



# AtTAHALOF

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**DEATH LABYRINTHS  
CHILDREN ENSNARED BY TERRORISM**



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# At TAHALOF

IMCTC Quarterly Magazine



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# SOCIAL STIGMA AND PERSECUTION IN THE ARGENTINE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

## ■ Carolina Espinosa Rubiano

**The approach** to migration through generations represents a field of research little explored and of great relevance due to its contribution to the understanding of social and cultural change processes, not only in the receiving societies, but also in those societies which for various reasons generate migratory flows of their citizens. In relation to the policies and media discourses on terrorism on a global scale, there exists a correlation marked by the stigmatization of certain national or religious groups.

■ Colombian researcher in anthropology and sociology, with a special focus on the causes and consequences of human migration, National University of San Martín, Argentina.



## Salomon Brothers

This article analyses how the process of social and media stereotyped construction of terrorist linked to the Arab and Muslim origin developed in the case of the Salomon Brothers, belonging to the fifth generation of Arab migrants to Argentina. This also include an analysis of the relevance of this stigmatization in sustaining and justifying restrictive anti-terrorist and migratory policies that violate Human Rights, from a national perspective.

In November 2018, Kevin Gamal (23) and Axel Ezequiel (26) Abraham Salomon, were arrested in an anti-terrorist operation. Their family home was raided in search of weapons and evidence proving their alleged link to Hezbollah. The participation of the media that echoed the arrest, in the midst of the preparations for the G-20 summit that would take place on December 1 in Buenos Aires, was for the Argentine society the confirmation of terror and the always latent possibility that terrorist attacks such as those of the Israeli Embassy (1992) and the Jewish mutual AMIA (1994) could be repeated.

The case of the Salomon brothers triggered the launching of a biased media machine driven by narratives based on the reproduction of a Muslim stereotype related to religious

fanaticism, antagonism with national and Western interests and dangerousness. These discursive logics try to justify, through public punishment, the constant surveillance, persecution, and exposure of those who fit into a media profile where being young, Muslim and having made trips to the Middle East is a reason enough to be accused and placed under suspicion.

## Theoretical Perspectives

Studies of migration across generations provide a lexicon to explain the heterogeneous ways in which, successive generations of migrant families identify themselves as part of an ethnic group and the ways, in which their worldviews resemble or differ from those of their relatives. Two works on migration, which focus on the study of the otherness represented by the sons and daughters of migrants in receiving societies, provide several categories to understand the processes of adaptation or social integration across generations.

This integration can be seen in various forms. Levitt and Waters (2002) paid attention to the adaptation patterns shown by immigrants and their children and grandchildren, characterized by flexibility and integration into society; they described it as a process of selective cultural hybridity,

such as learning the language of the host country, while preserving the language and culture of the parents. They also add that other theoretical contributions are economic, political, and religious ties with their countries of origin that go beyond national borders, while working in the countries that hosted and received them as immigrants.

What are the social phenomena that incite the differentiation between the original inhabitants of the country and the immigrants? Despite the fact that Argentine society is characterized by one culture, we find racist ideas that still explain the diversity of social origins, feeding the concept of otherness, as foreigners and strangers, especially those who do not come of European origin.

### Stigmatization

An analysis by Liliana Bertoni (1994) about the representation of the so-called “Turks” in several newspapers demonstrates this. Her results show the high number of pejorative adjectives used against them. The portrayal made by the media about the Turks has produced political decisions that restrict the entry of people from the Middle East, and those of Muslim and Arab origin.

Despite this hostility towards Middle Eastern migrants, Arab descendants are nowadays considered the third largest group of immigrant origin in Argentina, after Italians and Spanish, although a certain exotic idea about citizens of this origin is still present and prevails through the generations.

For the Salomon Brothers, the construction of stigma, then, encompasses punitive characteristics in the name of prevention, allowing to separate “good citizens” from those who might not be, something that, the speed of the media and social networks makes impossible to stop or amend with the same emphasis. This system of preventive punishment is based on the constant and imminent risk that society is under attack.

### Domestic Enemy

Another characteristic of this narrative is the evocation of war images, with the so-called fight or war against terrorism, which makes it necessary to locate an internal enemy linked to international dynamics and actors, a mechanism that serves to justify a state of exception, which allows to undertake extraordinary actions, alluding to the lack of cultural integration of migrants, as the main engine of devaluation and demonization of their descendants. As well as the hardening of the requirements for entry to the countries, turning the borders into real trenches of the anti-terrorist struggle. These discourses also consolidate verticality in

terms of political and social power through the centralization of various decision-making bodies. This means that the agendas of global interest are imposed as a priority over peripheral countries such as Argentina, regardless of their domestic relevance.

The argumentative logic of massiveness, urgency, and vulnerability of all citizens in the face of a global enemy, causes the facts to be interpreted or narrated, regardless of the observations. In the case presented here, the fact of owning hunting weapons inherited from their great-grandfather, a military jacket and having had trips to Turkey, Arab Emirates and Lebanon meant for the brothers to spend 22 days in prison in Ezeiza. Not only that, but they were also subjected to public exposure of their faces, names, intimate family details and exact place of residence. The biased media picked up all these detailed tips to frequently live stream around the clock on their various channels, which caused negative effects on the two brothers for a longer time.

Although they later obtained acquittal, their names remained on social media websites and online, linked to terrorism, which prompted Kevin Salomon to vent and voice his anger in a press interview in 2019: “The state published our names and pictures in the media, and we were called terrorists; they mistreated; I lost my study and my job, as well! No company will hire me; I felt sad and angry, because my country harmed me this way.”

The stigma then, is consolidated as a kind of inheritance that essentializes under categories such as being a descendant of Arab migrants, young and Muslim, a maximum and potential threat according to the current prejudices. Under this logic, the fight against terrorism has become a global doctrine of national security, which legitimizes these discourses and procedures, consolidating a “media criminology” as a social construction of reality.

Now, the process constituted in the social imaginary described so far, has been conceptualized under the category of securitization of migration by scholars of migratory phenomena, such as Bigo (2005). His work refers to the constant creation of unease and uncertainty, focusing general fears and the social gaze of “evil” on the specific category of immigrant or on their descendants. In the Argentine case, this process has its correlate in certain concepts and regulations of the Migration Law No. 25.871, approved in 2003.

For example, Article 35, which deals with the impediment of entry, a power belonging to the border official, for those who “fall under the suspicion” that the reason for entering the country differs from that one stated to the immigration

authorities, without any element in the legislation that defines what these possible traces of suspicion are, reflects the assumption of criminality that falls on the migrant, just for the very fact of migrating. As Sayad (2010) says, it is a double punishment, which turns the migrant's presence into a temporary one, and makes him subject to the provisions of the receiving State.

### Human Rights

Turmoil and disharmony seem to sneak into Argentina between the security services and human rights organizations because of the way migrants were treated. The security services have rejected the dictates of such organizations; considering them as a cost that society is reluctant to pay, seeking to enact more restrictions on the pretext of counterterrorism.

For these reasons, along with the two terrorist attacks in the 1990s, and the increasingly growing immigrants, the citizens have faced many challenges in preserving their identity; this is what Argentine society instrumentalized to mistakenly associate Muslim and Arab immigrants with terrorism.

Migration does not only represent those who move their bodies across borders; it also includes everything that is foreign, including nation and culture, as well. In the security model implemented by the government of President Mauricio Macri and Minister of Security Patricia Bullrich (2015-2019), Argentine citizens were classified as dangerous because of their family origins, and religious beliefs were blacklisted.

### Conclusion

The majority of those fleeing economic crises, political turmoil, or ethnic conflicts did not do justice to their home countries; diaspora is no home to them. The host countries over the years, alongside their agencies and media, practiced state terrorism against them. The refugees and immigrants along with their descendants have become a *raison d'être* of legislation for some repressive measures and the curtailment of their human rights.

This is triggered because of their Islamic and Arab origins, and they seem to be like out of the frying pan into the fire. ■



# CIVILIAN JOINT TASK FORCE FIGHTING OFF BOKO HARAM

■ Dr. Abdulrahman Banisaid Hamid

In the second quarter of 2013, amidst of a state of terror and panic sustained by the residents of northeastern Nigeria fueled by killings, destructions, and continued kidnappings of innocent people, the Civilian Joint Task Force came into play in Maiduguri, of the capital Borno State to provide support the army in fighting back Boko Haram, which has wreaked havoc on the entire country, inflicted suffering to millions of people, committed brutal crimes against children, women and the elderly, and committed looting and vandalism. People were not safe anymore in their homes, brining full-scale paralysis to all walks of life, and forced many people to flee outside the troubled city for safer places.

■ Researcher on Terrorist Groups in the Lake Chad Basin, Nigeria.





## **Civilian Joint Task Force**

The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is a popular protection committee formed by young volunteers who sought to defend their towns and villages against the brutal terrorist attacks by Boko Haram and apprehend the insurgents responsible for most of the bloody attacks in the state.

Trained members and volunteers joined the CJTF, supported by the district chiefs, village notables, and regional and national chiefs. Some estimates indicate that the number of the CJTF members is about 26,000 in northeast of Borno and Yobe, but there are no official statistics. Most members of the CJTF are indigenous or poor in Borno state, particularly Maiduguri, the state's regional capital. A United Nations report on children joining the CJTF, issued in April 2017, reveals that about 228 children were used by the CJTF between November 2015 and December 2016, for the purpose of intelligence, inspections, maintaining order, and shifting in guard places. Some of such children contributed to the arrest of suspected members of Boko Haram. The CJTF also included female members, who showed up in the city of Maido Guri carrying swords, daggers and sticks, and participated in reconnaissance; female volunteers guarded facilities, searched women, and determined the identity of elements in Boko Haram. With many joining the CJTF, it became divided into groups of varying size, structure and organization in different regions, but united by one goal: to maintain community security.

## **Volunteers' Motives & Drivers**

Many young people emphasize that the atrocities committed by Boko Haram have left them with no choice but to join the CJTF and hunt down the insurgents who have brought misery to the people across the region. Several reasons prompted volunteers to join the CJTF:

1. The citizens, especially the youth, are exhausted of the devastating effects of

the criminal acts of Boko Haram, which paralyzed most of the activities of social and economic everyday life. One of the young volunteers interviewed by journalists revealed: “We are tired of this situation, and we want to put an end to the state of loss we are sustaining”.

2. The lack of security. Daily shootings and killings were common throughout the state as revealed by one of the locals who spoke of the terror in the city: “People are no longer safe. At any moment, one may be stabbed by a knife, or by a gunshot, or by a rebel bomb.”

3. Many young people lost their relatives in the Boko Haram pugnacious attacks, and families lost their homes and livelihoods. This gave them a powerful incentive to take revenge on the insurgents.

4. The inability of the army and police to recognize the insurgents at times caused innocent people to fall victims to such horrendous crimes, and the destruction of property of some citizens as collateral damage during the pursuit of Boko Haram insurgents. One volunteer reveals such atrocities: “We live with them and know them, and we have no choice but to help hunt them in their dens.”

### Government Position

The CJTF was recognized by the Borno State government as an actor in assisting the military in establishing security; the CJTF received financial and logistical support from the federal and state governments. Such harmony contributed to strengthening its legitimacy and position within the affected communities. The grassroots committees have

shown great commitment and cooperation with armies that are mostly not inured to Boko Haram’s guerrilla warfare. The authorities of the countries concerned also contributed to the formation of such committees.

With reports revealing the abuse, trauma and mistreatment of citizens by members of the CJTF, the Borno State government started to closely monitor its activities; it trained some of its members in guard work and self-defense to ward off and avoid any violations against citizens. About 800 people were first trained in September 2013, and in November of 2013, government forces trained about 1,000 people, and by 2015 they had trained about 5,000 people from the CJTF. The state government was interested in investigating the trained members of the CJTF to learn about their social and economic characteristics, the reasons that prompted them to confront the insurgents, and the challenges they face. The spokesman for the CJTF stated: “The army trained us on how to fight off terrorists and deal with security issues in an efficient manner.”

