CTX

CTX

From the Editor

The *Combating Terrorism Exchange* staff are happy to bring you the Spring 2018 issue of *CTX*. The terrorism landscape looks different and also very much the same since our last issue came out in spring 2017. ISIS is on the run and no longer has a secure stronghold in Syria or Iraq. It has been pushed out of the large cities and towns it once held, but even partial victory has come at a tremendous cost in military and civilian lives, in treasure, and in the very structure of the besieged cities that ISIS held. Much of Mosul was destroyed to save it.

I'm reminded of an animated cartoon I saw when I was a young child. A man is trying to sleep, but a little cricket keeps chirping and waking him up. When the man tries to find the cricket, it stays quiet and eludes him, but as soon as he lies down and shuts his eyes, the cricket begins chirping. The man becomes steadily more frustrated and violent in his efforts to find and kill the cricket, until, in the end, his entire house lies in ruins. But the cricket is still chirping. I laughed at the man's crazy behavior, but I also wondered whether he ever was able to sleep again.

Much of Syria and Iraq lies in ruins. Hidden bombs keep exploding in Kabul, gunmen and truck drivers keep attacking across Europe, refugee families keep hoping for asylum. ISIS, weakened and on the run, will nevertheless keep chirping the same ugly song as long as there are young men and women ready to listen to the message and join its jihad against the world. Will anyone ever rest again?

Anne Speckhard and Ardian Shajkovci of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism begin this issue with an unusual interview. The young man they speak with is an imprisoned former ISIS "emir" who proudly describes his role in teaching the ISIS brand of religious ideology to new recruits and very young children. It is only when Speckhard confronts him and plays recordings of former ISIS operatives mourning their participation in violent extremism that the young man's self-image begins to crack.

The next article comes from Wael Abbas, who uses mapping technology to test Mao Zedong's theory that terrain and population play a critical role in the ability of insurgencies to spread and hold territory. Taking the expansion and contraction of ISIS's insurgency between 2014 and 2017 as a case study, Abbas

demonstrates that a supportive population and difficult landscape may be useful indicators of an insurgency's long-term viability.

Our third essay concerns the UN's efforts to stabilize the Democratic Republic of Congo after years of insurgency and counterinsurgency that have left the country devastated and the people traumatized. Authors Badura Hakimu and Heather S. Gregg describe why the program of security, demobilization, and reintegration, which ought to serve as a model for similar situations, has not met its goals.

The final feature article takes us to South Sudan, another country that is being torn to pieces by competing insurgencies and an ineffective—even complicit—government. Amarsaikhan Serdari served as Sector North Commander with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in 2015 and 2016. In that role, he witnessed firsthand how UN peacekeepers are handicapped by the lack of an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability in their efforts to provide security and prevent violence for fragile communities in a highly unstable environment.

This issue brings you two very different CTAP interviews. The first is with historian and military analyst Max Boot, who sat down with Anders Hamlin to discuss Boot's new biography of US military adviser Edward Lansdale. Lansdale helped establish a democratic government in the Philippines in the 1950s and then tried to do the same, less successfully, in Vietnam. Boot and Hamlin examine the current geostrategic landscape and ponder, "What would Lansdale do?" The second interview, with Iranian-American scholar Reza Marashi, delves into US-Iran relations and the obstacles that prevent these two important countries from finding ways to work together toward common goals. Although the interview took place in the fall of 2016, Marashi's insights remain cogent and useful for understanding the present rocky state of relations between the two countries, particularly in light of recent uncertainty about the current US administration's commitment to the seven-state nuclear deal.

For our book review, Stans Victor Mouaha-Bell discusses the book *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement*, written by Alexander Thurston. It's a mistake, Thurston notes, to blame ideology alone for insurgencies while forgetting the role of politics. Finally, be sure to check out Christopher Harmon's new book in the Publications section.

We'd love to hear from you at CTXEditor@GlobalECCO.org or on Facebook at Global ECCO whenever you read something in CTX that sparks your interest, raises questions, or demands a response. After all, you're the reason we publish CTX. Send your article submissions, comments, and questions to CTXEditor@GlobalECCO.org. Keep up the great work. We hope to hear from you soon.

ELIZABETH SKINNER

Managing Editor, *CTX*
CTXEditor@globalecco.org

Inside This Issue

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Lieutenant Colonel Wael Abbas graduated from the American University in Beirut in 1999 with a BCE in civil engineering. In September 2000, Lt. Col. Abbas joined the Lebanese Armed Forces. He was commissioned as a Lieutenant Engineer upon graduating from the military academy. Lt. Col. Abbas's decorations and awards include the Military Valor Medal and the Medal in the Fight against Terrorism. He holds a master's degree in Defense Analysis from the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS).

Max Boot is the Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), a columnist for the *Washington Post*, and a global affairs analyst for CNN. Boot has served as an adviser to US commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan and lectured on behalf of the US State Department and at many US and international military institutions. Before joining the CFR in 2002, Boot spent eight years as a writer and editor at the *Wall Street Journal*. He is a prolific author and regularly contributes to many publications, including *Foreign Policy*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times,* and the *Wall Street Journal*. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of California, Berkeley (1991), and a master's degree in history from Yale University (1992).

Dr. Douglas Borer is an associate professor of Defense Analysis at NPS, Monterey, California. He earned his PhD in political science from Boston University in 1993. Dr. Borer's academic postings include the University of the South Pacific, the University of Western Australia, Virginia Tech, the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and the US Army War College. In 2007, he co-founded (with Dr. Nancy Roberts) the Common Operational Research Environment (CORE) Lab at NPS. In 2011, he and Dr. Leo Blanken created the Combating Terrorism Archive Project.

Dr. Heather S. Gregg is an associate professor of Defense Analysis at NPS, where she works primarily with US and international SOF. Prior to joining NPS, she was an associate political scientist at the RAND Corporation. Dr. Gregg earned her PhD in political science in 2003 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She also holds a master's degree from Harvard Divinity School and a BA in cultural anthropology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of *The Path to Salvation: Religious Violence from the Crusades to Jihad* (University of Nebraska, 2014) and *Building the Nation: Missed Opportunities in Iraq and Afghanistan* (University of Nebraska, forthcoming in December 2018).

Major Badura Hakimu is an intelligence officer with the Tanzanian Army.

Major Anders Hamlin serves in the US Army Special Forces. He earned his degree in Defense Analysis from NPS in 2017.

Reza Marashi joined the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) in 2010 as the organization's first research director. He came to NIAC after serving in the Office of Iranian Affairs at the US Department of State. Prior to his tenure at the State Department, he was an analyst at the Institute for National Strategic Studies covering China-Middle East issues and a Tehran-based private strategic consultant on Iranian political and economic risk. Marashi is frequently consulted by Western governments on Iran-related matters. His articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, and the *Atlantic*, among other publications, and he has been a guest contributor on many broadcast outlets.

Lieutenant Colonel Stans Victor Mouaha-Bell was educated at the Prytanée Militaire de La Flèche and the École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr, France. Following graduation in 2000, he served as a paratrooper platoon leader in multiple combat operations in central Africa and later in a variety of operational assignments. LTC Mouaha-Bell holds a master's degree in political science from the University of Yaoundé II, Soa, Cameroon. On staff assignments, he participated in international meetings related to the fight against Boko Haram, including the African Union's Defense and Safety Specialized Technical Committee and the Lake Chad Basin Commission's defense meeting. He is currently enrolled in the master's program in Defense Analysis at NPS.

Colonel Amarsaikhan Serdari joined the Mongolian Armed Forces in 1985. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in economics from the Military Academy of Mongolia in 1989 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the army. In 1993, he was selected to attend the Defense Language Institute in San Antonio, Texas. Upon his return to Mongolia in 1994, he served in a variety of command and staff positions. As a major, Serdari served a tour to Iraq from 2003 to 2004 as a senior intelligence officer at the Headquarters of the Combined Joint Task Force Seven in Baghdad. Posted to Brussels as a defense attaché to Benelux countries, he planned and executed Mongolia's participation in NATO's Kosovo Force operation. Beginning in October 2015, he served in Malakal, South Sudan, as Sector North Commander with the United Nations Mission. COL Serdari is a 2017 graduate (CSRT) of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies.

Dr. Ardian Shajkovci is the director of research and a senior research fellow at the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE). He interviews ISIS defectors to study their trajectories into and out of terrorism, and he trains law enforcement, intelligence, education, and other professionals on the use of counter-narrative messaging materials to counter violent extremism. Dr. Shajkovci holds a doctorate in public policy and administration from Walden University. He earned his MA degree in public policy and administration from Northwestern University and his BA degree in international relations and diplomacy from Dominican University. Dr. Shajkovci is an adjunct professor at Nichols College, where he teaches counterterrorism and cyber security.

Dr. Anne Speckhard is an adjunct associate professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University School of Medicine and the director of ICSVE. She has interviewed over 600 terrorists, their family members, and supporters in various parts of the world. For the past two years, she and ICSVE staff have been collecting interviews with ISIS defectors, returnees, and prisoners, and developing the Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter-Narrative Project. Dr. Speckhard trains law enforcement and other professionals on the use of counter-narrative messaging materials, and consults on the rehabilitation of children used as violent actors by groups such as ISIS. In 2007, she led the design of the psychological and Islamic challenge aspects of the Detainee Rehabilitation Program in Iraq. She has consulted to NATO, OSCE, foreign governments, and many branches of the US government. Dr. Speckhard is the author of several books, including *ISIS Defectors: Inside Stories of the Terrorist Caliphate* (Advances Press, 2016), *Bride of ISIS* (Advances Press, 2015), and *Talking to Terrorists* (Advances Press, 2012).

COVER PHOTO

Cover image: Child's artwork depicting a Boko Haram attack. © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-0727/Umar, via https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Alert_MISSING_CHILDHOODS_Embargo_00_01_GMT_13_April.pdf

TERMS OF COPYRIGHT

DISCLAIMER

Confronting an ISIS Emir: ICSVE's Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter-Narratives Project Videos

Dr. Anne Speckhard, Georgetown University, and Ardian Shajkovci, International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism

Most experts agree that the most successful counter-messaging campaigns against ISIS are the ones that use the voices of insiders—both ISIS victims and ISIS cadres who have firsthand knowledge of the group's brutality, corruption, religious manipulation, and deception. With this in mind, we at the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) have spent the last two years in Western Europe, Turkey, Iraq, Central Asia, and the Balkans interviewing ISIS defectors, ISIS prisoners, and ISIS cadre returnees from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.[1] Their stories are captured on video and edited down to short clips, interspersed with actual ISIS video footage and pictures, and then turned back against imprisoned ISIS cadres as an intervention measure.

Using "formers" to talk back to terrorism is a well-established practice. Mubin Shaikh is a good example of someone who nearly joined al Qaeda and imbibed deeply of the jihadist ideology before turning away and infiltrating a Canadian terrorist cell to help law enforcement take it down.[2] Usama Hasan, a former radical Salafi extremist and mujahedeen in the Afghan jihad against the country's communist government in the early 1990s, is another example of someone who has turned against Salafi-jihadi ideology and is dedicated to fighting violent extremism in the United Kingdom.[3]

Using formers to help deradicalize their peers is rife with problems, however. Those who have returned from ISIS were often psychologically unhealthy even before they joined, and are deeply traumatized upon their return. Some do not want to speak about their experiences, while others fear retribution from ISIS if they speak out against the group. Some of them fear further prosecution and social stigma. Others are unstable, reverse their positions frequently, or are not useful role models. Often, former fighters are ashamed of their past and want to hide it. They are not easily accessible and may be psychologically unable to carry out a supporting role in countering violent extremism.

In April 2017, some colleagues and I spoke to Abu Islam, an ISIS "emir" (high in the military command) in a prison in Sulaymaniyah, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. During this interview, we used two videos from ICSVE's Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter-Narratives Project in a psychological intervention with him. The following is an account of that conversation.

Interview with Abu Islam

Dressed in an orange jumpsuit and wearing a black mask over his face, Abu Islam is brought into the faux wood–paneled room of the Special Forces Security compound in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. His hands are cuffed, and his feet are shackled together.

There are five of us in the room: me (Anne Speckhard); Ardian Shajkovci; Alice, an American who is working with us; a Kurdish handler; and our Peshmerga interpreter, Alaz.[4] I am seated at the front corner of the desk with my laptop

"I saw that the Islamic State was living by shari'a law. They were throwing homosexual people from high buildings. If you steal, they cut your hand. They are really living it."

unfolded. Ardian is seated to my side. Alice and our handler sit behind the desk. Alaz takes the hooded Abu Islam from the prison guards and guides him gently to the center chair in front of the desk next to me, where he carefully lifts the mask from Abu Islam's face before taking his own seat. Abu Islam's dark, wavy hair, medium-length curly beard, and intense brown eyes are revealed. His dark eyes focus briefly on me, burning momentarily into mine, and then dart back again to Alaz. They know each other. Alaz has repeatedly interrogated him.

Only in his mid-20s, Abu Islam has been hunted for two years by the Peshmerga forces who charge him with running a network of cells of suicide bombers, sending some as young as 12 to explode themselves in bombing missions. He is credited with either directly or indirectly organizing attacks that killed over 250 victims, although some of the high-ranking Peshmerga counterterrorism officials we spoke to believe that number to be closer to 500. "He's a guy we chased for more than two years," stated the head of Kurdistan's Zanyari intelligence service in a recent interview with journalist Robin Wright. "To pick him up and realize that we finally got him, it was a big catch for us," he explained.[5]

Born as Mazan Nazhan Ahmed al-Obeidi, Abu Islam is the second oldest of nine siblings in his family and the oldest male. His father served in former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's army. He describes his childhood as both "safe" and "nice." Growing up in the oil-rich area of Kirkuk, Iraq, Abu Islam finished high school and then pursued university studies in shari'a (Islamic law) at the local university. With only one year left to go before graduation, Abu Islam abruptly left his studies to join the so-called Islamic State in 2014.

"I wasn't Salafi growing up," Abu Islam explains. The legs of his orange jumpsuit are rolled up to mid-calf—Salafi style—to match the dress worn by the Companions of the Prophet Muhammed. "I got that mentality in university when I read the book *Tawhid* by Wahhab. It convinced me," he adds.

Abu Islam is referring to *Kitab at-Tawhid* [The Book of the Unity of God] by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, an eighteenth-century Saudi religious reformer who worked to purify Islam by turning back to following the original practices of the Prophet and his Companions. The violent followers of Wahhab, including al Qaeda and ISIS, interpret his teachings to justify killing those who do not follow their strict interpretation of Islam. ISIS, and groups like ISIS, practice *takfir*—an extreme extension of Wahhabi-Salafi doctrine that sanctions violence against both Muslims and non-Muslims who are deemed as infidels (non-believers). This is the type of Islam and the ideology that Abu Islam had already embraced in his university studies; thus he was ready for ISIS when they came to Iraq and established themselves as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).

"I got into the brotherhood at the mosque," Abu Islam explains. "They were against the Islamic State, but for me, I saw that the Islamic State was living by shari'a law. They were throwing homosexual people from high buildings. If you steal, they cut your hand. They are really living it."

When asked where he saw this, Abu Islam answers, "It was on social media, YouTube. It made sense for me. I watched a lot of their videos." As we listen to him speak, we were reminded of ISIS's powerful online presence and the online propaganda machine that recruits youth via the Internet. Even in Iraq, ISIS propaganda videos reached this university student, persuading him of their righteousness: "I was convinced and made up my mind."

"They were on the streets also. They had a territory twice the size of Great Britain. At the time I joined, I was 22 or 23. A lot of my relatives were in the area [ISIS] took over, and some of my cousins and family members were already in [ISIS]. It was easy to join. I got a recommendation," Abu Islam explains, referring to ISIS's practice of trusting potential recruits based on the recommendation of another member of ISIS. "They knew I don't drink or smoke and that I'm a shari'a student. That made my CV look really good," he explains, smiling enthusiastically.

"I didn't take shari'a training," Abu Islam answers proudly when asked about ISIS's known practice of putting new recruits through two weeks of shari'a training to learn the basics of Islam as they preach it and to take on their "hear and obey" philosophy.[6] "I gave lessons in shari'a." This is how Abu Islam initially describes his role in the Islamic State. "I became the teacher because of my background," he continues. He also bypassed military training because they needed shari'a teachers to train the others: "They didn't teach me weapons. In the beginning, they asked me if I knew how to use an [AK-47 assault rifle], and of course, I did." The knowledge of assault rifles is common among Iraqis, notes our Peshmerga interpreter.

It appears there are not large camps for the Cubs of the Caliphate in Iraq, compared to the camps in Syria where hundreds of youth are gathered, trained, and taught to fight—with some being trained and prepared to become suicide bombers—after they graduate.[7] In Iraq, it seems the Cubs are gathered into smaller groups. Individuals like Abu Islam appear to serve as their itinerant preachers, traveling from one group to another.

"Sometimes there were four to five or six to seven [individuals]. It depended. I'd go to the villages and teach them. I moved from place to place to give shari'a lessons," Abu

A Cub of the Caliphate

اريد الذهاب الى سوريا لألتقي اخواني واخواتي في الإسلام

Islam explains. "It was mostly *fiqh* [the principles and understanding of Islamic practices]: how to pray properly, how to fast, how to help other Muslims, how to pay *zakat* [obligatory charity], and about the Islamic State."

In Syria, ISIS defectors interviewed in our ISIS Defectors Interview Project described their shari'a trainers as "shining charismatics" and were heartened by learning "true Islam" from them.[8] I ask Abu Islam whether the Iraqi recruits already knew their religion or were also gladdened by these teachings. He answers, "They didn't know the right way. We taught them the right ways. We talked about what [the Islamic State] could be. Hopefully, we'll expand our territory. According to our beliefs, we can't say we are definitely doing it. Instead, we say, *inshallah* [by God's will] we will expand our territory. Open the walls. Take down Europe."

> **ISIS defectors described their shari'a trainers as "shining charismatics" and were heartened by learning "true Islam" from them.**

Abu Islam tells us that there were "young fighters from foreign places" in his classes, but "they didn't understand much Arabic," which reminds us of an Albanian I interviewed in Kosovo who also recalled taking ISIS shari'a training in Arabic—it all went over his head.

We came to Iraq on this trip to speak at the Iraqi prime minister's conference, Education in Iraq Post Daesh-ISIL Territory. The conference brought together local and international experts to address the issue of the estimated 250,000 to 500,000 youth who lived and served under ISIS in the Nineveh and the Mosul regions of Iraq between 2014 and 2017. Universities were closed under ISIS. Libraries were burned to the ground. Textbooks, even for the very young, were replaced by texts that taught them how to behead enemies and indoctrinated them in the Islamic State's barbarity and its refusal to recognize anyone else's views as legitimate. At the conference, we viewed the exhibit of some of these

captured ISIS texts. Picking them up and handling them gave each of us a chill down the spine—touching the same books ISIS cadres had handed out to children under their control.

The schools in the area continued to run even after ISIS took over, Abu Islam explains, adding, "They used to study English. It was good for us—knowing English—but we denied books that we didn't like. After a while, we denied all the existing books. We changed all the books over to our mentality."

"How did you talk to the kids who were going on suicide missions?" I ask, going back to his role as a shari'a trainer. "What did you teach them to persuade them to go on suicide missions?" I ask this, already knowing from our interviews with Syrian ISIS defectors that ISIS leaders fill the children's minds with bright visions of Paradise and promise that they will feel no pain when they push the button to explode themselves—that they go instantly to Paradise. The faint-hearted ones are even offered a sedative, and in many cases, the youngest do not even realize they are about to die.[9]

"We used to tell them ..." Abu Islam begins, but then quickly detours into denial. "It was not my job exactly." He hesitates and then continues, "Study and learn your future. We want to expand our territories and put shari'a over the whole earth. Most of the time they came as volunteers, self-motivated." Asserting that the kids chose themselves as "martyrs," he gains confidence again, "They have read the Book. We make the way for them. We never told anyone they have to go. It's voluntary. It's never forced. I didn't see anyone forced, ever."

"So, when you prepared young children to take 'martyrdom' missions—driving explosive-laden cars or wearing vests into enemy lines or checkpoints—what did you teach them? How did you prepare them?" I ask, having already learned from Peshmerga counterterrorism officials that Abu Islam sent children as young as 12 years old on suicide missions.

Abu Islam exudes disagreement with how the question was asked and explains that ISIS never takes children into its ranks: "In Iraq, you have to be 18 to sign up for the Army. We [ISIS] don't have any age limit. Instead we believe that when a man's semen develops, then he's considered a grown-up man. We only take them when they get to that point. They were never children. They were men."

Cynical about how he answered the question, I further probe: "How old were these *men*, according to your criteria?"

"A fully-grown man has to have his semen," Abu Islam reiterates. "This is according to shari'a." The translator interjects by explaining that, according to Abu Islam's definition, a young boy who begins having wet dreams is already a man ready for battle and mature enough to sign his life over for a "martyrdom" mission.

While Abu Islam denies there was any pressure in ISIS for children to become "martyrs," we know from ISIS defector interviews that in the Syrian training camps, youth are heavily pressured into driving explosive-laden cars into enemy lines and lied to about the painfulness of their deaths—and sometimes fail to even understand that their mission involves death. "There is an office. If anyone volunteers—'I want to give my *bayat* [pledge]'—then he signs up for a martyrdom

> ISIS leaders fill the children's minds with bright visions of Paradise and promise that they will feel no pain when they push the button to explode themselves.

> According to Abu Islam's definition, a young boy who begins having wet dreams is already a man ready for battle.

mission at the same time. It's like a regular recruiting process," Abu Islam explains.

He is further asked about the training camps and how they are provided with a steady stream of explosive-rigged cars to put the children in and send them to their deaths at checkpoints and the frontlines.

"There is a training camp they take them to and teach them how to set up and use these cars," he explains. "'It's a regular camp,' they tell them." He hesitates again. "The car manufacturing is in a different place," he detours.

"But what do they tell these children?" I push.

"They instruct them. They know what will happen. They're happy. It's like a kid at Christmas. You know how happy they are? Calmly happy, knowing something good is going to happen," Abu Islam explains, as we witness how he truly embraces this sickness.

"Is there any ritual to go with this?" I ask further, wondering exactly how they send a kid off to his horrific death.

"[The ISIS senders] have a list of se-rial numbers and names. If I'm set to go next, then I'm next. If something changes the order and they aren't sent, they start crying. If they aren't the next one, they actually cry and get angry, and even complain, 'My name is set to go!' I've seen this with my own eyes," Abu Islam explains, as his eyes appear to shine in admiration for their zeal.

"What happens right before you go?" I ask again.

"There is nothing special they do."

"Pray? Wash? Celebrate? Make a video?" I press, since in the past I have sat with relatives of bombers who have seen the videos of their children wrapped up in explosive vests or jammed into explosive-laden vehicles, with some children crying and others seemingly jubilant about going as "martyrs."

"There is nothing special. They wash up to be clean. Everyone prays. Everyone says goodbye. There are tears of joy. We make a video," he admits, but again adds a denial, which is possibly self-protective, given he is a prisoner and does not want to incriminate himself. "I didn't make the videos. I sent them to Kirkuk," he explains.

"Do they receive a sedative?"

I have sat with relatives of bombers who have seen the videos of their children wrapped up in explosive vests or jammed into explosive-laden vehicles.

"No sedative, ever."

"What's the usual way to go? Car or belt?"

"Both," he answers. "They wear the belt in the car just in case one goes down," he adds.

"What are their instructions?" I further ask. "Kill as many as possible?"

"Yes."

"Any special conditions? What if there are women and children at a checkpoint?" I probe.

"In the front line, everyone is an enemy. Everyone is a target," Abu Islam intones but quickly adds, "In cities, we tell them to try to avoid targeting the markets and civilians, and they have specific targets—military and government targets."

"And you?" I ask about his recent arrest in which he was wearing, but did not detonate, his suicide vest. "I didn't sign up to be one. I did fight." He goes on to say that he has fought in all three ISIS tactical military formations, including in the very front line where the fighters go in wearing vests and "martyr" themselves if overtaken, killing everyone around them to avoid capture. He was never one of those front line cadres, yet he states, "I always had my suicide belt on. We jump into the [Peshmerga] helicopters and explode ourselves. There is no surrender. No surrender. Just push the button."

"But you did surrender," I state. "You wore the belt. Did you have it in your mind, when captured?"

"You didn't have time to detonate or didn't want to do it?" inquires Alaz, our Peshmerga translator, explaining to us that he never had the chance to ask him this question and would like to know the answer as well.

"I didn't want to die. I wanted to live, so I didn't do it," Abu Islam states matter-of-factly, despite the fact that he has sent plenty of others to do just that. "I wanted to finish the project, spreading shari'a," he adds.

"Were you scared?" I ask.

"Yes," he admits. "I was scared. Every human being is scared."

I ask Abu Islam about ISIS's policy toward captured women, a question that instantly grabs his attention. He is in his element spouting out shari'a law on the rights of ISIS cadres with regards to captured women. "It becomes a right," he says, while looking around the room in which three out of five present in the room are women, waving his arm to bring us all into his sweeping gesture. "If I dominate everything in this room, then it becomes mine. I do as I want. It all becomes the property of the Islamic State," he adds.

While we are usually capable of listening to anything without having much of a reaction during the interview, we feel suddenly sickened imagining how close to Mosul we have been in the past days—barely an hour's drive—and how this mindset has been a harsh reality for so many captured women, whether they be Yazidis, Christians, Shia, or Sunni.

Abu Islam denies that he had a *sabaya* [sex slave]. He also explains that very few Iraqis had them. He can think of only one man in their area of ISIS, Dr. Mahavia, who had one. This is likely similar to the Syrian experience where married Iraqis who served from home are not seen by ISIS leadership as needing to be supplied with a woman. Yet, we will also hear from an unmarried Iraqi who took full sexual advantage of the enslaved women held in this region of Iraq.

As we continue interviewing Abu Islam, though I am calm, I feel increasingly irritated at how he is able to justify the brutal and inhumane practices of ISIS and to offer arguments in support of their activities. Before my next question, I decide to show him one of our ICSVE-produced videos denouncing ISIS. I open my computer and ask if he would be willing to watch the video of another ISIS cadre (a defector) speaking on this subject. I inform him that it is a short video—only four minutes—and with his agreement, I begin to play it. Abu Islam watches intently as a former ISIS cadre from Syria, Ibn Ahmed, explains his horror and post-traumatic stress after being the guard for 475 Yazidi, Shia, and Sunni sex slaves, including his role in organizing mass institutionalized rape.

