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EMPATHY AS A WEAPON : UNDERSTANDING HOW TO WIN AGAINST THE CROWD-SOURCED JIHAD

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JCSP 45

Exercise Solo Flight

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By Major Anthony Berardinelli

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EMPATHY AS A WEAPON: UNDERSTANDING HOW TO WIN AGAINST THE CROWDSOURCED JIHAD

INTRODUCTION

The United States declared Daesh *defeated* in 2010, with an estimated 700 members of the violent extremist organization (VEO) dispersed in the Levant but deemed unable to aggregate and influence regional stability.¹ The end of 2018 and early 2019 has ushered in the present day proclamations on the status of Daesh, with the last bastion of the extremist group in the Baghuz Fawqani, pocket in Syria neutralized and Daesh again declared defeated.² *Defeated* is a relative term, with Daesh now comprising a network of 20,000–30,000 members dispersed around the globe and linked to the deadliest terror attack since 9/11.³ In the move from a local insurgency in 2003, to a regional insurgency in 2012 and onward to a globally influential proto-state in 2014, Daesh has fomented an

¹ Amanda Bennett, “Daesh? ISIS? Islamic State? Why What We Call the Paris Attackers Matters,” *The Washington Post*, November 25, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/11/25/daesh-isis-islamic-state-why-what-we-call-the-paris-attackers-matters/>; “What Does ‘Daesh’ Mean and Why Does ISIS Hate It?” NBCNews.com, accessed April 27, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/paris-attacks-what-does-daesh-mean-why-does-isis-hate-n463551>. “Iraq Celebrates One Year since Victory against ISIS,” Asharq AL-awsat, accessed April 27, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1498751/iraq-celebrates-one-year-victory-against-isis>; “In national holiday, Iraq marks one year since defeat of Daesh,” PressTV, accessed April 27, 2019, <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/12/10/582515/Iraq-Daesh-defeat-one-year-anniversary>. The Islamic State, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham have all been used by various groups to describe this violent extremist organization. Daesh will be used in this paper as it is the official Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) terminology. The name Daesh is also considered derogatory toward the group. “Timeline: The Rise, Spread and Fall of the Islamic State,” Wilson Center, April 02, 2019, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state>.

² “Timeline: The Rise, Spread and Fall of the Islamic State,” Wilson Center, April 02, 2019, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state>; “ISIS Fast Facts,” CNN, March 25, 2019, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/isis-fast-facts/index.html>.

³ Joseph Hincks, “Trump Says ISIS Has Been Defeated. It Has Not Been,” *Time*, January 18, 2019, accessed April 28, 2019, <http://time.com/5506007/trump-isis-victory-islamic-state/>; “IS ‘caliphate’ Defeated but Jihadist Group Remains a Threat,” *BBC News*, March 23, 2019. Accessed April 28, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45547595>; Tim Lister, “Destroyed on the Battlefield, ISIS Begins New Chapter of Terror,” *CNN*, April 28, 2019, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/28/world/isis-sri-lanka-international-threat-intl/index.html>.

increasing amount of public support.⁴ The act of aggregating and disaggregating has made the ideology stronger, akin to a partially eradicated virus that surges back deadlier. Therein stands the problem – current methods are strengthening VEOs, and aided by technology, a blueprint for rising to power in failed and failing areas of the world has been prototyped. Al-Qaeda conducted the 9/11 attack with \$500,000 United States Dollars (USD), while Daesh has anywhere from \$50-300 million USD in gold, cash and e-currency reserves.⁵ The next regional power vacuum in the Levant or in other unstable region may allow for a “Daesh 3.0” that will prove even more challenging to defeat, at a cost of lives and treasure that may be too rich for consideration. *A new approach is required.* This paper seeks to use the Stanford Design Empathy Model to understand Daesh foreign fighters, define the problem returning from the Levant through case studies and recommend a human-centric bespoke approach. Empathy is a key component in the fight against extremism in Canada for an individualized approach to each surviving foreign fighter as they may hold solutions to preventing another Daesh rise to power like that from 2013 to 2014. This essay will advocate a counter-narrative that expresses the harsh reality of the surviving Canadian Daesh foreign fighters to prevent a new generation of the vulnerable becoming indoctrinated in extremism. Where a counter-narrative is unsuccessful, Daesh foreign fighters should be exploited through modern surveillance methods. Finally, a case will be made that the families of Daesh foreign

⁴ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 05, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group>.

⁵ “A View from the CT Foxhole: Edmund Fitton-Brown, Coordinator, ISIL (Daesh)/Al-Qaida/Taliban Monitoring Team, United Nations – Combating Terrorism Center at West Point,” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, April 26, 2019, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://ctc.usma.edu/view-ct-foxhole-edmund-fitton-brown-coordinator-isil-daesh-al-qaida-taliban-monitoring-team-united-nations/>.

fighters left behind by conflict should be studied in greater detail to understand the risks and opportunities they present.

The online appeal of Daesh compelled 40,000 foreign fighters from 80+ nations to fight in the Levant, and the specter of a “modern Jihadi utopia” attracted disenfranchised youth from around the world.⁶ Sources from first-hand accounts and terrorism and insurgency experts will enhance understanding of Daesh social media methods and the overall of the environment inherent in the rise of Daesh. The core of the discussion will use the Stanford Human Centered Design Process to understand *why* disenfranchised sub-populations attracted by the Daesh message leave first world countries. Three case studies of foreign fighters will analyze the mindset and proclaimed motivations of the disenfranchised, with one each focusing on those incarcerated overseas, those incarcerated in Canada and those free in Canada. The current problem framework will be formed from primary sources that have emerged from the rubble of the collapsed “Caliphate.” This will lead to recommendations on a direct and indirect targeted approach to dismantle the strength of the information messaging and warfare used by Daesh and analogues. The conclusion will draw together final points on a strategy of dissuading, detecting and/or deprogramming those who would travel the world to conduct Jihad and better prepare for the next metastasis of Daesh. We must understand potential future issues and determine what can *still* be learned. Daesh was physically defeated on the battlefield in 2019 in Syria and Iraq, but without collaboration

⁶ “The Caliphate’s Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State’s Foreign Fighter Paper Trail – Combating Terrorism Center at West Point,” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, January 18, 2018, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-caliphates-global-workforce-an-inside-look-at-the-islamic-states-foreign-fighter-paper-trail/>; “Number of Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria Doubles in a Year, Report Finds,” *The Guardian*, December 08, 2015, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/08/isis-foreign-fighters-iraq-syria-doubles-report>.

on a multi-faceted approach to avoid future actions that again lead to conditions for another Daesh or analogous group, success may have been in vain. Success begins with knowing the enemy.⁷

AN ORIGIN STORY

Violent Ideological Roots

In the mid-1990s and in early 2000, two prominent extremist Jihadists bear the mantle of the founding ideological and tactical leadership of Daesh: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Ali al-Anbari.⁸ These founders have woven and carried the thread of a radical ideology that has spread through the internet to thousands of followers. Daesh was known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) during a tumultuous relationship with Al-Qaeda, yet the trademark extreme ideology has remained very similar throughout. Anbari created the underpinnings of this ideology, while Zarqawi had been the prominent operational commander. Zarqawi was a brutish tactician who led through physical presence and force, while Anbari was the nominal second in command who planned the extreme ideology that Daesh embodied.