### Tasks

As insecurity and instability became more notoriously rampant across the country, volunteers launched extensive manhunt operations, scouring streets and homes to identify insurgents and report their activities. Members of the CJTF carried primitive weapons, including machetes, iron rods, wooden batons, and old rifles, in attempts to force the remnants of the insurgents out of their hideouts and hand them over to the security forces. The grassroots





committees guarded many public facilities, such as schools and hospitals, and were concerned with searching vehicles for weapons and explosives or arresting insurgents. Their action station and position were so effective that no vehicle could evade inspection: the points controlled by volunteers outnumber the points controlled by the security forces.

The military provided the volunteers with phone numbers as whistle-blowers to inform it of any attack or information about the insurgents. The youth have efficiently passed on information to the army units that launched attacks of pinpoint accuracy against the insurgents, causing hundreds of deaths, injuries and arrests. The volunteers were able to capture Boko Haram members and kill others without the help of the army.

In November 2014, the official spokesman for the CJTF stated: "Members of the grassroots protection committees killed more than 75 militants of the Boko Haram group during confrontations, after which they managed to regain control of the town of Maeha, located in Adamawa State, northeastern Nigeria." The CJTF also successfully brought back some of the abductees. For example, the CJTF found one of the schoolgirls who had been kidnapped by Boko Haram in April 2014, two years after her abduction. She was found in the Sambisa forest near the border with Cameroon. The kidnapping carried out by the Boko Haram group was the largest operation that shook local and global public opinion. Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls at once while they were taking their final exams at school in Chibok, Borno State, northern Nigeria.

### **Public Position**

The CJTF found comfort in the local population, and many Nigerians spoke highly of the all-out efforts it played to restore relative security in the state capital. In press interviews, the people of Maiduguri and Jerry districts expressed their gratitude for the heroic efforts of the youth volunteers, stressing that this maneuver has come to fruition. "If it weren't for the CJTF, Maiduguri would have fallen

to the clutches of Boko Haram," states Saad Abubakar, the traditional leader of the area.

### **Boko Haram Reactions**

The grassroots committees frequently searched some houses for the militants of Boko Haram and thwart its criminal plans. Given the crackdown on Boko Haram activities in the state capital by the CJTF, Boko Haram had to relocate its activities to the jungle, in particular the Sambisa Forest. Boko Haram has failed to carry out some of its attacks and plans due to the activity of the CJTF and the close cooperation of the population with the security forces. Therefore, the towns with volunteers were treated very violently by Boko Haram.

More so, the insurgents worked hard to kill all the residents who could carry arms, regardless of whether they were among the CJTF members. As a result, many of the CJTF members fell victim to the clutches of the insurgents, which prompted the government to deploy units selected from the army, police, air force and navy to establish security in Maiduguri.

However, this did not prevent the Boko Haram terrorist attacks against the units members. For instance, Boko Haram carried out a heinous massacre in August 2013 as a retaliatory reaction, in which 14 people were killed, while attending a meeting in the town of Bama.

### **Conclusion**

The role of the CJTF in restoring relative peace and security to Maiduguri and other parts of the state has successfully stemmed the attacks, while killing hundreds of Boko Haram terrorists, which has well resonated with the local population, and is reflected in the improvement of their living and security conditions. If there are some negatives in the performance of the tasks of the CJTF, the government has sought to address it by training its members to further help control their activities, which highlights the importance of the popular committees, along with the army and police, in restoring security and safety across the region. ■



# DEATH LABYRINTHS

## CHILDREN ENSNARED BY TERRORISM

**Child** recruitment in armed conflicts dates back in history to the Middle Ages, when children were notoriously instrumentalized in wars by Western and Northern Europe in the Crusades launched against Islam burgeoning in the East, especially the Children's Campaign in 1212, which claimed the lives of about 30,000 children.

### Ubiquity of Child Recruitment

In reality, child recruitment has snowballed into 86 countries, currently instrumentalized by 58 armed groups, albeit a war crime. In the late 1990s, the recruited children were estimated at 300,000 across the world, and terrorist groups are infamously adding insult to injury. Some reports reveal that children are most exploitatively recruited by ISIS in the Syrian conflict, which has recruited about 4,000 children in Syria since 2014 of whom 1,000 children were killed in battlefields. Despicably, ISIS streamed live video footages, showing children carrying out executions in Syria, which are messages couched in terrorism to be communicated and interpreted: a new generation is being developed and groomed to carry out the mission, when ISIS is militarily eliminated.

A report by the Observatory of Fatwas and Extremist Opinions of the Egyptian DAR AL-IFTA revealed that terrorist organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and other organizations loyal to ISIS in Africa are the most likely to recruit children for warfare; Africa is home to more than 75% of

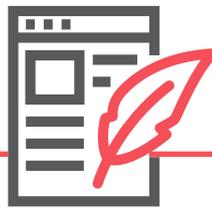
children living in conflict areas of the world. In Q3 and Q4 of 2020, the French Defense Minister, Florence Parly, confirmed the heavy reliance on minor recruits in terrorist organizations, such as Boko Haram to carry out terrorist operations in Africa and make up for the few fighters. Boko Haram recruited at least 8,000 children from 2009 to 2016.

Children and minors may join terrorist and armed groups when born into a family linked to such organizations. Of the 40,000 ISIS fighters in Syria and Iraq, 12% were children, 4,640 are foreign minors, and more than 730 ones were born to foreign terrorist fighters in the territory once controlled by ISIS between April 2013 and June 2018. Some reports estimate that 5,000 children were born in ISIS-controlled areas. Of the forced marriages that were common in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, only 5% remained after the army's demobilization.

### Key Reasons

Children seem to be involved in all armed groups for various reasons, and despite the importance of some reasons. Some reasons are more motivational especially ideological factors. Other reasons contributory to involving children in armed groups, are deeply ingrained and steeped in the structure of the local community.

The results of a research program implemented by the United Nations University (UNU), in coordination with UNICEF, which addressed the trajectories of children inside



and outside non-state armed groups, including terrorist groups, revealed that children are often forcibly recruited into armed groups. In many cases, however, children seek willfully to join such groups. What contributes to making such decisions?

It turns out that negative emotions, such as anger and hate for another group, are key motives in making such decisions. Children have positive motives for joining armed groups, such as the need for affiliation and identity, and the strength of peer influence. Children and minors, especially teenagers, struggle for their identity and self-actualization, and sometimes armed groups offer them a tailored society, a satisfying identity, and the opportunity to be part of an attractive cause.

Akin to affiliation, people harbor a desire for a sense of meaning in their lives. Such a desire becomes more burning for attention, and a sense of respect, is more promoted when a person feels insulted, deprived, or expects to lose self-importance. With many armed groups exploiting and feeding on humiliation and frustration to attach a sense of importance to their propagandized missions, more child recruitment has come into play. Beyond a shadow of doubt, the feelings of exclusion among teenagers in society, be it real or perceived exclusion, have an impact on their recruitment into terrorist groups as an alternative society with a sense of affiliation. Research also shows that children are vulnerable to peer influence, including pressure to engage in antisocial actions. Children are more likely to join terror-

ist and armed groups if they have peers or relatives who have already joined such groups. Some reports reveal that three-quarters of those who have joined Al-Qaeda or ISIS from Europe have been decoyed by their peers. In a survey of former members of violent extremist groups in Africa, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) concluded that the majority of respondents had known such groups through peers. A case study on Mindanao in the Philippines, which sustained ISIS terrorist acts in 2017, confirmed that family and social networks had a profound impact on directing teenagers and children to join extremist and armed groups, more than any social or economic grievances did.

Many of the youths, children and teenagers of armed groups in Mali had one of their parents a member of a violent extremist group.

In the United Kingdom, a study of 131 former members of violent extremist groups found that 30% of them had family ties to violent extremism.

Grinding poverty and economic vulnerability are still factors contributory to child recruitment into terrorist groups. For instance, unemployment and the inability to pay secondary school fees are glaringly exploited to further recruit children. In a UNDP survey, 13% of respondents who joined violent extremist groups in Africa admitted they did so in search of job opportunities, and nearly half of former Boko Haram members revealed many of them joined Boko Haram because it promised them to offer financial support. ■



# CHILD RECRUITMENT AND ABUSE

## IN STRATEGIES OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

■ **Dr. Mohammed Arif Al-Azamat**

**Over** the past few years, child recruitment and abuse has been notoriously increasing across the world by extremist and terrorist groups. Many international reports have highlighted imminent threats. The article discusses child recruitment and abuse by violent extremist groups and terrorist organizations, bringing to focus religious or ethnic factors, criminal motives, and the pretexts behind such practices.

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■ Researcher in terrorism and extremism, founder and former director of the Jordanian Center for Combating Ideological Extremism, Jordan



### Ubiquitous Child Abuse

UN reports state that Boko Haram recruited and exploited about 8,000 children in Nigeria between 2009 and 2018. In 2015, the United Nations monitored about 275 cases of children recruited by ISIS in Syria. In Somalia, a UN report revealed that the Mujahideen Youth Movement recruited and exploited up to 2,228 children and 72 girls in 2018. Terrorist groups in the Central African Republic exploited 291 children and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1,049 children. In Yemen, the Arab-European Forum for Human Rights presented in the 42 session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, held in May 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland, a memorandum revealing the recruitment of armed groups of about 23,000 Yemeni children in the country. The African Sahel region still records continued recruitment of children into terrorist organizations. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) documented the killing

of 150 children in the first two quarters of 2019.

As revealed by a research paper published by the Middle East Institute, the Iranian BASIJ Organization, established in the wake of the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution and came under the official authority of the Revolutionary Guards in 2007, recruits and trains fighters, including children, in the Revolutionary Guards. According to the US Treasury official website, in addition to Iranian citizens, the BASIJ also recruits Afghan immigrants, including children as young as 14 to join the FATEMIYOUN Brigade, an armed fighting group under the control of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Syria. It recruits others into the ZAINABIYOUN Brigade, a fighting group that includes Pakistani nationals who are also under the control of the Revolutionary Guards in Syria.

The report of the General Inspection Department of the US Department of Defense (Pentagon) indicates that the

Syrian Democratic Forces, which are dominated by the YPG or alternatively PKK Party, still recruit children after forcibly detaining them from refugee camps in northeastern Syria.

### Child Recruitment Motives

Extremist and terrorist organizations seek to attract children, who well display purity of thought and innocence of instinct to inflame their feelings and instill the inevitability and sanctity of fighting in their mindset, and the passion for violence deep in their hearts, so that they would later be dropped into the battlefields and become docile, sycophantic and obsequious killing agents.

Terrorist groups exploit children and adolescents because it is easier to indoctrinate them and less likely to reject and resist. They are more willing and subservient to accept the ideology of hate, be trained in programs of violence, and undergo brainwashing in special camps. This can be done by watching the video footages of executions and killings, while urging them



to carry out such terrorist operations, which proves their aggression and brutality, and makes them more loyal and obedient in the implementation of orders, turning them into human suicide bombs.

In addition, children do not cause suspicious behaviors, and their exploitation often leads to unobtrusive tasks. By the same token, children are financially paid much less than men and women.

Children are deceived by various means, such as gifts, inviting them to advocacy camps, providing them with game weapons. Children and orphans may be kidnapped and recruited without the knowledge of their parents and guardians. Terrorist organizations readily recruit children online and via social networking websites, where children are an easy prey when engaged searching for entertainment and exploration.

Extremist and terrorist organizations use ideological, ideological, religious, ethnic and fanatical drivers as pretexts to justify their recruitment and exploitation of children. After recruitment, such terrorist organizations teach and train them to fight. Several cohorts of boys become fully groomed and ready to fight, as young as 16

years old; they are often recruited into groups of suicide agents or spies; their ability to move and hide covertly and learn about the ins and outs on the ground, or being involved in supportive missions, such as couriers and informants.

