The Demise of the Islamic State and the Fate of Its Western Foreign Fighters: Six Things to Consider

Author: Lorne L. Dawson

As the ISIS Caliphate shrinks into oblivion, security services are wondering what will become of the Western foreign fighters drawn to Syria and Iraq. Taking into consideration six set of circumstances, this paper offers three conclusions: (1) in the short term, relative to previous jihadist conflicts, most of the surviving Islamic State fighters will stay, fight, and die in jihadist groups fighting an insurgency in Syria and Iraq; (2) in the mid-term, the Islamic State and its fighters will be impacted by the uniquely charismatic and prophetic nature of the group, giving it the potential to more successfully survive the collapse of its Caliphate; (3) in the long-term, the development of a global subaltern jihadist movement has transformed the basic conditions of terrorism, and hence the ongoing threat posed by all jihadists.

ICCT International Centre for
Counter-Terrorism - The Hague

Introduction[1]

Predicting the future is a fool's errand, especially in the field of terrorism studies. No one predicted the two most significant developments in the last twenty years: the 9/11 attack by Al-Qaeda and the rise of the IS Caliphate. Yet for practical reasons it is imperative that we try to envisage and prepare for what is coming. With the military defeat of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria, what will become of the remaining fighters? Will IS remain a significant terrorist threat, especially outside of Syria and Iraq? How will the demise of IS affect the future of jihadism in general? To address these questions, we must synthesise two bodies of information, transitory, but often rich, data from situational assessments, and insights that are more theoretical developed from the overall study of terrorist movements. This brief analysis gives due consideration to recent reports on the status of IS in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, but it will concentrate on delineating a kit of ideas that likely will be relevant no matter what happens on the ground.

Given the brevity of the report, the discussion is simplified, focusing on six analytically distinct points, which dovetail to create a larger picture of what to expect. These six points relate to: 1. assessing the immediate situation; 2. the fate of the leadership; 3. the virtual caliphate; 4. the failure of prophecy and the persistence of IS; 5. recognizing IS as a global subaltern social movement; and 6. recognizing that the basic conditions giving rise to jihadism have not changed.

1. Assessing the Immediate Situation

In truth, we have very little accurate information for discerning the fate of the foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs, to use the terminology of the United Nations) who have fought for IS in Syria and Iraq. There are four main reasons for this state of affairs:

- I know of only three studies that tried to develop actual data on what happened to foreign terrorist fighters prior to the Syrian-Iraqi conflict and the rise of IS: Thomas Hegghammer's well-known article, [2] an ICCT report by Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn and Edwin Bakker, [3] and another article by de Roy van Zuijdewijn. [4]
- The military collapse of the Caliphate has been so precipitous, and at the hands of largely irregular forces, that we have few reliable sources of information on the casualty and capture rates for FTFs, let alone reports on specific FTFs.
- Similarly, while we know that IS has established a presence in Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, Egypt, perhaps elsewhere (e.g., Philippines), we have only fragmentary information on whether these forces are being reinforced by fighters from Syria and Iraq.

- This is in part because the internal operations and decision-making processes of IS remain opaque, and the status of its leadership and remaining fighters is largely unknown.

In considering the fate of the FTFs from prior conflicts, mainly Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Bosnia, there was a rough rule of thumb: about one third died in the conflicts, one third resettled in those states or other Muslim majority nations, and one third returned home.[5] Since the rates at which any of the true returnees to "Western" nations became involved in other terrorist plots and attacks in their native lands is quite low (though still a source of real concern), it would appear that most of the returnees were at least disengaged, and many were perhaps disillusioned. Hegghammer concludes that "most foreign fighters appear not to leave with the intention of returning for domestic attacks," and roughly only "one in nine" did "perpetrate attacks in the West".[6] Alternatively, de Roy van Zuijdewijn argues that a more accurate estimate would be only one out of eleven.[7] As both studies carefully delineate, the estimates are based on data acquisition and analysis processes with clear limitations.[8]

Anecdotally, it appears many from this earlier generation of FTFs returned somewhat chastened and eager to get on with their lives (e.g., see Deeyah Khan's film "Jihad: A Story of the Others," Fůůse Films). The conditions are different, however, for the cohort from Syria and Iraq.

The fighters who joined the Afghan jihad often left with at least the implicit support of their countries, families, and friends. When they returned home, the conflicts were largely over. They were victorious and often treated as heroes. They returned legally, and while security services commonly noted their return, interviewed them, and perhaps even monitored many, they were not prosecuted. Those who left for Syria and Iraq did so covertly. In most cases, they were violating the laws of their countries and various international agreements. They have sought to return home while the wars they fought still raged, and they are more straightforwardly fugitives from justice.

As most reports suggest, we need to disaggregate these new "returnees",[9] if only minimally, into the "disillusioned," the "disengaged but not disillusioned," and the still "operational" returnees.[10] These returnees have either fled IS, overcoming its resistance, or become separated from IS (or other jihadist groups) in the course of combat, or been

………

[5] This formulation is based on multiple discussions with security officials and others, but I have not been able to track the source. Some believe it stems from statements by officials from the United Nations.

[6] Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?," 10.

[7] de Roy Van Zuijdewijn, "The Foreign Fighters' Threat."

[8] Van Zuijdewijn's lower estimate reflects her decision to disaggregate the FTFs involved in domestic attacks into three groups: those who merely received training abroad; those who actually engaged in combat abroad; and those who tried to join a militant group but failed. Her estimate is for those who actually fought elsewhere.

