Islamic State, Identity, and the Global Jihadist Movement: How is Islamic State successful at recruiting "ordinary" people?

By: Alyssa Chassman[1]

Abstract

What conditions breed radicalization? How does Islamic State capitalize on those conditions to maximize their recruitment numbers? The foreign fighter phenomenon has puzzled academics, particularly as the crisis in Iraq and Syria has seen an influx of foreign fighters from "ordinary" backgrounds. This analysis attempts encapsulate why Islamic State is successful at recruiting foreign fighters by looking at their recruitment strategies in practice in conjunction with secondary analysis of identity theories and sociological processes of recruitment. The analysis finds that identity crises are key factor in the process, and IS recruiters are methodical in their approach of how they interject their ideology on the hearts and minds of the vulnerable.

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[1] Master of Arts in Human Rights, Kingston University London

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I. Introduction

> *"If you knew who I was and who you were,*
> *you would not have killed me."*
> - *Sign outside the Nyamata Catholic Church in Rwanda, in which 10,000*
> *people were killed in one day in 1994.* (Moshman, 2007).

In June 2014, a masked man with a London accent appeared in a video beheading American journalist James Foley. In the year that followed, as the man went on to publically film the beheadings of several western journalists and aid workers, FBI and MI5 officials worked to discover the identity of "Jihadi John." The man was later identified as Mohammed Emwazi, a Kuwaiti immigrant from North-West London. He soon became the face of the global jihadist movement as the world attempted to reconcile how a seemingly ordinary man with a British upbringing could savagely and publicly murder several innocent people (Verkaik 2016, p. 13).

Emwazi is one of about 20,000 foreign fighters to travel to Iraq and Syria since the emergence of Islamic State[2] (*Soufan Group* 2015: n.p*).* IS has profoundly impacted the state of world affairs since its offshoot from al-Qaeda in 2014, bringing radical Islam and the recruitment of foreign fighters to the forefront of political conversation. The group has flipped academic discourse on its head regarding how to combat radicalization and movement of foreign fighters. Intelligence officials have been studying the multifaceted ways in which *mujahideen*[3] operate with emerging media tactics, so that they may prevent the flow of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria. The phenomenon has lead researchers and intelligence specialists to pose the question of how and why IS is successful at recruiting "ordinary" people.

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[2] "Islamic State" is also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), IS, or the derogatory Arabic name "Daesh."
[3] The term for people engaged in jihad (singular: mujahid)

In genocide studies, systematic murders are often viewed as crimes of hatred, incomprehensible as something that could be carried out by someone "ordinary" (Moshman 2007: 115)**.** Although the United Nations has not formally deemed the crisis in Syria as genocide, the themes are the same - mass killings "perpetuated by individuals acting collectively on behalf of what they perceive to be their group against what they perceive to be a different group" (116). Individuals see themselves as powerful enough to act on behalf of their collective group identity against another. In the minds of "ordinary" people, it is an issue of "us versus them," or an "axis of evil" ideology - the idea that only certain people have the capability to commit evil acts (Stanton n.d: n.p). On the contrary, says Stanton, every individual has the capacity for both, provided the right circumstances. So why do ordinary people commit human rights violations as such? So is it evil? Is it poverty? Is it bullying? Is it hatred? Is it religion? Is it hunger for power? Is it mental illness? Is it grievance? Or is it none of those?

This analysis is theoretical in nature, and includes the work of prominent theorists such as Ömer Taşpınar, Kris Christmann, and Thomas Hegghammer in order to propose that relative deprivation theory acts as in indicator of an individual's susceptibility towards radicalization. Most research, particularly from Hegghammer, poses that there are no identifiable "root causes" for radicalization, but deficits in identity left by feelings of relative deprivation in relation to those root causes may make an individual an easy target for IS. Historical and sociopolitical contexts, while crucial to note, do not directly play a role in why people join terrorist groups, although they may lead to feelings of relative deprivation. I also posit that social identity theory (SIT) affects how collective groups operate to develop and reinforce individual identities. In this case, the findings also suggest that IS targets individuals facing relative deprivation in order to capitalize on SIT to plant their ideology. In order to do this, the research conducted for this analysis identifies the practical and symbolic means that IS uses to conduct recruitment (i.e. social media, propaganda), and evaluates the academic literature regarding messaging techniques (micro-level) of jihadist groups. Thus, this report hinges on four parts. The first examines the sociopolitical conditions in which IS and their ideologies came to exist. The second identifies who becomes radicalized, and what causes an individual to be susceptible to becoming radicalized. The third evaluates macro-level

symbolic approaches (social media and online propaganda) that IS utilizes in order to interact with prospective foreign fighters. And the fourth seeks to comprehend how IS draws upon a narrative in their micro-level recruitment messaging to take the recruit through secondary socialization processes.

IS recruits are largely enlisted from the Internet, with specific strategies employed by IS recruiters in order to hook fringe members of in-groups of society. My findings posit that there are two emerging themes in IS's recruitment tactics exist: that of *access*, and that of *legitimacy*. IS establishes both, with access manifesting on a macro-level through propaganda, and legitimacy existing on a micro-level through one-on-one interaction. While they use social media and propaganda to create a community surrounding their ideology, the crucial attribution to their success is their propensity to establish an unbreakable meta-narrative of objective grievance that dominates all communications with potential transnational insurgents. This meta-narrative brings the group together for a particular cause, allowing them to establish a collective group identity. Group identities appeal to those who are lacking a sense of community in their own lives, and IS incentivizes jihadi hopefuls with a way to avenge perceived grievances in a collective group setting. IS is successful at recruiting "ordinary" people because their narrative is unwavering. They have the ability to target the right individuals and exploit their discontent by channeling it into grievance and providing them with a sense of community.

1.1   Significance

In the human rights framework, one major policy question surrounds 'accountability.' Jack Donnelly discusses the existence of a 'duty-bearer" in his book Universal Human Rights (1989, p.10). According to human rights doctrine, if there are laws surrounding human rights, then actors must be held accountable for their actions. But often, little emphasis is put on the actors *unless* the actors are states. Frequently, it is the responsibility of governments to ensure protection of their citizens, but when human rights violations are so systematic within a group, how can we study motives in order to prevent them before they begin? Instead of

placing accountability after the fact, if states had more knowledge about what causes individuals to commit human rights abuses, they can act preemptively instead of retroactively.

Statistician Nate Silver compared predicting terrorist activity as akin to predicting an earthquake – while there may be potential warning signs, none can guarantee the inevitability that it will occur (Ball 2013: n.p). Changes in seismic activity are not mutually exclusive with earthquakes, just as certain risk factors are not with terrorist activity. Silver's analogy pinpoints why current data has yet to lead to the creation of successful government strategies in preemptively targeting homegrown extremism before the individual takes action at home or abroad. Bakker & Zuijdewijn (2015: 17) call foreign terrorism a "low probability, high impact threat." Radicalization and terrorism are generally difficult to predict, particularly without nuanced intelligence systems that allow monitoring of activity of suspected sympathizers. However, understanding why foreign fighters are motivated to join terrorist organizations can assist in lowering the probability by targeting radicalization before it occurs. While the number of foreign fighters may be few and far between relative to the scope of the conflict, the possibility of detrimental impact is limitless, and the threat of the growth of IS hinges on the answer to this research question.

For example, foreign fighters, particularly from Europe, could potentially pose a danger because they may be able to return to their homes to commit jihad. Some are able to tiptoe back in to Europe through non-stringent borders in Turkey. In 2013, Chakib Akrouh, a Belgian-Moroccan, traveled to Syria but returned home to Belgium undetected. Years later, Akrouh went on to storm a restaurant in Paris, murdering dozens (Bacchi 2016: n.p). Akrouh is not the only foreign fighter who has returned to his home country from the throws of war in Syria. Lord Keen of Elie, Home Office Spokesman of the House of Lords in the United Kingdom, revealed that around 400 British jihadists have returned to the UK after fighting in Iraq and Syria since 2012 (Matharu 2016: n.p).

However, it is essentialist to say that the threat of "domestic terrorism" lies in the balance if this research question is not answered. Realistically, European fighters are not as likely to return home as once thought (Özdemir & Kardaş 2014: 19). In fact, even if foreign

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fighters do return home, the question of whether foreign fighters are indeed a security risk is contested (Hegghammer, 2013). The greater threat is the expansion of terror networks to peers and family members back home. Radicalization involves personal ties and trust (Hafez 2016: n.p). Peer networks and existing groups can help facilitate recruitment. As will be seen throughout this analysis, trust between recruiter and recruit is a key precipitant in radicalization. Between friends, peers, and family members, trust has already been built, eliminating a large hurdle in the recruitment process. This speeds up the process and allows the group to grow.

By understanding what causes these fighters to make *hijra*[4] to Syria, nations such as the United States and United Kingdom can significantly limit IS's power and influence abroad. Currently, policy regarding how to combat radicalization in the West has been widely criticized by academics. The Prevent strategy in Britain, which requires educators to report any individual who they perceive to be "at risk" of becoming radicalized, has been critiqued for identifying British Muslims as "flawed citizens" who are in need of alteration (O'Toole et al., 2011: 3). In France, a blanket ban has been placed on the burqa, which is perceived as "a security threat" (BBC 2014). Whilst these are honest attempts at countering radicalization, strategies and policies like these do more harm than good. Instead, they stigmatize Muslims and identify the Muslim community as a "suspect community" (Hickman et al., 2012: 3). United Nations Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai criticized the Prevent strategy in Britain for "dividing, stigmatizing and alienating segments of the population," and noting that in this way, the strategy could actually promote extremism (*The Guardian* 2016: n.p). There has been no cohesive agreement in how to tackle extremism, and even by the UK's own account, the government's proposals rest on the assumption that the path to extremism starts with religious conservatism and ends with support for violent jihad (Parliament 2016: n.p). However, as this analysis will display, there is no "escalator" approach to radicalization and travel to Syria, and the path to extremism is not linear as governments propose. The aim of states should be to combat the ideology of extremism by understanding the process of radicalization in order to combat the ideology itself. This hinges a cohesive knowledge of what it takes to become radicalized, the process, the narrative, and the types of people at risk.

