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About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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Financing Terror Bit by Bit

By Aaron Brantly

TERRORISM IS HIGHLY dependent on cash flows for the purchase of everything from munitions and supplies to domains and pamphlets. Traditionally, one of the more challenging aspects of organizing international terrorist activities is rooted in financial transactions. The transfer of money around the world has, in the last decade, fundamentally changed the way terrorist organizations raise money to support their activities. Digital currencies like e-gold, Bitcoin, Peercoin, and Dodgecoin provide complex yet efficient mechanisms for the transfer of funds, as well as the decentralized collection of donations in a more anonymous manner than conventional banking transactions. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that terrorists are considering and, in limited instances, using digital currencies such as Bitcoin to finance activities.[1] While these tools have gained in popularity, in recent years their expansion into various terrorist organizations has been slow and deliberate and has not matched pace with transnational criminal uses of these same technologies.

For the purposes of this article, the term "terrorist organization" does not include the hacktivist community, which has already demonstrated widespread utilization of these technologies. Here, the term is limited to "international terrorism" as outlined in 18 U.S.C. § 2331 - Chapter 113B. This definition is an important caveat as it frames the scope of the analysis to a specific community of actors and acknowledges that the use of these technologies has

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1 This has been witnessed by tracking conversations of jihadists within various internet chat rooms and forums.

been demonstrated and documented by other actors contained within a broader definition of terrorism.

This article is designed to demonstrate the advantages and limitations of the use of digital currencies by illicit actors, specifically jihadists. Focus is placed on the technological problems posed to terrorist organizations in leveraging these currencies, as well as the benefits associated with their use. Furthermore, this analysis demonstrates, in brief, the technical challenges faced by law enforcement and intelligence agencies engaged in anti-money laundering (AML) and countering the financing of terrorism (CFT) endeavors.

Shortcomings in the Old Way of Doing Business

The U.S. Department of the Treasury and other government agencies recognize that terrorist organizations use a variety of methods to launder and finance terror activities. Two traditional methods that terrorist organizations have used for the financing and laundering of funds are traditional Hawala networks and conventional international banking.[2] While the possibilities for financing terrorism extend to a wide array of methods ranging from robbery and narcotics to ransom and smuggling, it is valuable to limit the scope for analytical purposes to examining the functional and legal/regulatory challenges associated with digital currencies in the context of these historical terrorism financing methods.

A great deal of emphasis has been placed on both of these financing typologies. In the case of Hawala networks, the Department of the Treasury has provided extensive reports on their use to finance terror and launder money across borders.[3] These networks implicitly rely on the trusted relationships of brokers within the network. While these traditional networks are efficient and difficult to track for transferring money from point A to B, they are at the same

time inefficient for the decentralized collection of funds from multiple sources and the disbursement of those funds to single or multiple geographically dispersed end points. The limits imposed by a trust-based network constrain the dynamic collection and disbursement of funds within a terror network and slow down the process of funding, planning, and implementing attacks.

In contrast, conventional banking systems using ISO 9362 (SWIFT-BIC)[4] or other modern commercial banking protocols/standards are efficient modes for conducting international financial transactions. The challenge here for terrorist groups is that these systems adhere to strong regulatory frameworks within codified national and international agreements such as those developed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).[5] The use of conventional banking systems unnecessarily exposes terrorist organizations to oversight by banks, law enforcement, and intelligence officials, which threatens their operational security.

In summary, the traditional option of Hawala and the conventional option of international banking pose unique risks for terrorist groups engaging in international financial transactions. The literature on AML/CFT efforts in these two areas is extensive.[6] However, partly due to its novelty and partly due to its complexity, the evolving world of digital or crypto currencies like BitCoin and their impact on AML/CFT has been given substantially less attention.

Beyond Convention and Tradition: New Methods for Financing Terror

Much of the literature to date has focused on the functional aspects of crypto currencies and a narrow subset has focused on the practical implications of alternative pathways

for financial transactions at both the national and international level. Two recent cases have elevated the role of digital currencies in the AML/CFT research space. The first major incident was the investigation, takedown, and indictment of Liberty Reserve and its founder. Liberty Reserve was a Costa

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Rica-based digital currency founded in 2006 and the successor to several digital gold currencies.[7] The second incident, also culminating in 2013, was the investigation and takedown of Silk Road, an illicit online market functioning within the "Deep Web."[8]

Liberty Reserve functioned similarly to a conventional bank with a central ledger of transactions. However, Liberty Reserve embedded tacit anonymity by deliberately failing to mandate account holder validation. In other words, people who opened accounts were not required to provide any of the basic personally identifiable information that a conventional bank would require to conduct financial transactions. This tacit anonymity hid Liberty Reserve account holders' activities from legal and regulatory oversight by law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Liberty Reserve added to the tacit anonymity of its users by requiring all users to deposit and withdraw funds from third-party "exchangers" to eliminate a direct paper trail to Liberty Reserve. The central objective was to

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2 Hawala – meaning transfer – is a pre-modern financial transfer system that facilitates the conduct of commerce through trusted informal networks.

3 Patrick M. Jost and Harjit Singh Sandhu, "The Hawala Alternative Remittance System and its Role in Money Laundering," Financial Crimes Enforcement Network and INTERPOL/FOPAC, 2003.

4 This system provides unique identification codes for financial institutions. SWIFT-BIC stands for Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication-Business Identifier Codes.

5 Financial Action Task Force. *International Standards on Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation.* (Paris, France: 2013), pp. 1–130.

6 For a broad overview of the current state of the literature on AML/CFL, see Peter Romaniuk, "The State of the Art on the Financing of Terrorism," *The RUSI Journal*, 159:2 (2014): pp. 6-17.

7 *United States of America v Liberty Reserve S.A*, No. USA-33s-274 (Ed. 9-25-58), United States District Court, Southern District of New York, May 2013.

8 "Deep Web" refers to the utilization of Tor networks to encrypt and hide web traffic.

avoid U.S. and international law and in the process create a black-market banking system. For terrorist groups, the global reach of Liberty Reserve combined with its ability to avoid revealing regulatory practices presented a solution to the problems associated with more traditional banking.[9]

Silk Road, unlike Liberty Reserve, was not a financial institution, but rather a commercial marketplace equivalent to an Amazon or Ebay for illicit merchandise.[10] The marketplace made possible the sale of everything from narcotics to weaponry. Similar to purchasing a book on Amazon,

> **"Silk Road would not have been as successful at illicit e-commerce if it used credit cards and bank accounts which tie users to their transactions conducted in the deep web."**

customers of Silk Road could purchase drugs and guns from a variety of private sellers, all of whom connected anonymously to the market and all of whom used a digital currency to engage in transactions.[11] The site was accessible only to users of Tor[12] and conducted financial transactions through an emerging digital currency called Bitcoin (BTC).

Silk Road would not have been as successful at illicit e-commerce if it used credit cards and bank accounts which tie users to their transactions conducted in the deep web. To maintain the anonymity of the marketplace beyond access through Tor networks, the site relied on Bitcoin, a secure,

non-trust-based currency. Using third-party money "exchangers" would have been inefficient and limited the ability to engage in rapid e-commerce transactions. If Silk Road had used a service such as Liberty Reserve, every user would have had to register with Liberty Reserve and one or more third party "exchangers" willing to convert Liberty Reserve currency. To engage in any given transaction, currency would have needed to be converted or transferred at least three times.[13] To overcome this problem, the site leveraged a new digital currency type that had only been conceptualized a year earlier.

Bitcoin[14] was designed to eliminate the need for trust through mathematical proof of work. Trust and the ability to ensure the security and reliability of transactions are crucial to sustained iterative commerce. The ability to ensure trust in a digital currency was a major turning point that has largely facilitated the success of Bitcoin. Although Bitcoin was not designed with anonymity in mind, its construction provides anonymity to its users as evidenced in the 2013 indictment of Silk Road founder Ross Ulbricht.[15] All conventional Bitcoin transactions are transparent and by design open for all participants in the Bitcoin network to view. In other words, every transaction ever conducted in Bitcoin is recorded and distributed to every other user in the network. Instead of providing

anonymity for transactions, Bitcoin's structure facilitates anonymity through the absence of personally identifiable information (PII) linking sellers and buyers to transactions through the use of public and private key pairs, as will be examined in more detail below.

Because each transaction is the result of a hash-based (mathematical) proof-of-work requiring significant computational power, it is probabilistically unlikely that any one user can double spend any given Bitcoin. The ability to double spend was a fundamental problem associated with

> **"Unless terrorist organizations can sufficiently educate all members that use crypto currencies to do so at a very high level, the use of these networks may leave the overall organization vulnerable."**

early concepts of digital currencies, as the validation process might make it possible for an individual to essentially purchase things from two different vendors using the same currency value at the same time without either vendor knowing that the money used to purchase a good or service had already been spent.

Since there is no central oversight mechanism like a bank or in the case of cash, physical currency, the creators of Bitcoin minimized potential manipulation of the system by creating a mathematical means to ensure the validity of each transaction in relation to the balances present in a consumer's account. Therefore, because every user in the network has a record of all transactions, it is highly unlikely that any given user can spoof (falsify) transactions so long as the majority of ledgers in the network indicate a transaction has occurred. This creates a non-trust-based verification that provides every user with knowledge of every transaction that has ever taken place since Bitcoin started in 2009.

9 A more detailed analysis of the inner workings of Liberty Reserve is provided in the 2013 Federal indictment: *United States of America v Liberty Reserve S.A*, 2013.

10 Kim Zetter, "How the Feds Took Down the Silk Road Drug Wonderland," *Wired*, November 11, 2013.

11 *United States of America v Ross William Ulbricht*, USA-33s-274 (Ed. 9-25-58), United States District Court, Southern District of New York, February 4, 2014.

12 Tor is free software that enables anonymity by en-crypting and directing internet traffic through a network consisting of more than 5,000 relays.

13 In contrast, Bitcoin requires only one mathematical proof and any given transaction takes between 10 min-utes and 24 hours, far less time than a comparable Lib-erty Reserve transaction.

14 In 2008, under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto, a concept paper for a decentralized cryptographic peer-to-peer digital currency was published. The concepts presented in this paper led to the creation of a digital currency rooted in cryptographic proofs (mathematical equations) based on a cryptographic hash (the present block), the hash of the previous transaction (previous block), and what is called a nonce (a generated pseudo random number). Together these form what is called the "block chain." To ensure there is security of the mathe-matical proof, each hash can be solved by only one nonce. To complete each stage of the block chain, any given com-puter in the network must continuously try out different numbers until it finds the correct nonce to complete the segment of the chain. Each segment of the chain is unique and formed by adding the preceding portions of the chain to the current block.

15 *United States of America v Ross William Ulbricht*, 2014.

While the transactions themselves are not hidden, the individuals engaged in the transactions are largely anonymous.

Even though Bitcoin users do not provide any direct PII, they are not completely anonymous. Users can be tracked by a careful examination of transactions, primarily by analyzing the repeated use of specific public keys that direct funds for payment. Investigators can use technologically advanced analytical techniques to map user transactions across the network and pair them across datasets to find

> **"Cryptography is a never-ending mathematical and computational arms race and crypto currencies, such as Bitcoin, are likely affected as better algorithms and more powerful computers are developed."**

individual network users.[16] Essentially, constructing a pattern of behavior based on transactions can reveal tremendous amounts of information about a user, to include where they shopped, how much they spent, the frequency of transactions, and any transactions with a party that collected PII.

These discovery techniques are time-consuming and imperfect, but have been successful in reducing the anonymity of Bitcoin users who use the same public key for multiple transactions. Similarly, analysts use these techniques to reduce or remove the anonymity of users who use multiple sets of public keys to complete transactions in an attempt to maintain anonymity.[17] This can provide an opening for law enforcement and intelligence agencies to use amateur users (who either donate to or receive funds to plan and engage

in terror activities) through Bitcoin to deconstruct a network.

Buyers and sellers using Bitcoin can enhance their anonymity by changing their public keys associated with various transactions. This is the equivalent of using a different credit card number for every single purchase a traditional consumer might make. Additionally, new services such as Dark Wallet propose to enhance the anonymity of transactions by allowing illicit transactions to digitally "piggyback" on non-illicit transactions, creating a single transaction that obfuscates both.[18] These new services, combined with tools such as Tor, can significantly enhance the probability of engaging in anonymous transactions online using Bitcoin.

While novice participation in Bitcoin is relatively straightforward, the maintenance of high levels of anonymity on Bitcoin requires substantial effort and technical skill. Amateur jihadist use of Bitcoin poses a technical problem for the widespread use of Bitcoin by terrorist organizations. The amateur (non-anonymous) use of Bitcoin by a participant in a network can reduce the anonymity of all network transactions. Novice users could provide a point of origin for intelligence and law enforcement agencies to begin work on deconstructing a terrorist finance network. Specifically, the more transactions made to a single or set of public keys, the less likely it is that the parties involved will maintain anonymity in a distributed funding or donation network. Unless terrorist organizations can sufficiently educate all members that use crypto currencies to do so at a very high level, the use of these networks may leave the overall organization vulnerable.