### ISIS and Caliphate Cubs

In jihad that has become more onerous, labyrinthine and octopus-like reality, the term CUBS OF THE CALIPHATE used by ISIS describes the candidates for recruitment through many methods. United Nations reports indicate that ISIS is the most recruiting and exploiting of children; ISIS has recruited four thousand children in Syria since it rose to prominence in Raqqa at the end of August of 2014.

ISIS instrumentalized children as spies, agents, and scouts, and used them to plant bombs and mines, grooming some into becoming fighters and suicide bombers. The ISIS propaganda videos show children beheading and shooting prisoners down. Some children have been indoctrinated by ISIS for years in special courses held on clandestine camps for hand-making explosives and honing their fighting skills to perfection.

The labyrinth of CUBS OF THE CALIPH-

ATE still echoes and is rife in circles, especially with many children detained in overcrowded centers in Syria, such as Al-Hol Camp, or in Iraq in Nineveh. Peter Neumann, Director of the International Center for the Study of Radicalization at King's College London, states that at least 13,000 foreign followers of ISIS are being held in Syria, including 12,000 women and children. Also 1,400 children detained in Iraq. However, several countries, including Russia, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Indonesia and France, have successfully repatriated some of their citizens. While other countries have preferred to separate children from extremist parents, placing them with their relatives, or in foster homes or put up for adoption; mothers often refuse to be separated from their children.

Some countries, such as Jordan, have required that children born in the so-called Caliphate undergo a DNA test to prove their parentage, and then prove their nationality, before returning to their home countries. Other countries, such as Tunisia, have refused to repatriate their citizens, leaving at least 200 Tunisian children and 100 women in Syria and Libya, according to Human Rights Watch.

## Joseph Kony

Historically, the northern region of Uganda inhabited by the Acholi people, steeped in symbols and spiritual values, and deeply imbibed with spirits, ghosts and hidden forces, witnessed the emergence of many insurgencies; the most notorious is the Holy Spirit Movement, which was founded by Alice Lucina in 1985, a woman who claimed that her body was reincarnated the spirit of an Italian who was killed in the First World War, and that she had supernatural abilities; Alice Lucina claimed the ability to treat patients. She immediately announced the establishment of the Holy Spirit Movement, which adopted a general belief that the Acholi people were threatened with demise, and that maintaining their survival required the establishment of a supernatural power from the Acholi.

Inspired by such movements, Joseph Kony established the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in 1988, with ideologies and beliefs that shadowed Kony's mindset. Sometimes, the LRA believes in Christianity and rejects magic and voodoo, and sometimes it practices other religious rituals. On the whole, the LRA represents a syncretic mixture of mysticism, Acholi nationalism and Christian fundamentalism; it seeks to overthrow the Ugandan regime, claims to establish a theocratic state based on Acholi traditions, the provisions of the Bible and the Ten Commandments mentioned in the Bibles. The movement is now classified as a global terrorist organization.

Kony claimed to be a prophet, and that he speaks in the name of the Lord, and that he is a shaman who is visited by spirits! While he deceptively decoys people, others see him as an accomplished liar and charlatan, leading a group of boys and fanatics, and combining the contradictions of religious mysticism, the thinking of a seasoned gangster, and the ruthlessness of

bloodthirsty tribal hate. Despite international and regional efforts to catch him, he is still at large today.

The LRA has suffered many defections and repeated defeats, nonetheless it still attacks civilians in villages in the border areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Sudan. Although the LRA is not considered today a major and dangerous military threat, its affiliated cells, ubiquitously rampant in many areas, still support kidnap children. In 2019, the terrorist insurgents kidnapped 222 people, including dozens of children.

In 2012, millions learnt about the Ugandan LRA in a movie that had more than 100 million views, made by the American non-profit organization Invisible Children, that addresses the children recruited by the LRA and Joseph Kony, one of the most notorious leaders of internecine wars and despicable massacres.

A UN report published in 2013 reveals that the LRA claimed the lives of more than 100,000 people in the last twenty-five years, kidnapping and enslaving between 60,000 and 100,000 children to recruit males (some sources state that about 80% of the Ugandan LRA are kidnapped children), or to sexually exploit females. The United Nations report also states that about two and a half million citizens were forced to flee and escape the oppression of the Ugandan LRA to live in the camps, relying on international humanitarian aid.

The LRA still promotes recruitment, coercion and indoctrination of children with hate speech and extremism. Children are often kidnapped from villages, where they are brutally recruited. New developments and increased military pressures have come into play to reduce the LRA's violence; a shift was made to the religious narrative that the movement has maintained over the past decades. Joseph Kony and his fugitive

comrades turned from the doctrine of murder in the name of Lord to a murderous and criminal motive to survive.

Kony may not want to give up, but others may, and yet many of them are frustrated and afraid to do so because according to the accounts made by the dissidents and defectors, they no longer knew where their homes were or where they were going! Others fear retaliatory reactions possibly to be staged by the locals or the national civilian and military forces.

At the present time, the LRA remains a lethal force that hinders security and stability. Perhaps, the ubiquity of the LRA in the forests of the Republic of the Congo, parts of southern Sudan, and the Central African Republic keeps the populations of these countries in constant fear, reduces them helpless to practice their agricultural business as livelihoods and their everyday life activities. During the past two years or so, food production in these areas has been severely hampered, and it was previously considered the main breadbasket for a region like South Sudan.

## Conclusion

Given the inaction of the international community to provide radical solutions, it seems that child recruitment and exploitation by extremist and terrorist organizations and parties to the conflict will still drag on; it persists as long as such conflicts slip into everyday realities. When children grow stubbornly more aggressive and brutal, feeding on fanatic ideology, it seems that bringing back to track is a chimera; such rehabilitation will require more time and more effort. If governments do not crack down on such criminal practices, present and future generations will capitalize on more crimes, kidnappings, killings while beheading becomes quite normal. Against a backdrop of ruthless behaviors, the world will grow wilder than is. ■

# ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD KIDNAPPINGS IN BOKO HARAM

■ Dr. Al-Khidr Abdul Baqi Mohammed

**The most** notorious means that terrorist groups use to implement their policies and ideological goals and objectives are violence, sabotage, kidnapping innocent people as hostages. Such terrorist operations have alarmingly increased over the recent years. Infamously enough, Boko Haram in Nigeria is the most notorious organization that commit such terrorist crimes. Kidnappings in schools substantially increased in 2020 across northern cities and states; thousands of children and women fell victim to Boko Haram, making Nigeria third in the world as per the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) of 2020.

The article discusses the reality of the mass kidnappings committed by Boko Haram, highlighting the long-term goals, socioeconomic and sociopolitical effects, along with the policies taken by the Nigerian authorities to address such operations.

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## Mass Kidnapping by Boko Haram

Boko Haram feeds on extremist ideology in interpreting religious scriptures. As an approach, it has adopted the violent armed confrontation with the nation-state and any entities or individuals that go against its ideology, especially after transformation from a civil advocacy group of a civil nature to an armed group in 2004 when it first sparked off the confrontations with the security forces.

Northern Nigeria has recently sustained mass kidnappings by terrorists, following the 2009 events, in which the leaders of Boko Haram, including Boko Haram Founder, Mohammed Yusuf, along with sympathizers were liquidated, although kidnappings of foreign workers are common in the Niger Delta Region, east of the country, by armed gangs and tribal groups to exercise pressure on the central government for political bargains. Boko Haram's long-term goals of mass kidnappings can be summarized as follows:

1. Agitating public opinion, frightening and threatening citizens to show seriously evince readiness to promote its ideology that rejects western secular education and address the preference of youth to western regular schools.
2. Carrying out revenge and retaliatory acts against members of the security forces given the detention of key leaders by the authorities.
3. Using kidnapers in swap operations and strengthening its position with the authorities as a strong pressure lobby.
4. Providing a quick material resource to support its members by recruiting new fighters.
5. Creating a public opinion issue that exercises pressure on the political decision-makers and the key authorities, and stirring up emotions, especially when kidnapers are children or women. Children are very important in group activities and in pressure on government given the emotions they arouse. Other militant groups have followed suit, making kidnapping a profitable business.
6. Financing various operations, capitalizing on the ransom paid to release the kidnapped individuals.
7. Promoting the Boko Haram ideology in the media to achieve more global fame and keep its reputation resonating in the media, which would achieve free publicity.

## Trajectory Stages of Kidnapping

The individual and collective kidnappings of Boko Haram have gone through several stages, subject to the nature of relations and development of terrorist activities:

1. **Kidnapping-Based Existence:** It confirms military prowess and supremacy. Boko Haram used to take kid-

nappings as a goal, mostly carried out by individuals.

2. **Kidnapping-Based Balance:** It strengthens the situation; such kidnapping operations focus on security and army commanders or counterparts of peer groups. For instance, after the Nigerian government imposed a state of emergency in May 2013 in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, Boko Haram intensified targeting vulnerable groups, especially women, children, students and locals in rural areas. The Boko Haram Leader, Abubakar Shekau, warned that his fighters would take revenge on the families of the Nigerian security forces because they arrested the wives and children of the Boko Haram members.
3. **Kidnapping-Based Multi-Functions:** It depends on mass kidnapping to use the kidnapped people in various fields, such as recruiting new fighters, obtaining ransom, gaining sympathy, exercising pressure on the other party, and achieving media propaganda.

## Most Notorious Kidnappings

Nigeria has sustained many kidnappings of different manifestations, driven by political, criminal, commercial, and social motives. However, Boko Haram is one of the first terrorist groups to have carried out mass kidnappings for purely ideological terrorist purposes. As Boko Haram has adopted kidnappings in its terrorist strategy, the situation escalated with four kidnappings carried out in less than three months. The following are the most notorious kidnappings:

- **Bama Kidnapping:** It is a mass kidnapping from a police military barracks in Bama, Borno State, in May of 2013, targeting 8 children and 4 women.
- **Chibok Kidnapping:** It is the most notorious kidnapping, April of 2014, targeting 276 secondary school girls in Chibok, Borno State; about 100 schoolgirls are still missing.
- **Dapchi Kidnapping:** 111 girls from the boarding section of a government school were targeted in Dapchi, Yobe state, about 300 KM from Chibok, February 19 of 2018.
- **Kankara Kidnapping:** December 20 of 2020, armed men targeted a school in Kankara in the northwestern state of Katsina, the birthplace of President Buhari. The armed men kidnapped nearly 350 boys. Later, the security forces successfully liberated the hostages.
- **Kajara Kidnapping:** Less than three months into the Kankara kidnapping, in the latest episode of mass school kidnappings, February 17, of 2021, an armed group that stormed the Governmental Science Secondary School in Kajara District, Niger State, kidnapped 27 students, three staff employees and 12 individuals.



The repeated mass kidnappings caused glaringly negative effects on all social activities, especially education by closing schools, imposing lockdown, and forcing teachers, students and children to give up all educational activities. Violent attacks on schools have claimed the lives of more than 600 teachers, 19,000 teachers have fled for fear of being killed, and others have been threatened to be targeted or kidnapped in states such as Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa.

### Kidnapping of Female Students

Boko Haram for several reasons; it has caused social repercussions locally, regionally and globally.

Boko Haram attacked the Government Secondary School for Girls in Chibok, Nigeria, at night on April 14 of 2014. The gunmen stormed the school, shot the guards and kidnapped many female students in trucks, possibly heading to the Sampsia Forest. Meanwhile, several houses in Chibok were also burned down.

The school was closed for four weeks before the attack due to the poor security situation. In fact, all secondary schools in Borno district have been closed since March due to the horrific Boko Haram attacks.