Abu Islam's eyes dart along the pictures in the video taken from ISIS, taking in faces and places he may recognize, just as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighter Huthaifa Azzam did when we showed him the same video.[10] "He is an Iraqi," Abu Islam comments. I tell him no, this is a Syrian, but he has a similar accent because he is from Deir ez-Zor. The video plays as Ibn Ahmed paints a grim picture of rape and horror for young captured women separated from their men and children. As more horrifying images of Yazidi and other women abused by ISIS appear on the video, Abu Islam's gaze falls to the floor. Suddenly, he is silent and stunned to see his glorified version of ISIS described in this graphic manner.

ISIS Victim

لكن قل ما قيل لي كان محض كذب ولم تكن ابدا ما وعدت به

"How do you feel watching this video?" I gently ask.

"I was against that idea," he says. His voice sounds flattened by what he has just viewed. "It doesn't matter. When I see this video ... this is the outcome of this practice—this video. It's not the proper way to turn you to Islam. It's not a good way to spread our beliefs." Referring back to the rapes, he adds, "Not everyone listens [to objections]. They just go with it. There are more that like it [raping captured women] than are against it."

"How about the beheadings?" I ask.

"It was a law," he answers. We cannot help but see discomfort in his face as he patiently awaits his next question.

"Is it not the same thing? Does it not also spread a negative view of Islam?" I ask.

"I got convinced," Abu Islam answers defensively.

"How do you feel now?"

"It's not right," he says, gazing down at his hands, and adds, "We were wrong."

"Is there a way to get there without all this violence?" I ask, knowing he harbors the dream of spreading shari'a and making a utopian world where Islam reigns above all else.

"Yes, of course," he answers.

"Why did you sign up to violence?" I ask, although I know that the United States and the US-led coalition's security blunder in Iraq, which led to the ousting of Saddam Hussein's senior military and intelligence officials, coupled with more than a decade of sectarian killings, gave birth to ISIS.

"I believed back in that time," Abu Islam explains. "I got convinced," he adds. He explains about how ISIS seemed to be a righteous and Islamic answer to sectarian power struggles and security issues: "I didn't know it was going to be that way."

We ask Abu Islam if he is willing to watch another ICSVE-produced video. When he agrees, we show him our four-minute video clip of a 15-year-old Syrian boy describing his time in the Cubs of the Caliphate and how the leaders sent children as young as six years old in explosive-laden vehicles to their deaths—many having no idea they were about to die. There are pictures of children younger than eight in the film. Abu Islam watches this clip intently as well, again studying everything in it. At the end, the boy denounces ISIS, calling them *kafirs* [unbelievers] and infidels.

"[The boy] is calling you the *kafir*. How do you feel about that?" I ask after we view the clip. "These are little kids. Do these children have their semen? Are they men?" I challenge, feeling angry with his denials.

Abu Islam is stunned into silence and again stares at the floor.

> "[The boy] is calling you the *kafir*. How do you feel about that?" I ask after we view the clip. "Do these children have their semen? Are they men?"

Screen captures from ICSVE video

My wife didn't know [that I joined them] until recently, in the beginning of 2016.

She remained silent, then she said, 'This path isn't good for you,

you will harm us and yourself.'

I told her that I was forced into this and I can't get rid of them anymore.

But what they said was different from what they have done.

The simple people, children, women and the old people [are killed].

I regret what I have done.

"How do you make this right between you and Allah?" I ask softly, wondering if he will open up more.

"Allah will accept everything—if you admit it," he answers back, continuing to stare at the floor in shame.

"Did you make a mistake?" I ask.

"Yes. We were mistaken," are his last words.

We end our interview. The guards come into the room, and Abu Islam's black mask is once again placed back over his face as he lets them guide him blindly out of the room.

> **Once confronted with the truth told by other former ISIS cadres, Abu Islam is unable to keep up his false bravado and unquestioned beliefs in ISIS's interpretation of shari'a law.**

Postscript

Abu Islam is by no means rehabilitated after watching two counter-narrative videos. That being said, capture, interrogation, and imprisonment have all begun to work on him. After being challenged with the harsh realities of ISIS and other ISIS cadres denouncing the group, he admits to not knowing whether ISIS was right. After all, joining ISIS has not worked out that well for him. Once confronted with the truth told by other former ISIS cadres, he is unable to keep up his false bravado and unquestioned beliefs in ISIS's interpretation of shari'a law. His arguments fall flat. He is backed into submission, as evidenced by his responses after watching the videos.

We have focus-tested the Breaking the ISIS Brand videos in the Balkans, Central Asia, Western Europe, and the Middle East, and they have overwhelmingly hit their mark. No one we spoke to questioned their authenticity or viewed the message as being wrong. Many are sobered by them, including the ISIS emir we interviewed for this article. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Anne Speckhard is an adjunct associate professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University in the School of Medicine and director of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism.

Ardian Shajkovci is the director of research and a senior research fellow at the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism.

NOTES

1   The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) is a nonprofit organization that focuses on the causes and prevention of violent extremism and terrorism. It runs the Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter-Narratives Project in which 71 ISIS defectors, returnees, and captured cadres from around the globe have been interviewed in depth for the purposes of creating short video clips of insiders denouncing the group.

2   Anne Speckhard and Mubin Shaikh, *Undercover Jihadi: Inside the Toronto 18—Al Qaeda Inspired, Homegrown Terrorism in the West* (McLean, Va.: Advances Press, 2014); Morten Storm, Paul Cruickshank, and Tim Lister, *Agent Storm: My Life inside al Qaeda and the CIA* (New York: Grove Press, 2015).

3   See "Usama Hasan," Quilliam, n.d.: https://www.quilliaminternational.com/about/staff/usama-hasan/

4   The names of participants other than the authors and Abu Islam have been changed to protect them.

5   Robin Wright, "Face to Face with the Ghost of ISIS," *New Yorker,* 24 March 2017: http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/face-to-face-with-the-ghost-of-isis

6   Anne Speckhard and Ahmet S. Yayla, *ISIS Defectors: Inside Stories of the Terrorist Caliphate* (McLean, Va.: Advances Press, 2016), pg 234

7   Ibid., 39–71, 183–200. "Cubs of the Caliphate" is what ISIS calls its youth Cubs of the Caliphate is what ISIS calls its youth groups, where children are trained in military tactics and shari'a law, and prepared to be "martyrs."

8   Ibid., 110.

9   Ibid., 40.

10 Interview with Huthaifa Azzam by Anne Speckhard, Amman, Jordan, 2016. .

Maps in the Analysis of Insurgencies: The Case of ISIS

LTC Wael Abbas,
Lebanese Armed Forces

When the Mongols invaded parts of Europe in the early thirteenth century, they possessed an uncontested cavalry, highly sophisticated siege weapons, great discipline, and unmatched tactics and strategies.[1] They defeated the great empires of the East and tried to achieve similar successes by expanding west into a vulnerable Europe that was weakened by the struggle between the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX. After the Mongols succeeded in invading Poland and Hungary, however, they abruptly retreated from Europe amid serious preparations to invade Austria. While historians give many reasons for the sudden withdrawal of the Mongols, some argue that "they halted just beyond the Danube because this was the furthest extent of the Eurasian steppe," which created some difficulties related to "the number of horses the Mongols had and the amount of grazing ground available in Hungary and in the rest of Europe."[2] If this reasoning is true, we can say that the availability of grazing represented a boundary or limitation for the Mongols' invasion of Europe.

While researchers can find other historical cases of military campaigns that faced similar limiting conditions or boundaries, this article applies a similar concept to modern insurgencies, using ISIS as a case study. It explores answers to the following questions: Are there any "boundaries" that limited the expansion of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, and if yes, what are the conditions that defined them? Can this concept apply to other insurgencies, or does ISIS represent a unique type of insurgency? Finally, how can this concept help in analyzing modern insurgencies in their different stages of development?

It is important to note that the variables included in this analysis do not exclusively define the conditions for the success or failure of an insurgency. Many other factors can come into play. The significance of the variables analyzed here, however, allows for a good understanding of certain dynamics related to the rise and fall of insurgencies.

Conditions for a Successful Insurgency

Typical insurgencies usually resort to guerrilla warfare strategies based on popular mobilization. When researchers refer to guerrilla warfare strategies, many of them reference the methods and theories crafted by Mao Zedong and promulgated in his famous pamphlet, titled *Guerrilla Warfare*, during the Chinese resistance to the Japanese occupation in 1937. The introduction to a translation of this pamphlet summarizes the main requirements for successful guerrilla warfare as recommended by Mao.[3] The first condition is the "organization, consolidation, and preservation of regional base areas situated in isolated and difficult terrain." As explained by military historian B.H. Liddell Hart, "rugged or forest country is the most favorable for guerrillas. Deserts have diminished in value for them with the development of mechanized ground forces and aircraft."[4] The second is a cooperating and sympathetic population that provides logistical and informational support, in addition to providing the main source of

When researchers refer to guerrilla warfare strategies, many of them reference the methods and theories crafted by Mao Zedong.

recruitment. Better knowledge of the terrain and the ability to dissolve among the population enable the guerillas to be in "an impenetrable fog" while the enemy "stands on a lighted stage."[5] As a result, the guerrillas engage the enemy only when the conditions are in their favor, and they withdraw when the tides are against them as they aim to draw the enemy into a protracted conflict.

Mao conceived guerilla war as progressing in three phases: the *organization/ consolidation/preservation* phase, the *expansion* phase, and the *decisive/destruction of the enemy* phase.[6] In the first phase, the insurgents establish isolated base areas for recruitment, training, and indoctrination. In the second phase, the insurgents increase their capabilities in personnel and weapons and conduct more attacks on enemy targets. In the decisive phase, the insurgents become powerful enough to conduct conventional military operations to destroy the enemy and increase their territorial control.

Many researchers argue that guerilla warfare strategies can be applied by different insurgencies regardless of their ideology. The operational problem in guerilla warfare, according to one argument, is

> overcoming the conventional military superiority of the state (or occupying power) through an asymmetrical campaign based on the support (and resources) of a constituent population. While the [Marxist insurgency] will attempt to draw support from among a revolutionary class (classically, the peasantry), the non-Marxist insurgency will define its natural constituency along different lines (e.g., ethnicity, communal affiliation, or regional identity).[7]

Researchers who study Salafi jihadist groups observe that these groups have applied insurgency strategies, especially those recommended by Mao.[8] For instance, the "Strategic Plan for Reinforcing the Political Position of the Islamic State of Iraq," circulated by Iraqi jihadists between December 2009 and January 2010, recommended using guerrilla tactics to weaken the Iraqi units in areas where the government had a weak presence, in an attempt to create security gaps. These gaps would allow jihadists to seize these areas and benefit from the resources abandoned by the Iraqi forces. The authors of the plan did not forget the second necessary condition for a successful insurgency recommended by Mao: the population. They explained that jihadists would not succeed in establishing their state in Iraq without gaining the loyalty of the Sunni tribes.[9] A few years earlier, an al Qaeda franchise released an online book titled *The Management of Savagery* by an unknown author named Abu Bakr Naji. The book presented a similar strategy to what was presented later in the "Strategic Plan," describing how the jihadists should aim at creating "security vacuums or 'regions of savagery' in the periphery of the state."[10] The jihadists would then control these regions and try to gain the support of the tribes by providing security and public goods, establishing Islamic law, and indoctrinating the people. After establishing a network of these controlled regions, the book urged jihadists to try to merge these regions into an Islamic state.

An article titled "New Masters of Revolutionary Warfare: The Islamic State Movement (2002–2016)" took the argument one step further by applying a detailed analysis of how the jihadist groups that preceded the Islamic State implemented Mao's three phases of revolutionary warfare between 2003 and 2014.[11] In the building phase, following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003,

A book titled *The Management of Savagery* describes how the jihadists should aim at creating "security vacuums or 'regions of savagery' in the periphery of the state."

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi established a network of jihadists in several weak regions of the country. His organization, al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), moved to the expansion phase over the next three years and took control of most of Anbar province in 2006. The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) declared itself in October 2006, a few months after al-Zarqawi was killed by a coalition air strike. The United States, however, by supporting the Sunni *Sahwa* (Awakening) councils in Diyala and Anbar provinces, expelled ISI from the region in 2007 and forced it back to the preservation/building phase. Despite this setback, the political problems in Iraq and the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011 gave ISI a chance to recover and move to the expansion phase again with the capture of Mosul in 2014.

This article applies a similar concept to analyze the expansion and retreat of ISIS after 2014 based on Mao's three phases of revolutionary warfare but with a different methodology. The use of maps and spatial data to analyze these phases adds a new dimension to the analysis: terrain and population are considered to be necessary conditions for the success of any insurgency, and consequently can define both its potential and limitations.

> **The political problems in Iraq and the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011 gave ISI a chance to move to the expansion phase again with the capture of Mosul in 2014.**

Spatial Analysis of Insurgencies: ISIS as a Case Study

Geographic information systems, spatial analysis, and maps have been used as powerful analytic tools in different fields of study, including crime and terrorism. For instance, a special report by the US Department of Justice highlights the importance of using different mapping techniques to study crime patterns and identify criminal "hot spots."[12] In the case of terrorism, a study analyzed the spatial and temporal patterns of terrorist attacks in Iraq between 2004 and 2006 in an attempt to predict and counter future attacks.[13] Another study focused on possible logistical constraints for the spread of insurgency in Russia's Northern Caucasus by analyzing the effect of existing road networks on the spread of violence.[14]

The methodology presented in this article uses spatial data to map the development of an insurgency—ISIS, as a case study—through the different stages outlined by Mao. The study evaluates how each stage relates to the two main conditions for a successful insurgency—regional bases located in isolated and difficult terrain and a sympathetic population for logistical and informational support—according to four variables. Two variables relate to geographic features (terrain and land cover), and the other two relate to the population (population density and the geospatial distribution of ethnoreligious groups in Syria and Iraq). The advance and retreat of ISIS in Syria and Iraq for the period between June 2014 and December 2017 is mapped with respect to the variables of terrain and population, using snapshots of critical moments in the conflict. This method may reveal ISIS's progress from one phase to another according to Mao's terminology, and may also help clarify why the advances and retreats occurred as they did.

ISIS is an adequate case study for our analysis for two reasons. First, ISIS passed through different stages of expansion and retreat between 2014 and 2017, thus providing a sufficient time frame and adequate data for the analysis. Second, ISIS is viewed by some experts as a unique case because it did not follow the strategies used by other insurgencies. Therefore, if the results of this present analysis contradict this view by showing that ISIS fits into Mao's framework of protracted war, then its findings may be usefully generalized as a model for analyzing other insurgencies.

Mapping ISIS's Territorial Expansion and Retreat

The start of the Syrian conflict in 2011 gave the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) a chance to recover from its defeat in Iraq in 2007. Once it took control of areas in northern and eastern Syria, including the city of Ar Raqqah in 2013, ISIS succeeded in expanding back into Iraq.[15] In the summer of 2014, ISIS forces seized the city of Mosul on 10 June, followed by Tikrit on 11 June.[16] By 21 June, ISIS had already consolidated its capabilities in regions where the presence of the Syrian and Iraqi governments was weak, mainly in northeastern Syria and in the Ninawa and Anbar provinces in Iraq. On 5 July, at the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul, ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared himself caliph of the restyled "Islamic State." The invasion of Mosul in 2014 marked the group's move from the consolidation phase to the early expansion phase. The population density map in figure 1 reveals that until this stage, ISIS controlled areas of low population density. Regardless of the loyalty of the population, ISIS did not expand into regions of high population density, including Mosul, until it had the material capability to control them.

Figure 1. Population Density, 21 June 2014[17]
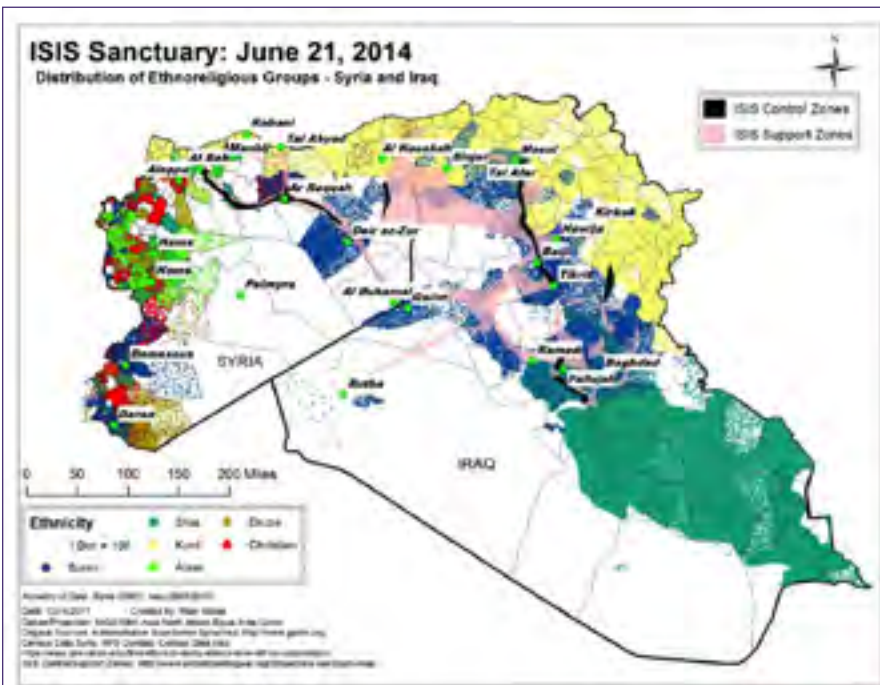
Figure 2. Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups, 21 June 2014

Moreover, these areas were dominated by a sympathetic Sunni population, as shown in figure 2. The supportive population played a critical role at this stage, as it did in Fallujah, which, although geographically close to Baghdad, has historically been resistant to the government and was the first region to come under ISIS control, in January 2014. Although the Sunni tribes played a major role in defeating AQI in these regions, ISIS used the sectarian divisions that dominated Iraq to present itself as a plausible and better alternative to the Iraqi government.

The elevation and dominant land cover maps (figures 3 and 4), however, show that the ISIS-controlled regions up to this stage are low-elevation areas (less than 250 meters) that are mostly desert or have sparse vegetation. This is rather strange for insurgencies, which generally prefer safe havens in mountainous or covered areas (forests, jungles, swamps, and the like) because such areas present real challenges for
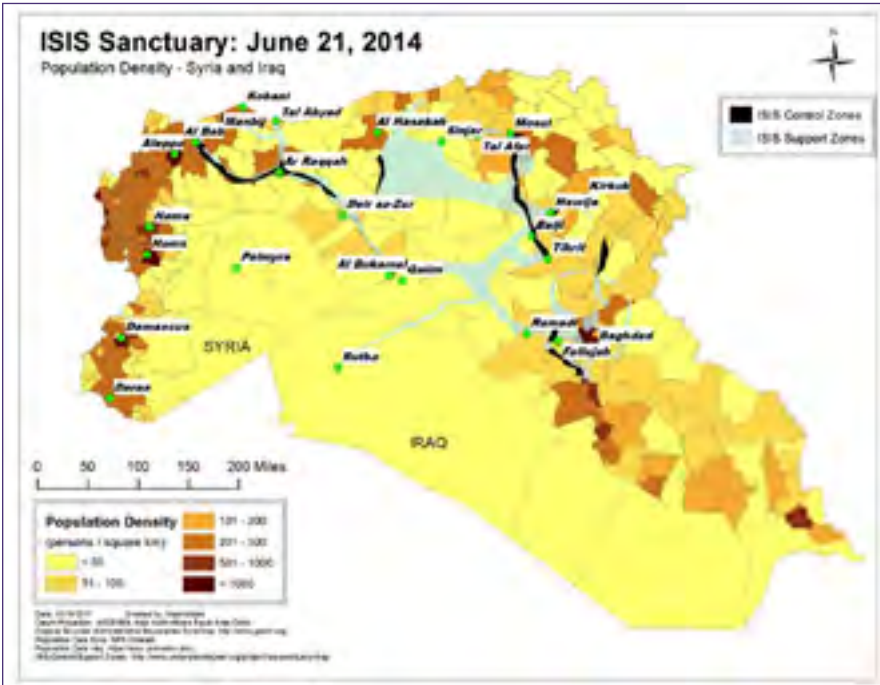
conventional forces. Examining these geographic maps in relation to the ethnoreligious map in figure 2, however, reveals that the mountainous areas in western Syria have mixed populations, while those in northern Iraq are purely Kurdish. In the consolidation phase, it appears that ISIS focused on areas that were distant from the strongholds of the Syrian and Iraqi governments irrespective of the terrain—which was probably more a matter of availability than of choice—and dominated by a religiously supportive population. Moreover, given its initial material weakness, ISIS likely preferred areas with low population density that were easier to control. These unsuitable geographic conditions, however, ultimately played a decisive role in the group's defeat in the later stages of the conflict, when ISIS lost these areas in a fast and dramatic way. It seems likely that the inhospitable conditions made ISIS extremely vulnerable, as would be expected for any similar insurgency.

In the months following the capture of Mosul and Tikrit, ISIS approached the end of the expansion phase and sought to move to the decisive phase with a boost in capabilities that included recruitment, financing, and weapons that it had seized in the occupation of Mosul. This allowed the terrorist group to conduct more attacks and occupy more territory in an attempt to connect its regional bases. In Iraq, ISIS seized Tal Afar, Baiji, Qaiim, and Rutba, culminating its successes with the capture of Sinjar in August 2014, where ISIS fighters committed a horrible massacre of thousands of ethnic Yazidis.[18] In

Figure 3. Elevation, 21 June 2014
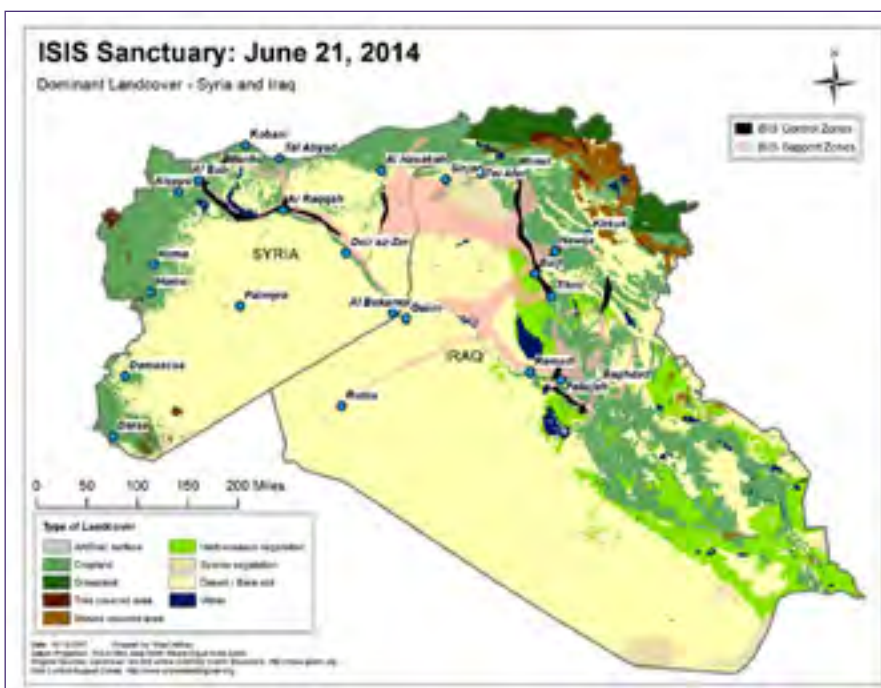
Figure 4. Dominant Land Cover, 21 June 2014

Syria, ISIS invaded Al Bab, Manbij, Tal Abyad, Deir az-Zur, Al Bukamal, and areas near Al Hasakah city. The map in figure 5, which shows ISIS-controlled areas as of September 2014, reveals that ISIS linked its areas of control in Syria and Iraq by seizing areas similar to the ones they controlled in the previous phase. The cities of Sinjar, Aleppo, Manbij, Tal Abyad, and Al Hasakah also had a supportive population and lay at the periphery of the state's control, but in this phase, ISIS clearly attempted to penetrate into regions with ethnically different populations and harder terrain. These military operations indicate that ISIS was moving toward the end of its expansion phase and into the decisive phase. In

complex theaters with multiple actors, which is the case in both Syria and Iraq, however, the phases are not as clear as they would be if one insurgency were confronting one government. ISIS was moving into different phases depending on the opponent. Before the US-led coalition's intervention in support of the Kurdish fighters, the Kurds appeared to be the weakest opponent from a military standpoint, and so ISIS attempted to expand at their expense.

In December 2014, ISIS moved to the decisive phase against the Kurds in Syria, penetrating into the heart of the Kurdish territories in northern Syria and taking control of parts of Kobani, as figure 6 illustrates.