AQI suffered military tactical defeat at the hands of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which targeted senior AQI facilitators and command and control

⁷ Amarnath Amarasingam, Colin P. Clarke, "Where Do ISIS Fighters Go When the Caliphate Falls?" *The Atlantic*, March 06, 2017, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/isis-foreign-fighter-jihad-syria-iraq/518313>; Nur Aziemah Azman, "Islamic State (IS) Propaganda: Dabiq and Future Directions of Islamic State." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 8, 10 (2016). <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wpcontent/uploads/2016/10/CTTA-October-2016.pdf>.

⁸ David Kilcullen, *Blood Year: The Unraveling of Western Counterterrorism* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 81; Hassan Hassan, "The True Origins of ISIS," *The Atlantic*, January 07, 2019, accessed April 02, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/isis-origins-anbari-zarqawi/577030/>. Daesh traces an origin story that predates the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

nodes.⁹ From 2003 to 2006 Zarqawi led insurgent AQI forces against the ISF and US Coalition in Iraq until his death in a targeted strike by JSOC. The death of Zarqawi led to an organizational junction where Egyptian Abu Ayyub al-Masri took the newly branded Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) to a successful 2006-2008 campaign leading to the takeover of Anbar province, Iraq. The US surge planned and executed by US General Petraeus in 2008 orchestrated the military defeat of ISI in Anbar province and killed Masri in 2010. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current leader of Daesh, survived detention at the infamous Camp Bucca prison, the killing of his predecessor Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and also the proclaimed defeat of ISI in 2010 with the decapitation of key leaders.¹⁰ Daesh under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi led to a strategy change and split from the original Al-Qaeda core, with Baghdadi maintaining a low profile in rebuilding Daesh.¹¹ The radicalized Camp Bucca former detainees, many with Baathist military roots, and Anbari formed a core of extremist ideology that would prove vital to Daesh creating the infamous *Caliphate* that some called the Islamic State.

The two concurrent aggravating factors of Iraqi government corruption and the Syrian Civil War from 2011 to 2014 contributed to the ideal opportunity that Baghdadi seized.¹² Daesh combined success on the battlefield first in Syria and then streamed across the porous border with Iraq to use conventional maneuver warfare to conquer a land mass the size of Great Britain and 11 million people including the cities of Mosul,

⁹ David Kilcullen, *Blood Year: The Unraveling of Western Counterterrorism*. Oxford University Press, 2017, 7-14.

¹⁰ Zack Gold, "(U) Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI): An Al-Qaeda Affiliate Case Study," October 2017, accessed April 28, 2019, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DIM-2017-U-016118-2Rev.pdf.

¹¹ Charles R. Lister, *The Syrian Jihad Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 37-62.

¹² Kilcullen, David. *Blood Year: The Unraveling of Western Counterterrorism*. Oxford University Press, 2017, 61-65.

Ramadi and Fallujah.¹³ Baghdadi announced the “Islamic Caliphate” 29 June 2014, establishing the proto-state.

THE NETWORK

The Allure of Daesh

Daesh weaponized social media to recruit over 40,000 foreign fighters to fight in the Levant.¹⁴ These Daesh fighters streamed from the Middle East, North Africa, and the West and hailed from over 86 individual countries to take part in the global struggle against the West, embodied by the “Great Satan” of the US.¹⁵ Daesh used the promise of sex, adventure, combat, territorial gain and achieving a higher purpose to motivate the disenfranchised to join the struggle against the west. The approach of Daesh was dual pronged to appeal to a higher hierarchy of need to be part of something greater, while also satisfying basic needs of conquest and sex. The apocalyptic vision of Daesh allowed the group to surpass Al-Qaeda to become the preeminent modern Islamic extremist

¹³ “United States Study Centre,” America First: US Asia Policy under President Trump - United States Studies Centre, accessed January 17, 2019, <https://www.usssc.edu.au/events/understanding-isis-a-conversation-with-military-strategist-dr-david-kilcullen>.

¹⁴ “S/2019/50 – Twenty-third Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals and Entities - United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee,” United Nations, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/news/document/s-2019-50-twenty-third-report-analytical-support-sanctions-monitoring-team-submitted-pursuant-resolution-2368-2017-concerning-isil-daesh-al-qaida-associated/>; Alex Schmid, “Foreign (Terrorist) Fighter Estimates: Conceptual and Data Issues,” *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*, 2015; D. Malet, “Foreign Fighter Mobilization and Persistence in a Global Context”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 27, no.3 (2015), pp. 455.

¹⁵ “The Caliphate’s Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State’s Foreign Fighter Paper Trail – Combating Terrorism Center at West Point,” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, January 18, 2018, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-caliphates-global-workforce-an-inside-look-at-the-islamic-states-foreign-fighter-paper-trail/>; “Number of Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria Doubles in a Year, Report Finds,” *The Guardian*, December 08, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/08/isis-foreign-fighters-iraq-syria-doubles-report>.

group.¹⁶ Daesh used a two-pronged messianic and earthly gratification approach to draw foreign fighters from 2014 to 2015 at a rate of 1250 per month to the Levant.¹⁷ Daesh was unprecedented in success by embracing the power of immediate gratification nested with a larger message of the road to the apocalyptic battle on the plains of Dabiq.¹⁸ While Daesh is not the only terrorist group to use a network approach to inspiring attacks and fomenting hate (for example the rise of the far right), they have the largest current cohesive network.¹⁹

The appeal of Daesh leadership was strong, with the true believer Baghdadi instituting a lead by example strategy broadcast to the world through Daesh and Western sources.²⁰ The words of Baghdadi reverberated truth to some, as he stated: “If you see me acting truly, then follow me. If you see me acting falsely, then advise and guide me.... If I disobey God, then do not obey me.”²¹ William Faizi McCants argues that Baghdadi showed tremendous individual capability in building Daesh while completing a PhD and creating a coalition of like-minded individuals through force of will and raw intimidation.²² Baghdadi remained humble despite being promoted to lead Daesh: “I

¹⁶ William Faizi McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: Picador/St. Martin’s Press, 2016), 99-145.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ “Canada’s New Far Right: A Trove of Private Chat Room Messages Reveals an Extremist Subculture,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 29, 2019, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canadas-new-far-right-a-trove-of-private-chat-room-messages-reveals/>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; William Faizi McCants, “The Believer: How Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Became Leader of the Islamic State,” The Brookings Institution, accessed April 28, 2019, <http://csweb.brookings.edu/content/research/essays/2015/thebeliever.html>.

