now. But, for like other groups, I think what concerns me are that factions or like in Africa, there might be smaller groups of really aggressive fighters.

Name: Yes

Participant 9

I think AQ is going to learn from this obviously. They are going to go okay, we can't just take over a city because, like you said, thirty nations response. So, I think AQ's model has always been and will always be a longer trajectory where it is win the hearts and minds of the people slowly adapt them into your version of sharia law, your understanding of Islamic texts. And, you know, I feel like AQ does attacks and they promote attacks against the West, they are also much focused on local operations and getting people to adhere to what they believe in. I don't think AQ will follow the same ISIS model and I do think they will learn from it. As soon as they declared the caliphate everyone in the world was like all eyes on you buddy. So, I think AQ is learning from that.

Participant 4

I would expect newer groups to adopt similar tactics simply because those tactics are reckless. And they come with strategic risks.

And so new groups that are reckless as a movement their newness, I definitely see that happening again in the future, over and over again.

Participant 10

Yes, I think they will. I think they will take that away. Simple, small scale, small scale attacks with simple weapons that do the most damage.

I do see that a little bit with TTP, the Taliban Pakistan. I see a little bit with that with LET out of Pakistan too. They have a little bit of that going on small scale.

Participant 6

Yes, I would assume, propaganda and those type of messaging that other groups are taking on board how they are doing it. Their multi linguist linguistic type platforms. And taking lessons, either positive or negative on how that is working. It would be hard to imagine that even people that are not members or where members and left, that they aren't somehow be sharing how they do it or what went right or wrong.

Participant 11

They might imitate or adopt similar tactics, such as open source usage. Just to survive. And to counter that and to survive in the environment that ISIS is dominating. They would adopt things that seemed to work for ISIS.

Participant 5

Could it be replicated, sure? It would just need. It is obviously going to be different in some ways because it is all dependent on the environment in which you are doing it. They got lucky if you will or took advantage of the ongoing conflict in Syria, the weak Iraqi government, and the marginalization of the Sunni's in Iraq to take over that big chunk of land in Eastern Syria, Western Iraq. Which gave them a foothold to not only claim they had a caliphate, but also manage and govern land, which gave their claim of a caliphate some legitimize that they were actually controlling something.

I am sure they will adopt some, and I think we have even seen, again, I haven't looked that closely at AQ messaging, but I think we have seen it become more responsive. Especially Zawahiri over the past year or so. It is still not nearly what ISIS does, but it does seem to be a bit quicker in response to things. So, I think they will learn some of those lessons.

I am trying to think which one it would be. I would think it would be more likely some of their affiliates break off depending on what happens. I don't think they will ever be the vanguard like ISIS was or like AQ ever was. But maybe more leading edge of ISIS ideology. But I think the big factor in that will be what happens to the guy's still ISIS leadership. Do they go to an affiliate? DO they end up in the Sinai or Libya, then they may drive it from there. The question is then is that ISIS core or if some of the leadership goes to Libya, then is it ISIS Libya now instead of ISIS core.

Participant 1

Of course. They don't see if coming (finance). It leaves a digital trail. You cannot eliminate it. There are weak points, attack points, are fundamentally there.

Participant 12

It makes sense. Whenever one group figures out how to do something successfully, especially in the digital information age. That technology and knowhow is going to proliferate through the internet, through blogs. Whether it is how to make an explosive gas or build an IED or put a grenade on a drone. Other groups are going to inevitably figure that out. And it is not just in terrorism. It is in conventional warfare. When someone invites a new technological innovation, like putting armored treads on a vehicle like a tank. That changes the nature of warfare forever.

In the future, armed drones. ISIS was the one who really came up with that idea and made it work effectively and actually did some damage. Things like that are going to proliferate.

Participant 2

I do and I think we seen AQ in so much as an unified organization big parts of it and powerful parts of it adapt in Syria, like what was formally known as al-Nusra Front. And

realize that to have power, sometimes you have to collaborate. You can't be totally rejectionist. And that caused problems. A lot of the groups mainly participate. It is almost like a loosening of their position. Modify of their position for short term gain is much more pragmatic. Supposed to saying it is my way or the high way kind of stuff. We will have to do this and then if we have to participate in certain power structures where we don't have complete and total power, but we can do that. We can eventually still have that vanguard inside, and then once we have the power, be the parasite that bursts out from that. So, I do think that is the case. I think that AQ is for the most part dead. AQ as a unified organization has been dead for a long time.