Figure 5. Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups, 10 September 2014

Figure 6. Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups, 5 December 2014

Figure 7 shows that the Syrian Kurdish regions attacked by ISIS in the autumn of 2014 had higher population densities than the areas ISIS controlled in the earlier phases of its insurgency. ISIS conducted conventional military operations exactly as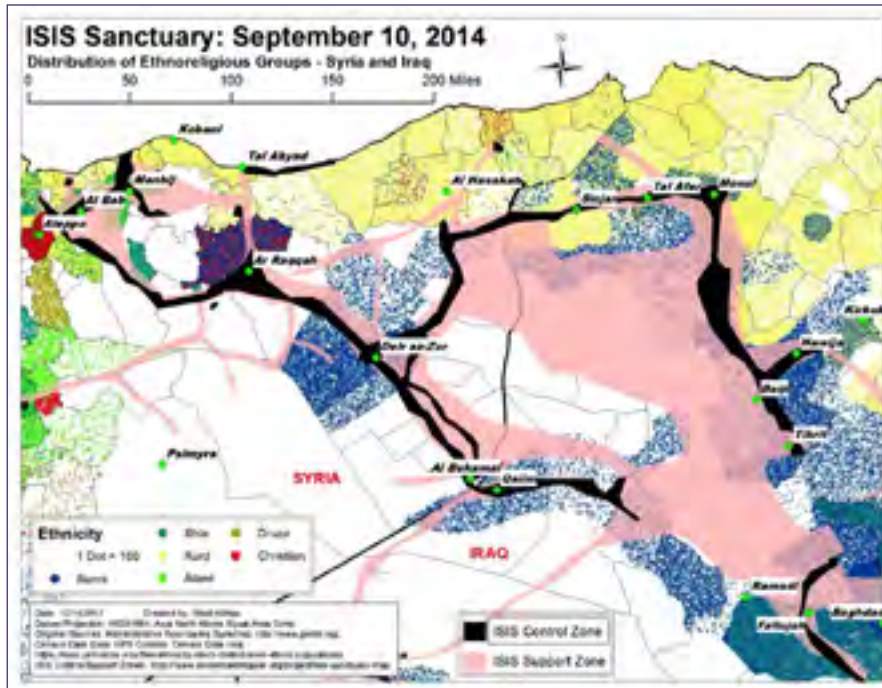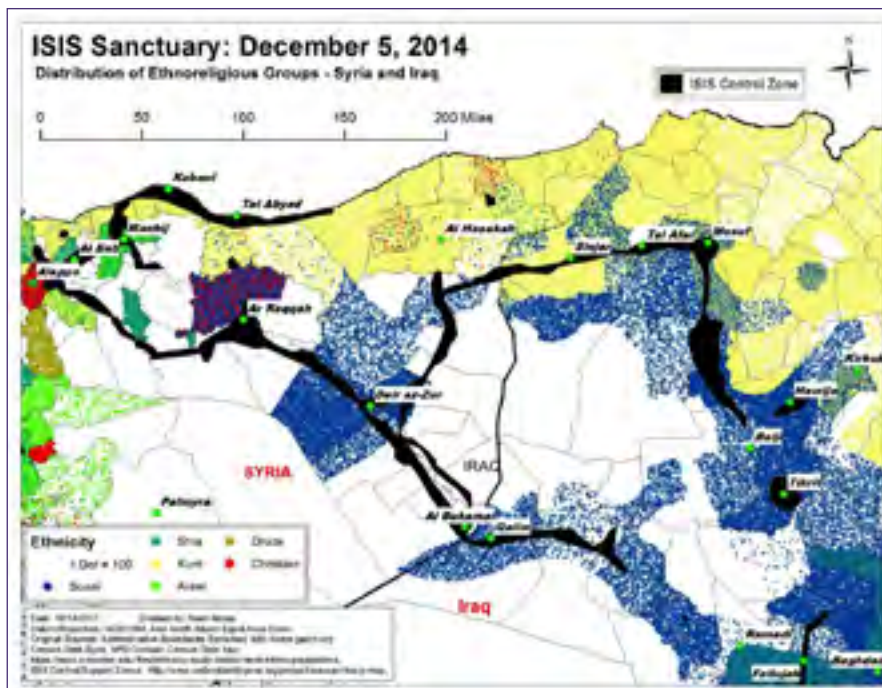 Mao prescribed for this stage, mobilizing its forces and attacking in unobstructed terrain. It seems, however, that ISIS advanced prematurely to the decisive phase, by failing to take into account the US-led coalition's announcement in September 2014 that it was planning a military intervention. The airstrikes conducted by the coalition in support of the Kurdish forces in Kobani prevented ISIS from delivering a decisive defeat to the Kurds and helped the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) win the battle of Kobani in December 2014. Kurdish forces fully recaptured the city on 27 January 2015.[19] On the Iraqi front, coalition airstrikes halted the advance of ISIS and helped clear its fighters from Mount Sinjar in December 2014, and from some parts of Sinjar city.

> **As ISIS was forced back to the consolidation phase in the Kurdish areas of Syria and in Iraq, it moved ahead with the expansion phase against the Syrian regime.**

The first few months of 2015 witnessed a mix of successes and defeats for ISIS in both Iraq and Syria. As ISIS was forced back to the consolidation phase in the Kurdish areas of Syria and in most of the regions where it operated in Iraq, it moved ahead with the expansion phase against the Syrian regime, which seemed extremely vulnerable during the first half of 2015. In April 2015, ISIS lost Tikrit to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), but it seized Ramadi and the strategic Al Walid–Al Tanf border crossing in May and the areas between Rutba and Al Walid in August. In Syria, ISIS saw major success expanding northeast of Palmyra, capturing the city of Palmyra on 20 May and Al Quaryatain on 26 May.[20]

ISIS's expansion in Syria at the expense of the Syrian government carried all the signs of the decisive/destruction of the enemy phase. ISIS invaded Palmyra and its surrounding regions by conducting conventional military operations. The militants also expanded into regions of mixed Christian and Alawi populations near Al Quaryatain, into more difficult mountainous

Figure 7. Population Density, 5 December 2014
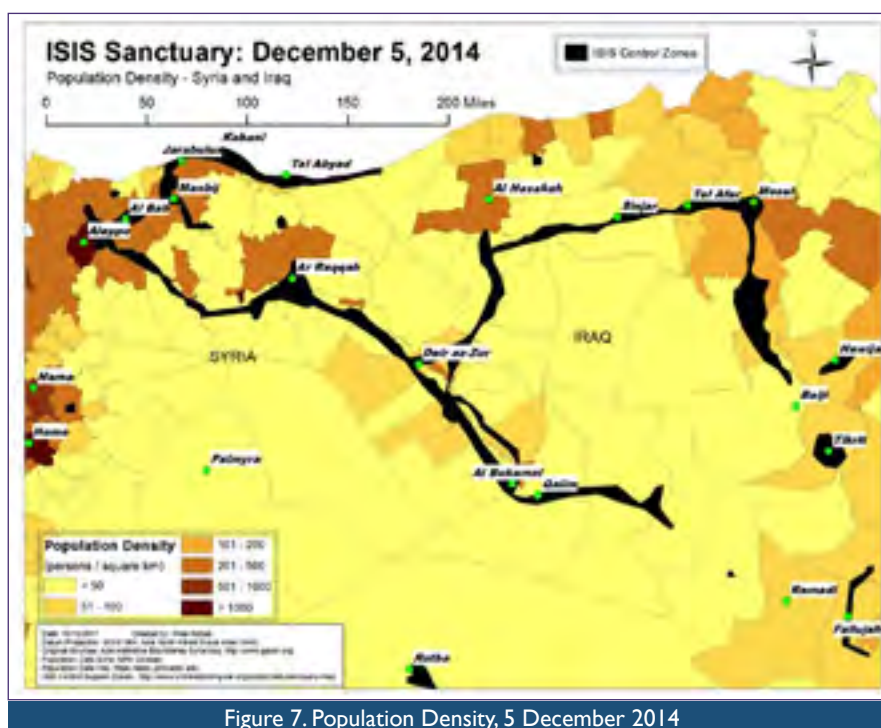
terrain, and closer to the Syrian capital of Damascus during this same period, indicating a perception of power superiority over the Syrian regime. Figures 8 and 9 illustrate this phase of expansion.

Even as the Syrian regime seemed to be losing ground against ISIS in many areas, a Russian military intervention in September 2015 in support of the Syrian government reversed the tide in its favor.[21] One more time, an external military intervention forced ISIS back into the consolidation phase. Facing opponents supported by two superpowers, ISIS lost ground in many parts of Iraq and Syria at the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016.[22] Pro-regime forces supported by Russian airstrikes retook Palmyra on 27 March 2016. The setbacks continued as ISIS militants lost control of the city of Manbij to the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on 15 August. A few days later, Syrian opposition groups backed by Turkey seized the town of Al Rai in Northern Aleppo province. These forces later moved south to take control of the town of Dabiq on 16 October, thus undercutting the narrative of ISIS, which claimed the town would be the location of the decisive end-of-times battle between Islam and the West. Meanwhile, Turkey also supported the forces that seized Jarablus from ISIS on 24 August 2016, and by September 2016, ISIS had no presence on the Syrian-Turkish border.[23]

Figure 8. Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups, 13 August 2015

Figure 9. Elevation, 13 August 2015

Although the pattern of losses that ISIS endured is related in part to the strategies of its adversaries, the overall picture reflects Mao's phases of revolutionary war. ISIS lost areas in a succession that was the reverse of what happened in the expansion phase: areas closer to the important strongholds of the state, higher population areas, and areas with adversarial ethnoreligious groups, especially Kurdish and Shia regions. In Syria, all the actors fighting ISIS have represented, in a way, the "state" fighting an insurgency. All these actors were working to establish their own version of a state and had the means to achieve their ambitions, especially with the support of an external power. The Syrian government, supported by the Russians, showed that it still had the power and legitimacy to preserve a united Syria by competing for the areas controlled by ISIS. Meanwhile, the Kurds did not hide their ambitions for an independent state and had the impression that if they—with the support of the United States—defeated ISIS, they would have the right to rule their regions. The Syrian opposition
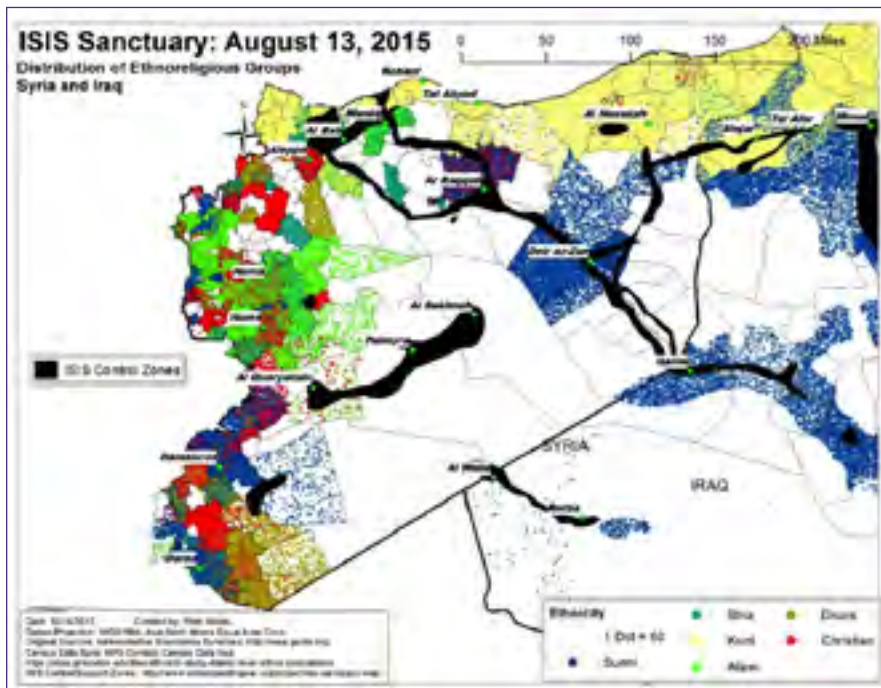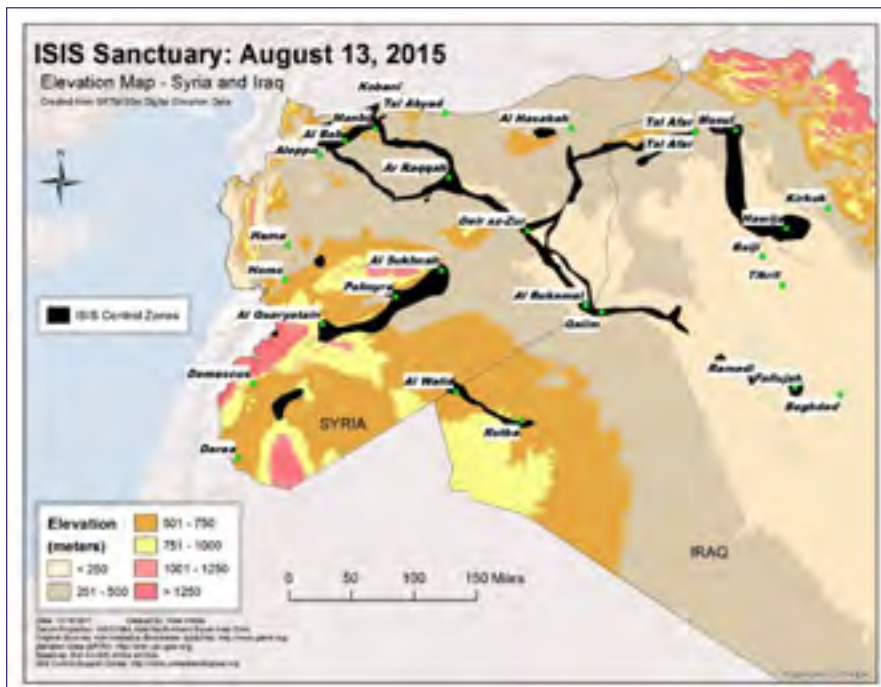
groups, although weak at this stage, found support from Turkey, which wanted to keep the Kurds divided and away from its borders.

As a result, ISIS retreated against all three actors, withdrawing first from the areas where its opponents enjoyed a supportive ethnoreligious population or had strategic reasons for sustaining a significant military presence (see figure 10). For instance, the Syrian Army advanced east from its areas of control in Homs to retake control of Palmyra, which represented an important supply route between eastern and western Syria and would be central for the military operations advancing toward Deir az-Zur. In the north, while the Syrian Army advanced east of Aleppo (Syria's second major city), Turkey supported the

opposition forces that seized Jarablus, a strategic town directly on its border with Syria, followed by Al Rai in Northern Aleppo province, in an attempt to control the important city of Al Bab and prevent the Kurds from joining their regions east and west of the Euphrates River. Meanwhile, the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, dominated by the Syrian Kurdish YPG, controlled the city of Manbij, an ethnically mixed town directly adjacent to the ethnic Kurdish areas.

In Iraq, a similar dynamic came into play. ISIS lost Sinjar city in November 2015, Ramadi in December 2015, Hit in April 2016, and Fallujah in June 2016.[24] ISIS first lost the areas closest to the Iraqi government's centers of power near Baghdad (Ramadi, Hit, and Fallujah) and those closest to the Kurdish regions, such as Sinjar. Mosul, which is closer to the Kurdistan region than Baghdad, was the next target. Because it is dominated by a Sunni Arab population, the Kurdish Peshmerga, although they controlled countryside outside the city, would have to wait for the Iraqi Army to attack Mosul itself. Figure 11 shows the progress of these military operations.

In 2017, ISIS retreated farther to the periphery of Syria, into mostly desert regions away from areas with high population, adversarial ethnoreligious groups,
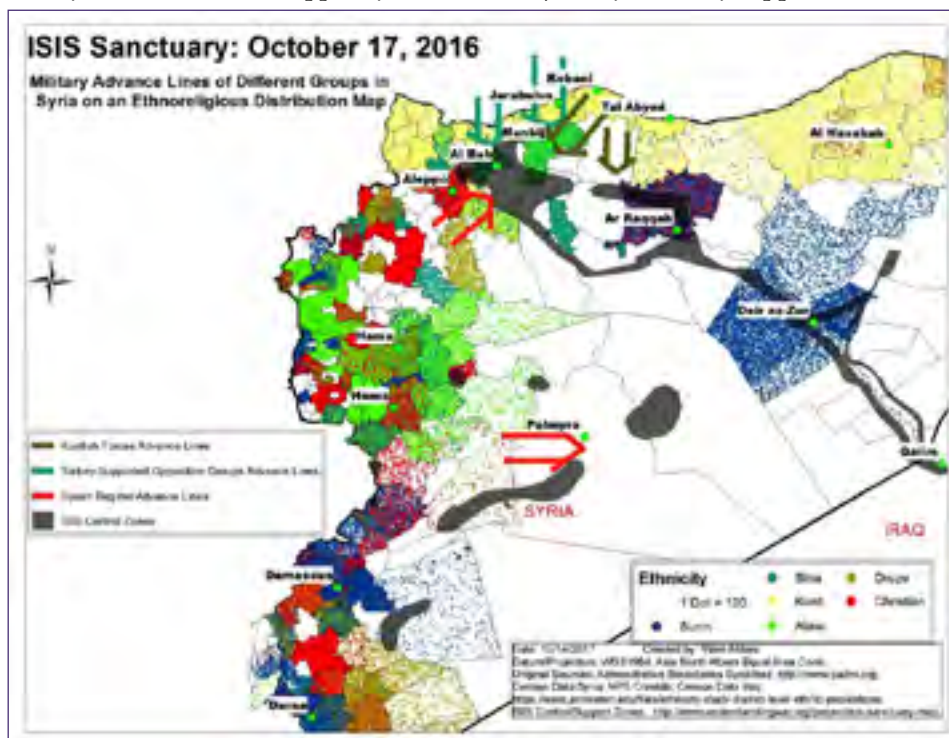

Figure 10. Military Advance Lines of Different Groups in Syria, 17 October 2016
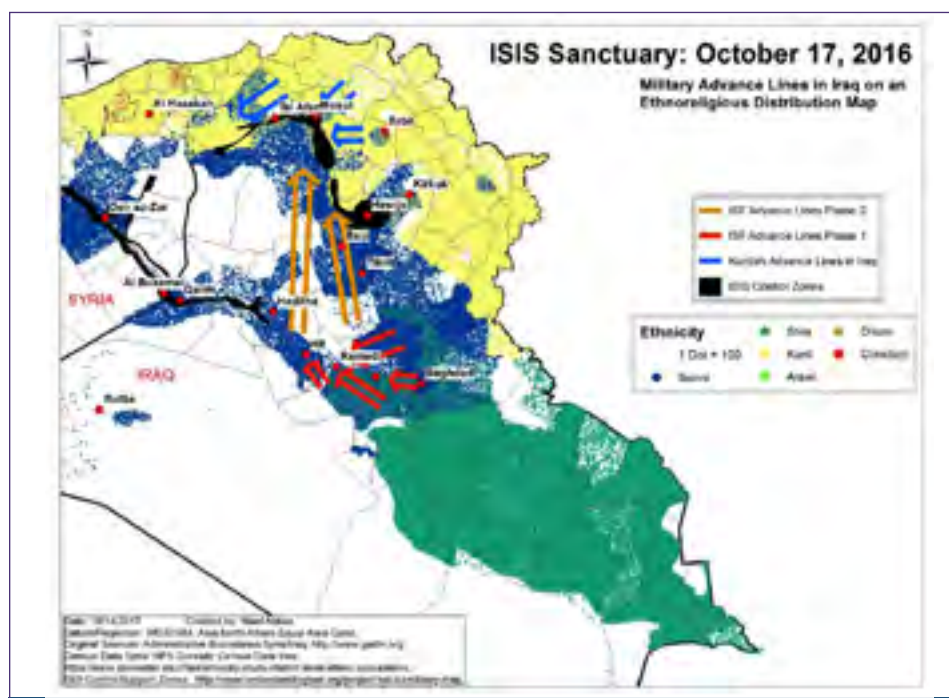

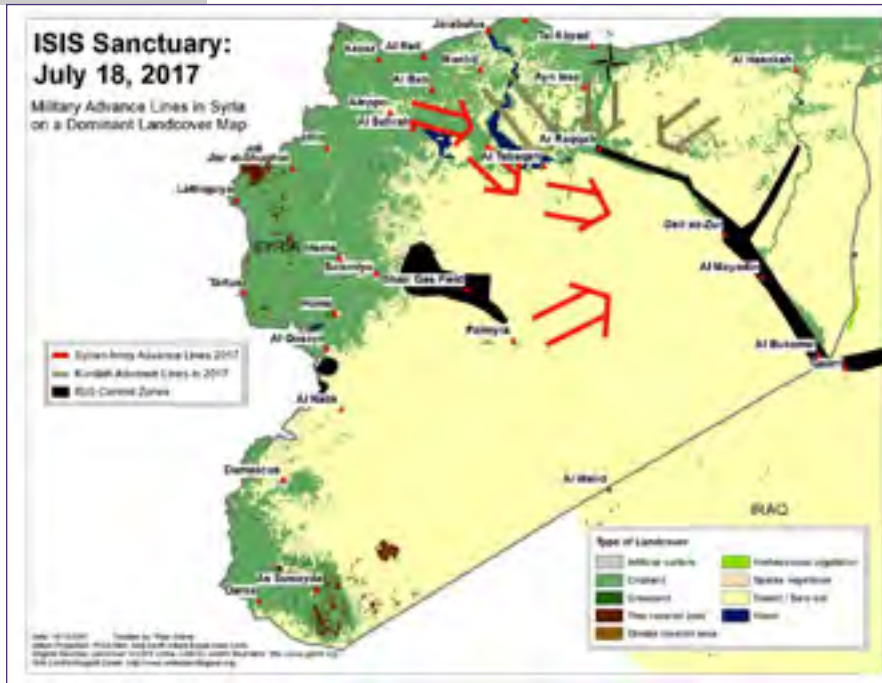Figure 11. Military Advance Lines in Iraq, 17 October 2016

Figure 12. Military Advance Lines in Syria, 18 July 2017
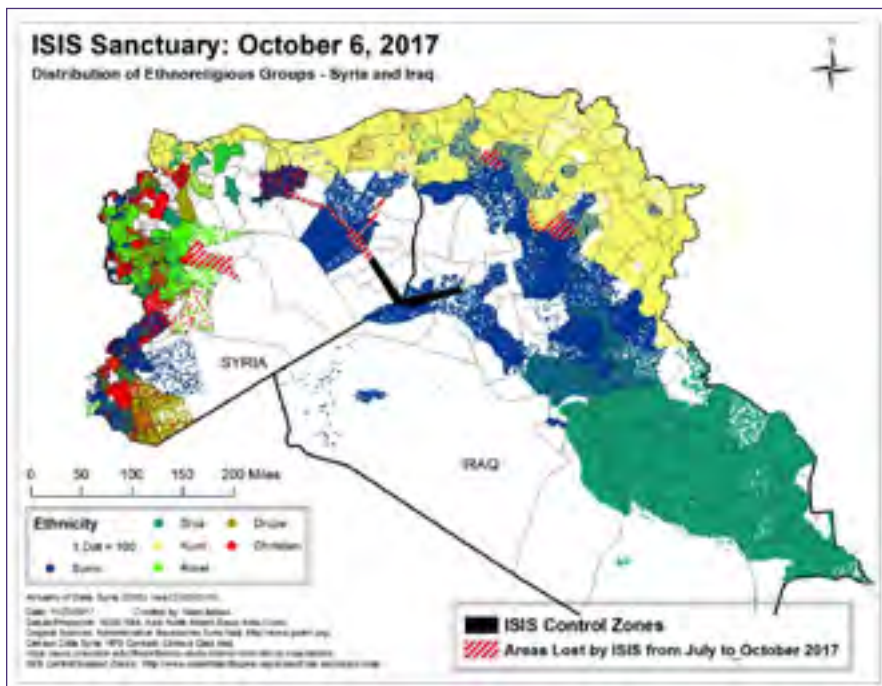
Figure 13. Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups, 6 October 2017

and strongholds of the Syrian government and the Kurds. This shift signaled an increasing weakness that forced ISIS back into regions suitable for the preservation/organization phase. On 23 February 2017, the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army seized the important town of Al Bab from ISIS.[25] At the same time, the Syrian Army advanced southeast of Al Bab on 27 February, coming into proximity with both the Turkish-backed opposition forces in Al Bab and the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in Manbij.[26] In March 2017, the Syrian Army recaptured Palmyra, which had been invaded by ISIS for the second time in December 2016.[27] In Ar Raqqah province on 6 June 2017, after eight months of offensive operations under "Operation Euphrates Wrath," which was launched to isolate the city of Ar Raqqah, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), supported by US airstrikes, formally announced the start of military operations to retake the city. The SDF had major successes against ISIS during these operations, particularly on 10 May 2017, when it captured Al Tabaqah, an area famous for being the site of Syria's largest dam.[28] On the other side, pro-regime forces backed by Russian airstrikes expanded into western Ar Raqqah province near Al Tabaqah on 13 and 14 June 2017. These forces also advanced east of Palmyra, securing the Palmyra–Deir az-Zur highway on 12 June 2017, followed by Al Sukhnah, in preparation for an advance into Deir az-Zur province.[29] Ar Raqqah city represented ISIS's last urban stronghold in the center of Syria, and after the loss of this city, ISIS retreated towards Deir az-Zur province on the Iraq border, as shown in figure 12.

In the second half of 2017, ISIS lost its remaining territories in Syria and Iraq. The sequence of losses continued as before: ISIS was pushed from the center outwards mainly to desert regions, from higher population areas to lower ones, and farther away from areas dominated by adversarial ethnoreligious groups, as shown in figure 13.

The Syrian regime's forces lifted the three-year siege of the industrial city of Deir az-Zur in September, followed by Al Mayadin in October; the Syrian army finally reached Al Bukamal on the Iraq border in November. At the same time, the Kurds attacked from their regions in northern Syria and took control of the eastern side of the Euphrates near Deir az-Zur.[30] In Iraq, the ISF completely liberated Mosul from ISIS's control in July, followed by Tal Afar in August and Hawija in October. The ISF finally expanded its operations towards the Iraq-Syria border to take control of Qaiim in November.[31] Without any urban areas under its control, ISIS was forced to return to the preservation phase in the vast deserts on the border between Iraq and Syria, and hide among the local tribes. It seems,

Figure 14. Dominant Landcover, 6 October 2017

however, that the Iraqis had learned from their past experience with AQI; in November the launch of a military operation to clear ISIS from these desert areas was announced. At the same time, the Syrian government announced its intent to clear ISIS from the uninhabited areas along the Euphrates River on the other side of the border.

Conclusion

ISIS followed Mao's three phases of revolutionary warfare in its expansion and retreat during the four years of conflict in Iraq and Syria between 2014 and 2017. It seems strange to expect a jihadist Islamist movement to follow the insurgency strategies historically linked to Marxist and national insurgencies. Contrary to the conventional wisdom on insurgencies, however, ISIS applied these strategies because, as explained by Mao, they are strategies not of choice but of necessity, "imposed by the initial material weakness of the opposition."[32] Therefore, it is logical that any insurgency would resort to these strategies because they represent a natural tendency towards survival and self-preservation, and offer the best chance for an insurgency to achieve its goal of defeating a superior enemy. The methodology presented in this article, which uses maps and spatial analysis to analyze the conditions of terrain and population available for an insurgency at the different stages of its development, is a powerful tool for understanding and countering future insurgencies.

