



CENTENNIAL HIGH SCHOOL MODEL CONGRESS CONFERENCE 2016

SENATE – HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS **COMBATING ISIS RADICALIZATION OF AMERICAN MUSLIMS**

By Barry Plunkett and Kaitlyn Won

The committee of Homeland Security is the U.S. Senate's main supervising subcommittee with extensive jurisdiction over government function in general and the Department of Homeland Security's function in particular. Its primary duties are to oversee the productivity and efficacy of all agencies and departments of the federal government.

INTRODUCTION

At the conference, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security will strive to counteract the radicalization of Americans by ISIS. In 2011, the United States withdrew from Iraq, and a civil war erupted in adjacent Syria, opening up a dangerous power vacuum in the already unstable region. Thousands of innocent civilians died as fractalized rebel militias, the Syrian Army, and dozens of terrorist organizations grappled for power. Out of the chaos emerged the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a powerful Sunni terrorist organization bent on creating an Islamic caliphate in the region. With unparalleled brutality, ISIS swept out of Syria and down through Northern Iraq, killing tens of thousands and staking its claim to vast swaths of territory. Once a relatively obscure group, ISIS has become a quasi-state governing more than 10,000 square miles of territory with strict Sharia law. Unlike most other terrorist organizations, ISIS has mastered the use of social media as a recruitment tool. Facebook, Twitter, and dozens of encrypted chat sites have become weapons ISIS uses to radicalize Muslims living outside their territory. ISIS's social media specialists, who tailor their recruitment strategies to each individual target, have met with unprecedented success. Since 2011, more than 30,000 Muslims from around the world have travelled to the Middle East to fight for ISIS and ISIS-affiliates. At least 250 of these Muslims have been Americans have been radicalized by ISIS operatives. According to a bipartisan congressional report released in September by the House Homeland Security Committee, US efforts to curb "unprecedented" radicalization have "largely failed."

At CHSMC 2016, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security will work to rectify this failure by drafting and debating new legislation to combat ISIS radicalization.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 2003, the United States invaded Iraq in response to intelligence that Saddam Hussein had ties to Al-Qaeda and a large arsenal of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons at his disposal. The ensuing war killed upwards of 200,000 Iraqis and opened up an enormous power vacuum in the arguably already unstable country. Saddam Hussein's dictatorial government was overthrown; governmental agencies were dismantled and defunded, and the Iraqi army was disbanded. Tens of thousands of former government employees and soldiers were left without jobs, and the entire country was left without security--a tenuous position for a country already gripped by severe social and political conflict between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims.

Inevitably, the Iraqi economy collapsed, but billions of dollars from the US kept the country functioning, albeit barely. Meanwhile, the US military did its utmost to maintain some measure of security. More than 80,000 troops were deployed in the initial invasion, code name Operation Iraqi Freedom. Over the next 5 years, the number of US troops stationed in Iraq increased to more than 170,000. Despite this military presence, terrorist and separatist organizations thrived in the wartorn country due to the US's ill-conceived and poorly executed attempts at nation-building.

While the US occupied Iraq from 2003 to 2011, US officials worked to empower a national, democratic Shi'ite government. The US believed that their government would satisfy the majority Shi'ite Iraqi population (60%) and stabilize the country without alienating the minority Sunni population, which would still have some representation in the national legislature and local governments. The ambitious plan failed spectacularly. Iraq had no tradition of democratic pluralism, so the minority Sunni and Kurdish populations were wary of the new government and the Shi'ite population which controlled it. For decades, the government had been controlled by the minority Sunni population. Ruthless Sunni dictators had used violence and intimidation to oppress Shi'ite majority. Now that their roles were reversed, the Sunnis feared oppression at the hands of a vengeful and authoritarian Shi'ite government. They feared the new government would systematically silence their voices and violate their rights. Unfortunately, these fears were not unfounded.