Participant 14

Absolutely, I think a lot of other groups probably have changed their market, their branding.

This isn't just Islamic terrorism. Anyone could. I think we will see the model that ISIS has put out. For the transnational world, we see their initial innovation we saw through them will move across to other groups.

Participant 8

And you may see more surgical moves by state actors to conduct terrorism again. And this type of terrorism will probably, we will see this for a while.

If you dwindling or otherwise just spinning your wheels, then maybe we will adopt the ISIS moniker. And yeah, let's go out and do some of their stuff and get there blessing. Maybe it will work for us.

Participant 3

Killing seven people in New York City is a win for them. It is not 3,000 people and two major buildings coming down. But it is still a win. So, they are willing to take quantity over quality, I think. And I think other groups are watching what they do, and they realize once you have that increase in operational tempo, which is attack after attack after attack, or attempt and attempt after attempt. It doesn't matter how successful you are. You are a) having attacks and projecting power externally, but b) you are getting all this media attention so your brand starts to build. And when you build a brand like that, you have all the people watching and every time there is an attempt or an attack, somebody with a like mind for whatever reason takes notice. And they then have that precedent. So, hey that guy did that attack with that car, I can do that too. So, it starts to build itself. So, I think that is another way which they are affecting the future of terrorism.

But, for like other groups, I think what concerns me are that factions or like in Africa, there might be smaller groups of really aggressive fighters. Or really aggressive people who are just willing to attack and don't. Those are the people who concern me. Not people who have ideology, but people who just want to be violent for no reason.

So, I think you will see maybe smaller groups, but I really do think the ISIS problem is generational. So, whether or not people subscribe to ISIS per say, particularly in European countries, I think there are people there might be close enough to network with people who were part of ISIS. You know what I mean. Like the neighborhood, like the Molenbeek neighborhood. And I think that kind of stuff. I don't know if that plays out at groups or individuals.

Do we have a lone actor problem? We definitely do in the United States. And I am pretty sure that is happening elsewhere as well. There are places like pockets of pro ISIS people who are necessarily officially ISIS, so technically other groups, but who work under the same perimeters. You see a lot of it in South East Asia, the Philippines, where that group actually held territory for a little while. Bangladesh where it is just sort of law less. Especially in countries where they don't acknowledge they have a terrorism problem. That stuff is just sort of ripe for.

And they are telling them exactly how to do it. Exactly the way they built ISIS core. They are laying out the plan for their affiliates. So, you see a lot of that. So, I don't think the really heavy ISIS people will leave the core area. But I do see where there are permissive operating environments. That is where you could start to see smaller pockets of resurgence. I think that happens in Philippines and South East Asia.

Participant 7

I could see them doing that. I could see other groups like AQ doing that in very isolated incidents. I don't think AQ core would ever want that kind of thing, but I could see people who are extremists disenfranchised with ISIS for whatever reason, disenfranchised with AQ for whatever reason maybe because they are being told not to attack the West at large like ISIS is doing. Either disenfranchised with that. I could see one offs going forward with that. Especially if AQ would have more successes in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And that was a new news headline. People might become more amenable to that sort of thing. I think, the thing ISIS wanted to do is gain support and how they did that. They wanted to gain support in very far reaches. But I don't think other groups would do that until they are mission aligned with that.

Potential Growth Area

Name: Africa

Participant 9

I think the Sahel is probably a really good place for jihad because there is not really good control. The problem is how you get fighters to a desert. No one wants to live there. The place is terrible.

Participant 4

Egypt is a huge question mark. The massive population and there is a lot of unrest and poverty. I could see something happening there.

Sahel, sure. It is actually happening right now in the Sahel. In the Maghreb as well. Arabian Peninsula.

Participant 10

I see a movement to North Africa,

Central Africa

Participant 5

So, good portions of Africa,

Participant 15

I think Africa is a big future front.

So, Africa is a big one.

Participant 2

I also think Africa, can be a growth area for the movement.

And Africa is probably the most ripe for all its extremist brands of stuff per growth, but I just don't see Libya had the best chance right now, the wild card is Egypt, we can talk about that in a second.