ISIS had no realistic prospects for a successful insurgency because it lacked the favorable conditions of both terrain and population.

Studying the geographic and population conditions available to an insurgency can give an indication of the outcome of the conflict at an early stage. The geography of Syria and Iraq played a decisive role against ISIS. If the terrain in the Sunni areas where ISIS enjoyed some population support had been more favorable—for example, mountainous or forested—ISIS probably would have had a better chance of success, or at least better prospects for protracting the conflict even in the face of great military powers like the United States and Russia. In Afghanistan, for instance, the Taliban have survived a long US military

campaign against them because they can take advantage of both a supportive population and difficult terrain. The prevalence of sympathetic Sunni tribes in many regions of Afghanistan, especially in the mountainous areas on Pakistan's border, have played a major role in the Taliban's ability to avoid a decisive defeat over the years. In the words of Mao Zedong, "If we do not fit guerrilla operations into their proper niche, we cannot promote them realistically."[33] Such a strategic failure is exactly what caused the dramatic defeat of ISIS. ISIS had no realistic prospects for a successful insurgency because it lacked the favorable conditions of both terrain and population, which set limitations on its expansion and success. In this context, Iraq and Syria can hardly represent the "proper niche" for ISIS or any other Sunni jihadist insurgency.

This analysis of ISIS as a case study shows that the conditions of terrain and population work in combination; having both favorable terrain and a sympathetic population at the same time is critical for the success of an insurgency. This adds to the challenges faced by insurgencies and lowers their prospects of success. On the one hand, an insurgency that limits itself to isolated, difficult terrain with low population density will not be able to grow and expand. On the other hand, an insurgency that enjoys high levels of popular support in open and accessible terrain will find it very hard to defend itself against a superior enemy.

Sympathetic Sunni tribes in the mountainous areas on Pakistan's border have played a major role in the Taliban's ability to avoid a decisive defeat.

Consequently, a government can focus its resources on depriving the insurgents of either of these conditions: favorable terrain or supportive population, depending on which is easier to achieve. A complete analysis of these conditions should precede the crafting of a counterinsurgency strategy to make it more efficient in defeating the insurgency. The proposed spatial analysis helps identify the most critically vulnerable regions, where the favorable conditions of terrain coincide with a large supportive population. Based on these findings, most military and intelligence resources should be allocated to these regions as a short-term solution. The government should also increase its presence in isolated areas regardless of the size of the population and the need to provide services. Over the long run, the government should develop infrastructure in the countryside and any isolated regions, a policy which can serve the state's goals in two ways: responding to the grievances of the population might lower the population's support for the insurgents' cause, and making these regions more accessible by investing in roads, airports, communication services, and other infrastructure would deprive the insurgents of much-needed isolated terrain.

Moreover, understanding the dynamics of advance and retreat for ISIS or any other insurgency in light of Mao's three stages of revolutionary war can help states craft corresponding counterinsurgency strategies. As Iraq has experienced twice so far, it is not enough to achieve a decisive military victory against an insurgency to guarantee it will not recover. The recommended strategy in this case is to follow ISIS to the areas that are most suitable for the building/preservation phase, in the remote deserts on the Iraq-Syria border, and respond to the grievances of the tribes in these regions to prevent any future support for the resurgence of ISIS.   ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LTC Wael Abbas has served in the Lebanese Armed Forces since 2000.

NOTES

1 The views expressed here are those of the author alone and do not reflect the views of the Lebanese Armed Forces, government, or any other official entity.

2 Timotheus [pseud.], "The Mongol Invasion of Europe," All Empires Online History Community, 27 March 2007: http://allempires.com/article/index.php?q=invasion_mongol_europe . See also Denis Sinor, "The Mongols in the West," *Journal of Asian History* 33, no. 1 (1 January 1999): 1–44.

3 *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare,* trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Washington, D.C.: HQ, US Marine Corps, 5 April 1989), 37.

4 B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Meridian, 1991), 366.

5 Ibid., 23.

6 *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, 20–21.

7 Gordon H. McCormick, "People's Wars," in *Encyclopedia of Conflicts since World War II*, 2nd ed., ed. James Ciment, vol. 1–4 (New York: Routledge, 2015), 20: https://books.google.com/books?id=BpGXBwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

8 Jihadist publications have referenced these strategies, including the writings of Abu Ubayd al-Qurashi (who cited Robert Taber, William Lind, and Mao Zedong among others). See William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 81.

9 Ibid., 79–82.

10 Ibid., 83.

11 Craig Whiteside, "New Masters of Revolutionary Warfare: The Islamic State Movement (2002–2016)," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 4 (August 2016): http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/523/html . Griffith uses slightly different terminology to describe these phases.

12 John E. Eck, Spencer Chainey, James G. Cameron, Michael Leitner, and Ronald E. Wilson, *Mapping Crime: Understanding Hot Spots* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, 2005): http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/11291/1/11291.pdf

13 Laura K. Siebeneck, Richard M. Medina, Ikuho Yamada, and George F. Hepner, "Spatial and Temporal Analyses of Terrorist Incidents in Iraq, 2004–2006," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 7 (July 2009): 591–610.

14 Yuri M. Zhukov, "Roads and the Diffusion of Insurgent Violence: The Logistics of Conflict in Russia's North Caucasus," *Political Geography* 31, no. 3 (March 2012): 144–56.

15 ISI became ISIS after an offshoot, the al-Nusra Front, expanded into Syria in 2013. See "Mapping Militant Organizations: The Islamic State," Stanford University, n.d.: http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/1

16 Jessica Lewis and Ahmed Ali, "The Fall of Mosul to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 10 June 2014: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2014/06/the-fall-of-mosul-to-islamic-state-of.html ; "Developments in the Aftermath of the Fall of Mosul," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 11 June 2014: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2014/06/developments-in-aftermath-of-fall-of.html

17 All of the maps that accompany this article are the work of the author. The shape files for ISIS's control zones in Iraq and Syria were created based on the maps published by the *Institute for the Study of War*: http://www.understandingwar.org/project/isis-sanctuary-map . Elevation maps were created using digital elevation data (SRTM 90m) of Syria and Iraq from the CGIAR Consortium for Spatial Information: http://srtm.csi.cgiar.org . Land cover maps were created using worldwide land cover data from the ArcGIS online archive accessed from the ArcGIS software. Population density maps and ethnoreligious distribution maps were created using population data for Iraq from the Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) Project: https://esoc.princeton.edu/file-type/gis-data . Population data for Syria came from the CORE lab at the US Naval Postgraduate School, and data for the administrative boundaries of Iraq and Syria came from the Global Administrative Areas spatial database: http://www.gadm.org

18 "Iraq Crisis: Yazidi Villagers 'Massacred' by IS," BBC, 16 August 2014: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28814633

19 Jennifer Cafarella and Valerie Szybala, "ISIS's Second Front in Syria," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 18 June 2014: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2014/06/isiss-second-front-in-syria.html ; "Battle for Kobane: Key Events," BBC, 25 June 2015: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29688108

20 Jenny Stanton, "Iraq Takes Back Tikrit from ISIS," *Daily Mail*, 1 April 2015: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3019960/Iraq-PM-declares-liberation-Tikrit-IS.html ; Patrick Martin, Genevieve Casagrande, and Jessica Lewis McFate, "ISIS Captures Ramadi," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 18 May 2015: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/05/isis-captures-ramadi.html ; Christopher Kozak and Jennifer Cafarella, "ISIS Control and Expected Offensives in Central Syria: May 29, 2015," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 29 May 2015: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/05/isis-control-and-expected-offensives-in.html

21 "Russia's First Reported Air Strikes in Syria Assist Regime with Targeting Broader Opposition," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 30 September 2015: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/09/russias-first-reported-air-strikes-in.html

22 "Islamic State Has Lost Grip on 12% of Territory in Six Months—Study," *Guardian*, 10 July 2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/11/islamic-state-has-lost-grip-on-12-of-territory-in-six-months-study

23 Kareem Shaheen, "Assad Hails Syrian Regime's Capture of Palmyra from ISIS," *Guardian*, 27 March 2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/27/syrian-regime-forces-retake-all-of-palmyra-from-isis?INTCMP=sfl ; Damien Gayle, "US-Backed Fighters Take Town of Manbij from ISIS," *Guardian*, 6 August 2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/06/us-backed-syrian-fighters-take-town-of-manbij-from-isis?INTCMP=sfl ; Kareem Shaheen, "Turkish-Backed Syrian Rebels Recapture Town of Dabiq from ISIS," *Guardian*, 16 October 2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/16/turkish-opposition-fighters-syria-dabiq-islamic-state?INTCMP=sfl ; Kareem Shaheen, "Syrian Rebels Reclaim Key Border Town from Islamic State," *Guardian*, 24 August 2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/24/syrian-rebels-reclaim-key-border-town-jarablus-from-islamic-state?INTCMP=sfl

24 Kareem Shaheen, "Battle for Sinjar: IS-Held Town in Iraq 'Liberated,'" BBC, 13 November 2015: http://www.bbc.com/news/34806556 ; Ashley Fantz and Hamdi Alkhshali, "Ramadi Has Been Taken Back from ISIS, Iraqis Say," CNN, 29 December 2015: http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/28/middleeast/iraq-military-retakes-ramadi/index.html ; Patrick Wintour, "Falluja Fully Liberated from Islamic State," *Guardian*, 26 June 2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/26/falluja-iraq-fully-liberated-from-isis

25 "Syria Situation Report: February 16–24, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 24 February 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/02/syria-situation-report-february-16-24.html

26 Michael R. Gordon, "US Strengthens Its Forces in a Crowded Syrian Battlefield," *New York Times*, 4 March 2017: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/04/us/politics/us-troops-syria.html

27 Christopher Kozak and Alexandra Gutowski, "ISIS Recaptures Palmyra in Major Blow to Pro-Regime Forces," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 13 December 2016: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/12/isis-recaptures-palmyra-in-major-blow.html

28 Ellen Francis, "US-Backed Syria Militias Say Tabqa, Dam Captured from Islamic State," Reuters, 10 May 2017: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-tabqa/u-s-backed-syria-militias-say-tabqa-dam-captured-from-islamic-state-idUSKBN1862E4 ; Genevieve Casagrande, "The Campaign for ar-Raqqah: January 12, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 12 January 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/01/the-campaign-for-ar-raqqah-january-12.html ; Christopher Kozak and ISW Syria Team, "The Campaign for Ar-Raqqa City: June 6–20, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 20 June 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/06/the-campaign-for-ar-raqqa-city-june-6.html ; Christopher Kozak, "The Campaign for Ar-Raqqa City: June 20–July 17, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 18 July 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/07/the-campaign-for-ar-raqqa-city-june-20.html

29 "Syria Situation Report: June 7–29, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 31 July 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/07/syria-situation-report-june-15-22-2017.html ; "Syria Situation Report: August 8–23, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 25 August 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/08/syria-situation-report-august-8-23-2017.html

30 Rhys Dubin, "Syrian Army, US-Backed Forces Rub Shoulders in Eastern Syria," *Foreign Policy*, 11 September 2017: http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/11/syrian-army-u-s-backed-forces-rub-shoulders-in-eastern-syria/ ; "Syria Situation Report: August 31–September 14, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 14 September 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/09/syria-situation-report-august-31.html ; Christopher Kozak, "Escalation in Eastern Syria," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 27 September 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/09/escalation-in-eastern-syria.html ; "Syria SITREP Map: September 14–27, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 28 September 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/09/syria-sitrep-map-september-14-27-2017.html ; "Syria Situation Report: November 7–20, 2017," *Institute for the Study of War* (blog), 22 November 2017: http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2017/11/syria-situation-report-november-7-20.html

31 "How the Battle for Mosul Unfolded," BBC, 10 July 2017: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-37702442 ; Michael Knights and Matthew Schweitzer, "Shiite Militias Are Crashing the Mosul Offensive," *Foreign Policy*, 18 November 2016: http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/18/shiite-militias-are-crashing-the-mosul-offensive/ ; Thaier Al-Sudani and Kawa Omar, "Iraqi Forces Retake Most of Tal Afar from Islamic State," Reuters, 27 August 2017: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-talafar/iraqi-forces-retake-most-of-tal-afar-from-islamic-state-military-idUSKCN1B70DO ; David Zucchino and Rod Nordland, "Iraq Claims Victory in ISIS' Last Urban Stronghold," *New York Times*, 5 October 2017: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/05/world/middleeast/iraq-hawija-isis.html ; "ISIS Dealt Twin Blows with Loss of Deir ez-Zor and Key Iraq Border Post," *Guardian*, 3 November 2017: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/02/deir-ez-zor-cleared-of-last-islamic-state-fighters-isis

32 McCormick, "People's Wars," 24.

33 *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, 55.

Demobilizing and Reintegrating Armed Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo

MAJ Badura Hakimu, Tanzanian Army, and Dr. Heather S. Gregg, US Naval Postgraduate School

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) HAS EXPERIENCED armed conflict both internally and with its neighbors since the mid-1990s.[1] The presence of a variety of armed groups, including foreign fighters, Congolese militias, and rebel forces, has become a major obstacle to peace and security in the region. These armed groups have violated human rights through acts that include murder, kidnaping, torture of civilians, mass rape, the use of child soldiers, and the burning of houses and entire settlements. These conflicts have killed hundreds of thousands and affected millions of lives.[2]

In an effort to halt the warfare, DRC signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in July 1999.[3] This landmark agreement led the UN Security Council to pass Resolution 1279 on 30 November 1999, which established the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), with the goal of facilitating the ceasefire agreement and disengaging all warring parties. Three years later, on 17 December 2002, the main Congolese factions signed the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement, which called for a program of demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants.[4] With international support, the DRC created four distinct DDR programs to help end hostilities in the country: a DDR Reintegration and Resettlement (RR) program aimed at repatriating foreign fighters, two national programs aimed at demobilizing a variety of Congolese rebel and militia groups, and one program that focused specifically on the province of Ituri, where violent rebel groups were particularly active.

Despite these efforts to end hostilities and stabilize the state, the population has continued to experience insecurity and violence. Violence in the eastern part of DRC has been particularly destructive, and new armed groups have emerged despite the peace accords and DDR programs. Ultimately, the protracted violence and lack of security within the country and region demonstrate that these DDR programs were unsuccessful, especially because many ex-combatants have returned to their original jobs as fighters.

This article provides insights into why the DDR(RR) programs failed in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It proposes that five shortcomings led to the programs' demise: an unrealistically short timeline to accomplish the stated goals, inadequate funding, an overemphasis on disarmament, the failure of the DRC government to enact meaningful security sector reform and create competent security forces, and the DRC's troubled relationship with neighboring countries, particularly Rwanda. Overall, the DDR(RR) programs in DRC did not place enough emphasis on long-term efforts during the "reintegration" phase, which was the intended goal of DDR. Successful reintegration requires the parties to address a multitude of problems that

Violence in the eastern part of DRC has been particularly destructive, and new armed groups have emerged despite the peace accords.

go beyond illegally armed individuals, including security sector reform, good job opportunities for ex-combatants, and mechanisms for reconciliation and rebuilding trust within the communities that receive ex-combatants.

DDR Programs and Conflict Resolution

A disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program aims to transition legally and illegally armed individuals from combatant to civilian life.[5] According to the UN's DDR Resources Center, "the objective of the DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments so that recovery and development can begin."[6] DDR, in other words, is an integral part of peacebuilding and sustainable development in post-conflict environments.[7]

> A DDR program is an integral part of peacebuilding and sustainable development in post-conflict environments.

Typically, DDR programs begin with a call for ex-combatants to disarm. The rationale behind disarmament is that ex-combatants with weapons pose security threats to the state, civilians, and countries bordering the conflict state. The disarmament component of DDR usually includes sorting, controlling, recording, verifying, and destroying weapons and explosives.[8] In some cases, ex-combatants are given cash for their arms in a "buy back" program.[9]

Demobilization is a course of action for regulating and controlling the transformation of former soldiers from combatant to noncombatant status.[10] Demobilization often starts with disarmed ex-combatants being confined to designated centers or camps before being returned to society.[11] In addition to persuading the former combatants to lay down weapons and stop fighting, neutral international agencies provide various types of assistance, typically in the form of financial support, which helps these former fighters to begin a new life.[12] These programs often also provide opportunities for the government to compile information and figures on the physical, emotional, and social well-being of the former soldiers—information that the government can use to address the obstacles that may prevent these individuals from habituating to noncombatant life.[13] Demobilization is typically followed by reinsertion, which is a preparatory step in the rehabilitation process that provides moral and psychological support to ex-combatants, and sometimes to their families, for a short period. Tangible support can include food, clothing, shelter, health care, and psychological counseling.[14]

> Successful DDR programs require considerable time and resources and clear goals to be successful.

Reintegration, typically the final phase in DDR programs, aims to strengthen the skills and well-being of former soldiers so that these individuals can achieve social and economic reintegration with their communities and not return to fighting. This phase may provide training in skills needed for self-employment, assistance finding a regular job, education opportunities, and long-term economic assistance.[15] Reintegration is typically the most expensive and time-consuming stage in the DDR process and if done well, successfully transitions fighters back to being peaceful and productive citizens. In some cases, additional steps to the DDR program are added, including the repatriation and resettlement of foreign combatants.

Ultimately, successful DDR programs require considerable time and resources and clear goals to be successful. The effectiveness of such programs depends on the ability of the state to promote humanitarian assistance, support economic and social development, deploy reliable forces to provide security for the population, and demonstrate the needed political resolve.[16] In post-conflict countries,

these very aspects of the state are often weak and ineffective, making the implementation of DDR programs difficult.

DDR Programs in DRC

Initial efforts to create a DDR program in DRC began with the 2002 Pretoria Accords between the governments of DRC and Rwanda.[17] These accords included a DDR program aimed at demobilizing, disarming, and repatriating foreign forces in DRC, specifically Rwandan fighters. The Congolese Army was given 90 days to complete this mission.[18] Ultimately, the program succeeded in disarming only 402 individuals, and there was a disagreement on the number of repatriated troops. Rwanda claimed it withdrew 23,400 troops during the timeframe.[19] The DRC, however, claimed that 20,000 Rwandan soldiers remained in the eastern region of Kivu. One UN report from 2003 claimed that Rwandan forces in the DRC, under the umbrella of the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), had not been demobilized at all.[20]

Rebels, militia groups, and the DRC government signed another peace deal, the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement Peace Accords, on 17 December 2002.[21] The Congolese government launched a nationwide DDR program as part of these accords. The first phase ran from October 2004 to December 2006; the second phase started in July 2008 and was completed in December 2009. Alongside this nationwide program, a separate DDR program was created in Ituri province to run from 1 September 2004 to June 2005. Ultimately, the first phase of the nationwide DDR program succeeded in demobilizing 102,014 individuals, disarming 186,000 individuals, and integrating 83,986 individuals into the national army. The second phase of the DDR program claimed to have demobilized 4,782 individuals, in addition to disarming 12,820 individuals and integrating 8,038 individuals into the national army.[22] The Ituri program reported demobilizing 15,811 individuals and collecting 6,200 weapons, of which 70 percent turned out to be old and unusable.[23] Several agencies disputed the figures on disarmed militias in Ituri. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, claimed that 12,500 combatants were disarmed, while IRIN News put the figure at 9,000.[24]

Although the exact number of those repatriated, demobilized, and disarmed remains debatable, hundreds of thousands participated in these DDR programs, making them

> **The Ituri program reported demobilizing 15,811 individuals and collecting 6,200 weapons, of which 70 percent turned out to be old and unusable.**

Peacekeepers assist with disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration in the DRC.

some of the largest in the region, if not the world. Despite a large number of partici-
pants, however, violence and insecurity have persisted in the DRC.

Shortcomings of the DDR Programs in the DRC

As mentioned above, five main factors contributed significantly to the
shortcomings of the DDR programs launched in the DRC: an unrealistically
short timeline, inadequate funding, an overemphasis on disarmament, the
failure of the DRC government to enact meaningful security sector reform
and create competent security forces, and the DRC's troubled relationship
with neighboring countries.

Aerial view of camps for people displaced by conflict

All of the DDR programs initiated in the DRC suffered from unrealistically short timelines. The initial DDR(RR) program targeted external fighters such as former uniformed troops from Rwanda, Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR), the FDLR, a Hutu nationalist militia in DRC, and forces of the Interahamwe, a Hutu paramilitary organization. The program allowed only 90 days for both the pullout of Rwandan armed forces and the dismantlement of former FAR forces and Interahamwe.[25] This timeline, measured in days and months, did not allow enough time for progress toward solving the major issues of demobilizing, disarming, dismantling, and repatriating the militias, but instead increased pressure on officials to achieve quick results. The program's overseers were not able to tackle the most difficult problems associated with removing and repatriating these outside forces from within DRC, such as identifying and gathering foreign fighters, some of whom had been in the country for decades. Nor was there sufficient time to train, mobilize, and consolidate enough government troops to oversee the process. The short timeline also did not allow sufficient time for UN forces to deploy and help implement the repatriation process. Initially, the MONUC deployed only 8,700 troops in the DRC, not nearly enough to oversee such a large DDR program or provide general security to the areas where the DDR process was occurring.

Another key obstacle to successfully executing the DDR programs in DRC, both in the short term and over time, was the lack of adequate funding. An insufficient allotment of funds (USD$200 million) caused the DDR program to run out of money halfway through the proposed process and created gaps in services for those wishing to demobilize and those already demobilized. International assistance allocated only USD$14 million for integration and army reform.[26] This lack of funding greatly hindered security sector reform initiatives and made it difficult to integrate irregular fighters who wished to join the DRC military.

The lack of success in the DDR(RR) program and national DDR programs in the DRC can also be attributed to an overemphasis on disarmament. The DDR(RR) program succeeded in disarming only a reported 402 individuals.[27] The nationwide DDR program disarmed 186,000 individuals in the first phase and 12,820 individuals in the second phase.[28] In Ituri, between 9,000 and 12,500 combatants were disarmed.[29] The total number of weapons that were collected through the national program is unknown, but the figure was 6,200 weapons for the Ituri program, of

which 70 percent were old and unusable, suggesting that ex-combatants did not truly disarm.[30] Ultimately, given the hundreds of thousands of armed individuals in the DRC, the number of those who were disarmed is low.

Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles to lasting peace in the DRC has been the lack of security sector reform throughout the country, particularly in the east. This failure has negatively affected the rule of law, civil order, and the justice system. The government's inability to create competent, professional security forces and deploy them throughout the country caused citizens to take up arms to provide their own security. The absence of government-provided security in the eastern region, for example, especially in the rural areas, created an unstable environment that impelled citizens to join militias and armed groups for self-protection. Corruption in local government structures further undercut overall popular support for the government, including any security it provided.[31] Under the supervision of traditional chiefs, communities took to hiding weapons for self-protection from both criminal gangs and government security forces and organized local militia groups for protection, which further weakened the progress of the DDR programs. Thus, ineffective governance and lawlessness in eastern DRC created fertile conditions for the emergence of militia groups that threatened the security of the local population, despite the implementation of the DDR programs.

> **An insufficient allotment of funds (USD$200 million) caused the DDR program to run out of money halfway through the proposed process.**

Finally, DRC's relations with neighboring countries has continued to be a challenge to peace and stability. Rwanda, in particular has continued to meddle with DRC militias. For example, according to one report, Rwandan deserters from the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) aided Congolese Tutsis in forming the March 23 (M23) rebel group after the DRC government failed both to protect the Tutsi population in North Kivu from Hutu militias and to dismantle the FDLR.[32] In March 2013, the UN passed Resolution 2098, which authorized the use of offensive operations in the eastern DRC to counter M23, and the rebel group was finally neutralized in November 2013.[33] Clearly, more work is needed to build better relationships between the DRC and its neighbors, and to create mechanisms for removing foreign fighters from DRC.

Creating Better DDR Programs in DRC

The protracted armed conflict in DRC is the product of decades of poor governance, ethnic conflict, interference and spillover violence from neighboring states, and insufficient and unprofessional security forces. Decades of insecurity have produced an array of illegally armed groups and militias with a variety of different goals. Given this complicated and lengthy history, creating a DDR program that truly reintegrates ex-combatants back into civilian life or integrates them with government forces requires a holistic approach that focuses not only on the fighter but also on society, the economy, and the government. And while this task is enormous, steps taken in the near term could help move DRC in a better direction.

First, DDR should be understood as a long-term process, and the goal should be the "R"—reintegration—which creates the conditions for ex-combatants to take their place in society as productive and peaceful citizens. The temptation in DDR programs is to focus on demobilization and disarmament because these are short-term efforts and highly measurable; however, demobilization and disarmament are more measures of performance than they are measures of effectiveness. In the end, the goal should be to reintegrate ex-combatants into society and give them incentives to stay demobilized and possibly disarmed over the long haul. Demobilization, in other words, should be a step towards reintegration—not its own goal. As the program unfolded in DRC, hundreds of thousands of illegally armed individuals were demobilized, but there is little evidence to suggest that these individuals stayed demobilized. Persistent insecurity, lack of jobs, and conflicts within local communities have prevented many of these individuals from moving beyond demobilization to reintegration.

> **This one effort—human capital development at the community level—could go far in transforming conflict zones.**

Similarly, focusing on disarmament does not guarantee reduced violence or stability. In countries that have experienced protracted conflict, weapons tend to be plentiful and focusing on removing all or most weapons from a conflict zone is time-consuming, expensive, and ineffective. As the conflict in the DRC has shown, individuals turned in old or non-functioning weapons rather than truly disarming, thus rendering the disarmament program pointless.

Focusing on reintegration requires addressing a multitude of problems beyond the presence of illegally armed individuals. Most notably, ex-combatants need to have a pathway to earning a living; without a job and the ability to provide for their families, fighters are unlikely to lay down their weapons. Post-conflict countries, however, often have weak economies and lack opportunities for individuals to earn a living. Furthermore, communities receiving ex-combatants must be prepared for them and find mechanisms for reconciliation and rebuilding trust. Without the buy-in and acceptance of the local population, efforts at truly reintegrating ex-combatants are unlikely to succeed.