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[4] Pilgrimage. A common term used by Islamic State fighters to reference the journey to Syria/Iraq

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II. Background

"We love death more than you love life. This is civilization's ultimate challenge. Will the lovers of death and destruction overwhelm and defeat those who love life and have created great civilians that celebrate human creativity and achievement?"

- Robert Spencer, *The Complete Infidel's Guide to ISIS* (2015).

2.1 Terminology

David Malet defines foreign fighters as "non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflict (2010: 97). For the sake of this analysis, in utilizing the term "foreign fighters," or "transnational insurgents, (TNI's)" I will be only be referencing those who (1) lack citizenship, familial affiliation, or personal ties to the conflict state, (2) have traveled considerably from their country of origin to participate in the insurgency, (3) previously had no ties to radical Islam, or any other extremist ideology, (4) had no previous affiliation with a military organization, and (5) has joined the insurgency. The term "foreign fighter" will be utilized in this analysis for all who fit those categories. These distinctions between foreign fighter and local fighter must be made for two primary reasons: first, because the ideological differences between local rebels and transnational insurgents are vast. Foreign fighters are seen as having elevated status within IS territory, as they have voluntarily given up their "Western ideals" to join the conflict. Secondly, TNI's typically have no personal stakes in the conflict, with few individual ties, political grievances, or personal connections to the insurgency (Gates & Podder 2016: n.p).

There has been much debate over the definition of the word "terrorism," and most studies on Islamic extremism have settled for a working definition due to lack of consensus (Al Raffie 2013: 69). This analysis will frequently use the term "radicalization" to refer to the process in which one becomes sympathetic to jihadist ideology (Hegghammer 2013: 2). It is crucial to note that, while they are intertwined, radicalization is not synonymous with terrorism, or even becoming a foreign fighter. Of course, not all who travel to Syria are 'fighters.' Just as there is no universal profile for those who travel to Syria, there is no universal activity that all defectors engage in (Briggs & Silverman 2014: 15). There are many

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who become radicalized or engage in the process of radicalization yet do not become foreign fighters, engage in terrorism, or even reach the frontline. Many who join do so for occupational reasons, with many becoming doctors, engineers, or police for IS. However, to fully comprehend the foreign fighter phenomenon, the process of radicalization must be entirely understood. In no way does radicalization imply violence is occurring or will occur, however does lead us to draw conclusions about the process of adopting violent ideology. In this analysis, while the term foreign "fighters" will be used with frequency, it is not solely referring to those who engage in combat.

In this analysis, it is essential to define what it means to be 'ordinary,' however not with the motive of determining a broad sociological definition to the word, but with the aim of understanding what it means in the context of the foreign fighter phenomenon. Of course, foreign fighters are all but "ordinary" in the definitional sense of the word, however in the study of human rights offenders, it is fundamental to eschew the 'us versus them' mentality that plagues the field of study as a whole. Individual worldviews stem from in-group bias, and each in-group has different expectations as to standards of behavior (Monroe 2012: 228). According to Monroe, we expect that people who we find morally exemplary will subscribe to the values that we share (210). By perpetuating this narrative, the in-group of the subjective individual always maintains its status as 'ordinary,' and those in the out-groups become 'extraordinary.' This normative view on the world can be detrimental in the field of genocide studies, and I have methodically elected to use the term 'ordinary' instead of "Western" in order to refrain from partitioning good versus evil into two categorical groups and not to imply that Western is in any way synonymous with 'good' and non-Western is synonymous with 'evil.' I want to assure that the way 'evil' is viewed throughout this analysis is that every individual, ordinary or extraordinary, is capable of 'evil.' However, in avoidance of sparking a philosophical discourse of what it means to be 'ordinary', for this analysis, the definition fits people with non-violent, non-extremist backgrounds, so long as we continue to understand that all people are capable of 'evil' given the circumstances. It is understood that 'ordinary' is a relative and subjective term, however this analysis purposefully strays away from the West versus Non-West narrative.

2.2 Islamic State Ideology, Beliefs, and Goals

IS ideology is derived from Salafism, an ultra-conservative branch of Sunni Islam which seeks to understand the "true interpretation or practice of Islam or to reject the cumulative experience of the Muslim community" (Moussalli 2009: 11). IS believes that the Qur'an should be taken literally. They believe in Sharia law, a religious legal system that requires citizens to uphold the standards established in the Qur'an. They believe that anyone who does not share their beliefs should be punished, and by doing this, they are fulfilling the mission of Allah[5]. Those deemed as infidels include Shia Muslims, Yazidis[6], Christians, and any other Muslims that do not hold IS's values. Infidels are subjected to kidnap, rape, and murder. For IS their brutality is deliberate, unlike in other conflicts, when it is typically a byproduct of war (Moubayed 2015: n.p).

IS ignores transnational borders, and disregards the distinction between fighters and non-fighters, seeing all who do not believe in their agenda as kafir[7], apostates, and infidels destined for death (Kfir 2014: 2). IS fights its immediate enemies in and around its territory: the Alawites in Syria, the Shi'ites in Iraq, the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan, and Sunnis disloyal to the regime (Byman 2015: 170). They aim to consolidate control over territory in both Iraq and Syria, and hope to expand from there. Their immediate goals are to conquer the Middle East, and eventually create a worldwide Islamic state.

The group aims for a utopian world in which there is no conflict. In their view, if everyone follows the rule of the Qur'an, there will be no need for conflict (Moubayed 2015: n.p). They call this quixotic state the "caliphate[8]." According to the November 2015 issue of *Dabiq[9]* magazine, they want to eliminate the "grey-zone" of coexistence between the West and "true' Muslims (as they perceive them to be), and call for attacks in order to further separate the two.

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[5] God
[6] An ethnically Kurdish religious group indigenous to Syria
[7] Infidels
[8] A Muslim territory with an Islamic form of government that uses Sharia law, and represents political unity.
[9] Islamic State's English language magazine

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2.3 Historical Context

Many observers have sought to understand the ideological influences animating IS's mission through the historical context of ancient jihadi ideology to modern militant Islamist thought. This chapter lays the groundwork for greater understanding of the framework of IS's mission, however, does not vindicate the group's claim to legitimate Islam. Instead, this chapter will provide a brief ecology of jihadi discourse that has evolved throughout history in order to comprehend the context in which IS operates. To draw between the recruitment rhetoric and the actions of IS on the battlefield, one must fully comprehend the history of the mission that fuels them.

IS's mission is not innovative. For generations, different groups have adopted aspects of fundamentalist Islam. The idea that the Qur'an should be interpreted literally stems back to 1263, when Ibn Taymiyya, an Islamic scholar, said that excessive misery was a direct result of people straying from the true meaning of Islam (Moubayad 2015: 6). 751 years before the official creation of IS. Taymiyya called for jihad[10]. Years later in 1703, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was inspired by the writings of Taymiyya, and took his ideas further, developing the ideology that has become the basis for radical Islamic thought – Wahhabism.

Wahhabism should be noted as the quintessential "reform movement" of Islam (Spencer 2015: 24). Wahhabism strives to eradicate all Islamic practices that are believed to be toxic according to al-Wahhab's interpretation of the Qur'an, including the banning of shaving, smoking, drinking, adultery, and idol worshipping. The movement also rejects all attempts at globalization, and innovation (bid'a) (25). The ideology of IS, Salafism, stems from Wahhabism, however it shall be noted that the two are not the same. Unlike Wahhabis, Salafists are apolitical in nature and do not support party politics (Moussalli 2009: 16). They place emphasis on religious activism rather than political.

The concept of a 'caliphate[11]' is also not new, sourced from the death of Mohammad with the Sunni/Shia divide. Sunni Muslims believe the caliph[12] must be able to trace his

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[10] Holy war. Literally in Arabic: "the struggle"
[11] An Islamic State, ruled by a caliph.

lineage back to the Quraysh clan of Mecca, the clan of merchants to which Muhammad was born (Moubayad 2015: n.p). Meanwhile, Shia Muslims believe that Muhammad appointed a successor in Ali ibn Abi Talib, a friend of his, and that the caliphs should be direct descendants of Ali (BBC 2016). Clashes between Sunni and Shia Muslims regarding the true claim to the caliph of Islam continued for centuries until the abolishment of the formal caliphate by Turkish President Atatürk in 1924 (Moubayad 2015: n.p).

Since then, a formal caliphate has not existed, and not many groups have attempted to create one. Most jihadist groups rarely even acknowledged the goal of creating a caliphate. Al-Qaeda, the group primarily attributed with the development of IS, hardly mentioned the concept of a caliphate primarily out of fear that a formal declaration of a caliphate would cause Americans to immediately diminish it before it could begin (Spencer 2015: 14). They spoke of a caliphate solely for aspirational purposes. In a letter from Osama bin Laden, he explained:

> *"We should stress the importance of timing in establishing the Islamic State.... We should keep in mind that this main power still has the capacity to lay siege on any Islamic state, and that such a siege might force the people to overthrow their duly elected governments. We have to continue with exhausting and depleting them till they become so weak that they cannot overthrow any State we establish. That will be the time to commence with forming the Islamic State"* (14).

That cautious mentality from the leader of al-Qaeda drove a group of al-Qaeda in Iraq[13] insurgents to break away with the concrete aim of developing a caliphate. In 2006, the leader of AQI, Abu Musab al Zarqawi was killed in an airstrike, and Abu Ayub al Masri took his place, declaring the establishment of Islamic State in Iraq[14] and appointing Abu Omar al Baghdadi the leader of the group. Their headquarters was soon pushed from Baghdad to Mosul, where their membership dwindled due to the Iraq war. After the death of Abu Omar,

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[12] Successor
[13] AQI
[14] ISI

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Abu Bakr al Baghdadi became the leader of ISI, sending troops to Syria (leading to the name-change to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or the Levant)[15].

In late June 2014, al Baghdadi officially announced that he was forming a caliphate called Islamic State (dropping the –IS or –IL suffix from its name). Soon after, IS became just that - an Islamic state with a functioning government, tax system, welfare state, currency, national song, flag, police force, and even national passports. Its coveted location in Iraq and Syria allows them prime access to oil wells, which allows the group to fully fund itself. In 2014, oil smuggling in Iraq and Syria brought IS around $2 million per day (Byman 2015: 173).