Participant 14

I think my thoughts are always North Africa. Africa in general, but I guess North as it is familiar

Participant 7

Africa

Name: Europe

Participant 11

More urbanized, over populated, over governed, areas like Europe would the ISIS ideology is popular. They are already there, but I think there is some potential for them to grow.

Participant 5

The one area I would say that might be somewhat concerning at least from a Western perspective are places in Europe with large refugee populations where you are seeing a lot of right wing attacks. Or governments that swing right wing and marginalize or

victimize those populations that would then make them more susceptible to anti-Western propaganda.

Participant 15

Depending on the continuation of the migrant crisis and other demographic changes in Europe, and depending on how far you want to forecast out, Europe could be a big front. I mean even forecast far enough out, we could look at Germany and France. Where with migration and the nature order of how migration happens. And the fact that the traditional white Western European families are not having as many children. If we forecast out 50 to 100 years, there could be much larger Muslim populations in those countries that then could lead to either terrorist groups or peaceful political action.

Participant 1

Parts of Belgian where they will not have police.

Participant 14

Europe, maybe just little bouts

Participant 7

Caucasus

I think Turkey is a major thing to look at. Despite all the recent economic crisis, and the craziness, Turkey is always the wild card. Turkey is always important to note they are a member of NATO. So they are friends with the West and all that. At the same time, they are friends with Russia and enemies with Russia, and Israel and enemies with Israel. They boarder Syria. They have done multiple incursions into Iraq. So, they are friends and enemies with Iraq.

Name: Israel

Participant 2

In Syria or Iraq, or I can see it moving towards Israel. Here is why I think. It is easy to say the most recent thing is probably the most likely thing to happen again.

In terms of galvanizing or regrouping, a powerful dangerous movement that can be a threat to nation states, or nation's states that we care about would be the Levant. I could see it mutating perhaps into southern Syria along the Israeli boarder or Lebanon or something like that. Or just appearing again in Iraq or along the Syria boarder.

Name: Philippines

Participant 10

Philippines

Participant 15

Philippines maybe.

Participant 1

So, let's go to the Philippines and take on one of the islands.

Participant 8

Pacific

Participant 3

There are places like pockets of pro ISIS people who are necessarily officially ISIS, so technically other groups, but who work under the same perimeters. You see a lot of it in South East Asia, the Philippines, where that group actually held territory for a little while.

Yeah, Philippines is definitely a place of concern.

I think that happens in Philippines and South East Asia.

Participant 7

Philippines. I think it went BBC or sky news there was an article on their headlines in the morning, they were talking about how long it went before a major news network started covering in the Philippines and the cities ISIS has taken over. I think it was a year for any major Western news network picked it up. That is a huge deal. That is a huge deal.

Name: Russia and Caucasus

Participant 7

Caucasus

Russia has less of a presence or we have less of a presence there. I think that is going to be a place to look.

I think the Caucasus are another place. That is a conflict zone that is very open to foreign fighters.

Name: South America

Participant 9

I think anywhere where there is almost a collapsed state or non-control of territory. I mean I think there is potential for growth in even in South America, a place like Venezuela where the economy is taking.

Name: Yemen

Participant 6

Heavily infused Shia areas such as Yemen might not be the best place

Participant 8

Yemen

Returnees Strengthen domestic Jihad

Name: No

Participant 4

I don't really see that. I think that those countries that have large foreign fighter populations that have traveled to the conflict zones, they have reacted, policy wise, going to the crunks of my paper. Policy wise, they have reacted to those things in such a way that is has become effective. They have investigated everyone that has returned. France for example, they have brought charges against nearly every single foreign fighter that traveled to the conflict zones. And other countries had different methods of going about it, but those might be rehabilitation. For some of them, it is incarceration. And for others like Bosnia, they have reintegrated because their whole population was that way anyway. They weren't as disenfranchised as they were someplace as they were in some place like France or Belgium. And so, I don't think so. There might be that latent disgruntled nature of those populations that exists, and maybe with some other trigger that could bring those things back out, and they could act out in some way. But, I think those guys have suffered in a war zone, they have matured, they have returned, they have been prosecuted or rehabilitated or whatever, and now that's probably over with for 99 percent of them.