Though the new government was designed to be democratic, the Shias who controlled it were not prepared to cede any power to the Sunnis who had slaughtered and oppressed them for decades. Whenever possible, the government marginalized Sunnis, stripped them of their rights, and deprived them of equal protection under the law. The US attempted to prevent this oppressive treatment whenever possible. US officials found that instituting authoritarian controls and denying the Iraqis their right to self-governance proved to be the only effective means of preventing socio-political persecution, but doing so would invalidate the US's justification for the protracted occupation. With no answers, US officials were forced to stand by while the abuses of power continued. During elections, the US Army attempted to maintain order and security at the polls. In areas of concentrated military presence--near US military bases, in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, and other strategic outposts--they were successful. Iraqis were able to vote safely in these regions. That was not true in most of the country. In majority Shi'ite regions, Shias employed intimidation, manipulation, and outright violence to keep

Sunnis away from the polls; Sunnis behaved similarly in majority Sunni areas. The result was elections and a government that were only nominally democratic.

The violent elections and frequent incidents of sectarian violence proved to the world what US military planners had known since the initial invasion: the US could not maintain security in the region by itself. For the sake of self-governance and for the protection of the Iraqi people, the US Army needed to train, arm, and fund local security forces. Ample funding, equipment, and arms were provided, and thousands of troops completed training programs. But for whatever reason, the green security forces were unable to maintain order. They could not--or perhaps did not want to--prevent Shi'ite violence perpetrated against Sunnis, and they seemed utterly unprepared to respond to the growing Sunni insurgency. Simply put, the US-trained forces could not protect the Iraqi people even with active support in from the US military, leaving a gaping security vacuum for the duration of the occupation--a vacuum which was increasingly filled by Sunni extremists.

From the outset of the occupation, Sunni extremists took advantage of the security vacuum in the region to promote violence and recruit terrorist operatives. The conditions for insurgency were ideal. The economic collapse had cost thousands of Sunnis their jobs. They were desperate for any kind of work they could find, and terrorist organizations, with generous funding from foreign donors, offered them employment when no one else could. Meanwhile, the sudden disenfranchisement of the once powerful Sunni population left many anxious to reassert themselves and regain some measure of power. Recruiters harnessed this sense of powerlessness along with the anger created by the new government's oppressive behavior to polarize the Sunni population and move them to violence.

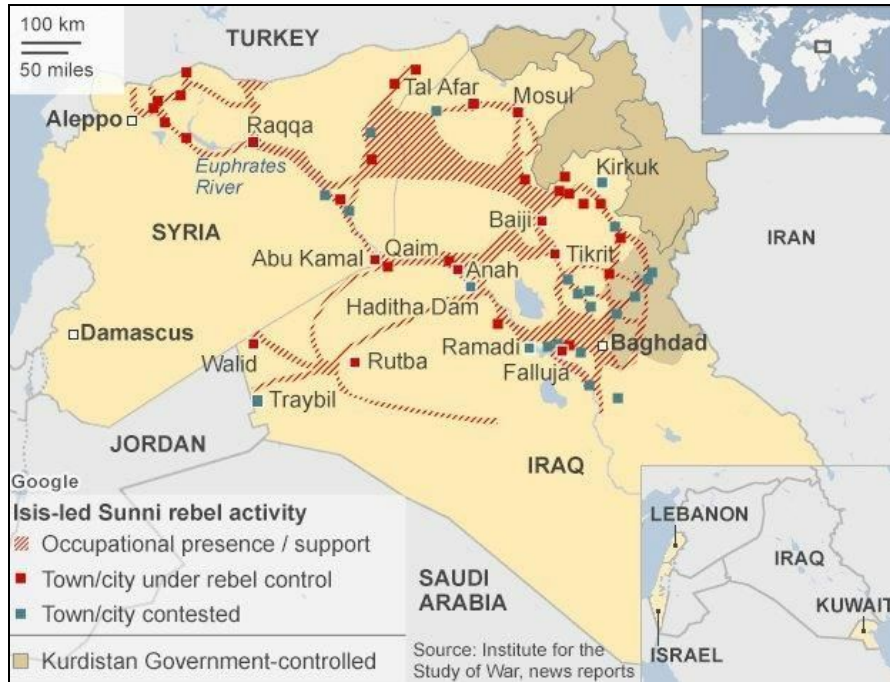
In 2004, Al-Qaeda founded a new branch in Iraq known as "Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia." Led by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, the organization waged a guerilla war against American troops, the new government, and the Shi'ite population. Al-Zarqawi and his organization orchestrated suicide bombings, car bombings, hijackings, kidnappings, and paramilitary operations against civilians and military targets until he was killed by a US airstrike in 2006. Zarqawi's death opened up a power vacuum in the insurgency, which was filled by a new organization known as the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). ISI served as an umbrella organization which took control of Zarqawi's former Al-Qaeda and a number of other smaller terrorist organizations in Iraq, creating a cohesive and formidable network of terrorist organizations. Through 2011, much of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq was conducted through ISI or funded by it.

