UNDERSTANDING THE REGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS THAT FACILITATE IED USE
1. Overview 1
  1.1 Notes on methodology 3

2. IED usage among non-state actors 4
  2.1 Known perpetrators of IED attacks in the past five years 5
  2.2 Technical considerations 22
    2.2.1 Weapon supplies 22
    2.2.2 Usage and recycling of military ammunition 22
    2.2.3 Commercially available precursor materials 26
  2.3 Tactics, techniques and procedures 27
    2.3.1 Tactical designs 27
  2.4 Expertise inherited from former military personnel 32
  2.5 Networks of knowledge exchange 33
    2.5.1 IS-Boko Haram 34
    2.5.2 Boko Haram-AQIM & wider al-Qaeda network 35
    2.5.3 AQAP-al-Shabaab 35
    2.5.4 AQAP-Jabhat al-Nusra 35
    2.5.5 Taliban-Al-Qaeda 36
  2.6 Timings of IED incidents 36
    2.6.1 Escalation of violence during Ramadan 36
    2.6.2 Escalation of violence during elections 38
    2.6.3 The spread of VBIEDs in 2014-2015 40

3. Cultural, ideological and religious motivators for IED incidents 42
  3.1 Salafi teachings 42
    3.1.1 Ideological underpinnings for jihad 42
    3.1.2 Religious justifications for IED attacks drawn from Muslim jurisprudence 43
    3.1.3 Contemporary scholars of jihad 44
    3.1.4 Counter-arguments within Muslim jurisprudence and scholarship 46
  3.2 The sectarian dimension 48
    3.2.1 Regional and local sectarianism as a trigger for jihadism 49
  3.3 Demographic and socio-economic factors driving jihad 50
    3.3.1 Religion as an outlet for socio-economic disparity and disenfranchisement 50
    3.3.2 Identity and alienation 51
    3.3.3 The political context 52
    3.3.4 The jihadi narrative: Corrupt regimes and the defence of Islam 54
    3.3.5 Summary 55

4. The foreign fighters phenomenon 56
  4.1 The flow of volunteers to Syria and Iraq... 57
    4.1.1 Moroccan foreign fighters 57
    4.1.2 Jihadi recruitment in Turkey 59
    4.1.3 The appeal to Western volunteers 60
  4.2 ... and back to their countries of origin 60
5. Sources of funding (including self-funding) for the major groupings that perpetrate IED incidents

5.1 The ‘Islamic State’
5.1.1 A diversified ‘state’ economy
5.1.2 Revenue raised from the extraction, refining and sale of oil
5.1.3 Taxation, customs duties and extortion
5.1.4 External donors
5.1.5 Foreign terrorist fighters and microfinancing

5.2 Al-Qaeda and its affiliates
5.2.1 Donors
5.2.2 Kidnapping for ransom
5.2.3 Control and taxation of trade and smuggling routes

5.3 The Taliban
5.3.1 The drug trade
5.3.2 Cigarette smuggling
5.3.3 Illegal mining and emerald smuggling
5.3.4 Kidnappings
5.3.5 Taxation and extortion
5.3.6 Ghost schools
5.3.7 Other internal sources of revenue
5.3.8 External sources of funding

5.4 Al-Shabaab
5.4.1 Taxation and extortion
5.4.2 Smuggling and the drug trade
5.4.3 External funding
5.4.4 Other sources

5.5 Boko Haram
5.5.1 Self-funding
5.5.2 Taxation and extortion
5.5.3 Kidnappings and people smuggling
5.5.4 Raids and robberies
5.5.5 Smuggling of arms and goods
5.5.6 Collections and begging
5.5.7 External funding

6. Key sponsors and donors

6.1 Saudi Arabia
6.2 Qatar
6.3 Kuwait
6.4 Bahrain
6.5 Iran
6.5.1 Support for armed groups in Iraq
6.5.2 Support for armed groups in Syria

6.6 Turkey
6.6.1 Alleged financial and material support for IS
6.6.2 Alleged purchases of Syrian oil

6.7 Islamic charities
6.7.1 Qatar Charity
6.7.2 RIHS, Kuwait
6.7.3 Sheikh Eid Foundation, Qatar
6.7.4 IHH, Turkey

6.8 Islamic banks

7. ‘Soft power’ financing of religious, cultural and educational networks that nurture the jihadi ideology

7.1 Decades of Wahhabi propaganda
7.1.1 A counter to political Islam in Morocco
7.1.2 Changing the face of traditional Islam in Kashmir
7.1.3 Salafism and broadcast and online media
7.1.4 Targeting Muslims and non-Muslims

7.2 Mosques and Islamic centres in the West
7.2.1 Belgium
7.2.2 Italy
7.2.3 Spain
7.2.4 Germany
7.2.5 Calls for an end to foreign funding of mosques

7.3 Case study: Qatar Charity and the Muslim Brotherhood network in France and Europe
7.3.1 Qatar Charity UK
7.3.2 UK inquiry into the Muslim Brotherhood

7.4 Impact and relevance of foreign funding for Western Islam
7.4.1 Active engagement

8. Areas of concern for the future

8.1 The Sahel
8.2 The Middle East and North Africa
8.2.1 Egypt
8.2.2 Tunisia
8.2.3 Lebanon
8.2.4 Jordan
8.3 Turkey

9. Conclusions

10. Recommendations
The main perpetrators of IED attacks in the countries most affected by explosive violence are almost all Salafi-jihadi in outlook and in practice. The jihadi terrorism that fuels such attacks is, in turn, a globalised transnational enterprise, networked but largely decentralised in its operations. This report examines the regional and transnational networks that facilitate IED use, aiming throughout to analyse and explain as well as to describe them. We have focused on networks linking the ‘Islamic State’ (IS); al-Qaeda (AQ) and its affiliates; the Taliban; al-Shabaab; and Boko Haram, as these are the major groups responsible for the worst IED violence.

In section 2 we introduce the non-state actors regularly using IEDs, together with technical data and notes on their tactics, techniques and procedures. We show how the groups under review use IEDs both for quasi-military purposes and as an insurgency tactic, and do so in very similar ways. AOAV’s data reveal, for example, remarkable similarities in the proportion of suicide bombings different groups carry out, and the ratio of civilian to armed actor casualties of their attacks. Most of the groups target civilians with IEDs and, in the countries worst affected by their actions, civilians represent the overwhelming majority of the casualties they inflict.

AOAV has been able to identify links between several of the groups relating to the manufacture, tactics and usage of IEDs, as well as signs of interorganisational cooperation. Much of the material that terrorist groups’ bomb-makers use in their improvised devices is stolen military ammunition, supplemented by commercially available precursor materials such as fertiliser, potassium chlorate, hydrogen peroxide and other chemicals. We track the sources of these components and the exchange of bomb-making expertise between groups.

Section 3 looks at the cultural, religious and ideological underpinnings of Islamist terrorism, and focuses on these groups’ shared Salafi-jihadi ideology in the context of other relevant factors. We examine the arguments of classical and contemporary Salafi scholars in Islamic jurisprudence both for and against armed jihad, suicide bombings, and the targeting of civilians. For example, we see how IS made unorthodox use of the Islamic principles of qisas and mumathala to justify the burning of Jordanian Air Force pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh in February 2015, in defiance of mainstream Islamic scholarly opinion that it is forbidden to use fire as a punishment. The sectarian – that is, anti-Shia – dimension of Salafi-jihadism is also discussed.

Groups vary in the degree to which they seek to justify their actions thematically, but they all adopt some sort of religious framework. At group level they paint a black-and-white view of the world, depicting their actions as a defence of Islam and a virtuous struggle against corruption and injustice, and some of their grievances are legitimate. Yet individual followers are often motivated by more personal or local socio-economic factors, and may have joined the jihadi as an act of rebellion, thrill-seeking or self-protection. Action to address issues such as social or economic inequality, corruption and injustice would, as a by-product, be of considerable value to counterterrorism efforts.

The Islamic ‘caliphate’ in Iraq and Syria is the new Afghanistan. As in the 1980s, a conflict portrayed by the Salafi-jihadis as a battle between Islam and anti-Islamic forces is attracting thousands of foreign volunteers. These fighters may – some of them, at least – return to their countries of origin to carry out bombings and other terrorist attacks, or go on to fight elsewhere. It was more recently in Iraq and now in Syria, that jihadi recruits have received their most intensive indoctrination and training. Already over 20,000 foreign fighters have reportedly arrived in IS-controlled Syria and Iraq, more than the total number of foreign fighters who battled the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Section 4 examines the foreign fighters phenomenon. IS recruitment propaganda is heavily slanted toward foreigners, and nearly 20% of the foreign fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq are IS and returning fighters or new recruits from a wide range of places, including Western Europe and the US but also Libya and possibly other Middle Eastern states. The second is the movement of self-funding foreign fighters into conflict zones, often bringing with them material support of various kinds, and their use of multiple small transactions to microfinance their jihad. The report notes innovative measures being piloted to track this form of funding.

Islamic charities, which have a track record of supporting violent jihadi groups in the past, are also looked at. They continue to play a nebulous but potentially significant role in the funding of terrorism. These charities carry out much valued humanitarian work in many of the areas most affected by IED violence, but their association with particular groups has a darker side: it aids jihadi’s efforts to win local hearts and minds. In some instances, there are even plausible claims that weapons have been transferred to armed groups under the cover of humanitarian aid. Pan-Islamic humanitarianism often responds to the same rhetoric as the global jihadi: the need to aid fellow-Muslims suffering hardship or aggression by non-Muslims. Both forms of response draw on a sense of solidarity and, on its own terms, altruism.

Section 7 tracks the way in which decades of oil-financed Wahhabi propaganda have – without promoting violence – spread fundamentalist Salafi Islam across the globe, largely as a counterweight to Shiaism and the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood. Wealthy Arab states continue to fund mosque-building and proselytisation, including in the non-Muslim West. This has contributed to providing fertile ground for some groups, especially nowadays with the aid of social media, to find potential recruits for a more radical outlook. Radicalisation, however, tends to take place not in mainstream or foreign-funded mosques but in private prayer halls and ‘garage mosques’. We conclude that the Salafi-jihadi genie is out of the bottle. Whereas previously jihadi recruits would have been young, radicalised Muslims, it may be that radicalism itself is now attracting other alienated youth to Islam, making the radicalisation process all the harder to monitor.

In examining the ongoing efforts of some Gulf states to spread Salafi Islam in Europe, we have questioned whether this is compatible with host societies’ desire to integrate Muslims in their communities. We suggest that at a minimum, greater transparency on the part of Gulf State donors and local European Muslim recipients is called for.

To round off the report, we identify in section 8 some areas of concern for the future, top of the list being the Sahel region. AQIM and IS in Libya are already active to the north, and Boko Haram to the south. The fluidity of alliances among these and other similar groups is an additional factor for instability. Niger is a hub of Salafi-jihadi influence. Niger is seen as particularly vulnerable to more radical jihadi violence, largely due to economic stagnation, high population growth, rapid urbanisation and climate change.

AOAV’s data show a sharp increase in IED attacks in Egypt, by a range of minor groups, in 2014 and 2015. There have also been a large number of terrorist attacks reported in Sinai in 2016. Egypt’s repressive government, bleak economic outlook and vulnerability to a spillover of violence from neighbouring Libya make it another area to watch.
Finally, the report addresses the conundrum of NATO ally Turkey’s ambivalent relations with IS and Jabhat al-Nusra, and its ongoing hostility to the PKK. Turkey, now facing IED violence on its own soil, is critical to international efforts to tackle the epicentre of the globalised transnational jihad and its profligate use of IEDs, the source of so many civilian deaths.

1.1 NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

The IED data in this report are based on AOAV’s Explosive Weapons Monitor Project (EWMP), and cover IED attacks between January 1, 2011 and June 30, 2016. The analysis of IED tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) in this report is therefore based on events that occurred and were recorded by the EWMP within this timeframe; events occurring before or after this period have not been included. However, in order to provide a comprehensive view of the networks behind IED attacks, the report does not limit itself to this timeframe when discussing the general workings of these groups.

The full methodology of the EWMP can be found through the AOAV website. However, some notes should be made in regard to its use in this report.

The EWMP collects data on global explosive violence from English language sources. Sources are collected through an amalgamation of alerts set up for certain words pertaining to explosive violence being used in news stories. Examples of such words include ‘explosion’, ‘rocket’, and ‘IED’. Only attacks that have produced casualties (killed and/or injured) are taken into account. Incidents are classified according to the launch method used. For the purposes of this report, the part of the EWMP classified as ‘Launch method: IED’ is therefore the one that has been analysed. This launch method may have different activation methods, which means that suicide bombings and car bombs (among others) are included in the report as long as the device used was an IED. The EWMP also records the location, time, target and perpetrator (if known) of IED attacks.

In the report, responsibility for attacks is assigned according to two variables: first, if a group claims responsibility for the attack, and second, if a group is clearly named as the perpetrator in the source used. As groups have had different names during the timeframe under review, the total number of attacks attributed to their various names has been merged. For example, the Islamic State in Iraq’s (ISI’s) attacks have been merged with the Islamic State’s (IS’s) attacks to create a single total figure. It should be noted that since many attacks are never attributed to a specific perpetrator, the true number of attacks by any perpetrator may be higher than that given in this report.

Groups are referred to by only one name throughout this report, regardless of whether they have been known by other names during the timeframe under consideration. For example, Islamic State (IS) is called IS throughout the report, despite having been known by other names between 2011 and 2016. Conversely, the group currently known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham is called Jabhat al-Nusra in this report, since this is the name by which the group was known during the period when the IED data used in this report were collected.

AOAV has identified 84 different known perpetrators of IED attacks from January 2011 up to June 2016. Of these, the vast majority are Salafi-jihadi insurgent groups active in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia and South East Asia. Others are nationalist or separatist movements, mainly active in India, Pakistan, Turkey and Colombia. A small number of perpetrators are anarchist groups active in Europe and Central America.

Of the 10 worst perpetrators of IED incidents, eight can be described as Islamist terrorist groups, with all of them adhering to various strands of Salafi-jihadi ideology. These groups play an active and influential role in wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, or pose serious threats to national security in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroun, Indonesia, Mali, Egypt, Algeria and India.

2. IED USAGE AMONG NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS

The 10 worst perpetrators of IED attacks 2011-2016

AOAV has identified 84 different known perpetrators of IED attacks from January 2011 up to June 2016. Of these, the vast majority are Salafi-jihadi insurgent groups active in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia and South East Asia. Others are nationalist or separatist movements, mainly active in India, Pakistan, Turkey and Colombia. A small number of perpetrators are anarchist groups active in Europe and Central America.

10 countries worst affected by IED attacks 2011-2016

Of the 10 worst perpetrators of IED incidents, eight can be described as Islamist terrorist groups, with all of them adhering to various strands of Salafi-jihadi ideology. These groups play an active and influential role in wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, or pose serious threats to national security in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroun, Indonesia, Mali, Egypt, Algeria and India.
This report examines the networks enabling terrorist groups to carry out IED incidents. It will specifically focus on the Islamic State (IS), the Taliban, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and various al-Qaeda factions (such as Jabhat al-Nusra and AQAP).

Based on the casualty ratio between civilian and armed actors, the major perpetrators of IED attacks, except for AQAP and IS Sinai Province, all seem to use IEDs primarily to target civilians. 93% of Boko Haram IED casualties were civilians, and of these over 70% were killed. In the case of IS, 87% of their IED victims were civilians, and nearly 40% of these died. Jabhat al-Nusra’s IED casualties were 61% civilian, of which over 30% were deaths.

Although more civilians than armed actors are casualties of IED incidents, the ratio of deaths to injuries from IED attacks is higher among armed actors than among civilians. With the exception of the TTP, groups kill more armed actors and security personnel than they merely injure. In the case of al-Shabaab, for example, 75% of its IED armed actor casualties are deaths, against 25% injuries. For Jabhat al-Nusra, the ratio is 92% to 8%. The reason for the high death rate among armed actor and security personnel casualties is likely to be the perpetrator groups’ high usage of roadside IEDs that target vehicles with several people on board but few, if any, bystanders near enough to be injured. This contrasts with other groups’ targeting of shops and market places where large numbers of civilians are close enough to the explosion to be injured without being killed.

A look at country statistics on IED attacks further attests that IEDs cause primarily civilian casualties. In Iraq, the country worst affected by IEDs, 93% of casualties (both killed and injured) were civilians, and in Nigeria as many as 94%. Only in Libya and Yemen do armed actors and security personnel casualties account for anything even approaching half of IED casualties.

Most groups seem to have a preferred type of target that they strike. Al-Shabaab, for example, targets commercial premises such as restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues in more than a quarter of its IED attacks. Boko Haram launches a high proportion of its IEDs at markets, town centres and places of worship. The Taliban and the TTP both use more than 30% of their IEDs either on roads, against vehicles, or at military checkpoints.

IS, however, attacks a more diverse range of targets. Its IEDs have targeted commercial premises (17%) such as shopping centres, malls and restaurants, army bases (12%), urban centres (12%), public buildings (9%) and markets (9%) – all basically urban locations – but 14% of its IED attacks have also occurred on roads.

AQAP seems to favour using IEDs against armed actors, and with almost half of its IED attacks (48%) having been against army bases. Similarly, Jabhat al-Nusra has targeted army bases in 29% of its attacks.

Although IS, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, TTP, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram share common traits in their usage of IEDs, such as attacking both civilians and military targets, there are also differences between their approaches to tactics and deployment. The rest of this section will therefore present what is known about these groups and their use of IEDs. In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of global IED usage, it will also present the groups that AOV has recorded as responsible for carrying out IED attacks in the past five years.

### 2.1 KNOWN PERPETRATORS OF IED INCIDENTS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS

**IS in Syria and Iraq** (384 reported incidents)

Islamic State in Syria and Iraq grew out of the chaos that followed the US invasion of Iraq, and has al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Islamic State in Iraq (IS) as its predecessors. IS has, at the time of writing, declared provinces in Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the North Caucasus. Besides carrying out attacks in most of these countries, they have also claimed responsibility for, or have been said to inspire, attacks in France, Belgium, the United States and Turkey. The group’s global appeal and unprecedented territorial gains have made them a challenging enemy for both counter-terrorism units and rival territorial groups.

Given that IS controls unprecedented swathes of territory and runs a complex operation, it is difficult to give a comprehensive account of its history, mode of operations and tactics. However, specific tactics in regard to IED usage, funding, and foreign backing will be discussed at length later in this report.

As far as leadership structure is concerned, Islamic State is run by several councils that complement the leadership of Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: the Shura Council, the Military Council (MC), the Security and Intelligence Council (SIC), the Sharia Council and the Media and Communications Council. There is also a general cabinet that includes ministers with different portfolios. The Shura Council is the overarching body for the other councils. It consists of between 9 to 11 members (mainly Iraqis) and is an advisory body that approves the emir’s appointments. It has the power to remove the emir and appoint a new one should he fail in his duties. The Shura Council basically brings together the heads of the other councils. For example, the Head of the Military Council (believed to be Abu Ahmad al-Alwani, although he has also been reported dead by some sources) and the Head of the Sharia Council (Turki al-Binali) both hold places on the Shura Council. The now deceased Abu Muhammad al-Adnani (former chief spokesman) was also on the Shura Council. 3

In October 2016, Jordanian media reported that Jordanian national Omar Mahdi Zeydyan had been appointed head of the Shura Council, the first non-Iraqi to hold such a high position within the organisation. 3

Despite the Shura Council’s hypothetical authority, it is the Military Council that is believed to be the real power within the organisation. It is important to highlight the strong Baathist influence in the MC, both historical and current. Ever since the establishment of the MC, each of its leaders, with only one exception, has been a former Baathist officer. Interestingly, the MC includes an ‘explosives minister’ in charge of the group’s IED tactics. This minister has been identified as Khairy Abed Mahmud al-Taey, better known by his nom de guerre Abu Khalaf, of whom almost nothing is known. 4

Besides this organisational structure, IS has a wide reach through its cooperative partner groups, most of which have been incorporated as wilayats (provinces). These groups include Boko Haram (officially called Wilayat Khabar Ifriqiya – IS West Africa Province), Ansar Bani Hillary (known as Wilayat Khorasan – IS Afghanistan Province), Islamic Youth Shura Council (Wilayat Barqa – IS Libya) and Caucasus Emirate (Wilayat al-Qaouq – IS Caucasus Province). In Yemen, too, IS has managed to rally a collection of local militant groups under its flag. Similarly, the group’s attempt to establish itself in Afghanistan (Wilayat Khorasan) has employed several militants previously engaged with the Taliban and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

With regard to IEDs, IS has been reported to manufacture and deploy IEDs on a ‘quasi-industrial scale’ that requires networks and cross-border trade. In a recent report, Conflict Armament Research identified 51 companies in 20 different countries that had sold products used in IS’s IED manufacturing. Most of these products were available without licence or permit, and the report highlighted the speed with which IS was able to obtain these products. Occasionally these products have shown up among IS forces less than a month after being purchased, despite being shipped from the other side of the world. 6 Some analysts go as far as labelling IS’s IEDs as ‘industrial explosive devices’. Part of this industrialisation of bomb-making is due to the fact that IS uses minority groups, such as Yazidis, as bomb-makers in large factories. Given that many of the IEDs that IS manufactures in Syria and Iraq are quite similar, it is believed that production is centralised and bombs thereafter distributed across its areas of control. 7

The fact that both Syria and Iraq, before their respective wars, imported huge amounts of arms, that were stored in countless unsecured or unknown sites run by their armed forces, has been a major contributing factor to the scale of IED production and subsequent destruction in recent years. The issues surrounding unsecured munitions are important and will be discussed in more detail in the next section. The US-led invasion of Iraq, one of the most significant proliferation instances involved the theft of 342 tonnes of HMx, RDX and PETN high explosives from the Al-Qaeda weapons depot south of Baghdad. 8 The chaos and circulation of weapons and precursor materials, particularly in Iraq, is something that IS has been able to exploit.

A 2015 study by researchers at Arizona State University revealed important findings about IS’s IED strategy. Examining the group’s operations in Syria and Iraq between June and December 2014, the researchers were able to identify several patterns to IS’s usage of IEDs. One of the most crucial conclusions was that IS appears prone to employing suicide-vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) operations in Baghdad prior to significant infantry operations in other locations, so as to prevent swift deployment of Iraqi army/police reinforcements in response. There was also a link made between coalition airstrikes against IS and increases in IED usage the following week, suggesting that airstrikes lead IS to resort to ‘more distributed insurgent-style tactics’. 9

IS’s usage of armoured vehicle-borne IEDs was also addressed. Armoured VBIEDs have many strengths, as they are less vulnerable while also being mobile. IS has been able to perfect its use of armoured VBIEDs to the
point where it does not simply use one at a time, but has been known to use up to 30 armoured VBIEDs at once. This was seen during IS’s capture of the Iraqi city of Ramadi in May 2015. During its offensive, IS launched a bulldozer packed with explosives toward the city’s security perimeter, obliterating it and allowing around 30 more armoured VBIEDs into the city.16

During the Mosul offensive that is taking place as this report is being written, it has become apparent how IS uses IEDs as landmines after retreating, hiding IEDs in everyday objects such as stuffed toy animals, decks of playing cards, and piles of rubble and garbage.17

The Taliban (261 reported incidents)

The Taliban came to prominence in the mid-1990s, when the group swiftly seized control of many of Afghanistan’s provinces.12 Although the group lost the Taliban reach in Afghanistan was at its widest since 2001.11 Blending strict Deobandi (a conservative revivalist interpretation of Sunni Islam found predominantly in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh) fundamentalism with local Pashtun tribal codes, the Taliban has a long history of using IEDs in its insurgency against Soviet, NATO and Western forces.13

The Taliban’s main leadership is known as the Quetta Shura, after its location in the Pakistani city of Quetta after the US invasion of 2001. The leadership has undergone changes in recent years, both under former leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour and under current leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. Mansour was the first to bring non-Pashtu into the main leadership body.14 Mansour’s leadership, until his death in an airstrike in May 2016, was marked by internal rivalry, with many questioning how much power he actually possessed. One group, led by Mullah Rasool, broke away,17 but re-united with the main leadership under new leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. Akhundzada also managed to contain a short-lived rebellion by a faction led by Mullah Dadullah, that together work under the larger umbrella term ‘the Taliban’. Although this report recognises the complexity and dynamic workings of the Taliban and its subgroups, it shall for simplicity’s sake refer to this collection of groups as ‘the Taliban’.

As part of their strategy, the Taliban have tried to operate on multiple fronts in order to stretch the under-resourced Afghan army.20 Foreign soldiers and aid workers have also been attacked, but the majority of attacks affect Afghan civilians. In the attacks that AOAV has been able to ascertain were perpetrated by the Taliban between 2011 and 2016 (reported in English language media), 1,661 civilians were said to have been killed. However, the true number of people killed by the Taliban is likely to be much higher. During the same period AOAV recorded as many as 928 IED incidents reported in English language media in Afghanistan alone for which no group was identified as being responsible, in which 5,831 civilians were killed or injured. Notably, various kinds of fertilisers have been used by the Taliban to manufacture IEDs. Such explosives were predominantly made by ammonium nitrate fertilisers, but have in recent years been manufactured with potassium chloride and particularly calcium ammonium nitrate (CAN). This made the Afghan government take action, outlawing ammonium nitrate-based fertilisers in 2010. However, this has not prevented the substance from being used in Taliban bomb-making. According to the Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), 70% of IEDs in Afghanistan are made with CAN. The illegality of ammonium nitrate fertilisers has turned it into a lucrative smuggling commodity. Most of the CAN used in Taliban IEDs is manufactured in Pakistan, predominantly in the Punjab province, from which it is smuggled into the country both through illicit drug routes but also through border crossings. Several instances of CAN being smuggled into Afghanistan from Pakistan have been reported but there is no indication that enough CAN for 140,000 bombs was legally produced by Pakarab Fertilizers Ltd, a subsidiary to Fatima Group. Attempts have been made to stop Pakistan producing fertilisers, but so far it has refused to do so. One of the main framers of the terminating production of CAN is the Fatima Group, whose assets in the United States have been frozen due to their product’s involvement in Taliban IEDs. US officials have stated that enough CAN for 140,000 bombs was legally produced by Pakarab Fertilizers Ltd, a subsidiary to Fatima Group. According to one fertiliser dealer in Pakistan, wealthy Pakistani businessmen need the explosives for constructing, and demand for fertilisers by farmers in Afghanistan make getting hold of fertiliser easily for the Taliban.

There have also been reports of the Taliban being able to seize large quantities of military equipment left behind by NATO and US forces after their withdrawal from certain areas. Moreover, the Taliban managed to get their hands on 150 US military Humvees. Some of these stolen vehicles were used in VBIED attacks in February 2016 in southern Helmand Province, where six Afghan security personnel were killed.21

The Taliban have used child soldiers, who have received training and been deployed in both the production and the planting of IEDs. In Kunduz province some of this training has taken place in Taliban-controlled madrasas, to which many children are sent because the Taliban cover the children’s expenses.22

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (100 reported incidents)

The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has some elements in common with the Afghan Taliban, but is a rather different organisation in terms of aims and strategies.23 The TTP serves as an umbrella organisation for several armed Islamic groups in Pakistan, and most armed jihadi groups in the country have some affiliation with the TTP.24 The organisation was founded in 2007 at a meeting of tribal elders representing more than 24 districts in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in northern Pakistan. It is by far the worst offender as regards IED attacks in Pakistan, and has killed almost 4,000 people through IED attacks in the past five years. Attacks have been carried out against schools25 and universities26 as well as Pakistani army and government buildings. Religious minorities have also been targeted with IED attacks, and the TTP often strikes in densely populated areas.

Like the Afghan Taliban, the group has its origins in the anti-Soviet resistance of the 1980s. The first emir of the TTP, Baitullah Mehsud, has admitted to direct al-Qaeda involvement in the group’s foundation. Reports suggest that the TTP takes ideological guidance from al-Qaeda, and in return provide safe havens for al-Qaeda leaders and commanders, including Ayman al-Zawahiri. The TTP has strong links and probably overlapping membership with the Afghan Taliban.

Current leader Maulana Fazullah’s tenure has seen significant infighting within the TTP, and many factions are reported to have switched allegiance to IS.27 There are questions as to how much power Fazullah has, both because of the fact that he is not from the internally dominant Mehsud tribe, but also because the TTP does not negotiate with the US.28

The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) can be broken down into a series of subgroups, each with their own distinct identity. The most prominent of these is the Haqqani network, which has been known to operate independently of the main TTP leadership.29

The Haqqani network holds sway over the Taliban, and that the two should be treated as one organisation.20 The Haqqani network’s respective leaders.

It is widely reported that the Afghan Taliban have received substantial support from Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) since its founding in 1984. Cooperation has been so intimate that there have been reports of ISI officials on the frontline with the Taliban, and Pakistan has been accused of harbouring top Taliban commanders. Despite actions such as Operation Zarb-e-Azb, aimed at expelling terrorists from provinces along the Afghan border, Pakistan is said to offer a safe haven for the Taliban’s and the Haqqani network’s respective leaders.

The Taliban have throughout their existence cooperated with several groups active in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. These include (among others) Hizb-i-Islami, Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. In August 2016 there were reports that the Taliban were forging an alliance with IS, although it is not clear if this is in order to gain more supporters or to form a more effective force against IS. The extent of some of the interaction with IS is unclear, as smaller groups goes so far that it is in fact difficult to speak of them as one cohesive group, but rather as a collection of smaller units, such as the Haqqani network and Hezb-e-Gulbuddin, that together work under the larger umbrella term ‘the Taliban’. Although this report recognises the complexity and dynamic workings of the Taliban and its subgroups, it shall for simplicity’s sake refer to this collection of groups as ‘the Taliban’.
not run under a central command; its 35,000 or so fighters are simply held together by affiliation in a loose coalition. Besides the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the group has a close relationship with the Haqqani network, and is allied with other groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan.

Given its overlapping history with the Afghan Taliban, it is likely that Pakistan intelligence contributed both directly and indirectly to the rise of the TTP. However, the Pakistani military has since 2014 conducted the extensive military Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which successfully eradiated many TTP cells within the FATA region. Some observers are claiming, rather, that Afghan intelligence has provided support to TTP factions in the same way that Pakistan has been accused of aiding the Afghan Taliban. It should be noted that the TTP leadership is based in Afghanistan.

With ideological roots in Deobandi Sunnism, the TTP recruits heavily from radical madrasas in Pakistan, and has most of its bases in North and South Waziristan. Its leadership is based in Afghanistan. The group has started carrying out attacks in Kenya, including attacks on the Westgate mall (killing 67) and Garissa University (killing 152). In fact, al-Shabaab have to some extent pioneered forms of IED manufacturing – for example, the innovation of placing IEDs in laptops, thus concealing them from airport security. This occurred in February 2016, when an IED exploded on a flight from Mogadishu to Djibouti, killing one of the perpetrators while forcing the plane to return to Mogadishu. On March 7, another laptop bomb exploded at Beledweyne airport, injuring six people in an attack that al-Shabaab were suspected to have carried out. This in some ways reflects al-Shabaab’s growing ambitions, as the group has moved on from mainly attacking Somali government targets to targeting civilians on a much larger scale, as well carrying out attacks in Kenya.

Boko Haram (76 reported incidents)

Boko Haram, the world’s deadliest terrorist group in 2015, is active in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Counter-terrorism efforts by these governments have to some extent curbed the group’s expansion. Previously allied with al-Qaeda, they swore allegiance to IS in 2015. Although officially followers of strict Wahhabi Salafism, the group’s supporters are said to be driven by several ideologies, mostly a range of extremist Sunni fundamentalist views. Since 2011, the group has carried out extensive attacks with IEDs, including car bombs and suicide attacks. As AOAV has previously reported, there was a 1,000% increase in civilians killed or injured by explosive weapons in Nigeria between 2011 and 2015, and there have been more than 7,200 civilian deaths and injuries from IEDs in the past five years.

Boko Haram is the known perpetrator of explosions that killed more than 2,800 people during that period. In addition, there have been almost 200 IED attacks in Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria within the past five years committed by an unknown perpetrator, and it is very likely that Boko Haram was involved in several of them.

Boko Haram was founded in 2002 in Maiduguri, in northern Nigeria’s Borno state, by Mohammad Yusuf, originally as an Islamist organisation. After clashes with local authorities in 2009, the group became significantly more radical, violent, and similar to the group the world knows today. In 2016, the group has been disputes and confusion over who leads the organisation. Abubakar Shekau, who has headed the organisation since 2010, seems to have been replaced by IS, who announced on August 3, 2016 that Abu Musab al-Barnawi (allegedly the son of Mohammad Yusuf) had been installed as leader instead. Shekau, however, replied that he was still in charge of the group, and that Barnawi was an infidel who had been installed in a coup. On August 23, 2016 there were unconfirmed reports that Shekau had been killed in an attack by the Nigerian military, which Boko Haram later denied.

Boko Haram is reported to have received aid from both al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the past. There have also been reports of Boko Haram training with AQIM, although they were not reported to have had direct contact with al-Qaeda’s central command. As the appointment of Barnawi by IS suggests, there seems to be greater influence from IS central command in at least some factions of Boko Haram. Besides these links, there have been reports of support from high-ranking Nigerian military personnel and public officials, something which we will expand on later in this report.

Boko Haram has repeatedly mounted attacks on military facilities, such as the dual attacks on a military barracks in Borno state41 and on an Air Force Base in Maiduguri in December 201342. There is evidence of captured ordnance being used to devise IEDs, such as 60mm and 81mm mortar bombs and 105mm/155mm artillery shells, as well as French-made GRI 66-EG anti-personnel cluster munitions. These have been linked to a number of deadly IED attacks including one that killed 9 people in the northern Kangelera Mora District of Cameroon in October 201543, and as part of an attack that killed at least 86 people near Maiduguri in Nigeria in February 201644. It is believed the bombs were stolen from ammunition depots at Nigerian air bases, most notably in Kano and Kainji. Boko Haram has also acquired military precursors by such means as illicit trade on the central African black market and suspected collaboration with the Nigerian military, which we will return to later on in this report.

A study57 of Boko Haram’s use of IEDs in Nigeria between March 2015 and February 2016 highlights some important findings. First of all, Boko Haram has mainly used small and medium-sized IEDs – including IEDs contained in soda cans and gas cylinders. The group has used IEDs to neutralise armoured vehicles and attack checkpoints. They also appear increasingly to be using ‘rockets’ – IEDs often delivered by women and children, making it difficult for the military or the surrounding community to detect the perpetrator. Like IS, Boko Haram has been known to use IEDs in order to hinder police and army operations by weakening their logistic assets.

PKK (53 reported incidents)

The PKK is a terrorist-listed organisation working for Kurdish self-determination in Turkey. Founded in the late 1970s as a radical leftist organisation, it is currently seen as one of the main internal threats to Turkish national security. Although the PKK have engaged in peace talks and ceasefires with the Turkish government on several occasions, the Syrian conflict has reignited hostilities between the parties. Turkey, in 2011, the group accused of targeting PKK positions in Syria under the guise of attacking IS (whom the PKK have also engaged in combat). The PKK is currently led by Cemil Bayik, who is one of the founding members of the organisation, although imprisoned former leader Abdullah Öcalan (53 reported incidents)
continues to exercise considerable influence from prison. Bayik is said to reside in northern Iraq.19 The PKK’s membership is alleged to stand at around 7,000, but the group enjoys considerable support from sympathisers all over the world.20 Over the course of its existence, it is believed that the PKK has received support in various forms from Greece, Syria, Iran, Armenia, Cyprus and Russia – support without which the organisation would not exist today, according to experts.21 During the Ergenekon trial of 275 alleged coup plotters in 2013, evidence was put forward to indicate that the PKK received money and assistance from elements within the Turkish intelligence community in the 1970s and 1980s, and that a senior official in gendarmerie intelligence had frequent contact with Cemil Bayik.22 Given the PKK’s ongoing engagement in Syria, it is likely that the group has been able to benefit from interna
tional backing for the YPG (People’s Protection Units) – the Syrian Kurdish faction that has been fighting ISIS in northern Syria.

Some of the attacks attributed to the PKK have simultane
tously been attributed to its offshoot TAK, also known as the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons. TAK has openly expressed dissent with the PKK regarding its allegiance to al-Qaeda.71 Employing a violent Salafi-jihadi interpretation of Islam, its prime ambition is to oust Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and to this end they target regime and military centres as well as civilians. However, Jabhat al-Nusra is also aiming to expand its territory. A US official recently described Nusra as having been, before breaking away and renaming itself Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, al-Qaeda’s largest formal affiliate in history.72

Jabhat al-Nusra have purposely employed a tactic of organically embedding themselves within the revolu
tionary dynamics of the Syrian conflict, and have managed to establish a presence among opposition elements. This has meant that they have been able to appear ‘moderate’ whilst entrenching their organisation among certain communities, allowing them to expand and imple
ment their radical ideology, in this way they have been able to build local zones of influence, eventually leading to control of territory from which they can launch attacks.73

Jabhat al-Nusra is led by Abu Muhammad al-Jolani and his deputy Sama al-Oraiy. The group has a 12-member Shura Council responsible for determining strategy. There are also seven provincial leadership commands, for southern Syria, Homs, Damascus, Dabiq, Aleppo, Hama and Latakia, each run by a provincial ‘emir’.74 The group also employs a faction called Jaysh al-Nusra which is employed for Nusra’s most strategically impor
tant military operations. Although Nusra has formally broken away from al-Qaeda, many analysts see this merely as a rebranding, and there is reason to believe that al-Qaeda will continue to wield at least some influence over Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. It is also likely that the group will continue its successful cooperation with Ahrar-al-Sham. Nusra has throughout its existence received foreign funding from states like Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. There have also been reports of American arms meant for Free Syrian Army (FSA) factions ending up in Nusra hands.75

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (23 reported incidents)

Originally an offshoot of al-Qaeda active in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has managed to make a bloody name for itself on its own. Many regard AQAP as al-Qaeda’s most dangerous faction, due to its track record of attacks on foreign soil, notably the one on French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in January 2015.76 AQAP has strong affilia
tions with al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and has made significant gains since the 2011 Arab Spring protests in Yemen. The group has also been able to exploit the disorder in Yemen brought about by the conflict between the Yemeni government (supported by a Saudi-led Sunni Muslim coalition) and Houthi rebels.

AQAP was founded in 2009 when Saudi al-Qaeda fight
ers were driven out of their country and merged with their Yemeni counterparts. The organisation’s roots can be traced to the Afghan anti-Soviet campaign, after which many mujahideen, having been denied entry to their home country, resettled in Yemen. One of AQAP’s historical leaders was Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born preacher who was killed in an airstrike in September 2011. Current leader Qasim al-Raymi previously held the position of military commander and also worked in al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. Another notable figure is the infamous bomb-maker Ibrahim al-Asiri, the man behind the 2009 Christmas Day bombing plot and the 2010 cargo plane bombing plot, as well as an assassination attempt on Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef.

AQAP’s organisational structure is compartmentalised and hierarchical, and consists of several branches that direct strategy in different sectors.77 The political branch decides overall direction, while the military branch plans all major attacks. The religious branch is AQAP’s authori
tative voice on religious matters. There is also a propa
ganda wing, which is responsible for online outreach as well as the infamous Inspire magazine.78 Besides al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, there is also one in Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi’s delegates to the failed Geneva peace talks.79 It has been reported that in the chaos of Yemen’s war, AQAP fighters have stormed weapons depots, seizing armoured vehicles and rockets. These stores were known to hold US weapons and ammunition that had been supplied to support government counter-terrorism operations before the war.80 AQAP has continually employed IEDs in its attacks on government forces, Houthi rebels and civilians.81
IS Sinai Province (22 reported incidents)

Previously known as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), IS Sinai Province (IS-IP) swore allegiance to IS and renamed itself in November 2014. The group emerged from the chaos that engulfed the Sinai Peninsula after the ousting of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, when local militants drove out the country’s security forces. IS-IP escalated its campaign after the Egyptian military removed former president Mohamed Morsi in 2013. Since pledging allegiance to IS in 2014, the group is believed to have received arms and funds from IS central command. There is some debate over the group’s alleged links to the Muslim Brotherhood, with some claiming that IS-IP is a militant wing of the Brotherhood. There have also been suspicions of IS-IP working in coordination with Hamas or other groups active in Gaza through Egypt-Gaza smuggling channels.

IS-IP is believed to have a few hundred to a thousand fighters. Many of these undergo prolonged ideological and military training, so the group may have several more (albeit inactive) fighters at its disposal. The group is led by Abu Osama al-Masri. ABM managed to bring together several dormant or active jihadi cells in Egypt’s Sinai under a single command. The group also saw the need to gain local support, and made efforts to integrate into local communities – these characteristics have been incorporated into IS-IP as well.45 It is unclear, though, how much of ABM’s structure has been incorporated into IS-IP. ABM made use of several local cells in areas outside the Sinai such as Cairo, Giza, Ismailiya and Fayyum, which all functioned under regional commands. However, attacks carried out by the group in the Cairo area suggest that the group still has some active cells operating outside the Sinai. IS-IP is believed to have been funded by Egyptian businessman Ahmed Adawi al-Shalbaya, who reportedly sent money from Saudi Arabia.46

Apart from some ambushes using light arms, IS-IP primarily uses IEDs. The group famously downed a passenger jet in 2015, when an IED exploded on board Metrojet Flight 9268, killing all 224 civilian passengers and crew.

FARC (15 reported incidents)

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, was established in 1964 and has since grown to promi- nence as a powerful guerrilla organisation fighting against the Colombian government. Current leader Rodrigo “Timochenko” Londoño has been in command since 2011. The group was believed to have more than 7,000 fighters in 2014. Throughout its history, FARC has received funding and support from the Cuban government as well as from the government of Venezuela under Hugo Chavez. However, both countries have also been instrumental in assuring that peace talks between FARC and the Colombian government have occurred.47

Originally fighting for land reform, FARC integrated itself into rural Colombia by providing education and medical services to the local population. As a means of obtaining funds, the group turned to kidnapping and the drug trade in the 1970s. This warranted both a national and an international response. In the 1980s, many wealthy landowners formed paramilitary forces in the Colombian countryside to counter FARC influence. These forces were responsible for the killing of innocent civilians who were believed to be FARC supporters. Despite the violence, the Colombian government and FARC held peace talks sporadically from the 1980s. This changed in the early 2000s, when newly elected president Álvaro Uribe delivered on his promise to strike back violently against FARC. This campaign heavily weakened FARC, and new negotiations were initiated by President Juan Manuel Santos in 2012. The talks culminated in a peace agreement between the government and FARC in the summer of 2016.48 However, the deal was unexpectedly rejected by a narrow margin in a nationwide referendum on October 3, leaving the peace process in a state of uncertainty as of this writing.

Abu Sayyaf (14 reported incidents)

Based on the southern Philippine islands of Jolo and Basilan, Abu Sayyaf is an Islamic fundamentalist group with roots in Moro (Filipino Muslim) separatist movements and has been active since the early 1990s. It was previously known as Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and was a member of the AutonomousPhilippines National Liberation Front (MNLF), but broke away after disagreeing with MNLF’s policy of pursing autonomy rather than an independent Islamic state. Founder Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani was a veteran of the Afghan War and is believed to have met Osama bin Laden during that time.49 Al-Qaeda also provided funding to Abu Sayyaf’s inception. Making international headlines for its kidnappings (its prime source of income), Abu Sayyaf has also attacked Philippine government and military targets with IEDs. In 2014, the group swore allegiance to IS. Although little is known about the extent of IS influence, the IS magazine Amaq ( Depths) has reported on Abu Sayyaf, which suggests some measure of association.50 Abu Sayyaf has long had ties to Indonesian militant groups such as Jamaah Islamiyya and Mujahideen Indonesia Timur.51

The group currently has a fractured leadership, and since Janjalani’s death has functioned more as a conglomerate of the several factions within the movement. Its two most prominent figures are believed to be Radulhan Saharon and Isnilon Hapilon. The latter, since Abu Sayyaf’s pledge of allegiance to IS, is believed to be the most influential IS commander in the Philippines. Much of Abu Sayyaf’s structure is based on clan ties, and members are encouraged to marry other members’ relatives in order to maintain affiliations. Although rural in origin, Abu Sayyaf has in recent years established urban cells that have widened its reach, enabling it to carry out kidnappings outside their traditional sphere of influence. Philippine intelligence has stated that the group is protected by local politicians and police officers who are related to members within the movement. Accusations have also been directed at local Filipino Muslim leaders for not speaking up against the group’s violence.52

Aajad Misir (12 reported incidents)

Aajad Misir (Soldiers of Egypt) was formed in 2013, after founder Hurnunn Mohammad Attiyah split away from Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (now known as IS Sinai Province), in protest against the Rabaa massacre that year.53 Aajad Misir is the only known group that exclusively targets the Cairo area. Despite subscribing to Salafist-jihadi ideology, Aajad Misir is distinct from other Salafi-jihadi groups in not seeking to establish an Islamic caliphate. Rather, Ajaad Misir recognises Egypt as a distinct entity. The group also incorporates language referring to Egypt’s January 25, 2011 revolution in its discourse, stating that the demands of the revolution have not been met. They have also been noted for taking a sympathetic view toward civilians, and have tended rather to attack security forces, police and army personnel. For example, when the group killed police commander Ahmed Zaki in a car bomb on April 232014, it said the time of detonation had been chosen so that the blast would not cause any innocent victims.54

Aajad Misir are said to enjoy good relations with IS-IP (who have referred to Aajad Misir as their ‘brothers’), and the group also seems to have a good relationship with al-Qaeda, as both AQAP and AQIM eulogised founder Hurnunn Mohammad Attiyah after he was killed in April 2015. Attiyah was, according to Aajad Misir’s own propaganda, a veteran of the Iraqi War, and it is likely that he made connections with al-Qaeda there. Observers have also pointed out that Aajad Misir’s attempt to avoid (Muslim) civilian casualties is in line with the al-Qaeda guidelines on waging jihad.55 Moreover, given that the group was founded in reaction to the Rabaa massacre, some have suggested that there may be links between Aajad Misir and the Muslim Brotherhood, although these links have not been corroborated.

Ansar al-Sharia Libya (10 reported incidents)

Formed in the chaos after the ousting of Muammar Qaddafi, Ansar al-Sharia Libya (ASL) was one of the groups responsible for the attack on the American consulate in Benghazi in 2012.56 A conglomerate formed by several factions from the Abu Obayda bin Aljarah Brigade, February 17th Brigade and Malik Brigade, ASL gained a foothold in Libya through the dawa and social services work favoured by many (and actively encouraged by al-Qaeda) in the vacuum that arose in many countries after the Arab Spring.

At the peak of its powers in 2013, ASL was able to provide health and banking services to people in Libya, as well as conducting a complex humanitarian assistance operation in Sudan following major floods in August 2013. ASL delivered more than five tons of medicine and ten tons of grain to stranded survivors. In early 2014, they reportedly sent food to the Latakia area of Syria. However, since Libyan General Khalifa Heftar commenced his ‘Operation Dignity’ in 2014, aimed at driving Islamist groups like ASL out of Benghazi, ASL has been in decline. Following leader Muhammad al-Zawahiri’s death in 2015, and growing IS influence in Libya, ASL has found it more and more difficult to compete.57

ASL espouses a violent Salafi-jihadi ideology, aiming to establish a theocratic state based on Sharia law, and compiled an electoral list for the 2014 Libyan elections. Within this ideology, it deems the killing of civilians (as well as Muslim civilians) permitted, as no goal is considered nobler than jihad. Although ASL’s leadership structure remains opaque, the organisation is currently led by Abu Khalid al-Madani, of whom little is known. ASL has good relations with al-Qaeda. AQIM issued a eulogy when former leader Zahawi, who supposedly met with Osama bin Laden in the 1990s, died. ASL is also said to have ties to Jihabat al-Nusra and al-Mourabitoun.58 It has been reported that the Libyan government diverted funds to ASL in return for their help in clamping down on the drug trade in Benghazi.59
Baloch Liberation Tigers (10 reported incidents)
The Baloch Liberation Tigers (BLT) is an armed group fighting for the independence of Balochistan from Pakistan, and is opposed to democratic measures promoting the Baloch cause. The group emerged in 2011, and carries out IED attacks on both civilian and military targets, primarily in the Balochistan region. Very little has been reported on the Baloch Liberation Tigers, and little is known about the organisation. A spokesman for the group purportedly stated that the victims of a gun massacre carried out by the BLT near the Iranian border in July 2012 were targeted because of their Punjabi ethnicity. The group has also targeted people celebrating Pakistan’s Independence Day. The BLT’s attacks therefore suggest a strong ethno-nationalist ideology, which is present among other Baloch nationalist groups, such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), as well. Balochistan has been heavily affected by terrorism. In northern parts of the region, groups such as the TTP and the Talibans are present (the Talibans have their headquarters in the Baloch city of Quetta), while Baloch nationalist groups are active in southern areas.

New People’s Army (10 reported incidents)
The New People’s Army (NPA) is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and is a Maoist organisation that engages in guerrilla warfare. The group has as its goal to overthrow the Philippine government and rid the country of US influence. The NPA mainly attacks government targets and US interests, often employing IEDs, and is designated a terrorist organisation by the United States, the EU and the Philippine government. The NPA was established by José Maria Sison in 1969 on the Philippines’ largest island, Luzon, and the group made early efforts to gain popularity with rural populations. The group also provoked military crackdowns from the Ferdinand Marcos regime, something which drew many new members to join the NPA and the CPP during the 1970s and 1980s. The 1990s and 2000s have seen the NPA and the Philippine government going back and forth between negotiations and engaging in combat.

Although primarily a rural-based guerrilla group, the NPA has an active urban infrastructure to carry out acts of terrorism, including improvised爆炸装置 (IEDs), and is designated a terrorist organisation by the United States, the EU and the Philippine government. The NPA has engaged in urban terrorism against the police, corrupt politicians, and drug traffickers. The NPA’s hierarchical structure is kept deliberately opaque. As part of the CPP, the group is still under José Maria Sison’s command, despite his having lived in exile in the Netherlands since 1986. The NPA has a military commander and its own National Operational Command, but is not considered to be independent of the CPP. Throughout its existence, the NPA has received funds and weapons from other left-wing militias around the world, such as the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Sandinistas of Nicaragua, and the Communist Party of El Salvador. They are also said to have cooperated tactically with Philippine groups such as the MNLF and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

IS Libya Province (10 reported incidents)
IS Libya Province was established in 2014, when militants in Libya pledged allegiance to IS. IS Libya’s roots can be traced back to the Battar Brigade, a group of militants from Derna in eastern Libya who were active in the Syrian conflict, where they reportedly carried out attacks against Jabhat al-Nusra. These fighters later returned to Derna and founded the Islamic Youth Shura Council. When an Islamic State delegation arrived in Derna in 2014, the ISYC pledged allegiance to IS, who subsequently announced the creation of Wilayat Barqa (Libya Province). The group quickly seized important cities, most notably the coastal town of Sirte, which they ruled in a similar manner to that practised by IS in cities such as Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq. Sirte is strategically located close to many of Libya’s most significant oil fields. However, IS Libya has been on the back foot throughout 2016, and forces loyal to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) have virtually driven it out of Sirte. Despite losing its stronghold, the group still has a strong presence in Libya, with an estimated 5,000 IS fighters in the country. The group is led by Saudi jihadi Abdelkader al-Najdi, who has been in command since March 2016.

IS Libya has been able to exploit the chaos and circulation of weaponry in the country in its use of IEDs. Qaddafi reportedly stockpiled a significant quantity of munitions, worth billions of US dollars. These were distributed freely to various factions loyal to Qaddafi at the outbreak of the initial Libyan civil war in 2011. The International coalition airstrikes inadvertently aided the dispersal of munitions. The targeting of ammunition bunkers with airstrikes often meant that instead of munitions being destroyed, ordnance was scattered across open fields. This led to widespread and systematic looting by various armed groups, including IS Libya Province. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) reports that there are 19 undamaged and 17 damaged or destroyed unsecured Ammunition Storage Areas (ASAs) in Libya. It is believed the majority of these also have a large amount of bunkers ranging in number anywhere from 20 to 117, which are capable of holding thousands of tonnes of ammunition and weapons each. The majority of these are damaged, unsecured and so pose a major threat to human safety. These unsecured munitions have spread rapidly to various armed factions, who are easily able to utilise them in IED attacks. IS in particular has conducted IED attacks on various energy and military installations in the country. These capabilities are further evidenced by the fact that Libyan forces discovered ‘IED factories’ in Sirte in July 2016.

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (9 reported incidents)
Founded in the mid-1990s, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) has been responsible for several IED attacks and suicide bombings in Pakistan. Ideologically inspired by Deobandi Sunnism, a majority of LeJ attacks are driven by a sectarian agenda and have targeted the Shia Hazara community in Balochistan. Iranian involvement in the Syrian Civil War has further inspired attacks on Shia and Iranian targets. LeJ is said to provide support and protection to other terror groups in Pakistan, such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, and is supposed to utilise them in IED attacks. IS in particular has begun to utilise LeJ militants in IED attacks.

Free Syrian Army (9 reported incidents)
One of first major anti-Assad rebel groups to form after the Arab Spring, the FSA has backing from major foreign powers such as the US, UK, and Saudi Arabia. Despite having suffered losses and desertions to Islamist groups, the FSA is still considered the biggest and most secular of the rebel groups fighting Bashar al-Assad’s government. It reportedly consists of 27 larger factions, most averaging around 1,000 fighters. This counters claims from journalists and Syrian military personnel on the ground stating that the group is de facto non-existent. Some divisions have reportedly carried out joint attacks with Ahrar al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra in Sirte in 2016.

Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) (9 reported incidents)
Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) is part of a larger Moro insurgency in the Philippines, and is a break-away group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Founded in 2008, BIFF aims to establish an independent Islamic state for the Filipino Moro minority. They mainly target government institutions and civilians though bomb and assassinations as a lead to derail the peace process that MILF and the government has recently undertaken. BIFF has carried out joint attacks with Abu Sayyaf116 and has pledged allegiance to IS.116

IS Yemen Province (8 reported incidents)
In 2014 several Yemeni militiam pledged allegiance to IS, which initiated the establishment of a Yemeni IS branch. IS Yemen Province has, like AQAP, been able to profit from the chaos and vacuum that has followed in the conflict between government forces and Houthi rebels. Given IS’ vicious anti-Shia rhetoric, they have further exacerbated the sectarian aspect of Yemen’s war, targeting Shia mosques and other symbols affiliated with Shia Islam. IS Yemen Province has also carried out several explosive attacks, for example in May 2016 when a double suicide bombing in the Hadhramaut region killed 47 people.

IS Yemen Province is believed to have around 300 fighters, and is divided into sub-provinces. IS operates in 10 out of Yemen’s 21 governorates. The group is led by Abu Bilal al-Harbi, a Saudi scholar of Islamic law. His role has been described as running the daily provincial affairs as well as to build support for the group among the Yemeni population. There have been accusations that the group is being supported by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. IS Yemen Province’s official spokespersons claim that a Saudi-led coalition is backing the IS expansion, seeking to shuffle the cards on the Yemeni scene. However, this appears to be nothing more than unfounded political mud-slinging.

