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COUNTERTERRORISM YEARBOOK 2017

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COUNTERTERRORISM YEARBOOK 2017

Edited by Jacinta Carroll

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PREFACE

DR SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO

The 6th President of the Republic of Indonesia

It is a matter of certainty that terrorism will continue to be the key challenge to national and international security.

It is extremely difficult to know when and where the next attack will occur. Each of us—no matter how distant, or how powerful, or how seemingly peaceful—can be a potential target.

Indonesia, like many other countries, has at various times in our post-independence history faced different forms of terrorism, coming from a variety of perpetrators. Since the time of the Bali bombings in 2002, it has often been said that Indonesia has had a good record of successful counterterrorism measures. Many plots have been foiled, scores of terrorist cells have been uncovered and apprehended, and our deradicalisation program has progressed. But we were not successful all the time. Despite our all-out efforts, we were still hit by several strikes. And whenever they happened we never let our guard down; we always rebounded and fought them even more strongly.

We have learned several lessons in our counterterrorism efforts. The first is to keep the fight against terrorism away from politics as best as possible. Once counterterrorism activities become subject to the political circus, things will become disoriented—a situation which benefits only the terrorists. A quiet, focused, sustained and professional approach is the best way to fight terrorism.

Second is the imperative to engage in international cooperation. One cannot be drawn into inward-looking nationalism for the practical reason that most terrorist operations are transnational. As we have experienced in Indonesia, intelligence sharing is extremely critical to our ability to identify, track, disrupt and neutralise terrorist groups.

Third is the need to shore up public support and to maintain religious moderation. There is nothing the terrorists want more than to see the breakdown of public order and the spread of fear and insecurity, which would provide fertile ground for radicalism. A resilient society, thriving religious tolerance and a strong civil society is the best antidote to terrorism.

Fourth is the need to constantly adapt. The terrorists today are very different from the terrorists when I first joined the military in the early 1970s. They are more sophisticated in their craft, are bent on killing indiscriminately and disproportionately and, unlike in the past, are willing to die for their cause. As the terrorists' means of attack continue to evolve, so must our methods to counter them. We must try to catch up with their craft and if possible be one step ahead of the terrorists, although I know that is easier said than done.

2016 was a difficult year in the fight against terrorism, judging from the number of attacks and casualties worldwide. Throughout 2016, the Islamic State (IS) suffered major setbacks and lost significant territory in the Middle East. At the same time, however, the group continued to engage and recruit sympathisers who have inspired, enabled and directed terrorist attacks. Those attacks have occurred with frequency and global reach, from Malaysia to Germany and from Bangladesh to the US. The geographic vision of those who are calling for the so-called 'caliphate' far exceeds the borders of the Middle East, and we shall continue to feel the effects of IS's dangerous ideology in the years to come.

Counterterrorism agencies have also been active behind the scenes. 2016 has seen significant work to counter terrorist financing, new research into counterterrorism methods, improved methods of deradicalisation, and a broadening of training to help local police recognise emerging extremist threats. Importantly, international cooperation is continuing to grow. There have also been efforts to build a stronger coalition of moderates and interfaith solidarity.

To that end, this counterterrorism yearbook is the first in what will be an annual ASPI publication reporting on key counterterrorism developments around the world. Each chapter covers a region or specific country, providing in-depth analysis on relevant counterterrorism strategy, policy, legislation and operations.

It is my sincere hope that this yearbook will help practitioners and the community alike understand the nature of these challenges and what is being done globally to make the world safer.

In a security environment that appears sometimes dominated by the threat of terrorism, let us focus on and learn from the many and varied efforts being undertaken to counter this insidious threat.

I am therefore pleased to commend this publication to you as an authoritative reference on global counterterrorism actions.

INTRODUCTION

JACINTA CARROLL

Head of the Counter-Terrorism Policy Centre,
Australian Strategic Policy Institute

Countries, coalitions, organisations and communities across the world put enormous effort into countering terrorism. Much of this work is done out of the spotlight, in legislatures, police forces, policy departments, security agencies, social services, academia and community groups. Certainly almost all of the vast global activity undertaken to counter terrorism is done without the headlines that accompany terrorist attacks. This work is a contribution to redressing the balance.

Sharing knowledge about what others have done, including what does and doesn't work, is one of the most important aspects of counterterrorism (CT). While working-level intentions are often good, differences in politics, culture, law, language and variations in the security environment across the globe makes it challenging to translate the experiences of others into relevant lessons for our own particular situation.

ASPI established its Counter-Terrorism Policy Centre in late 2015 to explain the CT environment to the public and policymakers alike, and to provide policy advice on CT. Through this first Counterterrorism Yearbook, in what will be an annual publication, we aim to promote that understanding and contribute to shared knowledge of CT.

The Yearbook is arranged by country and region, looking at those areas around the world where terrorism and CT are in greatest focus. Each chapter examines CT developments in 2016, including the terrorist threat being faced and how governments and others have approached CT through both policy and operations. Particular nuances of the local environment are also explained, whether in the transition of a nationalist independence movement into an alliance with Islamist terrorism, or the role of multiple jurisdictions in federations.

What emerges is a story of a CT world in three parts. At one extreme is the Middle East and North Africa: the epicentre of Islamist terrorism. CT here is about the immediacy of fighting wars and insurgencies. But the battlegrounds feature a complex array of players and histories of political instability, social divisions, criminality and corruption. The problems facing these countries go beyond the remit of CT alone, and will endure beyond the current battles with terrorism.

Western countries provide the counterpoint. While the world was shocked by terrorist attacks and plots in Europe, North America and Australia in 2015 and 2016, there are few instances of actual terrorist violence by comparison to other regions. Western countries also have strong political, legal and social institutions enabling a complex and considered array of activities to address terrorism at home and abroad, as well as to build collaborative arrangements and resilience. While the threat remained high in these countries in 2016, so was the level of CT activity.

The third area encompasses a range of experiences, from those such as Indonesia which had turned the tide against homegrown terrorism and continues to build effective governance, but is facing a renewed threat; and others across Asia, Africa and the Middle East who are dealing with longstanding and complex disputes that are complicated by allegiances to external terrorist groups, or opposition elements being labelled as terrorists. Others, such as some of the Gulf states, are affected by proximity to terrorist violence in neighbouring countries, and may be contributing to CT operations at the same time as their nationals or governments are supporting some of those considered to be terrorists.

At the core of the CT story for 2016 is the fundamental challenge of security: how to protect society from terrorist violence while maintaining other human rights.

Countries and their communities are taking various approaches to resolving this challenge. As the following chapters show, many states see the protection of fundamental liberties as the core aim of CT. At the same time, CT practitioners will advise their governments to change laws, take additional security measures, and conduct operations to make the environment harder for terrorists, and also ensure that terrorists are held to account. The net result of these additional measures can, however, be restrictions on the very liberty that the terrorists are aiming to undermine. This conundrum led to substantial debate in many countries and globally in 2016, and we expect that debate to continue as long as the challenge of terrorism remains.



AUSTRALIA:

THE YEAR IN REVIEW AND THE YEAR AHEAD

JACINTA CARROLL

Head of the Counter-Terrorism Policy Centre, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

Australia has invested significantly in counterterrorism (CT) policy, capabilities and operations since the 11 September 2001 attacks, creating new policy, legislation, powers and capabilities, supported by more than \$1 billion in additional funding in the past two and a half years.¹ Australia's CT efforts in 2016 saw continuing success, and the country remained free of major terrorist attacks despite an ongoing and persistent high threat. But CT agencies were stretched as never before in their attempts to keep the evolving threat in sight and to pre-empt imminent attacks. The year involved several plot disruptions, terrorism-related arrests, new CT legislation, success on the battlefields of Iraq and Syria as part of the international coalition, and progress in a range of other international CT initiatives in which Australia is a leader or contributor.

Consistent with longstanding convention, CT policy and legislation enjoyed bipartisan support from the major parties in Australia's two-party political system, and this translated to similar support in the states and territories across the Australian federation.

During the year, Australia experienced one low-scale and low-impact attack inspired by the so-called Islamic State (IS). CT authorities also disrupted seven major terrorist plots,² and the CT year ended dramatically with the disruption of one of the largest terrorist plots in the country's history.³

While 2016 also featured the disruption of a right-wing extremist terrorist plot—the first of its type in the recent threat environment—Islamist extremist terrorism remained the dominant form of terrorist threat to Australia and the primary focus of CT activity.

The current threat is likely to endure in 2017, as Islamist extremists continue to seek to attack Australian targets, as well as those in the nearby Southeast Asian region. This means that CT investigations and operations will continue apace. Ongoing reviews of CT and related issues, such as Australia's intelligence capability, will drive policy and legislative change. There should be some nuanced moves in Australia's international CT engagement in 2017 as coalition operations in the Middle East move to the next stage, and engagement with Southeast Asian partners adjusts to counter the threat in the region.

AUSTRALIA'S TERRORIST THREAT ENVIRONMENT

In 2016, global Islamist terrorism continued to be the major influence on national security in Australia.⁴ Inspired primarily by the international success and propaganda network of IS, small groups mostly based in Sydney and Melbourne—Australia's two largest cities—continued to promote violent extremism and seek to mount attacks. As in the past two years, IS named Australia and Australian places as targets in video propaganda, notably in September when it included places from Bondi to Brunswick in its online magazine *Rumiyah*⁵ and again in December when stock footage of significant locations in Melbourne was included in a video calling for strikes.⁶ But despite the generic calls, and other than a Syrian-based Australian's involvement in two failed plots (discussed below), IS has not to date been directly involved in planned attacks on Australian targets.

TERRORIST ATTACKS

In 2016, Australia entered its third year of a terror threat alert level of 'PROBABLE: a terror attack is likely',⁷ the second-highest of five levels.⁸ But the public's initial shock at the original announcement in September 2014, followed just three months later by the Lindt Café siege in Sydney, appeared to have worn off somewhat by 2016. Three additional attacks occurred, including one in 2016, but all were single-actor, low-capability acts, while larger planned attacks were disrupted. It seems that Australia's CT success may inadvertently undermine the importance of the terror threat alert level, as any significant threat to date has been nullified.

The 2016 attack was Australia's fourth in the current post-IS threat era. On 10 September in the Sydney suburb of Minto, a 22-year-old Australian national, Ihsas Khan, attacked another man whom he reportedly knew by sight and inflicted serious but not critical stab wounds. Khan reportedly had mental health issues and associated with individuals who supported Islamist extremism.⁹ While the matter is still before the courts, media reporting has speculated that Khan was radicalised and directed to undertake the attack by some new associates.¹⁰

Public discussion of the four terrorist attacks typically refers to the attackers as 'lone wolves' (suggesting that they are completely self-motivated) and highlights mental health issues, which has the effect of dismissing the assailants as unimportant and rationalising the acts as random, unpredictable, unhinged and unpreventable.¹¹ While this may be interpreted as demonstrating community resilience against terrorism, it might also indicate a lack of public understanding of the severity of the threat and low preparedness for a future large-scale attack.

The tactics involved in most attacks and plots have been relatively simple, involving knives and single-action firearms. This reflects the relatively low capabilities of homegrown groups and Australia's restrictive firearms regime, but also indicates that terrorists are electing to pursue low-signature activities in order to avoid scrutiny, as has been seen in other countries. Despite these past preferences, potential terrorist actors and groups are still seeking access to semi-automatic firearms and explosives for more lethal attacks.¹²

For a better understanding of Australia's evolving threat picture in 2016, it's useful to consider the types of attacks planned in foiled plots. One disrupted plot allegedly included multiple-venue and mass-casualty attacks in public places in Melbourne's CBD on Christmas Day, including improvised explosive devices, knives and firearms.¹³ Arrests made in Sydney and Melbourne during 2016 involved charges of conspiring to obtain illegal firearms and manufacture explosive devices. And the 2016 trials associated with Curtis Cheng's 2015 murder confirmed that the weapon used was

obtained illegally from local Middle East organised crime gangs.¹⁴ This indicates that terrorists in Australia intend to mount mass-casualty fatal attacks, where possible. Australia's strict firearms regime means that terrorists seeking to attack with firearms will probably need to either engage with organised criminal groups or remain satisfied with lesser capability, commercially available weapons.

TERRORISTS AND SUPPORTERS

The overall number of Islamist extremist supporters, including foreign fighters and would-be foreign fighters, remained consistent with levels seen in 2015—a year when Australia, like many other countries, saw a dramatic increase in homegrown terrorism. Authorities state that in 2016 they were investigating about 400 CT cases—broadly the same as 2015 and up from around 200 in 2014—and were specifically focused on around 200 people in relation to recruitment and support for IS.¹⁵

The high level of surveillance and disruption by law enforcement and security agencies has seen terrorists look to previously unknown people—'cleanskins'—to undertake attacks. Among the cleanskins were Khan and the two unnamed 16-year-olds arrested in the Sydney suburb of Bankstown in October 2016 for allegedly planning an imminent knife attack on members of the public.¹⁶

In 2016, a young Islamist preacher came to public prominence as one of the main radicalisers on the Sydney and Melbourne circuit. Junaid Thorne—also a self-proclaimed sheikh—appeared to court publicity by appearing in television news reports and projecting himself as an influential tough guy due to his having served four months in the highest security prison in New South Wales (NSW).¹⁷ But as the number of his supporters dwindles as they die, go to jail or head overseas, Thorne's talks reportedly attract only a handful of people.¹⁸ Thorne is also under investigation for aiding and abetting the Bankstown plotters.¹⁹

Australians continued to be over-represented on a pro-rata basis among foreign terrorist fighters.²⁰ While Australians don't appear to have assumed important leadership roles in IS proper, they've featured in propaganda, recruitment and networks focused back to Australia, as has occurred with other nationalities. In 2016, authorities stated that 110 Australians were foreign fighters. That number is broadly consistent with figures over the previous two years, and Duncan Lewis, Director-General of Security, stated in May 2016 that the number travelling overseas had plateaued.²¹

It's estimated that up to 69 Australian terrorists have died in the Middle East, and another 40 have returned home, for reasons ranging from disillusionment and fear to, potentially, a desire to undertake activities in Australia.²² This means that more than 200 Australians have been in the Middle East supporting terrorism in recent years, many of whom may eventually return to Australia. While Australians have been involved with foreign terrorist groups before—notably including al-Qaeda during its heyday in Afghanistan—the numbers were low. Still, the returnees from that era nonetheless presented an ongoing threat. In addition, some of those whose attempts to travel have been thwarted by authorities through passport cancellation and suspension may also seek to engage in terrorism at home. This creates increased demands on CT resources to investigate and monitor them, as appropriate, in accordance with the assessed threat posed by the individual.

Analysts assess that the demise of IS on the battlefields of Syria and Iraq will see many foreign fighters leave the area, either moving to other battlefields and safe havens or returning home, where they might continue to pose a threat.²³

The return of Southeast Asian fighters to their home countries also poses a threat to Australian interests and regional security and will be a factor for the coming year. Indeed, Prime Minister Turnbull observed in late 2016 that the next terrorist attack on Australia might come from our region.²⁴

COUNTERTERRORISM IN AUSTRALIA IN 2016: DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY AND POLICY

Australia's strategic approach to CT continued in a considered manner through 2016. Developments were limited mainly to progressing legislation that had been under consideration by governments in the various jurisdictions and in the federal parliament for some time and commencing some policy initiatives. CT wasn't a headline issue for governments or the public during the year; it didn't feature in the federal election held in July or in the 2016 Defence White Paper published in March. Indeed, while the White Paper noted ADF CT-related operations—including more than a decade in the Middle East and Afghanistan—and referred many times to the threat of global terrorism as part of the broader security environment, it provided no specific guidance on Defence's future CT capabilities and role, either at home or abroad.²⁵

This was partly addressed later in July, when Turnbull announced a review of the ADF's role in domestic CT; by the year's end, this had not substantially progressed, and it's not clear when it will be finalised.²⁶ It's important that this review consider objectively the role of military and defence capabilities, and not assign particular CT roles when they might be replicated or more appropriately done elsewhere.

A review of the Australian intelligence community commenced in 2016 and is due to report in 2017. It is considering the roles and relationships of the various agencies and, among other things, their roles in CT. The intelligence community includes the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, the Office of National Assessments, and Defence's Australian Signals Directorate and Australian Geospatial Organisation.

The Australian Government continued to observe and learn from developments in other first-world liberal democracies. Following the July attack in Nice, Turnbull announced a review into lone-actor attacks—clarifying that the visible attacker might not be the only one involved—including a particular focus on the mental health of perpetrators.²⁷ In November, as a result of the review, the government announced its commitment to develop a national strategy for places of mass gathering, including a nationally consistent approach to risk assessment for such places.²⁸ While key findings of the review were mentioned in Turnbull's November national security update, mental health received less focus in public reporting of the review's outcomes, being listed only as one of number of factors that may lead to radicalisation and as a matter for future attention.²⁹

Organisationally, the Commonwealth Office of the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, established in May 2015 in the Prime Minister's department, changed its name to the Centre for Counter-Terrorism Coordination, signalling a more direct and active role for the organisation. At this stage, it hasn't changed its role, but that's to be expected. The organisation was created in 2015 to provide a strategic-level understanding of CT in Australia and advise on future improvements. It's likely that 2017 will bring additional CT command and control changes in Australia, originating from the work of the coordinator and the centre.

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission was created in May and commenced operations on 1 July.³⁰ The commission amalgamated the national criminal intelligence agency, the Australian Crime Commission, with Crimtrac, a federal agency providing key information sharing between law enforcement agencies. The merger currently maintains the Australian Crime Commission's former CT role but enhances information linkages for criminal information. A pilot program has been initiated in the new organisation, seeking to track and better understand the links between terrorism and organised crime in Australia. This is a good use of the resource in the light of the observed relationship some terrorists have with criminal groups, including in facilitating access to money and weapons.³¹

The NSW Coroner's inquest into the three deaths resulting from the December 2014 Lindt Café siege continued through 2016, having begun in May 2015. The inquest has been broad-ranging and looked at the siege itself only in March 2016. This high-profile case continued to capture media attention, including criticism of the actions of the NSW Police Force and implying that the ADF should have been brought in to resolve the situation.

Coronial inquiries into the 2014 death of Melbourne attacker Numan Haider and the 2015 Cheng murder also proceeded. In the absence of any other formal CT review mechanism in Australia, the coronials have assumed the role of a broader review.³² With the Lindt inquiry findings due to be handed down after February 2017—and in the absence of a major terrorist attack in the interim—it's likely that the state and federal governments will use this as a primary basis for future CT policy development.

COUNTERTERRORISM LEGISLATION

Three pieces of CT legislation were passed in the last session of the Australian Parliament of 2016 (Table 1). They included amendments to existing legislation, such as lowering the age limit for control orders from 16 years to 14 years, and the introduction of a new charge of advocating genocide.³³ While the changes reflected the reality of the evolving terrorism environment, the two years taken to get this largely administrative bill drafted and through parliament—similarly to other recent CT legislation—may indicate a lack of political urgency about CT. But the delay also stems from a process in which all CT legislation is immediately referred to the relevant parliamentary committee for formal inquiry, and from the need to consult among the federal, state and territory governments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).³⁴

TABLE 1: New Australian counterterrorism legislation in 2016

Name	Purpose	Date enacted
Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (State Bodies and Other Measures) Act 2016	To amend existing CT legislation to reflect the current operating environment. Includes lowering the age of recipients of control orders from 16 years to 14 years.	30 November 2016
Criminal Code Amendment (War Crimes) Act 2016	To align domestic law with international humanitarian law to protect from prosecution ADF members on operations lawfully targeting terrorists not engaged in direct combat.	1 December 2016
Criminal Code Amendment (High Risk Terrorist Offenders) Act 2016	To enable ongoing detention of convicted terrorism offenders where they present an ongoing threat.	1 December 2016

That this parliamentary review process has served Australia well and reached a level of maturity was evident in 2016, when the second and most significant of the three pieces of legislation was proposed. The Criminal Code Amendment (High Risk Terrorist Offenders) Bill 2016 was passed into law in under six months without compromising the formal and public inquiry and review process.³⁵ Where a convicted terrorist is approaching the end of their custodial sentence but is considered to present an ongoing and unacceptable risk to the community, the law allows a Supreme Court judge to direct ongoing detention for another 12 months, to a maximum of 10 years. With 55 Australians currently detained on terrorism charges—including some whose original sentences were finishing or close to finishing—the law is a sensible protective measure. It also usefully drew upon existing criminal law relating to serial sex offenders, with enhanced protections for the individual, thereby providing assurance regarding proportionality and justice.³⁶

The last of the three end-of-year laws was also an amendment to the Criminal Code—and also ratified within six months—to protect ADF members on military operations from war crimes prosecution for targeting IS and other terrorists not actively engaged in hostilities. This was relatively uncontroversial, as it aligned with international humanitarian law and was agreed in principle beforehand by COAG.³⁷

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Like other countries, Australia has faced challenges in understanding the motivators for violent extremism, translating that knowledge into practical programs to counter their attraction, and developing tools to measure the effectiveness of those programs. During 2016, efforts in this area were focused primarily in academia and policy development. At the national level, the Attorney-General's Department continued to commission university research into the issue and laid the groundwork to develop a countering violent extremism (CVE) expert reference group. Internationally, Australia was also involved in a regional initiative to develop a counter-narrative guide for Southeast Asia.³⁸

NSW established a new CVE policy area in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and similarly commissioned some academic research, while the Victorian Government entered the delivery phase for its new Resilience Office, which looks at CVE as well as crime prevention and disaster management.

In 2016, CVE programs were in place in the states and territories, working with at-risk communities and individuals who have been identified as being in the early stages of radicalisation or who are otherwise candidates for deradicalisation, and bringing together agencies and groups that might be able to provide support and assistance. These programs include arrangements for early intervention where police identify vulnerable youth. Recognising the growing issue of extremism in jails, NSW and Victoria began pilot prison deradicalisation programs.

COUNTERTERRORISM OPERATIONS

INTERNATIONAL

During the year, Australia continued its military contribution to the coalition against IS in the Middle East, where it provides a combat contribution through the Air Task Group and the Special Operations Task Group and training to the Iraqi Armed Forces through Task Force Taji.³⁹

Australian CT agencies are also actively involved in international investigations where there might be Australian links or support could be provided through Australian capabilities. The most salient example in 2016 was the close cooperation with Turkish authorities and other CT partners in the apprehension and arrest in Turkey of Australian Neil Prakash, which was acknowledged some weeks later, in November.⁴⁰ One of the highest profile Australian foreign fighters, Prakash had featured in IS propaganda targeting Australians and other English-speakers and had been designated a high-value target by the US. Like many other Australian terrorists, Prakash was a convert to Islam. He was wanted by Australian police for allegedly directing two disrupted attacks in Australia, both planned for Anzac Day memorial celebrations in 2015 and 2016. While details of his case won't be officially released until his trial, unconfirmed reports suggest that he might have either fallen out with the IS leadership and was seeking to escape or was looking for safe haven elsewhere.⁴¹ Regardless, the pictures of a gaunt, dishevelled and wounded Prakash—so far from his 'warrior' image—provide a potent counterpoint to IS propaganda.

Together with Indonesia, Australia continued its leadership of the Counter-Terrorism Financing Summit—launched in November 2015 in Sydney—at a 2016 summit held in Bali in September. The 2016 summit launched the first Asia-Pacific regional risk assessment of terrorism financing and committed to progressing a range of initiatives in 2017, including training.

DOMESTIC DISRUPTIONS, PROSECUTIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Day-to-day domestic CT investigations in Australia paid dividends in 2016.

Including the plots mentioned above, the state and territory joint counter-terrorism teams disrupted seven planned attacks including five major plots (Table 2).⁴² Authorities highlighted the increasingly short time between their awareness of a plot and its planned execution, with security chief Duncan Lewis advising an inquiry in August that, of the 10 terrorist plots disrupted by then, three had been disrupted one to three hours before the planned attack.⁴³ As in other countries, Australian CT agencies will continue to face challenges in balancing between getting sufficient evidence to support a charge and protecting the public by ensuring that an attack doesn't proceed.

Two high-profile extremist propagandists, Shayden Thorne (brother of Junaid) and Roberto 'Musa' Cerantonio, were arrested with three others in Queensland and charged with attempting to join IS in the Middle East. This incident attracted some derision in the Australian media due to the impracticality of the alleged plotters' plan to tow a small boat (a 'tinny', in the Australian vernacular) 3,000 kilometres along the main national highway from Melbourne to far north Queensland and then to sail to Indonesia. This unusual and highly visible incident earned the group the derogatory title of 'tinny terrorists', and acting Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce called them 'clowns and buffoons'.⁴⁴

Several older cases progressed to prosecution in 2016. In NSW, Mehmet Biber was arrested and charged with foreign fighter offences for fighting with Jabhat al-Nusrah in Syria in 2013.⁴⁵ This demonstrated both the challenges for authorities in collecting evidence for this charge and their commitment to prosecuting offenders. As noted by Australian Federal Police Acting Assistant Commissioner Jen Hurst, commenting on the last foreign fighter arrest of 2016 on 22 December, 'the challenge in these matters is to obtain evidence to an appropriate standard for prosecution'.⁴⁶ Four men were charged in relation to the 2015 murder of Curtis Cheng.⁴⁷ In Victoria, Sevdet Besim was convicted for his role in the 2015 Anzac Day plot and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

TABLE 2: Disrupted terrorist plots in Australia, 2016

Date	Place	Form of planned attack	Arresting authority	Result
25 January 2016	Sydney, NSW	Simple. Firearms attack on shopping centre.	NSW Joint Counter Terrorism Team	One man and one woman charged
24 April 2016	Auburn, Sydney, NSW	Simple. Attack Anzac Day ceremonies.	NSW Joint Counter-Terrorism Team	One juvenile male charged
17 May 2016	Sydney, NSW	Simple. Attack government or Defence establishment.	NSW Joint Counter-Terrorism Team	One man charged
14 June 2016	Sydney, NSW	Simple. Stabbing attack with knives.	NSW Joint Counter-Terrorism Team	One juvenile male charged
6 August 2016	Braybrook, Melbourne, and Bacchus Marsh and Tatura, Victoria	Relatively complex. Numerous improvised explosive devices.	Victorian Joint Counter-Terrorism Team	One man charged
12 October 2016	Bankstown, Sydney, NSW	Simple. Stabbing attack with knives.	NSW Joint Counter-Terrorism Team	Two juvenile males charged
22 December 2016	Melbourne, Victoria	Complex. Multiple-venue mass-casualty attack planned on Melbourne CBD on or around Christmas Day 2016. Plan to use explosives, knives and firearms.	Victorian Joint Counter-Terrorism Team	Five men charged

Supporters and recruiters also appeared in the courts. The most significant case occurred in July, when Hamdi al Qudsi became the first person to be charged and convicted for recruiting and facilitating the movement of foreign fighters. The Sydneysider and long-time Islamist was found guilty of recruiting and attempting to facilitate the movement of seven young Australians to fight with al-Qaeda and IS groups and sentenced to eight years in prison, with a minimum of six years. This case provided a useful insight for the Australian public into the realities of facilitation. In particular, al Qudsi's case revealed details of the tactics used to radicalise and recruit foreign fighters and the sources of funding for those activities. The case also revealed the networks of older men who alienate youth from their families and, in the case of at least three of al Qudsi's recruits, send them to their deaths in the Middle East.⁴⁸ The court proceedings exposed publicly for the first time how recruitment works in Australia, including through recorded conversations and text messages between al Qudsi and his recruits.⁴⁹ Al Qudsi's sentencing also removed part of the recruitment apparatus in Australia, as—together with now-deceased Mohamed Ali Baryalei—al Qudsi was responsible for facilitating the movement of around 20% of Australia's foreign fighters to date.⁵⁰

In March, a 16-year-old Sydney girl was found guilty of transferring thousands of dollars to her relative, an IS member in Syria.⁵¹ The money had been provided to her by another extremist known to police, Milad Atai.⁵² Police indicated that both were IS sympathisers and that the girl had previously sent money to IS.⁵³ This case illustrated the small amounts of money that can be involved in terrorism financing (\$5,000 was transferred in the initial charge). Together with the method of using family associates and other individuals as conduits, this indicates the significant challenge in tracking terrorism financing. This was also the first Australian case of a female being charged with terrorism offences.

Passport cancellations and suspensions to prevent would-be foreign fighters from travelling continued through 2016, albeit at lower numbers than in 2015, reflecting IS's flagging fortunes on the battlefield (Table 3).⁵⁴ Around 45 passports were cancelled in 2016, bringing the total since 2014 to 190.⁵⁵ These figures illustrate the dramatic impact of IS's foreign fighter recruitment: before the rise of the group in 2014, between one and six passports were cancelled on security grounds per year.

TABLE 3: Counterterrorism activities in Australia, 2016

Activity	Number in 2016
Attack planning disruptions	7
People charged	30
Convictions	5
Passport cancellations	45
Counterterrorism operations	7

THREAT VS OPERATIONS: HOW IS AUSTRALIA DOING?

Because Australia hasn't to date experienced a mass-casualty attack at home, assessing the effectiveness of its CT arrangements is challenging. That operational agencies have disrupted 13 plots in less than two and a half years speaks to effective intelligence collection, analysis, people capabilities and investigative techniques. However, the existence of that number of plots—including complex and mass-casualty plots—demonstrates that the threat is real.

One measure of the effectiveness of Australia's approach to CT is what might have happened if plots had proceeded as planned and not been prevented, or if other developments hadn't received appropriate attention. If not for disruptions and timely responses to new developments, the following might have occurred:

- up to 17 terrorist attacks since late 2014, including a multiple-target mass casualty attack in Melbourne on Christmas Day 2016
- the travel overseas of more than double the number of Australian foreign fighters, from around 200 to almost 400⁵⁶
- the continued operation of Australia's main foreign fighter recruitment network.

That CT isn't the sole or even primary role of most agencies, and that domestic CT operations occur in the state and not national jurisdictions, speaks to highly effective interagency communication and cooperation.

However, it's hard to maintain the focus and momentum of Australian CT when it's only occasionally a headline story, and when that's mostly due to successful operations. The challenge for Australia will be to adapt its CT regime in the event of an attack. That will require a clear-eyed review of national capabilities and transformational change in an emotionally charged and contested environment.

The lengthy time taken for the passage of CT legislation—averaging 18–24 months—and the costs to agencies through the inquiry process in losing existing powers, the watering down of provisions or additional oversight mechanisms for each proposal might make agencies loath to propose more legislative amendments.

CHALLENGES, ISSUES AND THE WAY AHEAD

Australia's CT decision-makers and policymakers need to be ready in case 2017 brings a mass-casualty attack. They need to do their best to articulate and institute the arrangements and capabilities that will put Australia in its best position to respond and recover.

During 2017, a number of reports will provide an opportunity for the Australian Government to change its approach to CT and place pressure on it to do so.

The findings of the Lindt coronial inquiry will attract the greatest public attention and produce an expectation that the Australian and NSW governments will take substantial action. Both governments would be better placed to establish their own broad CT strategic plans and objectives first, rather than risk being expected to respond to the inquiry as an authority on CT. The inquiry is charged with determining the cause of death of three people, not reviewing all aspects of Australia's CT arrangements and how they should best be postured for the future.

Australia will also need to consider how it will react to the routing of IS from Iraq and Syria, how best to contribute to stabilisation, and the form of Australia's future contributions—if any—to ongoing CT operations in the Middle East and North Africa.

As the threat in our region evolves, Australia may need to refocus closer to home. It should consider how it might engage more in CT in Southeast Asia, including possible operations with Indonesia, Australia's closest neighbour and in which Australia has significant interests, and the Philippines, already a longstanding partner in Defence cooperation on CT and home to a potent mix of terrorist insurgents fuelled by social, economic and political issues.

Agencies involved in CT will continue to invest significant resources in identifying, investigating and mitigating attacks against Australia and Australian interests. Based on the past two years, and the evolving threat, they are likely to encounter more low- and higher scale terrorist plots, and additional attacks will occur. They will continue to focus effort on tracking possible returning Australian foreign fighters and dealing with the repercussions of the links and experiences that those fighters will bring with them.

NOTES

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TERRORISM IN INDONESIA IN 2016

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In Indonesia, 2016 was bookended by two significant terrorist events. The first was the bombing and shooting attack by four people near the Sarinah department store in the centre of Jakarta on 14 January, which killed eight people and injured 23 others. The second was a series of arrests for terrorism offences, including a planned suicide bombing of the presidential palace by a female jihadist intended for 11 December but thwarted by CT police the day before. These were just two of at least 13 terrorist incidents and plots in 2016, but they were notable for several reasons. Both were inspired by the Islamic State (IS) and directed by senior Indonesian members of IS in Syria. Indeed, the Sarinah attack was the first IS terrorist operation in Southeast Asia to result in loss of life. Although in many ways a bungled operation, the attack revealed the ability of senior Indonesian jihadists in Syria to organise violence at home rather than just recruiting Indonesians to go to the Middle East to fight for IS, as had previously been the case. The failed 11 December plot was the first involving a potential female suicide bomber in Indonesia. Women have long played an important role in Southeast Asia's terrorist networks but to date have never directly participated in an operation.

These events mark important changes in the dynamics of Indonesian terrorism. Since the emergence of IS in late 2013, there have been predictions that it would further radicalise terrorists in Indonesia, leading to a return to the types of mass-casualty attacks not seen since the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotel bombings in Jakarta in August 2009. Only in 2016 did we see those predictions become a reality. For much of 2014 and 2015, IS's main concern was to attract Southeast Asians to Syria and Iraq as fighters, and it made little practical effort to promote operations within Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines—the sources of most of its Southeast Asian fighters. The number of returnees from the Middle East also increased over the year, suggesting that this will pose a mounting security threat for Indonesian CT officials. In addition to intensifying activity from pro-IS groups, other sections of the jihadist community, particularly Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), are showing signs of consolidation, though they have not been involved in recent violent activity.

In this chapter, I look at the major terrorist events in Indonesia over the past year and examine the short- to long-term trends. I argue that, while Indonesia's terrorism threat levels have risen somewhat because of IS factors, they remain well below those of the 2000s, when JI-linked terrorists put together a succession of highly lethal attacks that resulted in more than 300 deaths and a thousand serious injuries. Virtually all terrorist bomb attacks and plots over the past seven years have been of low technical competence and often amateurish in their execution. But if better leadership and technical competence became available, especially through returnees from Syria, then threat levels could rise significantly. I also contend that, despite the continued success by CT police in detecting, arresting and prosecuting violent jihadists, the Indonesian Government's overall CT strategies are patchy and misconceived.

OVERVIEW OF INDONESIAN TERRORISM IN 2016

Terrorism continued to be one of the major security problems facing Indonesia. It attracted not only high-level government attention, which hasn't always been the case in the past, but also commanded extensive media coverage and civil society discussion. Public commentary mostly condemned terrorist groups but some also criticised Indonesian security agencies, especially the specialist police CT unit, Detachment 88 (commonly known as Densus). While the Sarinah attack—discussed in more detail below—was the highest casualty incident, two other attacks directly led to single fatalities. On 4 July, a suicide bomber blew himself up in an attempted attack on a police station in the Central Java city of Solo, and, on 13 November, a child in a church in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, died when a jihadist exploded a Molotov cocktail among the congregation.¹ That these incidents didn't result in more deaths and injuries indicates poor planning and lack of technical skills on the part of the attackers.

The number of terrorism-related arrests in 2016 was the highest to date. According to the Indonesian National Police, there were more than 150 arrests up to early December 2016. Many of them involved police uncovering terrorist cells that had advanced plans for operations. Among the plots that captured public attention was that of a group of five pro-IS terrorists on the island of Batam who were arrested on 5 August while preparing to launch a rocket attack in Singapore (no such weapon was found, and the group lacked the skills to carry out such an attack). More than 50 terrorist inmates were also released in 2016 after serving their sentences, which has implications for the terrorist threat environment.²

At least 15 suspected terrorists were killed by police during raids to arrest them. The best known of them was Santoso, the leader of the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (Eastern Indonesia Holy Warriors), who was shot dead on 8 July in a large-scale joint police and military operation in the rugged mountains of Central Sulawesi. Santoso had been a leading supporter of IS and, for several years, was the most wanted terrorist in Indonesia.³ This brings the number of terrorists killed by police since 2009 to about 110. Some of these shootings are the result of Densus engaging in firefights with terrorists during raids, but many appear to have been avoidable and reflect a tendency among some police to believe that killing violent jihadists is as good as capturing them alive. In large part because of this death toll, the police continued to be one of the main targets for terrorists. In 2016, one police officer was killed by terrorists in Poso and another was badly wounded in a knife assault in Tangerang, near Jakarta. There were several foiled bomb attacks on police stations.⁴ The number of police fatalities since 2009 is around 36.

Most of the terrorist activity in Indonesia over the past year was IS-related. The most recent police figure for the confirmed number of Indonesians who have gone to Syria and Iraq is 546; these are reliable minimum figures because the police have names for all those on its list.⁵ The real figure is undoubtedly higher, as there have been departures from Indonesia that the police have no information on. Perhaps as many as 650 are likely to have gone to Syria. Not all are fighters: about 40% of those going to Syria and Iraq are women or under 15-year-old children, and some of the men are not going for combat roles.⁶

As many as 100 Indonesians have been killed in Syria and Iraq since March 2015. Initially, most were victims of conflict with Kurdish forces, but more recently the heavy loss of life has been due to air strikes by either the US (or its coalition partners) or Russia.

Also notable is that some 300 Indonesians have been deported from the Middle East to Indonesia after trying to reach the conflict zone. Most have been intercepted at the Turkish border, and all but a handful had planned to join IS. Half of those deported are women and children. Another 60-plus suspected IS recruits have also been prevented from leaving via Indonesia's airports.

There's a growing number of returnees, and they represent one of the most problematic categories for Indonesian security officials. Currently, there are estimated to be about 50 returnees, but that number includes some who haven't been in combat roles, such as Irfan Awwas, a leader of the Islamist organisation, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Indonesian Holy Warriors Council), who went to Syria to distribute aid. Indonesian officials tend to regard all returnees as having received military training in the Middle East, but the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), the leading centre for Indonesian terrorism research, considers that the figure for serious jihadists is more likely to be about 20–25.⁷ About 12 of them are now in prison on various charges, including under Article 15 of the Terrorism Law 'on giving assistance or agreeing to a terrorist act', specifically for having trained with IS. A number of others have also been charged under the Anti-Terrorism Financing Law.

ISLAMIC STATE IN INDONESIA

IS has significantly influenced Indonesian jihadism since early 2014, when a growing number of local prominent jihadist figures and groups began to align themselves with the Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi-led movement.⁸ Many observers expected that pro-IS groups would quickly consolidate and seek to form a single network or organisation to coordinate activities to promote IS's ideology and support recruitment and fundraising.⁹ That hasn't happened, and IS's Indonesian support base experienced deepening divisions and worsening fragmentation during 2016. To understand the complex dynamics of this process, we need to look both at the leadership of the Indonesian fighters in Syria and Iraq and at the relations between senior IS loyalists in Indonesia.

Three Indonesians have dominated the community of IS's Southeast Asian fighters in Syria and Iraq and IS's propaganda and recruitment in their home region: Bahrun Naim, Bahrumsyah and Abu Jandal. All three have their own networks back in Indonesia and figured prominently in appeals to their countrymen and women to join IS. Over 2016, each attempted to encourage and direct their supporters to undertake operations in Indonesia.

Personal relations between the three have deteriorated since 2015, and there has been open rivalry between them to build their respective support bases and present themselves as the pivotal figure for IS in Indonesia. Bahrumsyah and Abu Jandal, both of whom have held leadership roles in Katibah Nusantara, IS's dedicated unit for training Southeast Asians, had a particularly bitter falling out in mid-2015, when Abu Jandal accused Bahrumsyah, then the Katibah commander, of withholding funding intended for Indonesian and Malaysian fighters. IS later jailed Abu Jandal for a month for what it deemed unsubstantiated allegations.¹⁰ The exact relationship between the Indonesians and the IS's central leadership isn't clear, but the Indonesians' attempts to orchestrate terrorist attacks in Indonesia appear to have the imprimatur of the IS senior command.

Abu Jandal was purportedly killed in the battle for Mosul in early November, although no photos of his corpse or other confirmatory evidence have emerged.¹¹ Bahrumsyah has been reported at various times in Islamist social media as having been killed, including in one account in late 2015 that he had been beheaded on IS's orders.¹² None of these accounts has been verified, and he seems to have still been controlling flows of money into Indonesia in early 2016. It's likely that Abu Jandal is dead, but not Bahrumsyah.

Within Indonesia, Aman Abdurrahman remains the pre-eminent figure in pro-IS circles. Currently in jail on terrorism charges, Aman has been the chief ideologue for IS since he pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi in November 2013. He's a skilled and prodigious translator of Arabic jihadist texts and has done more than any other jihadist thinker to spread IS teaching and to inspire militant Muslims to join the IS cause. Most pro-IS groups acknowledge his intellectual leadership, and many regularly seek his guidance on doctrinal and sometimes operational issues.¹³ But Aman's fractious, uncompromising personality makes him a controversial figure, even among IS-aligned groups, and this is one of the factors hindering efforts to form a more united organisational structure to support IS in Indonesia.¹⁴

Other key figures in IS activities include Rois, who is on death row for his role in the 2004 Australian Embassy bombing in Jakarta, and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the former emir of JI during the 2002 Bali bombings, who is serving a 15-year jail term for terrorism-related offences.

Organisationally, there's no single group coordinating IS-related activities in Indonesia. Instead, there's an assortment of small jihadist groups and networks that are in a constant state of flux. Two of the most prominent groups supporting IS are Mujahidin Indonesia Timor and Ba'asyir's Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (Community of the Helpers of Monotheism), but both are in decline. Mujahidin Indonesia Timor has been hard hit by the death of Santoso and numerous other key figures during 2016 and may well disappear. Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid split after Ba'asyir pledged allegiance to IS in mid-2014, and most of its members, including Ba'asyir's two sons, left to form another organisation, which is opposed to IS. Another group, the Jama'ah Ansharul Khilafah Islamiyah (Partisans of the Islamic Caliphate, or JAKI), of whom Aman is the spiritual leader, appeared poised in late 2015 to assume a central role, but it too seems to have waned significantly. Various factions within the longstanding Darul Islam movement in West Java and South Sulawesi also continue to be sympathetic to IS. Increasingly, IS's backing is coming not from well-organised groups but rather from autonomous cells that are in communication with individual IS figures in Syria. Pro-IS groups and cells appear to be a small minority of Indonesia's jihadist community, among which many groups are trenchantly opposed to IS.

Also worthy of note is that some of the staunchest opposition to IS in Indonesia comes from other non-IS jihadist groups, chief among them JI. JI had been rebuilding its membership base and organisational structure over the past two years, although the details of this process are poorly understood, even by Densus. JI has been sending a small number of members to Syria and Iraq, but they usually join IS rivals, such as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (previously Jabhat al-Nusra), and return to Indonesia within a few months. JI preachers also rail against what they see as IS's illegitimacy and its violence towards other jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq. Despite its recent revival, JI hasn't been involved in any recent terrorist activity, and its plans appear focused on the longer term goal of establishing an Islamic state in Southeast Asia.

ISLAMIC STATE AND THE SARINAH ATTACK

Mid-morning on 14 January, four members of JAKI detonated a series of homemade bombs in the central thoroughfare of Jakarta, Jalan Thamrin. One bomber died in the blast at the Starbucks cafe opposite Sarinah, and another blew himself up at a police post in front of the department store. The remaining two then walked onto Jalan Thamrin and began shooting with handguns at police and bystanders. One of the gunmen was eventually shot dead by police, and the other died when the bomb he was attempting to throw at police exploded. Four members of the public died, including a visiting Algerian-Canadian Muslim. Five policemen were among the 23 injured.¹⁵ This was the first major terrorist attack in Jakarta for more than six years, and its impact on the public was all the greater because many people recorded videos and took photographs. IS quickly claimed responsibility for the attack. Over the following weeks, police arrested another 12 people in connection with the operation.

Police soon named Bahrun Naim as the mastermind behind the attack. Police spokesmen said that Naim wanted to be the leader of IS in Southeast Asia and had been unhappy with an announcement by an IS media outlet that the Abu Sayyaf leader in the southern Philippines, Isnilon Hapilon, had been appointed IS emir of the region. According to police, the 14 January attack was intended to show that Indonesian groups led their Southeast Asian counterparts in mounting terrorist operations.¹⁶ Naim flatly denied involvement on his social media pages.