On May 6 of 2014, 8 other girls were kidnapped from Waraba village in northeastern Nigeria, and Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the said kidnappings. According to the data of the records of the Examinations Department, a total of 530 schoolgirls were registered from the various villages surrounding the city to take the secondary school certificate exams. However, the exact number of schoolgirls present at the time of the attack is unknown, and the schoolgirls were between 16 and 18 years old, in their senior years of school. Due to the paucity of information made available for us about the said kidnapping, albeit mixed reports, we can provide no accurate account on the issue.

**Pos-Kidnapping Situation:** one month into the kidnapping, May 12 of 2014, Abu Bakr Shekau, Boko Haram Leader, published a video footage evincing the Boko Haram readiness to return the kidnapped schoolgirls to their respective families, in exchange for the Nigerian authorities' release of the Boko Haram members detained by the Nigerian go-

vernment. In the video snippet, appeared about 130 girls, reciting Surat Al-Fatihah, and Shekau, while speaking in the video clip, indicated that the schoolgirls had converted to Islam.

The Nigerian government rejected the Boko Haram conditional offer, in an official statement announced by the Nigerian Minister of the Interior. On May 22, Nigerian school teachers organized demonstrations across the country, calling for the girls' release and return alongside the construction of fences around open-air schools. On May 27, the Nigerian Army's Chief of Staff announced that the army had been able to locate the girls, but could not reveal the clandestine location, speaking to protesters who had gone to street to demonstrate in front of the defense permanent headquarters: «We are working very hard, and we will bring the girls back.» On May 28, it was announced that four kidnapped girls had escaped from the detention location. As reported, the total number of the schoolgirls released is 163 out of 276.

### International Response to Kidnapping

The said kidnapping attracted remarkable attention at the international arena. Several countries and major international bodies offered to assist the Nigerian government in liberating the kidnapped schoolgirls. To this effect, American units launched search operations, and a campaign was created on social networks calling for their liberation. The United Kingdom provided a team of experts and advisers in international development from the Foreign Office and other institutions, and the United States sent a team of military, police and hostage negotiators.

Gordon Brown, the UN Special Envoy for Education, talked about a project to enhance the security of Nigerian schools. The said project aims to identify the schools most at risk and engage communities, students and children themselves in preventing similar attacks. Former French President, François Hollande, expressed France's readiness to host a security meeting of the African countries to discuss the crimes committed by Boko Haram, which was held later. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang announced China would provide Nigeria with useful intelligence information by satellite

and intelligence agencies. Israel also offered its readiness to help Nigeria to overcome the said ordeal.

## Kidnapping and Ransom

The frequent tragedies of mass kidnappings confirm the theory of skepticism in public behavior, which holds that kidnapping has snowballed into a craft for some parties. The theory also reveals the economic aspect of such kidnappings, emphasizing that the victims are not only rich or famous; kidnapped victims are also from the poor, who are perhaps the most targeted, especially boarding schools that are overpopulated and flooded with school children. The perpetrators are usually terrorist gangs and thugs who take advantage of the poor police apparatus, in addition to the weapons easily made available in the country.

Kidnappers are enticed by several factors, such as poverty, unemployment, despair and inequality. Equally important, kidnappings have become notoriously rampant because the government does not control the entire territory, given the fact that armed gangs are mushrooming and sprouting up ubiquitously, weapons are easily made available aided by advanced communication technologies. It is critically important for the government authorities to put in unremitting efforts to crack down on such a sociopolitical malice.

Unfortunately, ransom has contributed to the ubiquitous growth of kidnappings, which government officials usually deplore. A report by the Nigerian intelligence company (SB Morgen) revealed that the kidnappers obtained at least \$18 million between June 2011 and March 2020.

## Government and Mass Kidnapping

The Nigerian government has taken several policies and measures against the mass kidnappings committed by Boko Haram including:

- **Replacing Military Commanders:** President Buhari replaced the army commanders given the increase in violence and ordered a large-scale military operation following the safe return of nearly 300 kidnapped girls and women.
- **Launching Joint Operations:** President Buhari stated that the priority and primary goal of the Nigerian government is to return all school hostages. He also called on state governments to review their policies in clamping down on thugs. To this effect, the police and army forces began joint operations to rescue the kidnapped schoolgirls.
- **Launching Bring-Back-Our-Girls Campaign:** It has received great support on social media, including the support of the then first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama. The said campaign called for their rapid and safe release and return.
- **Safe School Initiative:** This initiative was launched after the Chibok schoolgirls were kidnapped to further enhance security in schools in the northeastern region of Nigeria, by building a fence around each open-air school. The Government has pledged at least \$14 million for a three-year project, with the support of Gordon Brown, the UN Special Envoy for Education, and former British Prime Minister, in addition to building several schools temporarily for education as part of the said project.
- **International Declaration on Safe Schools Adopted by Nigeria:** In March 2015, the Nigerian government adopted it, which provided for the commitment to protecting education in armed conflict. President Buhari approved the said declaration in 2019, pledged that the Government would implement it in accordance with the law, would be committed to ensuring programs and policies to prevent such attacks on schools when they come into play, and to combat impunity for those who carried out such attacks. The Nigerian government and private donors have paid for at least six years of education.
- **Financial Aid Allocated by Local Authorities and Federal Government:** It has been appropriated for about 57 schoolgirls who escaped from Boko Haram. The said financial aid were from international agencies and foreign governments. However, it seems that the other victims, who were also abused by Boko Haram terrorists, did not benefit from such financial aid.
- **Launching Voluntary National Initiatives:** Such efforts were spearheaded by religious, political and social figures to establish a direct dialogue project and peaceful negotiation between the society segments and prevent military options to free the kidnapped schoolgirls.

## Conclusion

In the foreseeable future, all manifestations of kidnappings do not seem to come to an end. As such, government efforts, especially the faultless military and security operations, may reduce the number of terrorist operations and limit the capabilities of terrorist groups to carry out mass kidnappings. Several measures and precautions have been taken in this regard, and many other options are still being considered.

The good offices efforts of the national initiatives launched recently in more than one area in the north of the country seem so far to be seminal and productive, and have come to fruition, albeit slowly. More importantly, the welcome displayed by the people alongside the civil society heralds a good indication of the efficient mediation between all parties, including extremist and terrorist groups. ■

# CHILDREN AND DAESH

## LEARNING FROM THE PAST TO PROTECT THE FUTURE



### ■ Dr. Charlie Winter

In early August, Daesh supporters on Telegram shared a short video from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In it, three young adolescent boys, no older than twelve or thirteen years of age, declared their support for Daesh and joked about beheading their enemies. There was nothing unusual about this footage. For years, Daesh and its supporters have explicitly celebrated the fact that

it recruits and deploys (particularly male) children on the front lines of its war. The reality is that children have long been one of its recruitment mainstays.

Although in recent years there has been a noticeable decrease in the recruitment and exploitation of children, this issue is still more controversial than ever. This article addresses different aspects of this critically important issue.

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## Recruitment Pathways

Today, at a time when Daesh's affiliates across West and Central Africa have entered into a new period of ascendancy, with teenage and pre-teen children in many instances leading the charge, the issue of recruitment of minors has once more been brought into sharp refrain. However, the experience of Nigeria and the DRC today should not distract from the experiences of Iraq and Syria a few years ago, which saw Daesh deploying hundreds if not thousands of boys in battle, let alone today, with tens of thousands of children forced to reside in securitised camps on the basis that they are considered to represent a potential Daesh-inspired threat.

When Daesh was at its height in Iraq and Syria, children were recruited via a six-stage process:

1. Seduced by its promises of power and fulfilment.
2. Schooled in its ideology and practices.
3. Selected as viable candidates for participation in its war.
4. Subjugated through hardship geared towards facilitating identity fusion.
5. Acting either as soldiers, propagandists, suicide operatives or outreach teams.
6. Stationed on and off the battlefield.

This process, which was as flexible and spontaneous as it was structured and deliberate, relied on both coercive and persuasive practices. The former manifested in forced enlistment, as communities were subsumed en masse into Daesh's sphere of operations. Consider, for example, the Yazidi boys who were indoctrinated into its rank and file, and their sisters abducted for the purpose of sexual enslavement, while their family members were killed or forced into domestic servitude.

Its persuasive efforts saw Daesh actively appealing to a young audience, framing participation in its project as empowering, fun, meaningful, and, perhaps most importantly, spiritually enriching. This line of effort saw it making entreaties to children through street outreach, often delivered from brightly coloured media kiosks that dotted the cities and towns it controlled when it was at its height.

These days, Daesh no longer has the luxury of drawing on a formalised, openly active recruitment bureaucracy. Moreover, with the possible exception of its affiliates in the Lake Chad Basin and eastern DRC, nor does it have a monopoly (or even partial control) on schooling, let alone other aspects of civilian governance. This means that its recruitment activities have had to change tack, moving away from 'willing' enlistment to instead rely on more 'conventional' coercive methods such as kidnap and intimidation.

## Roles and Implications

Participation in Daesh's insurgent project took (and takes) a number of forms. In the main, public and militarised roles are restricted to male children and adolescents. However, a few years ago, girls were also able to be active participants in the group's state-building cause, through predominantly domestic and marital responsibilities.

At its height, boy children were principally deployed as fighters in Daesh's rank and file. In this capacity, they were trained, armed, and deployed in much the same way that adult men were—enlisted as frontline soldiers, suicide bombers and suicide assault operatives, as well as reservists and heavy weapons support. On many occasions too they were forced to serve as executioners, killing 'adversaries' of Daesh on tape with a view to provoking outrage and ire the world over.

In addition, boys were frequently deployed as media operatives armed with 'battle-cams'—often nothing more than a handheld camcorder or GoPro, enabling them to capture the raw footage that formed the foundation of Daesh's communications output. As a rule, child media operatives were confined to the battlefield. The more experienced and technically proficient of Daesh's visual propagandists were reserved for subject matters that were more challenging to make 'dynamic'—that is, issues like education, taxation, and agriculture.

Teen and pre-teen boys were also trained, on a rarer basis, as preachers and clerics. They would perform da'wa as officials in Daesh's Mosques and Da'wa Center and occasionally go on to lead prayers in mosques. Positioned as such, they were celebrated as an example of Daesh's violent reordering of social (and age-hierarchical) norms in the territories it controlled.

## Post-Territorial Influence

In both Syria and Iraq, Daesh's territorial collapse presented a turning point in the group's methods and tools of recruiting children, as well as new risks to their welfare. With the liberation of Baghuz—Daesh's final enclave in Syria—in March 2019, thousands of Daesh-affiliated women and children became newly registered occupants of Kurdish-run camps in north-eastern Syria.

As of 2020, an estimated 43,000 children live in Al-Hol camp and over half of the 2,500 residents of Roj camp are minors. They and their families rely on humanitarian aid organisations to provide protection, clothing, nutrition, education, and psychosocial support services, and, throughout their residency at these camps, there have been consistent

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challenges to implementation and uptake, now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fears of these camps becoming a 'mini-caliphate' or another Daesh 'province' are not wholly unfounded. Visiting journalists have reported children hurling stones, wielding sharp metal sword-like blades, and issuing threats to 'infidels' and 'enemies of God.' Children—especially those ostensibly supportive of Daesh—are symbolic of the group's ambitions of intergenerational and post-territorial endurance. In July 2019, footage from al-Hol showed a group of (predominantly male) pre-teen children gathered around a makeshift Daesh flag raised from a lamppost. They raise their index fingers while chanting (remaining and going beyond), the first part of Daesh's slogan 'remaining and expanding.' In the foreground, a crowd of women cheer. Many of the children featured are too young to have attended the group's schools and military training camps, the majority of which closed in 2017, implying their education began in the camp setting.

Aiming to provide a structured learning environment away from the influence Daesh propaganda, UNICEF, and Kurdish authorities in al-Hol have established 25 learning centres in the main section of the camp. However, these institutions still fail to reach the full school-age population, on account of shortages of space, teachers, and resources.