Jihadists Discuss Crypto Currencies
Individuals interested in jihad seem to be paying attention to this complexity and have posted YouTube videos, discussions links, and links to research on the anonymity of Bitcoin on various discussion boards.[19] These same

individuals have spent time and effort to discuss the problems of financing associated with jihad. One user even explicitly writes about the potential to purchase weapons and ammunition and the ability to exchange digital currency for hard currency. Yet despite this optimism, the same user goes on to discuss the level of technical expertise required by users to engage in financial transactions using Bitcoin.[20]

These forum discussions are important in the context of AML/CFT research as they highlight a deliberate effort on the part of individuals associated with jihadist movements to understand a new and evolving technology to raise money for terrorist activities. While these discussions indicate an asymmetry in the level of knowledge between more technical jihadists and their less technical counterparts, they also illustrate an effort by more technical members of the community to inform and educate their peers on the proper use of digital currencies. Moreover, there are direct references to using digital currencies to transfer money into countries where conventional or traditional methods of financial transactions are difficult due to a lack of network capacity or surveillance and regulation.

Although some websites affiliated with terrorist organizations have begun collecting Bitcoin donations, this practice appears to be relatively limited. One example would be http://kavkazcenter.com. It is possible that as the technical capacity of these organizations increases, their use of digital currencies will also increase. This increase is likely to be small, however, in relation to overall terror financing through other channels such as hawala, kidnapping, front companies, narcotics sales, oil sales, and many more.

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16 Fergal Reid and Martin Harrigan, "An Analysis of the Anonymity in the Bitcoin System," in Yaniv Altshuler et al eds., *Security and Privacy in Social Networks* (New York: Springer, 2013).

17 Ibid.

18 Andy Greenberg, "'Dark Wallet' Is About to Make Bitcoin Money Laundering Easier than Ever," *Wired*, April 29, 2014.

19 These are some of the links that have been posted

on jihadist discussion boards: http://youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Um63OQz3bjo#!, http://bitcoinweekly.com/articles/how-bitcoin-security-works-by-analogy, https://shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=200037&highlight=bitcoin.

20 These discussions were posted to the Shumukh al-Islam Network on April 29, 2013.

Conclusion

Given the interest that terrorist organizations have shown in leveraging digital currencies, their use of such mediums for conducting financial transactions will only increase in the future. The development of digital currencies poses a long-term challenge to law enforcement and intelligence agencies as the technical skill of their targets and the level of complexity of the currencies available increase.

Yet, because these currencies are all based on the mathematics that serve as the foundation for modern cryptography, it is possible that their use might also offer opportunities for the tracking of illicit behavior. Herein lies the dilemma of using digital currencies. As one person develops a cryptographic algorithm allowing transactions to be more anonymous, another person immediately begins work on solving it to peel back the anonymity. Cryptography is a never-ending mathematical and computational arms race and crypto currencies, such as Bitcoin, are likely affected as better algorithms and more powerful computers are developed.

Both terrorists and governments will likely struggle to leverage these tools to their advantage in the coming years. The main takeaway, however, is that when certain pathways for financing terrorist activities become more difficult, there are increasingly going to be alternative means available to finance terror and launder money as technology and technological skills increase.

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Boko Haram: Recruitment, Financing, and Arms Trafficking in the Lake Chad Region

By Jacob Zenn

IN JULY 2014, Cameroon's Defense Ministry announced that Boko Haram[1] was a growing threat in the Lake Chad region and now has approximately 15,000 to 20,000 members.[2] A Nigerian journalist with longstanding contacts with Boko Haram, however, says that Boko Haram has up to 50,000 members.[3] Even the lower estimate of the two would mean Boko Haram has similar manpower as militant groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria and pro-Russian militias in eastern Ukraine.[4] The higher estimate may be correct if "members" include not only armed militants but also individuals who cooperate with Boko Haram, whether intentionally or coerced. Using this inclusive definition of "members," two of Boko Haram's newest recruitment profiles are of forcible conscripts, especially teenage boys and girls, and financiers, who are primarily businessmen, arms traffickers, and kidnappers in Cameroon.

This article reviews Boko Haram's recruitment from the time its leader, Abubakar Shekau, declared jihad against Nigeria and the United States in 2010 until the present. It then discusses the role of forcible conscripts and financiers in Boko Haram operations in 2014. The article finds that the strategic shift of Boko Haram's armed militants to seize and hold local government areas

(LGAs) in its self-described caliphate in northeastern Nigeria explains why it increasingly requires forcible recruits and financiers in its membership network.[5]

Ideology, Economic Vulnerability, and Infiltration

After Nigerian security forces killed Boko Haram founder Muhammad Yusuf in clashes with his followers in July 2009, Yusuf's deputy, Shekau, emerged as his successor.[6] Shekau's loyalists included Yusuf's disciples who found inspiration in al-Qa`ida's style of militancy and Yusuf's and

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Shekau's call for a "pure" Islamic state in Nigeria. Boko Haram also attracted criminals that members recruited in prison and were freed in rescue operations, including the first attack under Shekau on Bauchi prison in September 2010.[7]

Boko Haram's operations in late 2010 required minimal training, such as drive-by assassinations of local politicians and religious leaders, who were "guilty" of mixing Islam with "infidel" notions of democracy, secularism and

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1 The group Boko Haram identifies itself as Jama`at Ahl al-Sunna li al-Da`wa wa al-Jihad, which is Arabic for "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." The term "Boko Haram" means "Western education is sinful" in the Hausa language.

2 "Cameroon Furious and Fearful Over Boko Haram Infiltration," thenewage.za, July 12, 2014.

3 The journalist mentioned was Ahmed Salkida. See Emmanuel Elebeke, "Boko Haram has 50,000 Members in its Camp," *Vanguard*, August 28, 2014.

4 John Hall, "Could ISIS Now be Twice as Powerful? Membership of Extreme Group May Double in Size as it Merges with al Qaeda's 15,000-Strong Syrian Offshoot on Border with Iraq," *Daily Mail*, June 25, 2014; "Ukraine Imposes New Conditions on Peace Talks with Pro-Russia Rebels," France24, July 9, 2014.

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5 Nigeria has 774 local government areas (LGAs), including more than 20 in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa that are considered under Boko Haram's control as of October 2014. See "Boko Haram Leader Proclaims 'Islamic Caliphate' in Nigeria," *Vanguard*, August 24, 2014.

6 On Shekau's use of imposters, see Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau: Dead, Deposed Or Duplicated?" *Militant Leadership Monitor* 5:5 (2014).

7 Sani Muhd Sani, "Attack On Bauchi Prison - Boko Haram Frees 721 Inmates," *Leadership*, September 8, 2010.

Western education. Boko Haram also paid small fees to fruit sellers and *al-majiri*[8] boys to scout on security forces and burn down churches and schools.[9] However, when Boko Haram began carrying out sophisticated bombings, such as on churches on Christmas Day in 2010 and the Federal

> ## "Boko Haram similarly has cooperated with several rogue customs officers in northeastern Nigeria, who turn a blind eye to cross-border arms trafficking."

Police Headquarters and UN Building in 2011, and kidnapping foreigners in 2012, it relied on Nigerians who received funding or training from abroad with al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and who were part of Ansaru's[10] *shura* (leadership council).[11]

Ansaru, in particular, acquired inside information to carry out key attacks, including the ambush of Nigerian troops in Kogi before they deployed to Mali in January 2013, the rescue of several dozen Boko Haram members from the Special Anti-robbery Squad prison in Abuja in November 2012, and kidnappings of foreign engineers in northwest Nigeria in 2012.[12] Boko Haram

similarly has cooperated with several rogue customs officers in northeastern Nigeria, who turn a blind eye to cross-border arms trafficking because they (or their families) are threatened or bribed by Boko Haram, or sympathize with its ideology.[13]

Forcible Conscripts: Chibok as a Turning Point

The kidnapping of more than 250 girls, mostly Christians, in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria on April 14, 2014, brought international attention to Boko Haram's forcible recruitment. Yet that incident was neither the first nor last time Boko Haram employed the tactic. Boko Haram militants and their wives began kidnapping young girls in early 2013 to use as assets to trade in prisoner exchanges, use as decoys to lure troops into ambushes, and serve as porters and cooks.[14] Two days before the Chibok kidnapping, on April 12, 2014, Boko Haram took several girls from a college in Dikwa, Borno State. In addition, on April 19, May 5, and June 10, 2014, the militants took more than 40 girls from towns near Chibok, and on October 20, 2014, took 45 more girls from Wagga, Adamawa State and "married" the young ones after the Nigerian government reported an agreement with Boko Haram on releasing the Chibok schoolgirls, which did not materialize.[15] Internally displaced people (IDPs) who fled Borno estimate that Boko Haram may have abducted between 500 and 2,000 women since 2013, but most incidents go unreported.[16]

Only after the Chibok kidnapping did Boko Haram start using women in operations, including the wives of slain or arrested militants and beggars who were offered a "few naira notes."[17] During the month of Ramadan in June 2014, there were six female suicide

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bombers, all under 16-years-old, who carried out four attacks at universities and fuel stations in Kano, a military barracks in Gombe, and a fuel station in Lagos. In addition, one 10-year-old girl was detected with a suicide vest in Katsina in July 2014.[18]

The explosives were placed under the girls' *hijabs* or clothing and detonated remotely, possibly without them knowing.[19] There was media speculation that they were from Chibok. However, it appears more likely they were among the dozens of girls recruited by Boko Haram's "female wing" in Kano, which was led by Hafsat Bako. She is the widow of a deceased Boko Haram commander and was based in Borno's Sambisa Forest, where some of the Chibok girls were initially held, and her arrest in June 2014 coincided with the end of the series of female suicide bombings.[20] Her role in the female wing and in Sambisa Forest therefore suggests an operational link between the kidnapping in Chibok and the deployment of the female suicide

8   *Al-majiri* (literally meaning "migrants," derived from the Arabic word *muhajir*) are young Islamic students in northern Nigeria, who beg for alms in return for shelter and Qur'anic lessons from local leaders. There are millions of *al-majiri* students in northern Nigeria, with many in Kano and Borno. See "Al Majiri Education: Journey to Nowhere," *Vanguard*, April 19, 2012.

9   "Boko Haram: Army Arrests Orange Seller with N600m," 247UReports, May 20, 2013.

10   Jama`atu Ansaril Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru) was founded in January 2012 by former Nigerian AQIM militants, who focused on kidnapping foreigners and bombing churches in the Middle Belt in Nigeria. It, however, ideologically opposed Boko Haram's use of *takfiri* ideology to justify the killing of Muslims.

11   These leaders included Yusuf's former third-in-command, the Cameroonian Mamman Nur, and U.S. specially designated Nigerian terrorists Adam Kambar and Khalid al-Barnawi.

12   "Islamists Ansaru Claim Attack on Mali-bound Nigeria Troops," Reuters, January 20, 2013; "Declared of Jama`atu Ansaril Muslimina Fibiladis Sudan Garki II

Abuja," November 30, 2012, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1m5-zV3zfU; "French Man Kidnap: Possibly an Inside Job – Katsina CP," *Vanguard*, December 21, 2012.

13   Ola Audu, "Soldiers Nab Top Customs Officer for Allegedly Ferrying Arms for Boko Haram," *Premium Times*, May 28, 2013; JC Finley, "10 Nigerian Generals Arrested for Supplying Information, Ammunition to Boko Haram," UPI, June 3, 2014; "Nigeria Officials Held for 'Boko Haram Links'," al-Jazeera, September 30, 2012.

14   Joe Brock, "Insight: Boko Haram, Taking to Hills, Seize Slave 'Brides,'" Reuters, November 17, 2013.

15   Drew Hinshaw, "Boko Haram Kidnaps 20 More Girls in Nigeria," *Wall Street Journal*, June 10, 2014; "Boko Haram Seizes 40 Women in Fresh Raid," *PM News Nigeria*, October 20, 2014; "Boko Haram Frees Abducted Women, Girls," *Vanguard*, October 23, 2014.

16   Author's interview of journalists who interviewed IDPs in Gombe and Adamawa States. Salihu Garba, "Yan Boko Haram Sun Sace Mutane Fiye da Dubu Uku Banda na Chibok," VOA Hausa, August 19, 2014; Tim Cocks, "Nigerians Doubtful of Girls' Release after Boko Haram

'Truce' Breached," Reuters, October 19, 2014.

17   Naira is the national currency of Nigeria. See "Kano Bombings Traced to Female Beggars," *This Day*, August 4, 2014.

18   Robyn Dixon, "Young Women Used in Nigerian Suicide Bombings," *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 2014.

19   "Women, Kids as Suicide Bombers," *Vanguard*, August 15, 2014.

20   Ibid.

bombers, even though the schoolgirls were likely not the bombers.

