

U.S. Naval War College

U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons

CIWAG Case Studies

8-2018

Defeating ISIS and Al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield: The Case for the Corporation Against Ideological Violence

Michael W.S. Ryan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/ciwag-case-studies>

Recommended Citation

Ryan, Michael W.S., "Defeating ISIS and Al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield: The Case for the Corporation Against Ideological Violence" (2018). *CIWAG Case Studies*. 16.
<https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/ciwag-case-studies/16>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in CIWAG Case Studies by an authorized administrator of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

CENTER ON IRREGULAR WARFARE AND ARMED GROUPS



Defeating ISIS and Al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield:
The Case for the Corporation Against Ideological Violence

Michael W. S. Ryan

United States Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island



**Defeating ISIS and Al-Qaeda on the Ideological
Battlefield: The Case for the Corporation Against
Ideological Violence**

Michael W. S. Ryan

Center on Irregular Warfare & Armed Groups (CIWAG)
US Naval War College, Newport, RI
CIWAG@usnwc.edu

This work is cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited.
This case study is available on CIWAG's public website located at
<http://www.usnwc.edu/ciwag>

Message from the Editors

In 2008, the Naval War College established the Center on Irregular Warfare & Armed Groups (CIWAG). CIWAG's primary mission is twofold: first, to bring cutting-edge research on Irregular Warfare into the Joint Professional Military Educational (JPME) curricula; and second, to bring operators, practitioners, and scholars together to share their knowledge and experiences about a vast array of violent and non-violent irregular challenges. This case study is part of an ongoing effort at CIWAG that includes symposia, lectures by world-renowned academics, case studies, research papers, articles, and books. Our aim is to make these case studies part of an evolving and adaptive curriculum that fulfills the needs of students preparing to meet the challenges of the post-9/11 world.

Michael W. S. Ryan's second case study for CIWAG is a deeply analytical and penetrating assessment of two challenges: first, how Jihadi Salaafist groups recruit individuals to their cause; and second, how we can stop them. Ryan's argument is that to really disrupt the strategic communications of these groups, we must first understand how they leverage ideological frameworks to target vulnerable people. As a result, his nuanced analysis of the methods used by Jihadi Salaafist groups provides the framework for understanding how they hijack language and concepts to groom and retain followers. Ryan also addresses the question of how to inoculate against and repel these ideological overtures and help the families and communities they target by examining deradicalization and counter-radicalization programs in Saudi Arabia and Europe. For the United States, he recommends the establishment of a joint public-private Corporation Against Ideological Violence, modeled after the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Ever the pragmatist, Ryan also discusses the barriers—both conceptual and institutional—that must be overcome to ensure such a program's success.

Classroom instructors should find the nuanced analysis of Jihadi Salaafist recruitment techniques a solid foundation for why and how these groups continue to appeal to diverse audiences despite battlefield setbacks.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

Practitioners and academics should find the detailed discussion of how a public-private Corporation Against Ideological Violence could be organized, funded, and be effective a thought-provoking and pragmatic framework.

It is important to note two critical caveats to this case study. First, the opinions found in this case study are solely those of the author and do not represent the views of the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy, the Naval War College, or CIWAG. Second, while every effort has been made to correct any factual errors in this work, the author is ultimately responsible for the content of this case study.

We also have a special note of thanks for CIWAG's senior editor, Janet Parkinson, for her tirelessly professional editorial work in bringing this complex case study from concept to full case study. Her good judgement and intellectual rigor were vital at all stages of development, from design to delivery.

We hope you find this case study useful, and look forward to hearing your feedback and suggestions for how you can contribute to the Center on Irregular Warfare & Armed Group's mission here at the Naval War College.

Author Biography

Michael W. S. Ryan is a senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation and an adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute, both in Washington, D.C. Formerly, he served as a senior executive in the U.S. departments of state and defense and as vice president of the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Middle East Institute. He studied Arabic in Egypt and received his Ph.D. from Harvard University. Dr. Ryan is author of *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy: The Deep Battle Against America*, published by Columbia University Press (2013). His current research focus is jihadist ideology, doctrine, and strategy.

Table of Contents

Message from the Editors	1
Author Biography.....	3
I. Introduction.....	5
A. The Meaning of Jihad for Jihadi Salafism.....	16
B. Types of Jihad: al-Qaeda’s Perspective.....	18
C. Jihad After ISIS: Fusion of Jihadism and Salafism	19
D. Hybrid-War Weapon	21
E. Lessons from <i>The 9/11 Commission Report</i>	22
III. The Radicalization Process and Targets	25
A. The Recruitment Process: The Shotgun Approach	26
B. The Recruiting Process: The Rifle Approach	30
C. The Art of Recruitment.....	31
IV. What Is To Be Done? Go Broad, and Go Deep	35
A. Countering Violent Extremism.....	36
i. The Behavioral Approach	38
ii. Radicalization and Deradicalization.....	41
B. Programs Outside the United States	43
i. The Saudi Experience	43
ii. Major European Approaches.....	45
C. The United States Today.....	48
V. The Solution: The Corporation Against Ideological Violence	52
A. The Way Forward: First, Approach the Problem.....	53
B. The Way Forward: Establish the Tools	53
C. The Way Forward: Establish Governance.....	56
D. CAIV’s Organization and Tasks	58
E. Inherent Difficulties, and Their Solutions.....	63
VI. Conclusion	67
Annex A: The Recruitment Handbook.....	69
A. Target Groups for Recruiting.....	70
B. The First Stage: Getting Acquainted and Choosing.....	71
C. The Second Stage: Getting Close (or Approaching).....	72
D. Third Stage: The Awakening of Faith	74
i. Shrinking the World	76
E. Fourth Stage: Planting the Concepts	77
F. The Last Stage: The Establishment of the Brigade	78
Annex B: The Millennium Challenge Corporation	81
Annex C: Further Reading.....	83

I. Introduction

We believe the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities, and management. – *The 9/11 Commission Report*¹

The vast majority of observers and analysts have argued that defeating the ISIS ideology (or that of al-Qaeda) is a job for soft power. The fact that all efforts to date have fallen short of the mark has not deterred the search for the magic key to make soft power finally work in this arena. The problem with such an approach is that ISIS treats its ideology and military doctrine as a part of a relatively seamless continuum. We need a new approach that attacks both in a coordinated fashion. This case study will illustrate how the United States can avoid repeating the four failures mentioned above in the war against jihadist ideology.

The struggle against ISIS, al-Qaeda, and their affiliates has always included two aspects. First is the *close battle*: kinetic operations conducted by military, intelligence, and police, assisted by the activity of globally networked financial institutions. The leaders in every aspect of the close battle are clearly identified and, with the lessons learned over the years, those leaders work to share information and coordinate their activities as much as possible in a coherent whole. The second aspect is the *deep battle* of ideas, engaged in collectively by the same actors and by other approaches such as diplomacy and international aid agencies.²

¹ “The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States” (Official Government Edition 2004) 339; <https://www.9-11commission.gov/report/>

² Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda’s Strategy*, (2013) 3-5. The terms “close battle” and “deep battle” are derived from briefings the author attended that General Michael V. Hayden (Ret.) delivered at Jamestown Foundation functions. Gen. Hayden emphasized that in the leadership positions he held at the NSA and CIA, the close battle, the battle of immediate life-or-death decisions, always demanded his time. The deep battle, on the other hand, while crucial to prevent jihadist groups from recovering from defeats in the close battle, was not a good fit in the time available to decision makers or in terms of the subject matter, an ideology based on a religion and non-Western cultural terms.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

The United States and its international coalition have prosecuted a mostly successful collaboration on the close battle despite occasional setbacks. This collaboration has not achieved all its goals and thus can declare significant progress but no final victory. We should expect this collaboration to continue even in the face of a reduced regional footprint by the United States. The deep battle—the war of ideas against jihadist ideology—has not achieved similar success, either at home or abroad. The elements needed for the war of ideas already exist, but they are much less developed and certainly less successful than kinetic operations. How can this be rectified? This case study will chart a new approach.

The United States fights the close battle both inside its own borders and internationally, country by country, in a networked coalition of allies and partners. Its fight in the deep battle must similarly engage within its own borders and simultaneously in collaboration with a network of allies and partners. The close battle is fought differently from country to country because of differences among national legal structures, military, intelligence, and enforcement capabilities. We should expect the battle of ideas also to be fought differently inside the United States from the methods used by our allies, although with large areas of overlap.

Each member of the American coalition has a unique mixture of history, culture, and government structure and thus must fight the battle of ideas using its own best judgment, first within its own country and then internationally as part of the coalition. Some countries are further along this path, and most face greater problems internally than the United States. Each international partner also needs to decide the relationship of its war of ideas to its internal enforcement and intelligence efforts.

So far, the war of ideas has had two aspects: (1) devising appropriate counternarratives to jihadist propaganda, and (2) thwarting jihadist recruitment, either by counter-radicalization efforts to prevent recruitment or by efforts to deradicalize those who have already been recruited. The results so far has been mixed, as we shall discuss in the course of this study. *While developing a counternarrative to jihadist ideology is necessary to help prevent recruitment, we should not expect a*

*Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield
logical argument alone to be effective after full radicalization and
recruitment.*

A war of ideas against a religiously based ideology, like violent Jihadi Salafism, is difficult to define within U.S. Constitutional constraints. Some critics have asked why we should focus on a radical Muslim ideology when other violent ideologies have inspired fatal attacks in the United States for decades. Moreover, unlike the war of ideas during the Cold War, this new war is pitted against non-state actors who are expert at manipulating ancient cultural symbols that are foreign to the United States and the West in general.³ Unlike the Cold War, this new war is aided by technology that allows anyone with a cell phone to bring the war into our very homes. This war of ideas therefore must be fought from the highest federal level down to the most local of all levels, the cell phone of an individual adolescent.

This case study argues that defeating radicalization and promoting deradicalization needs to be addressed within a new federal agency in the form of a public-private corporation: the Corporation Against Ideological Violence, or CAIV.⁴ This would be a presidential initiative with bipartisan support, sufficient dedicated resources, and a clear focus on winning the war of ideas against radical ideologies that encourage or demand violence from their adherents. Although the primary motivation and focus of this study is creating CAIV to defeat violent jihadist ideology, the recommended methodology is applicable to any violent ideology and not specific to a particular religion or set of beliefs. In practice, it should be extended to cover other violent ideologies as well, whether based on jihadist, neo-Nazi or other ideologies.

This case study will examine what we have learned about the radicalization process as well as jihadist ideology and recruitment, first to define how a war of ideas might best be conceived and then to discuss

³ Since 9/11, the United States has fought Sunni jihadist groups, the latest of which is ISIS. The United States has hostile relations with Iran, which also promotes a violent ideology, but Iran is not included in Congress's Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) stemming from the 9/11 attacks.

⁴ The proposed initiative is modelled on another federal corporation, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in which the author served as a senior executive. Details on MCC are contained in Annex B.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

how CAIV can help win the deep battle. It describes CAIV's composition, methodology, costs, and initial tasks.

Since the 9/11 attacks, the United States has worked hard to create the basis for collaboration and information sharing among elements of the close battle against terrorism at the federal level and between the federal level and the local level. This collaboration and information sharing must be formalized for the deep battle, both within the U.S. and internationally. Best practices, research, and tools thus must be shared among international and national partners in the collaboration in accordance with formal agreements.

General information, strategies, best practices, and international programs may be found in summary form on the Department of Homeland Security's website under Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and in online reports from international institutions like the International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, the United Arab Emirates' Center of Excellence, Hedayah, and many others; but such information is scattered across the globe and is rarely in a usable format. Among the recommended tasks for CAIV is developing a new tool that captures such data in an accessible and usable form—an information fusion center, accessible to researchers, international partners, and ordinary individuals alike. CAIV would also develop a national hotline to provide individuals and families with online access to counsellors and would create professional training courses for counsellors at the state and local levels. CAIV would need grant authority and funding to assist local NGOs in developing the capacity to help communities counter violent radical ideologies before law enforcement becomes necessary.

This Case Study will develop its argument as follows.

First, it will describe the power of jihadist ideology in context. This part will examine the meaning of jihad for the Jihadi Salafist ideology. It will also identify the problem of dealing with nonviolent “gateway” groups, which teach an ideology that can lead to violence when an individual moves on to a Jihadi Salafist organization with the same goals as the gateway group but on a faster timeline. For example, it will

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

note the origins and development of Jihadi Salafism through the collaboration of the nominally nonviolent Muslim Brotherhood in exile and radical Wahhabi scholars in opposition to the Saudi Arabian government and the official Saudi religious establishment. It will describe the types of jihad before al-Qaeda and then how Jihadi Salafism developed further outside of Saudi Arabia by al-Qaeda to become what one jihadi strategist called the “global Islamic resistance.” Then it will examine the innovative fusion of jihadism and traditional Salafism in the person of the ISIS “caliph,” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Second, it will examine the jihadist recruitment process and targets developed by al-Qaeda and vastly improved by ISIS. Research confirms the intuition that radicalization, whether within jihadism or neo-Nazism, is the product of the “intersection of an enabling environment and a personal trajectory.”⁵ This part will demonstrate how both ISIS and al-Qaeda aspire to provide the enabling environment by recruiting and securing individual and small-cell terrorists inside the United States without the benefit of the large footprint that characterizes its activities in Europe. It argues that with the loss of territory in Syria and Iraq, setting up cells in the United States has become a high priority for ISIS. This section also illustrates how ISIS translates into English or simply uses al-Qaeda’s English-language manuals on recruiting and securing lone-wolf mujahedeen inside the United States and elsewhere. It then describes the recruiting process and how it was applied in the case of one lonely American woman in a rural area. (Annex A has a more detailed analysis of the recruitment-to-mobilization process.)

Third, it will make recommendations on how to win the war of ideas against ISIS, al-Qaeda, or any radical ideology. The basis of these recommendations is the establishment of a formal collaboration between elements of the close battle, including enforcement and intelligence, and elements of the deep battle or the war of ideas—both in a domestic U.S.

⁵ See Daniel Koehler, *Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism*, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017) (Kindle edition) 76. Koehler is quoting from Fernando Reinares et al., *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism: A Concise Report Prepared by the European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation* (May 15, 2008).

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

context and as a wider collaboration among allies and partners who share a violent ideological threat. This section will review first how this collaboration grew in the United States, in part out of the Obama administration's presidential initiative on countering violent extremism (CVE). This collaboration has been among the major drivers of the close battle, including the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). The section then explores how members of the international collaboration have conducted this, which varies from country to country. Part 3 focuses on the domestic U.S. collaboration on the deep battle and recommends establishing a new actor, the Corporation Against Ideological Violence, a wholly owned government corporation whose single focus would be on countering radicalization in the deep battle of ideas both domestically and internationally, while avoiding any duplication of effort with the highly successful close battle waged by American military, enforcement, and intelligence.

And fourth, the case study will describe CAIV's makeup and tasks. CAIV's domestic partners will include state governments and CAIV-certified NGOs, as well as local communities. The purpose of domestic partners will be to offer an alternative to law enforcement for targeted interventions early in the process on the path to violence. CAIV also will create a virtual network for willing international partners comprised of centers formally established or supported by international allies and partners after the 9/11 attacks. (It is expected that some of these centers may also address ideologically inspired violence beyond the scope of violent jihadism.) For both domestic and international applications, CAIV will produce a two-phase approach that deals with current challenge and future threats. It begins with identifying and addressing the consequences of jihadi recruitment messaging and contents and also provides resiliency training to reconnect individuals with social networks that provide a bulwark against predatory recruitment. Additionally, it will introduce three major categories of doubt about the extremist path an individual may be contemplating: (1) doubts about the ideology itself, (2) doubts about the

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

leadership and group behavior, and (3) doubts about personal and practical issues.