Moreover, since March 2020 all learning centres have closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that these education efforts have instead had to rely on the distribution of books to children for self-study. Home-schooling has been the default for foreign nationals in the 'annexe' section of the camp, wherein agencies have been unable to

establish learning centres largely due to women's refusal to send their children to receive a secular education.

Seeking to support the foundations of the survival of the statehood, and in implementation of the second stage of the ideological and intellectual indoctrination and inculcation process adopted by ISIS, women were entrusted with raising the group's future leaders, fighters, and supporters, it would appear that some of them are still engaging in this role. One pamphlet from 2014 advised mothers to read their children bedtime stories of celebrated martyrs; to encourage target practice through archery and play with toy guns; and to educate them in the correct targets for violence. Now, even without specific guidance from Daesh's central leadership, it seems some women in Al-Hol are continuing work to instil its ideals in the unregulated space each tent provides.

## Assessing Future Risk

While policymakers acknowledge that Daesh-affiliated children are victims of the crimes of their parents, Gilles de Kerchove, the EU's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, recently labelled the group's junior recruits as a 'ticking time bomb.' That comment was emblematic of a broader sentiment among Western counter-terrorism policymakers today.

Concerned with the potential security risk posed by Daesh-indoctrinated children, states are now wrestling with the political and ethical challenges of repatriating their citizens. Despite repeated calls from Kurdish authorities, aid groups, and researchers, repatriation rates remain proportionately low. By July 2019, only up to 25 per cent of minors in Syria have returned to their countries of origin (or, in the case of newborn infants, to the country of primary nationality of their parents).



This low rate is in part due to the fact that policies and approaches vary so significantly between individual states. For some—such as Kazakhstan and Tajikistan—proactive collaboration with local authorities has led to the swift identification and return of hundreds of children. For others, such as Saudi Arabia, repatriation has not been facilitated on a large scale, but instead has taken the form of targeted ‘rescue’ missions to recover individuals.

Framing repatriation of young people as a way to recover the most vulnerable segments of Daesh’s population has allowed some otherwise hesitant or unresponsive governments to make political concessions and get some, though not all, children out of the camps. A salient example is Norway, which repatriated just five orphans out of 40 minors in Syria in June 2019, with the remainder contributing to the 114 children from Nordic countries still languishing in Syria as of May this year.

The reality is that long-term containment of children, even if they are considered to be Daesh supporters, within camps is untenable. States’ excuses for inaction have been met with successful jail-breaks and fundraising campaigns to smuggle Daesh-affiliated women and their children out of the camps. In light of this, increasing attention is turning to the question of permanent detention. By March 2019, an estimated 1,100 Daesh-affiliated children were being processed or held by the Iraqi justice system. Charges and prosecutions range from illegal entrance into Iraq to militancy.

Of even greater concern are reports of arbitrary arrest, forced confessions, and torture of juvenile suspects in Iraqi and Kurdish custody. Now, two years later, in what has been termed ‘a conveyor belt of incarceration,’ children

(particularly adolescent boys) are reportedly being transferred from camps to secure children’s homes, and then on to adult prisons for expected life sentences without any hope of release.

## Conclusions

The continued security-first approach to dealing with the challenges posed by ‘Daesh-affiliated’ minors carries risks of long-term insecurity and a humanitarian crisis. Widespread opposition to the repatriation of foreign nationals has left thousands of children languishing in unsanitary conditions with limited educational or developmental opportunities beyond the ideological instruction provided by a minority of Daesh-supportive women.

Such an environment only serves to further entrench the group’s claim that its ‘caliphate’ is ‘remaining.’ Moreover, harmful, and unlawful practices of juvenile detention in places like Iraq risk further stigmatisation and psychological trauma, thereby creating additional barriers for rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

The success or failure of actions taken to manage these children will determine whether Daesh’s ambitions of intergenerational succession will be fulfilled. In order to prevent further indoctrination and recruitment, and to avoid fuelling the grievances that led to the group’s initial rise to power, children’s welfare and developmental needs should be prioritised.

In practice, this means removing them from insecure environments that serve as echo-chambers for Daesh’s ideology and instead ensuring that they have the right psychological, educational, and social support and tools to turn away from its malign influence. ■

# CHILDREN OF YEMEN

CATAPULTED FROM SCHOOLS INTO BATTLEFIELDS  
AND LOWERED INTO GRAVES

■ Colonel Dr. Abdullah Mohammed Shadi

**Notoriously** enough, child recruitment in Yemen is one of the most infamous manifestations of human rights violations domestically and globally. The internecine war raging on in Yemen for years has caused tragic political, economic and social conditions that have made the entire country in tatters, especially children. Enervated by grinding poverty, prolonged starvation, ongoing conflict, and the persistently stubborn attacks on schools, children left school to be voluntarily taken into battlefields for combat and security purposes.

■ Media Delegate of the Republic of Yemen to IMCTC.

## The Houthis and Child Recruitment

UNICEF always emphasizes that good education is the right for every child, and that decision-makers must make good education a priority. However, a UNICEF report recently published reveals that nearly two million children in Yemen have dropped out of school, reducing children of Yemen, who were once happy, to be the most miserable, the most notorious children who drop-out, and the most exploited in recruitment and combat.

Although domestic and international laws and customs have ensured the protection of childhood, children in Yemen are the least protected. Children in Yemen are reduced to be recruits on the battlefronts, or laborers in servitude, or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) alongside their families or fall victim to violence and terrorism (deaths or injuries). According to a United Nations report on children and conflict areas, child recruitment and involvement in warfare in Yemen has alarmingly peaked the death toll; the armed Houthis bear the full brunt of the despicable scourge, with more than 77% of child recruitment in Yemen, while documented cases of the government forces made up 16%, the Security Belt Forces affiliated with the Transitional Council 5%, and the rest of the groups and organizations 2%.

The Houthis use summer centers and schools in Yemen to recruit children, after providing them with sectarian and ideological training for more than a month to be driven into the pitched battlefields and be part of the machine of war. Recruited children alongside their families are decoyed into their families deceptive cultural courses or security centers far from the confrontations of war. While many children are allured into the frontlines

of war, others are instrumentalized to provide supplies, pool information, build fortifications, dig trenches, and plant mines.

The Yemeni SIYAG organization for children rights highlighted the Houthi recruitment of more than half a million children in 2020, through six thousand summer camps set up in the territory under the Houthis control, planning to involve many other children in running fierce battles with the legitimate forces. School children are tempted into recruitment by the Houthis by money, food provision, promotion of military ranks, or forced conscription through kidnappings and threats. Drugs are also used in recruitment; the territory under the Houthis control is flooded with drugs. As such, children have become addicted to drugs, hence, to force them to join the Houthis training camps and battlefronts. Against such a backdrop of loss, childhood in Yemen is derailed from schools and bulldozed into battles.

### Shocking Statistics

According to the Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations, His Excellency Ambassador Abdullah Al-Saadi, the Houthis have disreputably recruited about 30,000 children, most of whom are from Sana'a, Dhamar, Amran, Al-Mahwit and Hajjah, who are under the age of 17; they were distributed among the different conflict zones to be involved in committing appalling hostilities. Such acts are glaringly blatant violations of international conventions and laws of child protection.

A recent international report issued by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor and the Yemeni SAM Organization for Rights and Freedoms reveal that the Houthis used about 52 camps to train thousands of students and children between the ages of 10

and 18. Such camps first distort their Yemeni and Arab identities and second imbibe them with extremist sectarian ideologies and hollow slogans, and third provide with weapons.

The marked deterioration of the economic situation has substantially contributed to increasing child recruitment in Yemen; many families agree to have their children recruited to obtain financial return, albeit a pittance meet some everyday life needs, given the price spike and the unpaid salaries for civilians and military staff for years. Still, some families are unwitting victims of the recruitment of their children until they return home as dead bodies or being injured in the battlefields.

### Tragedies

Once we seek to cite telling examples of the recruitment of children in Yemen and their belligerency, hundreds of tragedies come flooding into memory. Such children once dreamed of a better future but slipped into an awful nightmare in a country sadly drenched in bloodshed, following a failed coup d'état staged by the Houthis against legitimacy. Perhaps one of the strangest of such tragedies is that two brothers fight each other, each aims his rifle at his brother, which reduced their parents to lose their patience and be driven into a state of mental, emotional and psychosocial uncontrollable loss.

Another telling tragedy is about a father who is brought a box with a picture of his only child, decorated with fake slogans and roses. Unexpectedly, the father was dolorously surprised to have seen the remaining parts of his son's dead body.

### New Ideology

Back in Dhamar, a 14-year-old child in the lower secondary school cherishes

higher hopes for a brighter future; he daydreams and plans to be a future doctor, an engineer or a teacher. On holiday, his parents sent him to the summer center to polish up his skills and hone his talents to perfection. He was miraculously renowned for his acute intelligence, pure intuition, and witty repartee. He came in first among his classmates. Upon completion of the said courses, he came back yoked together and imbibed with a totally different ideology. Inculcated and brainwashed with new mindset, he desperately sought to convince his family to join the battle frontlines, but they refused categorically. Halfway frustrated, he further attempted to convince them that he would be in the back lines, away from any threats. The low-income family was eventually convinced that he would go to a set camp for some training, unwittingly that the journey was driving the final nail into the son's coffin.

One month into his recruitment, he was catapulted into the battle frontlines on the Yemeni border, carrying a Kalashnikov rifle in his hand, about the length of his frail body, while harboring delusions of grandeur that feeds on deception and deviant ideology. After a while, he returned to his family on a short leave, gave them some money, and soon returned to be stationed at the battle frontlines, honorably dubbed Senior Commander ABU AQEEL. Instead of going to his parents for the second time with money and gifts, he was carried in a bier as a dead body in a coffin, decorated with his image and name as a martyr.

### Money in Return for Own Only Son

A 13-year-old boy from Amran is the only child to his parents with several sisters. His lower secondary school is within the immediate vicinity of his house. The regional security supervisor attempted to attract him to cultural course and advanced courses in Sana'a, aiming at spreading ill-intentioned ideology in the mindset of children, drumming up for the dire need for jihad and fighting the invading enemies.

Following several intensive courses, he was imbibed with hostility, and eventually settled on the western coast of the Red Sea in the fierce frontlines with many peers. While the hit-and-run battles were raging on, he is captured by the National Army in Jabal Al-Nar, 15 kilometers east of the coastal city of Mocha. Months later, his troubled parents were



desperately doing their best to release him, but to no avail! His father went to Sana'a to meet senior officials for help. Surprisingly, several war brokers asked him for big money in exchange for the release of his son, with other promises to include him in the prisoner exchange deal. In response, his father was forced to sell part of his land to return his son after nearly two years, while his classmates become upper secondary school students.

### Sharia Scholar

A 16-year-old child experienced a different tragedy. He received his education up to the first secondary grade, memorized the Noble Quran, and was impressively affable and well-mannered of a remarkable reputation in his neighborhood, Sana'a. His dream was to be a scholarly polymath in the Quranic Recitations or Islamic Sharia, but the human wolves were on the lookout for him! He was drawn in as a supervisor at a summer center, and

then was brainwashed with extremist ideology to end up as a cultural supervisor in one of the neighborhoods of Sana'a and then as a supervisor in one of the fierce battle frontlines as there was a dire need for recruits to be used by the Houthis as fuel for war, without training such naïve and new recruits, who do not know the basics of warfare. Consequently, he was shot in the head and transferred to a hospital in Sanaa, without the knowledge of any of his relatives fear of shock. After a months-long coma, he awoke in a miserable state, fully paralyzed.

### Conclusion

The tragedies explained, inter alia, are much telling about poor children, whose future is nipped in the bud, while slipping and allured into full-scale wars, feeding on children, boys and youth; such wars only serve politicians and key actors. It is high time for war to come to an end! When can Yemen restore and bask in greater glory

as it once was?