²¹ “Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi,” Counter Extremism Project, April 26, 2019, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi>. There are other primary sources of this quote, but they are linked to extremism and are not recommended for casual searches.

²² *Ibid.*

was appointed to rule you but I am not the best among you.”²³ These words inspired the disenfranchised at an alarming and unprecedented modern rate, with Baghdadi alive and plotting destruction in the West and congratulatory of the Sri Lanka Easter terrorist bombings.²⁴

THE EMPATHY MODEL

Wanting to Understand

Empathy is not sympathy or love; it can be a weapon. Saddam Hussein eluded the most advanced military the world has ever known for nine months, discovered in his home town “willing to negotiate” due to the use of empathy by key US personnel.²⁵ The human centric approach of retired U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Eric Maddox divulged Saddam Hussein’s location through a human intelligence driven interrogation leading to the successful capture.²⁶ Maddox used an interrogation approach based on listening to his subjects, gaining trust to such a degree he was once removed by superiors who

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Liz Sly and Souad Mekhennet, “ISIS Leader Baghdadi Makes First Video Appearance in 5 Years, Emphasizes Group's Global Reach,” *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2019, accessed April 30, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/isis-leader-baghdadi-appears-in-a-video-for-the-first-time-in-five-years/2019/04/29/a82611d4-6a9b-11e9-bbe7-1c798fb80536_story.html?utm_term=.4beeb84b0ab2; Joyce Karam, “US Trying to Confirm Authenticity of Baghdadi Video,” *The National*, April 30, 2019, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/the-americas/us-trying-to-confirm-authenticity-of-baghdadi-video-1.855223>.

²⁵ Kip P, Nygren, “Emerging technologies and exponential change: Implications for Army transformation Parameters,” Summer 2002; 32, 2; ProQuest; 86; Rory McCarthy, “Saddam: ‘I Am President of Iraq and I Am Willing to Negotiate’,” *The Guardian*, December 16, 2003, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/dec/16/iraq.rorymccarthy>. Saddam Hussein, pulled from a spider hole unarmed and surrounded was reported to have said: “I am Saddam Hussein. I am the president of Iraq and I am willing to negotiate.”

²⁶ “Former Soldier Who Found Saddam Hussein Tells How He Did It,” *Gazette*, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2015/04/22/Former-soldier-who-found-Saddam-Hussein-tells-how-he-did-it/stories/201504220208>; Volker Janssen, “The Surprising Interrogations That Led to Saddam Hussein's Capture,” *History.com*, November 08, 2018, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.history.com/news/saddam-hussein-capture-iraq-interrogations-eric-maddox>.

believed his he was conspiring with prisoners.²⁷ Stated by Maddox on the empathetic approach he used to enable Operation Red Dawn that led to the capture of Hussein: **“There are no emotions in empathy. Empathy is understanding. It’s not sympathy.”**²⁸ Maddox used his own empathy model of fostering trust over the course of 2,700 interrogations to become arguably the most famous modern interrogator, advocating for a more nuanced and human centric approach than the brutality and torture inherent in the era of enhanced interrogation made infamous by the war crimes committed at Abu Gharib.²⁹ Trust was the key to enabling mission success; mission success that is needed in countries like Canada. Canada needs a model to better identify threats through a human centric approach to understand why the disenfranchised seek extremist organizations.

Each case study will use the Stanford Design thinking model due to the human centric focus inherit in this archetype.³⁰ The Stanford Human Centered Design (HCD) comprises 5 steps: empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test.³¹ The HCD model breaks down the first step, Empathize, as the critical factor in the entire process because it allows an understanding of why someone does something and how – as well as how the individual in question views the world according to their own

²⁷ *Ibid*; “Five Years Later, How They Got Saddam Hussein,” NPR. December 12, 2008, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=98174979>.

²⁸ Volker Janssen, “The Surprising Interrogations That Led to Saddam Hussein’s Capture,” History.com, November 08, 2018, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.history.com/news/saddam-hussein-capture-iraq-interrogations-eric-maddox>.

²⁹ “Five Years Later, How They Got Saddam Hussein,” NPR. December 12, 2008, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=98174979>; Seymour M. Hersh, “The General’s Report,” The New Yorker, June 19, 2017, accessed April 23, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/06/25/the-generals-report>.

³⁰ “An Introduction to Design Thinking Process Guide,” accessed April 28, 2019, <https://dschool-old.stanford.edu/sandbox/groups/designresources/wiki/36873/attachments/74b3d/ModeGuideBOOTCAMP2010L.pdf>.

³¹ *Ibid*; “Design Thinking for Social Innovation (SSIR),” Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change, accessed April 28, 2019, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/design_thinking_for_social_innovation.

physical and psychological needs.³² Empathy will be the centerpiece of each case study, supported by the second step of define to shape the problem statement.³³ Each case study will use define in a supporting role as it is a key aspect to frame a problem.³⁴ While ideation (coming up with an extensive range of options), prototyping (eliciting information from an audience), and testing (refining solutions to make them better) are all important in coming up with a fulsome solution, they are beyond this paper.³⁵ Daesh former, current or prospective mindsets can frame the problem, allowing for consideration of options.

There may be 60 returned foreign fighters in Canada, over 30 Canadian Daesh detainees in Syria and more of both either unaccounted for or not disclosed by official government agencies.³⁶ These numbers are difficult to confirm, as are confirmations of Canadians killed in Syria and Iraq fighting for Daesh which may be 22 according to Amarnath Amarasingham.³⁷ This group of foreign fighters do not fit a single mold, nor is there ready access to a detained population that an interrogator like Maddox had in Iraq. Without a start state, there can be no jumping off point for an individualized

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Diana Swain, "What to Do with Suspected Canadian ISIS Fighters and Their Families Detained in Syria?," CBC News, February 18, 2019, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/isis-canadians-syria-prosecutions-1.5019971>; Stewart Bell, "EXCLUSIVE: Canada's Plan for Managing the Return of ISIS Fighters Revealed in Documents," Global News, May 14, 2018, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4205480/canadas-plan-freturn-isis-fighters/?fbclid=IwAR1xxFwbWX5IUg8CK9yqHc6j0mhhkgzW7VJApt410mVk02v2umQc7nk03bA>. "Terrorism Experts Applaud Minister's Clarifications on Returned Foreign Fighters," The Globe and Mail, January 17, 2019, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-terrorism-experts-applaud-public-safety-ministers-clarifications-on/>.