[9] Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro, "Homeward Bound? Don't Hype the Threat of Returning Jihadists," *Foreign Affairs*, December 2014; Georgia Holmer and Adrian Shtuni, "Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative," United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 402, March 2017. Available at https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/sr402-returning-foreign-fighters-and-the-reintegration-imperative.pdf; Charles Lister, "Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization of Reintegration?", Brookings Doha Centre Policy Briefing, August 2015; Anne Speckhard and Ahmet S. Yayla, "Eyewitness Accounts from Recent Defectors from Islamic State: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 6 (2015). Available at:
http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/475/html

[10] Colin P. Clarke and Amarnath Amarasingam, "Where do ISIS fighters Go When the Caliphate Falls?" *The Atlantic*, March 6, 2017. Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/isis-foreign-fighter-jihad-syria-iraq/518313/

purposefully sent to other lands to serve IS. Those sent elsewhere may not necessarily be doing so to perpetrate planned attacks.

More of this cohort, however, appear to have been involved in major lethal attacks, ranging from Mehdi Nemmouche's attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014, to the Charlie Hebdo shooting in January 2015, and the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015. Saying so, though, involves aggregating those who merely trained aboard with those who have seen combat. It appears, nonetheless, that this newer generation of returnees is more dangerous. More have received training for covert operations, more are battle hardened, and more may be part of a network of individuals that IS established in Europe to assist with and engage in attacks.[11]

In any event, given the ferocity and scope of the conflict in Syria and Iraq, there is good reason to believe that fewer FTFs will survive. More of them will be captured, and perhaps executed, by Syrian, Iraqi, Kurdish, and even Western forces.[12] If they do elude death or capture, fewer will be able to find their way home because their passports were confiscated by IS, and neighbouring countries are monitoring their borders better. Most recognize they will face potential prosecution at home, which will discourage them from returning.

In the few instances where we know large numbers have returned, such as the 425 IS members thought to have returned to Britain,[13] we have no clear understanding of their status. At this time the government will not say how many are under prosecution, and how many have "disappeared" into the general population.[14] Most of these 425 returnees, however, are from an earlier period in the Syrian/Iraqi conflict. In May of 2016 Lord Keen of Elie, a Home Office spokesman, told the House of Lords that 400 British Muslims who are suspected of joining either IS or al-Qaeda in Syria and Iraq had returned since 2012, and 54 had been convicted of an offence and another 30 were being prosecuted.[15] We do not know what has been happening since the spring of 2016. A new comprehensive study of American returnees from the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, however, reports that 9 of the 12 of the U.S. FTF returnees they could identify were arrested and charged with terrorism-related offenses.[16]

....

[11] Rukmini Callimachi, "Long Before Brussels, ISIS Sent Terror Operatives to Europe," *New York Times*, March 29, 2016; Rukmini Callimachi, "How a Secretive Branch of ISIS Built a Global Network of Killers," *New York Times*, August 3, 2016. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/world/middleeast/isis-german-recruit-interview.html?emc

[12] Jon Vale, "British Isis fighters in Syria must be killed in almost all cases, says minister," *The Independent*, 22 October, 2017. Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/british-isis-fighters-syria-must-be-killed-rory-stewart-a8014431.html

[13] Richard Barrett, "Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees," The Soufan Center (October 2017). Available at: http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017.pdf

[14] Lizzie Dearden, "More than 400 British Isis jihadis have already returned to UK, report warns," *The Independent*, October 24, 2017. Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/isis-british-jihadis-return-uk-iraq-syria-report-islamic-state-fighters-europe-threat-debate-terror-a8017811.html

[15] Robert Mendick, "Only one in eight jihadists returning to UK is caught and convicted," *The Telegraph*, May 21, 2016. Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/21/only-one-in-eight-jihadists-returning-to-uk-is-caught-and-convic/

[16] Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Seamus Hughes and Bennett Clifford, "The Travelers: American Jihadists in Syria and Iraq," Program on Extremism, George Washington University (2018). Available at: https://extremism.gwu.edu/travelers; Ironically, however, in the face of the difficulties of acquiring evidence from a distant war zone, these convictions have been for lesser offenses. Returnees are receiving 10 sentences on average, while the 50 Americans prosecuted for attempting to travel have been sentenced to 14 years in prison on average.

Barring a significant change in circumstances, far more of the hardened jihadist fighters will stay in Syria and Iraq and die defending their cause, or for practical and strategic reasons they will find refuge in the existing networks of jihadists in Syria and Iraq. As Abu Muhammad al-Adnani declared, IS will revert to what it was so successfully before – an insurgent group fighting a guerilla war.[17] Its remaining members will reorganize, rearm, and persevere. Some also may find their way into one of an ever-shifting array of rebel and jihadist groups currently operative in Syria, whether Hayat Tahrir al Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra), Ahrar al Sham, Nour al-Din al-Zenki, Faylaq al Sham, or even the Turkistan Islamic Party. A recent New York Times article suggests thousands may have escaped and "new assessments, bolstered by reports from analysts and smugglers in the region, suggest that Islamic State fighters are fleeing to more hospitable parts of Syria and Iraq, or to third countries where they can lie low".[18]