Subsequent research by IPAC revealed that it was in fact Abu Jandal, in collaboration with Aman Abdurrahman, who had initiated the attack. Abu Jandal reportedly instructed Aman, JAKI's ideological leader, to mount an attack in Jakarta, partly in the hope of replicating the 'success' of the IS-directed November 2015 Paris attack, which killed 130 people. Abu Jandal may have been spurred to do this by Naim urging his loyalists in Indonesia to 'learn from the lessons' of Paris and launch similar assaults in their own major cities. Naim had tried to arrange for the assassination of Jakarta's Christian Chinese governor, Ahok, as well as police generals in late 2015, but his plans were foiled. Acting on Abu Jandal's command, Aman ordered a released terrorist prisoner and JAKI member, Abu Gar, to consult with Rois about the technicalities of arranging for the attack. All the perpetrators of the Sarinah attack were from JAKI, and several had long records of involvement in a variety of hardline jihadist groups.¹⁷

For many Indonesian jihadists, the Sarinah attack was an embarrassing failure. Despite being in the midst of hundreds of people in close confines, the four attackers succeeded only in killing themselves and four other people, all of whom were Muslim. No policemen were killed, despite dozens being present and within firing range. Any comparison to the Paris attack revealed Indonesian terrorists to be amateurish and slipshod, and it's likely that IS leadership would have been unimpressed.

The Sarinah attack indeed highlighted the problems that pro-IS groups have in launching major operations. The overwhelming majority of planned attacks are discovered and thwarted by the police, usually resulting in the arrest of

most or all of those involved. In the case of the 14 January operation, the plotters had succeeded in escaping police detection but lacked the experience and expertise to be able to deliver a large-scale terrorist event. The design and construction of the bombs was crude, and none detonated in a location that yielded high casualties. The gunmen were also inept and failed to kill any of their primary targets, the police. By contrast, the bombings carried out by JI and its breakaway Noordin Network between 2000 and 2009 were relatively sophisticated, clandestine operations and were carried out without detection by the security services. Those attacks were conducted by teams with long experience in jihadist training camps in northern Pakistan and the southern Philippines, as well as having had the benefit of careful planning and implementation.

ATTEMPTED FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

On 10 December, Densus officers arrested 29-year-old, burqa-clad Dian Yulia Novi, in Bekasi, a satellite city on the eastern outskirts of Jakarta. Dian was carrying a backpack containing a rice-cooker bomb of a type similar to those used in numerous IS bombings in Europe and the Boston marathon bombing. Earlier that day, police had intercepted a farewell note that Dian had sent to her parents stating her desire to die a martyr's death. She admitted to police that she had been planning to bomb the presidential palace in central Jakarta the next morning because it was a car-free day and many people would be milling nearby. Three men were also arrested, including Dian's husband, Nur Solihin. Both Dian and her husband were IS supporters and had been part of Bahrin Naim's network. They had obtained modest funding from Naim for the attack, and he had discussed with Dian how she should try to slip past the palace guards before detonating the bomb. Solihin and another arrestee, Agus Supriyadi, appear to have been members of JAKI and involved in running websites that published the columns and translations of Aman Abdurrahman.¹⁸

In subsequent days, more details emerged of Dian's background and path towards becoming a suicide bomber. She had come from a relatively poor family and had worked in Singapore and Taiwan. According to Tempo magazine, she became radicalised in 2013 when she began studying Islamist websites. She joined pro-IS Facebook and Telegram groups, leading her to declare to a fellow IS supporter earlier in 2016 that she was willing to become a 'bride' (pengantin) for a suicide bomb. Around August or September, Bahrin instructed Solihin to find a woman willing to martyr herself. Solihin met Dian through his networks, communicating initially via Telegram Messenger. Dian, who was unmarried, reportedly told him she was not only keen to do amaliyah (jihadist operations) but wanted to do it with a husband. Solihin, who was already married, decided to marry Dian by proxy in October. They had met only three times before their arrests.¹⁹

Although unsuccessful, the planned attack is nonetheless significant for several reasons. As mentioned above, it was the first time that an Indonesian terrorist group had been prepared to use a female suicide bomber. While this mode of attack has been used many times in the Middle East, especially by Palestinian groups, jihadist leaders and scholars in Indonesia have firmly objected on doctrinal grounds to women being operationally active. The arrest of a second suicide bomb 'bride', Ika Puspita, on 20 December suggests that the taboo on female terrorists is now well and truly removed, at least for IS-linked networks. Bahrin was clearly seeking to take advantage of women being less likely than men to attract the scrutiny of security services, and other terrorist plotters can be expected to conclude the same.

Moreover, police reported that the bomb was quite well made and could have been very lethal if detonated in a densely populated area. Bahrin's publicly available website contains detailed instructions for making bombs at home using everyday equipment and ingredients that can be obtained without high risk of detection by security agencies.²⁰ The makers of Dian's bomb admitted that most of their information on bombmaking had come from the internet. That the plotters targeted the closely guarded presidential palace suggests that they are willing to take great risks to attack places of great symbolic value.

THE BROADER COUNTERTERRORISM CAMPAIGN

Indonesia's CT policing continues to be one of the most successful areas of activity for the Indonesian National Police. Indeed, Densus has one of the best records in the world for apprehending and prosecuting terrorists, having put well over 800 jihadists behind bars since 2002. Despite this, Densus is under considerable pressure from President Joko Widodo ('Jokowi'), security ministers, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the State Intelligence Agency to ramp up the number of terrorism-related arrests. Jokowi has been somewhat impatient with Densus, holding seemingly unrealistic expectations about how quickly complex CT operations can be concluded. He has allowed the TNI to play a greater role in CT efforts in both on-the-ground operations and broader counter-radicalisation campaigns. The TNI, in general, has a much shallower understanding of terrorism issues than the police and is attracted primarily to quasi-military solutions and greater nationalist indoctrination programs, which are usually not effective in combating terrorist activity.²¹ A revised draft Counter-Terrorism Bill before parliament allows the TNI to take the lead role in certain kinds of CT activities. The State Intelligence Agency has also been seeking greater powers, including that of arrest, to conduct CT campaigns, despite a lacklustre record of terrorism analysis. There's a risk that pressure from the government and other agencies might force Densus to act precipitately in its terrorism investigations and focus on further raising the quantity of arrests rather than the quality of its CT strategies.

In contrast to Densus' strong performance, the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) has made at best a patchy contribution to CT efforts. Despite a large budget and sizeable staff, the BNPT has weak analytical capacity on terrorism trends, poorly devised policies and often misguided terrorist rehabilitation and community counter-radicalisation campaigns. Moreover, it has in recent years acquired a reputation for corruption and inefficiency.

The BNPT has directed much of its counter-radicalisation resources towards mainstream institutions such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, with mixed results. It has emphasised moderate Islamic teachings and ideology training based on the religiously neutral state doctrine of Pancasila. While such messages are welcome in the broader Muslim community, they have little traction among radical groups. Several years ago, the BNPT formed regional boards to carry out local research on terrorist dynamics, establish links to at-risk sections of the community and communicate BNPT policies and initiatives to stakeholders in their home provinces. To date, few of the boards appear to function well, and most seem preoccupied more with formal events at up-market hotels than with gaining information from and the trust of radicalised groups within the Muslim community.

More particularly, the BNPT has failed to develop effective deradicalisation programs within Indonesia's chronically overcrowded and understaffed prison system. Prisons are a major site of terrorist recruitment, and at least a dozen released inmates were involved in terrorist plots over the past year. The agency funds visits to terrorist detainees by academics and religious scholars, which cooperative prisoners are paid to attend. Although the scheme is a popular source of income for terrorist inmates, prison officials are sceptical that any change in prisoners' attitude results from the sessions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that family pressure is the main reason terrorist detainees disengage from violent activities.²²

Another source of tension between the BNPT and correctional officials is the agency's desire to transfer deradicalised prisoners to its new custom-built penitentiary at Sentul, outside Jakarta. This appears to be driven by the BNPT wanting to demonstrate success with its rehabilitation program. Prison chiefs, by comparison, prefer to leave 'reformed' inmates in the general prison population, where they might have a moderating effect on other terrorist detainees. The BNPT also funds business training programs for jihadist detainees, as well as providing them with a small amount of start-up capital for enterprises upon their release. There's some evidence of encouraging results from this program.

Overall, given the rising level of threat that the Indonesian Government ascribes to terrorism, the BNPT's performance has been disappointing. Without tighter supervision and clearer guidelines on the agency's objectives, it's likely to continue to have minimal impact in improving Indonesia's CT efforts.

CONCLUSION

It's important to keep Indonesia's terrorism problem in perspective—something that media commentary on the subject isn't always inclined to do. While Indonesia does have the largest jihadist community in Southeast Asia, it suffers less terrorism fatalities than the Philippines. Of the several thousand Indonesian jihadists, most are not supporters of IS; nor do they involve themselves in or approve of terrorist attacks against civilians, at least under current conditions. Of the minority who are IS aligned, very few have the skills and discipline to mount major attacks, though a great many have the wish to do so. While foreigners and non-Muslim Indonesians are high-priority targets for IS members and affiliates, it is Indonesian Government officials, and especially police and prosecutors, who remain at the top of the enemy list and are the most vulnerable to attack.

Indonesia is very likely to experience worsening terrorism problems in the coming years. Despite police success at breaking up terrorist cells and plots, there's a ready supply of new recruits to extreme jihadist causes, such as IS. Some of these recruits are older, more experienced jihadists who have come to regard IS's struggle as more virtuous or compelling than that of other jihadist groups to which they have been affiliated, but many of the new recruits are younger and from backgrounds with little or no trace of militancy or puritanism. As IS's military fortunes continue to decline in Syria and Iraq, opening up the prospect of its partial collapse, the possible return of skilled, battle-hardened jihadists to Indonesia could substantially add to the potency of local terrorist groups.

If Indonesia's experience of returning mujahidin from Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1980s and early 1990s is any guide, many IS returnees will be committed to continuing their violent jihad at home.

The likelihood of a worsening terrorism threat should impel the Jokowi government to bolster its broader CT efforts. The BNPT is failing to properly address many of the key issues relating to radicalisation, and most of Indonesia's successes in counterterrorism are due to law enforcement rather than prevention campaigns. Better researched and more tightly targeted deradicalisation programs, along with more professional management of terrorist prisoners and closer monitoring of releasees, would be a substantial advance in Indonesia's combating of extremism.

NOTES

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- 19 'Laporan Utama: Teror Jaringan Kulak Tahu', *Majalah Tempo*, 25 December 2016, 32–34. See also the interview with Dian in the same edition.
- 20 Bahrun Naim, 'Ketika Aseton Peroksida Menjadi Peledak Utama', [online](#) (now blocked by the Indonesian government).
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TERRORISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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The Islamic State (IS)-inspired attacks in Jakarta on 14 January 2016, the 9 April 2016 attack on Philippine security forces in the southern island of Basilan conducted by groups claiming allegiance to IS, and a recent spate of kidnappings by known terrorist groups in the southern Philippines are a timely reminder of the persistent threat that terrorism continues to pose to Southeast Asia. While terrorism isn't a new security phenomenon in Southeast Asia, over the past year it's been IS that has emerged as the signal expression of this threat, in part because of the speed with which it has gained popularity in the region and the number of local terrorist groups that have claimed allegiance to the group's black standard.

Estimates on the number of Southeast Asians now involved in the conflict in Syria and Iraq, fighting with IS and other smaller militant groups, vary between several hundred and a thousand. The clear majority come from Indonesia, followed by Malaysia, although there are more Malaysian foreign fighters per capita. A handful are known to be Singaporeans and Filipinos. Although there are some suspicions that militants from Thailand have also departed for the conflict zones in the Middle East, there's no conclusive evidence to date. While these figures are a fraction of the populations of the Southeast Asian countries from which the fighters originate—and are also dwarfed by the numbers that have come from Europe and other Middle Eastern countries—the IS phenomenon nevertheless still poses a threat to the region on several counts.

First, there's the danger of attacks by local groups or individuals inspired by IS. They might not have direct links to IS central. Rather, the IS's abstract ideas—promulgated significantly via the internet—provide impetus and inspiration to support their local grievances and further their local aims.

Second, there's the threat posed by returnees from Syria and Iraq. In particular, authorities are concerned about the possibility that militants who have been in the Middle East could return with battlefield experience and operational knowledge to plan or mount attacks in the region. In addition, there are also concerns for calls made by prominent Southeast Asian IS sympathisers for fighters who cannot make their way to the Middle East to wage jihad at home.

Third, there's the threat posed by militants who will soon be released from prison. Weak prison systems in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines mean that terrorists may continue to plan activities while in prison, as well as radicalise other prisoners to join their group. We should bear in mind, though, that not all imprisoned terrorists are IS supporters or sympathisers. Indeed, elements in local terrorist and militant groups such as some from the notorious Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), responsible for the Bali bombings among other attacks, are currently known to be anti-IS. Yet, at the same time, the possibility of terrorists and militants making common cause to advance their objectives can't and shouldn't be discounted.

DEVELOPMENTS IN COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

While JI is based primarily in Indonesia and focused essentially on that country, it has had significant influence and impact across Southeast Asia—particularly in Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines—and is included in this chapter as well as in the separate chapter on Indonesia. The emergence of JI at the turn of the century thrust the threat of terrorism to the forefront of the security agendas of regional states, where it has remained. Yet the threat itself has morphed. From the more organised and hierarchical structure of JI and its four-mantiqi (branch) regional structure, the threat has evolved through the appeal of the virulent ideology of IS in recent years. When Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced on 28 June 2014 (the first day of Ramadan) that a caliphate had been formed by IS, the announcement captured the imagination of the extremist fringe across Southeast Asia. The announcement was followed by a comprehensive and effective propaganda campaign that conveyed the impression of the group's invincibility and validation from God. July and August that year witnessed a series of bay'at (pledges of allegiance) to IS taken by radical groups and clerics from Indonesia and the Philippines.

The audacity of its announcement of the caliphate and the forcefulness of its communications strategy set IS apart from other groups. In September, the Southeast Asian dimension of the group was given something of a formal expression with the formation of Katibah Nusantara, an IS wing consisting of Malay- and Indonesian-speaking fighters in Syria. Katibah fulfils several functions: it provides a social network to help Southeast Asian recruits settle in, training for those who would eventually take up arms and communications with the network of pro-IS groups operating in Syria. These developments and links demonstrate that the threat posed by IS in Southeast Asia is real, and it's been growing since mid-2014. The changing nature and manifestation of the threat means that CT responses have had to evolve accordingly.

MALAYSIA

The Malaysian Government was initially slow to react to the growing threat posed by IS. Such was its early nonchalance that in June 2014 Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak unfortunately chose to refer to the group in a positive light during a political function at which he spoke on the fighting spirit of his United Malays National Organisation party's rank-and-file members. Subsequent events soon compelled a change of outlook. On 26 May 2014, a Malaysian suicide bomber, Ahmad Tarmimi Maliki, drove a military vehicle packed with explosives into police headquarters in Anbar province, Iraq, killing 25 police personnel. The bombing preceded an attack on the compound by IS militants. This was the first known suicide attack in which the perpetrator was a Malaysian. Another suicide attack perpetrated by a Malaysian, this time in Syria, was reported soon after.¹ Not long after that, intelligence emerged that IS sympathisers in Malaysia were planning to assassinate the country's top leadership.² In response, Malaysian CT efforts ramped up to address any such threat.

A Malaysian Government White Paper on the IS threat published in October 2014 identified 39 Malaysians who were believed to be in Syria and Iraq: some were involved with IS and some had joined Afn al-Sham. By July 2015, IS supporters claimed that more than a hundred Malaysians were in the Middle Eastern conflict zones, although government sources place that figure only at 60.³ According to the latter, 27 Malaysians have been killed in the conflict in Syria, including nine suicide bombers, while 112 were arrested in 2016 for attempting to make their way to Syria.⁴ In June 2016, the threat came home when the first IS-inspired attack took place on Malaysian soil as IS sympathisers tossed a grenade into a nightclub in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, wounding eight members of the public.⁵

It's been reported that, since 2013, CT operations have foiled 13 attempts at terrorist attacks on Malaysian soil.⁶ Of those, seven had reached 'Phase 2' of planning when they were uncovered, meaning that militants were caught with chemicals, ammunition and other bomb-making materials. Seven of the plots were believed to have been planned at the instruction of a Malaysian IS recruiter based in Syria, Muhammad Wannady Muhammad Jedi. The plots aimed to target entertainment outlets, nightclubs, alcohol-producing factories, government buildings and security installations.

What's striking in Malaysia is how recruitment trends have evolved. Two points, in particular, should be highlighted. First, those who have been detained for IS-related activity include military personnel and civil servants. Second, similarly to the experience of other countries, the impact of social media on recruitment and indoctrination has been considerable. While previous militant and terrorist groups—from the Malayan Communist Party to JI more recently—recruited via personal contacts and interactions during religious classes (in the latter case), many of the current breed of terrorists are being indoctrinated through social media. Without any direction and devoid of hierarchical organisational structures, IS sympathisers and supporters are generating and disseminating content on their own through platforms such as Facebook and various blogs. The overall effectiveness of the internal security apparatus means that groups and organisations are finding it almost impossible to gain any foothold, which increases the importance of the internet as a recruiting tool. That said, the attention of the Malaysian security services has been drawn to several small jihadi groups, such as Kumpulan Tandzim Al-Qaeda Malaysia, Briged Al Jamaah, Kumpulan Fisabilillah, Kumpulan Daulah Islamiah Malizia, Al Qubro Generation and Kumpulan Gagak Hitam, which they are currently watching.⁷

Over the past few years, the Malaysian Government has developed and refined a suite of legislative tools in support of CT operations. Since independence, the CT policies of successive Malaysian ruling administrations relied primarily on the Internal Security Act (ISA) of 1960, which provided for detention without trial for up to two years, with the possibility of indefinite renewal. Faced with a groundswell of opposition in recent years both in parliament and in civil society—including allegations that incumbent political leaders were abusing power by using these legislative tools to curb civil liberties and silence opposition voices—the Najib administration repealed the ISA in 2011. The following year, the Special Offences (Special Measures) Act of 2012 was implemented to replace the ISA and provide for action to be taken ostensibly against terrorism, sabotage and espionage. Two additional pieces of legislation were tabled in 2015 after the release of a White Paper on Islamic militancy, both aimed at prevention: the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act. These were enacted despite protests from civil society groups and opposition politicians who criticised the bills for curbing civil liberties.

Supporting the legal edifice is the work of state-sanctioned Islamic authorities. JAKIM, the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia, has assumed a greater role in CT efforts over the past year. Its clerics and scholars have engaged the Muslim community by explaining the concept of jihad from the angle of classical Islamic jurisprudence. In October 2014, the Malaysian National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs issued a fatwa banning any Malaysian Muslim from being involved with IS. This was followed by another fatwa in April 2015 that banned Malaysian Muslims from expressing support for the group.

In a surprise move, Malaysia also joined the anti-IS coalition led by the US. This was a notable departure from the longstanding stated scepticism and suspicion of Malaysian leaders about American policy towards the Muslim world.

Despite a suite of new legislation, Malaysia's current CT policies essentially build on the longstanding practice of relying on the Special Branch for intelligence gathering and on internal security legislation for incarceration. While these efforts have for the most part been successful—

only one successful IS-linked attack and several foiled attempts took place in 2016—it remains to be seen whether Malaysian CT efforts can deal effectively with the ideology of IS beyond token gestures by government-linked religious leaders denouncing the group. For instance, JAKIM continues to provide sermons to Malaysian mosques that frequently cast aspersions at Shia Islam and non-Muslims. These are precisely the kinds of ideas that feed into IS narrative of religious warfare against those who don't subscribe to their ideology.

SINGAPORE

Among Southeast Asian states, Singapore has the most robust and comprehensive CT strategy. According to government statements, the strategy contains five elements, each of which has continued to be refined to make it more effective: intelligence and international cooperation; border control; target hardening; community involvement; and crisis and consequence management. This strategy is accompanied by a comprehensive legal, policy and supervisory framework crafted to deal with the threat of terrorism and to cooperate with the international community in the fight against terrorism. A major thread that runs through the various elements in the strategy is effective interagency coordination and cooperation. To that end, the National Security Secretariat was established in 1999 to enhance coordination among security agencies and government ministries to confront non-traditional security threats, including terrorism.

In the Home Team Journal, a publication of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore's CT strategy is described as multipronged, with counter-ideology as one of its central features. Other aspects of the strategy include security responses by the Singapore Armed Forces and police, intelligence managed by the Internal Security Department and community preparedness in the event of an attack. The concept of 'Total Defence', the cornerstone of Singapore's approach to national security, informs the island-state's CT strategy. The overall intent is to synchronise an integrated, networked and coherent front to combat terrorism.

In 2016, the Singaporean Government refined its terrorism incident response protocols. Previously, the Singapore Armed Forces Special Operations Task Force was the designated first responder in CT efforts on land. On 29 April 2016, the government announced the establishment of new emergency response teams. These units would be the first responders to a terrorist attack and are specifically trained to contain threats swiftly while minimising casualties. The Singapore Government has also set up the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosive (CBRE) defence group to provide specialised responses to CBRE attacks, including the capability to deactivate mass-casualty devices and undertake decontamination. The group works closely with agencies such as the Defense Science Organization National Laboratories, the National Environment Agency and the Health Sciences Authority to harness and develop technology to counter CBRE attacks.

The Internal Security Department remains at the forefront of CT efforts, which have been predicated on tactics and strategies that were crafted in response to the threat of Islamic extremism that emerged at the turn of the century (centred on JI) and that have been refined and enhanced to deal with IS. This includes efforts targeting suspected terrorist and extremist activities online and the use of the financial system by known or suspected terrorists and their sympathisers.

A major instrument used to counter the threat of terrorism is Singapore's ISA. Bequeathed to the Singapore Government by the British colonial administration (similarly to neighbouring Malaysia), the ISA grants executive power to prevent subversion and suppress organised violence against people and property. The ISA further allows the government to impose restrictions on a detainee's freedom of movement, and through Chapter II of Part II of the Act allows for preventive detention (detention without trial). In November and December 2015, the Internal Security Department arrested 27 male Bangladeshi nationals under the ISA. The men were part of a religious study group that supported the ideology of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and IS and considered carrying out armed violence overseas. The work passes of the men were cancelled, and they were repatriated to Bangladesh. Although they weren't planning to carry out violent acts in Singapore, the fact that Singapore hosts a large number of Bangladeshi migrant workers has given cause for concern. The ISA was used several more times in 2016 on Singaporean citizens. This included the re-detention of Muhammad Fadiil Abdul Hamid in April for attempting to join IS in Syria (he was previously detained 2010 and 2012 for attempting to engage in armed violence in Afghanistan) and the detention of Zulkiflar Mohamad Shariff in July for radicalising two others. As of July 2016, 20 people were in detention under the ISA in Singapore.⁸

One distinct feature of the Singaporean approach to CT is community engagement in order to enhance vigilance and preparedness in the event of an attack. Towards that end, a series of exercises of mock attack situations has been conducted across the island. The exercises focused on preparedness and the coordination of different agencies in responding to terrorist attacks.

In the face of the nebulous ideology of IS and mindful of what it deems to be the fragile nature of relations between communities of different ethnic and faith identities, the government has taken measures to increase public awareness

of the threat that terrorist attacks would pose to Singapore society. In March 2016, it announced a new national awareness program, SG Secure, which was launched in September. SG Secure is a comprehensive public education program that aims to involve every citizen in a collective effort to shield the country from terrorism—building on the Total Defence concept—as well as to strengthen the cohesion between different faith communities. It also aims to prepare the general population for a potential terrorist attack through public education and awareness campaigns, as well as preparedness exercises based on simulated terrorist attacks in public spaces.

Other CT initiatives include interfaith dialogue and efforts by Muslim organisations to assist Singapore's 'counter-ideology' efforts. The Majlis Ulama Islam Singapura implemented the Asatiza Recognition Scheme to align Islamic education with Singapore's social and cultural mores by reaching out to Islamic teachers; the scheme also attempts to insulate the country's Islamic education community from extremist teachings from abroad.

Beneath this public education initiative is an acute sense of vulnerability to the threat of terrorism, as well as a concern that Singaporean society might be desensitised to the threat, ironically because of the effectiveness of CT operations that have managed to thwart several planned attacks while also keeping them away from the gaze of the public eye. As Singaporean political leaders are keen to remind: 'It is not a matter of if, but when.'⁹

In sum, Singapore's CT strategy is predicated on an acute sense of threat, not only for the physical costs that a terrorist threat could impose by way of damage and casualties, but arguably more so the threat to the multicultural and multireligious social fabric of the country. For this reason, Singapore has invested heavily in CT and will continue to do so. The success of its CT efforts thus far can essentially be boiled down to both the level of professionalism of its security services and the holistic nature of its strategy, which involves not only security measures but also community outreach and counter-ideology.

THE PHILIPPINES

In Southeast Asia, the terrorism problem is arguably most acute in the Philippines. Although the country continues to be confronted by a longstanding communist insurgency, the threat that has preoccupied the government in Manila is the one posed by militant and rebel groups operating in the southern islands of the archipelago and claiming their objective to be the creation of an Islamic state and liberation of those lands from the rule of Christian Filipinos.

Several militant and terrorist groups operate freely in the southern islands of Sulu and Basilan, undertaking kidnappings, armed clashes with the Philippine military and police and, to a lesser extent, bombings. These groups—several of which have overlapping memberships—include the Abu Sayyaf Group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, Ansar Dawlah fi Filibbin, Ansar Khalifah Sarangani and Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao.¹⁰ Such is the extent of the threat that the region of the southern Philippines is considered the most likely candidate to be declared a wilayat or province of IS. Given the losses that the group is suffering in the Middle East, the concern has grown more acute that its Southeast Asian fighters might be looking for safe havens, and the largely ungoverned spaces in the southern Philippines would doubtless appear prime real estate for that purpose.

Given the magnitude of the challenge posed by IS sympathisers and supporters and the increased frequency of kidnappings of civilians in the south, it follows that CT should assume greater urgency. Yet, unlike Malaysia or Singapore, the Philippines remains poorly equipped to tackle the problem. Since the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines, Philippine security forces have benefited from sizeable military aid and assistance from the US to fight terrorist and other militant groups.¹¹ However, this investment of resources and international assistance hasn't translated into a significant reduction of the threat. A major reason for this is the growing popularity of IS, to which several small but violent militant groups, including some of those mentioned above, have pledged allegiance since 2014. Moreover, while Philippine security forces mount frequent operations against militant groups, particularly the Abu Sayyaf Group in Sulu and Basilan, several such operations have ended in humiliation for the Philippine military as they laid bare its lack of training, skill and experience in countering militants. The fact that President Rodrigo Duterte has spoken freely about scaling back military cooperation with the US adds further to anxiety over the Philippine military's abilities to deal with the threat in the southern region.¹²

The Philippines' CT efforts have also been hampered by the lack of strong legal tools. CT legislation in the Philippines remains woefully weak and underdeveloped. The primary legal instrument that can be mobilised to support CT policy is the Human Security Act 2007, which legislates for surveillance of suspected terrorists and their communications but not their arrest or prosecution. In addition to being of only limited utility to CT efforts, the Act has actually proven to be an impediment for CT, as the Philippine police have avoided arresting and charging terrorist suspects under the act due to the penalties it imposes on the authorities in the event of wrongful detention.¹³ As a consequence of this weak legal CT edifice, individuals who are arrested and detained for involvement in terrorist-related groups, activities, or both are usually apprehended and charged for non-terrorism criminal offences such as kidnapping, extortion and murder; nor are their actions legally described in that manner.

Mindanao is a particular focus of terrorism, as separatist and insurgent groups have operated in the region for decades. The longstanding 'Moro wars' have come close to resolution on several occasions, the most recent following the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in March 2014 between the Philippine Government and the leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the largest of the insurgent groups operating in the south. Nevertheless, progress towards a final resolution of the Mindanao conflict suffered a major setback when the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which provides the crucial constitutional foundation to the CAB, failed to be endorsed by the Philippine congress at its February 2016 sitting and remains in limbo. Passage of the BBL was in part obstructed by resurgent mistrust between the Philippine legislators and the MILF after security forces of the Philippines accidentally clashed with MILF rebel fighters in Mamasapano in January 2015. Government officials, MILF leaders and analysts have warned that failure to pass the BBL could lead to a resurgence of violence.¹⁴ Disappointment within MILF circles could also create a potential pool of disillusioned recruits for the more violent rebel and militant groups still operating in the region.¹⁵

While Benigno Aquino's pugnacious successor, Rodrigo Duterte, has articulated an uncompromising position towards terrorists and extremists operating in southern Philippines (where Duterte hails from), his tough talk has yet to take the form of concrete action. Meanwhile, the Philippines remains the weakest link in the Southeast Asian CT chain.

THAILAND

Similarly to the Philippines, the challenge for Thai CT has been rendered more difficult by the existence of a long-drawn insurgency in the southern border provinces, where ethnic Malay Muslim militants have been waging armed resistance against the state for decades. It remains for the most part a shapeless local insurgency, but the volatile character of the region continues to draw attention from foreign actors. While Thailand's conflict is essentially a limited ethnonationalist armed insurgency, in 2016 it was recharacterised by militants with IS imprimatur. A post on Facebook in April 2016 depicting the trademark black flag symbol of the group superimposed on much of the Isthmus of Kra suggests that the militant group is attentive to the situation in the restive south.

Thai CT policy has prioritised a hardline approach. Much has been written about the use of extrajudicial powers by the security forces against both known and suspected militants, which they do with impunity. While there's little evidence of any active IS-affiliated activity in Thailand, security officials haven't missed the opportunity to draw a correlation between violence in the southern provinces and the IS agenda. For instance, Thai Deputy Police Commissioner Srivara Ransibrahmanakul has suggested that Malay Muslims from the southern provinces were providing financial support to IS, but hasn't provided any evidence to substantiate his claim.¹⁶ While there's currently an ongoing dialogue process that brings security officials and self-appointed representatives of insurgent groups to the table and several meetings were conducted in 2016, it has made little headway. Doubts persist as to the influence that the presumed insurgent leaders involved claim to have over militants, as well as the sincerity of the junta-appointed representatives.

Given its preoccupation with royal succession and the political situation in Bangkok, the military junta that came to power after the coup of May 2014 has paid very little attention to the security problems in the southern provinces. In fact, little has changed in Thai counterinsurgency strategy in the south since the outbreak of violence at the turn of the century.

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

Drawing from the lessons of CT efforts against JI, regional governments and security agencies have been alert to the transnational nature of the threat, which necessitates a transnational response. Accordingly, regional cooperation on CT increased in 2016. Three multilateral initiatives are worth noting.

First, regional governments gathered for the Counterterrorism Financing Summit in Bali, Indonesia, in August 2016. A follow-up from the inaugural 2015 summit, the 2016 meeting drew representation from regional countries as well as ASEAN, Interpol and the UN. The summit is a joint initiative of Indonesia and Australia, and the agenda is driven by them

as well as Malaysia (which offered to host the 2017 summit) and Singapore to build upon existing successful cooperation in anti-money-laundering efforts to counter the financing of terrorist organisations. The event was also used to host an international CT forum, bringing together CT ministers and agency heads from across the region. Key outcomes included priority attention to exchanges of biometric information, especially of known Southeast Asian fighters in Syria and Iraq and those convicted of terrorism offences, and best practices in deradicalisation and countering violent extremism through regularised institutional exchanges.

Second, with the increased frequency of kidnappings and Abu Sayyaf activities in the Sulu Sea, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines finally agreed to joint maritime patrols in May 2016. The significance of these patrols lies in the fact that, given the transnational nature of the threat and the ease with which militants have been moving across the borders of the triborder area encompassing Sulu (Philippines), Sabah (Malaysia) and Sulawesi (Indonesia), collaboration between the respective security agencies will be critical to the efforts to diminish the threat.

Third, ASEAN defence ministers had signed a joint declaration on combating terrorism at the 10th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) in Vientiane, Laos, which expressed the intention to enhance regional and international cooperation to curb the transnational threat of terrorism. The ADDM Plus (including Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Russia and the US) established in 2010 continued, notably with the sixth meeting of its CT Experts Working Group in 2016. While concrete measures have yet to arise from the joint declaration, it at least marks a consensus in the recognition of the threat and of the need for transnational cooperation.

DERADICALISATION PROGRAMS

A major element of CT strategy across Southeast Asia has been the emergence—with varying degrees of success—of deradicalisation programs. The underlying premise of this approach is the belief that some terrorists engage in acts of violence on the basis of misinterpretations of religious teaching and injunctions, especially in relation to the concept of jihad and the obligations of Muslims to wage jihad. This arises from the prevalence of ‘self-radicalisation’—that is, by individuals who have been misguided through their consumption of extremist teachings, usually through the medium of the internet. It has emerged over the past year that several so-called ‘lone wolves’ planning acts of terrorism in Malaysia and Singapore, or who had left to join the jihad in Syria, were radicalised this way. For example, in August 2016 two Singaporeans, Rosli Hamzah and Mohamed Omar Mahadi, were detained under the country’s ISA for demonstrating intent to travel to Syria to join the ongoing jihad after listening to a Batam-based radio station, HangFM, which frequently featured religious teachers preaching extremist views.¹⁷ Meanwhile, in Malaysia, concern has heightened over ‘lone wolf’ attacks at home by individuals exposed to IS propaganda found online.¹⁸

In both Malaysia and Singapore, religious rehabilitation has emerged as a key element of their respective deradicalisation programs: Malaysia’s Religious Rehabilitation Program and Singapore’s Religious Rehabilitation Group. These programs focus on re-education, aiming to rectify the religious misconceptions of those sympathetic to extremist ideas, and on rehabilitation, including a comprehensive strategy to support as well as monitor extremists after their release. The Malaysian deradicalisation programs are a combined effort involving the Royal Malaysian Police and JAKIM. Singapore’s Religious Rehabilitation Group, by comparison, works closely with the government but claims independence from it. In both cases, the religious rehabilitation process involves ulamas serving as counsellors who engage detainees in detailed discussions on religious doctrine with the primary purpose of disabusing them of their belief in the extremist ideology associated with IS. Significantly, the deradicalisation and rehabilitation process involves not only working with the detainees but with their family members as well—particularly in cases when the detainee is the father figure and breadwinner in the household—to ensure that their material needs are also met. This involves regular house calls to family members of detainees, education support and financial assistance for families who have lost their source of livelihood with the detention of a family member. In August 2016, Malaysian authorities confirmed that detainees undergoing rehabilitation included eight returnees from Syria.

Unlike in Malaysia and Singapore, deradicalisation and rehabilitation programs in Thailand and the Philippines are far less structured or developed and often have the contrary effect of deepening the sense of marginalisation due to detainees being mistreated and subjected to inhumane

conditions in overcrowded detention facilities together with political prisoners, common criminals and drug addicts. In Thailand, youths suspected of participating in or expressing sympathy towards the Malay Muslim insurgency in the southern border provinces may be sent to 'job training' at military-run 're-education' camps, where they are instructed in the 'correct' interpretations of both Islam and local political history.

In the case of the Philippines, deradicalisation efforts have mostly been ad hoc interventions made by local units or prison wardens. Because terrorist detainees are held in various correctional facilities across the country, rather than centrally, as in the Indonesian model of 'hothousing' in Cipinang or Semarang, the problem of prison radicalisation is arguably less significant.

CHALLENGES

Over the past year, national security operations have gathered pace in the maritime Southeast Asian countries as leaders call for vigilance against the threat posed by terrorism, and particularly IS. Notwithstanding the increased CT effort, several challenges remain both for individual states and for the region as a whole. This report highlights five key issues for consideration.

The first issue is how Southeast Asian governments have addressed a range of matters relating to extremism, including how the politicisation of Islam is dealt with in relation to extremism, hate speech and violence against minorities. Here, the case of Malaysia is particularly instructive. The inability or reluctance of the political leadership to take decisive action against those who use religion to perpetuate and justify hate speech, and in some instances to incite violence, against religious and ethnic minorities inadvertently plays into the IS narrative of religiously sanctioned warfare against apostates and unbelievers, thereby providing an opportunity for its virulent ideology to take root and find a following. As but one example, a state-appointed mufti in Malaysia was able to openly call a non-Malay political opposition party *kafir harbi* (infidels at war with Islam) without fear of sanction.

Second, more effort is needed to acknowledge both the severity of the problem and the shortcomings of existing CT efforts. The Philippines is a case in point, showing how any attempt to arrest the problem needs to begin with a cognitive shift in the way it's framed. The Philippine political and security establishment has for a long time dismissed the Abu Sayyaf Group as little more than criminals and bandits. This is a dangerous underestimation of the threat, not to mention, also, profoundly ironic: if the Abu Sayyaf Group is indeed merely a group of bandits, it follows that the inability to defeat them is a damning indictment of the security establishment. It's time for a clear-eyed recasting of the problem, for the arid reality is that these 'bandits' are in fact formidable adversaries who have demonstrated over more than a decade that they are able to withstand the Philippines security forces. A realistic understanding of the group and its capabilities is essential to defeat it.

A third challenge is the issue of military professionalism and security sector reform. In Thailand, the military has grappled with militancy and insurgency in the restive southern provinces for more than a decade, with little evidence that its strong-arm tactics are working or garnering local support for the government. While the specific situation in the southern Philippines is different, the overall picture is the same. This is the only region in Southeast Asia (excluding the border regions of Myanmar) where militants more or less control territory. And Manila struggles to assert any real authority over the islands of the Sulu archipelago, which are effectively controlled by Abu Sayyaf and other splinter militant groups. Years of military operations, with US assistance, have barely made a dent in the capabilities of the extremist groups operating in the region. Indeed, the Abu Sayyaf Group appears to be getting stronger, not weaker: the 9 April 2016 incident in which Abu Sayyaf militants ambushed Philippine soldiers outside the village of Tipo-Tipo on the island of Basilan resulted in 18 soldiers dead and many more wounded and proved a major embarrassment for the Philippine military.

Fourth, given the transnational nature of the problem, improvements in governance and security sector reform at the national level would still need to be supplemented with broader and deeper regional cooperation to effectively deal with the threat. The Sulu archipelago, for example, is part of a triborder area bounded by the east Malaysian state of Sabah and the Indonesian island of Sulawesi and includes waters of the Sulu and Celebes seas in between. As noted above, this porous and ungoverned area presents a major problem due to the ease of movement by militants and terrorists across the borders. Over time, the area has developed its own insidious political economy based on people smuggling and arms trafficking, which play a big part in sustaining the activities of militant and terrorist networks. While security agencies from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are already engaged in regular information sharing, the magnitude and persistence of this problem indicates that current actions aren't enough: cooperation needs to be taken to a higher level. The security agencies of the relevant countries have already embarked on joint patrols akin to the multilateral initiatives against piracy in the region. The conversation should also switch to joint operations, building on the success of those initiatives.

Fifth, regional governments must be cognisant of the fact that religious rehabilitation to counter violent extremism, while important, has its limits. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many supporters of terrorism have elected to do so for reasons other than religious beliefs. For this reason, rehabilitation programs shouldn't overemphasise religion at the expense of other social, psychological and emotional motivations. Put simply, a social worker or youth counsellor could well play just as important a role as an ulama in the rehabilitation and deradicalisation process—perhaps an even more important role.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism emerged as a key area of policy focus on the security register of archipelagic Southeast Asian states in 2016. This attention was driven by perceptions that the threat posed by IS-inspired terrorist groups and individuals had increased, even if the magnitude was smaller than the problems in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. CT policies have been strengthened correspondingly, although at different levels of depth and intensity, but Singapore's are possibly the most comprehensive and advanced.

In 2017, the threat of terrorism will continue to preoccupy security agencies in the region. For them, there'll be three concerns. First, returning Southeast Asian foreign fighters must be dealt with. With the turning of the tide against IS in Syria and Iraq in recent months, it's likely that these fighters will be finding their way home, some of them intent on continuing their armed jihad on local shores. Second, there's the real prospect that the southern Philippines could be identified as a safe haven for Southeast Asian jihadists. Third, while JI continues to be at odds with IS affiliates, it would be foolhardy to dismiss the prospects for rapprochement, leading to some sort of tactical cooperation.

NOTES

- 1 Ahmad Tarmimi's act was followed a few months later by Ahmed Affendi Abdul Manaff's detonation of bombs in the vehicle he was driving in Syria in November 2014.
- 2 Farik Zolkepli, 'Terror cell intended to create Islamic State-like regime in Malaysia', *The Star*, 7 April 2015.
- 3 'Malaysians thronging towards Islamic State, militant groups in Syria, jihadist claims', *Malay Mail Online*, 11 January 2015, [online](#).
- 4 'New extremist groups in Malaysia', *Straits Times*, 17 December 2016.
- 5 The attack was claimed on the Facebook page of Muhammad Wannady Muhammad Jedi to be the work of IS supporters.
- 6 Farik Zolkepli, 'Attack on eve of Malaysia's National Day foiled', 1 September 2016, [online](#).
- 7 Alizah Shah, 'New extremist groups uncovered', *New Straits Times*, 17 December 2016.
- 8 'Man detained under ISA had radicalized other Singaporeans', 29 July 2016, [online](#).
- 9 See, for example, Home Affairs Minister Shanmugan, cited in 'Attack on Singapore a matter of when, not if, says Shanmugan', 23 March 2016, *Today*, [online](#).
- 10 See Rommel Banlaoi, 'IS threat to Philippine security', *Rappler*, 24 June 2015, [online](#).
- 11 The total amount of aid is assessed to have exceeded US\$400 million from 2002 to 2014. See Linda Robinson, Patrick B Johnson, Gillian S Oak, *US Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2016, [online](#).
- 12 'Duterte says he wants US special forces out of southern Philippines', *Reuters*, 13 September 2016, [online](#).
- 13 Email interview with a Filipino military officer with operational experience in counterterrorism, 8 September 2016.
- 14 'Congress adjourned, fails to pass BBL', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 4 February 2016.
- 15 John Teo, 'Ensure Bangsamoro peace process continues', *New Straits Times*, 19 February 2016.
- 16 Don Pathan, 'Information war far from fair in Thailand's south', *Andalou Agency*, 11 December 2016, [online](#).
- 17 Arlina Arshad, 'ISA arrests: Batam radio station draws strong opposition for extreme leanings', *Straits Times*, 20 August 2016.
- 18 'Malaysian cops prepare for lone wolf ISIS strikes', *Straits Times*, 24 June 2016.



COUNTERTERRORISM IN SOUTH ASIA

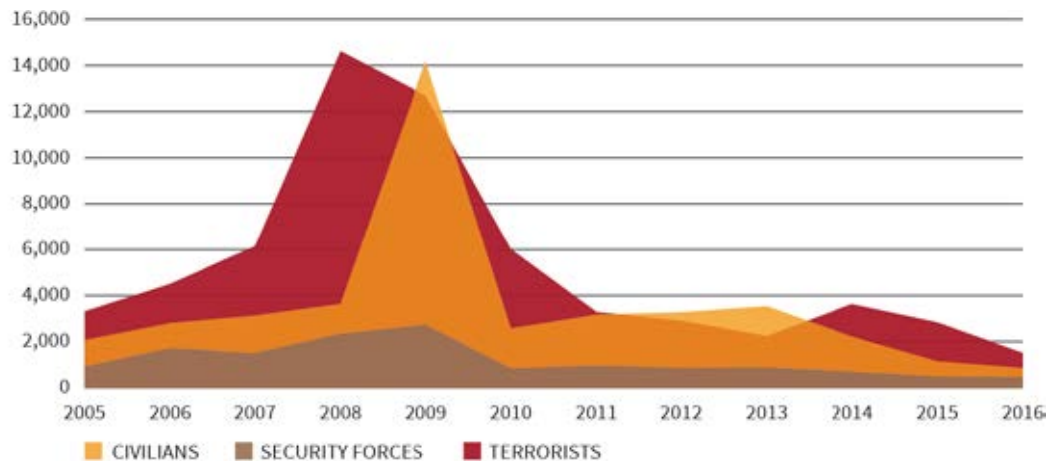
SHASHANK JOSHI

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South Asia in 2016 presented a mixed picture for CT. Excluding in Afghanistan, fatalities from terrorist violence among all categories of victim—members of the public, security forces and, indeed, terrorists—are at their lowest levels in more than a decade. Civilian casualties have fallen every year since 2013, standing at 857 in 2016, around 6% of the decade's peak of 14,196 in 2009.¹ This progress has been most significant in Pakistan, in part owing to a years-long military offensive against Pakistani Taliban strongholds.

However, these relative gains have had limited overall impact: South Asia continues to have two of the five countries with the highest proportions of deaths from terrorism, and three of the top eight countries affected by terrorism.² Figure 1 shows the elevated levels of terrorism in the late 2000s, driven above all by the Pakistani Taliban, falling thereafter, and then showing another significant period of decline from 2013 to 2016. Despite national and international CT efforts, the Afghan Taliban made substantial territorial gains across Afghanistan, Islamic State (IS) continued to mount sectarian attacks, and Pakistani terrorist groups escalated their attacks in India, prompting unprecedented publicly announced cross-border raids by the Indian military. In a context of weak democratic institutions and state patronage of some terrorist groups, CT measures also substantially affect domestic political stability and international tension.

FIGURE 1: Fatalities from terrorism in South Asia (excluding Afghanistan), 2005 to 2016



Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/southasia/datasheets/Fatalities.html>

This chapter devotes the greatest attention to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. These are the three states where terrorist activity is most frequent and consequential. Their triangular interaction is a key factor in regional security, and India–Pakistan relations are almost entirely dominated by CT issues. More briefly, the chapter also surveys trends in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Islamist terrorism is the most important dimension of regional CT, but ethnic and separatist terrorism remains of concern.