Legitimizing the Chibok Kidnapping via Historical Manipulation and ISIL

The future of many of the schoolgirls kidnapped in Chibok and other towns in northeastern Nigeria is likely as "wives" of militants ("slaves" in Shekau's own words). As "wives," their value to Boko Haram is greater than as bartering chips in an increasingly improbable deal with the Nigerian government because of Boko Haram's dispersal of the girls into multiple groups and their

> "Even if Boko Haram returned 90% of the Chibok schoolgirls, the militants would still have more than 20 girls from Chibok and hundreds of other girls to leverage in future negotiations or keep enslaved."

inability to reconvene all, or even half, of the girls if a deal were reached.[21] Even if Boko Haram returned 90% of the Chibok schoolgirls, the militants would still have more than 20 girls from Chibok and hundreds of other girls to leverage in future negotiations or keep enslaved. In a potential deal, the militants would also likely demand territorial concessions from the Nigerian government that would guarantee Boko Haram sovereignty in dozens of LGAs in northeastern Nigeria under its control. Shekau, who praised the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a July 2014 video statement, declared these LGAs as "part" of an Islamic State in a separate video statement released in October 2014.[22] The video featured ISIL's *rayat*

ul-uqab flag behind Shekau and played ISIL's signature *nasheed*, *My Umma, Dawn Has Arrived*, as background music while Shekau made the declaration, signaling that Boko Haram sees its caliphate as part of al-Baghdadi's.[23]

Boko Haram will legitimize the "slavery" of the Chibok schoolgirls based on a textual interpretation of the Qur'an and the support the kidnapping received from ISIL as well as al-Shabab.[24] ISIL cited the "Nigerian mujahidin" in the October 2014 edition of its magazine *Dabiq* as precedent for ISIL's own kidnapping of several hundred non-Muslim Yazidi women in northern Iraq, who ISIL forced to become "sex slaves" of militants.[25] Boko Haram therefore may not be carrying out kidnappings of women in 2014 for the same purposes it kidnapped women in 2012 and 2013.[26] Rather, Boko Haram, like ISIL, may be seeking to revive practices that were virtually non-existent since the end of the last caliphate era in Nigeria (and Iraq and the Levant) in the early 20th century. Such practices include kidnapping mostly non-Muslim girls to "contribute their children to the next generation" of the caliphate and *hadd* punishments, such as beheading, stoning, whipping, and hand-cutting of "criminals," which Boko Haram carries out in LGAs under its control.[27]

Forcible Recruitment of Teenage Boys

Since the Chibok kidnapping in April 2014, Boko Haram has increasingly kidnapped teenage boys in northeastern Nigeria and "re-educated" them at Qur'anic schools that are often in Cameroon.[28] Signposts in Arabic language that Boko Haram erected in Cameroonian border towns with ISIL's *rayat al-uqab* insignia on them say, "It is a crime and treason not to join jihad."[29] This is likely Boko Haram's justification for the forcible conscription and killing of boys (and girls) who refuse.

The militants use untrained boys to acquire intelligence and carry out the first wave of attacks on villages or barracks. When they gain experience,

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they can be part of the second wave designed to overwhelm the security forces after the first wave weakens their positions and morale.[30] Boys may also be given a quota of how many security officers or "high value targets" they must attack, and risk death at the hands of their commanders if they fail or show "cowardice."[31]

21 Ameh Comrade Godwin, "Some Chibok Girls are Pregnant, Others May Never Return – Obasanjo," *Daily Post*, June 13, 2014; "Grave Violations Against Children in Northeastern Nigeria," Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, September 2014.

22 Aminu Abubakar, "Nigerian Town Seized by Boko Haram 'Part of Islamic Caliphate'," Agence France-Presse, August 24, 2014; Stephanie Lining, "Boko Haram

Releases Video Showing Beheading of Nigerian Air Force Pilot as Terror Leader Who Was Thought Dead Reappears," *Daily Mail*, October 3, 2014.

23 Jacob Zenn and Allen Grane, "Five Reasons To Pay Attention to Boko Haram's Latest Video," CFR Africa in Transition, October 7, 2014.

24 "Al-Shabaab Expresses Support for Boko Haram Abduction," Somalianewsroom.com, May 13, 2014.

25 *Dabiq Magazine*, al-Hayat Media Center, October 2014.

26 Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram," *St. Andrews Journal of Terrorism Research*, January 2014.

27 For a view on Islam's abandonment of slavery as a sign of its adaptability to modern times, the author recommends the Mauritanian Institute for Access to Modernity (IMAM); Chris Pleasance, "Hundreds of Yazidi Women Held in Islamic State Prison Where They are Held as Sex Slaves or Sold Off as Jihadi Brides for as Little as $25," *Daily Mail*, August 28, 2014; Paul E. Lovejoy, "Concubinage and the Status of Women Slaves in Early Colonial Northern Nigeria," *The Journal of African History* 29 (1988): pp 245-266.

28 "Boko Haram Kills Three, Abducts 12 in Cameroun," *This Day*, August 20, 2014; Omeiza Ajayi, "Boko Haram Begins Forced Recruitment," nationalmirroronline, July 22, 2014.

29 The author received a video of a battle between security forces and Boko Haram in Fotokol, Cameroon where such signposts could be seen. See "Boko Haram: Over 50 Women Abducted in Gulak Town," *Daily Post*, September 15, 2014.

30 "Boko Haram 'Executes' 2 for Smoking Cigarettes," Agence France-Presse, August 21, 2014; "Boko Haram Kidnaps Scores of Villagers in Nigeria: Witnesses," Agence France-Presse, August 15, 2014; "Gunmen Kill 16 Villagers, Burn Several Houses, Conscript Youths," newtelegraphonline.com, April 13, 2014.

31 Kingsley Omonobi, "Thousands Flee to Cameroon as Boko Haram Conscripts Youths to Fight Nigeria," *Van-*

Boko Haram also appears to be focusing on Cameroon for its non-forcible recruitment of men, possibly because the destruction of villages in Nigeria has alienated youths and caused them to flee to IDP camps outside of Borno or join the anti-Boko Haram Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) vigilante group. In Cameroon, which until 2014 was spared from large-scale attacks, locals often consider Boko Haram "just another

> "Boko Haram also appears to be focusing on Cameroon for its non-forcible recruitment of men, possibly because the destruction of villages in Nigeria has alienated youths and caused them to flee."

religious group" or "the boys."[32] According to Cameroonian police, there have been more than 500 new recruits in villages along the border with Nigeria, some of whom were "drugged or manipulated" in training camps.[33] They provide Boko Haram with the ability to use Cameroon as a rear base for attacking Nigeria, to raise money through kidnapping foreigners, and to traffic weapons into Nigeria from Cameroonian border towns.

Financiers, Arms Traffickers and Kidnappings in Cameroon
When Boko Haram was an above ground movement before 2009, it had wealthy members who served as intermediaries between financial sponsors, such as local government officials or wealthy Salafists abroad, and Muhammad Yusuf.[34] Now officials have distanced themselves from Boko Haram, while

mainstream Salafist and al-Qa`ida funding decreased as a result of Boko Haram's massacres, the break-up of Ansaru's shura in Kaduna in 2012, and the French-led military intervention in northern Mali in 2013, which disrupted the AQIM supply line to Boko Haram.[35] However, Boko Haram has made inroads with new financiers, who are from Borno and bordering areas of Cameroon's Extreme North Region and are often ethnic Kanuris like Yusuf, Shekau and most Boko Haram members. These financiers provide Boko Haram with weapons and a route to negotiation with the Cameroonian government in kidnapping-for-ransom operations.[36]

One Cameroonian financier, Alhaji Abdalla, is a vehicle exporter based in Amchide whose business operations extend to Qatar (the vehicles likely move from Doha to other ports in Asia).[37] He served as a key negotiator for Boko Haram in talks with the Cameroonian government for the release of the French Moulin-Fournier family of seven, which was kidnapped by Boko Haram (likely in coordination with Ansaru) in Waza (a town 16 miles east of Amchide) in February 2013.[38] The government paid a $3.14 million ransom and released Boko Haram prisoners in April 2013 in exchange for the family.[39]

In July 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped from Kolofata (a town three miles from Amchide) the town's *lamido* (local ruler) and his family and the wife of Cameroon Deputy Prime Minister Amadou Ali, who represented the Cameroon side in negotiations for the

Moulin-Fourniers and ran programs to prevent recruitment of Cameroonian youths to Boko Haram (Amadou Ali was outside of Kolofata so he avoided being kidnapped).[40] The kidnapping was reportedly motivated in part by Cameroon's failure to pay the full ransom for the Moulin-Fourniers.[41]

In October 2014, however, Boko Haram released the wife of Amadou Ali and the *lamido* and his family, along with 10 Chinese engineers who were kidnapped in April 2014 from Waza, after the Cameroonian government paid

> "These financiers provide Boko Haram with weapons and a route to negotiation with the Cameroonian government in kidnapping-for-ransom operations."

approximately $600,000 in ransom to cover the remaining payment for the Moulin-Fourniers.[42] In addition, Cameroon released 30 prisoners, including some who were imprisoned in Maroua in July 2014 after being caught stockpiling weapons in the town of Kousseri on Cameroon's border with Chad.[43] Others released from prison included a leading Boko Haram recruiter, the mastermind of a kidnapping of two Italian priests and a Canadian nun in a town north of Maroua in June 2014, and the top Cameroonian Boko Haram commander, Abakar Ali. Abakar Ali had been arrested in September 2014 in Kousseri and revealed under interrogation that he coordinated arms trafficking with the mayor of Fotokol (a town on Cameroon's border with Nigeria at Gambarou-Ngala), who was subsequently arrested with stockpiles of weapons at his residence.[44]

guard, September 1, 2014.

32 "Fears in Cameroon of Boko Haram Recruitment," IRIN, April 16, 2014.

33 "Boko Haram Gathers New Recruits in Cameroon," news24.com, August 8, 2014.

34 Nasiru L. Abubakar, "Video Shows Ex-Commissioner's Execution," *Daily Trust*, August 4, 2009; "Boko Haram Gets N40million Donation From Algeria," Sahara Reporters, May 13, 2012; Eli Lake, "Boko Haram's Bin Laden Connection," *Daily Beast*, May 11, 2014.

35 "Mali: un Béninois à la tête d'une unité combattante, une katiba, dans le Nord," Radio France Internationale, December 28, 2012; "Barnawi, Kambar: Qaeda-linked Militants with Boko Haram Ties," Agence France-Presse, June 21, 2012.

36 "Cameroun: 10 millions d'euros de rançon pour libérer le père Vandenbeusch," *Le Journal International*, February 7, 2014.

37 "Cameroun: La Boko Haram connection," camer.be, June 2, 2014.

38 Ibid. For details on Ansaru's likely role in the Moulin-Fournier kidnapping, see section on "Evidence of Ansaru's Presence in Borno" in Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram's Evolving Tactics and Alliances in Nigeria," *CTC Sentinel* 6:6 (2013): p. 13.

39 "Boko Haram Unleashes Terror in Cameroon," *Sun News Online*, July 28, 2014.

40 "Biya's Answer to Boko Haram," *Africa Confidential*, August 29, 2014.

41 "Cameroon/Boko Haram. Was Unpaid Ransom for French Family Responsible for Kidnap of VPM's Wife?" *Iroko Magazine*, July 28, 2014.