Despite this organization and scope, ISI grew weaker in the later years of the American occupation due to more sophisticated nation-building strategies. The Americans effectively mediated conflicts between Shia and Sunni government officials, limited abuses of power, and negotiated compromises between the two sects, thereby winning the trust of the Sunnis. More satisfied with their government and less wary of the American occupation, Sunnis were less willing to turn to violence to assert their power. As recruiting flagged and funding dried up, ISI and most of the other terrorist organizations in Iraq became less active, violent, and effective. These trends augured well for the newly democratic nation.

In 2008, with the Iraqi economy on its way to a healthy recovery and promising developments in Shi'ite-Sunni relations, President Bush and Congress agreed to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq. The deadline for complete withdrawal was set for January 1, 2012. As American troops left the country, the

remaining forces continued training Iraqi security forces. By the conclusion of the withdrawal on December 18, 2011, they had trained and armed more than 11,000 Iraqi troops. Given the progress the Americans had made, security experts were confident these forces would be able to defend Iraq from international threats and domestic terrorism. They had received first-rate training and were armed with state-of-the-art American weapons. The threats they faced appeared more manageable than ever before, but security experts had overestimated the stability of the region.

After most American troops had left the country, sectarian violence increased once again, and the Shi'ite government returned to its old habits of persecuting the Sunni minority. American nation-building and democratic pluralism were forgotten as the socio-political rift between Sunnis and Shias reopened. ISI thrived in this renewed state of instability. Recruitment spiked. Attacks more than tripled. The Iraqi security forces--which at 11,000, numbered less than 1/10th of the former US occupation--simply could not fill the security vacuum opened between 2008 and 2012 as US forces withdrew. The collapse of the government in neighboring Syria and the ensuing chaos also contributed to the growth of ISI. ISI leaders flooded into eastern Syria, where Iraqi security forces dare not attempt counterterrorism operations. In Syria, ISI leaders met, exchanged resources, and colluded with Syrian extremist leaders, enabling ISI operatives to become more active and dangerous in Iraq. ISI also found thousands of willing recruits among the masses of disillusioned and desperate Syrians. Some of these men were trained in Syria and shipped into Iraq to execute suicide bombings and other paramilitary operations; others stayed in Syria for similar missions. At some point during this period of rapid growth and expansion, ISI split with Syrian Al-Qaeda leadership and changed its mission dramatically. Since its founding, ISI had deployed violence and propaganda to purge Iraq of American, western, and Sunni influences. Now, the organization sought to establish a self-governing Islamic caliphate. Out of the instability of post-occupation Iraq and wartorn Syria, ISI, now the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) sought to build and govern its own nation under strict Sharia law.



Map of Iraq and Syria depicting ISIS occupational presence in late 2014..