Participant 15

No, not really. I think for the most part. Even though there is a growth in Muslim populations, especially in Western Europe. They tend to be moderate and somewhat, it is a relevant term, they are not by in large in my experience, they are not jihadist. And it is still a minority of those populations that are jihadists. So, I don't think strengthened, maybe. In the sense that 2 is a bigger number than 1. But, I don't know that it has made it any bigger of a problem in Europe. But as the population grows, who knows. I think part of that depends on how the West deals with the situations in the Middle East. Everything originates in the Middle East. And if that can be stabilized, then things elsewhere, then things elsewhere can become stabilized. So, I don't necessarily think that foreign fighter returnees create a significant long-term problem for Western democracies, or whatever. It certainly could if policies are miss-stepped. Right now, I don't think so.

Participant 8

Responded quite well. And I think the trouble as we are seeing with some fire brands that seem to have free access under freedom of speech to hold picnics and Quran parties and whatever else to get the name out, that turn into recruiting events. That is difficult to

suppress. So, those communities will probably still be there to the extent that it is going to still foster the movement to what we are seeing in 2014, 2015, 2016, I don't think that will be the case. I think that tapered off, but largely because of the, just my opinion, largely because of the ways that Islamic State was managing things.

Participant 3

No, because I don't think they will return. Particularly from the US perspective.

In terms of making it a greater threat, to domestic terrorism in the country, I don't see that. Because I don't see volumes of people returning, but also most people who have conducted attacks in the United States were radicalized here and never traveled.

Participant 7

They are obviously doing a decent job. I think they are doing a fantastic job given the self-imposed constraints that they give themselves. I am not saying they are bad, but they are self-imposed.   Privacy concerns, legal restrictions. I mean if you look at the CT laws of Europe, you have some countries where you say you are going to go or want to go to Syria to fight with ISIS, you can be arrested. Other people you have to basically have to be about to carry out an attack in that country territory to be arrested. Sharing information is difficult because one country could be like "I heard this guy was going to travel to Syria" and the other country was okay, what do you want me to do about it. So there is a lot of difficulties, but I think it is going to be a mid-term. Or like midterm issue. I think immediately basically people who wanted to come back, I think already did. They are not coming back now. Those people I think the majority want to try to get a job, settle in, be part of their community. Somewhat excluded and still somewhat disenfranchised with society, but they are going to have a really hard time getting a job. Because you went to fight in Syria, you are coming back Maybe you do, maybe the one guy who genuinely that was real dumb. I shouldn't have done that. Now, you are not going to have an easy time finding a job. Even if you are in a country where that is not against the law. Yeah, you are going to have more members of an ostracized society. You are going to have people targeted by right wing groups. I think they are becoming strengthened over the past year at least.

Name: Yes

Participant 9

They meet up with people in prison. They become more radicalized.

And I don't think Europe is going to be able to do that because European politicians don't understand Islamic ideology and religion. So, how can you de-radicalize someone if you don't understand the roots of why they did it in the first place?

Participant 4

There might be a few kicking around that might want to carry out some sort of violence

Participant 10

I think it does. I think it strengthens it through there been there, done that and they can recruit people. Plus, if they don't fit into society well and they come back out of jails after being arrested, they are going to go back to what they know. Which is the violence, the criminal activity.

Participant 6

There is always that fear, in detention or prison, do they create an atmosphere or can they can still radicalize from within there.

I suppose in some aspects they will remain either wittingly or unwittingly a source of recruitment.

Participant 11

I don't think they are doing a decent job. It is like the problem of going to prison and trying to deradicalize people. You don't know if people are really deradicalized or if they are just deradicalized to get time cut off their sentence. So, you have all these people who come back and you can observe them, monitor them, whatever. But you are really not tracking them intimately, twenty-four seven. You are not really, it is hard to keep track of their online, especially with encrypted. So, it may look to some as if security forces are containing or preventing attacks, but I don't think it address or knows or penetrates into the influence these guys are having on others.

Participant 5

But again, those guys will always pose a threat because of the ideology in their head and you can never tell which one is the guy who came back and abandoned his past life and which guy is the one covering up for intentions down the road.

Participant 12

Those folks coming home are going to be dangerous. They are going to be especially dangerous in soft liberal places like Europe that doesn't have the tools and doesn't have the right mentality to handle that. Somebody coming back from Iraq and Syria might know how to go to their local Home Depot and build explosives. Those people are going to be incredibly dangerous for a long period of time because they have been radicalized, they have the knowhow. And they are probably thinking well, the caliphate, the wheel of time turns, the caliphate is on the decline, but in time, especially in Europe, our populations are going to rise and we will come out on top. There is significant danger there.