The case study will conclude with a discussion of the creation and funding of CAIV, the authorizing legislation for its governance structure, and the special provisions afforded to it as a wholly government owned federal corporation in the form of a public-private partnership, and the decision to fund the effort for success through the Congressional appropriations process.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield
II. The Power of Jihadist Ideology in Context



Figure 1. Rocket Launcher and IED Lesson (credit:Wladimir van Wilgenburg)

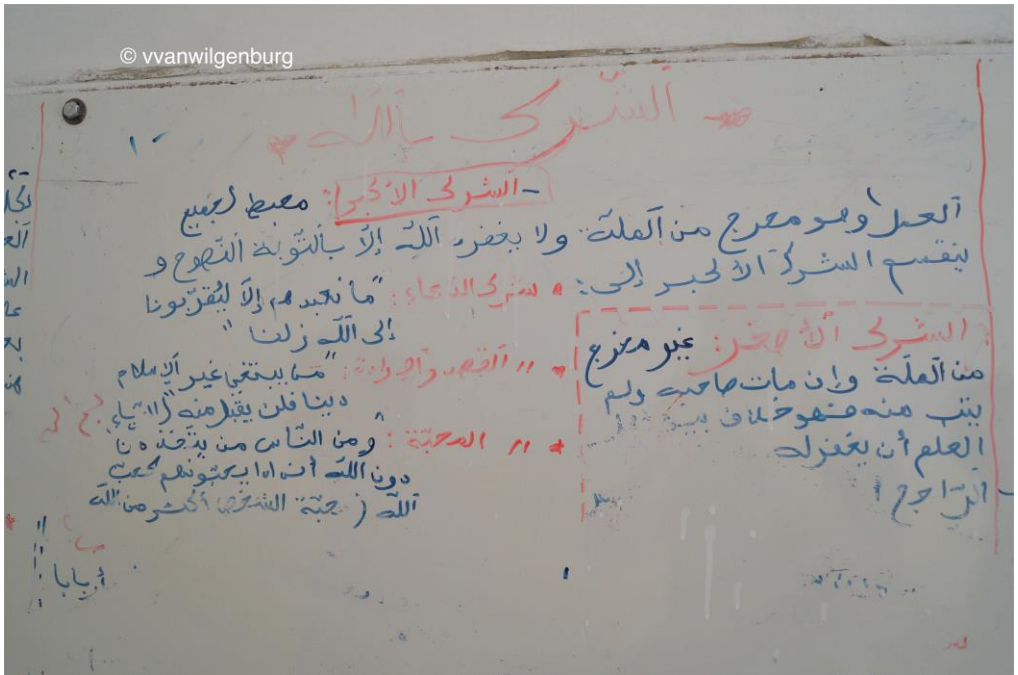


Figure 2. Greater Polytheism and Lesser Polythesim Lesson (credit: Wladimir van Wilgenburg)

Wladimir van Wilgenburg, a young journalist and scholar, has been embedded with the Kurdish fighters in Iraq and Syria since 2014. He traveled to several cities in northern Syria witnessing firsthand the war against ISIS, including the liberation of the ISIS capital of Raqqa. During June 2016, he was embedded with Kurdish forces who were part of the U.S.-supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) campaign to liberate the strategic town of Manbij. ISIS occupied and strongly defended the entire area. The SDF campaign’s purpose was to sever the ISIS group’s strategic smuggling corridor between Turkey and Syria.

Early that month, Wladimir visited an Armenian church in Tal Abyad near the Turkish border, which had been converted into a training center for fighters under ISIS occupation, but came under SDF control in July 2015. On the walls of one room was a series of white boards with

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

lessons in blue, black, and red Arabic script along with carefully drawn and annotated illustrations of various weapons and ammunition. The military training was highly technical and included the weight and size of rocket launchers and IEDs with every part carefully annotated. However, religious instruction was not far from even the most technical military training. Several boards held lecture notes on traditional Islamic topics like “the monotheism (*tawhid*) of the names and attributes of Allah,” “the major polytheism (*al-shirk al-akbar*)” that nullifies a person’s claim to be a Muslim, “the lesser polytheism,” and the most practical topic for governance, “the role of the shar‘iah.”⁶

With its superior Islamic credentials compared to other Muslim jihadist groups, ISIS has proven success in recruiting individuals and building a vibrant network of both provinces (*wilayat*) that hold territory and other guerrilla entities that do not yet hold territory.⁷ Despite its loss of territory in Syria and Iraq, the ISIS group’s powerful propaganda and military prowess as a terrorist group and as a proto-state make it potentially stronger than any other jihadist group, including present day al-Qaeda. Moreover, the jihadist group’s ideology and organization integrate its religious and military aspects: as we have seen, ISIS displays its Islamic credentials even in classrooms devoted to military education and training. Although the United States and its allies have achieved hard-fought military victories, ISIS will likely continue to use its powerful Islamic credentials to recruit and absorb new fighters to its cause, perhaps under a new name and with new leadership. After losing territory devoted to its proto-state, the group will no doubt wage guerrilla warfare and plot

⁶ Wladimir van Wilgenburg provided the author access to his copyrighted photos of the ISIS white boards in December 2017. The author translated the phrases from Arabic, and any mistakes in translation or description are his alone.

⁷ For an account of how ISIS built a series of provinces and affiliates outside Syria and Iraq, see Bardia Rahmani and Andrea Tanco, “ISIS’s Growing Caliphate: Profiles of Affiliates,” (02/19/2016), www.wilsoncenter.org/articles/isiss-growing-profiles-affiliates

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

terrorist attacks, rather than the semi-conventional warfare that became its hallmark.

The key point for our consideration of ISIS ideology is how Zarqawi (the leader of the ISIS group's predecessor in Iraq) set the model not only for ISIS, but also for al-Qaeda despite its opposition to ISIS. Zarqawi did not separate ideology from military affairs. The ISIS group's credentials in the person of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (renamed Caliph Ibrahim) are thus infused into its ideology, which is composed of traditional Salafi/Wahhabi religious teachings, modern extremist dogma, and an Islamized guerrilla strategy.

Like al-Qaeda's leaders, the wildly successful Zarqawi was not as powerful as he might have become if he had been recognized as a religious scholar. Unlike al-Qaeda, the organization he founded developed the ability after his death to argue that leadership and religious stature was established within one person, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The organization took the time to argue—publicly, in Arabic—that al-Baghdadi possessed all the qualifications of the original Arab caliphs, and when the time was right after the fall of Mosul, they declared al-Baghdadi to be Caliph Ibrahim. Al-Qaeda objected to this outcome, but too late; tens of thousands of jihadist fighters flocked to the new caliph's banner.

Even after the loss of its territory spread across the border between Syria and Iraq, ISIS still exists—primarily because thousands have accepted its integrated ideology. In the aftermath of American-led military successes against it, one renowned expert has argued that ISIS's remaining strengths include “the power of its brand and its presumed ability to mount spectacular terrorist strikes in Europe.”⁸ It does not take much imagination to recognize that ISIS would desperately like to replicate that ability in the United States to regain a portion of its preeminence in jihadist circles while al-Qaeda “unobtrusively rebuilds its military strength” without triggering an overwhelming American response.⁹

⁸ Bruce Hoffman, “Al-Qaeda's Resurrection,” *Council of Foreign Relations Expert Brief* (March 6, 2018), <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/al-qaedas-resurrection>

⁹ *Ibid.* 3,7-8. Al-Qaeda has a current international presence of over 20,000 (not counting chaotic Syria and fellow travelers). Hoffman argues that al-Qaeda is presently trying to avoid suffering the

A. The Meaning of Jihad for Jihadi Salafism

Both ISIS and al-Qaeda use variations of Jihadi Salafism as their ideology.¹⁰ As its name implies, the ideology is a fusion of the austere form of Islam called Salafism and jihad in the sense of religious warfare. In Arabic, *jihad* means “struggle” or “effort.” Jihad in this sense may be a spiritual struggle that has nothing to do with war. However, jihad in the public sphere in modern times almost always means a war to defend Muslims against attacks from non-Muslims and their apostate Muslim allies. Such a war may be purely defensive or preemptive. To understand jihad as a component of jihadist ideology, however, one must look at two aspects: first, jihad as insurrection against all Muslim leaders, who have now been declared apostate; and second, jihad as revolution against the New World Order, led by the United States and its close partner and ally in the Middle East, Israel.

Jihad as insurrection had its origin in the intellectual ferment of twentieth-century Egypt with two pillars of jihadist history, Sayyid Qutb and Abd al-Salam Faraj.¹¹ Because Sayyid Qutb declared universal *takfir*—that is, no Muslim countries exist, only individual Muslims—it followed that all nominal Muslim countries and their leaders were legitimate targets of violent jihad. In addition, Qutb argued that no legitimate caliphate had existed for hundreds of years, which by inference denied the Ottoman caliphate any legitimacy. After Qutb, Abd al-Salam Faraj wrote that violent jihad was an individual obligation. This point is crucial. In the ordinary order of events, political and recognized religious leaders called for jihad, and parents acquiesced in their sons’ participation unless their own country was under attack. Faraj’s statement means that individuals are obliged to wage jihad without official sanction or parental permission.

The precise origin of the term *Jihadi Salafism* is difficult to determine. However, as its name implies, Jihadi Salafism is the fusion of

ISIS group’s fate at the hands of the American coalition but that this “ruse” will eventually end and it will return to terrorism in the West, presumably whenever such a course is feasible.

¹⁰ In Arabic, word order is not always significant. The phrase “*al-salafiyyah al-jihadiyyah*” may be translated correctly either as Salafi Jihadism or Jihadi Salafism. I have chosen the latter in English because I view Salafism as the basis for personal morality, governance, and law and Jihadism as the violent and extreme variant of Salafism.

¹¹ See Michael W. S. Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda’s Strategy: The Deep Battle Against America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 26-44.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

the new universal concept of jihad born in Egypt and the austere form of Sunni jurisprudence born in Syria and Saudi Arabia. The Islamist ferment within Saudi Arabia's religious opposition (1970–1996) became known in radical circles as the “Islamic Awakening.”¹² Inside Saudi Arabia, this movement was composed of the political Islam of the Egyptian and Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in exile, tailored to Saudi culture, and the radical teachings of fundamentalist Wahhabi scholars of the nineteenth century.

The ideology of Jihadi Salafism as we know it today emerged among what became known as the Shaykhs of Jihadi Salafism in Saudi Arabia between 1997 and 2003, the year the unsuccessful al-Qaeda insurrection began in Saudi Arabia.¹³ Because neither Bin Laden nor Zawahiri had the formal knowledge or religious status to provide a theological justification for al-Qaeda's and other global jihadists' actions (unlike ISIS), they were forced to depend on outside theologians for the religious theory to justify them. Toward the end of the 1990s, a group of religious scholars inside Saudi Arabia, influenced by the Sahwa movement but more radical, began to provide such justifications for these global Jihadi Salafists.¹⁴

Jihadi Salafism as a violent revolutionary ideology was honed in the writings of the Palestinian-Jordanian Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, the actions of al-Qaeda's leaders Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the strategies of Abu Bakr Naji and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. The emergence of ISIS represents the ideology's end point, which may prove to be strategically premature after its conventional military defeat in Syria and Iraq.

Saudi Arabia suppressed the ideology of Jihadi Salafism inside Saudi Arabia and also defeated the al-Qaeda insurrection by 2005. The ideology is alive, however, wherever al-Qaeda or ISIS has a presence and inspires jihadists worldwide.

¹² See Stephane LaCroix, trans. by George Holoch, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011).

¹³ Saud al-Sarhan, “The Struggle for Authority: The Shaykhs of Jihadi-Salafism in Saudi Arabia, 1997-2003,” in Bernard Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stephane Lacroix, eds., *Saudi Arabia In Transition: Insights on Social, Political and Economic Religious Change*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁴ Saud al-Sarhan, “The Struggle for Authority: The Shaykhs of Jihadi Salafism in Saudi Arabia, 1997-2003,” in Bernard Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stephane Lacroix, eds., *Saudi Arabia In Transition: Insights on Social, Political and Economic Religious Change*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 181-206.

B. Types of Jihad: al-Qaeda's Perspective

The prominent jihadi strategist and movement historian Abu Mus'ab al-Suri separated jihadist warfare in the Middle East into three major types or “schools of jihad”—local clandestine organization, regional open-front, and individual or small-cell jihad.¹⁵

In classic local jihadism, radical jihadists form a clandestine, hierarchical group that mostly operated within a single country. The Fighting Vanguard group of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria is a good example of this school. The Fighting Vanguard fought inside Syria, its only target, while the nominal Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leadership did very little leading from exile. Al-Suri opined that this kind of jihad failed in Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco as well as Syria because strong central regimes in the Middle East had developed powerful, modern security systems. These systems allowed the central governments to roll up a local clandestine group to the point that it was totally destroyed in its target country.

Al-Suri referred to the second school of jihad as “open front.” Open-front jihad is the form of jihadist insurgency that most resembles conventional warfare. It involves a wider, regional, overt approach that avoids the strict hierarchical cell approach and the limitations and vulnerabilities of a clandestine existence. Al-Suri's examples of open-front jihad include Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya. This type of jihad was fought on a global basis and, according to al-Suri, was successful militarily and politically at least before 9/11.

According to al-Suri, after 9/11 the U.S. and its allies in Europe partnered with the authoritarian governments of Middle Eastern countries to develop a global system to defeat jihadists wherever they were, starting with the overthrow of the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The primary factor in the defeat of open-front jihad, according to al-Suri, was the overwhelming technical superiority of American forces. The only type of jihadist warfare that would succeed in this environment, al-Suri argued, was what he called “the school of individual and small-cell jihad.” As its

¹⁵ See Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, 207, 220 ff.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

name implies, this last school involves what U.S. pundits refer to as “lone-wolf” or “homegrown” terrorism.

The complexity of al-Suri’s analysis is generally lost in popular accounts. For example, he argued that if the correlation of forces between the “Crusader-Zionist coalition” and the jihadist movement should approach a more equivalent status, he himself would join an open-front jihad. In other words, if the United States were to withdraw from any theater of jihadist open-front warfare, the balance of power between jihadists and its local enemies could shift in favor of the jihadist forces. Both al-Qaeda and later ISIS concluded that the best way to encourage the United States to withdraw its forces from the Middle East was to engage in classic guerrilla strategy from terrorism to semi-conventional warfare, not only in the greater Middle East but also in Asia and the Pacific, in addition to al-Suri’s strategy of small-cell and individual terrorism inside the United States and its allies’ borders.

Al-Suri’s analysis stopped in 2005 when he was captured by Pakistani forces and handed over to the United States. The conditions he cited for jihadist success in the open-front model appeared in Syria during the Arab Spring, if only for a moment in historical time, but he was out of combat in Assad’s infamous Sednaya Prison. It is worth noting that al-Qaeda in Syria (before the creation of the breakaway Organization for the Liberation of Sham [HTS] in January 2017) included traditional open-front jihad, insurgents with conventional weapons, as well as its clandestine subset that the United States called the Khorasan group, which was charged with planning terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies outside of Syria.

C. Jihad After ISIS: Fusion of Jihadism and Salafism

Traditional Salafism, like other mainstream versions of Sunni Islam, views jihad as a community affair that involves the political authorities of a Muslim state.¹⁶ Salafism is relatively forgiving of its

¹⁶ Thomas Hegghammer has used the term “classical jihad” to refer to the traditional jihad practiced by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and “global jihad” to refer to the concept of jihad as an

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

leaders as long as they are Muslims who have not committed major, nullifying sins in public. In accordance with this tendency, Salafist religious leaders generally support the concept of deference to *wali al-amr*. *Wali al-amr* means “protector of affairs” and designates the authority that protects the Muslim community from internal and external threats and generally runs the affairs of state to that end, including the formal and binding declaration of jihad.

Salafists and other Muslims consider jihad to be a collective duty (*fard kifayah*). However, Jihadi Salafists consider jihad to be an individual duty (*fard al-'ain*). These distinctions are not mere esoteric details about belief structures—they have immediate practical effects on all Muslim-majority countries concerning who has the right to declare war and who has the legal obligation to fight and materially support a religious war.

Neither ISIS nor al-Qaeda accepts the concept of deference to the ruler in matters of war and peace. As Jihadi Salafist groups, they both follow Sayyid Qutb’s view that there are no Muslim countries, only Muslims, and therefore there are no legitimate Muslim rulers who must be obeyed. ISIS is the more radical because it does not recognize as Muslim *any* leader, including jihadists, who has not pledged allegiance to the ISIS caliph. Furthermore, only the ISIS caliph has the right to declare jihad as an individual obligation for all who would be Muslim.

These basic elements of governing indicate the fusion of religious and political affairs in which there is no meaningful distinction between matters of religion and matters of war. This is important because it offers a further demonstration of why ISIS cannot be defeated by either hard power or soft power alone. Rather, it demands that the United States and its allies attempt to frame the war against ISIS as a fusion of soft and hard power, both conceptually and in practice.

The same analysis could be applied to al-Qaeda, although that group has compartmentalized religion and ideology to some extent and is not currently in a position to declare a caliphate. Like ISIS, however, al-

individual obligation as championed by al-Qaeda. See Thomas Hegghammer, “Classical and Global Jihadism in Saudi Arabia,” in Bernard Haykel et al., *Saudi Arabia in Transition* (2016), 207-228.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

Qaeda has a Jihadi Salafist world view, which anticipates that it will achieve what ISIS has achieved, theoretically after securing a much greater consensus and therefore greater legitimacy and wider support.

D. Hybrid-War Weapon

ISIS is trying to create a hybrid-war weapon out of the lone-wolf phenomenon. This is not a new form of jihad but a refinement, aided by modern social and other online media, of al-Qaeda's doctrine on the use of lone wolves and small cells for political means, rather than as individual acts of revenge or rage.

To create the desired political effect, lone wolves and small cells must appear to be a significant threat while eluding the police. To that end, the ISIS group's operations, explicitly based on Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's strategy, when applied to the United States is to create as many unconnected cells as possible that sustain themselves without any knowledge of the details of the existence of other cells. Thus no cell poses a security threat to any other cell; when police discover one cell, no other cell is threatened.

When the cells begin to operate, they (theoretically) will give the impression to the American people that the nation is under attack from within by a large, powerful group, something a vulnerable network could never achieve.