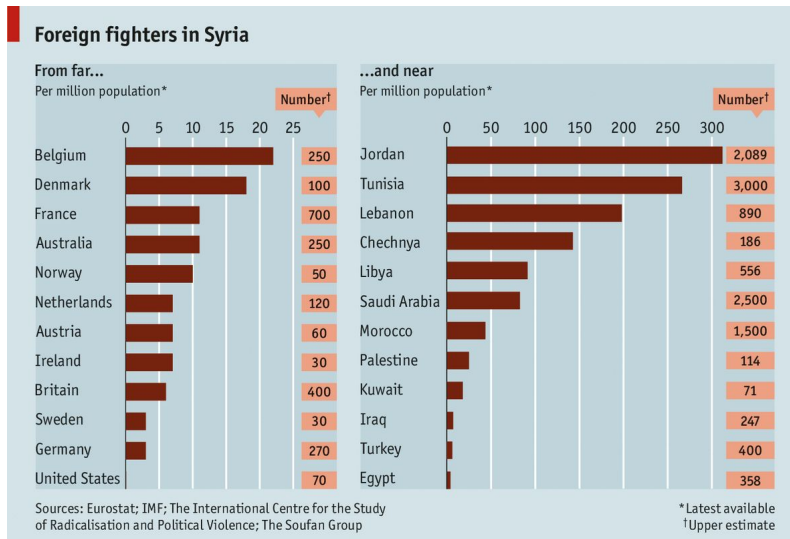
For the next two years, ISIS grew quickly in Syria. It attracted far more recruits and much more funding than any other extremist Sunni group in the region due to its unique and ambitious goal. None of the other terrorist organizations operating in Syria offered the same optimism; none of them promised to create an Islamic utopia in the Iraq and the Levant. Throughout 2013, as capital and recruits flowed into it, ISIS took large swaths of territory in Eastern Syria. In 2014, the organization undertook a large-scale military campaign in Western Iraq. The Iraqi Army was powerless to stop the ISIS advance. Iraqi fighters abandoned their posts in encounter after encounter with ISIS fighters. Sometimes, the Iraqis surrendered after skirmishing bravely, but in many instances, they dropped their weapons, abandoned their vehicles, and fled before firing a single shot. The American training programs had clearly failed to prepare the Iraqis for the grim realities of war with religious fanatics.

ISIS penetrated much deeper into Iraq and Syria over the summer. In Syria, fighters pushed west and established a “capital city” in Raqqa. In Iraq, fighters recovered the Iraqis’ abandoned American weapons and vehicles, grew battle hardened, and became increasingly formidable fighters. They captured Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, and continued towards Baghdad. For sometime in the summer of 2014, it appeared as if Baghdad and Iraq might fall to the terrorists. Ultimately, the Peshmerga, the Kurdish military, not the Iraqi Army, combined with US airstrikes stopped ISIS’s advance towards Baghdad and saved the country. Since that initial advance, ISIS has not taken much more territory, but it has effectively held most of its gains, in spite of an extensive airstrike campaign led by the US. In the two years since its first campaign into Iraq, ISIS has developed into a quasi-state. It has instituted a strict, traditional form of Islamic Sharia law to govern its

territory. And like any other government, ISIS has created a large bureaucracy to enforce laws, collects taxes, and manage imports and exports. Most of the revenue ISIS earns through taxes and oil exports are directed to its military to fund perpetual wars with the Iraqi Army, Syrian rebels, Assad's troops, and the Peshmerga. The exact number of ISIS fighters is unknown: Estimates range from tens of thousands to more than 200,000. Whatever the exact figure may be, coalition airstrikes, which have cost more than \$5 billion dollars, don't seem to be reducing the it. One of the reasons for this resilience may be ISIS's unprecedented foreign recruiting success.

Recruitment and Radicalization of Foreigners

Using social media platforms like Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter as well as encrypted messaging apps, ISIS has reached out to and radicalized thousands of Muslims in dozens of countries around the world. Since 2012, somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 foreigners have travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS, the rebels or Assad. The exact portion of this population which has joined ISIS is unknown, but ISIS is known to have at least several thousand active foreign fighters. This is likely only a fraction of the foreign fighters ISIS has recruited. Most foreigners have returned to their home countries or have been captured or killed. The CIA estimates that thousands more may have been radicalized to execute domestic acts of terror in their home countries. Many more may have been recruited into sophisticated sleeper cells, lying in wait to strike. In 2015 alone, nearly 70 ISIS operatives were arrested in the US after they had been radicalized online. The scope of domestic radicalization, performed largely online, is unknown in the United States and other western nations, but intelligence agency estimates are disconcerting. The success of ISIS recruiting is unprecedented among terrorist organizations. For decades, foreign Muslims have sympathized with and joined Sunni extremist groups like Al-Qaeda, but they have never been radicalized on this scale at such a high rate. This is a battle that we are losing. This committee must act.



Histograms depicting the number of foreign fighters operating in Iraq and Syria per capita. These figures include all fighters operating in the region, not just those employed by ISIS.