42 Ibid.

43 Mbenju Mfany, "Over 40 Boko Haram Members Detained in Maroua," thecameroonian.com, June 25, 2014.

44 "Cameroon Army Arrests Ramat Musa, Nigerian

Cameroon also reportedly returned to Boko Haram some of the weapons and ammunition it confiscated from Boko Haram in Kousseri.[45]

The pattern of Boko Haram kidnappings of foreigners in exchange for ransoms and the release of weapons traffickers occurred in several other instances. When Boko Haram kidnapped a French priest in "coordination" with Ansaru in November 2013 from a town 16 miles

"The tie between arms traffickers and Boko Haram commanders was also highlighted in key arrests in Cameroon."

south of Amchide, the militants released him weeks later for a multi-million dollar ransom and a Kanuri weapons trafficker.[46] Boko Haram also released the two Italian priests and Canadian nun after several weeks in captivity in June 2014 in another prisoner exchange and ransom deal.[47]

The tie between arms traffickers and Boko Haram commanders was also highlighted in key arrests in Cameroon. One Chadian weapons trafficker was arrested in Waza in June 2014 working on behalf of a Maroua-based Boko Haram

commander and possessed $15,000 from deals that he made in Chad.[48] Days before his arrest, Cameroon uncovered weapons stockpiles in Maroua's central market.[49] In addition, in June 2014, Cameroon discovered travel documents from Libya (Africa's largest arms market since 2011) and Qatar and receipts from car exports to Qatar in a Boko Haram camp, which suggests a possible link to Alhaji Abdalla, who was Boko Haram's negotiator in the Moulin-Fournier and other kidnappings.[50]

Across the border in Nigeria, one of the financiers of the Chibok kidnapping and a plotter of the assassination of the *amir* of Gwoza was a Kanuri named Babaji Yaari, who runs a lucrative cart taxi business.[51] He coordinated the Chibok kidnapping with the leader of Boko Haram's female wing, Hafsat Bako, who was discussed above. Bako was arrested based on the Nigerian security force's interrogation of Yaari.[52] The transfer of many of the schoolgirls to Cameroon and Chad after the kidnapping suggests that Bako's and Yaari's network and the network of kidnappers, financiers, and arms traffickers in Cameroon likely overlap.[53]

Conclusion

This article reveals several new trends in the Boko Haram insurgency. First, Boko Haram's recruitment now includes hundreds, if not thousands, of forcibly conscripted boys and girls, who are often taken to and "re-educated" in

Cameroon. This type of recruitment demonstrates Boko Haram's need for more human resources to control territory in its self-described caliphate in northeastern Nigeria, and increasingly also in Cameroon.[54] The introduction of new commanders other than Abubakar Shekau, who was previously the only public face of Boko Haram, in videos of an attack in Gwoza in Borno State and the decapitation of a Nigerian air force pilot in August and October 2014 show Boko Haram's intent to reveal new commanders and

"Boko Haram's recruitment now includes hundreds, if not thousands, of forcibly conscripted boys and girls, who are often taken to and 're-educated' in Cameroon."

amirs as the militants gain control of more LGAs.[55] Moreover, the arrest of Tuaregs from Mali fighting for Boko Haram in Cameroon in September 2014 suggests that its kidnapping and arms trafficking operations may be attracting militants who can strengthen the cross-border insurgency in Nigeria and Cameroon.[56]

Second, Boko Haram is increasingly launching operations in Cameroon's Extreme North Region and attempting to seize control of Cameroonian border towns, such as Fotokol, Amchide and Kolofata, to secure supply lines for receiving weapons from Chad and Libya for use in Nigeria.[57] Boko Haram may also seek to gain control of interior towns in

Mayor of Fotokol, 300 Insurgents," *The Street Journal*, October 4, 2014; "Cameroonian Military Capture Boko Haram's Top Commander, Abakar Ali," Sahara Reporters, September 26, 2014.

45 "Amchide: 31 Membres de Boko Haram Livrés au Nigeria," Cameroon-Info, December 27, 2012; "40 Suspected Boko Haram Militants Arrested in Cameroon," *Leadership*, June 24 2014; "Cameroun: 20 ans de prison pour des members," camer.be, July 31, 2014; "Cameroun: Les membres de Boko Haram libérés par le gouvernement," camer.be, October 16, 2014.

46 "Boko Haram: Freed French Priest Arrives in Paris," *PM News*, January 1, 2014; "Senior Officials in Cameroon Suspected of Complicity With Nigerian Islamic Sect," Cameroon-Info.net, April 11, 2014; "Abducted Chinese Likely in Nigeria – Cameroon," *Vanguard*, May 17, 2014; Guibai Guitama, "Cameroun – Libération du père Georges Vandenbeusch: Le négociateur désigné de Boko Haram réclame son argent," *L'Oeil du Sahel*, January 6, 2014.

47 Kathryn Blaze Carlson, "Release of Canadian Nun, Italian Priests Spurs Questions," *The Globe and Mail*, June 1, 2014

48 "Cameroun: Un coursier du Boko Haram aux arrêts à Waza," camer.be, June 19, 2014; Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "Cameroon's Military Seizes War Weapons," VOA, June 18, 2014.

49 "Cameroon Arrests 40 Boko Haram Suspects," *Punch*, June 25, 2014; "40 Suspected Boko Haram Militants Arrested in Cameroon," VOA, June 24, 2014.

50 "Cameroun: La Boko Haram connection," camer.be, June 2, 2014.

51 Cart taxis (popularly called *Achaba* or *Going*) in northern Nigeria are imported mostly from China and became a lucrative business after the government imposed a ban on motorcycles as a means of transportation, which the government believed are more likely to be used in terrorist attacks, such as drive-by shootings. See Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram's 'Borno Kidnapping Duo': Hafsat Bako and Babuji Yaari," *Militant Leadership Monitor* V:VII (2014).

52 Ibid.

53 "Nigeria: Reports Say Boko Haram Ferried Abducted Girls to Chad, Cameroon," *Daily Trust*, April 29, 2014.

54 "Nigeria's Female Suicide Bombers: A Show of Strength," War on the Rocks blog, October 16, 2014.

55 "Boko Haram Releases Video Showing Beheading of Nigerian Air Force Pilot as Terror Leader Who Was Thought Dead Reappears," *Daily Mail*, October 3, 2014; "Boko Haram Declares Gwoza Islamic Caliphate," *Punch*, August 25, 2014.

56 "Boko Haram Clashes Disrupt Learning in Cameroon," *Deutsche Welle*, September 10, 2014.

57 Boko Haram has attacked Cameroonian border towns such as Fotokol, Ashigashia and Kolofata, and Amchide, which connect to Borno's border towns of Gambarou, Gwoza, and Banki, respectively.

the Extreme North Region, such as Maroua, Waza, and Kousseri, not only for their importance in the supply line, but also for their historic value as parts of the former Kanem-Borno Caliphate, or "Greater Kanoura."[58] The Kanem-Borno Caliphate's former boundaries correspond almost precisely to Boko Haram's current area of operations, and Boko Haram may seek to recreate

> ## "One of the key questions for the Nigerian government is whether a deal for the release of the Chibok schoolgirls, or any type of ceasefire with Boko Haram, is possible and whether it would require Nigeria to cede territory to Boko Haram."

that caliphate through its own newly-declared caliphate, but with *takfiri* ideology replacing the Sufi traditions of the descendants of the Kanem-Borno *amirs*, who Boko Haram has killed or expelled from northeastern Nigeria.[59] Boko Haram's seizure of Abadam on Borno's border with Niger's Diffa Province in October 2014, which is also part of the historic Kanem-Borno empire, could signal future Boko Haram operations in Niger, where Boko Haram has supply lines that are currently more often used for receiving food and fuel than weapons.[60] The "reunification" of the former Kanem-Borno Caliphate areas would seemingly erase the legacy of colonialism that Boko Haram founder Muhammed Yusuf criticized in his sermons for "amalgamating [Borno] to the infidels...leaving Niger in

poverty...and creating ethnic problems and political divisions in Chad."[61]

Finally, one of the key questions for the Nigerian government is whether a deal for the release of the Chibok schoolgirls, or any type of ceasefire with Boko Haram, is possible and whether it would require Nigeria to cede territory to Boko Haram. According to Muhammed Yusuf's sermons, establishing an Islamic State was a prerequisite for Boko Haram to have the "independence" to negotiate on equal footing with the "infidel" Nigerian government.[62] It therefore appears that Boko Haram still follows Yusuf's doctrine, but now also with a model and legitimacy from ISIL on how to create this Islamic State through guerrilla warfare and territorial control.

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58 "Greater Kanoura" is a nationalist term used in the 1950s that refers to majority Kanuri areas of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger in the 1950s. See Minahan, J. *Nations Without States* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996).

59 Jacob Zenn, Atta Barkindo, and Nicholas Heras, "The Ideological Evolution of Boko Haram in Nigeria: Merging Local Salafism and International Jihadism," *The RUSI Journal*, July 2013.

60 "Boko Haram Seizes 40 Women in Fresh Raid," *PM News Nigeria*, October 20, 2014.

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61 Shaykh Muhammad Yusuf, Tarihin Musulmai, *History of Muslims*, video from pre-July 2009, accessed May 2014.

62 Abu Shekau's (and Muhammed Yusuf's) tafsir to Boko Haram members, video from pre- July 2009, accessed May 2014.

Boko Haram's Regional Cross-Border Activities

By Scott Menner

ON JULY 27, 2014, over 200 Boko Haram militants stormed Kolofata, a town in Cameroon's Extreme North Region. They targeted Vice Prime Minister Amadou Ali's house, kidnapping his wife and sister-in-law, as well as Seini Lamine, a senior religious leader and the town's mayor.[1] The night before, Boko Haram killed four Cameroonian soldiers and kidnapped at least 13 others.[2] Earlier in the month, Boko Haram kidnapped two sons of Bieshair Mohaman, Cameroon's traditional leader in Limani on July 15, 2014.[3] In northern Nigeria, authorities traced[4] some of the explosives used in recent suicide attacks to a quarry in northern Cameroon that was raided by Boko Haram in May 2014.[5] Boko Haram has targeted Niger as well. In December 2013, Nigerien authorities foiled a Boko Haram plot to kidnap the central government representative, the local governor, and the military zone commander in Diffa.[6] There is also increasing evidence that Boko Haram may be active in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad.

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1 "Boko Haram Kidnaps Cameroon's Vice PM's Wife, Kills 3," *Nigerian Tribune*, July 28, 2014; "Cameroun: 14 Membres de Boko Haram Reçoivent 10 à 20 Ans de Prison," Cameroon Web News, July 26, 2014; See also Javier Blas, "Kidnap Attack Shows an Expanding Boko Haram Now Targeting Cameroon," *Financial Times*, August 1, 2014.

2 One soldier who survived the attacks indicated that Boko Haram may have kidnapped up to 13 of his comrades in the attack. See "Boko Haram Clashes with Cameroon Soldiers in Cross-Border Attacks," Reuters, July 26, 2014. See also "Two Cameroon Soldiers 'Killed in Crossborder Boko Haram Attack,'" Cameroon Web News, July 25, 2014.

3 Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "Suspected Boko Haram Militants Kidnap Cleric's Children," Voice of America, July 15, 2014.

4 "Boko Haram: Explosives Used by Female Suicide Bombers Traced to Chinese Factory," *DailyPost*, August 2, 2014.

5 This attack resulted in the kidnapping of 10 Chinese nationals. See "Suspected Boko Haram Rebels Attack Chinese Plant in Cameroon," Reuters, May 17, 2014.

6 David Lewis, "Niger Fears Contagion from Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists," Reuters, March 19, 2014; Thomas Fessy, "Niger Hit by Nigeria's Boko Haram Fallout," BBC News, April 22, 2014.

This article analyzes Boko Haram's cross-border activities in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, and its presence in the CAR. Although it is difficult to ascertain precisely why Boko Haram is undertaking these cross-border activities, there are at least four explanations for how it has carried out this activity: the region's borders are long and fluid, militaries in the region are ineffective, multilateral cooperation is failing, and Boko Haram exploits historic ethno-linguistic cross-border ties.

Niger

In the aftermath of the 2012 Malian uprising and Nigeria's implementation of the 2013 State of Emergency to crack down on Boko Haram, refugees flooded into neighboring countries, including Niger, which immediately feared Boko Haram infiltrations. In southern Niger, Boko Haram members have plotted to bomb public places. In 2012, Nigerien authorities arrested 15 suspected Boko Haram members in Diffa, where

> **"In southern Niger, Boko Haram members have plotted to bomb public places. In 2012, Nigerien authorities arrested 15 suspected Boko Haram members in Diffa, where they were planning to attack the local military garrison."**

they were planning to attack the local military garrison.[7] On October 14, 2012, news reports speculated that Boko Haram[8] or al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) militants kidnapped five Nigeriens and a Chadian in Dakoro.[9] In 2014, the Nigerien government arrested 20 Boko Haram members in Diffa and Zinder for plotting to attack

a market.[10] Niger's army chief General Seyni Garba said his country avoided a "bloodbath."[11]

Boko Haram is also known to recruit Nigerien herdsmen and farmers whose livelihoods have been undercut by severe drought.[12] According to an interview with the BBC, some alleged Boko Haram recruits in Diffa claim that they accepted payments of over $3,000 each to join Boko Haram.[13] In February 2014, Nigerien authorities reportedly uncovered a Boko Haram training camp.[14]

More recently, Boko Haram members in Diffa ambushed an army patrol and escaped to the Nigerian side of the border.[15] Three Boko Haram members were captured and the next day nine more were arrested in connection to the attack.[16] Similar attacks, comparable to the Diffa kidnapping plot mentioned above,[17] may increase as Boko Haram attempts to deter increased Nigerien counterterrorism efforts. If Niger takes an increased role in the international coalition to defeat Boko Haram, the militants may transform Niger into a more active theatre of operations.

Chad

Although there is little information on the details of Boko Haram's activities in Chad, military sources in N'Djamena interviewed by the International Crisis Group reveal that Boko Haram elements are present in N'Djamena and elsewhere

in the country.[18] Some rumors, including a story in the *Premium Times* on September 12, 2014, based on Chadian Army sources and communications obtained between Nigerian field officers and the

> **"Chadian President Idriss Déby has raised the alarm about instability in the Lake Chad basin and about 'the permanent threat' from Boko Haram and AQIM."**

Nigerian military, allege that Modu Sheriff, former Borno State governor, is a sponsor of Boko Haram. The rumors say that he has harbored and trained Boko Haram militants in Abéché, Chad.[19] In addition, arms trafficking routes suggest that weapons intended for Boko Haram pass through Chad's territory from Libya, Sudan, and the CAR.[20]

Chadian President Idriss Déby has raised the alarm about instability in the Lake Chad basin and about "the permanent threat" from Boko Haram and AQIM.[21] As a result, Chad is sending more troops to the Nigerian border[22] and receiving support from France, which in August 2014 launched Operation Barkhane,[23] a regional initiative[24] headquartered in N'Djamena. Even so, Chad's expanded

7 *Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel?* (International Crisis Group, September 19, 2013), p. 41.