IS's claim to the caliphate has largely appealed to Muslims in the region whose aim has been unity of Muslims. According to Moubayad, al-Baghdadi has captivated Sunni audiences because until the declaration of the caliphate, Sunni leadership had lacked charismatic individual leading its citizens (2015: n.p). Baghdadi has been cited by US intelligence officials as being "ruthless, resilient, and ambitious" and known for his tactical military skills (Ignatius 2014: n.p).

Soon after Baghdadi declared a caliphate, IS's territorial control grew immensely. In 2014 alone, IS captured Raqqa, declaring it the de facto capital of the state, followed by the conquering of Mosul, Tikrit, the border crossing between Syria and Iraq, Sinjar, Zumar, the Mosul Dam, Taqba airbase, and Kobani (Glenn 2016: n.p). Today, they are continuing to grow both territorially and in recruitment numbers.

2.5 "Irresistible IS"

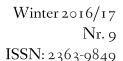Thomas Hegghammer (2010: 63) poses the question "why would anyone want to fight someone else's war?" In fact, IS has seen an estimated 20,000 foreign fighters who fit this category (Dodwell 2016: n.p) In one of the first times in history, the conflict has also seen a record-breaking influx of fighters from the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, France,

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[15] ISIS

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Belgium, Spain, Germany, and other Western States (*Tass* 2015: n.p). However, the conflict in Iraq and Syria is not the first major foreign fighter mobilization in history. Swaths of Westerners have joined other major conflicts, from the Afghanistan conflict in the 1980's to the Chechen conflict with Russia in 1995 (Briggs & Silverman 2014: 8).

Table 1: Number of Foreign Fighters in Major Conflicts from 1936 - Present

Conflict	Number of Foreign Fighters
Spain (1936 – 1939)	30,000 – 60,000
Afghanistan (1978 – 1992)	5,000 – 10,000
Bosnia (1992 – 1995)	1,000 – 3,000
Somalia (1993 – 2014)	250 - 450
Afghanistan (2001 – 2014)	1,000 – 1,500
Iraq (2013 – 2014)	4,000 – 6,000
Syria (2011 – 2014)	~20,000

Sources: (Schmid 2015), (Malet 2015).

While foreign fighter mobilizations are not new, the conflict in Iraq and Syria has seen unprecedented numbers of jihadis from the West joining the fracas. In fact, they are moving at such an unprecedented rate that no other conflict in history has seen this many foreign fighters mobilizing in such a short period of time (Briggs & Silverman 2014: 9). The rate of foreign fighters traveling to Syria "exceeds the rate of travelers who went to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen or Somalia at any point in the last 20 years" (Spencer 2015: 68). From their lowest point in 2008 with only a few thousand fighters (Ignatius 2014: n.p) to today when there are an estimated 50,000 militants fighting for IS (TASS 2015: n.p), public and intelligence services look on in incredulous disbelief at the rapid growth of the group.
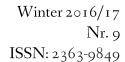
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Table 2: Number of Foreign Fighters in IS (Dead and Alive)

Country	Number of Recruits	Most Recently Updated
Australia	120	October 2015
Austria	300	October 2015
Belgium	470	October 2015
Bosnia	300	October 2015
Canada	300	November 2015
Denmark	125	October 2015
Egypt	600+	January 2015
Finland	70	August 2015
France	1700	May 2015
Germany	760	November 2015
India	23	November 2015
Indonesia	700	July 2015
Ireland	30	November 2015
Israel	40-50	January 2015
Jordan	2000+	September 2015
Kosovo	232	October 2015
Lebanon	900	September 2015
Malaysia	100	November 2015
Maldives	200	May 2015
Morocco	1200	October 2015
Netherlands	220	October 2015
Norway	81	October 2015
Philippines	100	August 2014
Russia	2400	September 2015
Saudi Arabia	2500	October 2015
Spain	133	October 2015
Sweden	300	October 2015
Switzerland	57	October 2015

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Tunisia	6000	October 2015
Turkey	2000-2200	November 2015
United Kingdom	760	November 2015
United States	150	October 2015

(Source: Soufan Group, 2015).

Their appeal among not just young Muslims, but Westerners with no previous ties to the conflict zone has never been seen before. The media focuses on Americans and young Britons; however, thousands have made their way from over 100 different countries (Spencer 2015: 67).

III. Literature Review and Methodology

3.1 Literature Review

According to David Malet (2010: 16), the academic community has yet to develop a common framework to understand foreign fighters, despite the fact that transnational insurgencies have existed for generations. Most research has yet to capture the richness of the issue, typically shelving foreign fighters into one lump category, and ignoring the intersectionality and multi-faceted nature of the research. For this reason, research surrounding foreign fighters, especially in the context of a globalized world, is still in its infancy. Throughout the current literature, researchers have struggled to find reoccurring risk factors for potential transnational insurgents in order to produce lucrative strategies in preventing radicalization (Awan, 2012; Crenshaw, 1995; Laqueur, 2003; Reinares, 2003; De la Corte, 2006; Newman, 2006).

Foreign Fighter Flows

Despite the existence of foreign fighters for centuries, for the first time, the global jihad is attracting individuals from diverse social, economic, religious, ethnic, cultural, national, and criminal backgrounds (Benmelech & Klor 2016: 1). Many academics over the years have attempted to understand foreign fighter surges of the past (Hegghammer 2011;

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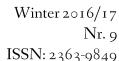
Malet 2013;) and current (Briggs & Silverman 2014; Özdemir & Kardaş 2014) and offering explanations for why foreign fighter trends occur. David Malet in particular has offered several contributions to the field pre-IS. He explains that transnational insurgencies hinge on threats to a shared identity group, and insurgencies frame the war as threatening to the group, necessitating mobilization from foreign fighters (Duyvesteyn & Peeters 2015: 3). Thomas Hegghammer offers a similar explanation, posing that the origin of the Muslim foreign fighter phenomenon can be traced back to a "pan Islamist identity movement" in the 1970's (2011: 89).

Common Models for Radicalization Research

Christmann (2012) provides an in-depth analysis of different theoretical offerings from the academic community in regards to why radicalization occurs. Included in his analysis are biological, psychological, religious, and societal theories. To make sense of the biological influences, he points to the work of Bakker and Wadgy who note the similarities in demographics for people who become radicalized; The majority are young and male, ranging from mid-teens to mid 20's (Bakker 2006; Wadgy; 2007). According to Christmann (2012: 23), this research parallels much mainstream criminology research, and could be related to higher levels of "impulsivity, confidence, risk-taking, and status" which may be more prominent in young males.

Christmann also presents psychological theories as means for explaining individual level explanations for radicalization rather than explanations for widespread radicalization. These explanations, which Christmann notes as being widely unsuccessful, work to present a common "terrorist personality" by evaluating pathologies such as mental illness or repressed sexuality (24).

Some academics have pointed toward the root cause approach to offer an explanation for terrorism. These root causes vary, from poverty to structural factors to cognitive deficits (Gupta et al., 2012). Many academics have ascertained the likelihood of political coups to poor economic conditions (Collier & Hoeffler 2004; Miguel et al., 2004), however most

literature confirms a negative or no correlation between radicalization and economic prosperity (Abadie 2006; Benmelech & Klor 2012; Krueger & Maleckova 2003; Drakos & Gofas 2006; Piazza 2006; Krueger & Laitlin 2007).

Others have identified religious ideology as a means for explaining why people become radicalized (Munroe & Moghaddam 2012: 121). Munroe & Moghaddam note that there are complex interactions of human social behavior that imply there is causality and causation that allows people to understand meaning and purpose of life through religion. Jeff Goodwin (2012: 127) presents the counterargument that religion, while central to the goals of groups, does not cause people to be driven toward acts of violence.

Theorists who have identified relative deprivation as an explanation have proposed varying definitions of the theory, contingent on whether or not they pose root causes as being an accurate theory. Leggiero (2015) and Taşpınar (2009) both identify that in radicalization studies, we must not ignore the root causes themselves, but instead, understand an individual's response to the root causes that cause them to become more vulnerable to radicalization. These reactions often manifest themselves in feelings of relative deprivation. de la Sablonnière & Tougas (2008) propose that feelings of relative deprivation occur during times of social change. Grant & Brown (1995) ascertain that collective protest is often a product of relative deprivation, thus giving rise to the idea that RDT may play a "facilitative role" rather than a "causative role" (Christmann 2012: 25).

Christmann presents different sociological processes of radicalization that have been proposed for debate in recent years to attempt to comprehend drivers of radicalization on both a micro and macro level. Many authors have presented statistical data that shows that Muslims suffer from deprivation more than non-Muslims, which may be the base for feelings of resentment (25). Feelings of resentment do not directly implicate radicalization, but may be formative in fostering feelings of discrimination, hostility, or blocked mobility, which could prompt a "cognitive opening" in belief systems that allow radical influencers to infiltrate.

Theories of radicalization may take the approach that feelings of identity confusion may put someone at risk for becoming radicalized. Myron Aranoff's passage in *Terrorism, Identity, and Legitimacy* takes the constructionist approach to interpreting identity, based on the notion that politics are facilitated through the cultural construction of bonds of collective identity (2011: 169). His analysis primarily uses collective identity as a means of interpreting nationalism, however is easily transferrable to other identity processes. He conceptualizes cultural understandings as having a past, present, and future, and individual's perceptions of their identity are born from linear events that have occurred to their group throughout time. Wiktorowicz (2005) identifies that an individual becomes particularly vulnerable to radicalization when they individual has faced some sort of identity crisis and is open-minded to sampling other groups.