International donors could help the reintegration process work by providing funding for job training over an extended period of time. In particular, the focus should be on initiatives that aim to develop human capital, including education, vocational training, and farming skills for the whole community, not just for ex-combatants. This one effort—human capital development at the community level—could go far in transforming conflict zones and helping them become more economically productive and harmonious spaces. The development of

human capital could thus become a vehicle not only for reintegrating former soldiers but also for rehabilitating war-torn communities. Similarly, jobs programs could be structured in such a way as to reintegrate ex-combatants and help them work towards reconciliation with their communities and societies.[34] UN Development Programme-funded fishing cooperatives in Ituri, for example, helped bring villagers and former combatants together to work for a mutually beneficial purpose.[35]

Perhaps the greatest challenge with DDR programs is that their success requires commitment from several government sectors. In a state that is attempting to end internal conflict, DDR and security sector reform must take place simultaneously to address shortcomings in government security forces and the threat of illegally armed individuals and groups.[36] In the case of the DRC, the country's security forces were small, poorly equipped, and inadequately trained, all of which greatly hindered their role in the DDR process. As noted earlier, international donors directed only a small portion of the total budget for the entire DDR program to reforming the DRC's military.[37] The international community clearly did not see security sector reform as a priority.

In addition to insufficient numbers of properly trained and equipped government forces, the UN mission in the DRC was unable to mobilize enough MONUC forces or deploy them quickly enough to help provide security and oversight of the DDR process. The result was a security vacuum in critical areas, particularly outside major cities, and an inability to successfully identify, repatriate, and demobilize foreign fighters and domestic militants. The rushed timeline of the DDR programs made matters worse because it did not allow adequate time to mobilize or deploy the MONUC forces, nor did it provide time to better train and professionalize DRC forces for the DDR mission.

Alongside security sector reform, the rule of law should be considered one of the fundamental ingredients in the overall DDR process. The rule of law has all but disappeared in parts of the DRC as a result of protracted conflict and poor governance. In some provinces, government forces are as much a threat to the local population as illegally

> **Alongside security sector reform, the rule of law should be considered one of the fundamental ingredients in the overall DDR process.**

armed individuals and groups. Under these conditions, the government is unable to create security, establish rule of law, or build trust with the population. To help reestablish security and civil structures, the UN and other international organizations should have provided better and longer training of the DRC's security forces, including better human rights training. As it was, very little time and money went into professionalizing DRC's forces. In addition, international organizations should have provided desperately needed training for lawyers and judges, the lack of which has undermined due process and the prosecution of war-related crimes. In both the short and long run, security is unlikely to take hold without a strong justice system, and justice is not possible without addressing rule of law—the ability to enforce the law and the capacity to prosecute those who violate it.

Finally, international organizations and regional actors need to rigorously address the role that neighboring countries have played and continue to play in the persistent violence in the DRC. Former Rwandan forces, in particular, have been a major source of instability. The presence of several Hutu nationalist forces within DRC, including the FDLR and Interahamwe, and the rise of the Tutsi M23 (which Rwanda allegedly funds), have perpetuated conflict in the Kivu region and caused ongoing civilian casualties and human rights violations, particularly against the Tutsi populations. Although some of the peace accords attempted to address the persistence of Rwandan rebel forces in DRC and compel their repatriation, these measures did not completely remove the Rwandan militants or pressure the Rwandan government to make meaningful changes. The DDR programs in DRC demonstrate that, in many cases, demobilizing armed combatants requires a transnational or even regional approach in order to stabilize a country and end the fighting.   ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MAJ Badura Hakimu is an intelligence officer with the Tanzanian Army.

Dr. Heather S. Gregg is an associate professor in the Defense Analysis department at the US Naval Postgraduate School.

NOTES

1   This article is taken from MAJ Hakimu's master's thesis. See Badura Hakimu, "Insecurity in the DRC: The Obstacle to Peace and Security" (master's thesis, US Naval Postgraduate School, December 2016).

2   "Democratic Republic of Congo: Ending Impunity for Sexual Violence," Human Rights Watch, 10 June 2014: https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/10/democratic-republic-congo-ending-impunity-sexual-violence ; Thomson Reuters Foundation News, "Congo (DR) Conflict," 9 December 2013: http://news.trust.org/spotlight/Congo-DR-conflict/?tab=background

3   The 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire was intended to end the Second Congolese War and included the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces. It was signed by Angola, the DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, and included Zambia, the Organisation of African Unity, the United Nations, and the Southern African Development Community. See "Ceasefire Agreement (Lusaka Agreement)," United Nations Peacemaker, n.d.: https://peacemaker.un.org/drc-lusaka-agreement99

4   Jeanne M. Haskin, *The Tragic State of the Congo: From Decolonization to Dictatorship* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), 131–33.

5   W. Andy Knight, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: An Overview," *African Security* 1, no. 1 (2008): 27: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19362200802285757

6   "What is DDR?" United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Resource Centre, May 2005: http://www.unddr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction_1.aspx

7   Alan Bryden and Vincenza Scherrer, "The DDR-SSR Nexus: Concepts and Policies," in *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and Security Sector Reform: Insights from UN Experience in Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, eds. Alan Bryden and Vincenza Scherrer (Vienna: LIT Verlag GmbH & Co., 2012), 5.

8   Martin Edmonds, Greg Mills, and Terence McNamee, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Local Ownership in the Great Lakes: The Experience of Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo," *African Security* 2, no. 1 (2009): 33: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19362200902766383

9   Nat J. Coletta, Markus Kostner, and Ingo Wiederhofer, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Lessons and Liabilities in Reconstruction," in *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 173.

10 Ibid.

11 Edmonds, Mills, and McNamee, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration," 33.

12 Kimberly Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1, no. 1 (2007): 66–90.

13 Coletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration," 174.

14 Edmonds, Mills, and McNamee, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration," 33.

15 Theidon, "Transitional Subjects," 71.

16 Knight, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration," 28.

17 The 2002 Pretoria Accord focused specifically on relations between the DRC and Rwanda. It aimed to further implement the 1999 Lusaka agreements and stipulated the withdrawal of Rwandan forces from the DRC in exchange for the demobilization of pro-Hutu forces in the country, including former FAR, FDRC, and Interahamwe. See "Peace Agreement between the Governments of Rwanda and the DRC on the Withdrawal of the Rwandan Troops from the Territory of the DRC and the Dismantling of the Ex-FAR and Interahamwe Forces in the DRC," UN Peacemaker, n.d.: https://peacemaker.un.org/drcrwanda-agreementwithdrawal2002

18 Zoë Marriage, "Flip-Flop Rebel, Dollar Soldier: Demobilisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo 1: Analysis," *Conflict, Security, & Development* 7, no. 2 (2007): 290; Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project, *Profile of Internal Displacement: Democratic Republic of Congo* (Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project, 25 October 2004): 17: http://docplayer.net/16400049-Profile-of-internal-displacement-democratic-republic-of-the-congo.html

19 Marriage, "Flip-Flop Rebel, Dollar Soldier," 294.

20 Ibid.

21 The 2002 Global and Inclusive Agreement, signed in Pretoria, South Africa, focused primarily on improving governance, security, and civil society in the DRC. It called for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the reunification and reconciliation of the country, the creation of a multiethnic professional army, and a political transition to a more inclusive democracy with judiciary and independent civil society. See "Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Pretoria Agreement)," United Nations Peacemaker, 16 December 2002: https://peacemaker.un.org/drc-agreementontransition2002

22 Henri Boshoff, *Completing the Demobilisation, Disarmament, and Reintegration Process of Armed Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Link to Security Sector Reform of FARDC: Mission Difficult!* Institute for Security Studies Situation Report (Pretoria, South Africa: ISS, 23 November 2010), 3–4: https://www.issafrica.org/uploads/SitRep2010_23Nov.pdf

23 James-Emanuel Wanki, "Disarming War, Arming Peace: The Congo Crisis, Dag Hammarskjöld's Legacy, and the Future Role of MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 11, no. 1 (27 March 2011): http://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/disarming-war-arming-peace/

24 Marriage, "Flip-Flop Rebel, Dollar Soldier," 292.

25 Mark Malan and Henri Boshoff, *A 90-Day Plan to Bring Peace to the DRC? An Analysis of the Pretoria Agreement of 30 July 2002*, Institute for Security Studies Paper 61 (Pretoria: ISS, 2002), 1: https://www.issafrica.org/uploads/PAPER61.PDF

26 Marriage, "Flip-Flop Rebel, Dollar Soldier," 291.

27 Ibid., 294.

28 Henri Boshoff, "Overview of Security Sector Reform Processes in the DRC," *African Security Review* 13, no. 4 (2004): 62: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2004.9627319

29 Marriage, "Flip-Flop Rebel, Dollar Soldier," 292.

30 Wanki, "Disarming War, Arming Peace."

31 Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 71.

32 International Peace Information Service, *Mapping Conflict Motives: M23* (Antwerp, Belgium: IPIS, 2012): http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20121130_Mapping_Conflict_Motives_M23.pdf

33 Janet McKnight, "Surrendering to the Big Picture: Historical and Legal Perspectives on Accountability in the Democratic Republic of Congo Following the Defeat of the March 23 Movement," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 3, no. 1 (2014): 5–18: http://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.de/

34 Heather S. Gregg, *Employment Handbook for Fighting Counterinsurgencies: A Toolkit for How to Build Rapport, Create Jobs and Work towards a Viable State*, Naval Postgraduate School Technical Report NPS-DA-09-001 (Monterey, Calif.: NPS, November 2009).

35 Carrol Faubert, *Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-Affected Countries* (New York: UNDP Evaluation Office, 2006), 9–10: http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/thematic/conflict/DRC.pdf

36 Sean McFate, *The Link between DDR and SSR in Conflict-Affected Countries* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), 2–3: http://www.usip.org/publications/the-link-between-ddr-and-ssr-in-conflict-affected-countries

37 Marriage, "Flip-Flop Rebel, Dollar Soldier," 291.

COL Amarsaikhan Serdari, Mongolian Army

# Dealing with Contingencies in South Sudan

The conflict in South Sudan is unlikely to cease in the near future, and there are indications that it is turning into a protracted one.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1996 (2011) to "consolidate peace and security, and help establish conditions for development in the Republic of South Sudan."[1] Over the past few years, however, UNMISS has been highly criticized by the international community for failing to carry out its mandate. The Security Council's mandate tasks the peacekeepers with protecting civilians, deterring human rights violations, creating conditions conducive for the delivery of humanitarian aid, and supporting the conflict resolution agreement in South Sudan. These tasks are all of equal importance, and UNMISS has made a great deal of progress in implementing each of them. Nevertheless, critics believe that UNMISS has mismanaged recent crisis situations or in some cases, completely failed in its response. Specifically, UNMISS has been accused of failing to protect civilians in Malakal, Upper Nile State, in February 2016 and of being useless in Juba, the nation's capital, when serious fighting broke out among South Sudanese factions in July 2016.

As a result of these incidents, the UN Security Council decided to send a Regional Protection Force to the young African nation and increase UNMISS's troop level by 4,000.[2] Many of those who monitor the security situation in South Sudan are asking, "Will the Security Council's mandate be better implemented with a larger UNMISS force? Will the additional force become a 'game changer' and improve the performance of UNMISS?" Although it might sound discouraging, the short answer to these two questions is no. The additional force might temporarily, and to some degree, stabilize the security of Juba, but it will not improve the overall performance of UNMISS or contribute significantly to the implementation of the mandate without several further improvements to the force's capabilities.

Background

After more than five decades of struggle, the people of South Sudan managed to gain their independence, and a new nation, the Republic of South Sudan, was born on 9 July 2011. At the same time, a new UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, was established. South Sudan, however, enjoyed relative peace and stability for only two years. In December 2013, President Salva Kiir, a member of the Dinka tribe, accused his deputy, First Vice President Riek Machar, a Nuer, of plotting a coup and attempting to seize power and dismissed him from office.[3] The accusation was justified, and violence broke out in the capital city, Juba, on 15 December, when ethnic Dinka
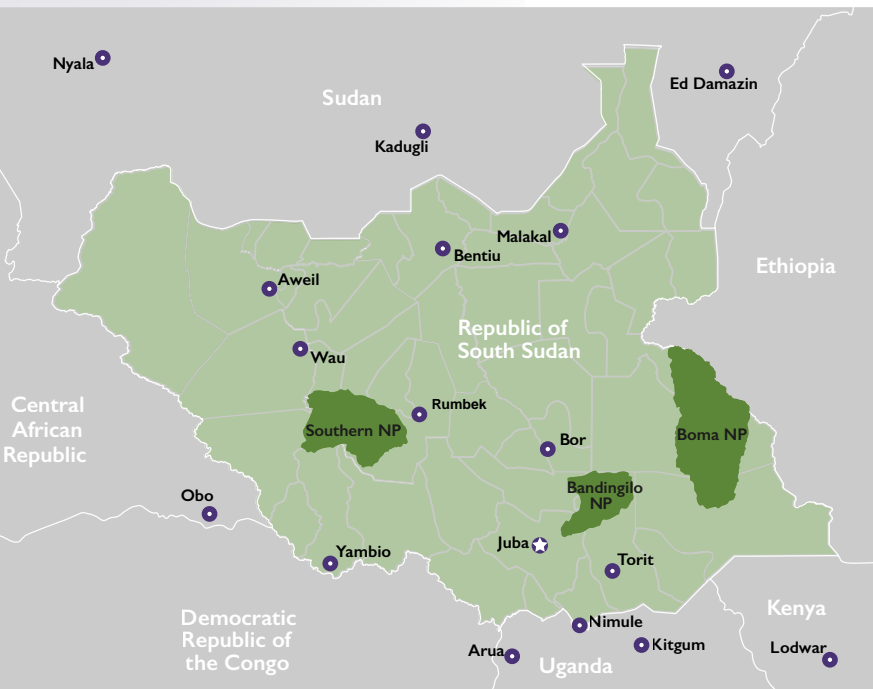
UN team visits Tonga, Upper Nile State in November 2015. This is a group photo of the team with SPLA-iO leaders. (Faces have been blurred for privacy.)

and Nuer soldiers opened fire on each other. The violence quickly spread to other parts of South Sudan and became a civil war that, over a period of two years, took the lives of more than 50,000 people, most of whom were innocent civilians, and displaced approximately 800,000 others.

The rival leaders signed a peace agreement in August 2015, after many months of peace talks and negotiations held in neighboring capitals. Riek Machar finally came back to Juba in April 2016. The two sides formed a Transitional Government of National Unity, and the opposition leader once again became First Vice President of South Sudan. This time the peace lasted only three months. Things went terribly wrong in July 2016, when some of the government's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers, manning a checkpoint in Juba, clashed with a patrol of Machar's Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-iO). Over the following days, the clash turned into full-scale fighting with heavy weaponry including tanks, large caliber guns, and attack helicopters. Ironically, the fighting took place in the capital city over the country's Independence Day. More than 300 people lost their lives, thousands sought protection in UN camps in Juba, and several thousand fled the country.[4]

The situation in South Sudan remains volatile and uncertain at present, and in many analysts' assessments, the country is again on the brink of an all-out civil war. Despite the peace agreement and various international arrangements, including the ones facilitated and supported by the so-called Troika (Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the African Union's Peace and Security Council, and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, the government of South Sudan and the opposition are unable to resolve their differences. In addition, the conflict is further deepening rifts between the Dinkas, Nuers, Shilluks, Mabanese, and other tribes of South Sudan. The conflict is unlikely to cease in the near future, and there are indications that it is turning into a protracted one.

UNMISS's Problem

There are two primary reasons, among many, for UNMISS's ineffectiveness in controlling the violence: the first is its inability to move freely and intervene where needed, and the second is that it lacks the means to "see and hear" the operational environment. UNMISS is unable to move freely because both the government of South Sudan and the opposition intentionally use their respective forces to prevent UNMISS from being able to reach and intervene in conflict areas. The South Sudanese place restrictions on UNMISS's ground, air, and riverine movements so frequently that UNMISS has faced difficulties in recent years just moving the supplies and personnel it needs to sustain its bases. Peacekeepers are often being denied access to conflict zones by SPLA and SPLA-iO soldiers, and there have been instances when well-equipped and armed peacekeepers

were stopped and turned back just a few meters away from their own bases. UNMISS's complaints of movement restriction, which they consider violations of existing status of forces agreements, are usually ignored by both the government and the opposition.

Most, if not all, movements of supplies and people require UN military personnel to provide force protection and liaison support, but the restrictions persist, so having a large peacekeeping force—currently 12,760 strong—is no help to UNMISS. Although some say the peacekeepers are not up to their tasks and are not capable of doing anything, this is not the case. They are quite capable of fulfilling their tasks when they know and understand their operating environment. UNMISS's peacekeepers are reluctant to force their way through SPLA and SPLA-iO checkpoints because they do not know what to expect down the road or on the way back to base. They are hesitant to secure an airport without assurances that the SPLA or SPLA-iO are not going to come back with a heavier force. They are not willing to stand their ground without knowing that they will succeed in their mission. In short, UNMISS's peacekeepers do not want to take unnecessary risks when they are unsure that they can prevail over their adversaries. What the peacekeepers need is foresight and information—intelligence—on terrain, water, weather, population, and most importantly, on the adversary. UNMISS needs to be equipped with an adequate intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability to be effective and able to deal with challenging situations, including restriction of movement.

> **ISR would reduce uncertainty, improve situational awareness, and increase the confidence of the peacekeepers when they are faced with obstacles such as restriction of movement.**

A Solution to the Problem

ISR capability is absolutely necessary for UNMISS to be effective in South Sudan. ISR would improve the mobility and intervention capacity of the peacekeeping force by reducing uncertainty, improving situational awareness, and increasing the confidence of the peacekeepers when they are faced with obstacles such as restriction of movement. ISR would also significantly improve the overall performance of the troops in protecting civilians, deterring various threats to UN personnel and humanitarian aid providers, and supporting cease-fire agreements, all of which will contribute to the full implementation of the Security Council's mandate.

The following three incidents demonstrate the urgent need for UNMISS to have ISR capability. The incidents took place in the past few years, and it is very likely that others like them will occur in the future. Each event resulted in the loss of not only UN property and supplies, but also many lives, and the outcomes damaged the credibility of the United Nations and its peacekeeping force. Each one could have been averted had UNMISS possessed an adequate ISR capability.

The Kaka Crisis

In late October 2015, SPLA-iO forces took UNMISS personnel hostage and seized UN transport ships

Indian Army contingent commander in Renk briefs Sector North Commander. Renk, Upper Nile State, December 2015

UNPOL briefs Sector North Commander on the situation in the POC site in Bentiu, Unity State, January, 2016.

with vital supplies in Kaka, Upper Nile State.[5] UNMISS relies on barge convoys to transport and deliver bulky items, supplies, and heavy equipment along the Nile River to bases in remote areas of South Sudan. In early October 2015, a convoy of UN barges moved from Mangalla to Malakal, where it offloaded its main cargo. The decision was then made to deliver goods and materials to Melut and Renk in Upper Nile State, where other UN bases were located, using the same barge convoy. On 24 October 2015 the barges and some boats—codenamed LifeLine 14—sailed north from Malakal to Melut. After reaching and offloading at Melut, the LifeLine convoy continued its journey northward on 26 October, intending to deliver supplies to the UN base in Renk, a city located close to the border with Sudan, collect some equipment there, and sail back upriver.

Shortly after leaving Melut, the LifeLine crew observed a major SPLA-iO installation on the western bank of the river, and several vessels and barges docked in front of it. One of these barges had a T-55 tank on it. There were approximately 1,500 rebel soldiers on the river bank, all of anti-aircraft guns. A speedboat with the LifeLine convoy and signaled for were observed to have their engines running UN convoy from moving forward. The had to stop. At that moment, all of the including artillery, machine guns, and 50 or 60 SPLA-iO soldiers came onboard them armed, along with artillery and SPLA-iO troops onboard approached it to stop. Some of the SPLA-iO vessels ning, apparently ready to prevent the convoy slowed down and eventually SPLA-iO troops pointed their weapons, the tank gun, at the UN's barges, and the LifeLine convoy. The soldiers

> **All of the SPLA-iO troops pointed their weapons, including artillery, machine guns, and the tank gun, at the UN's barges.**

immediately started searching the UN barges and boats. Protests from the UN personnel had no effect. Later, the UN personnel, including military liaison officers, members of the Bangladeshi Force Marine Unit (BanFMU) Force Protection (FP) element, and crew members were taken ashore, disarmed, searched, interrogated, and placed in custody.

Over the following three days, the SPLA-iO offloaded the LifeLine barges, seizing 55,000 liters of fuel, two machine guns, five AK-47 assault rifles, an inflatable boat, a generator, communication equipment, ammunition, and many other items belonging to the UN and its personnel. On 1 November, after days of negotiation with the local SPLA-iO leadership, the

barges, some of the boats, the UN personnel, and the crew were released. Though the SPLA-iO promised to return the seized UN property, equipment, and weapons, efforts to collect them have been fruitless.

This incident illustrates the fact that UNMISS was oblivious to the SPLA-iO's plans and that the knowledge it thought it had about the force was not enough. The episode could have been prevented had UNMISS had current intelligence on the SPLA-iO in Kaka. In fact, the Kaka incident is evidence that the SPLA-iO has good knowledge of UNMISS, its personnel and forces, and its movement of goods. The concentration of SPLA-iO forces on the river and the disposition of its river crafts indicate that the SPLA-iO was prepared to intercept the LifeLine convoy and seize UNMISS goods, equipment, and weapons.

UNMISS made a mistake by not conducting route reconnaissance or checking the ground situation prior to the movement of its convoy. The use of imagery intelligence (IMINT) would possibly have detected the adversary's forces and indicated their intentions. Also, a simple reconnaissance of the sailing route by the BanFMU FP element would have been enough to prevent the LifeLine convoy from continuing its journey north of Melut. Ensuring safe movement of barges such as the LifeLine 14 is possible with proper intelligence, but as things are, it is possible that a similar incident will happen again in South Sudan. Therefore, it is highly recommended that UNMISS employ ISR—specifically IMINT—before and during this type of operation.

Crisis at the Malakal Protection of Civilians Site

UNMISS faced one of its toughest challenges when fighting broke out inside a UNMISS Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in Malakal on 17 February 2016. The PoC is located next to the UN base in Malakal, and prior to the fighting, it housed approximately 48,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) who came from South Sudan's three leading tribes, the Shilluks, Dinkas, and Nuers. A few Sudanese (Darfurian), Ugandan, Ethiopian, and Eritrean nationals also resided in the site, largely for commercial interests. Relations among the tribes and communities in the PoC were influenced by political, military, and security dynamics in the country, and they deteriorated whenever there were major political or security developments. The February 2016 crisis in the Malakal PoC was a direct result of the South Sudan government's decision to create new states.

Sector North Commander visits Mongolian Battalion in Bentiu, Unity state, 2015.

Sector North Commander reviews the honor guard of Mongolian Battalion in Bentiu, Unity state.

In October 2015, South Sudan's President Kiir issued an executive decree that divided the country's 10 states into 28 smaller states. The former Upper Nile State was split into three states, which were to be populated mainly by specific tribes: Western Nile for the Shilluks, Eastern Nile for the Dinkas, and Latjor for the Nuers. The president's decree and its implementation had a tremendous impact on the Malakal PoC residents. The creation of Eastern Nile State, which included Malakal and its environs, sharply increased tensions between the Dinkas and the Shilluks, who considered the region to be their ancestral land. This was as true within the PoC as outside it. The situation worsened further when the governor of Eastern Nile State, SPLA Lieutenant General Chol Thon Balok, an ethnic Dinka, issued an administrative order relieving all civil servants from non-Dinka tribes of their positions across the state. The Shilluks decided to fight the Dinkas and preserve their land.

Within the PoC, the Dinkas knew the Shilluks were determined to attack and got ready to fight back. Weapons and ammunition were covertly smuggled into the PoC. The situation was getting worse day by day.

Tension between the Shilluks and Dinkas reached a boiling point on the night of 16 February 2016, after two Dinka SPLA soldiers in civilian clothes attempted to enter the PoC with AK-47 ammunition. Violence was about to erupt as crowds of angry youths from the two tribes gathered and stood facing each other, but the UNMISS's Formed Police Unit (FPU) intervened and managed to prevent the outbreak of hostilities. The next evening, however, around 2230 local time, the youths came back with weapons—AK-47s, light machine guns, and hand grenades—and opened fire on each other. The fighting lasted 17 hours, with few interruptions, and it involved the active participation of government troops on the side of the Dinkas. The SPLA not only took part in the PoC fighting, but also sent troops to secure the Malakal Airport, deployed an infantry unit near the UNMISS base on the river bank where a BanFMU detachment was stationed, and assisted the Dinka IDPs with leaving the PoC for Malakal town before and during the fighting.[6] UN-MISS's peacekeeping force responded on the afternoon of 18 February, when more SPLA reinforcements entered the PoC to support the Dinkas. The peacekeepers conducted a deliberate assault on the Dinka militants and the SPLA soldiers, drove them out of the PoC, and secured the site. The incident took the lives of 34 IDPs and injured more than 100. Violence has not recurred in the Malakal PoC since the military intervention.

Again, the crisis in the Malakal PoC site could have been prevented if UNMISS had been equipped with ISR capability. There were indications and warnings of the coming violence, such as shops closing, holes being cut into the PoC fencing for escape, and people getting ready to leave the site before the fighting, but these indicators were ignored. Some IDPs and humanitarian workers informed the UN police, FPU, UN Department of Safety and Security, and UNMISS's Field Office in Malakal about the tensions among the IDPs and possible dangers, but that information was never shared with the peacekeeping forces. The UN agencies were reporting to their chains of command, but didn't share their observations with one another. That was a mistake, one that is still being made.

> **The crisis developed because UNMISS did not have the capability to collect information on unfolding events, make timely assessments, or share those assessments.**

The UN Board of Inquiry and Special Investigation Team investigated the incident and later concluded that the peacekeeping force failed to react in time to the crisis in the PoC. It is true that there were a number of problems with the peacekeepers' response, and they were clearly identified in Sector North's After Action Report, which was shared with the UN investigators. Notwithstanding, the peacekeepers' actions, although much criticized, saved the lives of thousands of Shilluk and Nuer IDPs who were—and still are—targeted, harassed, kidnaped, and sometimes murdered by South Sudan's government force, the SPLA. The Malakal PoC incident in February 2016 was a result of UNMISS's failure to foresee the growing danger of the situation. The crisis developed because UNMISS did not have the capability to collect information on unfolding events, make timely assessments, or share those assessments among its responsive sections.