The chapter first describes trends and developments in terrorism over 2016, then reviews CT measures and their success, and then considers the prognosis for those measures over 2017.

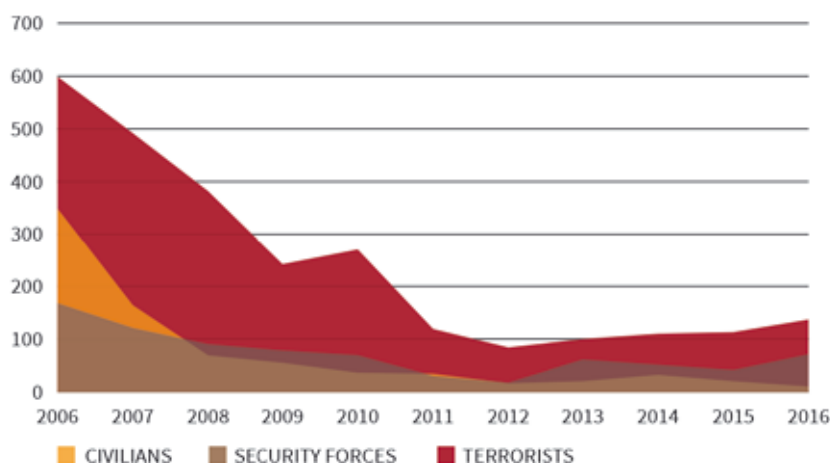
REGIONAL TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN TERRORISM

INDIA

India continues to view Islamist terrorism as one of its greatest security challenges, albeit one bound up with the broader challenge from Pakistan.³ Major terrorist attacks in Kashmir and on New Delhi's parliament complex in 2001–02 and then in Mumbai in 2008 prompted crises in India–Pakistan relations. Experts widely predicted that further mass-casualty terrorism would trigger Indian military action despite Pakistani efforts to develop and threaten the use of tactical nuclear weapons.⁴ In 2016, these terrorism-related tensions reached their highest levels since 2008, culminating in an Indian military attack on Pakistan-administered territory.

The historic princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, of which India holds two-thirds, remains disputed between the two countries. Indian-held Kashmir experienced a major insurgency, backed by Pakistan, through the 1990s and early 2000s, but incidents of terrorism have since declined (Figure 2). Civilian fatalities were above 500 in each year between 1990 and 2005, but have remained under 100 since 2007, and there have been year-on-year declines since 2014.

FIGURE 2: Fatalities from terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, India, 2006 to October 2016



Source: SouthAsiaTerrorismPortal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/southasia/datasheets/Fatalities.html>

This fall in violence has multiple causes. One is a ceasefire agreed between India and Pakistan in 2003 and a consequent reduction in artillery fire, which has reduced opportunities for militant infiltration across the Line of Control (LoC).

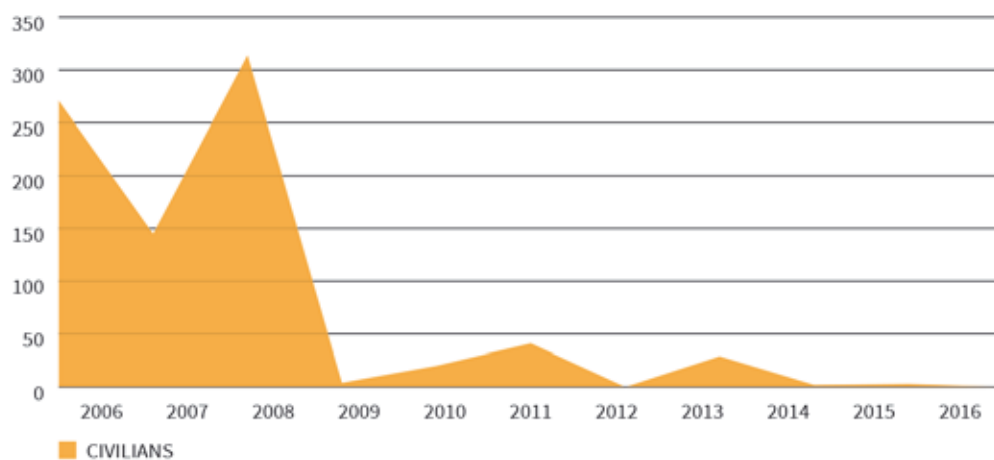
Another is a deliberate reduction in assistance to militants by the Pakistan Army, particularly after the army attracted international censure and American pressure after previous high-profile attacks.⁵ India's own improvements to security measures along the LoC, including the installation of new sensors, are also likely to have helped.

In January 2016, an attack on an Indian air base in Pathankot, in the state of Punjab and close to Kashmir, was attributed to the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) group, which appears to be receiving renewed protection and assistance from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency.⁶ India and Pakistan handled the resulting crisis with unusual restraint and cooperation: the two countries' national security advisers conversed regularly, and India took the remarkable step of permitting a Pakistani investigation team to visit the air base. However, Pakistan's prime minister, who had taken earlier steps to improve relations with India, was sidelined by the army and the investigation was effectively undermined and shelved.

In June, Indian security forces conducted a targeted killing of Burhan Wani, a charismatic young commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist organisation in Kashmir, who had built up a large social media following. This triggered the largest wave of protests in Kashmir since the insurgency of the 1990s. India blamed Pakistan for fuelling the unrest and widely publicised the testimony of a suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative who had been arrested in July.⁷ There followed a harsh Indian crackdown marked by the use of disfiguring pellet guns. In this atmosphere of mutual recrimination, militants, probably from the Pakistan-backed LeT, entered an Indian Army camp near the Kashmiri town of Uri on 18 September and killed 19 soldiers in the deadliest such attack for 20 years. India's response marks a major CT development in the region, and is taken up in the next section.

Excluding Kashmir, Punjab and the northeast—all of which have historically seen major insurgencies by separatist groups—there's been a dramatic fall in violence from the mid-2000s to the present, and zero reported casualties in 2016 (Figure 3). Incidents in 2016 were confined to five explosions in the first half of the year, spanning West Bengal in the east, Haryana in the north, and Kerala and Karnataka in the south. The only casualties in those attacks, all of which used crude explosive devices, were two attackers in West Bengal in January. The attacks haven't been reliably attributed to specific groups, although at least one was reportedly associated with an IS-affiliated movement in southern India and others are likely to have links to local Islamist movements.⁸

FIGURE 3: Fatalities in terrorist violence outside of Kashmir, Punjab and the northeast, 2006 to October 2016



Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/southasia/datasheets/Fatalities.html>

In Punjab, the lone casualties of 2016—one civilian and seven members of the security forces—were those in the January attack on the Pathankot air base. That attack wasn't Punjab-focused separatist terrorism, but effectively geographical spillover from Pakistan's broader effort to apply pressure on India.

In central India, there remains a larger, if substantially diminished, problem from what India calls left-wing extremism by predominantly Maoist groups, many of which are known as Naxalites. They inflicted a little over 100 civilian casualties in 2016, a steady fall from the 600 casualties in 2010. Despite this reduced threat, India's National Investigation Agency warned in July 2016 that Indian IS recruits had 'contacted' Naxalites to learn methods and obtain weapons.

India has also seen a dramatic reduction of violence in its northeast, where separatist and autonomist insurgencies have been operating since 1947. The 56 civilian and 10 security force casualties in 2016 represented the lowest casualty levels in the recorded data.

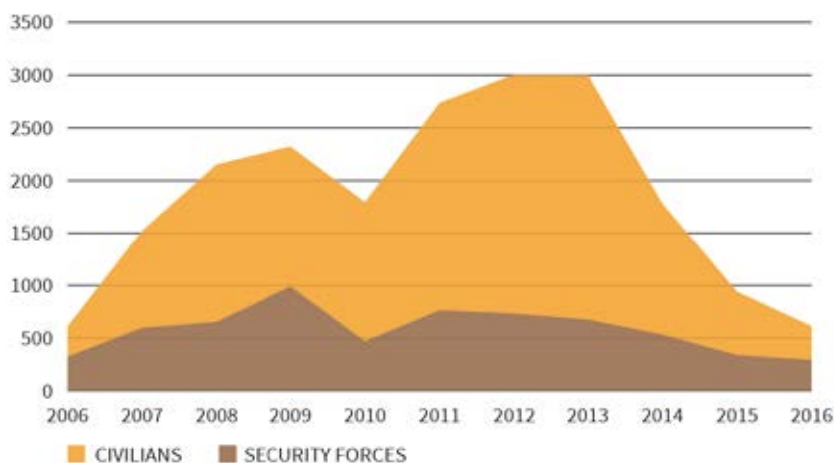
In addition to Pakistan-based and local armed non-state groups, India has also paid close attention to the broader threat from transnational terrorism. In September 2014, al-Qaeda announced the formation of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). AQIS's targets include India, among other South Asian nations.

Indian agencies have been concerned by the threat from IS both to Indian interests in the Middle East and to Indian soil. There are no reliable estimates of Indian recruits to IS, but most reputable sources place the figure between 20 and 70. These are extremely low per capita figures compared to, say, European or Middle Eastern recruitment patterns. However, Indian investigators confess uncertainty as to the number of recruits from the broader Indian diaspora, which has close ties both to southern India and to the Persian Gulf. A large number of Indian recruits reportedly drew on their earlier connections to the Afghanistan- and Pakistan-based Ansar-ut-Tawhid fi Bilad al-Hind, which was in turn an offshoot of the India-based Indian Mujahideen.⁹ Ansar-ut-Tawhid fi Bilad al-Hind has conducted pro-IS propaganda in a variety of Indian languages.

PAKISTAN

The general trend in Pakistan is a sustained fall in terrorist violence, and civilian and security force fatalities in 2016 (612 and 293, respectively) were at their lowest level in over a decade (Figure 4). Civilian fatalities were highest in Balochistan (251) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (123) in the west of the country, where the violence is concentrated in areas closer to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Figure 5).

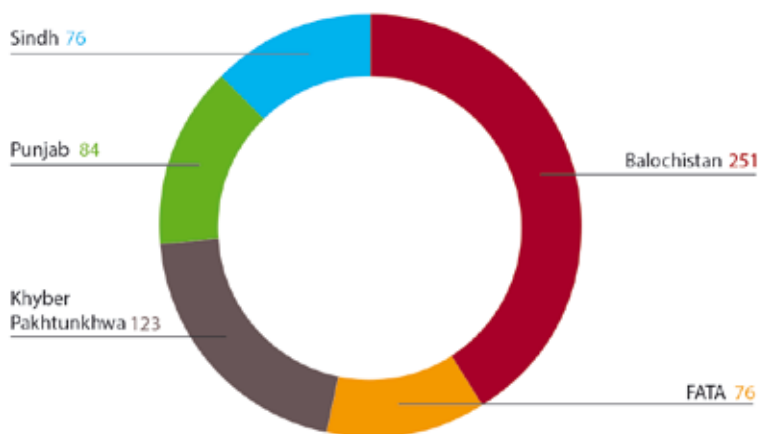
FIGURE 4: Fatalities in terrorist violence in Pakistan, 2006 to 2016



Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/index.html>

Despite this progress, Pakistan suffered several high-profile attacks in 2016. Those that caused more than 20 fatalities included a suicide bombing in Lahore in March, a bombing outside a hospital in Quetta in August, a bombing of a mosque in Mohmand in September, and an assault on a police academy in Quetta in October. The first three were claimed by the Pakistani Taliban splinter group *Jamaat-ul-Ahrar*, while the third was attributed to the sectarian group *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)* acting in concert with IS. *Jamaat-ul-Ahrar* has repeatedly targeted churches and schools and was designated by the US as a terrorist group in August 2016. Its senior leadership has ties to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

FIGURE 5: Civilian fatalities in selected Pakistani provinces, 2016



FATA = Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/index.html>

In addition to terrorist attacks directed against civilians and the state in general, Pakistan has faced a resurgence in sectarian groups directing violence at the country's Shia minority. LeJ, which grew out of the broader anti-Shia group *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan*, claimed a string of attacks on the minority Shia Hazara ethnic group through 2016, including several assassinations. As described in the next section, CT measures against LeJ expanded in 2016, but are complicated by the group's relationships to civilian and military authorities.

AFGHANISTAN

Afghan CT is effectively a subset of broader counterinsurgency efforts against the Afghan Taliban and allied groups. Those efforts struggled through 2016, and the Taliban captured more territory than at any point since its regime was toppled in 2001. Afghan National Security Forces casualties have been extremely heavy; around 900 soldiers were killed in July alone. CT is also likely to be affected by the wider political crisis in Afghanistan, where there are severe tensions between the president and chief executive within the national unity government.

Major terrorist attacks have included a suicide bombing on a government security building in April that killed 28, a suicide bombing against a Shia Hazara protest in July, which killed 80 (the worst such incident in Afghanistan since 2001), an attack on the American University of Afghanistan in August that killed 16 or 17, and an attack on a Shia shrine in October that killed 16. IS claimed the second and last of the major terrorist attacks, while the Taliban or allied insurgents are assumed to have conducted the others.

IS aims to expand the sectarian dimension of the Afghan conflict, enabling it to capitalise on resulting sectarian divisions as it did in Syria and Iraq. In the past, the Haqqani network has demonstrated the greatest ability to conduct large, coordinated strikes in Kabul under the insurgent banner, many of them planned and launched from within Pakistan.

While the Afghan Taliban has grown more assertive as foreign troop numbers have fallen over several years, IS has also been present through its Khorasan Province (ISKP) since 2014. Pakistan's offensive in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas has pushed IS-aligned fighters into eastern Afghanistan, where they have clashed with the Taliban. The weakness of the local Taliban and the falling back of beleaguered government forces created space for IS to expand during 2015. In these areas, IS prosecuted a brutal campaign of assassinations, kidnappings and killings to weaken local resistance and deepen its control. However, in July 2016, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan claimed that IS's numbers there had declined from 3,000 in January to 1,000–1,500, most of whom were former members of the Pakistani Taliban. The ISKP is reportedly confined mainly to four eastern districts. Despite this weakening, the group has demonstrated a continued capability to mount attacks, including inside Kabul. The Afghan Analysts Network notes that the ISKP is likely to have at least three cells in different areas of Kabul, each dozens-strong. The oldest cell was established by al-Qaeda—IS's parent organisation—more than seven years ago.¹⁰

Although US officials had claimed that only 50–100 al-Qaeda operatives remained in Afghanistan, those estimates have been revised upwards to more than 300. This may reflect increased cooperation between al-Qaeda and the Taliban as well as between al-Qaeda and the Haqqani network.

THE REST OF SOUTH ASIA

Bangladesh has faced two major terrorism challenges. One is a growing threat from IS, which has claimed two dozen attacks in Bangladesh since September 2015.¹¹ They included the worst attack in Bangladeshi history, when 20 hostages were killed in a Dhaka restaurant during a 20-hour siege in July 2016. A second challenge is a persistent, multi-year campaign by Islamist militants—claimed variously by al-Qaeda and IS affiliates—to assassinate secular writers, bloggers, academics, members of religious minorities and foreigners. This campaign is an extreme offshoot of earlier efforts by local Islamists to push back against liberal and secular political forces, especially on the issue of blasphemy, suggesting that local issues have driven these groups' strategies. Of greatest concern are the al-Qaeda-affiliated Ansarullah Bangla Team and the IS-affiliated Jund al-Tawheed wal Khilafah. The level of coordination between parent and affiliate organisations remains uncertain.

Other parts of South Asia face lesser terrorist threats:

- While Nepal's political settlement remains fragile, it has had four consecutive years with no fatalities from the Maoist insurgency that plagued the country in the 2000s. Nor has it experienced any other acts of terrorism. However, its low state capacity and porous border with India have given rise to concern over possible incursions by foreign groups and states.
- Sri Lanka has similarly been free of terrorist-related fatalities since the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or Tamil Tigers, in 2009. Following accounts of the death of a Sri Lankan national fighting with IS in Syria in 2015, there have been concerns about broader IS efforts to recruit in the country, but little evidence of successful IS recruitment.
- The Maldives has experienced a growing problem with radicalisation and terrorism involving both domestic attacks and connections to transnational conflicts. The islands are likely to have sent more jihadists to Iraq and Syria on a per capita basis than any other country, and a greater absolute number than any of the other, far larger, countries in the region. However, 2016 was without incident in the Maldives.

DEVELOPMENTS IN COUNTERTERRORISM

Given the high intensity and frequency of terrorism in South Asia, the balance between military/paramilitary and law enforcement approaches to CT is generally skewed towards the former in all three major countries discussed here. Domestically, India has frequently combined direct military, law enforcement and counterinsurgency approaches.

With a few exceptions, international CT cooperation in the region is limited in its scope and effectiveness, in part because terrorism is—with some justification—viewed by each state as an instrument of foreign states, rather than as a common threat to be addressed jointly.

COUNTERTERRORISM IN INDIA

Over the second half of 2016, Indian CT measures were placed at the heart of the country's diplomacy and military operations. India used bilateral and multilateral meetings and summits, notably the UN General Assembly, to highlight Pakistan-backed terrorism, encourage international sanctions on specific individuals and groups, and isolate Islamabad.

The most important development came in September, when India conducted what was perhaps its most important CT action in many years by sending its special forces across the LoC to attack terrorist facilities in what it called 'surgical strikes'. These actions were formally described as pre-emptive measures against terrorists about to cross into Indian-held territory, but were widely acknowledged to be reprisals for the Uri attack described in the previous section.¹² The scope, depth and nature of India's raids continue to be heavily disputed, and Pakistan denies that anything took place. While India has conducted low-level, cross-LoC raids in the past, they appear to have been on a smaller scale, lacked a high level of political or even military authorisation, and were intended as private signals to Pakistan's frontline military forces. September's highly public raid should be understood as an important shift in India's CT policy, indicating that the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is eager to deter Pakistan-based terrorism by imposing a reputational and tangible cost on Pakistan, as well as by signalling the unpredictability of India's response. It's too early to evaluate the effects of this shift, but the resulting intensification of crossfire over the LoC may lead to higher levels of infiltration into India.

The reduction in Naxalite violence was probably related to a number of factors. One is sustained CT operations in preceding years, in which more than 10,000 were arrested and more than 600 leaders were killed. Notable operations occurred in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district in March,¹³ in Odisha's Kandhamal district in July,¹⁴ in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district in August,¹⁵ and in Jharkand's Latehar district in November.¹⁶ However, the quality and quantity of reporting on such operations are relatively poor, given the difficulty of access in afflicted areas. A second factor is a policy of persuading Naxal leaders to surrender through inducements of cash, plots of land and loans (the size of the inducement depends on the Naxalite's rank).¹⁷ A third factor is accelerated development, which is intended both to extend the writ of the state into contested areas and to reduce local grievances that might otherwise spur recruitment. This has involved the construction of fortified police stations, accelerated road-building and cooperation with the powerful local governments of affected states. Finally, Indian officials have also claimed that their campaign of 'demonetisation', involving the withdrawal of a significant proportion of the country's circulating cash, has also weakened Naxal funding, although such claims should be viewed with caution. In November, India's Home Minister argued, optimistically, that 'if we continue our fight with Maoists in this manner I am confident that the danger of Naxal violence will be completely eliminated in nearly five years.'¹⁸

Against cellular rather than guerrilla groups, India conducted a more focused campaign of disruption and arrests in 2016. Three AQIS operatives, with explosives, were arrested in southern India in November in the first such arrests in almost a year. Over the year, India arrested a further 68 people with suspected links to IS; most of the arrests were in southern states, possibly owing to those states' significant diaspora and economic ties to the Middle East.¹⁹ Some of those arrested were discovered with materials for explosives, indicating a reasonably advanced degree of plotting. One of the most important arrests involved former Indian Mujahideen member Shafi Armar, who had reportedly sought to create an IS branch, Junud al-Khalifa-e-Hind, in India.

Indian CT has also included political efforts to accommodate terrorist and insurgent movements from a position of strength. To that end, in August 2015, the Indian Government signed a landmark Framework Accord with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM), the most powerful of multiple armed groups fighting for an independent homeland for Naga tribespeople. The accord reportedly included provisions for several thousand insurgents to join a state-sanctioned paramilitary force. Negotiations continued through 2016, but several Naga factions rejected the agreement, while militants from the NSCN-IM continued to mount attacks on security forces throughout the year.²⁰ As Naga factions compete with one another and seek to maintain leverage in talks with the government, the insurgency is likely to continue at a low level through 2017.

More broadly, Indian CT capabilities were consistently shown to be weak. India's CT institutions performed poorly during key crises, especially in January's Pathankot attack. Perimeter security was extremely poor despite almost a day's advance warning of an attack. A plethora of competing forces—including ageing Defence Security Corps personnel, close-quarters-trained National Security Guards and the Air Force's Garud commandos—operated in an unclear chain of command. A series of premature declarations of victory by ministers confused matters further. The army, highly experienced in clearing operations over large areas, appeared to be sidelined by not being called to assist despite the proximity of several large units. Poor Indian border security and corrupt border guards also seem to have played a role.

In the domain of CT cooperation, US–India ties continue to deepen. There's evidence that US signals intelligence has played a role in helping India to attribute multiple terrorist attacks to Pakistan-backed groups, most notably the Pathankot attack in January.²¹ US–India joint statements have routinely begun mentioning India-focused terrorist groups by name. An India–US Counter Terrorism Joint Working Group meeting was held in July 2016, and the US is likely to have given tacit support to India's military strikes across the LoC in September. The US National Security Advisor spoke with her Indian counterpart hours before the operation and issued broadly supportive statements in its aftermath, in contrast to Washington's historically wary approach to any use of force between India and Pakistan.

Broader international engagement included a February 2016 meeting between Modi and the Crown Prince of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which included discussions on CT cooperation. The resulting India–UAE joint statement emphasised 'the responsibility of all states to control the activities of the so-called "non-state actors"', which was intended by each party as a rebuke to Pakistan and Iran, respectively, for supporting insurgent groups. A week earlier, the UAE had extradited to India several suspected Indian IS supporters. India's outreach to the Gulf Cooperation Council, which has been several years in the making, is crucial to locating and interdicting Pakistani terrorists in the Gulf, as well as isolating Pakistan on the issue of terrorism. September 2016 also saw the first ever high-level Sino-Indian dialogue on CT, just over a week after that month's Uri attack, although India is likely to be wary of this process in the light of China's shielding of Pakistan at the UN, described in greater detail below.

COUNTERTERRORISM IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan's approach to CT remains dominated by its politically powerful army and its intelligence agency. The main phase of Operation Zarb-e-Azb—a major military offensive against Pakistani Taliban sanctuaries in North Waziristan that began in 2014—concluded in April 2016. While Zarb-e-Azb has, like previous smaller raids, avoided targeting some terrorist groups with close ties to the intelligence services, notably the Afghan Taliban-allied Haqqani network, the operation is viewed as a major success in Pakistan, and to some extent abroad.²²

The Pakistan Army claims that as part of Zarb-e-Azb it has killed around 3,500 militants, destroyed almost 1,000 'hideouts' and cleared over 4,000 square kilometres of territory, at the cost of nearly 500 soldiers. The operation has also been part of a broader CT framework agreed in January 2015, known as the National Action Plan, which includes policies such as parallel military CT courts. This and other steps have involved an expansion of the army's already formidable powers over the civilian government. Many arrests took place through 2016, including the mass arrest of almost 5,000 suspects in March (only 200 of whom remained in custody beyond the initial period) and almost 200 LeJ, al-Qaeda and Pakistani Taliban suspects in December. However, trials have often proceeded slowly, if at all.

Beyond conventional military operations against the Pakistani Taliban, Pakistan, like India, has also conducted extrajudicial killings of some terrorism suspects, usually describing these incidents as gunfights. In November, security forces killed two LeJ militants in Balochistan and five more members in December. This builds on an earlier campaign of pressure against LeJ, which included killing its leader in August 2015. Many of the group have retreated to Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, where they have joined with IS.

Ambiguity in Pakistani CT can be broadly illustrated through the continued military shelter and support of a variety of jihadist groups, including LeJ. Other beneficiaries of Pakistan's support include the Afghan Taliban, whose senior leadership is based in the Baloch city of Quetta and whose leader was killed in Balochistan in May 2016; the Haqqani network; LeT, which maintains a large compound in Punjab province and whose leader, Hafiz Saeed, travels and speaks freely in public in Pakistan; and JeM, which has close ties to al-Qaeda and was once driven underground, but which now appears to be returning to prominence as a useful anti-Indian instrument. After the Pathankot attack in January, Pakistan briefly detained

JeM leaders but took no further steps, instead persuading China to block efforts to place the group's leader, Masood Azhar, on a UN list of terrorists. Azhar continues to write a weekly news column, in which he urges war against India.

Such connections between government agencies, extremist groups and the terrorist arms of those groups deeply complicate CT efforts by civilian, military and intelligence agencies. In many other cases, the military's policies can't be described as CT at all, and are instead superficial gestures of compliance. While Pakistan alleges that India and Afghanistan both sponsor terrorism in Pakistan, there's relatively little evidence for that claim.

COUNTERTERRORISM IN AFGHANISTAN

In 2016, Afghan police conducted more than 1,800 operations against militants, although there's no available breakdown between Taliban and other targets.²³ Most of Afghanistan's known non-Taliban CT operations have relied heavily on foreign assistance.

For example, the reduction in the ISKP's strength over 2016 was likely to have been a result of intense military operations. In January, US President Barack Obama authorised US forces in Afghanistan to strike IS targets. Between January and August, the US conducted almost 140 airstrikes to that end. In July 2016, ISKP leader Hafiz Saeed Khan was killed in a US drone strike. The strike came during joint operations by US and Afghan special forces against the group in southern Nangarhar Province, in which 300 IS fighters were reportedly killed. In September, another US drone strike in the Achin district of Nangarhar killed 15 militants. Later in the year, IS was driven out of Pachir Agam district, which includes the Tora Bora cave complex. Five hundred villagers from that area were then armed by the government to be deployed to security checkpoints along the Pakistani border, thereby building on Afghanistan's controversial use of local militia.

Military operations have also targeted al-Qaeda and its affiliates. In July 2015, US forces located and destroyed an AQIS camp in Kandahar that covered more than 30 square miles, the largest such facility that had been seen at any point in the war, and in a location where al-Qaeda wasn't previously thought to have a substantial presence. More than 160 militants were killed in the attack, which required over 60 airstrikes and 200 ground forces. In late October 2016, three senior al-Qaeda members were killed in drone strikes in the east of the country, including the group's leader and deputy leader in Afghanistan.

In the area of broader international cooperation, Afghanistan relies above all on the US and NATO's 13,000-strong Resolute Support Mission. However, Afghanistan and India, united by intense mutual suspicion of Pakistan, also increased cooperation over 2016. In September, the two countries signed a pointed agreement demanding 'an end to all sponsorship, support, safe havens and sanctuaries to terrorists, including for those who target Afghanistan and India.'²⁴ The same month, India, Iran and Afghanistan discussed trilateral cooperation, including against terrorism, building on joint Indian-Iranian anti-Taliban sentiment that surfaced during Afghanistan's civil war in the 1990s.

Afghan CT is also closely connected with counter-narcotics activities. Vanda Felhab-Brown estimated in April 2016 that 20–40% of the Taliban's income comes from drugs, noting that drug-related activity is broadly assessed to constitute up to one-third to one-half of the country's overall economy.²⁵ However, drug interdiction has fallen in tandem with foreign troop numbers. While Afghan authorities conducted more than 1,000 operations, seized over 200 tons of drugs and arrested more than 1,400 suspects between April and October 2016, poppy production overall grew 43% in 2016 compared with the previous year, in part because of rising insecurity.²⁶

COUNTERTERRORISM ELSEWHERE IN SOUTH ASIA

In the face of a rising threat from al-Qaeda and IS affiliates, Bangladeshi CT policy has proven especially contentious in a highly polarised domestic context. The Awami League-led government of Sheikh Hasina Wazed has denied the presence of those two transnational groups and has instead applied legal and political pressure on its Islamist opponents, blaming them for the terrorist attacks in Bangladesh. In June, the government initiated a major crackdown and arrested more than 10,000 people, but that included members of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-i-Islami party, which claimed that their members were deliberately targeted for political, not terrorism, reasons.

More broadly, in February 2016 Dhaka police launched the Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime Unit, notionally with 600 members, although it probably remains well under that strength. In June, Bangladeshi officials also cooperated with more than 100,000 Islamic scholars, leaders and thinkers who published a fatwa condemning terrorism.

US–Bangladesh CT cooperation has been expanding, and US Secretary of State John Kerry made his first visit to the country a month after the Dhaka attack in July. Improvements in the India–Bangladesh relationship are also likely to have facilitated bilateral CT efforts based on shared concerns over the India–Bangladesh–Myanmar border areas. India has repeatedly warned Bangladesh that Pakistan-based terrorist groups have used the Chittagong Hill Tracts border area for training Rohingya militants in Myanmar, and there have been reports of trilateral cooperation against the Aqa Mul Mujahideen, an offshoot of Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami-Arakan, in particular. Further high-level India–Bangladesh talks were held in December on cross-border terrorism and contraband flows. Each country shared lists of terrorists deemed to be present in the other; India pointed out 45 hideouts in Bangladesh, spanning nine districts.²⁷

In the same month, Bangladesh also held a major cross-government meeting on terrorism financing, building on the earlier formation of a national committee, chaired by the foreign minister, to implement relevant UN Security Council reforms. Bangladeshi authorities have monitored IS-linked transactions into the country and interdicted some flows.²⁸ Bangladesh has fared relatively well in regional rankings of progress on countering terrorist financing.²⁹ In July, Singapore jailed four Bangladeshi nationals in its first ever convictions under the Terrorism (Suppression of Financing) Act.³⁰

Nepal's uncertain political circumstances and low state capacity mean that its CT policy is of little regional significance. India considers that Pakistan uses Nepali territory to infiltrate counterfeit currency and terrorists into India. Indian forces on the Nepali border were on high alert in early October after warnings of JeM or LeT infiltration. In February and October–November 2016, India and Nepal held joint CT exercises at the battalion level. In January 2017, Nepal will host Interpol's 23rd Regional Conference, which will include discussions on transnational crime and terrorism.

The most important development in Sri Lanka's CT policy in 2016 was the introduction of a draft framework for a Counter Terrorism Act in October. This was intended to replace the 1980s-era Prevention of Terrorism Act, which had been criticised as discriminatory and draconian. Civil society groups have complained of provisions in the Counter Terrorism Act that allow confessions to police to be used in court, the over-broad definition of terrorist acts, and the criminalisation of speech that threatens the 'unity, territorial integrity or sovereignty' of the country. The UN raised a series of similar issues in December.³¹ The government has emphasised that the draft is an 'evolving document ... in the form of a white paper'. Parliamentary committees will deliberate on the legislation before it proceeds. Sri Lanka also conducted regular CT drills in October with the coastguards of India and the Maldives, and with the Indian Army the same month.

In the Maldives, as in Bangladesh, CT laws have been used for domestic political purposes, notably for the conviction of former president Mohammed Nasheed in 2013. In June 2016, the government released a brief seven-page policy paper on terrorism that, while setting out a highly general agenda, also castigated 'some Maldivians living outside the country [who] have exaggerated the issue of violent extremism and terrorism beyond its severity in the Maldives'. In February 2016, the government established the National Counter Terrorism Centre. The centre has found no evidence of organised recruitment by IS, but has prevented three nationals from travelling abroad, extradited another suspect and monitored others. In August, the head of the centre requested Indian assistance in intelligence sharing and capacity building following the India–Maldives Defence Action Plan that had been agreed earlier in the year. In October, the Maldives hired India's largest private university to carry out a series of terrorism awareness and training programs.³² India–Maldives cooperation is, to some extent, dependent on the broader state of the bilateral relationship. India has some reservations about the present government of the Maldives but was willing to engage more over the second half of 2016. This is likely to continue, as it serves India's interests in limiting Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean and in emphasising the role of CT in India's regional diplomacy.

REGIONAL MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been proposed as the basis for a regional CT mechanism. This issue has been discussed periodically since 2006, and expert-level meetings were held as recently as September 2016. However, the SAARC is not an effective forum for dealing with CT, as its mechanisms are largely hostage to the prevailing state of the India–Pakistan relationship.

In September 2016, India responded to the Uri terrorist attack by withdrawing from the SAARC summit, which had been due to be held in Islamabad, and persuading other countries with grievances against Pakistan to do likewise. India will eventually resume participation in the SAARC, and the institution's survival isn't in doubt. However, India, frustrated by Pakistan's objections to India–Afghanistan trade and eager to isolate Islamabad, is increasingly looking to alternative bodies to deal with economic issues, such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.

Meaningful regional CT is therefore confined to bilateral relationships, of which the India–Afghanistan one is perhaps the most significant, and a handful of multilateral ones (notably, India–Bangladesh–Myanmar), mostly centred on New Delhi. India’s CT capabilities are disproportionately greater than those of other states in its region, and any multilateral CT body would effectively be an Indian-driven enterprise that would, by necessity, exclude Pakistan. However, some smaller states are wary of increasing Indian influence in their domestic affairs and might prefer ad hoc arrangements that preserve their autonomy. Moreover, there remain serious differences about which groups are terrorists—even between currently friendly states such as India and Afghanistan or India and Bangladesh. This, too, would complicate institutionalised CT cooperation. Finally, the US also remains a key actor in South Asia, with a major military and intelligence presence in Afghanistan and ongoing concerns about terrorist activity, nuclear security, and political stability in Pakistan.

THE PROGNOSIS

Five general conclusions about the prognosis for CT in South Asia can be made.

First, at the broadest level, terrorism in South Asia is declining, but is still at high levels and is changing in shape. Both al-Qaeda and IS have been placed under sustained and severe military pressure in Afghanistan, with the result that IS is shrinking and is now confined to a small geographical area. However, IS remains capable of capitalising on the weakness and fragmentation of larger insurgent groups both there and in Pakistan. There’s a threat of sectarian terrorism from IS and local groups and partnerships between the two groups in Pakistan. Existing CT measures have hit the Pakistani Taliban hard, but are failing to prevent, or limit, mass-casualty and sectarian attacks.

Second, CT policy in South Asia is especially challenging because of state sponsorship of terrorist groups, notably by Pakistan. Larger terrorist acts are consequently seen by regional countries as acts of war, and it’s harder to observe, disrupt and degrade groups being sheltered on foreign soil. The reinvigoration of JeM, the continued activity of LeT, the sensitive political situation in Kashmir and India’s new willingness to conduct public strikes over the LoC point to significant risks of conflict in the absence of meaningful, sustained and visible actions by Pakistan against these proxy forces. Pakistan has intensified its claims that India and Afghanistan sponsor Islamist, nationalist and ethnic armed groups within Pakistan. Although the evidence for that remains limited, such claims are likely to grow in significance over 2017 as regional tensions grow and as New Delhi seeks to apply diplomatic pressure on Islamabad. State sponsorship of terrorism also limits the degree of regional CT cooperation. International cooperation presupposes that the problem is one of information and capability rather than intent, but that’s not how India, Afghanistan and other regional states view the problem. In March 2016, Pakistan’s National Security Adviser provided an unprecedented intelligence warning to his Indian counterpart, prompting a large-scale mobilisation of police and the National Security Guard. The warning occurred in the brief period of warming relations in the aftermath of the Pathankot attack, during which India and Pakistan demonstrated mutual restraint. However, any modest trust developed through such warnings has since dissipated, as Pakistan-backed groups continue to mount attacks.³³

Third, the most important shift in regional CT in 2016 was India’s willingness to conduct publicly announced cross-border military raids. While such raids have occurred in the past, their public avowal increases popular support for this type of action and creates greater escalatory pressures. Whether the raids have a deterrent effect on the Pakistan Army’s support for terrorist groups can only be judged some time into 2017. Should the India–Pakistan ceasefire informally agreed in 2003 break down, the resultant intensification in artillery fire is likely to increase the level of jihadist infiltration into Kashmir. India will continue to place CT at the heart of its diplomacy and military preparedness, not least as important local elections raise the stakes for Indian politicians.

Fourth, CT policy in South Asia continues to be highly politicised, and civil society groups claim that CT legislation and anti-terrorism forces are used to curb legitimate political activity. Those concerns have been greatest in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, although India has also used broad legislation to target dissent on the issue of Kashmir. This is in part a function of highly contentious politics, in which the rules of the political game are not settled and incumbents sometimes use state institutions to increase the barriers to entry for opponents.

Fifth, South Asia is characterised by limited state capacity in law enforcement, intelligence and broader national security. This is most evident during terrorist attacks, when poor standards of defensive and offensive equipment, low preparedness and poor management and oversight have led to incidents being more prolonged and destructive than might have been the case. Even India, which is the wealthiest South Asian nation and has undertaken significant institutional improvements since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, has had uneven operational responses to attacks in and around Kashmir over 2015 and 2016. In Pakistan's case, during the October 2016 Quetta attack, the attackers were able to breach a mud wall at the police academy, which had not been hardened despite two previous attacks on the same site. Other institutional failings include poor investigative techniques, limited cooperation between competing intelligence and security agencies and poor border security, which in turn facilitates the flow of people, arms and illicit substances in a trade that may benefit terrorist organisations.

NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise specified, data in this chapter is gathered from the South Asia Terrorism Portal, which collates casualty figures.
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COUNTERING TERRORISM
IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

IRAQ AND SYRIA

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The Middle East remained an epicentre of terrorism in 2016. Countries in the region have experienced a marked increase in terrorist violence fuelled by insurgency, sectarian conflict and the fallout from the political upheavals of the Arab Spring. Iraq, Syria and Yemen, in particular, are ravaged by sectarian and political conflict that has opened up space for not only separatist and insurgent groups but jihadist terrorist organisations.

The Middle East now has the dubious honour of spawning two of the world's most notorious terrorist organisations: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS). While IS has experienced significant losses over the past 12 months—most notably losses of territory and reduced prospects for a geographically rooted 'caliphate'—it remains a potent terrorist threat. Beyond Iraq and Syria, it has established regional affiliates that have reignited terrorist activity in other countries after years of relative quiet. Al-Qaeda has also regained some traction after years in decline, aided by the continuing conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Jihadist terrorism exists both in Western democracies and in the Middle East, but the roots of each are different. In the West, jihadist terrorism is a potent but limited threat, fanned by alienation and existential grievances; in the Middle East, it's founded in the fundamental instability of the region. Middle Eastern terrorism remains rooted in bad governance, authoritarianism, the preponderance of extreme ideology, and sectarian identity politics that have roiled the region in violence for decades. Terrorism in the Middle East can't be separated from existing regional political and sectarian conflicts and ideologies.

This chapter explores the terrorism environment and the CT approaches of Syria and Iraq, and their allies, in 2016, and looks to what 2017 holds. A separate chapter deals with the other nations in the region.

SYRIA

The devastating conflict in Syria continued and intensified in 2016. More than 400,000 people have lost their lives and 11 million more have been displaced in a five-year civil war that has metastasised into a jihadist hotbed and a regional and global proxy conflict.

Syria has become a stratified rock of various conflicts. The players in this complex environment include the Assad regime and the fractured group of rebel forces—secular and jihadi—who oppose Assad's rule; ethnic Kurds who are also fighting the Syrian regime and who have carved out autonomous territory amid the chaos; and members of the coalition against IS, fighting in both Syria and Iraq. Amid this, the country has also become a battleground for geopolitical influence between Saudi Arabia and Iran and their respective allies, as well as between the US and Russia. All have been pursuing their own CT and strategic interests in the country. This conflict also allowed Islamic militants to take advantage of the unrest and carve out territory for a so-called caliphate during 2014 and 2015.

The second half of 2016 was dominated by the brutal battle for Aleppo, a key fighting ground between Assad's troops and rebel forces. In November, government forces launched a renewed assault on Aleppo with Russian, Iranian and Shia militia support and retook most of the city, pushing rebel forces into a few neighbourhoods. Some of the most effective rebel groups have included jihadist organisations such as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra), which has complicated the coalition's ability to back the rebel effort. Hundreds of civilians died in the siege of Aleppo. The Syrian and Russian forces were accused of deliberately targeting civilians, and rebel forces were accused of preventing civilians from escaping the conflict zone.¹

Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the IS and other rebel groups lost ground in 2016, but the conflict appears far from finished. Instead, it is likely to transform from a civil war into an insurgency campaign by rebel and jihadist groups.

Several governments, including Syria's Assad regime, have CT and security agendas in Syria, and their forces have taken an active role in the fighting. Syrian, Russian, Turkish and US forces and the US-led anti-IS coalition partners continued to conduct airstrikes and special operations against IS-held territory in Syria.

Iran has been supporting the Assad regime, sending supplies, soldiers and its militia proxies. It views Assad's control of Syria as vital to its regional interests, shoring up Shia power.

Iran continued this support in 2016, when Iranian militias played a key part in the Assad–Russia operation to retake Aleppo—leading the assault on east Aleppo—and participated in ceasefire talks with Turkey and Russia, without the US. Iranian-backed militias were accused of preventing civilians and rebels from fleeing Aleppo amid shelling of the city and of execution-style shootings of civilians.² In 2016, Human Rights Watch released a report accusing the Iranian Government's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of recruiting undocumented Afghan civilians living in Iran to fight in Syria with Shia militias. Iran has reportedly sent thousands of Afghans to Syria.³

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia has supported rebel forces—including jihadis—but has opposed IS. Saudi Arabia seeks to displace the Assad regime in order to undermine Iran, its regional rival. Syria has long been a country where Saudi Arabia and Iran have battled for influence. In 2016, the Saudis significantly stepped up their military involvement in the Syrian conflict, participating in air operations against IS targets and indicating their willingness to provide ground troops.⁴ Before that, Saudi Arabia—along with Qatar and Kuwait—had been financing Syrian rebels since the beginning of the conflict. Saudi Arabia has consistently worked with the US to arm and train rebels: the Saudis provide funding and arms, and the US provides training under Operation Timber Sycamore.⁵ Saudi Arabia also hosted a failed attempt during the year to unite Syrian opposition groups.

While the US also opposes the Assad regime, its higher priority and military combat focus is on IS. At the start of the conflict, Washington criticised the Assad regime's violent handling of Syria's opposition and pursued a policy to remove the regime. The US blamed the actions of the Syrian Government for giving rise to IS, while Syria has in turn blamed failed US policies in Iraq for causing spillover into Syria and creating the group. The rapid rise of IS and its control of territory appear to have softened US insistence on Assad's removal. Lacking a viable alternative to Assad that the US can support, the Obama administration had an inconsistent and tepid approach to the Syrian conflict. In 2016, the US concentrated most of its efforts on targeting IS, resulting in the group losing significant territory in both Syria and Iraq; it also decisively ruled out large-scale military operations or the presence of US ground troops in the country.⁶ US programs aimed at bolstering opposition rebels have been less successful. One of the key issues to watch for in 2017 is how the new Trump administration will approach US involvement in Syria and Iraq.

Russia has backed Assad since the beginning of the conflict, fearful of losing its last remaining allies in the region. Its decisive entry into the conflict in 2016 helped turn the tide back in Assad's favour with the military siege of Aleppo in a blunt attempt to wrest control from rebel forces. Bilateral US–Russia cooperation and talks—tepid to begin with—were suspended in October 2016 over Russia's involvement in Aleppo, and the US and other Western allies accused Russia of carrying out a brutal bombing campaign without regard for civilian casualties.⁷ Russian involvement was, however, the decisive factor in breaking the siege and offering a major victory to Assad, Russia and Iran.⁸

Turkey has also been heavily involved in the Syrian conflict, pursuing multiple priorities. It opposes both Assad and IS, but views Kurdish autonomy in Syria as its largest strategic threat. It considers Kurds fighting inside Syria to be an arm of the Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK, a Kurdish insurgent group. Turkey's proximity to the conflict zone, its long border (which is the main crossing point for foreign fighters in and out of Syria) and its anti-IS operations have made it a major target of IS external terrorist attacks.

Turkey has cooperated inconsistently with the US in Syria and against IS. In 2016, it moved closer to Russia, sponsoring ceasefire talks with Russia that didn't involve the US. Relations between Turkey and Russia have improved greatly since the downing of a Russian fighter jet over Turkish airspace in 2015. Turkey's relationship with the US has come under strain, particularly over the US's support to Kurdish rebels fighting in and around the conflict. Turkey took its biggest step into the conflict when it sent tanks, planes and ground forces into northern Syria in August 2016, clearing the area around Jarabulus. Turkey's broader involvement was due to its reassessment of the IS threat and its concern that Kurdish advances in Syria would link two Kurdish enclaves along the border—an outcome it desperately wanted to prevent.⁹ In 2016, Turkey also began a military operation against IS militants in eastern Aleppo and remains embroiled in the fight.¹⁰

IRAQ

Since it was first published in 2014, the Global Terrorism Index¹¹ has consistently rated Iraq as one of the countries most affected by terrorist violence. The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) recorded a total of 19,266 Iraqi civilian casualties from acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in 2016, including 6,878 killed and 12,388 wounded. Even though terrorist attacks declined by 30% in 2015, numbers climbed again in 2016 as IS reinvigorated its suicide bombing campaign and key battles were fought in Fallujah and Mosul to wrest territorial control from the group. As IS began to lose territory in Iraq—and thereby its 'caliphate'—it resorted to more traditional terrorist tactics against security personnel and civilians in areas outside of its immediate control.