The academic community seems to agree that none of these attempts to understand processes of radicalization fully encapsulate the issue at hand. Many act as causal factors and not necessarily key agents of socialization that cause radicalization to occur. Many things must be considered. Horgan (2008: 82-83) proposes six key risk factors that may predispose an individual to engage in terror activities: "1) having an 'emotional vulnerability,… often linked to feelings of being culturally… displaced and searching for spiritual guidance; 2) dissatisfaction or disillusionment with mainstream political or social protest as a method to produce political change; 3) identification with the suffering of Muslim victims globally or experience of personal victimization; 4) the conviction that violence against the state and its symbols can be morally justified…; 5) gaining rewards from membership of the group…; 6) close social ties, having contact with people experiencing the same set of issues or having involvement with terrorism through family or associates." Horgan himself identifies these risk factors should not be considered in isolation because they cannot fully capture the processes of radicalization. However, those who fit these risk factors may be predisposed to violence.

There remains a large gap in current research regarding point 6 in Horgan's risk factors. While points 1-5 should be noted as causal factors, few researchers have evaluated the secondary socialization processes that occur within the relationships between radical group members and the individual becoming radicalized. This analysis attempts to fill that gap, by

gaining a deeper understanding of how emotional vulnerability brought on by relative deprivation and identity crises interact with IS's infiltration of propaganda techniques through personal relationships in order to cause radicalization.

The small amount of research on these secondary socialization processes begins to encapsulate the triggers for radicalization, however rarely in conjunction with previously studied risk factors. Marc Sageman (2004) emphasizes the importance of networks, kinship, personal relationships, and social circles in the reinforcement of extremist ideology. He notes that the relationship between a person and others whom have an operational link to the organization, and social bonds take precedent over any religious ideologies. These linkages are born from feelings of moral outrage and mutual understanding of the marginalization of Muslims at home and abroad.

Some approaches of understanding attempts to solidify identity are attributed by academics to social processes. Many sociologists suggest identity cohesion and consolidation stems from processes of dichotomization or "othering", the process of identifying two or more key groups as working towards opposite goals, and creating a meta-narrative to strengthen the in-group's mission (Somers & Gibson 1993; Schwartz et al., 2008). Kfir (2015) notes that identity groups are strong if they are collectively unstable, meaning that they share a common grievance. He says that groups exploit insecurity by portraying negative events in a particular light that helps their cause. Sageman (20014) agrees. The work of Somers & Gibson (1993) point out that groups use a process called epistemological othering that establishes an 'us versus them' narrative.

While a variety of theories have been put forth to understand these processes, this analysis will attempt to reconcile the risk factors and how they interact with secondary socialization processes. By putting forth new theories and expanding upon the processes touched upon by Sageman and introduced by Somers & Gibson, this analysis aims to fill a major gap in research that combines theories such as relative deprivation theory and social identity theory with agents of social change to perhaps put forth a new proposal of how social theory interacts with socialization.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Formal theory building in terrorism has been relatively absent (Wright 2015: 76). From a political perspective, the relationship between theory and practice is integral in determining practical solutions in terrorism policy, but yet few formal theoretical frameworks exist. This analysis uses four dominant theories to understand different aspects of IS recruitment, from the sociological explanation for what puts an individual at risk for becoming radicalized, to how IS uses propaganda, to how specific recruiters strategically develop relationships with potential recruits to lead them to conforming to IS ideology.

Constructivism

The theory of Constructivism says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world based on experiences and self-reflection. In this context, the process of understanding takes place through competition between groups that "while pursuing conflicting interests, negotiate their internal and external social boundaries" (Aronoff 2011: 168). This determines the individual understanding of marginalization or domination of particular groups in a certain environment, which supports the "us versus them" approach discovered for this analysis. The constructivist approach is fundamental to all processes of human cognition and social interaction (2011: 168). The Constructivist approach overarches this analysis to explain notion formation regarding in-group superiority or inferiority. The processes in which national, ethnic, religious, and peer group identity is fluid, and is most at threat during times of domination, perceived lack of assimilation, or deprivation. Constructivist perceptions are what shape our ideas of depravity, which lead us to a deeper understanding of Relative Deprivation Theory.

Relative Deprivation Theory

In this vein, Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) has been used as an explanation between frustration and political violence for centuries (Skjølberg 2007). The theory attempts to explain the link between grievance, understanding of grievance, individual mobilization, and political violence. RDT is born from constructivism, in which the notion of collective identity is established through social constructions. The theory can be understood through Ted Robert Gurr's book *Why Men Rebel* (1970), which explains that instead of an absolute

standard of deprivation, a gap between expected and achieved welfare creates collective discontentment. This manifests itself not in concrete depravity, but in comparative depravity to others. It may be experienced personally or perceived at a wider group level, and this perhaps manifests in feelings of frustration by the social standing of their in-group (Christmann 2012: 24). This analysis uses RDT to offer explanation for why individuals may feel grievance or discontentment about their current situations, thus they either seek out or are sought out by IS. RD often can cause people to feel disconnected from their identity group, which leads them to feel depersonalized (de la Sablonnière 2008: 296).

Symbolic Interactionism Theory

Herbert Blumer coined the term 'symbolic interactionism' by offering that people act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them. (*Symbolic Interactionism* n.d: n.p). Symbolic interaction theory addresses subjective meanings of people's interpretations of objects, events, symbols, and situations. In this context, and as will be seen in the Propaganda chapter, IS is aware of this flexibility of interpretation of how perceptions of reality can change, so it uses propaganda campaigns that attempt to skew the recruit's interpretation of IS.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory is a broad theory that explains that a person's sense of identity is based on their group memberships. Tajfel (1979) proposed that groups give people a sense of social identity and belonging in the world. When people feel pride in their groups, they divide the world into "them" and "us" through social categorization (or epistemological othering). Salient identities are more likely to result in aggressive responses, which has been applied largely to religious identity (Wright 2015: 77). SIT relates to how IS attracts those experiencing relative deprivation to their group. They offer a new social identity, one that is perceived as stronger with more benefits, than their previous identity. SIT is interested in the socio-cognitive processes of groups and how they shape identity (Al Raffie 2013: 76). Social categories have boundaries, and are inherently discriminatory, as they outline in-groups and out-groups, and who is permitted to fit where.

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3.3 Methodology

Having established the theoretical framework for which this analysis will reside, it is important to note which methods were used for data collection. There are a number of approaches that could be taken to answer the research question. This analysis will focus on answering the sociological conundrum of how individuals in groups influence each other by using secondary analysis of existing theories, and content analysis.

The objective of this analysis is to understand the link between risk factors for radicalization and messaging techniques used by IS in order to socialize recruits. Thus, the article takes an interpretative, rather than empirical approach to answer the research question. For this reason, I took a mixed-methods approach, while leaning toward a qualitative approach, to understanding individual phenomena. For example, data regarding foreign fighter flows throughout time is primarily quantitative in nature, however could not alone answer the research question. Quantitative data is supplementary, and primarily used to further emphasize the scale of the problem, rather than to answer the question.

Qualitative data, in this instance, has proved more useful for the overall research design, in order to prove why IS is successful at recruiting "ordinary" people. I attempt to stray away from focusing too much on direct anecdotal or case-study based data and instead conducted rhetorical analysis of text from IS propaganda in conjunction with secondary analyses of existing theories. Specific forms of IS propaganda analyzed include *Dabiq* magazine, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and YouTube. Much of this analysis also comes from an evaluation of anecdotal evidence and case-study based data from people's own accounts of interactions with jihadis online. These used throughout this piece as means of identifying common trends of IS's use of messaging techniques rather than individual's personal experiences with radicalization. Any references to interviews or anecdotal evidence throughout this analysis are secondary data. This data was primarily collected to understand the secondary socialization processes used by IS to lure in their recruits. However, to understand the risk factors, analysis of existing articles put forth by theorists and academics was the prominent method.

This analysis has some limitations, which may skew the results. Part of the reason this analysis scarcely includes case studies or interviews was based on the lack of time and resources. Little anecdotal data is publically accessible, thus I would have needed to conduct my own interviews. Sociology cannot thrive without anecdotal data, however drawing broad conclusions based on a few public case studies would be detrimental to developing fruitful analysis. For this reason, I opted to use anecdotal data as a supplement to emphasize the aggregated data collected from other methods. Further research would need to be conducted in which more personal data is collected on individual experiences. The application of theory always carries loopholes, as there are simply always outliers in any sociological framework. This analysis does not account for an individual's propensity to commit violence, social background, and upbringing. However, it is impossible to study each individual's social context without interviewing each person who has traveled to IS. For that reason, this analysis does not attempt to develop grandiose theory of individual motives, but to understand the broad sociological frameworks in which IS and recruits operate throughout the recruitment process.

IV. Who, Why, and How?

4.1. Who are they?

The study of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria is still in its embryonic phases, thus it is essential to avoid lumping generic figures or labels into one category or make broad assumptions about the demographics of people who join IS (Özdemir & Kardaş 2014: 10). According to the *New York Times* (2016: n.p), *only* one common trend exists, "a casual acceptance of causing the death of random people." They seem to fit a bizarre profile. They are not the typical jihadi fighters of past conflicts. Instead, they are three young schoolgirls from East London, an aspiring German rapper, a redheaded Australian butcher from the suburbs of Sydney, or an Oxford born son of a minister of the Church of England (*The Independent* 2016: n.p).

Data on the demographics and socio-economic status of Western foreign fighters is scarce. An estimated 6% of foreign fighters from the European Union are converts to Islam (Briggs & Silverman 2014: 8). Many are second or third generation immigrants, few have prior connections to Syria, and around 18% are women. The average age of fighters from the West is 18-29, which is much younger than previous foreign fighter flows. However, these numbers vary significantly between countries. Part of the problem in developing counter-extremism tactics is that few of these people have been flagged as vulnerable by security services (8).

An ideological commonality has been attempted as an explanation to who joins IS. Hegghammer (2011: 64) notes that in order to make sense of foreign fighter volunteering, one has to assume the existence of subjective grievances linked to an expanded notion of nationhood or nonmaterial selective incentives (in this case, afterlife rewards), or a collective belief or ideology. The ideological suggestion poses a problem. If the true Muslim belief is to "die in your rage[16]," then how can one explain the lack of foreign fighter flows to the Middle East before the Afghan War in 1980? (65).