Jihadists are realists who have studied the United States for years. They have great respect for American police and intelligence agencies. They know that the likelihood that any cell will escape its first operation is miniscule. These clandestine units will not be extensively trained operatives, because such individuals would likely come to the attention of U.S. security forces and police. The al-Qaeda security manual, adopted by ISIS, is intended to give untrained clandestine cells a better chance of survival, at least until their first operation. A major recommendation is to look upon survival as a goal, something ISIS must realize is highly unlikely in the United States or even in Europe, where the group's presence appears far more developed than in the United States. It would be

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

an additional benefit if the existence of the English-language manual gives U.S. authorities, other Americans, and overseas jihadists the impression that such cells already exist, even if they do not.

The security manual's theoretical exception to the no-suicide rule inside the United States would apply to the individual who had originally set up the small unconnected cells. Only that person would know about the details of the cells' existence. In al-Suri's theory, the original recruiter and set-up man, who he called the "builder unit," should either leave the country before he is detected or perform a suicide operation so that his secrets die with him. With today's technology, the "builder unit" would not need to be inside the United States to accomplish his goals.

The last aspect of this hybrid-war weapon, which we should expect ISIS or its successor organization to use in the United States, is its "virtual planner" model. In this, the recruiter or a colleague becomes an online advisor and planner of an attack by a small cell with a high political value for jihadists.¹⁷

E. Lessons from *The 9/11 Commission Report*

The 9/11 Commission Report concludes: "We believe the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities, and management."¹⁸ Imagination is not the same as fantasy. Imagination in this sense is the projection of known jihadist aspirations, proven capabilities, and likely threat into likely future scenarios. Imagination requires creating the policies, capabilities, and management structure to avoid or defeat the next wave of jihadist attacks on the United States. Since the *9/11 Report*, the United States has shown the imagination to create a formidable set of tools for the close battle, both at home and

¹⁷ See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Madeleine Blackman, "ISIL's Virtual Planners: A Critical Terrorist Innovation," *War on the Rocks* website (January 4, 2017). The authors suggest this model has been used in Europe and link its origins to the thinking of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri about simplifying attacks so that virtually any motivated cell or individual could carry one off without advanced training.

¹⁸ "The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States."

abroad. The United States now needs to show some imagination in the deep battle.

While important in the bigger picture, the Jihadi Salafist ideology has had a limited impact on mobilization or recruitment to ISIS or other jihadist groups. By “mobilization,” I mean persuading existing jihadists and recent recruits to take a specific action, whether travelling to an area of hot jihad, committing terrorist attacks in situ, or simply waiting for future orders. I use “recruitment” to mean the process of inducing non-jihadists to join a jihadist group. This process may involve persuading a non-Muslim to become a Muslim. (For ISIS, even nominal Muslims may be considered to be non-Muslims or apostates.)

Individuals join a jihadist group for reasons other than ideology: to protect Muslims from attacks; to partake in the romance of jihad; to seek salvation through martyrdom; to seek revenge against the perceived perpetrators of violence against Muslims; and a variety of other reasons, some of which have nothing to do with religion, such as to earn money.¹⁹ In the ISIS group’s case, the establishment of the Islamic State caliphate motivates foreign fighters and locals to join.

Once an individual joins a jihadist group, however, ideology plays a crucial role in establishing group cohesion and identity. Ideology gives a well-constructed justification for violence in general as well as for extreme violence, which a recruit otherwise would find abhorrent. Ideology may also be the partial basis for mobilizing a recruit to action or travel at a specific time in the sense that ideology plays a role in a new recruit’s response to the call for action. In short, ideology rarely acts as the on-ramp, but once recruited, an individual’s highway is defined by ideology.

Jihadi Salafism also underpins the long-term goals of a group, including the establishment of an Islamic emirate or state and ultimately the caliphate. ISIS has fused the war-making implications of Jihadism and Salafism’s religious teachings into a single ideology personified by a paramount leader, the caliph—and has rendered meaningless the distinction between military dogma and religious belief.

¹⁹ For motivation to join ISIS, see Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside The Army of Terror* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015)

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

To claim that ISIS has nothing to do with Islam is unsustainable and certainly will not work as part of a Western counternarrative. Muslim religious scholars have balked at declaring ISIS to be outside Islam. However, other scholars as well as laypeople and journalists have compared ISIS to the Kharijites, the original partisans of *takfir* to demonize and then murder those who disagreed with their radical and uncompromising views of what it means to be righteous. Detractors, including other jihadists, have declared that ISIS is the source of unending *fitna* (internecine strife or civil war) among fellow Muslims, reminiscent of the periods following the death of the last Rashidun Caliph, Ali. Even before ISIS, Muslim religious scholars argued against al-Qaeda with a combination of historical and religious arguments from an international Muslim perspective.²⁰

Developing an effective counternarrative(s) to Jihadi Salafist ideology is problematic. In any case, defeating the Jihadi Salafist ideology requires much more than a counternarrative. The United States has developed increasingly effective and networked military, police, and financial programs against jihadist threats. These measures address those already radicalized and committed to Jihadi Salafism, which means committed to violence. While the difficult process of ideological “deradicalization” of individuals on a violent path is something that needs to be studied, it is not the main tool for defeating jihadist ideology.

Defeating jihadist ideology means preventing the tempted from buying that plane ticket to the latest hot jihad. It means robbing jihadist recruiters of their ability to recruit by making the ideology unappealing to its targets. To defeat jihadist ideology in this last sense requires understanding how individuals become progressively radicalized to the point of violence. To defeat the recruiters, we need to understand their art and offer appropriate alternatives, which are the subjects of the next two sections.

²⁰ See Michael W. S. Ryan, “The Salafist Challenge to al-Qaeda’s Jihad,” *Terrorism Monitor* vol. 8, issue 44 (December 2, 2010), The Jamestown Foundation (website).

III. The Radicalization Process and Targets

Alex was a lonely young woman living with her grandparents in rural Washington state.²¹ After watching the horrifying video of ISIS beheading journalist James Foley in 2012, she went on Twitter to “understand why they were doing” such things. Alex quickly found herself talking to people who openly identified as members of ISIS and politely answered her questions. Soon she was talking constantly to her new friends, especially one who claimed to be an ISIS fighter stationed near Damascus. Her new friends led her to ask about Islam, and her days were filled with friendly conversations about Islam, Christianity, and her life. Now the lonely hours were filled with supportive male and female friends, who initially never asked anything of her. As she drifted toward radicalization, another ISIS member, Faisal, who lived near Manchester, England, took up her religious education. Under Faisal’s tutelage, Alex decided to convert to Islam. Afterwards she was communicating with “more than a dozen” ISIS sympathizers who sent her gifts, including a “\$200 gift certificate to IslamicBookstore.com.” Faisal advised her not to go to a local mosque, “saying it was a government-infiltrated mosque.” Her new “friends” led Alex further into extremism. Eventually, Faisal offered to send round-trip tickets for Alex and her 11-year-old brother to travel to Austria to meet her future husband. Her grandmother intervened and confronted Faisal, and Alex promised to cut off all relations. But she missed her new friends . . .

Radicalization usually begins with some form of recruitment process. To understand how to counter the ISIS group’s and al-Qaeda’s

²¹ For more detail, see Rukmini Callimachi, “ISIS and the Lonely Young American,” *New York Times*, June 27, 2015.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

ideology, one needs to understand the processes of radicalization and its conjoined twin, recruitment.

Recruitment often begins with a wide-area appeal, the shotgun approach, followed by an individualized appeal, the rifle approach. ISIS excels at both. The shotgun approach for ISIS includes professional video and audio productions on the dark web targeted at young Muslims, broadcasts of speeches in Arabic translated into European languages, videos of idealized life within ISIS territory, and what early Anarchists dubbed “propaganda of the deed,” which may include videos of battles, carefully orchestrated beheadings and other forms of mass murder, or more prosaic sermons by religious scholars. For some, the shotgun approach is enough to begin planning to join ISIS or al-Qaeda; for others, especially those most needed by either group, the personalized rifle approach is preferred or even necessary to seal the deal. It is also most likely the most secure approach because the very process of individual recruitment involves winnowing out unsuitable and suspect recruits.

Here, we will refer to two English-language manuals that represent the ISIS group’s shotgun approach but also tell us a great deal about its rifle approach. The first manual is about the ISIS-recommended security regimes for jihadist cells based on al-Qaeda’s doctrine, and the other contains a step-by-step course on how to recruit individuals for al-Qaeda and similar Islamic societies at a time when ISIS was still part of al-Qaeda as the Islamic State in Iraq, further discussed in Annex A. Like the first manual, the recruiting course is based on jihadist strategist and historian, Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri’s magnum opus, *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance (Da‘wah al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah al-Alamiyyah)*.

A. The Recruitment Process: The Shotgun Approach

By the time al-Qaeda entered the world scene, jihadists had developed a sophisticated understanding of the types of recruits they needed and what kinds of appeals would motivate potential recruits. ISIS learned from al-Qaeda and improved on its broad recruitment approach by using social media and professionally produced videos. The most

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

successful broad approach for both organizations was to emphasize the injuries and humiliation wreaked on Muslims by the United States and its allies. For ISIS, another broad appeal was to join the ideal Muslim society, the caliphate.

The intended audiences for these shotgun appeals included anyone who had suffered a racial or ethnic humiliation, real or imagined. Neither al-Qaeda nor ISIS tried to appeal to those who had formal religious training. They both preferred to provide religious training from the Jihadi Salafist perspective as a kind of finishing school for the radicalization/recruitment process.

The al-Qaeda system did not aim for walk-in recruits. Instead, the organization generally insisted on a letter of recommendation from a known and trusted sympathizer before accepting a walk-in. ISIS was much more accepting of volunteer foreign fighters and developed a system to identify foreign agents or at least make it difficult for them to survive for long once they reached ISIS-held territory.

Both groups could advertise their appeals through online jihadist forums to stimulate interest, which is still part of the shotgun approach. But at some point the group would need to deal with individuals—always a perilous step. Clandestine regional or country-specific jihadist groups learned painful lessons of the dangers of the individual recruitment effort. Without strict controls on recruitment enforced by the jihadists, security and police forces in the Greater Middle East quickly infiltrated their ranks. The United States, despite its well-publicized failures, has been very successful using sting operations based on careful police work.

For some groups in the Middle East like the various Muslim Brotherhood organizations that work on a long-term time horizon for jihadist goals, recruitment is often a family affair or starts with young adolescents before they are of an age formally to join a Muslim Brotherhood branch or other gateway organization. For such groups, being a member is a cradle-to-grave proposition. Leaving the group would mean leaving one's family. Betraying a group means betraying one's family. Both are very difficult propositions, but not impossible if an individual has become impatient for action.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

However, these groups cannot always fill their ranks through the family structure and must then venture outside. Reaching out to strangers introduces the need for strictly enforced security measures to protect the recruiters, as well as counterintelligence procedures to guard the group against infiltration. Because Muslim Brotherhood-style groups in the West have a history of hiding their true identities, forgoing formal ties to Muslim Brotherhood branches in the Middle East, and remaining nonviolent, they generally fall outside enforcement's purview. The one striking exception is a case in which such a group provided funding to a designated foreign terrorist group.²² One author referred to this seemingly tactical nonviolence of otherwise radical groups in the U.S. as "the counterterrorism conundrum."²³

Al-Qaeda and ISIS have ambitious goals, no matter where they are. Both demand large numbers of recruits, and both must constantly replace attrition, create new affiliate organizations, and create individual or small-cell terrorist organizations behind enemy lines in Western countries. While ISIS recruiting is much more advanced from a technical and social media standpoint than al-Qaeda's traditional approach, both rely on the same basic principles for targeting individuals, albeit with some differences in procedures. Many of al-Qaeda's and the ISIS group's principles and procedures for security for individuals, small cells, and larger groups are explained in the works and lectures of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.²⁴

In the United States one does not need to read Arabic to learn about al-Suri's recommendations for lone-wolf or small-cell counterintelligence. ISIS adapted his teachings in an English-language manual for clandestine counterintelligence under the title "Safety and Security for Lone Wolf Mujahideen and Small Cells," which it uploaded

²² For example, Texas-based Holy Land Foundation's trial in 2007 saw all defendants found guilty of providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization (Hamas). The prosecution presented evidence of the intention of establishing a hostile "Islamic Movement led by the Muslim Brotherhood." (Government Exhibit 003-0085/3:04-CR-240-G, U.S. v. HLF, et al.)

²³ See Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 166-198.

²⁴ For an analysis of al-Suri's ideas, see Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy* (2013), 193-254.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

in October 2015.²⁵ The translator for ISIS informs his readers that, with some modifications and updates, his course is taken from al-Qaeda's *Course on Security and Intelligence*, which was originally intended for traditional jihadist groups. The ISIS manual also advises its readers to read al-Qaeda's English-language *Inspire* magazine for information about building bombs and other tricks of the trade, the same magazine that Tamerlan Tsarnaev read to produce the weapons used in the Boston Marathon attack.²⁶

The security manual's technical content will not surprise anyone familiar with standard government or private-sector security precautions. For example, it stresses the supreme importance of maintaining vigilance against host-country security services, practicing general information security, varying everyday routines, and performing careful advance planning. The manual offers advice on setting up a safe house, devising a cover story, and safeguarding and transporting weapons, among other things. If the reader intends to recruit members to his or her small cell, the author advises using family members or lifelong acquaintances.

Its context is entirely different, however, from similar documents in the West. The manual begins with quotations from the Qur'an and examples from *hadith* and biographical literature of the Prophet. The analysis accompanying the selections is intended to persuade potential terrorists that preserving their safety is a religious duty. It gives radicalized individuals permission to suppress their Muslim identities if that would contribute to the success of the mission.

The point of terrorism inside the United States or one of its allies is to produce a political effect that helps the jihadist cause. For the mujahideen inside the United States, the purpose is to make the United

²⁵ See Michael W. S. Ryan, "Hot Issue: How DAESH's Lone Wolf Guidance Increases the Group's Threat to the United States," The Jamestown Foundation (website), (November 24, 2015), <https://jamestown.org/program/hot-issue-how-daeshs-lone-wolf-guidance-increases-the-groups-threat-to-the-united-states/>

²⁶ The *Wall Street Journal*'s Alan Cullison had access to Tamerlan's computer (on WSJ assignment) after the Boston Marathon bombings (04/15/2013). Cullison told the author of this case study that Tamerlan was a "voracious reader" of right-wing extremists as well as jihadists. Personal conversation, May 2013.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

States “pay the price” for actions against jihadists overseas and to goad Americans to take harsh actions that may radicalize other Muslims.

Both al-Qaeda and ISIS have promoted suicide attacks as a cost-effective weapon to use in battle or in places they cannot reach otherwise; they will continue to follow this path.²⁷ Suicide, however, is not the preferred tactic inside the United States in the long run. Nevertheless, the manual stresses that the jihadist operating in the United States, with its effective intelligence and police agencies, should not expect to be able to escape to a safe haven somewhere outside the country.

B. The Recruiting Process: The Rifle Approach

“A lot of brothers—and (at one time) I fell into this group—consider the idea of *Da‘wa* [recruitment] to be that candidates who merely listen to a jihadi cassette or motivating lecture, etc. will suddenly stand up and shout out or say with motivation, ‘we want to be a troop and go to fight against America!,’ without considering the gradual stages which the candidate must pass through...”²⁸

What the author is about to describe above is the painstaking way the recruiter must approach individual recruitment to be effective. Such an approach is usually time-consuming, as demonstrated by Alex’s journey, mentioned earlier. After ISIS pioneered the use of social media, jihadist recruitment of individuals became more cost-effective and secure, but it could still consume a great deal of time. Potentially, any man or woman with a cell phone and the latest encryption software and secure apps could

²⁷ The manual begins with a clear approval of a suicide operation outside the U.S.: “I would like to congratulate the Ummah of Islam on the heroic operation carried out by our brother, the martyr Abu Dujana al-Khurasani...” The Jordanian suicide bomber’s given name was Hamam bin Khalil Abu Mallal al-Balawi. Abu Dujana was the Jordanian suicide bomber who killed and wounded CIA officers, contractors, and others inside Camp Chapman near Khost, Afghanistan on December 30, 2009.

²⁸ *A Course in the Art of Recruiting: A graded, practical program for recruiting via individual da‘wa*. The document’s pages are not numbered. The quote is from the first page of the preface.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

become a powerful recruiting center, if they know and practice the correct method, which the course aims to provide.

The rifle approach to recruitment involves a slow start and accelerates to a very pointed call to join a jihadist group. Calling the recruit to join is not theoretical or some time in the distant future. The recruiter is prepared to provide travel funds and is directly tied into a logistical system through the traditional entry points for jihadists to the Middle East, Turkey, and to some extent Pakistan. Sometimes, however, the recruiter may advise the recruit to operate in place.

From media reports, we know that this recruitment approach works on individuals who may never have thought about becoming a Muslim, let alone becoming a terrorist in the ranks of jihad. A talented and experienced recruiter, especially with ISIS, will choose the right candidate and exploit their needs in a methodical way to exert a powerful yet subtle influence over the course of his or her (often) young life.