8 "Le Niger et Le Nigeria Renforcent Leur Coopération et Signent Un Accord de Défense," RFI, October 19, 2012.

9 "Gunmen Kidnap Five Aid Workers, Driver in Niger," *Vanguard*, October 15, 2012.

10 Lewis, "Niger Fears Contagion from Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists."

11 "Niger Arrests 20 Boko Haram Militants in Suspected Plot," Reuters, February 17, 2014.

12 Nafeez Ahmed, "Behind the Rise of Boko Haram - Ecological Disaster, Oil Crisis, Spy Games," *The Guardian*, May 9, 2014.

13 Chris Agbambu and Seyi Gesinde, "How Boko Haram Recruits Niger Republic Youths with $3,000," *Nigerian Tribune*, April 23, 2014; See also "Boko Haram Pays N500,000 to Niger Recruits — Gang Members," *Vanguard*, April 24, 2014.

14 The specific location of the camp was not identified. See Fidelis Soriwei and Kamorudeen Ogundele, "B'Haram's Anti-Aircraft Training Camp Uncovered in Niger," *Punch*, February 19, 2014.

15 "Niger Arrests Fourteen Suspected Boko Haram Gunmen after Patrol Ambushed," Reuters, May 7, 2014.

16 Ibid.

17 Lewis, "Niger Fears Contagion from Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists"; Fessy, "Niger Hit by Nigeria's Boko Haram Fallout."

18 *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency* (International Crisis Group, April 2014), p. 25.

19 "EXCLUSIVE: Secret Intelligence Report Links Ex-Governor Sheriff, Chad President to Boko Haram Sponsorship," *Premium Times*, September 12, 2014.

20 "Arms Smuggling to Boko Haram Threatens Cameroon," IRINnews, February 21, 2014; Sagir Musa, "How Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram Smuggle Arms into Nigeria," *Vanguard*, May 11, 2013.

21 Ely Karmon, "Boko Haram's International Reach," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8:1 (2014), p. 78.

22 "Africa's Jihadists, on Their Way," *The Economist*, July 26, 2014.

23 "François Hollande's African Adventures," *The Economist*, July 19, 2014; Marcelle Balt, "Operation Barkhane Increases French Influence in the Sahel," RFI, July 22, 2014.

24 Conway Waddington, "Understanding Operation Barkhane," *African Defence Review*, August 1, 2014.

role in French-led counterterrorism operations is likely a double-edged sword. According to a United Kingdom travel warning, Chadian participation in counterterrorism operations with France increases the "risk that terrorist groups may cross into Chad to carry out attacks."[25] The U.S. State Department addressed border

> **"The cracks in Chad's border security widened on August 6, 2014, when Boko Haram militants crossed into Chad and gunned down six Nigerians in Dubuwa village."**

concerns for Chad on June 30, 2014, saying, "[d]espite recent stability, Chad's historically volatile security environment could deteriorate unexpectedly, particularly in border areas."[26]

The cracks in Chad's border security widened on August 6, 2014, when Boko Haram militants crossed into Chad and gunned down six Nigerians in Dubuwa village. The Nigerians fled an attack two weeks prior on Kirenowa,[27] a Nigerian town close to the Cameroonian border.[28] In a more brazen attempt to enter Chadian territory, on August 16, 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped at least 97 young men and boys, as well as several women from the Doron Baga fishing village

in Nigeria near Lake Chad. Reports on this incident vary, including those that suggest Boko Haram militants loaded the victims into speed boats and ferried them to an island under Chadian control[29] where Chadian security officials intercepted a convoy of buses, rescuing 85 hostages and arresting six men accompanying them.[30] These incidents suggest that a shrinking Lake Chad and its archipelagic geography increases the porousness of the border region and creates a transit corridor for Boko Haram and potentially other violent non-state actors to move between Nigeria and its neighbors.

Further evidence shows that Boko Haram may intend to carry out more attacks in Chad. After the May 2014 Paris Summit for Security in Nigeria in which President Déby agreed to launch a "total war"[31] against Boko Haram, an audiotape surfaced on Alwihda Info that threatened Chad for its participation in the military coalition.[32] The tape threatened President Déby and an attack in N'Djamena. The speaker's voice was identified as a Chadian.[33] In response, Chad deployed security forces in N'Djamena and the French Embassy installed protective measures.[34]

Cameroon

Cameroon has the longest and perhaps the most vulnerable border with Nigeria, and Boko Haram has been able to operate relatively easily in Cameroon, carrying out logistics operations, assassinations,[35] kidnappings, and recruitment. Even though the first signs of Boko Haram's cross-border activities

in Cameroonian territory emerged in early 2012,[36] Cameroonian President Paul Biya only reorganized border security in March 2014, deploying an additional 700 troops to patrol the border.[37]

In March 2014, three Boko Haram arms dealers were arrested in the Extreme North Region for trafficking arms through Chad into Cameroon on their way to Nigeria.[38] In a second incident,

> **"While Cameroon was at first a victim of spillover violence from Nigeria and a transit state for arms trafficking, it has now become a rear base from which to attack Nigeria and an arena for Boko Haram's kidnapping-for-ransom activities."**

in June 2014, 40 Boko Haram members were arrested in Maroua and accused of using a market to conceal a large stockpile of weapons to be used in cross-border incursions into Nigeria.[39] Also in June 2014, Cameroonian authorities discovered a large Boko Haram weapons cache and arrested a Chadian arms dealer.[40]

25 "Chad Travel Advice - GOV.UK," available at https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/chad/terrorism.

26 "Chad Travel Warning," U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Passports & International Travel, (June 30, 2014), available at http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/chad-travel-warning.html.

27 Kirenowa was the one of the first places that Nigerian forces removed a Boko Haram camp in 2013 following the State of Emergency declared by President Goodluck Jonathan. A fisherman from Kirenowa said that all indications point to a return of Boko Haram in full force to Marte and "other local government areas along the shores of the Lake Chad." Boko Haram reportedly hoisted its flags and indoctrinated children in these villages in 2013 and may be poised to do it again. See Hamza Idris, "Boko Haram Trails Nigerians to Chad, Kills 6," *Daily Trust*, August 6, 2014.

28 Ibid.

29 "Boko Haram Dumps Kidnapped Doron Baga Villagers Around Lake Chad," Sahara Reporters, August 15, 2014.

30 Ibid.; See also Aminu Abubakar, "Chadian Troops Rescue 85 Nigerian Hostages from Boko Haram," CNN, August 17, 2014.

31 "African Leaders Pledge 'Total War' on Boko Haram," Al Jazeera America, May 17, 2014.

32 Abu Adil, "Boko Haram Menace Le Tchad," Alwihda Info, May 23, 2014.

33 "L'enregistrement de Boko Haram Qui Menace Le Tchad," Alwihda Info, June 5, 2014.

34 Ibid.

35 Boko Haram has assassinated 20 informants in Cameroon since the beginning of the year. See Stephanie Gosk, "Nigerian Neighbor Cameroon Faces 'Phantom Enemy' Boko Haram," NBC News, May 20, 2014. See also, Yuh Timchia, "Boko Haram 'Informant' Killed in Cameroon," *Africa Review*, January 21, 2013.

36 Cameroon first began to fear Boko Haram incursions after the April 10, 2012, attacks on the Nigerian border town of Banki. See: Grégoire Djarmaila, "Boko Haram Frappe À La Frontière Du Nigeria Avec Le Cameroun," Cameroon-Info.net, April 11, 2012; "Timeline of Boko Haram and Related Violence in Nigeria," IRINnews, February 22, 2013; "CrisisWatch Database - International Crisis Group - Cameroon," International Crisis Group, 2014.

37 "CrisisWatch Database - International Crisis Group - Cameroon."

38 "Cameroon Arrests Three for Trafficking Arms to Boko Haram," *Vanguard*, March 27, 2014.

39 Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "40 Suspected Boko Haram Militants Arrested in Cameroon," Voice of America, June 24, 2014.

40 Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "Cameroon's Military Seizes War Weapons," Voice of America, June 18, 2014.

In addition, while Cameroon was at first a victim of spillover violence from Nigeria and a transit state for arms trafficking, it has now become a rear base from which to attack Nigeria and an arena for Boko Haram's kidnapping-for-ransom activities. Boko Haram, which once preferred to profit from kidnapping foreigners like a French family in February 2013,[41] a French priest in November 2013,[42] two Italian priests and a Canadian nun in April 2014,[43] and ten Chinese nationals in May 2014,[44] has diversified to targeting locals like the Cameroon vice prime minister's wife, the sons of traditional leaders, and soldiers.[45]

In recent months, Boko Haram has intensified[46] its cross-border assaults in order to ensure safe passage to Cameroonian border towns by establishing a buffer zone between its territory in Nigeria and the Cameroonian military. This marks a major shift in Boko Haram's behavior as Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram's leader, had not ordered attacks in Cameroon since 2010, aside from assassinating individuals who had quit his group.[47] After Boko Haram increasingly clashed with Cameroonian troops throughout early 2014, and after the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, President Biya sent approximately 1,000 special forces troops[48] to the border in May.[49] Cameroon's increased security posture gave Cameroonian troops an advantage for only a short time.[50] From late July to early August

2014, Boko Haram has killed more than 30 civilians and abducted nearly 70 others from the border towns,[51] and at least 25 Cameroonian soldiers died at the hands of Boko Haram during August 2014 alone.[52]

Boko Haram's presence in Cameroon has renewed fears of widespread recruitment activities. Because Cameroon is facing a refugee crisis on two fronts, one from Boko Haram's violence in Nigeria and another from the sectarian violence in the CAR, Boko Haram may see the refugees as vulnerable targets and has allegedly begun to kidnap youth to force them to join its ranks.[53] However, some recruits have joined Boko Haram willingly and received their parents' permission.[54] In fact, Boko Haram may have intended to capture or kill Amadou Ali instead of kidnapping his wife because he led an effort to rescue 500 youth that had recently disappeared and were thought to have been kidnapped by Boko Haram.[55]

The Central African Republic

In January 2013, the UN assistant secretary general for peacekeeping operations asserted that the CAR resembles northern Mali in 2012 – a complete absence of central government in which al-Qa`ida-affiliated militants can operate. He speculated about Boko Haram's involvement in the CAR saying, "[W]e have some indications that there is some kind of presence here."[56] Furthermore, an alleged Boko Haram statement that appeared on the website Chechen UmmaNews on February 14, 2014, "vowed to avenge the spilled blood of Muslims massacred by the Christian anti-balaka militia in the [CAR]."[57]

Since then, Alwihda Info reported that French and Chadian intelligence believe that Boko Haram has connected with Séléka rebels and that it is supporting them with weapons in exchange for diamonds.[58] Furthermore, the Central African group Revolution and Justice (RJ), whose self-proclaimed purpose is to protect northern CAR's territory from Séléka and elements of the Chadian rebel group Baba Laddé's Popular Front for Recovery (FPR),[59] claims that it captured several Séléka militants as well as "two jihadists from Boko Haram" when Séléka militants attempted to cross the border between the towns of Boguila, CAR and Goré, Chad.[60] *Jeune Afrique* claims that French intelligence confirmed that Noureddine Adam, the Séléka former second-in-command, traveled to Nigeria,[61] which

Fighters in One Week," *Punch*, June 8, 2014.

51 Civilian deaths and kidnappings were calculated using information from International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch Database for the months of July and August along with corroborating news stories. See "CrisisWatch Database - International Crisis Group - Cameroon," available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/crisiswatch-database.aspx?CountryIDs=%7B5C2283AD-398B-4CEB-8ED9-B322B29F7E9A%7D. See also Ezekiel Attah, "Cameroon Fortifies Border as Boko Haram Kill Four in Fresh Clash," *TODAY*, July 27, 2014; "'Islamist Militants' Kill 10 in Northern Cameroon," BBC, August 6, 2014; Emmanuel Uzodinma, "Boko Haram Abducts 15 Persons in Cameroon Village, Kills Three," *DailyPost*, August 19, 2014; "Cameroon Kills 27 Boko Haram Members in Border Clashes," *Nigerian Tribune*, August 28, 2014.

52 "Le Cameroun Rend Hommage À 25 Militaires Tués Par Boko Haram," Africatime.com, August 29, 2014.

53 "Boko Haram Said Recruiting Fighters in Cameroon," BBC Monitoring Africa, April 17, 2014; Damien Gayle, "Boko Haram Snatch Young Boys from across Border in Cameroon," *Mail Online*, June 19, 2014; Chris Stein, "As Muslims Flee Central African Republic Fury, Fears of Radicalization; Thousands Are Threatened as Christian-Dominated Militias Take Retribution for Atrocities Blamed on a Muslim-Dominated Former Government. Many Worry the Mass Displacement Will Further Destabilize CAR," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 29, 2014.