In reality, foreign fighter profiles tend to vary across the board in terms of who joins, their prior situations, and their social, political, and religious beliefs. Radicalization is non-exclusive to any particular religious group or organization. According to McCants and Watts, "anyone can potentially sympathize with a terrorist organization if the conditions are right" (Byman 2015: 219). Even if we do attempt to create a profile out of common themes found throughout instances of foreign fighter trends, the study still disregards the fact that there are several individuals who have been exposed to "presumed generating conditions" or root causes of terrorism, that have yet to participate or show signs of radicalization (Clack et al., 2007: 25). For example, over 2.7 million Muslims live in Britain (MCB, 2015, n.p) and many are exposed to similar social, economic, and cultural background. So few actually become radicalized and engage in terrorism, so how can we account for those identities when trying to discover a profile for Western originated terrorists?

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[16] "Die in your rage" is a common phrase used amongst IS fighters on social media to denote their willingness to die for the sake of their cause.

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A Course in the Art of Recruiting, IS's 44-page recruitment manual, allows the world to understand exactly whom IS is targeting when they conduct recruitment. While it is unclear whether IS is systematically implementing these practices, it is still indicative of the wider scope of jihadist recruitment operations, and should be understood as an attempt to simplify the process for amateur recruiters.

Among those targeted in the guidebook are non-religious Muslims, recently converted Muslims, generally religious people (although not if they are "cowards, excessively talkative, stingy, or loners"), people who convert from one movement to the Salafi movement, youths who live far from cities, average members of other Islamic groups, university students, high school students, people with corrupted ("un-Islamic" ideas) and memorizers of the Qur'an. These subsets can be grouped into two categories – the religious, and the isolated (Abu Amru 2010: n.p). Abu Amru calls upon recruits to specifically focus on those who are not necessarily religious, and criticizes recruiters who focus on only recruiting those with religious backgrounds. Religious people, he says, are likely to have been previously ingrained with anti-jihadist knowledge, and are more difficult to recruit (Abu Amru 2010: n.p). He advises to target the non-religious, even those who have questions about Islam, as they are less likely to be scrutinized by security forces.

4.2 Why do they become radicalized?

The academic community has put several suggestions forward in order to create a common understanding of why people become radicalized. Too often, academic thought centers too much around the "root cause" approach to understanding radicalization, which attempts to pinpoint a specific cause for radicalization such as poverty, lack of education, etc. As there is no profile of radical extremists, there is no discernable universal reason for why people join IS (Briggs & Silverman 2014, p.13). However, five major views have emerged in discussing why people become radicalized. The first school of thought is that socio-economic factors contribute to the root cause effect. However, most academics have rejected this theory. Research has proven that there is no common trend in socio-economic status or personality factors (Taşpınar 2009: 75). The vast majority of terrorists are in fact, middle class (Sageman 2011: 48). Even Barack Obama has negated this theory, dismissing the idea that poverty is a
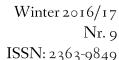
contributing factor. (Taşpınar 2015: n.p). The correlation between socioeconomic development and radicalization is poor, simply by the fact that foreign fighters to IS are neither poor nor uneducated. In a comprehensive study of 4,018 registration forms of IS foreign fighters, Dodwell et al., (2015: 17) found that 54% of Westerner foreign fighters in IS had a high school education, and 35% had a post-high school, university, or college education. Another study by Sageman found that the majority of foreign fighters had studied in a technical field such as engineering or medicine (59).

The second camp focuses on fanaticism, mental illness, or vitriolic hatred as the root cause for radicalization. The question remains: "how could someone do this?" after a shocking instance of terrorism (Horgan, 2008: 83). The temptation to denote fanaticism or hatred as the catalysts for jihad remains due to the lack of comprehensive profiles for jihadists. The concept of a completely dystopian society in which barbarians are ruling the government is seemingly more simple to understand than the idea that, beyond beheadings, rapes and murders, IS's ideology is inspiring to some. The public and academic community must start accepting that even the criminally insane have motives for their actions, as do jihadis (Baggini 2014: n.p). Baggini explained: "for jihadis, the narrative is that Islam is the true faith and that it is threatened by a hostile, kafir world. Given that millions throughout history have died to defend their religions, we cannot dismiss those who do the same now as simply deranged" (2014: n.p). Often theories from this narrative are derivations of micro-level analyses that focus on an individualistic approach – the idea that that something must be wrong with the individual, either mentally or born from a distinct moment in their personal history.

One of the most harmful narratives, the third camp, in the study of foreign fighters is that global jihadis are brainwashed. The term "becoming radicalized" implies that radicalization is two-sided process, with one individual pushing the meta-narrative, and one individual consenting to receipt of the meta-narrative who then potentially relates to and adopts the ideology. Brainwashing, on the contrary, implies that the action of radicalization as a one-sided effort, with one individual radicalizing, and another non-consenting individual being psychologically manipulated into accepting the ideology. "What does freedom mean if

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we accept the fundamental premise that humans are social beings, always raised in certain social and historical contexts and always belonging to particular communities that shape their desires and understandings of the world?" (Abu-Lughod 2002: 786). While the recruit may be seeking something different, disputing their rationality implies that either that human beings fundamentally lack autonomy in certain cases, or that they simply do not know better. Brainwashing is often proclaimed when perpetrator of violence is claiming diminished responsibility. The use of the term "brainwashing" implies loss of agency, control, or self-determination over one's choices.

Sageman also introduces the "ignorance" theory of terrorism, or the idea that people join terrorist groups because they do not know any better (2008: 58). However, as seen from the evidence regarding lack of education as a possible explanation, most foreign fighters are highly educated.

While brainwashing has merits in alternative contexts, it is detrimental to the field to assume that radicalization is attributed to brainwashing. Of course, all social groups do have some influence over their members, but it is when something deemed "evil" occurs that it is easier to place distance between the group and the individual action (Kuper & Staub 1999: 2). Assuming that brainwashing is the prominent method in recruiting foreign fighters allows states and individuals to distance themselves from the issue of radicalization, pretending that it is impossible to be countered. In practice, this lends itself to inadequate policies in tackling extremism at home, as it releases the individual from culpability. The problem is not a lack of free will, but a lapse of judgment, provoked by interactions with others in conjunction with pre-existing factors.

The fourth school of thought is that radicalization occurs because of religious ideology, however this is not the case (Sageman 2011: 51). Only a few religious scholars actually exist within the group, however their interpretation of the Qu'ran is unconventional, relative to other understandings of the scriptures. In fact, according to Sageman, the majority of terrorists come to religion through self-instruction (51).

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The fifth camp operates under the assumption that the "root cause" approach is a fallacy, and attempts to establish a more sociological explanation for why some individuals are pushed toward jihad. This camp says that potential foreign jihadists or grievance ridden Muslims face collective relative deprivation, leading them to experience confusion about their identity. Human politics are expressed and facilitated through cultural construction of bonds of collective identity (Aronoff 2011: 168). Identity becomes important and politicized when it is threatened by outside forces (be it marginalization, negative attitudes towards a particular group, globalization, or forms of domination). Frequently, identities are viewed as permanent, however with a largely globalized world, individuals are more easily able to call their identities into question based on perceptions of their reality based on the assumed reality of the alternative.

When the perceived realities of these two are deemed "unequal" an individual's understanding of their identity can falter. This is RDT. It is worth noting a study conducted on 2032 foreign al-Qaeda fighters which concluded that "potential recruits have an unfulfilled need to define themselves" which causes them to turn to violence in a community setting (Özdemir & Kardaş 2014: 12). Radicalization and terrorist recruitment occurs, not under the umbrella of abject poverty or mental illness, but at the convergence of negative social, political, and economic trends (Taşpınar 2009: 78). RDT explains that people feel discontentment if they recognize a discrepancy between "value expectations" and "value capabilities" (Mummendey et al., 1999: 229). Individuals experiencing collective relative deprivation are more likely to engage in protest actions and express hostility toward that group, and often, that turns into political violence (Grant & Brown 1995: 196; Gurr 1970: n.p). Taşpınar (2009: 76) notes that for this reason, youth frustration is perpetuated by a demographic explosion, growing expectations, weak state capacity, and diminishing opportunities for upward mobility for many Muslims.

RDT also refers to the management of opportunities in relation to expectations. Today, globalization creates a world in which everyone has awareness of opportunities elsewhere. Thus, there is no reason for marginalized, frustrated, or victimized individuals to stay within their current situations. When social, political, and ideological trends converge to create a
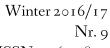
world where individuals may feel left out of social groups, and with access to the Internet one can begin to understand how this could lead to one seeking friendships online (Taşpınar 2015: n.p). According to Mummendey et al., there are six different strategic responses to status inferiority, with two responses referring to individualistic responses (rather than group). These responses include individual mobility (i.e. a Muslim chooses to identify as a Christian, as the perceived benefits are better) and re-categorization at a higher level (i.e. British Muslim immigrants begin identifying themselves as just "Muslims," rather than thinking of themselves as a lower category as immigrant etc.) (230).

One could attempt to reject the theory that RDT plays a role based on the thought that most people experience some feelings of relative deprivation in different social groups in their life, however, not all seek out membership in brutal terror organizations. Grievances are subjective, with feelings, personal circumstances, and lived experiences playing an important factor in the individual's perception of deserved status versus actual status. Of course, these are valid disputes, thus it remains essential to account for how deprived individuals interact with socialization processes, and pull-factors (incentives) to determine the perceived benefits of their current situations versus risks and incentives of seeking identity definition elsewhere. IS has a unique modality of portraying their message to relatively deprived individuals seeking to re-categorize or individually mobilize.

4.3 What means does IS use to attract recruits?

The complexity of IS's tactical recruitment operations manifest on both a macro and micro level scale. In *A Course in the Art of Recruiting,* Abu Amru calls micro level the "individual da'wa," and macro level the "collective da'wa" (Fishman & Warius 2009: 1). Their macro level recruitment tends to be done on a mass media and social media basis, and micro is done throughout one-on-one conversation, typically through the Internet. IS self identifiably prefers micro-level interactions in their recruiting (it draws less attention from security forces), but macro level recruiting cannot be discounted in how IS accesses its potential recruits. Both are equally important in IS's success in strengthening their caliphate through the recruitment of foreign fighters, however take different approaches to how they target potential recruits. Macro (or collective) level recruitment uses symbols to manipulate

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the individual interpretations of how prospective or potential recruits view the group. Micro (or individual) level recruitment capitalizes on identity deficits and personal grievances to establish a strong narrative that socializes the recruit into sympathizing with IS.