MUJAO (7 reported incidents)
The Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa, known by its French acronym MUJAO, was founded as an offshoot of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) by Mauritanian and Malian members, as an attempt to drive the groups ambition further into West Africa. The group was heavily involved in the Malian uprising which began in 2012. One faction of the group joined Mokhtar Belmokhtar’s group and formed al-Mourabitoun in 2013, whereas other members regrouped under the Macina banner in 2015. The group has mainly carried out IED attacks in Mali, but also in other Sahel countries such as Niger.
Ansar ul-Mujahideen (7 reported incidents) Ansar ul-Mujahideen was founded in 2013, and is closely linked to Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). They mainly operate out of North Waziristan in Pakistan, and predominantly attack government forces. A majority of its fighters are ethnic Uzbekis.121

People’s Liberation Army (7 reported incidents) The People’s Liberation Army of Manipur (PLA) is an armed organisation fighting for the independence of the Indian province of Manipur, and has been active since the 1970s. It has mainly waged guerrilla warfare against the Indian army, and has increasingly used IEDs to target army personnel.122

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (5 reported incidents) AQIM grew out of the ultra-violent Armed Islamic Group (GIA) - by many seen as a historical predecessor to IS - that was active during the Algerian Civil War in the 1990s. The group was officially founded in 2007, and is led by Algerian jihadi Abdelmalek Droukdel. AQIM has previously been affiliated with groups such as al-Mourabitoun, a Salafi group that is based and operates in the Damascus region in northeastern Syria. Despite longstanding quarrels with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), they joined them in 2015.144

Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) (4 reported incidents) Formed in 2009 in the Megahalya province by Pakchara R Sangma after he deserted the police force, the GNLA is fighting for a separate ‘Garoland’ in northeastern India. GNLA have been able to take advantage of the porous border with Bangladesh,146 and the group mainly carries out attacks against the local police forces.146

ULFA (4 reported incidents) Established in the late 1970s, ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) aims to establish an independent state in the Assam region in northeastern India. The group has been known to attack both military and civilian targets.127

Lashkar-e-Balochistan (3 reported incidents) Although Jilani-ul-Ahrar reportedly broke away from the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2014, there is confusion over whether or not (and the degree to which) the group is still connected to the Pakistani Taliban. There have also been reports that the group has pledged allegiance to IS. On Easter Sunday 2016, they targeted a Christian community in Lahore, killing 70 in a suicide attack.128

United Baloch Army (4 reported incidents) A Balochi nationalist group, the United Baloch Army (UBA) has broken away from the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). The UBA has been responsible for several attacks in the Pakistani region of Balochistan. In May 2015, they executed 20 Pashtun people in the Baloch district of Mastung,132 and the group has continuously employed IEDs and other explosive devices to attack Pakistani army personnel.123

Janatatkrit Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) (4 reported incidents) JTMM grew out of the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal, and are fighting for the independence of the Terai region. The group presents itself as a legitimate political party. Although JTMM have been accused of human rights violations, they are not listed as a terrorist organisation, and have not carried out an attack since 2013.133

Lashkar-e-Islam (3 reported incidents, have now joined TTP) Lashkar-e-Islam emerged as a sectarian armed jihadi group in the mid-2000s, mainly targeting Shia, Barelvis and Pakistani military in the Khyber region of Pakistan.133 Despite longstanding quarrels with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), they joined them in 2015.144

Islamic Front (3 reported incidents) Jabhat al-Islamiyya, or Islamic Front, is the result of a merger between several militant Salafi groups fighting in Syria and Iraq coming home and providing strength to the Caucasus wing.144

Islamic Front (3 reported incidents) Jabhat al-Islamiyya, or Islamic Front, is the result of a merger between several militant Salafi groups fighting in Syria and Iraq coming home and providing strength to the Caucasus wing.144

Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) (3 reported incidents) Founded by veteran jihadi and former Afghan Prime Minister and Hakim Hakmatyar. HIG was part of the Afghan anti-Soviet resistance movement in the 1980s. Being side-lined by the Taliban, the group re-emerged as a relevant force after the US invasion in 2001. The group mainly targets US or Western military personnel,145 and has consistently used IEDs to attack US military staff.146

Hezbollah (3 reported incidents) Founded as a response to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), Hezbollah is a Shia Islamist organisation. Although Hezbollah is considered a terrorist organisation by many, it has successfully evolved into a political party and has one of the region’s best trained militias. They have been heavily involved in the Syrian Civil War, where they are fighting together with government forces. They have also conducted operations with the Lebanese army on the Syrian border. Hezbollah occasionally attacks Israeli military targets, and has been known to use IEDs on these occasions.

IS Caucasus Province (3 reported incidents) Formed in 2015, after militants led by Rustam Asildarov left the Caucasus Emirate Group and pledged allegiance to IS, the Caucasus Province has carried out attacks against Russian military bases as well as against civilian targets. IS Caucasus Province mainly operates between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and has subdivisions in Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria.148 The group has their own Russian language media-wing. Although the group’s size is unknown, Russia is wary of some of the hundreds or perhaps even thousands of Russians fighting for IS in Syria and Iraq coming home and providing strength and experience to the Caucasus wing.144

DHKP-C (3 reported incidents) The Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front, also known by its Turkish acronym DHKP-C, is a leftist armed organisation founded in the mid-1990s. The group is classified as a terror organisation by the United States and the European Union, and has carried out several assassinations and suicide bombings, most notably the bombing of the US Embassy in Ankara in 2013.149

Islamic Front (3 reported incidents) Jabhat al-Islamiyya, or Islamic Front, is the result of a merger between several militant Salafi groups fighting to overthrow Bashar al-Assad’s government in Syria. Member groups include organisations such as Ahwar al-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam.

UNLF (3 reported incidents) United National Liberation Front (UNLF) is an armed insurgent group aiming to establish an independent Manipur state in northeastern India. UNLF mainly attacks Indian military and police forces.150

Informal Anarchist Federation (3 reported incidents) The Informal Anarchist Federation is an Italian anarchist group active since the beginning of the 2000s. The group has targeted EU institutions and politicians. Groups using the same name have claimed arson attacks in Russia, Argentina, and the United Kingdom.152
TAK (Freedom Falcons) (3 reported incidents)
TAK, also known as the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, is an offshoot to the PKK, and has openly expressed dissent with PKK regarding the latter’s willingness to engage in dialogue with the Turkish government. Although the PKK claims not to have any control over the TAK, many analysts see this as very unlikely.118 Questions have arisen over their relationship after the two separate bombings in Ankara in February and March 2016, which were both claimed by TAK but believed to have PKK involvement as well.

Abdullah Azzam Brigades (2 reported incidents)
Abdullah Azzam Brigades (AAB) was formed in 2009 as an offshoot to al-Qaeda in Lebanon. The group is named after al-Qaeda co-founder and Osama bin Laden’s mentor Abdullah Azzam. AAB started working in Pakistan in 2009 as an offshoot to al-Qaeda in Iraq, under the leadership of Saleh al-Qaraawi. When al-Qaraawi was arrested by Saudi authorities in 2012, Saudi national Majid bin Muhammad al-Majid took over the leadership. However, he was arrested by Lebanese security services in 2015. A year later, spiritual leader and successive leader, Siraj al-Din Zureiqat was reportedly killed by Hezbollah in Arsal. AAB has four main branches: the Lebanese Branch (occasionally called Ziyad al-Jarrah Battalion), the Gaza Branch (called Marwan Hadidaz division), the Arabian Peninsula Branch (Yusuf al-Uayyari Battalions) and a media branch called al-Awzaya Media Foundation.119 Although AAB initially cautioned against using violence at the start of the popular protests in Syria, the group has inevitably been involved in kidnappings and extortion, and has recently turned to drug trafficking. ELN has attacked both military personnel and natural resource companies.120 The ELN was not partner to the peace agreement reached by the Colombian government and FARC earlier this year.

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) (2 reported incidents)
Based in Indonesia, JI aims to establish an Islamic state comprising southern Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei and the southern part of the Philippines. Formed in 1993, they are said to have links to al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Some observers have described them as al-Qaeda’s South East Asian wing, whereas others see the groups as allied in theory only. JI was responsible for carrying out the 2002 Bali nightclub attack that killed 202 people.121 JI has ties to other Islamist groups operating in Indonesia and broader South East Asia. These groups include Jamaah Anshurat Taudhid, Front Pembela Islam, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, KOMPAK, Laskhar Jundullah and Majelis Dakwah Umat Indonesia. The use of training camps in the Philippines Mindanao province also helped them establish a relationship with the MNLF. JI also reportedly has ties to Abu Sayyaf.122

Individuals Tending to Savagery (ITS) (2 reported incidents)
A Mexican anarchist group, ITS has carried out attacks against scientists in Mexico as a protest against the proliferation of nano-particles, believing this will create a man-made apocalypse. They have used IEDs in letter bombs that were sent to scientists.123

Liwa Ahrar al-Sunnah Baalbek (2 reported incidents)
Liwa Ahrar al-Sunnah Baalbek, also known as the Free Sunnis of Baalbek Brigade, is a Lebanese Salafist movement which carried out its first action in 2013. The group has heavily criticized Hezbollah with sectarian language, and was involved in the killing of senior Hezbollah operative Hassan al-Laqqis. The group is believed to have ties to the Abdullah Azzam Brigades.124

Jund al-Khilafah (Kazakhstan) (2 reported incidents)
Also known by its acronym JAK, this group has its origins in the North Caucasus area, but is reportedly based in the Afghan-Pakistani border region.125 They are reportedly linked to al-Qaeda and the Haqqani network, and have carried out attacks on Kazakh military and police.126

Brigades of Aisha (1 reported incident)
Aisha Umm al-Muminen (Aisha, Mother of the Faithful), also known as the Brigades of Aisha, is a Lebanese Sunni extremist group. Their only known attack in the last five years was an IED bombing in Beirut in August 2013, targeting a Hezbollah stronghold because of their involvement in the Syrian Civil War.126

Jundullah (Pakistan) (1 reported incident)
Formerly associated with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Jundullah broke away and pledged allegiance to IS in 2014. The group has a history of targeting Shia and Christians in Pakistan, and killed 127 people when they targeted the All Saints Church in Peshawar in September 2013 with a suicide attack.127

Advisi People’s Army (APA) (1 reported incident)
This Advisai militant group was active in the Assam region in northern India, and had strong ties with the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). They mainly specialised in kidnappings, and exploded an IED on a railway track in 2011 which injured almost a hundred people. The group laid down arms in 2011.128

Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami (1 reported incident)
Often acronymised as HuJI, Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami is a Deobandi Sunni militant group with the stated goal of incorporation of Jammu and Kashmir into Pakistan. The group is based in Pakistan, but mainly carries out attacks in India. In 2011, they used an IED to attack the High Court in Delhi, killing 15 and injuring more than 40 people.129

Al-Mukhtar Group (Pakistan) (1 reported incident)
Widely seen as closely linked to TTP and tasked with carrying out their Karachi operations, the al-Mukhtar group bombed a gambling den in Karachi in April 2011, killing 19 people.130

Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) (1 reported incident)
 closely linked to other Baloch nationalist movements, the BLA mainly targets Pakistani politicians and security personnel. It is widely seen as the most influential of the Baloch nationalist movements.131

Aharrul Hind (1 reported incident)
Aharrul Hind broke away from the TTP in 2014 as a rejection of the peace talks between the Pakistani government and the TTP. In March 2014, they claimed responsibility for an IED attack on a Frontier Corps vehicle in Quetta, together with the United Baloch Army.132

Naqshbandi Army (1 reported incident)
Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqqashbandia (Army of Men of the Naqshbandi Order), abbreviated JRNT, are also known as the Naqshbandi Army. They are an armed group made up primarily of former Iraqi Baathists and Saddam Hussein supporters. The group was previously led by Saddam Hussein’s right hand man Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, and largely subscribes to a Sufi interpretation of Islam.133

Yakiraya Bango (1 reported incident)
Yakiraya Bango is a Thai insurgent group, whose only known attack was when they used an IED to bomb a market on 21 September 2009 in the Sai Buri district in Thailand, killing six people and injuring 40.134

Jemaah Anshurat Taudhid (JAT) (1 reported incident)
Created in 2008 as an offshoot to Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), JAT aims to establish an Islamic caliphate in Indonesia and has mainly attacked Indonesian military personnel, state officials and civilians. In 2014, the group officially swore allegiance to IS, something which is said to have caused rifts within the group.135

Mara 18 Gang (1 reported incident)
Mara 18, also known as the 18th Street Gang, is a multi-ethnic street gang originating from Los Angeles that has factions across Central America. In January 2011, they carried out a bus bombing in Guatemala City using an IED that killed 6 people.136

Haqqani network (1 reported incident)
Closely linked to both the Afghan Taliban and the TTP, the Haqqani network have certainly been involved in more than 1 incident, but have officially only been attributed with carrying out the truck bombing that killed 5 Afghan civilians and wounded 77 US soldiers, in September 2011 in Kabul.137 The Haqqani network grew out of the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan in the 1980s, and its founder Jalaluddin Haqqani was an associate of Osama bin Laden. The group is considered the most lethal group targeting US and foreign soldiers in Afghanistan. They are mainly based in Pakistan.138

CorCom (1 reported incident)
CorCom, an abbreviation of Coordination Committee, is an umbrella organisation consisting of several Manipur-based insurgency groups in northeastern India. Some of its member groups are the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).139
Karen National Union (1 reported incident)

The Karen National Union is a political organisation with an armed wing, who at first struggled for independence for the Karen minority in Burma, but since 1976 have demanded a federalised system.

Unified National Liberation Front (1 reported incident)

A Nepalese militant group, the Unified National Liberation Front (UNLF) claims to fight for the rights of indigenous people, and carried out an IED attack in Kathmandu in February 2012.174

Mast Gul Group (1 reported incident)

This TTP-affiliated group is led by former Hizbul Mujahideen leader Mast Gul, who was involved in fighting Indian security forces in Kashmir in the 1980s. In February 2014, they carried out a suicide attack outside the Iranian consulate in Peshawar.175

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (1 reported incident)

The RSS is a right-wing Hindu nationalist organisation that is widely seen as the parent organisation of India's ruling BJP party. In January 2016, they carried out an IED attack on members of the Communist Party of India.176

Lashkar-e-Taiba (1 reported incident)

Lashkar-e-Taiba is an Indian Islamist group fighting against Indian control of Jammu and Kashmir. The group does not use suicide bombings, as they see it to be against Islam. It has historically held close ties with al-Qaeda.

Paraguayan People’s Army (EPP) (1 reported incident)

Known by its Spanish acronym, the EPP is a communist guerrilla group operating in northern Paraguay aiming to overthrow the Paraguayan government. The group detonated an IED outside Horqueta police station in January 2011, injuring 4 people.178

Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (SPP) (1 reported incident)

A Greek anarchist organisation founded in 2008, Cells of Fire has targeted both government and police personnel.179

Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) (1 reported incident)

The LVF is an Ulster loyalist paramilitary militia formed in the 1990s that mainly killed Catholic civilians during the last days of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. In February 2013, they detonated an IED outside a family’s home in Belfast.180

Mukta Alinama Group (1 reported incident)

Mukta Alinama is a Thai insurgency group previously led by Mukta Alinama, who was killed in 2014. Their only confirmed IED attack was in July 2012, when they detonated an IED near an ATM machine in the Yala region in Thailand.

GATIA (1 reported incident)

GATIA is a French acronym for the Self-Defense Group of Ingham Touaregs and Allies, a militant organisation that emerged during the Malian crisis of 2012. GATIA is a Touareg group opposing the MNLA, who are another Touareg group fighting for the liberation of Mali’s Azawad province. GATIA seeks to work with the Malian government and to prevent the break-up of the country.181 The group targeted the MNLA with an IED in January 2015, killing 15 people.182

Brigades of the Imprisoned Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman (1 reported incident)

Formed as a protest against the imprisonment of ‘The Blind Sheikh’ Omar Abdul Rahman, the man behind the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing, this group carried out a bombing against the US consulate in Benghazii in 2012 using an IED. There were no casualties in the attack.

Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) (1 reported incident)

Formed in the early 2000s, the JMB aims to establish an Islamic State in Bangladesh by force. Extreme in ideology, it has attacked religious and cultural sites, as well as government officials.183

People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) (1 reported incident)

Often claiming to be the ‘original’ Manipur independence group, PREPAK was established in the 1970s with the aim of creating an independent Manipur state through force. The group is a part of CorCom, and has existing contacts in both Burma and Bangladesh.184

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) (1 reported incident)

The PFLP was formed after the Six Day War in 1967, and gained fame when it hijacked an Air France plane in 1976. Established as a leftist revolutionary group, the PFLP soon saw itself surpassed in relevance by groups like Fatah and Hamas. Their armed wing is called the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, and they are the second largest member organisation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).185

Dire’ al-Aasimih (1 reported incident)

A little-known Syrian rebel organisation, whose name means “Shield of the Capital”, who in November 2013 detonated an IED and killed 31 Syrian army personnel including 4 generals, outside of Damascus.186

People’s Liberation Front of India (PLFI) (1 reported incident)

An armed leftist group, which has been described as an offshoot to the Communist Party of India (CPI).187 Their only attack was on 25 March 2014 when 3 police officers were injured as they hit one of the PLFI’s landmine IEDs.

Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) (1 incident)

The PRC was created by former Fatah members dissatisified by the conciliatory approach taken by Fatah and the PLO towards Israel. The group is active in the Gaza strip.188

Ahrrar al-Sham (1 reported incident)

Ahrrar al-Sham was established by former prisoners of the Assad regime, who were released at the start of the Syrian uprising in 2011. They have primarily carried out attacks against the Syrian army, and were allied with Jabhat al-Nusra.189 They are reportedly one of the first groups to have used IEDs in the Syrian conflict, and have since 2014 started attacking IS. Following a Salafi doctrine, Ahrrar al-Sham is generally seen one of the best-armed rebel groups in Syria. Unlike other Salafi groups, they have expressed that their campaign is limited to Syria and that they do not aim to establish an Islamic caliphate. They oppose IS, and have been described as sympathetic to al-Qaeda, although there is no evidence of a formal alliance between the two. The group has held a leading role in three different Syrian umbrella organisations: the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF), the Islamic Front and the Jaysh al-Fateh. They often absorb groups from such coalitions if they fall apart, as happened with the SIF. Ahhrar al-Sham is also part of the Jaysh Halab, a rebel coalition active in Aleppo. Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have all financially assisted Ahrrar al-Sham. The group is led by Abu Yahia al-Hamawi.190

Ansaru (1 reported incident)

The Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa, known by its abbreviated Arabic name Ansaru, is a Nigerian Salafi-jihadi group. It was created as an offshoot to Boko Haram, as the Ansaru leadership disagreed with Boko Haram’s killing of Muslims. It has been suggested that the group is linked to AQIM.191

Momin Afridi Group (1 reported incident)

Created as a protest against the TTP, the Momin Afridi Group is mainly active in the Khyber province of Pakistan.192

Mosul Brigades (1 reported incident)

Created as a response to the IS occupation of Mosul in 2014, and remains active today as a guerrilla force within the city.193

Wild Freedom & Instigators of Social Explosion (1 reported incident)

These two Greek anarchist groups together detonated an IED at a shopping centre in Athens in January 2013, claiming the attack was a protest against capitalist values.194

2.2 TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE USE OF IEDS

2.2.1 WEAPON SUPPLIES

Much of the material that terrorist groups use to make IEDs is stolen military ammunition. According to a UN Security Report of the Secretary General, over the past decade, unintended explosive events relating to poorly stored or managed ammunition stockpiles have affected more than 50 countries.195 Evidently, this is also something that terrorist groups have exploited. In this section, we shall first examine how terrorist groups have managed to obtain and recycle military ammunition, before looking at what commercially available components are used in the making of IEDs.

2.2.2 USAGE AND RECYCLING OF MILITARY AMMUNITION

IS: Syria and Iraq

The mass proliferation of weapons in both Syria and Iraq prior to their respective wars has undoubtedly aided IS in obtaining ammunition and explosives. In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the civil war, Syria expended upwards of $5.3 billion in arms purchases.196 Such weapon stockpiles were left severely exposed when the war broke out and the regime lost control of key areas of the country.

There was a similar situation in Iraq, which during the 1980s was the largest importer of military equipment in the world. Estimates suggest that 12% of the entire global weapons export market was directed towards Iraq.197 In 2003, not only did coalition forces struggle to secure, destroy, and recover these extensive munitions stockpiles, but further quantities of additional munitions...
were also sent to the country, with very few controls in place. As David Kay, the former chief UN weapons inspector, reported, tens of thousands of tonnes of ammunition were being looted but there were just not enough boots on the ground, and the military didn’t give it a high enough priority to stop the looting.”

For instance, there was the theft of 342 tonnes of HMX, RDX, and PETN high explosives from the Al-Gaza weapons depot south of Baghdad in October 2004. This made up one of approximately 90 sites in Iraq in which military materials were looted or razed in the aftermath of the invasion.

Weapons system theft
In recent years there have been numerous documentations of IS capturing military munitions including Iraqi Al-Jaleel 60mm light mortars and Russian 82-PM-41 and 82-BM-37 types. They have also allegedly seized an unknown quantity of 155mm M198 towed howitzers during the capture of Mosul in June 2014, along with the Chinese Type 59-1, and the former Soviet Union D-30 and M-30 122mm howitzers from Syrian military stockpiles. IS military stocks were also significantly enhanced by a series of captures of military bases in Iraq and Syria beginning in January 2014. In June 2014 alone, the UN Security Council sanctions panel estimated that IS captured munitions “sufficient to arm and equip more than three Iraqi conventional army divisions, [the equivalent of 40,000 to 50,000 soldiers.]”

There have also been reports of IS placing additional armour onto stolen military vehicles in order to fortify them for breaching defensive lines.

Ammunition theft
It has also been noted that, despite the fact it is predicted that IS has no capacity in the short term to manufacture improvised weapons of mass destruction (IWMDs), they are in control of some IWMD precursors. This includes various chemical munitions – for example, mortar shells and artillery seized from bases in northern Iraq. Further, Iraqi media has also reported that IS has been using facilities such as the University of Mosul in order to perfect their IEDs as well as develop IWMDs.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) reports there are 19 undamaged and 17 damaged or destroyed unsecured Ammunition Storage Areas (ASAs) in Libya. It is believed the majority of these damaged and undamaged ASAs also have a large quantity of bunkers ranging in number anywhere from 20 to 117, which are each capable of holding thousands of tonnes of ammunition and weapons. These unsecured munitions have been reportedly looted and have since spread to various armed factions who are easily able to utilise them in IED attacks.

Weapons systems
IS in particular has conducted IED attacks on various energy and military installations in the country and it is highly likely they are exploiting such vast amounts of unsecured munitions, with Libyan forces discovering “IED factories” in Sirte in July 2016. IS has also targeted and gained control of military bases, including one originally held by US forces south of Tripoli in 2012. There they were able to seize a significant amount of American weaponry including military vehicles and ammunition.

It was also reported in December 2015 that IS had located secret underground storage facilities that contain chemical weapons.

Further concern from Libya’s vast unsecured munitions sites is the regional spread of weaponry. The UN Security Council’s Panel of Experts on Libya has noted “the increased use of improvised explosive devices” in the region. The Panel of Experts stated in 2013 that the country had become a key source of weapons in the region and that without proper controls in place, “weapons were spreading from Libya at an alarming rate.” This has continued up to March 2016 as they have found the “increased demand for material, including weapons, ammunition, and military stores and firing ranges, most of which are still littered with thousands of unexploded devices.”

The Taliban
The Taliban have been known to recycle explosive remnants of war such as unexploded artillery shells and landmines left behind by the Soviet-Afghan War. These are often salvaged by locals and sold to insurgents. There have also been a limited number of reports of motorcycle bombers being stolen. One widely reported incident was in 2010, when Australian mortar shells and hand grenades were identified by NATO troops while defusing roadside IEDs. These were believed to have been stolen by defector Afghan troops trained by the Australian military.

There is also widespread reporting of US weaponry reaching the Taliban. These events are overtly attributed to poorly managed supply lines and a lack of proper inventory checks. A report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) from 2014 states that, without a comprehensive inventory of the weapon flow, the US military could not be sure what (if anything) had been lost or stolen. The report states: “There is a real potential for these weapons to fall into the hands of insurgents,” either sold or stolen from ammunition sites or procured on the black market.

Ammunition
There were widespread reports of ammunition spreading from Gaddafi’s vast stockpiles even before the overthrow of Gaddafi. Nigerian soldiers intercepted an arms-smuggling convoy in June 2011 and seized 640kg of Semtex and 435 detonators. A similar event was reported in June 2012 when soldiers in Mauritania captured 300kg of explosives and detonators smuggled in from Libya after a clash with suspected militants. The Algerian authorities also reportedly seized more than a tonne of explosives between July 2011 and February 2012. IS are also reported to have been using American ammunition after having seized American bases in 2012. Moreover, Libyan media has since been ‘out’ from Sirte in the summer of 2016 reported the findings of military ammunition in former IS bases.

Ammunition
IS: Libya
Following the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, and the subsequent NATO intervention, Libya has become highly vulnerable to the vast numbers of unsecured ammunition sites across the country. Before his ousting, Gaddafi had reportedly stockpiled a significant amount of munitions, totalling billions of dollars. These were distributed freely to various factions loyal to Gaddafi at the outbreak of the conflict. NATO also inadvertently aided in the dispersion of munitions as ammunition bunkers targeted by air strikes often meant that instead of the munitions being destroyed, ordnance was spread across open fields. This has led to widespread and systematic looting by various armed groups.

The departure from Afghanistan of NATO and US forces, leaving unsecured armories as they withdraw, is also of concern. This includes dozens of abandoned military stores and firing ranges, most of which are still littered with thousands of unexploded devices.

The Taliban are reportedly responding to this withdrawal by seizing abandoned and unsecured military equipment to bolster their offensive. This includes the capture of assorted weaponry and of around 150 American Humvees. Some of these stolen vehicles were reportedly to have been used in VBIED attacks in February 2016 in southern Helmand Province, where six Afghan security personnel were killed.

There are also repeated security concerns surrounding the security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, which is understood to consist of up to 90 nuclear weapons. Given the rise of the Taliban in Pakistan, it remains the most susceptible nuclear stockpile to insurgent threat.

Boko Haram
There is widespread evidence that commercially manufactured explosive and propellants are prolifically used by the group in their IEDs. They have reportedly targeted various construction sites, quarries and factories to obtain such materials in all three countries in which they operate.

Such theft of dynamite and detonators has been linked to IED attacks across the country.

The theft of military precursors from poorly stored ammunition sites by the group has also played a role in what can be characterised as an opportunistic style of insurgency. Boko Haram has repeatedly mounted assaults on military installations, such as the dual attacks on military barracks in Borno state and on an Air Force Base in Maiduguri in December 2013. They also mounted an attack on a military base in Bosso, Niger on 3 June 2016, in which they burned down a military post and seized numerous weapons and ammunition.

In addition, they have also been known to target banks in northern Nigeria, in conjunction with attacks on police stations where guns and ammunition were seized.

There is further evidence of captured ammunition being used by Boko Haram to detonate IEDs, for example from explosives such as 60mm and 81mm mortar bombs and 105mm/155mm artillery shells. Weapons systems have also been used, such as 60mm and 81mm mortar bombs, as well as French-made GR-EG anti-personnel cluster munitions.
These improvisations of manufactured munitions have been linked to a number of deadly IED attacks, including one that killed 9 people in the northern Kangeleri Mora District of Cameroon in October 2015, and as part of a wider attack that killed at least 86 near Maiduguri in February 2018. It is believed the bombs were stolen from ammunition depots of Nigerian air bases, most notably in Kano and Kairin. Military precursors have also been acquired by Boko Haram through the Central African black market in illicit arms and through alleged – though uncorroborated – claims of collaborations with corrupt officials in the Nigerian military. There are even reports that Boko Haram sympathizers in the army have aided in the theft of munitions from military stockpiles. John Campbell, the US ambassador to Nigeria from 2004 to 2007, has stated “there are hints that sympathizers in the Nigerian army will deliberately leave doors of armories unlocked for Boko Haram.”

Through such diverse means it is clear that Boko Haram has been able to acquire considerable weapons capabilities. In April 2016, the Nigerian Army announced the discovery of a large cache of arms and ammunition seized from Boko Haram. This included explosive mortar equipment. They also discovered an IED factory in Wulwuta village, Borno state in March 2016, containing IED pressure plates and empty artillery shells used in the proliferation of IEDs. Army spokesman Colonel Sani Usman noted that “Boko Haram's deliberation means a maximum casualty...by stuffing 2 empty artillery shells and other cartridges with IED and batteries ready to explode.”

AQAP
It has been reported in Yemeni and Saudi media that AQAP fighters have stormed weapons depots, and seized armoured vehicles and rockets from Yemeni Army stores. These stores were known to have held US weapons and ammunition that had been supplied to support Yemeni government counter-terrorism operations before the outbreak of the Yemeni Civil War. AQAP frequently deploys improvised devices utilizing equipment, ammunition and weapon systems looted from the Yemeni security forces.

The 12th edition of AQAP’s online magazine, Sada al-Malāhhī (“Echo of Battle”), released in February 2010, even includes an article discussing the group’s detailed innovative designs for IEDs. The article highlighted their planning of attacks, including the use of detection prevention elements that would confuse X-ray machines, metal detectors and security equipment intended to pick up explosive residue.

In March 2012, AQAP mounted a complex assault on an army base near Al-Koud in the Abyan Governorate. The base was easily overrun allowing AQAP to seize multiple heavy weapons including armoured vehicles, and rockets. In May 2012, AQAP stormed a military position outside the city of Zinjibar in Abyan province. They captured both various weapons and ammunition. In February 2015, AQAP assaulted the Yemeni Army’s 19th Infantry Brigade Base in the Bihan region of Shabwa province, which they penetrated using a VBIED. In April 2015, AQAP attacked a large weapons depot in Hadhramaut seizing dozens of tanks, Katyusha rocket launchers, and small arms.

Unsecured munitions sites have also proven dangerous in instances other than insurgent theft. In March 2011, a series of blasts at an ammunition factory in the southern town of Jaar left at least 100 civilians dead and dozens more injured a day after the plant was looted by suspected AQAP members. It is reported that AQAP seized weaponry and explosives from the factory and left exposed gunpowder on the floor.

Al-Shabaab
Somalia has been under an arms embargo by the UN since 1992. The embargo was partially lifted in 2013 so that weapons could reach Somali security forces with the demand that they were not diverted to anti-state actors. However, the United Nations Somalia Monitoring Group found in 2014 that senior government officials were implicated in redirecting the flow of arms to al-Shabaab. One such official was Musa Haji Muhammad ‘Ganjab’, who previously served as presidential adviser. Ganjab is also believed to have contacts within the security sector as well as with local warlords. The extent of Ganjab’s involvement remains confidential from public view.

Further, there have been reports of a large shipment of weapons that had been supplied from Yemen to a location close to Qandala, northeastern Somalia, in October 2012. The arms cache in the shipment included 220 RPG-7 rockets, 304 PG-7 boosters, 230 hand-grenade detonators, a 73mm cannon, 137kg of TNT, two bags of ammonium nitrate, five rolls of red detonator cord and 500 electric detonators (C-DET), making it one of the largest seizures of an illegal arms cache on record in Somalia in recent years.

The purchaser of the C-DET electric detonators and red detonator cords found in the Qandala shipment in October 2012 was identified as Anwar Saleh Kodsai, a Yemeni individual with close ties to Al-Shabaab and AQAP. He has also been connected to individuals in a criminal network of pirate leaders, illegal fishers and Al-Shabaab agents involved in trafficking in the Gulf of Aden. It is believed that Al-Shabaab continues to obtain weapons and component materials for improvised explosive devices from this network.

Al-Shabaab frequently attacks military bases and police stations for the purpose of obtaining both weapons systems and ammunition. In 2016 alone there are multiple examples of raids that have resulted in al-Shabaab seizing large quantities of both. Arabic media reported in April 2016 that al-Shabaab had seized “tonnes of weapons” after clashes with the Kenyan military by the Kenyan-Somali border. Another example is the raid on the Lanta Bure military base in the lower Shabelle region in Somalia in July 2016, which left ten soldiers dead and saw al-Shabaab leave with weapons, ammunitions and a military truck. In another attack in the same region in July 2016, al-Shabaab captured both various weapons and ammunition. In February 2015, AQAP assaulted the Yemeni Army stores. These stores were known to have held weapons and explosives from the factory and left exposed gunpowder on the floor.

AOAV has identified that there has been an escalation in al-Shabaab’s usage of VBIEDs, and thefts like these indicate that more such attacks are to be expected.

2.2.3 Commericially Available Precursor Materials

Besides the seizure of military ammunition, armed insurgent groups rely heavily on the skills of their bomb-making experts. Although it requires technical mastery, constructing an IED does not necessarily require material that can only be found in military storage units. Rather, they can be made from everyday household items. These products like paint thinner, nail polish remover, fertiliser, bleach and hair dye. Many of these products have also been used by the groups examined in this report.

Fertiliser
A report by Conflict Armament Research reveals IS’ abil- ity to rapidly obtain chemicals, detonators and other precursor material in an often entirely legal manner. These products have mainly been bought from companies based in Turkey and India, and are usually shipped from abroad to either Turkey or Lebanon. The report also shows that the majority of the group’s IEDs are made from a mix of aluminium paste and fertiliser, both are commercially available. The aluminium paste that IS has used was made by three different companies in Brazil, Romania and China, and was later imported by three different Turkish companies. Most of the fertiliser IS has used is made from either calcium ammonium nitrate (CAN) or urea.

These materials have also been used by the Taliban in Afghanistan. The majority of IEDs used in Afghanistan are manufactured with homemade precursor materials such as fertilisers, and most frequently CAN. Because of Afghan restrictions on CAN due to its presence in many IEDs, the product is often distributed illicitly from Pakistan via complex smuggling networks. Up until 2013, this type of IED accounted for 70% of all IED usage in Afghanistan.

Potassium chlorate
An alternative to fertiliser is potassium chlorate, something the Taliban started using extensively in Afghanistan after the restrictions on CAN. Potassium chlorate is used in the production of matches and textiles, which several factories in Pakistan produce. As a precursor material, it is a lot cheaper than CAN. A 110-pound bag of CAN in Afghanistan is expected to cost around $160, whereas the same quantity of potassium chlorate is expected to be sold for $48. Potassium chlorate is also easier to prepare, as one only needs to add fuel to create a primary explosive.

Although there are less signs indicating that IS have used potassium chlorate, India’s security services arrested 16 men accused of being IS members, and the men had reportedly collected large quantities of potassium chlorate. Al-Qaeda’s English language Inspire magazine in 2010 published a bomb-making recipe based on household staples where the primary explosive was a mix of potassium chlorate (extracted from matches) and sugar.
Hydrogen peroxide

Hydrogen peroxide is another commonly used primary explosive. Hydrogen peroxide drums, left by IS, have been found in Tikrit in Iraq. The substance used by IS was reportedly produced in the Netherlands and imported by a Turkish company. Hydrogen peroxide was the primary explosive used in the IEDs detonated in the London bombings on 7 July 2005. Further, hydrogen peroxide mixed with acetone creates the extremely explosive acetone peroxide, which is another commonly used homemade explosive.

A variation of this mixture is TATP (triacetone triperoxide), which has become known as ‘Mother of Satan’ among terror groups due to its sensitivity and number of fatal incidents during manufacturing. This substance was used in the bombings in the Paris attacks in November 2015 and in the Brussels Airport bombing in March 2016. Traces of TATP have reportedly been found in IS’ bomb-making factory at the University of Mosul. Although dangerous, manufacturing this deadly substance is relatively easy. Hydrogen peroxide is available at pharmacies and beauty stores, as is acetone. Najibul- lah Zazi, an Afghan man who was arrested in 2009 before carrying out a planned suicide bombing in the New York City subway, reportedly purchased 18 bottles of hair care products containing hydrogen peroxide at a beauty shop that he was later going to turn into an IED.

Eyewitness account from an IS bomb-making laboratory

AOAV has recorded an eyewitness account of a bomb-making laboratory in Sirte, Libya, which was visited just days after IS left it. The account indicated that IS, at least in Libya, has been using alternative primary explosive sources than the ones discussed above. In the factory, acetic acid, sodium hydroxide, sodium sulfate and tartaric acid were found. All these can be used in producing homemade explosives.

Acetic acid, for example, can be used in the highly sensitive HMTD (hexamethylene triperoxide diamine). Acetic acid is also used in vinegar and some antiseptics, and can be purchased online. Sodium hydroxide, another name for caustic soda, can be used to manufacture DNP (diazodinitrophenol), sodium azide and lead azide which are all highly explosive primaries. Lead azide, for example, has a detonation velocity of 5,180 metres per second, and was one of the substances used in the assassination attempt that AQAP carried out against Saudi Minister of Interior Mohammad bin Nayef in 2009. Given that caustic soda is a household product, it is easily obtainable. The presence of these products in an IS bomb-making factory highlights the ease with which groups may obtain material that can be used for IEDs.

Sodium sulfate can be used to form gunpowder, and tartaric acid can form a relatively insensitive homemade explosive. Petroleum jelly has also been found in IS’ bomb-making labs in Iraq as a commonly used cosmetics and healing product, and is thus an easily obtainable product that can be used to create a primary explosive.

PETN

Another widely used substance that is easily made with commercially available components is PETN (pentaerythritol tetranitrate). This is formed through mixing nitric acid, sulfuric acid and pentaerythritol. These components are all available in either pharmacies or online stores, and a recipe for PETN can be found through a quick Google search. PETN is easily concealable. Ibrahim al-Asiri, the AQAP bomb maker, constructed a bomb made from PETN hidden in printer cartridges that was due to detonate in a thwarted attack on a cargo plane flying from Yemen to the United States. The PETN was in this instance in powder form, taking on a similar effective x-ray cross section as the normal toner material used in printer cartridges would and enabled the bomb to get through security. As a result, the bomb was discovered due to US intelligence reports rather than security scans.

Although it has not been confirmed, it is likely that PETN was used in the Somalia airplane bombing perpetrated by al-Shabaab on 2 February 2016, where explosives were concealed in a laptop and brought through security scanners. PETN can also be produced as plasticised sheets, which would enable them to be inserted without necessarily disrupting the weight or shape of the laptops and consequently get through security. Moreover, given AQAP’s and al-Shabaab’s intimate relationship, this may have been a result of knowledge sharing between the two groups given AQAP’s past innovations with PETN.

2.3 TACTICS, TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

In this section, we examine noteworthy tactics, techniques and procedures pertaining to IED usage among transnational terrorist networks. These are VBIEDs and suicide VBIEDs, roadside bombs, person-borne IEDs (PBIEDs), inihgimi operations (offensive suicide operations), infiltration of armed forces, and disguise for the purpose of infiltrating public places. Based on original data from AOAV’s Explosive Violence Monitor and desk-based research, these ENTPs (Enemy Tactics Techniques and Procedures) will be discussed in detail. The section will also analyse linkages between various terrorist groups in order to investigate possible ENTP transfers between and within transnational IED networks.

2.3.1 TACTICAL DESIGNS

VBIEDs and suicide VBIEDs

One tactic that has been used by most of the main perpetrators of IED attacks is vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs). There are some variations of this tactic. One could employ it as a standard car bombing. Another way is the suicide VBIED attack, which has been deployed by the likes of IS, al-Shabaab, AQAP, Jabhat al-Nusra, the Taliban and the TTP. Although there are differences in the scale, efficiency and extent to which these groups use suicide VBIEDs, all major perpetrators use it as a means to get through security barriers set up by police or armed forces.

Al-Shabaab, for example, used a suicide VBIED to break through the security gates when they attacked an AMI-SOM base in El-Ado in Somalia on 15 January 2016. After obliterating the security parameters, al-Shabaab fighters stormed the compound and killed more than 100 soldiers and peacekeepers. Al-Shabaab has also used this type of complex attack before, for example in the attacks in Iraq. Petroleum jelly is a commonly used cosmetics and healing product, and is thus an easily obtainable product that can be used to create a primary explosive.

AQAP and Jabhat al-Nusra, have also employed this type of complex attack. AQAP used it to break through the security barriers when they attacked an army base in Seyoun in the Hadramaut province in Yemen on 9 December 2014. Nusra carried out a similar attack on a military checkpoint in Jaramana outside of Damascus on 19 October 2013, where they killed 16 soldiers. Although both groups have caused civilian casualties through their use of suicide VBIEDs, the details of recorded incidents suggest that the target for this kind of attack is predominantly military bases and checkpoints.

This is not surprising, given that complex attacks involving suicide VBIEDs are an effective way of creating damage and confusion around heavily armed areas. Moreover, there is a growing pattern of using armed VBIEDs in suicide operations, as an armed vehicle can prevent the IED from being neutralised before detonation. This means that it allows for attacks to be carried out without a major element of surprise, as defending forces may not be able to take out the vehicle, before it reaches their security barriers.

This is a tactic that IS has perfected. Although they have used it for anti-personnel attacks, IS has employed complex attacks involving suicide VBIEDs on an unprecedented scale as part of their military strategy. Given the high levels of military equipment the group have seized through their campaigns in Iraq and Syria, they have been able to heavily armour their vehicles for assaults on military checkpoints. Something that has not been widely reported in English language media is that this tactic seems to have been exported to at least one of IS’ provinces, as the vehicles used in Libya have been armoured in a similar fashion to the ones used in Syria and Iraq. Many of the vehicles used by IS have armour welded onto them, often with a large aluminium net covering the front in order to protect them from anti-armour weapons. However, it should be noted that IS’ use of armoured VBIEDs seems to be contextual, as they were deployed in response to the nature of the conflict, as the Syria and Iraq stage makes the armoured VBIED attacks against military checkpoints an effective form of attack. IS has also been known to use ambulances as VBIEDs. On 6 November 2016, IS used ambulances filled with IEDs to drive into security checkpoints in Tikrit and Samarra in Iraq. The attacks left a total of 21 people dead.

In Yemen, however, the group seemed to have mainly used un-armoured vehicles. Although they have used them against military targets, such as on 12 May 2016 when a suicide VBIED killed 10 soldiers in the port city of Mukalla, many of its attacks have targeted civilians and have not needed the heavy protection offered by armoured VBIEDs. This is probably due to the differences between the conflicts in Yemen and Syria, IS’ main struggle in Yemen is not a military insurgency, but rather a fight to carve out a space for themselves in a competitive environment. To some extent, this informs us of how the contextual reality shapes groups’ IED strategies.

This could be an explanation for the relative lack of usage of this method by groups such as Boko Haram and the TTP. In Boko Haram’s case, AQAV has only recorded six instances in which they used suicide car bombings as a tactic, and only eight in Nigeria as a whole over the last five years. The relatively organised
crackdown on the group from Nigerian and Cameroonian authorities has prevented Boko Haram from transporting VBIEDs for long distances.\(^{170}\) There does not seem to have been an increase in the usage of VBIEDs as a result of the IS merger.

An interesting diversion in the usage of the VBIED tactic is the Taliban. According to AOAV’s Explosive Violence Monitor, 23% of the Taliban’s suicide VBIED attacks occurred on open roads, hitting military convoys and buses. This is the highest number amongst any of the main perpetrators, which indicates a pattern in their attacks.

The Taliban’s roadside bombs

Furthermore, 25% of the Taliban’s total recorded IED attacks were roadside bombs. Of these bombs, 75% of those whose detonation method could be confirmed were victim-operated IEDs (VOIEDs). This makes the Taliban the most prolific user of the roadside bomb, and their attacks on roads suggest a guerrilla style approach towards their usage of IEDs. This is in itself not surprising, given their background as a guerrilla organisation fighting a foreign invader in the 1980s. Moreover, the geography of Afghanistan lends itself to such attacks, and miles of often empty roads make ISAF or UN convoys obvious targets.\(^{271}\)

PBIEDs

A person-borne improvised explosive device (PBIED) is an IED carried or transported by a person or proxy, and also includes suicide bombings.

Suicide bombings have been used by all major perpetrators in the last five years, and especially by those groups who could be labelled as Islamic fundamentalist terror groups. Among the ten worst offenders of IED attacks, the eight groups seen as Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups used suicide attacks in between 38% and 60% out of their total amount of attacks. Out of these groups, IS had the lowest proportional share of suicide attacks. This is likely a result of their previous incarnation as the Islamic State of Iraq, a group that conducted significantly less suicide attacks and far more roadside bombings.

However, after announcing the establishment of their caliphate in 2014, 56% of IS’s total amount of IED attacks have been suicide attacks. Excluding the group’s pre-Caliphate era, this means that all of the major Islamic terrorist perpetrators of IED attacks use suicide operations for between 49-60% of their total amount of IED attacks. This is quite a remarkable similarity given the rather vast contextual differences in which these groups carry out their attacks. It must be noted that AOAV’s data only covers English language media and a bias on reporting on suicide attacks might exist in the data, but there certainly seems to be evidence of a popularity in using suicide attacks as a tactic of IED use.

Although this is a tactic that has been employed by most groups, we shall focus on two case studies of specifically efficient PBIED tactics below.

Boko Haram’s suicide bombers

Boko Haram’s inventive ways to smuggle or plant IEDs is very much related to their tactic of using person-borne IEDs (PBIEDs). Given that Boko Haram uses a lot of small IEDs, with some only being soft drink cans filled with explosives, they are easy to conceal and are easily transported by individuals. Importantly, Boko Haram makes use to use small PBIEDs at checkpoints and police stations, preferring this method to suicide VBIEDs used by many other groups. These PBIEDs can be explosives that perpetrators throw at their targets, or suicide belts that are either detonated by the bomber themselves or by command-operated detonation.

On 19 May 2011, an IED planted by a Boko Haram insurgent injured five people at a police station in Maiduguri in Borno state. On 7 July 2015, a Boko Haram suicide bomber detonated his suicide vest next to the security parameters outside a government building in Zaria in the Kaduna region, killing 25 people including a two-year-old girl. Furthermore, local French language media has reported an increase in these small IEDs in Cameroon targeting armed forces, after military campaigns have reduced local insurgents’ resources.\(^{272}\)

Boko Haram’s use of PBIEDs is at its most devastating when used for anti-personnel attacks targeting civilians. As armed forces have become more efficient in identifying Boko Haram fighters, and as local vigilante groups have had some success in neutralising them, Boko Haram has shifted its tactics to avoid getting caught before carrying out attacks. This has resulted in their infamous use of women and children as proxies, which allows them to more easily infiltrate targets. In fact, eight out the 13 attacks carried out in crowded markets by Boko Haram that AOAV recorded were committed by female suicide bombers, who were most likely coerced into acting as proxies. In several of these instances, these proxies were young girls. The youngest proxy was only seven years old when she detonated a suicide belt at a market in Jos on 22 February 2015, killing five and injuring 19. A month before, on 10 January 2015, an IED strapped to a ten-year old girl was remotely detonated in a market in Maiduguri. According to AOAV’s data, there was a sharp rise in suicide attacks carried out by women and girls on the part of Boko Haram in late 2014 and early 2015, the reason for which needs to be explored further.

The tactic of using women and children as proxies has also been used against military targets. For example, on 29 June 2016, an 11-year old boy from the village of Djakana in Cameroon blew himself up outside a video club in his home village, with local French language media reporting at least 11 civilian deaths, also killing two soldiers stationed in the village.\(^{273}\) As more villages in northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon and southern Chad have received military protection from local armies against terrorists, Boko Haram has started using women and children as suicide bombers to more easily target soldiers. This is something that has not been covered extensively in the Western media, and strongly suggests a heightened form of community entrenchment of Boko Haram fighters (or a high level of impunity enjoyed by them in their communities, enabling them to use recruitment and coercive tactics). According to an analyst AOAV spoke with, this tactic originally started as a means to circumvent resource constraints, but may have been continuously employed because of its efficiency.\(^{274}\)

Boko Haram has also used PBIEDs during raids to target fleeing civilians, in order to cause as many casualties as possible.\(^{275}\)

IS inghimasi operations

The use of PBIEDs is something that seems to have been revolutionised by the Islamic State. Besides using several suicide bombers as well as their aforementioned use of suicide VBIEDs, IS has incorporated so-called inghimasi operations in their day-to-day military tactics in an unprecedented manner.\(^{276}\) This has also not been covered in English language media. In fact, an examination of IS’s eulogies, available through their social media channels ‘Anmaq’ (‘Depth’), suggests that a substantial number of those eulogised as ‘Istisshād’ or ‘Shahīd’ (martyr) have died in inghimasi operations.

An inghimasi operation is a complex attack, and essentially indicates a suicide mission. The word inghimasi comes from the Arabic word ghamasha, which means to submerge or to plunge oneself into something. IS usually uses this as an offensive tactic during raids. Inghimasi fighters will charge their enemies using small firearms, whilst trying to penetrate enemy lines before ‘plunging’ into their enemies and detonating suicide vests.\(^{277}\) Whilst this is occurring, IS usually fires rockets and mortars behind enemy lines, in an attempt to create as much confusion and chaos as possible. The tactic is surprisingly effective. This is demonstrated by the fact that the American soldier who died north of Mosul in May 2016 was between 2-3 miles behind the front line when he was killed by an IS fighter.\(^{278}\) This highlights how far behind enemy lines an inghimasi operation can reach.

Something else that has not been widely covered by English language sources is the industrial scale at which IS produces both suicide bombers and inghimasi fighters. According to AOAV’s data, there has been a sharp rise in suicide operations by IS after they announced the establishment of a caliphate in 2014. The organisation Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), who were IS’s predecessor, only used suicide operations in 10 % of their recorded IED attacks, whereas IS used this method in 56% of that group’s confirmed IED attacks. A sign of this drastic shift, is the professionalism with which IS runs suicide operations and in particular inghimasi operations. According to unpublished research from a British academic who wished to remain anonymous but was willing to share his data with AOAV, there are signs of IS running specialised inghimasi training camps. Similar to Boko Haram’s use of children as suicide bombers, a large number of those enrolled are children and teenagers.\(^{279}\)

Infiltration

Almost all of the main perpetrators of IED attacks have been able to infiltrate armed forces in manners that have advanced their positions. In the former case, this seems to be done for primarily intelligence gathering and reporting purposes in order to shape tactical design rather than for the purpose of carrying out attacks or IED emplacement, although this also occurs.

Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab has been very successful at installing people in high positions within AMISOM and the Somali National Armed Forces. Several testimonies have also implied that al-Shabaab has been able to infiltrate even FGS positions and Somalia’s National Intelligence Agency (NISA).\(^{30}\) Al-Shabaab’s own intelligence unit, ‘Amniyat’, has been responsible for most of these infiltrations. Besides intelligence gathering, this has dramatically en-
hanced al-Shabaab’s operational capacities, as the group has been able to carry out attacks in Mogadishu and retreat with minimal opposition. Amniyat has also been known to use the huge Somali refugee camp Dadaab as a base for planning operations in Kenya. Local media has reported that the camp has been used as base from which Amniyat operatives send out suicide bombers. This has been cited as one of the reasons why Kenya in May 2016 decided to close the Dadaab camp.

Islamic State

Infiltration of IS fighters in refugee populations has been feared by both Western and Middle Eastern governments, although it does not seem to have occurred to the same extent as with al-Shabaab. Arabic media has reported on refugee workers in Iraqi Kurdistan who have expressed concern over IS infiltrating local refugee camps. The Kurdish Peshmerga has also stated in Arabic media that IS has infiltrated the Iraqi army, with Peshmerga spokesman Silwan Barzani pointing to the fact that IS hit US targets in the Makhmour area in March 2016 as evidence of intelligence sharing between the Iraqi Army and IS. This claim remains unsubstantiated.

In Egypt, there have been concerns over Islamic State Sinai Province infiltration of the Egyptian armed forces. Lebanese online newspaper al-Monitor reported that a 2014 attack on the Mediterranean port city of Damietta, in which a group of terrorists attacked a naval patrol, killed several on board and kidnapped many others before being stopped by another naval patrol. According to al-Monitor, this attack was carried out by a group of members of the Egyptian navy led by an officer. Because of a media blackout of the events, not much more is known about what transpired, but according to other Arabic media several Sinai Province attacks have been planned by army defectors.

Taliban

If the case of Islamic State is speculative, there are stronger indicators of Taliban infiltration of the Afghan armed forces. There have been several green-on-blue events in Afghanistan, and although they have dropped in number since 2012 (when they accounted for 15% of all coalition force deaths), each year since 2008 has seen at least one such attack. The Taliban often claim that this is because of their infiltration of the Afghan armed forces which allows them to carry out attacks against coalition forces, and US General John Allen in 2012 admitted that about half of the green-on-blue events were the result of Taliban infiltration. In January 2016, a Taliban statement posted on their website claimed responsibility for two successful attacks in Helmand that killed 14 soldiers and one commander in the Afghan army, although this has not been confirmed. Ahmad Zia Masood, a former advisor to President Hamid Karzai, has however admitted that the Taliban have been able to infiltrate both the armed forces and government institutions.

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda also provides an interesting case. Their perhaps most successful infiltration in recent years was when al-Qaeda in the Indian sub-continent (AQIS) were able to infiltrate the Pakistani navy and seize the PNS Zulfiquar, before being stopped by personnel at the site. The raid was reportedly carried out by Pakistani naval officers who had swapped allegiance to AQIS, which was demonstrated by the ease with which they were able to get through security checkpoints. The attack took place on the same day that the PNS Zulfiquar was scheduled to join an international flotilla in the Indian Ocean, from which it was supposed to attack the American Naval Fleet. This suggests that AQIS were being fed intelligence from the Pakistanis as well. Al-Qaeda later released a statement regarding the attack, claiming that the attackers were all commissioned officers in the Pakistani navy. Interestingly, there have been reports of al-Qaeda infiltration within IS ranks as well, mainly from IS upstart areas such as Libya and Yemen. In Yemen, local media has reported on IS even rejecting new recruits out of fear of al-Qaeda infiltration.

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is probably the most clear-cut case of successful infiltration into armed forces, and there are several examples of suspected inside jobs where military personnel have leaked intelligence to Boko Haram. In September 2016, Boko Haram members were arrested for attempting to infiltrate the Nigerian army, one of whom was an IED specialist. This is not an isolated incident. Former president Goodluck Jonathan in 2012 stated that Boko Haram had been able to infiltrate both the army and the government executive. In one instance, a former Special Forces commander was killed fighting for Boko Haram, and deserters have frequently joined Boko Haram. The Eye witness account from Nigerian soldiers have even indicated that there has been direct operational cooperation between army units and Boko Haram, during which army units have led fellow soldiers into Boko Haram ambushes. Retired Air Marshal Alex Badeh has stated that this is due to fifth columnists within the Nigerian military which feed information to Boko Haram. It should however be mentioned that Badeh himself has been accused of stealing $20 million from the military’s counter-terrorism budget. Nigerian media even reported in October 2015 that an alleged Boko Haram fighter, Aliyu Hussaini, had successfully bluffied his way into the military on his ‘credentials’ as a brigadier-general.

Disguise

Various methods of disguise in order to plant IEDs have been perfected by both Boko Haram and IS. Local Nigerian media have reported that Boko Haram fighters have dressed up as women to avoid getting caught before carrying out attacks. Moreover, Boko Haram has also enlisted women to transport IEDs and plant them in crowded places. Many women have been able to hide IEDs under their headscars or on their backs as if they were carrying babies. Regional media has also reported on Cameroonian concern that Boko Haram fighters are hiding among the refugees that have fled from Nigeria to Cameroon as a result of their pillaging. Furthermore, the Nigerian military has issued warnings that Boko Haram fighters are disguising themselves as fruit and vegetable sellers, while hiding their IEDs under large piles of produce in crowded markets. In 2016, the Nigerian military also cautioned against Boko Haram insurgents pretending to be mentally unstable in order to more easily slip through security and place IEDs in crowded places.

Boko Haram has also shown off inventive strategies of IED concealment. On 10 November 2014, a suicide bomber detonated a suicide belt at a school in Potiskum in the Yobe region, killing 49 and injuring 79 others. The suicide bomber was disguised as a student. In 2013, Nigerian military discovered a Boko Haram factory site that produced schoolbags that could fit IEDs, such as the one used by the Boston bombers. Although Boko Haram mainly use concealment and disguise for attacks with smaller IEDs, on 3 July 2014 five people were killed when a van exploded by a checkpoint. The van carried large quantities of explosives that were covered by firewood, indicating that Boko Haram is willing to use their disguise tactics on a larger scale.

IS has also reportedly used women’s clothing to escape security. According to analysts that AOAV has interviewed, IS in Libya has masqueraded as fleeing families when they have attempted to exit cities that have been taken over from rival forces. On August 31, 2016, several IS fighters were caught cross-dressing in the southern Syrian city of Tarsal. According to local media, this was done in order to take advantage of the fact that the Free Syrian Army were allowing displaced people to take refuge in the city. Moreover, on 20 July, an IS fighter in Yemen was able to plant an IED among several policemen by a checkpoint in Aden. The man was reportedly disguised as a policeman and had asked to eat with other officers during their lunch break, during which time he planted an IED under the table and detonated it after having left the site. As previously mentioned, the Mosul offensive has revealed that IS in urban landscapes make extensive efforts to conceal IEDs in every-day items in order to create as many casualties as possible and stall attacks on them after they have retreated.

Al-Shabaab has also been known to wear military uniforms when carrying out attacks. This is facilitated by the widespread accessibility of low cost military uniforms, due partly to a lack of import oversight, which has been described as an ‘underreported threat to peace’ in Somalia.