The Juba Crisis

UNMISS failed to effectively deal with a crisis situation that developed in the capital city of Juba in July 2016. In fact, the crisis in Juba demonstrated how fragile the peace in South Sudan is, how weak security is for South Sudanese and

The Assistant Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, El Ghassim Wane, visits Malakal, Upper Nile State, October 2016.

foreigners alike, and how incapable UNMISS is of protecting civilians if violence breaks out in the country.

While on the way back to their base from former First Vice President Riek Machar's residence on the evening of 7 July 2016, an SPLA-iO mounted patrol was stopped at a checkpoint manned by SPLA soldiers. Upon being threatened with disarmament and arrest, the patrol fired on the government soldiers, killing five and injuring several others, before escaping the scene.

The next day, President Kiir and First Vice President Machar met at the Presidential Palace to discuss the previous night's incident and find ways to prevent the outbreak of any further hostilities in the city. During the meeting, however, a shoot-out occurred at the palace between government troops and forces loyal to the first vice president, and it quickly turned into full-blown fighting. The fighting spread to Jebel, Gudele, and other districts of Juba where SPLA-iO forces were stationed. On 9 July, the fighting intensified. The SPLA placed tanks and armored personnel carriers at every intersection and deployed small groups of soldiers in close proximity to each other on the streets of Juba. It also deployed ZSU-23-4 anti-aircraft guns mounted on trucks around the Juba International airport. The next day, the SPLA launched a large offensive against opposition cantonments, including Riek Machar's residence, using T-72 tanks and MI-24 attack helicopters. In four days of heavy fighting, the SPLA defeated the opposition forces and took control of the city. On 11 July, President Kiir declared a ceasefire, but small-scale clashes continued in and around Juba in the following days. Opposition leader Machar withdrew from the city, and later fled the country. After the crisis, he was replaced by his associate Taban Deng Gai, who was sworn in as first vice president on 26 July 2016.

The heavy fighting in Juba resulted in more than 300 deaths and many more injuries. Hundreds of women and girls, including members of international organizations, were raped by SPLA soldiers during the crisis. Tens of thousands of people fled to neighboring countries to seek safety. The UN bases in Juba were caught in the crossfire, targeted, and then attacked, during which two peacekeepers and one UN civilian employee lost their lives. Government soldiers looted the World Food Program's storehouses in the capital city, and foreigners were targeted, robbed, beaten, and raped. During the crisis in Juba, UNMISS didn't know where the enemy fire was coming from and didn't attempt to locate and neutralize it.

The UN strongly condemned the fighting, killing, looting, and rape, but it must ask, "What could UNMISS have done differently in the Juba crisis?" Could it have saved the lives of innocent civilians? Could it have deterred violence against women and girls and prevented them from being raped? Could it have protected its bases, humanitarian warehouses, and other property? The answer to these last three questions is yes. Had UNMISS troops been equipped with the right tools—namely, ISR—and had UNMISS leadership been provided with current and updated information, things would have been different. UNMISS wouldn't have been able to stop the fighting, but it could have protected the peacekeeping mission, saved lives, and prevented looting, robberies, and rapes.

> **The crisis in Juba demonstrated how fragile the peace in South Sudan is and how weak security is for South Sudanese and foreigners alike.**

Conclusion

> **The UN strongly condemned the fighting, killing, looting, and rape, but it must ask, "What could UNMISS have done differently in the Juba crisis?"**

The three incidents described above occurred over a period of less than three years, and events like them are very likely to occur again in the future. An effective way to deal with similar circumstances is to equip UNMISS with an ISR capability.

UNMISS's inability to manage crisis situations led the UN Security Council to reinforce the mission with 4,000 more troops in 2016. The additional troops, most of whom have not yet been deployed as of this writing, are intended to secure Juba, critical infrastructure, and UN bases and enhance the protection of civilians. Raising the force level without proper equipment and weapons, however, is unlikely to improve the security situation in South Sudan. The larger force will face the same problems as the current UNMISS force—mainly, the restriction of movement. The restrictions on UNMISS's ground, air, and riverine movements, imposed by both the SPLA and the SPLA-iO, are hampering the successful execution of the mission's tasks, and ultimately, the ability of the peacekeepers to implement the UN mandate. An effective way to deal with movement restrictions is to equip UNMISS with an ISR capability. An ISR capability in support of civilian, military, and police components would better enable UNMISS to prepare for or avoid potential adversarial actions than will the deployment of additional troops. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

COL Amarsaikhan Serdari, Mongolian Army, served as Sector North Commander of the UNMISS operation in Malakal, South Sudan.

NOTES

1   See "Background," United Nations Mission in South Sudan, n.d.: https://unmiss.unmissions.org/background

2   United Nations, UN Security Council Resolution 2304 (2016); "South Sudan: Deployment of UN-Mandated Regional Protection Force Begins," UN News, 8 August 2017: https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/08/562962-south-sudan-deployment-un-mandated-regional-protection-force-begins

3   For an overview of Machar's career, see "South Sudan's Riek Machar Profiled," BBC, 26 April 2016: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25402865

4   "South Sudan: Alarmed by Violence in Yei, UN Mission Calls for Immediate End to Hostilities," UN News, 10 October 2016: https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/10/542312-south-sudan-alarmed-violence-yei-un-mission-calls-immediate-end-hostilities

5   "Head of Mission Urges Release of Remaining UN Personnel Taken Hostage in South Sudan," UN News, 30 October 2015: https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/10/514162-head-mission-urges-release-remaining-un-personnel-taken-hostage-south-sudan

6   The SPLA soldiers supported the Dinkas because they are from the same tribe, and many SPLA soldiers had family members residing in the PoC. Before the fighting broke out, some SPLA soldiers dressed in civilian clothes, entered the PoC, and remained there until the incident was over. Meanwhile, UNMISS forces were busy trying to manage the flow of IDPs from the PoC to the UN base.

THE CTAP INTERVIEW

Max Boot, Council on Foreign Relations

Interviewed by MAJ Anders Hamlin, US Army Special Forces

THIS INTERVIEW IS TAKEN FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE COMBATING Terrorism Archive Project (CTAP).[1] On 21 March 2018, noted military historian Max Boot visited the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, California, where he and Major Anders Hamlin discussed Boot's recently published biography of Edward Lansdale and the legacy of Lansdale's efforts to establish and support stable governments in the Philippines and Vietnam between 1950 and 1957.[2]

Anders HAMLIN: Your previous books covered subjects such as America's history of involvement in small wars, the history of guerilla warfare, and the impact of technological change on war and society. *The Road Not Taken* is your first biography.[3] Students of Edward Lansdale have access to his memoirs, along with Cecil Currey's biography and a number of other works that touch on Lansdale's career and legacy.[4] What does *The Road Not Taken* bring to the table?

Max BOOT: There is a lot of new research in this book that other people did not have access to, including the love letters that Ed Lansdale wrote to Pat Kelly, his longtime mistress, who eventually became his second wife. These were previously unavailable to any scholar. The letters that Lansdale was writing, often simultaneously, to his first wife, Helen, were also unavailable until I acquired them from family members. Some new documents have been declassified only in the last couple of years. So, together, all of this enabled me to offer the fullest and most in-depth portrait of Ed Lansdale and his storied career, which really goes beyond a lot of the myths and clichés and legends that have grown up around him over the decades. The new material enabled me to tell his story and have access to his innermost thinking in a way that previous authors have not had, and I put it all into the context of the most recent scholarship on the Vietnam War. So I think this is the most in-depth and most up-to-date treatment of Ed Lansdale that you are going to see anywhere.

HAMLIN: What made you choose to write about Ed Lansdale, especially in the Vietnam context?

BOOT: I was initially fascinated by Lansdale years ago, when I met one of his closest collaborators in New York, Rufus Phillips. Rufus was a wonderful guy. He joined the CIA right out of Yale and was sent to Saigon in 1954, where he went to work for Ed Lansdale and became one of his closest colleagues and friends. Rufus is now in his mid-80s and lives with his wife in northern Virginia. I wrote a couple of chapters about Lansdale in my last book, *Invisible Armies*.[5] My editor and I were talking about what I should do for an encore, and he suggested writing about Lansdale. I was initially skeptical, but I am very glad that he convinced me to do it, because there was a lot of new material there and a fascinating story. Getting this deep into the material made me realize how superficial a lot of the previous writing on him has actually been. So I think I bring a new perspective to the table.

Getting this deep into the material made me realize how superficial a lot of the previous writing on Lansdale has been.

Max Boot

Edward Lansdale

HAMLIN: How did your perspective change as you moved from writing about him as part of a case study in your previous work to writing a whole book about him?

BOOT: That's a great question. I learned a lot more about him, and I gained both a greater appreciation for some of those insights and a greater understanding of his limitations. You see both of those in the course of the book. I learned about the extent to which he immersed himself in local society and how hard he tried to learn about the culture that he was in, as a prelude to becoming an effective counterinsurgent or an effective operative in the realms of psychological and political warfare. But I also learned a lot about his limitations. He had a tendency to alienate his superiors. He clashed with various bureaucratic foes, often in ways that were ultimately counterproductive. There are a lot of episodes that I didn't write about at all in my previous book, including his involvement in Operation Mongoose to overthrow or kill Fidel Castro, which I detail pretty closely in this book.

HAMLIN: In the Philippines, Lansdale had an ideal partner in Ramon Magsaysay and faced an insurgency generally isolated on the island of Luzon. How much of Lansdale's famous success in the Philippines was a function of those fortunate circumstances?

BOOT: There is no question that circumstances were much more favorable for Lansdale in the Philippines than they were subsequently in Vietnam, but remember, it's always easy to conclude in hindsight that things would have worked out because they did work out. But when Lansdale went back to the Philippines on a second tour in 1950, the situation looked pretty dire, and many in the US government assumed that the Philippines could fall to the Huks—the communist insurgents—at any time. So I would push back on the notion that it was an easy situation or that success was foreordained. There is no question, however, that because the insurgents lacked outside support, and because Lansdale was working within a culture that he understood very well, and because he had a protégé and partner in the very charismatic and successful politician Ramon Magsaysay, he found much more favorable terrain for his operations in the Philippines than he would subsequently in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, he was dealing with a state that was next door to the enemy and an insurgency that received growing amounts of support from North Vietnam. Initially, he also faced a lot of problems in Vietnam with the French, who were supporting various political and religious sects against the central government. And the man he had to work with, Ngo Dinh Diem, was far from charismatic—a reclusive scholarly guy who was authoritarian by disposition. Lansdale also didn't speak any language but English and had to communicate with Diem through a translator. All of that makes what he was able to achieve in the next couple of years even more impressive in some ways, because he did manage to set up the state of South Vietnam in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. When he left Vietnam at the end of 1956, the new state appeared to be on a fairly solid footing. His achievement was not destined to endure, but I think what he tried to forge in South Vietnam might have been more lasting if he had been allowed to go back and continue working with Diem. But he never had the opportunity to do so.
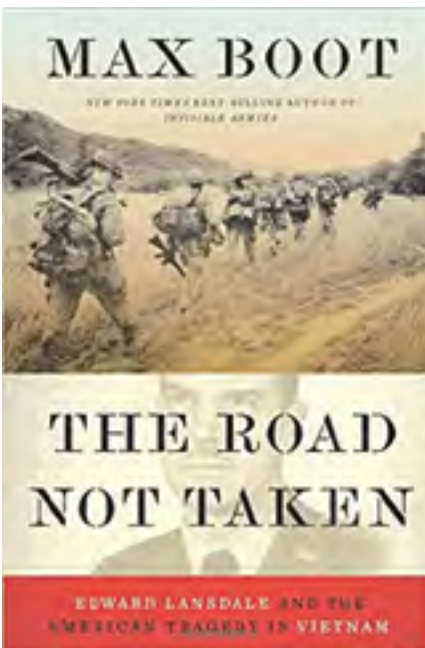
HAMLIN: John Paul Vann is perhaps even more famous than Lansdale as the archetypal American advisor in Vietnam. Vann considered Lansdale to be a hero, but by 1972, Vann was coordinating B-52 strikes and fighting the type of war that Lansdale had sought to avoid. Was John Paul Vann the anti-Lansdale?

BOOT: No, I wouldn't say he was the anti-Lansdale. They were friends and saw eye to eye on a lot of things. Both of them opposed a heavy-handed use of force to put down an insurgency. I would say that Vann was more focused on the purely military sphere of operations, whereas Lansdale was much more focused on politics. During the Easter Offensive, Vann and other US advisors did a tremendous job of bolstering the the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) by calling in air strikes that enabled the South Vietnamese to repel the North Vietnamese invasion.[6] In some ways, I think that Vann and the other US advisors were making up for the weaknesses of the ARVN's leadership—factionalism, corruption, and favoritism. The critical contribution that Vann and other advisors made in 1972 was to backstop the ARVN officer corps and essentially step in when ARVN officers didn't get the job done. The American officers stepped forward and provided very effective leadership to the ARVN troops and also, of course, very effective liaison work with American air power. If we had managed to keep 5,000 advisors and air power on call after the Paris Peace Accords in 1973, South Vietnam might have continued to exist. I think the role that Vann and the other advisors played was a critical one in 1972.

> **What Lansdale tried to forge in South Vietnam might have been more lasting if he had been allowed to go back and continue working with Diem.**

> We default to killing insurgents in the hope that this strategy will kill the insurgency, and we are usually disappointed.

HAMLIN: In *The Road Not Taken*, you quote Rufus Phillips saying about Lansdale, "We shall not see his like again, but his ideas shall never die." Do you think that this is true? Is it possible that Lansdale's ideas, if not dead, have been forgotten in some ways?

BOOT: His ideas continue to live to some extent—I certainly hope that I am keeping them alive and introducing them to a new generation. Lansdale handicapped himself because he did not set out his methods in a very persuasive format, in the way that T.E. Lawrence, David Galula, and other writers did.[7] As a result, these strategists became more influential because people can consult their writings today. I have tried to make up for that gap with this book, by laying out his life and how some of his ideas might have salience today. Although Lansdale was not cited in the Army/Marine COIN Manual, General David Petraeus [commander, US forces in Iraq] was certainly aware of his ideas, and Lansdale's approach to politics, above all, certainly played a role in the [2007 Iraq troop] surge. I think his ideas are the basis of modern COIN 101, but now there is a bit of a disconnect between COIN theory and actual COIN practice. In COIN practice, we tend to concentrate a lot of resources on leadership targeting, the targeting of terrorist groups, using decapitation strategies—killing insurgents rather than trying to pursue a favorable political end state, which is what Lansdale was all about. Of course, we do that because it's much easier. We know how to do leadership targeting. We have a lot of trouble doing the politics, so we default to killing insurgents in the hope that this strategy will kill the insurgency, and we are usually disappointed. We are constantly forced to confront the truths that Lansdale put out there: it's not enough to kill insurgents, you have to offer a better alternative. I think that's the biggest challenge we face in the war on terrorism, just as it was the biggest challenge that the United States faced battling communist insurgencies in places like the Philippines and Vietnam.

HAMLIN: Who are the Lansdales of today, those who know the answers and should be listened to?

BOOT: That's a great question. There certainly are some SOF operators, FAOs [foreign area officers], and advisors who have spent some time out there. There are also various civilian experts such as, for example, Carter Malkasian, a historian who worked with the Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan; and Sarah Chayes, a former National Public Radio reporter who lived in Kandahar

Junction City Supply Drop

for years and worked with the US command in Afghanistan. These are people who have that very specific, on-the-ground knowledge that Lansdale possessed. But the challenge is similar to the challenge that Lansdale faced: how do you translate these insights into the Washington policy process? How do you make people in Washington pay attention to what you know—what you are learning on the ground? I think that, in many ways, that's the biggest challenge that these latter-day Lansdales confront.

HAMLIN: The Philippines are still troubled by the communist New People's Army in the north and of course, by various Islamist terrorists and insurgents in the south. What would Lansdale do if he were advising the Philippine government today?

BOOT: That would be a tall order, because I think it would be very hard to make [Philippines president] Rodrigo Duterte listen to anybody, much less an American. But I think what Lansdale would certainly do is focus on the government and try to link the government with the people to address people's needs. That's not happening because Duterte is pursuing a strongman strategy of sending out vigilantes to kill supposed drug dealers. In some ways, it's a little reminiscent of [former Philippines president] Ferdinand Marcos, whom Duterte greatly admires. Lansdale was not in the Philippines by the time Marcos declared martial law in the early 1970s and became a dictator. Lansdale was retired and back in Washington, but he still had a lot of friends in the Philippines, and they were telling him, "This guy Marcos is going to come to grips with the insurgency; he is going to impose law and order and crack down on crime, so it will be a great thing." Lansdale was very skeptical because he was concerned that Marcos would become a self-serving strongman. Of course, those fears were amply vindicated.

Lansdale would probably have a very similar concern about Duterte today, who is also this wannabe strongman who cracks down on insurgents and crime and so forth. But he is going about it in such a heavy-handed fashion that it's almost certain to backfire. Under his direction, the Philippine army has used massive force to try to defeat ISIS offshoots in the southern Philippine islands with some limited success, but I don't think this policy is actually going to bring lasting peace. I believe that the fundamental reason you have insurgencies is bad government. The countries that are well governed don't have insurgencies. Nobody worries about an insurgency in Switzerland. But in the Philippines, as long as you have this bad government, you are going to have insurgencies, whether they're Islamic, or communist, or what have you.

HAMLIN: What would Lansdale suggest for Afghanistan in 2018?

BOOT: Again, I suspect that Lansdale would focus on trying to make the Afghan government less corrupt, more accountable, and more effective, and he would work closely with the leadership in Kabul to try to achieve those aims. I think one of the big failures in our Afghanistan policy is that we became alienated from our ally [former president] Hamid Karzai, just as we became alienated from our Vietnamese ally Ngo Dinh Diem in the early 1960s. We were at loggerheads with Karzai, and we didn't have anybody on our side who could influence him in a positive direction, at least not after [Zalmay] Khalilzad stepped down [as US ambassador to Afghanistan]. So I think Lansdale would have focused on trying to find somebody who could work very closely with [Afghan president]

> Lansdale would focus on the government, and try to link the government with the people to address people's needs.

Ashraf Ghani in a supportive fashion and help align the efforts of the US and Afghan governments so that we don't wind up at loggerheads again. I think Lansdale would probably be cheered by some of Ghani's attempts to crack down on corruption and put some corrupt generals and officials on trial. He would want to put the US government behind those efforts, and he would probably be dismayed to see that other branches of the US government are often working at odds with that focus on corruption. The CIA and others, including Special Operations Forces, have basically hired their own private Afghan armies. That has achieved some immediate tactical effects against the Taliban, but it also comes at a cost of fostering corruption and warlordism, and undermining the authority of the central governments. Lansdale would be concerned about some of those developments and would want to focus more on trying to increase people's faith in the government, this being the ultimate route by which to defeat the Taliban.

HAMLIN: In your book *War Made New*, you touched on the growing proliferation of UAVs, unmanned aerial vehicles.[8] In the years since that book was written, we have come to rely more and more on these and other high-tech tools for prosecuting our counterinsurgency and counterterrorist campaigns. What would Lansdale say about this reliance and about the associated focus on leadership targeting?

BOOT: Oh, Lansdale would be very skeptical about trying to find technological solutions to fundamentally human problems. This reminds me of his encounter with [then-US secretary of defense] Robert McNamara in, I think, 1962. McNamara called him into his office and asked for his help in trying to computerize the Vietnam War, to reduce everything down to a matter of numbers and calculations that could be fed into a computer. Lansdale said to him, "Well, that's great, Mr. Secretary, but don't lose sight of the X factor." McNamara began to write "X factor" on his graph paper and asked, "What is that?" Lansdale said, "That's something that can't actually be calculated. It's the feelings of the people. It's the sentiments of the people about whom they want to be governed by. That's ultimately going to determine the course of this conflict." I think it's important to keep that insight in mind today, because the reason why these Islamist terrorist groups find a foothold among various populations, whether it's the Pashtuns in Afghanistan, the Sunnis in Iraq or Syria, or groups in Somalia, Libya, and Nigeria—in so many other places—is because the government is alienating

some substantial sector of its own population. That's not a problem you are going to kill your way out of.

To move away from channeling Lansdale for a second and give my own view, I would say that drone strikes and the use of drones for ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] and all of this other stuff is useful. I am not saying we shouldn't do it, but it's not the solution, and we're fooling ourselves if we think it is. It can be part of an integrated strategy, but it should not be the whole strategy. Drones are used for everything these days, including a lot of ISR, but if you are talking about kinetic drone strikes, with Reapers and stuff like that, that's basically a version of what JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command] has been doing since 2001. Remember that JSOC became the world's greatest manhunting machine under [former JSOC commanding general Stanley] McChrystal.

> **Islamist terrorist groups find a foothold among various populations because the government is alienating some substantial sector of its own citizens.**

JSOC killed a lot of people in Iraq between 2003 and 2006—a lot of people who deserved killing—but the decapitation strategy didn't really achieve any larger strategic affect. At most, it can achieve some short-term tactical effects, disrupt some terrorist operations, which could be a good thing, but it certainly is not going to defeat the insurgents. You are basically mowing the lawn. You didn't see violence actually start to come down until the surge in 2007–2008, when General Petraeus implemented a much more comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy, of which leadership targeting was one aspect. You also had political aspects and providing security to the people—there was a lot more going on.

HAMLIN: Earlier, you mentioned that the difficulty that modern Lansdales face is translating their expertise and ideas into the policy process. You also mentioned that Lansdale's biggest limitation was in clashing with the bureaucracy and alienating supporters. To what extent is this an internal bureaucratic problem?
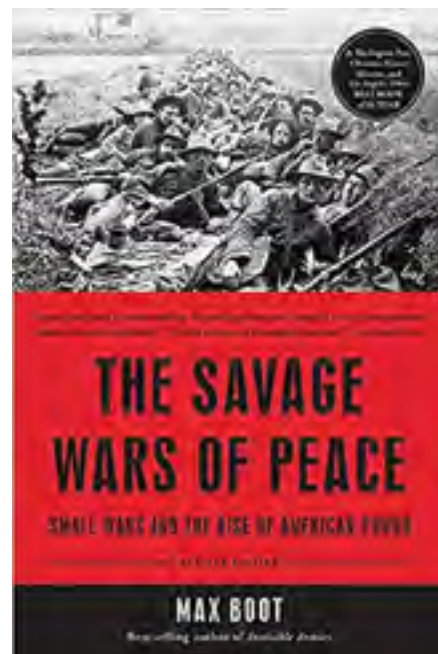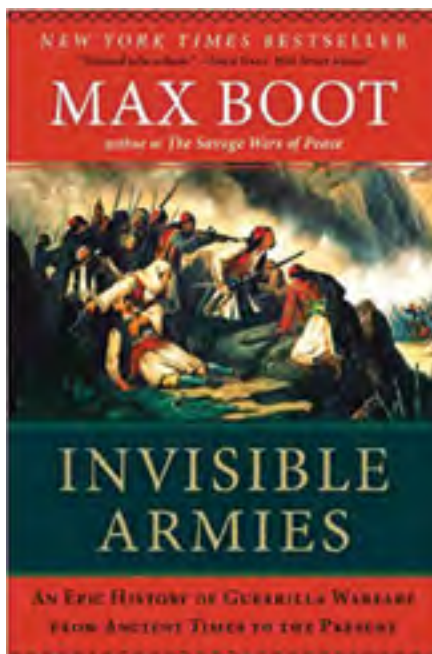
BOOT: Well, it is a long-lasting problem. In some ways, Lansdale's travails mirror those of T.E. Lawrence, who was very successful at winning over the Bedouin tribesmen, but not so successful at winning over the statesmen in Whitehall. Lawrence was very frustrated by the results of the post–World War I peace settlement, which undid a lot of what he was trying to achieve in terms of fostering Arab independence. Instead, of course, the French and British governments carved up the Middle East between them into new colonies. So I think there are a lot of similarities

with Lansdale, who achieved some success on the ground but then was stymied because he was ultimately ignored by the powers that be in Washington, who went ahead with the Diem coup in 1963 against his advice. Also against his advice, they Americanized the war effort, sent in vast numbers of troops, tried to bomb the North into submission—they did all of these things that Lansdale warned would not work. So I think this is an enduring problem. It's especially tough because kinetic actions brief so well. When I was sitting in on some of these battle update assessments in Baghdad and Kabul, every morning the commander would be briefed on the JSOC "jackpots" of the previous night: here is the bad guy they took down. That's an obvious metric of success that briefs well. Things like key leader engagements are just not as sexy because this work of trying to build a long-term relationship doesn't necessarily produce immediate results. Trying to influence local leaders is important and people recognize that, but again, it doesn't translate into an obvious metric of success. So I think there is always a tendency to fall for the sexier kinetic approach and to neglect the unsexy, long-term, often frustrating work of building up these relationships that ultimately may prove more important in defeating the insurgency.

> There is a tendency to fall for the sexier kinetic approach and neglect the unsexy, long-term, often frustrating work of building relationships.

HAMLIN: Your books *Savage Wars of Peace* and *Invisible Armies* look respectively at American experiences with small wars and the history of guerillas, terrorists, insurgents, and counterinsurgents.[9] As we approach 18 years of involvement in Afghanistan, what historical lessons are most applicable for Special Operations and conventional forces serving in Afghanistan, and for policy makers in Washington?

BOOT: The first lesson that jumps out at me is the historical importance of cross-border sanctuaries for determining the failure or success of any insurgency. In the case of Afghanistan, the support the Taliban receive from Pakistan makes it virtually impossible to defeat them, and certainly impossible with the levels of force that we have in Afghanistan. That's going to remain an eternal source of frustration because I don't think that cross-border support is going to change anytime soon. The government of Pakistan isn't going to give up on the Taliban.

Other forces that contribute to the success of the Taliban have to do with the corruption and brutality of the Afghan government and the warlords who are aligned with it. Again, that's part of the historic norm, because insurgencies flourish when governments are dishonest, corrupt, and abusive, and lose the support of the people. I think most Afghans support their own government, but there is a substantial minority, concentrated especially in Pashtun areas in the south and east, who don't. The ineptitude of the government and the prevalence of cross-border sanctuaries are the two most important factors that have shaped the war in Afghanistan. US troops have done the best they could, but they could not overcome these huge adversities.