If the recruiter chooses to influence a young American to pursue jihad at home, the process may be very near to impossible to reverse. No generic counternarrative will be likely to affect such a situation. There are very few examples of reversing a radicalization process outside of a controlled situation in a prison in which jihadists may be persuaded to renounce violence. Even in successful cases, the reversal involves only the realization that violence may not achieve the jihadists' goals. The adopted principles and learned goals are likely to remain.

To defeat jihadist ideology therefore, the best approach is to intervene as early as possible—before the recruitment process is finished and before an individual advances beyond stage one on the path to violence.²⁹ For some individuals, however, even then it may be too late.

C. The Art of Recruitment

For ISIS, as for al-Qaeda, the preferred method of recruitment is ultimately personal. Shotgun-approach videos may allure those who feel the need to redress Muslim humiliation when they cannot address their

²⁹ For a discussion of the stages, see “The Behavioral Approach,” below.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

own feelings of humiliation in a normal setting. The wide approach may also engage young men in the romance of combat on the path of “Allah,” or even the attraction of living in the ideal Muslim society; some young women have expressed the need to marry and raise children in the caliphate under shari‘ah law.

Most people, however, need a final push from the personal touch to make the decision to opt for violence in place or travel to participate in the great romance of jihad. That final push comes from some sympathetic person who is a guide with all the answers to the potential recruit’s questions.

The personal touch, the rifle approach, also is probably necessary to find a way to motivate the vital administrative professional, which ISIS and al-Qaeda organizations always need and can rarely obtain. Very few of these potential recruits will be motivated by the Jihadi Salafist ideology, which becomes a crucial factor once the potential jihadist becomes actual.

So how does the personal approach turn radical ideas or extremist dreams into action—into violence?

The second manual was an al-Qaeda production, which has also been used by ISIS,³⁰ that helps answer these questions because of its content. Using the shotgun approach, al-Qaeda authors produced and provided a manual for potential recruiters with the title *A Course in the Art of Recruiting: A graded, practical program for recruiting via individual da‘wa*.³¹ The dedications in the manual included the Islamic State in Iraq, which was then technically part of the al-Qaeda global network.

Da‘wa in the manual’s title is the Arabic word for “call” or “invitation” to Islam. For ISIS and al-Qaeda, Islam means Jihadi Salafism. Every other form of Islam is a deviation for Jihadi Salafists, although al-Qaeda postpones judgment in most cases, whereas ISIS is quick to use the

³⁰ For an apparent example of how ISIS uses this manual, see Rukmini Callimachi, “ISIS and the Lonely Young American,” *The New York Times* (June 27, 2015).

³¹ Thanks to Claire Weinraub, who brought the recruiting manual to my attention. The security manual is available online by subscription at *MEMRI* and the SITE Intelligence Group, among others. It originally appeared in a jihadist Twitter account before being taken down. Although the document shows no author, the cover page indicates that it was collected and organized by Abu Amru Al Qa’idy [sic]. The last page shows that it was translated by Abu Mujahid [sic] and Abu Khalid [sic].

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

label of “apostate” for any group or leader that disagrees with the ISIS group’s claims to the caliphate.

The manual presents a course in recruiting mujahideen, or individual and small-cell terrorists as well as foreign fighters, and also tells us a great deal about the radicalization process and its targets. The principles are the same for ISIS and al-Qaeda, but they have slightly different targets.

Al-Qaeda has a well-known set of targets, which its leaders and essayists have explained over the years. Al-Qaeda traditionally does not prefer to recruit individuals with traditional formal religious training, because that would involve confronting what is likely a more mainstream version of Islam. Jihadists would rather recruit someone without formal religious training. Neither al-Qaeda nor ISIS wants to be forced to counter what they consider an incorrect understanding of Islam. For this reason, they may discourage a potential recruit from going to a local mosque. If the target recruit is not a Muslim, the recruiter may offer to instruct him or her and convert them online.

The recruiting manual does not use Jihadi Salafism as a major initial part of the call to jihad. Since potential recruits probably have little deep knowledge of Islam, let alone Jihadi Salafism, the ideology cannot be an entrance point. Potential recruits often do have a Muslim identity, which will be the starting point once a recruiter has identified a promising candidate.

While the appeal of jihadism may play a role in recruitment, recruiters are urged to show great patience in their dealings with potential recruits. Jihadism can be used to show the recruit that he can perceive himself to be a winner if only he would take the step into righteous violence. He or she can travel to a hot jihad and make a difference in redressing the humiliation of fellow Muslims, or stay in place in a Western country to fight behind the lines. If the recruit has led a dissolute life, jihad can cleanse him of his sins. If he feels he does not belong in an infidel land, he can join the caliphate and perhaps participate in the Apocalypse to usher in the ultimate triumph of Islam.

Of course there are many other more mundane appeals, which the recruiter will find over time. For example, the person may simply need

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

money for his family, which is more likely a motivation in the Middle East. Or perhaps he or she is an opportunist living in an area where either ISIS or al-Qaeda operates, and seeks a status or some benefits out of the situation. Obviously, with the ISIS loss of territory in Syria and Iraq, the recruiting job for foreign fighters becomes more difficult and would only apply locally to affiliates unless ISIS or some other entity arises again in historically Muslim lands.

On the one hand, recruiting lone-wolf or small-cell jihadists may actually be marginally easier in one respect after the loss of ISIS territory and the possible defeat of al-Qaeda and other jihadists in Syria. It would not be difficult to argue that the United States is responsible for the loss of the territory in Syria and Iraq claimed by the ISIS neo-caliphate. On the other hand, reestablishing recruiter networks and a coordinated, coherent message will take time for the core neo-caliphate without a clear safe haven.

However, ISIS and its predecessors have shown great patience and determination, while the U.S. has on occasion been too quick to declare victory and lose focus on this peculiar threat. It takes little imagination to recognize that the United States has done little to adopt policies, capabilities, and the effective management structure to thwart jihadist recruitment and ideological developments in the years following the ISIS caliphate's military loss in Syria and Iraq, al-Qaeda's resurrection, and the emergence of new jihadist groups.

IV. What Is To Be Done? Go Broad, and Go Deep

Before we begin our search for counter-ideology tools, we must acknowledge that jihadists, especially ISIS, have perfected the tools they use. As expert as the United States is in the intelligence, enforcement, and military spaces, we have yet to find our way in the counter-radicalization space. With our tradition of freedom of speech and religion, we have found the task of countering jihadism especially challenging because a legitimate religion, however distorted, is the basis of its radicalizing ideology. Americans have tried to ignore the religious context and power of jihadism, and we have occasionally demonized Islam itself, rather than identifying and attacking its aberration. Neither approach is valid, and neither has been effective. We need a reset.

Just as jihadists have used the shotgun approach and the rifle approach in spreading their ideology, the United States and its partners need to address both a broader audience as well as individuals when opposing that ideology.

Just as jihadists do not recognize borders, we need to transcend borders in our programs to counter their ideology. In practical terms, that means the United States and its partners need to combat jihadist ideology locally, within each country, and also internationally, as a network. Such an approach is not different from how the United States and its partners have fought the close battle against al-Qaeda using intelligence, enforcement, international financial tools, and the military both internationally and, with the exception of the military, inside the United States in a relatively seamless effort.

Just as we have worked to prevent or limit access to safe havens to jihadists in the close battle, we need to limit jihadist recruiters and ideologues' access to physical and virtual safe havens.

The close battle has had false starts (Iraq, and the failure to capture/kill Bin Laden early in Afghanistan), but we have improved our collective game eventually (draining al-Qaeda of funds, disrupting their central command and control, and taking away territory from ISIS in Syria and Iraq). We improved the tools of fighting the close battle (drones,

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

intelligence, financial networks, and cooperation), and so should we expect to improve our approach and tools for the deep battle to defeat jihadist ideology and recruiting—if we make the effort a priority. First, we need to review what has been done, often under the rubric of countering violent extremism.

A. Countering Violent Extremism

After the ISIS group's dramatic loss of territory and a series of horrific terrorist attacks by both traditional clandestine cells and surprising individual attacks, European countries have reason to be concerned about citizens returning from the killing fields in Iraq and Syria. Even if the return is less than expected or the returnees are less interested in pursuing violence, European countries still have reason to remain concerned. They need to consider how best to absorb these citizens and how to deal with the problem of home-based terrorists. In addition, law enforcement and political processes are faced with the rise of xenophobic right-wing groups and political parties.

This amorphous but powerful set of worries was reflected in the 2014 United Nations Security Council resolution 2178, which recognized the need for programs to deal with returning citizens from fighting in Syria and Iraq. President Obama responded to the issue by convening a three-day summit on countering violent extremism (CVE).³² The problem with the summit appeared to be the vagueness of the terms of engagement and a flaw in the concept itself: Who are these violent extremists? If the United States perceives them only as Muslims, Constitutional and therefore crippling legal issues are inevitable.

The fact sheet for the Obama summit cites approaches “to counter hateful extremist ideologies that radicalize, recruit, or incite to violence.” Although al-Qaeda and ISIS groups are referenced, the proposals could

³² See “FACT SHEET: The White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism” (February 18, 2015), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/18/fact-sheet-white-house-summit-countering-violent-extremism>

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

theoretically include any kind of extremist ideology on the left or right of the political spectrum.

In the United States, CVE was intended more for communities, with assistance from the federal government in facilitating local partnerships and strengthening law enforcement. Recruitment of foreign fighters is noted as a target problem. There is vague language covering all the domestic and foreign bases, but CVE as a political movement has not caught fire in the United States as it has in Europe and some Middle Eastern countries such as Morocco and Iraq. Not many U.S. entities beyond terrorism experts and university centers have focused on CVE as a priority.³³

Some U.S. Muslim communities joined the voices that were concerned that CVE programs, despite their anodyne language, seemed to be a thinly veiled cover for surveillance and police enforcement programs against Muslim Americans. Other Americans criticized CVE as not being forthright that the problem is “radical Islam”; still others ridiculed it as ineffective, asserting it assumes dubious profile markers that allow experts to identify those who will turn violent or fall for an ISIS operative’s pitch.

Meanwhile, U.S. law enforcement and intelligence have become more effective in general and more alert to the potential problem of radicalized individuals. The FBI website indicates that investigations are underway in all 50 states about “Homegrown Violent Extremists (HVEs).”³⁴ The website leaves no doubt that HVEs are identified as “global-jihad-inspired individuals who are based in the U.S., have been radicalized primarily in the U.S., and are not directly collaborating with a foreign terrorist organization.”³⁵ The problem for the FBI is that knowing an individual has become radicalized is not evidence that this same person

³³ For example, the Center for Cyber & Homeland Security at George Washington University created a “Program on Extremism.” See Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes, “Countering Violent Extremism in America (June 2015), <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/CVE%20in%20America%20.pdf>

³⁴ See the official FBI website: <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism>

³⁵ Ibid.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

will become violent. Having radical thoughts and speech is not a crime in the United States.³⁶

i. The Behavioral Approach

Peter Bergen has described an approach that the FBI takes, not just for terrorism cases but for other violent crimes as well.³⁷ This approach was developed within the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) in the division devoted to terrorism after 9/11. While the details are complex, the concept is to focus on the behavioral process (as demonstrated by research) that someone goes through from grievance to violence. This approach does not depend on a perpetrator's perceived motivation, state of mind, or a specific radical ideology. However, as noted previously, violence occurs at the intersection of an "enabling environment and a personal trajectory," whether that environment is a toxic ideology or a criminal gang.³⁸ The behavioral scientists in the FBI did not consider this truism in their approach to the issue.

The BAU, in consultation with private-sector security experts, developed a methodology to identify who will become violent, based on how far they travel on a six-step pathway-to-violence framework. Factored into this analysis are the existence of what may be perceived as inhibitors to violence: a stable family, a satisfying job, etc. In plain words the pathway may be described as: (1) a grievance, (2) the decision to act on it, (3) research and planning, (4) active preparation (obtaining and testing weapons), (5) dry run/surveillance of the target, and (6) violence. The advantages of using this approach include the ability of analysts to observe these steps, in part because of the phenomenon of leakage, which is the

³⁶ Another issue with the definition, if one takes the term literally, is that HVE should capture other domestic violent extremists in addition to "global-jihad-inspired." This is not a problem of FBI understanding the issue of home-grown terrorism, but the definition as stated in this context is misleading.

³⁷ See Peter Bergen, *United States of Jihad: Who Are America's Homegrown Terrorists and How Do We Stop Them?* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017), 233-243.

³⁸ I drew this insight from Fernando Reinares et al., *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism: A Concise Report Prepared by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation* (May 15, 2008), p. 9.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

ordinary by-product of the radicalization process. Individuals usually like to talk about their new ideas and convictions and what they intend to do about them. For our purposes, it is important to note here that step one in the BAU process may be something as universal as boredom or loneliness, and the enabling environment could be any number of ideologies.

Generally, families and the radicalizing individual's social milieu (friends, teachers, etc.) notice the changes that individual is undergoing. The families may be part of the problem, or they may not know what they are seeing or how to address it. Reluctant to see their family member or friend arrested and perhaps prosecuted, family and friends may also be reluctant to contact the police, especially in stage one or even stage two in the BAU model. Although they may not trust the police for a variety of reasons, they may however be willing to seek help from government agencies or NGOs without a law enforcement mission that are ready to help without threatening the family's integrity.

For social service agencies or an NGO, using the BAU approach or something similar might avoid two problems. First, they may be able to avoid prosecution for the individual being radicalized if they can intervene early enough. Second, the behavioral model cannot be reasonably charged with a bias against a specific religion, as it does not depend on, for example, targeting the sudden adoption of the most conservative Muslim practices in dress or worship. If an individual's actions show that he or she is on a path to violence, every situational indicator would inform the formulation of an effective intervention based on the specific ideology (enabling environment), whether jihadism, neo-Nazism, some other form of extreme racism, or simple criminality.

There will still be cases that avoid detection. Bergen points out that the Boston Marathon bombers displayed all the steps outlined in the BAU approach and, furthermore, that all "inhibitors" that might have prevented the Tsarnaev brothers from becoming bombers had "fallen like dominoes."³⁹ For example, the brothers' immediate family had left the United States, and Tamerlan's dream of improving his situation by participating in the Olympics as an elite amateur boxer had been crushed.

³⁹ Ibid., 240.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

The Tsarnaev brothers' path to violence was noticed by relatives and others. Russian authorities had warned the FBI that Tamerlan had shown himself to be radicalized while on a trip to Dagestan. FBI agents interviewed him, but agents saw no evidence that Tamerlan was planning an attack.

It is often noted that Tamerlan researched how to build the bombs and remote detonators he and his brother used by reading the English-language version of al-Qaeda's *Inspire*. Less reported is another phenomenon reflective of a recommendation in the last stage of al-Qaeda's *A Course in the Art of Recruiting*. Tamerlan's reading exposed him to translated selections of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's writings on individual and small-cell terrorism behind enemy lines.⁴⁰

Tamerlan was far along his ultimate path, but that path was not straight. Alan Cullison, a journalist for the *Wall Street Journal*, was given access to Tamerlan's computer after the police had finished with it. According to Cullison, Tamerlan, often portrayed as an unintelligent thug, was a voracious reader, and in addition to jihadist material, he had researched violent right-wing militia writings.⁴¹ He is not understood to this day. Most likely, he was deep into his radicalized world and far along the path to violence by the time the FBI interviewed him, but still able to put up a false face.

This is a cautionary tale. All we can do is reduce risk in hardcore cases and strive to improve our understanding of the Tamerlans of the world—if not of their psychology and motives, at least of their telltale actions. Defeating future Tamerlans before their cascading psychologies tip into violence—when coupled with what we are already doing in the close battle—is the equivalent of victory over jihadist ideology and perhaps other as yet unnamed violent ideologies. This victory is worth a significant investment.

⁴⁰ For more on al-Suri and the Boston Marathon bombers, see Michael W. S. Ryan, "The Boston Marathon Bombing: Radicalization Process and the Tsarnaev Brothers," The Jamestown Foundation website (May 9, 2013), <https://jamestown.org/program/hot-issue-the-boston-marathon-bombing-radicalization-process-and-the-tsarnaev-brothers/>

⁴¹ Alan Cullison, personal conversation, May 2013.

ii. Radicalization and Deradicalization

Daniel Koehler, the director of the German Institute on Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies (GIRDS), has written *Understanding Deradicalization*, the definitive sourcebook on radicalization and deradicalization from extremist ideologies, which takes into account the latest programs and research.⁴² Koehler, who turned to studying the threat of jihadism after extensive experience studying the neo-Nazi movement, tries to bridge the gap between theoretical research and the practical needs of those who struggle against violence inspired by violent ideologies.

The book is a comprehensive guide to deradicalization theories, programs, and methods as they are today, and also a “who’s who” in modern research on the radicalization and deradicalization processes. Koehler recognized that government authorities cannot wait for theory and research before they take practical steps to thwart violent radicalization. While a major purpose of his book is to help practitioners devise programs to counter violent extremism, it starts from the premise that one must first understand the radicalization process based on well-documented empirical evidence.⁴³

Like the author of the jihadist recruiting manual, Koehler’s view is that radicalization proceeds by limiting a target’s choices of political concepts and values to a specific ideology, which ultimately leads to violence as the only valid choice. He refers to this process as “de-pluralization.” The logical counter to this process is to persuade the radicalized individual or group that there are more choices available. Unfortunately, we live in a world of Jihadi Salafist recruiters, who, as we have seen, choose their targets carefully and follow a very painstaking path to lead them to radicalization and violence.