2.4 EXPERTISE INHERITED FROM FORMER MILITARY PERSONNEL

Many armed groups have been able to make use of strategic expertise that current members have inherited from their former affiliations. In some instances, that includes expertise brought into insurgent groups from military personnel. The most relevant case in this regard is Islamic State and the influence of former Iraqi Army commanders from Saddam Hussein’s Baath Party. The link between IS and former Baath Party members has been well-documented, with many of IS’ most influential commanders having served in Saddam Hussein’s military or intelligence services. For example, the now deceased Abu Ali al-Anbari, who was IS’ Syrian governor, was a former Major-General in Saddam Hussein’s intelligence services. The same institution has drawn several IS commanders, for example current IS intelligence chief Iyad Hamad Khalaf al-Jumayli, as well as Security and Intelligence Council (SIC) members Abu Safwan Rifai and Abu Luay. IS’ Military Council (MC) is also filled with former Iraqi Army officers. For example, two former leaders of the MC, Haji Bakr and Adnan al-Bilawi (both deceased) were former Baathists, and so is the man believed to be its current leader, Abu Ahmad al-Alwani (there are conflicting reports of whether he is dead or not), and member Abdullah Ahmad
The strong presence of former Baathists may be surprising given the Baath Party’s strongly secular outlook. However, the two share more than is realised. For example, a former Iraqi general interviewed on Al-Jazeera Arabic stated that IS and Baathists are equally horrified by what they see as American and Iranian control over Iraq.116 As many Baath officials were Sunni Arabs, the two are also said to share hostile attitudes towards Iraq’s other sects and ethnic groups, such as Shia and Kurds.117 Moreover, Saddam Hussein conducted the so-called ‘Faith Campaign’ during the 1990s, in which he pursued a more socially conservative and Islamist agenda. This turned many Baath command- ers towards conservative and occasionally extreme forms of Islam, therefore enabling the existence of a ‘religious deep state’ where the regime managed to co-opt religious institutions and education. One of these educational institutions was the Islamic University of Baghdad, where IS’ Amir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi completed his PhD in Islamic Studies.118 In fact, when Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi arrived in Iraq in 2002 he was impressed with how far into the regime the local Salafi movement reached.119 However, some analysts have stated that this has nothing to do with religion. Rather, Baathists mainly see IS as an organisation through which they can retake control of Iraq.120

Given this level of influence of former Baathists, IS has inevitably adopted some of the tactics used by Saddam Hussein’s army. IS’ use of suicide VBIEDs should be understood in light of this. The Iraqi army relied heavily on artillery and armour during offensives, but given IS’ initial lack of their own, the group employed suicide VBIEDs rather than armouring the outset of offensives in a manner similar to the Iraqi Army. Another sign of how suicide VBIED strategy is influenced by Baathist command- ers is the way in which they often target pre-selected areas or points before battles, and these targets rarely change. The Iraqi Army did this during the Gulf War, where they placed oil drums in strategic loca- tions which they later aimed for once coalition forces approached. These targets did usually not change, even if coalition forces steered clear of them.121

Despite a clear Baathist influence in IS tactics, it would be wrong to overstate its influence. Just like IS displayed an ability to adapt by using VBIEDs instead of artillery, they have also managed to break out of the occasionally static Baathist military strategy. This is mainly because of the jihadi experience of several high-ranking commanders and foreign fighters. It has even been found that IS has used defensive tactics in Mosul similar to those used by Chechen jihadis in the 1990s, which is indicative of the large number of fighters with a connection to the Chechen insurgency.122 Moreover, the Iraqi army had a rigid top-down hierarchy, whereas IS is much more decentralised. This in many ways allows for more innovative tactics.

One example of this is the group’s offensive on the Syrian city of Hassaka in June 2015. After being cornered in an area of the city called al-Zuhur, IS abandoned their strat- egy of detonating IEDs in pre-determined locations, and instead set them off as they retreated to hinder The Syrian Kurdish YPG forces from pursuing them, as well as creating smoke screens which made airstrikes difficult.123 This demonstrates that although there is a clear influence of Baathist officers within IS ranks, the expertise that they provide only provides a limited explanation of IS’ military success.

2.5 NETWORKS OF KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Although a lot of IED knowledge is self-taught, either through imitation or rigorous internet research, there is ENPTP proliferation within the terrorist community.124 This could either be intentional or accidental. Often, knowledge is transferred by proxy rather than learning from one particular source. Individuals who have acquired skills through other groups or persons, in turn teach new students. This is the case for the Afghan Taliban, for example, who originally learnt IED-making skills from Arab al-Qaeda fighters and now are teaching their knowledge to new recruits.125 According to the Egyptian security forces, in a story not covered by English language media, this seems to be the case for Egypt’s worst perpetrators of IED attacks. Members of both IS Sinai Province and Aqaid al-Mur have reportedly received training in Syria, Libya or Afghanistan. After returning to Egypt, these ‘cooks’ have taught their skills to their members of their respective organisations.126

There is also an element of organisations absorbing knowledge from members previously active in other groups, or even former military personnel. Besides the Baathist influence on IS tactics mentioned previously, IS Khorasan Province has been able to benefit from the knowledge of former Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) members, who have joined the group in Afghanistan.127

AQAV has been able to identify links of ENPTP exchange between organisations regarding the manufacture, tactics and use of IEDs, many of which have not been covered significantly in English language media. How- ever, as most experts would point out, it is very difficult to fully ascertain to what extent links between groups are used, although one can definitely detect the signs of inter-organisational cooperation. It should be noted that some of the groups that cooperate are allied under either the larger IS or al-Qaeda banner. However, as they are still separate branches working in different contexts, investigating their level of interaction is important for the understanding of networks behind IED incidents.

2.5.1 IS-BOKO HARAM

IS’s entry into Libya has provided them with an oppor- tunity to work with their allies Boko Haram. Although there is a huge geographic area separating IS’s previous strongholds in Sirte in northern Libya, and Boko Haram’s stronghold in northern Nigeria, the groups have been able to cooperate in the lawless landscape of the Libyan and Sahelian deserts. Arabic language media have, for example, reported that Boko Haram has sent fighters into Libya to assist IS troops.128 Moreover, regional intelligence officials have suggested that IS fighters may have fled northern Libya down to the south, using smuggling routes controlled by Boko Haram.129

There is also the obvious fact that IS in August 2016 installed Abu Musab al-Barnawi as new Boko Haram leader, therefore de facto deposing Abubakar Shekau. Based on this, it is safe to say that there is cooperation between the two. However, an analyst AQAV spoke with said that the rumours of Boko Haram fighters present in Libya are exaggerated.130 A Boko Haram expert at Chatham House told AQAV that there haven’t been any material signs of cooperation between the two groups yet, but that it is certainly possible.131 Reports in August 2016 have stated that there has been virtually no IS presence in Nigeria, besides an alleged IS recruiter who was arrested by Nigerian security forces and four Nigerian individuals bound to join IS in Libya. This does however indicate that there is active communication between the groups, although Boko Haram has had very little, both financially and militarily, to show for their pledge of allegiance.132
According to AOA\'s data, Boko Haram has carried out attacks by female suicide bombers since the summer of 2014. It is therefore noteworthy that alongside reports of Boko Haram crossing into Libya, there have been reports in local media of IS Libya Province using women as suicide bombers.\(^{218}\) This emerged after Libyan army forces arrested several women linked to IS in March 2016, and there is concern among the local intelligence community that the two have been inspired by each other.\(^{218}\) Some have said that it is almost certain that Boko Haram will be able to benefit from IS\'s sophisticated IED knowledge.\(^{219}\) Arabic media have also highlighted that IS\'s re-positioning in Libya may allow it to build contact networks with other regional groups, such as AQIM and MUJAO.\(^{220}\)

2.5.2 BOKO HARAM-AQIM & WIDER AL-QAEDA NETWORK
Paradoxically, Boko Haram may have increased their cooperation with al-Qaeda through AQIM since pledging allegiance to IS. Although not well reported by Western media, Boko Haram received training by Algerian AQIM operative Khaled Benaouai as far back as 2006, through which AQIM assisted Boko Haram in their attack on the UN building in Abuja in 2011, with some reports even suggesting that AQIM made the bomb and delivered it to Boko Haram. Moreover, in the aftermath of Boko Haram\'s invasion of Damaturu in Yobe state in November 2011, documents and manuals identified to be derived from al-Qaeda in Iraq were found, so there is a long history of interaction between these two networks.\(^{221}\)

Some analysts see the Libyan turmoil as a potential to give this relationship a fresh start, despite the official ties between Boko Haram and IS. Given the alleged presence of many West African fighters in Libya from Boko Haram and AQIM affiliated groups, these have since the expulsion of IS from cities like Sirte reportedly cooperated and exchanged equipment and funding.\(^{222}\) The fact that much of Boko Haram\'s IED strategy in northern Cameroon strongly resembles that of AQIM\'s in Mali suggests that, if not knowledge exchange, there is certainly imitation occurring.\(^{223}\) This is probably a result of some of the fighters who previously broke out as the Ansaru group, a group with strong ties to AQIM, has returned to influential positions in Boko Haram.

Most importantly, there have been suggestions that the IS appointed Boko Haram leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi is in fact an al-Qaeda mole. This has been based on the fact that he, theologically and ideologically, is closer to al-Qaeda than IS, as well as the fact that several people in his faction have ties to AQIM. These include Mamman Nur, who previously worked as a link between AQIM and Boko Haram and reportedly masterminded the 2011 Abuja attack, and Abu Fatima, a former Ansaru operative, a group which is seen as having strong ties to AQIM.\(^{224}\) Given the existing ties between these individuals and AQIM, this relationship might be one to observe for the future.

2.5.3 AQAP-AL-SHAABAAB
Although these groups are allied under the al-Qaeda banner, their level of cooperation and interaction has not sufficiently been examined in English language sources. The cooperation between the groups is so strong that the two have been able to exchange ammunition, money and even people across the Gulf of Aden, according to local news outlets.\(^{225}\) Eyewitness accounts from former al-Shabaab fighters have confirmed that the group has sent people to train with AQAP in Yemen.\(^{226}\) AQAP are well known for their sophisticated IEDs, with their chief bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri being notorious for his bombs.\(^{227}\) In 2006, it was reported that AQIM assisted Boko Haram in their attack on the UN building in Abuja in 2011, with some reports even suggesting that AQIM made the bomb and delivered it to Boko Haram. Moreover, in the aftermath of Boko Haram\'s invasion of Damaturu in Yobe state in November 2011, documents and manuals identified to be derived from al-Qaeda in Iraq were found, so there is a long history of interaction between these two networks.\(^{221}\)

According to two Somali sources, al-Shabaab members have travelled to Yemen, something which has led to ENTPP exchange.\(^{228}\) The group has also sent operatives to Yemen, and even participated in the training of AQAP operatives.\(^{229}\)

Some analysts see the Libyan turmoil as a potential to give this relationship a fresh start, despite the official ties between Boko Haram and IS. Given the alleged presence of many West African fighters in Libya from Boko Haram and AQIM affiliated groups, these have since the expulsion of IS from cities like Sirte reportedly cooperated and exchanged equipment and funding.\(^{222}\) The fact that much of Boko Haram\'s IED strategy in northern Cameroon strongly resembles that of AQIM\'s in Mali suggests that, if not knowledge exchange, there is certainly imitation occurring.\(^{223}\) This is probably a result of some of the fighters who previously broke out as the Ansaru group, a group with strong ties to AQIM, has returned to influential positions in Boko Haram.

Most importantly, there have been suggestions that the IS appointed Boko Haram leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi is in fact an al-Qaeda mole. This has been based on the groups during Nusra\'s operations in Idlib and Aleppo in 2014.\(^{230}\) Moreover, local Yemeni outlets have reported on AQAP\'s adopted strategy of using their military capacities in service of goals important to local communities, thereby attempting to win the hearts and minds of the local population. This is a direct sign of communication with Nusra, who have had significant success with this \"hearts and minds\" model of governance in Syria.\(^{231}\) Several Arabic news sources have reported on Ibrahim al-Asiri, AQAP\'s chief bomb maker, travelling to Syria and spending time with Nusra forces.\(^{232}\) In fact, he was believed to have been injured during an attack on Nusra headquarters in Latakia in western Syria in 2013.\(^{233}\) It is very likely that Asiri instructed Nusra fighters in IED manufacturing during his time in Syria.

2.5.5 TALIBAN-AL-QAEDA
Questions have been raised about the relationship between al-Qaeda and the Taliban following the death of former leader Mullah Mansour in 2016. For example, Lebanese media outlet al-Monitor raised the issue of there being a delay in al-Qaeda\'s pledge of allegiance to new Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. There is also a reported disagreement between the two on where to focus their resources, given al-Qaeda\'s global ambitions compared to the Taliban\'s explicit focus on Afghanistan.\(^{234}\) The Taliban announced in early 2016 that they categorically rejected taking any action outside of Afghanistan, which supposedly shot ties between the groups.\(^{235}\) However, this has also led many to question as to what influence al-Qaeda still has over the Taliban.\(^{236}\) The fact that Sirajuddin Haqqani remains deputy Taliban leader should probably be seen as a sign of decent relations and communications between the groups.

The ties between the al-Qaeda and the Taliban are historically important. For example, the Taliban acquired their knowledge of IEDs through their al-Qaeda connections.\(^{237}\) Moreover, recent reports have suggested a growing presence of al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan. The US military uncovered two large al-Qaeda training camps in the Shobarak district of the Kandahar region in October last year, which turned out to be the largest al-Qaeda complex ever found in Afghanistan. It was found to have a large fighting strength and was the site of a previous attack on Nusra headquarters in Latakia in western Syria in 2013.\(^{238}\) It is very likely that Asiri instructed Nusra fighters in IED manufacturing during his time in Syria.

2.6 TIMINGS OF IED INCIDENTS
In order to further grasp what facilitates the usage of IEDs among transnational terrorist groups, AOA\'s analysis of IED incidents in some of the countries worst affected by explosive violence. It was found that IED incidents are more likely to occur during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in Iraq and Afghanistan, where Ramadan has seen a larger proportion of attacks than the monthly average of the last five years, almost every year since 2011. This is significant, as these are the two countries most affected by IED violence. Moreover, AOA\'s analysis has been able to identify some similarities between different countries in terms of the timings of the diffusion of IED incidents in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. This suggests that the spread of certain kinds of explosive violence is due to regional interconnectivity and local contexts.

2.6.1 ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE DURING RAMADAN
Iraq:
Iraq, the country which according to AOA\'s Explosive Weapons Monitor has suffered the most IED attacks in the past five years (2,350), offers some crucial insight regarding the timings of IED incidents. For example, attacks to some extent do seem to be more frequent during the period of Ramadan. The holy month in Iraq saw a higher number of IED incidents than the monthly average in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, and first half of 2016. 2014 was the only year where the monthly average of IED attacks was higher than the amount of attacks carried out during Ramadan in Iraq. Crucially, civilian places were targeted to a higher degree during Ramadan as well, following a similar pattern. The holy month of 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015 all saw a higher number of attacks on populated areas than those years\' monthly average, again with 2014 as the only exception. This suggests a pattern of escalating both the number of attacks as well as the attacks on populated areas during Ramadan in Iraq.
It should be noted that the holy month was never the month that suffered the most attacks during this time period. However, Ramadan was among the three worst affected months every year (except 2014), which further suggests that the rise of attacks during the holy month is not because of an absence of attacks throughout the rest of the year.

A worrying trend is that Ramadan in Iraq seems to become deadlier and deadlier in comparison to the rest of the year. Whilst the holy months of 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 did not display a higher total casualty number than those years’ monthly average, 2015 and the first half of 2016 have seen a higher total number of casualties from IED incidents than those years’ monthly average. 2015 saw an increase of total number of casualties of 11%, and the first half of 2016 saw a staggering 86% increase. This suggests that although Ramadan has traditionally been more frequently targeted in Iraq, IED incidents have for the first time started to claim more victims. This should be incorporated in future strategies on how to prevent attacks in the country most affected by IED violence in the world.

However, other months have been the scene of extensive violence too. In 2011 and 2012, the deadliest attacks of the year both took place in January. In 2011, four of the five deadliest IED incidents in Iraq took place within the first two months of the year, and the two deadliest attacks of 2012 both occurred in January, 2013, 2014, and 2015 saw their deadliest attacks in September, August and July respectively. None of the deadliest attacks of either year was carried out during Ramadan, although the attack in Khan Bani Saad on 17 July 2015, which killed 120 civilians, took place one day after Ramadan ended.

**Afghanistan**

The pattern is similar in Afghanistan. Indeed, the IED incidents during Ramadan over the past five years surpassed the monthly average each year. Ramadan was the month with the most incidents in 2011, and among the three worst affected each year since, except 2015. Attacks in Afghanistan have consistently dropped since 2011, but Ramadan has remained proportionally worse affected each year. 2014’s deadliest attack in Afghanistan was carried out during Ramadan, when a suicide car bomb detonated in a market in Orgun in the Paktika region on 15 July, killing 87 civilians. Similar to Iraq, Ramadan also saw more attacks on populated areas in all years except 2015 compared to the monthly average, suggesting a pattern of escalating both total numbers of attacks and disproportionately targeting civilians during the holy month. However, Ramadan in Afghanistan never saw a larger number of casualties than the monthly average in the timeframe examined.

This pattern is revealing. Although the conflicts and the terrorists involved in them are very different in Iraq and Afghanistan, they are the only countries to display this susceptibility to IED violence during Ramadan in such a consistent manner.

This pattern shows up sporadically in other countries. For example, Nigeria saw more attacks during Ramadan in 2014 and 2015, than those years’ monthly average, but not in 2011, 2012, or 2013.

Syria did not experience this proportionality until 2015, which had a monthly average of 3 attacks, whilst 10 were carried out during Ramadan. The first half of 2016 has seen similar proportions. IS has explicitly called for attacks during the Islamic holy month, and given the group’s roots in Iraq, that could be one reason behind the large proportion of attacks during Ramadan. Given that IS has established itself in Syria and Nigeria (through Boko Haram) only more recently, perhaps that explains the growing proportion of attacks carried out during Ramadan in recent years.

### 2.8.2 Escalation of Violence During Elections

Studies of violence and elections in Europe have shown that violence in relation to elections is more common in countries with less permissive democratic systems. However, it has in this study been found that among the ten worst affected countries, it was the countries with the (comparatively) more permissive democratic and electoral systems that, in general experienced more violence and also more IED incidents.[352] In this particular case, it seems as if the trend is strongest in countries that are stumbling democracies moving away from authoritarian rule, such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. All of these countries saw attacks from groups (the Taliban, IS and the TTP) that make claims to challenge the state’s authority. However, these groups used IEDs in different ways, with some selectively targeting specific parties and others simply aiming to disrupt the electoral process. It has also been found that some groups who usually deploy a large amount of IED incidents, such as the Taliban and Boko Haram, did not use IEDs as their main means of violence to disrupt the elections.

**Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan, whose elections the Taliban rejected in strong terms, there was a slight surge in IED incidents in the month leading up to the April 2014 elections compared to the rest of that year, with that month seeing 14 attacks compared to that year’s monthly average of 12. However, not many of the attacks carried out in the month leading up to the election were aimed at targets involved in the electoral process. This does not mean that there was no election-related violence during this time. For example, the suicide bombing at market in Mainana on 18 March 2014, which killed 15 people, allegedly aimed at provoking fear among the electorate. Similarly, an IED attack on 2 April 2014 killed six policemen outside of the Afghan Ministry of Interior. However, most of the high profile attacks leading up to the elections were not IED attacks. This includes the raid on the Serena hotel in Kabul on 20 March 2014, where nine people were killed, as well as the attack on the election commission headquarters on 29 March 2014, in which four Taliban were killed after a gun battle. On Election Day itself, 20 people were killed across the country in non-IED attacks.

**Iraq**

In Iraq’s provincial elections of 2013, the month leading up to the elections had a lower amount of IED incidents (39) than that year’s monthly average (54). However, there were still heavy indications of explosive violence targeting parties involved in the electoral process or attacks aimed at making people refrain from voting. On 14 April, six days before the election, Najim al-Harbi, a candidate in Diya province, was killed in a car bomb. The next day, the Islamic State in Iraq carried out an astounding
23 IED attacks in seven different provinces, and eight of these attacks targeted people tied to the electoral process, three of which detonated near polling stations. Similar events took place on 19 March, which saw 18 IED attacks. This violence to some extent succeeded in derailings the elections, as the voting was delayed until June in Ainar and Nineveh due to the crumbling security situation.

The next year, in 2014, Iraq held presidential elections. This time, the month leading up to the elections saw a larger amount of IED attacks (43) compared to that year’s monthly average (37). Several attacks targeted the electoral process. For example, 33 people were killed on 25 April at a rally held by Shia militia and political party Asaib Ahl al-Haq. Three days later, two days before the election, there were four IED attacks on polling stations in the Kirkuk, Diyala, Salahuddin and Baghdad regions. On Election Day itself, there was one IED incident, killing two women walking to a polling station in Kirkuk, as well as a foiled attempt where a suicide bomber was shot and killed as he tried to enter a polling station in Mosul. Five more people were killed across the country on Election Day in non-IED incidents.

Pakistan
Pakistan saw a big surge in IED incidents within the month leading up its general elections on 11 May 2013. The month before the elections displayed a doubling in the amount of attacks (35) compared to the year’s monthly average (18). Furthermore, 27 of the attacks targeted people directly involved in, or engaging with, the electoral process. According to Pakistani government reports, 81 people were killed and 437 people injured in 119 violent incidents (IED attacks and other violence) between April 20, when campaigning officially begun, and May 9, when a campaign blackout was instituted. Indeed, Pakistani media called the weeks leading up to the elections the ‘bloodiest’ in the country’s history.

The TTP was the main perpetrator of these attacks, and managed to use its explosive violence as a political tool. The TTP targeted mainly the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were spared TTP violence, probably because of their favourable opinion towards peace talks with the TTP. Given that the TTP at the time wanted to engage in discussions with the Pakistani government over potential peace talks, they used IED attacks in order to swing the ballot towards parties that would work in their favour. Election Day itself saw seven IED attacks, killing a total of 15 civilians. Three different polling stations in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa were attacked, as well as two different ANP events in Karachi. In total, Election Day saw 20 people killed in various violent attacks.

Nigeria
Despite the above demonstrated increase in IED incidents around elections, there are several deviations from this pattern. Nigeria, for example, saw fewer IED incidents in the month before the presidential elections of 28 and 29 March 2015 (4) compared to the monthly average of that year (7). Furthermore, there were no IED incidents on people involved in the electoral process. However, Boko Haram did attack several polling stations on Election Day, and are believed to have killed 41 people, including opposition politician Umar Ali. Most victims were killed as Boko Haram ambushed villages and polling stations using light arms. Nine more people were killed in non-IED incidents when Nigeria held local elections a few weeks later.

Egypt, Yemen, Somalia and Syria
Egypt, on its part, saw six IED incidents in the month before its presidential election in May 2014, a doubling compared to that year’s monthly average of three attacks. However, only one of these attacks targeted individuals involved in the electoral process.

There is an even weaker trend in Yemen and Somalia. Yemen only saw one IED incident in the month leading up to its presidential elections in February 2012, and Somalia had no reported attacks in the month before its presidential elections of 2012.

Syria, on its part, saw 11 incidents in the month before its presidential election in June 2014, compared to that year’s monthly average of 4, although a majority of these were part of the larger conflict raging in the country. Surprisingly, no IED incidents were reported in the month leading up to Syria’s parliamentary elections of April 2016.

Elections do not necessarily mean a spike in IED violence. In the countries examined, it seems as if a more permissive electoral process, where the result is not certain and may change the direction of the country, means more attacks. It is probably an accurate statement that there were no election-related IED attacks in Syria given that it was widely expected that Bashar al-Assad would win. In Yemen, Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi ran unopposed in 2012’s presidential elections, and in Egypt it was clear that Abdel fattah al-Sisi was going to win. In most of these countries, the insurgent groups’ position would likely not change for the worse as a result of the election, whilst in Afghanistan, Pakistan and to some extent Iraq the elections represented either a disapproval of the group’s claims as legitimate rulers, or a potential change for the worse in terms of level of influence.

2.6.3 THE SPREAD OF VBIEDS IN 2014-2015
A closer look at the global use of VBIEDs as a tactical design reveals some interesting patterns. Specifically, there are some interesting parallels to be made between Syria and Iraq and between Somalia and Yemen.

Syria and Iraq have seen a similar pattern in their domestic VBIED numbers between 2011 and 2015. They see the number of VBIED incidents rise in the early period and peak in 2013 before dropping, despite no signs of either country’s conflict showing any sign of slowing down.

Although the numbers are much higher in Iraq, it is revealing that both countries have seen a similar statistical trajectory of these attacks. Both Syria’s and Iraq’s conflicts share similar traits (and even main players), but there are also several differences between them, which makes these numbers rather interesting.

One thing that could explain the IED use of both countries peaking in 2013 is the former IS-Jabhat al-Nusra connection. Jabhat al-Nusra’s leader Abu Muhammad al-Julani was explicitly sent to Syria by IS (at this time Islamic State in Iraq, ISI) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in order to establish a Syrian branch of the organisation in 2012. However, Julani’s Nusra often refused to obey central command which led to them breaking ties in 2013. Nonetheless, Jabhat al-Nusra was the worst perpetrator of VBIED attacks in Syria in 2013, committing nine of the 59 attacks recorded (46 of the attacks were carried out by an unknown perpetrator). There is certainly a possibility that Nusra incorporated some of their mother organisation’s tactics. Indeed, IS was the worst known perpetrator of VBIED attacks in Iraq in 2013, committing 34 of the 340 attacks, (the other attacks were carried out by an unknown perpetrator).

Another interesting comparison is between Yemen and Somalia, who have also seen similar trajectories in their domestic VBIED statistics.

Both countries saw a rise from 2011 to 2012, before a drop in 2013, and a sharp rise in 2014 and 2015. The link between AQAP and al-Shabaab has been touched upon before, and may well be a reason behind these numbers. However, there are many differences between the two countries. For one, Yemen has seen a civil war with several foreign, regional and local actors involved since 2015, whereas Somalia is mainly attempting to quell al-Shabaab’s insurgency with the help of Kenyan Special Forces.

Al-Shabaab’s escalation of violence in this time, and especially their more frequent use of VBIEDs, is undoubtedly a reason behind Somalia’s spike in VBIE
As has been previously mentioned, eight of the ten worst perpetrators of IED attacks can either be placed squarely in the Salafi-jihadi camp or at least be seen as having an ideology based on a violent interpretation of Islam. It should be noted that explosive violence, in the shape of IED incidents or suicide bombings, is not confined to Islam, or even the Salafi-jihadi interpretation of it. Explosive violence has been and is being used by all kinds of groups, ranging from nationalist to anarchist in ideology. Believing it to be unique to Islam would be not only factually incorrect but also not conducive to the prevention of IED violence. However the past five years have, to AOAV’s best knowledge, seen an unprecedented wave of IED attacks being incorporated both in military strategies and in attacks targeting civilians, and most of the perpetrators of these attacks subscribe to Salafi-jihadism. In light of this, AOAV believes it is important to investigate what religious justifications within Islam, and specifically within Salafism, are being used to legitimise the loss of life through explosive violence. However, it is not the intention of this report to scapegoat any one religion or community, as that would be directly counter-productive in efforts to curb the rise of IED attacks around the world.

Furthermore, there are other, demographic, political and socio-economic, factors in play, and since only a minority of Salafists accept the jihadi arguments for committing violence, it is important that we also examine other motivations. Some of these are also considered separately in our report “Understanding the rising cult of suicide bombers”.

### 3.1.1 IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR JIHAD

Salafi-jihadism has been seen as a reaction to several things, mainly the perceived failures of political Islam in the 1990s, as well as the intellectual crisis in the Salafi movement when Saudi Arabia, supposedly the bastion of Salafism, invited US troops onto its soil in 1990 during the Gulf War. Different Salafi-jihadi thinkers and organisations vary considerably on many issues, both theoretically and practically, but they are united by a strong focus on the importance of military struggle (jihad) combined with an often uncompromising and literalist reading of scripture and religious law (the Sharia). This often entails the excommunication (takfir) of non-believers, which in the extreme Salafi-jihadi interpretation may mean anyone who is not loyal to the group. This idea is further elaborated in the concept of al-wala wa-r-bara (loyalty and disavowal).
3.1.2 RELIGIOUS justifications for IED incidents drawn from Muslim jurisprudence

Although Salafi-jihadism represents a fringe movement within Islam, transnational IED networks frequently make use of religious justifications for explosive violence. In order to understand these workings, it is worth briefly examining Islamic jurisprudence and the way in which it can be taken to justify the use of IEDs against combatants and civilians. Understanding how groups such as IS, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and others use jurisprudentialjustifications for targeting civilians can provide a way toward understanding how their brutal acts can be rationalised using Islamic legal arguments. Conversely, Islamic jurisprudential discourse may also be used as a means of calling on groups to abide by normative Islamic values and principles in a bid to lessen civilian harm.

The main sources of Islamic jurisprudence, from which the legitimacy of any action, including the targeting of civilians, may be determined, are the Quran and the Sunnah, which includes hadiths. Secondary sources are ijma (consensus), qiyas (analogic), istihsan (juristic preference) and ijtihad (reason and opinion). Ijma refers to the consensus reached by the Prophet’s companions and classical scholars. Qiyas uses analogy to deal with various cases involving new phenomena that were not familiar to the Prophet and his contemporaries. For example, date wine was forbidden in early Islamic times due to its intoxicating effects. When grape wine was introduced, there was no established religious view concerning this new phenomenon, which is why qiyas was used to determine that it should be forbidden, since its effects (intoxication) were analogous to those of date wine. Istihsan is when a particular jurist documents a preferred position in a given contextual situation – for instance, whether it is lawful to target an opposing army when non-combatants are present. Aqil wa ray refers to the process of deducing law by means of logic and intellect. Using these principles, individual preachers and scholars can issue religious opinions (fatwas) on any given issue. When issuing a fatwa, a scholar should take into account the sources mentioned above. Fatwas do not have any legal or religiously binding effect, but can nevertheless be used by individuals or groups in order to justify their actions. In fact, many terrorist groups have their own scholars who frequently issue fatwas on various matters.

The mainstream Islamic position, based on the above sources, is that non-combatants may not be targeted. However, the fact that it is possible to use the above legal methods to deduce whether or not an act is permissible allows groups to justify and legitimise their actions by manipulating and stretching certain concepts. This, in turn, may ‘permit’ their usage of IEDs to target civilians. However, there is internal criticism of some such attacks even within the Salafi-jihad camp. For example, well known scholars such as Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatafah (both with affiliations to al-Qaeda) have issued warnings against attacks on civilians.

The Mardin fatwa
One religious justification put forward by groups who use IEDs against civilians, and most importantly against others, is the Mardin fatwa, which is considered to be one of the most important scholarly voices in Salafi-jihadi intellectual tradition. The Mardin fatwa refers to a Turkish fortress in southeastern Turkey in the 13th century that had a mixed population of Muslims and non-Muslims and was besieged by the invading Mongol armies. The fatwa was given in response to a question as to whether Mardin was part of dar al- wasl (a realm of peace, safe for Muslim practices) or dar al harab (a realm of war, where Islam is under threat). This edict was deemed crucial, as Mardin was inhabited by both Muslims and non-Muslims but was ruled by the Mongols, who had converted to Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah’s response was that Mardin was neither one thing nor the other. Rather, it represented a third type of domain, in which Muslims should be treated as they deserved. If they deviated from the way of Islam, they should be treated as unbelievers, and this was how Ibn Taymiyyah viewed the invading Mongols. By extension, Ibn Taymiyyah made it ‘permissible’ to wage armed conflict against even Muslim peoples and rulers, even Muslims if they were deemed to be apostates. This fatwa has repeatedly been used by jihadi groups to justify their aim of overthrowing regional regimes and their killing of civilians, even if they are Muslim, and is closely linked to the concept of excommunication (ta’ifir) mentioned above.

Modern Salafi-jihadi scholars have used Ibn Taymiyyah’s fatwa as a precedent legitimising the use of IEDs against civilians. Thinkers like Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdudi, Hassan al- Banna, and Sayyid Qutb have also developed Ibn Taymiyyah’s philosophy, writing extensively on jihad and its goals. They have broadly asserted that the Islamic governance system can be maintained and protected, if not expanded, through violence. These thinkers have influenced non-state armed groups, including Al-Qaeda’s first in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

IS’s burning to death of Jordanian Air Force pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh
One recent example of the contrivance of legitimacy from Islamic sources is the burning to death of Jordanian Air Force pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh. The case made headlines when IS released a video of the fatal immolation of Al-Qaeda’s first in command, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, which is mentioned in the Quran as a way of providing retaliation for a crime. This retaliation is often equal in nature to the crime, which makes it similar to the idea of an eye for an eye. However, qisas is usually concerned with providing justice between individuals, in effect between the victim and the criminal, a criterion that the burning of al-Kasasbeh did not meet, as the people in IS who ordered and carried out the burning were not actual victims of his ‘crimes’. Furthermore, IS applied the concept of mumahtha to justify their use of fire, as it refers to reciprocity in punishment. The word mumahtha is derived from the root matha, which means to resemble, copy or imitate. Since the Jordanian pilot had dropped bombs on people, and thus killed them with ‘fire’, IS judged it legitimate to kill him by the same means. This once again demonstrates how IS works within existing, although not widely accepted, traditions of jurisprudence, and is concerned with its actions being religiously justifiable.

On the international stage, qisas could be used to legitimise attacks on foreign nationals. Although qisas is usually used against a known aggressor, some Salafi-jihadi thinkers have expanded it to entire nationalities. Yusuf al-‘Ubayy is seen as the person who popularised this application of qisas. He did so based on the principle of maḥfūm al-muwāfaqa (the understanding of consent), arguing that individuals can be complicit in crimes committed by groups with which they affiliate, such as their elected governments. This could thus be understood to legitimise the killing of any US nationals in retaliation for deaths the US Army has inflicted in Muslim countries, although this is hotly debated even within Salafi-jihadi circles.

3.1.3 contemporary scholars of jihad

In addition to the examples of classical jurisprudence mentioned above, it is important also to recognise the vital role that contemporary jihadi theorists play in the justification of explosive violence. We therefore offer a brief introduction to some prominent contemporary jihadi theorists.

Al-Qaeda and its affiliates

This section refers to scholars who are either ideologically aligned with, are frequently quoted by, or have given their explicit support to al-Qaeda.

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi
Maqdisi has been described as the most important living jihadi theorist, and was seen as the spiritual mentor of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who founded the organisation that would later evolve into IS. Maqdisi’s legacy is still highly influential in al-Qaeda circles. Maqdisi has stated that it is permissible to kill Muslims and target Shia if necessary. A Jordanian national, he has been imprisoned several times. When in February 2015 he was released from a Jordanian prison, it was suggested he had been released in order to be able to under stand the regional and transnational networks that facilitate IED use
condemn IS, as the Jordanian authorities were worried about growing IS influence in Jordan.\textsuperscript{173} Maqdisi has been credited, together with voices such as Abu Qatada al-Filastini, Abu Hamza al-Masri and Abu Basir al-Tartusi, with helping to theorise and popularise ideas of jihad emerging from the anti-Soviet struggle in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{174} He is opposed to IS.

Abu 'Ya'la al-Libi
Libyan Abu 'Ya'la al-Libi helped theorise al-Qaeda's justifications for the killing of civilians. Al-Libi argued that attacking unbelieving civilians was necessary from a utilitarian point of view, as the harm of not doing so would lead to greater harm to the Muslim world. Although he was killed in a drone strike in 2012, his work is influential among other scholars today, such as Abu Mundhir al-Shinqiti.

Abu Qatada al-Filastini
A Jordanian national, Abu Qatada rose to fame as the scholar who provided an intellectual basis for the radical preachers coming out of London's Finsbury Park Mosque in the 1990s, during the Algerian Civil War, in support of the GIA. Abu Qatada has since been closely affiliated with al-Qaeda. Wanted on terrorism charges in several countries, he was eventually indicted in Jordan before being released in 2014. He has since been seen with Jabhat al-Nusra fighters, and has denounced IS as 'rogues and renegades'.

The Islamic State network
This section refers to scholars who are either ideologically aligned with, are frequently quoted by, or have given their explicit support to Jabhat al-Nusra.

Abu Mundhir al-Shinqiti
A Mauritanian Salafi-jihadi cleric who has both expressed and retracted support for IS. Shinqiti has issued fatwas calling for Christians and Jews to be targeted,\textsuperscript{175} and has called on Egyptians to take up arms in the Sinai.\textsuperscript{176} He attacked Tartusi for his criticism of the jihadi movement, stating that al-Tartusi had abandoned jihadi methodology.\textsuperscript{177}

Abu Muhammad al-Tahawi
One of the most important Jordanian voices in support of IS, he is one of the leaders of the Jordanian Salafi movement. He has criticised Maqdisi for his attacks on IS, and stated that he will not give up his support for the group.\textsuperscript{178}

Omar Mahdi Zeydan
Another influential Jordanian supporter of IS, Omar Mahdi Zeydan switched allegiance to the group from al-Qaeda in 2014.\textsuperscript{179} Zeydan has expressed the need to wage jihad against apostate Muslims who refuse to abide by the Sharia.\textsuperscript{180} Zeydan was, according to Jordanian news outlets, appointed head of the IS Shura Council in September 2016.

Nasir al-Fahd
Al-Fahd is a Saudi cleric who in a 2003 fatwa justified the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). In 2015 he pledged allegiance to IS from inside his Saudi prison cell, and called on Muslims to join the group.\textsuperscript{181} Before being imprisoned, Nasir al-Fahd was a professor of theology at Mohammad Ibn Saud University in Riyadh.\textsuperscript{182}

Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham
This section refers to scholars who are either ideologically aligned with, are frequently quoted by, or have given their explicit support to Jabhat al-Nusra.

Abu Musab al-Suri/Mustafa Setmarian
Nasir Abu Musab al-Suri appears to have become the main ideologically inspirational figure for Jabhat al-Nusra. His teachings have been instrumental in Nusra's success in integrating among local communities.\textsuperscript{183} A Syrian former guerilla fighter in Afghanistan, he has been credited with shaping much of al-Qaeda's early military strategy, as well as being the main architect in the 2004 Madrid bombings and the 2005 London bombings.\textsuperscript{184} He is a strong critic of IS.

Abdullah al-Muhaysini
A student of al-Alwan (below), Saudi cleric Abdullah al-Muhaysini is an outspoken supporter of al-Qaeda and Jabhat al-Nusra, with whom he has close connections, although he considers himself to be unaffiliated.\textsuperscript{185} However, he has been identified as a judge in Jaysh al-Fateh, a rebel coalition comprising groups including Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham. As we shall see later on, he has also acted as a major fundraiser, primarily for Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, where he is said to be based. According to Saudi Arabian news outlets, he was an early opponent of IS.\textsuperscript{186}

Unaffiliated
The following preachers are not necessarily aligned with any particular group, but are still seen as influential and important voices in the theorisation and proliferation of Salafi-jihadism.

Abu Basir al-Tartusi
Although he has been seen with Syrian jihadi groups and was a strong supporter of the GIA during the Algerian Civil War, Syrian cleric Abu Basir al-Tartusi argued that the 2005 London bombings were wrong and argued against the type of collective punishment employed by jihadi groups. He also opposes suicide bombings on theological grounds, and has criticised AQAP for its 'unnecessary' violence in Yemen. However, he has also stated that it would be wrong to abandon jihad against illegitimate rulers,\textsuperscript{187} and is seen as an important member of the global jihadi community. He is an important Salafi critic of IS.

Sulaiman al-Alwan
Saudi cleric who had the 9/11 hijacker Abdulaziz al-Omari as a student. Al-Alwan has issued fatwas endorsing suicide attacks against Israel, and his mosque in the Qasim region of Saudi Arabia has been called a 'terrorist factory'. He was arrested in 2004 and released in 2012, before being arrested again in 2013.\textsuperscript{188}

Abu Sa'ud al-Amri
Egyptian jihadi ideologue who has openly supported armed action in the Sinai. His work "The Reality and Future of the Jihadist Current" is seen as an important work in modern Egyptian jihadism.\textsuperscript{189}

Sheikh Mundhir al-Subhi
Saudi cleric who had the 9/11 hijacker Abdulaziz al-Omari as a student. He has been identified as a judge in Jaysh al-Fateh, a rebel coalition comprising groups including Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham. As we shall see later on, he has also acted as a major fundraiser, primarily for Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, where he is said to be based. According to Saudi Arabian news outlets, he was an early opponent of IS.\textsuperscript{190}

3.1.4 COUNTER-ARGUMENTS WITHIN MUSLIM JURISPRUDENCE AND SCHOLARSHIP
Despite the examples provided above, it should be stressed that mainstream Islamic scholarship and jurisprudence condemn violence in general and violence against civilians in particular. This section looks at scholars, jurists and preachers who have denounced violence. It will not attempt to cover all such figures, but rather looks at individuals and organisations that are active within the Salafi tradition, or within regions heavily affected by Islamist terrorism, as their voices are important in efforts to mitigate the violence.

Importantly, several condemnations of terrorism have come from Saudi religious figures. Saudi Arabia's Council of Senior Scholars has claimed that violence and terrorism are 'un-Islamic', and that Islam punishes terrorist acts.\textsuperscript{191} The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh
Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Sheikh, has tried to convince people to refrain from joining ‘Kharijites’ terrorist groups such as IS. Similar statements have been made by the imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Abdul Rahman al-Sudais, who has denounced the use of explosive violence, as well as Sheikh Abdullah bin Basfar, a scholar involved in the Saudi government’s counter-terrorism efforts.

An interesting condemnation has come from the former imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Sheikh Adel al-Kalbani. Not only did he condemn IS, but he also stated that the group is a direct product of Salafism, and that the Salafist movement needs to take a hard look at itself. Al-Kalbani, himself a Salafist, criticised Salafism’s desire for ‘blind reenactment’ of the Prophet’s times—which he believes IS and the Salafist movement have in common—rather than taking a rationalistic approach to the times of the ‘pious predecessor’ generations. Al-Kalbani also criticised other clerics for not speaking out against IS.

Hatem Al-Awni, another Saudi cleric, has made some scathing criticisms of his country’s role in feeding Islamist terror. Al-Awni’s views are too liberal to be popular, and they have not been widely disseminated. However, he has been critical of the Saudi religious establishment, which has been accused of being too lenient and not doing enough to combat extremism.

In Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Scholars Council has strongly condemned terrorism in the name of Islam, together with the Islamic Council of Afghanistan and the High Peace Council. Afghan scholars such as lofiful in Mardin for a conference to reinterpret and discuss the eponymous mediaeval fatwa issued by Ibn Taymiyyah, as discussed above. The gathering was attended by a panel of twelve scholars including Abdullah bin Bayyah from Mauritania, Abdul Wahhab al-Tariri from Saudi Arabia and Habib Ali al-Jifri from Yemen. The delegates agreed that the original Mardin fatwa was not appropriate to modern times and should not be used by extremist armed groups. The conference closed with the signing of a ‘New Mardin Declaration’ that urged the faithful to uphold Islam’s moral and ethical values, condemned extreme radicalism, and called on them to foster peace.

3.2 THE SECTARIAN DIMENSION

As has been mentioned above, Salafi-jihadi intellectual discourse has long justified attacks on other Muslims through the process of takfir, and this has spurred attacks on civilians who either don’t fall in line with the extremists’ agenda or simply practise another form of Islam. Inevitably, this has also provoked attacks on Shia Muslims, and most Salafi-jihadi groups hold violent anti-Shia views. This is yet another symptom of the so-called Sunni-Shia divide in the Middle East today, which is in many ways exacerbating terrorism and several armed conflicts, and therefore explosive violence in the region.

Given that the original schism took place in the 7th century, it is often suggested that the Sunni-Shia conflict has been ongoing for hundreds of years. Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, there was disagreement over who should lead the newly established Muslim community. One camp opted for Abu Bakr as the new caliph, as in their view he was the best candidate, whereas another camp saw the Prophet’s cousin Ali as the best choice given that he was related to Muhammad. Abu Bakr ended up claiming the title, and although Ali would eventually caliph himself, this sparked anger among his supporters. This camp was called Shi’ah, meaning ‘partisans of Ali’, which is how the name ‘Shia’ is derived.

Although the two camps differ in some religious practices and fought battles early on, this is not a conflict that has been raging for more than a thousand years. In fact, Sunnis and Shia populations have co-existed peacefully for a much longer time than they have been in conflict. Rather, this divide is largely a matter of geopolitics, and specifically the so-called ‘regional cold war’, or battle for regional hegemony, fought between Saudi Arabia and Iran. These two states are not only the two main players in the Middle East but also lay claim to be the bastions of Sunni and Shia Islam respectively. This has led to very little separation between religion and politics, and at least not a discussion level, which new thinking gives the impression of a battle between sects. The fact that the two countries also support armed groups with sectarian agendas further accentuates the image of the region polarised by sectarianism.

This is a fairly new phenomenon, and depends on the instrumentalisation of religious identities. This is something that has been done in the Middle East before. Colonial powers often played groups against each other in newly created nation-states, and regional authoritarian states have also used this to profit. Saddam Hussein (a Sunni) in Iraq, and Hafez al-Assad (an Alawite) in Syria, both belonged to minorities in their respective countries, and employed a loyal clique of supporters from their own sect to at least a considerable degree, which means they were wary of the backlash this could provoke, and therefore made certain to co-opt important figures in the ethnic and religious majorities. This way, sectarianism was both institutionalised and contained.

This lid was taken off after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which allowed for sectarian sentiments to bloom in the power vacuum that had been created after Saddam Hussein’s ousting. Iran, on their part, used the occasion to support Shia militias in Iraq, which made Saudi Arabia and several Gulf states warn against increased Iranian influence. Similarly, the countries that
had objected to US presence in Iraq, such as Syria and Iran, as well as their non-state allies Hezbollah, warned against an ‘imperialist intervention’ in the Islamic world’s affairs. When the Arab Spring erupted in 2011, these divisions were accentuated, as various regimes instrumentalised sectarianism to quell the uprisings. For example, protests in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia were portrayed by the respective regimes as being carried out by Iranian agents. In Syria, Bashar al-Assad quickly made use of the fact that Saudi Arabia and Qatar supported some of the more radical opposition groups to rally the support of Syria’s religious minorities against a Sunni-majority opposition. In many ways, Syria has become the major hotbed for sectarian violence and discourse, primarily because the actors invested in it see it as the decisive battle in the regional struggle for hegemony.416

Along with the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, Middle Eastern sectarianism has also been exacerbated by the ongoing war in Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is fighting against a Shia group known as the Houthis, who in turn receive backing from Iran. Although this would lead many to draw a parallel between a pro-Saudi and Sunni camp facing off against a pro-Iranian and Shia camp, this would be to simplify the issue. Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen’s former president and a Sunni, has for example allied with Houthis. Similarly, many Sunnis are fighting on the Syrian regime side in Syria’s civil war. The regional division narrative has succeeded partly because of Iran’s and Saudi Arabia’s rhetoric, which attempts to turn attention away from problems on their home turfs by making grandiose statements about a regional war of religion.417 However, to some extent, this has worked, as some analysts have pointed to the fact that young people in Saudi Arabia are more engaged in nationalist discourse in relation to the Saudi campaign in Yemen than with criticising the Saudi state for cutting back on many of the economic benefits that their parents enjoyed.418

In this toxic climate, individual acts may become highly symbolic. For example, Saudi Arabia’s execution of Saudi Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr in January 2016 was widely seen as an insult to Iran, simply because of Nimr’s religion. Saudi Arabia allegedly executed Nimr in order to counter the augmentation of Iran’s regional profile through the Iran nuclear deal.419 Moreover, many Arab countries’ airwaves are filled with preachers spreading anti-Shia messages, and Saudi state ideology (Wahhabism) is filled with anti-Shia discourse. Perhaps because of Shia Muslims’ regional minority status (Iran, Iraq and Bahrain are the only Shia-majority countries in the Middle East), there is much more anti-Shia rhetoric coming from the Sunni camps, both from state institutions and from Salafi-jihadi groups, than vice versa. That is not to say that Shias have never oppressed Sunnis. Iraq’s former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was widely seen as being hostile to his country’s Sunni Muslims, for example. However, given that the groups looked at in depth in this report are exclusively Sunni, anti-Shia rhetoric is currently a larger problem in relation to IED violence.

3.2.1 REGIONAL AND LOCAL SECTARIANISM AS A TRIGGER FOR JIHADISM

The sectarianism described above is not simply an abstract geopolitical rivalry, but seems to have taken root in many Middle Eastern societies as a result of the various conflicts in the region. In 2016, more than 22,000 IS registration files were leaked from IS in Syria. The files, which are forms in which new recruits provided personal information, offer some understanding as to how sectarianism may motivate people to join a terrorism organisation.

The North Governorate in Lebanon serves as a case in point, and has seen sectarian tensions between the local Sunni and Alawite communities.420 Northern Lebanon has long been home to extreme interpretations of Sunni Islam. This has been traced back to the Islamic uprising in Syria in which the North Governorate has strong ties, during the 1980s. The uprising was crushed by Syrian Alawite president Hafez al-Assad, and many proponents of the uprising fled to northern Lebanon. Together with a general Lebanese Sunni concern over the growing domestic and regional influence of Shia Lebanese militia and political party Hezbollah, this has created a fertile hotbed for Sunni extremism and anti-Shia, and consequently anti-Alawite, sentiments.421

The fact that current Syrian president Bashar al-Assad is an Alawite and is backed by Shia Iran and Hezbollah in Syria’s civil war has only spurred these sentiments further. Since many Salafi-jihadi groups preach a vicious anti-Shia rhetoric, the Sunni population of northern Lebanon, already holding grudges against the local Alawite neighbours, are in some ways perfect recruits. Moreover, local clerics such as Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal422 and Salem al-Rafei423 are known for their rhetoric on a regular basis. As a result, the North Governorate has sent 70% of Lebanon’s foreign fighters to Syria. A similar case can be found in Muqarraq Island, an island located outside Bahrain’s capital Manama, which has sent 79% of Bahrain’s total number of foreign fighters. The region has close ties to Bahrain’s royal family, a Sunni family ruling over a majority Shia country, and Muqarraq is itself a majority Sunni region. Muqarraq was at the heart of the resistance against the predominantly Shia-led uprising in 2011, which was violently struck down by the Bahraini regime. Local anti-Shia sentiments are personified by Turki al-Binali, IS’ most well-known scholar and an advocate of harsh anti-Shia views, who grew up in Muqarraq.424

As mentioned above, the Bahraini regime has often painted the Arab Spring protests as being sponsored by Iran, and Shia opposition figures are sometimes referred to as ‘Safaivids’.425 Given Bahrain’s close relationship to Saudi Arabia, and the latter’s ongoing ‘regional cold war’ with Iran, Muqarraq’s intimate ties to the Bahraini royal family adds another dimension to the local anti-Shia sentiments.426

3.3 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS DRIVING JIHAD

Although terrorist groups often respond to local situations, some common traits can be identified among several of these groups; these are discussed elsewhere in this report. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the jihadi motives, however, one needs to look at the variety of background factors motivating individuals to join terrorist groups, as well as the narratives presented by these organisations.

One of the best sources for understanding individual motivations for joining IS is the large collection of IS recruitment material. Joining IS can be a complex decision and it is within IS’s interest to recruit a wide range of people. They have sent 79% of Bahrain’s total number of foreign fighters to Syria. However, one should not jump to the conclusion that all those who take up jihad are poor and uneducated.

A study of one hundred prominent jihadis has showed that 47% of them had attended higher education. Interestingly, 57% of these had in turn studied natural sciences, mathematics or technology. In fact, it has often been suggested that the more logic-based ‘black-and-white’ approach often taken in these subjects lends itself to embracing a black-and-white jihadi narrative.427 It should however be noted that the sample in this study concerned either jihadis in high positions or those considered ideologues in international terrorist groups, meaning that it would not be entirely correct to claim that a relatively large part of jihadis are educated as well. AOAV has, through analysis of our Explosive Weapons Monitor and the leaked IS files, as well as a detailed look at both relevant literature on the matter and primary source materials, identified further common denominators among both individuals and the groups they join.

3.3.1 RELIGION AS AN OUTLET FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISPARITY AND DISENFRANCHISEMENT

It is important to note that the array of regions and countries from where fighters identified in the leaked IS registration forms originate each have their own unique problems. This strongly suggests that there is a wide spectrum of reasons as to why people join IS. For instance, in the eastern Libyan city of Derna, of which IS controlled significant parts between 2014 and 2016, there seems to be a traditional communal penchant towards extreme Salafism. The city was even put under curfew in the 1980s because of local support for the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. This was purportedly the result of Dernawis veterans of the Afghan campaign returning and radicalising their fellow Dernawis in the 1980s.428 There are also poor socio-economic circumstances in the city, providing a perfect cocktail for radicalisation.

In Kebibi in Tunisia, the country’s highest per capita contributor of fighters to IS, there are poor economic opportunities for local citizens. The city is located in the centre of the country, far away from the lucrative coastlines and from the Libyan or Algerian border areas, and has played a peripheral role in the country’s politics. Moreover, since Tunisians were denied religious education during the years of ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, there has according to Tunisia observer Haim Malka, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, been a desire among Tunisians to let religion play a greater part in their lives.429

UNDERSTANDING THE REGIONAL AND TRANSMISSIONAL NETWORKS THAT FACILITATE IDE J USE | 50
However, economic deprivation cannot be understood to be the only driver towards extremism. Qassim in Saudi Arabia, another large per capita exporter of IS fighters, is a more affluent region than both Derma and Kebili, and yet is also known to be one of Saudi Arabia’s most conservative regions. For example, Qassim is the home region of IS Yemen governor Abu Bilal al-Harbi. In spite of the region’s relative well-being, Qassim has often been a hotbed for anti-regime sentiments. For example, local cleric Sheikh Saadi bin Nasser al-Shatri was very vocal in his disagreements with the government after the decision to integrate men and women at a research facility at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, something for which he was later fired from the Council of Senior Clerics. The region also saw widespread unrest in 2013, when a group of local women protested against their sons being held on ambiguous terrorism charges.

Religion has, in these regions, played an important role people’s decisions to join IS. However, the religious contexts of the three locations are too different and diverse to simply pinpoint their one common denominator and religion. The conservative regions of Derma and Qassim have, for instance, very little in common with religious practice in Kebili. Rather, religion seems to have provided an outlet for feelings of disenfranchisement and disappointment among those with poor economic opportunities or those who are angry at an incumbent regime. Such religious sentiments towards rebellion have also been exploited by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. This suggests the universality of the revolutionary politics of religion felt among terror recruits. Religion is not the root cause, but it seems to provide a channel through which sentiments of disenfranchisement can be expressed.

3.3.2 IDENTITY AND ALIENATION

The sentiment of disenfranchisement is all too often connected to identity. People from all over the world joining jihadist groups seem to identify with these organisations rather than their own communities and countries – some of which effectively become enemies as soon as they join a jihadist group. Shiraz Maher at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) has noted this, highlighting how the four homegrown terrorists responsible for the London bombings on 7 July 2005 justified their actions by claiming that the UK was inflicting harm on ‘their people’ (Muslims) through the war in Iraq. However, none of the bombers were Iraqi, or even Arab. Three of the four bombers were born in Britain, and they all grew up and attended school in the country. Logically, one imagines they should have felt kinship with the people they killed by detonating their suicide vests. But instead they identified with the extreme ideology of al-Qaeda, and they felt more affiliation with the people of Iraq (whom they had never met). This alienation and identity crisis is something that has been skilfully exploited by IS, al-Qaeda, and Jabhat al-Nusra in terms of attracting foreign fighters, as well as by the likes of the Taliban and Boko Haram among their domestic targets. Maher has encouraged the attempt by UK authorities to promote British values in order to quell this sense of alienation. However, as the French example demonstrates, this may be both insufficient and even counterproductive. According to a study by William McCants and Christopher Meserole, there is a higher propensity among young Muslims in Francophone countries to embrace jihadism. For example, both France and Belgium have seen higher proportions of their respective Muslim communities travel to Syria than the UK and Germany have. The authors conclude that this is a result of French political culture and Francophone countries’ ‘aggressive’ approach to secularism, which stipulates laïcité as the one and only French (or Belgian) way of life. This is paired with policies and legislation addressing matters portrayed as problems with the Muslim population in particular. For example, Belgium and France are the only two European countries to have banned the full veil in public schools, and the recent ‘burkini’ ban in certain French towns is another sign of this.