In 2016, IS remained the main terrorist threat in Iraq. It's the most lethal terrorist group in the country and responsible for more than 11,000 deaths since its founding, although that figure is likely to be far lower than the real number, as 50,000 terrorist-related deaths haven't been claimed by any particular group.¹² The next deadliest group in Iraq is al-Qaeda, IS's precursor. Other groups active in Iraq include the al-Naqshabandiya Army, a Sufi group that's been active since 2006, and the Mukhtar Army, a Shia militia group.¹³ Iraq is also beset by other Shia militias, although many have been incorporated into or sanctioned by the Iraqi Government.

The Iraqi Government continues its military efforts to regain territory lost to IS. In February 2016, the government—with coalition support—retook the city of Fallujah. The battle to retake Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, began towards the end of 2016 and will probably continue well into 2017.

Yet, even when IS no longer holds the territory it gained in 2014, Iraq will remain a deeply divided country. It's beset by violent sectarianism, political corruption and stagnation, making political and security progress difficult. There are fundamental problems with the country's borders, the makeup and structure of its government and still festering sectarian difficulties that remain unresolved, until which time they'll remain fodder and impetus for more terrorism.

Creating an effective CT force is a critical priority for Iraq, but progress has been fitful. The Iraqi security services came into being in post-Baathist Iraq under coalition guidance and in a highly polarised and violent environment. Those initial challenges led to inconsistent capabilities across the services.¹⁴

Despite the significant time and money invested in rebuilding the Iraqi security services, serious shortcomings were identified with the emergence of IS and its success in overrunning Iraqi military units and taking over Mosul.¹⁵ In addition to the disparity between the intense level of the terrorism threat and political conflict and the technical readiness of Iraq's newly formed security units and structures, the rampant corruption and sectarianism in the political structures of the country also work against the effectiveness of the security forces.¹⁶

The most effective fighting unit is the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), which leads Iraq's CT operations against IS. While it's been Iraq's most effective force, the CTS remains controversial because it was formed without parliamentary authority, has been implicated in sectarian abuses, and is perceived by some as too close to its US military founders and trainers. Because it's the country's most effective force, its operations have expanded beyond its core mission of surgical CT special operations, and it's now used as the primary force element in major battles, such as the campaign to retake Mosul from IS.

The CTS's reputation and perceptions about it within Iraq went through a transformation in 2016. Once perceived to be the former prime minister's Praetorian Guard and referred to as the 'dirty division', it's now lauded as the most effective actor against IS and is now termed the 'golden division'. Its separation from ministerial control, once a cause of concern, has paradoxically insulated it from the corruption and unprofessionalism plaguing other security units. However, the constant heavy operations that it has led over two and a half years of war and an estimated 20% casualty rate have taken a toll and degraded its CT capabilities.¹⁷

In addition to the CTS, several militias—particularly Shia militias—have been incorporated into state CT forces in a coalition of convenience to combat IS and remove the group from control of Iraqi territory. Hashd al-Shaabi (the Popular Mobilization Forces, PMF) is an umbrella group of militias working as a pro-government, anti-IS force. It was formed in 2014, after IS's initial successes in taking over parts of Iraq, in the face of Iraqi military collapse and in response to a call by Shia Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani for popular mobilisation against IS. In February 2016, Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi officially sanctioned the PMF as an 'independent military formation' within Iraq's security services under the general command of the armed forces.¹⁸

However, the PMF operates in a tight nexus with Iran. In February, an official decree directed that the PMF come under official Iraqi Government control—including being paid by the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior—but until then much of the PMF operated under Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a former Badr Brigade commander who's very close to Iran's Quds Force. There have been reports that Iran has deployed hundreds of IRGC and conventional army personnel to Iraq to support the PMF. The February decree allowed current staff and leadership to remain, meaning that al-Muhandis—who was listed in 2009 as a specially designated global terrorist—will remain in a top leadership position.¹⁹ Despite the PMF's reputation as a Shia-dominated, Iranian-backed version of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, there's Sunni representation in some PMF units.²⁰

In November 2016, the Iraqi parliament passed a law ratifying Order 91, making the PMF an independent entity of the Iraqi Armed Forces that answers directly to the Prime Minister, in much the same way that the CTS now does.²¹ The new law requires the PMF to end affiliations with all political parties, while senior appointments must be approved by the parliament. It's not clear what this law will mean in practice. In all likelihood, if recent history is a guide, political influence will remain.²²

Supporters of these measures see them as a way to bolster Iraq's fighting forces and bring effective but previously extrajudicial militias under state control, providing more oversight and accountability while harnessing their fighting prowess. However, critics say that the PMF is a tool of Iran and will bring an unacceptable level of Iranian influence, and that they would exacerbate Iraq's sectarian conflict. The Sunni bloc in parliament opposed the measure. The passage of the PMF law also complicates efforts to adopt the national settlement proposal, as the Sunni bloc is boycotting this broader reconciliation initiative in opposition to the PMF law.²³

A third Iraqi CT security element is the Kurdish Peshmerga, in northern Iraq. With decades of experience working with the US military and for the semi-autonomous Kurdish regional government, this Iraqi force is in a coalition with Iraqi Government elements to face the common enemy of IS.²⁴ However, Peshmerga operations also contribute to Iraq's broader sectarian conflict. Peshmerga forces have continued to establish 'facts on the ground' as they move into and take effective control of disputed territory during the fight against militants.

The CTS, PMF and Peshmerga units all played a critical CT and military role in 2016, including in 2016's most significant operation, the battle for Mosul.

While Iraqi Government forces and their coalition partners made significant inroads in 2016, the battle against IS—specifically in Mosul—will continue beyond former prime minister Maliki's stated deadline to retake the city by the end of the year. The Mosul operation didn't begin in earnest until October 2016. Iraqi forces made significant gains in November, but momentum slowed and fighting didn't resume until the end of December. Resistance by IS fighters has been fierce, and Iraqi units are spent after enduring heavy losses and resupply problems. While IS has steadily lost territory, its units have destroyed Mosul airport, have constructed barricades and are embedded in civilian areas throughout the city, stalling Iraqi forces and contributing to massive civilian casualties as the battle proceeds.²⁵ The longer this campaign continues, the more likely is a humanitarian or refugee crisis to overwhelm the fragile Iraqi coalition.

Mosul has competing political significance for all the Iraqi coalition actors, and competition for the city won't end with IS's defeat. How the battle is fought and its aftermath is managed will have significant implications not only for the future of IS and how it will evolve in the region, but for Iraq's future as a state.²⁶ Terrorism and insurgency remain a real and persistent concern for Iraq, but security operations won't destroy IS or other threats to the state. Unless there is a concerted political reconciliation effort, the underlying political and social conditions that gave rise to terrorism in Iraq will remain.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2017

Through 2017—and for the foreseeable future—the broad political and societal issues underlying Iraq and Syria's terrorism problem will remain and continue to threaten the region's security.

Although IS has experienced significant territorial losses, it has also demonstrated its ability to regain territory, as occurred in Palmyra.²⁷ It's unclear whether Russia will be able to sustain its substantial role in Syria, but there's every indication that a Russian-led coalition, comprising Iran and Turkey, will continue to push their collective interests and bolster the Assad regime at the expense of US, Gulf and coalition interests. Turkey's détente with Russia is likely to continue as all parties in the conflict soften their opposition to the Assad regime.

It remains to be seen whether the new Trump administration will change US policy towards IS in a significant way. The incoming US administration promised a broader action against IS and militant jihad but has also laid out a clear isolationist and non-interventionist posture. At minimum, the new administration is likely to continue its airstrikes against jihadist targets and training camps. In Iraq, the battle of Mosul will likely continue throughout 2017, but national political reconciliation and reform efforts will need to be stepped up in Iraq, Syria and Yemen if there's to be any serious resolution of the conditions underlying the terrorism threat.

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IRAQ AND SYRIA



COUNTERING TERRORISM
IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

EGYPT TO OMAN

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In the Middle East, countries other than Iraq and Syria have also experienced a marked increase in terrorist attacks in the wake of the Arab Spring, the rise of the Islamic State (IS) and the revival of al-Qaeda and its offshoots. Yemen, in particular, has been ravaged by sectarian and political conflict.

Beyond Iraq and Syria, IS has established regional affiliates elsewhere in the Middle East—including in Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—that have reignited terrorist activity in those countries after years of relative quiet. Despite years of waning influence, al-Qaeda has also regained some traction, aided by the continuing conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

This chapter reviews the terrorism environment and the CT approaches of Middle Eastern countries other than Syria and Iraq in 2016 and the prospects for 2017. Syria and Iraq are the subject of a separate chapter of this Yearbook.

EGYPT

Consolidated military rule under Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the passage of a restrictive new CT law haven't diminished the terrorist threat in Egypt. In fact, 2016 was a particularly violent year, during which the country experienced its highest level of terrorism since the late 1990s.¹ Various terrorist actors targeted security forces, government officials and minorities. The year ended with two bomb attacks. One targeted security forces in Giza, killing government personnel, and the other was an attack on the Coptic Botroseya Church in Cairo that killed 26—mostly women and children—during a prayer service. It was the deadliest terrorist attack on Egypt's Christian minority since the 2011 New Year's Eve bombing of the Two Saints church in Alexandria.

Throughout 2016, Egypt continued to battle militants in Sinai, particularly IS's Egyptian affiliate, IS Sinai Province, which was previously known as Ansar Bay al-Maqdis. The militant group has been operating in northern Sinai for some years, but in 2014 it officially pledged its allegiance to IS and has since become one of IS's more effective affiliates, despite its small fighting force and sustained military pressure from the Egyptian Government. Its membership consists of former Egyptian al-Qaeda members, Bedouin tribal members and other former Egyptian foreign fighters with experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, and is estimated at around 1,000 fighters. The group was responsible for a number of attacks against Egyptian security officials in 2016—mostly in Sinai but also in Giza and Cairo—and also stepped up attacks against civilians. IS Sinai-affiliated cells have targeted senior military personnel for assassination and ambushed military and police checkpoints.² In addition to the Botroseya Church bombing, other terrorist events in 2016 included the beheading of a Coptic priest, a stabbing attack on tourists in Hurghada and at least two assassination plots against President al-Sisi.³

Egyptian security forces made a concerted effort against IS and other Islamic militants during 2016. The military mounted a number of operations, particularly in al-Arish, where IS Sinai is based, and also Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah, where a number of violent attacks have occurred. However, a strict curfew imposed on those three cities since 2014 was lifted in 2016. Intensive operations, security sweeps and arrests are ongoing.⁴

CT operations have been launched usually in response to particular attacks by militants. For example, in October 2016, after an IS Sinai attack that killed 12 and wounded six soldiers in central Sinai, the Egyptian Air Force attacked various positions, reportedly killing 100 militants and destroying outposts and armouries.⁵

The security services have also conducted mass arrests in response to the plots to assassinate the President. One of the plots involved an attempt to assassinate him in Saudi Arabia while the president would be meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Nayef in his hotel room. In November, 292 suspects alleged to have been part of 22 cells were referred to military courts over charges in 19 attack plots. Other plots included plans to assassinate six judges. The arrests also targeted a cell called the 'Fired Police Officers', which considered Egyptian security personnel to be apostates and sought to join with IS Sinai.⁶

Egyptian officials claimed to have killed an IS-affiliated militant leader, Abu Dua al-Ansari, alleging that he was the leader of IS Sinai. Al-Ansari was targeted, along with other senior jihadists, in a joint air force and CT squad raid in al-Arish in August.

Despite some tactical success against IS Sinai, the persistent threat from the small but potent militant group hasn't diminished. Indeed, during the year it made concerted, if uneven, efforts to migrate its militant activity closer to Cairo and not just the Sinai provinces.⁷

During 2016, Egypt joined the international coalition against IS. While Egypt continues to receive US assistance in its CT efforts in Sinai and along its Libyan border, it has so far not provided direct military assistance to the broader anti-IS coalition instead confining its CT efforts to within its own borders. Egypt is also part of the Saudi-led anti-terrorism coalition announced by Riyadh in December 2015.

CT operations in Sinai have spurred broader CT cooperation with Israel, notably after identifying emerging links between IS Sinai and Hamas. The relationship between the two groups is essentially one of convenience: IS Sinai is looking for medical assistance, military training and smuggling, while Hamas's tunnels are located near IS Sinai bases.

This new relationship has precipitated closer and more public Egyptian–Israeli military and intelligence cooperation⁸ including each country allowing operations by the other within the Sinai area. Importantly, Israel allowed Egypt to move heavy weapons into Sinai for CT operations—overlooking provisions of the 1979 peace treaty—and has reportedly conducted airstrikes with Egyptian cooperation in the province.⁹

In addition to battling IS Sinai, the Egyptian Government continues its political and security crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and its armed faction. In 2016, Mohamed Kamal and Yasser Shehata, leaders within the Muslim Brotherhood's armed wing, were killed following a raid on a Cairo apartment in October.¹⁰ Egyptian security officials arrested six Muslim Brotherhood members accused of being involved in the June 2015 killing of the country's top prosecutor, Hisham Barakat, in Cairo. The government accused Hamas of colluding in the murder, claiming that it provided training and the explosives used.¹¹

In 2016, the al-Sisi government branded the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation, whereas it had previously been intermittently tolerated as a political opposition group. The Egyptian Government now makes no distinction between the Muslim Brotherhood, IS, al-Qaeda or any other Islamist group, claiming that they share the same ideology. Egyptian officials have explicitly stated:

the extremism and radicalism which serve as the lifeblood of today's terrorist groups is based directly on Brotherhood thinkers and ideologues that are still venerated and closely adhered to by the organisation, such as Sayid Qutb. To put it simply, the threat of terrorism as we see it today owes its existence to the Muslim Brotherhood.¹²

The Egyptian Government continues to pursue this view of CT, focusing on ideology to the exclusion of all other political and social factors. Much of this thinking is manifest in the country's new CT law, which was issued by decree in 2015 and ratified in 2016. The law is controversial, and critics highlight that it shields law enforcement personnel from accountability and provides the authorities with a de facto state of emergency. A particularly controversial element of the law is that it restricts journalists from reporting on CT operations in ways that contradict official government statements. Publishing 'false news or statements on terrorist acts or counterterror operations'—that is, anything contrary to official Ministry of Defence statements—would lead to a significant fine, and anyone convicted wouldn't be allowed to practise their profession. Non-government groups have been banned from visiting the Sinai, where CT operations are ongoing and where security forces are reported to operate with impunity.¹³ The CT law defines terrorism quite broadly to include any act that 'harms national unity [and] social peace', and also allows the President to impose a curfew for a period of up to six months.¹⁴

The parliament also approved a 2014 decree on the protection of critical government facilities. The decree increases the jurisdiction of military courts, allowing them to try civilians accused of attacking buildings and cutting off roads.¹⁵

Egypt was elected head of the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee commencing in January 2016. The 15-member committee monitors the implementation of Resolution 1373 (2001) requiring countries to adopt measures that enhance their legal and institutional ability to counter terrorist activities at home. Under Egyptian leadership, the committee held a special meeting on preventing the exploitation of information and communication technologies for terrorist purposes; the meeting encouraged cooperation among member states as well as with the private sector.¹⁶

ISRAEL

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In the latter months of 2015 and through 2016, Israel faced a terror threat mostly different from those that it had previously countered: a wave of mainly stabbing and vehicular attacks, and occasional more serious firearms attacks, seemingly carried out by individuals rather than organisations.

Those attacks were accompanied by an increase in rioting and violent demonstrations using stones, Molotov cocktails and other IEDs.

The wave started in September 2015, prompted by claims from the Palestinian Authority (PA) that Israel was intending to change the status of the Temple Mount and calls from the PA to 'defend Jerusalem'.

It then generated its own momentum, including from claims by the PA and other Palestinian sources that Palestinians killed while participating in the violence had been murdered.

In the first year of the violence, which peaked in October 2015 and eased off in the second half of 2016, 40 Israelis were killed and 498 injured. The Palestinian death toll was 247, including 150 assailants; most of the remainder were killed in skirmishes with Israeli security forces.

Writing in *The American Interest* on 10 January 2017, leading Israeli journalist and analyst Ehud Yaari pointed out that Israel ultimately brought down the level of attacks by analysing those responsible and devising strategies to counter the new threat.

Because the attacks were carried out by individuals, it was determined that it would be counterproductive and inflammatory to respond with widespread restrictive measures, as Israel previously employed.

There were six components in Israel's strategy. The first was to reduce the tension over the Temple Mount, including by making it very clear that there was no intention to change the status quo there, reinforcing the ban against Jewish prayer and banning visits by politicians and right-wing activists, taking the sting out of the PA's campaign of incitement.

Second, once it was realised that many of the attackers had put new profile pictures, or even announced their intentions, on Facebook, much effort was also devoted to monitoring social media and using it to lure potential attackers.

These methods prevented around 400 attacks, including 20 plots to kidnap Israeli soldiers and civilians.

A third tactic involved what Yaari calls 'selective retaliation', such as denying work permits to terrorists' families and, in some serious cases, demolishing their homes, and temporarily locking down areas from which multiple attacks originated. Those who incited violence and organised riots were prosecuted, while villages that stayed peaceful received economic incentives.

A fourth strategy was enhanced cooperation with PA security, which became easier to achieve once Israel made it clear that Hamas, the PA's deadly rival, was operating under the cover of the violence to advance its plans to ultimately take over the West Bank.

The fifth step was to go after weapons workshops, which were producing rudimentary firearms and explosives. Carrying out night-time raids into West Bank villages, the Israeli military shut down around 40 workshops.

Finally, the Israelis acted to disrupt Hamas operations in the West Bank and to prevent the terror organisation using the wave of attacks as cover to carry out more serious atrocities.

The terror wave has now largely dissipated, and attacks are down to the pre-September 2015 level. Israeli CT forces remain vigilant.

As argued in a joint report, [The wattle and the olive](#), by ASPI and the Begin–Sadat Center for Strategic Studies last year, there's scope for Israel and Australia to cooperate on CT by sharing information on terrorist financing, countering violent extremism, foreign fighters, connections between Middle East terrorism and violent Islamist extremism in Asia, and developments in security technologies.

JORDAN

Jordan's CT and intelligence agencies are widely seen as being among the most capable in the region but experienced a number of setbacks in 2016. The security services also benefit from decades of CT experience, as well as strong intelligence alliances with the US and other regional actors. Jordan has been a key and vocal US and Western ally in the fight against terrorism. The Jordanian Government also responded calmly and reasonably to the Arab Spring protests, accommodating some protest demands while maintaining the monarchy's hold on power, thereby creating enough space for political grievances to be aired while not acceding to revolutionary change.¹⁷

IS's broadcast immolation of a Jordanian pilot captured in Syria in 2015 was a unifying moment for the country and galvanised its CT efforts in 2016. Still, with 2016 being the bloodiest year in recent times, Jordan hasn't been immune to the jihadist threat and has felt the effects of IS within its borders and beyond.

Jordan's previously strong reputation in CT took a hit in 2016 after some embarrassing compromises. In June, Jordanian security installations were compromised on two separate occasions: a lone attacker shot and killed five officers at a General Intelligence Division building before escaping, while a car bomb at a military base on the Syrian border killed six soldiers. Duty guards were reportedly asleep when both attacks happened.¹⁸ CT agencies thwarted many other plots in 2016, including a plan to strike five separate military and security bases; the three Syrians involved were arrested.¹⁹

While effective, Jordan's security services haven't been immune to corruption and human rights abuses. In 2016, it was confirmed that intelligence officials were illegally selling weapons destined for Syrian rebels for profit. One of those weapons was bought on the black market by a disgruntled Jordanian police officer, who used it in 2015 to kill two Americans, a South African and two Jordanians at a training compound.²⁰ According to a joint investigative report by the New York Times and Al-Jazeera:

Jordanian officials who described the operation said it had been run by a group of [General Intelligence Division] logistics officers with direct access to the weapons once they reached Jordan. The officers regularly siphoned truckloads of the weapons from the stocks, before delivering the rest of the weapons to designated drop-off points.²¹

Homegrown radicalisation within the large refugee population is also on the rise. Jordan ended the year with an attack on 18 December, later claimed by IS, that killed 14 people in the popular tourist area of Karak. In September, the two-week Irbid operation—conducted in a refugee camp by Jordanian security forces—neutralised an IS cell that planned to attack both military and civilian targets. The operation resulted in the deaths of seven homegrown militants from the area, who were reportedly wearing explosives belts and had other weapons.²² Jihadist radicalisers have also infiltrated the country's elite: three sons of Jordanian parliamentarians were killed fighting with jihadist groups in Syria during 2016.

Growing stresses in the country have no doubt contributed to the problems of radicalisation and terrorism. Jordan is beset by the same economic challenges as the rest of the region, such as economic stagnation, unemployment of over 20%, and a large and growing refugee population due to the conflict in Iraq and Syria. The refugee challenge has strained the job market, services, housing and already strained water supplies while disrupting trade routes, lowering investments and reducing tourism.²³ Polls in 2016 showed that, while Jordanians are traditionally welcoming to refugees, the large influx has worn their hospitality thin.²⁴ Furthermore, security officials are rightly worried that IS and other jihadist groups will exploit these conditions to radicalise and infiltrate refugee flows.²⁵ The Minister for Planning indicated in 2016 that Jordan was likely to restrict the entry of refugees, and that has essentially occurred since June.²⁶

It's estimated that 2,500 Jordanians have travelled to Syria to fight, mostly with Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. This means that Jordan is contending with both foreign fighters and the threat of domestic radicalisation. King Abdullah and the Jordanian Government have taken a strong stance against violent Islamic extremism.²⁷ Yet, despite the kingdom's 'zero tolerance' approach and call for greater countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts, Jordan's revamped CVE programs are still nascent. It was only in May that Jordan formally committed to developing a national CVE strategy through signing a memorandum of understanding with the UN Development Programme.²⁸

During 2016, the European Union continued CT cooperation with Jordan, including by being the major funding contributor to help Jordan house Syrian refugees. February's 'Jordan Compact' saw the international community agree to provide a US\$2.1 billion aid package to Jordan in 2016–2018 on the condition that Jordan creates jobs for the refugees, who were previously barred from working.²⁹

KUWAIT

During 2016, Kuwait continued to build its CT capabilities, although the Kuwaiti Government lacks a clear legal framework for prosecuting terrorism crimes. It's also a cooperative partner in international and regional CT efforts, including being part of the Small Group of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL.

While Kuwait didn't suffer a major terrorist attack in 2016—unlike in 2015, when a Saudi IS sympathiser committed a suicide attack inside the Shia Sadiq Mosque that killed 27 and wounded 227—it experienced one failed attack. In October, an Egyptian resident of Kuwait rammed a garbage truck loaded with explosives into a truck carrying five US soldiers. There were no fatalities, and the assailant injured only himself. The attacker was found with papers referencing IS and confessed to collaborating with four other Egyptians—including a local imam—to attack US targets.³⁰ This was the first IS-related plot to target US interests in Kuwait.

Kuwaiti CT authorities also foiled a number of terrorist plots. Livani Azvilo Pescaeda, a Filipina who was in the country as a domestic worker, was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in jail for planning a terrorist attack. Pescaeda had met and married a Somali in Saudi Arabia; her husband, now purportedly a member of IS based in Libya, had exhorted her to conduct a suicide attack in Kuwait.³¹

In July, security services disrupted three IS-linked cells. One cell had plotted suicide attacks on a Shia mosque and an Interior Ministry installation. Another cell consisted of a Kuwaiti mother and son who were arrested in Syria as members of IS and repatriated to Kuwait. The third cell comprised a police officer and another man, who confessed to plotting unspecified attacks in Kuwait and had weapons and ammunition.³²

After the 2015 Shia Sadiq Mosque attack, the Kuwaiti parliament passed a controversial law mandating that all citizens and visitors provide DNA samples to government authorities as a CT measure. The law was widely criticised in 2016, and it's likely that it will be significantly amended, if not revoked. A group of Kuwaiti lawyers mounted a legal challenge and an appeal to the Emir, stating that the law was unconstitutional, was unlikely to deter terrorism and undermined privacy rights.³³ Before the legal challenge, however, Kuwaiti authorities had already begun collecting DNA samples from members of the security services and those suspected of having falsely claimed Kuwaiti nationality.³⁴

Despite some reform, Kuwait remains a hub for terrorism financing. The latest US State Department terrorism report highlighted Kuwait's involvement in the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, recognising that, while the country has met its CT financing reform goals, Kuwaiti entities and individuals continue to be a significant source of terrorist financing.³⁵ During the year, a leaked German intelligence report stated that groups from Gulf countries, including Kuwait, are supporting extremist Islamic groups in Germany and that those groups and charities were linked to their home countries' governments.³⁶ Kuwaiti officials denied the allegation.³⁷

As in Qatar, Kuwaiti nationals are known to fund jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq. In a joint operation with Indian security services in 2016, a Kuwaiti citizen was arrested and charged with making arrangements to fund the trip of the first group of Indian IS recruits to Syria. This action spurred broader investigations of terrorist financing networks in Pakistan and Afghanistan paying for IS foreign fighters' travel to Syria.³⁸

OMAN

Oman remains a bright spot in a region beset by terrorist violence.³⁹ Despite its long border with the terrorism hotspot of Yemen, it has remained free of terrorism and scored a zero for terrorism vulnerability in the 2016 Global Terrorism Index.⁴⁰

Oman continues to sustain its anti-violent-extremism stance, driven by Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said. Oman's resilience to terrorism is due in part to the country's practice of the traditionally conservative and non-violent strain of Ibadi Islam, which emphasises tolerance, its neutral and non-interventionist foreign policy, and its successful modernisation, education and economic reforms. Those reforms have allowed Oman to modernise while maintaining its traditional culture because it has largely met its citizens' needs and allowed it to retain a niche role in regional affairs. These factors have largely insulated the country from terrorism and blowback from regional troubles.

In April, Oman added to its already comprehensive CT legislation with amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Acts to improve law enforcement's ability to track offenders. The amendments also included heavier penalties and longer jail sentences.⁴¹

Sticking to its longstanding foreign policy strategy, Oman has remained neutral in the conflict in neighbouring Yemen. It has hosted several rounds of talks aimed at ending the conflict and provided humanitarian assistance to affected Yemeni civilians. Oman was also involved in negotiating the release of two US citizens kidnapped by Houthi rebels in October 2016.⁴² It does, however, take its border security seriously: the construction of a fence along its border with Yemen continued in 2016.⁴³

While not initially joining the Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAF) when it was established in 2015, Oman did join in 2016. The IMAFT initiative is officially an anti-IS initiative, but is also a vehicle for anti-Iran posturing and a mechanism to further Saudi Arabia's regional influence at Iran's expense. Oman has retained ties with both regional heavyweights and has resisted pressure to take sides in the Saudi–Iranian power struggle. Although some observers interpreted Oman's membership of IMAFT as moving closer to the Saudi orbit, the move was more likely Oman signalling its commitment to working with the rest of the Gulf on CT. In February and March—before officially signing on as an IMAFT member—Oman participated in the alliance's joint security activity, Operation North Thunder,⁴⁴ but reiterated its policy of neutrality, stating that it would 'support the fight against terrorism as part of the regional alliance but we will not be part of any military aggression against any of our neighbors or Arab brothers.'⁴⁵ Oman will continue to maintain its longstanding relationship with Iran in 2017 and beyond.

QATAR

The wealthy Gulf state of Qatar is officially a regional Western ally in the fight against Islamic terrorism but has also played a significant role in financing terrorist groups, particularly Jabhat Fateh al-Sham in Syria. Qatar's paradoxical foreign policy and CT actions have played both sides of the terrorism issue: hosting the US al Udeid Air Base, sharing intelligence and serving as a regional broker on the one hand, while allowing a permissive terrorism financing environment, staging ground and support for militant Islamic groups operating in the region on the other. Qatar has taken a different view of certain groups, such as Hamas, that other countries have labelled as terrorist organisations. It's difficult to discern whether Qatar is an ally or foe when it comes to international CT cooperation.⁴⁶

US Treasury officials have labelled Qatar as a 'permissive jurisdiction for terrorist financing', even though the Qatari Government and royal family have not themselves been implicated in terrorist financing.⁴⁷ However, it's been reported that Qatar, along with other Gulf states, was behind Jabhat al-Nusra's rebranding as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham in order to remove legal obstacles to supporting the group. Qatar was reported to have promised money, supplies and additional support if the group officially relinquished its al-Qaeda affiliation. Although names have changed, the group retains the same individuals and ideologies and remains a militant Islamic group.⁴⁸ Qatar's support of other militant Islamist groups in Syria is a controversial attempt to counter IS, which it views as the larger enemy. However, some of its support for rebel groups has been in coordination with the US, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Qatari foreign officials indicated in 2016 that Qatar will continue the effort to support rebel factions in Syria even if the new US administration abandons that policy.⁴⁹

Other Qatari donors have also been linked to funding al-Qaeda's Iran cell.⁵⁰ Qatar's application of its terrorist financing laws has been lax, and known terrorist financiers live openly in the country.⁵¹

The Egyptian Interior Ministry stated that the leader behind the December 2016 Botroseya Church bombing in Cairo travelled to Qatar, where he met and conspired with Muslim Brotherhood leaders to plan the attack. This has caused renewed tensions between the two countries, as Qatar had supported the previous Muslim Brotherhood government and has allowed many of its members to reside in Qatar.⁵² In an intelligence report leaked in 2016, Germany also accused Qatar, along with other Gulf countries, of supporting salafi groups in Germany.

There were no major terrorist attacks in Qatar in 2016, and it hasn't had a terrorist attack since a 2005 suicide bombing that killed one person. Qatar has contributed 1,000 ground troops to the Saudi-led operation in Yemen against Houthi rebels. In September, three Qatari soldiers died conducting military operations.⁵³

SAUDI ARABIA

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has long been a target and an incubator of terrorism: it's rightly viewed as both 'the arsonist and the firefighter'.⁵⁴ The kingdom is also a source of terrorism financing and has actively exported its brand of extreme Wahhabi Islam, fuelling extremism and terrorism worldwide. It has actively supported Islamic militant groups throughout its history as a means of resisting Soviet influence, as a counter to Iranian-supported Shia groups and as a means of keeping domestic constituents placated. However, this support of militant extremist groups metastasised and became a threat to the stability of the kingdom and ruling al Saud family. Throughout its recent history, Saudi Arabia has simultaneously supported, ignored and cracked down on terrorist entities.

Saudi Arabia is often criticised for its role in expanding Islamic extremism and terrorist financing worldwide, and it has often deflected those charges. In 2016, however, the kingdom ushered in a new approach of honestly dealing and grappling with Saudi Arabia's role in global Islamic terrorism and made public and concerted efforts to counter its past ambivalence towards Islamic extremism. Saudi Arabia stepped up its CT initiatives in 2016, but the war in Yemen, strategic rivalry with Iran, budget difficulties due to low oil prices and the domestic terrorist threat have weighed the kingdom down.

Saudi Arabia released its first comprehensive CT white paper in 2016, attempting to reform and answer criticism that it has done little to counter terrorism.⁵⁵ Another motivation for drafting and publishing the CT white paper is no doubt recent US legislation that allows the families of victims of 9/11 to more easily sue the kingdom and to blunt US as well as international frustrations with Saudi Arabia's adherence to a strict and extremist Islam that many argue has been a bedrock of terrorist ideology.⁵⁶

In 2016, Saudi Arabia stepped up its efforts to counter IS. It has been the source of more than 2,500 foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq—the second-highest number of any country.⁵⁷ In late 2015 and early 2016, Saudi Arabia formed the Muslim anti-terrorism coalition IMAFT, initially including 34 countries; membership has since grown to 41. Formed in response to the growth of IS and its destabilising influence, the coalition is also a means for Saudi Arabia to project power in the Islamic world and serves as a blunt to its regional rival, Iran. Iraq, Syria and Iran were pointedly excluded from the coalition.⁵⁸ The exact purpose of the coalition and the nature of its effort remained unclear throughout 2016, as many of its signatories had varied perceptions of what the coalition would entail.⁵⁹

The country also reached out to new CT partners in 2016. The most significant move was to conduct the first joint CT exercises with China, prompted by China's effort to expand its security ties in the Middle East.⁶⁰

Saudi Arabia also increased its participation in the US-led anti-IS coalition and took part in military operations against IS in Syria in 2016. The Royal Saudi Air Force conducted numerous air attacks in 2016 targeting IS fighters, facilities and supply lines.⁶¹ While Saudi Arabia was part of the effort to fight IS, it continued to support the no less extremist al-Nusra Front. As with the allegations about Qatar mentioned above, the rebranding of al-Nusra as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham has been linked to pressure from Gulf states so that they won't appear to be funding an al-Qaeda affiliate. However, for all intents and purposes, the organisation remains a violent Islamist militant organisation with significant ties to al-Qaeda.⁶²

Aside from this, the kingdom did take significant steps to stifle other terrorist funding in 2016. In March, it took joint action with the US to disrupt the fundraising networks of a number of terrorist groups by blocking transfers and imposing sanctions on networks across the region.⁶³

The kingdom also took steps to end its controversial involvement in the Yemen war, which has served as a proxy conflict between it and Iran, announcing that it would end its military combat operations targeting Houthi rebels. However, Saudi Arabia said that it would continue its air support for Yemeni troops, and that a small team would remain in country to equip and advise Yemeni forces.⁶⁴ Saudi Arabia has been roundly criticised for its military operations, which have caused significant civilian casualties, and for blockades that have created food shortages, essentially starving parts of the country. There was a broader acknowledgement in 2016 that the Saudis' involvement in the Yemen conflict has worsened Saudi security, not helped it, as rebels have conducted revenge attacks on Saudi border villages and interests.⁶⁵

Saudi Arabia experienced a number of terrorist attacks and conducted significant CT operations in 2016. In January, security forces arrested 33 people affiliated with IS. Also in January, a suicide attack claimed by IS killed four people at a mosque in the eastern part of the country. In February, IS militants killed a retired security official, and in April an improvised explosive device damaged police vehicles and killed one man when it was detonated next to a police station. July saw a wave of three suicide attacks in 24 hours at the end of Ramadan. The coordinated attacks targeted the US consulate in Jeddah, a site in the city of Medina and a Shia mosque in eastern Saudi Arabia. While two of the attacks failed, the Medina attack killed four people.⁶⁶

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) continued its CT commitments in 2016, bolstered CT cooperation with other Gulf Cooperation Council countries and maintained its strong CT alliance with the US. Like the other Gulf states, it viewed Iran as a threat to regional stability and accused Tehran of sponsoring terrorism against Gulf interests in the region. The UAE didn't suffer any terrorist attacks in 2016, was largely insulated from the terrorist violence surrounding it, and focused on countering violent extremism and counter-messaging. It did, however, face a number of threatened terrorist attacks, all of which were foiled by authorities.

The UAE joined the Saudi-led military effort in Yemen, but refocused its efforts on routing out al-Qaeda strongholds in the country in 2016, rather than battling Houthi rebels.⁶⁷ UAE special forces conducted operations in Yemen targeting Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and worked with the US to train and equip Yemeni military forces. The UAE forces were praised for their ability to carry out complex operations, and US partners called the UAE contingent the 'most capable CT force on the ground in Yemen'.⁶⁸ The UAE conducted a particularly successful mission in Mukalla, targeting AQAP bases and training camps and negotiating with local tribes. The UAE's Yemen engagements demonstrated an increasingly robust and ambitious engagement in regional military operations in 2016.⁶⁹

The UAE is also one of the most active Arab members, along with Jordan, of the international coalition against IS. It has built one of the most capable air forces in the region, and the number of UAE sorties flown against IS in Syria is second only to the number of US sorties.⁷⁰

The UAE has also been active in countering violent extremist ideology and in counter-messaging. The emirates are host to Hedayah, an independent CVE think tank and forum established under the auspices of the Global CT Forum.⁷¹ It has also hosted the Sawab Centre and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies. While the UAE has worked to promote religious tolerance and reinforce Islamic messages of tolerance against violent extremist varieties, it's embroiled along with other Gulf countries in a geopolitical and religious rivalry with Shia Iran. This has inflamed sectarianism and extremism. The UAE joined other Gulf countries in accusing Iran of being a state sponsor of terrorism in a letter circulated at the UN General Assembly in 2016.⁷²

The UAE has been a hub of terrorism financing, which remains a problem even though the emirates have taken steps to combat it. In 2016, the Abu Dhabi Global Market signed a memorandum of understanding with the UAE's Central Bank to cooperate on the country's anti-money-laundering and combating terrorism financing initiative.⁷³

The State Security Court at the UAE Federal Supreme Court heard and reached verdicts on a number of terrorism-related cases in 2016. In March, the founder of a terror cell calling itself Shabab Al Manara was sentenced to life imprisonment, along with 10 other members of the cell. The group had plotted to bomb shopping malls in the UAE.⁷⁴ Another case involved 19 men (five Emiratis and 14 Yemenis) who were charged with setting up and running a barred organisation affiliated with the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁵ There were several terrorism-related cases in which individuals were tried for financially supporting terrorism, promoting terrorist ideology online and attempting to travel and join IS and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. Plots against government installations, Arabic satellite media stations and other civilian targets were foiled.⁷⁶

The UAE also stepped up international cooperation on terrorism with a number of countries and international organisations. In September 2016, the UAE and Europol signed an agreement that will allow for first-level intelligence cooperation to exchange strategic and technical intelligence, as well as training exchanges. By signing the agreement, the UAE became the first country in the region to join the Europol information network.⁷⁷ During the year, the UAE and India agreed to step up their CT cooperation issuing a joint statement on cooperating to counter violent extremism.⁷⁸ The UAE also took in 15 Guantanamo detainees in 2016 in the largest transfer of detainees by the Obama administration and is engaged in rehabilitation efforts.⁷⁹

BAHRAIN

Bahrain occupies a unique space in the regional landscape. It's host to the US Navy's 5th Fleet, a key Gulf ally of Saudi Arabia and a Sunni monarchy ruling a majority Shia population.

Bahrain joined the Saudi-led anti-IS coalition in 2016 and also bolstered intelligence and security ties with other regional partners, such as Egypt⁸⁰ and other neighbouring Gulf states. In November 2016, it hosted CT exercises for all Gulf Cooperation Council member states as part of a show of Gulf unity in the face of the terrorist threat and Iranian influence in the region.⁸¹ Bahrain also explored new partnerships in 2016, establishing a joint Bahraini–Indian joint steering committee to support bilateral training and information exchange.⁸²

At home, Bahrain's approach to CT has been less orthodox. The government has cracked down on Shia opposition groups in the name of combating terrorism and has condemned Iran as a state sponsor of terror within Bahrain. In April, the government classified 68 groups as terrorist organisations, including the February 14 Coalition, a non-violent opposition group linked to significant anti-government protests in previous years.⁸³ Bahrain's courts ordered the dissolution of al-Wefaq, a major Shia opposition group, accusing it of creating 'an environment for terrorism, extremism and violence as well as a call for foreign interference in internal national affairs,'⁸⁴ despite international criticism that they were stifling opposition.⁸⁵ Opposition group members were also the target of terrorism charges and citizenship revocations.⁸⁶ Bahraini authorities also made several terrorism-related arrests through the year. The security services claimed that some of those arrested had connections to the Iranian Government.

Bahrain experienced two terrorist attacks in 2016. In July, two police officers were killed and six wounded in a bomb attack in Sitra, the site of numerous protests. The explosives used in the attack were similar to some seized by Bahraini authorities earlier in the year.⁸⁷ Also in July, a woman was killed and three children were injured by a roadside bomb detonated in al Eker village.⁸⁸ Sporadic explosives attacks and protests have been the norm in Bahrain since major Shia-led protests against the government commenced amid the broader Arab Spring protests.

YEMEN

Yemen has been continually beset by conflict, and rarely controlled by a single power. A popular rebellion during the 2011 Arab uprisings overthrew the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh, which had ruled Yemen since 1978. Yemen has struggled since then to form a cohesive government and descended into civil war in 2015. Fighting is primarily between Houthi rebels who control the capital and are allied with forces loyal to Saleh (two groups who had previously opposed each other for years) and those of the current president, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. The Houthi rebels had been waging a low-level insurgency against the Yemeni Government since 2004.

The civil war soon became a regional proxy conflict: Sunni Arab states accused Iran of backing and arming the Houthi rebels. In 2015, Saudi Arabia, with US and other Gulf state backing, intervened militarily in support of the Hadi government through Operation Decisive Storm. In 2016, having averted a likely Houthi takeover of government, Saudi Arabia announced that it would pull back its involvement. The intervention had not, however, achieved its stated aim of either consolidating the Hadi government or creating a political sharing agreement, and has also had severe humanitarian consequences. Yemen's instability is fertile ground for insurgent and terrorist groups.

AQAP is based in Yemen and is al-Qaeda's most capable affiliate. AQAP has a long-established presence in Yemen, but the most recent civil war has been a boon to the group. In April 2015, it took control of portions of the southern coast, including the port city of Mukalla and its substantial resources, reported to include US\$100 million looted from the Mukalla branch of the central bank and up to US\$2 million per day from taxing imports through the port.

In April 2016, Yemeni and Emirati forces, with US support, retook Mukalla and the surrounding province. Coalition troops met little resistance, as most AQAP fighters had left the city in anticipation of the operation. Operations against AQAP are ongoing, and Yemeni and coalition forces are targeting AQAP training camps in particular. Airstrikes in March killed at least 50 militants in a camp in the mountains of southern Yemen, while a joint Yemeni–UAE–US operation in May around Mukalla broke up a AQAP training camp, arresting eight militants and seizing a large number of weapons.

US Central Command conducted nine airstrikes against AQAP between September and December, including one in December that killed four militants. Yemeni CT units also raided suspected AQAP hideouts, seizing weapons and a bomb-making factory in Aden, and disrupted AQAP cells planning attacks against government facilities.

IS has also established a presence in the country and conducted some attacks. It claimed two separate suicide attacks in December—one that killed 49 people and wounded many others and another that killed 48 government soldiers. IS is attempting to take advantage of AQAP's withdrawal from Mukalla to establish its presence in southern Yemen. In March, on the anniversary of the launch of Operation Decisive Storm, in western Aden IS conducted its first coordinated suicide,

vehicle-borne explosive and small arms attack against a coalition military base in Yemen. In June, it repeated that attack approach in Mukalla, killing 35 and injuring at least 50. While IS's support and presence in Yemen remain limited, especially compared to AQAP's, it has shown that it can exploit the quickly changing environment in the country. IS is also pursuing a two-pronged strategy in Yemen, attacking Houthi Shia groups to foment sectarianism while also targeting coalition forces to stymie attempts to consolidate the Hadi government's authority.

With no decisive victor in its civil war, exacerbated by the Gulf Arab states and Iran playing out their regional conflict by proxy, Yemen will remain divided and politically unstable, providing fertile ground for AQAP and IS for the foreseeable future.

LEBANON

Lebanon continues to feel the reverberations of the violence in neighbouring Syria and, despite its vibrant civil society, continued to grapple with political instability and terrorist threats in 2016. Lebanon's political deadlock has detrimentally affected its ability to respond coherently to the surrounding regional turmoil. Lebanon finally elected a president, Michel Aoun, in October 2016, after two years of deadlock.

What happens in Syria and Syria's regional interests have always affected Lebanon. Although Syria removed its military presence in Lebanon over a decade ago—and despite Syria's own civil war and uncertain prospects for the Assad regime—it retains significant influence over the country. Lebanon's factions are divided in their support for various Syrian actors. Into this mix, Lebanon remains a sectarian battleground and acts as a forum for proxy political battles between Shia Iran and the Sunni Arab states. Hezbollah is still a formidable force in Lebanon and a key actor in the Syrian conflict. Lebanon faces a terrorist threat from IS and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, which operate along Lebanon's porous border with Syria and are active in Lebanon's refugee camps. Both have stepped up their attacks inside Lebanon in retaliation for Hezbollah's support of the Assad regime. There's an increasing concern inside the country about growing support for Sunni militant groups as a counterweight to Hezbollah.

Hezbollah occupies a singular space in the Lebanese and regional landscape. It's at once a terrorist organisation—designated as such by many governments—but also a key political player in Lebanon and the region, and one of the only factions able to guarantee Lebanese interests in the regional conflict. Hezbollah's security apparatus rivals that of the Lebanese state and it pursues its interests accordingly. The group continued to hone its strategy and operational experience through its involvement in Syria in 2016, shifting its focus and resources from domestic priorities to military operations across the border. Its successful support of Assad's forces in Aleppo in 2016 gave the group both valuable fighting experience and a boost to its reputation. But it paid a heavy price for this involvement, suffering significant casualties and losing one of its most senior military leaders, Mustafa Badreddine, in an explosion in Damascus, as well as waning popularity within Lebanon.