The scourge of children dropping out of schools and joining the extremist and terrorist groups has frighteningly exacerbated, becoming a horrible nightmare that ubiquitously creeps in the stability and prosperity of Yemen now and in the future. This requires a seriously strict stance on various levels. Parents are required to resist the Houthis' temptations, and categorically refuse to throw their children into the incinerators of death. Equally important, human rights and child protection organizations must fulfill their humanitarian and moral responsibilities, and exercise pressure to stop despicable operations savagely committed by the Houthis against children in Yemen. This requires bringing those responsible for child recruitment to trial as war criminals. Again, centers of rehabilitation and social integration of conflict-affected children should be established. ■



# COMMERCIALIZATION BY TERRORIST GROUPS IN MALI

## ■ Modibo Ghaly Sisi

**Hardly** can terrorist groups survive without huge financial resources. It stands to reason that financing for such terrorist groups is the lifeblood of their day-to-day and continued survival. As long as they are comfortably financed, terrorist groups can snowball into reality, spread their ideologies, attract more followers, covertly funnel weapons, provide capacity-building training, propagandize their agendas, and secure food and living expenses. Sources of funding for such groups include donations, from institutions or individuals and the activities of extremist members, such as hostage-taking, taxation, and human trafficking.

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### **Breeding Ground for Terrorism**

Over the recent years, the countries of the Sahel Region in Africa have ballooned into a breeding ground for terrorist groups that have risen to prominence as a key driver across the region. Such terrorist groups practice many economic activities that provide them with power and influence. Such economic day-to-day activities include selling animals that are taken as spoils of war, or animals that breeders voluntarily surrender as zakat funds, and trading in gold, weapons, ammunition, motorcycles, fuel, and Muslim-styled fashion for women.

The Sahel Region resonated and echoed back to mind in 2012, following the events in Libya and the fall of former President Muammar Gaddafi. Against a backdrop of instability, the Sahel Region ballooned into a breeding ground for terrorism in Africa and beyond. Given its geographical fragility, the Sahel Region makes favorable and invincible hideouts for extremists. It is also conducive for smuggling activities, where local borders do not crack down on traffickers and smugglers, making counterterrorism almost a chimera.

Quite recently, hardly does a day go by without turning the spotlight on extremists and associated appalling crimes across the region. Laurent smartly wrote and named his book SAHELISTAN (2013). Laurent discusses the Sahel Region, which has become similar to Pakistan and Afghanistan because of the increasingly growing crimes of terrorist groups in the Sahel Region, equivalent to the size of Europe.

The report shows the commercial activity of terrorist groups in Mali, where their economic activities flourish and contribute to providing for their everyday life needs and implement their criminal plans. Although the terrorists spread in the northern and central regions, the central region sustained violent acts linked to the fundamentalists in the wake of the Tuareg insurgency, such as the districts of TINENKO, DOUMENTZA and JUARU in Mobet.

On July 3 of 1994, the Tuareg marched into TINENKO and Diora, which had suffered due to the attacks of the Tuareg insurgents. By the same token, and since the outbreak of the 2012 crisis, the Tuareg insurgents of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad again attacked TINENKO on March 3 of 2012, set fire to justice offices, released prisoners, and sabotaged the telephone networks of ORANGE and MALITAL.

After the coup d'état of March 22 of 2012, which overthrew President Amadou Toumani Toure, insurgents sneaked into DIORA, JUARU, JATJILOMO, and the areas around, and informed the population of a new state called Azawad. One week into the insurgency, the same insurgents returned under the banner of Ansar Al-Din to inform the population themselves that they have become part of an Islamic Republic.

As such, the Malian state has abandoned the aforementioned three districts since 2012 until the launch of Operation Serval in January 2013; the French forces supported the Malian forces and defeated the members of Ansar Al-Din, while the Tuareg members returned. Meanwhile, Mali

regained control of the provincial and sub-prefecture capitals. Over the course of two years, the terrorists completely disappeared from central Mali.

However, extremists sneaked again into TENENKO, following the attacks on the NAMPALA camp on January 5 of 2015, and on the security points in TENENKO on January 8 and 16 of 2015. Since then, the fighters of the Ansar Al-Din have snowballed into this region, which has had dire consequences on such societies. On May 5 of 2015, armed members of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad attacked TINENKO again, but the army managed to defeat the forces of chaos and evil. However, the terrorist groups are gaining more momentum and power, making much headway every day from their usual bases across Mali and the Sahel Region.

## Key Business Activities

### 1) Zakat

Ansar Al-Din in central Mali collects zakat from people in the towns it controls and shares it with the poor. It began collecting zakat by force in 2016, in the towns of TOGIRI, KOMBI, and DIONDEURI in the TENENKO district, and in DOGO and GATEJA LOMO in JUARU. Reports reveal that the local population is the source of forced zakat. The citizens interviewed hinted that it was the locals who told the extremists that nomadic herders in the delta do not pay zakat on their livestock.

Over the past five years, zakat was levied once a year on herders' livestock, farmers' grain, and merchants' money. The animals collected from the payers of zakat are collected and sold at low prices to merchants who owed allegiance to the group. They raise, fatten and resell them in the local livestock markets of the region. The proceeds are used to support fighters in the center area, and purchase transportation, especially motorcycles. The grain is distributed between the center and the families of the fighters who cannot benefit personally from their sons who joined the group.

### 2) Looted Animals

With inter-communal conflict becoming more frenzied across central Mali, animal poaching and looting became a common practice. As it animals are frequently stolen, the living and economic situation of the farmers and shepherds became catastrophic; they found themselves trapped in narrow areas, unsafe for their properties.

Therefore, many fields were no longer plowed and cultivated, and the shepherds avoided various paths, fearing that their livestock would be stolen. Since May of 2016 until now, hardly does a day go by without extremists or armed men and their allies from the TERIRI stealing thousands of animals (cattle and livestock) of the Bambara and Dogon farmers and herders in central Mali, and then selling them to notorious traders close to or affiliated with the group.



### 3) Arms Trade

Ubiquitously rampant in central Mali, Ansar Al-Din allured the locals to for recruitment purposes through audio recordings, flyers and posters glorifying fighting and denouncing the abuses committed by state agents in Mali. This method has successfully attracted many adult and young locals into Ansar Al-Din. The new members received motorcycles, weapons and ammunition to gain their loyalty.

Young people were encouraged to meet their needs by the means available; some sold their own or their parents' animals to purchase equipment from the same suppliers who have become terrorist members. Given the inter-communal conflict, the Fulani militiamen obtained their supplies of arms and ammunition from these extremists.

### 4) Motorcycles

Motorcycles are the key transportation means for the insurgents, and over the course of time motorcycles have become part of their trade. Motorcycles are bought from local traders, and neighboring countries, such as Mauritania, which supplies central Mali and Nigeria with their needs of those motorcycles, and then resells them in the central regions within Mali.

### 5) Foodstuffs

The main products imported by extremists from Mauritania and Algeria include pasta, oil, dates and milk. Mali is dependent on neighboring countries bordering the sea to meet its food provision. Given the poor borders, extremists can bring in tens of tons of foodstuffs that are popular within the region, and then use their revenues to improve the financial situation of the group.

### 6) Muslim-Styled Fashion

Since their ubiquity across the country, extremists have been calling for observing the fashion of Muslims, such as hijab, burqa and niqāb. Terrorist networks buy such fashion items from intermediaries in Mali, Mauritania and Algeria, who sell them directly or sell them in Malian camps and villages. This system created a good network, including trader, suppliers and women who buy them involuntarily in rural areas.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded that extremist groups have engaged in the trade of various products within the territory they control in central and northern Mali and areas within the immediate vicinity, feeding on the poor security and economic situation in these areas. By the same token, the same is

true for the rest of the Sahel countries, where these groups are involved in the oil trade in Nigeria, Niger and Chad, and the gold trade in several mining sites in Burkina Faso.

in northern Mali, these groups currently have absolute control over the operations of the organization and security and the exploitation of gold in several mining sites; such activities generate huge financial returns that they exploit in the implementation of their criminal schemes, and the expansion of their terrorist influence, which requires comprehensive measures, including economic, social and ideological aspects to defeat the forces of extremism and terrorism. ■



# ISIS REGIONAL ARM IN KHORASAN

## DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

### ■ Dr. Muhammad Tahir Mahmood

In recent years across the South Asian region, the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) (Daesh) organization has expanded, branching out from its original heartland in the Middle East. So far, Pakistan and Afghanistan (which Islamic State encompass within what it calls Greater Khorasan) have been hotspots of IS-K activity, including widespread recruitment and multiple attacks. The historic Khorasan region geographically encompasses parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. IS-K aims to establish Khorasan as a province of the Islamic State caliphate. This arm of the wider ISIS has emerged in an already complex landscape, competing with various elements of militants in the region.

This article presents an overview of the ingress of IS-K in the South Asian region. Crucial questions concern how the group recruit and radicalize their foot soldiers; the ideological underpinnings of their narratives and strategies, their links with core leadership in the ISIS ranks, organizational structure and leadership in Khorasan, militant activities in the region and the international domestic response to IS-K.

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## Organizational Structure and Leadership

Abu Bakr-al-Baghdadi declared himself the so-called Caliph from the Zengi Mosque in Mosul in 2014. Many splinter groups in and around the South Asian region subsequently declared their allegiance to him. South Asian militant groups that pledged allegiance included the splinter factions of the Afghan Taliban, Shahidullah group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) who was previously part of Al-Qaida, Jandullah, and other smaller groups.

After the self-styled Caliphate from Iraq, the Islamic State announced their further five-year strategy; they released a map which showed the Pakistan-Afghanistan region as part of a much broader province of Khurasan.

### ISIS Provinces



With the help of sympathisers from different splinter groups, the Islamic State's (IS-K) militants established their physical presence in the region with the motto of 'Remaining and Expanding'. This encapsulates its broader ambition of gaining more and more territory to create an Islamic State under the banner of a wider Caliphate. On the 10th of January 2015, Hafiz Saeed Khan, a former Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commander, and Shahid-Ullah-Shahid, a former TTP spokesperson, alongside four other TTP commanders released a video and reaffirmed their allegiance to Abu Bakr-al-Baghdadi, thus formally declaring the Khurasan Province of Islamic State.

On the 26th of January 2015, Abu Muhammad-al-Adnani (Chief strategist of ISIS) endorsed their declaration and Hafiz Saeed Khan was thereby appointed as the first Emir (leader) of the Islamic State Khorasan Province. Initially, IS-K spread its active presence in Nangarhar, Zabul, Faryab, Helmand, Ghazni, and Kunduz provinces and was struggling to expand its hold in Jalalabad, Kunar, and Nuristan. Since 2015, IS-K has been one of the most violent militant groups leading attacks on civilians, security forces and minority communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

IS-K consists of a leadership structure, led by an Emir, a Shura Advisory Committee, and a commander at the provincial level. The first Emir of the IS-K, Hafiz Saeed Khan, was killed in a US drone strike in Kot, Afghanistan, 26 July 2016. The second Emir of IS-K was Abdul Haseeb Logari. According to the former Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, he was the mastermind behind the attack on a military hospital in Kabul, 8 March 2017. He was subsequently killed in a combined operation by US and Afghan Security Forces in April 2017. In June 2017, a former commander of TTP, Abu Saeed Ghaleb, was appointed as Emir of the IS-K. However, shortly after his appointment, on the 11 July 2017, he was

killed by a US drone strike in Kunar, Afghanistan. Following this, Abdul Rahman was appointed as the fourth Emir of IS-K in July 2017. He was killed after a month later in a US airstrike on 10 August 2017, also in Kunar, Afghanistan. In March 2020, the Afghan Security Forces detained IS-K Emir Aslam Farooqi with several commanders in Kandahar province. The current Emir of IS-K, Shahab-al-Muhajir was appointed in June 2020. Shahab-Al-Muhajir is of Arab origin and is the first IS-K Emir to have been appointed from outside the region.