Source: The Economist

Recruits are flocking to ISIS from around the globe. Aaron Y. Zelin, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Study, says his data indicates recruits have travelled to ISIS from approximately 100 countries. The majority of these recruits hail from nearby countries in the Middle East. Data indicates Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Tunisia are the leading vectors for radicals in the region. That being said, the exact number hailing from Iraq is unknown, and the estimate is widely considered too conservative. Western Europe--especially the UK, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium, where Muslims are largely marginalized--produces the second-most radicals. In September 2015, the House Homeland Security Committee released a report which estimated that 250 Americans had travelled to Iraq and Syria since 2011 to join ISIS. Several dozen of those fighters have since returned home. Some are being monitored; others were apprehended upon landing in the US, but many have been free to return to American society. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle considered this an egregious security failure. They fear that these former ISIS fighters may be returning home to form sleeper cells, radicalize more Americans, and/or perpetrate acts of terrorism stateside. While no such attack has yet been recorded, their fears are not unfounded.

The San Bernardino terrorist attack proved homegrown extremism could be lethal in and of itself, even without ISIS's support. In December 2015, Syed Rizwan Farook, a natural born Pakistani-American, and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, a Pakistani-born permanent US resident, killed 14 and wounded 22 in a terrorist attack in San Bernadino, California. The couple's social media activity prior to the attack indicates they were motivated by the desire for jihad and martyrdom. They had been radicalized by terrorist propaganda sites on the deepweb two years prior. FBI investigators concluded that the couple was not part of any terrorist cell or network. They did not travel to Syria. They had not colluded with ISIS but were inspired by the organization's successes abroad. Without any affiliation with a larger organization, Farook and Malik plotted and executed a deadly

terrorist attack, and they may have radicalized their neighbor, Enrique Marquez, in the process. The extremists who have returned to the US since joining ISIS may be capable of far worse with the combat experience, logistical support, funding, and training that ISIS may have provided them. This committee must determine whether it can address this security failure retroactively and should consider developing a monitoring program for foreign fighters who return to the US in the future. Moreover, the committee develop a cohesive national strategy to combat domestic radicalization and couch it in a broader counter-radicalization strategy that includes programs to identify, monitor, and dissuade potential radicals. Early-intervention, providing “off-ramps” to radicalization for suspects being monitored by law enforcement, must become a standard and widespread practice among US agencies.



Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik.

Source: LA Times

The House Homeland Security Committee report on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel also found that despite some efforts to combat recruitment, radicalization, and travel, authorities have only managed to “interdict a fraction” of the Americans who have sought travel to Iraq and Syria. This failure may be caused in part by the unprecedented rate of radicalization. Law enforcement and intelligence agencies don’t have the technology, funding, or manpower necessary to stop the flow of fighters to the conflict zone. They simply don’t have the capacity to monitor and intercept all of the suspected fighters. The report also found that security weaknesses in Western Europe may threaten US security. Terrorists are employing “broken travel” in Europe to evade surveillance. “Broken-travel,” the use of multi-stage routes employing air travel, public transportation, and foot travel to avoid detection systems, has confounded and deceived European intelligence agencies on a large-scale. Unless information-sharing among European and American agencies improves, extremists may be able to use “broken travel” to enter the US from Europe after leaving the conflict zone. Information-sharing failures have also been identified between local and national law enforcement agencies in the US. The committee should consider developing strategies to replace the culture of “lone-wolf” intelligence among US and international agencies with a culture of cooperation by improving intelligence-sharing standards and protocols. Families, citizens, and communities must also be intimately involved in the development and deployment of a national counter-radicalization strategy. There a very few outreach initiatives that teach communities and parents how to identify the warning signs of radicalization and respond to them. This committee should decide if national or local initiatives should be created, what messages and instructions they should include, and how they can be funded. Simply responding to radicalization and monitoring radicals is not

enough. Counter-radicalization policy should also address the emotional risk factors for radicalization as well as the technology ISIS uses.

CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

ISIS utilizes various strategies to radicalize and gain potential participants. It uses the internet and other sources to spread its influence around the globe.