As indicated, some fighters will find their way, on purpose or by default, to IS affiliates in Libya, Yemen, and Afghanistan, where the groups will probably welcome them. However, the prospects of these groups are highly unclear. The lack of stable and fully legitimate governments in each of these countries has created the opportunity for IS to establish itself, but the fluctuating and intense competition of multiple militias, as well as the strong presence of al-Qaeda in, for example, Yemen, and the interventions of other countries, means the conditions on the ground can change rapidly.[19] The success of IS in Sirte, Libya (2015-2016), for example, was soon reversed by the counter attack of a coalition of militias, mostly from Mistras, loyal to the newly formed Presidency Council, and backed by U.S., U.K. and Italian partners. A key factor in this defeat was the overwhelmingly foreign nature of the IS forces in Libya, which led to a nativist backlash.[20] So if IS is to succeed abroad, they must find ways to sustainably align themselves with local groups, and recruit local members, following the example set by a-Qaeda in Yemen.[21]

In the end it remains too early to tell from this data whether we are entering into a new, more diverse, and lethal phase of the global "war on terrorism." We are still in the early days of the post-Caliphate era and the evidence is ambiguous. The new Program on Extremism study raises some doubts since only 1 of the 12 returned fighters from Syria and Iraq identified "returned with the intent to carry out an attack on behalf of a jihadist

....

[17] Middle East Meida Research Institute, "ISIS Spokesperson Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani Calls on Supporters to Carry Out Terror Attacks in Europe, U.S." MEMRI, May 20, 2016. Available at: https://www.memri.org/tv/isis-spokesman-abu-muhammad-al-adnani-calls-supporters-carry-out-terror-attacks-europe-us/transcript; Loveday Morris, "Away from Iraq's front lines, the Islamic State is creeping back in," *Washington Post*, February 22, 2017. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/away-from-iraqs-front-lines-the-islamic-state-is-creepring-back-in

[18] Eric Schmitt, "Thousands of ISIS Fighters Flee in Syria, Many to Fight Another Day," *New York Times*, February 4, 2018. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/04/world/middleeast/isis-syria-al-qaeda.html

[19] Jerome Drevon, "The Jihadi Social Movement (JSM): Between Factional Hegemonic Drive, National Realities, and Transnational Ambitions," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 6 (2017): 55- 62.

[20] International Crisis Group, "How the Islamic State Rose, Fell and Could Rise Again in the Maghreb," Middle East and North Africa Report No. 178 (July 24, 2017). Available at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/178-how-islamic-state-rose-fell-and-could-rise-again-maghreb; Aaron Zelin, "The Others: Foreign Fighters in Libya", The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Note #45 (2018). Available at: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-others-foreign-fighters-in-libya-and-the-islamic-state

[21] Bruce Hoffman, "Al Qaeda: Quietly and Patiently Rebuilding," *The Cipher Brief* – Newsletter, December 30, 2016. Available at: https://www.thecipherbrief.com/al-qaeda-quietly-and-patiently-rebuilding; Eric Schmitt and Saeed Al-Batati, "The U.S. has Pummelled Al Qaeda in Yemen. But the Threat is Barely Dented," *New York Times*, December 30, 2017. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/30/world/middleeast/yemen-al-qaeda-us-terrorism.html

group in Syria," and none of the 22 jihadist attacks in the United States between 2011 and 2017 "were committed by a perpetrator who was known to have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join jihadist groups." [22] While another study of American returnees demonstrates a curious fact: the involvement of a returnee in a domestic terrorist plot, between 1990 and 2017, actually decreased the likelihood of the plot succeeding, because it increased the likelihood of the plot being detected. [23] So while, on the one hand, it is logical to have anticipated a greater threat from the returnees from Syria and Iraq, given the sheer number of FTFs involved, and the greater scope of their potential involvement in military training and action, on the other hand, we have data that indicates the threat may have been exaggerated. Conditions in North America, however, differ from those in Europe and elsewhere, and there are other factors to be considered.

2. The Fate of the Leadership

The next most immediate consideration determining the future of IS and the FTFs will be what happens to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his inner circle. Where are they and will they survive? No one has yet seriously suggested that al-Baghdadi is not alive. At present, he is likely somewhere in the deserts of eastern Syria or perhaps western Iraq. [24] Symbolically, and perhaps practically, his survival is important; yet his death may not be as consequential as some think. If he is martyred in some way, the movement can likely survive his death, despite the centrality of his charismatic authority. Such is the case with Osama bin Laden, and IS has been able to replace many important leaders killed by the U.S. and others (e.g., al-Adnani). If, however, Baghdadi's death, or worse his capture, is dishonourable in some way, as happened with Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi, it could have a delegitimising effect for the remaining followers of IS. The situation is complicated and lends itself to interpretation in terms of a series of scenarios, ranging from a humiliating capture to mysteriously eluding detection.

It is difficult to determine the operational impact of his death, given his "contested biography." Depending on the source, from amongst those who knew him well, Baghdadi is either a "mediocrity" with no leadership skills, or a complex and charismatic "clerical-warrior-king".[25] Everyone agrees he is ruthless, but it is not clear whether he is a puppet-king or the true leader of IS. In the end, as the scholarship on charismatic authority shows, it may not matter since contrary to popular conception, charisma is not so much something individuals have as something that is socially constructed and attributed to leaders.[26] Certainly, the formidable IS propaganda-machine has lionized Baghdadi, as a descendant of the Prophet and the superhuman saviour of the Sunnis - the very epitome of charismatic leadership.[27] The impact of his death will depend then, in part, on whether he has been willing and able, like the most successful charismatic leaders, to accept the relative "routinisation" of his authority by building a true management structure around him that outlasts him. If he did, and the very operation of the IS Caliphate suggests this

....