³⁷ Amarnath Amarasingam, "So, How Many LEGIT Returnees Are There in Canada at the Moment?" Twitter, November 22, 2017, accessed April 30, 2019, https://twitter.com/AmarAmarasingam/status/933136916681318401?ref_src=twsrc^tfw|twcamp^tweetemb ed|twterm^933136916681318401&ref_url=https://globalnews.ca/news/3877256/number-of-returned-foreign-fighters-essentially-the-same-as-2-years-ago-ralph-goodale/.

approach. Coalition Forces, including elements of Canadian Special Operations Forces in the Levant destroyed regional and global threats in adversary bastions; however it is not always possible to funnel threats into one region.³⁸ It is more efficient to eliminate the threat outside of Canada's borders using Special Operations forces, however domestic policy holds a complex litany of national factors that make a simple solution to a complex problem impossible at this time. Three case studies will form a sample of the individuals who sought to leave the West to join Daesh and who may indicate the larger trend.

CASE STUDIES - EMPATHY

What We Know

The Daesh apocalyptic and immediate reward message duality led dozens of foreign fighters to leave Canada to fight and die in regions they had never lived in.³⁹ There was not one pattern for these foreign fighters as studies of autobiographies have shown, highlighting the difficulty of not only understanding who does this but also what

³⁸ "Canadian Special-forces Team Hunts down and Dismantles Chemical Weapons in Iraq," *The Globe and Mail*, October 10, 2017, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canadian-special-forces-team-hunts-down-and-dismantles-chemical-weapons-in-iraq/article36528217/>; David Pugliese, "New Details on Canadian Special Forces in Iraq to Be Released Later, Military Says," *Ottawa Citizen*, January 26, 2017, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/update-on-canadian-special-forces-in-iraq-planned-for-a-later-date>; David Pugliese, "Canadian Special Forces under Fire from ISIL in Iraq, but Military Won't Say Much about 'sporadic' Attacks," *National Post*, October 06, 2016, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-special-forces-under-fire-from-isil-in-iraq-but-military-wont-say-much-about-sporadic-attacks>; Adnan R. Khan, "What's Canada's Role in Iraq? It's Bigger than You Think," *Macleans.ca*, November 04, 2016, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/quagmire-iraq-could-get-messy-for-canada/>.

³⁹ Charlie Pinkerton, "Sixty Canadians Have Returned after Joining Extremist Groups: Study," *IPolitics*, December 13, 2018, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://ipolitics.ca/2018/12/11/sixty-people-have-returned-to-canada-after-joining-extremist-groups-threat-study/>; Amanda Connolly, "Number of Returned Foreign Fighters 'essentially the same' as 2 Years Ago: Ralph Goodale," *Global News*, November 23, 2017, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3877256/number-of-returned-foreign-fighters-essentially-the-same-as-2-years-ago-ralph-goodale/>.

they are thinking.⁴⁰ Daesh foreign fighters who have survived the battlefield defeat in Syria and Iraq may provide a unique opportunity to determine if there are common characteristics for those who travel the world to engage in terrorism. Some, like John Horgan who interviewed over 200 terrorists and foreign fighters believe that there may be a common thread of the need for personal significance, because they feel insignificant on their own or humiliated as part of a larger group being attacked either physically, psychologically or both.⁴¹ Some may even feel remorse after the fact, no longer able to align their beliefs with the actions they have conducted according to both Horgan and Arie Kruglanski.⁴² Three categories of case studies will build towards an empathy model, to move toward determining if need, narrative or network were the driving factors for these individuals.⁴³

CASE STUDY 1

Daesh Canadian Foreign Fighters Incarcerated Abroad

The physical Daesh Caliphate is destroyed, and now some foreign fighters want to come back to what they identify as home in the West.⁴⁴ One of the highest profile

⁴⁰ Altier, Mary Beth; Horgan, John; and Thoroughgood, Christian. "In Their Own Words? Methodological Considerations in the Analysis of Terrorist Autobiographies." *Journal of Strategic Security* 5, no. 4 (2012): 85-98.

⁴¹ Stephanie Pappas, "Inside Twisted Terrorist Minds - Where Is the Empathy?" LiveScience, April 16, 2013, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.livescience.com/28765-how-terrorists-overcome-empathy.html>.

⁴² Kruglanski, A., Jasko, K., Webber, D., Chernikova, M., & Molinario, E. (2018). The Making of Violent Extremists. *Review of General Psychology*, 22(1), 107–120.

⁴³ *Ibid*; Yusoufzai, K. and Emmerling, F., 2017. How identity crisis, relative deprivation, personal characteristics, and empathy contribute to the engagement of Western individuals in Islamist terrorist behavior. *Contemporary Voices: St Andrews Journal of International Relations*, 8(1), pp.68–80.

⁴⁴ Rukmini Callimachi, "The English Voice of ISIS Comes Out of the Shadows," *The New York Times*, February 17, 2019, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/17/world/middleeast/isis-islamic-state-narrator.html>; "Caliphate," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2018, accessed March 07, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/podcasts/caliphate-isis-rukmini-callimachi.html>.

captured Daesh foreign fighters also is Canadian, Mohammed Khalifa – narrator for “Flames of War,” lending immediacy to dealing with this issue.⁴⁵ Stanford Human Centered Design (HCD) methodology can observe these individuals, engage them in interview type discourse and watch and listen to their stories.⁴⁶ This empathy first step is aided by the likes of the Western media through Rukmini Callimachi in the podcast “Caliphate.”⁴⁷ Charlie Winter notes that the most recognizable voice of English language Daesh propaganda is Khalifa, someone who professes: “No, I don’t regret it,” when asked from his Syrian prison cell about leaving Canada to join Daesh.⁴⁸ Khalifa as the English narrator of the infamous “Flames of War” Daesh propaganda video is credited with using his technological proficiency to create slick production values within a general call to arms for the Sunni Muslim world.⁴⁹ Observing Khalifa and his subsequent interview by Callimachi has delivered perhaps one of the best profiles, allowing for an understanding

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ “An Introduction to Design Thinking Process Guide,” accessed April 28, 2019, <https://dschool-old.stanford.edu/sandbox/groups/designresources/wiki/36873/attachments/74b3d/ModeGuideBOOTCAMP2010L.pdf>; “Design Thinking for Social Innovation (SSIR),” Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change, accessed April 28, 2019, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/design_thinking_for_social_innovation.