Resentment, Rage, and Complexity

There are a few common traits shared by some Muslims in the United States and other countries alike that make them vulnerable to radicalization. They feel as though they are anomalies, and believe themselves to be apart from the surrounding cultures, leading to the development of rejection and anger. They cannot withstand the society's rejection, and feel more ashamed and confused rather than trying to assuage the feelings by finding faith to fill in the hole. This is where ISIS begins to play a role; it appeals to and radicalizes those with such insecure thoughts to the extreme. Their operatives provide a sense of belonging, value, and thus, validate their resentment.

Not all Muslims have views that align with ISIS, for a majority of Muslims are known to be peaceful and have deep appreciation for the practice and mastery of Islam. Nevertheless, there is a reason for the problem lying in the core of Islam – its complexity. Christianity, which is considered to be the most prevalent religion in the U.S., is rather simple. It wants its followers to forgive and love others, and as a result of its simplicity, it is not difficult to follow, even if one's faith dissolves. On the other hand, one must have a profound understanding of Islamic faith to shield oneself from radicalization. Adding the sense of rejection and the complexities to a disoriented, lost person, the outcome is potential radicalization.

Internet, Social Media, and Encrypted Message Platforms

Although not the source of the problem, social media plays a large role in the spread of radicalization and even the mobilization of the sympathizers residing in the U.S.. According to the George Washington University's Program on Extremism, approximately 300 sympathizers have been identified to be actively spreading propaganda and interacting with those with the same mind-sets. American sympathizers are most active on Twitter, where they continue to randomly create numerous accounts. Some of these accounts, the *nodes*, act as the generators of the main content, and the others, the *amplifiers*, simply retweet the material or promote newly made accounts of those who recently had their past account suspended. This leads to a never-ending effort to shut down all the online sympathizers.



ISIS Facebook Page

Source: Political Insider

Some of the materials that these sympathizers post include personal narratives and reinforcements of ideological messages. They also upload words of persuasion to potentially recruit members, who would almost instantaneously gain access to visually impacting videos and photographs, which legitimize their political assertions.

The Internet facilitates recruiting members and consolidating the recruits into more formal organizations because it is a relatively more secure means for potential members to connect with those alike. Posts on almost any social media platforms can go viral within seconds, and linking potential recruits allows them to pass beyond an isolated group of conspirators. By creating an inclusive social network, ISIS can create “*echo chambers*,” where the most extreme ideas and proposals can be shared and supported.

ISIS recruiters use social media to identify potential sympathizers and radicalize them by assuaging their emotional distresses. The online sympathizers tend to be young people for whom the Internet is easier to use. They have higher tendencies to feel isolated than older generations. They are still looking for and developing their identity in an unknown environment. Coming across an online network of Muslim radicals with familiar backgrounds makes them feel accepted. Their virtual acquaintances sympathize with their feelings of isolation and loneliness, and they propose radicalization as a panacea for these feelings. The online extremist community promises them friendship, salvation, and happiness. It provides disenchanting, young Muslims with the community they were never able to find in Western society--a powerful incentive for radicalization.

Online radicalization often occurs as peer-to-peer recruiting, which takes place in 3 steps. It begins on Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, and other public social media platforms with a public “call to arms.” Recruiters lambast western society and liberal social norms, extol the importance and benefits of jihad, field questions about joining ISIS, and provide links to extremist blogs, websites, and chatrooms. After the recruiter has formed a connection with a potential radical, the interaction moves to private direct messages (DMs). Here the ISIS

operative assesses the recruit’s interest, nurses the recruit’s burgeoning hatred of the west, and develops an emotional relationship with the recruit. Over the course of dozens of hours of conversation, the operative earns the recruit’s complete trust and forms a close, personal bond with him. The operative fills an emotional void in the recruit’s life by listening to him/her carefully, expressing interest in his life, and spending as much time with him as possible. The recruiter is always available and happy to talk and provide emotional support when no one else is. One 23-year-old woman described the experience for the New York Times, saying “I was on my own a lot, and they were online all the time.” Finally, once the recruit has absorbed and adopted ISIS’s extremist ideology, the interaction moves to the deep web or encrypted messaging platforms, which cannot be monitored by authorities. The ISIS operative then transmits attack or travel plans to the recruit.