Interestingly, fighters joining IS from China’s Xinjiang province, also called East Turkestan, seem to react to similar grievances as those in Belgium and France. Many of the Chinese IS fighters are ethnic Uyghurs, a Muslim group which has seen restrictions on its religious freedoms. This includes laws restricting beard growth and the age at which young men can attend prayers at mosques. These restrictions have been matched with an intense Chinese counter-terrorism campaign, which has effectively portrayed Uyghur Muslims as a security threat. Furthermore, economic opportunities in the area are bleak, with none of the IS fighters from Xinjiang reported to have attended university, and fewer than 2% reported as having a professional job. Whilst AOAV is in no way implying that France or Belgium are the European equivalent of China, there are some interesting parallels that can be made in this instance. Besides the restrictions of the full veil in public schools, France has since the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 enforced some of the toughest anti-terrorism laws in Europe. The new legislation has been labelled ‘draconian’ in its way of targeting the Muslim community and prompted Minister of Justice Christiane Taubira’s resignation in January 2016. Essentially, the ‘Francophone way’ seems to have created communities that feel disenfranchised, targeted, and cut-off from the rest of society. This has become apparent in the suburbs of Paris and the Brussels neighbourhood of Molenbeek. Salah Abdeslam, the only surviving participant in the 13 November 2015 Paris attacks, hid in Molenbeek before his arrest and Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the chief planner of the attacks, lived there. IS recruits from areas like Molenbeek have often struggled with unemployment, which again reinforces a sense of alienation and disenfranchisement. In France, Belgium and Xinjiang province, despite their vast political and cultural differences, the mix of restrictions on religious practice, harsh anti-terrorism laws and peripheral societal positions, seem to have contributed to a sense of alienation. This has in turn created a landscape in which individuals are able to identify more strongly with extreme jihadist ideologies, rather than their fellow citizens and countries of residence. Both al-Qaeda and IS have been skilful at targeting these sentiments, painting a picture of a black-and-white world where there is one problem (the hypocritical West and their support for corrupt Arab regimes), and one solution (the strand of Islamic law enforced by either of the two organisation). Supported by slickly produced propaganda videos, portraying life as a jihadi like an ‘adventure camp for young men’, this message has evidently proved to be efficient. It suggests that although there are local reasons for alienation, there are global similarities in the motivations for which people take up arms in the name of terrorist organisations.

3.3.3 THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Although the countries worst affected by IED violence have vastly different local contexts, some common denominators can be identified. The most obvious one is the level of armed conflict experienced in these countries. Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan are all among the ten countries who suffered most internal conflict deaths in 2016. This is reflective of IED usage. Although the conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya have foreign powers invested in them, they are primarily internal conflicts that started because of local disputes. Similarly, the IED violence experienced in countries such as Pakistan, Egypt, Nigeria, Somalia and India is an expression of an insurgency undertaken by a group adverse to the central government. This is highly indicative of IED attacks, as they are overwhelmingly carried out by non-state actors such as insurgent groups. Non-state actors’ impact on conflict has grown significantly over the last few years, something indicated both by the internal conflict deaths as well as IED usage.

Lack of political freedom

Many factors unite these countries besides their experiencing armed and explosive violence. The low level of political freedom is one. Among the countries examined in this report, only Nigeria and Pakistan qualify as ‘party free’ in the Freedom House’s 2015 Index. Both countries rank at the very bottom of the list, with Iraq, Egypt, Afghanistan and Yemen all considered ‘not free’. Clearly, the rankings in Syria and Yemen have worsened in the last few years due to the countries’ civil wars, but one should keep in mind that demands for greater political freedom was also what helped ignite the current conflicts.

The lack of political freedom is inevitably linked to radicalisation, at least in some of the countries examined here. In Syria, several people who protested peacefully against Bashar al-Assad in 2011 were tortured and had threats made against their families. Hamza al-Khateeb, a 13 year old, who was detained whilst attending a protest in Deraa in southern Syria, was killed in custody. When his body was dumped outside his family’s house by the Syrian security services, it became apparent that he had been burnt with cigarettes, had his bones broken and had suffered several gunshot wounds. There have also been reports of the Assad regime employing so called ‘rape campaign’ early in the protests, where soldiers would break into families’ houses and force themselves upon some family members whilst the others were forced to watch. It is safe to say that such a harsh crackdown has contributed to radicalisation.
In Saudi Arabia, the use of anti-terrorist legislation to jail human rights activists and dissidents, in addition to supporters of IS terrorist plots and others, reportedly "incites violence and feeds terrorism rather than combating it" by creating a sense of rage and frustration, that risks propelling more angry young men, already well versed in Salafi doctrine, into the arms of terrorist groups.410

Without wishing to generalise, several regimes in the Middle East, such as Egypt, Iraq and Libya, have been known to use force indiscriminately against opposition figures. Within modern Salafii-jihadism, there is a long tradition of influential jihadi thinkers and fighters being radicalised either in prison or through torture. Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, for example, transformed into arguably the most influential modern Salafii-jihad thinker during his time in prison under Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is believed to have been radicalised during his time in Abu Gharib prison and the Camp Bucca detention centre in Iraq, along with several other prominent IS commanders.411

Many individuals have undergone the same ideological transformation in prisons or detention centres throughout the Middle East. For many, joining a jihadi organisation may simply be the best chance to get revenge for the injustices and violence they have been put through by their governments. This became clear relatively early in the Syrian Civil War, where jihadi groups were among the best armed and funded organisations in the country. This pragmatism also extends to the fact that people will join whichever group they perceive as protecting their interests at a specific time. Therefore, joining a jihadi organisation is not always a result of a distorted view of Islam or the world, but may simply be a result of rage and convenience.

Tribalism
Keeping in mind the very local dynamics of each conflict, many have raised tribalism as a conflict driver in the Middle East and West Asia. Tribes do play an important role in most of the countries examined, and may be a factor in driving violence. Many of those that rebellled against Muammar Qaddafi in Libya were from the eastern part of the country and had purposely been shut out of the country’s political system by Qaddafi. Similarly, many of the tribes antagonised by Yemen’s former President Ali Abdullah Saleh were also the ones who first turned on him.412 Reciprocally, the fluid nature of Yemen’s tribal alliances has allowed local tribe chieftains to negotiate better than any other foreign mediator so far.413

Similar points may be made in the case of the Taliban. A Pakistani counter-terrorism expert, Sohail Tajik, claims that 90% of recruits at suicide bomber training centres in South Waziristan were Pashtuns and of these, 70% came from one specific tribe – the Mehsuds, which might point at the level of sheer tribal frustration in areas beset by chronic underdevelopment, corruption and the constant threat of violence.414 In Afghanistan, tribal feuds may be a direct cause for people joining the Taliban. However, this often reflects local feuds rather than sudden radicalisation, as people may join the Taliban as a means to get back at the other party in the conflict. Occasionally, people shift between being on the government’s side and the Taliban, depending on what local warlord pledges allegiance to whom.415

IS has invested heavily in gathering tribal support. In 2014, in its magazine, Dabiq, the group devoted four pages to describing how they wish to co-opt tribes into their fighting project.416 While certain tribes do pledge allegiance to IS out of resentment of the Iraqi government or opportunism, this isn’t common practice. In January 2014, there was a broad tribal revolt against IS. In a violent response, houses of tribal leaders were blown up and many tribesmen were massacred. This demonstrates that although tribalism may be a driver in conflict, it can exacerbate and mitigating conflict, it is probably not a reason behind IED diffusion.417

Corruption
Another thing these countries share is corruption. According to Transparency International, Somalia was the most corrupt country in the world in 2015, ranking at 167, with Afghanistan right behind it. Iraq and Libya were tied at 161, and Yemen and Syria tied at 154. Nigeria and Pakistan were, again, doing a bit better, ranking at 136 and 117 respectively.418 Simultaneously, these countries are also very poverty stricken, with most of them ranking in the lower half even among other under-developed countries.419

Internet access
All these factors provide a perfect platform for diffusion of the victimhood narrative which has been exploited by terrorist groups. As is well-known, this narrative and subsequently much of terror groups’ recruiting takes place online. Surprisingly, many of the countries examined have widespread access to the internet. Although some of them have very low internet access, such as Somalia (where only 1.7% of the population have internet access), Afghanistan (6.8%) and Iraq (13%), it is higher in Syria (29.6%), Nigeria (46.1%), Egypt (33%), Yemen (24.7%) and Libya (21.1%).420 This access serves two crucial purposes. Firstly, it exposes people to income inequalities and other injustices in their societies, and consequently drives demand for more political freedom. This also plays in to the victimhood and marginalisation narrative. Secondly, it can expose people to propaganda from terror groups that play on the aforementioned sentiments.

3.3.4 THE JIHADI NARRATIVE: ‘CORRUPT REGIMES’ AND THE DEFENCE OF ISLAM

Based on the local and regional contexts discussed above, it is easy for terrorist networks to present a narrative of an unfair world in which Muslims are discriminated against, and in which even the Muslim world is run by authoritative leaders who have failed to create functioning economies and prosperity (in addition to mistreating their populations), but despite this continues to have the support of the world’s major powers. The fight against ‘corrupt regimes’ does to a large extent inform the narrative presented by terrorist groups to potential recruits and the rest of the world. This phenomenon is in no way new or exclusive to jihadi organisations. George Joffé argues that extra-territorial threats are often seen as a means to gain the support of the world’s major powers.

Islamist extremism thus follows a pattern of populist responses to autocratic governments and state interventions. What is unique about it is not the groups’ black-and-white world view, but rather the ideology through which they express it.421 However, this does not mean that these groups’ aversion towards government actions can be neglected. Instead, one needs to look at how this seemingly one-size-fits-all narrative works in each context.

Often, if not always, these regimes are portrayed in jihadi propaganda as being directly supported by foreign powers with diabolic agendas. In many cases, such as Afghanistan and Somalia, these foreign powers are Western countries or organisations perceived as Western, such as the United Nations. However, Syria’s conflict has also highlighted the outrage among some terrorist groups against countries like Iran and Russia, which indicates that this is not simply about anti-Western sentiments. Jabhat al-Nusra has, for example, demonstrated its hatred of both the United States and Iran.

AQIM stated that their attack on the Grand Bassam resort in Côtes d’Ivoire in March 2016 was retribution against France and their allies in the region.422 Given AQIM’s origins as a group emerging out of the chaos of the Algerian Civil War in the 1990s, this is not surprising. The group has consistently, in its various forms, contested what they see as the Algerian regime’s betrayal of Islam and anti-colonial values. These values were prominent during the Algerian War of Independence, a war from which the Algerian regime still draws considerable legitimacy.423 However, as Algeria is currently a loyal ally of France in the global war on terror, which is in turn – led by a foreign power that many groups believe to be imperialistic (United States), this has been framed as a betrayal and ‘neglect of the Algerian people’.424 IED attacks on regional Sahelian security forces have therefore become AQIM’s standard tactic, as many of the states they have targeted (Mali, Côtes d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso) are portrayed as corrupt regimes with foreign support. Provided that the Sahel is a poor region heavily affected by drug trafficking, poverty and lackVal of human rights, this paints an appealing black-and-white picture of one problem (corrupt regimes) and one solution (al-Qaeda).

Al-Shabaab paints its context in similar black and white colours. The FGS and the Kenyan government are both internationally backed, are the most prominent in regional terrorism, but both have also been accused of major human rights abuses.425 Moreover, the Kenyan government has been accused of scapegoating the Somali refugee community residing in the country,426 and its counter-terrorism effort has been notorious for targeting and torturing Somalis.427 Kenya is - like Algeria - a country with a proud anti-colonial history. This, to some extent, enables al-Shabaab to portray them as hypocrites who are targeting the country’s Muslim community. Al-Shabaab is known to recruit in the Somali refugee camps in Kenya, hoping to exploit the grievances they have against both the Kenyan and the Somali state.428 Local Kenyan media has also reported on Muslim Kenyans fighting for al-Shabaab, suggesting that the narrative presented resonates with some within the country’s disenfranchised Muslim community.429

The Taliban have also managed to exploit anti-Western sentiments in Afghanistan. This is evident in their efforts

UNDERSTANDING THE REGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS THAT FACILITATE IED USE | 54
to connect their attacks on civilians to either foreign powers or the Afghan ‘puppet regime’, justifying civilian casualties through their supposed links to either of the two. This means that a USAID worker becomes ‘an agent of the United States’, and someone working on a construction site commissioned by the Afghan government becomes ‘an agent of the Afghan state’.

The presence of the global anti-terror campaign should also be noted, as it has been used as a justification for violence. In Pakistan, the TTP justified their attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar that killed 132 children and 9 staff by stating that the attack was carried out against Pakistan’s apostate army due to its role as ‘the agents of the Jews and the Christians’, because of its support for the international war on terror.

Similar tendencies can be identified with Boko Haram. Military repression is even seen as a direct cause of Boko Haram’s turn to extreme violence in 2009. This is because the Nigerian military killed moderates within Boko Haram that, in turn, directly contributed to the group’s radicalisation. Moreover, extra-judicial killings are carried out against civilians. Individuals may, when exposed to jihadi propaganda, find that it resonates with their own lives. In this way, a legitimate feeling of alienation and disenfranchisement as a Muslim in Europe, or a legitimate feeling of being let down by one’s supposedly Muslim government (that is supported by a powerful foreign government), may motivate an individual to embrace violence and carry out IED attacks against civilians. Similarly, local grievances against Shia groups may also find endorsement in the extreme anti-Shia rhetoric and tactics of the likes of IS and al-Qaeda.

A tricky path for governments to tread is how to handle these things in their ‘war on terror’. Armed action against these groups, such as air strikes, may be deemed necessary, but governments should keep in mind that military intervention or counter-terror campaigns often serve perversely to fuel and strengthen jihadi narratives. In order to stop the spread of explosive violence, a more rounded strategy than armed action alone is needed.

IS’s hatred for corrupt regimes and the West is well established, as is al-Qaeda’s. With IS, however, we have seen their objection to the United States’ war on terror take a more dramatic turn with it being used directly in their tactics. IS prisoners wear the same orange prison suits as prisoners in Guantanamo, something a top US defence official says is a result of the symbolic value the prison suit carries – a close link to the US detention centre. This, again, highlights the importance of anti-counter terror and anti-state intervention narratives employed by IS, and many other groups.

3.3.5 SUMMARY

The motivations listed above are all based on local dynamics. At the same time, they also fit into a universal jihadi narrative of a black-and-white, polarised world in which Islam is under attack. Individuals may, when exposed to jihadi propaganda, find that it resonates with their own lives. In this way, a legitimate feeling of alienation and disenfranchisement as a Muslim in Europe, or a legitimate feeling of being let down by one’s supposedly Muslim government (that is supported by a powerful foreign government), may motivate an individual to embrace violence and carry out IED attacks against civilians. Similarly, local grievances against Shia groups may also find endorsement in the extreme anti-Shia rhetoric and tactics of the likes of IS and al-Qaeda.

A tricky path for governments to tread is how to handle these things in their ‘war on terror’. Armed action against these groups, such as air strikes, may be deemed necessary, but governments should keep in mind that military intervention or counter-terror campaigns often serve perversely to fuel and strengthen jihadi narratives. In order to stop the spread of explosive violence, a more rounded strategy than armed action alone is needed.

4. THE FOREIGN FIGHTERS PHENOMENON

A salient feature of armed conflict in the Muslim world since the Afghan conflict in the 1980s has been the involvement of so-called foreign fighters, that is, combatants with no apparent link to the conflict other than religious affinity with the Muslim side. With jihadi becoming an increasingly globalised or transnational activity, tens of thousands of such fighters have inserted themselves into conflicts from Bosnia to the Philippines, and today especially in Syria and Iraq.

Foreign fighters matter because they can affect the conflicts they join, as they did in post-2003 Iraq by promoting sectarian violence and indiscriminate tactics. Perhaps more important, foreign fighter mobilisations empower transnational terrorist groups such as IS, because volunteering for war is the principal stepping-stone for individual involvement in more extreme forms of militancy. For example, when Muslims in the West radicalise, they do not usually plot attacks in their home country right away, but travel to a war zone such as Syria first. Indeed, many jihadi operatives began their militant careers as war volunteers, and most transnational jihadi groups today are by-products of foreign fighter mobilisations.

Foreign fighters, according to Thomas Hegghammer, director of research at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment and a leading scholar of jihadist history, are therefore key to understanding transnational Islamist militancy. In the 1970s, a phenomenon that Hegghammer refers to as populist pan-Islamism emerged. Political Islamist activists who had been exiled from Syria and Egypt at that time, most of them members of the Muslim Brotherhood, found refuge and employment in the Hijaz region of western Saudi Arabia, which needed their education and skills. From there, with access to ample financial resources, they propagated an alarmist discourse emphasising external threats to the Muslim nation (ummah), and also established an influential global network of charities for the provision of inter-Muslim aid.

The norms and networks established by the Hijazi pan-Islamists enabled Arab activists a short time later, in 1980s Afghanistan, to recruit foreign fighters in the name of inter-Muslim solidarity. Many of the same logistics chains and funding sources (especially Islamic charities) were involved in several different mobilisations. The ‘Arab Afghan’ mobilisation in turn laid the basis of a foreign fighter movement that went on to take part in conflicts in Chechnya, Bosnia, Algeria and elsewhere and continues to do so today.

Classic jihadi recruitment propaganda typically argues that the Muslim nation faces an existential external threat. The conflict for which volunteers are sought is but the latest and direst in a series of occupations of Muslim territory and massacres of Muslims. Documents and videos commonly contain vivid descriptions of the crimes allegedly being committed in the conflict in question: Muslim women are being raped, children and the elderly are being killed, mosques desecrated and resources plundered. Victims are systematically referred to as ‘our brothers (sisters, mothers, children)’ as if they were blood relations of the prospective recruits. Muslims are urged to fight back militarily in the area in question. The rationale is that all able Muslim men worldwide must join the fighting because Islamic law requires it. Documents cite scripture and classical jurists at length to show that the criteria for military jihad are met.

In the early period of pan-Islamism, magazines published by international Islamic humanitarian organisations were also full of articles reporting the plight of Muslims around the world, and called for financial contributions in much the same way that the foreign fighter literature called for recruits. The first Arab Afghans, Hegghammer argues, were not fighters but humanitarian workers dispatched by the Hijaz-based Islamic charities. The Hijaz also provided most of the Saudi fighters who went to Afghanistan.

Hegghammer’s research is based on extensive data on foreign fighter mobilisations, a large collection of previously unexplored primary and secondary sources in Arabic, and personal interviews with former foreign fighters conducted in Britain, Jordan, Pakistan, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia. From his analysis, the rise of transnational Islamist militancy has its roots at least as much in extreme pan-Islamism as in extreme Wahhabism and the ideas of Muslim Brotherhood theorist Sayyid Qutb. It thus has a quasi-nationalist character as well as its fanatical religious dimension.

4. THE FOREIGN FIGHTERS PHENOMENON

A salient feature of armed conflict in the Muslim world since the Afghan conflict in the 1980s has been the involvement of so-called foreign fighters, that is, combatants with no apparent link to the conflict other than religious affinity with the Muslim side. With jihadi becoming an increasingly globalised or transnational activity, tens of thousands of such fighters have inserted themselves into conflicts from Bosnia to the Philippines, and today especially in Syria and Iraq.

Foreign fighters matter because they can affect the conflicts they join, as they did in post-2003 Iraq by promoting sectarian violence and indiscriminate tactics. Perhaps more important, foreign fighter mobilisations empower transnational terrorist groups such as IS, because volunteering for war is the principal stepping-stone for individual involvement in more extreme forms of militancy. For example, when Muslims in the West radicalise, they do not usually plot attacks in their home country right away, but travel to a war zone such as Syria first. Indeed, many jihadi operatives began their militant careers as war volunteers, and most transnational jihadi groups today are by-products of foreign fighter mobilisations.

Foreign fighters, according to Thomas Hegghammer, director of research at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment and a leading scholar of jihadist history, are therefore key to understanding transnational Islamist militancy. In the 1970s, a phenomenon that Hegghammer refers to as populist pan-Islamism emerged. Political Islamist activists who had been exiled from Syria and Egypt at that time, most of them members of the Muslim Brotherhood, found refuge and employment in the Hijaz region of western Saudi Arabia, which needed their education and skills. From there, with access to ample financial resources, they propagated an alarmist discourse emphasising external threats to the Muslim nation (ummah), and also established an influential global network of charities for the provision of inter-Muslim aid.

The norms and networks established by the Hijazi pan-Islamists enabled Arab activists a short time later, in 1980s Afghanistan, to recruit foreign fighters in the name of inter-Muslim solidarity. Many of the same logistics chains and funding sources (especially Islamic charities) were involved in several different mobilisations. The ‘Arab Afghan’ mobilisation in turn laid the basis of a foreign fighter movement that went on to take part in conflicts in Chechnya, Bosnia, Algeria and elsewhere and continues to do so today.

Classic jihadi recruitment propaganda typically argues that the Muslim nation faces an existential external threat. The conflict for which volunteers are sought is but the latest and direst in a series of occupations of Muslim territory and massacres of Muslims. Documents and videos commonly contain vivid descriptions of the crimes allegedly being committed in the conflict in question: Muslim women are being raped, children and the elderly are being killed, mosques desecrated and resources plundered. Victims are systematically referred to as ‘our brothers (sisters, mothers, children)’ as if they were blood relations of the prospective recruits. Muslims are urged to fight back militarily in the area in question. The rationale is that all able Muslim men worldwide must join the fighting because Islamic law requires it. Documents cite scripture and classical jurists at length to show that the criteria for military jihad are met.

In the early period of pan-Islamism, magazines published by international Islamic humanitarian organisations were also full of articles reporting the plight of Muslims around the world, and called for financial contributions in much the same way that the foreign fighter literature called for recruits. The first Arab Afghans, Hegghammer argues, were not fighters but humanitarian workers dispatched by the Hijaz-based Islamic charities. The Hijaz also provided most of the Saudi fighters who went to Afghanistan.

Hegghammer’s research is based on extensive data on foreign fighter mobilisations, a large collection of previously unexplored primary and secondary sources in Arabic, and personal interviews with former foreign fighters conducted in Britain, Jordan, Pakistan, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia. From his analysis, the rise of transnational Islamist militancy has its roots at least as much in extreme pan-Islamism as in extreme Wahhabism and the ideas of Muslim Brotherhood theorist Sayyid Qutb. It thus has a quasi-nationalist character as well as its fanatical religious dimension.
Western governments should therefore worry less about the spread of ultraconservative Salafism than about populist anti-Western propaganda in the media and on the Internet, he says. “Those seeking to prevent foreign fighter recruitment need to recognise that the recruitment message relies not primarily on complex theological arguments but on simple, visceral appeals to people’s sense of solidarity and altruism.”

**4.1 THE FLOW OF VOLUNTEERS TO SYRIA AND IRAQ...**

Foreign fighters, commonly referred to in the counter-terrorism literature as FTFs (‘foreign terrorist fighters’), have continued to volunteer in their thousands to take part in the global jihad in defence of the Muslim umma and Islam, as they see it, and for the glory of the caliphate. By January 2015 the total number joining Sunni militant organisations in Syria and Iraq had exceeded 20,000, of whom nearly 20% were residents or nationals of Western European nations, surpassing the number of foreign fighters in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The largest European countries – France, the UK and Germany – also produce the largest numbers of fighters (see graphic opposite), but relative to population size, the most heavily affected countries are Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden. With up to 11,000 jihadists, the Middle East remains the dominant source of foreigners in the conflict, led by Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Jordan. Another 3,000 were from countries of the former Soviet Union. Per capita, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon contribute the most fighters of all.

The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, which produced these figures, estimates that 5-10% of the foreigners have died and a further 10-30% have left the conflict zone, returning home or being stuck in transit countries. Data from elsewhere suggest that many of the Western recruits are recent converts to Islam.

As noted earlier in section 3, a vast cache of data passed by one or more IS defectors to various media organisations in early 2016, consisting of over 4,600 personnel records produced by IS, primarily between early 2013 and late 2014, provides the most detailed and intimate picture yet of IS foreign fighter recruitment procedures. The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point produced a report in April 2016 analysing this data and providing a window into the organisation’s global workforce. The records catalogue information about foreign fighters’ countries of origin, citizenship, points of entry into Syria, marital status, skills and previous occupations, education levels, religious knowledge, fighting role preferences in the group (combat, martyrdom operations or the inghimasi operations we discussed in Section 2.3), and previous jihadi experience. Taken together, the data depict an organisation attempting to vet new members, manage talent effectively within the organisation, and deal with a diverse pool of recruits.

Rather than attempt to summarise its rich findings here, we would direct the reader to the report itself. We will, however, examine here some case studies from a diverse range of source countries, together with their governments’ responses.

**4.1.1 MOROCCAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS**

With a contingent of around 1,500 fighters, Morocco is one of the main exporters of foreign fighters to Syria. Until 2014 the Moroccan authorities, who were content to see their own jihadists leave and add to the pressure on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, mostly turned a blind eye to networks of recruitment. Since the dramatic rise of IS, however, concern over local repercussions and the return of war-hardened radicals has prompted Rabat to adopt a hardline, security-oriented approach instead.

During the 1980s, dozens of Moroccans from different Islamic ideological backgrounds travelled to Afghanistan to participate in the insurgency against the Soviet domination of that country. When the Taliban came to power in 1996, an organisation called Groupe Islamique Combatant Marocain (Moroccan Islamic Fighting Group) was formed to represent former fighters of Moroccan origin who had settled in Afghanistan, but also to plan for attacks in Morocco at a later stage. Nothing much came of these plans, but after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq 200-300 Moroccans managed to join the fight there, most of whom ended up being killed or jailed.

From early 2012, the militarisation of the Syrian and Libyan revolutions introduced the phenomenon of foreign fighters to new arenas. After Syria, Libya has become the second most important destination for Moroccan jihadi. Some 500 Moroccan fighters have reportedly followed the call by IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for North Africans to join the group’s self-proclaimed emirate in Libya.
Most of the Moroccan fighters are recent converts (from either non-religious or non-violent Islamic backgrounds) to the jihadi line of Salafism, with only loose ideological commitment to the jihadi ideology. However, in the training camps in Syria and Libya these recruits are indoctrinated into becoming hardened jihadi. In general, recruitment is mainly based on personal relations, yet social media has become a new channel of recruitment and, according to a local NGO, around 80% of Moroccans who join the fighting in Syria are today recruited via social networks while the rest are recruited face to face.

Until 2013, what Mohammed Masbah calls “the inaction bordering on tacit encouragement displayed by the Moroccan authorities” constituted an important push factor that facilitated the travel of jihadi. This policy, he says, “was clearly driven by the desire to get rid of them and reduce the burden of controlling and containing the local Salaf-jihadi scene, within as well as outside the prison system”. Most Moroccans joined the fight in Syria through the ‘traditional’ route: a regular airline flight from Casablanca to Istanbul, then onwards by bus to Gaziantep in southern Turkey, or Jarablus just across the Syrian border. (Moroccans do not need a visa to travel to Turkey and Tunisia.) When the authorities tightened their control on Casablanca airport, jihadists took alternative routes, stopping over in Tunisia or making their way informally through Algerian territory into Libya before travelling on to Syria.

Masbah cites research by a Moroccan human rights group that points to a clear correlation between the recruitment of foreign fighters and social marginalisation. In addition, the conflict in Syria created a new boost to jihadi ideology, which had been in decline after a number of prominent radicals of the previous decade reversed their positions. In Morocco, local sheikhs started to echo the fatwas of global jihadis against the Assad regime, and pickier about potential recruits. Applicants typically need references from known Nusra members and are encouraged to know some Arabic. This is also said to have to complete a three-week ideological indoctrination course at various safe houses in Turkey before being sent to Syria. Potential Nusra recruits are also encouraged to possess skills useful to the group, such as medical knowhow or the ability to build websites or use a gun.

Jabhat al-Nusra has also relied heavily on al-Qaeda networks built from participation in prior waves of jihad in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Somalia and Iraq. IS recruitment in Turkey, by contrast, has appeared patchier, more personalised, and more dependent on savvy propaganda videos and publications.

4.1.2 JIHADI RECRUITMENT IN TURKEY
A 2016 study by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue on jihadi recruitment in Turkey, provides interesting insights into the foreign recruitment processes of not just IS but also Jabhat al-Nusra. This study puts the combined total for foreign fighters from Turkey (including ethnic Kurds) at 2,000-2,200, much higher than the ICSR figure referred to earlier, citing data from security intelligence firm The Soufan Group.

It found that Turkish nationals have mostly tended to affiliate with either IS or Jabhat al-Nusra, while smaller numbers have joined Ahmar al-Sham and Nusra-affiliated battalions, including Jaysh al-Islam. IS has attracted two thirds more Turkish recruits than Jabhat al-Nusra, it said, quoting Turkey’s foreign ministry. In Turkey, IS is known for employing a less rigorous selection process than Jabhat al-Nusra and for attracting less ideologically sophisticated recruits. Lower entry barriers may have facilitated IS recruitment. And while IS has a reputation of welcoming recruits to pursue martyrdom, Jabhat al-Nusra – both in and outside Turkey – is perceived as more disciplined, centralised, and pickier about potential recruits. Applicants typically need references from known Nusra members and are encouraged to know some Arabic. This is also said to have to complete a three-week ideological indoctrination course at various safe houses in Turkey before being sent to Syria. Potential Nusra recruits are also encouraged to possess skills useful to the group, such as medical knowhow or the ability to build websites or use a gun.

Jabhat al-Nusra has also relied heavily on al-Qaeda networks built from participation in prior waves of jihad in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Somalia and Iraq. IS recruitment in Turkey, by contrast, has appeared patchier, more personalised, and more dependent on savvy propaganda videos and publications.

4.1.3 THE APPEAL TO WESTERN VOLUNTEERS
IS propaganda and messaging is disproportionately slanted toward foreign fighters, in both its content and its target audience. Important IS messages are commonly released simultaneously in English, French and German, then later translated into other languages, such as Russian, Indonesian and Urdu.

“Foreign fighters are overrepresented, it seems, among the perpetrators of the Islamic State’s worst acts,” Norwegian terrorism expert Thomas Hegghammer has said. “So they help to kind of radicalise the conflict – make it more brutal. They probably also make the conflict more intractable, because the people who come as foreign fighters are, on average, more ideological than the typical Syrian rebel.” Syrians who take up arms to fight alongside militant groups such as IS may often have no choice about the matter; they are compelled to join up or else face being killed. There may be few other options open to them anyway to work and earn a living.

According to the anthropologist Scott Atran, Western volunteers are often in transitional stages in their lives. They may be “immigrants, students, between jobs or girlfriends... looking for new families of friends and fellow travellers. For the most part they have no traditional religious education and are ‘born again’ into a radical religious vocation through the appeal of militant jihad.” John Horgan of the University of Massachusetts also echoes this view: “They want to find something meaningful for their life. Some are thrill-seeking, some are seeking redemption.”

With the emergence of large numbers of foreign fighters on social media such as Instagram, Ask.fm and Twitter, providing a conversational and continual commentary on the conflict, internal motivations soon came to the fore, according to Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger. While few would dispute the importance of religious allure in attracting fighters to the field, the conversation online frequently turns to the theme of fun and adventure. On the other hand, lurid and graphic depictions of decapitations have also appealed to “thugs and violence junkies”.

Among the IS social media media helps to spread the message is an e-book entitled ‘How to Survive in the West – A Mujahid Guide’, which was reportedly distributed through a link on Twitter in March 2015. It is allegedly one in a series of e-books by IS supporters and recruiters to give practical guidance to young Muslims in the West who have no choice but to join IS or wage jihad in their own countries. The topics it covers include ways of blending in with Western society, maintaining a clean IP home address, developing physical fitness and stamina, bomb-making at home (six types: Molotov cocktail, nail bomb, microwave airbag bomb, gas canister bomb, remote-controlled bomb and car bomb), transporting weapons, and how to make contact with jihadis on Twitter.

4.2 ...AND BACK TO THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN
The return of foreign fighters is an increasing worry for several western European countries. The EU has expressed concern that many Belgian residents who have returned to the country after fighting in the Middle East are not being properly monitored by Belgium’s security services.

In January 2014 the Dutch government revoked the passports of eight would-be foreign fighters who had tried to travel to Syria. In the UK, the government brought in powers in 2015 to strip jihadis of their

Canadian jihadi Andre Poulin, also known as Abu Muslim, who fought and died for IS in Syria. Open source
British citizenship, though these powers have rarely been used. Countries including France and Denmark have been exploring ways to rehabilitate or ‘deradicalise’ returning volunteers, as we will discuss below.

The threat posed by returnees is not simply a matter of the bomb-making and shooting skills they have learned, and the emotional resilience to killing they may have acquired, but their ability to recruit new soldiers for IS, some of whom will follow the returnees back to Syria, and others who will be ordered to remain and carry out attacks at home. Moreover, because there is rarely hard evidence available of violence or terrorist acts in Syria, it can be difficult to prosecute returning IS fighters for their actions there. A report by the Dutch intelligence service AIVD comments that many returnees come home disappointed by the realities they encountered. Those who were not seen as fit to fight were reduced to menial jobs like housekeeping and cannot be said to have engaged in terrorist activity, and so cannot be convicted. At the same time, according to AIVD, it is often the case that “even those who did not fight continue to be involved in jihadist circles” when they come home. Others join criminal groups, possibly as a way to raise money to send back to Syria and Iraq.

The Jerusalem Post’s Yaakov Lappin, writing for the Investigate Project on Terrorism in September 2016, argues however that while Western security officials have rightly raised concerns about a possible increase in IS attacks in the West due to setbacks in Syria and Iraq, the threat to Arab-Muslim countries is even higher, due to their proximity to IS’ heartland and the sheer numbers of IS volunteers from the Middle East and North Africa. IS, Lappin reminds us, is ideologically dedicated to toppling Arab governments it sees as apostates and Western-backed puppets. Failed states like Libya, he points out, have already become alternative IS outlets, and the group’s leadership can be expected to seek additional areas in the region to which to spread. The leading candidates mentioned by Lappin are Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan.

Saudi Arabia has been dealing with the problem of returning foreign fighters and their terrorist acts or plots for many years. In 2004 it set up the Prince Mohammed Bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre (MNCC) to deradicalise and rehabilitate them, and in 2008 it set up the non-Sharia Specialised Criminal Court (SCC) to try hundreds of mainly AQ members on terrorism charges. With the rise of IS in Iraq and Syria in 2014, supporters of that group have joined AQ, Jabhat al-Nusra and AQAP on the list of suspects rounded up in connection with terrorist plots in the kingdom. Since April 2015 most of those convicted in the SCC have been linked with IS.

Although the MNCC has claimed a recidivism rate of only 10-20% in recent years and generally has seen as a success, a member of the kingdom’s unelected parliament, the Shura Council, called in 2014 for its deradicalisation programmes to be reevaluated.

Latifah al-Shalan said psychologists and sociologists should be given a greater role alongside the religious scholars who had previously taken the lead. She pointed out, in support of her recommendation, the fact that 47 of the 77 individuals involved in terrorist activities that had taken place in al-Ahsa Province a few weeks previously had been former inmates of the centre. Her reading of Western practice in this field was that socio-economic factors had to be given at least as much attention as religious or ideological matters.

A number of Western states are indeed attempting to develop deradicalisation programmes, some of them still experimental, in an attempt to rehabilitate returning fighters. Sending them to prison risks being counter-productive, since prisons, as we have seen, have often proved fertile ground for radicalisation in the first place. Denmark, France, Germany, the UK and the US all have projects of some kind aimed at turning jihadis away from violent ways of thinking and acting, and reintegrating them safely into society. Yet there is no consensus on what works. Counterterrorism consultant Marc Sageman, a leading authority on terrorism networks, goes so far as to dismiss the whole concept because “no one has clearly defined radicalisation... so when we don’t know much about the process of so-called radicalisation, what is the reverse process, of which we have even less of an idea?” To Sageman, the deradicalisation schemes are “political programs for politicians to claim they are doing something about the threat to their respective countries when in fact they don’t know what they are doing”,

In his own analysis of radicalisation, the process whereby ordinary individuals are transformed into terrorists willing to use violence for political ends, Sageman rejects both a micro-level explanation of radicalisation – the idea of some kind of “terrorist personality” – and a macro-level search for socio-economic “root causes”. He argues instead that radicalisation has four “prongs”:

“A sense of moral outrage at apparent crimes against Muslims both globally and locally is a common theme among the terrorists. This outrage is interpreted in a specific way, namely that this moral violation is part of a larger war against Islam. This ideology appeals to certain people because it resonates with their own personal experience of discrimination, making them feel that they are also victims of this wider war. A few individuals are then mobilised through networks, both face to face and now more and more commonly online, to become terrorists.”

The micro-level explanation is also rejected by John Horgan of the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, who says: “Four decades of psychological research on who becomes a terrorist and why, hasn’t yet produced any profile.”

Other security experts who have worked in counterterrorism, and social workers, psychiatrists and other professionals who work with extremists, have warned that a blanket approach to fighters returning from Syria risks further alienation of the very populations at greatest risk of sympathising with the jihadist cause and perpetrating the attacks that governments hope to prevent. Meanwhile, former British intelligence officer Richard Barrett has suggested that disillusioned returnees should be approached as a resource and not a threat. He has said he believes there are more disillusioned fighters than is widely known, because many are reluctant to come forward in the current climate.

Palestinian-born psychologist Ahmad Mansour, who runs a programme in Germany called Hayat, that focuses on Salafists and their families, views the focus on the dangers posed by returnees from Syria as “scaremongering”. Rather, he argues, many suffer post-traumatic stress disorder from the battlefield, or are disillusioned by the reality of life in the Islamic State. The climate of alarm surrounding returnees means that their families, who are often the first to learn of a fighter’s return, hesitate to inform the police for fear of the repercussions. The returnees themselves may face obstacles to rejoining the wider society, thus increasing the risk of alienation that could lead to further radical activity.

In conclusion, the return of radicalised foreign fighters, whether battle-hardened or traumatised by their experiences with IS in Syria, is still a new and unpredictable phenomenon for Western governments to tackle, and it is worth examining whether it might need to be handled with kid gloves rather than an iron fist.
5. SOURCES OF FUNDING (INCLUDING SELF-FUNDING) FOR THE MAJOR GROUPINGS THAT PERPETRATE IED INCIDENTS

The landscape across which most IED events are currently occurring is dominated by two loose, rival networks of armed Salafi-jihadi groups: the caliphate networks of the self-styled Islamic State; and the longer-established Al-Qaeda core and its regional affiliates. Groups operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in sub-Saharan Africa, have their own additional networks and sometimes linkages with regional govern- ments and security agencies. Within these networks and a host of subsidiary micro-networks, funds, materials, technical expertise and personnel are exchanged, primarily through mechanisms such as the international banking system, hawaladars and money transfer serv- ices, the Internet and social media, and across porous borders in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. We will examine existing and emerging financial processes later on.

Behind the terrorist groups themselves – though to a lesser extent than before, thanks to strategic adjustments as well as AML/CFT measures (anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism) – stand generous state sponsors and deep-pocketed private donors in Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with Turkey also playing a role. The key sponsors and donors will be discussed in detail in section 6. In addition, members of the Saudi and Qatari ruling families and other wealthy individuals have, for the past four decades, been propagating and financing the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam that has inspired jihadists and incited a sympathetic climate for their actions among sections of Muslim communities in all regions of the world. We will be studying historical and contemporary patterns of Gulf-originated influence-spreading and Salafi propaganda, with special reference to the establish- ment of mosques and provision of preachers in Europe and the United States, in section 7.

Methods of terrorist financing are continuing to evolve rapidly along with changes in the nature, scope and geographic range of non-state (or self-styled state) armed groups and their activities. In addition, there have been expanding opportunities for jihadist groups and their sympathisers to organise operations and solicit and receive funds online. AML/CFT measures have made traditional transactions through the international banking system and money transfer services somewhat less straightforward for outlawed groups, though they are still a major channel for fund transfers, together with hawala services and the physical transportation of cash. The Haj pilgrimage which draws around two million Muslims to Mecca each year provides another rich opportunity for networking, exchanging funds and information, and raising pious donations ostensibly for relief work in areas of armed conflict.

At the same time, however, groups have adapted. In some cases they have become less reliant on external sponsors and donors by developing and exploiting their own sources of funding: illicit revenues from sales of oil, gas and other natural resources in territory under their control; quasi-sovereignty-based activities such as raising taxes on people and goods travelling “their” territory; and a range of criminal activities such as looting banks, drug-smuggling, mafia-style extortion rackets and kid- napping for ransom.

The rise in lone-actor and small-cell operations, espe- cially in the West, requiring relatively small amounts of money, materials and training, has made viable new and more opaque patterns of procurement and supply. And the phenomenon of largely self-funding foreign fighters (increasingly non-Arab as well as Arab) travelling to conflict zones – predominantly Syria and Iraq – poses a further challenge for those seeking to deny resources to perpetrators of IED attacks.

Work by the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF), looking primarily but not exclusively at the fund- ing of Islamic State (IS), would seem to downplay the role of direct financing by Salafi-Wahhabi governments, one of the revenue streams that have continued to attract close attention from Western enforcement agencies. Important, too, are gifts from wealthy donors in the Gulf, often channelled through Islamic charities. However, some progress has been made in clamping down on these, notably since Saudi Arabia and the UAE became uncomfortably aware of the threat to their own soil, and the return home of, especially, Saudi citizens after fighting alongside IS in Syria and Iraq.

FATF lists the traditional terrorist financing methods and revenue-generating mechanisms that remain significant as:
- private donations;
- the abuse and misuse of non-profit organisations;
- the proceeds of criminal activities such as smuggling, robberies and tax fraud;
- extortion of the local populace and kidnappings for ransom;
- legitimate commercial enterprise (business dealings, often through front companies); and
- state sponsorship of terrorism – to which it refers diplomatically in only the most general terms (among the countries collaborating in FATF’s work is one of those most commonly accused of this, Saudi Arabia).

Among new and emerging forms of terrorist financing, FATF pays particular attention to the phenomenon of largely self-funded foreign fighters who, while not rep- resenting a major source of funds, nevertheless consti- tute a significant material resource. They may raise the money for their journeys in the weeks or days before - hand from their families, by taking out bank loans, or by selling personal goods such as a car or large consumer items purchased on credit without the intention to repay. They may also finance their stay by receiving money transfers from family or friends, or through continuing to draw salaries or welfare benefits from their bank accounts while abroad. When individuals make sudden and unusual small-scale transactions in this way it is particularly challenging for financial agencies to deter- mine whether they are suspect or legitimate, especially if they have not previously been on any watch list.

Other emerging terrorist financing mechanisms identi- fied by FATF are:
- fund-raising through social media, including crowd- funding websites, with all the benefits of anonymity and the difficulty of identifying an end-user or ben- eficiary;
- new payment products and services, such as e- wallets and applications like CashU, as well as the loading and selling of pre-paid cards such as those marketed for travel;
- virtual currencies such as Bitcoin, which are already being used by criminal groups and are seen as likely to be used by terrorist groups; and
- exploitation of natural resources – the oil and gas sector in Syria, Nigeria and Colombia, and other mineral extraction industries in West Africa and Afghanistan; timber, drug cultivation and charcoal supplies elsewhere, etc.

---

Sources of funding for the major IED perpetrator groups

[Diagram showing sources of funding for major IED perpetrator groups, including state and/or private funding, quasi-state activities, criminal activities, and both quasi-state & criminal activities.]
5.1.1 A DIVERSIFIED ‘STATE’ ECONOMY

A significant difference between IS and other terrorist organisations has been its determination to administer the territory it has conquered as a quasi-state under Sharia law. This is an essential part of its claim to represent the global Islamic caliphate that the global jihad aspires to establish, and it is supported by a substantial bureaucracy. Among reports of military progress and depictions of the brutal punishments IS inflicts on those who do not follow its line, the group’s propaganda includes utopian images of a thriving economy and settled lifestyle in the caliphate, to which Muslims everywhere are invited to migrate.214

IS’s brutal imposition of its extreme Salafist moral and legal code has become notorious, but the group has also adopted a vast range of other, more benign, quasi-governmental functions. These range from managing the economy, exploiting the oil and agricultural sectors and raising taxes to providing bread subsidies and services like street cleaning, and paying public sector salaries as well as fighters’ salaries and the costs of military operations (this approach has been replicated, possibly emulated, albeit on a smaller scale, by AQAP in Yemen).215

The relative weighting of different sources of revenue has varied between Iraq – where IS managed to seize for a time a small but highly lucrative proportion of the state’s vast oil resources – and Syria, where at one time it controlled as much as 60% of that country’s much smaller and poorer oil sector.216 Coalition strikes on oil-related targets, together with softening oil prices, have also, over time, degraded though not destroyed IS’s income-generating capacity from oil. As a result, it has stepped up efforts to diversify into other economic areas and intensify its taxation and extortion activities.

5.1.2 REVENUE RAISED FROM THE EXTRACTION, REFINING AND SALE OF OIL

Even before the breakthrough capture of Mosul in June 2014, the event that emboldened IS to declare its new status as a “caliphate”, the group’s leadership had identified oil as fundamental to its vision of maintaining an Islamic state.217 When it pushed through northern Iraq and took over Mosul, IS also seized the Aйil and Alas fields in north-eastern Iraq’s Kirkuk province. On the very day of its takeover, locals told a Financial Times investigation team, militants secured the fields and engineers were sent in to begin operations and ship the oil to market. “They were ready, they had people there in charge of the financial side, they had technicians that adjusted the filling and storage process,” said a local sheikh. “They brought hundreds of trucks in from Kirkuk and Mosul, and they started to extract the oil and export it.” IS lost these fields to the Iraqi army in April 2015, but by then it had made an estimated $450 million from them in the 10 months it controlled the area.218

While earlier terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda were heavily dependent on donations from wealthy foreign sponsors, IS has derived its core funding from its status as monopoly producer of an essential commodity consumed in vast quantities throughout the area it occupied. The critical role of oil is reflected in the fact that it is centrally controlled by the top IS leadership, along with military, security and media operations, whereas the group’s structure is in most other respects highly decentralised, with regional governors being left to administer territories according to precepts laid down by the ruling shura council.

By late 2014, IS controlled over 300 oil wells and production facilities in Iraq alone, and about 60% of Syria’s total production capacity. At that stage it was earning amounts that fluctuated wildly with changing circumstances but were estimated to average $2.5 million a day. Supplies had initially been boosted by draining oil pipelines and seizing storage facilities in areas that came under IS control. Revenues came not only from smuggling oil and refined products out for sale on the black market but also from sales of fuel to the local population.219

While sustained US-led coalition airstrokes have targeted and taken out many IS oil assets, it has proved harder to destroy the plethora of mobile micro-refineries that IS has used, which can readily be reassembled or replaced if hit.220 In fact, despite international efforts to destroy it, IS’s oil operation has reportedly grown in size and scope, and is minutely managed by carefully recruited engineers, technicians and administrators. Its daily earnings were estimated in October 2015 to have declined to a still substantial $1.5 million a day, but remained IS’s biggest source of revenue.221 Even without normal access to export markets, the IS oil operation can thrive because it has a huge captive market in Syria and Iraq.222 Indeed, diesel and petrol produced in IS areas are consumed in territory the group controls but in areas that are technically at war with it, such as Syria’s rebel-held north. Even the Damascus government appears to have bought IS oil: in November 2015 the US Treasury Department sanctioned Syrian business- man George Haswani, together with his engineering and construction company HESCO, for acting as a middleman for oil purchases by the Syrian regime from IS.223

A Financial Times investigation in October 2015 revealed even closer cooperation between Damascus and IS over gas.224 Gas supplies 90% of Syria’s power grid, on which both sides are critically dependent, and several gas plants have in effect become joint ventures between the Assad regime and IS. Some agreements are extensions of pre-existing deals made with other groups, such as Jabhat al-Nusra, that controlled the areas before IS took over in mid-2014. In a written statement, Syria’s Ministry of Oil and Natural Resources said: “There is no co-ordination with the terrorist groups...
regarding this matter.” But it acknowledged that some of its employees work under IS “for the sake of preserving the security and safety of these facilities”. In late 2015 IS controlled at least eight power plants in Syria, including three hydroelectric facilities and the country’s largest gas plant. The regime was getting a share of the plants’ liquid gas. One plant, Tuweinan, was partly run by George Haswani’s company HESCO, mentioned by the author, “it does not have recourse to tax hikes to offset falling oil sales. Instead, it could raise import duties, but these are already high and doing so would likely further erode already waning popular support.”

5.1.3 TAXATION, CUSTOMS DUTIES AND EXTORTION

As stated earlier, the IS economy, while dominated by oil, has always been financed from a diverse range of sources, including looting banks and profiteering from the sale of cultural artefacts, along with the terrorist staples of robbery, extortion and kidnapping for ransom, of locals and foreigners. As Conflict Antiquities blogger Sam Hardy put it in October 2014:

This would appear to be a modern version of another Muslim tax from the Prophet’s time, the khums, or fifth, a 20% windfall tax on the profits of war, which has reportedly also been applied to pre-Islamic antiquities, again citing prophetic tradition as precedent. With regard to IS profiteering from cultural artefacts, Syrian archaeologist Professor Amr al-Azm was quoted in 2014 as saying that “IS(IS) militants don’t do the digging themselves. Instead, they sanction illicit excavation by locals and then levy a special Islamic tax, called khums, that takes 20% of all profits on treasure for the state.”

IS meanwhile imposes a common zakat framework across its territory, which it pursues remorselessly. It takes 2.5% of capital from wealthy residents and businesses, whether that business is a factory or a truck with a single driver. From farmers, it levies the equivalent of 5% of irrigated crops and 10% of rain-fed crops. Agriculture is one of the most lucrative sources of zakat, with wheat, barley and cotton the primary produce. In Iraq, farmers pay zakat in livestock and crops, while Syrian farmers report that many IS tax collectors calculate market prices and ask for the cash equivalent.

One major source of income in Iraq for a time was taxing the salaries of government employees. Until Baghdad controversially stopped transferring payments to perhaps 400,000 employees living in IS territory, including the city of Mosul. Members of Iraq’s parliamentary finance committee said the salary payments amounted to more than $1 billion, which IS taxed at a rate of between 10 and 50%.

IS is also known to have raised significant funds from exchange rate manipulation and transactions in Jordan and Iraq. An inquiry by the UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Sub-committee on IS financing heard in April 2016 how IS managed to multiply its looted cash, by feeding it into the regular official auctions of US dollars that are held in Iraq. The group was able to move its money in such a way as to exploit small differences in the official exchange rates between the US dollar and the Iraqi dinar. The system it allegedly used involved transferring captured money out through regional banks and money service businesses – disguising its source – and then inserting the money back into the Iraqi banking system in Baghdad. The money was then entered into foreign currency auctions, where IS was able to make a profit on the differential between wholesale and retail exchange rates. Any profit from these activities was then transferred back into IS-controlled areas through the hawala system.

In April 2016, following reports of IS fighters being forced to take pay cuts, further evidence emerged of the way oil losses were hurting IS’s finances. A report by Iraq’s central court of investigation, based in part on the confessions of captured IS suspects, said the group was resorting to alternative revenue-generating activities including fish farming and car dealerships. The report quoted Judge Jabbar Abid al-Huchaimi as saying that “the terrorists’ current financing mechanism has changed from what it was before the announcement of the caliphate nearly two years ago… After the armed forces took control of several oil fields Daesh (IS) was using to finance its operations, the organisation devised non-traditional ways of paying its fighters and financing its activities.”
Fishing in hundreds of lakes north of Baghdad generates millions of dollars a month, according to the court report. Some owners fleeing the area abandoned their farms while others agreed to cooperate with IS to avoid being attacked. “Daesh treats its northern Baghdad province as a financial centre,” said al-Huchaimi. He added that this area was IS’s primary source of financing in the capital, where it carries out frequent bombings against security forces and Shia residents. The report also described the militants’ taxation of agricultural land, a 10% levy on poultry and other duties on a range of imports into ‘their territory’. New revenues are also being generated from car dealerships and factories once run by the Iraqi government in areas seized by IS, such as Mosul, but al-Huchaimi said oil smuggling from Syrian refineries remained the group’s primary source of international financing.

The Iraqi court’s report described how funds were channelled to IS’s Bayt al-Mal, or Treasury Department, in Mosul and then distributed to other provinces through hawala offices, first in the city of Irbil and from there to other parts of Iraq. It also said that in addition to state sponsorship and donations from abroad, financial rewards for up to four children, and occasional bonuses like one worth $1,000 distributed after the militants captured Mosul in June 2014.

5.1.4 EXTERNAL DONORS

As has been noted already, IS has been far less reliant on foreign state sponsorship or donations from abroad than most terrorist groups. One notable exception to this was the work of Tunisian-born Tariq bin al-Tahar, named by the US Treasury Department in September 2014 as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist and killed in a drone strike in Syria in June 2015.252 Al-Harzi was a high-profile IS official operating in Syria who worked to raise funds and recruit and arrange light weapons training for them before sending them into Syria. Specifically, he facilitated the movement of Europeans – from the UK, Albania and Denmark, for example – to Turkey and eventually Syria, and he also recruited North Africans.

As of late 2013, al-Harzi held another interesting position, as IS’s emir of suicide bombers. He was a key figure in an IS facilitation network that played a central role in IS’s suicide and VBIED attacks in Iraq, and worked with other IS members to facilitate the travel of individuals from Syria into Iraq. In October 2013, he requested suicide bombers for operations in Iraq from a Syria-based associate. Al-Harzi also worked to provide material support to IS by procuring and shipping weapons with his brother from Libya to Syria.254

Meanwhile, intelligence officials have flagged up crowdfunding through social media as an emerging source of finance for IS. Volunteer fighters from Middle Eastern countries have often collected donations online from sources in the Gulf, and there is concern that such activity is also going on in Europe.255 According to FATF reports, there have been plenty of cases where appeals for donations, funds for the group and specific instructions were given over encrypted platforms about where to direct the funds.256 In May 2016, for example, an undercover reporter for Britain’s Sun newspaper exposed a case in which an IS fundraiser used an encrypted Telegram account to source cash, mobile phones and computer equipment from London for the group.257

5.1.5 FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS AND MICROFINANCING

In addition to the loss of oil revenue referred to earlier, recent losses of territory for IS in Iraq and northern Syria have been shrinking the group’s tax base. Under this new financial pressure, as well as in response to military setbacks, IS is shifting towards greater reliance on largely self-funding foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). These volunteers not only bring in money and material support but also present opportunities to stage low-cost operations in Europe and Arab countries when they return home. In the eyes of some analysts this threat is growing as IS’s strength in its core zone of operation is reduced.258 Plotters involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks had returned to Europe after being trained in northern Syria by an IS cell tasked with causing chaos in the West. According to an IS official quoted by Martin Chulov in the Guardian in September 2016, “morale is desperate, even in Raqqa [IS’s strongholds in Syria]. But they are very smart. They have made plans for all of this. They are investing a lot in sending their people to Europe, and it won’t be over soon.”259

We have referred to the subject of FTFs and the potential security threat they pose to Western, especially European, states and to states in the Arab and Muslim world in section 4. Here, though, we will examine their role in the new configuration of IS’s finances, together with the related and increasingly important area of small-scale transactions in IS funding.

Research published in May 2016, by Dr Magnus Ranstorp of the Swedish Defence University, catalogues the ways in which “IS recruits from Europe and today raising significant funds for the group through multiple microfinancing techniques within the European Union. Moneymaking schemes to date have included petty theft, fraudulent loan applications, social insurance fraud, and sophisticated VAT fraud. Aspiring and active European terrorists often use a range of techniques to transfer money to IS in Syria and Iraq, including bringing money with them when they travel and using their accounts. In terms of contact structures willing to provide funds, are particularly prized.” FTFs often make sudden asset sales or transfers ahead of their departure. They often quit their jobs if they are employed, and they commonly make unusually large withdrawals from their accounts. In terms of company financial activity, recruits often generate very large amounts in short periods: business purchases, often of IT or mobile phones, are made at high levels to maximise credit limits, with orders placed within a short period as unpaid invoices accumulate.

A significant number of European FTFs have past criminal convictions and so turn, unsurprisingly, to theft and petty crime when raising funds for the jihad. Extremist preachers, such as Khalid Zerkani, who recruited dozens of Belgians to fight jihad in Syria between 2013 and 2014, have justified such criminal fundraising on religious grounds. Zerkani encouraged his acolytes to rob people in the street and steal the luggage of tourists, and then distribute the proceeds to fund their travel to Syria.254 In another example, eight young men in Germany were prosecuted for robbing churches and schools to finance IS in Syria. They stole €19,000 worth of religious items and laptops and cash between 2011 and 2014, and often seriously damaged the premises before they left. Prosecutors said the central figure in the gang, a 26-year-old Moroccan, had uploaded a video to YouTube encouraging Muslims to fight for IS; he himself travelled to Syria, where he was trained in a military camp.256

Many FTFs have taken out loans from banks without any intention of paying them back. One of the most common fraudulent practices is to secure a car loan or leasing option for yourself with no intention of paying back the debt and every intention of reselling the vehicle. This also provides IS sympathisers with opportunities to send cars or SUVs to IS in Syria. Vehicles are also often driven from Europe to Turkey and then into Syria by FTFs.256

Investigations in Denmark, Belgium, France and the Netherlands have found FTFs continuing to receive welfare payments while fighting in Syria. British authorities have also been looking into the extent to which British FTFs are abusing the social insurance system through false claims, online fraud and even student loans.