54 "Boko Haram Starts Fresh Recruitment," *Nigerian Tribune*, April 19, 2014.

55 "Biya's Answer to Boko Haram," *Africa Confidential* 55:17 (2014).

41 Comfort Oseghale, "Boko Haram Releases Video of Kidnapped French Family," *Punch*, February 26, 2014.

42 "French Priest Kidnapped in Cameroon," France 24, November 15, 2014.

43 "Canadian Nun and Italian Priests Kidnapped in Northern Cameroon," *Standard-Tribune*, April 5, 2014.

44 James Bwala and Johnson Babajide, "Boko Haram Kills 29 in Borno, Abducts 10 Chinese in Cameroon," *Nigerian Tribune*, May 18, 2014.

45 "'Islamist Militants' Kill 10 in Northern Cameroon," BBC, August 6, 2014.

46 "Boko Haram Steps up Cameroon Raids," IRINnews, July 24, 2014.

47 Jacob Zenn, "Northern Cameroon Under Threat from Boko Haram and Séléka Militants," *Terrorism Monitor* 12:1 (2014), p. 8.

48 Bate Felix, "Cameroon Sends Troops to Nigeria Border to Tackle Boko Haram," Reuters, May 27, 2014.

49 "CrisisWatch Database - International Crisis Group - Cameroon."

50 Niyi Odebode, "Cameroon Kills 102 Boko Haram

56 Hannah McNeish, "Lawless CAR Attracting Terrorists' Attention," Voice of America, November 22, 2013.

57 "Nigeria Islamist Boko Haram Vows to Avenge Spilled Blood of CAR Muslims," BBC Monitoring Africa, February 15, 2014.

58 Johnny Yannick, "Chadian Comment Raps France for Omitting CAR from Boko Haram Summit," BBC Monitoring Africa, May 21, 2014; Johnny Yannick, "Sommet Spécial Boko Haram : Ce Que La France N'a Pas Fait Est Grave," Alwihda Info, May 18, 2014.

59 Jamil Ahmat, "Centrafrique: 'Révolution et Justice' Dément Être Un Groupe Rebelle," Alwihda Info, January 13, 2014; "Un Nouveau Mouvement Politico-Militaire En Centrafrique," Radio Ndeke Luka, March 21, 2014.

60 Issa Abakar, "RCA: Violents Combats À La Frontière Tchadienne, '2 Hommes de Boko Haram' Capturés," Alwihda Info, January 20, 2014; Issa Abakar, "RCA/Tchad Une Section Motorisé de La Séléka Attaque Une Ligne de Défense Des FS-RJ, 'de Sérieuses Pertes,'" Alwihda Info, January 20, 2014.

61 "Nigeria-Centrafrique, La Dangereuse Connexion," *Jeune Afrique*, March 12, 2014; "Séléka: La Présence de

stoked fears in Paris over the potential birth of an alliance between Adam and Boko Haram.[62] These connections may have encouraged Séléka to carry out attacks[63] and kidnappings[64] of their own in Cameroon.

A high-level French diplomat described the CAR as an "explosive cocktail" where Boko Haram, Séléka, Arabs from Darfur, Janjaweed, mercenaries from Chad, and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are likely crossing paths.[65] Some observers on the ground have witnessed regions overtaken by Islamist militants where churches are attacked and alcohol consumption and pork are banned.[66]

Conclusion

Boko Haram's intensified cross-border activities in the last two years have been enabled in part by four components.

First, the region's borders are long and shifting, allowing Boko Haram to escape capture, evade the Nigerian Army's offensives, and develop havens where they can plan attacks and recruit new members. The 2,000-mile border Nigeria shares with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon has almost 1,500 illegal or unmonitored crossing routes.[67] Moreover, the shrinking of Lake Chad has made what had historically been a difficult border to traverse more permeable and enables the movement of Boko Haram and potentially other violent non-state actors in ways that were heretofore impossible.

Second, regional militaries are deficient. Chad's military has been relatively effective at preventing incursions by Boko Haram, but Niger, Cameroon, and Nigeria are suffering from poor communications and a lack of patrol vehicles, equipment, training, and motivation to counter Boko Haram activities.[68] Nigerian troops in particular have mutinied and refused to fight due to the lack of firepower, deficient pay, and low morale.[69] Similarly, Cameroon's Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR), created to fight violent highway robbery, only began receiving training from United States Africa Command in 2012 and has been deemed "not very competent" by the director of Yaoundé's War College.[70]

Third, multilateral cooperation is failing. Despite the May 2014 Paris Summit for Security in Nigeria where Nigeria and its neighbors agreed to cooperate on security issues,[71] all of the parties have a long history of failing to establish clear measures for multilateral cooperation to address cross-border vulnerabilities.[72] Some also hold historical grudges from border conflicts. The two major issues preventing effective cooperation are the right of pursuit across international boundaries and intelligence sharing. While Nigeria was granted the right of pursuit in Niger, joint border patrols have yet to start.[73] Nigeria's other neighbors fear Nigerian troops operating on their territory because they have a reputation for human rights violations. Nigeria and its neighbors are currently hashing out legal agreements for pursuit and for

the multinational force due to be in place by November 20, 2014, but this could be another of a series of recent agreements since May 2014 that have yet to come to fruition.[74]

Fourth, Boko Haram has strong ethno-linguistic cross-border ties. The historic ethnic, linguistic, and cultural ties of the region, particularly the Sunni Muslim cohesion of Kanuri, Hausa, and Shuwa Arab groups that transcend national boundaries facilitates cross-border movement and makes policing the area extremely difficult.[75] Boko Haram takes advantage of this, penetrating the borders along with the regular flow of refugees and people participating in cross-border trade. Authorities have trouble distinguishing Boko Haram members from other citizens, which consequentially can backfire if harsh measures are used against individuals mistakenly associated with Boko Haram.

Without collectively addressing these four components that have allowed Boko Haram's cross-border activity to expand, the group will continue to inflict human casualties and significant economic damage, not just in Nigeria, but throughout the broader region.

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Nourredine Adam Au Nigéria Inquiète Paris," *Journal de Bangui*, March 13, 2014.

62 Ibid.

63 See "Affrontements Sanglants entre Rebelles Séléka et les Elements du BIR," Camer.be, February 18, 2014; "Cameroon Cracks Down on CAR Rebels," Voice of America, December 30, 2013; "Criminalité Transfrontalière: La Séléka Abat Deux Militaires et Un Chef de Village Camerounais," *Journal Du Cameroun*, December 31, 2013.

64 "Cameroon Blames Séléka Rebels for Hostage Taking," Voice of America, May 15, 2014.

65 John Irish, "France Wants Action on Central Africa 'Sectarian Poison,'" Reuters, October 11, 2013.

66 Jean-Paul Passi, "Commentary Slams 'Unconsciousness' of CAR's Ex-Rebel Group," BBC Monitoring Africa, November 27, 2013.

67 Adelani Adepegba, Friday Olokor, and Tunde Ajaja, "Ebola: Nigeria's 1,479 Illegal Borders May Spread Virus," *Punch*, August 2, 2014.

68 Tim Cocks, "Cameroon Weakest Link in Fight against Boko Haram: Nigeria," Reuters, May 30, 2014; "Multilateral Action against Boko Haram," *National Mirror*, August 25, 2014.

69 "Nigerian Troops Charged with Mutiny," BBC, October 16, 2014; Alroy Menezes, "Nigerian Soldiers Mutiny, Refuse To Fight Boko Haram Claiming They Are Ill Equipped," *International Business Times*, August 20, 2014.

70 Stephanie Gosk, "Nigerian Neighbor Cameroon Faces 'Phantom Enemy' Boko Haram."

71 "Nigeria, Neighbours 'Declare War' on Boko Haram over Abducted Girls," i24news, May 18, 2014.

72 Oghogho Obayuwana, "How Abandoned Pact Fuels Insecurity in Nigeria," *The Guardian*, May 5, 2014.

73 Thomas Fessy, "Niger Hit by Nigeria's Boko Haram Fallout."

74 Adekunle Aliyu, Ben Agande, and Favour Nnabugwu, "We'll Wipe out Boko Haram - Cameroon," *Vanguard*, October 14, 2014.

75 Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram's Growing Presence in Niger," *Terrorism Monitor* 10:20 (2012). pp. 4–5.

The Motivations of Syrian Islamist Fighters

By Vera Mironova, Loubna Mrie, and Sam Whitt

WITH THE SYRIAN civil war now well into its third year, there are scores of armed rebel forces fighting against the Bashar al-Assad regime, as well as against one another. In the marketplace of rebel groups vying for support, rebel fighters are offered incentives and face coercive pressures to join one group over another. The weakening of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) over the past year has led many Syrian rebels to rethink their allegiances on the battlefield. Possible suitors include nominally "Islamist" groups, including moderate revolutionary organizations like Ahrar al-Sham. A growing concern, however, is that rebels may be driven into the ranks of more extremist organizations such as Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This leads to a key question: what inspires thousands of ordinary Syrian people to join up with Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq?

To understand who these Syrian fighters are and what motivates them, the authors have been conducting survey research from inside Syria. Over the past year, the authors have surveyed more than 300 FSA fighters as well as Syrian civilians and refugees and 50 Syrian Islamist fighters in the Islamic Front (Ahrar al-Sham) and JN, the latter of which is al-Qa`ida's affiliate in Syria.[1]

This article proceeds by presenting a series of questions as the authors gave them to the interview subjects. It then discusses the implications that arise from their answers. To briefly summarize the findings, the interviews reveal that in contrast to foreign fighters, who have generally come to Syria on a quest for spiritual fulfillment and to build an Islamic state through jihad, Syrian fighters are joining Islamist groups primarily for instrumental purposes. Islamic groups are perceived as better equipped, led, and organized, and therefore are seen as more capable of defeating the al-Assad regime, which remains the primary goal of Syrian rebels. However, while organizational strength appears to initially attract individuals to Islamist groups, this research shows that individuals who are part of Islamist groups become more radical over time. This increases the importance of preventing individuals from joining these groups.
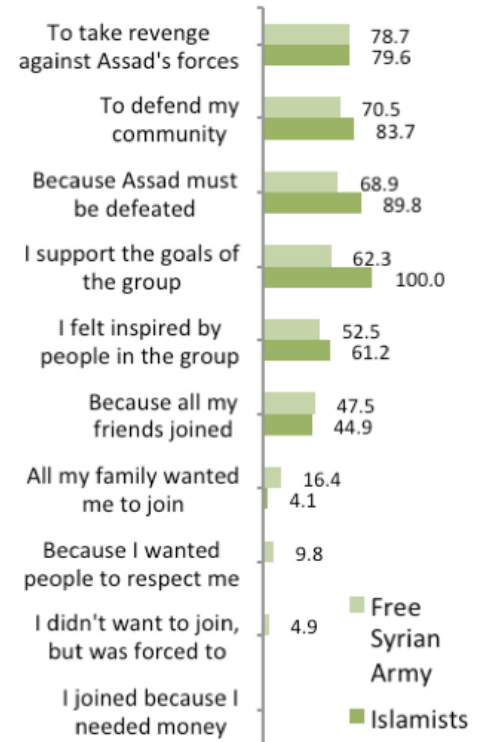
Why Are You Fighting?

Why do "prospective" Islamists decide to participate in the fighting in the first place?[2] Islamists were asked why they joined their group, and many responses were quite consistent with views expressed by rebel fighters from the reportedly more moderate FSA.[3] As can be seen in Table 1, the most common rationales for joining are to defend their community, to defeat the al-Assad regime, and to take revenge against al-Assad forces.

Of course, many Islamists also claim that they are fighting for Islam and to build an Islamic state, but this is not among the top three responses. Instead, the authors find that underlying social-community ties and sectarian-political grievances may be an important predictor of who joins and who does not. People who volunteer to fight have strong attachments to their communities and nurse grievances against the al-Assad regime. Religious ideation is secondary or even a tertiary motivation for joining. Many Islamists and moderate

FSA fighters are risking their lives for similar reasons: to take revenge against al-Assad forces (79% FSA vs. 79% Islamists), to defeat the al-Assad regime (69% FSA vs. 90% Islamists), and to defend their communities (71% FSA vs. 84% Islamists).