⁴² Daniel Koehler, *Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017) (Kindle edition). Koehler is the Director of the German Institute on Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies and a Fellow at George Washington University’s Program on Extremism.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5, 45, 65,74-78, 81-83, 89, 227, 294.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

The power of these recruiters is vastly enhanced by the new world of social media, which, as never before, allows us to “de-pluralize” our news sources and acquaintances to those who share our concerns and ideology. The recruiter, using either the shotgun or the rifle approach, has tailored the radicalization process to take account of social media and the target’s weaknesses; because of this, radicalization becomes like a very addictive drug that changes the addict’s brain chemistry to the point that giving up the drug seems worse than death. The bitter irony is that the perceived solution to all life’s problems is a single huge problem.

The experience of those who have tried to deradicalize individuals or groups has not been encouraging. The recruiter following *A Course in the Art of Recruiting* is counselled at every step except the last one to abandon a target recruit if they fail periodic assessments. This is true no matter how many months the recruiter has spent on daily and weekly interactions.

Unlike the jihadist recruiter, a government official choosing to abandon a radicalized jihadist would mean failure. The experience of those who have tried to deradicalize groups in a prison setting in the greater Middle East has generally not resulted in any of the groups (or individuals) giving up their Jihadi Salafist ideology. The most that has been achieved is what appears to be a tactical retreat from violence and sometimes a separation from the radical group. Recidivism is always a problem.

The challenge of counter-radicalization is to identify and intervene with individuals early on the path to violence and encourage them to reject it because of compelling doubts raised about the validity of the violent ideology, practical doubts about the path an individual is contemplating; and doubts about the righteousness of a violent group’s leadership and group.

B. Programs Outside the United States

i. The Saudi Experience

To get a sense for the prospect for deradicalization programs applied to Jihadi Salafists in the Middle East, it helps to examine the best of them, Saudi Arabia's.⁴⁴

Saudi Arabia began its program in the shadow of the al-Qaeda-staged insurrection inside the kingdom. The Saudi program for radicalized Saudi nationals began in 2004, and another facility was established in 2007 for intensive counselling before prisoners were finally released into society, a halfway house between prison and freedom. Prisoners, some of whom had joined al-Qaeda, including some who had passed through Guantanamo, were tested and screened for candidacy in the deradicalization program. From the beginning, the program was well-funded and well-resourced and was adjusted over time to take advantage of lessons learned. The Saudis who designed the program were often Western-educated and included psychologists and security experts to assess the candidates.

The prison program exposed candidates to critiques of their jihadist ideology by world-class Muslim scholars. These scholars provided arguments against the jihadist ideology including the use of *takfir* and the proper role of the Shari'ah. The most openly hardcore radicals simply dismissed the scholars, however, and were rejected by Saudi officials.

Over time, the Saudis recognized, like most researchers worldwide, that the aim of deradicalization should be adjusted to convince participants to renounce violence, rather than the probably unachievable goal of renouncing their ideology altogether. The Saudis also realized that

⁴⁴ See Marisa L. Porges, "The Saudi Deradicalization Experiment," Council on Foreign Relations Expert Brief (January 22, 2010), <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/saudi-deradicalization-experiment>; see also Andreas Casptack, "Deradicalization Programs in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study," Middle East Institute (June 10, 2015), <http://www.mei.edu/content/deradicalization-programs-saudi-arabia-case-study>. For an example of one former al-Qaeda member who was released from a Saudi rehabilitation program only to join 10 other al-Qaeda members in an escape to Yemen and there help found AQAP in Yemen, see Michael W. S. Ryan, "The Reemergence of AQAP Operative Mish'al Muhammad al-Shadawkhi," *Militant Leadership Monitor*, 3 no. 7 (July 31, 2012), https://jamestown.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/07/Militant_Leadership_Monitor_-_Volume_III_Issue_7.pdf?x87069.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

a radicalized version of Islamic history is a component of the original radicalization process, and so they worked to correct the candidates' faulty understanding of history. As incentives to reform, Saudi Arabia offered candidates for release cash incentives, jobs, and even marriage, along with a new family to reintegrate them into Saudi society. After their release, the graduates are monitored to look for signs of any form of returning to an active participation in or contact with radical organizations or elements.

The Saudi government has proven that it has been consistently serious about its deradicalization program. Their program is state-of-the-art and a valuable tool to increase our knowledge of the radicalization process for confirmed Jihadi Salafists. Nevertheless, establishing success in the deradicalization process remains elusive.

Recidivism rates are difficult to verify. The Saudis have increased their original rosy estimates to an estimated 10%-20% recidivism rate. Even the lower number still constitutes a significant security threat. In addition, at least some, perhaps 11, individuals fled to Yemen and likely participated in the establishment of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). We know that Said al-Shihri completed the Saudi program, but fled to become the deputy leader of AQAP in Yemen, and in that capacity oversaw the bombing of the American embassy in Sana'a in 2008. Further, we must consider the openly hardcore jihadists, who washed out after the initial assessment, to be constructive failures.

On the flip side, we do not know with certainty whether the Saudi program should take credit for all those who did not return to violence. How many of those were not truly committed to their radical choices in the first place? Some individuals are repulsed by the violence once they have seen its effects, and some simply grow out of a radical orientation. Of course, some may return to violence in the future under the right circumstances.

It would be hard to replicate the Saudi experience in its totality elsewhere. Few countries have the financial resources to devote to the issue, and no other country, even in the Middle East, shares Saudi Arabia's political culture, which the royal family is uniquely able to

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

manipulate without hard-power solutions.⁴⁵ Any number of Middle Eastern countries, or any country attempting to deradicalize individuals or groups, can and should bring mainstream Muslim scholars to prisons or elsewhere to counsel jihadists on the error of their beliefs and actions. However, we cannot expect such interventions alone to be successful enough in the short term to rely on as a solution. Koehler’s findings agree with the Saudis’ eventual conclusion that deradicalizing as a matter of practicality and realism—within a prison—needs to aim at changing actions rather than relying on a program’s ability simply to persuade committed jihadists to abandon jihadist ideology. Furthermore, there will be some hardcore jihadists who are beyond anyone’s ability to convince to reject violence.⁴⁶

ii. Major European Approaches

More than 40 countries have adopted some form of a program to counter jihadist extremism through deradicalization programs and rehabilitation programs within prisons.⁴⁷ Currently, this responsibility in the United States is spread among a number of entities that have a counterterrorism focus, including Homeland Security, the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI, the Department of State, the Department of the Treasury, and others. Other Western countries have adopted other models and vary in where they place the responsibility for counter-radicalization.

The Danish model, SSP (schools, social services, police), was originally designed to deal with youth gangs; religious radicalization was

⁴⁵ Although Saudi enforcement agencies do not hesitate to use harsh measures, Saudi Arabia’s social and political culture is partly based on history and is partly a product of the ruling royal family’s construction. In a system Stephane Lacroix refers to as “sectorization,” the royal family is the only institution in the country that “maintains vertical relations with all the sectors making up the field of power, and horizontal relations between sectors are practically nonexistent.” For details, see Stephane LaCroix, trans. by George Holoch, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 22-29.

⁴⁶ For an early look at prison programs, see Andrew Silke, “Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists,” *CTC Sentinel*, 4 no. 1 (January 2011).

⁴⁷ Koehler, *Understanding Deradicalization*, (2017) 290 (Kindle edition, Loc. 7456).

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

added after 9/11. This program has its home within the Danish police.⁴⁸ The police set up mixed teams called “info houses” to exchange information on potentially radicalizing individuals. These info houses internally share information between the police and social services and then perform outreach to schools and/or parents or others to determine what kind of program might help the identified individual. Parents and teachers can also initiate the action by coming to the info houses with their worries. Because of the Danish culture and traditions and its relatively small population, this model is reportedly very effective. Although these conditions for success are not available to most countries, the concept of info centers where police and social services can collaborate is worthy of consideration.

Germany has approximately one-fourth the population of the United States, but the number of foreign fighters supplied to jihadist wars in the Middle East is estimated to be 800 individuals compared to the estimated 129 foreign fighters the United States produced. The German model is thus built to deal with a large problem—not only with the issue of continued radicalization within its borders, but also with returning fighters (estimated in 2016 as 270, compared to 9 for the U.S. by 2017). Beginning in 2012, the German counter-radicalization approach has been based on a public/private partnership funded within the Federal Office for Migration and Refugee Affairs (BAMF) in the Ministry of the Interior.⁴⁹ The Interior Ministry is responsible for state security, including federal police and a Joint Anti-Terrorism Center, which provides information and analysis for all federal police in its area of responsibility. BAMF provides a hotline, which can be anonymous, as a first line of counseling for families and others concerned about a radicalizing family member or student. Once engaged in a specific case, the BAMF refers it to one of four NGOs that provide counseling for such cases. Individuals may also contact the NGOs directly if they prefer. While successful, this flexible approach creates problems in achieving and maintaining equal standards

⁴⁸ Koehler, *Ibid.* 149-151 (Kindle edition, Loc. 3904-3927).

⁴⁹ Koehler, *Ibid.* 151-152 (Loc. 3927-3957, Kindle edition). BAMF is the German acronym for Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

of counseling. Germany has a one-week training course available for counselors, but NGOs tend to follow their own policies and approaches. Every case, therefore, requires a great deal of transparency and communication between different federal partners on every decision concerning treatment. The German model has influenced other countries, including Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

The Dutch decided to build a counter-radicalization center from scratch.⁵⁰ After a number of pilots, the government established two organizations that work together: one for family support for deradicalization and another “exit unit” for individuals. Unlike other models, they were not built within existing enforcement units as add-ons but were designed specifically for these tasks. Both units work in close cooperation with existing civil society organizations devoted to the same or similar work. All their counselors went through extensive training before opening in November 2015. Because of the way the Dutch government proceeded, its approach was likely more expensive than the models that build on existing organizations. One positive aspect of this approach was that the government planned a unit dedicated to the issue of deradicalization, intervention, and family counseling built to government requirements.

Traditionally, the French model was based on hard law-enforcement efforts without any soft-power attempts at family counseling or support.⁵¹ Then in April 2014, the French government published a new counterterrorism strategy that announced the creation of several softer programs. These included specialized deradicalization facilities in prisons and the introduction of a family support hotline. In 2015, the French government also launched an online counternarrative campaign and in 2016 opened deradicalization wings in two prisons, staffed with trained counsellors and psychologists to work on prisoners’ rehabilitation. These new, softer programs were built within the government’s counterterrorism infrastructure and were designed to provide intelligence to law-enforcement agencies. In addition, the French planned 12 voluntary

⁵⁰ Koehler, *Ibid.* 152-153 (Loc. 3957-3973, Kindle edition).

⁵¹ Koehler, *Ibid.* 153-153 (Loc. 3973-3957, Kindle edition).

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

deradicalization centers outside the normal prison setting. The centers received serious criticism from a bipartisan report to the French Senate issued five months after the scheduled opening, however—at that time, only one had opened, and it was sitting empty. After just a year, the center closed.⁵² In addition to criticism of their disastrous start, poor planning, and underfunding, one critic asserted that the voluntary centers were not intended for deradicalizing jihadists but instead were focused on prevention.

Many other international programs exist beyond the space constraints of this case study, and descriptions of them are available online at various levels of detail.⁵³ The examples cited here describe established approaches of major European countries that would likely be among the members in any U.S.-proposed effort at dealing with violent radical ideologies.

C. The United States Today

In the United States under the Obama administration, the government's efforts at confronting radical ideology, termed "countering violent extremism" (CVE) was a shared responsibility both domestically and internationally. The Department of State pursued various efforts at creating an effective international communications strategy, but it has been largely underfunded within the traditionally strained State Department operating budget and plagued with false starts.

Under the Trump administration, domestic and international efforts under the banner of CVE appear to have a doubtful future. However, some activities captured under this banner may continue in some form. For example, in 2017, the Department of Homeland Security approved "26

⁵² See James McAuley, "France's Deradicalization Centers Seen as a 'Total Fiasco'," *Washington Post* (2/24/2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/frances-deradicalization-centers-are-a-total-fiasco-lawmakers-say/2017/02/24/218a8072-fa97-11e6-aa1e-5f735ee31334_story.html?utm_term=.b06f98ff4680

⁵³ For example, see the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Report, *Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Lead to Terrorism: Ideas, Recommendations, and Good Practices from the OSCE Region* (September 28, 2017), <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/346841>

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

grants—totaling \$10 million for two years of programming—to organizations that will work to improve the security of our communities and prevent terrorism.”⁵⁴ These grants were approved for local law enforcement agencies, state and local government agencies, universities, and nonprofit organizations. As one would expect, the grants are weighted toward those aimed at helping first responders confront the results of radicalization and prevent violence.

Other federal government enforcement and intelligence agencies were given a role in the Obama administration’s CVE initiative, which includes public outreach and information programs that will likely continue, regardless of the nomenclature used to describe them. For example, the FBI’s public information programs, such as its “Don’t Be a Puppet” website or something similar, will probably continue, although some groups have criticized it, among other things, for “perpetrating stereotypes.”⁵⁵ Further, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) under the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) has broad authority to coordinate the U.S. Government’s domestic and international counterterrorism intelligence programs. NCTC will likely continue its coordinated outreach programs to domestic governments and communities in a variety of ways, regardless of whether the CVE label is continued. All of these entities use information and outreach missions as a means of enabling their main missions of enforcement and intelligence.

Currently, with the encouragement and support of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, individual states and territories have established “fusion centers” to coordinate activities mostly related to counterterrorism. Because the centers are generally owned and managed by large police departments, their purpose is to encourage intelligence and information collection and sharing with other enforcement entities. However, some of these centers, especially in larger states, provide workshops and other programs that reach out to local communities and organizations. Since they are focused on enforcement, they do little or

⁵⁴ See <https://dhs.gov/cvegrants>.

⁵⁵ See <https://cve.fbi.gov/home.html>. While apparently well-intentioned, like all of CVE, this website has met with criticism. See, for instance: <http://karamah.org/press/dont-target-our-children-fbis-dont-be-a-puppet-website-in-schools-must-be-dropped>

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

nothing about the threat of jihadist ideology except in the most general sense.

These U.S. enforcement programs should be continued. They are crucial to supporting first responders and other entities on the front lines who fight ideologically based violence with interventions or arrests. When the radicalization/recruitment process morphs into support for or commission of violence, however, the intelligence and enforcement communities must always prioritize uncovering useful information and intervening to prevent violence against individuals or communities.

The immediate threat of terrorism will always be the priority issue for the close battle—and thus the deep battle of ideas will of necessity always be a secondary priority in competing for resources and the precious time of decision makers. Defeating violent extremist ideologies in the deep battle may benefit from lessons learned through enforcement and intelligence operations, but the war of ideas demands different actions, requires different skill sets, and operates on a different, often longer, time horizon. In addition, many affected communities and families may feel more comfortable going to an entity that is not dedicated to enforcement, but instead is chartered to help people understand the potential threat of violence in their lives and communities and avoid the need for enforcement.

Koehler and many other experts recognize that some individuals decide on their own to reject jihadist ideology, but no one has a generally accepted explanation for why this happens or how to replicate it. Researchers know more about how individuals and groups become radicalized than they know about how to reverse the course. This conclusion is not intended to discourage research into deradicalization—such research has many benefits, including learning more about how individuals become radicalized.

On the other hand, if the United States sets a priority of defeating Jihadist ideology as a way of breaking the cycle of continuous conventional warfare against jihadist groups and preventing what “home-grown” terrorists, trying to convert jihadists by debating ideology in person is neither cost-effective nor politically feasible. Research

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

demonstrates that there are more promising approaches, such as family counseling, as in the German model.⁵⁶

As mentioned above, to be successful a deradicalization effort or an early intervention should proceed by introducing three sets of doubts about the path an individual is contemplating: doubts about the ideology; doubts about the leadership and group behavior; and doubts about personal and practical issues.⁵⁷ Such a program also must be designed to hand off a subject to enforcement agencies when an individual's case analysis reveals someone too far along the path to violence for a noncoercive program. The tools needed for a national counter-radicalization—i.e., a counter-violent ideology—strategy will be discussed in the following section.

⁵⁶ See Koehler, *Understanding Deradicalization*, (2017) 291 (Loc. 7456, Kindle edition)

⁵⁷ See *Ibid.* 148 (Loc. 3866, Kindle edition)

V. The Solution: The Corporation Against Ideological Violence

The sorely needed deep battle of ideas must address the recruitment of individuals to violent ideologies and terrorism across a broad spectrum, including Jihadism and neo-Nazism. The purpose of such a program in the United States must be to thwart the radicalization process by offering individuals, communities, and schools multiple alternatives to their questions and concerns, involving both outreach and a one-stop location for information about the radicalization process.