### Number of Fighters

According to a research study conducted by the International Centre for Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR), approximately 300-400 Pakistani and Afghan fighters have gone to Iraq and Syria to fight alongside Daesh, while official numbers given by Pakistan's authority is circa 650 as of August 2017. There are differing opinions surrounding the number of IS-K militants operating in Afghanistan. According to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), there are between 7,000 and 8,500 IS-K militants and supporters in Afghanistan, while the US Department of Defence estimated in 2016 that there are around 1,000 to



3,000. However, according to the United Nations report of the 1st of June 2021, IS-K consists of an estimated 1,500 to 2,200 fighters based in the provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar.

On the 24th of March 2017, US Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson said in the 10 Global Coalition ministerial meeting on IS in Washington: Daesh is stepping up its recruitment of young people from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Daesh is resorting to many terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and many other places in Europe in order to send a message that they are still standing, and they want for those young people to go fight in its ranks.

### **Ideology**

IS-K is a perfect case study of a transnational terrorist network in which various disjointed radicalised groups and individuals follow the narratives, doctrines, and ideologies of militant and Jihadi organisations from other countries. In this regard, the domestic security challenges that Pakistan and Afghanistan have faced for the last

decades alongside the creation of ISIS (Daesh) in Iraq have enhanced the threat of terrorism in the South Asian region and worldwide. For example, the concept of an Islamic State was created in a Mosque in Iraq by Abu Bakr al Baghdad, but this very quickly spread from Northern and Western Iraq to Northern and Eastern Syria, the broader Middle East, North Africa, Europe, South, and East Asia.

Islamic State's ideology of militancy, radicalisation, jihadism, and the concept of a so-called Caliphate therefore spread globally. Consequently, numerous transnational militant groups adhere to Daesh's ideology. In this way, the ideology can travel across borders even if the organisation does not necessarily travel comprehensively itself. Examples of this approach are shown



by attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Paris, Brussels, Germany, Barcelona, London, Manchester, and Turkey, which were claimed as being IS-inspired but were actually planned independently in other parts of the world. In this modern world, the internet and social media play a pivotal role in facilitating the spread such ideology around the world.

## Policy & Strategy

Since its establishment, IS-K has relied on a different military strategy in order to gain more territorial control. The central leadership of the Islamic State is in Iraq or Syria, but they are affiliated with militant groups across the globe, notably in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

There are some splinter militant groups in the region that are ideologically and strategically consistent with Daesh in terms of their use of technology, financial and technical assistance, and their barbaric acts.

The incursion of Islamic State in the South Asia region has disturbed the jihadist landscape. Al-Qaida, Afghan Taliban and Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) openly rejected Daesh's concept of Caliphate, in contrast to some small splinter and militant rebel groups.

TTP wrote a 60-page letter in which they critiqued Baghdadi's claim to be the new Caliph. Meanwhile, in 2014, the Emir (leader) of the Afghan Taliban at that time, Mullah Mansour Akhtar, wrote a 14-page letter to Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi in which he warned him to stay out of Afghanistan, stating that: Jihadi groups across the Muslim world are struggling for Islam, and they have their own organizational structure. If you meddle in their affairs and create division, it will result in bloodshed within these organizations.

However, there are two different possible approaches to evaluating the presence and structure of IS-K in Pakistan and Afghanistan. **One school of thought** rejects the organised presence and influence of IS-K in the region. Instead, they discuss the four different factors that hindered Islamic State's struggle to achieve its goals and sizeable practical existence in the region:

1. IS-K is an outsider in South Asia. Linguistic, cultural, and geographical barriers have hindered its presence among existing jihadist groups.
2. Well-structured militant organisations, such as Al-Qaida, TTP and the Kashmiri jihadist groups have left very little space for IS-K.
3. The concept of the so-called Caliphate is detached from the on-the-ground realities and local conflicts in the region.

4. IS-K is a group defined by its Salafi-Takfiri Jihadist ideology, while most of the jihadist groups in the region are followers of Deobandi Hanafi.

Through these perspectives, it would appear that very little space is available for Salafi Jihadist ideology in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The **other school of thought** considers that underestimating the presence of the Islamic State in South Asia is a serious security risk. The political and jihadist culture combined with the presence of a large number of ideological sympathisers in the region could mean that IS-K will find a constituency among the new generation of jihadists in the region. The places where such sympathisers of Islamic State's ideology are to be found include colleges and universities attended by educated radicalised youth from the middle and upper classes of urban areas. In Afghanistan, IS-K has adopted a slightly different recruitment strategy, focusing on existing militant groups, especially splinter factions, and disenfranchised militant groups and individuals.

## Terrorist Activities

The presence of IS-K in Pakistan and Afghanistan and the allegiance of some smaller splinter militant groups did lead to IS-K authoring terrorist attacks in the region, some of which were large and audacious. A close analysis of Islamic State's activities shows that IS-K does have substantial penetration in both countries. Indeed, a series of high-profile attacks in Pakistan has proven its physical presence. For instance, a suicide attack at the hospital in Quetta on the 8th of August 2016 left 70 people dead and 120 injured. Another attack claimed by IS-K on the 24th of October 2016 at the police training academy in Quetta killed 61 police cadets and wounded 165.

In November of the same year, an attack at Shah Nurani Shrine in Khuzdar, Baluchistan, killed 52 and injured 100 others. Another attack claimed by IS-K in May 2017 in Mastung, Baluchistan, killed 25 and 37 injured, while in August 2017 in Quetta, yet another killed 15 and injured 40. In July 2018, during an election rally in Quetta, a suicide attack by IS-K left 149 people dead and 186 wounded. Moreover, a suicide attack in April 2019 in Quetta, Baluchistan, claimed by IS-K, targeted Hazara Shias, killing 20 people. In January 2020, Daesh took responsibility for the blast in the mosque in Quetta that killed 13 and injured 20 others and on the 3rd of January 2021, IS-K abducted 11 Hazara Shias coal miners from the coalfield in Baluchistan, took them to a nearby mountain and killed them brutally.

IS-K has also shown presence in Afghanistan through a series of high-profile attacks, including the attack on the

Pakistani Consulate in Jalalabad, 13 January 2016, which killed 7 people; the assault on a military hospital in Kabul, 8 March 2017, which resulted in 30 dead and 50 injured; and a shooting attack on the Hazara Shia community in Kabul in April 2017 which left 80 people dead and 230 injured. While in July 2018, an attack by IS-K at Kabul airport killed 23 and injured 107, and in August 2018 a suicide attack in a mosque in Paktia left 48 people dead and 70 wounded. On the 2nd of August 2020, an attack by an IS-K terrorist group at a prison in Jalalabad killed 24 Afghan security forces personnel. The recent attack at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul in August 2021 killed up to 170 people, including 13 US troops.

IS-K-claimed attacks first occurred in Afghanistan in 2015, and earlier in Pakistan. The numbers of attacks by IS-linked armed groups are not inconsiderable. Therefore, this may mean that IS-K and their affiliated militant groups are struggling to consolidate territorial presence in the South Asian region. Nevertheless, the physical presence of IS-K in Pakistan and Afghanistan has become a severe threat to the whole region, and it is the collective responsibility of South Asian states to adopt a comprehensive strategy against this menace.

### **Regional and International Responses**

Regional and international counterterrorism measures are taken against IS-K. Pakistan's Security Forces have launched two military operations against IS-K, operation Zarb-e-Azb in January 2015 and operation RADD-UL-FASAAD in February 2017. Operation ZARB-E-AZB was launched in the North Waziristan region which was under the control of TTP, Al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups, the IMU, LEJ, IS-K and its related militant groups.

This operation reduced incidents of violence and terrorism in the country. According to the former Director-General of Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Lt Gen Asim Bajwa, nearly 3500 militants were killed while 490 soldiers lost their lives during the operation. Furthermore, he claims that 992 sleeper cells were destroyed, 253 tonnes of explosives were recovered, 7500 bombs were destroyed, 2800 mines were removed, 3500 rockets were recovered during the operation and an area of 4304 SQ/KM was cleared. The militants had enough explosives to continue bombing for 15 years with up to seven bombings every day, he said.

Meanwhile, the US and former Afghan Security Forces rolled back the expansion of IS-K by re-capturing a significant portion of territory in Afghanistan. Furthermore, 75% of IS-K's leadership have been eliminated or captured

in airstrikes and operations by the US and NATO forces. In April 2017, US Forces attacked an IS-K complex in Nangarhar, dropping a 'Mother of all Bombs' (MOAB), resulting in killing an unspecified number of IS-K militants. Moreover, in response to the Kabul airport attack on the 26th of August 2021, which was claimed by IS-K, President Joe Biden vowed to hunt down those responsible. He said that ISIS-K would be made to pay for their bomb attack and that the US would respond with force and precision at our time, at a place we choose, in a moment of our choosing.

The United Nations Security Council Sanction Committee 1267 designated ISIS-Khorasan as a terrorist organization. Beforehand, in September 2015, the United States designated ISIS-K as a Designated Global Terrorist Group under Executive Order 13224, and in January 2016 a terrorist organization under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The Australian Government designated the Islamic State-Khorasan as a terrorist organization on November 3, 2017, under Criminal Code Division 102.

### **Conclusion**

Since the declaration of the new Caliphate by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2014 and of the new province of Khurasan in 2015, Islamic State has clearly signalled its intention to enter the South Asia region. Initial data suggests that the group has been able to attract some support, both in the shape of new young recruits and of splinter factions of existing militant organizations. There have been a considerable number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan-Afghanistan authored by IS-K, some of them large and audacious. Simultaneously, IS-K's overall penetration of the militant scene in the region still appears to be relatively limited.

It would be unwise for either of the states of Pakistan or Afghanistan to underestimate the potential risks of the emergence of the Islamic State-K in their region. Despite being relatively small at present, the group has the potential to grow to be a serious force in the future, especially if it is able to attract a large number of recruits from the younger generation in the region's towns and cities.

Daesh is more like a corporate terrorist organisation, re-branding the Salafi jihadist ideology in South Asia. The incursion of IS-K into Pakistan and Afghanistan must be treated as a threat to the whole region and not as a problem of individual countries. Finally, the question of how Afghanistan's new government will cope with the threat of IS-K depends on their political and military strategy and commitment to honour the Doha agreement that they will not allow any militant organization to use Afghan soil for terrorist activities. ■

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF ARMED TERRORIST CONFLICT

■ Dr. Dabissi NOUFÉ Djibril

**Much** has been discussed about extremism and terrorism and the conflicts that arise consequently; most of the discussions address religious beliefs, ethnic interests, or national and ethnic values that are in disharmony with the principles of minorities in one community. This article unpacks fundamentalist political actions related to human and environmental values. The discussion draws on the definition of environmental terrorism posited by Michel Frederick: “deliberate and organized systematic environmental sabotage to achieve political ends.” This can include actions taken towards environmental resources.

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## TERRORISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

Terrorism is divided into three parts: terrorism in support of national liberation or ethnic secession, left-wing terrorism and Islamic terrorism. This division is consistent with the recent political attacks and religious conflicts in Western countries, such as the attacks of 9/11 in New York of 2001, July 7, 2005 in London, and November 13, 2015 in Paris. However, it does not fit the context of defending central environmental values. Nevertheless, the United States of America considers environmental terrorism as one of the types of terrorism and enacts federal laws to confront any violent action that targets environmental facilities or institutions.