[22] Meleagrou-Hitchens, Hughes and Clifford, "The Travelers"

[23] Christopher J. Wright, "Sometimes they come back: responding to American foreign fighter returnees and other elusive threats," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 10 (2018). Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19434472.2018.1464493

[24] Anne Speckhard and Ardian Shajkovci, "Wanted Dead or Alive: The Frustrating, Failing Hunt for ISIS Leader Baghdadi," *Daily Beast*, January 6, 2018. Available at: https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-frustrating-hunt-for-mr-isis-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-the-caliph-must-be-captured-or-die

[25] Fawaz Gerges, *A History of ISIS* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[26] Lorne Dawson, "Charismatic Leadership in Millennialist Movements," in *Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 113-132.

[27] Max Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, ed. and trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1964).

is the case, then Baghdadi's legacy can be assured, with significant consequences for perpetuating the jihadi cause. Of course, this can only be true if some of the significant leadership escapes death or capture, with the resources to carry on the fight, and his glorification.

3. The Virtual Caliphate

IS has been a game-changer on several fronts. Most conspicuously in the sheer quantity and quality of propaganda they have produced and disseminated online, and the utilization of social media to recruit FTFs, encourage and guide domestic terrorists, and generate and sustain a global network of sympathizers.[28] From the beginning, Baghdadi and Adnani made it clear they thought the battle for the hearts and minds of the ummah was every bit as important as developing the military capacity to spread the Caliphate. They invested their resources accordingly, creating a complex set of media hubs producing professional materials (i.e., magazines, newsletters, videos, photo-essays, and social media messaging). Despite the best efforts of global social media companies to suppress and counter this media assault, recent studies suggest that the virtual caliphate has not shrunk hand in hand with the physical one.[29] The loss of territory and facilities correlates with some lulls in productivity, and perhaps some decline in volume. There also has been a shift from singing the praises of life in the Caliphate to more martial topics. It appears, however, that the investment in online activity is being sustained.[30]

This flow of propaganda is the lifeblood of the larger Baqiya ("enduring") online community, which undergirds the persistence of IS as an active threat in the West. The question is, can IS sustain this productivity? Given the straightforward technology involved, the work could continue while IS once again becomes a clandestine insurgency. Much of the work also could be done in other places – including Europe and North America. Much will depend on either getting some of the key creative people out of Syria/Iraq or establishing safe lines of communication between them and practitioners elsewhere. Both developments seem plausible.

4. The Failure of Prophecy and Persistence of IS

A strong case has been made that IS, and its precursors, must be understood as apocalyptic groups and much of IS's appeal for FTFs stems from this fact. [31] Common

………

[28] Jytte Klausen, "Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38 (2015): 1-22; J.M Berger and Jonathan Morgan, "The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and describing the Population of ISIS Supporters on Twitter," The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper No. 20 (2015); Charlie Winter, "Apocalypse, later: a longitudinal study of the Islamic State brand," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 35, no. 1 (2018): 103-121; Charlie Winter, "Documenting the virtual 'caliphate'," The Quilliam Foundation (2015). Available at: http://www.quilliaminternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FINAL-documenting-the-virtual-caliphate.pdf; Mia Bloom, Hicham Tiflati and John Horgan, "Navigating ISIS's Preferred Platform: Telegram," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2017). Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2017.1339695

[29] Winter, "Apocalypse, later"; "How 6th Graders would see through decliner logic and Coalition Information Operations," Online Jihad (2018). Available at: https://onlinejihad.net/2018/01/26/how-6th-graders-would-see-through-decliner-logic-and-coalition-information-operations/

[30] Mia Bloom and Chelsea Daymon, "Assessing the Future Threat: ISIS's Virtual Caliphate," Foreign Policy Research Institute (2018).

[31] Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 2015. Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980; William McCants,

sense suggests that the seeming failure of the prophecies associated with the IS caliphate will have a crippling effect on the morale and stability of IS. That, hoverer, is not what the research on prophetic new religious movements indicates will happen. [32] The comparative study of apocalyptic groups demonstrates that they survive prophetic failures quite well, at least in the immediate aftermath of the experience.

This counter-intuitive finding helped to create the theory of cognitive dissonance. [33] When our expectations and reality clash, it causes distress. We seek to resolve this tension by bringing what we know and what we believe into greater harmony. Normally this means changing our expectations or beliefs. However, when a serious commitment is involved, we often seek instead to reinterpret our experiences so they conform better to our expectations. We see things differently. Such is acutely the case when it comes to deeply held religious commitments. [34]

Apocalyptic groups often display remarkable resiliency. Their belief systems equip them with an array of plausible ways to rationalize the failure of a prophecy. [35] There are strong incentives, given the investments made, to reinterpret the seeming failure of prophecy as part of a larger plan, of a march towards eventual triumph over the forces of evil. Further, the success of the rationalizations used to manage dissonance depends on four larger social processes: [36] (1) the degree to which believers are socialized to the prophetic process and expectations; (2) the degree to which members are motivated or compelled to engage in costly preparations; (3) the degree to which leaders respond swiftly and thoroughly to apparent failures; and (4) the degree of solidarity and social support in the group. Even a superficial assessment of IS suggests that it would score high on each count. [37] So, there is good reason to think that the group, or at least its ideology, will survive the failure of this caliphate. [38]

The high levels of religious devotion and commitment to martyrdom that have been detected in social media dialogues with FTFs in Syria and Iraq reinforces this conclusion. [39]

....

The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of The Islamic State (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015).

[32] Lorne L. Dawson, "Prophetic Failure and Millennial Movements," in *Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 150-170.

[33] Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956).