Participant 14

So, I think that law enforcement hasn't done enough. I think ISIS itself also did enough for the message that came back from the returnees was that it wasn't what it seemed. It

wasn't good. It didn't meet the expectations from ISIS was promoting. I think that helped law enforcement, but sometimes law enforcement hasn't done enough.

Will ISIS Survive

Name: No or will struggle

Participant 9

They've lost their territory in Iraq and Syria. They have lost their so-called caliphate. So, there are a lot of networks and affiliates out there that pledge or don't pledge, or their pledges are accepted or not. Communication has definitely broken down right now. I don't know if the groups outside are able to adhere too, in the current state, it is breaking down slowly. I don't know if they have the same message. They might not be receiving the same message that they were getting during Islamic State's height.

Participant 4

I think they will have to rebrand and regroup.

Certainly not in their current form.

Participant 15

No, I think they will burn out. In a way, all revolutionary and at a certain point, and it has happened to Hezbollah, at a certain point, the revolutionary movement becomes the anti-establishment becomes the establishment, eventually. So, in order to survive all organizations, have to evolve and adapt. No, I think in iteration and current way they operate, they will burn out. They can't survive.

Participant 12

That is a fantastic question. So, losing the physical caliphate has massively hurt them. The fact that they lost their caliphate means to most of the beyond the fence Sunni's that are watching them. It proves that their caliphate was not legitimate. That has hurt their recruiting numbers. It's hurt their ability to raise funds. You are not seeing the massive influx of people to Iraq and Syria. Push people back out of those areas, flee from their safe havens spaces that they create. I think that is dead. Serious damaged accrued by losing their physical caliphate.

Participant 7

I guess it would depend on how you would define its current model. So, if it is a caliphate and somewhere around the Levant, then maybe not.

Name: Virtual

Participant 9

It is an ideology. It is not just a physical place. I think the ideology will live on. People aspire to do something great and if you are just stuck in some low end, crappy job but you got somebody radical and gets your emotions stirring about an idea. That idea is going to live on for a while. And even if it does go away, it will just morph into something different.

Participant 10

I think they will, maybe not in current form, but they will survive in the cyber realm, or the virtual jihad if you will.

Participant 6

Yes, I think that's might be what they count on in the future. Is, regardless of numbers, is establishing that global presence on the internet.

Participant 11

The virtual world where their message is circulating is going to expire people in the real world. The small guys, they people who can't get into other groups. The ones that want to be authorized by anybody to be so violent and act out their revenge fantasies. That's what ISIS really tapped. Is people's powerlessness and their willingness to subjugate themselves to any ideology or authority that licenses them to act out? So that is what ISIS has got going.

Participant 2

So, that is the model they are doing now. I don't see some people are bullish about it, the dangers of the virtual jihad. Along the lines of a more decentralized, itemized Salafist, transnational attack model. Because I just don't see. You have something to motivate that. To inspire that and without that base, people are less likely to do it. Because for what, what motivate you then to do it.

Participant 3

But also in terms of virtual jihad, I think ISIS is starting to use, we have seen a lot of hackers get on board the ISIS philosophy. And we have seen in some of the ISIS plotting efforts to compromise websites. For the most part, they were probably using it to get names or phone numbers or whatever.

Name: Yes

Participant 4

I think they will become more decentralized and become more cellular. And all of that. And there is no way they can control territory for much longer.

I don' think they will go away anytime soon. I think they will be more like AQ in that sense, then that they will be decentralized, they will be hidden and all of that sort of thing, but their tactics and how they carry out their mission will be their own way. And they have already shown us how they do that.

Participant 6

It think if they, it all depends on the future of ISIS leadership. Whatever cadre they have deciding if they get to a point where it would be their demise, they would go. And then try to separate themselves from the group. But I don't think they are at a point where they would need to do that. If they have still some resemblance of global support.

Participant 11

I think they will survive for a long time.

Participant 5

Something of it will survive. They may on their own behalf reorganize or change their model just to thrive better. But I don't see us or anyone else being able to completely wipe this sort of thing off the face of the planet. There are people in too many countries around the world that believe in this. And there are too many people entrenched that can just sit in their room and spout about this stuff online. It will keep some sort of following.

Participant 15

In order to be successful in achieving political and ideological goals, I think they will have to be more pragmatic, much like Hezbollah or some of the others.