Although it is still reliant on access to banking services in Syria and Iraq, IS has far less access to the international financial system than it once did, and small-scale transactions through the hawala system and through false claims, online fraud and even student loans.

This research, which draws on extensive interviews with law enforcement, financial investigators and intelligence officials, also provides important insights into the web of IS’s transnational networks and local recruitment and facilitation hubs.256 IS encourages each individual recruit to bring whatever assets are available to them to contribute to the group’s cause; their efforts are often well organised and supported by IS facilitators. Recruits with good credit histories and those well placed to defraud financial institutions, as well as those with a network of contacts willing to provide funds, are particularly prized. FTFs often make sudden asset sales or transfers ahead of their departure. They often quit their jobs if they are employed, and they commonly make unusually large withdrawals from their accounts. In terms of company financial activity, recruits often generate very large amounts in short periods: business purchases, often of IT or mobile phones, are made at high levels to maximise credit limits, with orders placed within a short period as unpaid invoices accumulate.
from their home country bank accounts through MSBs or via wired cash. An official 2015 UK report noted that “funds are typically broken down into smaller amounts to avoid the need to provide identification and to avoid detection. Intelligence also indicates that employees have been known to facilitate funds to terrorists through their position within MSBs.”

Cash couriers are another way of bypassing the international financial system to get money to IS. Sometimes FTFs carry money themselves; money smugglers also operate. For example, five men, all South African, were arrested at Johannesburg’s main airport in August 2015 as they were about to board a flight with $6 million stuffed in bags. A senior police officer told Fox News the suspects were believed to have been heading for the IS caliphate via Dubai, and there was “one … we are particularly interested in, as records show he was flying to Dubai every two days for a year.” The Iraqi ambassador to South Africa, Dr Hisham al-Awadi, told local news service IOI he was not surprised at suspicions the money could have been destined for IS. “There has been increasing activity in South Africa with regards to funding and fundraising for IS,” he said. “We are always receiving information about people who are joining. It could also be a possibility that those returning are being sent back to recruit or fundraise. It is something we must be wary of.” The ambassador’s remarks came a week after reports that eleven South Africans had returned from territory controlled by IS. The eleven claimed they had travelled there as aid workers.

FTFs are encourage to bring other useful material resources with them. FATF’s February 2015 report on IS financing offered the following case study as an example:

A suspicious traveller from a Nordic country arrived at Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport. When interviewed by the competent authorities, he admitted that he travelled to Turkey with the intention of travelling to Syria and joining IS. Camouflage, AK-47 type gun parts and cartridges, a first aid kit, three knives, binoculars, batteries, sport shoes, wire ropes, torches and military supplies were found in his luggage. He was denied entry into Turkey and was deported to his country of residence.

Small-scale transactions

In April 2016, senior officials within FATF, meeting at the UN in New York, discussed the role of small transactions in terrorist finance, and the difficulty for financial institutions of stopping them. The head of Belgium’s Financial Intelligence Unit, Philippe De Koster, said the November 2015 attacks by IS in Paris that killed 130 people were in part financed through welfare benefits, received in Belgium, that were moved via Western Union (WU) transfers. Duncan DeVille, WU’s global head of financial crimes compliance, said one suspect in the attacks sent seven WU wires totalling $552 and another sent a single wire for $226, illustrating the very small amounts of money involved. There have long been concerns about the use of WU and other MSBs to wire funds to IS-linked fighters joining the jihad in Syria and Iraq, although WU has not been accused of wrongdoing. Following the Paris attacks, however, the company received a total of 75 subpoenas, which identified more than 850 people, from authorities in the United States, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Austria and the United Kingdom, DeVille said.

The FATF meeting also heard how a pilot programme of the UK Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce had enabled Barclays Bank to identify transactions involving FTFs who had links with IS, by looking at card spending near the Syrian border. The bank then used the payments to determine the source of funds, and looking for links between the people involved, reporting suspicious activity where appropriate. The bank was then able to share its information with, and get feedback from, law enforcement officials.

This kind of heightened vigilance and detailed information sharing clearly has an impact on IS. Ranstorp’s research found, for example, that IS modifies its instructions to recruits and facilitators from time to time, and after WU and a number of other MSBs began watching more closely for IS-linked transactions in the Turkey-Syria border area, IS urged aspiring European FTFs only to transfer sums under €5,000. For a period of time it also encouraged them to transfer funds through MSBs to recipients in Bosnia, particularly in the Brcko district, a well-known jihadi hotspot, because it was seen as a safer option.

Since then, Spanish police claim to have made a breakthrough with the arrest in July 2016 of two Moroccan brothers suspected of transferring IS operations in Syria and Iraq. The two Moroccans, aged 22 and 32, diverted and transferred funds from Europe to pay for the transfer of members of IS into conflict zones, the interior ministry said.

Police discovered a large amount of cash and telecommunications data at the brothers’ home, which was expected to assist authorities in exposing the group’s presence in Europe. Ministry sources said that a third brother was involved in the funding, but was believed to have died fighting in Syria. The three had used false identities provided by IS. The death of the one of the brothers in Syria, who had travelled to the country with his wife and children to join IS, did not end their fundraising activities in Spain. Authorities say they used recent legislation to tackle money laundering in order to trace the international money transfers the cell was making. The ministry said this was the first time Spanish police had been able to trace remittances to IS end-to-end, establishing that the money was put at the group’s disposal and used primarily to cover recruiting costs.

Reporting on the arrests, the Spanish newspaper El Pais noted that hundreds of young residents in Spain, mostly Moroccans, have joined IS, and at least 13 have died in suicide missions against Syrian regime forces. At the same time, Spain has become a major terrorist financing hub for jihads in Syria and Iraq through an extensive network of 250 phone call centres, butchers’ shops and neighbourhood grocery stores, where money is transferred through a network of almost 3,000 small local and virtually untraceable microfinance delivery networks, according to Spanish intelligence agencies. This secret network, which manages the savings of over 150,000 Muslims and is also being used to help fund groups such as IS and Jabhat al-Nusra, is comprised of about 300 hawaladars, the majority of them Pakistanis. Oversight is “practically zero”, according to anti-terrorism officials. “We know that the system is helping the jihadis in Syria,” said one investigator.

Ranstorp’s research on IS microfinancing, cited earlier, draws the important conclusion that there is an increasingly urgent need to integrate financial intelligence into counterterrorism machinery within and across EU states, as intelligence officials point out that money flows are not just going in one direction – from recruits to IS in Syria and Iraq – but also now from IS sources to recruiters and supporters in Europe as ways to fund terror operations.

5.2 SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR AL-QUEDA AND ITS AFFILIATES

The al-Qaeda (AQ) network has three principle sources of financial support for its operations:

• donations channelled through a network of financial facilitators, mainly from wealthy individuals in the Gulf;
• kidnapping for ransom; and
• taxation of smuggling routes across the Sahel and the economy in general in Yemen.

In its early days, AQ was almost entirely dependent on donations, and not, as was believed at the time, primarily on Osama bin Laden’s personal wealth and business income; nor was it involved in the drugs or diamonds trade. But today individual donations, while still highly significant, have declined in relative importance, as kidnapping for ransom and control of illicit trade routes have proved lucrative too. While Saudi Arabia and the UAE have taken measures to clamp down on fundraising for Islamist groups that have been designated “terrorist groups”, Qatar and Kuwait are considerably more lax about the collection of funds within their territories for Salafi groups fighting the Assad regime in Syria. The most favoured beneficiary is Jabhat al-Nusra (recently rebranded as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham), as well as AQ and its affiliates in other regions.

Qatar has also supported Jabhat al-Nusra financially by paying multimillion-dollar ransoms for hostages taken in the Middle East. In addition, AQ affiliates AQIM and AQAP rely substantially on kidnapping for ransom to finance their activities; in 2012 the late AQAP leader Nasser al-Wuhayshi claimed that over half his budget in Yemen came from ransoms.

Control of smuggling routes across the Sahel has become a further source of revenue for AQIM and allied militant groups, with the destabilisation of the region since 2012 and Libya’s descent into chaos. The war in Yemen also enabled AQAP to establish a mini-state in the port city of Mukalla that plundered the local central bank and levied taxes on shipping.

5.2.1 DONATIONS

Private donations originating from the Gulf are a vital funding stream for AQ and AQ-affiliated groups. AQ also has supporters in Pakistan and Turkey. There is evidence that recently some funding via donations has been diverted from Afghanistan and Pakistan to terrorist groups operating in Syria. Donors are able to use networks of facilitators and fundraisers in the Gulf to collect and move funds out to terrorist groups; the climate of impunity for these terrorist financiers, particularly in Qatar, continues to give rise to concern.

A number of Qatar-based individuals who have been named as Specially Designated Global Terrorists and placed under sanctions by one or more of the US, UK and UN for providing financial assistance to AQ and
Designated Global Terrorists supporting them, chimes with its own high-level of support for Salafi groups fight -

- The Qatar government's reluctance to crack down on internally free to travel despite being under international travel bans, and appear to enjoy close and cordial relations with senior members of the government and the Al Thani ruling family. Among those identified are:
  - Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Umar al-Nu’aymi, a former history professor at Qatar University and president of Swiss-based human rights group Al Karama, whom the US treasury department accused in December 2013 of raising funds for Al Qaeda and its affiliates in Syria, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen that at times had amounted to millions of dollars per month. Friend of the ruling family and still not arrested as of December 2015.
  - Khalifa Mohamed Turki Subały, a former senior official of the Qatari Central Bank, under UN sanctions since 2008 for acting as a financier and facilitator for AQ and its senior leadership. After serving a six-month prison term in Qatar, Subały resumed his activities, working with Iran-based facilitators to channel funds to AQ leaders in Pakistan. His activities in support of AQ continued at least into 2013, and as of December 2015 "Subały and other econo -

Meanwhile, Gulf donors are also funding schools for imams in Syria where the curriculum includes indoctrination in the Wahhabi view of jihad. One such school belonging to Jabhat al-Nusra was found in 2014 to have graduated over 800 hastily trained preachers in a short space of time to work across Syria. It reportedly received a budget of $24,000 monthly from Saudi Arabia and private donors.

5.2.2 KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM

AQ and its direct affiliates have raised at least $125 million in ransom money since 2008, including $66 million in 2013 alone. Of this, $91 million accrued to AQIM, $29 million to AQAP and $5.1 million to al-Shabaab. Kidnappings for ransom in the name of AQ have mostly taken place in Africa, but more recently have also occurred in Syria and Yemen.

The first episode in this spate of kidnappings, in which £5 million was paid in Mali in 2003 for the release of 32 European tourists, opened the door to a new tactic for AQ. In the period that followed, AQKidnapping, involving four French hostages in Mali, which he was clearly monitoring closely.

In December 2015, the Consortium Against Terrorism Financing published an article that since at least 2013 AQ has been openly funding Jabhat al-Nusra by means of making ransom payments. CATF listed $150 million paid for some Turkish nationals, $20 million for some Filipinos, $30 million for some Lebanese citizens, $16 million for some Syrians, $15 million for some Italians and an indeterminate figure of $4-150 million for an American. The hostages included aid workers, nuns, bishops and UN peacekeepers. This mechanism, according to CATF, gives Doha a way of simultaneously funding Jabhat al-Nusra’s activities in Syria and also portraying itself to its iritated Western allies in a favourable, humanitarian light. It noted that in a prisoner swap deal between Jabhat al-Nusra and the Lebanese government, mediated by the state of Qatar and which Qatar reportedly paid Nusra $25 million to accept, the prisoner release was broadcast live on Lebanon TV and Qatari’s Al Jazeera satellite channel. The Qatari media helpfully highlight the numbers of women and children released. 5.2.3 CONTROL AND TAXATION OF TRADE AND SMUGGLING ROUTES

AQIM and related groups such as Ansar Dine and MUJAO are now raising revenue by “taxing” the estimated 30-40 metric tonnes of cocaine smuggled through West Africa each year, generating an estimated $800 million locally, en route from Colombia, Peru and Bolivia to Europe. (It should be noted that the scale of illicit trade in the Sahel, especially of narcotics, is widely disputed and by its nature impossible to determine with precision.)

The Qatar government’s reluctance to crack down on fundraising for AQ and specifically Jabhat al-Nusra, and indeed the way it provides a safe haven for Specially Designated Global Terrorists supporting them, chimes with its own high-level of support for Salafi groups fighting the Assad regime in Syria. In May 2015, the young emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani brokered a new agreement between Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to support Syrian rebel groups including Jabhat al-Nusra. Large amounts of money were already reportedly being passed to intermediaries in Turkey to buy weapons (notably from Croatia, according to the Gatestone Institute) to be transferred to groups in Syria.

Kuwait has also seen fundraisers openly soliciting donations for armed groups in Syria, mainly those allied with Jabhat al-Nusra, since at least 2012, on which we will have more to say below (in section 6.3).

Recently, European governments are understood to pay ransoms for hostages, although they deny this, often writing them off as aid payments. In the case of kidnappings in Yemen, Qatar and Oman have acted as intermediaries, together paying out $20.4 million in 2012-13 to AQAP for the release of two Finns, an Austrian and a Swiss national.

The ransom negotiations in AQ kidnappings are generally coordinated by AQ Central in Pakistan; local initiative is not encouraged in this area and a commander in the Sahel was once censured for securing only a “meagre” $700,000 for two Canadian diplomats because of his unwillingness to follow the Pakistan leadership’s instructions. In his last broadcast before his death in 2011 Osama Bin Laden spoke at length about another kidnapping, involving four French hostages in Mali, which he was clearly monitoring closely.

There is evidence, in the form of thousands of pages of internal AQAC files and financial documents found by reporter Rukmini Callimachi while on assignment for The Associated Press in northern Mali in 2013, that AQIM, AQAP and al-Shabaab came to follow a common methodology in hostage-taking, involving four French hostages in Mali, which he was clearly monitoring closely.

There are indications that AQIM is using the releases and ransom payments to build a new source of income and to underwrite the group’s political agenda. This is a new dynamic, and AQIM, AQAP and al-Shabaab should be seen as growing in sophistication and as a result, able to meet the needs of donors and governments around the world.
Most of the trafficking and informal trading of drugs, cigarettes and other contraband goods is carried out by individual clans of many different tribes, but primarily the Tuareg and the Bérabiche and Toubou peoples, with whom the militants often have economic links and ties of marriage. The armed groups are less likely to be involved directly in the movement of illicit goods themselves, but they profit from the trade by taxing it as it transits the vast desert areas now under their control, according to a 2014 report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime.

Groups such as AQIM earn about half the profits generated from drug trafficking, which can take the form of direct cash payments or weapons, ammunition, vehicles or other equipment. They are also reported to be profiting from the growth in people trafficking across the region to the Mediterranean coast. While most of the people being trafficked are undocumented economic migrants, concerns have been raised about the potential trafficking of terrorists into European cities too, especially after the discovery of a MUJAO cell operating in Spain. However, according to Foreign Policy’s Michael Duffy “this seems to be anomalous and the current threat is likely vastly overblown”.

In Yemen, AQAP has profited from the Saudi-led onslaught on Houthi rebels and IS fighters to establish a small quasi-state-based in the country’s third-largest port, Mukalla, a city of 500,000 people. When Yemeni government forces drove out Houthis, AQAP moved in, seized government buildings including the local presidential palace, freed 150 of their comrades from the city’s central jail, looted vast quantities of weapons and C4 plastic explosive, and plundered $100 million from the central bank’s Mukalla branch.

Whether consciously or not modelling their newfound economic mini-empire on IS’s caliphate-building practices in Iraq and Syria, AQAP has raised around $2 million a day in taxes and customs tariffs on goods and fuel coming into Mukalla Port, sending speedboats out, armed with RPGs, to levy fees on shipping. Tribes working in alliance with AQAP control most of the country’s oil industry, and AQAP has become the de facto fuel supplier in territory under their control. Furthermore, from the beginning of 2016 AQAP starting making extortionate demands for millions of dollars from state-owned firms including the national oil and mobile phone companies, of which at least $1.4 million is thought to have been paid, by the oil company.

Like IS, again, AQAP is making propaganda videos portraying itself as a responsible and well-run administration with the people’s interests at heart, its fighters pictured repairing bridges and supplying medical supplies to hospitals. In late 2015 it cancelled payroll taxes in areas under its control, calling the practice un-Islamic and saying “the poor have been paying alms to the rich and the rich don’t pay, and it’s the tyrants and oppressors who are the ones getting this money”. AQAP rule is strict but markedly less barbarous than that of IS, local residents have commented.

It remains to be seen how badly AQAP’s withdrawal from Mukalla in April 2016 will have disrupted the group’s economic infrastructure, as US air strikes against the group continue.

5.3 SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR THE TALIBAN

In 2014, the Taliban was named the world’s fifth wealthiest terrorist group (after ISIS, Hamas, FARC and Hezbollah). Although it is difficult to ascertain, estimates of the group’s annual revenue range from between $400 million to as much as $2 billion. This wealth is used not only for funding deadly IED attacks, but also for buying influence and bribing government officials. The fact that the Taliban is able to manage such large sums of money whilst in hiding in the Afghan and Pakistani mountains has led many to believe that they have had significant assistance, not only from hawala operators but also from conventional banking services, particularly in Pakistan.

The group is primarily known for its involvement in the Afghan drug trade. Although the Taliban is deeply unencumbered with drugs, it is not their sole source of income, and the group has a fairly diversified funding model. The Taliban has demonstrated an ability to exploit aid and reconstruction projects in post-war Afghanistan, taking advantage of the corruption and unstable security environment they themselves have helped create. Besides these two fields, taxation, extortion, kidnappings and involvement in illicit mining provide important funding sources. This has made some suggest that the group is acting more and more as ‘godfathers’ in a criminal syndicate rather than as a terrorist group or parallel government.

Despite the seemingly opportunistic nature of Taliban funding, the group clearly has both a strategy and an infrastructure aimed at maximizing revenue. The Taliban also uses a redistribution model, in which local Taliban financial commissions with abundant revenue sources, such as in Helmand province, send money to Quetta Shura to be distributed to areas with fewer sources of income. Below, some of the more prominent means of funding shall be explored further.

5.3.1 THE DRUG TRADE

Although the Taliban has diversified its funding, the main source of revenue remains their involvement in Afghanistan’s drug trade. Primarily, this concerns the trade in opium, such as opium or heroin. Some estimates have placed their share of Taliban income at 85%. Such percentages are likely overstated, but as we will see, the Taliban’s involvement in this trade and drug trafficking in general is a vital part of their existence.

First, the usual question mark surrounding zealous extremist groups and ‘immoral’ commerce such as drug trade often misses the point, which is that terrorist groups need money. The Taliban are no different in this regard. The group’s incentive to trafficking is kidnappings and involvement in illicit mining, calling the practice un-Islamic and providing the people with a form of income. The group has shown a capacity to remain present at almost every stage in the supply chain, from cultivation to trafficking. As a result, Afghanistan supplies between 70-90% of the world’s heroin. To make matters worse, the UNODC in October 2016 released new figures showing that opium production in Afghanistan had increased by 43%.

According to most accounts, the Taliban are not involved in the physical production of heroin or other drugs, but they have shown a capacity to remain present at almost every stage in the supply chain, from cultivation to trafficking. The group taxes farmers using the revenue it provides (and the revenue it provides) it would almost be senseless not to take advantage of it. Afghanistan’s poppy plant export stands at $2.8 billion and represents 13% of the country’s GDP. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that opium production reached as high as 18.3 kilograms per hectare in 2015, with a selling price of more than $200 per kilogram. As a result, Afghanistan supplies between 70-90% of the world’s heroin. To make matters worse, the UNODC in October 2016 released new figures showing that opium production in Afghanistan had increased by 43%.

According to most accounts, the Taliban are not involved in the physical production of heroin or other drugs, but they have shown a capacity to remain present at almost every stage in the supply chain, from cultivation to trafficking. The group taxes farmers using the revenue it provides (and the revenue it provides) it would almost be senseless not to take advantage of it. Afghanistan’s poppy plant export stands at $2.8 billion and represents 13% of the country’s GDP. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that opium production reached as high as 18.3 kilograms per hectare in 2015, with a selling price of more than $200 per kilogram. As a result, Afghanistan supplies between 70-90% of the world’s heroin. To make matters worse, the UNODC in October 2016 released new figures showing that opium production in Afghanistan had increased by 43%.

According to most accounts, the Taliban are not involved in the physical production of heroin or other drugs, but they have shown a capacity to remain present at almost every stage in the supply chain, from cultivation to trafficking. The group taxes farmers using the revenue it provides (and the revenue it provides) it would almost be senseless not to take advantage of it. Afghanistan’s poppy plant export stands at $2.8 billion and represents 13% of the country’s GDP. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that opium production reached as high as 18.3 kilograms per hectare in 2015, with a selling price of more than $200 per kilogram. As a result, Afghanistan supplies between 70-90% of the world’s heroin. To make matters worse, the UNODC in October 2016 released new figures showing that opium production in Afghanistan had increased by 43%.
was revealed that money exchange service New Ansari Money Exchange had conducted money laundering for the Hajji Juma Khan Organisation with the help of its Dubai-based subsidiaries Green Leaf General Trading LLC and al-Adal Exchange. Helmand drug lord Haji Aizullah Alizai has been heavily involved in New Ansari Exchange. Helmand drug lord Haji Aizullah Alizai has been heavily involved in New Ansari Exchange, and has previously been named as a major financier of the Taliban. Another Helmand based drug producer and smuggler, Shah Mohammad Barakzai, who was arrested in 2011, is also believed to have donated money to the Taliban through his two haivalis, the New Ahmadi Ltd and the Mohammad Wall Money Exchange.

The Taliban’s foothold both in Helmand Province and among drug rings is further demonstrated by the cases of Haji Fatah Ishaqzay and Haji Lal Jan. It has been proven that Ishaqzay, who runs a drug syndicate, has provided financial assistance to the Taliban. Ishaqzay is also said to have close relatives fighting for the Taliban. Moreover, a hospital run by the Ishaqzay syndicate reportedly offers free treatment for Taliban fighters. Most of the syndicate’s funding is said to have arrived through the aforementioned Abdul Habib Alizai and former Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour, who demonstrates how deeply engaged the Taliban is with local crime rings. Haji Lal Jan has, on his part, been mentioned as one of the highest profile traffickers convicted of financially supporting the Taliban. In 2014, he managed to escape from prison. Lal Jan has been identified as the Taliban’s most important financier in the Sangin District in Helmand Province – a district that the Taliban has been struggling to take and maintain control of in recent years. Lesser known is that the Taliban’s sustained efforts to gain control over Sangin, according to Afghan security officials, is because of the heroin labs in the area. This highlights Lal Jan’s role as both a provider of funds for military operations in the area, but also as a provider of future business at a successful conquest. This once again demonstrates how vital drug smuggling and the connections it brings are for the Taliban.

This intimate relationship in itself is not surprising, given that the Taliban movement received vital funding in its early stages from narcotics cartels headed by the likes of Haji Bashar Noorzi, who himself remained a respected adviser to Mullah Omar. Another sign of the close relationship between the Taliban and drug rings is the case of Haji Kotwal Noorzi, who as the head of a drug processing network in Helmand and Farah Province provided financial and logistical support to the Taliban, in addition to transporting arms to them. To show their gratitude, the Taliban left Haji Kotwal’s poppy fields untouched and facilitated his drug transports through Helmand. As a sign of their close relationship, Haji Kotwal was appointed to collect zakat from other drug smugglers in Girdi Jangal in Pakistan by the Quetta Shura.

Besides the trade in opiate drugs, it has been estimated that hashish gives the Taliban between $100-150 million each year. Afghanistan has more than 50,000 acres that are used for hashish cultivation, and the country supplies more than 4,000 tonnes annually. For farmers, it is also seen as a more profitable crop, as they can make as much as a $4,000 per acre.

5.3.2 CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

Cigarettes are, after narcotics, the second most significant item smuggled in Afghanistan, which imports approximately two billion dollars’ worth of foreign cigarettes each year. This is remarkable given that official estimates have placed smoking levels in Afghanistan at 20%, as well as the fact that Western cigarettes sell at around $1 per pack compared to a local cigarettes pack at $0.30. However, there seems to be an overwhelming presence of the Western cigarettes on the Afghan black market, in which the government’s excise tax and required documentation are largely ignored. The Taliban has inevitably found a way to tap into this trade, and cooperates with the TTP with bringing illegal cigarettes across the Afghan-Pakistani border.

5.3.3. ILLEGAL MINING AND EMERALD SMUGGLING

Another sector in which the Taliban yields significant profits is within illegal mining and emerald smuggling. The most noted case of this is their engagement in marble mining in Afghanistan, which seems to be, like their narcotics operations, primarily based in Helmand. In 2014, between 25 and 30 illegal mines were operated in Helmand. Many of the mines are close to the Pakistani border, which allows marble to quickly be moved onto the international market. The UN’s Afghanistan Monitoring Group stated that marble mining gives the Taliban at least $10 million per year. Abdul Jabbar Qahraman, the Afghan presidential envoy to Helmand, has put the figure at $18 million per year, or a staggering $50,000 to $60,000 per day. This is, in part, unwillingly funded by the Afghan government, which buys marble from contractors who in turn pay the Taliban, either for the extraction rights or for protection money.

Arabic media has also noted how the Taliban has expanded their reach into lapis lazuli mining. Afghanistan and Pakistan are the biggest suppliers of the stone, and in Afghanistan it is found in the Badakhshan Province, an area which the Taliban traditionally has not been able to wield significant control over. However, it has been found that the Taliban has managed to increase their influence in the lapis trade. In 2013, the Taliban earned only $1 million out of the $20 million earned by armed groups involved in lapis mining in Badakhshan. In 2014, that share rose to $4 million, with estimates suggesting that the Taliban earned half of the entire proceeds in 2015. It has been reported that the Taliban may extort as much as $1 million from those who wish to exploit the mines in the Kunar wa Munjan district in Badakhshan, and that the Taliban demands as much as $1,200 per transport truck at various checkpoints around the mines. Industry specialists assume that there are around 200 and 300 transport-lapis from mines in the region per year, which means that the Taliban could raise between $24,000-$360,000 per year from transport operations alone.

Moreover, Arabic sources have reported that the Taliban are gaining as much as $22 million on taxes levied on trade, and in Pakistan, a traditional transit point, the money is in turn driven by a demand for cosmetics, paper, and ceramic products in Europe. Leaked diplomatic cables have also revealed that the Taliban operated emerald mines in the Swat district in Pakistan as early as 2007, earning them as much as $10,000 per week.

In sum, three major types of Taliban activities in the mining sector have been identified. One involves the group being directly involved in or having control over extraction (such as the aforementioned marble quarries in Helmand), and the second includes extorting assets from both licensed and unlicensed mining operations (such as with the lapis lazuli mines in Badakhshan). In the third, the group acts as service providers for unlicensed mining operations.

In the latter type, the Taliban may prevent government forces from infiltrating areas in which an illicit mining operation is underway, thereby ensuring the project’s security. The UN’s Afghanistan Monitor Group has noted a case at a ruby mine in Jagdalak in Kabul Province where this is the case. The Taliban allegedly demands 15% of the proceeds for this service, which money is sent to the Quetta Shura through various hawala services. Industry specialists have stated that this service alone could render the Taliban an income of $16 million per year. Besides this service, the Taliban charges illicit mining operations for the transportation of rubies across the Pakistani border at around 20% of the proceeds.

5.3.4 KIDNappings

Although kidnapping for ransom is prohibited in the Taliban code of conduct (so is forced taxation of ‘common people’), this has clearly been ignored as the Taliban has become known as one of the most kidnap prolific insurgent groups in the world. The list of individuals that the Taliban has kidnapped is too extensive to list here, but includes both Westerners and Afghans. The Taliban has continuously kidnapped people since at least 2003, and although it was originally an instrument of intimidation, it seems now to have a primarily money making function. The Taliban is believed to have made tens of millions of dollars from kidnappings throughout the years. According to reports, a Westerner’s ransom can be placed as high as $200,000, and in some cases the Taliban has demanded (and received) between $15 and $20 million for the release of hostages.

Although many captives are executed, such as American Cynthy Broadwell in 2008 and British-born David John Addison in 2005, many are kept alive awaiting ransom payment. American Caitlin Connemara Coleman, who was abducted by the Taliban in 2013 along with her Canadian husband Joshua Ainslie Boyle, is even believed to have given birth to two sons while in captivity.

While a range of countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, normally refuse to pay ransoms to the Taliban (the US, for example, have killed awaiting ransom group leaders), there have been several cases where ransoms are believed to have been paid, although this is not usually admitted by governments. One example of this is the release of French journalists Stéphane Taponier and Herve Ghesquière, who according to the French government were released as a result of successful negotiations. However, according to Afghan and Taliban officials, their release was the result of an approximately $20 million ransom payment. Other cases which are said to have involved ransom payments include the release of Indian Jesuit priest Alexis Prem Kumar in February 2015, as well as the release of Czech
tourists Hana Humpalova and Antonie Chrastecka in 2015.

In both of the latter cases, Qatar played a crucial role in facilitating negotiations. Given the Taliban’s diplomatic presence in Doha, Qatar has been able organise several hostage negotiations, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi even attempted to enlist Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad al Thani’s assistance in releasing 39 Indians captured by IS during the visit’s India to in February 2015. Although it is commendable that innocent lives are spared, there have been concerns raised over Qatar’s eagerness to engage in hostage negotiations with terrorist groups, with some questioning the Gulf nation’s intentions. This will be discussed later in the report.

Afghan security officials have in 2016 noted a rise in kidnappings on part of the Taliban, according to Afghan media. This may be partly because new leader Hibatullah Akhundzada aims to make an early impression. Although Husain Mortazavi, the deputy spokesman for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, said in October 2016 that the Taliban are targeting ethnic Hazaras in an attempt to flare up ethnic tensions in Afghanistan. These recent shifts indicate that the Taliban may resort to using kidnappings as an intimidation tactic as well as a source of funds, perhaps in its ongoing struggle with the Taliban. Many contractors would, it has been found, admit that they routinely add between 10% and 40% to the cost of projects. The Taliban does not seem to, at least once the project was finished with the promise that they would not blow up the bridge before it was rebuilt. Once the bridge was reconstructed, and the 20% in Taliban hands, the Taliban would blow up the bridge again, and the same events would repeat themselves for a total of six times, earning the Taliban more money each time. Afghan intelligence officials have estimated that if the Taliban were able to earmark between 10% and 20% on money meant for construction projects over a ten year period, that would give them an income of a somewhere between a staggering $5 to $10 billion over the same period.

5.3.6 GHOST SCHOOLS

A pattern similar to the construction projects can be found in the so called ‘ghost schools’, which serves as another example of how the Taliban has managed to exploit the mismanagement of aid. According to the Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), a ghost school refers to a school that has practically been made up and exists in bureaucracy but not in reality, along with made up (ghost) students and teachers. In some cases, these teachers were still getting paid despite the fact that they did not exist. These salaries instead go into the hands of the Taliban and other local warlords, who use and ‘run’ the schools for embezzlement purposes. Disturbingly, reports have shown that two thirds of these salaries are paid through a World Bank fund, in which the US is the biggest donor, despite USAID statements that World Bank financial controls prevents salaries being paid to ghost teachers. This way, it seems as if the international community has unwittingly funded the Taliban. Even schools that do exist and receive foreign aid have displayed suspicious behaviour. In 2011, it was revealed that the Afghan Ministry of Education itself spent $118,000 on ‘weapons, international travel, and salary supplements’. It would not be farfetched to assume that some of these weapons ended up in Taliban hands.

5.3.7 OTHER INTERNAL SOURCES OF REVENUE

Besides the sources of revenue mentioned above, the Taliban seems to take advantage of whatever opportunity arises. Often, however, these engagements follow patterns similar to those that have been identified in other sectors. For example, Afghan media has reported on the Taliban reaching into the transport business, using transport companies (either legitimate or illegitimate) to move money, fighters and weapons. Local officials in Kunduz even stated that the Taliban have forced people to ride with their vehicles rather than bus transports as a cover up for their activities. According to reports, these vehicles routes normally start at the Torkham border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and their final destination is Taloqan province in northern Afghanistan. Leaked diplomatic cables have also revealed that the Taliban has operated timber smuggling-rings in cooperation with drug syndicates.

5.3.8 EXTERNAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

Besides the Taliban’s aptitude for making money for themselves, they have several supporters who have been willing to fund them throughout the years. These donations include direct state funding, or funding from businesses and charities active in countries with a known record of lax regulation on terrorist funding.

Pakistan

It is one of international diplomacy’s worst hidden secrets that the Pakistan Intelligence Service (ISI) has funded and provided weaponry and supplies to the Taliban, and it would be beyond the scope of this exercise to go through all the evidence and accusations pointing to ISI funding. However, it has been well documented that the ISI has both given funding and been present at the frontlines with the Taliban. This has been described as part of a larger scheme in which Pakistan uses militant groups to counter other regional interests – primarily those of India. Although there has been some improvement in Pakistan’s attitude towards the Taliban (perhaps mainly because of Taliban or TTP attacks mounted against Pakistan itself), there are still suggestions pointing to ISI involvement in and funding of the Taliban’s activities. Perhaps most importantly, the Taliban’s central command, the Quetta Shura, is based in the Pakistani city of Quetta, which Pakistan continues to allow.

Rahmatullah Nabil, the former head of Afghanistan’s intelligence service, released documents in July 2016 that, according to him at least, proved that Pakistan had continued to support the Taliban and the Haqqani network. The documents were letters dated from 2014 and sent to the Taliban and the Haqqani network from the ISI’s Peshawar branch. Both the ISI and the Taliban stated that the documents were fabricated. However, earlier in 2016 Pakistani foreign affairs advisor Sartaj Aziz admitted that Pakistan had a degree of control over the Taliban given that the group is based within their borders.

In June 2016, Pakistan also received heavy criticism for continuing to give government funding to Darul Uloom Haqqania, a religious seminary in the Khyber Pakhtunwa province, whose alumni includes students such as Mullah Omar, Mullah Mohammad Akhtar Mansour,
camps also said that Iran paid nomads to smuggle arms across the Afghan border to the Taliban. In 2010, the cables, Iran trains the Taliban in how to attack coalition and in Kerman province. According to leaked diplomatic camps in Iran, located in Tehran, Masshad, Zahedan Testimonies from fighters who had attended the training based in the border region between Pakistan and financial support for the Taliban. Money from RMX has together allegedly operated exchanges in Afghanistan, Iran and the UAE. The Rosham Money Exchange (RMX), based in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan, has also been accused of having provided financial support for the Taliban. Money from RMX has reportedly been used to fund operations in Helmand Province in Afghanistan.

Although there are still many uncertainties concerning the Taliban’s relationship with Pakistan, and despite some improvement on the part of the Pakistanis, it is clear that the Taliban would not be where they are today without the financial support emanating from Pakistan.

Iran

Iran has emerged as a major fundraiser and supporter for the Taliban in recent years. According to various reports, Iran supplies the Taliban with funds, arms, and training. There are supposedly four Taliban training camps in Iran, located in Tehran, Mashhad, Zahedan and in Kerman province. According to leaked diplomatic cables, Iran trains the Taliban in how to attack coalition forces with IEDs and various forms of roadside bombs. Testimonies from fighters who had attended the training camps also said that Iran paid nomads to smuggle arms across the Afghan border to the Taliban. In 2010, the US Treasury designated two commanders from Iran’s Quds Force (IRGC-QF), General Hossein Musavi and Colonel Hassan Mortezavi, for providing financial and material support for the Taliban. In 2012, they designated IRGC-QF General Gholamreza Baghbani as a narcotics trafficker who provided financial assistance to the Taliban through his shipments of arms and heroin precursors across the Afghan border.

The connections between Iran and the Taliban are maintained through the Taliban’s office in Iran, which opened in 2012. In addition, much of the communication between Iran and the Quetta Shura is facilitated by Tayeb Agha, the head of the Taliban’s Qatar office. Agha has visited Iran three times: in 2007, in 2013 and, finally, in May 2016, together with a Taliban delegation. The Taliban, who per custom denies foreign funding, have stated that these trips were conducted mainly with the purpose of maintaining good relations with Afghanistan’s neighbours.

The relationship between Iran and the Taliban has undoubtedly intensified during 2016. Arabic media has reported that former Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour visited Iran shortly before he was killed. Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban’s chief spokesman, later confirmed these reports. Moreover, there have also been reports of Iran intensifying support for the Taliban in order to stem the rise of IS in Afghanistan.

The Pakistan-issued passport of Mullah Akhtar Mansour, which he reportedly used to travel into both Iran and the UAE.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) emerge as arguably the worst offender in the Gulf, at least seeing to documented cases of money coming in from, or being funneled through, the country before reaching the Taliban. As mentioned above, Taliban drug lord financiers enlisted Atiqullah Ahmad Mohammad Din and Haji Juma Khan to funnel money through companies that they had set up in Dubai. Leaked diplomatic cables from the US State Department have shown that the US cautioned UAE officials against the fact that Dubai might be used as a hub or transit point for Taliban financial flows.

Another cable revealed that several large donations from the UAE have reached the Taliban, and that both the Taliban and the Haqqani network earn money from UAE-based business interests. A little reported case is Abdul Baqi Bari, an Afghan Dubai-based businessman who has provided funds to the Taliban. Bari has reportedly been a financier for the Taliban since 2001, and personally met Mullah Omar in 2001 as well as Osama bin Laden in 2002. The latter even provided him with $500,000 to purchase a factory for al-Qaeda. However, in the aforementioned cable, it is revealed that the UAE was aware of Bari but ‘[does] not believe Bari is loyal to the Taliban’.

Such neglection, whether intentional or not, seems to have persisted in the UAE. According to the Taliban’s spokesman, in an interview made in Arabic language media, former leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour apparently visited the UAE a total number of eighteen times. Mansour allegedly used the alias Wali Mohammad and travelled through Karachi airport, using a Pakistani passport. According to Afghan security officials, Mansour held meetings with Afghan businessmen and Islamic charities in the UAE in order to raise funds for the Taliban cause.

Qatar

As mentioned above, there has been suspicion surrounding Qatar’s eagerness to engage in hostage negotiations with the Taliban. For example, five Taliban detainees released from Guantanamo as a result of the successful Qatar-facilitated negotiation over Bowe Bergdahl were all sent to Qatar. The Clinton memo mentioned above also stated that Qatar has long been exploited by the Taliban for fundraising purposes, although there does not seem to be many known cases of Qatar-based charities or businesses funding the Taliban. However, the diplomatic connections between the two are strong. As previously mentioned, the Taliban has run a political office in Doha since 2013, and more than 20 relatively high ranking Taliban families are believed to reside in Qatar. Although it might seem controversial that the Taliban has an office in Qatar, their permanent representation in the country was given the blessing of both the US and Afghan government, who were keen on finding a place in which peace talks could be held with the Taliban. An office was seen as a confidence building measure to reach this goal. Although the office may be used for good intentions, one could have concerns regarding the intensifying relations between the Doha office, headed by Tayeb Agha, and Iran.

Saudi Arabia

The Clinton memo also mentioned Saudi Arabia as a major source of funding for the Taliban, if not through direct sponsorship then through individual or charitable donations. There is clearly a longstanding history of Saudi Arabia funding militancy in Afghanistan, commencing at the time of the Soviet invasion. Although Saudi Arabia in 2001 declared that they had cut all ties to the Taliban, there still seems to be funding for the group originating from Saudi oil. It should be noted that most proven cases are instances in which people affiliated with the Taliban have either donated or collected funds in Saudi Arabia, and not instances of direct state sponsorship.

Leaked diplomatic cables have suggested that Taliban-affiliated persons have travelled to the country in order to gather funds. One notable case is Torek Agha, a Taliban fundraiser who has both personally collected and fundraised in Saudi Arabia. Agha is believed to have collected as much as $4 million from Saudi and Gulf donors in 2010. It is believed that Agha later transferred the funds to Taliban finance collector Haji Mullah Gul Agha. This money was later held in Pakistan banks before being transferred to the Quetta Shura.

Other external donors

Several cases of charities supplying the Taliban with funds have also been identified. In March 2016, Scot James Alexander McIntosh was designated by the United States for having provided financial assistance to both al-Qaeda and the Taliban. This allegedly occurred through McIntosh’s charity, al-Rahmah Welfare Organisation (RWO). McIntosh is said to have hired fighters to obtain photos and personal details of children in order to create falsified dossiers and attract funding for the Taliban under the guise of supporting
orphans. RWO has supposedly been used as a front to fund militant activities in Kunar Province, and McClintock has reportedly provided funds to Shaykh Aminullah, who runs the designated Ganj Madrasa which has been said to provide funds to the Taliban.

In 2013, McClintock met with several Taliban commanders and was actively involved in preparing madrasa students to travel and fight in Afghanistan, as well as teaching insurgents how to use IEDs. According to the Treasury, RWO was used as a front to collect more than $180,000 from unknown UK donors that went directly to Taliban hands.666 Interestingly, RWO has currently or in the past, at least according to their website, several cooperative efforts together with organisations around the world. These include Masjid al-Tahwid in London; Qatar Charity; the Kuwait-based International Islamic Charity Organisation; the Abu Dhabi-based Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan Foundation; the Saudi-based King Abdullah’s Relief Campaign for Pakistani People; the Pakistan-based Welfare and Development Org; and the Saudi-based World Assembly for Muslim Youth.667 It should be noted that McClintock and RWO have “categorically denied” all accusations.668

5.4 SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR AL-SHABAAB

Al-Shabaab has proven that they have the ability to diversify their financial, tactics, despite military setbacks and funds from abroad drying up. Although the group makes money from travel and fighting in Afghanistan, as well as teaching insurgents how to use IEDs, RWO has currently or in the past, at least according to their website, several cooperative efforts together with organisations around the world. These include Masjid al-Tahwid in London; Qatar Charity; the Kuwait-based International Islamic Charity Organisation; the Abu Dhabi-based Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan Foundation; the Saudi-based King Abdullah’s Relief Campaign for Pakistani People; the Pakistan-based Welfare and Development Org; and the Saudi-based World Assembly for Muslim Youth.667 It should be noted that McClintock and RWO have “categorically denied” all accusations.668

**5.4.1 TAXATION AND EXTORTION**

**Taxes on land and businesses**

Due to changing circumstances, al-Shabaab’s most reliable source of revenue is taxation on controlled territory. In fact, the group even has a Zakat unit (tax unit), in which fighters are employed for a salary ranging from $100 to $500 per month. This unit collects detailed information on businesses operating under its control, including agriculture and livestock. These businesses’ value is assessed and taxes are imposed on a number of means: sales taxes on stores and commercial enterprises, corporate taxes on businesses (usually protection money), land tax on farmers, corporate religious tax (zakat) of 2.5 per cent on profits as well as a requirement for ad hoc contributions for jihad operations.664

**Eyewitness account**

Eyewitness account has attested to the conscientiousness with which al-Shabaab taxes people living under their control, as even vegetable sellers on the street are extorted to pay protection money to al-Shabaab. One Somali intelligence official has stated that al-Shabaab made as much as $9.5 million from taxes on farms in the Jumba valley in 2014. But it is not only businesses or people under Shabaab control who are affected, as some businesses in Mogadishu continue to pay tax to al-Shabaab rather than the Somali government. As taxation has become a more vital source of revenue, al-Shabaab has displayed a tendency to occupy territory for extended periods of time, even in Kenya.666

**Extortion from aid agencies**

The extortive element is not only present in the corporate rates on business, as even humanitarian aid agencies and NGOs are obliged to pay for al-Shabaab to let them through on roads and to areas in which they work. Again, al-Shabaab seems to have bureaucratised this practice, employing a Humanitarian Coordination Officer in charge of dealings with aid agencies. This officer individually vets and registers agencies and assesses at what rate they should be charged, which is often dependent on what type of work the agency conducts. Construction projects are for example charged higher than food distribution, likely because al-Shabaab can claim some of the food deliveries as theirs and gain popularity among the population. Fees to operate and distribute aid in an area may reach as high as $10,000.666 One official at an unnamed UN agency stated that his employer had spent 10 per cent of its project budget to al-Shabaab in 2009.666 According to other eyewitness accounts, demands for protection money are often made through text messages on mobile phones, and money is usually transferred back on mobile phones as well.666 Al-Shabaab is clearly willing to profit off foreign aid presence, even though it has accused such agencies of spreading ‘vices and immoral- ity’ among Muslim youth, and has even attacked and killed members of such organisations.

**Economic blockades**

Al-Shabaab has also been known to use their economic control as a direct weapon against uncooperative villages and organisations, as they occasionally implement economic blockades on and between certain areas. These blockades, which may go on for several months, often have detrimental economic and humani- tarian effects. For example, the more than one-year-long blockade of Hudur between 2014 and 2015 resulted in malnutrition rates of 32%. However, al-Shabaab usually continues to collect tax on businesses, despite them being unable to sell their products due to the blockades.

**5.4.2 SMUGGLING AND DRUG TRADE**

**Charcoal smuggling**

Despite having lost important trade centres, al-Shabaab still makes a significant amount of money from smuggling and drug trade. One source of income that is frequently mentioned is Somalia’s charcoal production, which is the reason why the UN has banned the import of charcoal into many countries. Al-Shabaab deploys not only tax boats before they reach harbours for export, forcing drivers to pay bribes on roads controlled by the group, but have allegedly been able to export charcoal from the port of Kismayo despite losing it to the Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) since 2012. In fact, residents of Kismayo who are affected, as some businesses in Mogadishu continue to pay tax to al-Shabaab rather than the Somali government. As taxation has become a more vital source of revenue, al-Shabaab has displayed a tendency to occupy territory for extended periods of time, even in Kenya.666

Despite having lost important trade centres, al-Shabaab still makes a significant amount of money from smuggling and drug trade. One source of income that is frequently mentioned is Somalia’s charcoal production, which is the reason why the UN has banned the import of charcoal into many countries. Al-Shabaab deploys not only tax boats before they reach harbours for export, forcing drivers to pay bribes on roads controlled by the group, but have allegedly been able to export charcoal from the port of Kismayo despite losing it to the Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) since 2012. In fact, residents of Kismayo who are affected, as some businesses in Mogadishu continue to pay tax to al-Shabaab rather than the Somali government. As taxation has become a more vital source of revenue, al-Shabaab has displayed a tendency to occupy territory for extended periods of time, even in Kenya.666

**Illicit sugar trade**

A similar routine has been established with the illicit sugar trade between Somalia and Kenya, where sugar smuggling makes up as much as $5-10 million per year.666 Estimates have even shown that one single road checkpoint can gather as much as $5-10 million in tax per year.666 This is similar to the self-interest of KDF and the Jubbaland administration. The two may gain as much as $200 million through their combined shares in the charcoal trade. Given the seniority of the KDF personnel involved in this operation, one cannot exclude that there is knowledge and direction of this operation in high-level Kenyan cabinet positions.

Although the amount of money al-Shabaab makes on charcoal has diminished since 2012, various estimates have shown that al-Shabaab might still make as much as $15-50 million per year on trade.674 Estimates have even shown that one single road checkpoint can gather as much as $5-10 million in tax per year.666 This is similar to the self-interest of KDF and the Jubbaland administration. The two may gain as much as $200 million through their combined shares in the charcoal trade. Given the seniority of the KDF personnel involved in this operation, one cannot exclude that there is knowledge and direction of this operation in high-level Kenyan cabinet positions.

By Brigadier General Walter Koipaton, who has risen to the rank of Deputy Commander of the Kenyan National Army.671 Nairobi-based trader Haji Yasin has also been pointed out as an important player in this equation. Similarly, the Jubba- land Centre of Commerce has also been accused of hosting several members who all profit off of this trade.671

This suggests that the reason why charcoal is still being shipped out of Somalia, and why al-Shabaab continues to make money off of it despite a UN embargo, is due to the self-interest of KDF and the Jubballad administration. The two may gain as much as $200 million through their combined shares in the charcoal trade. Given the seniority of the KDF personnel involved in this operation, one cannot exclude that there is knowledge and direction of this operation in high-level Kenyan cabinet positions.

Although the amount of money al-Shabaab makes on charcoal has diminished since 2012, various estimates have shown that al-Shabaab might still make as much as $15-50 million per year on trade.674 Estimates have even shown that one single road checkpoint can gather as much as $5-10 million in tax per year.666 This is similar to the self-interest of KDF and the Jubballad administration. The two may gain as much as $200 million through their combined shares in the charcoal trade. Given the seniority of the KDF personnel involved in this operation, one cannot exclude that there is knowledge and direction of this operation in high-level Kenyan cabinet positions.

By Brigadier General Walter Koipaton, who has risen to the rank of Deputy Commander of the Kenyan National Army.671 Nairobi-based trader Haji Yasin has also been pointed out as an important player in this equation. Similarly, the Jubba- land Centre of Commerce has also been accused of hosting several members who all profit off of this trade.671

This suggests that the reason why charcoal is still being shipped out of Somalia, and why al-Shabaab continues to make money off of it despite a UN embargo, is due to the self-interest of KDF and the Jubballad administration. The two may gain as much as $200 million through their combined shares in the charcoal trade. Given the seniority of the KDF personnel involved in this operation, one cannot exclude that there is knowledge and direction of this operation in high-level Kenyan cabinet positions.

Although the amount of money al-Shabaab makes on charcoal has diminished since 2012, various estimates have shown that al-Shabaab might still make as much as $15-50 million per year on trade.674 Estimates have even shown that one single road checkpoint can gather as much as $5-10 million in tax per year.666 This is similar to the self-interest of KDF and the Jubballad administration. The two may gain as much as $200 million through their combined shares in the charcoal trade. Given the seniority of the KDF personnel involved in this operation, one cannot exclude that there is knowledge and direction of this operation in high-level Kenyan cabinet positions.

By Brigadier General Walter Koipaton, who has risen to the rank of Deputy Commander of the Kenyan National Army.671 Nairobi-based trader Haji Yasin has also been pointed out as an important player in this equation. Similarly, the Jubba- land Centre of Commerce has also been accused of hosting several members who all profit off of this trade.671

This suggests that the reason why charcoal is still being shipped out of Somalia, and why al-Shabaab continues to make money off of it despite a UN embargo, is due to the self-interest of KDF and the Jubballad administration. The two may gain as much as $200 million through their combined shares in the charcoal trade. Given the seniority of the KDF personnel involved in this operation, one cannot exclude that there is knowledge and direction of this operation in high-level Kenyan cabinet positions.
Problematically, there have been indications of Kenyan Army complicity in sugar smuggling too. According to one report, high ranking military officials, KDF commanders and members of the Ministry of Defense are all involved in this smuggling ring, which allegedly receives protection from the highest echelons of Kenyan power.\(^677\) The sugar smuggled into Kenya usually arrives through the Kismayo, where according to eyewitness accounts the KDF levies $2 per bag. Apparently, 14 tonnes may leave Kismayo each week, numbers which have been corroborated by sugar traders in Dadaab and Garissa. The sugar trucks are taxed by al-Shabaab a few kilometres outside Kismayo, which grants them passage through al-Shabaab controlled territory towards Kenya. At the border, drivers usually pay around $600 to get through. Truck drivers at the Amuma and Liboi border crossings have attested that payments are made at the border to tip off police and customs. The sugar is then transported to Garissa, where it is stored before being distributed across the country.

UN officials have stated that this procedure is well known by people in President Uhuru Kenyatta’s circle. EU and US officials have also indicated that business men Mohammed Hussein and Sheikh Kassim are involved in the illicit sugar trade. The UN Monitoring Group, which investigates al-Shabaab’s involvement in the illicit sugar trade, has according to a UN official been reluctant to look into the cooperation between al-Shabaab and KDF as they feel that the result of such an investigation would compromise their ability to live and work in Kenya.\(^678\) It should be mentioned that Kenya has denied these allegations, and has established a so called ‘sugar unit’ within its national intelligence service in order to address the al-Shabaab sugar trade issue.

**Heroin smuggling**

Heroin trade is also a growing source of revenue for al-Shabaab. Due to the war in Syria, many of the heroin smuggling routes from Asia have been redirected through East Africa. Although not many details are known about al-Shabaab’s involvement in the trade, the group has been known to re-sell imported heroin to criminal groups in Nigeria. This has proved a lucrative engagement, as these exchanges have enabled al-Shabaab to buy sophisticated weaponry and conduct more complex operations. Al-Shabaab’s entrance into the heroin market has also enabled them to build connections with crime rings in Kenya and South Sudan, with whom al-Shabaab have reportedly traded arms.\(^679\)

One case that suggests several things about the nature of al-Shabaab’s heroin trade is the case of the MV Amin Darya, a ship intercepted on 15 July 2015 by Kenyan authorities. The vessel contained more than 800 kilogrammes of heroin, and the traffickers onboard had been in consistent communication with Javed Ali, an Iranian businessman based in Dubai, who according to the UN Monitoring Group has possible links to al-Shabaab. Moreover, the Dubai-based company A. Ebrahimi & Partners hired a suspect who was supposed to act as a clearing agent for MV Amin Darya once it docked in Mombasa. The vessel had also docked in Hobyo, in central Somalia, on its way to Mombasa, where it allegedly had picked up al-Shabaab gunmen who later disembarked.\(^680\)

**5.4.3 EXTERNAL FUNDING**

**Alleged foreign sponsorship**

The MV Amin Darya case is somewhat reflective of which foreign powers are usually mentioned among foreign al-Shabaab funders. Several individuals from different countries have been mentioned or designated as financiers of al-Shabaab, including Qatari national Emad al-Mahmoud and Saudi Sheikh Abu Faid. Such indications have been corroborated by eyewitness accounts from former al-Shabaab fighters in Arabic media, who have stated that the main portion of external funding comes from wealthy Arab businessmen who sympathise with al-Shabaab’s ideology. One former fighter, Hassan Ali, stated that this type of funding rarely occurs through direct links, but often through goods shipped to and back from Somalia for which al-Shabaab reap the profits.\(^681\) This is in addition to the fact that Saudi Arabia and UAE have been identified as countries breaking the international ban on charcoal from Somalia. Moreover, there have been several unconfirmed reports of Iranian vessels transporting weapons and fuel to central Somalia.\(^682\)

Regarding state sponsorship of al-Shabaab, Eritrea has been the largest source of funds and material for the group, something which has led to a UN and EU arms embargo on the country. Eritrea has supported al-Shabaab mainly as a means to disturb neighbouring Ethiopia, with amounts allegedly reaching $40,000 to $60,000 per month. This money was reportedly funneled mainly through the Eritrean embassy in Nairobi, and was carried into Somalia via couriers.\(^683\) In fact, leaked diplomatic cables from the US State Department mentions evidence of Yemane Gebreab, a senior advisor to President Isaias Afwerki, providing both funds and arms shipments to al-Shabaab between 2007 and 2009.\(^684\) Eritrea has also been accused of allotting their controversial ‘diaspora tax’, taxing Eritreans living abroad 2 per cent on their earnings, to militant groups such as al-Shabaab.

Although financial support from Eritrea has dwindled since 2012 (the UN’s Eritrea Monitoring Group have found no evidence for state sponsorship of al-Shabaab in 2014 and 2015), there are concerns over the country’s deepening ties to the UAE and Saudi Arabia as a result of the war in Yemen, for which the Gulf countries have asked to station troops on Eritrean soil. Besides the obvious geo-strategic advantage this provides, closer cooperation with Eritrea is believed by some to be a way of scaring Ethiopia into the GCC-aligned camp, a campaign in which al-Shabaab is seen as instrumen
tal.\(^685\) It should also be noted that Qatar was in 2009 accused by the United States of funding al-Shabaab through Eritrea, something Qatar has since denied. Interestingly, Arabic and Somali media reported in early 2016 that former al-Shabaab commander Mohamed Saadi Dalmah had been political asylum seeker in the UAE. In early 2016, Dubai-based company A. Ebrahimi & Partners were said to be involved in the illicit trade of something which has not been covered in Western media.\(^686\) At least one atom had previously been pointed out as a major arms dealer for the group in leaked US diplomatic cables, although turned himself in to Somali authorities in 2014.