Even without active, peer-to recruitment, social media can encourage extremism. Although the case dynamics remain unclear, it is clear that social media played a role in driving Americans Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi to attack the Muhammad Art Exhibit and Cartoon Contest in Garland, Texas. A couple months prior to the incident, Simpson, who had been involved in jihadist (jihad: an Islamic militant) pursuits for over a decade, became an active member in a group of U.S.-based ISIS sympathizers. Moreover, Simpson was able to contact a prominent British foreign fighter named Abu Hussain al Britani and a well-known Somali-American English-speaking propagandist, Mohamed Abdullahi Hassan, also known as Mujahid Miski. Using his Twitter account “Shariah is Light,” Simpson replied to a post Miski had made ten days prior to the attack: “The brothers from the Charlie Hebdo attack did their part. It’s time for the brothers in the #US to do their part.” He asked Miski to “dm”(direct message) him, and once the two were armed, they drove to Garland from Arizona with a vehicle loaded with weapons. Before the attack, Simpson tweeted one final time using the hashtag: #texasattack, which was instantly spread throughout the internet by Abu Hussain al Britani, who exhorted others to commit similar actions.

PEER-to-PEER TERRORIST RECRUITING

**1 OPEN-SOURCE
“CALL TO ARMS”**

Using Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other public forms of social media to *identify* recruits and give general advice.

**2 SHIFT TO PRIVATE
COMMUNICATIONS**

Using email, direct Facebook or Twitter messages, or messaging apps such as WhatsApp to *assess and develop* recruits.

3 “GOING DARK”

Using the deep web or encrypted messaging services like Wickr and Surespot to *plot attacks or plan travel to overseas terrorist hotspots*.



Elton Simpson pledges allegiance to ISIS before his attack.

Source: Program on Extremism, George Washington University

Identifying and tracking down ISIS sympathizers online is a challenging task because a majority of them remain anonymous. Also, the commonalities between supporters remain broad, which becomes a greater provocation in the identification process. As long as social media and the Internet are the center of communication and information-gathering, ISIS will continue to radicalize and recruit online, making the cyberspace a major factor in the spread of ISIS influence and radicalization--one which this committee must address in its policy proposals.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Below are just two of many potential solutions that the committee can and should consider. The House Homeland Security Committee's report on foreign fighters included 36 policy recommendations that you should briefly review.

Promote Online One-to-One Contact

Yasir Qadhi, a prominent Muslim theologian in America, stated, "'This battle needs to get online, which is what I'm doing.'"



*Yasir Qhadi giving a sermon on the recent Paris bombings and
providing two practical ways of overcoming challenges
for Muslims*

Source: halaltube

Counteracting radicalization is an issue of international concern, and numerous organizations have been set up to confront the extremist ideology, primarily online. Government agencies have tweeted out counter messages and funded general outreach efforts in Muslim communities, and internet companies have suspended accounts, removed gory videos, and shared information with law enforcement. Various NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have trained religious and community leaders to counter against ISIS messages and have created websites with peaceful interpretations of the Quran. Many have taken steps to fight ISIS online, but what's absent is the general effort to establish one-to-one contact with those influenced by ISIS and its ideologies.

Humera Khan, the executive director of Muflehun (Arabic for "those who will be successful") devoted to fighting Islamic extremism, states, "In terms of recruiting, ISIS is one of the loudest voices. Their message is sexy, and there is very little effective response out there. Most of the government response isn't interactive. It's a one-way broadcast, not a dialogue." Although Khan and many others have put in great efforts, the amount of action taken is yet to be sufficient.

Reversing the tide will necessitate more of what Khan has done. In other words, what the U.S. needs more of is more efficient and reliable means of identifying and communicating with people on the verge of being convinced by extremist messages. For example, a London think tank known as the Institute for Strategic Dialogue piloted tests, in which it located people at risk of radicalization on Facebook and attempted to dissuade 160 of them. This test, albeit being small, showed the power of a thorough individual contact strategy.

By promoting online peer-to-peer contact and creating and expanding government agencies to do so, the U.S. would have a better stand in the long online battle with ISIS, which is in control of the online struggle to this day.