V. Understanding the Path to Radicalization: The Politics of Access, Symbolism, and Online Propaganda

"Nobody, absolutely nobody, straps a bomb on their body because they were recruited from the Internet. It takes an enormous amount of personal face-to-face contact and time in order to recruit a young person into the cause of jihad." – Reza Aslan

While the study of terrorism requires a deep understanding of the "main effects" of each level of grievance and identity, it is essential not to discount the "interactions" that occur to lead someone to becoming radicalized. Feelings of disenfranchisement in mainstream society are common amongst young people, however, that alone does not cause a person to strap a suicide belt to their body (Schwartz et al., 2008: 540). This is where the study of radicalization becomes more concrete, with identifiable interactions between a group member and a recruit being specific and targeted, rather than ambiguous conversation about feelings of significance. Feelings of marginalization, when coupled with symbolic narratives and intense adherence to a meta-narrative make radicalization much more likely (541).

5.1 The Cyber Caliphate

Two substantial emerging themes exist in the study of IS's success. The first theme is access. Without access, the insurgency of foreign fighters to IS would be akin to foreign fighter trends of the past. Today more than ever, radicalization occurs primarily online, with over 4,800 terrorist websites available, up from just 14 in 1998. (Weimann 2009: n.p). The dissemination of IS propaganda is easier than ever with the use of these websites, as they have capability of going "viral" and reaching a large-scale audience whom they may not have reached otherwise. al-Sarqawi, the former leader of AQI, was one of the first to spread propaganda online via terrorist websites, posting footage of bombings, decapitations, and

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executions (CFR 2009: n.p). The United States Department for Homeland Security has called the internet a "radicalization accelerant," drawing youths by providing them with a venue to seek information, receive answers to questions about ideologies, traditions, or in response to propaganda they may have seen online (Homeland Security Institute 2009: 6). But most notably, the Internet provides them with a venue to make contact with new communities (5).

The scale of IS's social media impact is difficult to measure, but it is estimated that IS's propaganda machine produces around 90,000 tweets per day, and about 100,000 pieces of online propaganda in other forms (Spencer 2015: 70). Many attempts to quantify social media's impact on IS recruitment have been made. By far the most successful and comprehensive has been a quantitative study from the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, in which researchers completed a study that has provided a snapshot of the profiles of IS supporters on Twitter. From September through December of 2014, they discovered at least 46,000 Twitter accounts that were used by IS "supporters," however, not all were active and the number acts as a conservative estimate (2015: 2). Most supporters were based in Iraq and Syria, but one in five IS supporters in the sample selected English as their primary language when creating their Twitter account (3).

Berger and Morgan (2015) noted that their data is insufficient in determining a direct correlation between the quantitative data of Twitter and recruitment success. One can understand from their research that, as their data is purely quantitative, it segregates the individuals from autonomy and private networks outside of social media (micro level/individual da'wa). Both researchers acknowledge that essentializing the jihadi population down to their Twitter handles fails to account for symbolic interactionism that occurs between the person tweeting and the individual back home. Yet, this information does provide a comprehensive snapshot of the perceived value of symbols within the culture of IS. Social media is clearly viewed as valuable by IS, and with the massive amount of propaganda being produced every day, IS indisputably values virtual connections with each other and the rest of the world. Regardless of whether or not it is a systematic valuation or a collective group trend, noting the scale can allow one to begin to draw conclusions about how IS's strategy is effective.

5.2 Symbolic Propaganda Messaging

More important than the quantifiable data is the interaction that occurs online through the collective da'wa. IS uses symbols as a mode of reaching potential jihadists online. Symbolic interactionism is a mode of socialization, particularly in children or vulnerable individuals. Propaganda is undeniably a form of symbolic interactionism. By definition, under symbolic interactionism, propaganda is a means of inciting a feeling by projecting an unrelated symbol. (O'Shaughnessy 2004: 85). In this context, this definition holds true, with IS using either shock value propaganda (to spark curiosity in the individual), or relatable propaganda (to target those who have already been radicalized but house doubts about traveling abroad).

IS propaganda functions in these two distinct but pertinent ways. The first is to use shock factor symbols (such as videos of beheadings, photos of women holding Kalashnikovs, articles in *Dabiq* magazine praising terrorist attacks around the world etc.) in order to spark curiosity in anyone who views them. The second operates as more of a means to an end, using relatable symbols as a way of convincing the already radicalized to make hijra to Syria. In this way, they operate similarly to any large PR firm in the West, with a clear strategy, target audience, and sophisticated symbolic messaging techniques in order to convey their brand to anyone who consumes it. By using these techniques, it is simple for IS recruiters to identify those watching their brutal content. Demonstrating this, *Undercover Jihadi Bride* (2016) has been groundbreaking for gaining insider knowledge about the process of IS's recruitment operations, and links can be drawn between their strategies in theory and in practice. In the book, a journalist ('disguised' on the Internet as a young French Muslim) "retweeted[17] a brutal IS video, and almost immediately, several jihadists contacted her through the site.

IS recruiters are easily able to find potential recruits through actions like these and through interactions with their viral content that spreads through the internet like wildfire. IS uses videos rather than textual propaganda (Zelin 2015: n.p). On March 17, 2014, IS released an hour-long video titled "Salil al-Sawarim I" which was watched by 56,998 distinct YouTube accounts within 24 hours (Lister, 2015: n.p). The ability for videos such as this to

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[17] On Twitter, a user can "retweet" someone else's tweet, thus sharing the content with their unique "followers"

"go viral" allows their mission to be seen by a slew of new individuals on a global scale. The purpose of these symbols is to reach a generation of younger recruits. Those who are viewing IS's brutal content are likely either to be curious, or house desires to commit the same atrocities, and IS has the ability to access both.

In the second way that IS uses propaganda, the symbolic content has proved essential in developing a narrative of "coolness" and relative normalcy within IS. For this reason, they abandon their beheading videos and trade them for kitten memes, blogs of teenagers living in the caliphate, and private Facebook groups just for "sisters." They offer fitness programs for jihadis, smartphone apps, and ideological computer games. Their app called Fajr al-Basha'ir (Dawn of Good Tidings) links individuals' personal information and releases IS content directly to their phones (Lister 2015: n.p). They utilize tools such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Tumblr, and Ask.fm to share captioned photos or religious quotes and to discuss life in the caliphate (Chassman 2014: 6).

Most famously, the blog of Aqsa Mahmood, a Scottish woman who left Glasgow for Aleppo in 2014, allows insight into how IS uses this "relatability" factor to recruit new people. Mahmood, writing under the name "Umm Layth," writes about being a woman in the caliphate, her temptation to break Islamic law by plucking her eyebrows, and the heartbreak she faced when leaving her family behind (*Fa-Tubalighuraba* 2014: n,p.). She shares how-to guides for women that include packing lists, and how to arrive in Syria safely. Frequently, readers ask her questions and she responds offering assistance (Chassman 2014: 4). This form of propaganda resonates with Western audiences. It targets those who have been radicalized but are having doubts about making the leap to make hijra. They are waiting for someone to say, "my life is not too different from yours… It's about kittens, it's about dress, it's about politics (Britain's Jihadi Brides 2015: n.p).

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VI. Understanding the Path to Radicalization: Identity and Individual Recruitment Messaging

"Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets, and until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment, and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier." – *Mohammed Sidique Khan*

IS recruitment operations are successful, not because of their use of the Internet, but their ability to develop complex messaging systems that convince others to sacrifice their lives to advance the mission of the group. This collectivist approach to recruitment displays the message of prioritizing the group before the individual, and in social groups that are largely collectivist, social identity takes precedence over individual identity (Schwartz 2011: 541).

6.1 Recruitment Messaging

David Malet writes succinctly about foreign fighter messaging for recruitment efforts in all civil conflicts. While the recruitment methods differ from conflict to conflict, Malet poignantly discusses the value of the relationship between the potential insurgent and recruiter. Throughout history, insurgents have always tried to recruit foreign fighters by pointing out current civil conflicts as threatening to the particular transnational identity group of the individual being recruited. The common bond of ethnicity and religion is not necessarily present, so recruiters must find new methods of appealing their audience to their message. Recruitment messaging turns to the idea of preserving a community of us vs. them (2010: 100).
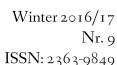
According to Malet, recruitment messaging occurs in a three-pronged model. The two former prongs relate to how insurgencies strengthen their legitimacy to formulate a model for one-on-one recruitment. (1) Insurgencies, which are often the weaker group in a civil conflict, need to tap into their resources in order to strengthen their forces. Typically these are in the form of fighters, specialists, or monetary contributions. (2) They target groups who they expect to identify with their cause. In the case of IS, they have turned to similar groups in the region such as Al-Nusra Front, or Boko Haram (Middle East Eye 2014: n.p). On the internet, they turn to those who share similar ethnicity, religion, and ideology, ("your people are suffering"). While the most receptive audiences are those who share the same ethnicity, religion, or ideology, among the most interested individuals are marginalized in some form and feel empathy toward the insurgent group's mission. (3) Recruiters convey that the potential TNI's participation is necessary within the conflict, and appeal to the individual by telling him/her that their group is under immediate threat without them (100).

In combination with Malet's logistical model, there are five sociological processes that have emerged in the research that IS uses in order to socialize the recruit: depersonalization, social cohesion, establishing legitimacy, epistemological othering, and conformity/obedience. Each step plays in important role in IS's success at forming an identity around the individual and allowing them to develop within the framework of IS's ideology.