To address this, I propose the creation of a new federal entity—the Corporation Against Ideological Violence (CAIV). CAIV would be a collaborative public-private partnership within the federal system. While it would collaborate with other entities tasked with the counterterrorism mission, it would have the lead in counter radicalization and deradicalization efforts. The tools of the collaboration would include research, education, information, communications, and cyber, with enforcement as a backup. Because of the nature of this public counter radicalization effort, CAIV would not include classified information or sensitive law-enforcement information.

CAIV would need to be a presidential initiative with bipartisan support. This would give the United States and potentially its allies new tools and approaches, as well as creating a new collaborative international effort to thwart the efforts of extremist ideologues to radicalize individuals and groups. As a federal program, CAIV would serve as an example for potential use or adaptation, both domestically and internationally. Its shared data and shared research could create a learning environment in which all participating countries could collaborate. It would engage the deep battle first against Jihadism, and then against other violent ideologies.

It is important to note that CAIV would not compete with the counterterrorism community. Rather, it will augment their efforts, acting as a resource to the enforcement and intelligence communities while

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

benefitting from information gained by those communities about the radicalization life cycle in the United States and other affected countries.

A. The Way Forward: First, Approach the Problem

Because thwarting radicalization must be a collaborative effort involving the participation of both private and government centers, a number of elements are needed to ensure successful collaboration. These include shared pain, a convener of stature, a clearly defined purpose, a common information base, a sense of movement, a formal charter, committed leaders of stature, and representatives of substance.⁵⁸

The first two prerequisites of successful collaboration in business and government are the *existence of a shared or common pain* and a *convener of stature*. The existence of HVEs in all 50 states is a clear indicator of a shared pain, calling for collaboration on a national scale. The federal government is the convener of stature and will ensure a nationally consistent approach. CAIV will foster the collaboration among the governmental and private institutions required for success in the domestic context. The U.S. government also has shown its ability to lead international coalitions, another part of CAIV's mission.

B. The Way Forward: Establish the Tools

Two additional elements of collaboration are a *clearly defined purpose* and a *common information base*. CAIV's clearly defined purpose is to defeat violent ideologies in the United States; its common information base is the information fusion center.

CAIV's information fusion center would collect and disseminate best practices and research about how to counter radicalization by attacking its root ideology via the shotgun approach. CAIV would enable

⁵⁸ The principles of collaboration are an adaptation of those found in Mike Leavitt and Rich McKeown, *Finding Allies, Building Alliances: 8 Elements That Bring—and Keep—People Together* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013). The author had the privilege to work for and with the authors as a senior executive at the EPA. The importance of the elements of collaboration was a significant theme.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

the collaboration of private-sector researchers, media, and IT experts, as well as liaison officers on loan from government agencies such as Homeland Security, Defense, and Justice (FBI) with missions in the “close battle.” The purpose of the liaison officers would be to provide useful public information from their parent departments and agencies and to facilitate collaboration and de-confliction between the close battle and the deep battle. The Department of State would be the natural conduit to overseas partners.

As well as information produced by American experts, the fusion center would include information translated from partner countries’ experts, such as Saudi Arabian, Egyptian, or Emirati scholars giving explanations of terms like *takfir* from a variety of mainstream Muslim perspectives and legal refutations of ISIS positions on violence, suicide attacks, and other topical issues. The idea is not to create talking heads but to have easily accessible and authoritative counters to extremist propaganda and jihadist recruiters’ ploys. This would not be a passive collection function but would be driven by the latest information and research about topics with high payoff.

The bulk of CAIV’s responsibility, however, would involve the rifle approach to help families, communities, and prisons intervene against the radicalization of individuals and work to disengage potential offenders at least from violence, if not from the extremist ideology itself. The first step is to provide clear, authoritative answers to questions such as, How do I know my child is under the influence of a recruiter? in an attractive, accessible format online. CAIV would provide information to families, communities, schools, and the U.S. Congress that would raise everyone’s awareness of threats of online social media. CAIV could provide releasable profiles of observable behavioral changes during the radicalization process described as the “path to violence,” as well as the process and methods used by recruiters to induce those changes. Such programs require a national hotline with trained counsellors ready to respond to calls for help. In addition to the national hotline and counseling, CAIV would also provide information on specially designed prison programs aimed at preventing recidivism for violent offenders.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

Other features would include links to established international programs like Hedayah.ae, the English-language website supported by Dubai, and similar international and American websites devoted to countering Jihadi Salafist propaganda.⁵⁹ The Defense Department would be helpful in community outreach in the United States because of its unique ability to provide compelling evidence of the tragic results of jihadist groups' recruitment in the real world rather than the mythical world of propaganda and recruiting.

The tasks assigned to CAIV will no doubt change over time based on internal and external evaluations of what works. Initially, we must plan for a comprehensive center for countering violent radicalization primarily based on violent ideologies, whether they be based on race, politics, or religion. At the heart of CAIV will always be the information fusion center, a clearing house for information about radicalization and deradicalization based on open sources made accessible to the public in a state-of-the-art, interactive website and drawn from curated sources in the United States and from a network of international partners.

Internal performance measurements would fulfill the fifth element of successful collaboration, a *sense of movement* toward clearly defined, measurable goals. CAIV will need to define performance goals for each of its tasks and design evaluations to create a constant learning and improvement environment. To achieve truly meaningful performance goals, staff will need to evaluate operations and continually correct goals and performance measures. Initially, these measures would include "output" (number of interventions) and "intermediate" measures (time and cost of fusion center module rollouts); as CAIV becomes established, these would be supplanted by, for example, the number of successful interventions compared to the number of tips, and the relationship of NGO activities to verifiable statistics concerning national trends in violent ideological recruitment. It is vital that CAIV's performance-reporting to Congress and the public can always cite independently verified empirical data to support its claims and that cost-effectiveness is prioritized in funding.

⁵⁹<http://www.hedayah.ae>

C. The Way Forward: Establish Governance

CAIV would need a *formal charter* establishing its placement in the federal system, the composition of its Board of Governors, and covering interactions with foreign and domestic partners. In its authorizing legislation, Congress should emphasize that CAIV is not a regulatory institution and that its oversight functions are restricted to certifying institutions and requiring independent audits and performance reporting. Legislation should also require the Board of Directors to provide oversight in order to avoid mission creep and duplication of effort. The best model would be the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which was established as a corporation within the federal government but has characteristics of both a federal agency and a private corporation.⁶⁰ The MCC model for CAIV will allow for easier international collaboration and a clear source of funding through interagency transfer or stand-alone appropriations.

To succeed, CAIV will need to be a clear administration priority and have the bilateral support of congressional leadership. To keep costs down, to ensure a nimble response to changing trends, and to avoid a “go-it-alone” culture, the permanent staff should to be capped by the by-laws in a range of 300-350 at full strength.⁶¹ To attract clients within the United States, CAIV should be formally separate from law enforcement, intelligence, or military hosts. To ensure collaboration, however, the Defense Department, Homeland Security, the State Department, the Department of Justice, and the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) would need to be involved through seconded liaisons and membership on

⁶⁰ Congress authorized MCC in PL 108-199 on January 23, 2004. MCC receives its appropriation as part of the appropriations subcommittees that fund the State Department and foreign operations in the House and Senate. Similarly, CAIV would need its own authorizing legislation but would need to be funded by the appropriations subcommittees for either Homeland Security or the Department of Justice.

⁶¹ The size and governance of CAIV is based on the author’s experience as a VP in the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which in 2018 reported a staff of 352 but is committed to reduce it to 320 in 2019. Since 2004, MCC has signed 33 compacts with 29 countries and is responsible for programs in 47 countries. (See Annex B.)

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

the Board of Governors. To avoid interagency conflict and promote collaboration where appropriate, CAIV (similar to the MCC structure) would report to a high-level Board of Directors drawn from Cabinet-level directors and prestigious private-sector leaders appointed by the President of the United States.

The CAIV initiative will require collaboration at various levels and within different spheres. Inside the U.S., CAIV would require collaboration with state governments and institutions, schools, universities, and affected communities, as well as federal government agencies. Overseas, CAIV would need to collaborate with the appropriate governments and potentially with existing institutions or centers with a similar mission.

Collaboration requires *representatives of substance*, subject-matter experts, whether on research issues, enforcement issues, or counterterrorism issues. Successful collaboration also requires committed leaders. Without *committed leaders of stature* for the Board and CAIV itself, the program will fail to secure collaboration at a high enough level with necessary partners, and it will founder. *Stature* in this instance for the Board of Directors means an individual with a well-known public profile, such as a Cabinet secretary or the head of a significant government agency. The ideal Chairman of the Board would be the Secretary of Homeland Security, with the Attorney General as Vice Chairman. Other voting members could include the Department of State, the Department of Education, the FBI and the National Counterterrorism Center. As with the MCC, the National Security Advisor would have a seat as an observer, and the CEO of CAIV and senior staff would brief the Board on all matters of interest.⁶²

⁶² During this author's 18-month tenure at MCC as a VP (2006–2008), he briefed the Board on financial and budget issues for the CEO and observed a very high level of attendance (including the Secretary of State herself) for MCC Board meetings, which were scheduled to accommodate the extremely demanding schedules of the Board.

D. CAIV's Organization and Tasks

Initially, CAIV would act as a clearing house for information about the radicalization process in the United States and elsewhere, along with best practices learned in collaboration with our partners and allies, both internationally and in collaboration with a variety of American institutions, such as state and local governments, NGOs, and research centers associated with universities. In addition, it would operate an anonymous hotline as well as counselling services for communities and families confronted with the radicalization of individuals. Such a hotline service would provide anonymous or engaged counseling, as well as interactive web interfaces offering information about the radicalization process, the known recruiting practices of ISIS and al-Qaeda, and life stories of those forced to live under the rule of the ISIS caliphate.⁶³

Taking a cue from the indications-and-warnings culture of military intelligence and the threat-management culture of law enforcement, CAIV would create a series of indicators that an individual is on or approaching the path to violence and develop a warning protocol to establish how far on that path that individual may be, based on empirical evidence gleaned from leakage. These indicators would be available to all partners, both nationally and internationally.

Rather than competing with existing functions, CAIV thus would alleviate some of the pressure on law enforcement to act on to every tip that someone might become violent or is enmeshed in the web of an ideologically violent recruitment effort. CAIV ultimately would take on the task of intervention with the family or social environment of the target individual through partners at the local level and then recommend a direct intervention with the individual with trained counsellors or refer the case to law enforcement when an individual has already committed a crime or

⁶³ During the rise of ISIS, al-Qaeda quietly became more powerful as a network in the Greater Middle East, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and is arguably a stronger threat to the United States and its allies in the long term. This threat will manifest itself especially if the United States grows weary of fighting any nodes in the al-Qaeda network except those that pose a direct, immediate threat to American vital interests.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

is far along the path to violence.⁶⁴ It would be expected that many of these tips would come directly to the CAIV hotline, especially before the NGO network is fully established.

Its workforce should be a combination of civil service employees, administratively determined employees, and liaison officers on loan from the military and other federal agencies. The administratively determined positions would allow term-limited appointments of private-sector experts. These AD slots could allow special pay grades as appropriate and ensure a healthy turnover of expert staff, while the civil servant positions would ensure a core continuity. A small team of subject matter experts and very experienced federal government and private-sector employees would be required in the initial planning stage to avoid the usual difficulties and enhance CAIV’s effectiveness.

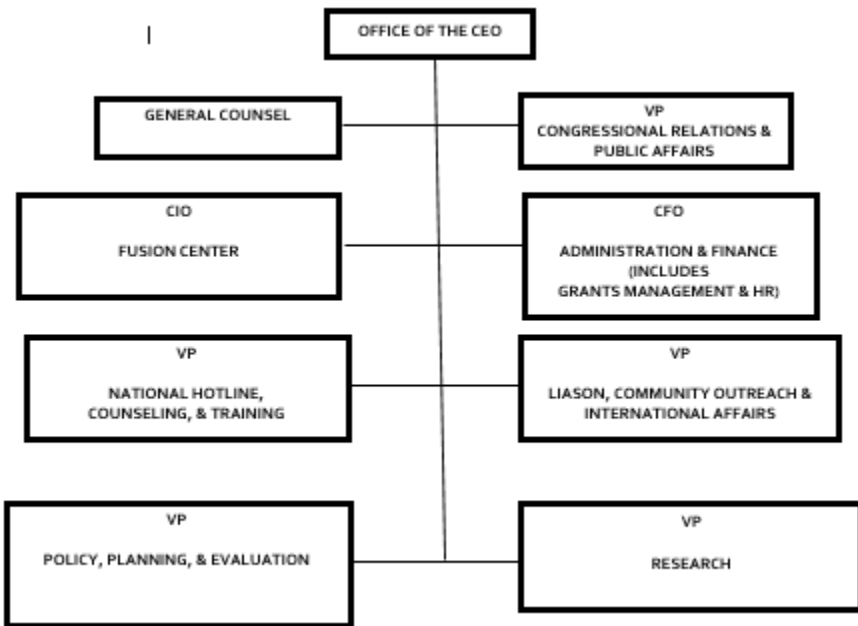


Figure 3. CAIV Organization Chart

⁶⁴ CAIV should take cases only when an individual is in the first or at most the second stage on the path to violence. Counsellors would need to be given protocols for when to engage and disengage in any individual case. The fusion center would allow anonymity for anyone seeking information but who has not decided to engage counselling services either online or in person.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

When fully established, CAIV would undertake eight main tasks: (1) creating and maintaining an information fusion center; (2) establishing a national hotline to provide information and expert counselling services; (3) creating a nationwide deradicalization network; (4) acting as liaison with U.S. law enforcement, intelligence, and military; (5) liaising with foreign counter-radicalization institutions; (6) publicizing and promoting current research; (7) providing research grants; and (8) establishing policy, planning, and evaluation guidelines.

Create and maintain an information fusion center. The CIO would be responsible for maintaining a data clearinghouse, or information fusion center, which would be a curated database of information on violent ideologies. The CAIV VP for Research would be responsible for its research content. The fusion center would provide links to unclassified information produced by CAIV, other federal agencies, universities, and NGOs, which would be available to both domestic and international-partner organizations. It would include empirical information on known recruiting efforts by members of violent ideologies inside the United States, as well as information about gateway ideologies and any organizations that are specific targets for recruitment by groups or individuals espousing a violent ideology. The fusion center would also include information for domestic consumption on how to get counseling and other help, either locally or from CAIV experts, for the victims of violent ideological recruitment.

Train and provide counselors via a national hotline. The CAIV VP for National Hotline, Counseling, and Training would create and manage a national counter-radicalization hotline available to affected families, communities, and individuals. Because “leakage” is a critical avenue to identify an individual in crisis, the hotline would be key to giving families, teachers, and friends a resource at an early stage of a loved one’s radicalization, before law enforcement becomes necessary. This department would be also responsible for the availability of counseling services, both via phone and online, and would train new counselors for

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

the hotline. It would also design and provide nationally available courses on counseling families, individuals, and communities on relevant subjects. These courses would be part of the certification process for NGOs and others that would eventually provide counselling locally. Such training courses and follow-up performance audits would ensure uniformity of standards and procedures. The CIO would be responsible for the hotline's technical needs, including designing new applications to improve its performance and keep current with the latest technological developments.

The design for the fusion center and hotline would be among the first tasks in the creation of CAIV, which would use best practices for modular design and rollout testing. Because CAIV would be subject to daily hacking attempts, the CIO would require support from Homeland Security and the private sector to ensure the highest standards for computer security.

Create a nationwide NGO network for deradicalization. This VP would also be responsible for creating and certifying a national network of NGOs to work with local communities, families, and schools to perform counter-radicalization interventions for recruits being targeted by a violent ideology. NGOs that currently operate suicide hotlines or other support services are likely initial candidates. Initially, these organizations would self-identify by applying for support grants administered by CAIV similar to the grants currently offered by Homeland Security, although CAIV grants would be focused on non-enforcement entities.

NGOs and government entities in the network must include mandatory evaluations and performance measures to create a feedback loop for improving performance. This does not mean treating each case identically; rather, it entails using standardized protocols across the network for communication and initial analysis of a potential case.

Provide liaison with U.S. enforcement, intelligence, and military. The CAIV VP for Liaison, Community Outreach, & International Affairs would be responsible for liaison with all CAIV partners, including other federal government civilian agencies, the U.S. military, and individual

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

states. The liaison would include creating points of contact with Homeland Security's approved enforcement fusion centers to ensure that information about programs, activities, lessons learned, and new threats flows laterally between organizations, across states, and down to all levels.

Provide liaison with foreign institutions that counter radicalization. The CAIV VP for Liaison would also be responsible for communication with international programs in coordination with the State Department. Liaison would include both virtual and in-person meetings with international partners to facilitate information-sharing on potential collaboration on common concerns. CAIV would not maintain an overseas footprint.

Promote and publicize results of research on radicalization and deradicalization. The CAIV VP for Research would ensure that all CAIV offices and network members are informed of the latest academic research on the radicalization process, best practices in deradicalization programs in prisons, and counter-radicalization interventions outside the enforcement process. The VP for Congressional and Public Affairs would offer a selection of this same information to the news media and on social media, and respond to the information needs of the U.S Congress.