Since the stated goal of terrorism is to undermine the functional safety of the state and the well-being of the population, it is necessary to classify its actions within the scope of threats to environmental security. According to Rousseau's social contract theory, human beings have voluntarily become organized into a political system to enhance their security, later known as statehood, and security issues were essential to their survival and protection internally from rebellion and externally from aggression. This is the national security that has been confirmed with the passage of time by the control of the state subject to violence over its territory, and by the military dominance of the international arena. Then the non-military domains of security increased in state politics.

Consequently, this led in 1980s to the redefinition of the concept of national security; its requirements were expanded in terms of the departure from the narrow tradi-



tional approach to include any act that affects the well-being of the population or the functional safety of the state in the national security threats. The concept of environmental security then appeared and became inevitable.

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS AND DISASTERS

In the past decades, interest in the close relationship between man and nature has increased, and this has been linked to achieving security; the survival of societies has become associated with the control of nuclear weapons and the sound environment management in the biosphere. Some publications have warned of the depletion of natural and energy resources needed to run our societies, including "The Silent Spring" and "Limits to Growth."

The transboundary nature of some risks, such as acid rain associated with industrial pollution, highlighted the need for consultations between countries in the search for sustainable solutions, bringing about new global phenomena, such as global warming, climate change, fragility of the ozone layer, depletion of genetic heritage, desertification, deforestation, marine pollution, radioactive, industrial and household wastes and land degradation, which are all a real threat to humans and their institutions. These escalating environmental threats were documented in the Brundtland Report in 1987 and in the Rio preparatory work in 1992.

The impact of armed conflict on environment is the most permanent, with dangerous and long-term consequences for ecosystems and the lives of people. A hundred years following World War I, farmers in northeastern France were sometimes forced to stop working because a shell was found buried in the ground. Kuwait has also been severely affected by environmental disasters resulting from the burning of hundreds of oil wells back in the 1991 Gulf War. The 9/11 Attacks resulted in huge civilian and material losses, and after a few weeks, triggered by bioterrorism. The deadly anthrax contaminated the mail and caused several deaths. It was possible for the tragedy to end there, but the matter went beyond pollution to environment, as the explosions and the fall of the towers into the atmosphere released various materials of organic and metallic elements and fine particles, and materials resulting from combustion and asbestos, in addition to toxic gases. Such materials are notoriously harmful to the health of the residents, especially those working in places close to the site of the accident.

## SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

The research examined the results of the degradation of ecosystems and the depletion of natural resources. By ex-

aming the empirical reality of the term 'environmental security,' two trends emerge: the first one is concerned with environment, and the second one is associated with statehood. In the first direction, environmental security of a country is the loss of non-traditional threats to the basic environmental elements and the well-being of the population; environment is an indispensable variable. The term environmental safety includes three elements: permanent exploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources, protection of air, water and soil elements so that pollution does not affect the natural regeneration, and reduction of risks associated with industrial activities.

Beyond a shadow of doubt, the scope of the concept of environmental security includes all the issues associated with the protection of these three elements. This security may be endangered and threatened by acts of sabotage, such as belligerency, environmental terrorism, excessive pollution, or unsustainable exploitation of resources, let alone permanent human intervention in some environmental areas. This concept of environmental security consists of a holistic view of the relations between states because it is related to the security of the earth entirely. Therefore, this vision pays more attention to research studies addressing the impact of global environmental issues, such as the greenhouse effect, the degradation of the ozone layer and the depletion of the genetic balance. Treatment approaches for these trends should be further explored, and a combination of political, economic, technical and ethical endeavors to pave the way for global environmental security should equally be seriously considered.

Some research studies address environmental security in a different approach; environment is considered an independent variable, while state security is a dependent variable, and environmental safety is an environmental component of national security. These studies are based on the assumption that environmental issues due to their origin or severity may affect national security to varying degrees according to the social, economic, political or diplomatic difficulties and disturbances they lead to or attacks on regional safety or open warfare.

The relationship between national security and its associated environmental component thus is examined according to two visions: the first vision discusses environmental issues as the main factor in the loss of security, and this trend is based on either the clashes resulting from local or regional environmental conflicts such as cross-border pollution and the overexploitation of common resources, or the shift and disruption of power relations in one region or

different regions as a result of major environmental disturbances such as climate change and desertification. The second vision addresses environmental issues as secondary factors to the loss of security; environmental disputes affect national security only indirectly, thus contributing to the increase in political, economic, social or military turmoil, hence fueling existing conflicts.

## INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

International environmental management is related to achieving the concept of sustainable development; that is, it is related to societal issues pertinent to environmental problems. Therefore, it is a holistic concept that applies at various levels for different purposes, in an environment marked by conflict of interest. Looking at environmental constraints seems to be the area preferred for trials to update public action which is reflected in the emergence of new patterns of environmental regulation and protection. However, every year millions of tons of waste and pollutants are dumped into the sea, and such a practice is subject to several international or regional strict rules to combat marine pollution. The international community recognized years ago that preserving a good environment is a major international issue, but the issue itself did not put into action a real environmental law.

To well address this inability in the international system and the ineffectiveness of international systems to protect environment, the international community has been working since 2001 to lay down the outlines for a reform that is still vague. Since Johannesburg Summit of 2002, this impasse should incentivize considering different methods that go beyond the old ones, which were considered a model work, which are in fact shackles, so to speak, that prevent reaching the definition of the common environmental interest. Thus, this common vision should allow us to move towards inter-generational solidarity that imparts meaning to the concept of sustainable development, as formulated at the global level by the Brundtland Commission in 1987: "We borrow environmental capital for the sake of future generations, knowing that we can never pay them their dues, yet humankind has the necessary means to ensure sustainable development, that is, to meet and accommodate the needs of current generations, without compromising the ability of future generations to respond to their own needs."

The fragility of international arrangements and the contributions of international organizations to environmental management are equally important in rigorous discussions, as the process of consultation and decision-making on

the environment at the international level is still a process marred by poor organization. Despite the clear links between environment, economy and development, international organizations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, have not equally provided sufficient resources to respond effectively and regularly to global environmental problems. As the United Nations Environment Program and the United Nations Development Program seek to enhance their impact, the fact that they are only programs is holding them back. The program has very limited room to maneuver and make progress, because it does not exercise any powers other than making recommendations. Despite the initiatives of UNEP are different, it cannot go beyond its scope, unless otherwise it is granted real authority to intervene and act.

Despite the objection of some countries, the program was granted the right to develop independent capabilities in scientific research; there is consensus that this body should become the scientific authority in this field and the main source of information on the global environment. The fragility of international environmental governance has eroded and whittled away at confidence in the international system, which has led various countries to reconsider their own environmental interests.

## **TERRORISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATION**

In recent years, initiatives to develop the green economy have come into play in various parts of the world; some bodies that have taken into account the threats to the environment and the position of people in their environment. Following the 9/11 Attacks, awareness of other threat sources doubled, especially the terrorist threat to nuclear power stations, and the West began to feel increasingly uneasy and worried about the vulnerability of the infrastructure.

The threat of mass terrorism is no longer illusionary. In Belgium, investigations proved in 2016 that many sites were subject to the terrorists' meticulous scrutiny, whether in collusion with the inside with four security permits that may have been withdrawn from the Tihange Nuclear Power Station, through the penetration of subcontracting companies on which this industry relies heavily, or by an old accident that remains unknown, relating to the serious sabotage of a turbine at the Doyle Power Plant in August 2014.

If we add to these widespread breakthroughs the risk of piracy of nuclear waste during its transportation or storage, we then find out that giving up nuclear energy will greatly

reduce the risk of terrorism, while freeing up new capital to exploit renewable energy sources, as the cost of rehabilitating nuclear facilities in France is estimated at one hundred billion euros. The advantage of renewable energy is that it is decentralized and thus operates in small networks, making them uneasy or undangerous materials in terrorist operations.

Given the fact that terrorism is ballooning and snowballing into a bigger threat, it is important to include other areas of environmental transformation, as more attacks were recently launched. Some of the projects that many people today disapprove in Europe are considered direct and important targets of terrorism, in addition to the waste of public money and agricultural land, coupled with the emission of greenhouse gases, in clear contradiction to the Paris Agreement.

The local movements and communities should pay attention to economy, and negotiate with their countries to strengthen public. It is necessary to act immediately to accelerate the environmental transformation of economy and make it at the service of society.

## **CONCLUSION**

Environmental issues are potential threats, as environmental pressures and scarcity of resources will be the source of future instability of states, and a cause of international conflicts. Thus, it appears that the concept of environmental safety has a very wide scope in the context of the two trends that have been discussed and analyzed: the first trend uses the concept of environmental security to breathe new life into international relations, drawing on competition and conflict between states to obtain strategic natural resources. The other trend depends on environmental degradation, which harms the functional safety of states and the welfare of people.

This analysis deserves more attention for its deep psychological and real impact even though it is apparently marked weaknesses coupled with the challenges it has encountered, which are manifested in the practical aspect of the concept of environmental safety and security. Environmental changes may contribute to an increase in conflicts and unrest, and hence create a feeling of insecurity; consequently, they may be used as a tool for internal or external policy. The big gap between existing environmental security and sustainable development should be seamlessly bridged, and rational policy requires structural changes and a set of innovations that clearly go beyond the opportunistic patching that seek to paper over and shore up a whole host of issues. ■

# FOREWORD



## WAY OUT

**The risks** of child recruitment in terrorist organizations and armed groups are increasingly growing. However, the bespoke programs, whether by preventing child recruitment, shutting children off from such groups, or rehabilitating and integrating children into society are inconsistent with the severity of the said phenomenon and associated risks, with many challenges coming into play.

Once linked, a child cannot easily dissociate from such armed groups, as various challenges remain dauntingly tough. Children suffer from being relocated from their homes and families; they cannot trace their way back home. More challengingly, children are bulldozed into going to other countries. For instance, the children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda have had difficulty going back home; such children were unaware of the surrounding vicinity and had no clue of how to develop an escape plan.

Experiences show that once children are informed of how to leave armed groups with prior knowledge that they will receive support once they act accordingly, they can be more encouraged and enthused to leave. To this effect, a special program in northern Uganda used fliers dropped from helicopters, bushland leaflets, and a local radio program to provide information to children on how to escape or surrender safely, with promises of pardon made to encourage them to leave the LRA.

Equally important, the knowledge base about children associated with terrorist and armed groups is still relatively poor. It becomes difficult to pinpoint exactly what factors influence children being attached to such groups, and how to help them escape. Such children may fear reprisals, or they may be rejected by family and community members upon return.

Unfortunately, terrorist groups have shown their ability to indoctrinate their child recruiters; when they are fully imbued and inculcated with extremism and violence, they

evinced more resistance to efforts to remove them from such groups for social reintegration.

Public opinion may demand a more robust approach in managing children recruited by terrorist groups, as they perceive that such children receive special treatment vis-à-vis other vulnerable people who really deserve such treatment more than anyone else.

Given the poor resources, reintegration programs may be developed through a one-size-fits-all approach, although recruited children show various experiences. Programs unaware of individual needs, while brushing aside resiliency required for appropriate responses will often have little impact. The general social and economic conditions remain decisive factors.

Practitioners and policy makers need to act in a timely manner to address this phenomenon. When developing child reintegration policies and programs, it is important to consider different aspects, such as health, psychological and social recovery, and their needs and aspirations to return to their families and communities.

Research shows severe effects of violence on the physical and mental health of children, who need treatment that many countries cannot provide. Again, such children often face severe stigmatization and rejection from their families and communities. Some terrorist and armed groups force children to commit heinous acts of violence targeting their families and communities to block their way back home.

It is necessary to develop closer cooperation globally to clamp down on this formidable phenomenon. It would be much helpful for the UNSC to move forward, based on Chapter VII and refer cases of suspected recruitment in conflict areas to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. The experience of the Joint Forces Command of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen can be one of the best practices of recruited and victimized child rehabilitation and reintegration through the UN Child Protection Unit. ■

**Editor-in-Chief**

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