6.2 The Importance of Friendships

In the introduction to this analysis, a quote was introduced from Thomas Hegghammer that said: "why would anyone want to fight someone else's war?" IS has the unique ability to transform the idea of "someone else's war" into everybody's war. While the first emerging theme in the study of IS's recruitment strategy is access, the second is legitimacy. IS's macro-level recruitment strategies are integral to their success, however few people log onto social media and become immediately radicalized. At this point, IS must establish themselves as a group with a legitimate cause. The alliances forged between recruiter and recruit cannot be discounted and must be thoroughly examined in determining why an individual is drawn to the brutal narratives of IS. According to de la Corte (2007, n.p)**,** research suggests that the

social environment and friendship shared between the recruit and recruiter heavily influences the process of joining a terrorist group. In a study of 168 subjects, 68% of recruits said friendship was the main influence on their decision to enter jihadist organizations, and in 14% of cases, they joined because of a familial tie to the organization (2007: n.p). De la Corte calls this "secondary socialization," in which jihadists are socialized outside of their dominant environments (n.p). IS utilizes this "secondary socialization" to legitimize brutality to the "ordinary" individual who likely has not been subjected to violence of these standards.

6.3 How does IS do it?

Depersonalization and Self-Categorization

Depersonalization is a large component of SIT, and is the process in which individuals experience feeling separate from their identity, groups, or body (Kaminski 2015: n.p). In the case of foreign fighter recruits, many feel that they fit in with their identity group, often due to understandings of relative deprivation. Those experiencing a disadvantaged or inferior position in society, according to SIT, leads to a "negative social identity," which can trigger attempts to improve one's status position (Mummendey et al., 1999: 229).

IS offers an opportunity to improve one's status– join the *Ummah* and find a new identity within. IS capitalizes on the depersonalization of the individual, offering an alternative community to join. This is called self-personalization, or the process of adopting a collective identity, which will override their personal, individual identity (Al Raffie 2013: 77). According to Ocheing, IS finds cracks in "lexical priming" of a fragile individual, who may feel disenfranchised within their social groups (p.180). Recruiters then focus on deepening the cracks by perpetuating discourses that allow the recruit to imagine themselves as a member of the group. During this initial step, recruiters infiltrate by matching the individual's interests and goals to the organization, and explaining how the they can use their personal skills or qualities to the group's advantage. By allowing the recruits to imagine themselves as using their skills to benefit the group, the individual begins to separate themselves further from their original in-groups.

By the process of depersonalization, the individual's identity begins to develop itself in relation to the identity of the IS recruiter, although *A Course in the Art of Recruiting* recommends that the recruiter stays away from intentionally conducting that approach (Abu Amru 2010: n.p). The guidebook encourages the recruiter to allow the recruit to further self-depersonalize, as to not push the narrative too soon. According to the manual, once the recruit begins asking questions and beginning to identify with the recruit, the depersonalization process will deepen and cracks in the individual's identity will begin to show.

In some ways, IS taunts the West in order to spark a reaction that provokes the depersonalization process. In 2014, IS made headlines after beheading several Western journalists and publicizing the videos online (Carter 2014: n.p). These killings were strategic in that they acted as a prod towards the West in order to spark a reaction. As IS makes headlines, Islamophobia grows on a global scale, further creating a divide between Muslims and Westerners. This can be proved by IS's use of recordings of Donald Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric in their recruitment videos (Garofalo 2016: n.p). In using these, they aim to strike a chord in the heart of Muslims facing Islamophobia, driving them into the arms of a group that may have convinced them that they are an *Ummah*. Muslims facing Islamophobia then have a decision; do they stand up with those who hate them, or those who claim to "defend" them, even if those who defend them are one of the most brutal groups on the planet? According to Orwenjo the Muslim must decide which camp he chooses to belong to: "pulling away from his religion, disbelieving in Allah, and disgracefully submitting to the man-made… laws of the east and west" or "tortured on the accusation of terrorism… Because terrorism is to refuse humiliation, subjugation, and subordination…. Terrorism is for the Muslim to live as a Muslim" (191).

Social Cohesion

Once the individual begins to falter away from their prior identities, it is the aim of the recruiter to display a narrative of social cohesion. The narrative produced by al-Baghdadi is conducive to creating an entirely new communal identity, with the *Ummah* as the dominant identity for the group. The overall aim is to imprint the narrative of social cohesion into the mind of the recruit (de la Corte 2007: n.p).

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al-Baghdadi's narrative appears welcoming to all Muslims, calling upon all to unify under one flag, and although those who do not submit are subjected to murder by IS, the narrative creates the confines of a concrete Islamic state, an exclusive group of which only the "morally superior" as outlined by the *Qu'ran* are welcome. At this point, the recruit identifies the positive relationships within IS, and shows how they work together as a group towards a common goal. In any social group, fighting for a collective cause helps establish a dominant identity that will then encompass the group and apply itself onto the individual. (Orwenjo 2016: 179).

IS is seemingly a "grassroots" initiative, in which anyone can participate. (Moubayed 2015: n.p)**.** Not surprisingly, this lends itself to the idea of social cohesion. While IS does have an established hierarchal system, the ultimate aim is not to progress, at least by IS's account, during their time on earth. Many of the terror groups of today have established a more flexible organizational model, which is better conducive to higher recruitment levels. This appeals to the common sympathizer, who, in Nazi Germany, may not have been able to fly from the United States with the goal of making a name for themselves, but now has an option of establishing themselves as a martyr within IS, regardless of hierarchy (2015: n.p). Within the organizational structure, all martyrs are viewed on an equal playing field.

Establishing Legitimacy

IS works to assure that their mission is portrayed in a positive light (Steed 2016: 54). From this point, IS recruiters have set up a scenario, which ascertains the recruit to sympathizing with the attempted legitimacy behind their brutal cause. Herein lies arguably the most important and effective step of impressing the narrative from a sociological standpoint, and how establishing legitimacy can lay the groundwork for actual radicalization. The group faces a hurdle in having to convince neutral audiences that its brutal cause is just, and the morality, legality, and ethical nature of its aims and activities is warranted (Awan 2012: 99)

The success of jihadi thought can be attributed to a consistent "meta-narrative" that has existed throughout history. According to Awan, the narrative attempts to compel audiences to view contemporary conflicts through the lens of a wider, historical, global "attack on Islam"

(100) the group exploits individuals' vulnerabilities, curiosities, or doubts by infiltrating them with their messaging that the conflict in Syria applies directly to them (Malet 2010: 100). They use religion as a vessel to convey their message, which justifies a normative order to how actions are taken within the group.

For years, jihadi groups have legitimized their cause by denouncing the West as the monolithic enemy. This "meta-narrative," or over-arching/dominant narrative can be seen throughout the evolution of IS's ideology, from the inception of Al-Qaeda to where the group stands today. In 1996, Osama Bin Laden issued his first *fatwa*[18], which would establish the meta-narrative for al-Qaeda and IS in the future:

> *"The people of Islam had suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators: to the extent that the Muslim's blood became the cheapest and their wealth as loot in the hands of the enemies. Their blood was spilled in Palestine and Iraq. The horrifying pictures of the massacre of Qana, in Lebanon are still fresh in our memory... Massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Kasmir, Assam, Philippine, Fatani, Ogadin, Somalia, Eritrea, Chechnya, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina took place, massacres that send shivers in the body and shake the conscience."* (Hoffman 1998: 94).

The remainder of the *fatwa* calls upon Muslims across the world to "push the American enemy out of the holy land" and to fight until they are entirely defeated. This polemic provides jihadis with emotional ammunition to legitimize their mission.

According to Choudhury, narratives are powerful drivers for social action. They create a link between events and a way of life that we should be living in response to those events (2011: 194). IS draws upon the narrative that stagnation is tantamount to perpetuating violence against Muslims, and uses cognitive discourse to characterize their cause as one of "oppression and victimhood" (194). The way that they should live their lives according to

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[18] Religious Decree

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narrative calls for them to redeem themselves by standing up for IS's perceived *ummah*[19], and framing Muslims as the victim and the West as the perpetrator.

Epistemological Othering

In the study of identity politics, the term "epistemological other" has been coined in order to develop a framework for self-identity and cohesion within groups (Somers & Gibson 1993: 2). After establishing legitimacy behind their collective goals, they dichotomize the two groups of "us versus them" as if to say, "if you're not with us, you're against us."

Individuals can define themselves on many levels – race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sex, nationality, political ideology, professional roles, familial roles, personal qualities, sexuality, etc. (Moshman 2007: 118). The polarizing nature of identities perpetuates a dichotomous system where individuals are either in or out of a group, and IS exploits grievances, insecurities, and differences of those on the fringe of the in-groups of society (but not fully inside them) to maintain their high recruitment base. SIT denotes that an individual's sense of self and conception of their social identity is based on their group memberships (Tajfel, 1978). It hinges on the concept that no person is an island, and every person engages in a process of categorization into groups, identification, subjective association, comparison, or a bias towards one's group and its importance (Kfir 2014: 2). Every group fosters a sense of belonging with shared cultural norms, values, and goals.

The concept of the epistemological other refers to the idea that every social group within the social construction of 'identity' has an "other" that works to counter their narrative (Somers & Gibson 1993: 16). In IS's ideology, anyone who does not foster the same beliefs is the "other." This dichotomization creates an "us versus them" scenario in which two categories of abstract identities are concretely established. However in the case of IS, identities are concrete, not abstract. IS has no sympathy for lukewarm members of their identity group, and by establishing the epistemological other, they create expectations for how in-group members act. If you are not in, you are out.

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[19] Muslim Community

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Even if the concept of agency is disregarded, all major social movements throughout history (the Civil Rights movement, the Suffragette Movement, the Anti-Apartheid movement, to name a few) have sprung from the concept of the epistemological other, in which collective actions from both sides are carried out in order to negate the actions of their own epistemological other (Somers & Gibson 1993: 16). In contrast to movements of the past, the boundaries between groups are not as black and white as they may seem (literally black versus white, male versus female, etc). In a non-binary social group like IS, the crucial actors between the groups are the individuals who lay in somewhere within the grey area. Because there is no dominant national identity or common core group, IS works to establish their narrative as dominant in order to adjure those in the grey area to conform to understanding and interpreting their actions as the legitimate cause. In this modality, they may create social cohesion in a larger space, and in contrast to strengthening their meta-narrative within their group, they grow their network by convincing others why their side is on the right side of history.