HAMLIN: How do you think the United States should engage with the world over the next 10 years? How should we use the elements of our national power, especially with respect to peer competitors like Russia and China?

BOOT: Lansdale actually offers a pretty decent model of how to interact with the rest of the world. He tried to interact empathetically, sympathetically with foreigners, and treated people with respect and dignity. Those are good hall-marks of the way we should conduct ourselves. Unfortunately, I don't think [US] President [Donald] Trump understands the importance of soft power, but soft power has been the secret sauce of American foreign policy. The United States is the richest country and has the most powerful military, but our military is still outnumbered by all of the other militaries in the world. If we had been a threat-ening, aggressive power like Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union or Napoleonic France, we would have seen a big coalition of states ganging up to contain and eventually bring us down. That hasn't happened because we have been a relatively benign power. There is a coalition of states that is against us, but we also have allies all over the world, far more than do countries like China and Russia, which are very threatening to their neighbors and have almost no real friends. We have a lot of real friends, and I think that is truly the secret of American success in the world: we are able to mobilize this huge free-world coalition of like-minded states. My concern is that we fritter that away with this "America First" foreign policy, which I think needlessly alienates the rest of the world and undermines America's core strengths as a country that stands for human freedom and dignity, in the way that Lansdale did. I suggest that we should continue the approach that American policy makers have taken since 1945: being relatively benign in our approach to the world, not taking full advantage of any relationship, trans-forming former foes into friends, defending democracies, promoting free trade, and standing for democratic freedom—all of these things that our country is all about. I think they have stood us in great stead all around the world, and I hope they remain the defining characteristics of American foreign policy.

HAMLIN: Where do you think Lansdale's legacy is most felt? In the CIA? The Air Force? Special Operations?

BOOT: I don't think he left a lasting imprint on the CIA or the Air Force, because he was such an outlier in both organizations. In some ways, his legacy may be most alive in the Special Forces, because one of his bureaucratic successes in the late 1950s or early 60s was in convincing the Special Forces to take on the counterinsurgency mission, which, of course, remains a hallmark of the SOF to this day. A lot of the thinking on counterinsurgency—COIN 101 these days—is based on concepts that Lansdale developed in the early 1950s and which he

> **One of Lansdale's bureaucratic successes was in convincing the Special Forces to take on the counterinsurgency mission.**

relentlessly promoted from the late 1950s on. Some of the things that he taught endure to this present day, primarily within the Army and Marine Corps, which are the two services that are most focused on counterinsurgency. But what he was teaching about the importance of politics and political advising and working with foreign leaders—that aspect of his teaching is largely neglected. It's a positive development that the Army is standing up these security forces assistance brigades, because that's in the Lansdalian vein: recognizing the importance of advise-and-assist missions to promote our security interests. But there is not really a comparable effort on the political/civilian side of advising. That remains a gap in US capabilities, and we could learn something from Lansdale's day. I think that in today's war on terror, we could really use an army of Lansdales out there, but they don't exist.

HAMLIN: What advice do you have for Special Operations officers here at NPS who are preparing to return to the force?

BOOT: I would focus on two pieces of advice. The most potent weapon system you are ever going to possess is the one between your ears. The more I read and learn about the history of warfare, the more I am convinced that there is nothing more powerful than a good idea. You have to think your way to victory before you can achieve actual victory on the battlefield. The military tends to place a lot of emphasis on the martial virtues of strength and bravery and that kind of stuff, and obviously those are important, but at the end of the day, the most important attribute is being smart and savvy—that ultimately trumps everything else. If you look at the success that Ed Lansdale enjoyed, it wasn't because he was a crack shot or good at martial arts or anything like that. As far as I know, he never killed an enemy in battle, but he managed to achieve a lot of national security objectives just by thinking about war in a different way. So that's a big lesson.

The second lesson, again drawing from Lansdale's experience, is about the primacy of politics. I assume that everybody reading this knows the famous dictum from [military strategist Carl von] Clausewitz about war being a continuation of politics by other means. It's one thing to hear that, and it's another thing to internalize it and really grasp what that means in practice. Too often, we treat warfare as an engineering exercise, a targeting exercise, a technical exercise: putting steel on target and eliminating enemies of one kind or another. We forget that, ultimately, what counts is building up a political system. We should keep in mind that in the past, whenever we've failed in the political realm, we have squandered whatever gains we won on the battlefield, whether it was in World War I, or more recently in places like Somalia, Haiti, and Iraq. That's a lesson that we should have learned time and time again. On the home front, the military is supposed to be non-partisan, and abroad they feel that politics isn't really their job; the State Department or somebody else should step in and do it. But as I am sure you realize, when you look behind you, increasingly, you don't see anybody there. So, if the military doesn't focus on the politics of whatever country it is deployed to, more often than not, nobody else is going to do it either. It's going to be a vacuum that gets filled by our enemies. Effective political engagement is imperative.

One of Lansdale's insights was that the US military has a huge political impact wherever it goes because we bring all of these resources and troops, and we have a huge impact on local society. But most of the time we don't realize it—we are

The most potent weapon system you are ever going to possess is the one between your ears.

In the past, whenever we've failed in the political realm, we have squandered whatever gains we won on the battlefield.

My final bit of advice: think about the political impact that you have when you engage.

mindless about it. You have certainly seen that in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, where we constantly empower certain factions of society and disempower others. It's often done with tiny stupid little things we didn't even think about, like giving out contracts to provide concrete for blast barriers for our bases. We don't normally think about who is going to provide that concrete and whom is he aligned with politically. Where is the money going to go? Is it going to fuel corruption? You have to do a deep level of analysis to even begin to understand the political impact that you are having on a society, but most of the time we don't do that. So that would be my final bit of advice: think about the political impact that you have when you engage. That's crucially important. ❖

NOTES

1   The Combating Terrorism Archive Project (CTAP) aims to collect and archive knowledge on strategy, operations, and tactics used by military and other security personnel from around the world in the twenty-first-century fight against global terrorism. Collectively, the individual interviews that CTAP conducts constitute an oral history archive of knowledge and experience in counterterrorism for the benefit of the CT community now and in the future.

2   This interview was edited for length and clarity. Every effort was made to ensure that the meaning and intention of the participants were not altered in any way. The ideas and opinions of all participants are theirs alone and do not represent the official positions of the US Naval Postgraduate School, the US Department of Defense, the US government, or any other official entity.

3   Max Boot, *The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018).

4   Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1988).

5   Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).

6   The 1972 Easter Offensive, also called the Eastertide Offensive, was a large conventional invasion of South Vietnam by the North Vietnamese.

7   T.E. Lawrence is better known as Lawrence of Arabia. His most famous book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, is still in print (London: Penguin Classics, 2000). David Galula was a French military officer and scholar whose work on counterinsurgency draws on the lessons learned from 130 years of French colonial warfare. He published two books: *Pacification in Algeria* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1963) and *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger Security International, 1964).

8   Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006).

9   Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

THE CTAP INTERVIEW

Reza Marashi, National Iranian American Council

Interviewed by Dr. Doug Borer, US Naval Postgraduate School

Tʜɪs ɪɴᴛᴇʀᴠɪᴇᴡ ɪs ᴛᴀᴋᴇɴ ꜰʀᴏᴍ ᴛʜᴇ ᴄᴏʟʟᴇᴄᴛɪᴏɴ ᴏꜰ ᴛʜᴇ Cᴏᴍʙᴀᴛɪɴɢ Terrorism Archive Project (CTAP).[1] On 12 September 2016, Reza Marashi, research director at the National Iranian American Council, visited the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, California. Dr. Doug Borer of the Defense Analysis Department at NPS spoke with Marashi about the then-recently concluded multilateral agreement to constrain Iran's nuclear program, Iran's tactics in the Persian Gulf, and the role of Hezbollah and Iran in Syria.[2] Although this interview took place over a year ago, the discussion remains fresh and relevant to the present geostrategic situation, particularly as the current US administration considers abrogating the Iran nuclear deal.

Doug BORER: I want to start by talking about a bit of news that came out recently concerning the release of some of the American prisoners who were in Iranian jails and the supposed payments that were made for them.[3] What is your view on the importance of that news?

Reza MARASHI: The Iranian government's imprisonment of dual nationals— people who hold citizenship in both Iran and the United States or Europe—has long been a problem. But let's focus on American citizens. This is a problem that's been going on for over three decades now. What separates this specific instance from incidents in the past is that the United States now has channels of communication with Iran that we haven't had in more than 30 years. So, we were able to directly discuss with the Iranians potential ways to resolve the current problem. After much deliberation and much discussion, we were able to reach an arrangement by which Iranian citizens in American prisons were swapped for American citizens in Iranian prisons.

Naturally, there is going to be a big to-do about this. There is a to-do about anything Iran-related that is not confrontational, because Iran is politically toxic in the United States. As we were negotiating the prisoner swap with Iran, we also had a claims tribunal going forward in The Hague. Before the 1979 revolution, the Iranian government had given the United States money to make purchases from the Department of Defense. Once the revolution happened, the United States obviously was not going to give the revolutionary government the weapons or the money, so the money had been sitting in the United States since 1979. The tribunal in The Hague was set up as part of the process of resolving the earlier Iranian hostage crisis— getting our people who were trapped in the US embassy from 1979 to 1981 out.[4] So setting up this tribunal was part of that process, and the money was one of those claims.

This money that the Iranian government had in the United States was in the process of being adjudicated, and the United States was going to lose big, to the tune of about $10 billion. Now, if you are the

If you find out that you are about to lose $10 billion, wouldn't you try to settle for less?

Americans protest Iran's hostage-taking in 1979.

US government, regardless of your political affiliation—Republican or Democrat or anything in between—if you find out that you are about to lose $10 billion, wouldn't you try to settle for less? Wouldn't you try to settle bilaterally with the Iranians so that you avoid having The Hague tribunal render a resolution that is not favorable to the American national interest? That's exactly what we did. We contacted the Iranians in a track that was separate from the prisoner swap, and said, "Hey, why don't we settle this claim? We will give you back your money with interest." The Iranians said okay, and at that point we were just haggling over the price. But we were very concerned that the Iranians would pull the plug at the last minute, so we offered to settle on a number: about $1.7 billion. We said, "We will give the money to you, but we want the prisoners out first." That's how it happened. There were some less-than-honest arguments calling this ransom.[5] Well, no. If anything, it was the other way around. We were holding the leverage over the Iranians. The Iranians didn't say, "Give us this money, or we won't give you back your prisoners." We were telling the Iranians, "Let our people out and then we will give you the money." It was negotiated on a separate track from the hostage talks. If people want to argue that the optics didn't look good, I will say, fair enough. But then I will follow that up by saying that nothing looks good in terms of the political optics pertaining to Iran.

BORER: I think that gets back to the broader, more strategically important nuclear deal that was agreed to several months ago.[6] What do you think has been the outcome of that, for the broader relationship between Iran and the United States? As critics might ask, has this nuclear deal and the transfer of money

actually had any impact on Iran's outreach to Hezbollah and the Houthi rebels, and other regional concerns?

MARASHI: It's a great question. If you were to talk to US and Iranian officials, or officials from any of the other countries that were party to the negotiations over the nuclear deal, they would all tell you that this was strictly about Iran's nuclear program. This was not about Iran's regional policies, US-Iranian relations, or anything else. They would say it was strictly transactional. It was not meant to be transformational in terms of the broader relationship between the United States and Iran. I would answer that by saying, fair enough, but I don't buy it. It wasn't supposed to change everything in one fell swoop, but it certainly laid the groundwork so that, if implementation of this deal was faithfully carried out by both sides, it could serve as a foundation from which additional and subsequent discussions over other issues of contention could potentially grow.

Based on assessments by the US government, the other governments that were party to this negotiation—the British, French, Germans, Chinese, and Russians—and also the International Atomic Energy Agency, we know that Iran has verifiably fulfilled its end of the bargain. This means that every aspect of Iran's nuclear program—the entire supply chain from beginning to end—is being fully monitored and verified. So if Iran sneezes in its nuclear facilities, we know. That's good. We didn't have that kind of vision on the inside until this point. To attempt to build a nuclear weapon now, Iran would have to create an entire parallel supply chain, which has never been done in the history of the world. So, on nonproliferation, we are good.

Where we are struggling, believe it or not, is in providing Iran with the sanctions relief that was promised under the terms of this deal. Let me unpack that for you. The United States made very specific commitments that are outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA. Anybody can read it online.[7] Have we fulfilled all of the specific obligations? Yes, we have. But there is a kicker. Very specific language in the JCPOA says that if Iran does not derive the economic benefit that was promised as a result of the sanctions relief outlined in this deal, the United States and Iran will work together to find mutually agreed upon additional steps that the United States will take to provide sanctions relief. Iran has not derived the economic benefit that was promised. So, the disagreement between the countries lies in what additional steps

the United States has to take to provide the sanctions relief that was promised.

BORER: Do you think that is simply a matter of the price of oil?

MARASHI: I actually think it has nothing to do with oil. I think it has to do with the fact that the United States has unilateral sanctions that prevent Iran from conducting financial transactions in banks across the world. We have gone around the world and said that if banks process Iranian financial transactions, we will sanction and fine them. When you add it all up, we have fined banks around the world to the tune of millions, if not billions, of dollars. So banks are unwilling to process fully legitimate Iranian financial transactions, even on humanitarian goods, for example, because they don't want to be penalized. So the banks are saying to the US government, "Provide a clear framework for what is permissible and what is not. We want a grandfather clause to say that if we do transactions that are legitimate today, in 2016, and—God forbid—the nuclear deal falls apart, you won't retroactively punish us for doing business that was legitimate at the time." The US government has not yet provided that kind of guidance and, frankly, the reason is because we are in an election year, and it is politically very difficult to provide additional benefits to Iran on anything, even though we are obligated to do so under the JCPOA. The Iranians could be making a much bigger stink about this, but they also have domestic politics, and if they say the deal isn't working, that raises the political temperature on them.

> **Every aspect of Iran's nuclear program is being fully monitored and verified. So if Iran sneezes in its nuclear facilities, we know.**

BORER: Do you think that the momentum for this deal will maintain itself no matter which of the two major party candidates wins the US election, or do you think it would be different under a President Hillary Clinton or a President Donald Trump?

MARASHI: I don't think either one is going to scrap the deal. It is not in the American national interest to scrap a deal that every other major powerful country in the world has agreed to. It would adversely affect the American national interest to go back on a deal that we agreed to, not just with the Iranians, but with the French, the British, the Germans, the Russians, and the Chinese. That would raise questions about US credibility. So we have to be cognizant of not allowing our own domestic politics to impede our ability to carry out hefty and difficult multilateral arrangements and agreements.

Now, that being said, what might be different if Trump were president? On the one hand, he says we should be doing business with Iran, selling airplanes and doing oil business with them, and he asks why the Europeans and the Asians are getting all of the money and the contracts. But on the other hand, he says the deal is terrible and that he won't be beholden to it should he become president. So it's hard to nail him down, but oftentimes a president is only as smart as the advisors that he or she surrounds themselves with. Most of Trump's foreign policy advisors are the same cast of characters that President George W. Bush had surrounding him. Their policies in the Middle East are pretty clear. So I think his policies in the Middle East will more closely resemble those of George W. Bush than those of Barack Obama, George H.W. Bush, or Bill Clinton.

> **I think it's less than honest to say that we have truly run the course with regard to diplomacy in Iran.**

I don't think that there has been any particular damage to American power or credibility as a result of the Iran nuclear deal. In fact, I think they have been enhanced because the deal averted a military confrontation with Iran that nobody wanted. I don't think we have sacrificed any leverage. I don't think we have sacrificed any option with regard to checking Iranian ambition or Iranian power that is adversely affecting the interests of the United States. If anything, diplomacy without the military is like an orchestra without the instruments. But I think most levelheaded people would agree that military force should be the last resort. I think it's less than honest to say that we have truly run the course with regard to diplomacy in Iran. I think there is a lot more we can do to have discussions, to test the seriousness and the intentions of this Iranian government to resolve problems peacefully.

BORER: There has been news recently about swarms of small Iranian boats seeming to challenge or harass US boats in the Persian Gulf.[8] Does that behavior come from divisions inside the Iranian military establishment, or are some commanders a little more free with the rules of engagement? Or do you think that these tactics are part of a strategic direction that comes from the top of the Iranian defense establishment?

Iranian Revolutionary Guard stages a re-creation of the arrest of American soldiers, 22 February 2016.

MARASHI: That's an important question. I think it's a little bit of both. I don't think it's a secret to anyone that the Iranian government does a lot of things in the Persian Gulf that we don't like. We do a lot of things in the Persian Gulf that the Iranians don't like. The question then is, what do we do about the things we don't like? We don't have an Incidents at Sea Agreement with the Iranian government, which is crazy to me, because we have very legitimate concerns about their behavior in the Persian Gulf, such as those tactics you outlined.[9] But we don't have the political courage in Washington, D.C., to propose it to them. I think the United States and the American national interest benefit from demonstrating that the problem is in Tehran, not in Washington. Demonstrate a willingness to sit down and discuss it with

the Iranian government—have a very difficult and oftentimes tense discussion over what the rules of engagement should be and try to find ways to resolve problems peacefully. I think it's frankly in Iran's interest, as well, to have such an agreement because they don't want a military confrontation with the United States.

But the question is, if they don't want a confrontation, why are they doing these provocative things? I like to say that all politics is local. So I do think that while Iranian military speedboats coming up against our big boys in the Persian Gulf is destabilizing, it also doesn't have approval from the very top of the food

Iranian Revolutionary Guard

chain in Iran's political pecking order. I think that the Revolutionary Guard, who are the ones doing this maneuver in the Gulf, are freelancing a little bit. The reason why you have seen them do more of it over the past few weeks is twofold. First, I think they are trying to demonstrate internally, inside of Iran's political system, that they are still here: "You [Iranian politicians] have to deal with us internally, but also you, the United States, have to deal with us externally. You can't work around us." Also, they think we are in their part of the world, in their waters. So they want to demonstrate to us that there is a certain level of deterrence, and we shouldn't think that, just because we have struck this nuclear deal, the Iranians are projecting weakness. This is what I think the strategic thinking is, in part, for why they are doing this swarming. Now, obviously, I disagree with that thinking, and I think what they are doing is reckless. But because we don't have those channels of communication to try and iron out some rules of the road, it is very easy for them to do.

But also, I think Iran's internal politics is at a crossroads. You have different actors within the Iranian political system and within the Iranian military pecking order who want to go in either one direction or another. There are some people in the Iranian system who believe that greater engagement with the outside world can help achieve Iran's strategic interests and resolve a lot of problems peacefully. There are others who think that the United States and other Western countries will never accept the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has been the governing system since 1979. Because it will never be accepted, Iranians must do everything in their power to resist American power projection in the Middle East. I think that's a dangerous line of thinking, and I also think it's incorrect, because the idea of finding mutually agreed-upon solutions in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, broadly conceived, between the United States, Iran, and other stakeholders in the region, hasn't truly been tested. I don't blame US military officials for going to the podium and saying, "Look the Iranians better be careful. Otherwise they might bite off more than they can chew." I think the Iranians need to hear that. I think we have shown the proper level of restraint. Going forward, if the Iranians continue to challenge our ships, then I think it's worthwhile for the US government to send messages to the very top of the Iranian food chain to say, "This has to stop, and if it doesn't, here is a clearly

I don't blame US military officials for saying, "Look, the Iranians better be careful. Otherwise they might bite off more than they can chew."

outlined set of actions that the US government will take." I think the Iranians will get the message.

BORER: Do you think that the idea of containing Iran has already, to a certain degree, dissolved, given Iranian influence in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, and its increasing influence in Yemen—essentially in the region writ large? On the flip side, do you think that Iran has already overextended itself?

MARASHI: On the latter point, yes. I am a big believer in looking at things from a geopolitical lens as opposed to an ideological lens. Through a geopolitical lens, I see Iran overextended, particularly in Syria and to a lesser extent in Iraq, and I see the United States thinking that maybe it wouldn't be such a bad thing to try and bleed out the Iranians and make them pay for what they are doing. This is exactly what Iran did to us in Iraq from 2003 until about 2011, depending on whom you talk to. So it's a little bit of payback. Now, that being said, Iranian policy in the region has always vacillated, whether it has been more interventionist or demonstrating more restraint. It depends on what is going on in the region.

In my view, containing Iran has always been a fool's errand because trying to contain a regional power is always a losing battle. When I look at things through a geopolitical lens, I understand the need for a balance of power. Iran already is a regional power; it's not seeking to become one. I would argue that it's always been one. I would say the same thing about Saudi Arabia. I think they both are the pillars of regional power and regional security in the Middle East. Frankly, that view has been shared by most US officials as far back as [former US president Richard] Nixon and possibly even before him. People make the argument for containment, but I think it's a short- to medium-term argument, and they are looking at the solution according to a short- to medium-term trajectory, because you cannot contain a regional power indefinitely. The cost of doing so in blood and treasure increases exponentially as time passes. One would think we had learned our lesson with Saddam Hussein and Iraq. The policy toward Hussein was containment, so why did we have to invade if containment was working? What is the end goal of containment? Is it to overthrow the regime and install somebody who is more pliable with regard to American interests? Or is it to find some kind of modus operandi with the government to stop it from doing things that are destructive to American interests? I think this needs to be more clearly defined.

So, if it's not going to be containment, I personally favor focusing on balance of power, and I think that's more in the US national interest. Maintaining a balance of power is what we were doing up until 1992, frankly—and we didn't have a good relationship with Iran prior to 1992 either. I think both Ronald Reagan, through the Iran-Contra arms deal, and George H.W. Bush at various points during his administration, sought to find covert channels of communication with the Iranian government because they understood that Iran is a powerful country, and it needs to be engaged on some level. Maybe they thought we shouldn't be overly reliant on our traditional partners in the region because those partners could use and abuse the relationship with the United States to achieve their interests at the expense of our own. When our interests overlap tactically or strategically with the Saudis or the Egyptians or other traditional American partners, that's great. But sometimes, as has been the case in Afghanistan and

> **Iran can be engaged on some issues to test the proposition of working together to achieve what is in the US national interest.**

Bashar al-Assad

Iraq at various points in time, for example, it might be tactically or strategically in our interests to either communicate with or collaborate with the Iranians. Why not test the proposition? If doing so is in the US national interest, then I don't think that ideology, traditional partners, or domestic politics should get in the way. Iran can be engaged on some issues to test the proposition of working together to achieve what is in the US national interest. I think the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action [the nuclear deal] demonstrates that if Iran sees it to be in their interest, they are willing to have those conversations, and talks can prove to be successful.

BORER: The attempted military coup in Turkey added a new variable, if you will, into the region.[10] And then the Turkish government showed a seemingly resurgent interest in more forcefully interacting in Syria. Do you think that Turkey's increased involvement further complicates things for the United States, or does it actually help to have a long-standing regional ally be more assertive in its own neighborhood?

MARASHI: It depends on how responsible those assertive actions of our traditional partners actually are in practice. I think that in Syria and Yemen, and even in Iraq, the Turks and the Saudis, both of which are traditional American partners, have become susceptible to imperial overreach. Frankly, they didn't learn from the mistakes that the United States made in 2003. When we intervened in Iraq, we didn't have a clearly defined endgame. I am very skeptical of military intervention that doesn't have a clearly defined endgame because mission creep kicks in, and how do you define the strategic objectives? I think our strategic objectives in Iraq have changed over time—multiple times, frankly.

Now I think the same thing is happening to the Saudis and the Turks. Victory as defined by the Saudi government in Yemen when it first intervened is very different from how it defines victory today. It's not clear to me what the Turks' strategic objective for intervening in Syria is. They say that they want to push back the Kurds. They say they are flexible about the degree to which [Syrian president Bashar al] Assad is part of a political transition—if a political solution can be reached that will stop the killing.

Turkish troops

But Turkey hasn't clearly defined what will cause it to pull Turkish troops out of Syria. I would frankly say the same thing about Iran. What is the clearly defined endgame? If it's Assad surviving and never leaving power, then there will be an intractable conflict because durable solutions to conflict require the buy-in of every country with the capacity to wreck the solution. This means that Syria can't be solved without Iran, but it also can't be solved without the United States, Turkey, and Russia because they have all made themselves players. They are all supporting different actors in the proxy war. Nobody has clean hands.

I would say the same thing to a lesser degree about Yemen, because I don't think Iran has intervened there in the same way that the Saudis have. I would say the same thing about Iraq, as well. Nobody can force any kind of military or political solution on anyone else. If you can't win outright by exerting force, then the conflict becomes this cycle of escalation, where one side escalates, and then the other side says, "We have to escalate as well, because we don't want to be subdued and pushed into some solution that doesn't achieve our interests, however we define them." Well, as the different actors continue to escalate, one after the other, eventually they are going to run out of escalatory options short of direct military conflict, which is why it's so important to have those channels of communication.
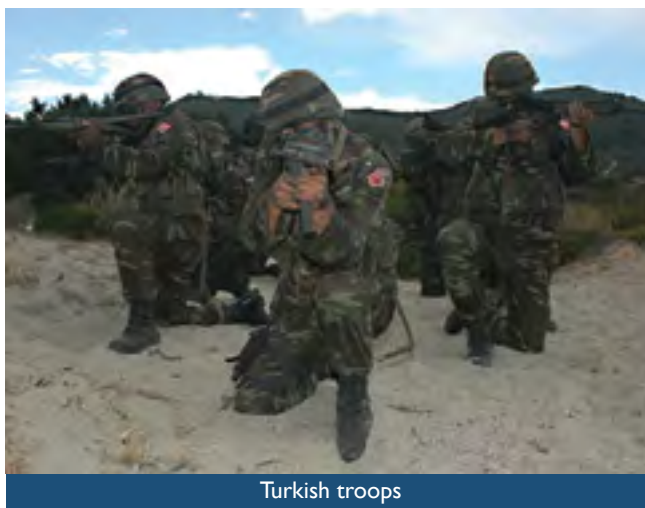
You need an off-ramp so that you don't reach the worst possible outcome. I don't think that's something that the Turks, the Saudis, and the Emiratis have fully internalized. I think the United States is much more cognizant of this danger now because we have been doing this kind of operation for 15 years, since 9/11. I think the [Barack Obama administration] is asking our allies to do more and that's right, because we don't want free riders. That's important, and I give the Obama administration credit for pointing out that our traditional partners do need to do more. Our traditional partners are going through some growing pains because, for decades, they have outsourced their security to the United States. When you outsource your security, you are inherently insecure. Those governments are not used to doing any sort of moderate or light lifting, never mind heavy lifting. So there is going to be a learning curve. I think that they need to make some mistakes in order to

have more restraint in their power projection. Just like the United States does now.