**Diversion of charitable funds**

The GCC links are reinforced by suspicions of Islamic charitable organisations being accused of diverting funds through to al-Shabaab. These organisations include the Kuwait-based African Muslims Agency, the Red Crescent Society of the UAE, the Saudi-based al-Islah Charity, the International Islamic Relief Organisation, Dawa al-Islamiyya and the al-Wafa Charitable Society. Dawa al-Islam Charity has itself received funding from two other Saudi-based charities, the Muslim World League and the al-Haramain foundation, with the latter having been designated as a terrorist organisation by the United States due to its ties to al-Qaeda.\(^686\)

**Remittances and money transfers**

Another large portion of external funding is derived from money being sent from abroad through remittance services or through the hawala money transfer system. The hawala system is a decades-old system based on honour code in which an individual gives money to a hawala agent (hawaladar), who in turn pays the same amount of money to a hawaladar on the receiving end who finally deposits the money to the intended payee. The hawala system is used by many in the Somali diaspora community as a means to send money to people without conventional banking accounts or computer access, and is used by several aid organisations active in Africa and the Middle East. However, hawala transfers are almost untraceable, which has made them a popular tool for terrorist groups, and so also al-Shabaab, with the US State Department identifying it as one of al-Shabaab’s most lucrative sources of income.\(^687\) Besides direct donations from sympathisers abroad, this is also a result of al-Shabaab’s network of informers which enables the group to be aware of hawala transfers being made between parties and consequently demand tax transfer.\(^688\)

It is estimated that $1.2 billion is sent to Somalia each year through remittances and hawala transfers, thus providing a vital lifeline for the poor country. Most remittances are wired through firms based in the Gulf area. One Dahabshiil (the money transfer service used by 95% of all aid agencies present in Somalia) employee, South African Abraham Mosioa, was arrested in Nairobi for having abused his position to funnel money through to al-Shabaab, although Dahabshiil denied any affiliation with him. The American branch of Dahabshiil was in 2015 sued by a Somali-American man who claimed that the firm had helped fund the assassination of his mother, Somali singer and politician Saad Ali Warsame. It should be noted that Dahabshiil was one of the 13 money transfer services that were shut down by Kenyan authorities in 2015, but was reopened a few months later due to harsh criticism from humanitarian aid agencies. The other services were Kandy, UAE Exchange, Amal, Iftin, Kaash Express, Amana, Juba Express, Tawakal, Bakaal, Hodan, Continental and Flex.

It would be wrong to blame hawalas and money transfer agencies for terrorist funding, and shutting down the services would have detrimental effects for Somalia. However, there have been cases in which personnel within money transfer agencies have been complicit in al-Shabaab funding, for example Missouri in the United States where an agent helped his client to hide the sources of his funds.\(^86\) al-Shabaab funding, for example Missouri in the United States where an agent helped his client to hide the sources of his funds.\(^86\)
undisclosed cash at Oslo airport, which according to Norwegian media was going to be shipped to Somalia through the United Kingdom by a Somali hawala agent.690

Although transfers to al-Shabaab from abroad may be difficult to detect, some cases have led to restrictions on money transfers. Somalia has also introduced new money laundering legislation aimed at more efficient monitoring of funds sent to al-Shabaab. This, along with the fact that many people in Somalia’s diaspora have simply lost faith in al-Shabaab’s ideology (which was more nationalist than Safadji-hijadi in its inception) and tactics, has made money transfers from abroad a less integral part of al-Shabaab’s funding.691

5.4.4 OTHER SOURCES
Telecom market
There are suspicions about Somalia’s telecom industry directly funding al-Shabaab and facilitating their operations. The Somali telecoms market has been unregulated since 1991, resulting from non-existent government oversight which in extension means that they have been able to evade taxes (only Hormuud Telecommunications pay regular income tax to the Somali government) and failed to cooperate on surveillance issues. There have been accusations of these telecom companies sending the money they gain from not paying taxes to groups serving their aims, as well as failing to provide the intelligence they could on military movements of groups in their mobile networks.692 Al-Shabaab has on several occasions been able to strong-arm telecom companies into shutting down their internet services, as well as executing telecom workers they have believed to ‘side with the state’, demonstrating the problematic role played by the Somali telecom industry.

Illicit mining and ivory poaching
Al-Shabaab has also started to engage in illegal mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The group has allegedly joined hands with Ugandan group ADF/NALU in exporting minerals out of the DRC through illicit mining networks.693 Ivory poaching has also been raised as a significant source of income for al-Shabaab, and although the group has traded illegal ivory this remains a relatively small source of revenue, which would only suffice to finance small operations and occasional IED attacks.694

5.5 SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR BOKO HARAM

5.5.1 SELF-FUNDING
It is very difficult to identify only a few dominant characteristics in Boko Haram’s funding. Rather, the group has a highly diversified financing strategy, where seemingly opportunistic and almost ad hoc operations that generate small amounts seem to be their dominant source of revenue. The group essentially has the ability to ‘live off the land’, which is enough to run their low-cost insurgency that is dependent on quite simple weaponry, demonstrated primarily by their aforementioned usage of small IEDs. Northern Nigeria is a region where more than two-thirds of the population lives on less than $1 per day, meaning that Boko Haram does not need large funds to support themselves.695

Indeed, observers have put their annual income at $10 million, which is significantly lower than other organisations. However, it would be wrong and dangerous to see the group simply as an opportunistic thug gang, as they have demonstrated a sophisticated ability to remain off the radar and have been weary of forming long-term financial relationships with other groups. The small bounty approach may be less rewarding, but also lends itself to black market and untraceable dealings that provides a more secure flow of funds coming into the organisation. This also seems to be a strategy born out of necessity, as foreign funding has dwindled since 2011 and reliance on robberies and extortion has increased.

Their ability to stay off the radar has been attributed to Nigeria’s docile financial environment. Godwin Emefiele, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and Francis Usani, Director of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), have both identified this as a factor that facilitates Boko Haram funding. For example, Boko Haram has been known to use fraudulent identities and documentation to open and run bank accounts, as well as paying off bank employees to cover up their activities.696

Means of money transfer
Much of Boko Haram’s funds are transported through human cash couriers, which are able to move rather easily between the porous borders of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad. US intelligence officials have noted the sophistication by which Boko Haram has avoided Nigerian financial regulation, which is partly a result of their hard-to-track usage of human cash couriers.697 The group reportedly regularly uses women as cash couriers, given that Muslim security personnel at checkpoints in northern Nigeria would not, under religious restrictions, make physical contact with them. Cash couriers are often tapped with transporting other important items, such as messages or letters between leaders and commanders. For example, in June 2012 a Boko Haram cash courier was apprehended on the border between Nigeria and Niger with a letter from AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel and Abubakar Shekau, suggesting the importance of these couriers to Boko Haram’s communications and external infrastructure. Boko Haram also uses the hawala money transfer system to send funds, although not much detail is known about their usage of the service.

5.5.2 TAXATION AND EXTORTION
Like many other terrorist groups, Boko Haram uses taxation and extortion in territories they control as a reliable source of income. In 2015, it was estimated that around five million people lived under Boko Haram control, and that between 25-75% of households in this area were taxed.698 Although the UN stated in September 2016 that between 40 and 60 thousand people under Boko Haram control in Nigeria was two million (adding some areas in Cameroon, Niger, and Chad), the group still holds enough territory to collect significant revenue from taxation.699 Not much is known about Boko Haram’s taxation policies. What is known is that they usually levy taxes on goods passing through areas under their control. One notable case is the trade between Boko Haram and fishermen and herders in Niger. Before Niger banned this trade as part of a state of emergency introduced in February 2015, Boko Haram was able to openly trade in fish, cattle and other products across the border. However, although the ban imposes some challenges on the trade, testimonies from herders and fishermen in the region suggest that Boko Haram still operates checkpoints at which they tax products coming through.700

Something which has not been reported is that Boko Haram has, as one result of their collaboration with IS, been able to start taxing migrants in Niger and Libya. This is in turn done through connections with local clan leaders or smugglers who control desert routes, and seems to be a lucrative upside to the otherwise unstable relationship with IS.701

Boko Haram has also been known to impose jayaa, a tax on non-Muslims, in the areas they control. Although not much is known to what extent this practice is imposed, the group has on several occasions killed people under its control who have refused to pay their religious tax.702 A group of 20 Christians in the northeastern Nigerian village of Kamuya had allegedly been warned about their outstanding tax before they were killed. This extortive element spans into protection money from local business as well. A fighter arrested by Nigerian security forces in 2012 admitted that Boko Haram used both negotiation and intimidation in order to demand protection money, even having succeeded in getting state institutions to provide ‘donations’ to the group. These reports were corroborated by bank accounts shown to Nigerian security forces, and the money was spent on small operations, including IED attacks.703

5.5.3 KIDNAPPINGS AND PEOPLE SMUGGLING
Kidnapping could perhaps be said to be Boko Haram’s largest source of revenue, and the group is believed to have collected more than $10 million over the past several years.704 It has been documented that Boko Haram between 2010 and 2012 received funds from AQIM for the purpose of conducting kidnappings and to later divide the release money, a practice which does not occur today.705

The group is said to demand $1 million for the wealthy Nigerians they kidnap, and were able to reap as much as $3 million for the release of a French family that they abducted outside the northern Cameroonien city of Amur bi in February 2013. In that particular case, the Cameroonien government also released Boko Haram members from prison, demonstrating how conducive kidnappings may be to their cause.706 The group also has a special kidnapping squad that plans and executes kidnappings of high-profile businessmen, politicians and other influential people.

However, most victims of Boko Haram kidnappings are mid-level Nigerian officials, who are not wealthy enough to have a security detail, but can afford to pay sums ranging up to $10,000, which thus make them both a lucrative and easy target. Boko Haram also kidnaps people with less financial capacity. Despite not being able to pay large sums of money, they are easy to abduct and can provide sums that can keep Boko Haram operations going. For example, a Nigerian official stated that Boko Haram in early 2015 kidnapped a Nigerian farmer’s three children outside of Diffa in southern Niger, demanding $4,000 for their release. The farmer allegedly emptied his bank accounts and sold all
of his cattle to get his children back, leaving the family with no other means of income. 709

The most infamous case of Boko Haram kidnapping is the so-called Chibok girls case, where Boko Haram on the night of 14 April 2014 abducted 276 female students from a state school in Chibok in Borno State. Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau later claimed that he would sell them as slaves. Although this is the most documented case, Boko Haram conducts these abductions on a regular basis with the intention of selling women and other people they kidnap off as slaves. One ‘slave’ may cost as little as $12, and Boko Haram usually uses social media such as WhatsApp or Facebook to arrange transactions or even advertise the people they sell. 710

5.5.4 RAIDS AND ROBBERIES

Boko Haram partially finances their operations through bank robberies and raids of villages. The group has robbed hundreds of banks in Borno state and the surrounding areas, a practice which they justify by calling the money ‘spoils of war’, which, according to the group at least, makes it permissible under Koranic law. Village raids have also become a trademark for the group, and these are often violent and deadly. In 2014, Boko Haram raided over 40 villages, an atrocity that left 2,000 casualties. In 2015, at least 35 such attacks were recorded, leaving at least 870 people dead. One example is the Kuwara massacre between 1-2 July 2015, where Boko Haram burned mosques due to them preaching a ‘too moderate’ version of Islam and killed 118 people. The testimony of Kabiru Abubakar Dikko Umar, believed to have masterminded the Christmas Day attack in Madalla in 2015, revealed that the loot from robberies was shared between five groups within the organisation. Namely: the less privileged; widows of soldiers; zakat (alms giving); those who brought in the money; and, finally, to the leadership. 711

5.5.5 SMUGGLING OF ARMS AND GOODS

Smuggling is also an area in which Boko Haram seems to act opportunistically. According to various reports, Boko Haram smuggles petrol, cattle, livestock, ivory, cigarettes, arms and drugs through northern Nigeria on a regular basis. The group has been pointed out as a major player in drug smuggling, although such reports are probably overstated. 712 Boko Haram has dealings with drug smugglers, but it usually occurs as a result of the fact that they tax the drugs as they would any other product coming through their area of control. There have, however, been reports of Boko Haram acting as a middle-man in the drug trade between Latin America and Europe, where Nigeria is believed to be a transit hub. 713

Furthermore, Indian media has reported that Boko Haram has teamed up with the Mumbai criminal syndicate known as ‘D-Gang’, led by Dawood Ibrahim. Abubakar Shekau and Ibrahim reportedly met in Nigeria to set up an arrangement in which Boko Haram fighters would help D-Gang export drugs to India. 714 Moreover, former Malian Defence Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Soumeylou Boubeye Maïga has stated that Boko Haram controls some of the $800 million per year cigarette smuggling routes that run through the Sahel, although it is likely that their share is rather small compared to groups such as AQIM, al-Mourabitoun and Ansar Dine. 715

It is certain that Boko Haram partakes in such trades, but it is probably exaggerated to suggest that the group controls entire smuggling routes. According to confession made by arrested Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau, one proceeds from arms sales are often donated to Boko Haram, and arms are delivered to the group free of charge. One arms smuggler said that weaponry on several occasions had been sent from ‘other terrorist organisations’, most likely AQIM. 716 The chaos in Libya has further facilitated the transfer of arms into Nigeria, something which Boko Haram is believed to have taken advantage of through their connections with IS.

A confession from an apprehended Boko Haram fighter in 2013, further confirmed that the group regularly purchases or steals goods that are sent to members in other locations, where they are sold at inflated prices. 717 Nigerian media has placed Boko Haram’s recent shift towards trading stolen cattle within this larger scheme. According to Nigerian analysts, the group has resorted to this strategy due to their impaired capacity to attack and rob banks, focusing instead on smaller but more easily obtainable income streams. 718

5.5.6 COLLECTIONS AND BEGGING

One arrested member of Boko Haram, who was identified as a treasurer for the group, revealed that he was in possession of both mandatory and voluntary donations from the group’s members. The unnamed treasurer stated that members of Boko Haram often make voluntary donations of less than $1, but are also expected in their roles as members to make donations to the organisation. In fact, during Muhammad Yusuf’s time as leader, members were obliged to pay a daily levy of 100 naira ($0.30) to the organisation, and this formed the foundation of the group’s finances in its early stages. 719

Other confessions have revealed that Boko Haram uses children, elderly and the mentally impaired in order to appeal for funds from the public. These people are used as beggars, positioned in strategic locations in towns and cities. The beggars also function as spies, according to the confession. 720 Nigerian officials have also insinuated that they suspect Boko Haram of using beggars for the purpose of luring people into IED attacks, for example by running through villages shouting ‘Boko Haram’ and creating panic and consequently driving people into selected detonation points. 721

5.5.7 EXTERNAL FUNDING

Foreign donors

Boko Haram has, like most other terror groups, been pointed out as a group that receives funds from foreign and particularly Gulf donors. One case that would support such claims is the connections Boko Haram has had with Cameroonian businessman Alhaji Abdalla, who runs a vehicle import business with dealings in Qatar. Boko Haram has previously stolen cars and sold them through Abdalla’s firm to individuals in Qatar. The intimacy of the two parties’ relationship is demonstrated by the fact that Abdalla was one of Boko Haram’s negotiators during the French family hostage situation in 2013. Moreover, the Cameroonian military found receipts from Qatar as well as travel documents from Libya and Qatar in a Boko Haram camp in June 2014. 722

Something which has not received widespread attention in Western media is the confession of Sheikh Sani Halim, a Boko Haram defector. Halim claims that the group has many more years as a Boko Haram fighter, he visited countries like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Libya and Niger, and received his training in Pakistan and Libya. 723 Although there are several caveats to such a confession, it does shed light on links that Boko Haram has to several of these countries. Boko Haram has, for example, maintained a diplomatic presence in Saudi Arabia (negotiations between Boko Haram representatives and the Nigerian government were held in Mecca in 2012), which was the country to which Mohammad Yusuf fled in 2004 during a crackdown by the Nigerian military in northern Nigeria. Salafi sympathisers from the Gulf region have also been pointed out as early donors to Boko Haram’s cause, mainly through connections Yusuf made during two hajj trips to the country. 724 There have also been several reports of Boko Haram dispatching fighters to Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Sahel in order to raise funds. 725 The countries mentioned by Halim would also give credence to reports that Boko Haram has cooperated with AQIM and al-Shabaab.

Former head of French intelligence service DGSE (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure) Alain Chouet has also stated that Qatar and Saudi Arabia have directly participated in funding Boko Haram, and that much funding occurs through shell companies based in the countries neighbouring Nigeria. 726 Al-Muntada Trust, a London-based UK charity, and the Saudi-based Islamic World Society, have also been accused of funding Boko Haram, although no evidence of this occurring has thus far been made public.

During the trial of Kabiru Abubakar Dikko Umar it was made clear that there had been extensive internal disagreements within Boko Haram regarding the sharing of funds donated by a small Algeria-based group called Musulimi Yamaa, although little proof was added to this testimony. 727

Other smaller scale donations also occur, such as occasional donations from religious students in Cairo. These students are said to have been convinced by their Nigerian expat colleagues, who according to reports not covered in Western media sympathise with Boko Haram. 728

Indeed, very little evidence of either Gulf or other foreign funding exists. However, there has been an active presence of Gulf-based charities in the Sahel region for years (which will be touched upon later in the report), which may certainly have played a role in exposing several people to a radical ideology. It should also be mentioned that it is likely that individuals who have supported IS have also funded Boko Haram as a result of their pledge of allegiance.

Local and domestic donors

Whilst Boko Haram’s foreign sponsorship remains opaque, more is known about support from external actors within Nigeria. This support involves both the political and military establishment, and is often motivated by power moves or self-serving interests rather than ideological alignment.
Before 2009, several local politicians in Borno state either funded or aided Boko Haram in order to advance their own interests. In the build-up to the 2003 Nigerian general elections, several northern state politicians employed local youth gangs in order to gauge support. In Borno state, Ali Modu Sheriff employed members of Mohammad Yusuf’s group and promised them both money (50 million naira) and political influence in exchange for their support for his campaign as state governor. After winning, Yusuf was even allowed to pick a candidate for the position of Borno’s Minister for Religious Affairs as a result of Sheriff’s victory. After having failed on his promise to implement full sharia laws in Borno state, Sheriff and Boko Haram clashed, and Yusuf’s group eventually turned on their former ally and started attacking local institutions.

The enmity between Sheriff and Boko Haram has later been used as a tool by Sheriff’s political opponents, which has meant that more funds have been diverted towards Boko Haram. For example, Senator Ali Ndume was arrested in 2011 after a Boko Haram spokesperson upon interrogation confessed that Ndume had paid Boko Haram to send threatening text messages to rival politicians.729 Local business tycoons, such as Alhaji Bunu Wakil, have also been pointed out as major Boko Haram financiers.730 In Cameroon, the mayor of border town Fotokol, Ramat Moussa, was arrested after having been pointed out by Boko Haram commander Abakar Ali as having coordinated Boko Haram arms trafficking. Large stocks of weapons were found in his residence. The latter case supports a trend in which Boko Haram has found funding from northern Cameroon, especially among wealthy Kanuris (the ethnic group to which many Boko Haram fighters belong).721 Nigeria’s military has also been accused of either funding or diverting arms to Boko Haram. The aforementioned testimony by Sheikh Sani Haliru stated that General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, also known as IBB, funded training for Boko Haram in Libya and Pakistan, and that he has “more than 600 men, women and children on his payroll.” Haliru also stated that President Muhammadu Buhari and other top-level officials are in on this conspiracy. According to Haliru, this is not public knowledge because Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Bob Graham, has called extremist groups like IS and AQ “a product of Saudi ideals, Saudi money and Saudi organisational support.”732

Without giving full credence to Haliru’s claims, it should be noted that the Nigerian military has itself found evidence of their personnel either funding or aiding Boko Haram. For example, several retired high-ranking officers have been investigated for diverting hundreds of millions of dollars to Boko Haram, where the aforementioned Alex Badeh is one of them. Brigadier-General Aliyu Hussaini has also been arrested for allegedly being a member of Boko Haram and providing funds for the group.733 However, most observers would say that there is much less direct support for Boko Haram from Nigeria’s military than around 2009 and 2010. Many of the allegations raised against certain high-ranking officers remain unconfirmed and uncorroborated. Although there have been several cases of “inside jobs” concerning military personnel providing intelligence to Boko Haram, there is little evidence suggesting that the military has directly funded Boko Haram in recent years.734

Australian Stephen Davis, who negotiated with Boko Haram over the Chibok Girls case, stated that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) plays an instrumental part in making Boko Haram money untraceable and practically acts as a gatekeeper. Reportedly, Boko Haram fighters had told him that transactions to their main arms supplier, who is based in Cairo, are sent through the CBN without any interference. Davis also pointed to the fact that a senior official at CBN was very close to Sodiq Ominu Ogunkoja, the mastermind of the April 2014 Nyanya bombing which killed 88 people.735 Sheikh Sani Haliru’s testimony also mentioned that high level officials in the CBN are Boko Haram agents through their affiliation with IBB. These claims have not been corroborated.

Davis also stated that Ali Modu Sheriff continues to fund Boko Haram, which has been widely refuted by several observers and described as an attempt to divert attention away from the Nigerian government’s own failure to fully deal with Boko Haram.736

Governments and major donors who support the groups that perpetrate most IED attacks are not, as a rule, specifically sponsoring their use of IEDs, but rather wishing to strengthen and equip such groups in furtherance of their own strategic or political objectives. This section will therefore consider state sponsorship of these groups in the form of money, weapons, logistical support, and sometimes manpower and training. It should be recognised that the humanitarian aid that Arab and Islamic charities provide to civilians in conflict zones, whether directly or indirectly through favoured groups of militants, can also increase combatants’ capacity to wage war by allowing them to build support among the local population.

Having examined, in section 5, the sources of funding for the major groupings responsible for IED usage across the Middle East, Asia and Africa, in this section we will focus on the state actors and private donors placing their bets on a kaleidoscopic range of armed factions, active principally in Syria and beyond, in the context of larger regional power struggles.

Several Arab Gulf states have a long history of financing mujahideen in conflicts where Muslims or the pan-Islamic nation have been perceived as being under threat, notably in Afghanistan following the 1979 Soviet invasion. In Syria since 2011, the context has been different: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar have been openly backing various groups fighting against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and latterly, in some cases, against IS. In the early stages of the Syrian civil war, these countries provided direct government funding to the Syrian rebels, supplemented by vast donations from private Gulf citizens. As the conflict has evolved and the rising power of IS has come to be seen as a threat to GCC states’ own domestic security, the pattern of support for Salafi-jihadi activity in the region has altered.

6.1 SAUDI ARABIA

One of the Saudi kingdom’s most outspoken critics in the United States is Lebanese Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Bob Graham, has called extremist groups like IS and AQ “a product of Saudi ideals, Saudi money and Saudi organisational support.”737 The Saudis’ role in propagating Salafi thought around the world is amply covered elsewhere in this paper. We will consider here their financial and material support for armed activity where civilians suffer disproportionately, either as ‘jihad’ or for conventional geopolitical ends.

Saudi support for Salafi-jihadism goes right to the top of the regime, including the present monarch, King Salman bin Abdulaziz himself. Salman was the royal family’s main fund-raiser for jihadists in Afghanistan during the 1980s and in the Balkans in the 1990s, and was director of the Saudi High Commission for Relief in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was subsequently discovered to have had close links with senior AQ leaders.

6.1.1 INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

In Syria, once it was clear that the US was unwilling to take direct military action against the Assad regime, and with the separate prospect of Assad’s Shia ally Iran securing a nuclear deal, the Saudis started to take a more assertive position on the Syrian conflict, in partnership with Jordan and the UAE, in their increasing determination to end Assad’s rule. From mid-2013, they began devising a plan to create a national Syrian opposition army capable of bringing down the Damascus regime, gathering together chosen Sunni rebel groups; a parallel aim was to counter the growing strength of more hardline Islamic forces.

The initial intention was to build up a force of 7,000-10,000 fighters, including over 6,000 army defectors who had taken refuge in Jordan and Turkey (this proved unrealistic). Training had reportedly already begun in Jordan – a conduit for Saudi-funded training and arms since late 2012 – with the aid of Pakistanis, French and US instructors. A number of hawkish senior Saudi royals, however, entertained more ambitious plans to build a rebel army of 40,000-50,000 at a cost of several billion dollars, plans that were at least discussed with the foreign ministers of Jordan and the UAE, and with French President Francois Hollande in September 2013.738

Most prominent among the new groups receiving Saudi government funding was Jaysh al-Islam (the Army of Islam), a Sunni alliance founded that month by 43 rebel brigades and battalions in the Damascus region. Its formation closely followed the publication by the Association of Muslim Ulema in Syria of a proposal to unite Islamist rebel groups under a single Army of Muhammad, with a stated target of building up to a strength of 100,000 by March 2015 and 250,000 by March 2016. Other alliances were also being forged at the time, in a process of fracturing and regrouping among all shades of Islamist, Sunni, non-sectarian and secular civil and military actors that still continues.

In April 2016, the group admitted using chemical weapons in an attack on Kurdish forces in Aleppo (but said the brigade commander responsible had been disciplined). In December 2015, the group participated in a conference in Riyadh that led to the formation of the High Negotiations Committee for the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (HNC). Jaysh al-Islam’s political leader, Mohammed Alloush, was appointed as the HNC’s chief negotiator, but resigned in May 2016 after the HNC suspended peace talks with the Assad regime over worsening conditions on the ground in Syria. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has continued to supply its client groups in Syria with weapons and money. It recently emerged that it has increasingly been turning to the Balkans to buy up arms and explosives, shipping or airfreighting them to military bases in the kingdom for onward transport to Syria. Since the escalation of the Syrian crisis in 2012, eight central and eastern European countries (Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Slovakia, Serbia and Romania) have approved €1.2bn ($1.34bn) of weapons and ammunition exports in total to Saudi Arabia (accounting for two-thirds of the total), Jordan, the UAE and Turkey. The purchases appear to be escalating, with some of the biggest deals approved in 2015.

Arms export licences were granted despite fears from experts and within governments that the weapons could end up with the Syrian armed opposition, arguably in breach of national, EU and other international agreements. An investigation by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) has found that eastern and central European weapons and ammunition, identified from videos and photos posted on social media, are now being used by Western-backed Free Syrian Army units, but are also in the hands of fighters from Islamist groups such as Ansar al-Sham, Jabhat al-Nusra, IS and pro-regime factions in Syria, and by Sunni forces in Yemen and Yemen. An arms control researcher at Amnesty International commented that “the evidence points towards systematic diversion of weapons to armed groups accused of committing serious human rights violations”.

Jeremy Binnie, the Middle East arms expert for the publication Jane’s Defence Weekly, said: “The militaries of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UAE and Turkey use Western infantry weapons and ammunition, rather than Soviet-designed counterparts. It consequently seems likely that large shipments of such materiel being acquired by – or sent to – those countries are destined for their allies in Syria, Yemen and Libya.”

The graphic below tracks the routes of cargo flights identified as likely carrying arms from the Balkans to Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the past year.
Washington has also bought and delivered large quantities of military materiel from central and eastern Europe for the Syrian opposition, in an attempt to counter the spread of IS. Since December 2015, three cargo ships commissioned by the US military’s Special Operations Command (SOCOM), in charge of the covert supply of weapons to Syria, have left Black Sea ports in the Balkans for the Middle East, according to American procurement documents and ship tracking data.258

Arms bought by the Saudis, Turks, Jordanians and the UAE for Syria are routed through two military operation centres (MOCs) in Jordan and Turkey, according to former US ambassador to Syria Robert Stephen Ford. The weapons are then transported by road to the Syrian border or airdropped by military planes. The Saudis are also known to have airdropped material, including what appeared to be Serbian-made assault rifles, to their allies in Yemen.

The Saudis and Turks are also known to have provided weapons directly to Islamist groups not supported by the US and who, in some cases, are fighting MOI-backed factions. In early 2015, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, agreed to actively support the combined Jaysh al-Fateh (“Army of Conquest”) command structure for jihadist groups in Syria that includes Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham, Jund al-Aqsa and other hardline Islamist rebels, and constitutes an extremist rival to IS. The Saudis have been sending material support in the form of arms and money, with the Turks facilitating its passage. The border villages of Guevcci, Kuyubasi, Hacipasa, Besaslan, Kusakli and Bukulmez have been favoured routes, according to rebel sources, at least until some of this border territory changed hands recently.251

As it hardened its position against IS, in September 2014 Saudi Arabia became one of the first Arab states to join MOI-led coalitions against the Islamic State. It is worth remembering, however, that although Saudi Arabia is deeply hostile to IS, regarding it as a threat to its own security, it is nevertheless not displeased by gains made by IS in Syria at the expense of Bashar al-Assad and by extension its Iranian backers, whom it regards as the real enemy. By February 2016 Saudi officials were suggesting that the kingdom might be prepared to send ground troops to fight IS in Syria, and announced that it would send combat aircraft and soldiers to Turkey to participate in the US-led coalition against IS.254 It then trumpeted a massive military exercise, “Ra’ad al-Shamal” (“Northern Thunder”)255 near Kuwait and the Iraqi border, an announcement some saw as an empty boast directed principally at Tehran.754

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia remains embroiled in Yemen, fighting in support of the internationally recognised government against Shia Houthis rebels and IS militants, while apparently remaining sympathetic to AQ forces based there. The Saudi-led coalition of mainly Sunni Muslim states in Yemen, including the UAE, was criticised for allowing AQAP to thrive in Yemen and maintain a lucrative stronghold in the port city of Mukalla for over a year before finally forcing the group to abandon it in April 2016.256 A freelance journalist in Yemen reported, however, that many of the AQAP fighters who retreated from Mukalla made their way to the Yemeni province of al-Bayda. According to the U.S. Treasury, a Yemeni who reportedly once acted as AQAP’s emir in al-Bayda was Abdel Wahab al-Humayqani, whom the United States declared a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in 2013.257 In 2015, Humayqani conducted media interviews from Riyadh and was even hosted in the studio as a guest of Saudi state TV.758

6.1.2 COMBATING THE FINANCING OF TERRORISM

There is little doubt that Saudi Arabia has made progress in clamping down on terrorist financing in recent years. In June 2014, after undergoing successive evaluations since 2010 and gradually remedying a long list of deficiencies, it was recognised by the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF) as having an effective AML/CFT (anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism) system in place, which is “largely compliant” with FATF core and key recommendations.256

Only after considerable pressure from the international community did Riyadh eventually pass legislation criminalising financial support of terrorist organisations. On January 31, 2014 the Saudi authorities promulgated the Penal Law for Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing (“the terrorism law”) passed by the Council of Ministers in December 2013.754 The law defines the crime of terrorism financing as: “Any act involving collecting, providing, receiving, allocating, transporting or transferring of funds or proceeds, wholly or partially, for any individual or collective terrorist activity, organised or otherwise, within the kingdom or abroad, directly or indirectly, from a legitimate or illegitimate source; carrying out for the benefit of such activity or its elements any banking, financial or commercial transaction; collecting, directly or through an intermediary funds to be utilised for its benefit; promoting its ideologies; arranging for training sites; sheltering its members or providing with them any type of weapons or forged documents; knowingly providing any other means of support and financing as well as any act that constitutes a crime within the scope of the agreements mentioned in the appendix to the International Convention on the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and as defined in said agreements.”766

On February 3, two days after the terrorism law came into force, the king issued Royal Decree 44, which criminalises “participating in hostilities outside the kingdom” with prison sentences of between three and 20 years. And on March 7 the Interior Ministry issued further regulations designating an initial list of groups the government considers terrorist organisations, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the Houthi group in Yemen, along with “Al-Qaeda, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Al-Qaeda in Yemen, Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Daesh [the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham], Jabhat al-Nusra, and Hezbollah inside the kingdom”. A legal assessment of the terrorism law by Professor Michael Newton of Vanderbilt University School of Law, commissioned by the European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights, detailed its severe implications for human rights in Saudi Arabia.759 The law defines the legislation cited violence as an essential element of terrorism only in relation to attacks on Saudis outside the kingdom or on board Saudi means of transport. Inside the kingdom, “terrorism” can be non-violent – consisting of “any act” intended to, among other things, “insult the reputation of the state”, “harm public order” or “shake the security of society”. The interior ministry regulations include other sweeping provisions that the authorities can use to criminalise virtually any criticism of the government and its understanding of Islam. Since coming into force the legislation has been used against several human rights defenders, lawyers and activists, who have been tried and sentenced under its provisions for non-violent activities.

On the other hand, the Saudis have also been serious about tackling their increasingly troubling domestic terrorist threat. Following a series of IS-linked security incidents inside the kingdom in 2015, the authorities swept up hundreds of suspects in a series of arrests across the country. With between 1,500 and 2,000 Saudi citizens estimated to be fighting with IS in Iraq and Syria, the authorities have reason to fear the potential instability they may cause when they eventually return.

The 2014 terrorism law charged the Ministry of Interior with establishing Correction and Rehabilitation Centres “to provide care to persons detained for or convicted of any of the crimes provided for in this law, facilitate their integration in the community, enhance their patriotism and correct any misconceptions they have”. It thus reaffirmed the government’s commitment to the decade-old deradicalisation programme mentioned in section 4.2.758

At the same time, the Specialised Criminal Court (SCC), which had previously mostly heard cases relating to AQ members, has had an increasingly heavy IS-related workload. Since April 2015 most of those convicted in the SCC have been linked with IS. Here is a small, illustrative sample of some recent sentences:753

- One Saudi sentenced to 11 years in prison for facilitating terrorists’ passage through border checkpoint in exchange for money (August 2015)
- One Saudi sentenced to 9 years in prison for exploiting the Dawa Office to fund terrorism (October 2015)
- One Saudi sentenced to 19 years in prison for pledging allegiance to IS (December 2015)
- One Saudi sentenced to 10 years in prison for fighting with IS and funding terrorism (November 2015)
- One Saudi sentenced to 11 years in prison for facilitating IS and recruiting (February 2016)
- One Saudi sentenced to 7 years’ imprisonment in absentia for fighting with Jabhat al-Nusra (January 2016)
- One Saudi sentenced to 9 years in prison for pledging allegiance to IS, among other charges (March 2016)
- One Saudi sentenced to 9 years in prison for tweeting support for IS (March 2016)

As of January 2016, the Interior Ministry was conducting pre-trial investigations for 532 suspects in IS terrorist plots. Meanwhile, the more stringent oversight of financial institutions in Saudi Arabia, and also in its neighbour and ally the UAE, has won praise from the US Treasury Department after years of irritation, and focused the spotlight more sharply on the laxity of Qatar and...
Kuwait regarding the flow of donations to armed groups and designated terrorist organisations. However, unregulated fundraising through social media allows donors in Saudi Arabia to route their contributions through the less regulated Gulf states.

This is well illustrated by the work of Dr Abdullah Muhammad al-Muhaysini, a popular Saudi cleric who has exploited this fundraising loophole and continued to use his high-traffic social media presence to raise funds for the new Islamic Front, formed by some of the leading Syrian insurgent groups. Using Twitter and YouTube, al-Muhaysini’s fundraising campaign is able to operate for two reasons. First, al-Muhaysini directs potential donors to phone numbers in Kuwait and Qatar, from which they receive instructions for sending funds. Second, unlike most financiers, who remain based in the Gulf while making regular trips to northern Syria, al-Muhaysini actually relocated to Syria in September 2013, an action that has raised his profile. Like many other rebel financiers, he is also involved in legitimate charity work. He actively supports Jamia Rahma, a charity based in Mafraq, Jordan, which provides services to Syrian refugees.

Al-Muhaysini has sometimes used funds to offer bounties on Syrian regime tanks and vehicles. In November 2015, for example, he promised the Syrian lira equivalent of $675 to any rebel destroying a “regime war machine” in the south Aleppo countryside. In the flyer shown here he can be seen personally announcing to “the heroes of the anti-tank brigades” that a bounty of 150,000 lira will be paid to anyone who destroys a regime war machine – at minimum a 14.5mm technical (pickup truck carrying a mounted machine gun) – on the south Aleppo front.

As of October 2016, al-Muhaysini’s Twitter account had more than 56,000 followers, his YouTube videos were regularly getting thousands of views, and his Facebook page had more than 30,000 likes.

In October 2013, al-Muhaysini announced a new fundraising campaign to finance the jihad in Syria, entitled “Wage Jihad With Your Money”. A poster for the campaign, shown here, was circulated on jihad websites and on Twitter, with three telephone numbers listed at the bottom. One is a Qatari number, and the other two are numbers in Kuwait. A separate Twitter feed dedicated to the campaign is also advertised. Donors are offered “silver status” if they give the equivalent of $175 to buy 50 sniper bullets (prices are quoted in Kuwaiti, Saudi and Qatari riyals), or “gold status” for giving twice that amount to purchase eight mortar rounds.

And in a 2014 tweet appealing for funds to buy rockets, al-Muhaysini directed supporters to phone numbers in Qatar and Turkey (see below).

6.2 Qatar

As we have already seen in section 5.2, the government and ruling family of Qatar have been staunch and longstanding backers of AQ. They have, in addition, funded and given shelter to key figures in the Taliban and Hams. In the teeth of strong opposition from their powerful neighbours in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, the Qatars have also maintained close and supportive ties with several regional affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood, which Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Syria and Russia hold to be a terrorist organisation. In Libya, for example, where Qatar and the UAE both supported anti-Qaddafi rebel groups in 2011, Qatar’s continuing support for Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups in the post-Qaddafi era has been countered by UAE proxy support for rival, anti-Islamist, Libyan militants.

Allowing private local fundraising for radical Islamist groups abroad has long formed part of Doha’s domestic security strategy, as an outlet for Islamist political energies at home.764 As a small (however fabulously wealthy) player in a tense region of the world, sand-witched uncomfortably between neighbourhood giants Iran and Saudi Arabia, Qatar has cultivated a wide range of external friends and allies, including the US and Europeans, in the hope of warding off a variety of potential threats.

The relaxed approach of the Qatari authorities to the financing of Islamist groups, including those designated as terrorist, is well illustrated by the case of Abdulaziz Khalifa al-Attiyah, a cousin of Qatar’s foreign minister. In 2012 al-Attiyah was arrested in Lebanon following a tip-off from Western intelligence agencies that he was using Lebanon as a base for passing funds to Jabhat al-Nusra. He was released shortly afterwards after alleged diplomatic lobbying on his behalf by the Qatari authorities, who dismissed al-Attiyah’s arrest as politically motivated.765 Shortly after returning from Lebanon, al-Attiyah received a lifetime achievement award from the Qatar Olympic Committee, chaired at the time by Qatar’s current emir, for his services as head of Qatar’s Billiards and Snooker Union – hardly pariah status.766 When his case came to court in Lebanon in June 2014 he was found guilty in absentia on charges that included providing financial support to terrorist organisations, and was given a seven-year jail sentence.767 In the meantime, in 2013 al-Attiyah associated himself with the Madad Ahl al-Sham campaign in aid of Jabhat al-Nusra (see below).768

Since then, however, Qatar has issued new charity supervision and cybercrime prevention laws. Law No. 14 of 2014 penalises use of the Internet for unauthorised fundraising in support of terrorism. Under Law No. 15 of 2014, which regulates the work of charities oversight based on FATF standards, local charities must obtain authorisation from the newly established Charities Commission prior to any dealings with foreign entities. The Qatar Central Bank scrutinises charities’ overseas transactions to ensure compliance, and the government issues directives to local charities prohibiting them from transferring funds to several overseas charities suspected of engaging in illicit activities.769

In 2015, following much external criticism, the Qatari government froze assets and imposed travel bans on Qatar citizens Sa’ad al-Ku’abi and Abdullatif al-Kawari after they were designated as terrorist financiers on the UN al-Qaeda Sanctions List. However, according to the US State Department’s 2015 country report on terrorism, “despite these efforts, entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups, particularly regional al-Qaeda affiliates such as the Nusrah Front”.770

Qatar was furthermore deemed a Jurisdiction of Concern as recently as this year in the State Department’s 2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, which found that “the exploitation of charities and private donations to finance terrorism continues to be a concern, as does the ability of individuals to bypass the formal financial sector for illicit financing”.771

Historically, considerable financial and material support for AQ and, more recently, for Jabhat al-Nusra in particular, has been channelled through Qatar-based Islamic charities. Most notable among these has been Qatar Charity (formerly the Qatar Concerning Charitable Society), founded in 1992, directed by Sheikh Hamad bin Nasser bin Jassim Al Thani, and described in 2008 by an inter-agency US task force as a “terrorism support entity”.772 Qatar Charity was cited by Osama Bin Laden in 1993 as one of the charities used to channel financial support to AQ operatives overseas; it later funneled money to AQ operatives in Chechnya. In 2012-13 Qatar Charity was active in northern Mali when it was overrun by Islamist groups,773 and was accused of supporting Ansar Dine and MUJAO, AQIM allies in the area.774
Another prolific Qatar-based fundraiser for Jabhat al-Nusra, until it was finally shut down by the authorities in 2014, was the programme called “Madad Ahl al-Sham” (Aid for the People of Syria). Toward the end of 2013 Jabhat al-Nusra acknowledged Madad Ahl al-Sham as one of its preferred conduits for funds.775 Madad Ahl al-Sham, although no longer operating, provides an excellent case study on the blurring or commingling of humanitarian and terrorist fundraising. The campaign worked under the umbrella of the government-supervised Qatar Centre for Voluntary Work, and in 2013 was reported in the local press to have 50 young volunteers collecting and parceling up in-kind assistance for the suffering people of Syria.774 The campaign thanked the Saudi and Jordanian authorities for their cooperation, and claimed to have been granted a one-year permit to transport goods across Saudi Arabia.

This Madad Ahl al-Sham poster, which incidentally includes the name and phone number of Specially Designated Global Terrorist Sa’ad bin al-Ka’abi, emphasises the relief of winter hardship,777 but the one below (also with his name and number) presents a more militaristic image.778

Retweeted Twitter messages attributed to Madad’s media coordinator, Mohamed Helwan al-Seqatri, stated that Madad “supports the mujahideen with weapons and ammunition”779 and “gathers your donations to cleanse the rafidhis (pejorative term for Shia) from Syria”. The campaign was also blessed by AQ-linked cleric Abdullah al-Muhaysini of Saudi Arabia and Hamid Hamad al-‘Ali, a Kuwaiti preacher now under US and UN sanctions who has previously declared himself an “al-Qaeda commando.”
6.3 KUWAIT

The situation has evolved but not fundamentally changed since US Treasury Undersecretary David Cohen described Kuwait, in March 2014, as “the epicentre of fundraising for terrorist groups in Syria.”786 On the one hand, the Kuwaiti government has at last started to implement measures to restrict the flow of private donations to extremist Islamist fighters; on the other, Kuwaiti support for Syrian opposition groups, which was already declining as a result of donor fatigue and disillusionment with jihadist infighting,781 has still not been halted.782 At the same time the State of Kuwait has been a major donor to international humanitarian relief efforts for the people of Syria. Kuwait has seen fundraisers openly soliciting donations for armed groups in Syria, mainly those allied with Jabhat al-Nusra, since at least 2012. These fundraising activities originally grew out of genuine humanitarian work by Kuwaiti NGOs predating the 2011 Syrian uprising and subsequent armed conflict. Even more so than in Qatar, the Kuwaiti government and ruling family have felt a need to allow private citizens to support Islamist groups in other countries, including violent extremists, as a popular outlet for religious, political, and humanitarian zeal. This tolerance may also have helped to dampen criticism of the government from prominent Salafi preachers and Sunni politicians in the country, for taking a less active military role than other Gulf states in support of anti-Assad groups in Syria.783

In August 2014, the US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on two more members of the al-Ajmi family, Hajjaj Fahd Hajjaj al-Ajmi and Shafi Sultan Mohammed al-Ajmi, Salafi clerics who for years have been vigorously supporting groups allied to Jabhat al-Nusra through fundraising appeals on social media and the use of financial networks.790 Hajjaj Al-Ajmi has travelled regularly from Kuwait to Syria to engage in financial activity on behalf of Jabhat al-Nusra and deliver money to the group. Moreover, in 2013 a Jabhat al-Nusra media office directed followers on Twitter to send money to the organisation through al-Ajmi.

In June 2012, Al-Ajmi established a fundraising organisation called the “Popular Commission in Support of the Syrian Revolution”, and in mid-2013 he helped launch the “Mobilisation of the People of Qatar Campaign for the Levant” to raise funds for jihadist fighters in Syria. The Popular Commission solicited funds through its own Twitter account and Hajjaj al-Ajmi’s personal Twitter account for the purchase of weapons and artillery in support of jihadist groups in Syria. Several Syrian groups acknowledged such gifts with online thank you notes in the form of YouTube videos and Facebook postings that have since been removed from the web.

Private Kuwaiti money played a central role in arming a number of the biggest armed groups in Syria such as Ahhrar al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, and Jabhat al-Nusra. The Kuwaiti role sometimes involved creating military operations rooms and even directing the course of certain battles, such as in Hatla in June 2013.784 As the original rebellion against the Assad regime descended into a fragmented and increasingly brutal conflict, though, in which human rights violations and sectarian atrocities were routinely committed, some Kuwaiti donors withdrew their support. The fundraising that continued took on a distinctly more anti-Shia tone. This has fed into a vicious circle of increasingly bitter sectarian feeling back home in Kuwait, and in some other Gulf states, where it was not previously apparent.785

Pressed to restrict terrorist fundraising activities, in 2013 the Kuwaiti government passed the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism Law No. 106 of 2013786 and Ministerial Resolution No. 1532 of 2013 On Establishing the Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit.787 Its ambivalence about this was made clear, however, when just a few months later, in January 2014, it appointed prominent Jabhat al-Nusra financier Nayef al-Ajmi as both Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf (Islamic Endowments) and Islamic Affairs. Following his appointment, the Ministry of Awqaf announced it would allow non-profit organisations and charities to collect donations for the Syrian people at Kuwaiti mosques, a measure clearly vulnerable to exploitation by Kuwait-based terrorist fundraisers.788 Al-Ajmi was eventually persuaded to step down some months later.789

In August 2014, the US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on two more members of the al-Ajmi family, Hajjaj Fahd Hajjaj al-Ajmi and Shafi Sultan Mohammed al-Ajmi, Salafi clerics who for years have been vigorously supporting groups allied to Jabhat al-Nusra through fundraising appeals on social media and the use of financial networks.790 Hajjaj Al-Ajmi has travelled regularly from Kuwait to Syria to engage in financial activity on behalf of Jabhat al-Nusra and deliver money to the group. Moreover, in 2013 a Jabhat al-Nusra media office directed followers on Twitter to send money to the organisation through al-Ajmi.

In June 2012, Al-Ajmi established a fundraising organisation called the “Popular Commission in Support of the Syrian Revolution”, and in mid-2013 he helped launch the “Mobilisation of the People of Qatar Campaign for the Levant” to raise funds for jihadist fighters in Syria. The Popular Commission solicited funds through its own Twitter account and Hajjaj al-Ajmi’s personal Twitter account for the purchase of weapons and artillery in support of jihadist groups in Syria. Several Syrian groups acknowledged such gifts with online thank you notes in the form of YouTube videos and Facebook postings that have since been removed from the web.

In 2012, the Syrian Revolutionary Front, an Islamist organisation with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, acknowledged receiving nearly $600,000 from the Popular Commission, and Ahhrar al-Sham, one of the most radical Syrian Islamist militias, recorded a similar public thank you for $400,000 it said it had received from the same source. Despite several attempts by social media platforms to shut down his accounts, as of April 2016 al-Ajmi was still active on Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, with over a million followers.791

Sheikh Shafi al-Ajmi (pictured below) can also be seen in a YouTube video addressing a cheering crowd in front of the Lebanese embassy in Kuwait on June 11, 2013, appealing for funds to arm 12,000 mujahideen in Syria.792 He asked the mujahideen to save ten captured (Shia) Hezbollah members for him to have the ‘pleasure’ of slaughtering them personally on a future visit to Syria. Shafi al-Ajmi was briefly detained and interrogated on returning to Kuwait from Mecca with his family in August 2014, shortly after the US sanctions on him were announced.793

Photo: Yasser Al-Zayyat/AFP/Getty Images
The previous month, according to the US Treasury Department, he had publicly admitted that he collected money under the auspices of charity and delivered the funds in person to Jabhat al-Nusra, as well as purchasing and smuggling arms on the group’s behalf.

In June 2015, at a time of heightened security fears in Kuwait, after a suicide bombing claimed by IS killed 27 worshippers at a Shia mosque in Kuwait City, the authorities took the unusual step of permanently closing down a local charity that had long been collecting donations for Syria. According to the Kuwaiti daily Al-Rai, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour shut down the Sheik Fahd Al-Ahmed Humanitarian Society for failing to pass donations through the official channels, despite repeated warnings.795 (The previous year, in August 2014, the ministry had instructed the same charity to close down three of its branch operations.796)

The daily Al-Seyassah said the Fahd Al-Ahmed Society had not been licensed to collect donations. It also reported that the ministry intended to reprimand three more charity organisations for collecting donations without a licence, and to get them to sign undertakings not to repeat the violation, on pain of having their accounts suspended.797

The Kuwaiti government was already said to be tightening up its oversight of charities’ finances, for fear of their being exploited for “terrorist activities”. In May 2015, it was reported to have announced measures including a ban on donations in cash, and a requirement for donors to present identity cards.798 Al-Seyassah quoted a ministry source as saying there had been fewer charity violations in 2015, presumably during the run-up to Ramadan when Islamic charities conduct their major fundraising drives, than in the previous year. Most violations were by “individuals on social media”, or unlicensed collection booths in newly developed areas. The ministry wrote to the municipality asking it to remove the booths, and had asked the Ministry of Communications to cut off 40 phone lines that were being used to collect donations without the requisite licences.799

Nevertheless, suspicions continue to be raised regarding the Kuwaiti charity sector. As recently as September 2016, a Kuwaiti diplomat felt the need to deny unspecified media reports accusing Kuwaiti charities of funding terrorism. Ambassador Nasser Al-Sabeeh said the charities were firmly committed to the country’s laws and regulations, and “I’m 100 percent sure that not a single fil from Kuwait goes to any terrorist organisation or person in any part of the world”. Kuwait’s national news agency quoted him as saying that “there is a solid coordination between the Foreign Ministry and the Social Affairs and Labour ministry in that regard”.800

Meanwhile in mid-2015 the Kuwaiti authorities sentenced five individuals to ten-year prison sentences for forming an IS recruitment and fundraising cell. Cell members admitted to having transferred more than $400,000 in donations to IS since 2012 under the false pretext of providing humanitarian supplies to refugees, according to local media reporting.801 Al-Jarida listed charges against them that included hostile acts against a foreign government (Syria), membership of a proscribed organisation (IS) and financing terrorist acts. “In its landmark verdict,” said the paper, “the court appealed to the security, media and educational establishments to strengthen the bonds of cooperation between them and act under the guidance of the Islamic Sharia, in the light of its luminous directions and lofty values that call for goodness, righteousness and concord, with the aim of fortifying society against crime and terrorism.”

However, while the State of Kuwait thus appears to have taken a robust approach to these IS facilitators, no prosecutions or convictions of AQ or Jabhat al-Nusra fundraisers, after years of designation as terrorist financiers, have been announced to date.802

6.4 BAHRAIN

The small Gulf kingdom of Bahrain has seen some of the most naked jihadi fundraising in the guise of charity, and also the most nakedly sectarian, led by Salafi clerics who have also been members of the Bahraini parliament. The men have campaigned on behalf of groups fighting the Syrian regime and its Lebanese Shia ally Hezbollah (literally, ‘Party of God’), to which the clerics refer on social media as ‘the Party of Satan’.

In April 2013 Bahrain became the first Arab country to blacklist Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation.803 The majority of Bahrain’s population are Shia, but it is ruled by Sunnis. The 2011 Bahrain protests were not, however, a Shia uprising, as they are often misrepresented, but originated as an Arab Spring-style campaign for greater political and human rights in general. Sectarianism as an issue in Bahrain tends to reflect regional tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, in which the Syrian conflict has played a part, and on which, as on most things, Bahrain’s ruling Al Khalifa family stands squarely with its powerful Saudi neighbours.

In July 2013, the Gulf Daily News reported that more than 500 Syrian families had received aid from people in Bahrain since the start of Ramadan, as part of the Gulf-wide but Bahrain-based “One Body” campaign “to support Syrians through the crisis”.804 Campaigners, it said, had collected thousands of dinars, which had been used to purchase non-perishable food, ambulance, bread-making machines and 100 portacabins to provide temporary shelter for the homeless. A campaign organiser was quoted as saying that they were still receiving daily donations after evening prayers at Abu Hanifa Mosque in Busaiteen and Sheikh Al Farsi Mosque in East Riffa. “Some people are even bringing their wives’ jewellery such as gold bangles, chains and earrings to donate and help their brothers and sisters in Syria,” he added. The paper said that MP Abdulhalm Murad of the Asala Islamic Society, an active supporter of the campaign, had visited Syria the previous month along with fellow Asala member Dr Faisal al-Ghorair and campaign co-ordinator Khalid al-Balooshi to distribute food and goods. Murad had posted a YouTube video about the visit, which showed Syrian people receiving the donations and one of them thanking the Bahrainis for their help.

On Twitter, meanwhile, Murad was boasting of having successfully equipped 1,640 mujahideen through the ‘Tajhiz Ghazi’ (Equip a Warrior) Project to fight against the Party of Satan.805 The phrase ‘tajhiz ghazi’ recalls a saying of the Prophet that “he who equips a ghazi (warrior) in the way of Allah is as if he has taken part in the fighting himself; and he who looks after the dependants of a ghazi in his absence is as if he has taken part in the fighting himself”. (See also 6.7, Islamic charities.) In this sense, paying for weapons and ammunition can be seen as a form of proxy jihad. Indeed, at one point speeches in Bahrain calling for jihad were said to have been common; jihadi preacher Adel al-Hamad, licensed by the Bahraini Justice Ministry to pray at a mosque south of Manama, called on young people on May 24, 2013 to use their summer break to perform jihad in Syria.806

In the tweet referred to above, Murad urgently called for BD 2.5 million ($6.6 million) to equip 2,500 more mujahideen, and solicited donations to the One Body campaign.807

Translation: Good news – praise God, so far the Tajhiz Ghazi project has delivered to 1,640 fighters in four months. Critical need to equip 2,500 mujahideen to defend our honour against the Party of Satan: cost of equipping BD 1,000. One Body campaign, supervised by Sheikh Abdulhalm Murad and Sheikh Faisal al-Ghorair; to donate: [phone numbers, with Bahrain dialling code]. We await you daily at Shikhan [al-Farsi] and Abu Hanifa in Busaiteen after evening prayers. [Line] Thanks to the people of Bahrain after the arrival of the donations. Post to save our honour from the Party of Satan.
Ghorair was even more explicit in announcing the ‘good news’ in a speech to his followers in the Bahraini capital, Manama, in June 2013: “We are happy to tell you that we have sent arms and ammunition to the mujahedeen in Syria,” he said.808

The previous month a tweet called urgently for funds “to equip 300 fighters for al-Qusayr (in western Syria, scene of major battles in the spring of 2013 between rebel groups versus the Syrian Army and Hezbollah) to confront the dogs of the Party of Satan” and gave contact phone numbers for Murad, Ghorair and al-Balooshi.809 It also carried a link to a video statement entitled ‘Help al-Qusayr’ in which a ragtag group of militants holding a variety of weapons including an RPG describe how they used earlier donations.810

In February 2014, the interior ministry warned citizens against taking part in fighting with opposition groups outside Bahrain or engaging in regional or international conflicts, noting that some Bahraini citizens had gone to join the fighting in Syria. Interior Minister Lieutenant-General Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa ordered monitoring of social media accounts and websites that promote incitement or recruitment or offer any assistance or facilities for terrorist act, and said all financial transactions, donations and assistance for such purposes would also be monitored, and those involved arrested.811 No action was taken against Murad and his colleagues, whether because of their parliamentary immunity or because of the Sunni government’s partial definition of terrorism. Gulf journalists nevertheless continued to question whether the Taqiz Ghazi campaign against taking part in fighting with opposition groups outside Bahrain or engaging in regional or international conflicts, noting that some Bahraini citizens had gone to join the fighting in Syria. Interior Minister Lieutenant-General Sheikh Adel al-Mouawad – one of the other Asala MPs who had travelled to Syria with Murad and appeared on video hugging Syrian fighters – was put on the spot by Al-Arabiya TV. Al-Mouawad protested that what they had done was “all under the banner of aid work” and that “we do not need anybody’s authorisation to support our brothers in Syria”. Al-Mouawad’s presenter persisted in asking whether the One Body and Taqiz Ghazi campaigns had been licensed by the government as required by the law, but neither the Ministry of Social Development (which licenses charities) nor the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs (which licenses political parties like Asala) managed to give a satisfactory answer.