[34] Joel Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty Years of a Classic Theory* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007)

[35] Lorne L. Dawson, "When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists: A Theoretical Overview," *Nova Religio* 3, no. 1 (1999): 60-82; Jon R. Stone, *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Lorne L. Dawson and Bradley C. Whitsel, "Leadership and the Impact of Failed Prophecies on New Religious Movements: The Case of the Church Universal and Triumphant" in *How Prophecy Lives,* eds. Dianna G. Tumminia and William H. Swatos Jr (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 115-151.

[36] Simon Dein and Lorne Dawson, "The Scandal of the Lubavitch Rebbe: Messianism as a Response to Failed Prophecy," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 23 no. 2 (2008): 163-180; Dawson, "Prophetic Failure and Millennial Movements"; Dawson and Whitsel, "Leadership and the Impact of Failed Prophecy."

[37] Lorne L. Dawson, "The Failure of Prophecy and the Future of IS," Policy Brief, *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* 8, no. 3 (2017). Available at: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ICCT-Dawson-The-Failure-of-Prophecy-and-The-Future-of-ISIS-Sept-2017.pdf

[38] Peter R. Neumann, *Radicalized: New Jihadists and the Threat to the West* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016); Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants".

[39] Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights into the Motivations for Hijrah to Syria and Iraq," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 40, no. 3 (2017): 191-210.

5. Recognising IS as a Global Subaltern Social Movement[40]

In the last decade, those studying home-grown terrorism, radicalization, jihadism, and FTFs, have come to recognize the need to complement the predominant focus on the background, actions, and transformation of individuals with an appreciation of the larger historical and social emergence of a global jihadist social movement. Many have become attuned to the role of group dynamics in galvanizing the commitment of most terrorists, and of the utility of social movement theory in understanding how extremist groups mobilize people, and the role of framing in aligning the personal concerns of individuals with the political narratives of extremists.[41] As outsiders, however, most Westerner researchers have been slow to grasp the wider cultural and historical context sustaining jihadism as a social phenomenon. Scholars of terrorism began to trace key elements of the al-Qaeda narrative to a tradition of radical thought in the Muslim world, to such mid-twentieth century ideologues as Sayyid Qutb, the eighteenth-century puritanical reformer Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, and even the authoritative teachings of the fourteenth-century theologian Ibn Taymiyya. This intellectual lineage was augmented by a growing appreciation of the need to situate contemporary jihadists in the colonial and postcolonial histories of Muslim societies, and the ongoing geopolitical consequences of this past. The jihadist rejection of contemporary foreign policies, power inequities, and Western values, is grounded, however, in a larger history of contention – one that most of us in the West still only grasp incompletely and rather abstractly. As some have argued, though in somewhat different ways,[42] we need to start thinking of jihadism as a "form of insurgency" or "subaltern thought and activism" in the urban Muslim settings of Western Europe, North America, and elsewhere.

What I have in mind is too complex to summarise here, and the argument is speculative. Overall, however, there are a few key and simple insights that are noteworthy.

- First, social movements of this kind are fostered by three factors: (i) a profound sense of injustice and moral outrage; (ii) a strong sense of oppositional collective identity; and (iii) a strong sense of agency – believing there are actions to be taken which will make a difference.[43]

………

[40] Antonio Gramsci coined the term subaltern to designate the groups excluded from hegemonic power structures and cultural institutions, and denied a voice in their societies. Critical theory and exponents of postcolonialism adopted the term later.

[41] Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); Lorne L. Dawson, "Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation," *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* 8, no.1 (2017). Available at: https://icct.nl/publication/sketch-of-a-social-ecology-model-for-explaining-homegrown-terrorist-radicalisation; Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[42] Jonathan Githens-Mazer, "Islamic Radicalisation among North Africans in Britain," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 10 (2008): 550-570; Peter Mandaville, "Global Jihadism, Subalternity and Urban Islam in the West," in *Contextualizing Jihadi Thought*, eds. Jeevan Deol and Zaheer Kazmi (London: Hurst, 2012), 31-49; Olivier Roy, "Al Qaeda in the West as a Youth Movement: The Power of a Narrative," Policy Brief, Centre for European Policy Studies No. 168 (August, 2008); Olivier Roy, "What is the driving force behind jihadist terrorism? A scientific perspective on the causes/circumstances of joining the scene," Speech given to BKA Autumn Conference *International Terrorism: How can prevention and repression keep pace?*, 18-19 November, 2015.

[43] Bert Klandermans, *The Social Psychology of Protest* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

• Second, that the ideational appeal and persistence of jihadism depends on more than a reaction to specific foreign and domestic policies and military actions. It is also "a by-product of the social relations of power inherent in the history of global modernity and the social fabric of post-industrial [societies]".[44] This is a sweeping claim that is difficult to document, but illustrative examples come readily to mind, from the structural inequities of the banlieues of Paris[45] to the plight of the educated but under and unemployed youth of Egypt.[46]

• Third, in the longue-durée, as Githens-Mazer proposes,[47] the resonance and success of this kind of social movement grows out of popular access to a repertoire of myths, memories, and symbols, as much as theological and political arguments. We are dealing with a cultural phenomenon - the culture of a sub-culture.[48]

In a sense, the need to give more attention to the "big picture" is obvious, but I think we have been slow to grasp its significance. In part, perhaps, because the consequences are hard to translate into specific policy recommendations. IS and the Caliphate have created powerful myths, memories, and symbols that will resonate for a long time, with the aid of a global network of virtual supporters that will be hard to suppress.