William Connelly explains that "identity requires difference in order to be, and converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty" (1991: 64). The distinction in which "we" determine our superiority in society to "them" transforms the cognitive distinction into a socially recognized normative standard (Aronoff 2011: 169). It no longer is a collective mentality, but a mode in which they operate their group and political processes. And while social identity is always important, it becomes more salient in times of political strife or conflict, or in times when the group at large feels that their mission is under siege.

IS operates clearly within this space, and has identified the "epistemological other" as The West. It works to establish its narrative as the meta-narrative within the discourse, drawing on violence from the West against Muslims, and instances in which the West "misinterprets" the cause of the jihadis and publicizes it in a certain way within the media. "Don't believe what you read about us in the media" is a common narrative suggested by IS recruiters. IS's recruitment messaging works simply because they are able to gain the trust of an individual and implant these narratives on those they befriend. Vulnerable or at-risk

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individuals are more likely to trust what their friend says that the truth is, particularly if they have nobody to counter the narrative. IS has created a template for the "good Muslim" versus the "bad West," establishing themselves as the Muslims with the "good" mission, their religion under siege, and the "bad" West as misinterpreting IS's ideology to push their political agenda.

Conformity and Obedience

At this point, a greater identity has been established with the terrorist organization, and the individual has reached an understanding with the norms, standards, and teachings of the group. Stryker's identity theory says that commitment to an identity is directly related to the number of others who recognize that person as playing a role in the social group (Arena & Arrigo 2006: 65). Thus, the recruiter is aware that the individual's understanding of their identity hinges on their obedience to the group. The recruiter hones in on a reduction of disobedience, to assure complete conformity with the group's ideals and values (De la Corte: 2007, n.p). The *New York Times* (2015) highlighted the story of a young American nanny and her journey to becoming radicalized by IS. Towards the end of her radicalization, once she had declared her loyalty and conversion to Islam, her jihadist friends online began informing her of the realities of her decision, and aspects of the ideology that they had not previously addressed. For example, they informed her that she was no longer permitted to fraternize with any kufar, and was required to delete them from her social media networks. They then informed her that it is considered a sin to remain in non-IS territory, and provided her the opportunity to fly to Vienna on her way to Syria to enter IS controlled land. When she did not, her Twitter community began calling her a spy, and blocking her on social media.

This example shows how IS threatens the loss of community for the recruit if they refuse to obey or conform to the standards established by the group. In this way, they are able to threaten the previously new salient identities of the recruit if they do not conform. Individuals who have sacrificed their old identities within their comfortable in-groups for the unchartered waters of new social networks often conform to the standards requested of them by the group, in avoidance of losing out on their new-found identity.

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VII. Conclusion

IS is successful at recruiting foreign fighters because of its ability to appeal to people facing confusion about their identities or experiencing frustration at their perceived grievances. While I do not assert that only marginalized individuals are vulnerable to radicalization, there certainly is indication that people that display these characteristics are perhaps more widely targeted by IS recruiters. Academia on homegrown radicalization points out that identity plays a large role in the radicalization process. The causal narrative lies between 'root causes' and an individual's perception of their identity in relation to others. Many previous scholars have pointed to historical or ideological rhetoric, socioeconomic factors, religion, brainwashing, or fanaticism as a means of explaining the foreign jihadi trend. However, the research proves that the origin of the trend starts from individual feelings of relative deprivation which transition into grievances or disillusionment with their identity and dominant identity group. IS's use of propaganda and symbols as a mechanism of appealing to their target audience is nuanced and functions in two ways to spark curiosity in the viewer or to demonstrate a narrative of "coolness" to appeal to the ordinary individual. Subsequently, IS uses sociological tactics to depersonalize the individual before establishing their meta-narrative.

The analysis changes the way that we view both jihadist recruiters and foreign fighters as human. The "root cause" approach, which tries to justify root causes as an explanation for why people join IS, allows states and researchers to displace culpability to unrelated issues. Dismissing these narratives could allow states to transcend the debate of the importance of root causes, to understanding how people interact with them. This would allow states to create comprehensive anti-extremism policies, and gives us a ground to comprehend the process of developing grievances over root causes. The constructivist approach provides meaning for how these grievances develop.

Transnational jihadism is of course, ideology driven, but recruitment of foreign fighters lies less in spreading the ideology, but by establishing a concrete metanarrative to lay the groundwork for justification of the cause. Recruiters use a long list of sociological practices to prime the recruit to a point where the narrative can be interjected. They

strategically plant symbolic imagery throughout the Internet, and display emotive rhetoric that sparks fear and outrage. They appeal to the recruit to understand the suffering of Muslim women and children, so that the recruit is emotionally equipped to avenge the West.

These processes work through SIT. Social interactions provide individuals with a role in relation to other members of the group. Identities are fluid, even those that are driven by distinct social categories (ethnicity, religion, race etc.) In some ways, roles are defined in response to social stimuli (in this case, feelings of relative deprivation), and in other ways, they are established based on the response of other groups in which the individual interacts with (in this case, jihadi recruiters). All roles establish norms and influence decision-making processes, including duty to the group, which manifests itself in the form of obedience. Repeated contact with these groups strengthens identities, as it reinforces the individual's identity in relation to the group. In the end, once recruits have injected their ideology, foreign fighter recruits feel more willing to fight for IS because their identities are rooted more firmly with their comrades in the Middle East, rather than in their home states.

This school of thought does have some fallacies, however. Among these is the prevailing assumption that religious or in-group identities of minorities are salient and will lead to feelings of relative deprivation or grievance toward the west. Further research is required to understand particular trigger moments that spark ones feelings for relative deprivation, whether that lies in individual interactions or otherwise. Also, sociological processes can now be understood through a lens of SIT, however, the thought process of the recruit while undergoing radicalization must also be understood. For this reason, further research is necessary.

7.1 Combatting Global Islamic Extremism

How can states use this information to combat a group whose ultimate goal is to die a martyr for the sake of their cause? Contrary to many popular right-wing narratives of the day, using force as a counter-extremism tactic has proven ineffective, as can be seen with the split of ISI from al-Qaeda during the Iraq war. The response from states should lie in countering

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the narrative of jihadism on a global scale. But countering a meta-narrative or ideology is difficult in countries with free speech (Byman 2015: 219). Especially with the existence of the Internet, policing cyber jihad is nearly impossible through encrypted applications or individual one-on-one conversation. The Internet has a facet of anonymity, allowing jihadis to radicalize under the guise of an avatar and pseudonym, making tracing their footsteps a counterintelligence nightmare for authorities. However, difficulties in combatting radical Islam cannot allow states to discard the idea of creating rational policies that conquer global extremism. There are a few systemic and practical applications of counter-extremism that can be implemented on a global scale that could assist in the eradication of jihadist ideologies moving transnationally, at the very least in terms of "ordinary" foreign fighters.

End Discrimination of Muslims

Anti-Muslim discrimination drives Muslims directly into the arms of IS. Interpretation of the global jihadi narrative appeals to Muslims because it resonates with the lived experiences of Muslims facing discrimination and anti-Islamic sentiment on a daily basis. According to Sageman, this is primarily a North American and Western-European problem, with countries from these regions valuing, to an extend, a mostly homogenous society, despite the fact that many of these countries have been built from melting pot groups (2008).

Anti-Muslim discourse from the West acts as a propaganda tool for IS and the West needs to do everything in its power to prove that IS's outlook that the West is at war with Islam. Everyday microaggressions faced by Muslims in the West do nothing to combat IS's narrative. If states collaborate with Muslim populations and leadership within their communities, they may comprehend the reality of what it is like to be a Muslim on the fringe of the dominant identity within the state. These initiatives must be backed by prominent Muslim leaders in the community, and if so, will encourage Muslims to feel a part of the larger community as they can understand that the societies in which they live are working towards sympathizing with their realities and combatting vitriolic rhetoric and hate-crimes against Muslims. Ceasing the alienation of Muslims within the broader society can act as a preventative mechanism of what draws alienated Muslims towards the group in the first place.

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Counter the Collective Da'wa

Neutralizing the threat of radicalization before it occurs is difficult but easier than combatting terrorism retroactively. Proactive strategies are more effective at stopping foreign fighters before they go abroad. Countering online radicalization should include both positive and negative measures (Özdemir & Kardaş 2014: 21). Negative measures require ceasing access to information that includes extremist propaganda and rhetoric. There are several hurdles in this, however, as censoring content on the Internet can illegitimate a state's claim to freedom of expression and speech. These measures are perhaps better taken by individual online avenues, for example, social media sites, that act as hubs for online jihadist activity. Positive efforts, additionally, should be made in order to counter the narrative that may slip through the gaps left by negative measures. Alternate messages that counter the narratives of IS could be displayed on the Internet, however, IS has proved to successfully counter Western thought to its recruits thus far. In this way, though, IS must not be viewed as impenetrable, but a large hurdle to overcome in countering the narrative. By blocking access to terrorist propaganda online, the collective (macro) da'wa would be halted, preventing prospective recruits from reaching the contact that allows them to build the individual (micro) da'wa.
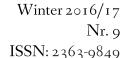
7.2 Now what?

Until states must work cohesively on developing a impenetrable anti-radicalization strategy, the IS foreign fighter phenomenon will continue to grow. This strategy must not be based on an understanding of 'root causes,' but the sociological processes in which ordinary people transition into mujahideen.. Radicalization is a deeply intense process, with systematic and multi-faceted ways in which recruiters operate to get the best outcome. IS's success hinges on the recruitment of foreign fighters, however culpability lies in the state to assure that radicalization is halted before it begins. Those who become radicalized are not 'evil,' but humans susceptible to sociological processes like everyone else. This does not imply a lack of accountability, but allows state measures to be taken in more comprehensive ways that targets radicalization preemptively before one becomes a foreign fighter.
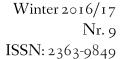
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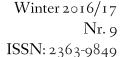
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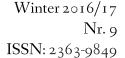
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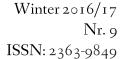
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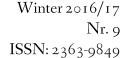
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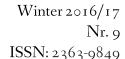Moshman, D. (2007). Us and Them: Identity and Genocide. *Identity*, 7(2), pp.115-135.

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