⁴⁷ Rukmini Callimachi, “The English Voice of ISIS Comes Out of the Shadows,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2019, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/17/world/middleeast/isis-islamic-state-narrator.html>; “Caliphate,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 2018, accessed March 07, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/podcasts/caliphate-isis-rukmini-callimachi.html>; ““Jihadi Jack” Interview: Homesick Jack Letts Tells ITV News He Wants to Return from Syria but ‘no One Cares’ about Him.” *ITV News*. Accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.itv.com/news/2019-02-22/jihadi-jack-interview-jack-letts-itv-news-syria/>.

⁴⁸ Rukmini Callimachi, “The English Voice of ISIS Comes Out of the Shadows,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2019, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/17/world/middleeast/isis-islamic-state-narrator.html>; “Caliphate,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 2018, accessed March 07, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/podcasts/caliphate-isis-rukmini-callimachi.html>.

⁴⁹ “ISIS Releases ‘Flames of War’ Feature Film to Intimidate West.” *Clarion Project*. March 06, 2018. Accessed March 06, 2019. <https://clarionproject.org/isis-releases-flames-war-feature-film-intimidate-west/>; Stewart Bell, “Canadian Captured in Syria Admits to Role in Gruesome ISIS Execution Videos,” *Global News*, February 17, 2019, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4966956/canadian-admits-narrated-isis-execution-video/>.

of someone active in the effective propaganda wing of Daesh and who now wants to return to the West.⁵⁰

Khalifa was an unremarkable computer studies College graduate in Toronto while in Canada.⁵¹ He claims Daesh YouTube videos of English speaking British foreign fighters in Syria were the catalyst to his leaving Canada.⁵² Khalifa felt a kinship and similarity with active foreign fighters and sought to join them.⁵³ Khalifa was then instrumental in creating the “Flames of War,” a video that would be the same call to Jihad for others as Syrian extremist YouTube videos had been for him, in effect using his own experience to create a similar catalyst for others to follow.⁵⁴ This shows an interesting nugget of empathy applied by Daesh. Despite the capture of Khalifa, he remains defiant in public admissions, daring the West to fight Daesh and being unrepentant.⁵⁵ However during private interviews he is much less filled with bravado; although he still regrets nothing in private or in public life.⁵⁶ His wife is still dear to him and not a subject he will speak about.⁵⁷ Khalifa may be the most important Daesh foreign fighter to understand what motivates others to leave their Western lives. A strong understanding of Khalifa through his interviews leads to the belief that hearing an

⁵⁰ “The English Voice of ISIS,” CBC News, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1444836931555>; Anthony Loyd, “Meeting the Canadian voice Of Islamic State,” The Times, February 18, 2019, accessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/meeting-the-canadian-voice-ofislamic-state-7xvqzd55q>.

⁵¹ Rukmini Callimachi, “The English Voice of ISIS Comes Out of the Shadows,” The New York Times, February 17, 2019, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/17/world/middleeast/isis-islamic-state-narrator.html>; “Caliphate,” The New York Times, March 10, 2018, accessed March 07, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/podcasts/caliphate-isis-rukmini-callimachi.html>.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

English voice over top of the propaganda videos was a key aspect of recruiting like-minded individuals from the West. Unpacking these details allow for a common understanding to define the problem and make sense out of what these videos have done to prospective and actual foreign fighters.⁵⁸ Before joining the Jihad, Western interference in Muslim nations may have motivated him to take action, and coupled with a rather mundane life may have been enough to spur him on a journey to fight for Daesh; the answer to why may be nuanced and not binary.⁵⁹ The ignoble end to Khalifa could be a strong counter-narrative: inspired to be a foreign fighter by propaganda, Khalifa becomes a key to Daesh propaganda only to end in misery as an example not to emulate.

In defining the problem, there are divergent but similar lines in the interviews with foreign fighters that highlight initial infatuation that led to disenfranchisement. The glory sought did not match the end of their time as a fighter for Daesh. This may be the key for deconstructing the bravado and adventure sold within “Flames of War” and analogues.⁶⁰ Khalifa, after exchanging fire with Kurdish Security Forces surrendered; the same English speaker for a group that vowed to never surrender and wore suicide belts into battle.⁶¹ This statement by Khalifa: “I was exhausted. My ammo was gone, they kept calling on me to surrender, and so I threw down my weapon,” places the listener in the

⁵⁸ “An Introduction to Design Thinking Process Guide,” accessed April 28, 2019, <https://dschool-old.stanford.edu/sandbox/groups/designresources/wiki/36873/attachments/74b3d/ModeGuideBOOTCAMP2010L.pdf>; “Design Thinking for Social Innovation (SSIR),” Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change, accessed April 28, 2019, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/design_thinking_for_social_innovation.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Freedland, “Let’s Deny Isis its Binary Struggle -- and Celebrate the Grey Zone,” *The Guardian*, Nov 20, 2015, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1734910213?accountid=9867>.

⁶⁰ “ISIS Releases ‘Flames of War’ Feature Film to Intimidate West.” Clarion Project. March 06, 2018. Accessed March 06, 2019. <https://clarionproject.org/isis-releases-flames-war-feature-film-intimidate-west/>.

⁶¹ CNN, “High Percentage of ISIS Fighters Wear Suicide Belts,” YouTube, December 22, 2014, accessed April 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=430W_imRQXw; Rukmini Callimachi, “The English Voice of ISIS Comes Out of the Shadows,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2019, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/17/world/middleeast/isis-islamic-state-narrator.html>.

point of view of a broken and defeated foreign fighter.⁶² This differs from the perspective of a college student in Toronto who followed the call to Jihad. Khalifa is not alone.

“Jihadi Jack” is another high profile foreign fighter to end his Jihad adventure with Daesh in ruin.⁶³ British-Canadian, Jack Letts is being held in Syria and is on record as being repentant, stating that victims of international Daesh terrorism had nothing to do with the conflict in the Levant, and that he misses his mother, pop culture and sweets.⁶⁴ A school drop-out at age 18, Letts may have been seeking a higher purpose as his family claim he left the West to help refugees after learning Arabic.⁶⁵ A third example for this case study is a Canadian Daesh foreign fighter from Ontario who not only fought for Daesh for four years in the Levant but also recruited others through social media – Mohammed Ali (nom de guerre Abu Turaab).⁶⁶

Ali used twitter and other social media to proclaim the greatness of Daesh’s global Jihad, yet now professes he committed no crimes and should be allowed to return

⁶² “Caliphate,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 2018, accessed May 02, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/podcasts/caliphate-isis-rukmini-callimachi.html?module=inline>. Rukmini Callimachi, “The English Voice of ISIS Comes Out of the Shadows,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 2019, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/17/world/middleeast/isis-islamic-state-narrator.html>.