6. The Basic Conditions Giving Rise to Jihadism Have Not Changed

This brings me to my last point: in the West and Middle East, it is hard to say that the basic social and political conditions fomenting extremism have changed much since 9/11. Many things have happened (e.g., the American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan; the Arab Spring; the Syrian civil war), but has the status of Muslims in France, or the plight of Sunnis in a Shi'a dominated Iraq, or the fate of millions of Syrian refugees, changed for the better? Have the geo-political power dynamics shifted in constructive ways? More specifically, given how I understand jihadist radicalisation in the West[49] have the conditions precipitating identity crises and the turn to extremism amongst some Muslim youth and coverts to Islam really changed? I do not think so. Rather it seems, as Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr famously said, "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

On the one hand, this realization sends me back to the advice of Max Taylor and John Horgan:[50]

In practical and immediate terms, limiting the opportunities for terrorist behaviour and focusing on the elements of the decisional calculus preceding potential terrorist

……

[44] Mandaville, "Global Jihadism, Subalternity and Urban Islam in the West."
[45] Gilles Kepel, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).
[46] Richard Cincotta, "State of the World 2005 Global Security Brief #2: Youth Bulge, Underemployment Raise Risks of Civil Conflict," Worldwatch Institute (March 1, 2005). Available at: http://www.worldwatch.org/node/76 ; Daniel LaGraffe, "The Youth Bulge in Egypt: An Intersection of Demographics, Security, and the Arab Spring," *Journal of Strategic Security* 5, no. 2 (2012): 65-80.
[47] Githens Mazer, "Islamic Radicalisation among North Africans in Britain."
[48] Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[49] Dawson, "Sketch of a Social Ecology Model."
[50] Max Taylor and John Horgan, "A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Psychological Process in the Development of the Terrorist," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 4 (2006): 585-601.

action seems a more sensible strategy than seeking to change either presumed individual qualities or broad societal processes.

In the short term, I concur fully. Concentrating on the behavioural indicators of radicalisation and mobilisation to violence is advisable.[51]

On the other hand, studying what some researchers call "behavioural radicalisation" to the exclusion of "cognitive radicalisation," and hence the role of ideology, is not advisable, in the proximate or long run.[52] Radical talk does not necessarily lead to violence; in fact, the correlation appears to be low.[53] The two processes are inextricably linked, however, and the turn to violence for jihadists is usually preceded by heightened religiosity,[54] and hence a framing of grievances as actionable, and the actions, planned or taken, as morally justified.

Overall, it is important to realise that we have entered a new era of terrorism – thanks in many ways to the innovations and successes of IS. Counter-intuitively a highly parochial group, set on fashioning a society guided by medieval social norms, has created a global social network and movement, utilising the most current means of communication, to resist the processes of globalisation – at least as guided by the socio-economic, political, and cultural agendas of the West. There is no going back and while traditional counterterrorism measures can destroy specific groups, they are of limited utility against global movements.

……

[51] "Mobilization to Violence – (Terrorism) Research: Key Findings," CSIS (2018). Available at: https://www.csis.gc.ca/pblctns/thrpblctns/2018-02-05-en.php

[52] Peter R. Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization," *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013): 873-893; Lorne L. Dawson, "Discounting Religion in the Explanation of Homegrown Terrorism: A Critique," in *Cambridge Companion to Religion and Terrorism*, ed. James R. Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 32-45; Lorne L. Dawson, "Challenging the Curious Erasure of Religion from the Study of Religious Terrorism," *Numen* 65, no. 2-3 (2018): 141-164; Daniel Koehler. *Understanding Deradicalisation: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[53] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalisation Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 219 -220; James Khalil, "Radical Beliefs and Violent Actions are not Synonymous: How to Place the Key Disjuncture between Attitudes and Behaviours at the Heart of our Research into Political Violence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37 (2014): 198-211.

[54] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

Bibliography

Barrett, Richard. "Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees." The Soufan Center (October, 2017) Available at: http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017.pdf

Berger, J.M and Jonathan Morgan. "The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and describing the Population of ISIS Supporters on Twitter." The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper No. 20 (March 2015).

Bloom, Mia and Chelsea Daymon. "Assessing the Future Threat: ISIS's Virtual Caliphate." Foreign Policy Research Institute (2018).

Bloom, Mia, Hicham Tiflati and John Horgan. "Navigating ISIS's Preferred Platform: Telegram." *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2017). Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2017.1339695

Byman, Daniel and Jeremy Shapiro. "Homeward Bound? Don't Hype the Threat of Returning Jihadists." *Foreign Affairs*, December 2014.

Callimachi, Rukmini. "Long Before Brussels, ISIS Sent Terror Operatives to Europe." *New York Times*, March 29, 2016.
Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/29/world/europe/isis-attacks-paris-brussels.html?emc=edit_th_2

Callimachi, Rukmini. "How a Secretive Branch of ISIS Built a Global Network of Killers." *New York Times*, August 3, 2016.
Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/world/middleeast/isis-german-recruit-interview.html?emc

Cincotta, Richard. "State of the World 2005 Global Security Brief #2: Youth Bulge, Underemployment Raise Risks of Civil Conflict." Worldwatch Institute, March 1, 2005.
Available at: http://www.worldwatch.org/node/76n

Clarke, Colin P. and Amarnath Amarasingam. "Where Do ISIS Fighters Go When the Caliphate Falls?" *The Atlantic*, March 6, 2017.
Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archice/2017/isis-foreign-fighter-jihad-syria.