Table 1. Reasons Given for Joining Rebel Groups (FSA vs. Islamists)

	Free Syrian Army	Islamists
To take revenge against Assad's forces	78.7	79.6
To defend my community	70.5	83.7
Because Assad must be defeated	68.9	89.8
I support the goals of the group	62.3	100.0
I felt inspired by people in the group	52.5	61.2
Because all my friends joined	47.5	44.9
All my family wanted me to join	16.4	4.1
Because I wanted people to respect me	9.8	
I didn't want to join, but was forced to	4.9	
I joined because I needed money		

While Islamists claim unanimously to support the goals of their group, they may also intentionally over-represent their own religiosity and attachment to the group. In a clarifying question "what is the most important reason for joining," only a quarter (25%) claimed that "fight for Islam, and to build an Islamic State" was their main reason for fighting.
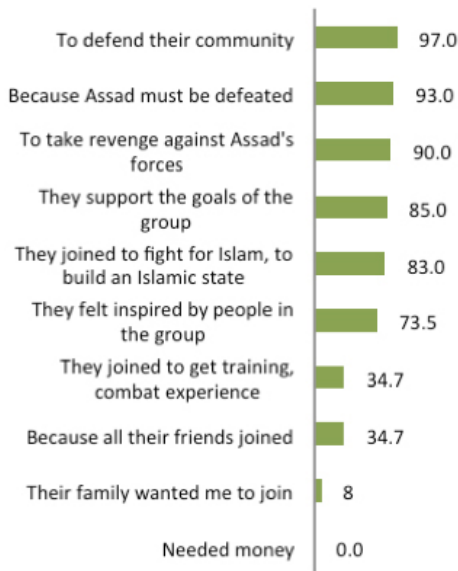
Another interesting result from the discussions with Syrian Islamist fighters is how they view the motivations of other individuals who joined their group. For example, when asked, "Why do you think others joined your group?" (see Table 2), the religious reason "to fight for Islam" is not even among the top three most popular responses. The main reasons listed by Islamist fighters are remarkably similar to those of FSA fighters (first, to defend their

community; second, because al-Assad must be defeated; and third, to take revenge against al-Assad forces).

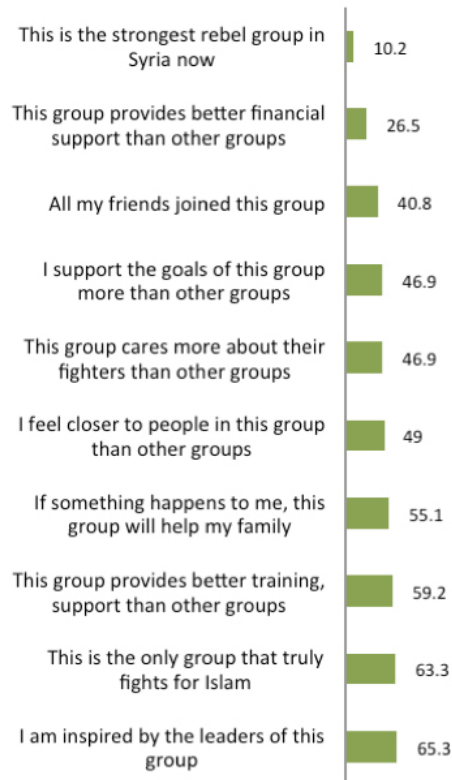### Table 2. Reasons Given For Why Others Joined Your Group (Islamists)

Reason	Value
To defend their community	97.0
Because Assad must be defeated	93.0
To take revenge against Assad's forces	90.0
They support the goals of the group	85.0
They joined to fight for Islam, to build an Islamic state	83.0
They felt inspired by people in the group	73.5
They joined to get training, combat experience	34.7
Because all their friends joined	34.7
Their family wanted me to join	8
Needed money	0.0

Why Did You Join this Islamist Group as Opposed to Other Groups?

The marketplace of rebel groups in Syria has been growing for some time.[4] Even those with strong Islamist preferences have many options to choose from. In asking fighters about why they avoided joining other groups, the authors find that "fighting for Islam" or "to build an Islamic state" are not the only rationales for why fighters selected one group over another. For many fighters, their group preferences are based on structural and organizational cues: they think their group has better resources, better training and better services (Table 3). For example, many indicate that their group takes good care of injured fighters, and if a fighter gets killed, the group will compensate his family. In interviews with fighters who first joined FSA and then switched to Islamist brigades, almost all mentioned non-religious reasons: "My friends left my old group and I left with them," "I didn't like people in my old group," "My friend got injured and they didn't support him," "I was with my old group [FSA] until I fought with Ahrar al-Sham. I liked their way of treating fighters and I joined."

4 "Syria Crisis: Guide to Armed and Political Opposition," BBC News, December 13, 2013.

Table 3. Reasons Given for not Joining Other Groups (Islamists)

Reason	Value
This is the strongest rebel group in Syria now	10.2
This group provides better financial support than other groups	26.5
All my friends joined this group	40.8
I support the goals of this group more than other groups	46.9
This group cares more about their fighters than other groups	46.9
I feel closer to people in this group than other groups	49
If something happens to me, this group will help my family	55.1
This group provides better training, support than other groups	59.2
This is the only group that truly fights for Islam	63.3
I am inspired by the leaders of this group	65.3

What Are Your Views on Islam?

The adoption of radical Islamic views could be a consequence of joining Islamist groups rather than a root cause. Many fighters are aggressively socialized and exposed to radical religious preaching once inside the group. Approximately 74% of surveyed Islamists claim that they have become more religious since fighting (compared to 37% of FSA fighters) and now, three years into the conflict, 96% indicate that religion plays a very important role in their life (compared to 43% among FSA). All but one Islamist said that they attend religious lectures, study, and recite the Qur'an daily. Also, all the Islamists claim to feel much closer to the people of their same religion (compared to 20% of FSA) and 92% think that religion should have a crucial role in future Syrian politics (compared to 60% among FSA).

Are You Fighting for Jihad?

Many Syrian Islamist fighters have conflicting views on what "jihad" means and whether they are waging jihad in Syria. Many (63%) believe that participation in jihad is not an individual requirement (*fard ayn*), but

a collective obligation (*fard kifayya*). Answers to the question "Is the Syrian War a Jihad?" and "What is Jihad?" range from the overtly religious ("Jihad is giving your soul for the name of God") to responses which are only distantly related to religion ("When you see a woman being raped just because she is against the government, you know that it's the time for jihad"). Despite being in an Islamist rebel group, only 76% of surveyed fighters claim that the war in Syria is about jihad. Also, Islamists were unanimous in agreement that the war in Syria, jihad or otherwise, is about revenge. This underscores how underlying grievances against the al-Assad regime could still be driving Syrian rebel fighters into Islamist groups.

Therefore, while some rebels are fighting under an Islamist banner and some are not, they may share similar goals. If more people in Syria are joining Islamist groups today, it may have less to do with religious ideation or extremism, and more to do with the perception that Islamist groups are better organized and better equipped than the struggling FSA. As a matter of recruitment strategy, entrepreneurial Islamist group leaders appear to be better at using religion to channel collective sectarian grievances. All the Islamist fighters interviewed in this study report strong trust in their group leadership, receive most of their news and organization from within their group, and tend to tune out other sources of information (only one respondent said, for example, that he trusted news from Western sources like the BBC).

Of course, this could mean that rebel fighters can be easily manipulated to serve a wide range of goals and functions. Elite competition may also explain why, despite many common goals, there is fierce in-fighting among various Islamist groups and the Free Syrian Army. Most (81%) of Islamists think that the goals of their group are not compatible with those of other rebel groups and 58% agree that even if al-Assad is removed from power, their group will have to fight other rebel groups.

Conclusion

At present, the authors' research suggests that rebel fighters are generally revenge-seeking and driven to Islamist groups not primarily due to ideological motivations, but rather for instrumental reasons. However, once inside the group, they are vulnerable to elite manipulation. Consequently, their desire for revenge against al-Assad could be channeled in other directions by calculating and competitive elites through ideological and religious indoctrination. In addition, rebel fighters no longer just blame the al-Assad regime for the conflict in Syria. They also cast blame on Iran and Lebanese Hizb Allah as well as the United States and Western powers, who many feel have abandoned them in this conflict. Islamist groups appear to be having great success harnessing and exploiting Syrian anger for purposes well beyond fighting the al-Assad regime, which is why the current drive in Islamist recruitment in Syria could have important spillover consequences for conflict elsewhere.

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Syrian and Iraqi Jihads Prompt Increased Recruitment and Activism in Southeast Asia

By James Brandon

DURING THE LAST three years, jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq have developed a strong international component, attracting around 12,000 foreign fighters from 50 countries.[1] Among these are Southeast Asian jihadists who have joined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and a range of other jihadist groups.

This article outlines how these volunteers, who mostly hail from Indonesia and Malaysia, have become involved with ISIL and other groups, and the likely implications of this in their home countries, in Syria and Iraq, and further afield. The article also examines how events in Syria and Iraq have impacted existing Southeast Asian jihadist and militant groups, including the potential for ISIL and other organizations to inspire increased militancy in the region.

Indonesia

The head of the Indonesian National Police, Gen. Sutarman, said in August 2014 that at least 56 Indonesians were believed to have joined ISIL, of whom three have been killed, although this figure may also include those who have joined other jihadist groups.[2] Most fighters seem to have traveled to Syria from Salafist-influenced religious schools in the Middle East, although they often have prior involvement in radical Indonesian circles. Typical of these is Riza Fardi (aka Abu Muhammad al-Indunisi), who was killed in East Ghouta, near Damascus, in November 2013. According to the radical Indonesian website "Voice of al-Islam," Fardi was born in West Kalimantan and attended the hardline al-Mukmi boarding school in Solo. The school is closely associated with Jemaah Islamiya (JI) and six of

the Bali bombers were educated there.[3] After this, he attended the al-Iman University in Yemen, run by Abdul-Majeed al-Zindani, a longstanding senior leader of al-Islah, the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Fardi then traveled to Syria to join the small Suqour al-Izz jihadist group, mainly composed of Saudi Salafists, before being killed while fighting against Syrian government forces.

Other Indonesian jihadists have died in Iraq conducting suicide attacks with ISIL. Wildan Mukhollad bin Lasmin, 19-years-old, died carrying out a suicide car bomb attack in Iraq in February 2014, having earlier fought in Aleppo.[4] He too had previously studied at a hardline Islamist school in Indonesia, followed by study in Egypt.[5] In July, ISIL

> **"The head of the Indonesian National Police, Gen. Sutarman, said in August 2014 that at least 56 Indonesians were believed to have joined ISIL."**

published a video titled *Join the Ranks* that featured alleged Indonesian members calling for volunteers to "migrate to the Islamic State as an obligation decreed by Allah"; however, it is unclear from the content (which features seven gunmen on a tropical-looking beach) if it was even filmed in Iraq or Syria.[6] On October 12, 2014, jihadist websites published Indonesian-language statements saying that another Indonesian ISIL volunteer, Hanzhalah al-Indunisi, had died conducting a suicide attack near Beiji in Iraq "killing dozens of Shi`a soldiers."[7]

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1 "Americans Among 12,000 Foreign Fighters in Syria: US," Agence France-Presse, August 21, 2014.

2 "ISIL Recruiter in Video Linked to Santoso," *Jakarta Post*, August 4, 2014. See also: "Indonesians and the Syrian Conflict," Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, January 30, 2014.

3 "Keluarga Besar Ponpes Al Mukmin Bergembira dengan Kesyahidan Alumninya (Al-Mukmin Boarding School rejoices)," Voice of al-Islam, November 30, 2014.

4 "Indonesian Man's Death in Iraq Jihad Evokes JI," *The Jakarta Globe*, February 20, 2014.

5 "Rakyat Indonesia sayangkan nyawa jihadis yang tersia-sia," Khabar South-East Asia, March 14, 2014.

6 "ISIS Recruitment Video Join the Ranks Urges Indonesian Muslims to migrate to the Islamic State," ABC (Australia), July 29, 2014.

7 "Hanzhalah Al-Indunisi, Pelaku Istisyhad Yang Tewaskan Puluhan Tentara Syiah," Al-Mustaqbel.net, October 12, 2014.

Hardline and militant Islamist organizations in Indonesia have meanwhile provided rhetorical support for Syrian jihadists, and for ISIL in particular. Most prominently, according to local media, on July 18, 2014 Abu Bakar Bashir, the jailed former leader of the regional terrorist group JI, along with 24 other convicted terrorists in Pasir Putih prison, publicly announced support for ISIL fighters. It is reported that he did so in a message to Mochammad Achwan, chairman of Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), JI's successor group, although Achwan said this fell short of a formal pledge

> **"Hardline and militant Islamist organizations in Indonesia have meanwhile provided rhetorical support for Syrian jihadists, and for ISIL in particular."**

of allegiance to ISIL's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[8] Soon afterwards, Achwan and other senior JAT members left JAT to set up their own group after refusing to follow Bashir's public declaration of support for ISIL.[9] Other smaller militant groups, such as the East Indonesia Mujahidin, also pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi.[10]

Elsewhere, small-scale pro-ISIL demonstrations have occurred sporadically, while in Bekasi city in August 2014 supporters of JAT publicly swore allegiance to ISIL at a local mosque, underlining divisions in JAT over ISIL.[11] Although such stunts can raise broader public awareness of ISIL, notwithstanding occasional arrests of suspected militants there

has been no perceptible increase in the number or scope of reported militant plots in Indonesia. The above pledges are likely to have a limited real-world impact, largely because those involved are generally veteran Islamists already committed to radical agendas.