⁶³ Murray Brewster, “Father of Jihadi Jack Says He Can Clear His Son's Name - but the Evidence Is Sealed CBC News,” *CBC News*, October 30, 2018, accessed May 02, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/jihadi-jack-letts-isis-syria-1.4884409>; Peter Zimonjic, “Jihadi Jack Tells U.K. Broadcaster He Misses His Mother, Wants to Return to Oxford,” *CBC News*, February 23, 2019, accessed May 02, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/jahidi-jack-misses-mummy-1.5030875>; “Father of Jihadi Jack Asks Canada to Help Bring Son Home,” *BBC News*, October 30, 2018, accessed May 02, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46039145>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Stewart Bell, “Canadian Jihadist Unmasked: ‘Abu Turaab’ Has Been Tweeting His Deadly Ideology since He Joined ISIS,” *National Post*, June 19, 2015, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/features/canadian-isis-fighter-abu-turaab-identified-as-mohammed-ali>.

to Canada.⁶⁷ Ali left for the Levant distraught with Western practices, including taxation, the West's treatment of Muslims and the Canadian higher education system.⁶⁸ Ali proclaimed that he was no longer a Canadian in 2016, changing his outward dialogue 180 degrees today, proclaiming "he has learned a lot of things" since his time in the Levant from 2014 onwards and that now he "just wants to go home" to Canada.⁶⁹

Using HCD to move from empathy to defining and beyond, the issue then turns to how one might deal with the outward bravado of aspiring and returning Western foreign fighters. The problem is they see only the glory and propaganda, not the real world plight, including the internal struggle of those who have failed. The three individual cases above show that failure is inevitable, juxtaposing the endless glory pitched by Daesh. Showcasing the harsh realities from first-hand sources may be a luminous way of doing this, using the stories of these three similar individuals. This could create a strong counter narrative, put together with vignettes from the point of view of those who started with dreams and aspirations of glory and ended with harsh failure and dissolution. Defining the problem may be useful to provide larger insight into what it all means in the larger scale: the point of view that they were lied to, they joined, they failed, they miss what they think of as home and now they want to return. These foreign fighters left the West under the pretense of their mundane or failing lives improving and now have found themselves educated in harsh reality and want to return to those places they rallied

⁶⁷ *Ibid*; Brooklyn Neustaeter, "'I Broke No Laws There': Canadian ISIS Fighter Wants Help to Return Home," CTVNews, February 12, 2019, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/i-broke-no-laws-there-canadian-isis-fighter-wants-help-to-return-home-1.4293114>.

⁶⁸ Stewart Bell, "Canadian Jihadist Unmasked: 'Abu Turaab' Has Been Tweeting His Deadly Ideology since He Joined ISIS," National Post, June 19, 2015, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/features/canadian-isis-fighter-abu-turaab-identified-as-mohammed-ali>.

⁶⁹ Stewart Bell, "'I Just Want to Go Back': Canadian ISIS Fighter Captured in Northern Syria Speaks out," Global News, October 10, 2018, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4528417/canadian-isis-fighter-captured-in-northern-syria-speaks-out/>.

against. The prospective foreign fighter following Daesh propaganda will find only failure, something to be showcased to defeat the challenge of Daesh information warfare, preventing further spread of the contagion when a Daesh-like group rises again. These individuals could be the basis for a strong counter extremist foreign fighter narrative.

CASE STUDY 2

Daesh Foreign Fighters Free in Canada

“Roses are red, violets are blue, IS is coming, to a town near you.”⁷⁰ That social media quote appeared during the height of power for Daesh, but still rings true for the networked terrorist group. A Canadian foreign fighter promoting conquest in Iraq and Syria used social media for this rudimentary piece of information warfare, but it is applicable today at home in the West given Daesh is an adaptive organization without borders. There remain other Canadian members of Daesh now living in Canada without being charged, including Abu Huzaifa who confessed to killing for the extremist group while in Syria.⁷¹ Huzaifa believed he had evaded law enforcement by returning from Syria via Pakistan, enabling him to speak with audacity to the media on his alleged crimes.⁷² Huzaifa may now be more radicalized than when he returned to Canada through the inability of law enforcement to charge him based on his confession.⁷³ Doubt

⁷⁰ Stewart Bell, “Canadian Jihadist Unmasked: ‘Abu Turaab’ Has Been Tweeting His Deadly Ideology since He Joined ISIS,” National Post, June 19, 2015, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/features/canadian-isis-fighter-abu-turaab-identified-as-mohammed-ali>. This is a quote from Mohammed Ali, a Canadian Daesh foreign fighter currently detained in the Levant.

⁷¹ “Government Grilled after Canadian Claims He Killed for ISIS,” Global News, accessed May 07, 2019, https://globalnews.ca/video/4204062/government-grilled-after-canadian-claims-he-killed-for-isis?fbclid=IwAR3rEfUGeerr7SPfAvP7OfwsW__twRWI3moXg4DWKK2BZjccly-VoVuhdiU; “Tory MPs Call for Action against Self-confessed ISIS Recruit Living in Toronto,” Global News, May 11, 2018, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4204245/canadian-islamic-state-recruit-toronto/>; “Caliphate,” The New York Times, March 10, 2018, accessed May 02, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/podcasts/caliphate-isis-rukmini-callimachi.html?module=inline>.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

and guilt marked the interview that Huzaiifa had with Callimachi during the podcast “Caliphate,” as it appeared that the murders he confessed to weighed heavily on him.⁷⁴ Huzifa seemed to be another that left the West to answer a higher calling, and did not find his greater purpose while fighting for Daesh.⁷⁵ Huzifa could potentially be a strong candidate for a counter-narrative, as malleable as he seems, while Kevin Omar Mohamed may a different story.

Kevin Omar Mohamed attempted to join an extremist group in Turkey but failed in crossing over to Syria, returning to Canada and espousing the “beauty” of committing an attack on the West.⁷⁶ Mohamed continued with online terror subversive messages and contact with extremists, only to go dark at one point withdrawing cash, hoarding propaganda and arming himself.⁷⁷ Caught armed within the confines of a Canadian University and charged with terrorism, Mohamed served two-and-a-half years of a four-year sentence prior to being released unrepentant.⁷⁸ Mohamed is an ongoing high risk for public safety, with no indications of reform of thought or adherence to a de-radicalization program.⁷⁹ It is difficult to project why Mohamed has not been repentant based on the

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ “Ontario Man Dubbed ‘high Risk to Public Safety’ after Trying to Join Terror Group Set for Release,” CBC News, February 23, 2019. Accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/canadian-terror-release-kevin-omar-mohamed-parole-1.5030090>. Mohamed attempted to join an Al-Qaeda affiliate, however for the purposes of this paper the violent extremist organization is similar enough to Daesh (even though the two organizations have clashed in Syria) that it is still informative on foreign fighters.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*; Paola Loriggio, “Ontario Man Who Pleaded Guilty to Terror Charge Sentenced to 4 1/2 Years in Prison,” National Post, November 01, 2017, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/man-who-pleaded-guilty-to-terror-charge-sentenced-to-4-12-years-in-prison-lawyer>.