Coker, Margaret, Eric Schmitt, and Rukmini Callimachi. "With Loss of Its Caliphate, ISIS May Return to Guerrilla Roots." *New York Times*, October 18, 2017. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/world/middleeast/islamic-state-territory-attacks.html

Cooper, Joel. *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty Years of a Classic Theory*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2007.

CSIS. "Mobilization to Violence – (Terrorism) Research: Key Findings." CSIS, 2018.
Available at: https://www.csis.gc.ca/pblctns/thrpblctns/2018-02-05-en.php

Dawson, Lorne L. "When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists: A Theoretical Overview." *Nova Religio* 3, no. 1 (1999): 60-82.

Dawson, Lorne L. "Charismatic Leadership in Millennialist Movements." In *Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, edited by Catherine Wessinger, 113-132. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Dawson, Lorne L. "Prophetic Failure and Millennial Movements." In *Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, edited by Catherine Wessinger, 150-170. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Dawson, Lorne L. "The Failure of Prophecy and the Future of IS." Policy Brief, The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague 8, no. 3 (2017). Available at: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ICCT-Dawson-The-Failure-of-Prophecy-and-The-Future-of-ISIS-Sept-2017.pdf

Dawson, Lorne L. "Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation." The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague 8, no.1 (2017). Available at: https://icct.nl/publication/sketch-of-a-social-ecology-model-for-explaining-homegrown-terrorist-radicalisation/

Dawson, Lorne L. "Discounting Religion in the Explanation of Homegrown Terrorism: A Critique." In *Cambridge Companion to Religion and Terrorism*, edited by James R. Lewis, 32-45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Dawson, Lorne L. "Challenging the Curious Erasure of Religion from the Study of Religious Terrorism." *Numen* 65, no. 2-3 (2018): 141-164.

Dawson, Lorne L. and Bradley C. Whitsel. "Leadership and the Impact of Failed Prophecy on New Religious Movements: The Case of the Church Universal and Triumphant." In *How Prophecy Lives*, edited by Dianna G. Tumminia and William H. Swatos Jr., 115-151. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Dawson, Lorne L. and Amarnath Amarasingam. "Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights into the Motivations for Hijrah to Syria and Iraq." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 40, no. 3 (2017): 191-210.

de Roy Van Zuijdewijn, Jeanine. "The Foreign Fighters' Threat: What History Can (not) Tell Us." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8 (5): 59-73 (2014).

de Roy Van Zuijdewijn, Jeanine and Edwin Bakker. "Returning Western foreign fighters: The case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Somalia." ICCT Background Note (June 2014). Available at: https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-De-Roy-van-Zuijdewijn-Bakker-Returning-Western-Foreign-Fighters-June-2014.pdf

Dearden, Lizzie. "More than 400 British Isis jihadis have already returned to UK, report warns." *The Independent*, October 24, 2017. Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/isis-british-jihadis-return-uk-iraq-syria-report-islamic-state-fighters-europe-threat-debate-terror-a8017811.html

Dein, Simon and Lorne L. Dawson. "The Scandal of the Lubavitch Rebbe: Messianism as a Response to Failed Prophecy." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 23, no. 2 (2008): 163-180.

Drevon, Jerome. "The Jihadi Social Movement (JSM): Between Factional Hegemonic Drive, National Realities, and Transnational Ambitions." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 6 (2017): 55- 62.

Festinger, Leon, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schachter. *When Prophecy Fails*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956.

Gerges, Fawaz. *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Gerges, Fawaz. *A History of ISIS*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Githens-Mazer, Jonathan. "Islamic Radicalisation among North Africans in Britain." *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 10 (2008): 550-570.

Hegghammer, Thomas. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013).

Hegghammer, Thomas. *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Hoffman, Bruce. "Al Qaeda: Quietly and Patiently Rebuilding." *The Cipher Brief* – Newsletter, December 30, 2016. Available at: https://www.thecipherbrief.com/al-qaeda-quietly-and-patiently-rebuilding

Holmer, Georgia and Adrian Shtuni. "Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative." United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 402, March 2017. Available at https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/sr402-returning-foreign-fighters-and-the-reintegration-imperative.pdf

International Crisis Group. "How the Islamic State Rose, Fell and Could Rise Again in the Maghreb." Middle East and North Africa Report No. 178, July 24, 2017. Available at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/178-how-islamic-state-rose-fell-and-could-rise-again-maghreb

Kepel, Gilles. *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Khalil, James. "Radical Beliefs and Violent Actions are not Synonymous: How to Place the Key Disjuncture between Attitudes and Behaviors at the Heart of our Research into Political Violence." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37 (2014): 198-211.

Klandermans, Bert. *The Social Psychology of Protest*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

Klausen, Jytte. "Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38 (2015): 1-22.

Koehler, Daniel. *Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism*. London: Routledge, 2017.

LaGraffe, Daniel. "The Youth Bulge in Egypt: An Intersection of Demographics, Security, and the Arab Spring." *Journal of Strategic Security* 5, no. 2 (2012): 65-80.

Lister, Charles. "Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration?" Brookings Institute, Doha Center, August 2015.

Mandaville, Peter. "Global Jihadism, Subalternity and Urban Islam in the West." In *Contextualizing Jihadi Thought*. edited by Jeevan Deol and Zaheer Kazmi, 31-49. London: Hurst, 2012.

McCants, William. *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015.