Hezbollah–Israel tensions continued into 2016. In January, Hezbollah attacked an Israeli patrol vehicle in Shebaa Farms along the Lebanon–Israel border. The roadside explosion was in retaliation for the death of Hezbollah militant Samir Qantar, believed to have been killed by Israel. Israel also made a number of arrests of individuals working with Hezbollah to smuggle explosives into Israel.

June saw eight suicide bombings against Christian villages along the Syrian border. While there was no claim of responsibility, Lebanese authorities imposed a curfew on nearby refugee camps and detained more than 100 people for being in Lebanon illegally. Lebanese authorities are increasingly concerned that Sunni militant groups will infiltrate the refugee population and recruit among the refugee population, and IS and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham are already active in settlements in the northeast in the Bekaa Valley. The country of 4 million now hosts over 1 million Syrian refugees, who now constitute around 25% of Lebanon's population.

Lebanese authorities also disrupted a cell planning attacks during the holiday season in December 2016. Intelligence officials claimed that a cell in Tripoli was planning an attack in Lebanon's north on the instruction of militants present in the southern Palestinian refugee camps. Lebanese security services routinely disrupted such plots throughout 2016.

During 2016, France pledged €100 million over the next three years to assist with the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. This followed Saudi Arabia suspending its \$3 billion aid package in retaliation for Hezbollah's support of Assad's forces in Syria and for Lebanon's failure to condemn the attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

In August 2016, one person was killed and 11 people were injured by a roadside bomb in eastern Lebanon. It wasn't clear why this area or those people were targeted, as previous road bombing attacks occurred in the Bekaa Valley targeting Lebanese or Hezbollah military vehicles.

In June 2016, a bomb exploded outside Blom Bank in Beirut. It is speculated that Hezbollah was behind the bombing, as the bank has been actively cooperating in US sanction efforts against Hezbollah. A number of bank accounts connected to Hezbollah had been closed in 2016.

Kidnapping for ransom remains a problem in Lebanon, as militant groups use it to raise funds. In October, the Lebanese Army arrested a Syrian and Lebanese national for conducting kidnapping for ransom operations.

Although Lebanon is officially a parliamentary democracy based on a 'confessional' system—distributing power along religious and ethnic lines—while Hezbollah remains a powerful and separate power, the country will be vulnerable to manipulation by regional interests and unable to marshal the political resources to deal with its domestic needs. It is likely to remain a battleground for factional interests, rather than coalescing around its national interests.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Substantial changes in the region in 2017 are unlikely. IS will remain a significant terrorism threat, and al-Qaeda will continue to play the long game, exploiting tactical openings to consolidate its presence in the region. Competition between IS and al-Qaeda is likely to intensify in 2017 as IS transforms into a more traditional terrorist organisation. Both groups will compete for recruits and ideological leadership within the movement.

Cracks are showing in Egypt's military regime as terrorist violence and political suppression continue. The underlying regional conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran and its proxies will continue to play out in 2017, and Iran is likely to gain the upper hand as Saudi Arabia overreached in its military operations in 2016. There appears to be no significant prospect for political reform in the coming year.

CONCLUSION

CT policy in the Middle East has often been used as a tool to consolidate state control at the expense of political and civil rights. Security strategy and tactics to combat terrorism have both deterred and spurred violence in Middle Eastern countries. Tactically, there were CT successes in the region in 2016, but structural governance and identity issues meant that security did not just plateau, but worsened over the year. The only exceptions in the region appear to be Oman and, to a lesser extent, the UAE.

Middle Eastern governments have historically played a cat-and-mouse game with violent Islamist extremist groups, alternately tolerating and cracking down on them. However, the rise of IS has demonstrated how tolerance of such groups can turn and destabilise the region. It has woken up most Middle Eastern nations to the threat of extremist Islamic ideology. State tolerance of terrorist groups and terrorist financing continues, however, as Iran, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states are still using proxy groups to promote their own interests. Middle Eastern CT strategies and policies remain entangled to various degrees with those of the West, particularly the US.

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TERRORISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE

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Europe has a long history of terrorism, from anarchist groups in the 19th century to ethnoseparatist and far-left groups in the 20th century, such as the Irish Republican Army, the Basque group ETA and Germany's Red Army Faction, including some groups that are still active today. While the number of attacks and victims of terrorism was higher in the 1970s and 1980s than today, the overall terrorist threat has never been as high as it is now, when 40% of European citizens cited terrorism as their main concern in 2016. This is a stark change from previous years when terrorism was ranked well behind other concerns, such as immigration or the economic crisis.¹ Public concern about terrorism in Europe is matched by that of CT officials, who consider that Europe is confronting an unprecedented threat.

This chapter reviews the major developments that have occurred in terrorism and CT in Europe in 2016. The past 12 months have seen an extraordinary amount of activity: this includes some successful attacks, as well as a number of foiled plots and numerous arrests. Governments and their security services have responded to the threat with more measures at the political, legal and operational levels. This chapter offers a concise overview of the main trends, focusing largely on the threat of jihadi terrorism and on a cluster of the countries most affected by it.

TERRORISM IN EUROPE

Terrorism was an issue of major concern for Europe in 2016. Although various types of terrorist groups are active on the continent, from ethno-separatists to political extremists (left-wing and right-wing), the jihadi threat largely overshadowed other forms of terrorism. In absolute terms, the number of jihadist attacks in Europe remained limited, and probably well below the number of attacks conducted by other types of terrorist organisations, consistent with the trend observed over the years.² However, jihadist activities broadly defined, including propaganda and recruitment activities, consumed much of the attention of security services in Europe, resulting in a large number of operations, arrests and trials. The rise in far-right activism was also a concern in several countries, and a number of incidents were reported. In geographical terms, it should be stressed that only some European countries were heavily affected by the jihadist threat, mostly in Western Europe, whereas many other European countries have seen no jihadi-related activities in their territory. While France has been under a 'state of emergency' since November 2015, and countries including Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden were on high terrorist alert, others such as Finland, the Baltic countries and most Central and Eastern European countries were on very low threat levels and mostly concerned with security threats other than terrorism—notably Russia.

IS-RELATED ATTACKS

All jihadist attacks committed in Europe in 2016 were related to the Islamic State (IS). In contrast to the previous year, when the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris took place in January, no attack was linked to al-Qaeda or its affiliates. There were at least 10 IS-related attacks in Europe last year, although the exact figure is difficult to establish because doubts remain about the motivation of the attackers and their connection with IS in a number of cases. There were different types of IS-related attacks: some involved foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) returnees, others didn't; some involved a network of individuals, others involved lone actors; some involved contacts with IS recruiters, but in others the attackers were simply 'inspired' by IS propaganda.

The Brussels attacks on 22 March were the only successful sophisticated plot in 2016, killing 32 civilians and 3 suicide bombers and injuring more than 300. The attacks were unique for 2016, and for Belgium, as they involved an international network of individuals connected with the November 2015 Paris attacks, coordinated bombings in two different locations (the international airport and a metro station) and the use of homemade explosives. It was also the only successful plot involving FTF returnees in Europe. The Bastille Day attack in Nice, when a Tunisian man drove his truck on the promenade des Anglais, killing 86 and injuring more than 400, was less sophisticated in most regards but was nonetheless the most lethal. It was similar to the attack five months later on a Christmas market in Berlin. The 26 July church attack in the little town of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray in France was less deadly than the other attacks listed here but struck the population by its brutality and the symbolism of its target: an 86-year-old priest. One of the two assailants had twice attempted, unsuccessfully, to join IS in Syria, and was under close surveillance by the French security services.

Other attacks took place over a particularly deadly summer in France, Germany, Denmark and Belgium (Table 4). The 18 July attack in Würzburg in Germany was the first to be claimed by IS on German soil, as opposed to France and Belgium, which had already been hit in previous years. In addition to the Würzburg attack, IS claimed credit for other small-scale attacks conducted by lone actors, such as in Charleroi and Ansbach, in Belgium and Germany, respectively. From publicly available information, it's not clear whether these perpetrators had established ties with IS members, or whether they had received instructions—in other words, whether these were cases of 'lone soldiers' or 'lone wolves'. However, IS's promptness in endorsing these attacks, despite their relative failure (since none resulted in any fatality) is quite remarkable, and could suggest that the group is seeking to maximise its visibility in Europe—and possibly in other regions—and to perpetuate a climate of fear, rather than trying to achieve symbolic or tactical successes.

TABLE 4: List of the main attacks claimed by IS in continental Europe, 2016

Location	Date	Description
Brussels, Belgium	22 March 2016	Coordinated suicide bombings at the airport and in the metro
Magnanville, France	13 June 2016	Stabbing of two police officers at their house
Nice, France	14 July 2016	Truck driven into a crowd on Bastille Day
Würzburg, Germany	18 July 2016	A man assaults train passengers with an axe and knife
Ansbach, Germany	24 July 2016	Suicide bombing near a music festival
Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, France	26 July 2016	Two men cut the throat of a priest in a local church
Charleroi, Belgium	6 August 2016	A man stabs two police officers
Copenhagen, Denmark	1 September 2016	A man shoots two police officers
Hamburg, Germany	30 October 2016	Stabbing of a young man
Berlin, Germany	19 December 2016	Truck driven into Christmas market crowd at Breitscheidplatz, killing 12 plus the hijacked driver and injuring 48

Source: Author's own compilation. This list includes only the successful attacks claimed by IS, but not the attacks that may have been inspired by IS, without an official claim from the group.

Beyond the 'successful' attacks related to IS, a number of plots either failed or were foiled in 2016. While reliable figures are unavailable for the whole of Europe, intelligence and political statements indicate that the number of failed or foiled plots was significantly higher than the number of actual attacks. According to a report from the French Government, 16 attacks have allegedly been foiled in France alone.³ Numerous press articles have reported disrupted plots in Germany, France, the Netherlands and Belgium, including a number during the 2016 European football championship, which took place in France in June. In a major CT operation coordinated between France, Belgium and the Netherlands, for example, an individual named Reda Kriket was arrested in Argenteuil, France, with a 'war arsenal' in his house, including automatic rifles and explosives. He was allegedly preparing an 'imminent attack'.⁴

In September, in another widely reported CT operation, three women were arrested for allegedly planning a terrorist attack in France. Shortly before their arrest, they had abandoned a car loaded with gas cylinders and gas cans in a tourist area of Paris, although it wasn't entirely clear whether the intention was to blow up the car, since no trigger device was found. Links were identified between these women and the perpetrators of the attacks in Magnanville and Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, and with an IS recruiter based in Syria, Rachid Kassim.⁵ Other plots were disrupted in Germany, including a plan allegedly targeting the Berlin airport. An intelligence officer was also arrested for apparently plotting an attack in Cologne.⁶

In addition to these established cases of jihadi terrorism, a number of dubious events were reported in which a connection with IS could be neither confirmed nor totally rejected. For instance, on 1 January, a man drove his car at a group into soldiers in Valence, France, but was stopped when he was shot and wounded; although jihadist material was found on his computer, French authorities stated that the attack wasn't an act of terrorism. A few days later, in Paris, a man armed with a knife and wearing a fake suicide belt was shot down as he tried to attack police officers in front of a police station. Although a pledge of allegiance to IS was found on him, and an IS flag was found in his residence, no clear connections could be established with the terrorist organisation, which didn't claim the attack. A number of other dubious cases were reported across Europe in 2016 involving stabbings, assaults and fake suicide belts. Although most of those cases appeared to not be related to jihadist terrorism, and some were the work of disoriented or mentally ill individuals, their high visibility through media reporting meant that they nonetheless contributed to an increasing feeling of insecurity or even psychosis among the population.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS, RADICALISATION AND THE JIHADI THREAT

The FTF phenomenon remained an issue of concern for security services in 2016. It's estimated that there are more than 5,000 FTFs from the EU, of whom approximately 30% have returned to Europe and 15% have died.⁷ In continental Europe, the countries most affected are France (around 1,900 FTFs), Germany (800), Belgium (550), Sweden (300), Austria (300), the Netherlands (250) and Denmark (130).

In a significant development, the dynamic of FTFs evolved in 2016 compared with previous years. Whereas the number of young Europeans leaving for Iraq or Syria had been increasing, then stabilising over the past three years, the number of 'jihadi travellers' seems to have dropped dramatically. In France, for example, only 18 departures were reported over the first six months of 2016, as opposed to 69 over the same period a year earlier. In Belgium, no departures were reported between January and September, whereas the previous year saw an estimated monthly rate of from five to 10. Similarly, the number of returnees seemed in decline across Europe compared to previous years.⁸ US intelligence sources confirmed that FTFs' movements via Turkey plummeted to their lowest levels in 2016.⁹

A number of factors might explain this trend. Domestically, there was certainly a greater awareness of the threat associated with FTFs following the multiple attacks in 2015, resulting in higher security attention but also in the adoption and implementation of measures that strengthened states' capacity to prevent FTF departures. A number of those measures had been adopted in 2015, including administrative sanctions such as the confiscation of passports and identity cards from potential FTFs, as well as hotlines in several countries for family or friends to report cases of radicalisation. Domestic measures can't account for all of the downward trend in departures, however, as external factors also played a role. IS's loss of control of the border between Syria and Turkey made travelling more complicated, and more dangerous, while the military defeats of the terrorist organisation and the absence of positive lifestyle perspectives in Syria or Iraq made travel altogether less appealing.

In addition to these logistical considerations, IS seems to have adjusted its discourse to the new geopolitical reality. Messages of the group from 2014 called on supporters to 'make hijra' (migrate to IS territory), which it described as an obligation; those who didn't have the means to make hijra could take action in Europe to support IS, but this was presented as an inferior contribution to the cause.¹⁰ In 2016, the discourse changed, perhaps even to the point of reversing the priorities. While IS would still welcome additional fighters in Syria, Iraq or even in other places such as Libya, IS's leadership (through the voice of its spokesperson al-Adnani¹¹) and a number of IS recruiters started to call specifically for local actions in Europe.¹²

A key figure in this process was Rachid Kassim, a French agent of IS presumably based in Syria, who is very active on Facebook and Telegram. In his messages, he called for 'local jihad' rather than hijra, but also called for small and efficient attacks, rather than grand schemes that would take time to plan and increase the risk of detection by intelligence services. In addition to inciting terror, he provided operational advice, such as on how to build bombs, and helped connect jihadi candidates sometimes several hundred kilometres apart. Kassim is suspected of inspiring or facilitating the attacks in Magnanville and Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray and the failed car bombing in Paris.¹³

Thus, in 2016, homegrown and home-based radicalised individuals proved a major vector for jihad in Europe, whereas the focus had previously been more on FTFs. As illustrated by the attack in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, frustrated jihadists—those who had failed to join IS in Syria—could be a serious security threat, but radicalised individuals who had taken no steps to travel proved an equal threat. This required security services to broaden their investigations, since more people could be considered at risk. Whereas the number of FTFs is finally stabilising, the number of home-based radicalised individuals is larger and potentially still growing, as there's no indication that the problem of radicalisation is being contained.¹⁴ This means that the threat from jihadist terrorism in Europe remained stable overall in 2016, which was reflected in unchanged threat levels across Europe, or perhaps even increased, as suggested by the increasing number of attacks and arrests compared to previous years.

ISLAMIC STATE, REFUGEES AND FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM

At least two attacks (those in Würzburg and Ansbach) were committed by asylum seekers, and other cases of radicalisation among asylum seekers were reported in the media.¹⁵ Although limited, those cases called attention to the vulnerability of these populations to extremist ideologies. Furthermore, it's known that some FTFs, including some involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks, used refugee flows to enter Europe undetected via Greece and Hungary.¹⁶ In September, Germany arrested three Syrian refugees on suspicion that they had been sent by IS on a mission.¹⁷ While such cases of infiltration were limited, the combination of these various occurrences fuelled the rhetoric of those opposing the growing number of refugees seeking to enter Europe—many of whom were truly fleeing regions devastated by terrorism and war.

In reaction to the refugee crisis and to the rise of jihadi activism in Europe, far-right extremist movements have gained traction. It's perhaps in Germany that this trend is most acute and growing—probably as a result of Chancellor Angela Merkel's welcoming policy vis-à-vis migrants—but the phenomenon was more widely spread across the continent. In Germany, a number of attacks on refugees, asylum shelters and mosques were reported in 2016, as well as other incidents such as the assault of a mayor considered too 'accommodating' to migrants.¹⁸

COUNTERTERRORISM IN EUROPE

Because only part of Europe was directly affected by the threat of terrorism, most responses to terrorism came from a core group of countries: Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. However, other countries were involved in the broader European CT process, notably in the context of the EU, which was also active in CT policy in 2016. Overall, the European response could be characterised by some evident trends: a sense of political urgency, a security-focused approach, further criminalisation of terrorist activities, and an accelerated CT policy cycle.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

As a result of the terrorist activities described above, the fight against terrorism remained very high on the political agenda of many European countries in 2016. The main elements of the political discourse were essentially reacting to the evolving threat, but with a strong posturing, or communication, dimension. Authorities in countries targeted by terrorism sought to show leadership and firmness in their CT posture while reassuring the population. This was most evident in the political statements made in the aftermath of attacks, including condolence messages sent by foreign leaders and in the various commemoration ceremonies. Common themes in all the statements were shock, solidarity, condemnation and determination. The tone of the post-attack speeches varied slightly, however, from one country to another. French President

Francois Hollande had a more warlike response after the attacks, notably in Nice, emphasising the military response, but also being quick to describe the attacks as 'terrorist', even before the evidence emerged. In contrast, Merkel was more nuanced, emphasising German values and principles, warning of political overreaction, and giving time for the investigation before drawing conclusions. These different tones reflected partly different approaches to CT and different security cultures, but they also inevitably shaped the threat perception among media and citizens.

Beyond words, governments sought to show deeds. This has been particularly the case in the aftermath of terror attacks, when the popular pressure is at its peak. One must distinguish two types of measures in this process, however. The first set of measures is announced in the direct aftermath of an attack, with a view to dealing with the incident and its immediate consequences. These measures are adaptive and temporary, answering to real operational necessity. For example, after the Brussels attacks, Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel announced that the threat level had been raised to its maximum level, that additional military assets had been deployed, and that controls at the border had been set up.

A second set of measures, which are designed to be more structural and permanent, can also be proposed at a later stage. These measures can be announced relatively shortly after a terrorist attack, with a view to reinforcing and the government's communication strategy. For example, Merkel announced her 'nine-point security plan'¹⁹ only a few days after the attacks in Würzburg and Ansbach, just as the French and Belgian authorities had announced security measures days after the Paris attacks in November 2015. Such measures can be really 'new', but they can also put older measures back on the table. In the emotional and security-aware post-attack context, there may be a tendency to pass measures that had been previously blocked, as illustrated by the EU Passenger Name Record proposal, which was adopted in the aftermath of the Brussels attacks after five years of political obstruction in the European Parliament. Measures may also be implemented following attacks in another country, such as Germany's announcement of new CT measures following the attacks in Brussels and Istanbul in early 2016.

Beyond the announcement of specific measures, which may indeed be part of a government's communication strategy and a certain form of 'penal populism',²⁰ the attacks in 2015–16 created a real sense of political urgency. France adopted its Action Plan against Terrorism and Radicalisation, containing 80 measures, in May 2016, six months after the Paris attacks and a month and a half after the Brussels attacks.²¹ Belgium had already announced its own action plan of 30 measures in 2015, which was complemented by a much-awaited security plan (or 'framework note') in 2016, extending beyond terrorism and radicalism to include other security threats as well as mechanisms of coordination between the different layers of institutional competence, which is a necessity in a federal state such as Belgium.²² Germany adopted a new strategy in 2016 to prevent violent extremism, while others such as Sweden or Denmark had already adopted similar action plans or CT strategies in 2015 or earlier. Overall, whether measures, action plans or strategies were adopted in 2015 or 2016, a lot of work has been done in most countries to put these plans into action over the past year.

At the domestic level, governments faced some opposition and even criticism of their CT policies, despite a short-lived sense of national unity in the aftermath of attacks. In France, former president Nicolas Sarkozy was particularly critical of the government's response to terrorism, whereas in Germany, Merkel's immigration policy came under very harsh criticism after the two attacks carried out by refugees and other cases of radicalised individuals or alleged terrorists hiding within refugee centres.²³ Some debates about radicalism and Islamism proved particularly controversial. Notably, proposals to outlaw particular female Muslim attire—the burqa (the full-body veil) and the 'burkini' (swimwear covering the entire body)—mainly in France, were echoed in neighbouring countries. Slightly less controversial, but nonetheless sensitive, discussions began in several countries about the necessity to encourage the emergence of a 'European' Islam.

In another significant political development, parliamentary commissions were set up in France and Belgium to investigate the Paris and Brussels attacks, respectively. The French commission submitted a 300-page report in July 2016, which notably recommended rethinking the intelligence architecture and cooperation between CT services.²⁴ However, the report seems to have received little political attention.²⁵ In Belgium, the commission started its work in April 2016 and is expected to submit its conclusions in early 2017.

Beyond domestic politics, terrorism was at the centre of several international forums. Belgium and France held a bilateral summit on 1 February to confirm their CT cooperation and announce some additional measures, such as the appointment of a French liaison magistrate to Brussels. France and Germany also held several bilateral summits (in April and August, notably) and ministerial meetings, leading to the adoption of a joint initiative on internal security on 23 August 2016.²⁶

These bilateral initiatives complement work done at the EU level, in which a group of 'most affected countries'—the so-called G11—played a key role. The group was initiated by Belgium in 2013 and meets informally before every meeting of the 28 EU ministers of justice and home affairs to draft the conclusions on terrorism. In the context of Brexit, 2016 also saw the nomination of a new British Commissioner at the European Commission, Julian King, in charge of the EU's European Agenda on Security, a regulatory package to improve Europe's internal security, including against terrorism. Supported by the very active office of the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, the EU is progressing

a number of pieces of EU-wide legislation and other instruments to strengthen the continent's response against terrorism.

Key priorities at the EU level included:

- encouraging the exchange of information among member states, as it was established that EU member states didn't make full use of relevant EU instruments and mechanisms before 2015
- developing more tools for data collection, including biometrics
- ensuring interoperability between relevant databases, as the various EU databases on criminal records or terrorism have not previously been connected
- reinforcing the external borders of the EU
- creating more synergies between the European Agenda on Security and the European Agenda on Immigration, which have been developed and implemented separately despite of a number of interactions and some overlap between them.²⁷

THE LEGAL RESPONSE

At the legislative level, 2016 continued in line with the previous year in the further criminalisation of terrorism-related activities, notably through the implementation of international law and recommendations at the national level. As the terrorist threat continued to grow and materialise in 2015–16, the legislative and policy cycles accelerated significantly. A number of European countries among the most affected EU member states adopted and implemented new laws based on UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014), which classifies as a criminal offence the act of travelling, or attempting to travel, to another country for terrorist purposes, providing or receiving terrorist training, or the financing of travelling for terrorist purposes. While a number of member states had already taken legal measures to restrict the travel of FTFs in 2014–15, the fight against the financing of terrorism became a real priority in 2016, particularly in France, Belgium and Germany. France and Germany pushed the topic strongly at the EU level.²⁸

In parallel to these national processes, the European Commission presented a new directive to combat terrorism in December 2015, which was negotiated through 2016 and is expected to be adopted in early 2017. The new directive will replace one from 2002, which had been updated in 2008. It will integrate into EU law the elements of UNSCR 2178 and of Financial Action Task Force recommendations on terrorist financing, with a view to harmonising the EU's judicial response to terrorism, and thus ensure that there's no 'two-speed' CT in Europe.

The adoption in April of the Passenger Name Record (PNR) regime by the European Parliament was another major development at the EU level, after more than five years of negotiations between the parliament and EU member states. The EU PNR arrangements will allow member states to collect and retain passenger flight details for flights in and out of Europe, including to track individual itineraries. This proposal had long been resisted by the European Parliament on the basis of data privacy and security concerns. After the attacks in Paris and Brussels, the measure was adopted by a large majority when member states agreed at that it was needed to more effectively combat terrorism and organised crime. However, questions remain about the real value of this tool, and specifically about how it will be used by intelligence services. While member states have two years to implement the new rules, Belgium and France anticipated the EU decision by commencing work on national PNR arrangements, including planning to extend the measure to maritime travel and, in the case of Belgium, to international high-speed trains.

In the most affected countries, a number of laws to strengthen the powers of the state against terrorism and radicalism were also discussed or adopted. For example, the judicial framework in France and Germany was modified to reinforce the operational capacity of the security services, including by broadening the use of special investigation techniques, such as wiretapping. France also provided for longer prison sentences for terrorists, including the possibility of imprisonment in perpetuity, while Belgium sought to revise its constitution in order to lengthen administrative detention from 24 to 72 hours for acts of terrorism. In addition, more stringent measures were taken against hate speech, such as outlawing websites preaching hate in Belgium, but also going as far as criminalising the consultation of jihadi websites. In September 2016, a French citizen was sentenced to two years in jail for regularly consulting IS propaganda online from a public library.²⁹

OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

At the operational level in most EU states affected by terrorism, one of the dominant trends in 2016 was the pursuit of measures designed to reinforce the security and intelligence services. The workload of the various CT services (judiciary, police, intelligence) continued to increase in 2016 as a result of the persistent terrorist threat. Ever more individuals and networks had to be monitored, investigated or prosecuted, leading to delays and bottlenecks in the judicial system and to a need for difficult prioritisation among police and intelligence services, based on particular criteria (both objective and subjective).³⁰ These structural constraints inevitably weaken the broader CT approach. In a small country such as Belgium, with a significant number of FTFs and radicalised individuals but limited CT personnel, the pressure on these services has become extreme.³¹

To address this problem and to cope with the threat more broadly, some European countries announced that additional personnel would be hired and more resources would be made available to the relevant services. France hired 7,500 new staff in 2015–16 for the ministries of justice and the interior and announced 650 additional positions for its domestic intelligence services in 2016–17. Furthermore, about €900 million was committed to various aspects of the response to terrorism in 2015–16.³² In a similar vein, Belgium pledged an additional €400 million for the fight against terrorism after the Paris attacks and committed to recruiting 1,000 new staff, but the allocation of the new resources proved to be a rather lengthy process.³³ In Germany, Chancellor Merkel and Interior Minister de Maiziere announced similar measures following the summer attacks.³⁴

Another visible aspect of the security measures taken by some European governments was the deployment of military forces in the street. In this regard, it's interesting to note the differences between member states. While France has long been accustomed to the presence of its military in the streets, this was new for Belgium in 2015 and a sign of exceptional times. The number of troops patrolling the streets increased after the Brussels attacks, before being slightly reduced towards the end of the year. In Germany, the possibility of deploying the military on domestic territory for CT purposes was also discussed but faces significant hurdles for historical reasons.³⁵

Another key CT dimension related to dealing with radicalised individuals and potential FTFs. The use of administrative measures to prevent people leaving Europe to join terrorist organisations, such as confiscating the identity cards or passports of potential jihadis, has become more generalised. In 2016, countries also continued to develop their institutional infrastructure and capacity to detect and monitor radicalism. French authorities planned to double their capacity to handle radicalised people by 2017; in Belgium, regional and local authorities sped up their efforts to develop specific programs and initiatives to prevent or deal with radicalisation.

Other priorities in 2016 included combating the financing of terrorism and CT in the cyber domain. As noted above, France and Germany pushed jointly for a stronger European response in the fight against terrorist financing while putting in place a number of domestic measures to strengthen their services. In Belgium, countering terrorist financing slowly emerged as a priority after years of neglect, and a number of legal and operational adjustments reinforced this approach.³⁶ France and Germany were also in the lead to promote enhanced efforts to counter the use of the internet and social media by terrorist organisations. Both countries prioritised responses to terrorists' use of encrypted communication tools and the development of counter-narratives to the jihadi discourse.³⁷ German Interior Minister de Maizière announced the establishment of a new centre for information technology for security authorities (ZITIS), which will focus on crime and terrorism on the internet and eventually employ 400 staff.³⁸ At the EU level, Europol gave the Internet Referral Unit a more active role in its newly established European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), including the task of taking down terrorist material from the web. One of the EU's flagship projects on strategic communication and counter-narratives, originally called the Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team but now the European Strategic Communication Network, was extended beyond its original end date of mid-2016.

At the EU level, the most notable operational development in 2016 was the launch of the ECTC. The new centre brings together representatives from EU member states and Europol staff working on terrorism-related issues and is designed to be operational, flexible and a major advance in EU-wide CT cooperation. Its establishment followed the positive contribution of Europol in the investigations of the Paris and Brussels attacks through Task Force *Fraternité*, in which Europol established an operational centre in Paris to investigate the international ramifications of the jihadist network behind the attacks.³⁹ EU member states, most importantly France, saw Europol's contribution as positive, and that led to greater operational and political support for the strengthening of the EU agency's powers.⁴⁰

In the area of intelligence cooperation, while calls by the Belgian Prime Minister to create a 'European CIA' after the Brussels attacks were ignored, European countries agreed to step up their cooperation in the informal Counter Terrorism Group (CTG), which brings together the heads of European intelligence services. Under Dutch leadership, the group agreed to further standardise and systematise the exchange of information on the terrorist threat. Discussions were also underway to create operational bridges between the CTG and the ECTC, although that proved too contentious for some member states. Still, the recent development of the ECTC and the deeper cooperation within the CTG are a remarkable step forward in police and intelligence cooperation, as that progress was unthinkable even a few years ago.

There is reportedly growing cooperation among police, judicial and intelligence services outside the EU framework, in bilateral or multilateral exchanges, in view of the transnational nature of the threat. An increasing number of meetings, information exchanges and joint investigations were reported among most countries affected by terrorism, particularly between France and Belgium.⁴¹

The EU took steps to secure its external borders in 2016, most notably with the announcement of the creation of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

Member states and EU institutions were also active outside EU territory in efforts to develop CT partnerships with countries in the Mediterranean (particularly Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia) and in the Middle East. They took part in diplomatic and military initiatives, notably in the context of the US-led anti-IS coalition. France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands participate in the coalition's military operations in Iraq and Syria.

PROSPECTS FOR 2017

For CT in Europe, 2016 was a very busy year. The number of jihadi-related attacks increased from the previous year, numerous plots and terrorist-related activities were disrupted, significant numbers of people, particularly youth, continued to radicalise, and some turned violent. The nature of the threat also partly changed, as most plots resulted from homegrown and 'home-based' radicalised individuals, as opposed to FTF returnees—all related to IS. Following this trend, CT efforts intensified in 2016 as additional political, legal, operational and administrative measures were adopted and implemented across Europe. The European countries most affected by terrorism to date—France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands—largely took the lead domestically as well as internationally. At the EU level, the unprecedented level of the threat and a clear sense of urgency allowed for major breakthroughs, particularly in police and intelligence cooperation.

Despite the increased efforts and the many CT measures adopted, the threat level remained high in many countries at the end of 2016. In recognition of this, France prolonged its state of emergency again until mid-2017, after its presidential election.

Given the evolution of the conflict in Iraq and Syria, a new wave of jihadi departures isn't likely in the foreseeable future, which means that the terrorist threat will continue to come mainly from home-based radicals in 2017. However, intelligence services also fear the return of FTFs to Europe as IS loses its safe havens in Syria, although it's unclear how many will come back and with what intentions. Some are likely to die while fighting, some will move to other jihadist theatres, and some will return to Europe disillusioned or traumatised. Some could return intending to commit terrorist acts, increasing the number of people who need close scrutiny. This scenario calls for the adoption of an effective strategy to deal with returnees, but most countries are unsure about how to approach this. Imprisonment appears a sensible and appealing response but could be counterproductive, given the problem of radicalisation in prisons. Each country is experimenting with a different approach to deradicalisation and disengagement—and sometimes more than one approach—but no best practice seems to have emerged yet. More European coordination will be needed on this.

Finally, the focus of CT is likely to continue to evolve in 2017. In jihadist terrorism, a return of al-Qaeda can't be discounted as IS loses global traction. Beyond this, the rise of far-right and far-left extremism is likely to continue during an important election year in several countries (France and Germany, among others) and could further increase the risk of societal polarisation.

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SECURITY CHALLENGES FACED BY TURKEY

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Over the past six months, Turkey has witnessed profound developments with major implications for its political stability and domestic security. Most significant of all was the abortive 15 July 2016 coup plot that coincided with the flare-up of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) insurgency and Islamic State (IS) militancy.

This chapter discusses the security implications of the failed coup plot, the underlying dynamics of the PKK insurgency and IS militancy and the government's response to these twin security challenges.

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Post-coup commentary has focused primarily on the bitter feud between President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the reclusive Pennsylvania-based Muslim cleric, Fethullah Gulen. That's unsurprising, in the light of the Turkish Government's allegation that Gulen had a central role in the coup plot.

However, this oversimplifies the coup by sheeting it home to the relationship between two consequential personalities while ignoring the deep polarisation in Turkish society as its root cause. Recent opinion polls reveal the extent to which ideological, sectarian and ethnic divisions bedevil Turkish politics and society.

For example, according to a 2015 survey by the German Marshall Fund, a US think tank, 74% of respondents won't allow their children to play with children whose parents support a different political party.¹ The survey also indicates that backers of the ruling Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) and those of the opposition parties hold diametrically opposite views on confidence in democracy and state institutions.

Equally, polls indicate the glaring dividing lines between Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms. In a 2015 survey, Ali Carokoglu—a leading political science professor in Turkey—found that the majority of Turks and Kurds don't see eye to eye on policies to resolve the Kurdish question.² Moreover, that survey demonstrated that 60% of voters for Turkish parties believe that the Kurdish political movement's ultimate aim is an independent Kurdish state, whereas only 33% of pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) voters hold that opinion.

Turkey's secular-religious and Turkish-Kurdish cleavages created the enabling environment for the botched coup. Putschists sought to exploit fractures in society and visceral feelings towards Erdogan but underestimated the overwhelming popular preference for electoral politics over military intervention. Societal disunity breeds volatility and instability, which can only be addressed by adopting a more conciliatory political tone and implementing democratic and secular reforms.

However, post-coup policies seem to be exacerbating social tensions. Large swathes of the Turkish population disapprove of official attempts to use the coup to rewrite the national identity of Turkey in a more conservative and religious direction and to consolidate power in a centralised executive presidency by the middle of 2017. So far, Erdogan has been governing by presidential decree under a highly controversial state of emergency.

Similarly contentious is the government's aim to increase civilians' political, as opposed to democratic, control and oversight over the military, intelligence and security apparatus. Among the changes is that the president and prime minister will be able to issue orders directly to the commanders of Turkey's land, air and sea forces, thereby reducing the Chief of Staff to the role of coordinator. Erdogan has appointed 61 new police chiefs in Turkey's 81 provinces and assigned 51 police chiefs to central departments that play an important part in CT activities. Many of the appointees are quite young, nationalistic, relatively inexperienced and fiercely loyal to the political leadership and the state.

Security experts fear that the structural overhaul of the armed forces and mass dismissals of mid-ranking and senior officers will undermine the military's institutional integrity, intensify the rivalry between the branches and create a more restive officer corps. They are concerned that, coupled with the restructuring of the intelligence and security forces, this may significantly affect the state's capability to combat the PKK insurgency and IS militancy.

PKK INSURGENCY

Turkey's 32-year-old conflict against the PKK insurgency reignited in mid-2015 after the breakdown of a fragile three-year peace process. At first, the PKK employed urban warfare in Kurdish-dominated towns and cities, which was met with a robust response by the Turkish military. Its expectation was that the encounter would instigate a Kurdish popular uprising. That hope didn't materialise.

PKK leaders misinterpreted the electoral gains by the pro-Kurdish HDP at the June 2015 general elections as a mandate to revert to violence rather than as an endorsement of the negotiation strategy. In fact, they didn't anticipate the erosion of the HDP's recent attraction to tribal and religious Kurds, who traditionally voted for the AKP. Arguably, the HDP would fail to pass the 10% threshold to secure representation in parliament if elections were held today.

In recent months, the PKK has resorted to its traditional rural campaign with bomb attacks in city centres in the southeast, Ankara (the capital) and Istanbul (Turkey's commercial hub). Erdogan has closed several Kurdish media outlets, suspended 11,250 teachers for alleged PKK links, arrested nearly 20 HDP parliamentarians, including party co-leaders, and replaced at least 24 HDP mayors with government appointees under emergency laws.

Turkey's military has also deployed Bayraktar TB2 UAVs armed with MAM-L laser-guided missiles capable of firing from 6.4 kilometres away to neutralise PKK militants. In addition, it has crossed over the border into northern Syria under Operation Euphrates Defence Shield, with tacit US and Russian support, to prevent the PKK's Syrian affiliate, the Peoples' Protection Units (YPG), from establishing a contiguous autonomous zone and to clear out IS fighters.

Its stated aim is the total elimination of the PKK, while the PKK has vowed to create havoc and bloodshed throughout Turkey. In all likelihood, neither side will achieve total victory. PKK militants can't match the firepower and reach of the Turkish military, but 33 years of confrontation hasn't extinguished the PKK's capacity to operate, largely because it's able to take sanctuary in the rugged mountainous terrain of northern Iraq. Only a political solution with moderate Kurdish nationalism and regional understandings on the PKK and YPG can provide a durable settlement to the Kurdish question in Turkey.

ISLAMIC STATE MILITANCY

Turkey has a sceptical view of the US endeavour to focus exclusively on 'degrading and destroying' IS militants in Syria and Iraq by militarily cooperating with the YPG while bypassing its strategic interests in both countries. Erdogan lobbied outgoing US President Barack Obama vigorously to sever that relationship, but to no avail. He felt that incoming President Donald Trump may be more amenable to his entreaties, but that remains to be seen, given Trump's lack of interest in the Syrian quagmire beyond removing IS and his avowed animosity to Islamist-inclined groups—even those fighting under the 'Free Syrian Army' banner.

IS militants have executed significant bomb attacks targeting Kurdish activists, left-wing demonstrators and foreign tourists. IS's highest profile target was Istanbul Ataturk Airport on 30 June 2016, when 45 people were killed. It has sought to damage the Turkish economy in retaliation for the country's anti-IS cooperation with the US and other NATO partners, which included authorising the use of the Incirlik air base, near to the Turkey–Syria border.

Although IS still poses a security threat to it, Turkey has taken two important steps to diminish that threat. Foremost is the construction of a concrete wall with watchtowers and the deployment of sophisticated technology along the 910-kilometre border with Syria to prevent illegal crossings of goods and people. Completion is expected by mid-2017.

With Turkish military support, the Free Syrian Army has dislodged IS from the strategic northern Syrian towns of Jarablus and Dabiq and is within striking distance of al-Bab, the crucial gateway to Aleppo. Russia seems to have reached an understanding with Turkey to allow its takeover of al-Bab in return for turning a blind eye to the seizure of the eastern half of Aleppo by Bashar Al-Assad's forces from the Syrian armed, largely Sunni, opposition groups.

Iraq's ongoing concerted campaign to retake IS-occupied Mosul and similar attempts in the Syrian theatre to expand from Manbij to the IS-run city of Raqqa by the YPG-dominated and US-aligned Syrian Democratic Forces will further weaken IS manoeuvrability in Turkey. At least in the short term, the spillover of violence from Syria into Turkey will be contained but whether that weakening will ensue depends on future developments in neighbouring Iraq and Syria and what happens to the tens of thousands of Islamist militants in northern Syria.

TACKLING SYMPTOMS, NOT CAUSES

Turkey's botched coup and its aftermath have occurred at a time of a rising PKK insurgency and IS militancy. Wholesale changes to the military, intelligence apparatus and security forces have raised concerns over the country's readiness to counter security threats, whether from Kurdish nationalism or Islamist militancy.

So far, the intensity of these two security challenges is being suppressed by the progressive erection of the concrete wall along the entire Turkey–Syria border, Turkey's greater adoption of UAVs, the military operations in northern Syrian and the Iraqi and US coalition campaigns against IS strongholds in Iraq and Syria. Yet, those tactics merely tackle the symptoms and not the root cause: the political polarisation and ideological cleavages plaguing Turkish politics and society. Without solving those problems, the most likely long-term scenario for Turkey is the stubborn persistence of its security challenges.

NOTES

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COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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During 2016, the UK lived in a Europe that was increasingly troubled by attacks, and by threats, from jihadist terror groups. Of the 43 states that the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office listed as running the highest risk of terrorist activity, the European group consisted of France, Belgium, Germany, Spain and the UK.¹ Successful jihadist attacks across France, Belgium and Germany in 2015 and 2016 seemed to herald a new wave of terrorism in Europe driven largely by the wars in Syria and Iraq and the rise of the Islamic State (IS).

THE THREAT PICTURE FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM

Nevertheless, the UK didn't suffer any direct attacks from jihadist terrorists in 2016 and didn't raise its national threat level, which remained at 'severe', where it has stood for the past two years.² This reflects both the strengths and the vulnerabilities of the UK's position as a prime target of international terrorism. On the one hand, the fact that no successful jihadist attacks occurred indicates the evident success, good fortune, or both, of the security services in the UK. To date, only two jihadist attacks have been successful in the UK since 2001: the July 2005 attacks on the London underground and a bus; and the murder of soldier Lee Rigby outside his London barracks in 2013. Those two cases have to be set against at least 50 credible and advanced plots in the past 15 years, in addition to several times that number of incidents that may be classed as 'disruptions' of ongoing terrorist plots.³ As it happens, in the midst of the 'Brexit' referendum campaign in June 2016, Jo Cox, a female Labour MP, was stabbed and shot in the street by a far right white supremacist in a murder that the court defined as a terrorist act, since it was driven by a political purpose.⁴ Of note, as with those who murdered Rigby in 2013, the perpetrator was charged and found guilty of murder under common law, rather than terrorism legislation.⁵

If this is a mercifully low toll, however, the other side of the story reflects the high and increasing potential for jihadist terror attacks on the UK in the current climate. The pattern of terrorism has been changing since 2015. There have been fewer attacks within Western states but, certainly in Europe, attacks of greater lethality. Shootings in 'marauding attacks' have become more prominent than individual bombings, and indiscriminate attacks on civilian 'soft' targets in public spaces have been more prevalent since 2015—the last year for which complete figures are available—than attacks on state- or government-oriented targets.⁶ Within the European business sector, the greatest proportion of attacks have been against the transport and logistics sectors, followed by the retail sector, the extractive industries and then national infrastructure, the financial sector and finally the tourism sector.⁷

The most recently available figures from Europol record 211 terrorist attacks against members of the EU either 'completed, failed or foiled' in 2015.⁸ The completed attacks caused 151 fatalities and seriously injured more than 360 people. Some 103 of the 211 cases were recorded in the UK. Europol also records the arrest of 1,077 individuals across the EU on terrorism-related charges. Of those, 44% were arrested on suspicion of membership of a terrorist organisation and 23% on suspicion of attack-related activities (up from 13% in 2014). UK police are reportedly dealing with some 550 'live cases' of CT at any one time.⁹ Europol also pointed to a 'notable increase in [terrorism-related] arrests of individuals of Russian origin in the EU', which indicates the breadth of the modern terrorist challenge, both in Russian jihadism and in other causes for which Russian nationals are prepared to resort to terrorism in Europe.¹⁰

In addition, terrorists' use of cyberspace in recent years has, according to the Director of the UK's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), moved to a new level:

Where al-Qaeda and its affiliates saw the internet as a place to disseminate material anonymously or meet in 'dark spaces', Isis has embraced the web as a noisy channel in which to promote itself, intimidate people, and radicalise new recruits.¹¹

A similar pattern is evident in recorded European crime, which interacts with terrorism in complex ways. There was a long-term decrease in recorded crime across the EU from 2002 to 2012, from just over 26 million crimes to around 24 million.¹² After 2007, although there were small increases in domestic burglary, there were significant decreases in robbery, drug trafficking and violent crime, alongside dramatic falls in motor vehicle theft.¹³

But the pattern of criminal activity within the EU has changed. In September 2013, the Director of Europol said that 'thousands of gangs' were capitalising on the rise of smartphone and internet technology. 'There is a changing face of crime across Europe,' he said, 'Everyday crime is down but more sophisticated, more dangerous forms of crime are going up.' He calculated that at least 3,000 internationally active organised criminal groups were operating across Europe.¹⁴ Based on a different definition, the UK Home Office has estimated that almost 6,000 such groups were operating in the UK in 2016.¹⁵

Thus, Europe has witnessed more well-organised and lethal terrorist attacks alongside more serious and organised criminality, all facilitated by the revolution in internet-based communication and accessible high-level computing capacity. Such developments and the deepening reality of digital societies have created many new potential platforms, opportunities and modes of operation for individuals and groups involved in terrorism and organised crime. This phenomenon was twice highlighted in 2016 as extensive IS computer files were hacked, stolen and captured by Western security forces as the group's strongholds in Iraq were steadily overrun. Such files clearly reveal the ambition of IS to launch attacks across Europe and its capacity to organise and inspire people to do so.¹⁶ As of the end of 2015, some 850 UK nationals were known definitively to have travelled to join terrorist groups in the Middle East, and around half are believed to have returned.¹⁷

THE COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

The UK Government's CONTEST counterterrorism strategy has been in existence since 2003 and was first published in 2006. It provides a holistic framework for the UK's response to terrorism. Its four themes—Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare—cover all aspects of CT policy and have been much imitated by other governments facing similar threats.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the Prevent element of the strategy to 'combat violent extremism' has remained the most difficult to implement and is the focus of sustained criticism. Far from countering violent extremism, some critics have said, the 'community approach' strategy still has the effect of stigmatising and marginalising Muslim communities in the UK as it tries to identify 'individuals at risk' of radicalisation and encourage community leaders to cooperate with the security services.¹⁹ The coalition government of 2010 reviewed Prevent, as did the 2015 government, and the current UK Prime Minister, who as Home Secretary until July 2016 was responsible for Prevent, takes a close interest in the whole problem of countering violent extremism. Nevertheless, 2016 saw little practical progress in this sphere.