The VP for Research would also recommend competitive research grants to universities and large NGOs to encourage and enable private-sector research on topics related to CAIV's mission. Because of the technical nature of these grants, the VP for Research would be responsible for developing the terms of grant offers, receiving grant applications, and presenting/explaining the grant applications, as described below.

Provide grants to NGOs, universities, and other research centers. CAIV grants would support the creation and maintenance of the CAIV network within the United States, as well as fund research projects on topics related to radicalization, counter-radicalization, and deradicalization. All grants would require performance data. The CAIV CFO would oversee the grants' financial and technical management and ensure that performance-

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

reporting requirements were not burdensome, were written in plain English, and were sufficient for providing information to Congress.

The VP for the National Hotline would solicit grant applications from NGOs and universities to provide CAIV-certified counselling services at the local level. Such grants would be necessary initially, especially in less affluent locales. Such grants would be for a multi-year start-up period and the NGOs would be expected to attract private financing to supplement and ideally replace CAIV funding.

Competitive grants would be recommended by a standing investment committee composed of all VP and C-level executives, chaired by its deputy CEO. The deputy CEO would forward the investment committee's recommendations to the CAIV CEO, who would make the final decision.

Establish policy, planning, and evaluation guidelines. The department of the VP for Policy, Planning, and Evaluation (PP&E) would formulate policy recommendations for the CEO to improve CAIV's overall effectiveness. This department would draft CAIV's strategic plan, based on input from the rest of the corporation and the results of independent performance evaluation of its programs. It would also be responsible for reviewing performance indicators and performance measures for all aspects of CAIV's work, including the fusion center, the national hotline, certified local NGOs, and the grant program. PP&E would work with the Research Office to determine what statistics should be tracked and analyzed and which successes or failures of domestic and international partners should inform CAIV's policies and procedures. It also would help ensure that budget requests and allocations include performance measures.

E. Inherent Difficulties, and Their Solutions

Establishing the Corporation Against Ideological Violence does pose some difficulties, some of which are the natural result of a centralized agency that must depend on decentralized execution.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

The first is the difficulty of maintaining high standards among NGOs and other network partners that provide counselling. To address the tendency to entropy in a large system, CAIV would need to provide positive leverage by creating a system of certified institutions as federally approved counselors. The certification would require standard training for counselors coupled with scheduled performance and fiscal audits to maintain the certification. CAIV could also certify experienced local institutions, especially universities, to train counselors employed by NGOs. Independent audits are crucial to this end. All of CAIV's offices would cooperate with the Inspector General (IG) in its oversight role over their specific functions. However, the CFO would take the lead on supporting annual financial audits, and Policy, Planning and Evaluation would take the lead on performance audits. Training courses for network partners would include information about preparing for and cooperating with audits. Pre-audit consultations would be carried out as necessary. The IG would not inspect all network partners on an annual basis, but would audit individual grant recipients on a discretionary basis.

Another difficulty is the tendency for bureaucracies to multiply requirements and rules, which creates increased overhead costs and potentially slows down delivery of services. The counter to this lies in CAIV's authorizing legislation. To avoid administrative bloat, legislation should require that general services like payroll, facilities, and the services of the IG be provided by the appropriate large government departments. For example, the Homeland Security IG could provide government audits for CAIV. Perhaps the most important counter to the usual bureaucratic difficulties will be a carefully detailed design.

At the international level, CAIV's two major difficulties will be (1) convincing other countries that formal collaboration is in everyone's interests; and (2) ensuring that its international efforts are closely coordinated with and mutually supportive of other federal efforts. Taken together, Islam's long history, the complexities of jihadist ideology, the near-universal reach of social media, and the proliferation of the ISIS group's and al-Qaeda's affiliates argue that the problem of defeating jihadist ideology are beyond any individual country's ability, even with

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

the United States' significant resources globally or Saudi Arabia's regionally. The issue requires the combined and coordinated efforts of all affected countries. In parallel with this international effort, each country needs to coordinate the efforts of all the appropriate government agencies to address the problem of modern extremist ideology based on a distorted version of traditional Islam.

The United States must recognize that it is joining a series of international conversations, not creating one. CAIV would work to attract other international programs rather than push its own program on others. Including information from other nations in the information fusion center is one way to get their attention and potentially approbation. Avoiding conflict with other U.S. programs will be accomplished through transparency, formal inter-agency agreements, and CAIV's governance structure. Of course, CAIV should operate within the parameters of comprehensive national counterterrorism and law enforcement strategies and foreign policy.

Timing and resources are crucially linked. With sufficient resources, the small planning team mentioned above can create a strategically planned rollout, which involves identifying the timing and impact of each aspect of CAIV. For example, the initial task would be to plan the design and rollout of the fusion center in separable modules, followed by designs for the rollout of the help hotline, and so on. One of the most important tasks would be estimating the cost of creating and maintaining the IT aspects of the fusion center and the hotline.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Administrating funding for an end-state of approximately a 320 strong workforce would likely mirror MCC's annual administrative budget without overseas operations, which is projected to be approximately \$94 million for 2019, of which approximately \$55 million accounts for human capital costs.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

Projected Annual Budget for CAIV

Annual CAIV Administrative Budget	\$105 million	
Annual CAIV Grants Budget	\$35 million	
TOTAL CAIV Annual Budget		\$140 million

Annual CAIV Administrative Budget Details

Human Capital	\$55 million	
Training	\$3 million	
Contracted Services	\$10 million	
Information Technology	\$22 million	
Rent	\$6 million	
Travel and Miscellaneous	\$4 million	
Inspector General Audits	\$5 million	
Total Administrative Budget		\$105 million

Annual CAIV Grants Budget Details

Regional Counseling Network	\$25 million	
Research Grants	\$10 million	
Total Annual Grants Budget		\$35 million

Figure 4. Proposed CAIV Budget. Basis for costs: Congressional CR for MCC (\$899 million) in 2018, adjusted for CAIV domestic variance and lack of requirement for large foreign aid budget. **Note:** Information Technology assumes staged modular implementation; all estimates would be adjusted annually.

VI. Conclusion

Hard power alone cannot destroy jihadist ideology. When we finish destroying their safe haven of the moment and killing their latest leaders, they begin again. The United States needs a new approach to the deep battle, to be coordinated internationally and at home with the hard-power tools that have been successful in the close battle.

The jihadists' aim, both internationally and within the United States, is the radicalization of individuals and groups to accept the Jihadi Salafist ideology and attack the priority targets identified by a small but growing group of jihadist ideologues. Without recruits, their ideology has no impact. Destroying the ability of ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other Jihadist groups to radicalize individuals will also destroy Jihadi Salafism by turning it into an historic footnote rather than the clear and present danger it now is.

Establishing the Corporation Against Ideological Violence will enable the United States to put best practices into use and attack the problem of violent extremist ideology in the deep battle of ideas.

Discussion Questions

Institutional Issues

1. One model for CAIV outreach may be similar to public health interventions. What would a community-level intervention look like in your immediate community? How would it differ from the community you grew up in? Why?
2. Given concerns about privacy and private data, what assurances should CAIV provide its partnership network about how information would be used by government agencies?

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

3. If you were helping to stand up CAIV, what would the most important priorities be for the first 12 months, three years, and 10 years? What would be signs that CAIV is fulfilling its mission? What would be signs that CAIV needs to adjust its priorities? How could CAIV balance its domestic and international outreach?

Crafting Messages

1. What are “positive” messages for this target audience, and how limited or grandiose should the messaging be? What happens when reality does not live up to the hype? How can CAIV anticipate, plan for, and mitigate the effects of disillusionment?
2. What are the challenges for crafting positive narratives that resonate with multiple different audiences?
3. The Bush administration’s attempt to use advertising executives to craft positive audiences was ridiculed and then dismissed; why?
4. How could the CAIV use its unique insights into motivations and aspirations to build a series of narratives that motivate and inspire individuals?

Annex A: The Recruitment Handbook

The following is a condensed interpretation of the contents of an al-Qaeda English language recruitment manual, which an ISIS online recruiter apparently used in a prolonged recruitment effort of a lonely young American woman in Rukmini Calimachi's *New York Times* story "ISIS and the Lonely Young American" (June 27, 2015). Although the manual was originally an al-Qaeda document, it was apparently adopted by ISIS online recruiters. Its full title is "A Course in the Art of Recruiting: A graded practical program for recruiting via individual *da'wa*." *Da'wa*, literally "Call" [to Islam], may be understood here as "recruiting."

Before beginning to address the programmatic portion of the course, the author of the recruiting manual provides what he refers to as "important advice before starting the work." The first point is to avoid criticism of the potential recruit and to be sure to thank him or her for any help they provide in the process, no matter how inconsequential. The flip side of this basic point is to welcome any of his opinions even if it opposes the recruiter's views. One bit of advice appears to be especially helpful not only for jihadist recruiters but also for anyone trying to deprogram the recruit, i.e., "Don't try to make him [the recruit] a carbon copy of yourself, but let him keep his independency [sic], individual character, and natural personality." The author goes on to offer several corollaries to these basic points. The recruiter should respect the recruit's privacy, his family, and even his lifestyle at least in the beginning. In short, do everything to get know the person you are trying to recruit, but avoid giving the impression that you are trying to recruit him or her. Therefore, in the beginning the recruiter should avoid talking about the problems of Muslims, or introducing the topics of al-Qaeda (or ISIS) or jihadists in general, unless the potential recruit introduces these topics into the conversation. The general idea is to avoid rushing things. Any decisions that the target recruit makes must always seem to be his or hers alone. To keep the recruitment process invisible to the target recruit, the recruiter must make sure that the potential recruits not be aware of others in the same process.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

The recruiter must be patient. The process will take months before it moves to the next stage.

A. Target Groups for Recruiting

The manual identifies ten different categories of potential candidates listed from #1, “the nonreligious Muslim”, to #10, “Salafis.” The nonreligious Muslim is preferred because the recruiter has more leeway to teach them. It is also the category that has many young people in it, who are the safest to recruit in the author of the manual’s opinion. Salafis are listed last and are problematic because they have been thoroughly educated by scholars who generally do not approve of the radical jihadists like al-Qaeda and ISIS. The grouping is not strictly logical or according to rank except for the first (preferred) and the last (problematic). In category #2 are Muslims who have recently returned to the practice of the faith after falling away. Not all categories include people who are necessarily Muslims. For example, #3, “generally religious people” contains individuals who have the characteristics of believers but just need to be motivated to join an Islamic group like al-Qaeda or ISIS and perhaps to convert to Islam first. Category #4 includes those who have recently joined the Salafists, but are not content because Salafists are not experienced as very active and the individual is looking to be more active. Category #5, “the youths who live far from the cities,” does not fit into any religious schema because the author admits they can be religious or nonreligious. However, he adds that “They have a natural disposition for the religion and it is easy to convince them and to shape them.” Category #6 includes average members of Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and various proselytizing societies, with the caveat that the recruiter should pursue only the young members because older members tend to be “thoroughly indoctrinated.”⁶⁶ University and high school

⁶⁶ The author of the recruitment manual recommends a subset of the Muslim Brotherhood (young members) who may be vulnerable to extremist recruitment, while older members are perceived as too set in their ways. This subset could be viewed as a potential gateway to extremism within an otherwise legal group, especially since the ultimate goals of the Muslim Brotherhood are generally congruent with more extremist groups, although their strategies on achieving those goals are

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

students make up categories #7 and #8. The universities are full of talented, often anti-government youth with the caveat that they are also “full of spies.” High school students are full of potential. The recruiter should strike up a relationship with those over age 15 because they still have open minds, and if the jihadist recruiter does not invite them to be religious, someone else will entice them with material goals. Category #9 appears to be the open-ended search for prominent members of society who can have great impact but have “corrupted,” “non-Islamic” ideas. The caveat here is that the recruiter should approach only those who have open minds, for example, “liberals” and “secularists.”

The point of identifying these groups is to create a way for the recruiter to think about all the people he knows in these categories and make a first cut of those most likely to reward the time required in the attempt to recruit them. The manual first identifies the five characteristics that are disqualifiers for individuals in any group. The first is being a “coward,” an obvious disqualifier for a terrorist group. The second is the excessively talkative person. Third are those who are hostile to the “Mujahideen,” “These are, for example, like the Murjites, “the people who are soft with the tyrant leaders and harsh with the common Muslims...” Fourth is the stingy person. (“Money is the backbone of Jihad.”) Finally, the fifth killer characteristic is the loner, who “is always alone and never tries to make relationships with people.” (“This kind is not qualified to work with you so don’t waste your time.”) Obviously, the author understands that the true loner can be a violent killer, but he is unlikely to work for anyone’s goals but his own.

B. The First Stage: Getting Acquainted and Choosing

After a few more preparatory remarks, the author introduces the first stage of the course, a general assessment of potential recruitment targets and then choosing the ones on which to concentrate one’s efforts.

circumstantial and often include the intention of abiding by the laws of a host country, especially in the West. It is the shared goals that argue for a group’s potential status as a gateway. In the West, groups on the Muslim Brotherhood model have been known to adopt other names.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

In true al-Qaeda and ISIS bureaucratic form, the author provides a series of forms for the recruiter to fill out. The first one is a simple matrix of the names of potential targets the recruiter would have for a first cut. Against these names are arrayed all the pertinent facts. The recruiter is urged to think of all the people he knows or at least has encountered, and judge whether there is a potential jihadist among them. Then he or she is to fill in all the pertinent information about each, i.e., address, phone, job and any pertinent notes for each. No one the recruiter judges to have one of the “killer characteristics” should be on this initial list

The next form is a matrix of all the names from the first list arrayed against five characteristics: Basic morals, Islamic morals, Distinction (family, class), Closeness (to recruiter), and Stability (family, job). The recruiter is then to give a rating of 1-10 points for the first four categories and 1-5 for the last category. For the purposes of this exercise, the recruiter is to revisit all the names on his list and pick two. The next stage in the decision process is to review the choices against three questions. These are arrayed against simple yes or no matrix. The first is a gut check. Were you convinced by your choice? If not, choose another. Next, did you consult anyone about your choice or pray for guidance?--a question that translates into “are you sure?” Finally, does your choice possess any of the killer “characteristics”? If the answers for this review indicate a problem which cannot be resolved, for example, if on reflection the recruiter thinks his choice actually does have one or more of the killer characteristics, the recruiter must return to his list and make another choice.

C. The Second Stage: Getting Close (or Approaching)

After finishing the first stage of recruitment with choices made, the manual guides the reader into the second stage “Getting close (or approaching).” This stage proceeds in the same painstaking fashion as the first stage. The al-Qaeda document, revised in 2010, assumes that the recruiter will be surrounded by acquaintances and his relationship will likely be in person. Jihadist recruiters today are likely be acquaintances on

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

social media, and the recruiter is likely to be in another country from his or her target. In this stage, the recruiter will never mention jihad or his real purpose. He or she will strive to strike up a friendship based on a religious interest in Islam on the part of the target. The recruiter will strive to become a helpful Muslim friend with long conversations and interventions on a daily and weekly basis. The recruiter will send appropriate presents, electronically or through ordinary mail of a religious nature or even candy. To an experienced eye, the relationship may well appear to be grooming, but to the target, the recruiter will appear to be a reliable friend who is always available, always helpful, and never argumentative or judgmental. The relationship will continue slowly over weeks or more likely months with the target becoming increasingly dependent on the recruiter.

As in the previous stage, the course provides the recruiter with forms to fill out to keep a record of daily and weekly activities. The recruiter must know about the target's "concerns, interests, and relationships with other people and how he spends his complete 24 hours in a day." The recruiter must have taken note of the target's negative and positive characteristics and "make a long term plan to remedy" his or her negative ones. When the recruiter has compiled enough information and executed the plan laid out in great detail in the manual, the recruiter must do an assessment of progress. Again the course presents a form, this time with eight questions arrayed against a numerical rating: 1 for "No," 2 for "Sometimes," and 3 for "yes." The questions are all aimed at achieving the goal of getting close to the target such as "Does he talk to you about his private affairs and his hobbies?" and "Does he love to spend a lot of time with you?" A score of less than 10 would mean that the target has received a no on all or most questions. Obviously, the target could receive a no on seven questions and only one "yes" and still score a 10. A score of less than 10 means that the process has failed and the recruiter should choose another target and start the process over. If the target receives a score from "10 to 18" the recruiter can be satisfied of some success but must continue the process for another month and repeat the assessment of the target. Finally, with a score from 19 to 24, the author of the manual proclaims, "your choice was a good one, continue with the Blessing of Allah, but you

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

should know that your close relationship with him (the recruit) must continue.”

The recruiter, however, may not continue to the third stage of the course until he or she completes a security survey. Again the course presents a form with three questions arrayed against “executed” and “not executed” The course cannot continue unless the response to all three questions is “executed,” “or there will be a danger for you.” The questions are intended to reveal how much the recruiter knows about his recruit and in what detail. “Did you find out how he [recruit] spends most of his time?” “Did you find out about most of his relationships and who he associates with?” The final question is perhaps the most ominous for the future relationship: “Did you find out his characteristics which will soften him up (and give you access to his heart), and did you find out his weaknesses?” To clarify the importance of this last question, the author provides a final form to record the positive and negative characteristics “to benefit from them.”