McCauley, Clark and Sophia Moskalenko. *Friction: How Radicalisation Happens to Them and Us*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Seamus Hughes and Bennett Clifford. "The Travelers: American Jihadists in Syria and Iraq." Program on Extremism, George Washington University (2018). Available at: https://extremism.gwu.edu/travelers

Middle East Meida Research Institute. "ISIS Spokesperson Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani Calls on Supporters to Carry Out Terror Attacks in Europe, U.S." MEMRI (2016). Available at: https://www.memri.org/tv/isis-spokesman-abu-muhammad-al-adnani-calls-supporters-carry-out-terror-attacks-europe-us/transcript

Mendick, Robert. "Only one in eight jihadists returning to UK is caught and convicted." *The Telegraph*, May 21, 2016. Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/21/only-one-in-eight-jihadists-returning-to-uk-is-caught-and-convic/

Moghadam, Assaf. *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Morris, Loveday. "Away from Iraq's front lines, the Islamic State is creeping back in." *Washington Post*, February 22, 2017. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/away-from-iraqs-front-lines-the-islamic-state-is-creepring-back-in

Neumann, Peter R. "The Trouble with Radicalization." *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013): 873-893.

Neumann, Peter R. *Radicalized: New Jihadists and the Threat to the West*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2016.

Online Jihad. "How 6th Graders Would See through Decliner Logic and Coalition Information Operations." March 15, 2018. Available at: https://onlinejihad.net/2018/01/26/how-6th-graders-would-see-through-decliner-logic-and-coalition-information-operations/

Roy, Olivier. "Al Qaeda in the West as a Youth Movement: The Power of a Narrative." Policy Brief, Centre for European Policy Studies No. 168, August, 2008.

Roy, Olivier. "What is the Driving Force behind Jihadist Terrorism? A Scientific Perspective on the Causes/Circumstances of Joining the Scene." Speech given to BKA Autumn Conference "International Terrorism: How can prevention and repression keep pace?" 18-19 November, 2015.

Sageman, Marc. *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Schmitt, Eric. "Thousands of ISIS Fighters Flee in Syria, Many to Fight Another Day." *New York Times*, February 4, 2018. Available at:
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/04/world/middleeast/isis-syria-al-qaeda.html

Schmitt, Eric and Saeed Al-Batati. "The U.S. has Pummelled Al Qaeda in Yemen. But the Threat is Barely Dented." *New York Times*, December 30, 2017. Available at:
https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/30/world/middleeast/yemen-al-qaeda-us-terrorism.html

Speckhard, Anne and Ahmet S. Yayla. "Eyewitness Accounts from Recent Defectors from Islamic State: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 6 (2015).
Available at: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/475/html

Speckhard, Anne and Ardian Shajkovci. "Wanted Dead or Alive: The Frustrating, Failing Hunt for ISIS Leader Baghdadi." *Daily Beast*, January 6, 2018. Available at:
https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-frustrating-hunt-for-mr-isis-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-the-caliph-must-be-captured-or-die

Stone, John R. *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Taylor, Max and John Horgan. "A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Psychological Process in the Development of the Terrorist." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 4 (2006): 585-601.

Tumminia, Dianna G. and William H. Swatos Jr. eds. *How Prophecy Lives* (Religion and the Social Order, No. 18). Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Vale, Jon. "British Isis fighters in Syria must be killed in almost all cases, says minister.*" The Independent*, October 22, 2017. Available at:
http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/british-isis-fighters-syria-must-be-killed-rory-stewart-a8014431.html

Weber, Max. *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization*, edited and translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. New York: Free Press, 1964.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan. *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.

Winter, Charlie. "Documenting the Virtual 'Caliphate'." The Quilliam Foundation (2015). Available at: http://www.quilliaminternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FINAL-documenting-the-virtual-caliphate.pdf

Winter, Charlie. "Apocalypse, Later: a Longitudinal Study of the Islamic State Brand." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 35, no. 1 (2018): 103-121.

Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants." *The Atlantic*, March 2015. Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/

Wright, Christopher J. "Sometimes They Come Back: Responding to American Foreign Fighter Returnees and other Elusive Threats." *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (2018). Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19434472.2018.1464493

Zelin, Aaron. "The Others: Foreign Fighters in Libya." Policy Notes #45, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (2018). Available at: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-others-foreign-fighters-in-libya-and-the-islamic-state

About the Author

Lorne L. Dawson

Dr. Lorne L. Dawson is a Full Professor in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies and the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Waterloo. He has published three of his own books, four edited books, and sixty-nine academic articles and book chapters. Until 2008 most of his research was in the sociology of religion, in particular the study of new religious movements. Since then terrorism has become the primary focus of his research, in particular the process of radicalization leading to violence. Dr. Dawson regularly makes invited presentations to a wide variety of government, academic, and public groups about various aspects of terrorism and counter-terrorism, and is frequently interviewed by the media on these topics.

The Demise of the Islamic State and the Fate of Its Western Foreign Fighters: Six Things to Consider

Lorne L. Dawson
June 2018

About ICCT

The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) is an independent think and do tank providing multidisciplinary policy advice and practical, solution-oriented implementation support on prevention and the rule of law, two vital pillars of effective counter-terrorism. ICCT's work focuses on themes at the intersection of countering violent extremism and criminal justice sector responses, as well as human rights-related aspects of counter-terrorism. The major project areas concern countering violent extremism, rule of law, foreign fighters, country and regional analysis, rehabilitation, civil society engagement and victims' voices. Functioning as a nucleus within the international counter-terrorism network, ICCT connects experts, policymakers, civil society actors and practitioners from different fields by providing a platform for productive collaboration, practical analysis, and exchange of experiences and expertise, with the ultimate aim of identifying innovative and comprehensive approaches to preventing and countering terrorism.