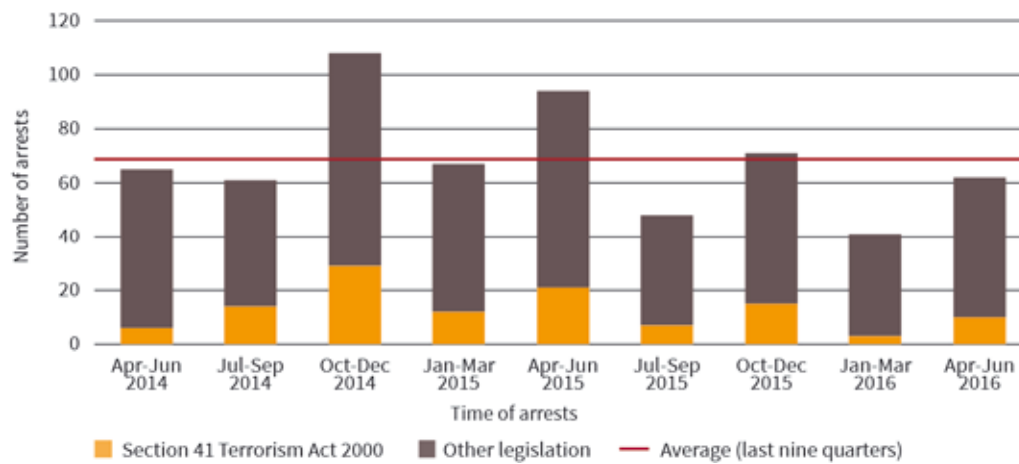
Both the Open Society Justice Initiative and Human Rights Watch published highly critical reports on the Prevent strategy during 2016, stressing what they described as threats to civil liberties in general and the counterproductive results of Prevent, particularly in schools and colleges.²⁰ Criticism wasn't restricted to non-government organisations. The Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation called for an independent review of the strategy, as did the UK Parliament's Home Affairs Select Committee, in a very critical report on plans for a new counter-extremism bill, which the previous prime minister, David Cameron, had intended to introduce, but which has now been held in abeyance. The committee also recommended rebranding the 'Prevent' program to 'Engage', as it was perceived as negative and discriminatory towards Muslims, and also doing more work to better define 'extremism'. The simple fact is that few in UK CT circles are happy with the working of the Prevent strategy, but no-one has been able to define a better alternative that can be practically applied at the community level.

Under pressure from the momentous implications of the Brexit vote, and in the absence of any public clamour for more efficient CT measures, many of the more structural parts of the CONTEST strategy, like Prevent, as opposed to the immediate Pursue element, have received little attention in the past year.

Nevertheless, in operational terms—the Pursue element in CONTEST—2016 witnessed some evolutionary developments. Noteworthy arrests and subsequent charges in August against an alleged bomb-making cell in Birmingham were linked to other arrests in Stoke-on-Trent. There were arrests in London and Cardiff on the grounds of preparatory terrorism acts, the arrest of an alleged bomber whose device failed to operate on a local train in North Greenwich, and several arrests of both male and female individuals on suspicion of aiding the recruitment, funding and organisation of terrorist cells, both in the UK and abroad. In August, a serving member of the armed forces was arrested and subsequently charged with terrorism offences in relation to the discovery of arms caches and related terror plots in Northern Ireland.

In fact, the number of arrests in the UK on terrorism-related offences by mid-2016 was about one-third lower than in the previous year and well below the levels in 2014–15 (Figure 6). The average number of arrests for the nine quarters from April 2014 to June 2016 was almost 70 per quarter; in the two quarters of 2016 for which figures are available, the number was just around 100. The conviction rate when trials have been held is 87%—comparable with conviction rates for other serious crimes—although, in recognition of the more serious plots to which such convictions related, longer prison sentences more than doubled, while life sentences increased sevenfold.²¹ For the London Metropolitan Police, there was a spike in CT activity and a significant increase (26%) in stops and searches in 2016 using the 2000 Terrorism Act, as compared with the previous year to June, and terrorism-related arrests accounted for some 12% of all arrests by the Metropolitan Police, up from 8% in the previous year.²²

FIGURE 6: Quarterly arrests for terrorism-related offences, Great Britain, 2nd quarter 2014 to 2nd quarter 2016



Source: National Counter Terrorism Policing Functions Command, UK Government, Home Office, Statistical news release, 22 September 2016, [online](#) (see data table A.01).

In November 2016, the Metropolitan Police launched a new CT and crime prevention scheme known as Project Servator.²³ This initiative involves targeting vulnerable areas unpredictably with both plainclothes and uniformed police, all specially trained, to disrupt plotting, gain intelligence and offer public reassurance through engagement with the community and by providing a visible presence.²⁴ This tactic has demonstrated its effectiveness in particular areas and also in combating drugs and theft in the capital, and is being adopted borough by borough throughout London during 2017 to try to make up for the evident deficit in genuine community-based CT policing.²⁵

The legislative framework behind CT operations is now rooted mainly in the provisions of the Terrorism Acts of 2000 and 2006, although many other much older Acts relating to firearms, explosives and sedition are often invoked. The most relevant parts of both the 2000 and 2006 Acts are under regular review—and criticism—for their potentially sweeping powers, most of which aren't used but nevertheless exist in law. In particular, section 41 of the 2000 Act, dealing with 'arrest without warrant', and the criminalisation of the 'encouragement' of terrorism and anything that 'glorifies' it in the 2006 Act, are regarded as problematical.²⁶ There's no popular demand that they be reformed in the immediate future, however.

The two previous governments from 2010 and the government of 2016 have sought to get a 'counter extremism bill' onto the statute books to give greater legal force to their efforts to counter violent extremism in the UK and extend their powers to ban individuals and organisations where they feel public harm is being done. But this may have become a step too far even in the current climate. Drafts of the Bill have met stiff resistance both inside and outside parliament, on grounds of inconsistency as much as civil liberties, as well as criticism that it also lacked a clear definition of extremism. The current Bill was introduced in May 2016 and remains the subject of ongoing scrutiny; it's not clear that there will be new legislation in this area in the near future.

Outside the legislative framework, UK CT authorities continue to discuss the most appropriate organisational structure to meet the challenge. The Metropolitan Police CT command, SO15, has the national police lead for CT. Working closely with the security services and GCHQ, SO15 is responsible for operating 'at a local, national, and international level and [it] supports the national Counter Terrorism Network and the Senior National Co-ordinator Counter Terrorism'.²⁷ It has long been suggested, however, that responsibility for all CT should be placed more centrally with Whitehall. A parliamentary committee considered the arguments again in 2014 and renewed the call for responsibility for CT to be transferred to the newly created National Crime Agency—a British counterpart roughly to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation—along with the 1,500 or more CT officers in the Metropolitan Police.²⁸ The argument had already been put on hold in 2012 because of the London Olympics, and the committee's recommendation was shelved again because of a spike in terrorist activity in 2014 and then by the 2015 election campaign. In the heat of domestic politics consumed by Brexit issues, the argument didn't resurface in 2016, although it's doubtful whether it will stay off the Whitehall agenda for long now that the UK has a prime minister who is believed to have been a long-time advocate of such a move.²⁹

SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

Along with all its European allies and partners, the UK shares a generally troubling CT environment. The conflict in the heart of the Levant looks set to get worse long before it gets better, and the terrorist blowback against European societies is expected to grow in coming years. The IS group will probably be ejected from Iraq and then Syria during 2017,

but is expected to rebuild in some of its other footholds across the Middle East and South Asia. Al-Qaeda-related jihadist groups and Kurdish separatists are still expected to be operational across the region as new national borders emerge in a 'balkanised Levant'. The waves of uncontrolled immigration into Europe continue to exacerbate intercommunity tensions throughout the continent and are already, in themselves, acting as conduits for terrorist transits in and around Europe. Right-wing and pseudo-racist political movements are on the rise in almost all European countries, including the UK, as are hate crimes and various forms of ethnic discrimination. The climate for possibly dramatic increases in terrorist activity has worsened considerably in the past two years.

British defence policy encapsulates the idea that terrorist threats to the country, and in particular the jihadist terror threat, should be engaged as close as possible to their source. Air operations as part of the US-led coalition in Iraq and latterly in Syria have been undertaken on this basis since 2014.³⁰ Those operations ramped up during 2016 as IS forces were pushed back. Other initiatives during the year included reinforcing the training mission to the Iraqi Army and Peshmerga forces, including deploying a full British battalion to Irbil as trainers.³¹ The government also tacitly admitted to an extension of the work of special forces operating on the ground in the region, not just in having them act as forward air controllers for more intensive air attacks, but in more actively seeking out the 'kill list' of British jihadists who would be arrested or killed if they were tracked down.³²

It's hardly surprising that within the UK's security services there's an acute awareness of a potential wave of terrorism building against the country, although the wave has yet to break against the UK in successful attacks. The Chief of MI6 made his first public speech in December to warn precisely of the growing threat to domestic society in the UK and to report that 12 clear terror plots against the UK had been successfully disrupted since June 2013. He also confirmed that MI6 agents were working in the heart of jihadist territories (presumably across the Levant) to penetrate the IS movement.³³ The question arises as to whether this yet-to-break wave is just a matter of time lag, or whether there are more tangible reasons why the threat has been unrealised so far.

One tangible reason may be that UK CT authorities not only began active operational planning and coordination even before the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and ramped up them again after the London attacks in 2005, but also had a generation of Northern Ireland experience on which to draw. For all its day-to-day limitations, coordination between UK agencies is generally good, and the nation's security and intelligence services are world class and—uniquely among European countries—have a global reach, notably through the Five Eyes arrangement. So the record shows that UK CT agencies have been very effective—but also lucky. Only four bombs have been detonated in the UK, all in the July 2005 attack. But at least another 10 bombs have been planted since then, nine of which would have worked if they had been made properly and one other if it hadn't been discovered.³⁴

Another tangible reason is also plausible, however. Lucky as they may have been, UK CT agencies are generally seen as some way ahead of many of their European counterparts in the evolution of their organisation and techniques. By 2010, many UK Government buildings and obvious public targets had been surrounded with landscaped security zones, and a comprehensive policy for public spaces was also in place.³⁵ Counterterrorist features have been built into the architecture of many new structures. The intelligence services and GCHQ have been largely retasked over the past 15 years to make terrorist groups a major target of their activities, the police services are undertaking more CT activity than ever before, and so on.

The fact is that there's evidence from intercepted IS files and from testimony from those in custody that the UK may have achieved some degree of 'deterrence by denial' in the thinking of terrorist leaders.³⁶ At least in relative terms, the UK is a more difficult target for a terrorist group than most other European states, and intercommunity relations, certainly in France and Belgium, are more conducive to a terror-friendly environment than in the UK. As the first National Coordinator of Counter-terrorism in the UK put it, the 2015–16 attacks in Paris, Brussels and Nice had exposed 'deep flaws in continental Europe's approach to counter-terrorism', whereas, in contrast, an independent report had rated London's CT measures, for example, as 'among the best in the world'.³⁷ There can be no room for complacency, but the UK's measures to combat terror are more advanced than those of any of its near partners, except possibly the US. 'Deterrence by punishment', in overtly targeting UK nationals fighting in Iraq and Syria, or in proclaiming powerful UK cyber deterrent capabilities, may play a part in this. But 'deterrence by denial'—denial of success, denial of cost-effectiveness—may be a strong incentive pushing recent attacks away from the UK and onto other European countries.

UK authorities confront the future with a sense of vigilant resolve. The greatest uncertainty of all for 2017 and 2018, however, is the practical effect of the Brexit vote on allied cooperation in CT.³⁸ On the face of it, CT cooperation between European security services and police forces should be the easiest element of the Brexit tapestry to replicate once the UK leaves the EU. It's clearly in the interests of all the agencies across Europe that this should be the case, and the nature of the terrorist challenge makes it imperative. There have been many statements to confirm this fact.³⁹ The UK has some 5,500 people working on digital access to intelligence—more than twice the number in France and five times the number in Germany. The UK's allies have a lot to lose if intelligence cooperation is harmed by the Brexit negotiations,⁴⁰ but new arrangements will nevertheless have to be worked out for the UK's relations with Europol and its access and contributions to common databases. The Schengen System III arrangements, to which the UK would want access, will include not just information exchange arrangements but also the facility to share DNA, fingerprint and vehicle registration details.⁴¹ Political statements aside, association agreements will have to be concluded but are as yet uncertain. More than that, as Europol further develops, a UK voice in its evolution, the way it handles its data access and its common protocols, will either not be heard or else will be inserted at a later stage in policy development.⁴²

As the anticipated terrorist wave breaks against Western societies throughout the world, the UK is relatively well placed to cope, and there's a high degree of public acceptance in Britain that terrorists will be successful from time to time. But anything that makes the UK's coordination with other partners more difficult than it otherwise need be, such as the sheer distraction of the Brexit negotiations, and still more any distancing of the UK from Europol, can't be other than a further challenge for the security services and the police.

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COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE UNITED STATES

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In late November 2016, the New York Times reported that the Obama administration was set to expand the authorisation of the use of military force to include broader authorities to strike al-Shabaab, the militant Islamist group operating throughout Somalia and other parts of the Horn of Africa.¹ This change in legislation demonstrates just how protean the threat posed by violent non-state actors remains more than 15 years after the al-Qaeda attacks of 11 September 2001. Indeed, 2016 was a year of both progress and setbacks for United States CT policy, as President Obama acknowledged in a speech on 6 December 2016 when he asserted that, while the US has made great strides against both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS), terrorism would remain a threat to the US for the foreseeable future.² Counterterrorism success is more about risk management and mitigation than about completely eliminating transnational terrorism, which is an unrealistic objective in many ways.

This chapter begins by outlining domestic and international developments in US CT policy, moves on to discuss successes and failures, and concludes with a look ahead to major challenges likely to face the incoming Trump administration.

DOMESTIC

In early 2016, much of the focus on domestic terrorism in the US was devoted to an incident that took place towards the end of 2015, when Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik killed 14 people at an office holiday party in San Bernardino, California. The subsequent FBI investigation concluded that the married couple were homegrown violent extremists inspired by foreign terrorist groups after it found that Malik had posted a pledge of allegiance on Facebook to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of IS.³

The shooting prompted further introspection in the US on how government agencies tasked with CT can work effectively to prevent the radicalisation of American citizens and led many to wonder whether the FBI could or should be doing more to keep Americans safe. For example, at a hearing in June 2016, Senator Ron Johnson (Republican, Wisconsin) and Senator Chuck Grassley (Republican, Iowa) released statements about the findings of a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General investigation that discovered a lack of cooperation between DHS entities in the wake of the San Bernardino attacks.⁴

In June 2016, Omar Mateen, an American citizen of Afghan descent, murdered 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in the worst terrorist attack on American soil since 9/11. Like the San Bernardino attackers, Mateen pledged allegiance to IS.⁵ And like events after San Bernardino, the aftermath of the Orlando attack saw concerns raised about a lack of intelligence sharing between local and federal law enforcement agencies.⁶ Local police in Florida said that the FBI should have shared more information with them about Mateen, whom the bureau had interviewed three times in 2013 and 2014 in relation to possible terrorist affiliations.⁷

In September, a stabbing spree at a shopping mall in Minnesota and a series of bomb attacks in New York and New Jersey were both inspired by Salafi-jihadist ideology.⁸ Once again, many people were highly critical of the FBI following the bombing attacks by Ahmad Khan Rahami, labelling the attacks an intelligence failure.⁹ Before launching his attack in September 2016, Rahami had been investigated by the bureau, was reported by his own father as a terrorist and had purchased bomb-making materials (including ball bearings, electric igniters and circuit boards) in his own name over the internet.¹⁰

Domestically, the US is still struggling to find an effective way to counter violent extremism and counteract the presence of terrorist groups in the social media sphere. In early 2016, a pilot federal program to combat extremist recruitment in Boston, Los Angeles and Minneapolis was criticised for 'getting off to a slow start'; some labelled the process 'frustrating', and funding had still not been received months after the program was scheduled to commence.¹¹ In 2016, the FBI launched 'shared responsibility committees', which seek to enlist mental health professionals, religious leaders, teachers, local law enforcers and social workers to help develop strategies to counter violent extremism.¹²

The State Department's counter-messaging team has had rapid leadership turnover and fumbled its way through myriad strategies in an effort to discern the most effective way to counter IS and similar groups online.¹³ A recent study led by Elizabeth Bodine-Baron found that, while IS opponents generally outnumber IS supporters by a ratio of six to one on Twitter, IS supporters out-tweet opponents, producing 50% more tweets per day.¹⁴

For all of the critiques of US domestic CT, there have also been many successes of note. The FBI reported that in 2016 it disrupted several plots targeting US military or law enforcement personnel.¹⁵ As at 30 November 2016, 111 individuals had been charged in the US with offences related to IS since the first arrests took place in March 2014. Furthermore, the FBI has stated that there are active IS-related investigations in all 50 states; 26 states have had at least one charge within their borders (New York had 19 arrests and Minnesota 14). Sixty people have pleaded guilty to the charges, and the average sentence to date has been just short of 13 years. The vast majority of those arrested are US citizens or permanent residents, and approximately 60% were arrested in operations involving informants, undercover agents, or both.¹⁶

INTERNATIONAL

At the global level, the US faces threats from a range of adversaries, including IS and its affiliates, al-Qaeda and its affiliates, several militant groups operating in Africa, the Afghan Taliban, and others.

MIDDLE EAST

Throughout 2016, US CT policy grew more assertive in combating IS. Working with elements of the Iraqi military and Kurdish Peshmerga units, the US has led a multinational coalition to retake critical territory from the group, including areas surrounding Ramadi, Fallujah and Haditha in Iraq and Jarabulus, Manbij and Dabiq in Syria.¹⁷ The current operation to retake Mosul is perhaps the centrepiece of US CT policy against IS, and a similar operation is being planned to retake the Syrian city of Raqqa, the group's headquarters, in 2017. The current mission of US special operations forces

(SOF) working in Iraq is to 'advise and assist' the Iraqi security forces, while those in Syria have worked as combat advisers and even teamed with Turkish forces to conduct joint operations along the Syrian border.¹⁸

Working by, with and through partners on the ground, the US-led coalition has managed to reduce the IS footprint in both Iraq and Syria by as much as 50% of the territory that the group once controlled in Iraq and 25% of the territory it occupied in Syria, all over the course of the past year.¹⁹ The damage that this loss of territory inflicts upon IS shouldn't be underestimated. As Liepman and Mudd commented, 'When terrorists lose territory, their message loses traction because potential followers do not have a geographic location to which they can migrate. As the Islamic State loses on the battlefield, its media and propaganda efforts decline.'²⁰ The IS's finances have also been seriously degraded over the past year as a result of measures implemented by the Counter ISIL Finance Group, which is chaired by the US, Italy and Saudi Arabia and aimed specifically at targeting the group's ability to raise money.²¹

Beyond reclaiming territory from IS, the coalition has also made great strides towards attenuating the organisation's war chest. Moreover, several senior IS leaders have been removed from the battlefield, including the group's second-in-command, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, its Minister of War, Omar al-Shishani ('Omar the Chechen'), its Minister of Information, Wa'il Adil Hasan Salman al-Fayad, and Abd al-Basit al-Iraqi, the leader of its Middle Eastern external operations network.²² The flow of foreign fighters travelling to the battlefield in Iraq and Syria has been 'cut to a trickle', from a high of about 2,000 per month at its peak in mid-2015 to as few as 50 per month, on average.²³ Moreover, the total number of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria has come down as well.²⁴

In Yemen, the US is maintaining a small SOF footprint to provide intelligence to the Emirati military.²⁵ And, although small swathes of territory throughout the country have been reclaimed from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, overall the group hasn't been significantly degraded and will remain a potent threat to the region and to the US for the immediate future.

AFRICA

In East Africa, al-Shabaab has withstood an onslaught from US-backed forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia to continue wreaking havoc throughout the Horn of Africa. Still, there has been some progress against the militants. In March 2016, manned and unmanned US aircraft conducted strikes against al-Shabaab training camps, killing an estimated 150 terrorists.²⁶ In September, US forces conducted what they labelled a 'self-defence strike' in coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia near Kismayo.²⁷

In response to the growing threat posed by Boko Haram, the US and Nigeria have established working groups focused on strengthening security cooperation between the two countries.²⁸ In neighbouring Niger, a new US\$100 million base in Agadez will allow US forces to fly MQ-9 Reaper drones, thereby substantially boosting CT capabilities in the region. One official described the base as 'the most important US military construction effort in Africa'.²⁹

SOUTH ASIA

In May 2016, a US drone strike killed Taliban leader Ahktar Mohammad Mansour in Baluchistan, Pakistan, although many Afghanistan experts have cast doubt on just what impact Mansour's removal will have on the organisation's cohesion and strength.³⁰ Moreover, the Taliban has successfully challenged Afghan Government troops in some areas, including Kunduz.³¹ On the whole, however, the Taliban looks no closer to being defeated militarily than it did at any point during the past 15 years. During 2016, it grew in strength, muscled out nascent IS elements in the country and demonstrated its potency through a string of spectacular attacks in major cities.³² In 2016, there were an estimated 9,800 US troops in Afghanistan training Afghan security forces and conducting CT operations against high-value Taliban and al-Qaeda targets. The total number of US troops in the country is expected to decline by about 1,400 in 2017.³³

EUROPE

Another success for US CT policy has been a closer working relationship with traditional allies, especially in Europe. Following the devastating IS-directed terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015) and Brussels (March 2016), the National Security Agency helped the Belgians analyse phone

metadata that led to the capture of Saleh Abdesalam, one of the key organisers of the terror network responsible for the attacks.³⁴ Perhaps looking to capitalise on the strong relationships built over the past several years with police agencies in Germany, the UK, France and Turkey—cultivated in large part to deal with the issue of foreign fighters—the Obama administration has given the Joint Special Operations Command expanded power to track, plan and potentially launch attacks on terrorist cells around the globe.³⁵

LATIN AMERICA

Achieving lasting CT success is not only difficult but requires a tremendous expenditure of resources and often takes years. A case in point is the recent peace deal announced between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government in Bogota.³⁶ The five-decade-long conflict wouldn't have had a chance of reaching a peaceful ending without Plan Colombia, a multi-year, multibillion-dollar US security cooperation effort that provided the Colombians with a range of capabilities, including 'signals intelligence assistance, precision-guided bombs for targeting insurgent leaders and drug lords, and helicopters for mobility so that the armed forces could get around the battlefield as needed.'³⁷ The lag-effect factor of successful CT policy might not be conducive to political election cycles, but good CT policy can have a lasting effect when sustained over a period of years.

LOOKING AHEAD

US CT policy has evolved over time in response to the threat posed by transnational terrorist and insurgent groups.

Following a November 2016 attack at Ohio State University in which a student originally from Somalia and inspired by ISIL attacked his classmates with his car and a knife, outgoing Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson declared that self-radicalised individuals motivated by extremist messaging on the internet are 'the most prevalent threat that we face right now in the homeland.'³⁸

Even the success of defeating IS on the battlefield is leading to second- and third-order effects with negative consequences, such as the potential for what FBI Director James Comey has dubbed a 'terrorist diaspora', which he believes will occur when scores of foreign fighters leave the Middle East and attempt to return to the West.³⁹ The IS's external operations arm, known as Amn al-Kharji, is overseen by the amniyat, which is responsible for the organisation's internal security.⁴⁰ Another possible endgame for ISIL, equally foreboding, would involve the group's surviving members going underground and working to establish a network of shadow governance while plotting to revitalise their insurgency.⁴¹

As the Trump administration prepared to take power in January 2017, the threat posed by transnational terrorism remained potent and was perhaps even exacerbated by Trump's rhetoric about banning Muslims from entering the US. Al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia, has already used videos of Trump's campaign speeches to recruit new members.⁴² Since the election, IS has voiced a favourable opinion of Trump's victory, asserting that his ascension to power will help the militants recruit new members who want to defend Islam from what they perceive as a continued Western offensive. In an interview with Reuters for a report that said Trump's election victory would make recruiting easier for jihadis, an IS commander in Afghanistan, Abu Omar Khorasani, stated, 'This guy is a complete maniac. His utter hate toward Muslims will make our job much easier because we can recruit thousands.'⁴³

The Trump administration will need to keep pace with terrorists' ability to adapt to US countermeasures while maintaining a high operational tempo punctuated by aggressive CT strikes. Continued reliance on unmanned aerial systems, SOF and small-footprint operations should be expected, at least in the early months of the new administration. One major question is whether Trump, who has been critical of Obama's handling of IS, will change the role of SOF in Iraq and Syria from 'advise and assist' to full-fledged combat operations. Another open question is whether or not a new administration will favour more intense aerial bombardment of urban population centres to raze areas ahead of the advance of coalition ground forces.⁴⁴

US CT policy will continue to evolve in response to the terror threat, which will remain heavily concentrated in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, although as IS is further degraded we should expect to see elements of spillover violence within the region, while blowback in the West remains a significant possibility.

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CANADA'S

APPROACH TO COUNTERTERRORISM IN 2016

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Canada's vast geography and its location adjoining its key ally makes it a fundamentally secure country. Still, it faces concerns and threats, so it must be vigilant. Those concerns aren't unique: many are faced worldwide, in one way or another, in relation to terrorism.

While there are numerous terrorism threats, including violent Islamist and right-wing extremists, arguably none is more serious for Canada at present than the Islamic State (IS) group.¹ As in many other countries, IS has brought its particular brand of extremism and terrorism to Canada. Its influence has manifested in two particular ways: as a recruiter, engaging and extending a dialogue to persuade Canadian citizens and residents to travel to conflict zones such as Syria and Iraq; and as a radicaliser, encouraging potential homegrown terrorists to engage in attacks at home against other Canadians.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

While Canada's national terrorist threat level remained at 'medium' in 2016, security agencies and police investigations identified an increasing range and number of threats targeted at Canadian entities. This situation has led to a change in the level of CT response required. Between 2002 and the beginning of 2015, 26 people were convicted of terrorism-related offences in Canada. Since the beginning of 2015, 16 have been charged: all are either awaiting trial or have outstanding arrest warrants. The weakening of IS in the Middle East appears to be making the group less attractive to Canadians, but is also leading to IS calling for attacks outside the Middle East, including in Canada.

DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN COUNTERTERRORISM

In recent years, the Canadian Government has implemented a number of initiatives to combat and counter the growing threat of domestic and international terrorism. Key among them is the Counter-Terrorism Information Officer (CTIO) initiative in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The initiative aims to increase awareness of terrorism and CT among first responders and to teach them to identify national security threats at their earliest stages. The program has seen success, and the knowledge base relating to terrorism and countering acts of terrorism has been shown to be formidable. In the past seven years, every major police agency in Canada, including more than 2,500 police officers, has undergone CT training, and this effort has expanded to cover emergency services in every province and territory. Still, Canada has more than 175 separate police agencies at the provincial and city levels, so effective CT measures must rely on broad knowledge sharing and skills development. This is an ongoing struggle, but it appears that the CTIO initiative is addressing it.

Internationally, Canada has established the Counter-Terrorism Capacity Building Program, which provides training and assistance to help other countries develop their CT strategies and operations.

Canada continues to identify and 'list' designated terrorist groups, in line with international protocols. Since 2015, two new groups have been added to the watch list in accordance with the Canadian Criminal Code: Islamic State—Sinai Province and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades. This ongoing action continues to be necessary as terrorist entities morph and change, and the designation provides an important reference to define terrorism in Canada's criminal law.

In June 2011, the Canadian Government initiated CT research under the Kanishka Project, which provided C\$10 million over five years to identify and advance research directly related to terrorism and CT, including a particular focus on counter-extremism and community engagement. The resulting research has produced improved knowledge and information sharing in areas such as the online activities of individuals involved with extremism, and an improved understanding of victims of terrorist activities and areas of deradicalisation. In total, more than 70 programs were funded to the end of 2016. The research is continuing to direct policies and programs to assist CT activities at home and abroad.

2016: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2016, Canadian authorities focused on monitoring the homegrown internal threat and extremist travellers. In appearances before parliamentary and Senate committees on the issue, security and police agencies said that as many as 300 people were the subject of investigation and tracking as domestic threats, while another 180 Canadians were deemed to be outside Canada and believed to be engaged with IS in theatre.

Canada continued to fight terrorism in the Middle East, primarily in Syria and Iraq in the coalition against IS. Since October 2014, this has included 2,654 sorties by the Royal Canadian Air Force (619 CC 150T Polaris refueller missions, 657 CP 140 Aurora reconnaissance missions and 1,378 CF 18 Hornet incursions). The Royal Canadian Army has also provided training contingents, medical support teams and an all-source intelligence team to the Joint Task Force—Iraq.²

The Canadian Armed Forces are engaged in multiple venues relating to terrorism, including CT activity in the Arabian Sea (Operation Artemis), combat and training missions in Iraq in the continuing fight against IS (Operation Impact) and continued support to the stabilisation mission in South Sudan (Operation Soprano).

The year continued to see police and security agencies engaged proactively in disrupting terrorist networks and engaging with both those at risk of radicalisation and those who have been radicalised. Using restorative justice models to engage and remove youth (in particular) from the influence of terrorism agitators has had some notable successes, particularly in the cities of Montreal and Calgary, which had experienced the highest rates of radicalisation in Canada.

2017: THE YEAR AHEAD

It's expected that the Canadian Government will continue its international work, primarily that managed by the Department of National Defence in the high-traffic terrorism areas of the Middle East. Canada may consider providing enhanced CT support in Africa, where there's a strong and continued mandate from the UN in the fight against terrorism.

On the domestic front, Canadian enforcement and security officials will continue to enhance collaboration and cooperation as they move their CT agenda into communities across Canada to remove the threat and, where they can't remove the threat, arrest it.

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TERRORISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM IN AFRICA

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The African continent has experienced a continued threat from established terrorist groups and has registered terrorist-related activities in countries that, traditionally, had been spared this challenge. Policy and operational responses have been varied in their nature and effectiveness.

NORTH AFRICA

SECURITY CONTEXT

North Africa continues to adjust to and, in some cases, struggle with the changes introduced by the Arab Spring.

Whereas jihadists had not expected the revolutions and remained on the sidelines as they unfolded, they took advantage of the ensuing uncertainty and instability. The proliferation of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania and Libya, seeking the implementation of sharia law, confirms this.

Regional jihadism is rooted in 1990s Algeria and what later became known as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a group that's well versed in illicit trafficking and kidnaps for ransom and has produced multiple offshoots. The region is also a battleground for Islamic State (IS).

Setbacks suffered by IS in the Middle East have prompted the group to seek bases elsewhere, hoping that a growing 'franchise' would shadow military and territorial losses. Libya has become the main African outpost of IS, which at its apex in early 2016 had territorial control over 250 kilometres of coastline and counted more than 6,000 fighters. Libya's appeal has been felt by an increased number of Arab fighters who now prefer Libya, in which the West is more reluctant to intervene militarily, to Syria or Iraq, where IS is under significant attack. Notably, it was from their Libyan base that dozens of jihadists mounted coordinated attacks against the army and the police in Tunisia in March. Yet IS has struggled to keep hold of its territory in the face of intensifying military operations.

Furthermore, Libya is the key gateway for African migrants attempting to reach Europe. IS is believed to be benefiting from human smuggling financially and as a way of deploying jihadists to Europe.¹ This unfolds against the backdrop of the Libyan civil war—now in its fifth year—fractured politics, a UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) that enjoys limited public support, a plethora of non-jihadi militias and a number of violent extremist organisations not aligned with IS, such as AQIM, Ansar al-Sharia, the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council, the Derna Mujahidin Shura Council and the Ajdabiya Revolutionaries Shura Council.

Although fragile, Tunisia is regarded as the success story of the Arab Spring, having undergone a peaceful transition following the ousting of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and having avoided chaos or the resurgence of an autocratic regime. Yet, IS's June 2015 mass shooting near Sousse, which killed 38, the November 2015 suicide attack against presidential guards that claimed 13 lives, and Tunisia's standing as the exporter of the most foreign fighters indicate a sustained threat. The last factor provided the justification for a state of emergency imposed in November 2015 and renewed until January 2017.

In Algeria, AQIM maintains a strong presence and, although years of CT operations have curtailed the group's ability to engage in an insurgency campaign, the March rocket attack against the In Salah gas plant, which is managed by British BP and Norwegian Statoil, indicated that AQIM's 'war on the interests of the Crusaders'² continued. In this context, Algeria isn't an easy operational ground for IS. Nevertheless, the group has established a local presence in the form of Wilayat Jazair or Jund al-Khilafah, an AQIM splinter group that pledged allegiance to IS in 2014. However, it's possibly the weakest of IS 'provinces' discussed above and it's unlikely to replace AQIM as the leading jihadist force in the country.

COUNTERTERRORISM DEVELOPMENTS

High levels of violence in 2016 required CT across North Africa to be driven by military actions and the strengthening of physical security, rather than by the introduction of new legislation or policy, which most countries, such as Morocco and Tunisia, had already expanded or amended in previous years.

LIBYA

Libya saw heavy fighting against IS on the ground and through US aerial strikes to degrade the group and assist with retaking territory. This came in response to a Libyan Government request for Western air strikes in January following an intense campaign of shootings, bombings and suicide attacks.

The battle for Sirte began on 12 May 2016 and resulted in the recapturing of the city in December. It was spearheaded by Al Bunyan Al Marsoos (Operation Solid Structure), consisting of Misrata militias and the GNA. In August, the US launched new strikes against IS targets in Operation Odyssey Lightning. IS's coastal provinces, Wilayat Tarabulus and Wilayat al-Barqah, were significantly reduced. Its third branch, Wilayat Fizzan in the southwest, could represent a viable option for IS regrouping by taking advantage of the institutional vacuum, the continued presence of active cells and the possibility of attacking oil installations.³ Some 1,000 fighters are now believed to be present in Libya.

This offensive prompted the scattering of militants. Local intelligence indicated that some 600 Tunisian jihadists had ‘vanished’ in Libya and were likely to attempt to enter Tunisia, leading to a need to increase border surveillance.⁴ Meanwhile, Algeria began installing surveillance cameras along its border with Tunisia in a move in line with Algiers’ traditional prioritisation of border control. Algeria has also nearly completed trenches along the borders with Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Above all, Algiers intends to seal its border with Libya to reduce the risk of attacks within its territory after the battle of Sirte. In August, the European Union Border Mission (EUBAM) Libya was extended until August 2017.

European nations have also been involved in CT efforts in Libya. Italy hosted an anti-IS coalition summit where members agreed on intensified efforts. Rome offered its Sigonella air base in Sicily in support of US drone operations. Additionally, at a May summit in Vienna, UN Security Council permanent members, alongside 15 other nations, offered to arm the GNA against IS despite the UN arms embargo on Libya. It later emerged that both France and Italy had deployed special forces to Libya. The UK provided technical assistance.

The fractured nature of the Libyan political and military landscape was the greatest hindrance to CT after the actions of the jihadi groups. There’s significant tension between the UN-backed GNA and the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA), headed by General Khalifa Haftar, which has significant capability and is fighting against Islamist militias but supports the rival government in Tobruk. In 2016, local and international calls for coordination between the GNA’s and LNA’s operations to liberate Sirte were ignored. In addition, the LNA has been receiving support from Egypt, which is concerned about the security of its western borders, and the United Arab Emirates, which is believed to have supported the LNA’s assault on Sirte by providing military vehicles. Haftar is also believed to have discussed weapons transfers from Russia.

This underscores the problem of a missing national army or police force legitimately representing the Libyan people. In the absence of a coordinated force and approach, anti-Islamist militias have arisen, such as the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade and the Libya Dawn, which, in addition to the GNA, Western partners and the LNA, are also fighting IS. All of these factors produced a complex environment in Libya at the end of 2016.

ALGERIA

The protection of Algeria’s borders against IS infiltration has been one of Algiers’ top priorities. The Algerian People’s National Army has also carried out military operations against AQIM in Illizi, Bouïra and El-Oued provinces, among others, as well as against IS, including a major operation in June that resulted in the arrest of 332 suspected militants across 11 provinces.

In May, following reports of possible coordinated terrorist attacks against Algeria, Algerian special forces carried out multiple CT exercises in the northern, southern and coastal areas of the country. The exercises also involved elite units of the National Gendarmerie, special forces of the Directorate of Intelligence and Security, troops from parachute regiments, and the navy.

In September, the government announced the establishment of a new anti-terrorism police force under military command. This prepared the ground for devolving some CT powers to selected local special police units and was part of a broader strategy to transfer CT responsibilities from security to military forces. According to Algerian authorities, this has helped to degrade Jund al-Khilafah and AQIM since 2014.

In late 2015, the Ministry of Religious Affairs announced plans for a national counter-extremism observatory to curb sectarianism and radical views that are ‘alien’ to Algeria’s tradition. A year later, the ministry appears particularly concerned with the ‘risk of Shi’ite indoctrination’ and the growing number of conversions.

Looking to 2017, reports of declining health of Algeria’s strongman secular president may see the country’s relative political stability at risk, with subsequent impact on security. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika came to power in 2002 following a bloody civil war between Islamist and secular groups, and both might seek to take advantage of a power vacuum to revive their fortunes.

TUNISIA

Tunisia renewed its November 2015 state of emergency, which is now set continue at least until early 2017. Tunisian forces have carried out a number of arrests and dismantled IS cells connected to Libya. Tunisia has been preoccupied by border security, particularly in the southeast, where in February it completed the construction of barriers. The transfer of US military equipment, including jeeps, light aircraft and a communications system, as part of broader bilateral CT cooperation further strengthened border control efforts. Bilateral cooperation also included a three-week military exercise with US Marines and local special forces—the first between the two units.

In March, the National Counter-Terrorism Commission was established to coordinate efforts across ministries and the security sector. While this was a welcome development, and strategic documents had been prepared in 2014 and 2015, a fully-fledged national plan outlining a multidimensional CT approach is missing. Notwithstanding the genuine threat, the repeated extension of the state of emergency is viewed by some human rights organisations as a way of curbing freedoms and returning to a police state. If true, this would undermine democratic gains after the Arab Spring.⁵

The Ministry of Religious Affairs launched a year-long countering violent extremism (CVE) campaign aimed at the youth and featuring a website containing sermons and religious seminars promoting moderate Islam and countering takfiri ideology. The initiative is complemented by programs on public and private TV and radio stations and a call centre to answer questions on Islam.⁶ Its effect remains to be seen.

MOROCCO

Moroccan CT operations in 2016 were dominated by several arrests and the dismantling of IS cells in the north, southwest and south and the disputed territory of Western Sahara. In May, Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi—self-proclaimed emir of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara—called for attacks against Moroccan troops, the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, and Western organisations.

Fifty-two individuals were arrested in July, suspected of planning the establishment of an IS affiliate in Morocco and plotting multiple attacks targeting 'prisons, security establishments, festivals and leisure centres in several cities of Morocco, apart from assassinations of security officials, soldiers and tourists.'⁷ In October, the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations reported the dismantling of a 10-strong all-female IS cell operating across eight cities, including Rabat and Tangiers, where the cell had been recruiting and training women.

Authorities near Casablanca apprehended a Belgian national of Moroccan origin linked to Salah Abdesalam, the ringleader of the November 2015 Paris attacks.

In 2015, Morocco inaugurated the Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines, and Morchidates in Rabat as the cornerstone of its strategy to oppose extremist views. In 2016, the institute enrolled 250 Moroccans and also established itself as a regional hub, attracting more than 400 students from Mali, Tunisia, Guinea Conakry, Ivory Coast and France.

In April, Morocco assumed co-chairmanship, with the Netherlands, of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, of which it is a founding member. Established in 2011, the forum serves as a mechanism that supports the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. At the forum's seventh ministerial meeting in September, members officially adopted the forum's toolkit for the Initiative to Address the Life Cycle of Radicalization to Violence.

Morocco and Algeria experience difficult diplomatic relations owing to political disagreement over the status of Western Sahara. This has hindered CT cooperation, with repercussions for the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, of which they are both members.

THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

SECURITY CONTEXT

Known for its regular droughts, nomadic tribes and illicit trafficking routes, the Sahel became a critical security concern when the flow of weapons and mercenaries from post-Gadafi Libya ignited a conflict in northern Mali in 2012.

The region features a plethora of violent actors. In Mali alone, by 2015, two coalitions of armed groups were engaged in peace talks with the government: the partly pro-government Platform and the more hard-line Coordination.⁸ Although the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation was signed in the summer, attacks have continued, particularly at the hands of the AQIM-aligned groups Ansar Dine, the Macina Liberation Front (which declared allegiance to Ansar Dine in May 2016), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, al-Mourabitoun and AQIM itself. UN peacekeepers from the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), humanitarian workers, government officials, military bases and civilians have been targeted. Securing territorial control remains among the aims of the jihadists, as indicated by the capture of the town of Boni in central Mali in September (it was recaptured shortly afterwards by the Malian Army).

The targeting of Westerners remained a trend, as shown by the abduction of two Australian aid workers in Burkina Faso, close to the Malian border, in January and a Swiss national near Timbuktu in February.

Joint AQIM and al-Mourabitoun attacks against the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, killed 21 people in November 2015, and against the Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, together with a nearby restaurant in January killed 30 people, confirming the jihadists' desire to single out Westerners. Attacks on hotels and restaurants known for being frequented by foreign and Western visitors, UN workers, airline crews, expats and journalists indicate that those targets were deliberately selected. In claiming responsibility for the January attacks, AQIM made it clear that they had been carried out in 'revenge against France and the disbelieving West'.⁹

The incident was the deadliest terrorist attack and the first by al-Qaeda in the history of Burkina Faso—a country that's an important base for France's regional CT efforts in the Sahel and which is supported by the presence of US troops. Unlike its neighbours, Burkina Faso hasn't previously been confronted by a sustained jihadist threat, and it prides itself on its strong social integration and peaceful coexistence among Muslims (60% of the population), Christians and adherents of other faiths.¹⁰

The past year demonstrated AQIM's desire to extend its influence beyond its traditional territory in Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Algeria. In March, 18 people were killed by AQIM and al-Mourabitoun at the Gran Bassam resort in Ivory Coast. A month later, Ghanaian intelligence identified both Ghana and Togo as likely targets.

This spread of attacks coincided with mounting concerns about IS's attempts to penetrate the region. When Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi—al-Mourabitoun's co-founder—issued a pledge of allegiance to IS in May 2015, he was removed. Internal clashes ensued. A year later, he announced that his new group, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), had carried out its first attack against a Burkina Faso security installation near the border with Mali and Niger on 1 September. Further attacks were carried out in Burkina and Niger. The group's bayat to IS was de facto acknowledged in late October but ISGS is yet to become a formal IS province. Its capabilities and likelihood of succeeding in an AQIM-dominated region remain unclear.

COUNTERTERRORISM DEVELOPMENTS

CT efforts across the region have been marked by the adoption of a regional approach.

Senegal hosted the annual Flintlock military exercise in February, which included representatives from the 33 nations of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. It involved more than 1,700 African, US and European troops and aimed at improving interoperability and cooperation among regional and international security forces.

A US–Senegal defence accord was signed in May, allowing a permanent American presence in the country, including access to airports and other facilities, to support regional CT operations and provide a rapid response to emergencies. In September, Washington also confirmed plans for a US\$50 million drone base in Agadez, Niger, to conduct missions in support of CT operations in Libya, Mali and Nigeria. Senegal hasn't yet been the target of terrorist attacks but it increased security measures following the attacks in Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast. Several arrests were made in Senegal during 2016.

In May, the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM-Mali) began its third two-year mandate. This term, EUTM-Mali will focus on developing the capacity of domestic armed forces to train their own troops. The UN CT Implementation Task Force sought to expand into other Sahelian countries to complement the CVE work done in Mali with a regional strategy.

Possibly the key regional intervention of recent years is France's Operation Barkhane, which includes troops, special forces, drones and aircraft with bases in Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger. Barkhane, an extension of Paris's 2013 intervention in Mali, works alongside MINUSMA and has come under repeated jihadist attacks. The operation has been extended until 30 June 2017. MINUSMA's failure to establish stability in Mali is largely due to its mandate, which lacks an aggressive CT component allowing UN forces to pursue jihadists. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon argued in favour of changing the mandate and deploying 2,500 additional troops in the face of mounting challenges on the ground. In July, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), together with the UN, sent a mission to Mali to assess the feasibility of establishing a CT force to support peacekeepers.