Malaysia

According to the Malaysian police, around 40 Malaysians are believed to have joined armed groups in Syria and Iraq as of August 2014.[12] Meanwhile, the Syrian government has said that 15 Malaysian jihadists have died in the conflict, but this cannot be independently confirmed.[13] Of these, the most visible and active Malaysian fighters are based around Hama, in western Syria, where they operate as a self-contained group within the relatively small Ajnad al-Sham Ittihadiyya al-Islamiyya (Soldiers of the Levant Islamic Union) jihadist group, sometimes in conjunction with al-Qa`ida's official affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra.[14] From their prolific social media output, this Malaysian group appears to be composed of around 15 fighters, grouped around a core of older individuals, but including others from a wide range of backgrounds. The group's main leader, until his death in early September 2014 following a Syrian government airstrike in Hama, was 49-year-old Mohammed Lotfi Ariffin, a preacher who fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s and Tajikistan in the early 1990s; upon his return to Malaysia he was detained under the Internal Security Act from 2001 to 2006.[15] He subsequently joined the Islamist Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), and was a leader of its youth wing in the northern state of Kedah; PAS publicly expelled Ariffin when news of his involvement in Syria became widely known, although after his death some PAS officials hailed him a "martyr."[16]

Other notable members of the Hama group included Zainan Harith (aka Abu Turab), a 52-year-old veteran jihadist from the Malaysian militant group Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM), who was killed by Syrian government shellfire in the town of Arzeh, near Hama, in August 2014.[17] Another KMM veteran, 47-year-old Zainuri Kamarudin, was injured in the same incident. Other members are more diverse, including Akel Zainal, a former drummer in 1990s Malaysian rock band "The Ukays," and several younger volunteers, including a 21-year-old who first contacted Ariffin by messaging him on Facebook.[18] As this illustrates, this Malaysian group sees social media as a key recruiting and propaganda tool. Both Ariffin and Zainal have regularly posted photos, short Salafist-tinged ideological admonitions, and updates on their current activities in Syria on Facebook, although both their accounts were taken offline in September/October. Their posts, which showed not only combat images but also the Malaysians' apparently relaxed and friendly interactions with local Arab fighters, had a relatively limited but enthusiastic following of Malaysian online sympathizers. Ariffin had 16,000 "likes" and Zainal had 1,600 "friends" on Facebook.

By contrast, very few Malaysians are known to have joined ISIL. According to an ISIL statement in Malaysian entitled *Malaysian Mujihadeen's Martyrdom Operation* (Mujahidin Malaysia Syahid Dalam Operasi Martyrdom), Ahmad Tarmimi Maliki, a Malaysian former factory worker, drove an explosive-packed SUV into the local headquarters of an Iraqi special forces unit near Ramadi in al-Anbar Province on May 26, 2014, in conjunction with an ISIL conventional assault on the facility.[19] ISIL claimed extensive Iraqi casualties, but this could not be confirmed. Malaysian media reported Maliki had received ideological training and some militant training in Malaysia, notably at Port Dickson in 2013, before heading to the Middle East

8   "Abu Bakar Ba'asyir Calls on Followers to Support ISIL," *The Jakarta Post*, July 14, 2014.

9   "Sons, Top Aides Abandon Ba'asyir Over ISIL, Form New Jihadist Group," *The Jakarta Post*, August 13, 2014.

10 "Government Bans Support, Endorsement of ISIL," *The Jakarta Post*, August 5, 2014.

11 "Bekasi Group Swear Allegiance to ISIL," *The Jakarta Post*, August 06 2014; "Sons, Top Aides Abandon Ba'asyir Over ISIL, Form New Jihadist Group," *The Jakarta Post*, August 13, 2014

12 "Malaysian Militants Plotted ISIL-Inspired Attacks, Say Police," *The Star Online*, August 20, 2014.

13 "Wisma Putra: 15 Malaysian ISIS Militants Allegedly Killed in Syria," *Malay Mail*, June 24, 2014.

14 "Lotfi On a Do-Or-Die Mission," *The Star Online*, June 28, 2014.

15 Wong Chun Wai, "Of Facebook, Selfies, Jihad and PAS," *The Star* (Malaysia), July 1, 2014.

16 "PAS pecat Lotfi Ariffin yang sertai gerakan bersenjata di Syria, kata Mustafa Ali," *The Malaysian Insider*, June 26, 2014; "PAS Leader Labels Fallen Jihadist a Martyr," *The Star Online*, September 14, 2014.

17 "Bank Robbers, ISA Detainee Among Malaysian Jihadists Killed, Wounded in Syria," *Malay Mail*, August 22, 2014; "Killed Jihadist was KMM Member," *New Straits Times*, August 22, 2014.

18 "No Going Back to Malaysia," *New Straits Times*, June 21, 2014.

19 "ISIS and the First Malaysian Suicide Bomber," *The Star* (Malaysia), June 14, 2014.

in April 2014.[20] Although officials did not explicitly connect the cases, in May 2014 one individual in Port Dickson was charged with "promoting acts of terrorism" in Syria.[21]

Although evidence is necessarily limited, there are some important differences between the Malaysians active with Ajnad al-Sham and those with ISIL in Iraq. For instance, the former have been permitted to organize themselves in a small unit, engaging in mainly conventional fighting, running their own social media operations, and enjoying friendly relations with Arab fighters.[22] By contrast, as with Indonesians, there is no evidence of Malaysians engaging in conventional fighting in ISIL or of any quasi-independent Malaysian grouping within ISIL, as is the case with Ajnad al-Sham. Moreover, the lone recorded Malaysian suicide bomber with ISIL likewise does not appear to have been part of any wider Malaysian or Southeast Asian group. In addition, the fact that within approximately a month of his arrival, ISIL used him as a suicide bomber possibly suggests they regarded the training he had received in Malaysia as of little or no utility.

Unlike in Indonesia, there is some evidence that ISIL and other groups are inspiring increased militancy in Malaysia. Most notably, in August 2014 police arrested 19 suspected militants for allegedly planning attacks on several targets in Putrajaya, near Kuala Lumpur, including pubs, discos and a prominent Carlsberg brewery.[23] Although the authorities said the group's plans were still at the "discussion" phase, the suspects had reportedly purchased aluminium powder, a potential bomb-making ingredient.[24] The police claimed

the group had been "inspired" by ISIL, and that some of the suspects intended to travel to Iraq or Syria for further training, although the exact nature of their link to ISIL remains under investigation.[25]

Philippines

In the Philippines, the response from existing jihadist groups to events in Syria and Iraq has been enthusiastic but largely rhetorical. On July 23, 2014, supporters of Abu Sayyaf, the country's most hardline jihadist organization, uploaded a video to YouTube of one of its leaders, Isnilon Hapilon, and a group of apparent fighters collectively

> **"Given the large size of Southeast Asian Muslim populations, the number of recruits to jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria are relatively low, even lower than those from European countries."**

pledging allegiance to al-Baghdadi. They promised al-Baghdadi "loyalty and obedience in adversity and in comfort," although adding this would be void if they "see in him any obvious act of disbelief." It is unclear if this *bay`a* represents the whole of Abu Sayyaf, particularly given its fragmented leadership.[26]

Separately, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) pledged loyalty to ISIL, although a spokesman said the group would not impose ISIL-style Islam in the Philippines, somewhat undermining the pledge's credibility.[27] Despite these statements, however, there is no clear evidence of Filipinos

heading to Syria or Iraq. Although government documents leaked in August 2014 estimated the number of Filipinos with ISIL at "close to 200,"[28] the country's influential armed forces responded that they were unaware of any Filipinos fighting in Iraq or Syria,[29] and the Foreign Ministry has said any numbers were "hypothetical."[30] In contrast to Malaysia and Indonesia, there is no evidence from Iraq or Syria of Filipinos fighting alongside ISIL or other groups; likewise, no related domestic plots have been reported.

The Rest of the Region

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, there is only fragmentary evidence of other nationals taking up jihad in Iraq and Syria. For instance, in one English-language ISIL video, *There Is No Life Without Jihad*, a British jihadist claimed that the group included a volunteer "from Cambodia."[31] Although the country has no significant history of Islamist radicalism and this claim was dismissed by Cambodian Muslim leaders, this could feasibly refer to a member of the country's small Cham Muslim minority.[32] Similarly, a lone Japanese individual was involved with the Islamic Front militia in early- to mid-2014 near Aleppo, before being captured by ISIL during fighting between the rival groups on August 14, 2014; his motivations are unclear.[33]

Conclusion

Given the large size of Southeast Asian Muslim populations, the number of recruits to jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria are relatively low, even lower than those from European countries.[34] While

20 "Local Militants Undergo Extensive Training Before They Arrive in Syria," *The Star* (Malaysia), June 24, 2014.

21 "Four Linked to Terrorism Face Rap in 3 Courts," *New Straits Times*, May 24, 2014.

22 See for instance, "Malaysian Jihadists in Syria," YouTube, June 25, 2014. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFb6sw4UvRg.

23 "Malaysia Says Putrajaya, Brewery, Discos, Pubs on Militants' Target List," *The Straits Times*, August 16, 2014; "Malaysia Foils Islamic State-Inspired Plot to Bomb Pubs, Discos and Carlsberg Brewery," *South China Morning Post*, August 19, 2014.

24 "Malaysian Militants Bought Bomb Material in Plot

to Attack Carlsberg Brewery, Say Cops," *Malay Mail*, August 21, 2014.

25 "Malaysian Militants Plotted ISIL-Inspired Attacks, Say Police," *The Star Online*, August 20, 2014.

26 "Alert raised vs Pinoy 'jihadists'," *Manila Standard Today*, August 10, 2014; "Shaikh Isnilon Hapilon (ASG) Made Bay'ah to ISIS," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCOA97_o1nU.

27 "BIFF, Abus Pledge Allegiance to ISIS," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 16, 2014.

28 Arlyn dela Cruz, "More Filipino Militants Fight in Iraq," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 9, 2014.

29 "Filipino Muslim Fighters Not Training with jihadists: Philippine Military," Xinhua, August 20, 2014.

30 "DFA Cannot Monitor Muslim Filipinos Going to Iraq, Syria for Supposed Terror Training," InterAksyon.com, August 27, 2014.

31 "Cambodian Jihadists Among Us: ISIS video," *Phnom Penh Post*, June 23, 2014.

32 "Hun Sen Denies 'Muslim Extremists,' Pledges Ramadan Funds," *Cambodia Daily*, July 19, 2014.

33 "Japanese Believed Held by Islamic State in Syria Said he Planned to Support Rebels," *Japan Times*, August 20. 2014.

34 See, for example: Joesph A. Carter, Shiraz Maher and Peter R. Neumann, *#Greenbirds*: *Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks* (London:

this may partly reflect the difficulties and cost of traveling to the Middle East, levels of engagement with pro-jihadists at events and on social media are also low, suggesting limited overall support for jihadist groups compared to levels of interest in the other Middle East conflicts such as the Israel-Palestinian issue. At present, it appears unlikely that events in Iraq and Syria will trigger a broader, popular revitalization of Southeast Asian jihadism, particularly as Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries enjoy strong – if uneven – economic growth, while their maturing political systems also allow outlets for peaceful dissent. Likewise, ISIL's rise has mostly been used by local jihadist groups to rhetorically underline their existing ideological positions rather than to radicalize local populations or mount fresh attacks. That said, the Malaysia plot and the increased activism of some Indonesian groups demonstrate the continuing potential for ISIL, particularly through its use of evocative concepts like the caliphate, to trigger a limited uptick in regional militancy. Indonesian veterans of the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad played an important role in inspiring the 1990s-2000s wave of militancy in Indonesia. This illustrates the potential for even small numbers of jihadist returnees from the current conflicts to trigger a significant increase in domestic militancy.

In the Middle East itself, the small numbers of Southeast Asian fighters are unlikely to significantly alter the military balance. However, as shown by ISIL's use of Malaysian and Indonesian suicide bombers in Iraq, foreign volunteers can also bolster groups' unconventional capabilities, potentially preserving better-trained local Arab fighters for other tasks. That said, available evidence suggests that, so far, most Southeast Asians who are fighting in the region have joined smaller, relatively less extremist groups like Jabhat al-Nusra and Ajnad al-Sham rather than ISIL, perhaps because these groups have existing, visible, and contactable Southeast Asian members with a strong social media presence. By contrast, Southeast Asian radicals safe in their home countries seem more likely to offer rhetorical verbal support to ISIL, particularly following ISIL's declaration of a caliphate. The presence of Southeast Asian jihadists in Syria and Iraq may have other impacts, however, as shown by the British jihadists' video references to a Cambodian volunteer. Exotic foreign fighters can be used to powerfully reinforce jihadist narratives that Muslims worldwide are rallying selflessly to the jihadist cause. It is therefore quite possible that the appearance of Southeast Asians in Syria and Iraq may prompt more radicalization in third countries than in their home nations.

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The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2014).