D. Third Stage: The Awakening of Faith

At this point the recruiter, hiding his or her ultimate intention, becomes a friend and mentor in faith. This means working through the ritual practices and articles of faith in Sunni Islam. This approach is still far from introducing the jihadist path as interpreted specifically by al-Qaeda, ISIS, or any specific jihadist group. However, the course introduces ten topics to be covered, which the recruiter can rely on when the time comes for the actual invitation to the recruit to join a group. In this stage, the recruiter will teach by example as much as by word. So, the first assessment following the methods employed in the earlier stages is to determine whether the recruiter is ready or even eager “to practice what you preach.” If the recruiter is not minimally ready to set a perfect example as measured by the assessment, the author directs the would-be recruiter to turn the target recruit over to “a righteous friend” who can continue the program. On the other hand, if the recruiter passes the assessment with a minimal grade, he may continue but should strive to

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

improve his personal score as he becomes the mentor for the target recruit. If the recruiter scores high in the personal assessment, he is urged to “strive your utmost because this stage never ends.” The author of the course is mostly encouraging. He notes, “If the people only accept advice from completely righteous advisors, then we will not find any advisors who are qualified to give advice.”

The ten topics should not be surprising to anyone familiar with Salafist Islam and most of them would be familiar, to some extent, to any student of Sunni Islam. These include faith in and love for Allah; yearning for Paradise and fear of Hell; love and respect for the Messenger of Allah Muhammad; observing all the obligatory prayer times; avoiding all forms of sin; practicing truthfulness and sincerity; increasing non-obligatory good deeds and prayer; and generally adopting a “beautifully decorated” character without bad morals or manners.

Two of the topics are closer to the whole purpose of the recruitment than the rest. The first of these describes the “virtues of jihad and martyrdom.” The approach is intended to be subtle. This is not the jihad of al-Qaeda or ISIS. The emphasis is on the role of traditional jihad within Islam and the justification of jihad through the hadiths. There are plenty of examples that the recruiter can use from the earliest days of Islam. The idea behind the topic is to lead the target recruit to see that jihad and dying a hero of jihad, a martyr, saves the good Muslim from the fires of hell. The stories or examples from history can be tailored to the personality of the recruit. The second topic, “Trials and Patience,” is a more dangerous area for the recruiter. The recruiter needs to provide his subject with information about the trials and tribulations of the jihad without frightening him or her away. At the same time, the recruiter must give his target recruit enough to think about so that he or she will not be “shocked by the truth,” when that is revealed in the final stage of the course. This is a topic for which the recruiter’s knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the target recruit will help with shaping the message so that it will appeal to its audience of one.

i. Shrinking the World

The rest of this stage of the course will be consumed with practical and theoretical lessons to deepen the target's faith and radicalize him or her so that the world will shrink to a dependency on this new Muslim friend or friends. It is a stage of shared prayers, lessons, and more gifts. The recruiter is a mentor and exemplar of the good Muslim to the recruit. If the recruit is a non-Muslim, he or she will be encouraged to convert at this time. If the recruit is a lukewarm Muslim, he or she will be encouraged to deepen a commitment to Islam. The recruit will become, in the words of the author of the course, "a stranger, but not alone." By this he means that the recruit will be a stranger to all the world except his new, loving friends. His or her world will be warm with prayer, acts of kindness (given and received), presents, shared meals, shared prayers, and works of charity. This sharing may be via the internet or in person. His or her world will be shrunk to one path forward. This can be a very powerful appeal to the adolescent or young adult who is the preferred target of the course. It may be very difficult to recover the target recruit at this point. This process is sometimes referred to as "de-pluralization." The target's world is shrunk to a single path forward, even though they may be unaware in their initial enthusiasm.

The recruiter is encouraged to use his or her imagination and to vary the times and the methods of training according to circumstance. The course suggests supplying the target with commonly available pamphlets on Islamic topics, books emphasizing the virtues of jihad in Islamic history, and the Qur'an in translation. Appropriate videos and lectures by well-known Muslim preachers are introduced at this point. To fill up the recruit's time, the recruiter should get his or her commitment to a prepared schedule for prayer times. The candidate is encouraged to perform self-assessments for at least one month. The recruiter is required to do yet another self-evaluation to maximize the variety of practical teaching methods used at this stage. The recruiter should not introduce doubts at this stage or discourage the recruit in any way. If the recruit raises questions or doubts, answer his doubts simply using the Qur'an, hadith,

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

and examples from the time of the Rashidun Caliphs, etc. As with all other stages, the course provides a self-assessment for the recruiter and an assessment of the recruit to determine whether he or she is ready to move to the next stage.

E. Fourth Stage: Planting the Concepts

During this stage, the recruiter plunges deeper into the theory and reality of jihad by introducing the basic concepts of jihadist ideology “to indoctrinate” the candidate. The course suggests spending at least two months at a minimum on this stage. The jihadist concepts are revealed clearly for the first time. The first concept is holding fast to the Qur’an and Sunna, which is true for any Sunni Muslim. However, this is explained in a novel sense: “if anyone of the Mujahideen makes a mistake in the basic principles of the deen [i.e. Islam], the candidate must disassociate himself from such a wrong-doing without hesitation.” This is a variation of the Wahhabi principle of “Allegiance and Disavowal,” i.e., allegiance to Muslims, jihadists in this case, and disavowal of everyone else. A key concept is that jihad and preparing for it are religious obligations. Also, if a ruler governs by any law other than the Qur’an and Sunna, he is a disbeliever, i.e., what is known as “*Al Hakimiyyah*” [sovereignty belongs to Allah alone]. Islam as presented does not allow democracy.

Under the heading of general concepts, the candidate is introduced to jihadist religious scholars and encouraged to be familiar with them. The course also explains how the jihadist movement is under attack all over the world, and this includes the media and government attacks on jihadist scholars. The candidate should understand, however, that jihadists are all over the world, so he need never feel lonely. If the candidate cannot join a jihadist group (the best way), the course introduces a number of ways he can participate in jihad without joining a group. For example, the candidate can become one of the Mujahideen on the Internet. He can view and share jihadist videos, join jihadist forums, etc. The first sign that the candidate is ready to move to the next stage is that he or she requests jihad and wants jihad. The second sign is that he or she reads jihadist books and

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

requests knowledge of Islamic legislation. The author warns that the second sign has a dangerous side to it because there are untrustworthy legal opinions and problematic Muslim scholars. The idea is to delay delving into this issue until the final stage. As with previous stages, the course provides an assessment of the candidate's performance to determine whether he is ready to move to the last stage.

F. The Last Stage: The Establishment of the Brigade

The author states that he “will not speak a lot in this stage.” He claims that everything the recruiter “must know” and “will want to know” is contained in Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri’s *Call to Global Islamic Resistance*. The author intends for the course to be “a stepping stone” to al-Suri’s book, which is the compilation of his insights and recommendations based on his long experience of and research into jihad. This appears to be strange advice for the reader of the English translation of the course, which must have been originally written in Arabic. Al-Suri’s book, completed in late 2004, is a dense Arabic composition of 1604 pages in its PDF form. Having this book in one’s possession is a likely cause for arrest in most Arabic speaking countries. It is a fugitive book on most jihadist websites and only parts of it in English translation are readily available.⁶⁷ The inclusion of this reference is likely the translator’s concern about being faithful to the original author’s text, which is characteristic of insider translations of jihadist documents. Al-Suri is known for his theories of individual and small-cell terrorism behind enemy lines with a special emphasis on the United States and its allies.

In this final stage, the author provides some approaches to jihad in a practical sense. The recruiter should now “paint the scene” of this stage as one that demands activity and preparation. The recruiter should open

⁶⁷ For a detailed biography of al-Suri along with selected translations of his book see Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); see also Jim Lacey, ed., *A Terrorist’s Call to Global Jihad: Deciphering Abu Musab al-Suri’s Islamic Jihad Manifesto* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008); for a brief analysis of his strategy and selected translations, see also Ryan, *Decoding al-Qaeda’s Strategy* (2013), 193-254.

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

the topic of jihad either in the recruiter's country or some other country. The recruiter should not expect that his target, who has now become his charge, has any idea about how to go about it or prepare for it. The first way to solve this problem is to present him with books that feature the sufferings of jihadists at the hands of various countries. The idea is not to make this a "source of fear," but instead to make the stories of Muslims who have been tortured and killed a source of anger. The recruiter should actively engage his charge in making preparations after reviewing options. Once again the course brings up al-Suri's book as a source of inspiration and practical advice. The recruiter needs to bring up examples of successful jihadists, some of whom his charge may not know about in any sense. Finally, the recruiter is encouraged to read al-Suri's book and if that is not possible at least recommended sections about recruiting, methodology, and the "Way." Depending on the recruiter's situation and his charge's strengths, the recruiter may suggest a group, the "brigade" in the title of this stage, which his charge may want to join. If this is not feasible, then the two may discuss the rationale, legal justification and methodology of performing jihad "individually." One gets the impression that the author cannot be more specific without knowing the particulars of an audience he does not know. The author does not suggest the obvious approach of seeking the advice of other colleagues that the recruit may or may not have already met either online or in person.

In the final mobilization stage, the recruiter encourages the recruit to join a jihadist group. For an ISIS or al-Qaeda recruiter, the recruit will be urged to pledge allegiance to the leadership of one of these groups. The specific action the recruiter recommends at this point will depend on the nature of the recruit and the needs of the jihadist group at the time. The action may be to stay in place, in which case the recruit will be expected to become self-sustaining and perhaps become a recruiter of others in his or her family or from among the recruit's friends. The recruiter may provide the recruit a one-time infusion of funds to provide for an easy start-up. If the recruit needs to travel to a "hot jihad" the recruiter could offer the recruit a round trip ticket to some European destination, (as in the case of

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

Alex in Rukmini Calimachi's *New York Times* story) where a handler would instruct him or her on the best way to travel to the final destination.

Annex B: The Millennium Challenge Corporation

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is an innovative presidential initiative established in 2004 by President George W. Bush. MCC's purpose is to help economically poor countries by entering multi-year agreements, referred to as "compacts" to fund economically beneficial and sustainable projects. The projects that form the basis of the compacts' funding requests are proposed and executed by the countries themselves without a large MCC presence in country. To be eligible for a compact, countries must pass a series of threshold indicators recommended by outside institutions (e.g. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Brookings Institution, the Heritage Foundation, etc.). The indicators offer objective measures demonstrating that a country can use the funding efficiently and appropriately. (For details see (<https://www.mcc.gov/who-we-fund/indicators>) These indicators include such items as ways to start a business and control of corruption. Because very poor countries often cannot meet the requirements of these indicators, MCC offers "threshold funding" to help improve selected countries' scores. Meeting these threshold requirements often entails improvements in a country's financial bureaucracy and business climate, control of corruption, and trade policy, but can include such items as human rights and the rule of law. At the compact stage, an investment board composed of VP level executive and chaired by the Deputy CEO makes recommendations for funding to the CEO for decision.

According to the MCC website (<https://www.mcc.gov/where-we-work>) oversees 47 country programs with a highly skilled workforce projected to be 320 employees by 2019. Congressional oversight requirements include an annual performance report that documents country program performance data on "specific objectives and benchmarks for measuring progress." MCC also must report to Congress on the cost effectiveness of its programs and maintain a rigorous evaluation program. The cost of this effort in in the 2018 Congressional Continuing Resolution (CR) is projected to be approximately \$899

Ryan Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield

million. The bulk of this funding (\$795 million) is for economic assistance to foreign countries. Administrative costs covering salaries, IT, overseas operations, etc. consume approximately \$104 million. MCC administrative costs have remained relatively flat over the most recent 6 years. (Source for budget figures: (<https://www.mcc.gov/resources/story/story-cbj-fy2019-admin-expenses>))

The MCC Organization

The MCC workforce is distributed among six departments: The Office of the CEO, the General Counsel, the VP for Administration and Finance, the VP for Compact Operations, the VP for Congressional and Public Affairs, and the VP for Policy & Evaluation. Workforce salaries for 320 employees is projected to be approximately \$55 million.

Board of Directors

The MCC Board of Directors is comprised of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the U.S. Trade Representative, the Administrator of USAID, the CEO of MCC and four private sector members appointed by the President of the United States.

The MCC Advisory Council

The MCC Advisory Council provides private sector expertise, insights, and recommendations that inform the agency's program and partnerships.

Annex C: Further Reading

Aly, Anne, Stuart Macdonald, Lee Jarvis, and Thomas M. Chen.

“Introduction to the Special Issue: Terrorist Online Propaganda and Radicalization.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 1 (February 25, 2016): 1-9. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157402.

Awan, Imran. “Cyber-Extremism: ISIS and the Power of Social Media.” *Society* 54, no. 2 (2017): 138-149. doi:10.1007/s12115-017-0114-0.

Benigni, Matthew C., Kenneth Joseph, and Kathleen M. Carley. “Online Extremism and the Communities that Sustain It: Detecting the ISIS-Supporting Community on Twitter.” *PLoS One* 12, no. 12 (2017). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0181405>.

Bloom, Mia. “Constructing Expertise: Terrorist Recruitment and ‘Talent Spotting’ in the PIRA, Al Qaeda, and ISIS.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 7 (2016): 603-623. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2016.1237219.

Cragin, Kim. “Resisting Violent Extremism: A Conceptual Model for Non-Radicalization.” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism & Political Aggression* 26, no. 2 (2014): 337-353. doi:doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2012.714820.

Cohen, Shuki J., Arie Kruglanski, Michele J. Gelfand, David Webber, and Rohan Gunaratna. “Al-Qaeda’s Propaganda Decoded: A Psycholinguistic System for Detecting Variations in Terrorism Ideology.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30, no. 1 (2016): 142-171, doi: 10.1080/09546553.2016.1165214

Farag, Donna. “From Tweeter to Terrorist: Combatting Online Propaganda When Jihad Goes Viral.” *American Criminal Law Review* 54, no. 3 (Summer 2017).

Gates, Scott, and Sukanya Podder. “Social Media, Recruitment, Allegiance and the Islamic State.” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015): 107-116.

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

Greenberg, Karen J. "Counter-Radicalization via the Internet." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (2016): 165-179. doi:10.1177/0002716216672635.

Gunaratna, Rohan. "Al Qaeda's Ideology." *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 1 (2005): 59-67.

Hafez, Mohammed, and Creighton Mullins. "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 11 (2015): 958-975. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1051375.

Hatton, Arthur T., and Michael E. Nielsen. "'War on Terror' in Our Backyard: Effects of Framing and Violent ISIS Propaganda on Anti-Muslim Prejudice." *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism & Political Aggression* 8, no. 3 (2016): 163-176. doi:10.1080/19434472.2015.1126341.

Haykel, Bernard. "ISIS and Al-Qaeda—What Are They Thinking? Understanding the Adversary." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (2016): 71-81. doi:10.1177/0002716216672649.

Ingram, Haroro J. "An Analysis of *Inspire* and *Dabiq*: Lessons from AQAP and Islamic State's Propaganda War." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 5 (2017): 357-375. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2016.1212551.

Kibble, David G. "*Dabiq*, the Islamic State's Magazine: A Critical Analysis." *Middle East Policy* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 133-43. doi:10.1111/mepo.12222.

Marcellino, William M., Kim Cragin, Joshua Mendelsohn, Andrew Michael Cady, Madeline Magnuson, and Kathleen Reedy. "Measuring the Popular Resonance of Daesh's Propaganda." *Journal of Strategic Security* 10, no. 1 (2017): 32-52. doi:10.5038/1944-0472.10.1.1527

Ryan *Defeating ISIS and al-Qaeda on the Ideological Battlefield*

McCauley, Clark. "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 3rd ser., no. 20 (2008): 415-433. doi:10.1080/09546550802073367.

Postel, Thérèse. "The Young and the Normless: Al Qaeda's Ideological Recruitment of Western Extremists." *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 12, no. 4 (2013): 99-117.

Quiggin, Tom. "Understanding Al-Qaeda's Ideology for Counter-Narrative Work." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3, no. 2 (2010): 18-24.

Secara, Diana. "The Role of Social Networks in the Work of Terrorist Groups: The Case of ISIS and Al-Qaeda." *Research and Science Today* (2015): 77-83.

Senzai, Farid. "Making Sense of Radicalization." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 32, no. 2 (2015): 139-152.

Sorenson, David S. "Priming Strategic Communications: Countering the Appeal of ISIS." *Parameters* 44, no. 3 (2014): 25-36.

Weinstein, Kenneth. "Countering Disinformation with Information: Defeating Adversary Propaganda to Win Hearts and Minds." *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly* (January 2016): 101.

Wilner, Alex S. "Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Radicalization." *Global Change, Peace & Security* 22, no. 1 (2010): 33-51. doi:10.1080/14781150903487956.

Zarate, Juan. "The Future of Counterterrorism Strategy." *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly* (February 2017): 32.