At the 49th session of the Economic Community of West African States, meeting in June, heads of state discussed plans for a joint multinational CT force in Mali. The defence ministers of another grouping—The Sahel Group of Five (Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mali)—announced the creation of a special rapid intervention and CT force in the region. It will consist of approximately 100 highly trained troops and is to be deployed against IS and AQIM across the Sahel. It remains unclear how these forces would coordinate. What's certain is that France is overstretched in the region. Increased participation of African troops in Mali would be beneficial and allow Paris to focus elsewhere in the Sahel and West Africa. This would make it harder for jihadists to set up bases in remote and uncontrolled areas or expand into new territories.

Authorities have also made significant arrests. Ivorian authorities apprehended several individuals involved in the Gran Bassam attack, including the person who transported the weapons to the resort. Burkina Faso police detained 10 suspects linked to the attack.

THE LAKE CHAD BASIN REGION

SECURITY CONTEXT

The region comprising Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon has been battling a violent campaign by the group calling itself People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad, most commonly known as Boko Haram ('Western civilisation is sinful/forbidden'). Starting as an isolated sect in the early 2000s, it became an insurgent movement fighting for the Islamisation of Nigeria. Over time, it began attacks into Niger, Chad and Cameroon, often in response to growing military operations by those countries.

Boko Haram, a long-time al-Qaeda sympathiser, pledged allegiance to IS in 2015 and later rebranded itself as Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). The incorporation of Boko Haram into IS's ranks raised concerns at a time when both groups had suffered significant losses. The first clear implications of this new relationship were frequent social media interactions and ISWAP's improved technological savviness. There were indications of physical contacts between the Nigerians and IS members in Libya, but operations in Nigeria saw little to no change.

In the summer of 2016, a rift within ISWAP was underway. Abu Musab al-Barnawi, son of Boko Haram's late founder Mohamed Yusuf, was designated ISWAP leader, sidelining Boko Haram's chief, Abubakar Shekau. This led to two separate organisations, although earlier fractures within Boko Haram showed significant fluidity among factions and offshoots; the same can be expected in the current context. Shekau's 'traditional' Boko Haram continues with the indiscriminate

and opportunistic targeting of military, government and civilians, while ISWAP under al-Barnawi claims to prefer the strategic targeting of military personnel and infrastructure and foreigners. Notably, ISWAP's approach is more aligned with AQIM's than IS's and doesn't exclude a return to AQIM's sphere of influence in the future. The opportunism that has characterised Boko Haram's interactions with other jihadists in the past lends further credibility to this speculation.

The military offensive that followed President Muhammadu Buhari's appointment in May 2015 and continued into 2016, together with more concerted regional efforts under the Multinational Joint Task Force, has weakened Boko Haram/ISWAP. The group is no longer able to carry out attacks across the country or hold territory. Activities are primarily concentrated in the northern part of Borno state (Nigeria) and borderlands of Niger, Cameroon and, to a lesser degree, Chad. Many militants have been either killed or arrested, and hundreds of abducted civilians have been rescued.

While significant progress has been made in the fight against Boko Haram, the proliferation of new armed groups and the re-emergence of old ones plagued Nigeria over 2016. The conflict between Fulani herdsman and local farmers, which was previously confined to the Middle Belt region, spread more broadly. Clashes between security forces and the Shia Islamic Movement of Nigeria have left hundreds killed. Biafra separatist sentiments are reinvigorated and often overlap with the renewed militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta. That area is of great concern. The Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), alongside similar groups, have engaged in attacks against oil infrastructure, purportedly in pursuit of a separate Niger Delta state. This escalation has prompted the government to launch Operation Crocodile Smile as part of Buhari's 'threat' to treat the NDA as 'terrorists'—in reference to the significant military capabilities deployed against Boko Haram. An NDA ceasefire was short-lived, and attacks continue at the time of writing.

COUNTERTERRORISM DEVELOPMENTS

Nigeria's approach to Boko Haram has been driven by the military. Buhari's appointment was followed by the strengthening of cooperation among Lake Chad Basin countries—a process that has benefited from the input and convening power of France. The use of vigilantes—the Civilian Joint Task Force—has contributed to military progress, but not without human rights violations. Without an effective disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration program for the thousands of taskforce members active in Nigeria, there's the risk that they'll turn into a new security threat. Planning for such a program is reportedly underway.

In December 2015, President Buhari declared—perhaps overoptimistically—that Boko Haram was 'technically' defeated, yet its elimination required a prolonged military offensive. The defence establishment continued its efforts to build a military-industrial complex to make Nigeria self-sufficient in facing current and future threats. In addition, the administration has continued its probe against government and military officials who, under the previous administration, had allegedly embezzled funds aimed for military supply, undermining CT and counterinsurgency operations.

Many CT arrests were made, including of an IS recruiter and would-be female suicide attackers. Hundreds of kidnapped civilians were rescued, and dozens of militants have surrendered.

In June, Niger launched a major offensive against Boko Haram and Chad and deployed a 2,000-strong contingent to Bosso, Niger, in response to escalating attacks.

Cameroon, whose Far North Region has been particularly affected by the violence, has taken a heavy-handed approach. In 2016, Amnesty International reported arbitrary arrests, torture and summary executions in overcrowded prisons filled with suspected terrorists living in 'horrific conditions'.¹¹

Cameroon began the planning for the first Unified Focus exercise, scheduled for April 2017, which will include elements of the Multinational Joint Task Force alongside US and European partners in a counter-Boko Haram scenario.

In May, Abuja hosted a regional security conference that brought together Lake Chad Basin heads of state, Benin, the US, France, the UK and other regional and international stakeholders to strengthen cooperation against Boko Haram, discuss a broader action plan for infrastructural development, address the human displacement crisis and improve information sharing, including

through an intelligence fusion cell. The UK pledged £40 million over four years to support CT and CVE efforts, as well as counterinsurgency training for approximately 1,000 regional troops.

Earlier, at the February AU Summit, donors had pledged US\$250 million against Boko Haram, including US\$110 million from Nigeria, US\$50 million from the EU and donations from the UK, the US, Switzerland and Africa.

As part of Nigeria's 'softer' approach to CT, the Office of the National Security Advisor launched the De-radicalisation programme guide in April. The guide was endorsed by the EU. Since 2014, deradicalisation has focused on prison programs for convicted terrorists and those awaiting trial; the programs are expected to expand into after-care support.

Nigeria's NGO and civil society sector has delivered CVE programs, including programs to empower victims of terrorism and engage youth and women. The UN CT Implementation Task Force sponsored a two-year program, ending in mid-2016, on countering the appeal of terrorism and building community resilience in Nigeria. The program consisted of CVE training and the establishment of the Partnership Against Violent Extremism, which involved civil society organisations and government representatives.

With the involvement of local municipalities, CVE initiatives are also ongoing in the Far North Region of Cameroon. Yaounde II, Kolofata, Kousseri and Mokolo, alongside Kaduna and Kano in Nigeria, Kiffa in Mauritania, Dakar in Senegal and Mombasa in Kenya, belong to the global Strong Cities Network. Launched in September 2015, the network includes mayors, municipal-level policymakers and practitioners who are united in building social cohesion and community resilience against violent extremism.

The US has launched a new approach to CVE in West Africa to guide programming during the 2016–2021 period with the aim of offering both direct support for CVE in at-risk communities and capacity building to improve long-term resilience. The Lake Chad Basin has been identified as a subregion requiring immediate actions. The US Embassy in Abuja invited applications for the establishment of a Nigerian CVE hub—or 'peace platform'—to be run by a civil society organisation and produce Hausa language radio programs and social media campaigns.

THE HORN OF AFRICA

SECURITY CONTEXT

Security concerns in East Africa have been dominated by Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (Movement of Striving Youth), commonly known as al-Shabaab. The group emerged in 2006 as the militant wing of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts, which took over most of southern Somalia.

A formal member of the al-Qaeda franchise since 2012, al-Shabaab has become infamous for high-profile operations, particularly since 2013, targeting Somalia and neighbouring countries, especially Kenya. However, the group has suffered internal fractures, loss of territorial control and US drone and air strike operations that have degraded its capability. As a result, it has reverted to guerrilla tactics in Somalia and Kenya.

A spate of attacks in Somalia indicated a strategic change specifically aimed at disrupting the already fragile political process in the lead-up to the November parliamentary elections. Military bases were repeatedly targeted, culminating in suicide attacks against the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) headquarters in August and other high-profile attacks to terrorise civilians. Public executions of civilians suspected of spying for the Somali Federal Government or AMISOM have been reported.

Although al-Shabaab now controls less territory, it has continued to seize towns, and in mid-2016 it opened a new battlefield against Somali and Ethiopian troops in the central Galgaduud region.

The National Intelligence Service confirmed that, in addition to traditional recruitment areas in northern and central Kenya, recruiters had started moving westwards in the Rift Valley, Nyanza and western Kenya, where they have exploited local grievances to fuel inter-religious tensions and entice the youth to join the group, including by using mass and social media.

Al-Shabaab hasn't been immune to IS's appeal. In December 2014, IS urged the Somalis to join its ranks. Whereas al-Shabaab's leadership remains loyal to al-Qaeda (a circumstance aided by close ties to AQAP), many young and foreign fighters have started to look to IS. Kenya-based preacher Hussein Hassan, once a strong supporter of al-Shabaab, has urged followers to accept al-Baghdadi as their commander. In October 2015, spiritual leader and high-ranking al-Shabaab member Abdul Qadir Mumin pledged his allegiance. In April 2016, the new Kenya- and Tanzania-based Jahba East Africa—which is likely to consist of former al-Shabaab members—joined IS. Later that month, Kenyan authorities foiled a planned biological attack that would have involved the use of anthrax, claiming it was linked to IS. In

September, IS claimed it was behind an attack involving three female assailants at a police station in Mombasa. In their first successful attempt to seize territorial control, in late October militants raised IS's black flag over the small port town of Qandala in Bari, northeastern Somalia. Bari is part of the semi-autonomous region of Putland, where Mumin and other al-Shabaab defectors are believed to be hiding.

COUNTERTERRORISM DEVELOPMENTS

Operations against al-Shabaab have continued to produce results. Senior commanders were killed alongside hundreds of lower-ranking fighters and bases were destroyed. The offensive intensified in the northern region of Putland, where the group had become more active after having been ousted from its southern strongholds. IS elements were also targeted in Janaale, where training camps were destroyed. In addition, Somalia passed its new Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism Law.

In March, AMISOM countries pledged to reinforce military operations in Somalia and establish a joint AMISOM command-and-control structure to improve cooperation. The AU later extended AMISOM's mandate until 30 May 2017, even though earlier in the year the EU had announced a 20% funding cut for the 22,000-strong mission. The decision caused a crisis, and Uganda and Kenya threatened to withdraw in 2017. The UK deployed the first 10 of 70 soldiers to assist Somalia with medical, logistical and engineering support, and the US engaged in a drone strike campaign.

A new operation against al-Shabaab-controlled territory in Jubaland (southern Somalia) was launched in August. Somali troops, together with AMISOM, were able to retake a number of towns close to the Kenyan border. Yet there have been a number of setbacks. Ethiopian troops who have been operating in the southwest abandoned a number of their bases in mid-2016, allowing al-Shabaab to occupy them and raising concerns over the state of the military coalition. Starting in late 2015, Ethiopia experienced protests, and it's likely that troops had to be repositioned domestically.

Kenya has continued targeting militants, arresting suspects and closing down religious schools in coastal Kenya believed to be recruiting for al-Shabaab. In mid-2016, a new air force unit was set up to recover soldiers behind enemy lines. A new anti-terror police unit was established in Isiolo (central Kenya), and it's planned to create other units in the towns of Moyale and Marsabit. The disappearance of innocent civilians was reported following their arrest by anti-terrorism police, who are alleged to be targeting Kenya's Muslim minority.

Owing to logistical and humanitarian challenges, in November Nairobi postponed by six months the controversial closure of Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp (hosting some 330,000 people) and the repatriation of its mostly Somali inhabitants. The deputy prime minister had described the camp as an 'existential security threat to Kenya' and the base from which al-Shabaab had planned major terrorist attacks and recruited new fighters.

Kenya deepened international CT cooperation by finalising agreements with South Africa on police and defence cooperation covering intelligence sharing, terrorist financing and stabilisation initiatives for countries at risk of violent extremism. Fighter pilots have also received training from Jordanian troops in support of CT operations.

In August, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (an East African bloc) announced plans to develop a regional strategy on preventing and countering violent extremism. With the support of the UN Development Programme, it launched national consultations in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania that would then be used to produce the strategy.

Kenya adopted a new National Strategy for CVE led by the National CT Centre in the President's office. Ambassador Martin Kimani was appointed Special Envoy for CVE. The strategy is to be implemented by the Ministry of Interior and Coordination and will focus primarily on the rehabilitation of returning foreign fighters.

East Africa is a recipient of Western CVE programming. The US-sponsored Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism was launched in 2009 in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda with a focus, beyond CVE, on curbing terrorism financing, border security, the rule of law in the CT context, and diminishing the capacity of terrorist networks. In 2014, the European Commission launched a three-year regional program as part of the Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism initiative, which is aimed at understanding the drivers of radicalisation and producing best practices for intervention in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

In 2016, intending either to target local authorities or to hurt foreign nationals and interests, Africa-based jihadist groups confirmed a now established trend: the developing world bears most of the brunt of terrorism.

Levels of violence have been such that the bulk of 2016 CT activities have been of a military nature, underpinning the sad reality that terrorism, insurgency and conflict are intimately intertwined. Regardless of what the starting point was, such as a secular insurrection in Mali or militant Islamism in Somalia, the groups have exploited local political, social and economic grievances to build their support bases. However, the intensification of indiscriminate violence has significantly reduced their popular support—as in the case of Boko Haram.

The past year fed the ongoing debate about whether African groups are part of a global jihadist movement or represent forms of localised jihadism. I argue that local dynamics, grievances and agendas are the main driving forces behind the emergence and growth of the African groups and that connections with jihadists outside the continent are less a genuine attempt to contribute to the establishment of a global caliphate and more a tool to strengthen domestic jihad.

The interconnectedness of groups within and across subregions is evident, particularly in the north and west of the continent. This is facilitated by individual connections among militants as well as porous borders and the greater ease of communication through information and communication technology. This also translates into the spillover of extremist ideology and violent activities from Nigeria into the Lake Chad Basin region, from Algeria to the whole of the Maghreb, the Sahel and West Africa, from Somalia to the whole Swahili coast—and from terrorism-prone to hitherto terrorism-free nations. IS-linked arrests in South Africa, an incident involving suspected al-Shabaab members in Rwanda and the killing of an IS recruiter in Kigali confirm the latter trend.

Responses have required concerted multinational efforts. Western involvement, such as the US strikes in Sirte and in Somalia, has often but not always proven a game-changer. Whereas regional approaches are welcome because they reduce the risks associated with country-specific initiatives, resourcing such initiatives is challenging—hence the importance of greater African missions that could take some of the pressure off France's Operation Barkhane. Yet a surge in plans requires coordination, which seemed lacking in 2016.

The stepping up in security operations and the implementation of CT legislation have been abused. Evidence in Kenya, Nigeria, Cameroon and Tunisia—to mention cases in 2016—indicates that the enforcement of CT laws and the introduction of emergency measures under the guise of CT have in some cases resulted in restrictions on freedom of expression and in physical abuse.

The lack of a commonly agreed definition for CVE leaves room for interpretations that have resulted in the stigmatisation of communities such as Somalis in Kenya. In turn, given the key role played by social marginalisation in radicalisation, CVE initiatives might prove counterproductive and infringe human rights.

Developments in 2016 confirmed the multidimensional nature of the challenge. CT, CVE, counterinsurgency and counter-organised crime actions are all part of the spectrum of operations needed to fight jihadists in Africa. It's a challenge to combine them effectively, but links between terrorism and drugs, weapons and, increasingly, human smuggling (together with other criminal activities, such as kidnap for ransom) are evident and play an important role in sustaining the groups, which remain resilient in the face of expanding military operations. On the whole, African groups are less capable of sustaining full-fledged insurgency campaigns and holding extensive territorial control, but they continue to cause havoc, disrupt lives and economies, produce high numbers of fatalities and force large-scale human displacement.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The military success achieved on some fronts in 2016 shouldn't lead to complacency. Nations are still facing a significant threat, and the fragmentation and infighting across the entire spectrum of African jihadists (sometimes as a result of targeted Western assassinations of leaders) could lead to unpredictability and higher risks.

Although high levels of insecurity ought to be met by military operations, a multidimensional approach is essential, and development and humanitarian initiatives can't wait until security is re-established.

Most CT is state-centric, which is unsurprising given that the concept itself originated in the West. However, the idea of Westphalian order is ill-fitted to the African continent. Capacity building to strengthen central government structures that aren't always perceived as legitimate by the population, that have a predatory nature or that command armies not always behaving as the protectors of the people can be problematic and, indeed, counterproductive to achieving CT and CVE goals. In places such as Mali or Somalia, ethnicity or clan kinship might be much stronger determinants of identity

and loyalty than central governments, and foreign actions to support central governments might be viewed with suspicion.¹²

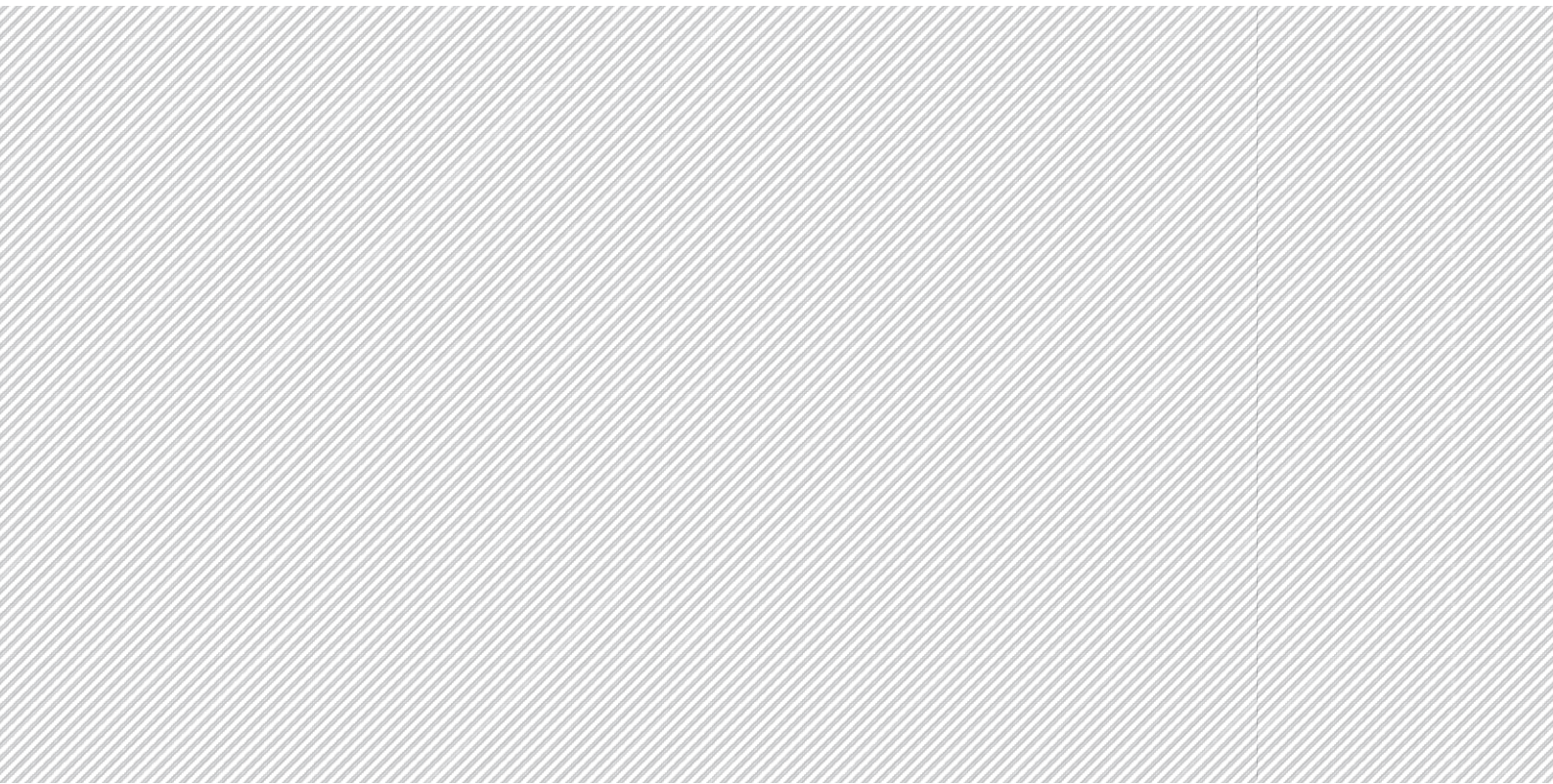
The negative effects of this approach are evident when Westerners collaborate with autocratic regimes as important CT partners, such as Cameroon, which has hosted a US drone base since 2015, and Djibouti, where the US military has its largest permanent presence in Africa. An approach that prioritises direct bottom-up engagements might be a better option and would also mitigate the risk of funds being diverted or stolen by corrupt officials. It might also produce a clearer understanding of local people's grievances and priorities.

Domestic agendas are likely to affect countries' ability to join regional CT operations. This is particularly true of fragile democracies. For instance, in the longer term there's a risk that Ethiopia's internal tensions will constrain its contribution against al-Shabaab. Burundi, Uganda and Kenya have all experienced political turmoil, and their commitment to AMISOM shouldn't be taken for granted. Interestingly, this year the EU threatened to cut its commitment to the Burundian contingent in response to repressive measures adopted to crush domestic pro-democracy demonstrations.

Furthermore, longstanding diplomatic tensions hinder smooth CT cooperation and, without improvements in sight, this should be taken into consideration for future CT engagements. Above all, the tense relationship between Morocco and Algeria means that countries that intend to develop strategies with Rabat or Algiers have to do so on a bilateral basis, rather than as part of a regional effort.

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COUNTERTERRORISM IN AND BY RUSSIA

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Russian counterterrorism efforts in 2016, as defined by the Russian Government, include domestic and foreign policy components. Abroad, Russia emphasised its military and other support to Bashar al-Assad in Syria, although it also maintained information exchanges and other cooperation with security services around the world. At home, the focus was on a range of counter-extremist operations and new legislation. In all cases, Russia continued to use a broader definition of 'terrorism' than is common and based its actions on the belief that brutal measures are needed to combat terrorist and extremist threats.

VIOLENCE AT HOME

There appears to have been an increase in violent jihadist attacks in Russia in 2016, although solid data on incidents isn't yet available. This follows reductions in both 2014 and 2015, which were probably linked to the destruction of the long-standing 'Caucasus emirate' insurgency, the remnants of which have largely sworn allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). For its part, IS has reportedly been growing in popularity in the country, in some cases attracting Russian citizens and migrants from Central Asia to Syria, mostly via Turkey. Estimates of the number of Russians in Syria, including estimates provided by government officials, vary but tend to be in the thousands.¹

Russian officials have historically dismissed concerns that some of those fighters would return to carry out attacks at home, arguing that Russian military action in Syria would destroy fighters from the Russian Federation.² However, it does appear that there have been returnees, and Russia's policy is to arrest and imprison them.

Russian police officials reported more than 1,300 terrorism-related crimes in the first six months of 2016, as well as 830 crimes linked to extremism.³ While the breakdown of the numbers isn't clear from official reports, the crimes certainly comprise far more than IS-related activities; officials say that they include hundreds of criminal cases pursued against individuals who took part in fighting in Syria and Iraq.⁴

Caucasian Knot estimates that 118 people were killed in the North Caucasus conflict between 1 January and 30 September 2016: 91 militants, 19 security forces personnel and 8 civilians. Seventy-five people were wounded, including 15 militants, 55 security forces personnel and 5 civilians.⁵ This is in line with a longer term downward trend in security forces' deaths over the past four years.⁶ This data doesn't include activity in the rest of the country or extremist or violent hate-crime attacks on members of minority religious groups, LGBTQI people, and others. Those offences appear to be occurring at rates similar to those in past years; the Sova Center has estimated between 38 and 41 victims for the seven months of 2016 to 1 August 2016.⁷

NEW LEGISLATION

Countering extremism and terrorism is a central component of Russian national security rhetoric. The country's national security strategy, issued on 31 December 2015, speaks of threats from terrorists and extremists, foreign and domestic.⁸ However, those terms are not well defined and often encompass a broader range of activity than is commonly covered by the terminology in Western states, such as activity by non-violent opposition and religious groups. Indeed, Russian legal frameworks and security structures don't clearly distinguish between violent 'extremism' and non-violent opposition, radical speech and writing.

In 2016, the most notable legislative act to address these issues was the passage of legislation known as the Yarovaya Law. Ostensibly meant to protect against terrorism, these laws require that telephone and internet providers store data about phone calls and text messages, require email and messaging providers to have 'backdoors' for security services to access encrypted devices and information, and make criminally liable anyone who fails to report another person's terrorism planning or action. The laws also restrict religious evangelism. Critics see these laws as geared to further crack down on opposition overall, rather than to fight violent extremism.⁹

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Russian security services are meant to coordinate counterterrorism operations through the National Antiterrorism Committee, which has multilateral representation from state agencies such as the Federal Security Service or FSB (whose director also heads the committee) and the ministries of Internal Affairs or MVD, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Health, Justice and Transport, and many others, including some local officials. The committee's role, on paper, is comparable to that of the US National Counterterrorism Center—it's a means to ensure that efforts are aligned, information is shared and policy is clear.

An important addition in 2016 was the new Federal National Guard, or Russian Guard, which was created in April to take on a variety of domestic security tasks that were previously the responsibility of the Internal Affairs Ministry's police forces, the Federal Security Service, or both. The paramilitary guard encompasses the specialised police units that had been part of the Internal Affairs Ministry. It isn't entirely clear just what its roles and functions will be in future, but a substantial counterterrorism and counter-extremism responsibility is part of its stated mandate.¹⁰ Given its extensive powers, which allow it to circumvent ordinary police procedures, many speculate that its role is as a high-end domestic control organisation—well beyond the counterterrorism mission.¹¹

DOMESTIC ACTIONS AND OPERATIONS

Russian law enforcement and military personnel continue to be deployed in particularly large numbers in the North Caucasus region. In the Chechen Republic, President Ramzan Kadyrov controls his own security forces and maintains a highly repressive system of rule largely independent of Moscow. While there's some speculation about what the creation of the Russian Guard may mean for Kadyrov's control, at the time of writing there had been no real changes. Punitive measures continued to be taken against relatives of both fighters and political critics, ranging from harassment to torture and burning homes.¹² While insurgent violence is greatly reduced in Chechnya, it hasn't been eliminated. Moreover, as noted above, it remains on the rise elsewhere in Russia.

Local authorities appear to have some leeway in their responses throughout Russia, and brutality is a key variable. For example, rehabilitation and deradicalisation efforts have been attempted in Dagestan and Ingushetia, with some reported success. Throughout the country, however, 'counter-terrorism' efforts tend to focus on Muslims and political opposition. As the figures for incidents above suggest, arrest rates are high. Authorities consistently detain people affiliated with non-violent Islamist groups and organisations. For example, the detention and registration of Salafi Muslims (or those suspected of being Salafists) remains a common practice. Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is defined as a terrorist organisation and banned in Russia—as it also is, to varying degrees, in Germany, Egypt, Turkey and China—are subject to arrest and prosecution. The highest rates of this activity are in the North Caucasus, but detentions and arrests also take place throughout Russia. Meanwhile, reports that local officials facilitate travel to Syria for some Russian jihadis persisted, most often in the North Caucasus. Such reports were particularly common in the lead-up to the Sochi Olympic Games in early 2014.

When following up counterterrorism leads, Russian officials often declare 'counter-terrorism operations' conditions in a given area. This is a regime in which freedom of movement is restricted, individuals are subjected to searches and security services have wide leeway, including latitude to monitor telephone conversations and other communications, evacuate citizens, impose quarantines, commandeer public transport and take other measures.¹³ A rough estimate suggests that such emergency measures were declared about 20 times in Dagestan alone between 1 January and 5 November 2016.¹⁴ Plot disruptions are often reported, but it's difficult to assess either the numbers or the form of activity based on readily available information.

SYRIA

Russia calls its military involvement in Syria a counterterrorism operation. Russian forces operate jointly with Syrian and Iranian units and provide support to some Kurdish units. Russia's forces in Syria include air force components, some special forces on the ground, and trainers and advisers embedded with Syrian units. There are also medical and other support units. Russian coordination with both Iran and Syria appears to be notably effective.

Critics, particularly in the US and Europe, accuse Russia of focusing not on targeting IS, but on attacking the broad range of Assad's opponents, including through the brutal bombardment of the city of Aleppo, which has caused large numbers of civilian casualties and led many to accuse Syria and Russia of war crimes.¹⁵ Although it seems likely that Russia is relying at least in part on its partners for air force targeting, the Syria campaign is also not out of line with Moscow's historical war-fighting practices, which tend to emphasise firepower and de-emphasise concerns about collateral damage.

Talks between the US and Russia on establishing a viable ceasefire broke down in October 2016. Russo-Turkish relations improved in mid-2016 after Turkey apologised for the 2015 downing of a Russian bomber. As of the end of 2016, the two countries had begun working closely together—and with Iran—to seek a ceasefire. In the past, Turkey had insisted that Assad be removed while Russia supported Syrian Kurdish groups. Ankara and Moscow had also been at odds about which targets are and are not appropriate.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Russian security forces personnel cooperate on countering violent extremism with counterpart government agencies in a broad range of other countries, including in the West. This is primarily in the area of law enforcement intelligence to support investigations, arrests and extraditions. Both information sharing and joint action continue even when relationships are tense, but they are also hampered by distrust, classification restrictions and divergent definitions of the threat. In the past, both Western and Russian investigators have reported frustration with the quality of information they have received from each other. Russia is also active in Interpol, although there have been concerns that it uses Interpol's watch lists for political purposes, resulting in the detention of the Kremlin's political opponents (and Russian fundamentalist Muslims who have left the country) as they travel.

UKRAINE

Ukraine deems its fight against Russian-backed separatists in the eastern Donbas region an 'anti-terrorist operation', in part to avoid calling it a war with Russia. Actual fighting takes the form of fairly conventional force-on-force operations. In addition to active duty Russian forces, which Moscow denies are present, large numbers of Russian retired military, mercenaries and volunteers have travelled to Ukraine to fight alongside the separatists. Some of them have since returned to Russia. Russia has also reported attempted 'terrorist' incidents backed by Kyiv in Crimea, which Moscow annexed in March 2014. Ukraine denies these allegations (and alleges Russian involvement in attempted terrorist attacks on Ukrainian territory). Due to the lack of independent media with access to the peninsula, the truth on the ground is hard to come by.

LOOKING AHEAD

While Russian authorities generally describe their campaigns against terror, at home and abroad, as successful, both the increase in violence at home and the number of fighters heading to Syria suggest that substantial challenges remain and will grow as fighters return from Syria. In the meantime, the brutality of Moscow's approach to this problem and its conflation of violent extremism with both fundamentalist Islam and non-religious political opposition further muddy the water and make clear assessments of both the problem and the approach difficult. It seems plausible that Russia's crackdowns help to create more discontent, and thus more radicalisation, while the imprisonment of radicals—including failed, aspiring and returning fighters—can foment more radicalisation in prisons. In the context of Islamist extremism, in particular, internal migration within Russia has helped ensure that there are both oppression and interest in extremist Islamist ideas throughout the country, although responses vary from place to place.

Russia may also be underestimating the potential threat posed by returned fighters from Ukraine, at least some of whom were motivated by patriotism and who may find themselves frustrated by both the absence of medical and financial support and the Kremlin's lack of commitment to the cause in the future.

Russia's cooperation with current and prospective partners will hinge on the extent to which both definitions and approaches can be agreed. For example, if the US agrees with Russia's view that support for the Assad regime in Syria is counterterrorism, the two may well be able to cooperate in helping Assad's forces further whittle down the opposition. However, stabilising Syria and truly eliminating IS as a threat will require far more than that.

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CHINA'S

TERRORISM THREAT AND RESPONSE IN 2016

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In August 2016, China experienced what appears to have been the first targeted terrorist attack against one of its embassies.¹ A Uygur suicide bomber drove a car into China's diplomatic compound in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, exploding it outside the ambassador's residence; the attacker was the only fatality, but three Kyrgyz employees were injured. While Kyrgyz authorities were quick to link the attack to a Syrian-based network—although publicly available evidence to date has been limited—for Beijing the attack was the manifestation of an increased threat from Uygur groups, which had now spread beyond China to threaten Chinese interests abroad. Clear and substantial connections between Uygur groups and international terrorist networks were also confirmed in 2016.

During the year, China increased its external security presence to mitigate these threats, while attempting to balance this against its longstanding practice of non-interference. At home, it has continued a hardline approach to managing the Uygur issue in Xinjiang, and 2016 marked a new level of regional control in the region, including an almost complete halt to media reporting of security-related incidents.

China's terrorist threat comes primarily from the divisions in China's westernmost region of Xinjiang, where a Uygur minority resents rule from Beijing.² That resentment has expressed itself through social tensions, an exodus of Uygurs from the country and violence against the state. Beijing has taken a two-pronged approach to dealing with the problem. In the first instance, it has invested heavily in the region economically (including the 'Silk Road Economic Belt', which has opened Xinjiang to regional trading markets), but at the same time launching regular 'strike hard' campaigns deploying heavy security measures to control the region and enacting new regional and national CT legislation.

Beijing's focus on terrorism is primarily concerned with Chinese Uygurs, something that has attracted some international and human rights concern as potentially unfairly dealing with its own minority citizens.³ The national CT legislation has similarly attracted criticism for not balancing strong CT measures with transparent and fair judicial process, as well as for a broad definition of terrorism that may be at odds with international law standards for free speech, freedom of religion and peaceful protest.

Reported terrorist incidents within China decreased in 2016, and then-regional Communist Party chief Zhang Chunxian stated in March that 'violent terrorist incidents have dropped significantly.'⁴ Indeed, only one incident was reported: an attack on 29 December in Moyu (or Karakax) County in southern Xinjiang, where a group drove explosive-laden cars into a local Communist Party office. Reporting on casualties was mixed, although official sources reported that three attackers, one security official and one bystander were killed.⁵ The explosives, while rudimentary, appeared to demonstrate an increased level of sophistication for attacks in the region.

While this incident capped an otherwise quiet year, non-state sources suggest that more was going on but not being publicly reported. The day after the incident in Moyu/Karakax County, a report published by the Hong Kong-based advocacy group, the Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy, claimed that more than 1,000 violent incidents in Xinjiang in the past year weren't reported in the press.⁶ The precipitous drop in reported incidents is indeed surprising, given previous levels of violence, which had been variously estimated at between a few hundred and 2,000 fatalities per year since 2013, but is difficult to evaluate due to the difficulties of undertaking independent research in the region.⁷

The reported decrease in incidents may be a product of a more aggressive government security posture in the region. In August, the regional government passed CT legislation supplementing national legislation passed earlier in the year. The local legislation was seen as far more wide-ranging than the national laws, focusing in particular on recruitment and radicalisation, the dissemination of extremist material (the definition of which was also expanded) and the deradicalisation of prisoners.⁸ Soon after its passage, a large CT exercise was undertaken in southern Xinjiang—the part of the region that remains majority Uygur—involving around 3,000 personnel and testing 21 new types of 'high-tech equipment, including drones, assault rotorcraft and all-terrain assault vehicles.'⁹

The security approach was further sharpened during the year through changes to the regional party leadership. Leader Zhang Chunxian was moved to the post of Deputy Leader of the Leading Group for Party Building and replaced by Chen Quanguo, the former party chief in Tibet. Upon arriving in the region, Chen immediately introduced hardline policies reflecting those used in Tibet, including establishing a region-wide network of 'convenience' police stations, providing increased state presence and surveillance. Recruiting drives for security officers were launched in Xinjiang and neighbouring regions to increase the number available for deployment.¹⁰ The importance Chen attaches to shows of strength was demonstrated in the wake of the Moyu/Karakax County attack, when he hosted a large public oath-taking ceremony and CT exercise in Urumqi.¹¹ Nevertheless, this heavy approach to security appears to be unable to completely address the region's problems, and the attack at the end of the year showed that local anger can still erupt into violence that gets to public attention despite the government crackdown.

Outside China, Beijing has also faced an increasingly worrying threat picture. The August attack in Bishkek followed a growing number of worrying indicators that Uygur militant groups outside the country were gaining strength.

The Syria and Iraq battlefields have also provided opportunities for anti-Chinese groups to link with Islamist terrorist groups. The Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) is the main Uygur terrorist group.

TIP's close link with al-Qaeda was confirmed earlier in the year through a series of videos released by the two groups. In May, the leader of TIP, Abdul Haq, who had previously been believed killed, re-emerged and released an audio message in which he attacked ISIS, praised al-Qaeda, and highlighted TIP's proximity to the latter.¹² In July, al-Qaeda's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, released a video as part of a bigger series called 'Islamic Spring' in which he specifically praised the Uygur contribution to the jihad in Afghanistan and beyond and elevated leaders from the group into the pantheon of senior jihadi leaders.¹³ Both videos carried threats for China, but in many ways the most worrying aspect for Beijing was the clearly warm and public embrace shared by the two groups.

Al-Qaeda has historically had close links with Uygur militants (Abdul Haq was identified as a member of al-Qaeda's shura, or leadership council, as early as 2005¹⁴) but has shown little interest in dedicating resources to the Uygur cause. The videos suggested the possibility of a change.

In Syria, TIP fights mainly alongside Jabhat al-Nusrah / Jabhat Fateh al-Sham groups and regularly publishes videos showing large numbers of well-armed fighters engaged in combat across Syria, as well as releasing messages condemning Islamic State (IS) activity. While the main body of TIP fighters is engaged in fighting in Syria, Beijing considers that Abdul Haq is hiding in northern Afghanistan. The South Asian wing of the group appears to have moved into Afghanistan in response to the Pakistani Government's Zarb-e-Azb push that ejected them from their previous base in Pakistan's badlands.

Evidence from the Middle East shows that a substantial number of Uygurs have joined IS. Leaked IS documents indicate between 118 and 167 IS fighters are identifiably Chinese or Uygur. Additionally, Uygurs appear to have been picked up by Turkish authorities as part of the investigation into the New Year's Eve attack in Istanbul. Yet while IS has added China to its list of enemies, it hasn't dedicated many resources to attacking it.

The patterns of TIP and other militant Uygur activity in Afghanistan and Syria go some way to explaining increased Chinese security activity in both countries. On 14 August, People's Liberation Army Navy Rear Admiral Guan Youfei met Russian and Syrian security officials in Damascus, where he pledged China's training support to Syrian medical staff.¹⁵ In Afghanistan, building on a long history of engagement, China sought to establish a new regional security subgrouping, bringing together the army chiefs of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and China to discuss border security and regional terrorist groups. Tajikistan has additionally publicly confirmed that China is helping to construct border posts between Tajikistan and Afghanistan.¹⁶

Beyond warzones, Uygur militants have demonstrated increased contact with Southeast Asian terrorist groups. In August 2016, Indonesian authorities shot and killed a Uygur linked to the East Indonesia Mujahidin, one of the main terrorist groups in Indonesia, led by Santoso.¹⁷ This was the tenth Uygur killed alongside the group. The Uygur group was allegedly seeking training with the East Indonesia Mujahidin before returning to China. In November, Nur Muhammet Abdullah al Faris was jailed in Indonesia for his involvement with a network planning a series of terrorist attacks in the region. The network was also reportedly involved in people smuggling to help Uygurs flee China and in some cases receive terrorist training. Some reports indicate that the group received money from TIP (or, as it was identified in the reports, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement), which it was using to advance its own goals as well as to support terrorist training for Uygurs.¹⁸

These developments indicate increasingly deep and substantial connections between militant Uygur groups and international terrorist networks. This menacing picture for China underscores the increased need for China to act against the networks externally. The 2016 national CT law recognised this, providing a broader mandate for Chinese security forces to act outside national territory to disrupt terrorist networks. And, as discussed above, China is also increasing the substance and visibility of its security forces beyond its national territory.

The question that remains, however, is the extent to which China's actions may be exacerbating the very threat that it seeks to mitigate. China's Uygurs see themselves as a persecuted minority that's subject to restrictive legislation not imposed on any other groups in China, including other Muslim minorities.¹⁹ While there's been substantial economic investment into Xinjiang, it's unclear whether the benefits are filtering down to the Uygur community or remaining primarily with the politically and economically dominant Han community. And the lack of information coming out of the region means that it's impossible to independently evaluate whether the 'strike hard' campaign has delivered results.

Certainly, the move of Zhang Chunxian from Xinjiang to Beijing and his replacement by former Tibet party leader Chen Quanguo suggests that the central leadership had mixed feelings about Zhang's tenure in the region, although it's hard to discern whether his move was related to failed policies in Xinjiang or his factional connections. Within Xinjiang, it appears that a hard line is taken against officials for failure in areas where attacks occur. A recent report indicated that the party chief in Moyu/Karakax County and the party secretary of Hotan Prefecture (where Moyu/Karakax is located) were both under investigation by the Discipline Inspection Committee for corruption and dereliction of duty, seemingly linking these investigations to the security failures associated with the 29 December incident.²⁰

China's terrorist problem continues to grow. Last year marked a new point with the attack on the Bishkek Embassy, and the broader threat indicators are not positive. As China continues to advance its 'Belt and Road Initiative', its nationals and companies are increasingly going to dangerous countries and potentially finding themselves in the cross-hairs of terrorist groups.²¹ Also, whereas previously China was able to shield itself from attack somewhat because terrorist groups saw the US and the broader West as their targets, this will change as Uyghurs rise up the ranks of international terrorist networks and China assumes a more prominent role in international affairs.

Another side to China's growing outward push reflects the country's increasing desire to assert itself internationally and become a more normalised security actor in international affairs. While this is reflected in continuing assertiveness in China's maritime relationships, on land it's often seen through the lens of CT, on which China finds a more accommodating international consensus. For Beijing, CT offers a more acceptable way to test the limits of its ability to assert its security interests abroad. But the complicated domestic nature of China's Uyghur issue has led to some calls of concern from members of the international community. At the same time, however, Beijing finds an increasingly worrying international terrorism threat picture connected with its domestic concerns, requiring a more assertive posture. In future, it's likely that these trends mean that Beijing will continue to crack down at home while expanding its efforts abroad.

NOTES

- 1 Chinese compounds have previously been struck by terrorist or insurgent networks, but the strikes have typically been incidental to being in a warzone and not specifically targeted, or have been small-scale individual attacks, as seen in Bishkek in 2009.
- 2 China has also faced a number of other incidents that have a terroristic aspect to them, including mass stabbings, occasional bombings and shootings, although for the most part those incidents have tended to be linked to individuals' complaints against the state.
- 3 See, for example, Javier C Hernandez, 'China says 5 killed in attack on Communist Party office in Xinjiang', *New York Times*, 29 December 2016, [online](#).
- 4 "'Violent terrorism' in China's Xinjiang has dropped: party official", *Reuters*, 8 March 2016.
- 5 Cui Jia, 'Terrorists strike, but progress made', *China Daily*, 30 December 2016.
- 6 Kenji Kawase, 'More than 1,000 violent clashes in restive Xinjiang this year', *Nikkei Asian Review*, 30 December 2016.
- 7 See, for example, reporting in Richard Finney: 'As many as 700 died in Xinjiang violence in last two years, rights group says', *Radio Free Asia*, 3 March 2015, [online](#) and "'At least 2,000 Uyghurs killed" in Yarkand violence: exile leader', *Radio Free Asia*, 5 August 2014.
- 8 Chong Koh Ping, 'Xinjiang gets tough on terrorism', *Straits Times*, 5 August 2016; 'Xinjiang issues China's first local counterterrorism law', *Xinhua*, 5 August 2016.
- 9 'China's armed police hold anti-terror exercise in Xinjiang', *Xinhua*, 15 August 2016.
- 10 James Leibold, Adrian Zenz, 'Beijing's eyes and ears grow sharper in Xinjiang', *Foreign Affairs*, 23 December 2016.
- 11 Eva Li, 'Show of force in Xinjiang sends hardline message', *South China Morning Post*, 3 January 2017.
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- 13 Thomas Joscelyn, 'Zawahiri praises Uighur jihadists in ninth episode of "Islamic Spring" series', *Long War Journal*, 7 July 2016.
- 14 UN Security Council Subsidiary Organs, 'QDi.268 Abdul Haq, reasons for listing', UN Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999) 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) Concerning ISIL (Da'esh) Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals Groups Undertakings and Entities, summary published 13 August 2009, [online](#).
- 15 Christopher Bodeen, 'Chinese admiral visits Syria in show of support', *Associated Press*, 18 August 2016.
- 16 'China to build outposts for Tajik guards on Tajikistan-Afghanistan border', *Reuters*, 26 September 2016.
- 17 Ruslan Sangadji, 'Last Uighur of MIT shot dead', *Jakarta Post*, 18 August 2016.
- 18 Nivell Rayda, 'Uighur terrorists sent funds to Indonesia', *The Australian*, 6 September 2016.
- 19 Alice Su, 'China doesn't mind Islamic extremists', *Foreign Policy*, 16 December 2016.
- 20 Jun Mai, 'China probes senior Xinjiang party officials days after deadly bomb attack', *South China Morning Post*, 5 January 2017.
- 21 The Belt and Road Initiative, also called 'One Belt, One Road', is China's broad-ranging economic development and trade initiative, aiming to increase prosperity through developing land and maritime trading links. A feature of the initiative relevant to terrorism and CT is infrastructure development across areas in China and neighbouring Central Asia.