There is a difference between Iranian and Saudi power projection in the region. Both have clients, non-state actors, that they throw out into the region to do destabilizing things. The difference is that the Iranians have these non-state actors in Iraq and Syria, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. If Iran says jump, they ask how high. If Iran says do more, they do more. If Iran says stop and pull back, that is exactly what they do: they stop and pull back. Iran has control. The Saudis don't have that kind of control over the non-state actors that they fund. If anything, they tell these non-state actors, "Do what you want to do, just don't do it in the kingdom. Better that you do it elsewhere, whether it's in the United States or other places in the region." The Saudis don't care, and I think that's extremely reckless. It's much more damaging to US interests than what the Iranians are doing. But there is nothing we can do to get the Saudis to rein these actors in because the Saudis have injected a poisonous, intolerant, minority strain of Islam into the region and they don't have the wherewithal to pull it back. The Iranians do, and I think that's a very important difference.

BORER: What are your thoughts on the danger of people making mistakes in this escalatory cycle? Hezbollah has been more active in Lebanon lately and may be considering a confrontation with Israel on the Golan Heights. Do you have any observations to share on that?

> I don't think the Iranians or Hezbollah thought that the war in Syria would drag on as long as it has.

MARASHI: I think Hezbollah is stretched thin in an unprecedented manner. On the one hand, Lebanon is its priority. But to project its power domestically inside of Lebanon, it needs that strategic passageway through Syria to connect to Iran, because Hezbollah is an Iranian client. I don't think the Iranians or Hezbollah thought that the war in Syria would drag on as long as it has, or that it would become the proxy war that it has become. I think both are looking for a way out because as they continue to dedicate manpower, resources, blood, and treasure for the fight in Syria, they become more vulnerable to an Israeli military attack in Lebanon, much like we saw in 2006.

I don't think Hezbollah wants to take a whack at Israel, because it would be biting off more than it can chew. I think the Israelis are having very serious conversations about whether now is the right time to take another whack at Lebanon because Hezbollah is overstretched. I have had these discussions with Israelis when I've traveled there. I think that idea is dangerous and reckless on the part of

Israel. I understand why, from a geopolitical perspective, they might want to discuss it, but I also think it's short-sighted because Hezbollah and its Iranian sponsors have done a very good job of integrating Hezbollah into the political, economic, and social fabric of Lebanon. While I am not a fan of Hezbollah, I think it is there to stay.

So then the question becomes, how do we get it to stop doing destructive and reckless things, so that Lebanon can become politically, economically, and socially stable in a way that, frankly, we haven't seen in quite some time? I don't think we can test that proposition until the war in Syria is solved—until we have some kind of solution that is amenable to all sides. In Syria right now, there are too many actors that are supporting various sides in the proxy war, and they're all viewing the fight through a zero-sum lens. Iran and Hezbollah are two of them. This mentality of "If I am not winning, then I must be losing" must be abandoned, just as it was jettisoned to solve the Lebanese civil war, for example. Until all sides realize that a political solution that stops the killing is actually in their long-term geopolitical interest, I think we will continue to see the bloodshed that we see now. Hezbollah will continue to be stretched thin. Who has escalation dominance in Syria? I would argue that the Iranians and Hezbollah have it. For Hezbollah, it's existential: Syria is their supply line. For Iran, it's about deterrence vis à vis Israel, because that's why Iran supports Hezbollah. There is an ideological component as well, and it's an avenue for Iran's power projection into the Arab world. It's much more difficult to explain what the US geopolitical interest is in Syria, beyond the idea that Syria is on Iran's side of the geopolitical chessboard: "Wouldn't it be cool if we could take Syria from their side and bring it to ours?" I don't disagree that it would be cool and that it would be a net strategic benefit over the long run, but then we have to have a discussion about the cost.

BORER: I like to conclude these interviews with what I call the "king for a day" question. If you could do just one important thing that would help ensure the future of US interests, what would it be?

MARASHI: I would put strict financial limitations on money in politics and campaign finance. I would undo the Citizens United decision.[11] I think the influence of private/corporate money in elections is adversely affecting the national security of the United States of America and poisoning our political system. It's also preventing us from being able to get very important things done that we need

to get done, not just on foreign policy, but particularly on domestic policy. All politics is local. I travel the world, and every single day people are asking me about what is going on in America. It frightens me when people look at the United States of America and question our ability to lead. I don't like that at all. I am a big believer in US power, and I believe that the world is a better place when we are projecting our power in a smart, calibrated way. People buy what we are selling and have integrated themselves into the international order that we have set up, so I have a big problem when they start to question whether it's in their best interest to do so. I think that there is a direct connection from this uncertainty to money in politics. We need to check that, and I think doing so would free up our politicians to take the kind of actions they need to take to sustain US power far into the future.   ❖

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

Reza Marashi is the director of research at the National Iranian American Council.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER

**Dr. Douglas Borer** is an associate professor of Defense Analysis at the US Naval Postgraduate School.

NOTES

1   The Combating Terrorism Archive Project (CTAP) aims to collect and archive knowledge on strategy, operations, and tactics used by military and other security personnel from around the world in the twenty-first-century fight against global terrorism. Collectively, the individual interviews that CTAP conducts constitute an oral history archive of knowledge and experience in counterterrorism for the benefit of the CT community now and in the future.

2   This interview was edited for length and clarity. Every effort was made to ensure that the meaning and intention of the participants were not altered in any way. The ideas and opinions of all participants are theirs alone and do not represent the official positions of the US Naval Postgraduate School, the US Department of Defense, the US government, or any other official entity.

3   Jay Solomon and Carol E. Lee, "$400 Million Sent to Iran as US Prisoners Released, Raising Questions," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 August 2016: https://www.marketwatch.com/story/400-million-sent-to-iran-as-us-prisoners-released-raising-questions-2016-08-02

4   "444 Days: Selected Records Concerning the Iran Hostage Crisis 1979–1981," National Archives, n.d.: https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/iran-hostage-crisis

5   Shawn Tully, "5 Things You Need to Know about the $400 Million America Sent to Iran," *Fortune*, 5 August 2016: http://fortune.com/2016/08/05/money-america-iran/

6   The six-nation deal was finalized in July 2015. "Iran Nuclear Deal: Key Details," BBC, 13 October 2017: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33521655

7   "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," US Department of State, n.d.: https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/

8   Henry Johnson, "Watch: Iranian Attack-Boats Swarm US Destroyer," *Foreign Policy*, 25 August 2016: http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/25/watch-iranian-attack-boats-swarm-u-s-destroyer/ ; Noah Shachtman, "How Iran Attacks at Sea (Updated)," *Wired*, 8 January 2008: https://www.wired.com/2008/01/inside-irans-se/

9   *Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Prevention of Incidents On and Over the High Seas*, US Department of State, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, 25 May 1972: https://www.state.gov/t/isn/4791.htm

10 "Turkey's Failed Coup Attempt: All You Need to Know," *Aljazeera*, 15 July 2017: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/turkey-failed-coup-attempt-161217032345594.html

11 This refers to a case that was argued before the US Supreme Court in September 2009, Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission. The court found that corporations and unions have the same right as individuals to spend money to influence voters during an election campaign. See "Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission," SCOTUSblog, n.d.: http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/citizens-united-v-federal-election-commission/

Reviewed by LTC Stans Victor Mouaha-Bell, Cameroon Army

Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement
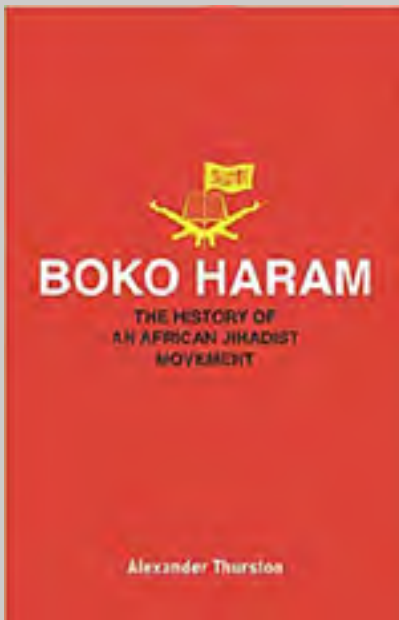
by Alexander Thurston

Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017

Hardcover: US$20.64

352 pages

The violent Nigerian jihadist group Boko Haram exhibits a rare ideological complexity compared to other similar movements. Over time, the group grafted political motives and religious pretexts onto the core economic and social grievances that gave birth to it. Now, after seven years of conflict between Boko Haram and the Nigerian army in northeastern Nigeria, the humanitarian situation is catastrophic, and the socioeconomic fabric of the region is completely devastated. Since 2011, more than 30,000 people have been killed, and almost two million are either internally displaced or refugees in neighboring countries. The counterinsurgency forces fighting Boko Haram seem powerless to stop violence by the militants in remote parts of Nigeria's Borno State. The political leaders of the countries affected by the Boko Haram insurgency seem to operate in a real fog of war.

Author Alexander Thurston, an assistant professor of African studies at Georgetown University, manages to explain the complex environment and context that gave birth to Africa's deadliest terrorist group. Thurston argues at the outset that Boko Haram is the outcome of dynamics born from locally grounded ethnoreligious interactions, and that its ruthlessness is partly a result of failed past efforts by the government to resolve such conflicts through violence.[1] Thurston also highlights how Boko Haram has adapted its strategies, discourses, and military and political objectives—in short, the group's ways, means, and ends—to respond to external events.

The book is an outstanding addition to the growing body of literature on both African studies and terrorism studies. The background to the author's research is a Nigerian social environment of mistrust and permanent suspicion, marked by tensions and crises between ethnic groups and political parties. Using a chronological approach, Thurston highlights five factors that can explain the rise of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria: religious doctrine, poverty and inequality, the chaotic political context marked by the end of military rule in 1999, youth unemployment, and the inaccessible topography of the region. Although Thurston distances himself from the all-too-common narrative that Boko Haram formed only because of poverty and rampant corruption in Nigeria, he acknowledges that the group emerged in a part of Nigeria where the government's public education program registered its greatest failures.[2] In the long run, this vacuum was filled by Islamist schools led by zealous activist preachers. It is on the interaction between religion and politics that Thurston focuses his analysis.

Understanding Boko Haram requires particular attention not just to the rise of religious extremism, but also to the social context in which Boko Haram emerged. A counterinsurgency strategy that emphasizes suppression cannot be viable, and Thurston reasonably maintains that body counts cannot be the only metric of its success. To make his point, Thurston revisits nearly 60 years of the political and religious history of Nigeria. He notes that, unlike traditional terrorist groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and ISIS, which usually

start their terror campaigns as small cells before gaining importance and expanding, Boko Haram already had a very broad popular base before transitioning to armed struggle in 2009. This singularity is explained by the resonance that the discourse of early Boko Haram leaders such as Mohammed Yusuf had among the local population, the pattern of Islamic authority in northeast Nigeria, and the effectiveness of the group's recruitment techniques among young people.

Thurston's analysis reveals four fundamental failures of governance that contributed to Boko Haram's radicalization: Nigeria's contentious politics, economic inequality, endemic corruption, and counterproductive conflict management strategies. Thus, he argues that the Nigerian government has been an instigator of violence and highlights its responsibility for the increased polarization of the region in conflict. This position, he notes, is echoed by Kyari Mohammed and other Muslim intellectuals who have raised pointed questions about the Nigerian government's response to Boko Haram. These scholars believe that the collusion of state authorities and *ulama* (Muslim clerics), combined with the state's resistance to examining the uprising's root causes, has set the stage for more violence.[3]

This framework allows Thurston and his readers to better understand Boko Haram's ethnoreligious dynamic, the most visible aspects of which are antimodernist goals, inflexibility and hostility to negotiation, and the total commitment of the group's members. Thus,

> Boko Haram has deployed a doctrine of religious exclusivism to claim legitimacy for its message. It has presented itself both as the victim of other actors' aggressions and as a righteous vanguard fighting for the purity of Islam. The interplay of doctrine and events means that there is no easy way out of the crisis. Boko Haram represents an ugly paradox: its ideas have limited appeal but significant staying power. The group can be crushed militarily, yet the state violence fuels its narrative of victimhood.[4]

Each attack, ambush, and kidnaping fuels questions about Boko Haram's motivations. While regional military responses to the group are gradually becoming more effective, Thurston insists that no long-lasting

Nigerian children imitating Boko Haram terrorists

solution will emerge without a serious investigation into the political causes of the insurgency and the need for political reform.[5] He emphasizes that political rhetoric is ultimately more important than religious rhetoric and must, therefore, be given priority in any proposed solution.

> **The book is an outstanding addition to the growing body of literature on both African studies and terrorism studies.**

Throughout his tale, Thurston gives a compelling description of the spread of Salafist ideology and the political context in northeastern Nigeria. However, his analysis misses one essential point: his examination of the use of the "*takfir*" epithet (declaring other Muslims to be apostates) was very brief, despite the fact that it is at the root of the group's religious legitimization of violence against civilians, and prompted serious theological and political debates within Boko Haram that eventually split the organization. This shortcoming, however, does not decrease the value of the book. All in all, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* is a rich and balanced account and very well-documented. This book is a must-read for anyone who is interested in African studies. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LTC Stans Mouaha-Bell is a SOF officer in the Cameroon Army.

NOTES

1   Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017), 33.

2   Ibid., 74.

3   Ibid., 148.

4   Ibid., 301.

5   Ibid., 302.

Abuja, Nigeria

PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT

## The Terrorist Argument: Modern Advocacy and Propaganda

Propaganda used by terrorists and armed groups might not always be the most sophisticated or nuanced form of rhetoric, but with the right mix of emotion and logic, it can be extremely effective in motivating supporters and frightening opponents. This book examines how terrorist groups in recent history have used propaganda, and how they have adapted to new communications technologies while retaining useful techniques from the past.

Harmon and Bowdish trace how armed groups and terrorists around the globe have honed their messages for maximum impact, both on the communities they hope to persuade to support them and on the official state organs they hope to overthrow. Sometimes both the messages and the techniques are crude; others are highly refined, carefully crafted appeals to intellect or emotion, embracing the latest forms of communications technology. Whatever the ideas or methodology, all are intended to use the power of ideas, along with force, to project an image and to communicate—not merely to intimidate.

The Terrorist Argument uses nine case studies of how armed groups have used communications techniques with varying degrees of success: radio, newspapers, song, television, books, e-magazines, advertising, the Internet, and social media. It is fascinating reading for anyone interested in civil conflict, terrorism, communications theory and practice, or world affairs in general.

Christopher C. Harmon is a terrorism specialist and held the privately endowed Horner Chair at the Marine Corps University Foundation. He has lectured at INTERPOL headquarters, on Capitol Hill, and at dozens of universities and graduate schools in the United States and abroad. The lead author or editor of four books on terrorism and counterterrorism, he has published essays in the geopolitics journal *Orbis*, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, and Oxford bibliographies.

Randall G. Bowdish is a retired Navy captain who commanded the USS *Simpson* as part of the George Washington Battle Group when the USS *Cole* was bombed in Aden. He has lectured at the NATO Centre of Excellence for the Defence against Terrorism and the Institute of World Politics and has taught courses on terrorism, irregular warfare, and strategy at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, the University of Nebraska, Nebraska Wesleyan University, and the US Air Force Academy, where he presently teaches. He has published widely on the subject of terrorism.
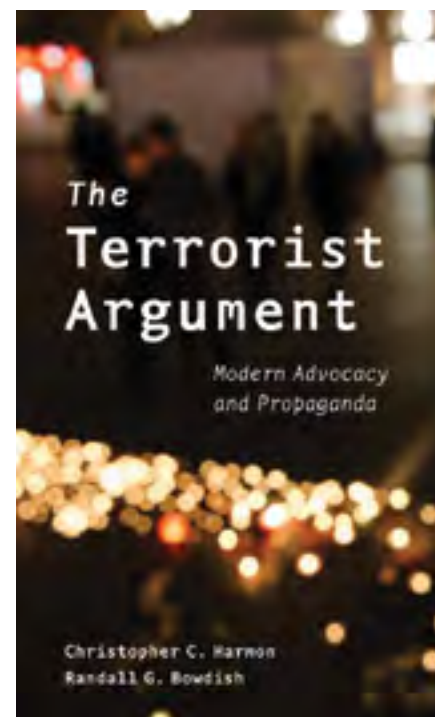
Christopher C. Harmon and Randall G. Bowdish

IMAGE CREDITS

Page 6: screen capture from ICSVE video: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCumpEsozixbl-PyKw12hmnw

Page 7: Provenance unknown, via http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/8928/ISIS-kidnaps-children-in-Mosul-for-suicide-bombings

Pages 8–13: screen captures from ICSVE videos: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCumpEsozixbl-PyKw12hmnw

Pages 18–25: Images courtesy of the author

Page 29: by User Daryona, base map adapted from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Departments_of_Congo_ru.svg, licensed under CC Attribution 2.5 Generic license

Page 31: (L) UN Photo/Martine Perret via Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/4211082061/in/album-72157622939266217/, licensed under Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0); (R) UN Photo/Martine Perret via Flicker at https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/4211846124/in/pool-democraticrepublicofcongo/; Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Page 32: UN Photo/Marie Frechon via Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/5737272258/in/pool-democraticrepublicofcongo/, licensed under Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Page 37, Clockwise from upper left: Kids of Congo by User jbdodane via Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/jbdodane/11978998824/in/photolist-jfxv1u-aHHmuv-jft6n6-jg6bps-jg4Pbj-jg7RbA-jfZf3c-rxgD-jAUZHs-jfGANA-jAShYf-jApmFj-jAtAyc-jfwmWf-jf YYvS-jfZi92-jfyKSc-jfGvA1-jfuAzv-jfJ8kL-jfxMq4-jAVwD7-jAW2i1-jfDrRT-jAnLc1-jAS1sE-rx8S-jASkw2-rxbS-jg2bvY-jg4EHN-jfuybH-jfusUR-jf VmMT-jfZG53-jfzABV-jfw3hb-jfw4Lz-jg5yJt-rx9s-jfz4CJ-jATjwW-jgKsZr-jfvds2-rxdw-rxgP-jASs2B-fJYuBt-jAViYs-jAUhX8, licensed under Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0); Harvesting cassava by User jbdodane via Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/jbdodane/11980510576/in/photolist-jfFfpb-jfzE9B-jgLBDX-jfY8sD-jfAZAt-jf YmMN-jf YcY3-jf Y8xu-jg365z-jg5q6B-jg4eHX-jfH7oh-jfGdx3-jfCSDR-jtQdHB-jfCpXL-jf WfmV-jfFAYY-jfDy3j-jfXUzK-jfBwkg-jfCr3t-jfDpMc-jg6Bf9-jg4Vwz-jg6QCb-jf Y5od-jfXJ2H-jf Wu6D-jg1Zfd-jfD68t-jg6Nty-jATsEZ-jAUUwM-jAV5Hj-jAWZf9-jAW4Gr-jAT5nk-jAWesD-8RUwz3-jg4WGm-jg4Zyo-jg1GE9-jfxAXS-jg5vDm-jfRb69-jfxPKW-jgNRfc-jgQchd-jfECBB, licensed under Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0); Doctor treats a patient by by Ollivier Girard/CIFOR via Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/cifor/35507872770/in/photolist-W6H8uW-h7qKWE-h7mXhf-h7emdG-h7a5FN-h7qUqJ-qrg7HR-udREcm-W6EQNJ-VHPNUU-Vsr35p-VpLUaf-vaSk14-VpKbkq-65WB3x-WFWwp8-h1AkcC-h1pT2P-h1sM67-VpPBaY-h1p744-h1vkVQ-h1ng8a-h1s9TC-h1zCjn-h1uECc-h1y7YJ-h1nqAB-h1szFd-h1ys9W-h1svqQ-7CYAHm-zrZFd4-zG9H4J-zG9Hf5-kK4zbt-kK4N5H-gYWbMm-TuADRE-qZr8kH-r4hQdy-WumJHB-kK5F23-CR5jrR-VpPC1L-VpL3pU-VpPhrL-8CQgJE-8CQgVU-h5FGYE, licensed under Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0); Congo ocean railway by User jbdodane via Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/jbdodane/11984021375/in/photolist-jfxv1u-aHHmuv-jft6n6-jg6bps-jg4Pbj-jg7RbA-jfZf3c-rxgD-jAUZHs-jfGANA-jAShYf-jApmFj-jAtAyc-jfwmWf-jf YYvS-jfZi92-jfyKSc-jfGvA1-jfuAzv-jfJ8kL-jfxMq4-jAVwD7-jAW2i1-jfDrRT-jAnLc1-jAS1sE-rx8S-jASkw2-rxbS-jg2bvY-jg4EHN-jfuybH-jfusUR-jf VmMT-jfZG53-jfzABV-jfw3hb-jfw4Lz-jg5yJt-rx9s-jfz4CJ-jATjwW-jgKsZr-jfvds2-rxdw-rxgP-jASs2B-fJYuBt-jAViYs-jAUhX8/, licensed under Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0); Congolese by Federico San Bonifacio via Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/sambobox/427542452/in/photolist-DMgtA-eWSLC-49JeJ3-eWSvH-37djnS-EAUcw-5BC3aN-d8zPE7-rztE1-rztE9-6V4VPo-rztE2-54NjXP-3SYvxn-3SYvHv-98pEKm-98mvp4-bsFkE3-Kv8pc-Kv8ok-72rqYg-54Nk6D-54Nk9V-54NktH-3FmQGq-54G8uR-i1Q55W-i1PJ6i-eZVSwx-ekNrZB-f1bbUQ-ekUbaQ-eZC9KP-eZCgFg-eZCazD-eZCcPZ-eZCdnD-ekUdBw-ekNsxT-ekNs5z-ekTTNb-ekTVYG-ekNr2a-ekNhtK-ekNhLv-ekTYhm-ecaRhE-p36JEo-p36K6d-u1Ub4Q, licensed under Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Page 38: Base map by User NordNordWest via Wikimedia Commons at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_Sudan_location_map.svg, licensed under (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/de/legalcode

Pages 39–44: Photos courtesy of the author.

Page 47: Publicity photo via https://www.washingtonpost.com/people/max-boot/

Page 48: US Government work via https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Major-general-lansdale.jpg

Page 49: By Lcpl. Mackenzie Schlueter, US Government work via http://www.marines.mil/Photos.aspx?igphoto=2000796457

Page 50: US Government work via https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:JunctionCity1967SupplyDrop.jpg

Page 58: By Trikosko, Marion S., photographer, Public domain via Wikimedia Commons at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMan_holding_sign_during_Iranian_hostage_crisis_protest%2C_1979.jpg

Page 60: Tasnim News Agency [CC BY 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0)], via Wikimedia Commons at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASimulation_of_Arresting_American_Soldiers_on_February_2016_by_Mbazri_01.jpg

Page 61: By Khamenei.ir (http://farsi.khamenei.ir/photo-album?id=23801) [CC BY 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

Page 62: By Fabio Rodrigues Pozzebom / ABr [CC BY 3.0 br (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/br/deed.en)], via Wikimedia Commons

Page 63: By PH1 Timm Duckworth, USN. (Image in Destined Glory/ "Loyal Midas" 2005) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Page 67: By Dejazzeez (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

Page 68: By Jeff Attaway, Creative Commons License, Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0, via https://wikitravel.org/shared/File:Abuja_Banner.jpg

Page 72: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-0727/Umar, via https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Alert_MISSING_CHILDHOODS_Embargo_00_01_GMT_13_April.pdf

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The *Combating Terrorism Exchange* (*CTX*) is a quarterly peer-reviewed journal. We accept submissions of nearly any type, from anyone; however, submission does not guarantee publication. Our aim is to distribute high-quality analyses, opinions, and studies to military officers, government officials, and security and academic professionals in the counterterrorism community. We give priority to non-typical, insightful work and to topics concerning countries with the most pressing terrorism and CT issues.

Submission Guidelines

For detailed submission guidelines, go to https://GlobalECCO.org and click on the "Submit to CTX" link.

CTX accepts the following types of submissions. Please observe the following length guidelines:

- **academic analyses** (up to 6,000 words)
- **reports or insightful stories from the field** (up to 5,000 words)
- **photographic essays**
- **video clips** with explanation or narration
- **interviews** with relevant figures (no longer than 15 minutes)
- **book reviews** (up to 2,000 words), review essays (up to 2,000 words), or lists of books of interest (which may include books in other languages)
- reports on any **special projects**

Submission Requirements

Submissions to *CTX* must adhere to the following:

- The work must be copyedited for basic errors *prior to* submission.
- Citations should adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. See the latest version at http://www.chicago-manualofstyle.org/home.html
- The work submitted may not be plagiarized in part or in whole.
- You must have consent from anyone whose pictures, videos, or statements you include in your work.
- You must agree to our Terms of Copyright.
- Include a byline as you would like it to appear and a short bio as you would like it to appear (we may use either, or both).
- Any kind of submission can be multimedia.

Submissions should be sent in original, workable format. (In other words, we must be able to edit your work in the format in which you send it to us: no PDFs, please.)

Submissions should be in English. Because we seek submissions from the global CT community, and especially look forward to work which will stir debate, *we will not reject* submissions outright simply because of poorly written English. However, we may ask you to have your submission re-edited before submitting again.

Ready to Submit?

By making a submission to *CTX,* you are acknowledging that your submission adheres to all of the submission requirements listed above, and that you agree to the *CTX* Terms of Copyright, so read them carefully.

Submit to
CTXSubmit@GlobalECCO.org

If you have questions about submissions, or anything else, contact
CTXEditor@GlobalECCO.org

CTX is online at globalecco.org

After a Boko Haram attack, aid workers asked refugee children
to draw what they saw and what they missed.