Participant 1

ISIL problem is that we are not going to ever kill all of them. Their propaganda machine continues to generate new and forward thinking people.

I don't think the current model has changed from the old model. And I think they continue to innovate, I think they will continue to chug along. The minute they get stale and get happy with what they are doing, they will fold.

Again, they don't have to hold territory. They can spread themselves thin. They can go into the city centers. They can dominate there. Because they are so vicious. They have no rules to play by, except their own. They have court system, they have fines, and they have all these things. They are making the rules for themselves. They don't respect your rules or my rules, and they require their people respect their rules. And as long as you are finding people willing to work under those and make enough money, it is a brilliant strategy. Absolutely brilliant.

Participant 12

Certainly not everyone is just laying down their arms and surrendering. Plenty are fighting to the death or moving to new battlefields. So, I think it will evolve, it will morph. I think the surgeons got rid of the tumor in that location, but there is still cancer cells throughout the body. It might in time in fade with successful CT efforts, or could evolve, adapt and become something more dangerous. I'm not sure anyone knows what the end game is. It is an interesting question. I'm not sure.

Participant 2

I don't see that there is anything right now. I do think ISIS has the best chance of reinventing itself. They really wouldn't have to reinvent itself, laying low and then remerging along with a similar model as they did in the interim years between Zarqawi being killed 2008 2009 in its decline to 2011 2012. Whenever we pulled out or drew down and they regrouped and re-strengthen. And then they took advantage of the security shortfalls that were there. And I think can happen again. I mean, it is the most likely major event that happened.

I think they will more likely attempt to replicate the success they had before by laying low, regrouping, and then waiting to seize territory.

Participant 14

Me personally, it will survive. Eventually it just keep getting degraded and degraded. But there will be little hints of them. Not enough for it to matter at most. That is long-term. I think we will always see little hints of it. Someone trying or a new guy, not enough to sustain what we saw in the past.

Participant 3

They can be military defeated. I am pretty sure they are or will be. But you are not going to kill unless you kill them all. You can't kill the ideology. I don't see them leaving Syria and Iraq. That is built into their narrative as the holy land. So, I think they will probably stay there. But what they are really good at doing what other groups have not done is that they built this global network. They took on 8 branches or affiliates, whatever you want to call them. Eight provinces in one year. The first year of having announced their caliphate. So, they went from zero to hero in like pretty quick. They have all these people worldwide who have pledged to that. So now as they are losing land in Syria and Iraq, they are calling on those groups saying hey, it is your job now and you need to pick up where we can't. And move forward.

So, I think one of their special gifts is being able to adapt. And I think we have seen that time and time again. I always say they are one of the most innovative and adaptable companies in the world. One of the best public relations machines.

And where they could not be, they just kept a small faction of people who knew exactly what they were doing. And they keep records of associates and they pass down contacts

and phone books and all kinds of stuff. They seem to have built in their own survival methods within the organization.

Another interesting way they insure their survival. That all shows how they adapted to CT pressure and all that sort of stuff. But keep in mind in terms of their propaganda, they have built defeat into its narrative. So, they told their people to get ready. We are going to lose and then we are going to come back again. So, they are building defeat, expansion, and resurgence into their narrative. They are in Baghdadi's statements where he says stay where you are for the time being and we are going to get ready and out time to fight will come. It is not now.

Participant 7

I mean if you talk about ISIS as the ideology as an extremist Islamic organization who wants to create a caliphate in the Levant, I think that will still exist. I mean, people are going to want that. Even the inter Islam fighting that happens is over that same exact thing. I think that will continue.

Appendix L: National Institutes of Health Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Richard Culp** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 01/10/2018.

Certification Number: 2592255.