COUNTERTERRORISM: 2016 LESSONS AND 2017 PROBLEMS

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Collectively, the chapters in this volume paint a dispiriting picture of the risks presented by terrorism in many parts of the world. The Middle East and North Africa remain the epicentres of radical Islamist extremism, and behind much of that extremism is the directing hand of states looking to advance their strategic interests by proxy. Europe has been convulsed by the separate but related phenomena of terrorism and mass people movements. Southeast Asia is bracing for a possible spike in violence associated with fighters returning from Syria and Iraq. In Australia, the US and elsewhere, the risk of terrorist action remains substantial and governments are thinking through what further steps need to be taken to counter the threat.

Perhaps the terrorists' greatest victory in 2016 was to bolster the wave of populist rejection of governments and establishment politics. Britain 'Brexit' from the EU in no small part because Britons outside of London wanted their border closed to waves of refugees sweeping through Europe. Partly, this fear was based on the thought that terrorists would be hidden in any intake. Throughout Europe, the postwar experiment of open borders is at risk as citizens tell their governments they want stronger borders and tougher measures against terrorists hiding among sympathisers in their major cities. Donald Trump's election as President of the US was assisted by his strong rhetoric, repeated in his inauguration address, that he would 'unite the civilised world against radical Islamic terrorism'—a phrase Barack Obama declined to use—'which we will eradicate from the face of the Earth'.

What prospect does 2017 hold? The fight to retake Mosul from the so-called Islamic State (IS) terror group looks to be entering a bloody terminal phase, and that's a welcome development, but IS continues to change shape and present different threats. We may see a broadening of IS terror operations in 2017 as foreign fighters disperse from Iraq, seeking to return home. Far from being eradicated, radical Islamist extremism seems to be expanding its geographical range and sustaining its following.

This is a moment for CT policymakers to think again about the adequacy of their responses to an evolving threat. What changes should be made to anticipate new threats, protect national populations and erode terrorist capabilities? Based on the deeply informative analysis presented by the authors of this yearbook, this chapter attempts to identify some broad themes and lessons we should learn from the terrorism wreckage of 2016 and to anticipate the problems we may encounter in 2017.

MIDDLE EAST: THE MELTDOWN CONTINUES

Several chapters in this yearbook make it clear that the Middle East and parts of North Africa are going through profound and irreversible changes in their political systems. Those changes are of such a scale that some countries, Iraq and Syria prominent among them, may irredeemably fracture into smaller units. Other areas, such as Yemen, central and western Iraq, central and eastern Syria, and much of Libya, Somalia, Mali and Sudan, are descending into ungoverned badlands—Hobbesian states of nature that can be exploited by terror groups and organised criminal gangs. Open an atlas to the pages on the Middle East and almost any border you see drawn there remains contested or is at risk of dissolving.¹

Terrorism draws strength from these trends and indeed contributes to them, but it's far from being the central factor driving the Middle East's meltdown. The Arab Spring ended a number of regimes, for example in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, which failed their populations in economic and social development over decades. Other regimes were forced to make changes to their political systems (Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Morocco and Jordan) or to violently put down domestic protests (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia). The invasion of Iraq in 2003 ended a brutal dictatorship but fractured the region's balance of power and uncorked a wellspring of extremism. Obama's decision to quit Iraq in 2011 (in effect, to acquiesce to a disastrous decision against retaining US forces by the then Iraqi Prime Minister)² and to passively tolerate the Syrian civil war was just as disastrous in opening the way to unrestrained violence.

Beyond the threat posed by IS and an array of other terrorist organisations, the Middle East is marked today by an increasingly complicated game of strategic rivalry in which the region's major powers offer support to terror groups in an effort to promote their strategic interests and to damage their enemies by proxy. Much of this modern version of the 19th century 'great game' for strategic influence is driven by the rivalry between Shia-dominated Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia. The game's further complicated by a resurgent Russia on a high-stakes mission to grow its influence in the region, a Turkey that's becoming more authoritarian, a China promoting its own brand of 'I win, you lose' mercantilism, and a US with seemingly declining interest and capability to shape the region.

The only judgement that can be made with certainty about 2017 is that regime meltdowns and hypercompetitive positioning with proxy forces will continue. To this mix can be added conventional arms racing and the growing risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The redoubtable Tony Cordesman warns that the US can neither afford to be passive nor to follow the traditional path of the US rush to action: finding solutions that are simple, quick and wrong.³

In the continuing Middle East meltdown, terrorism is likely to be the only real winner. Fighting in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Mali and elsewhere will provide fertile ground for people to radicalise and join terror groups. The hopelessness of millions of people stuck in refugee camps or of others feeling the heel of state repression will also aid radicalisation and recruitment. In 2017, the spread of terrorist activity will be wider than ever before. It will reach into diaspora and refugee communities around the world, be spurred by literally thousands of people trained in extremist fighting in the Middle East and take strength from the further collapse of fading political regimes.

It's important for Australia's national interests to understand that our involvement in military operations in the Middle East gives us a direct national stake in these wider strategic trends. We're right to be involved. Successive Australian governments have identified a very direct link between our domestic vulnerabilities to risks of terrorism and evolving events in the Middle East. This is a connection involving diaspora communities, a wider susceptibility of some to ideological radicalisation and our own historical involvement in Middle East conflicts going back more than a century.

These connections mean that we can't afford to be naïve about the wider changes redesigning the Middle East. Government decision-making needs to be informed by detailed intelligence analysis of developments in the region, an understanding that the spread of our interests is likely to grow rather than narrow, and the likelihood of extremist Islamist terrorists returning to become a larger threat in Southeast Asia.

WHAT NEXT FOR OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE?

On 24 January 2017, the Iraqi Government announced that its forces had recaptured eastern Mosul to the banks of the Tigris River, including all five bridges that span the river and lead to the smaller but more heavily populated western part of the city.⁴ The operation thus far has taken three months of hard fighting. In mid-December 2016, a Pentagon official estimated that the 10,000-strong First Brigade of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service—the so-called 'Golden Brigade'—was suffering upwards of 50% battle casualties and that the division could become ineffective in a little over a month. The US Central Command estimated that IS had detonated more than 600 suicide vehicle bomb improvised explosive devices (IEDs) since the start of the campaign.⁵

The coalition campaign against IS, referred to as Operation Inherent Resolve by the US, played a key role in training more than 50,000 Iraqi military and police personnel and in providing well-targeted bombing operations. A Pentagon briefing on 25 January 2017 judged that the fight for western Mosul could take months, but that IS was well prepared and still willing to fight. The air campaign had 'interrupted their command and control apparatus and imposed an incredible strain on their leaders, industrial base, financial system, communications networks and the system that they use to bring in foreign fighters.'⁶

So much for the more positive developments. The negative part of the story is that IS still operates as a capable fighting force, has substantial control and popular support in central and western Iraq and is still detonating significant numbers of suicide vehicle bomb IEDs in Baghdad and elsewhere. On 23 January, IS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was reported in the media to have been critically injured in an airstrike in northern Iraq, but this is the third occasion the claim has been made and reports suggest that the Pentagon doubts its accuracy.⁷ It seems that a significant part of the IS top leadership has left Mosul and may be in Syria or constantly on the move. The group has the network, funding and motivation to be able to shift its campaign from holding territory in Iraq to running a more traditional insurgency in Iraq and further afield.

In Syria, the picture's even more problematic. Russia's intervention has stabilised the position of the Assad regime. Anti-Assad forces, which comprise a shifting array of groups with extremist ideological motivations and even less savoury backing from external actors looking to prop up strategic advantage, still control or contest substantial territory on the border with Turkey. IS controls key strategic routes in the centre and west of Syria, focused on its stronghold of al-Raqqa city. In January, Russia, Turkey and Iran concluded an agreement to jointly target extremist groups, including al-Qaeda and IS. It's seemingly the US and the international coalition that has the weakest hand in shaping a better future for Syria.

What next, then, for the air campaign and Operation Inherent Resolve? The span of possibilities is quite large. One outcome could be that Iran exerts pressure on Iraq to push the coalition further out of the country once western Mosul is liberated.⁸ A second possibility is that the US could step up the air campaign in pursuit of Trump's 2015 claim that 'I would bomb the shit out of 'em. I would just bomb those suckers. That's right. I'd blow up the pipes ... I'd blow up every single inch.'⁹ In fact, even under the restrained Obama administration, Operation Inherent Resolve has launched more than 17,000 air strikes on IS targets in Syria and Iraq since October 2014.¹⁰ While

air operations should continue at least for some months and have value as long as IS presents identified targets, no-one should confuse bombing with finding a purposeful solution to violent Islamist extremism in the Middle East.

For Australia, the challenge is to remain sufficiently adaptive to be able to respond to quick strategic changes outside of Canberra's control. Baghdad might succumb to pressure from Tehran and demand a quick closure of our joint training effort with the New Zealanders. Trump may ask us to take a more prominent role and, indeed, that would be a logical outcome based on Malcolm Turnbull's frequent statements about the need to 'shatter' the IS's 'illusion of invincibility'.¹¹ Australia's task should be to continue to make a substantive contribution to training and air operations, but not to be surprised if the turn of strategic events imposes the need for quick changes to our role in the operation.

TRUMP: THE ORANGE ENIGMA

It would be difficult to find two more contrasting styles of leadership than those of Barack Obama and Donald Trump. Obama read; he absorbed data, delivered layered and caveated speeches and wrongly assumed that his brand of dispassionate logic would be enough to sell his key policy ideas. Trump has said that he doesn't want to receive the standard daily intelligence briefing pack. He's gregarious, prone to sweeping generalisations, untroubled by inconsistency and forever on broadcast via social media. The 45th President of the US had tweeted 34,390 times as at 29 January 2017. For good or ill, he's a whirlwind, uprooting the conventions of American politics and leaving everyone guessing what his core approach will be towards CT.

The world will probably not be wondering about Trump's approach for too long. On 28 January 2017, as he had promised during the election campaign, he directed Secretary of Defense James Mattis to develop a 'preliminary draft' of a plan for a new military campaign against IS in Iraq and Syria.¹² It's significant that Trump signed that presidential memorandum after meeting UK Prime Minister Theresa May and after phone calls with Russian President Vladimir Putin and the leaders of two major contributors to Operation Inherent Resolve, Malcolm Turnbull of Australia and Francois Hollande of France.

What more could the US do in military operations against IS? Air strikes could be intensified but are only effective if properly targeted, and that points to the need to increase the US military presence on the ground to help direct strikes. It's unthinkable that the US would resort to indiscriminate bombing of Iraqi and Syrian population centres in the way that Russian aircraft have bombed targets in Syria. That said, the presidential memorandum directs Secretary Mattis to 'recommend changes to any United States rules of engagement and other United States policy restrictions that exceed the requirements of international law regarding the use of force against ISIS'. That could see a widening of allowed targets.

Trump maintains that he'll be able to cooperate with Putin in a shared campaign against extremist terrorism, but that cooperation will soon hit up against the reality that Russia and the US have fundamentally conflicting strategic objectives in the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean. At the practical level, the US and Russia will have to develop an approach that separates their military operations and minimises any chance of either inadvertently attacking the other's forces. It's hard to imagine joint US and Russian military campaigns, because the US will want to distance itself from Russia's less discriminate use of force.

Trump's rhetoric about developing a military plan for the total eradication of IS also sits awkwardly with his desire not to commit large numbers of US troops to a ground war in Iraq or Syria. It may be that he'll look to adding additional military advisers and trainers in Iraq—if Baghdad will let him—and to the greater use of special forces. It would be in keeping with Trump's comments on the need for allies to do more for their own defence if Australia, France and other troop-contributing countries were to be asked to do more in Iraq and Syria. We should be prepared for the request and have a convincing response in mind.

On 25 January 2017, Trump signed executive orders on 'border security and immigration enforcement improvements' and on 'enhancing public safety in the interior of the United States'.¹³ The orders halt for four months the movement of refugees to the US and suspend all immigration from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. Syrian refugees are barred indefinitely. Some individuals from those countries holding US green cards and even valid visas have not been allowed back into the US, and airlines have been advised not to fly such people to US airports.¹⁴ Thus does the reality of executive power bump up against Trump's instinct for hardline and immediate solutions. During the election campaign, Trump called for 'extreme vetting' for individuals of potential terrorism concern seeking to enter the US. Trump tweeted on 25 January, 'Beginning today, the United States of America gets back control of its borders.' Unlike in the election campaign, Trump's words now carry immediate consequences.

Will any of this work in the longer term? How will it translate into a coordinated CT policy?

Trump's intent is clear. In remarks he delivered at the headquarters of the CIA on 21 January, he said:

We're going to do great things. We've been fighting these wars for longer than any wars we've ever fought. We have not used the real abilities that we have. We've been restrained. We have to get rid of ISIS. Have to get rid of ISIS. We have no choice.¹⁵

It's up to the President now to show how that can be done.

THE FUTURE OF ISLAMIC STATE: SCHOOL'S OUT

Many of the chapters in this yearbook worry about the consequences of fighters from IS and other extremist groups returning, battle-hardened, to their home countries from Iraq and Syria. This may be the defining feature of terrorism in 2017. There's certainly good reason to be alarmed. While estimates of total foreign fighter numbers vary, a detailed study in December 2015 by the Soufan Group, a private security firm, found that between 27,000 and 31,000 people had joined extremist groups in Iraq and Syria. Remarkably, these people came from 86 different countries. The top foreign fighter contributors were Tunisia (6,000 fighters), Saudi Arabia (2,500), Russia (2,400), Turkey (2,100) and Jordan (2,000). Some 5,000 fighters came from Western Europe, 4,700 came from the former Soviet republics and 900 came from Southeast Asia.¹⁶

At the time of the Soufan study, appreciable numbers of fighters were thought to have returned to their home countries, in particular around 250 to France, 350 to the UK and 200 to Germany. More than 600 fighters had returned to Turkey and 625 to Tunisia. We know that a number of those individuals were responsible for terror attacks in their own or neighbouring countries in 2016.

Some factors help to moderate concerns about a further large-scale flood of fighters returning home in 2017. First, many governments have got better at preventing the follow of fighters out of their countries in the first place. Turkey, in particular, has developed stronger border controls and also turned off its initial support for individuals going to fight the Assad regime.

Second, we know that significant numbers of fighters have been killed. IS used many low-skilled foreigners in suicide attacks, and coalition and Russian airstrikes have killed thousands.

Third, the fighting still has a long way to go in Iraq and Syria. IS looks to be doggedly defending Mosul and will presumably put as much effort into fighting to retain the western half of the city as it did for the areas east of the Tigris. After Mosul, there's Syria. It's hard to anticipate the shape of a successful campaign to retake al-Raqqa, but presumably many IS fighters will make a last stand there, as the city is the notional capital of the so-called caliphate. No-one knows what the shape of the IS fighting force will look like by the end of 2017.

Finally, governments now have a much sharper appreciation of the need to watch returnees. Those who do manage to escape from Iraq and Syria will in many cases find themselves subject to criminal charges, incarceration, or both. Nor should we assume that everyone who went to Syria and Iraq remains intent on committing terrorist acts. Some—perhaps a small number—will have been repulsed by what they saw and no longer wish to be in the fight. And then there's a difficult problem of working out what to do with the families of fighters. Some women and children may well have been held against their will. Almost all will be deeply traumatised. Others will have fully signed up to the extremist ideology of IS and other groups.

None of these factors, however, lends much confidence to the hope that returning fighters won't present a major international terrorist threat in 2017. Not everyone who fought for IS wanted to die for the cause, and many will escape if they can. It's clear after the New Year's terror attack in Istanbul that some fighters want to kill and then escape to fight again. Sadly, we repeatedly saw in 2016 that being on a security watch list of some type was no guarantee that individuals couldn't escape attention long enough to commit a terrorist act.

Where might this returning fighter threat manifest itself? The sheer numbers of Tunisian fighters suggest that that country and its North African neighbours are most immediately at risk. The centre of IS operations might well shift to North Africa if the group's position in Syria becomes unsustainable. Raffaello Pantucci's fascinating chapter on China points to the numbers of

ethnic Uyghurs fighting in the Middle East. It must surely be panicking Beijing that those fighters could spur greater anti-government sentiment in the west of the country. Russia might well be bracing for the return of Chechen nationals. Moscow's indiscriminate air campaign in Syria will have helped promote radicalisation among some and an intent on the part of fighters from Russia and the former Soviet republics to take their grievances back home.

In Western Europe, it seems that returning fighters have already embedded themselves into areas where sympathetic supporters provide shelter and encouragement. The challenge is to stem any further flow for fighters, and that will now have to be done amid heated internal political debates about border security and housing refugees. Europe is scrambling to make its intelligence, internal security and policing more effective by quickly exchanging information and monitoring risky individuals, who are often well known to the authorities.

The yearbook's chapters on Southeast Asia also portend the arrival of a much stronger IS presence in the region, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. It's striking how many nationals from those three countries went to fight in Iraq and Syria and noticeable also that so few people from Thailand made the journey, perhaps because the southern insurgency presented a more important focus for local Islamist extremists.

Southeast Asia's vulnerability to a larger relocated IS presence is a serious risk that's certainly worrying key governments right now. From Australia's perspective, this probably presents the most direct threat to our interests in the region because future terrorist attacks may target Western interests, Australia's prominent among them, as was the case with the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005.

SOME PERSISTENT MYTHS

A number of persistent myths in the analysis and reporting of terrorist activities around the world continued in 2016. To some degree, those myths reflect a repetition of established formulas used in reporting incidents, but imprecise language can be dangerous if it leads to mistaken assumptions about the causes of terrorist behaviour. A lack of detailed understanding about causality can lead to mistaken prescriptions for CT responses.

The myth of the lone-wolf attack was a persistent category error. A number of prominent attacks in France, Germany, the US and elsewhere were described as lone-wolf attacks, yet it was often the case that the individuals involved hadn't radicalised alone but had drawn on a network of associates with similar ideological leanings. It was certainly the case in attacks in Brussels, Paris, Nice and Berlin that the attackers had identified links to others who supported or promoted extremist Islamist ideologies. Moreover, in many cases it became apparent that attackers were known to the police as people with histories of anti-social and violent behaviour who espoused extremist ideologies and in some cases had served time in prison for criminal activity. The popular image of individuals self-radicalising in their bedrooms by looking at online extremist propaganda isn't entirely accurate. It seems more common that they operate within social networks where extremist views are promoted or tolerated and where a radicalised individual is facilitated towards committing an act of terrorist violence. By the time a person has become a user of online extremist material, the radicalisation process has been nurtured by others.

A second myth often reported in conjunction with terror events is that IS often falsely claims responsibility for nurturing the attack. The assumption seems to be that the group doesn't have the networks or sophistication to reach out to potential supporters. Again, the reality isn't as clear-cut. In the case of the attack in Nice, it seems clear that the assailant hadn't been directly in contact with IS facilitators, but he was probably genuinely inspired by IS propaganda. The same may be true for the attack in East Jerusalem in January 2017, in which a number of Israel Defense Force soldiers were rammed by a truck. Although Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu identified the attacker as 'a supporter of the Islamic State',¹⁷ it seems unlikely that the attacker had any direct connections with the group. The attack was later claimed by a previously unrecorded Palestinian group called the Martyr of Baha Alyan Collective.¹⁸

This can be contrasted with the evidently strong direction that IS offered to a range of other terror attacks or plots that were disrupted. In this yearbook, Greg Fealy recounts in his chapter on Indonesia how an attack in Jakarta in January 2016, and a foiled plan to mount a suicide bombing against the presidential palace at the end of the year, were directed by Indonesian IS members based in Syria. Likewise, the nightclub shootings in Istanbul during New Year celebrations at the very start of 2017 and attacks in Paris and Brussels showed close IS involvement in planning and facilitation. A key CT lesson here is simply to reflect on the potential for IS to mount a much broader set of attacks internationally in 2017. Over the past two years, the group has demonstrated that it has a strong and expanding international network, supported by apparently often secure communications. That's hardly surprising, when one considers its sophisticated social media campaigns.

A third myth is that nothing can really be done to protect citizens from seemingly random attacks around cities. Surely not every German Christmas market or French beach-side boulevard or shopping mall or airport or sporting event can

be protected from attacks? And surely terrorists will move their attacks to less defended targets if efforts are made to protect some particular type of infrastructure following an attack? True, there are no foolproof forms of protection or absolute security guarantees. But equally we can see that some cities, airports, malls, stadiums and public buildings are better protected than others. The difference comes down to forethought and the economic calculation involved in assessing the relative costs and benefits of adding layers of CT protection.

CT approaches are best thought of as involving a layered set of strategies that knit together to create a more effective defence. Jacinta Carroll shows in her chapter that Australia's stringent gun laws make it difficult for people to access the military-style automatic weapons that are such a common feature of overseas terrorist attacks. Good-quality intelligence and policing able to detect and stop plots have been of major value in Jakarta, Sydney and Melbourne and are obviously of huge value when it comes to managing security around major public areas, such as Melbourne's Federation Square and Flinders Street Station, which was the area of a planned attack.

In many countries, 2017 will see a continued hardening of public buildings and areas in ways that complicate or prevent terror attacks. Managers of major events such as concerts and sporting fixtures will simply have to plan for higher levels of security. Far from accepting the counsel of despair that protecting against terror incidents is too hard, many communities will demand that governments do more to protect them and, one hopes, will be prepared to accept longer delays in places such as airports as the price of greater security in a more risky strategic age.

A final myth concerns counter-narratives. Western governments often make the case that defeating IS's propaganda with a better articulated story about the attractions of non-violence is the systemic key to destroying Islamist extremism once and for all. But the tragedy is that democratic governments struggle to produce this material in a timely and convincing way. As Colin Clarke's chapter on the US recounts, 'IS supporters out tweet opponents, producing 50% more tweets per day.' While this is a race at which President Trump might excel, on balance I argue that Western efforts to consciously develop counter-narratives to extremist propaganda have been embarrassingly bad. For one such example, readers might like to research the counter-narrative efforts of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which in 2016 held the #LetsDoodle contest, asking 'artists to create a cartoon character challenging violent extremism with creativity, imagination and humour.' The winner was MIX the sheep, a piebald coloured ruminant, 'born of diversity: together even stronger', which happily lives in a paddock celebrating inclusion, diversity and solidarity.¹⁹

In the case of Australia, it's commonly said that any program that carries the Australian Government coat-of-arms will be shunned by the communities that it's intended for. The relatively undeveloped state of thinking around counter-narratives points to the need for governments to look harder at working out what messages they really can sell to individuals and communities at risk of being sympathetic to violent Islamist extremism. Part of IS's ideology involves the conscious rejection of the very values we see as being superior. The reality is that we're unlikely to tweet IS into submission. The values of liberal democracies will be attractive to liberal democrats. Rather than attempting to divert extremists with social media campaigns on the importance of inclusion, perhaps the focus should be on exposing the inconsistencies of IS's ideology and as far as possible taking the group's own propaganda off line.

TERRORISM: AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT?

It's often been claimed that terrorism doesn't present an existential threat to the survival of the nation-state. Former Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, took this view, which he claimed helped to keep a sense of 'proportionality' about American CT responses:

... terrorism is a real threat, but it's not an existential threat to the existence of the democratic country of the United States of America. Terrorism can cause real problems. It can undermine confidence. It can kill relatively large numbers of people. But terrorism is not an existential threat.²⁰

Two arguments can be put against Biden's view. The first is that widespread fear of terrorism certainly contributed to system-changing political movements in 2016 that called into question the viability of some long-cherished institutions, such as the EU and the EU's Schengen border-free

area. Terrorism has contributed to the rise of populist political movements in France, Germany and other European countries, which may further undermine the EU and bring an end to relatively liberal policies on accepting refugees, close previously uncontrolled borders and weaken multiculturalism. Although hardly the sole, or even a main, cause, fear of terrorism boosted Donald Trump's election campaign and was surely an existential threat to the electoral prospects of the US Democratic Party's candidate, Hillary Clinton.

In the Middle East and North Africa, terrorism has certainly become an existential threat to the balance of power that used to prevail in the region. It has led to the destruction of Syria, Iraq and Yemen and continued to put a number of established regimes under threat. Terrorism has been used as a rationale for governments in Turkey, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to become internally more repressive and is being used by a number of countries as a proxy means to weaken external rivals.

There are certainly broader forces in play. The rise of Western populist movements also draws on deep resentments about the loss of traditional manufacturing jobs, about the fraying connections between governing elites and 'ordinary voters', and about the changes wrought by widespread immigration and the impact on blue collar workers. But there's no doubt that the fear of terrorism is a leading factor in this mix of system-changing discontents. On this measure, terrorism wrought quite profound changes to many political systems in 2016 and will continue to do so.

A second argument against Biden's view is that Western governments should still worry about the possibility that terrorist groups will seek access to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). There's some limited evidence to suggest that IS has tried to use WMD agents where it can. An artillery round containing mustard gas was fired onto the Qayyara air base south of Mosul in September 2016.²¹ In February 2016, Iraqi officials advised that some 'highly dangerous' radioactive material had been stolen by IS from a company in Basra. The material was subsequently recovered but could have formed a basis of a 'dirty bomb', a device that could spread radiological material over a limited area.²² None of this suggests that IS has made much progress in equipping itself with usable WMDs. What limited evidence there is of WMD attacks using mustard gas or chlorine in Iraq and Syria shows that the effect is limited, although terrible for the individuals involved.

US concern about the potential for nuclear terrorism remains substantial, although it's based more on a theoretical possibility than on strong evidence of terror groups trying to develop such capabilities. At the fourth and possibly last Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington DC in April 2016, the summit communiqué said that 'the threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism remains one of the greatest challenges to international security and the threat is constantly evolving.'²³ It's a threat that particularly galvanises India, whose leaders worry that 'insider threats' in the Pakistan military might see a nuclear weapon transferred to terrorist organisations threatening India.²⁴

For all of the concerns in senior political circles, if a radiological dirty bomb were detonated in a US city, Joe Biden's claim would still hold that such an attack wasn't a threat to the American system of government. Then again, President Trump is now in the Oval Office. We shouldn't underestimate the system-changing power of terrorism and the fear of mass-casualty attacks. The implication behind dismissing terrorism as not being an existential threat is that societies may just have to accept that some level of risk is inevitable. That's an unproductive way of thinking about CT and one that may well have contributed to the Obama administration's drift on this issue towards the end of its second term.

NEXT STEPS

The arrival of the Trump administration and the half-completed fight to retake Mosul provide two natural reasons for CT policymakers to pause briefly and reflect on what the priorities should be for 2017. The first task, surely, is to redevelop a sense of common purpose among the Western and Middle Eastern partners in the military campaign against IS. The US remains the decisive military force in the campaign, and President Trump's appetite for a more aggressive fight in Iraq and Syria will set the momentum for operations. Consolidating Iraq's hold over all of Mosul will be an early critical task, followed by the need to destroy pockets of IS support in other parts of central and western Iraq. Syria is no closer to any viable peaceful solution and, regrettably, violence there will continue.

The next high-priority task will be to prepare for what looks to be a much more distributed and traditional CT fight around the world, from Paris to the Sulu Sea. The IS network remains intact, is quite sophisticated, is good at developing local support and has a large cohort of fighters who have been through a hardening experience in Iraq and Syria. Putting this diaspora down will be the major focus of CT in 2017.

By comparison with many countries, Australia's domestic position is good. As the Prime Minister frequently says, our police and security agencies are among the best in the world, our geography gives us some protection, and successive governments have worked hard to have the necessary laws and regulations in place to support modern CT practices. None of this offers room for complacency. We'll need to redouble our efforts in CT cooperation with the countries of Southeast Asia, and we're likely to be called on to do more rather than less with our military presence in the Middle East. For CT operators and policymakers, 2017 will be a demanding year.

NOTES

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACIC	Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission	ISKP	Islamic State's Khorasan Province (Pakistan)
ADF	Australian Defence Force	ISWAP	Islamic State West African Province
ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting	JAKI	Jama'ah Ansharul Khilafah Islamiyah (Indonesia)
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi)	JAKIM	Department of Islamic Development (Malaysia)
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula	JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammed (Pakistan)
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb	Jl	Jemaah Islamiyah
AQIS	Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent	LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Pakistan)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba (Pakistan)
AU	African Union	LNA	Libyan National Army
BBL	Bangsamoro Basic Law (Philippines)	LoC	Line of Control (Kashmir)
BNPT	National Counterterrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme) (Indonesia)	MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Philippines)
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (Philippines)	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
CBRE	chemical, biological, radiological and explosive	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
COAG	Council of Australian Governments	NDA	Niger Delta Avengers
CT	counterterrorism	NGO	non-government organisation
CTS	Counter Terrorism Service (Iraq)	NSCN-IM	National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Isak-Muivah (India)
CVE	countering violent extremism	NSW	New South Wales
DHS	Department of Homeland Security (US)	PA	Palestinian Authority
EU	European Union	PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (US)	PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces (Iraq)
FTF	foreign terrorist fighter	SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council	TIP	Turkestan Islamic Party
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters (UK)	TNI	Indonesian National Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia)
GDP	gross domestic product	UAE	United Arab Emirates
GNA	Government of National Accord (Libya)	UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
HDP	Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi)	US	United States of America
IED	improvised explosive device	WMD	weapon of mass destruction
IMAFT	Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism	YPG	People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel)
IPAC	Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict		
IS	Islamic State		
ISA	Internal Security Act of 1960 (Malaysia)		

APPENDIX 2

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Anthony is a senior analyst at ASPI and Senior Research Fellow, National Security College, Australian National University. Prior to joining ASPI, Dr Bergin was an Associate Professor of Politics at the University of NSW, Australian Defence Force Academy. From 1981-1985 he taught political science at the Royal Australian Naval College. From 1991-2003 he was the Director of the Australian Defence Studies Centre. He served for four years as an Adjunct Reader in Law at the ANU, where he taught international law. He is currently an Honorary Fellow at the Antarctic and Climate Ecosystems, Cooperative Research Centre. Dr Bergin has been a consultant to a wide range of public and private sector clients. For over a decade he has served as a member of the National Defence Committee of the Returned and Services League. At ASPI he is responsible for corporate and parliamentary engagement and 1.5 track dialogues. Dr Bergin has written extensively on a wide range of national security and maritime issues in academic journals, books, and ASPI reports. He is a regular media commentator and author of several hundred opinion pieces.



JACINTA CARROLL

Jacinta is the inaugural Head of ASPI's Counter-Terrorism Policy Centre, a position she has held since August 2015. Jacinta joined ASPI from the Australian Government where she had held a variety of Senior Executive appointments, and worked in the Department of Defence and the Attorney-General's Department. Her career experience includes working on national security, counterterrorism, strategic policy, border security, military operations, campaign planning and scenario development, information management, and international policy with a particular focus on the Middle East and Afghanistan; she has served in Iraq.

Jacinta is a graduate of the Australian National University, has post-graduate qualifications from Flinders University, and holds Masters degrees from the University of Sydney and Deakin University. She is a graduate of the Australian Defence College's Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies. Jacinta appears regularly in the media commenting on terrorism, counterterrorism, the Middle East conflict and national and international security.



COLIN CLARKE

Colin P Clarke is a political scientist at the RAND Corporation, where his research focuses on insurgency, political violence, transnational terrorism, criminal networks and a range of other international security issues. At the Matthew B. Ridgway Center for International Security Studies, he is an affiliated scholar with research interests related to transnational terrorism and violent non-state actors. At New York University's Center for Global Affairs, Colin is an associate of the Initiative on the Study of Emerging Threats (ISET). He is an Associate Fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) The Hague.

At Carnegie Mellon University, Colin is a Lecturer and teaches courses on US Grand Strategy and Terrorism & Insurgency. In 2011, he spent three months embedded with Combined Joint Inter-agency Task Force Shafafiyat in Kabul, Afghanistan, working on anti-corruption efforts and analysing the nexus between terrorists, drug traffickers, and a range of political and economic power brokers. CJIAF Shafafiyat was commanded by Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster. Colin is the author of *Terrorism, Inc.: The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare*, published in 2015 by Praeger Security International.

Colin appears frequently in the media to comment on terrorism and his work has been published in a range of newspapers and academic journals. He received his Ph.D. in international security policy from the University of Pittsburgh.



MICHAEL CLARKE

Professor Clarke was Director General of the Royal United Services Institute from 2007 to 2015. He had been Professor of Defence Studies at King's College from 1995 to 2007 and retains visiting professorial roles both there and at the Strategic Studies Institute at the University of Exeter. He has been specialist adviser to the House of Commons Defence Committee since 1997 and since 2016 also to the Joint National Committee on Security Strategy for the period of the current Parliament. In March 2014 he was appointed by the Deputy Prime Minister to chair an Independent Surveillance Review at RUSI. In October 2016 he began Chairing an open Inquiry into drone warfare for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Drone Technologies.



VIRGINIA COMOLLI

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Virginia is the Senior Fellow for Security and Development at The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. She set up the Security and Development Programme in 2014 to focus on hybrid insecurity and study how armed violence affects large urban centres in less-developed countries. Previously, she worked on international terrorism, radicalisation, organised crime and conflict with a special focus on West Africa, the Sahel and Latin America at IISS. In this capacity she was seconded to the UK Ministry of Justice.

Virginia is a member of the European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues (EENeT) and of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime. She sits on the international advisory board of the African Centre for Peace Building, and on the steering committee of 'Football for Peace'. She also acts as a Project Associate for the International Drug Policy Project at the London School of Economics and as a Technical Advisor at the Global Drug Policy Observatory at Swansea University.

Virginia holds degrees from the University of Wolverhampton and the University of Aberystwyth. She is the author of *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2015) and the co-author of *Drugs, Insecurity and Failed States: the Problems of Prohibition* (London: Routledge, 2012).



GREG FEALY

Greg is associate professor of Indonesian politics and head of the Department of Political and Social Change at The Australian National University. He gained his PhD from Monash University in 1998 with a study of the history of Nahdlatul Ulama. He is the co-author of *Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism and Indonesia* (2005), *Radical Islam and Terrorism in Indonesia* (2005) and *Zealous Democrats: Islamism and Democracy in Egypt, Indonesia and Turkey* (2008). He is also co-editor of *Soeharto's New Order and its Legacy* (2010), *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (2008), *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook* (2006). He is the director of the Partnership in Islamic Education Scholarships (PIES) program. He was the C.V. Starr Visiting Professor in Indonesian politics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington DC, in 2003, and has been a consultant to DFAT, USAID, The Asia Foundation and BP. From 1997 to 1999 he was an Indonesia analyst at the Australian Government's Office of National Assessments. He has been a board member of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australia-Indonesia Institute since 2014.



FADI HAKURA

Fadi is an associate fellow at Chatham House where he manages the Turkey Project. Before joining Chatham House, he qualified as a solicitor in the City of London. Earlier he completed an internship at the European Commission and worked in the World Bank's office in Brussels. He has been a guest lecturer on EU-Turkey relations at University College London since 2005. He regularly comments for the international media on all aspects of Turkish politics, foreign and security policies, including EU accession issues and Turkey's regional relations.



PETER JENNINGS PSM

Peter is the executive director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) a position he has held since May 2012.

Peter has worked at senior levels in the Australian Public Service on defence and national security. Career highlights include being Deputy Secretary for Strategy in the Defence Department (2009-12); Chief of Staff to the Minister for Defence (1996-98) and Senior Adviser for Strategic Policy to the Prime Minister (2002-03).

Since May 2012 Peter has expanded ASPI's role from its original high-quality research on defence to include research on cyber security; policing and international law enforcement, border security, national resilience and counter terrorism studies. Now with around 40 staff and close working relations with government, Parliament and industry, ASPI is Australia's leading think-tank on national security.

Peter led the 'External Expert Panel' appointed by Government in early 2014 to advise Ministers and the Defence Department on the Defence White Paper, released in February 2016. Peter is a member of the Australia-Germany Advisory Group, appointed by the Prime Minister and German Chancellor in 2015 to develop closer bilateral relations. He is a member of the Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations advising the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Peter has previously held a number Senior Executive Service positions in Defence including First Assistant Secretary International Policy Division, First Assistant Secretary Coordination and Public Affairs and Secretary of the Defence Audit and Risk Committee.

Peter was awarded the Public Service Medal in the Australia Day 2013 Honors list for outstanding public service through the development of Australia's strategic and defence policy, particularly in the areas of Australian Defence Force operations in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. In February 2016 Peter was awarded the French decoration of Knight in the National Order of Legion d'Honneur.



SHASHANK JOSHI

Shashank Joshi is a Senior Research Fellow at RUSI, specialising in international security in South Asia and the Middle East. He is a graduate of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University with a degree in Social and Political Sciences. He also holds an MA degree from Harvard University, where he studied in the Department of Government. He has been a Kennedy Scholar from Britain to the United States during 2007-08, a participant in the Summer Workshop on the Analysis of Military Operations and Strategy (SWAMOS) at Cornell University in 2010, and a Research Associate at the Changing Character of War Programme at Oxford University during 2015-16. He has lectured to the UK Defence Academy on a regular basis, and to the Atomic Weapons Establishment, the National Security Secretariat, and to other political, diplomatic, and military audiences in Britain, Europe, and Asia. He has given evidence to the House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee and Defence Committee several times.

He regularly writes commentary and analysis for newspapers in Britain and India, most regularly for The Hindu, and is a frequent contributor to The Interpreter, the blog of Australia's Lowy Institute. He has also published widely in both peer-reviewed and policy journals, including the Washington Quarterly, Survival, Journal of Strategic Studies, Asian Survey, and Arms Control Today. His most recent book, Indian Power Projection: Ambition, Arms and Influence, was published as a RUSI Whitehall Paper in December 2015.



LYDIA KHALIL

Lydia has a broad range of policy, academic and private sector experience, and has spent her career focusing on the intersection between governance and security—whether it be understanding the rationales behind terrorism and counterinsurgency, how to create governance systems that lead to functioning societies, effective policing strategies or the security and policy effects of new technology. She is currently a director of Arcana Partners, a strategic consultancy firm, and a fellow at the Lowy Institute for International Affairs.

Lydia's professional background in politics, international relations and security has focused on US national security policy, Middle East politics, terrorism/counterterrorism and intelligence. She was international affairs fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York where she analysed political and security trends in the Middle East. She also served as a political advisor for the US Department of Defense in Iraq, where she worked closely with Iraqi officials on political negotiations and constitutional drafting. In Australia, Lydia held fellowships with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and Macquarie University, specialising in intelligence, terrorism, national security and cybersecurity.

Lydia also has extensive national security and law enforcement experience. She was most recently a senior policy advisor to the Boston Police Department, working on countering violent extremism, intelligence and counterterrorism, and community policing strategies. She devised the BPD countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy and was a key advisor and author to the Whitehouse sponsored Boston CVE pilot program and Boston CVE Framework. She has also worked as a senior counterterrorism and intelligence analyst for the New York Police Department.

Lydia is a frequent media commentator and conference speaker and has published widely on her areas of expertise. She holds a BA in International Relations from Boston College and a Masters in International Security from Georgetown University. She is the recipient of the Distinguished Civilian Service Medal, the highest civilian honour bestowed by the US Department of Defense.



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Joseph is Dean and Professor of Comparative and International Politics at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He held the inaugural Lee Kuan Yew Chair in Southeast Asia Studies at the Brookings Institution, Washington DC, where he was also a Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Program.

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Joseph holds a PhD in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science, an MSc in Strategic Studies from the Nanyang Technological University, and a BA (Hons) in Political Science from the University of Madison-Wisconsin.



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Olga is a Senior Advisor and Director of the Russia and Eurasia program at CSIS. She has written extensively on military, political, economic, and social development in countries in transition, particularly in Russia, Ukraine, and the Central Asian and Caucasian successor states to the Soviet Union. At CSIS, she oversees and carries out research related to a broad range of domestic and foreign policy questions relevant to the region, oversees related Track II efforts, heads the Russian Military Capabilities Working Group, and hosts the Russian Roulette Podcast. Her most recent publications include *Security Sector Reform in Ukraine* (RAND, 2016) and “Russia’s Nuclear Doctrine: What We Know, What We Don’t, and What That Means” (CSIS, 2016).

Prior to coming to CSIS, Olga held a number of senior posts at the RAND Corporation, most recently as Director of RAND’s Center for Russia and Eurasia.

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He is the author of *We Love Death As You Love Life: Britain’s Suburban Terrorists* (London: Hurst, April 2015/US: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), described by *The Financial Times* as «the most articulate and carefully researched account of Britain’s “suburban terrorists” to date.»

He is currently completing a writing project looking at Chinese interests in Central Asia. His journal articles have appeared in *Survival*, *The National Interest*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, and *RUSI Journal* amongst others, and his journalistic writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Sunday Times*, *CNN*, *Guardian*, *Foreign Policy*, *South China Morning Post*, and more.



THOMAS RENARD

Professor Thomas Renard is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the Egmont Institute, and an Adjunct Professor at the Vesalius College, both in Brussels. His research focuses on terrorism and counter-terrorism in Europe, both at the national and EU levels. He is the author of several publications, including recently *Counterterrorism in Belgium: Key challenges and policy options* (Egmont Institute, 2016). Previously, Thomas worked with the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (as Head of the Brussels office) and with the Jamestown Foundation, a US think tank. He has published numerous articles on this topic. He is also a security consultant for the Belgian public TV/Radio (RTBF). In 2012, he became a member of the Young Atlanticist Program, convened by the Atlantic Council of the US. He is a member of the Friday Group, a group of young Belgians from diverse horizons gathering to reflect on strategic and major societal issues, supported by the King Baudouin Foundation, as well as a member of the Korea-Europe Next Generation Policy Expert Forum (2015). Previously, he worked as a journalist and as an analyst for US think tanks, based in Washington DC. All his publications are available on his personal webpage ([online](#)).



VERN WHITE

Vern is presently a sitting Senator in the Senate of Canada and Visiting fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Previously he has served as Police Chief for the city of Ottawa, Canada.

Vern has also worked with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, moving through the ranks from Constable to Assistant Commissioner and has served in three provinces and three territories, spending almost 19 years in the three northern territories. He has also worked for the Durham Regional Police Service and the Ottawa Police Service in the role of Chief of Police between 2005 and 2012.

He has been an Adjunct, visiting or part-time professor at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, the University of Ottawa, Carleton University and as a visiting fellow at the Australian Institute of Police Management. He is presently an adjunct professor at Charles Sturt University.



SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO

The 6th President of the Republic of Indonesia

Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (known as “SBY”) is the sixth President of the Republic of Indonesia, and also the country’s first directly elected President in the democratic era.

During his two terms in office, Yudhoyono delivered what the World Economic Forum called ‘Indonesia’s golden decade’, a period between 2004 and 2014 that was marked by democratic development, political stability, high economic growth and resilience, conflict resolution and robust international role. Under his leadership, Indonesia became an emerging economy, a regional power, a G-20 member, and assumed important roles on issues ranging from climate change to post-MDG, terrorism to geopolitics, inter-faith to architecture, etc.

Yudhoyono’s life story has been nothing less than phenomenal: a military officer who became a 4-star general, who became cabinet minister and then politician, who became President and then one of Asia’s most respected statesmen. His time in office was hardly a breeze: he faced the destructive tsunami and a series of natural disasters, separatism, terrorism, financial crisis and more. But he managed to overcome these challenges with a steady hand: the country recovered from tsunami and other disasters, the conflict in Aceh was peacefully and permanently resolved in mid-2005; terrorist groups were disbanded and detained; and the economy rebounded. And at a time when democracies around the world were in distress, Indonesia’s democracy steadily moved from strength to strength.

With a Ph.D in agricultural economics, Yudhoyono relentlessly pursued his 4-track economic strategy of ‘pro-growth, pro-job, pro-poor, and pro-environment’. His development mantra was ‘sustainable growth with equity’.

As President of the country with the world’s largest Muslim population, Yudhoyono has become a strong advocate for peaceful and moderate Islam, both internally as well as on the global stage. He devoted great efforts to develop closer relations between the Western and Islamic world. He also staunchly promoted and became an architect of military reforms, and championed Indonesia’s robust peacekeeping operations around the world.

Yudhoyono is presently chairman of Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and, as head of Partai Demokrat, remains active in the politics of Indonesia. As per February 2016, he has 8.6 million followers on Twitter, and 5.3 million on Facebook.