⁷⁸ “Ontario Man Arrested under Controversial Law Charged with Terrorism,” Macleans.ca, March 29, 2016, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/ontario-man-arrested-under-controversial-law-charged-with-terrorism/>; Stewart Bell and Andrew Russell, “Canadian Who Tried to Join Terror Group in Syria Set for Release from Prison despite Being ‘high Risk to Public Safety’,” Global News, February 22, 2019, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4986036/canadian-joined-terror-group-syria-released-parole-despite-high-risk-public-safety/>.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

sparseness of available information, however he may represent a subset of hardcore fanatics who are beyond rehabilitation or co-opting. While it may be impossible to know the mindset of all Canadian Daesh foreign fighters, some feel as if they have won despite losing their physical Caliphate and will carry on fighting.⁸⁰ This presents a national security issue, and a failed foreign fighter like Mohamed may be a future recidivist worthy of lifelong surveillance and/or detention.

Canada could not prosecute some of the 60+ returned foreign fighters, including those who have confessed to serious crimes.⁸¹ They have not been prosecuted because of difficult or non-existent chains of custody and the challenges in encryption.⁸² This risk to Canadians should instead be an opportunity by exploiting the nebulous existence of deep and dark web terrorist encrypted communications networks, especially for those deemed a high risk to reoffend.⁸³ A US based group that tracks violent extremist web traffic, The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) did exactly that, using phishing

⁸⁰ “‘Isis Followers and Acolytes Feel as If They've Won’,” Radio New Zealand, January 12, 2019, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/the-weekend/audio/2018678260/rukmini-callimachi-chasing-isis>.

⁸¹ “Caliphate,” The New York Times, March 10, 2018, accessed May 02, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/podcasts/caliphate-isis-rukmini-callimachi.html?module=inline>.

⁸² Stewart Bell, “Canada's Plan for Managing the Return of ISIS Fighters Revealed in Documents,” Global News, May 14, 2018, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4205480/canadas-plan-freturn-isis-fighters/>.

⁸³ “‘Virtual Planners’ in the Arsenal of Islamic State External Operations,” NeuroImage, March 14, 2018, accessed April, 30, 2019, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0030438718300127>; Gabriel Weimann, “Going Dark: Terrorism on the Dark Web,” Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, October 14, 2015, accessed January 17, 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1119546>; Khalil Sardarnia and Rasoul Safizadeh, “The Internet and its Potentials for Networking and Identity Seeking: A Study on ISIS,” July 11, 2017, accessed April, 30, 2019, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318352598_The_Internet_and_Its_Potentials_for_Networking_and_Identity_Seeking_A_Study_on_ISIS. The surface web is any common page that is open through a typical internet search index, for example, Google, Bing, or Yahoo, while the deep web would be whatever is not available through regular web search tools. The deep web may be open through increasingly specialized tools, for example Tor or Freenet that are an extra, but not overly onerous, barrier to general access. A subset of the deep web is the dark web, commonly where criminal and extremist networks operate. The hallmark of the dark web is difficult access, strength against intrusive attacks, and greater security. SVEOs have typically utilized the dark web to avoid being uncovered on the web.

techniques to uncover the fact that a Canadian member of Daesh was inciting terror attacks in the West.⁸⁴ Using networks of monitored and co-opted Canadian foreign fighters either through direct or indirect means can better disclose emerging threats. As was the case with Kevin Mohamed the real threat may be presented when networks go silent; when networks are active, they should be exploited.

CASE STUDY 3

Detained Daesh Foreign Fighters

While some foreign fighters fought overseas, there were others who attempted to leave but were intercepted, questioned, detained and denied the opportunity to join the foreign Jihad. Some security officials are proponents of funneling foreign fighters into war zones for targeting; this has not been the overall approach of some countries like Canada.⁸⁵ The merits of this strategy are clear in eliminating a threat at a safe distance – but this strategy is not always applicable, as in Canada where there are numerous challenges to the legality of targeting Canadians abroad.⁸⁶ Instead there may be an opportunity to understand these failed foreign fighter travelers through individual cases, to define where the problem lies at home and then create a counter-network. Some individuals may be beyond rehabilitation yet may someday walk free in Canada, while

⁸⁴ Stewart Bell and Andrew Russell, “How Police Hunted down an Ontario Terror Suspect from Anonymous Online Posts,” *Global News*, November 01, 2017, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3834325/how-police-hunted-ontario-terror-suspect-isis-anonymous/>.

⁸⁵ “Carter: U.S. Will Deploy More Troops to Syria to Combat ISIL,” U.S. Department of Defense, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1026625/carter-us-will-deploy-more-troops-to-syria-to-combat-isis/>; Paul McLeary and Adam Rawnsley, “SitRep: JSOC Hunting ISIS; Turkey Threatening Combat in Iraq and Syria,” *Foreign Policy*, October 26, 2016, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/26/situation-report-jsoc-hunting-isis-turkey-threatening-combat-in-iraq-and-syria-civilians-being-slaughtered-in-mosul-no-fly-no-go-and-lots-more/>.

⁸⁶ Craig Forcese and Leah West Sherriff, “Killing Citizens: Core Legal Dilemmas in the Targeted Killing Abroad of Canadian Foreign Fighters,” *Canadian Yearbook of International Law/Annuaire Canadien De Droit International* 54 (2017); Stewart Bell and Andrew Russell, “Coalition Forces in Syria, Iraq Targeted Three Canadians, Secret Document Says,” *Global News*, May 29, 2018, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4232306/exclusive-coalition-forces-in-syria-iraq-targeted-three-canadians-secret-document-says/>.

others may have shifted their views following prosecution and incarceration. Both groups could prove useful.

Ismael Habib attempted to leave Canada and participate in a terrorist activity after an elaborate sting operation in 2016, being convicted in 2017.⁸⁷ Habib was the first Canadian charged under this law.⁸⁸ Habib was previously incarcerated for 3 months following his travel to Syria in 2013, likely fighting for Daesh and establishing a family in the region.⁸⁹ Habib confessed that he “loved jihad more than anything” and stands to be incarcerated for at least half of his nine-year sentence under Canadian law.⁹⁰ Family was at least some of the reason for his returning to Syria after his initial short detention in 2013 before more stringent anti-terror travel bans were instituted. This allows for a window into the thought process of some Daesh foreign fighters who attempt to reunite with families.