Publicize ISIS Atrocities Against Sunnis

The most significant step to take in order to defeat ISIS in its propaganda war, which leads to radicalization, is to understand their pursuits. ISIS's goals all have one commonality – the vulnerability to a messaging counteroffensive. One way to counteract is to publicize ISIS atrocities against the Sunnis. By optimizing the technology available, there should be governmental actions taken to exploit aerial and electronic surveillance to its entirety. In other words, there should be a proposal to document the war crimes and abominations committed by ISIS against Sunni Muslims to show the potential recruits the realities of the organization. According to ISIS, it is acting to protect the Sunnis from sectarian regimes in Iraq and Syria, and it has been relatively silent about its massacres of uncooperative Sunni tribes, albeit flaunting its slaughtering of Shi'ites and Iraqi military personnel. By highlighting the massacres of the Sunni tribes in countermessages,

the government can not only undermine ISIS ideologies behind the propaganda, but dissuade potential members from joining ISIS as well.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Delegates should prepare themselves by first looking into the international rise of ISIS. Below is a list of useful sources to take into consideration:

- Evolution of ISIS by the New York Times Video:
<http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/100000003240417/the-evolution-of-isis.html>
- House Homeland Security Committee Foreign Fighter Report:
<https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/TaskForceFinalReport.pdf>
- House Homeland Security Committee Foreign Fighter Report Summary:
<https://homeland.house.gov/press/committee-unveils-foreign-fighter-task-forces-final-report/>
- University of Denver’s Center for Middle East Studies’ List of Multimedia Background Sources on ISIS and Radicalization: <http://www.du.edu/korbel/middleeast/isis.html>
- On The Issues to explore your Senator’s foreign policy, security, and surveillance positions:
<http://www.ontheissues.org/default.htm>
- The Hill to find basic information about your Senator, any posts they have made on social media, current events and policies categorized based on regulation, and videos:
<http://thehill.com/>

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the key elements of a national counter-radicalization strategy?
2. How can American communities and families be included in the strategy?

3. What can be done to combat peer-to-peer recruiting? What “off-ramps” can be provided for potential radicals?
 4. Should social media platforms be required to dedicate some of their resources to monitoring and removing ISIS-affiliated accounts?
 5. Should encrypted message platforms be required to provide encryption codes to governments? How could this be enforced?
 6. How can information-sharing be improved among local and national law enforcement and intelligence agencies? What protocols should be mandated?
 7. What steps should be taken to improve information sharing with European intelligence agencies?
 8. Should we consider creating an international database of known extremists? Which governments should we cooperate with to develop and maintain it?
 9. How should we address the root causes of radicalization (feelings of isolation, anger, and loneliness)?
 10. How do we fund expanded and additional counter-terrorism programs?
 11. How should law enforcement respond to returning ISIS fighters? Should they all receive the same treatment?
 12. Should we develop our own social media propaganda to counteract extremist propaganda?
 13. Is there a place for advanced interrogation or torture in our national counter-radicalization strategy?
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CONCLUSION

More than 250 Americans have travelled to fight in Iraq and Syria for ISIS since 2011. Hundreds more may be active stateside, planning domestic attacks and recruiting isolated, young Muslim-Americans. Despite concerted efforts by the CIA and State Department to combat ISIS propaganda on Youtube, Facebook, and Twitter, the rate of radicalization has not slowed. Intelligence agencies haven’t been able to accurately identify at-risk recruits or effectively intervene in the peer-to-peer recruiting process. And law enforcement agencies haven’t been able to intercept all of the fighters travelling to and from the conflict zone. Our detection, monitoring, intervention, and response mechanisms and protocols must be standardized and improved. The government must adopt a cohesive and comprehensive national counter-radicalization strategy that includes counter-recruitment and counter-travel measures without violating Americans’ rights to privacy. Senators are encouraged to reach across the aisle to form bipartisan partnerships and solutions to achieve this committee’s policy goals and provide for our national security. Effective legislative solutions should answer most or all of the questions without overinflating the counterterrorism budget. Read the House Homeland Security Committee’s policy recommendations, review your Senator’s policy positions, conduct additional research as necessary, and feel free to send us any questions you may have.

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- http://web.mit.edu/CIS/pdf/Human_Cost_of_War.pdf
- <http://www.crethiplethi.com/the-historical-roots-and-stages-in-the-development-of-isis/islamic-countries/syria-islamic-countries/2015/>
- <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf>
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