6.5 IRAN

That Iran sponsors terror-designated organisations and armed groups around the world has been well documented. The United States has listed Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1984, and the last five years have seen Iran not only funding but also being involved directly in conflict zones in the Middle East. As a result of this, Iranian institutions such as the Ministry of Intelligence and Security and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have been terror-designated due to the financial and material support they provide for terrorist groups.

coordination with the so-called delegation,812 and Murad was subsequently reported to be suing Al-Wasat for defamation for accusing him of raising money for terrorist causes.813 A Tunisian TV interview with a jihadist claiming to have fought with the Free Syrian Army, however, appears to confirm the details of the Bahraini MPs’ visit.814

In February 2014, the interior ministry warned citizens against taking part in fighting with opposition groups outside Bahrain or engaging in regional or international conflicts, noting that some Bahraini citizens had gone to join the fighting in Syria. Interior Minister Lieutenant-General Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa ordered monitoring of social media accounts and websites that promote incitement or recruitment or offer any assistance or facilities for terrorist act, and said all financial transactions, donations and assistance for such purposes would also be monitored, and those involved arrested.811 No action was taken against Murad and his colleagues, whether because of their parliamentary immunity or because of the Sunni government’s partial definition of terrorism. Gulf journalists nevertheless continued to question whether the Taqiz Ghazi campaign against taking part in fighting with opposition groups outside Bahrain or engaging in regional or international conflicts, noting that some Bahraini citizens had gone to join the fighting in Syria. Interior Minister Lieutenant-General Sheikh Adel al-Mouawad – one of the other Asala MPs who had travelled to Syria with Murad and appeared on video hugging Syrian fighters – was put on the spot by Al-Arabiya TV. Al-Mouawad protested that what they had done was “all under the banner of aid work” and that “we do not need anybody’s authorisation to support our brothers in Syria”. Al-Mouawad’s presenter persisted in asking whether the One Body and Taqiz Ghazi campaigns had been licensed by the government as required by the law, but neither the Ministry of Social Development (which licenses charities) nor the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs (which licenses political parties like Asala) managed to give a satisfactory answer.

Iran’s support for armed groups is often seen as having either an ideological or an explicitly Shia element to it. In the past five years alone, Iran has been funding Shia militias that are active in conflicts in Syria (Hezbollah and others), Iraq (Hashd al-Shaabi, or the Popular Mobilisation Units – PMUs) and Yemen (the Houthis). Although some of the groups that Iran supports subscribe to Iranian state ideology (primarily some of the PMUs), and many of them are Shia groups, most experts would say that the Islamic Republic’s funding of armed groups is more about security policy and national interest than about ideology.817

Moreover, Iran does not exclusively support Shia groups. Somewhat unexpectedly, they have been known to house several al-Qaeda fighters. According to the US Treasury, al-Qaeda has an agreement with Iran to use the country as a transit point between the Arab world and the group’s activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.818 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was allegedly given shelter in the Iran between 2001 and 2002. In 2016, it was revealed that three senior al-Qaeda figures residing in Iran - Faisal Jassim Mohammed al-Amin al-Khalidi, Yusef Musab al-Nuaimi and Abu Bakr Muhammad Ghumayn - had respectively both gathered funds and transferred funds from Iran that reportedly went to the TTP in Pakistan and al-Qaeda affiliates in Syria.819 Moreover, Iran has increasingly funded the Taliban since 2012.

Although it is clear that Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism and armed groups, and therefore IED attacks, it is occasionally unclear as to which part of the state authorised funding of various groups. For example, the IRGC is believed to handle several foreign policy issues rather than the Iranian government. In fact, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif reportedly said in a private conversation with US Secretary of State John Kerry in 2015 that he is not in control of the Syria portfolio, which is instead managed by the IRGC.820

The IRGC was established in the immediate aftermath of the Iranian revolution by Ayatollah Khomeini, and functions both as Iran’s primary internal and external security force and operates separately from the country’s military. The IRGC’s Quds Force (IRGC-QF) was established during the Iran-Iraq War, and mainly operates the country’s asymmetric warfare, and has been known to arrange weapons transfers to countries like Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as operating on the ground themselves.821 Both the IRGC and the Quds Force control large assets, and while they remain excluded from public Iranian budgets, estimates place IRGC’s annual turnover at between $10-12 billion. The IRGC was designated by the US Treasury in 2007,822 and the Quds Force has been listed as both a supporter of terror and a major human rights abuser in Syria.823

What is lesser known are the sources of funding used by various Iranian bodies to finance terrorism. Although the IRGC received $6.5 billion from the Iranian government, some of which was spent on funding and arming militias in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, substantial funds are derived from hidden business and charity conglomerates. For example, many Iranian ‘bonyads’ have been identified as major financiers of terror. ‘Bonyad’, which means foundation, is a tax-exempt charitable trust, and bonyads are highly influential in the Iranian economy. For example, Bonyad-e-Mostazafen va Janbazan (Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled) is believed to be the second largest company in Iran after the state-owned National Iranian Oil Company. Similarly, the Shirin of Irans Reza Foundation is one of the largest landowners in Iran. Both bonyads have allegedly funded Hezbollah, with the latter even conducting regular trips to south Lebanon to assist with reconstruction projects.824

Another suspected source of terrorist funding is from the wealth controlled by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, himself. Abdallah Safieddine, Hezbollah’s representative in Iran, stated that Hezbollah receives money directly from Khamenei’s private wealth, which has reportedly allowed Hezbollah to receive funds despite economic downturns in the Iranian economy. An investigation into Khamenei’s private wealth reveals that he controls an extensive and obscure business conglomerate called Setad Ejraye Farmane Hazrate Enam, commonly known as Setad. The conglomerate has interests in real estate and the other controlling corporate investments. Setad reportedly controls over 37 companies; the biggest worth some $40 billion. In 2012, it was estimated that Setad had a total value of $95 billion.825

Providing in-depth analysis on each group that Iran supports would be outside the scope of this report. Rather, this section shall look at further at Iranian funders and the various routes of funding in the Islamic Republic of Iran, mainly because these channels are heavily affected by IED violence. It should be noted that many of the groups that Iran supports in these conflicts do not figure in
AOAV’s monitor of explosive violence. However, given the conflicts raging in these countries it is necessary to investigate Iran’s role in these conflicts, as their funding of armed groups certainly exacerbates the conflicts and therefore the use of explosive violence.

6.5.1 IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR ARMED GROUPS IN IRAQ

Iran has funded and provided arms for various Shia militias in Iraq ever since the US invasion of 2003. It has been estimated that between 2003 and 2009, Iran contributed between $10 and $35 million per year, and since 2009 that number has risen to between $50 and $100 million per year.825 Some of the Iranian-funded militias put down their arms in 2011 after the US withdrawal. However, when IS seized Mosul in 2014, Iraq’s most prominent Shia cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, himself of Iranian nationality, issued a fatwa calling for the defence of Iraq and its Shia shrines. As a result, several militias were created, and in 2014 they were formalised as a branch of government called the Popular Mobilisation Committee.

The militias themselves are known in Arabic as Hashid al-Shaabi, or as the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs). It is estimated that there are between 90,000-100,000 fighters spread out across 60-70 militias.827 Kataeb Hezbollah is perhaps the most influential PMU, despite being a part of the Iraqi government. It has been designated a terrorist organisation by the United States. Other PMUs have also been accused of human rights abuses and receiving human rights abuses against the Iraqi Sunni population.828 In light of this, it remains relevant to examine Iran’s support for PMUs.

An Iraqi intelligence report leaked to Arabic media states that although it is difficult to speak of the PMUs as one cohesive group, there are two things that unite them: their ‘extremist religious cover’ and Iranian funding. Besides funding and direct involvement in fighting, Arabic media reported in September 2016 that Solaimani oversaw the creation of a PMU intelligence service. According to reports, the Karbala-based Radwan Foundation has been tasked with creating an intelligence apparatus, and has allegedly recruited more than 2,000 people for it already.829

Iran’s funding for the PMUs is seen as both direct strategy, as Iranian ISF influence in the PMUs is a means to increase its own influence of the country. As a lead in this campaign, the country has also made various soft power efforts, launching various Arabic language Iranian TV channels in the country.830

6.5.2 IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR ARMED GROUPS IN SYRIA

Iran has a great deal invested in the fate of Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad. Besides providing him with an estimated $15 to $25 billion between 2011 and 2015 alone,831 Iran has also sent significant funds on para-military groups fighting alongside Assad’s forces. The most well-known of these groups is Hezbollah, which has a long history of Iranian funding. From the beginning of the 1980s up until 2010, it is believed that the group received between $100 and $200 million annually. Due to an economic downturn in Iran, that number is believed to have dropped to between $50 and $100 million per year since 2010.832 Despite these dropping numbers, Hezbollah has, in large part due to Iranian funding, been able to contribute strength to Assad’s forces. Hezbollah’s involvement in the Qalamoun battle in 2013, for example, was said to have been crucial to the regime’s victory.

Again, the IRGC’s role cannot be underestimated. Although Iran wants to give the appearance of its Syria policy and operations being a decision taken in unity among the countries’ military institutions and policy makers, it is clear that it is the IRGC that are calling the shots.833 Besides funding Hezbollah, the IRGC have themselves been involved in many battles alongside the Syrian Army. In fact, President Barack Obama’s decision to sign an Executive Order blocking Quds Forces property was a result of alleged human rights abuses carried out by the forces in Syria.834 In April 2016, the number of IRGC and Iranian military personnel in Syria was estimated at lying between 6,500 and 9,200.835

The IRGC was also instrumental in establishing, funding and training the National Defense Forces (NDF), a pro-Assad paramilitary group and Syria’s largest pro-gov- ernment militia.836 Moreover, Iran funded the Iraqi Shia group Kataeb Hezbollah (KH), and Badr, are all products of Iranian funding and training. AAH recruits are often taken to Iran for intensive training with the IRGC for two weeks, and the Iranian government allegedly pays $5,000 to the families of soldiers who die in battle.837 The IRGC was also present in the formation of KH, and even facilitated training sessions between KH and Hezbollah in 2012 and 2013.838 The Badr Organisation has the most long-standing relation with Iran, as the group was based in the country for two decades. Qassem Solaimani has also been seen on the frontlines in Iraq alongside Badr leader Hadi al-Amery on several occasions.

Besides funding and direct involvement in fighting, Arabic media reported in September 2016 that Solaimani oversaw the creation of a PMU intelligence service. According to reports, the Karbala-based Radwan Foundation has been tasked with creating an intelligence apparatus, and has allegedly recruited more than 2,000 people for it already.829

Iran’s funding for the PMUs is seen as both direct strategy, as Iranian ISF influence in the PMUs is a means to increase its own influence of the country. As a lead in this campaign, the country has also made various soft power efforts, launching various Arabic language Iranian TV channels in the country.830

6.5.3 IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR ARMED GROUPS IN YEMEN

Iran has funded, armed and trained the Houthi rebels since 2010, well before they seized control over Yemen’s capital Sanaa in September 2014. Estimates say that the Houthis have received between $10 and $25 million per year from Iran since 2010 - significantly less than many of the groups they support have received from within the PMUs, they are also believed to have received funds from Iraq.834 Iran’s ambitions in Yemen are mainly believed to be the defeat of groups like IS and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Jabhat al-Nusra), the restoration of the status quo ante and the preservation of state institu- tions.846

This is, in one way, reflective of their relationship with the Houthis in general, and their strategy in Yemen in particular. Whereas the conflicts in Syria and Iraq present direct threats to Iranian national security, Yemen is more of a (low cost) opportunity for Iran to upset regional rival Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the Houthis are far from being controlled by Iran, but are rather a home-grown group that happen to represent interests that are in line with Iran. This way, one might say that Iran needs the Houthis more than the Houthis need Iran.851

However, this does not mean that support is non-exis- tent. A little reported story in Arabic media has shed light on Iranian support for the Houthis, revealed in a clas- sified letter from the Iranian bonyad Iranian Martyrs Foun- dation’s head, Mohammad Ali Shahidi, addressed to the bonyad’s subsidiary, the Yemen Martyrs Foundation. The letter apparently shows a reply to a request by the Quds Force on behalf of the Yemen Martyrs Foundation, which allegedly demanded that the Iranian Martyrs Foundation send $3.7 million to the Houthis. In the letter, the Iranian Martyrs Foundation seems to accept the request.852

The Iranian Martyrs Foundation was established by Ayatollah Khomeini to help families of those killed in the Iranian-Iraq war, and the Yemeni subsidiary was set up for
Iran seems to have oscillated between supporting the Afghan government and the Taliban ever since. Tehran tried to court the Afghan government, reportedly in an attempt to decrease US influence over the country, through both charitable donations and trade agreements. According to leaked diplomatic cables, Iran even encouraged Afghanistan to raise “anti-US talking points” and to back anti-US policies to stir tensions between the two countries.\(^{402}\)

According to the US State Department, Iran has sent weapons and financial assistance to the Taliban since 2006,\(^{403}\) and in 2007 Iran hosted a Taliban delegation at an “Islamic Awakening” conference. Having clearly failed to lure Afghanistan away from the US camp, Iran seems to have fully embraced the Taliban since 2012 or 2013. This has reportedly been done in order to disturb US interests in the region, as an unstable Afghanistan has been deemed as favourable to Iran’s interests.

As outlined in the section on Taliban funding, it has been proven that Quds Force commanders have financially assisted the Taliban, and that Iran has hosted Taliban fighters at various training camps. For more details, please see section 5.3.

### 6.6 Turkey

As we have seen elsewhere in this report, Turkey has actively supported various armed groups in Syria as a means to remove Bashar al-Assad from power. It has provided support alongside with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, to Jaysh al-Islam, and has also sent weapons to Jabhat al-Fateh, the umbrella organisation that includes Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham, Jund al-Aqsa and others. Some of this aid was allegedly delivered by means of coordination between the Turkish intelligence services and the Turkish Islamic charity IHH, as we shall see further in section 6.7.4. Moreover, we have seen that organisations like Abdulrah-Muhayyrisi are known to have directed supporters to phone numbers in Turkey in order to make private donations.

Perhaps most significant of all, Turkey has been accused of being negligent about preventing foreign fighters from crossing its border into Syria, a factor which has inevitably strengthened several jihadist groups operating in the region.\(^{432}\) What has been less well documented is Turkey’s alleged support for IS in particular, with various sources accusing Turkey of supporting IS in its war against the Kurds in Syria.

---

**6.6.1 Alleged Financial and Material Support for IS**

David L. Phillips of Columbia University has set out in a detailed research paper, updated between 2014 and 2016, the various accusations relating to Turkish links to IS.\(^{436}\) These include claims that Turkey gives training and medical assistance to IS fighters, provides financial support through oil purchases, and has even militarily assisted IS in battles against the Syrian Kurdish forces of the YPG.

Some of these claims have been corroborated by sources close to either Turkish intelligence or IS. In 2016 Ahmet Sait Yayla, a former counter-terrorism chief in the Turkish national police, accused the Turkish government of allowing known IS fighters to reside, receive health-care, and collect weapons in Turkey. For example, according to Yayla the former IS second in command, Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, received free treatment in Turkey after he lost his leg in an airstrike. Yayla also stated that IS fighters are living openly in Gaziantep, where they have had about 60,000 uniforms produced and shipped across the border.\(^{437}\)

Yayla also supplied photos apparently showing IS fighters handling “hell fireball bombs” made from liquid petroleum gas tanks, the parts for which are manufactured in the Turkish city of Konya, where several IS fighters are also said to reside. According to Yayla, this has been occurring with the blessing and complicity of the Turkish government and national intelligence organisation (MIT), which in some instances has apparently orchestrated weapons deliveries to Syria directly, without even the figleaf of IHH involvement.\(^{438}\) Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has responded to these claims by stating that Turkey has not sent weapons to any Islamist group in Syria, and that intercepted trucks travelling under MIT supervision were carrying “aid to Turkmens in Syria.”\(^{439}\)

One Turkish former IS fighter, Savas Yildiz, claimed in 2016 that Turkish intelligence is directly cooperateing with IS, and that IS fighters can pass through Turkish border control into Syria without difficulty.\(^{440}\) Another IS member said in 2014 that the so-called Islamic State regards Turkey as its ally against the Kurds in Syria,\(^{441}\) and that Turkey would prefer an IS presence in northern Syria rather than the YPG. We will return to this in section 8.
Others have likewise shared concerns about IS-Turkish cooperation. An unnamed Western intelligence official has stated that direct dealings between Turkish officials and IS are “undeniable.”164 Even King Abdullah of Jordan has warned about Turkey’s alleged support for extremist groups. Abdullah said “radicalisation is being manufactured in Turkey” and President Erdogan is looking for a “radical Islamist solution to the region.”165

Even when Turkey has seemed to have taken a firm stance against IS, there has been cause for suspicion. Al-Monitor queried the fact that dozens of alleged IS members were rounded up across Turkey immediately after the Sultanahmet bombing in January 2016, giving the impression that Turkey already knew their locations even without them having taken any action.163

6.6.2 ALLEGED PURCHASES OF IS OIL

Then there is the question of oil purchases. Accusations that Turkey was buying IS oil gained traction when Russian news outlet RT was conveniently able to back up such claims by examining documents left behind in Syria by IS.161 Similar accusations were also made by Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon in January 2016.162 Furthermore, in September 2016 a Turkish hacker group known as Redhack released documents that appear to show how Turkish oil company Powertrans was given rights to carry oil from northern Iraq to Turkey through Turkish pipelines and ports. The documents appear to show how Powertrans continued profiting from this scheme even after 2014, when most of IS’s network for transporting IS oil out of northern Iraq.875 Even when Turkey has seemed to have taken a firm stance against IS, there has been cause for suspicion. Al-Monitor queried the fact that dozens of alleged IS members were rounded up across Turkey immediately after the Sultanahmet bombing in January 2016, giving the impression that Turkey already knew their locations even without them having taken any action.163

It is difficult to ascertain the veracity of these various allegations, but it is clear that Turkey has contributed support to several Salafi-jihad groups active in Syria. How deliberate and proactive this support is probably varies from group to group. As we shall see in section 8, however, this strategy might in the long run do Turkey more harm than good.

6.7 ISLAMIC CHARITIES

Several major charities based in the Gulf that have, in the past, been implicated in financing jihadi terrorism continue to operate openly today. We will examine specific examples below from Qatar, Kuwait and also Turkey. Their activities tend to combine humanitarian relief and development projects with overt Wahhabi missionary operations (fundamentalist preaching and mosque-building), often in zones of conflict or sectarian tensions. In their fundraising they appeal to pious Muslims’ concerns for people in poor, disaster-stricken and war-ravaged areas, especially fellow-Muslims. They offer mosque-building, well-digging and the sponsorship of orphans, among other good works, as appropriate channels for Muslim philanthropy.

It is far from clear how much of this charity may be unwittingly or unwittingly diverted to jihad ends today. One problem from a counter-terrorism perspective, however, is that the infusion of funds or even humanitarian relief aid into areas where extremist groups are active may allow these groups to seem to be providing food, social services and medical care. This in turn may enable them to bolster their standing within local communities, thereby increasing support for their violent activities. As one analyst put it, when discussing a Kuwaiti donor’s support for several hospitals run and used by the Free Syrian Army, “such work may be humanitarian in nature but it clearly has partisan implications.”164 And as US Treasury Undersecretary David Cohen concluded in March 2014: “Even legitimate charitable activity that benefits a terrorist organisation strengthens that organisation; this is why they do it. Although some of our international partners may disagree with us, we must not allow terrorist organisations to use the cover of seemingly legitimate charitable activity to mask and advance their broader violent objectives.”165

Another grey area concerns zakat, the regular alms-giving that is obligatory on all Muslims and commonly implemented through donations to charitable organisations. Some scholars of a Salafist bent claim that zakat money can legitimately be used to fund jihad, but this is controversial. It is more often held correct to give it to “parents, relatives, orphans, the helpless and travellers in need” (Qur’an 2:215); or that “alms are for the poor and the needy and those employed to administer (the funds), for whose those hearts have (recently) been reconciled (to truth), for those in bondage and in debt, in the cause of Allah, and for the wayfaring” (Qur’an 9:60).

However, the phrase translated here as “in the cause of Allah” (also “in the way of Allah”) can be interpreted in various ways. It was not difficult for this researcher to find, in answer to the question “Is it permissible to collect zakat for the mujahideen?”, a fatwa issued by the influential Salafi cleric Sheikh Mohammed bin Saleh al-Uthaymeen of Saudi Arabia, dated September 26, 2007, stating: “Allah made mujahideen literally: those who strive in the way of Allah one of the categories of the people of zakat, so it is permissible for us to give zakat to those who strive in the way of Allah. But who is a mujahid (person who strives) in the way of Allah? ‘The Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) made clear who it is that strives in the way of Allah when we were asked, concerning a man who fights bravely, who fights zealously and who fights so that his status may be seen, which of these is in the way of Allah? and the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) gave us a valuable and just criterion by saying: ‘He who fights so that the Word of Allah may be supreme, he is in the way of Allah.’ So whoever fights for this purpose, to raise aloft the Word of Allah, to bring the Sharia of Allah into effect, and to introduce the religion of Allah to the land of the infidels, he is in the way of Allah. He is given zakat, whether by his being given dinhars (money) that he can use for the jihad or by material being bought to equip the warriors.”166

The phrase “equip the warriors” (tajhiz al-ghazat) or “equip a warrior” (tajhiz ghazi), thus referencing the virtuous calling of jihad, lends an aura of charitable duty to financing armed violence and the use of IEDs. It has been used as a fundraising slogan by some of the Jabhat al-Nusra financiers discussed earlier, as well as by the Salafi Bahraini MP discussed in 6.3 above, Sheikh Abdulrahim Murad.167

Others have likewise shared concerns about IS-Turkish cooperation. An unnamed Western intelligence official has stated that direct dealings between Turkish officials and IS are “undeniable.”164 Even King Abdullah of Jordan has warned about Turkey’s alleged support for extremist groups. Abdullah said “radicalisation is being manufactured in Turkey” and President Erdogan is looking for a “radical Islamist solution to the region.”165

The phrase “equip the warriors” (tajhiz al-ghazat) or “equip a warrior” (tajhiz ghazi), thus referencing the virtuous calling of jihad, lends an aura of charitable duty to financing armed violence and the use of IEDs. It has been used as a fundraising slogan by some of the Jabhat al-Nusra financiers discussed earlier, as well as by the Salafi Bahraini MP discussed in 6.3 above, Sheikh Abdulrahim Murad.167
6.7.1. QATAR CHARITY
We saw earlier, in section 5.2, that in the past Qatar Charity (formerly Qatar Charitable Society) regularly used to channel funds to AQ and its operatives overseas. It may not entirely have desisted. In December 2012, for example, a video proclaiming the creation of the Syrian Islamic Front, an umbrella group of Jabhat al-Nusra allies that later merged into the Islamic Front, showed Front members providing aid to Syrian civilians with boxes and flags bearing the logos of a Turkish humanitarian group (IHIF) that has been suspected of helping Syrian rebels, and also of Qatar Charity.864

At around the same time, French politicians explicitly accused Qatar of giving material support to separatists and Islamists in northern Mali.865 The French weekly Le Canard Enchaîné had previously quoted unnamed French intelligence sources as saying Tunisia separatists and AQ allies that later merged into the Islamic Front, that had fallen to the Islamists, told RTL radio: “The French government knows perfectly well who is supporting these terrorists. Qatar, for example, continues to send so-called aid and aid every day to the airports of Gao and Timbuktu.”866 Doha’s relationship with predominantly Muslim northern Mali is well entrenched. According to regional expert Mehdi Lazark, Qatar has an established network of institutions it supports in Mali, including madrasas, schools and charities that it has been funding from the 1980s and 1990s.867

Qatar Charity has been involved in Mali since at least 2009, when it opened a mosque in the capital, Bamako, and the Malian President came and prayed in it. In its report on the event, Qatar Charity noted that it had also distributed two tons of canned meat for the Eid in poor villages and school cafeterias, and that “Qatar Charity has carried out several education and health projects in the Republic of Mali, among which five schools, three clinics, thirty mosques and two play-service [sic centres]”.868 This categorisation perhaps gives an indication of the organisation’s relative priorities. The items it is inviting donors to fund in Mali in 2016 are not dissimilar: sheep, cows, sewing machines, motorcycles – and three more small mosques.869

Qatar Charity claims to have built 8,148 mosques worldwide in its latest Arabic edition of its magazine Ghiras870 including providing ambulances to Aleppo, vaccinating Syrian children against polio and measles, humanitarian projects in war-ravaged Yemen, building social housing in Mauritania, and the use of innovative apps, reality TV and social networking ambassadors to encourage charitable giving in Qatar. It also highlights the opening of a regional office in Ankara to oversee relief operations in Syria and improve its emergency response, and mentions plans to open sub-regional offices in Istanbul and Calais. Some of Qatar Charity’s activities are now being funded and managed through the linked organisation Qatar Charity UK, which we will look at further in section 7.3.

In the latest Arabic edition of its magazine Ghiras870 including providing ambulances to Aleppo, vaccinating Syrian children against polio and measles, humanitarian projects in war-ravaged Yemen, building social housing in Mauritania, and the use of innovative apps, reality TV and social networking ambassadors to encourage charitable giving in Qatar. It also highlights the opening of a regional office in Ankara to oversee relief operations in Syria and improve its emergency response, and mentions plans to open sub-regional offices in Istanbul and Calais. Some of Qatar Charity’s activities are now being funded and managed through the linked organisation Qatar Charity UK, which we will look at further in section 7.3.

In one example of a humanitarian operation with a fairly clear partisan or sectarian dimension, in May 2016 Qatar Charity launched a campaign with the slogan “Fallujah is Dying” (pictured above).81 It aimed to raise money and send relief to tens of thousands of (Sunni) civilians who were either besieged in the central Iraqi city of Fallujah or had been forcibly displaced from their homes there. The remaining inhabitants were being used as human shields by IS fighters in the city, as Iraqi forces claimed to be clearing it.871 Qatar Charity launched a campaign called “Forgotten Regions”, with a clear partisan or sectarian dimension, in May 2016 with the slogan “Fallujah is Dying” (above).84 It aimed to raise money and send relief to tens of thousands of civilians who were either besieged in the central Iraqi city of Fallujah or had been forcibly displaced from their homes there. The remaining inhabitants were being used as human shields by IS fighters in the city, as Iraqi forces claimed to be clearing it.84

The US authorities stated at that time that there was “no evidence at this point that this financing was done with the knowledge of RIHS in Kuwait”. Four years later, however, after RIHS branches had been closed or raided on suspicion of providing support for terrorism by the governments of Albania, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia and Russia, the Treasury Department designated the entire organisation, including its Kuwait HQ. It said RIHS provided financial and material support to AQ and AQ affiliates, including Lashkar e-Tayiba, Jemaah Islamiyah, and Al-Itihaad al-Islamiya, and had also provided financial support for acts of terrorism. “Designating and freezing the assets of an organisation engaged in charitable work is a decision not taken lightly, because the last thing we want to do is cut off needed humanitarian assistance”, said Stuart Levey, Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. “However, the reality is that RIHS has used charity and humanitarian assistance as cover to fund terrorist activity and harm innocent civilians, often in poor and impoverished regions. We have a responsibility to do all we can to shut down the funding channels of terrorism.”892

The US government concluded that RIHS’s senior leadership, who had actively managed all aspects of the organisation’s day-to-day operations, had been aware of both legitimate and illegitimate uses of RIHS funds and, when other states had taken action against it, had developed multiple methods to continue its operations.896

By 2011, in the early stages of the Syrian conflict, RIHS was financing armed groups fighting the Assad regime to the tune of KD 80,000 ($280,000) a month.82 In recent years it has also been linked to terrorist activity in Somalia82 and spreading Salafism in Tunisia,83 Spain83 and Egypt.82

The RIHS website89 lists current projects across Africa and Asia, including a clinic in Cambodia, a kindergarten in Tanzania and well-digging in India, but above all mosques, Islamic centres and schools as far afield as Belgium, Denmark, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan and Madagascar. It offers opportunities to sponsor orphans, Islamic scholars, missionaries and Quran-readers, and says that sponsoring Muslim orphans is of great importance, as it has the aim of “raising them in accordance with the correct precepts and understanding of Islam”. One Islamic centre it is setting up in Indonesia declares as its aim: “To care for orphans and the sons of Muslims, so that they go out as missionaries and Quran-readers and spread goodness.” From a non-Salaf perspective one might view this as indoctrination of the vulnerable.

The website carries testimonials from leading clerics including the prominent Salafist Sheikh Mohammed bin Salih al-Uthaymeen, who issued the fatwa on zakat quoted above, and the late Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Baz, former Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia.

In the past 18 months RIHS appears to have been particularly active in East and Sub-Saharan Africa, sending delegations to deliver aid to flood victims in Burkino Faso, northern Mali, Niger and Malawi, and to drought victims in the Horn of Africa; and to visit orphanages and other projects in Kenya, Tanzania, Djibouti and Cameroon. Maintaining its historic interest in Syria, the charity also posts under the heading of “Achievements” this year the delivery of emergency medical and food
aid to Aleppo on May 1, 2016, which would have been a considerable logistical feat.

6.7.3 SHEIKH EID FOUNDATION, QATAR

Another Gulf charity that does a lot of mosque-building and orphan-raising while also being tainted with jihadist connections is the Sheikh Eid bin Mohammed Al Thani Charitable Foundation in Doha. The Sheikh Eid charity was banned by Israel in 2008 for financing Hamas, and is also seen as being closely linked to the Saudi government. The like other groups already mentioned, IHH carries out legitimate charity work, but it is also alleged to have been involved in weapons transfers to Hamas as well as to militants in Bosnia and Afghanistan and, since 2012, to jihadi groups in Syria. In the early stages of the Syrian war IHH was seen as the Turkish government’s ‘soft power’ branch into Syria through its aid deliveries.

We have already mentioned how its logo, on boxes of relief supplies, was caught on camera in an Islamic Front video. In 2013, Turkish police raids on vehicles reportedly owned by IHH near the Syrian border found large caches of weapons that were being sent to Jabhat al-Nusra. The trucks were allegedly being escorted by personnel from Turkey’s intelligence service, MIT, and after a phone call from the local governor the police were told to stand down. A similar incident occurred in January 2014; again, the local governor intervened and the police officers intercepting the vehicles were reassigned.

These are not isolated incidents. In January 2014, Turkish police raided IHH offices in Istanbul, Van, Kilis, Adana, Gaziantep and Kayseri provinces in ‘an anti-al-Qaeda operation’ and detained 28 people. Two of the police chiefs responsible for the raids were later reassigned. In January 2015, the local governor intervened in Adana, Gaziantep and Kayseri provinces in ‘an anti-al-Qaeda operation’ and detained 28 people. Two of the police chiefs responsible for the raids were later reassigned.

6.7.4 IHH, TURKEY

NGOs outside the Gulf have also been tainted by alleged jihadi connections. One such is Turkey’s IHH (Human Relief Foundation). IHH has done charitable work since 1992, and is seen as being closely linked to the Turkish government. Like the other groups already mentioned, IHH carries out legitimate charity work, but it is also alleged to have been involved in weapons transfers to Hamas as well as to militants in Bosnia and Afghanistan and, since 2012, to jihadi groups in Syria.

The paper noted that there has been very little study of the potential ML/TF risks arising from Islamic Finance; international standards for the design of AML/CFT regimes make no special provision for Islamic finance; and the AML/CFT regimes of some countries with a strong Islamic finance presence are relatively weak. The limited capacity and experience in the supervision of Islamic finance, especially in jurisdictions that face higher ML/TF risk factors, represents an additional vulnerability.

Areas for further study of risk are identified as: the nature of the customer relationship in Islamic finance; the complexity of Islamic finance products; and the high volume of oest and sadakah (wealth tax and alms) funds collected, managed and disbursed for customers by Islamic finance institutions, often with discretion to designate beneficiaries, including non-profit organisations.

Using slightly updated figures, Ernst & Young have shown elsewhere (see below) the penetration of the Islamic (or ‘participation’) banking industry in each of these countries’ financial sectors.

6.8 ISLAMIC BANKS

It has sometimes been suggested that Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states may use Islamic banks, which have a significant presence in these countries’ financial services landscape, as a way of evading international safeguards against the financing of terrorism. However, an IMF working paper on Islamic finance and AML/CFT, published in February 2016, drew the conclusion that:

"There would appear to be no fundamental differences between ML/TF risks in Islamic and conventional finances. FATF, FSRBs [FATF-Style Regional Bodies] and their member countries are imposing the standards and best practices similarly on conventional and Islamic finance institutions. It is clear, however, that the issue of Islamic finance ML/TF risks requires further study."

The assets of Islamic financial institutions are currently concentrated in the Middle East (mostly in Iran and member countries of the GCC, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE) and in southeast Asia (mainly in Malaysia) and constitute a small but growing sector of the overall financial industry. The World Economic Forum published figures from Ernst&Young identifying the “top nine countries for Islamic finance” as follows:

Using slightly updated figures, Ernst & Young have shown elsewhere (see below) the penetration of the Islamic (or ‘participation’) banking industry in each of these countries’ financial sectors.

These figures, however, exclude the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has the largest Islamic banking system in the world, with assets of $482 billion, according to Dubai government data from 2014 – more than Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and the UAE combined.

The Iranian economy daily Financial Tribune reported in October 2015 that Iranian banks accounted for 40% of global Islamic banking assets in 2014, followed by Saudi Arabia (18.5%), Malaysia (9.5%), UAE (7.3%) and Kuwait (5.9%).

Global share of Islamic banking assets, 2015

---

6.8.1 UNDERSTANDING THE REGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS THAT FACILITATE IED USE

---

115 | ACTION ON ARMED VIOLENCE
It was reported in September 2016 that the Pentagon’s Special Operations Command (SOCOM) wants to include some discussion of Salafi-jihadism in the next edition of the US National Military Strategy, this being the ideology shared by IS and al-Qaeda and behind most global terrorism in the world today. The last National Military Strategy did not mention the ideological roots of terrorism. “If you look at threat doctrine from that perspective, it’s a much bigger problem, because it’s not just the violent jihadists, it’s the non-violent jihadists who support them,” one person knowledgeable about the National Military Strategy told the Washington Times. “Pretend there is no relationship between the violent jihadists and Islam isn’t going to win. We’re completely ignoring the war of ideas.” Sources close to the team responsible for preparing the National Military Strategy said however that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s team was not persuaded that the term should be included.

The debate within the Pentagon over whether to link terrorism to a particular Islamist ideology highlights a genuine difficulty: to what extent does the worldwide spread of non-violent Salafism produce an environment conducive to radicalisation, or even passively supportive of IED use? As we have taken care to emphasise in Section 3, explosive violence in the world is not unique to Islam, nor indeed to Salafi-jihadism. Moreover, not only are not all Muslims Salafists who seek to realise an Islamic state under Sharia law, but only a small minority even of Salafists espouse explosive violence as a strategy for accelerating progress toward that goal.

It is worth noting, however, that oil-financed indoctrination and propaganda for a fundamentalist, Salafist ideology – the Wahhabi creed that originated in Saudi Arabia – has profoundly impacted the Muslim world over the past few decades, and Gulf states are continuing vigorously to promote proselytisation in the West as well. The disproportionate number of converts to Islam among suspected and convicted terrorists suggests that this phenomenon deserves closer study. We will return to this topic shortly.

It is well documented that since the 1970s Saudi Arabia, through royal trusts and Islamic charities, and subse-

sequently also through the Mecca-based Muslim World League, has spent billions of dollars on establishing and staffing thousands of mosques, madrasas, colleges, Islamic centres and publishing houses producing preachers, missionaries, scholars, textbooks and QURANS to export the strictly puritanical Wahhabi creed across the world. Saudi influence has been consolidated by generous funding on easy terms for poor Muslim countries in Africa and Asia from the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank. The propaganda impact of these efforts may be seen in parts of Asia and Africa where Wahhabism has been encroaching or displacing the tolerant and non-violent SuFi Islam traditionally practised in these regions, and encouraging jihadi violence.

Islamic institutions in the Gulf – in Saudi Arabia and Qatar in particular – have spent heavily on supporting minority Muslim communities, and expanding Wahhabi influence, in non-Muslim countries too. Again, this has been seen as being at least partly responsible for the increasing vulnerability to radicalisation among sections of formerly quiescent Muslim communities, and the unexpected emergence of ‘homegrown’ jihadists in the West. In the wake of the November 2015 Paris attacks, academic Yousef Butt declared that “the fountainhead of Islamic extremism that promotes and legitimises such violence lies with the fanatical ‘Wahhabi’ strain of Islam centred in Saudi Arabia… If the world wants to tamp down and eliminate such violent extremism, it must confront this primary host and facilitator.”

7.1 DECADES OF WAHHABI PROPAGANDA

The modern world has become so familiar with the conservative Wahhabi strain of Islam that it is worth recalling the state of Islamic affairs before the 1973 oil shock, the vast increase in wealth of Arab oil-producing states, and the rise of what has been called ‘petro-Islam’. French political scientist Gilles Kepel wrote in 2003, in ‘Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam’:

Prior to 1973, Islam was everywhere dominated by national or local traditions rooted in the piety of the common people, with clerics from the different schools of Sunni religious law established in all major regions of the Muslim world (Hanafite in the
Turkish zones of South Asia, Malakite in Africa, Shafeefi in Southeast Asia), along with their Shia counterparts. This motley establishment held Saudi-inspired puritanism in great suspicion on account of its sectarian character. But after 1973, the oil-rich Wahhabites found themselves in a different economic position, being able to mount a wide-ranging campaign of proselytising among the Sunnis. (The Shia, whom the Sunnis considered heretics, remained outside the movement.) The objective was to bring Islam to the forefront of the international scene, to substitute it for the various discredited nationalist movements, and to refine the multitude of voices within the religion down to the single creed of the masters of Mecca. The Saudis’ zeal now embraced the entire world… [and in the West] immigrant Muslim populations were their special target.255

In the coming decades, Saudi Arabia’s interpretation of Islam became influential through (according to Kepel) the spread of Wahhabi religious doctrines via Saudi charities; increased migration of Muslims to work in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states; and a shift in the influence among Muslim states toward the oil-producing countries. The House of Saud spent billions of dollars on mosques, schools and publishing houses that churned out religious and educational literature, which was distributed cheaply, or for free, across the Muslim world.

During the decade-long Afghan struggle against the Soviets in the 1980s, the Saudis lavishly funded the spread of madrasas in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The majority of the area’s (Sunnni) Muslim population belonged to the Hanafi sect. However, the theologians who have since pushed Pakistan towards Islamist radicalism, as well as those who founded the Taliban, espoused Wahhabi rhetoric and ideals. These would already have been familiar, from the Saudi Hanbali theologians who migrated to India in the 18th century to help their Muslim brothers there against the British colonialists. In 1867 the conservative Deobandi branch of Islam was founded in India on Salafist lines, and set up its own madrasas, which subsequently most of the Taliban leadership are said to have attended. Later on, propelled by oil wealth, the Wahhabi worldview increasingly co-opted the Deobandi movement in South Asia.256

The petrodollar-financed schools, located in rural communities where there was no other source of education, taught a militant form of Islam, telling students they had a sacred duty to fight infidels. Out of these schools came the radical students who eventually formed the Taliban, as well as many al-Qaeda recruits. Today, many of these Pakistani schools draw students from Nigeria, Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere, and they return home radicalised.257

7.1.1 A COUNTER TO POLITICAL ISLAM IN MOROCCO

The 1979 Islamic revolution in Shia Iran alarmed the governments of many Arab and Muslim states, especially those, such as Saudi Arabia, with substantial Shia minorities who, they feared, might be inspired to have revolutionary ideas of their own. The model of an Islamic uprising to overthrow a pro-Western autocracy had its appeal to Sunni political Islamists too. In the kingdom of Morocco, which followed the Maliki school of Islam, Wahhabism had had a marginal presence, since the 19th century but began to get state backing after 1979. According to Professor Mohamed Darif, a specialist on Islam in Morocco, the authorities were at that time facing the rise of political Islam,258 especially on university campuses and often under Muslim Brotherhood influence,259 and the Iranian revolution led them to rethink power relations about 700 new mosques, which denies the legitimacy of both political Islam – such as that of the Brotherhood – and Shiism, became key in preventing the spread of Khomeinist revolution to Morocco.260

Saudi Arabia sponsored Wahhabi religious schools and distributed scholarships and religious literature to hundreds of students. The schools attracted students from the rest of the Arab world, and hundreds of Wahhabi-trained preachers returned home to spread their theories. Morocco was also receiving much-needed financial help from Saudi Arabia to support its military effort in the Western Sahara against the Polisario independence movement. “[W]hen Saudi Arabia gave money [to Morocco], it had to welcome its ulama (religious scholars). There was a political price to pay,” according to Darif.

If this was the Moroccan kingdom’s strategy, it did not succeed as planned. By 2003, when the terrorist group Salafia Jihadia, formed by Afghanistan veterans, carried out five suicide attacks in Casablanca, the state was struggling to maintain control of the country’s mosques. Radical jihadiism was taking hold.261 Outside the mosques, banned CDs of sermons by radical Saudi and Egyptian preachers were widely available for sale, and Gulf-owned satellite TV channels providing conservative Wahhabi fare proved popular. As political scientist Mohamed Tozy pointed out, before radical Islam became globalised with the return of former Afghan fighters and the popularity of firebrand local leaders, the Moroccan state had “the monopoly of the production of religion.”262 But then radicals started to condemn the prayers in state-controlled mosques, and distributed pamphlets and tapes denouncing the “infidel” state from ‘garage mosques’.

7.1.2 CHANGING THE FACE OF TRADITIONAL ISLAM IN KASHMIR

Meanwhile, Saudi-funded Wahhabi propaganda was changing the character of Muslim communities in Africa and Asia, and allegedly making them more supportive of jihadist terrorism. One example of this is the ‘Wahhabi invasion’ that has ‘radicalised’ the Kashmir Valley, according to the Times of India.263 “The famed Sufi tradition and spirit of Kashmiriyyat in the Valley, already ravaged by decades of insurgency, faces a new challenge,” Times of India reporter Asif Jolly wrote in 2011. “Wahhabism, an austere, puritanical interpretation of Islam promoted by Saudi Arabia, is making deep inroads into Kashmir due to the efforts of the Jamiat Ahle-Hadith, which calls itself a religious and welfare organisation.” According to Jolly’s report, Ahle-hadith had in recent years founded 700 new mosques, which on their traditional salwars end just above the ankle in contrast to their Hanbali counterparts. This motley establishment held Saudi-Shia, whom the Sunnis considered heretics, remained inspired puritanism in great suspicion on account of their theories. Morocco was also receiving much-needed financial help from Saudi Arabia to support its military effort in the Western Sahara against the Polisario independence movement. “[W]hen Saudi Arabia gave money [to Morocco], it had to welcome its ulama (religious scholars). There was a political price to pay,” according to Darif.

If this was the Moroccan kingdom’s strategy, it did not succeed as planned. By 2003, when the terrorist group Salafia Jihadia, formed by Afghanistan veterans, carried out five suicide attacks in Casablanca, the state was struggling to maintain control of the country’s mosques. Radical jihadiism was taking hold.261 Outside the mosques, banned CDs of sermons by radical Saudi and Egyptian preachers were widely available for sale, and Gulf-owned satellite TV channels providing conservative Wahhabi fare proved popular. As political scientist Mohamed Tozy pointed out, before radical Islam became globalised with the return of former Afghan fighters and the popularity of firebrand local leaders, the Moroccan state had “the monopoly of the production of religion.”262 But then radicals started to condemn the prayers in state-controlled mosques, and distributed pamphlets and tapes denouncing the “infidel” state from ‘garage mosques’.

Indian intelligence has said that between 2011 and 2013 alone, some 25,000 Saudi clerics arrived in the country with more than $250 million to build mosques and universities and hold seminars.265 With regard to the Kashmir Valley, police and central intelligence officers became aware in recent years of the network of radical preachers, and at one stage had plans to set up an Islamic university affiliated to leading Saudi institutions. There were also grants and scholarships for students to go to Jeddah. The organisation’s rapid proliferation and increasing popularity among young people was said to be making Kashmir’s predominantly Sunni-Hanafi Muslim community anxious. The Jammu and Kashmir Peace Foundation (JKPF), a Hanafi organisation devoted to reviving historic Sufi shrines, believed a sinister process of “fundamentalist indoctrination” was under way in Wahhabi madrasas and schools. Kashmir’s non-Muslim minority was also said to view the Wahhabi influx as a “conspiracy to Talibanise Kashmir”.

Ahle-hadith leaders vigorously denied all links to Islamist extremist groups. “We are more liberal than those that criticise us,” claimed General Secretary Abdul Rehman Bhat. He said former Ahle-hadith president Maulana Shokwat Ahmad Shah had been assassinated by Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen militants because he opposed extremism.

7.1.3 SALAFISM AND BROADCAST AND ONLINE MEDIA

Saudi Arabia provides a platform to many radical preachers on domestic and satellite TV channels broadcasting across the Middle East and North Africa, something that counter-extremism projects see as a further threat to regional security.266 The following sample of preachers and religious figures uses a range of modern media platforms to spread intolerant or sectarian messages:

Nabil al-Awadhy
This Kuwaiti-born cleric has made a name for himself on Saudi Arabia’s al-Jazeera and private stations such as the state-owned Rejaa TV Channel and MBC. Al-Awadhy is also a social media personality with more than eight million Twitter followers, half of whom are from Saudi Arabia. Although he has not directly supported any terrorist group, he has called for Muslims to either join or financially support groups active in Syria.267 He expresses violent sentiments with a vicious sectarian rhetoric, and has frequently attacked the Shia during the course of the Syrian war.268

[119 | ACTION ON ARMED VIOLENCE]
Muhammad al-Arefe
A Saudi preacher and ‘teleevangelist’, Al-Arefe also has a considerable social media presence, with over 13 million followers on Twitter. He has condemned IS, calling them apostates in a video shared on his Twitter and Facebook pages. 436 Al-Arefe is a professor at King Saud University in Riyadh and has his own TV show on the Iqraa network. Like al-Awadhy, he has told his supporters to join the jihad in Syria. His rhetoric is anti-Shia and he has called Shia Islam a ‘heresy’437 and labelled Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the highest Shia authority in Iraq, an ‘infidel’. Like al-Awadhy, he is tolerated on Saudi channels.

Ahmad Musa Jibril
Ahmad Musa Jibril is an American-based preacher who has a history of encouraging people to join the Syrian jihad. The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence has described him as a ‘cheerleader’ for foreign fighters, and stated that around 60% of them follow him on Twitter.41

Adnan al-Aroc
This Syrian cleric appears frequently on Saudi Arabian TV stations such as the religious channel al-Safa. He has frequently criticised minorities fighting on the side of the Syrian government in the Syrian war, and has called for armed action against the Assad government. In a TV interview in 2013 he called Jabhat al-Nusra ‘our brothers’. 438

Abdelkair Hamadache
An Algerian Salafi preacher who was previously a fighter for the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) during the Algerian Civil War in the 1990s, Hamadache has called for an Islamic state in Algeria, 439 and has said that he would welcome the opening of an IS embassy in Algeria. He appears frequently on radio, but was sentenced to prison in March 2016 after having called for the death of Algerian author Kamal Daoud. 440

7.1.4 TARGETING MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS

Wahhabi strain of Islam, has different political goals, and backs several branches of the Salafist Muslim Brotherhood organisation internationally. Saudi Arabia is hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood, whose ideology and political activism challenge its own claims to hold unique authority within the Muslim world.

However, the Saudis and Qataris are also nowadays more aggressively promoting their favoured interpretations of Islam in Western Europe and the United States, both in support of existing Muslim communities and in reaching out to ‘call’ or convert non-Muslims to Islam. It can be difficult to gauge in specific cases, and even harder to generalise, whether these mosque-building and missionary efforts (‘tabligh’ or ‘da’wa’) are purely spiritual – however theologically couched – or whether they also serve directly to indoctrinate Muslims with radical ideas supporting violence. A view sometimes expressed is that in Europe the larger mosques funded by foreign state sponsors tend to be more conservative and less radical441 than some smaller, informal and more extremist mosques and prayer rooms442 where the peddlers of jihad violence are to be found (or not) below the radar of surveillance.

Counterterrorism consultant Marc Sageman argues explicitly that “[a]lthough a few Salafi mosques are sites of emergent terrorism, most fundamentalist mosques are not. Mosques are as apt to constrain as to facilitate the global jihad. Mosques are generally conservative institutions with a strong emphasis on the literal and traditional interpretation of the Koran. The Salafi jahd flourish in private mosques, unregulated by the state, where their brand of Islam was the only acceptable one. Mosques, even fundamentalist ones, are generally not supportive of the global jihad even if the imam and the congregation sympathise with some of the grievances motivating the jahd.”443

The content of Gulf-funded fundamentalist preaching nevertheless often remains disturbing, with a potential, which is hard to quantify, to encourage extremist action.

It has been estimated that 80% of the 1,200 mosques operating in the US were constructed after 2001, the majority with Saudi funding.444 By 2005 hundreds of publications issued by the Saudi government and its affiliates, and filled with intolerance toward Christians, Jews and other Americans, had been disseminated across the country, according to a report entitled ‘Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques’, published by the NGO Freedom House. 445

The report concluded that “the Saudi government propaganda examines reflects a totalitarian ideology of hatred that can incite to violence”. By 2013, an estimated 75% of North American Islamic centres relied on Wahhabi preachers who promoted anti-Western views in person and online, through their sermons and through the Saudi-produced literature.446

Meanwhile, Islamic charities based in the Gulf reportedly controlled 60% of mosques in Italy by 2009. 447 Qatar Charity alone claims to have built 138 Islamic centres in Europe over the past three decades,448 and, with Qatari government support, is currently fundraising to complete “the largest Islamic centre in Europe”, in Mulhouse, northern France.449

7.2 MOSQUES AND ISLAMIC CENTRES IN THE WEST

Having said earlier that it is hard to judge whether specific Gulf attempts at exporting Islam are innocuous or potential precursors to explosive violence, there is no doubt that they are controversial and raise deep suspicions within host states in the West. In 2012, when Qatar opened its 20-story, $65 million (€50 million) flagship Islamic centre in Mulhouse, one commentator declared that “Qatar, the most fraudulent ‘moderate’, is sparing no effort to spread Wahhabi Islam across the whole world, discouraging integration [and] encouraging jihad”.450

The commentator in question, Soeren Kern, cited a recent 2,200-page report, ‘Banlieue de la Republique’ (Suburbs of the Republic), commissioned by the influential French think tank l’Institut Montaigne, that described how Muslim immigrants were increasingly rejected French values and identity in favour of Islam.451 According to the report, the suburban slums known in France as banlieues, where up to one million or more mostly unemployed Muslim immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East live, were already exploited by Islamist preachers from countries such as Morocco and Turkey to create “separate Islamic societies” ruled by Sharia law. France, which has a strong secular tradition, is home to between five and six million Muslims, the largest Muslim population in the European Union. They are mainly undereducated low-income immigrants, and so their mosques depend on financial support from countries such as Morocco, Turkey, Tunisia – and now Qatar, Kern added – of which he said, pursue their own objectives in Europe. Among other findings, the Montaigne report described the proliferation of mosques, Quranic schools and make-shift prayer rooms in the banlieues, the religious orientations of which are heavily influenced by the national origin of the founder or president of a given mosque.

It is beyond the scope of this research to explore in depth the history, evolution and diversity of Muslim communities in France, and their internal and external networks of relationships. Much scholarly and journalistic work has been done on the relative strength and degree of integration of the various strands of Islam – moderate, fundamentalist, politically activist and jihadist – that have a presence in the staunchly secular republic, and we will return to this in section 7.4.1 below. For now we will confine ourselves to identifying some of the networks among Wahhabi/Salafist and Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated mosques and institutions across Europe, their Gulf-sponsored, and their place in the intricate fabric of European Islam.

7.2.1 BELGIUM

One of the earliest links between the oil-rich Gulf states and European Islam was the introduction of Saudi Salafist preachers in Belgium as far back as the 1960s.452 At the time, Belgium was encouraging Moroccan and Turkish workers to come to the country as cheap labour. Allegedly keen to secure oil contracts, Belgium’s King Baudouin made an offer to the Saudi King Faisal, who had visited Brussels in 1967: Belgium would subsidise a mosque in the capital where the status quo could be maintained, and it would hire Gulf-trained Salafist clerics. The Saudis got a 99-year, rent-free lease on a run-down pavilion in one of the capital’s main parks. It opened in 1978 as the Great Mosque of Brussels, as well as the seat of the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium (ICC).

The conservative Salafist teachings of the new mosque’s preachers were very different from the more open and tolerant Islamic of the immigrant Moroccan community, but many of them “were re-Islamified by the Salafist clerics and teachers from the Great Mosque”.453 Some Moroccans were even given scholarships to study in Medina, in Saudi Arabia, according to Belgian MP Georges Dallierame. The MP accuses the Salafist clerics of also trying to undermine attempts by Moroc- can immigrants to integrate into Belgian society. A WikiLeaks cable revealed in August 2015 that a staff member of the Saudi embassy in Belgium had been expelled some years previously over his active role in
spreading the extreme so-called tafrih dogma (declaring people apostates, and thus deserving to be killed). The cable, between the Saudi king and his interior minister, referred to Belgian demands that the ICC’s Saudi director, Khalid Alabri, should leave the country, saying that his messages were far too extreme, and that his status as director meant he should not be preaching anyway.

As noted earlier, although the larger foreign-funded mosques in Europe spread hardline Wahhabi or Salafist readings of Islam, creating a climate of separatism and intolerance, they do not necessarily preach violent jihad. However, the steady implantation of Wahhabi doctrine among immigrant Muslims may prepare the ground for a more violent ideology to sprout, and then become still more extreme and radical. The Brussels neighbourhood of Molenbeek, home to terrorist mentor and IS recruiter Khalid Zerkani and other jihadi linked to at least four terrorist attacks, has seen an evolution of this kind. Researcher Hend Fath has noticed a pronounced shift over the past ten years from the often arcane theological debates of an earlier generation of jihadi, linked to al-Qaeda, to what she calls “gangster Islam”. When she first started studying the neighbourhood more than a decade ago, the radical scene was dominated by extremist clerics well versed in religious texts. This has mutated under the influence of IS propaganda, she says, into a criminal enterprise driven by “the synergy between banditism and Islam”.

7.2.2 ITALY

The rise of Islam and Islamism in Italy has also proved contentious. Italy’s first modern mosque, in Catania in Sicily in 1980, was financed by Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, in 1988 the Muslim Brotherhood established a mosque near Milan; and in 1995 a vast mosque part-funded by Saudi Arabia, reportedly with capacity for 12,000 worshippers, opened in Rome, the capital. A report from the director of the National Intelligence Centre (CNI) to the ministries of interior, foreign affairs and defence said: “This financial aid is resulting in negative attitudes toward a peaceful coexistence, such as the emergence of ghettos and parallel societies, Islamic courts and police forces outside the law, girls being taken out of school, and forced marriages… The financial flows, namely the donations and financial aid from other countries to Spain’s Islamic community, are not sufficiently controlled… It is necessary for the donor countries to become fully aware of the risks involved in supplying individuals with funds.”

A delegation of Spanish officials subsequently toured the Gulf states, urging them to provide aid only through the officially approved Spanish Islamic Commission. While the delegation found their hosts generally willing to cooperate, it was reported that Qatar, for one, preferred to make donations through the Islamic League for Dialogue and Coexistence in Spain. This body, according to the CNI, was “closely linked to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood”, which was believed to control, for example, the Islamic Cultural Centre of Catalonia. As elsewhere, the authorities in Spain were not wishing to throw suspicion on all aid from Muslim countries, let alone Spanish Muslim communities themselves, but they were not at all keen to allow uncontrolled foreign influence.

According to the CNI, the mosques and centres sponsored by Saudi Arabia, for example, “are not characterised by their high degree of radicalism,” but they “submissively” follow the guidelines set forth by Saudi Arabia. The danger, rather, was that funding might end up in the hands of extreme and unaccountable individuals who “arrogate to themselves the role of legitimate representatives of the Muslim communities in Spain” and even “misappropriate funds supplied by the Arab nations”. That, the CNI warned, is why some trips to the area aimed at raising funds “are made in secret and without the knowledge” of the Islamic community on whose behalf these individuals were asking for funding.

Today, as we saw in section 5.1, Spain has become a European financing hub for jihadi in Syria and Iraq. Hundreds of young residents in Spain, mostly Moroccans, have joined IS, and at least 13 have died in suicide missions against Syrian regime forces. However, any direct links between the original external Arab input of financing and doctrine and the violence now being perpetrated, would be hard to pin down with any certainty.