Appendix M: Curriculum Vitae

Richard B. Culp

EXPERIENCE
Intelligence professional with over fifteen years of experience in counterintelligence,
counterterrorism and all-source analysis

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Senior Counterintelligence & Counterterrorism Analyst
US AFRICOM TERRORISM & COUNTERINTELLIGENCE DIVISION
10/31/17 to Current

US EUCOM JOINT INTELLIGENCE OPERATATIONS ANALTIC CENTER,
TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM DIVSION
04/01/14 to 10/30/17
03/09/08 to 03/16/11

- ➢ Researched, fused, and analyzed cyber, counterintelligence and terrorism-related intelligence in support of EUCOM, CYBERCOM, NORTHCOM, PACOM and CENTCOM areas of operation
- ➢ Developed actionable cyber-related intelligence from gathered social media and open source data
- ➢ Vetted and maintained a list of identified targets in support of EUCOM contingency planning/operation tasking
- ➢ Achieved subject matter expert status in both the counterterrorism and counterintelligence fields of endeavor while directing and supervising a section of all-source intelligence analysts
- ➢ Created and presented cyber, counterterrorism, and counterintelligence updates for daily EUCOM staff briefings
- ➢ Trained junior intelligence analysts on team research, analysis, production, and dissemination practices
- ➢ Updated, populated, and utilized national-level terrorism and counterintelligence databases while conducting network analysis and target identification
- ➢ Extensively collaborated with numerous IC organizations to downgrade and release sensitive information (FORREL) to host and partner nation law enforcement and intelligence agencies
- ➢ Produced organizational studies for meetings with EUCOM host nation intelligence services through DIA bilateral sharing agreements
- ➢ Conducted research to detect patterns, trends, and developments which provided indications and warnings of cyber threats
- ➢ Data mined and analyzed various social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and proficient in online security research

- ➢ Prepared and presented in-depth cyber, counterterrorism, and counterintelligence briefings during exchanges with host nation military/intelligence agencies
- ➢ Authored analytical assessments that were published in the EUCOM Commander's Regional Highlights, Secretary of Defense's Readbook and the Joint Chiefs of Staff intelligence updates
- ➢ Performed link and pattern analysis to identify cyber actors supporting anti-NATO/anti-US malign influence campaigns
- ➢ Produced daily counterintelligence, counterterrorism and cyber-related assessments while frequently briefing EUCOM senior leadership in support of operations

Counterintelligence Agent
MULTI-NATIONAL CORPS-IRAQ COALITION ANALYSIS & CONTROL
ELEMENT (ACE), Baghdad, Iraq
V CORPS G2 ACE HUMAN INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS CELL, Heidelberg,
Germany
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE & SECURITY COMMAND, Virginia, U.S.A.
UNITED STATES ARMY
10/10/02 to 02/16/08

- ➢ Demonstrated ability to work efficiently and effectively during worldwide wartime operations by deploying and directly supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom
- ➢ Processed, analyzed, and disseminated all-source intelligence to include Counterintelligence, Imagery Intelligence, Signals Intelligence, Communications Intelligence, and Human Intelligence
- ➢ Produced critical source report evaluations in support of combat operations and provided quality control for Iraqi theater Human Intelligence requirements
- ➢ Responsible for identifying intelligence gaps and providing assessments to senior intelligence officers
- ➢ Analyzed data pertinent to force protection, cybersecurity, personnel and physical infrastructure security
- ➢ Researched, analyzed, and prepared oral and written assessments of trends in Iraq
- ➢ Authored articles and reports on a wide range of topics including cyber, political, tribal, and order of battle issues that were incorporated into daily intelligence briefings
- ➢ Prepared and presented country threat briefings and anti-terrorism training to individuals deploying in support of Overseas Contingency Operations
- ➢ Conducted law enforcement screening of contract linguists in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom
- ➢ Responsible for analyzing non-obvious relationships using biometric data to identify potential terrorists/persons of interest
- ➢ Conducted security inspections and surveillance operations
- ➢ Provided security protection to DoD data, documents, and other relevant information

CIVILIAN EDUCATION
WALDEN UNIVERSITY, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Ph.D. (expected graduation 2019)
Major: Public Policy and Administration

HAWAII PACIFIC UNIVERSITY, Honolulu, Hawaii
Master of Arts, With Distinction, May 2013
Major: Global Leadership and Sustainable Development

SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY, Winchester, Virginia
Bachelor of Science, Cum Laude, December 2001
Major: Administration of Justice & Sociology
2001 Sociology Student of the Year

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION
Advanced Counterterrorism Course (2015)
Terrorism Threat Finance, Defense Intelligence Agency (DISAP II) (2011)
Counterintelligence Analytic Methodologies Course (2009)
Islam in the Contemporary Operational Environment (2009)
Terrorism Finance Tradecraft (2008)
Counterterrorism Analyst Course (2005)
Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Course (2005)
Counterintelligence Agent Course (2003)