7.2.4 GERMANY

In December 2015, Germany’s Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel publicly accused Saudi Arabia of funding Wahhabi mosques in the West linked to extremism, which he said were becoming a threat to public security. King Salman had earlier offered to build 200 mosques in Germany for Syrian refugees, while facing criticism in the CNI, the mosques and prayer halls suspected of promoting Islamist radicalism. As reported by the Spiegel magazine, the European media has started discussing the use of Salafis to recruit for IS. According to the CNI, the Salafi movement in Germany has become a “crime organisation” and “have taken steps to set up organisations that can train Salafists in Germany and send them to Syria”. According to the CNI, the mosques and prayer halls suspected of promoting Islamist radicalism have been shut down since December 2015.

On November 2, 2016, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve announced the closure of four more mosques, in the Paris suburbs of Yvelines, Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-de-Marne and Seine-Saint-Denis, because worshippers were suspected of promoting terrorism. Cazeneuve announced the closure of four more mosques, in the Paris suburbs of Yvelines, Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-de-Marne and Seine-Saint-Denis, because worshippers were suspected of promoting terrorism. Cazeneuve said the mosques were closed because they were using Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. The newly arrived Syrian and Iraqi refugees are especially vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment to IS. In Seine-Saint-Denis, the office of the prefectural prosecutor has also ordered the closure of a mosque in Argenteuil because of links to IS. The prefect of Seine-Saint-Denis, Jean-Yves Larche, said the mosque in Argenteuil was closed after it was found to be part of an “organisation promoting extremism”. In December 2015, Germany’s Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel publicly accused Saudi Arabia of funding Wahhabi mosques in the West linked to extremism, which he said were becoming a threat to public security. King Salman had earlier offered to build 200 mosques in Germany for Syrian refugees, while facing criticism in the CNI, the mosques and prayer halls suspected of promoting Islamist radicalism. As reported by the Spiegel magazine, the European media has started discussing the use of Salafis to recruit for IS. According to the CNI, the mosques and prayer halls suspected of promoting Islamist radicalism have been shut down since December 2015.

In July 2016, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said he was “in favour of the idea that — for a period yet to be determined — there should be no financing from abroad for the construction of mosques”. He also called for imams to be “trained in France, not elsewhere”. At present, France only has two centres that are qualified to train imams. As a result, some 300 imams are hired from abroad, including many “whose French language skills are poor”. Valls, whose comments were welcomed by the main opposition party, added that Salafism “has no place in France”.

7.2.5 CALLS FOR AN END TO FOREIGN FUNDING OF MOSQUES

As bomb attacks by homegrown jihadi has become an intermittent feature of European life, politicians have grown more impatient. In France, about 20 mosques and prayer halls suspected of promoting Islamist radicalism have been shut down since December 2015. There are some 2,500 mosques and prayer halls in France, about 120 of which are considered to be preaching Salafism, according to a report on Al Jazeera.

On November 2, 2016, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve announced the closure of four more mosques, in the Paris suburbs of Yvelines, Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-de-Marne and Seine-Saint-Denis, because worshippers were suspected of promoting terrorism. Cazeneuve said the mosques were closed because they were using Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. The newly arrived Syrian and Iraqi refugees are especially vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment to IS. In Seine-Saint-Denis, the office of the prefectural prosecutor has also ordered the closure of a mosque in Argenteuil because of links to IS. The prefect of Seine-Saint-Denis, Jean-Yves Larche, said the mosque in Argenteuil was closed after it was found to be part of an “organisation promoting extremism”. In December 2015, Germany’s Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel publicly accused Saudi Arabia of funding Wahhabi mosques in the West linked to extremism, which he said were becoming a threat to public security. King Salman had earlier offered to build 200 mosques in Germany for Syrian refugees, while facing criticism in the CNI, the mosques and prayer halls suspected of promoting Islamist radicalism. As reported by the Spiegel magazine, the European media has started discussing the use of Salafis to recruit for IS. According to the CNI, the mosques and prayer halls suspected of promoting Islamist radicalism have been shut down since December 2015.

In July 2016, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said he was “in favour of the idea that — for a period yet to be determined — there should be no financing from abroad for the construction of mosques”. He also called for imams to be “trained in France, not elsewhere”. At present, France only has two centres that are qualified to train imams. As a result, some 300 imams are hired from abroad, including many “whose French language skills are poor”. Valls, whose comments were welcomed by the main opposition party, added that Salafism “has no place in France”.

7.2.5 CALLS FOR AN END TO FOREIGN FUNDING OF MOSQUES

As bomb attacks by homegrown jihadi has become an intermittent feature of European life, politicians have grown more impatient. In France, about 20 mosques and prayer halls suspected of promoting Islamist radicalism have been shut down since December 2015. There are some 2,500 mosques and prayer halls in France, about 120 of which are considered to be pre
Pierre Conesa, a lecturer at Sciences-Po Paris and author of a report on counter-radicalisation, has described the Salafist movement as “the most racist, sectarian, homophobic, anti-Semitic, misogynous and sectarian branch of Islam”, and said France had been guilty of allowing Salafism to thrive on its soil. “You lay the groundwork for violent action when you allow this kind of anti-republican ideology to spread on your territory, notably through Salafist imams who are paid by Saudi Arabia,” he told France 24.126

However Senator Nathalie Goulet, one of the authors of a wide-ranging report on Islam in France, which detailed Moroccan, Algerian, Saudi and Turkish investment in French Muslim organisations,127 said a ban on foreign funding of mosques would be “absurd and impossible... [Valls’s] comments are based on the assumption that radicalisation takes place inside mosques, which is not true.” Bernard Godard, a former interior ministry official in charge of relations with Muslim institutions, added that foreign funds tended to reach the larger mosques, those least likely to foster radicalism.128

Austria has already outlawed foreign funding of mosques. In February 2015, the Austrian parliament passed controversial reforms to a 1912 law that made Islam an official religion in Austria. The new bill, partly aimed at tackling Islamist extremism, gave Muslims more legal security – protecting religious holidays, for example – but banned foreign funding for mosques and imams. Integration Minister Sebastian Kurz said Austria didn’t want its Muslim community to be dependent on foreign funding, but Muslim groups said the ban was unfair, as international support is still permitted for the

Christian and Jewish faiths. Some said they planned to contest it in the constitutional court. Kurz, however, stated that the reforms aimed to stop certain Muslim countries using financial means to exert political influence. “We want to give Islam the chance to develop freely within our society and in line with our common European values,” he said.

7.3 CASE STUDY: QATAR CHARITY AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD NETWORK IN EUROPE

With this caution in mind about how to interpret the underlying motives and possible ramifications of foreign funding of mosques in western Europe, we turn now, as an extensive case study, to an ambitious Wahhabi missionary project in the West that is part of Qatar Charity’s “Ghaith Initiative”, and its relationship to the Muslim Brotherhood-ally Union des organisations islamiques en Europe (UOIE; or Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe – FIOE).

In June 2016, a delegation from the governing board of the Al Noor Centre in Mulhouse, northern France, visited Doha seeking donations to help complete construction of “the largest Islamic centre in Europe”, described in a press release as a project of Qatar Charity’s “Ghaith Initiative”.129 The delegation included three Frenchwomen described as supervisors of Al Noor France and identified as preacher Khadijah Halfiah, a board member of the Muslim Association of Alaise (AMAL) and the Noor Centre’s fundraiser; Bayout Ogheili (a recent ‘revert’ to Islam), a bank manager and financial adviser to AMAL; and Hind Al-Mohafidh, another AMAL board member.

Qatar Charity’s chairman, Sheikh Hamad bin Nasser bin Jassim Al Thani, said the project reflected the charity’s eagerness to “strengthen the Islamic identity of Muslim communities in Europe, supporting the idea of peaceful coexistence between different cultures, promoting a proper understanding of the values and principles of Islam and reflecting a moderate interaction with Muslim communities”.

It was stated that the centre is being overseen by Qatar Charity UK, whose deputy chairman, Salah al-Hammadi, is the son of the Qatar missionary preacher Sheikh Dr Ahmed al-Hammadi, the driving force behind the Ghaith Initiative. In June 2015, shortly before the launch of the initiative, Sheikh Ahmed could be seen tweeting, with Islamic chauvinism, that “the historic impact of the Muslims on Europe remains to this day, and cannot in fairness be denied”, and that “leading scholars in Europe testify to the major role of the Muslims in its renaissance”.130 He was already fundraising on Twitter and on local TV channels for Islamic schools in France, where he said there were 12 million Muslims (at least double most other estimates) and that 10,000 people a year were being brought into Islam.131 “The Al Noor Centre is a quantum leap in terms of projects in Europe,” the younger al-Hammadi said at the French delegation’s press conference.132

Qatar Charity says the centre will be “strategically located in the border region between France, Germany and Switzerland” and serve 200,000 Muslims in the area. The project will cost €27 million ($29.4 million), of which nearly half had been raised by June 2016, and it has the backing of Qatar’s Ministry of Awqaf (Islamic endowments) and Islamic Affairs. It will cooperate fully “with all local authorities and institutions working for the public benefit and fighting against Islamophobia, racism and incitement to hatred, contributing to Muslim community service, helping them to practise their religious duties, meeting their cultural needs and activating the spirit of active citizenship and positive partnership and commitment. It will also teach Arabic language and Islamic education to more than 800 children and young people – including Quran memorisation – and incorporate a regular school which will accommodate 300 students, providing them with a good level of education which will allow them to ultimately enter the most prestigious local universities.”133

Qatar Charity calls the Ghaith Initiative a “natural extension” of projects established over the past few years under the supervision of Sheikh Dr Ahmed Al Hammadi, which have included the creation of 138 Islamic centres across Europe. Similar projects in France for which the Qatar Charity website is currently soliciting financial support include an Islamic cultural centre in the ‘strategic’ city of Strasbourg (apparently ‘the capital of the European Union’); an educational and cultural centre in Belfort, also in northeast France; and the European Institute for Human Sciences (IESH), a residential imam-training centre near Chateau Chimon in central France that also offers distance learning, summer schools and family holidays.

The IESH was set up by the Union des organisations islamiques en Europe (UOIE) – one of a number of organisations designated terrorist by Saudi Arabia and the UAE in 2014. The institute has been teaching Arabic, Quran memorisation and religious studies since 1990, and is at present fundraising for a new mosque and accommodation block. The IESH has been “voted Quran Institute of the Year by the Muslim World League”, based in Mecca.134 It also publishes fatwas on happenings in Europe based on the guidance of the Dublin-

The AMAL delegation from Mulhouse and Sheikh Dr Ahmed al-Hammadi in Doha. Source: Qatar Charity press release
based European Council on Fatwa and Research (ECFR), which was established by the UOIE in 1997 and is chaired by the Qatar-based Muslim Brotherhood (MB) preacher Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi.485 According to Wikipedia, one of the objectives of the ECFR is to “promote, and control, the local education of native imams”.486 This is something that might help to counter criticism of the foreign-born imams often appointed in the past to preach in foreign-funded mosques in Europe without adequate knowledge of local conditions or even languages. However, this claim is not supported by the ECFR’s own constitution.487

There is an intricate network of relationships between the UOIE and its French offshoot (the UOIF) and the many mosques, the ECFR, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the Qataris and others. The UOIF was founded in 1983 in by two students, from Tunisia and Iraq, as a federation of about 15 Muslim organisations in France, and now owns and manages hundreds of mosques. It is seen as representing the MB in France, and it therefore makes sense for Qatar, which has for decades had close links with the Brotherhood in several parts of the world, to channel its investment in French Islam into UOIF-affiliated mosques and centres. According to one French commentator, Qatar’s financing of French mosques has followed the model of earlier Moroccan, Algerian and Saudi backers, “but with a greater emphasis on proselytising”.488 He also pointed out the contrasts between the Qatari’s association with the MB and its activist political reform agenda, the conservative Salafism associated with the Qatari donations.489 Other French Muslim groups have criticized what they see as the disproportionately grandiose scale of the project and its alleged commercial and political dimensions, as well as accusing AMAL of financial mismanagement and a lack of transparency about the Qatari donations.490

The controersial Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi (French commentators sometimes call him ‘sulfureux’, sulphurous) plays an influential role as head of the ECFR. He has been accused of “flying Europe with his fatwas from Dublin” while continuing to preach in Doha and broad-cast his popular talk show Al-Sharia wal-Hayat (Sharia and Life) to millions of viewers worldwide on Qatar’s Al Jazeera satellite TV.491 Qaradawi advocates the integration of Muslims into the modern world and has opposed certain extremist views,492 but he has frequently voiced anti-Semitic views in the past and justified suicide bombings, including by women, in Palestine.493 Qaradawi was also a regular guest at the IESH in Chateau Chinon and at UOIF gatherings in France before being banned in 2012 from visiting the country. The many other MB guest speakers and preachers at UOIF mosques and seminars have included Professor Tariq Ramadan and his allegedly more radical and openly anti-Semitic brother Hani (grandsons, incidentally, of MB founder Hassan al-Banna).

7.3.1 QATAR CHARITY UK (QCUK)

In 2014, with the help of a £99,151 ($120,000) loan from AMAL,494 Qatar Charity opened an office in London “because of the need for direct supervision of Qatar Charity projects in Britain and in Europe generally, especially with the development of these projects and their increase in size,” according to Chairman Sheikh Hamad bin Nasser Al Thani.495 He said more than QR500 million ($137 million) had been spent since 2010 on projects in Europe, “which has included a number of projects for the benefit of the Muslim communities there”. The new office’s managing director, Salman Kaldari, said the primary goal was to support the social and economic progress of the most disadvantaged, in the UK and other European countries, but in reality the London outfit appears from company documents to be more focused on Islamic projects. QCUK’s website is currently suspended, but elsewhere it has described itself as “a non-faith-based charity that is focused on making a sustainable and meaningful impact to communities regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender or colour. However, the charity also receives and distributes donations that are specifically earmarked for projects related to Ramadan and other Islamic traditions.”496

During its first full year of operations, 2014-15, QCUK’s income was £4,457,191 ($5,447,935), of which 99.5% consisted of grants from Qatar Charity in Doha,497 £3,978,451 of the total took the form of restricted donations, of which just 3.1% was spent during the year; a further 5.1% was accounted for by a net loss on foreign exchange. £85,400 from Doha was spent on helping local organisations in the UK to provide Ramadan meals for the poor in the community, and £38,768 of Doha money was used to alleviate food shortages among the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar (a cause also strongly promoted by Qatar’s Al Jazeera TV). Money from general unrestricted funds was used to help establish a centre for rape victims in Bosnia. Also, under the working name of ‘Nectar Trust’, QCUK partnered with Mosaic, a youth project of the Prince of Wales’s charitable trust, as part of a strategy to build relations with reputable charities and other organisations.

The unspent 92% of restricted funding, which is to be disbursed once due diligence processes are complete, was earmarked for projects including:

- £2,139,139 for three “community centres”, two in the UK and one in Europe, including facilities for marriage functions, sport and day care centres, prayer areas, shops, and classrooms for teaching Arabic;
- £802,437 for the IEHS imam-training centre at Chateau Chinon in France;
- £95,696 for the Emaan Trust in Sheffield, northern England, founded in 2004 with the objective of “establishing a major Islamic centre”, which has twice been visited by Dr Ahmed al-Hammadi of Qatar Charity’s Ghaith Initiative, most recently in July 2016; one of Emaan’s trustees, Ahmad al-Rawi, was formerly president of the UOIE;
- £392,933 for Swansea University Campus; and
- £61,576 for a multipurpose centre in Mulhouse, northern France; the money was due to be reassigned, once permission from Doha was confirmed, as the trustees decided after due diligence not to go ahead with the project.

In addition, £3,188 – a rather small amount for a major humanitarian charity, and also unspent – was earmarked for Syrian refugees.

During the financial year 2014-15 QCUK paid back in full the £99,151 loan from AMAL: the trustees’ annual report duly noted that QCUK’s director-general, Ayyoub Abouliaqin, was an AMAL trustee. It also noted, under ‘related party transactions’, that QCUK’s chairman, Youssef al-Kuwari, was CEO of Qatar Charity in Doha, and that one of QCUK’s other trustees, Mohammad al-Ghamdi, was the Doha charity’s executive director for international development. Since February 2016 there have been no British trustees on the board, and al-Ghamdi has stepped down, leaving Youssef al-Kuwari in charge along with fellow-Qataris Mohammed Saadon al-Kuwari and Salah Ahmed al-Hammadi.498

Qatar Charity and its UK operation, which has the blessing of the Qatari embassy in London, clearly has big ambitions. QUCF’s stated vision is to be “the main charitable partner for Qatar investors in UK and Europe” and “provide opportunities for Qatar investors and businesses in the UK and elsewhere to demonstrate and increase the effectiveness of their corporate social responsibility”. While broadly philanthropic in nature, however, its plan of work is also strongly oriented to spreading and strengthening the Qatari brand of the Islamic faith in Europe, and hardly transparent about doing so. We will discuss further below whether, or to what extent, activities of this kind should give rise to concern.

7.3.2 UK INQUIRY INTO THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD (MB)

A Palestinian official once reportedly claimed “the Americans mistakenly think that moderate political Islam, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, would be able to combat radical Islam”.499 Contacts between

Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi; Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Misned, mother of the Emir of Qatar; and Professor Tariq Ramadan, who holds the Qatar-sponsored chair of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University

QCUK’s Facebook profile picture

The Noor Centre in Mulhouse, meanwhile, into which Qatar Charity has already injected large amounts of funding, is run by the UOIF-affiliated Muslim Association of Alsace (AMAL). The project to replace AMAL’s older and much smaller facilities with a majestic new all-purpose centre was launched in 2009 with money from Kuwait as well as Qatar in addition to local donations, and reportedly has the backing of Youssef al-Qaradawi.492 Other French Muslim groups have criticized what they see as the inappropriate grandiose scale of the project and its alleged commercial and political dimensions, as well as accusing AMAL of financial mismanagement and a lack of transparency about the Qatari donations.490

The unspent 92% of restricted funding, which is to be disbursed once due diligence processes are complete, was earmarked for projects including:

- £2,139,139 for three “community centres”, two in the UK and one in Europe, including facilities for marriage functions, sports and day care centres, prayer areas, shops, and classrooms for teaching Arabic;
the US and UK governments and various MB representatives over the years may well have had this thought in mind. Key allies Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE, however, have all banned the Brotherhood, calling it a terrorist organisation, and made clear their desire for Western governments to do likewise. In 2014 British Prime Minister David Cameron announced an inquiry into the MB and MB-related groups and their extensive but secretive operations in the UK and elsewhere. Allegedly under Saudi pressure to come up with damning evidence against the Brotherhood, the British government eventually published the main findings in December 2015.

The inquiry found that for the most part, the MB have preferred non-violent incremental change as the means of achieving their goal of establishing an Islamic state, but they are prepared to countenance violence – including, from time to time, terrorism – where gradualism is ineffective. They have not been linked to terrorist-related activity in and against the UK, and have often condemned such activity in the UK associated with al-Qaeda. However, MB-related organisations and individuals in the UK have openly supported the activities of the Palestinian Islamist organisation Hamas, and some have consistently opposed programmes by the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK since 2009. The MAB, for example, is associated with the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE, or UOIE), established by the MB in 1989.

The inquiry noted in conclusion that much about the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK remains secretive, including membership, fundraising and educational programmes, but MB associates and affiliates in the UK have at times had significant influence on the largest UK Muslim student organisation, on national organisations that have claimed to represent Muslim communities, and on charities and some mosques. Though their domestic influence has declined, organisations associated with the Muslim Brotherhood continue to have an influence that is supported by Qatar and Turkey. It has carried out IED and suicide attacks against Israeli military and civilian targets, and continues to make rocket attacks against Israel.

The MB, the inquiry report went on, faced a significant challenge for community support in the UK from militant Islam, and support British values.

7.4 IMPACT AND RELEVANCE OF FOREIGN FUNDING FOR WESTERN ISLAM

Muslims are becoming more visible in Western urban communities, and all too often have fallen uncomfortably under the media spotlight following bombings and explosions perpetrated by Salafi-jihadis. Mainstream Muslim organisations, including those with foreign affiliations, routinely denote the extremists’ explosive violence but find themselves unfairly tainted by tenuous association. In the context of our research into networks that facilitate IED use, the questions to be answered here are whether, or to what extent, the extensive influence of Gulf Arab governments and Wahhabist institutions among Muslim communities in the West poses a security risk or a threat to civilian lives, and specifically whether it has the potential to affect vulnerability to radicalism and violence.

In Europe, lavish expenditure by conservative Arab states on mosques and Islamic centres has gone hand in hand with massive investment by their sovereign wealth funds, businesses and high net worth individuals in real estate, media organisations and top-flight football clubs. There is no doubt that the Gulf states, notably Qatar and the UAE, are ambitious to assert their presence on the scene and have the financial resources to do so; and we have seen the extent of their networks of influence.

Some activities of their Islamic charities in Europe clearly aim not only to support and resource existing Muslim communities but also explicitly to make new converts to Islam, through teaching, preaching and offering lessons in Arabic to facilitate study of the Quran. The true nature of the MB’s charitable activities, and to practise gradualism or indeed change – one’s religion, is a fundamental human right, and poses no threat to free societies. It is worth briefly remembering, for comparison, the extensive evangelistic efforts of European and American Christian missionaries around the world in the past, in which humanitarian work in the fields of health and education was closely bound up with Bible lessons, church-building and spreading the Gospel.

However, our findings in section 7.2 show that the content of preaching in foreign-funded mosques has tended to strongly reflect the religious agenda of the donors, whether the political activism and engagement of the Muslim Brotherhood, favoured by Qatar, or the ultraradical Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia. While the transformation of European Islam effected by the injection of Gulf money and fundamentalist preachers has helped to strengthen Muslim identity and often encourage separatism rather than integration with the wider community, it has not, however, directly fostered jihadi violence or attacks harming civilians.

Conversion to Islam is not in any sense a predictor of violence, and the majority of Western converts will never have anything to do with jihadi terrorism. Nevertheless, Western converts are overrepresented among jihadis. One study found that of 58 individuals linked to 32 IS-related plots in the West between July 2014 and August 2015, 29% were converts to Islam. Converts, it said, accounted for 67% (12 out of 18) of the Americans involved in committing or planning an IS-related attack, despite comprising only 20% of Muslims in the US. The same thing has been found among convicted British jihadi. According to another report, converts constitute an estimated 2-5% of Britain’s 2.8 million Muslims, yet were involved in 31% of jihadi terrorism convictions in the UK between 2001 and 2010.

The progression from conservative Wahhabi or radical Salafist beliefs to violent jihadi discourse, and then beyond that to recourse to violent action, takes place in only a minority of cases, and in accordance with the plethora of demographic and socio-economic dynamics that we explored in sections 3. Early studies of the role of Muslim converts in the context of homegrown terrorism took the view that the minority who radicalised almost always followed a “Conversion-Radicalisation-Activation” pattern. In other words, they first and most importantly converted to an extreme form of Islam (generally following some personal crisis), which allowed them subsequently to be further radicalised to the point where they might eventually turn to violent action.

It is widely thought that recent converts’ inadequate knowledge of Islam, together with their ‘double marginalisation’ (not feeling a sense of fully belonging either among their new co-religionists or in the wider non-Muslim society) might explain their tendency to be swayed by extremist thinking. But the idea is also gaining ground that it is radicalism that is attracting them to Islam in the first place – for reasons we explored in sections 3 and 4 above and illustrate below – and in a sense, they are being converted directly into violent Salafi-jihadism. Olivier Roy, a leading authority on political Islam, has developed this idea into a theory of generation explanations, by which the second generation of Muslim immigrant families against their parents and by native converts with their own causes of alienation, for which radical Islam is a convenient and deadly vehicle. This “generational nihilistic radicalised youth revolts”, Roy says, is “more about the Islamisation of radicalism than the radicalisation of Islam”.

In France, both the engaged political-activist approach of MB-affiliated UFIOF mosques on the one hand, and the focus on personal salvation and morality of the non-integrating Salafist mosques on the other, have been found severely wanting by this segment of alienated or
disenfranchised youth. This first became strikingly apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but evident when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieues – unrelated to terrorism, but apparent when in November 2005, after several nights of rioting in the banlieu

Several of the Gulf-funded projects in the West also claim to be working towards this end, as we saw in the case of the Al Noor Centre in Mulhouse. It is questionable, though, how appropriately this can be done in a local context by agencies so strongly influenced by foreign backers, especially backers whose governments and citizens continue, as has been abundantly demonstrated in the preceding chapters, to provide financial and material support to the world’s major perpetrators of IED attacks.

Western governments therefore face a challenge in deciding which Muslim groups and organisations to engage with to build positive relations that may also help ward off the threat of radical jihadiism. This issue is already receiving a great deal of attention, and clearly deserves further sensitive study and debate.

8. AREAS OF CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE

Although this report is vast in its scope, there are still many parts of the world that have not been covered, either because there are fewer IED incidents there or because the groups examined in this report do not operate there to the same extent. This does not mean that these areas do not deserve more attention. Clearly, there is a need for further investigation in places where the IED networks we have discussed may get a foothold next. We will consider here the prospects of this happening in a number of key areas.

8.1 THE SAHEL

If one region is to be hit by large scale terror in the future, it is likely to be the Sahel. This is something that the UN’s Special Envoy for the Sahel, Hinoute Guebrem Selllassie, raised in late 2015. However, not enough attention has been paid to this region.

The Sahel spans the border areas between North and sub-Saharan Africa, from Senegal in the east to Sudan in the west. Indeed, Sahel means ‘shore’ in Arabic, implying the dividing line between Arab and black Africa. In the early 2000s. AQIM, for example, evolved out of the remains of the ultra-violent GIA that was active in the Algerian Civil War. However, attacks have become more frequent, especially since armed groups were able to take advantage of the chaos that followed the Malian insurgency of 2012. Although Mali’s conflict officially ended with the signing of a peace deal in July 2015, there are still French troops in the country, as well as UN’s special Mali peacekeeping force (MINUSMA). These personnel have become popular targets for IED attacks in the region. Moreover, Mali’s peace has shown several signs of crumbling, most recently in July 2016 when fighting broke out between pro and anti-government Tuareg forces.

The Sahel states in general suffer from poor economic growth, leading to various problematic implications. Out of 188 countries listed in the UNDP Human Development Report, several Sahelian nations feature in the bottom 20 including Mali (179), Burkina Faso (183) Chad (185) and Niger (188). A common characteristic of these is that economic growth is largely concentrated in urban areas and major cities, neglecting rural areas, thus making these countries largely underdeveloped.

IED attacks in the Sahel and West Africa 2011-2016 (excluding Nigeria)

The region also faces major demographic challenges. Annual population growth in Africa is equivalent to 3.5% which doubles the population every 20 years; in the Sahel, these figures go as high as 7%. For example, the population of Niger is today 20 million, but could reach 40 million by 2035 and 89 million by 2050. To make matters worse, 85% of this population lives in 20% of the total territory. In total, the four landlocked Sahelian states’ population could triple from 67 million in 2015 to 200 million by 2050.

Climate change has also affected the Sahel, with many farmers struggling to grow their crops in the countryside, leading to both transnational and regional migration of rural populations seeking job opportunities in urban areas. This rural-to-urban migration further participates in the growing of slums in and around large cities, which in turn leads to xenophobia and animosity from their urban neighbours, increasing social unrest and internal instability. This phenomenon has only been exacerbated by recent flares of terror.

Moreover, Gulf countries have been buying up land in the Sahel due to their own food shortages, which has further diminished the amount of available arable land. The increased presence of Saudi and Qatari charities in the Sahel has also given rise to fears of growing levels of Salafism in the region, which in general traditionally practices a moderate form of Sufi Islam.
Malaysia has already seen several groups inspired by Salafi-jihadism, such as AQIM, Ansar Dine, al-Mourabitoun, MUJAO and the Macina Liberation Front. Many of these groups rely on smuggling routes for revenue. Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the leader of al-Mourabitoun, has established vital local contacts with the Tuareg population in northern Mali, which has allowed him to control important routes for drug trade. These smuggling routes have been easier to control due to the chaos in Libya. Similarly, Chad and Cameroon have experienced an increase in attacks from Boko Haram in 2015 and 2016. There is also the growing threat of the conflict in Libya spilling over into the Sahel, something which may be more likely given the alliance between Boko Haram and IS.

As a response to attacks by Boko Haram, the Chadian and Cameroonian governments have decided to ban the full veil (burqa) to quell IED attacks carried out by people hiding explosives in their clothing, or individuals cross-dressing in order to avoid attention. Chad’s Prime Minister Kalizebi Pahimi Deubet stated in grand fashion that burqas sold in markets ‘would be burned’ if not removed. The ban may be embraced by other Sahelian countries, as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 2016 endorsed this policy.

Although the decision seems popular with local populations, it risks antagonising conservative Muslim communities. This would provide organisations such as Boko Haram with an opportunity to present their narrative of victimhood, particularly in Cameroon where Muslims only make up 25% of the population. Mali has also seen an occasionally violent exclusion of conservative and Salafi Muslims. In 2012, 16 conservative Dawa Muslims were killed by Malian troops since their long beards made security forces believe they were al-Qaeda members.

IED incidents in Chad and Cameroon 2011-2016

Most Sahelian countries are majority Muslim, which may prevent the sense of exclusion that restrictive measures (such as banning the burqa) have caused in France, Belgium and China. However, stigmatising an entire conservative community has proven to cause long-standing grievances in other Muslim countries, such as with the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and Egypt and the FIS in Algeria.

The Sahelian country that is probably most likely to experience terrorist violence in the future is Niger. Officially the poorest country in the world, it has seen increased activity from both Boko Haram and AQIM in recent years. It is also home to more than 40,000 Nigerian refugees, meaning there is a risk of Boko Haram recruiting from stigmatised refugee communities, as al-Shabaab has done in Kenya. However, it is likely that Boko Haram’s ambitions will remain primarily Nigerian, and that recent expansion into countries like Niger, Chad and Cameroon is mostly a result of being pushed out by greater regional powers.

It is Mali, however, which is the current epicentre of terrorism and explosive violence in the region. This is also where influential leaders such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar of al-Mourabitoun and Iyad Ag Ghaly of Ansar Dine reside. Most recorded IED attacks in the region have occurred against security forces in northern Mali. However, the November 2015 attack on the Radisson Hotel in Bamako, as well as the January 2016 attacks on Restaurant Cappucino and Hotel Splendid in Burkina Faso’s capital Ouagadougou, and the March 2016 Grand Bassam resort attack in Côte d’Ivoire – all committed by AQIM and al-Mourabitoun – signify a shift in strategy. The attacks on larger targets by AQIM have been seen as a response to IS expansion.

Local Francophone media has also highlighted that AQIM and al-Mourabitoun, who are originally Algerian, used jihadis from all parts of West Africa in order to conduct the attacks. This indicates a widespread regional appeal and an ability to mobilise fighters that should worry local and foreign governments, and this grander scale of AQIM attacks is likely to lead to more deaths from IED violence.

There should also be concern over the occasional fluidity of regional alliances, such as the on-and-off relationship between AQIM and al-Mourabitoun. Something that has not been widely reported in Western media is the fact that AQIM operative Khaled Bernaoui trained Boko Haram fighters in Algeria back in 2006 and that there are suspicions that the 26 August 2011 bombing of the UN headquarters in Abuja (for which Boko Haram was blamed) was in fact carried out by AQIM as a favour or potential trade-off. Despite Boko Haram’s allegiance to IS, there are still fears that their relationship to AQIM is close enough to enable future cooperation between the groups.

Although Sahelian governments have expressed their concerns over regional terrorism, and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) announced in March 2016 that it was creating a coalition to fight terror, there are still concerns over states’ ability and willingness to efficiently mitigate the problem. According to Dalia Ghanem-Yazbeck, an expert on terrorism in the Sahel and North Africa, the tense relationship between Morocco and Algeria (largely due to disagreements over the Western Sahara issue), has hindered efficient security cooperation along the Mali and Mauritania borders. Moreover, Ghanem-Yazbeck stressed Algeria’s unwillingness to fully eradicate groups such as AQIM, as its demographic challenges and poor economic opportunities, makes the country a hotbed for future terror.

Itself being conducive to terrorism: poverty, lack of political freedom, corruption as well as restriction and exclusion of conservative religious symbols. The French military intervened in Mali in 2012 and still has troops there, and the United States have since 9/11 implemented two different counter-terrorism efforts in the region. There is now a combined AU and UN force to deal with the threat, but many experts believe this force is too small and poorly equipped.

This, along with the threat of AQIM and al-Mourabitoun, who are involved in regional and extra-regional operations, means that these groups are likely to remain a threat in the Sahel for the coming years.

8.2 THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

8.2.1 EGYPT

Although Egypt ranked as the country with the eighth most IED incidents in AOAV’s data, explosive violence in the country has not been given enough attention. According to AOAV’s data, IED incidents have multiplied quickly in 2014 and 2015, and there is reason to believe that the number of attacks will continue to rise.

IED incidents in Egypt 2011-2016

Although most attention is given to chaos in the Sinai Peninsula, there is a surprising amount of attacks occurring outside Sinai. These have mainly been carried by groups such as Ajnad al-Mir, al-Furqan Brigades, the Allied Popular Resistance Movement, and the Islamic State in Egypt (a group separate to IS Sinai Province), and have focussed mainly in areas around Cairo and Fayoum. There have also been occasional ambushes and kidnappings in the Western Desert,
signifying how groups based in Sinai can use it as a base in order to launch attacks into other regions.

It is Sinai, however, that is the epicentre of terror in the country and represents the biggest challenge for Egyptian security forces. The situation is deteriorating. Between April-July 2016, there was a total of 195 different kinds of terrorist attacks in the Sinai according to Egyptian terrorism monitors. Local sources, unverified by AOAQ, stated that there was as much as one IED attack per day within this period.1039 Unlike mainland attacks (which have decreased) IED attacks in the Sinai have risen in 2016.1037 Moreover, IS Sinai Province killed a Coptic Priest on 30 June 2016, a move which risks introducing a nasty sectarian dimension to the situation.1039

The Egyptian government and security forces have faced criticism for their management of the security situation. On 7 August 2016, Egyptian state media reported the Egyptian military announced the killing of Abu Doa al-Ansary, an IS Sinai Province leader, along with 45 other jihadis.1038 However, doubts have been raised among local residents as to whether Ansary was actually killed or if he even existed, given that many had never heard his name before.1034 IS Sinai Province has contrary to common practice not eulogised him, which has led some to believe that the Egyptian security forces are simply reporting fabricated news in order to signal their ability to deal with the country’s security situation. Moreover, Tunisian media has suggested that this is due to the sudden political freedom enjoyed by radical groups after the ousting of dictator Ben Ali, along with a stronger influence of radical television preachers from the Gulf. Moreover, Tunisia has history of an aggressive modernisation and secularisation campaign which has led to religious expression being suppressed until recently.1035 This to some extent further corroborates the relationship between Francophony, ‘aggressive’ secularism and foreign fighters mentioned previously.

Tunisia has described the threat of terror as ‘imminent’ but that the situation remains under control. Security forces have been carrying out operations throughout 2016. However, the continuation of violence in Libya is likely to cause problems for Tunisia. The country has so far been unable to monitor and secure its borders,1041 which is why observers are calling for a comprehensive national strategy in order to quell jihadism in the country.1042 If terrorist groups manage to get a foothold in Tunisia, the country may see a sharp rise in IED violence before too long.

8.2.2 TUNISIA

Although Tunisia has only experienced 3 IED incidents in the last five years, there has been a presence of terrorist groups that have carried out small-scale ambushes on security forces in the country for a while. These groups include the Uqba bin Nafi brigade of AQIM, Jund al-Khilafa, Ansar al-Sharia and, more recently, IS. The latter’s attacks in 2015, such as the Sousse beach shooting of July 2015 (killing 39) and the IED attack on a bus in Tunis on 24 November 2015, indicate a worrying trend, and Tunisia may witness a rise in IED attacks in the coming years.

Tunisia has exported an unexpected number of foreign fighters, despite being the only success story of the Arab Spring. According to local NGO Rescue of Tunisians Trapped Abroad (RATTA), more than 7,000 Tunisians have left the country to join groups like IS. Many of these fighters have travelled to Libya, which occasionally has been used as a base for attacks carried out in their home countries.1039 Local Tunisian media has suggested that this is due to the sudden political freedom enjoyed by radical groups after the ousting of dictator Ben Ali, along with a stronger influence of radical television preachers from the Gulf. Moreover, Tunisia has history of an aggressive modernisation and secularisation campaign which has led to religious expression being suppressed until recently.1040 This to some extent further corroborates the relationship between Francophony, ‘aggressive’ secularism and foreign fighters mentioned previously.

Tunisia has described the threat of terror as ‘imminent’ but that the situation remains under control. Security forces have been carrying out operations throughout 2016. However, the continuation of violence in Libya is likely to cause problems for Tunisia. The country has so far been unable to monitor and secure its borders,1041 which is why observers are calling for a comprehensive national strategy in order to quell jihadism in the country.1042 If terrorist groups manage to get a foothold in Tunisia, the country may see a sharp rise in IED violence before too long.

8.2.3 LEBANON

Lebanon has seen a total of 30 IED incidents since 2011. Almost half of these (12) occurred in the Bekaa valley, which lies alongside the Syrian border. These have mainly been part of skirmishes between Jabhat al-Nusra, IS, Hezbollah and the Lebanese Army, that the region has seen as a result of the spillover of the Syrian War. Beirut has had seven attacks, most notably the assassination of politician Mohammad Chatah in a car bomb on 27 December 2013, and the double suicide bombing in Shia district Bourj al-Barajneh on 12 November 2015 that killed 43 and injured more than 200. Tripoli in the North Governorate saw a double VIED attack on the Al-Salam Mosque and Al-Taqwa Mosque on 23 August 2013 that killed 47 and injured 500.

Lebanon has thus already experienced its share of explosive violence, but several factors suggest that the country may face further explosive violence. The biggest reason for this is the spillover of the Syrian war. Besides the more than 1 million Syrian refugees in the country, Lebanon has seen a direct impact from the war. In June 2014, IS and Jabhat al-Nusra even invaded and briefly held the town of Ansari in the northern Beqaa valley.1043 The Lebanese army, in unprecedented cooperation with Hezbollah, has been able to fight off the jihadi groups.1044 Moreover, Lebanese analysts have reported that many suspect the suicide bombings in al-Qaa on 27 June 2016, where eight suicide bombings were carried out in one day, were perpetrated by Syrian refugees from nearby IS controlled al-Qaa camp. Lebanese security forces have stated that groups like IS and Jabhat al-Nusra have attempted to recruit in Lebanese refugee camps.1045

Lebanon’s domestic political climate further complicates things. The country has not been efficiently governed for the past two years and has been without a president for the last two years. Inevitably, this has negatively impacted its ability to deal with the country’s security situation. Moreover, the fact that Hezbollah is arguably the most powerful political, and military, movement in the country makes Lebanon a logical target for terror due to Hezbollah’s involvement in the Syrian civil war. Their involvement has also escalated sectarianism in the country.1046 Given that Lebanon saw a 15 year long sectarian civil war between 1975 and 1990, existing tensions may be exacerbated by the Syrian crisis next door.

8.2.4 JORDAN

Between November 2015 and June 2016, Jordan experienced three terrorist attacks that were the worst the country had seen since the Amman hotel bombings of 2005, which claimed 60 victims. In November 2015, a man shot two American contractors and three Jordanians at a police training facility in Amman. On 6 June 2016, a lone gunman killed five employees of the country’s General Intelligence Department (GID) outside a refugee camp in Baqaa. Finally, the country experienced its first IED attack since the Amman bombings of 2005 when a suicide VIED crossed the Jordanian border from Syria on 21 June 2016 at the Ruapan crossing and detonated near a Jordanian security outpost, killing seven soldiers.

Despite Jordan being comparatively stable since the beginning of the civil war in neighbouring Syria and throughout the conflict in Iraq, there are worries about homegrown terrorism and the seemingly inevitable spillover effect from the war in Syria. In March 2016, an 11-hour long gun battle between security forces and IS cells resulted in the death of seven militants, and did according to the GID foal a major terrorist attack that was going to target both civilian and military targets.1047 Irbid is the hometown of one of the most infamous Jordanian IS supporters, the aforementioned Abu Muhammad al-Tahawiy. Moreover, the southern crime-ridden city of Ma’an has accounted to local media seen a rise in IS sympathies since at least 2014.1048 IS to some extent has Jordanian roots, as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who founded predecessor organisation AQI is from Jordan’s second largest city, Zarqa.

Estimates suggest that Jordan has sent more than 2,000 foreign fighters to Syria.1049 Surprisingly, three foreign fighters have parents who are sitting members of the Jordanian parliament. The Jordanian economy has taken a heavy toll from the more than 600,000 Syrian refugees that have entered the country, and if privileged youth can find IS appealing, this would suggest a worrying indication for those less fortunate.

The refugee issue is another possible factor that may spur IED attacks in Jordan. Jordan recently closed its borders to Syria, meaning that about 60,000 refugees are stranded on the Syrian side of the border.1050 However, Arabic media has reported that Jordan has considered stepping into Syria to create a buffer zone next to its borders, and would potentially stabilise this zone with the help of Jabhat al-Nusra.1051 Although this remains speculation, such a move could provoke a reaction from rivaling terrorist groups.

For the moment, Jordan remains stable. However, given its vicinity to crises in Syria and Iraq, and with evident sympathies for IS festering in the country, it would not be unlikely for Jordan to suffer more IED attacks in the future.
8.3 TURKEY

Turkey’s security situation has taken a drastic turn for the worse within the past five years, and this is reflected in the number of IED attacks in the country. Although IED incidents decreased in 2013 and 2014, they have rapidly escalated in 2016. In fact, the first half of 2016 alone saw more attacks than any other full year within the last five years.

IED Incidents in Turkey 2011-2016

![Graph showing IED incidents in Turkey 2011-2016]

There are several explanations for why Turkey has experienced this increase, and for why more violence is likely. The first is its perennially bad and once again deteriorating relationship with its own (and other countries’) Kurdish population. Turkey has experienced several large-scale attacks from the PKK and TAK, for example the suicide car bombing in Ankara on March 13, 2016, which killed 37 civilians and injured 125. Attacks from the PKK have increased after a ceasefire and ceasefire agreements were broken, and the umbrella organisation that includes Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham. This report has also highlighted the ease with which foreign fighters have used Turkey as a transit point before joining various groups in Syria. However, Turkey has also been accused by various sources of proactively supporting IS by means including Turkish training of IS fighters, medical assistance to IS fighters, financial support through oil purchases, and even military assistance to IS in battles against the YPG.

Although there is no doubt that Turkey has taken an active role in funding groups in Syria, it is difficult to confirm to what extent the accusations are true. What is certain is that Turkey, which to some extent sees IS as its enemy’s enemy in Syria, and therefore logically a friend, has through its leniency over border crossings and its support for various armed groups contributed to the creation of its own internal threat. This has become clear with several IED attacks being carried out by IS on Turkish soil. For example, IS claimed the multiple suicide bombings that killed 128 civilians in Ankara on October 10, 2015.

However, if NATO ally Turkey is in fact fighting against IS in Syria, in line with its official Westward-looking policy, it is likely that further attacks will take place on Turkish soil.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The main perpetrators of IED attacks in the countries most affected by explosive violence are almost all Salafi-jihadi in outlook and practice. The jihadi terrorism that fuels such attacks is, in turn, a globalised transnational enterprise; it is networked but largely decentralised in its operations. The sources of this enterprise’s financial, material and human resources are diverse and have evolved with changing circumstances – including counterterrorism measures – in recent years.

In this report we have focused on the networks linking the ‘Islamic State’ (IS), al-Qaeda (AQ) and its affiliates, the Taliban, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, and have focused on their common Salafi-jihadi ideology in the context of other relevant factors. We have been able to draw the following conclusions:

A. IED users share many similarities. The groups under review use IEDs both for quasi-military purposes and as an insurgency tactic, and do so in remarkably similar ways. Most of them target civilians with IEDs and, in the countries worst affected by their actions, civilians overwhelmingly represent the majority of the casualties they inflict.

B. IED users are linked in many ways. AOAV has been able to identify links between several of these groups relating to the manufacture, tactics and usage of IEDs, as well as signs of interorganisational cooperation. The groups show themselves to be pragmatic, flexible and adaptable in operational terms, however rigid in their rhetoric.

C. Religion plays a key role in the justification for IED use. Groups vary in the degree to which they seek to locate their actions within Islamic jurisprudence, but they all adopt some sort of religious framework for their actions. At group level they paint a black-and-white view of the world, depicting their actions as a defence of Islam and a virtuous struggle against corruption and injustice, and some of their grievances are legitimate. Yet individual followers are often motivated by more personal or local socioeconomic factors, and may have joined the jihad as an act of rebellion, thrill-seeking or self-protection.

D. There is less state funding of terrorism than we might think. In terms of financing, state sponsorship of Islamist militant groups has become less of an issue than was previously the case, although Qatar and Kuwait are still passively allowing private donations to reach groups in Syria fighting the Assad regime, especially Jabhat al-Nusra. Since the rise of IS in Syria and Iraq and IS-linked terrorist plots within the kingdom, Saudi Arabia, in particular, has cracked down on terrorist financing and joined in coalition airstrikes against IS. It continues, though, to sponsor military action against those it sees as allies of Iran in Syria and Yemen. Most of the Gulf states now have legislation and mechanisms in place for combating the financing of terrorism, and these are starting to be used, at least with reference to IS.

E. Syria has had an impact on funding streams for jihad. The war in Syria has resulted in the diversion of some Gulf Arab funding away from Afghanistan and Somalia.

F. IED users have adapted in a number of ways to find alternative sources of revenue. Where state sponsorship and/or private donations have been reduced and, especially in the case of IS, where the group postures as an independent power, terrorist organisations have developed diversified quasi-state economies. They rely heavily on revenues from oil and agriculture and various forms of taxation. They also attempt to provide some kind of public services. Criminal activities such as extortion, illicit trade, and kidnaping for ransom are also important sources of funds for these groups.
Funds and fighters often follow the same pathways. Two emerging features of terrorist financing are worth highlighting. The first is the two-way flow of funds between, primarily, IS in Syria and Iraq and returning fighters or new recruits from a wide range of places, including Western Europe and the US but also Libya and possibly other Middle Eastern states. The second is the movement of self-funding foreign fighters into conflict zones, often bringing with them material support of various kinds, and their use of multiple small transactions to microfinance their jihad. We noted innovative measures being piloted to track this form of funding.

Not all charity is good. Some Islamic charities, which have a track record of supporting violent jihadi groups in the past, continue to play a nebulous but potentially significant role in the funding of terrorism. These charities often carry out much valued humanitarian work in many of the main areas most affected by IED violence, but their association with particular groups has a darker side: it aids jihadi’s efforts to win local hearts and minds. In some instances, there are even plausible claims that weapons have been transferred to armed groups under the cover of humanitarian aid. Pan-Islamic humanitarianism often responds to the same rhetoric as the global jihadi: the need to aid fellow-Muslims suffering hardship or aggression by non-Muslims. Both forms of response draw on a sense of solidarity and, on its own terms, altruism. This area deserves further scrutiny.

The Islamic ‘caliphate’ is the new Afghanistan. As in the 1980s, a conflict portrayed by the Salafi-jihadis as a battle between Islam and anti-Islamic forces is attracting thousands of foreign volunteers. These fighters may – some of them, at least – return to their countries of origin to carry out bombings and other terrorist attacks, or go on to fight elsewhere. It was in Afghanistan, and more recently in Iraq and now in Syria, that jihadi recruits have received their most intensive indoctrination and training. Already over 20,000 foreign fighters have reportedly arrived in IS-controlled Syria and Iraq, more than the total number of foreign fighters who battled the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

IS loves foreigners and foreigners love IS. IS recruitment propaganda is heavily slanted toward foreigners, and nearly 20% of the foreign fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq have been from Western Europe. A disproportionate (though still small) number have been converts to Islam.

Beware the returning jihadi. The potential threat posed by foreign fighters returning home is a challenge facing not only Western governments but also those in the Middle East and North Africa region, which continues to provide the bulk of the insurgents. Not all returnees will be intent on mayhem, however; many may be traumatised or disillusioned. Options such as prosecution, imprisonment, revoking of citizenship and social rehabilitation (or ‘deradicalisation’), and their impact on target communities, will need to be assessed and implemented with great care.

Wahhabism lies at the root of much of the problem. Decades of oil-financed Wahhabi propaganda have – without promoting violence – spread fundamentalist Salafi Islam across the globe, largely as a counterweight to Shiism and the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood. Wealthy Arab states continue to fund mosque-building and proselytisation, including in the non-Muslim West. This has contributed to providing fertile ground for some groups, especially nowadays with the aid of social media, to find potential recruits for a more radical outlook. Radicalisation, however, tends to take place not in mainstream or foreign-funded mosques but in private prayer halls and ‘garage mosques’.

The Salafi-jihadi genie is out of the bottle. Whereas previously jihadi recruits would have been young, radicalised Muslims, it may be that radicalism itself is now attracting other alienated youth to Islam, making the radicalisation process all the harder to monitor.

Religious financing from the Gulf has had a troubling impact. In examining the ongoing efforts of some Gulf states to spread Salafi Islam in Europe, we have questioned whether this is compatible with host societies’ desire to integrate Muslims into their communities. At a minimum, greater transparency on the part of Gulf state donors and local European Muslim recipients is called for.

Beware the Sahel. We have identified a number of areas of concern for the future, top of the list being the Sahel region. AQIM and IS in Libya are already active to the north, and Boko Haram to the south. The fluidity of alliances among these and other similar groups is an additional factor for instability. Mali is a hub of Salafi-jihadi influence. Niger is seen as particularly vulnerable to more radical jihadi violence, largely due to economic stagnation, high population growth, rapid urbanisation and climate change.

Egypt is a concern. AOAV’s data shows a sharp increase in IED attacks in Egypt, by a range of minor groups, in 2014 and 2015. There have also been a large number of terrorist attacks reported in Sinai in 2016. Egypt’s repressive government, bleak economic outlook and vulnerability to a spillover of violence from neighbouring Libya make it another area to watch.

Turkey poses problems. The conundrum of NATO ally Turkey’s ambivalent relations with IS and Jihadi groups, and its ongoing hostility to the PKK, needs to be better understood. Turkey, now facing IED violence on its own soil, is critical to international efforts to tackle the epicentre of the globalised transnational jihad and its profligate use of IEDs, the source of so many civilian deaths.

Understand the regional and transnational networks that facilitate IED use.
10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1 As has been shown by this report, IED users constantly evolve tactics, whether it is through innovation or by adapting to local realities. The international community should strive to move quickly and adequately adapt counter IED efforts accordingly. This includes devoting more resources to IEDs as its own area of study rather than simply one feature of terrorism, and through analysis of existing data attempt to foresee trends in IED usage to prevent future casualties.

2 Although manufacturing an IED is relatively simple, groups often rely on certain people training others, particularly for more advanced devices. Preventing these bombmakers from diffusing their knowledge should be a number one priority, and intelligence efforts should pay equal attention to locating these individuals as to locating leaders.

3 The global coalition against IS should continue to push back the group. As IS lost territory throughout 2016, its sources of revenue have consequently declined. Limiting the area IS controls in Iraq and Syria will thus affect the group’s global reach. However, solutions need to be found in terms of managing the retaliatory IED attacks that IS employs as a response to lost territory.

4 There needs to be increased endeavours to proactively address and disrupt Boko Haram’s access to other groups active in Africa. With its heartland in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram has potential reach into both North and West Africa. There have been connections between Boko Haram and IS, as well as between Boko Haram and AQIM. Given AQIM’s tendency to use foot soldiers from all over Western Africa and its decent relations with Boko Haram, there are opportunities for both to coordinate efforts should the security situation in the Sahel deteriorate further.

5 A stronger security and intelligence apparatus on the Horn of Africa could potentially disrupt cooperation between al-Shabaab and AQAP. As this report has shown, the two share infrastructure and AQAP is said to have trained al-Shabaab fighters in IED-making. The international community should push for increased intelligence and action against their cooperation, which could present harm to both groups.

6 Cooperating with manufacturers of precursor materials has rendered crucial intelligence of how especially IS builds their IEDs. The security and counterterror sector should actively engage manufacturers to prevent their products from ending up in the wrong hands.

7 Access to terrorist propaganda and hateful messaging inspiring terrorism need to be restricted. This does not only apply to jihadi online forums. Hateful and inciting messages are, as has been mentioned in this report, spread on publicly sponsored TV channels across the Middle East, particularly from Saudi Arabia. Whilst freedom of expression should not be restricted, pressure should be put on TV stations that allow so called “tele-angels” to incite violence against minorities and non-Muslims.

8 Middle Eastern states enjoying lucrative and prosperous relations with many Western states should be called out for their active and passive support for transnational IED networks. Allies should actively consider suspending cooperation with states that passively or actively support groups that harm their own troops and interests. These states include to (various degrees) Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Turkey, Pakistan, Kenya, and the United Arab Emirates. Although the manner in which these states have support terrorist groups differ, Western allies should in general pressure them to implement and enforce stricter anti-terrorism financing legislation and to tackle corruption and cooperation between military bodies and terror groups. Some Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia, have shown promising signs of improvement in anti-terrorism financing legislation, but more needs to be done to fully come to terms with these states’ support for IED users.

9 Many groups take advantage of existing crime networks for revenues, for example in the narcotics trade and other smuggling activities. This serves as evidence that a holistic approach aiming to eliminate other criminal activities is required to eradicate terrorist networks. Support should be provided to states affected by IED violence to assist taking on crime syndicates that help terror networks acquire funds.

10 The obvious needs to be stated. In order to prevent the transnational IED networks from expanding, there needs to be an end to conflict. To prevent people from joining violent insurgent groups in the first place, several holistic approach measures must be implemented. This includes providing economic opportunities for socio-economically challenged areas, as well as universal access to participation in democratic procedures. As the chapter on foreign fighters shows, this is not only relevant for the Middle East but also for Europe.

313 Kyle Worton, “ Governing the Caliphate: Profiles of Islamic State Leaders”, Published by the Harry Jackson Institute, 2016.

314 In 2006, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In 2005, he announced on the Internet that he had joined the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the group's leadership referred to him as the “Caliph” of Islam.

315 Personal interview with Jacob Zenn, 6 October 2016

316 An analysis of the Islamic State's influence in the Middle East and the region's security challenges, CTC Sentinel, 19 February 2016.

317 This article was based on a report by a former US military intelligence officer who was part of a British intelligence team that was sent to Iraq after the invasion to investigate the link between Saddam Hussein and the Islamic State. The report was classified as “Top Secret.”

318 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

319 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

320 Personal interview with analyst at ICG, 22 July 2016.

321 Personal interview with analyst at ICG, 22 July 2016.

322 Personal interview with analyst at ICG, 22 July 2016.

323 Personal interview with analyst at ICG, 22 July 2016.

324 Personal interview with analyst at ICG, 22 July 2016.

325 Interview with Frederic Wehrey, Carnegie Endowment.

326 Personal interview with analyst at ICG, 22 July 2016.


328 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

329 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.


331 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

332 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

333 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

334 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

335 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

336 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

337 DW, “Rich Arabs are funding al-Shabaab”, 18 December 2014

338 Interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

339 Interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

340 Interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.


342 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

343 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

344 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

345 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

346 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

347 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

348 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

349 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

350 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

351 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.


353 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

354 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

355 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.


357 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

358 Dawn, “Pakistan’s bloodiest election campaign comes to an end”, 10 May 2013


360 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

361 DW, “Several killed in Nigeria election violence”, 28 October 2016

362 Interview with analyst at ICG, 22 July 2016

363 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

364 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

365 Ibid.

366 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

367 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

368 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

369 Hassan al-Banna - Hassan al-Banna was born October 14, 1906 and died February 14, 1949. Al-Banna was a radical Islamist and founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (Jamaat al-Islami al-Musri). He was the inspiration for Sayyid Qutb, who was a leading figure in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. He may have influenced al-Banna’s successor, Sayyid Qutb, and is most famous for his writings and influence on al-Qaeda.

370 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

371 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

372 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

373 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.

374 Personal interview with analysts at International Crisis Group in Nairobi, 22 July 2016.


377 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

378 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

379 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

380 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

381 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

382 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

383 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

384 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

385 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

386 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

387 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

388 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016


390 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

391 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

392 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

393 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

394 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

395 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

396 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

397 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

398 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

399 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

400 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

401 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016

402 Personal interview with Charlie Winter, 22 July 2016