Pamir Hakimzadah is another Canadian who left Canada but failed to join Daesh after being arrested in Turkey.⁹¹ Hakimzadah stated that he left to marry multiple wives, buy slaves and to kill non-Muslims.⁹² Less is known about the Toronto born engineering

⁸⁷ “Would-be ISIS Fighter Sentenced to 9 Years,” CBC News, September 29, 2017, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/ismael-habib-terrorism-sentence-1.4312936>; “R. C. Habib, 2017 QCCQ 6948,” ICD - R. C. Habib, 2017 QCCQ 6948 - Asser Institute, accessed May 07, 2019, <http://www.internationalcrimesdatabase.org/Case/3289/R-c-Habib,-2017-QCCQ-6948/>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Paul Cherry, “Ismaël Habib Sentenced to 9 Years for His Attempt to Join ISIL in Syria,” Montreal Gazette, September 30, 2017, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://montrealgazette.com/news/ismael-habib-sentenced-to-9-years-for-his-attempt-to-join-isil-in-syria>.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Public Prosecution Service of Canada, “Pamir Hakimzadah Sentenced for Leaving Canada to Join ISIS,” PPSC, February 28, 2019, accessed May 07, 2019, https://www.ppsc-sppc.gc.ca/eng/nws-nvs/2019/28_02_19.html; Stewart Bell, “‘Fulfilling the Wishes of God’: The inside Story of a Police Investigation into a Toronto ISIS Supporter,” Global News, March 02, 2019, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/5008031/inside-story-investigation-toronto-isis/>; Sherina Harris, “Former Ryerson Student Who Tried to Join ISIS Sentenced to Four Years in Prison,” The Eyeopener, March 02, 2019, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://theeyeopener.com/2019/03/former-ryerson-student-who-tried-to-join-isis-sentenced-to-four-years-in-prison/>.

⁹² *Ibid.*

student given his guilty plea, however he is reportedly open to de-radicalization programs.⁹³

With empathy demonstrating the mindset of failed to leave Daesh foreign fighters, defining the problem framework is now required in order to assess the situation.⁹⁴ The results of studying prospective Canadian Daesh foreign fighters must be rationalized against the fact that the group they wanted to join committed publicly broadcast crimes of genocide, extreme brutality, indoctrination, rape, mass executions and other war crimes.⁹⁵ Individuals who failed to leave Canada, and those who returned are potentially still inspired to commit Jihad, under the Daesh call to action.⁹⁶ Canadian Daesh foreign fighters, those who failed to reach the Levant, those who have returned or Canadian Daesh families detained in the Levant are all difficult to prosecute, in part because the International Criminal Courts has no jurisdiction in Syria or Iraq.⁹⁷ Even when they are

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ “An Introduction to Design Thinking Process Guide,” accessed April 28, 2019, <https://dschool-old.stanford.edu/sandbox/groups/designresources/wiki/36873/attachments/74b3d/ModeGuideBOOTCAMP2010L.pdf>; “Design Thinking for Social Innovation (SSIR),” Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change, accessed April 28, 2019, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/design_thinking_for_social_innovation.

⁹⁵ “UN Commission of Inquiry: Syrian Victims Reveal ISIS's Calculated Use of Brutality and Indoctrination,” OHCHR, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=15295&LangID=E>; “UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria: ISIS Is Committing Genocide against the Yazidis,” OHCHR, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=20113&LangID=E>; Anette Holmqvist, “Löfven Kräver Tribunal För IS-svenskarna,” Aftonbladet, March 06, 2019, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/samhalle/a/m6XP3L/stefan-lofven-begar-man-terroristbrott-ska-man-domas>. (translated with Google translate); “Bringing ISIL/ISIS to Justice for Genocide and Other Atrocity-crimes,” Parliamentarians for Global Action - Mobilizing Legislators as Champions for Human Rights, Democracy and Peace, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.pgaction.org/news/march-2018-bringing-isil-isis-justice.html>.

⁹⁶ Brian Dowling, “Attacks in France, Canada Follow ISIS Call to Action,” *Boston Herald*, November 17, 2018, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.bostonherald.com/2017/10/02/attacks-in-france-canada-follow-isis-call-to-action/>; Rahul Kalvapalle, “ISIS Leader Al-Baghdadi Appears to Call for Attacks on Canada in New Audio Recording,” Global News, August 23, 2018, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4403335/islamic-state-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-recording/>.

⁹⁷ “Justice, Syria and the International Criminal Court – AIIA,” Australian Institute of International Affairs, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/justice-syria-international-criminal-court/>; “Q&A: Syria and the International Criminal Court,” Human Rights Watch,

prosecuted, rehabilitation is not guaranteed and only partial sentences may be served.⁹⁸ Even the killing of Canadian Daesh foreign fighters abroad has been questioned in terms of legality.⁹⁹ It may now be impossible know what foreign fighters did to satisfy criminal courts, and if they are a future threat to Canada. There may be another answer; instead seeking options that place the problem at prevention and using foreign fighters as part of the solution.

The carrot and stick approach could mean that a Canadian Daesh returned foreign fighter could be granted the choice between a life of continuous surveillance or being co-opted by the system. This would create a network to defeat a network, using those with ready access to understand current and emerging threats.¹⁰⁰ Daesh returned foreign fighter co-opting would also instill a deep paranoia with terrorist decentralized networks of the well-connected mole; wasting limited Daesh personnel, equipment and monetary resources on paranoia of insiders. Limiting travel by only invalidating passports serves to domesticate the threat.¹⁰¹ Canadian Daesh families, connected to many of these Canadian foreign fighters, may be held as overseas for now, but this may not always be the case as

September 19, 2013, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/09/17/qa-syria-and-international-criminal-court>.

⁹⁸ Ontario Man Dubbed 'high Risk to Public Safety' after Trying to Join Terror Group Set for Release," CBC News, February 23, 2019. Accessed May 06, 2019.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/canadian-terror-release-kevin-omar-mohamed-parole-1.5030090>.

⁹⁹ Craig Forcese and Leah West Sherriff, "Killing Citizens: Core Legal Dilemmas in the Targeted Killing Abroad of Canadian Foreign Fighters," *Canadian Yearbook of International Law/Annuaire Canadien De Droit International* 54 (2017); Stewart Bell and Andrew Russell, "Coalition Forces in Syria, Iraq Targeted Three Canadians, Secret Document Says," *Global News*, May 29, 2018, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4232306/exclusive-coalition-forces-in-syria-iraq-targeted-three-canadians-secret-document-says/>.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley A. McChrystal, *Team of Teams: The Power of Small Groups in a Fragmented World* (London: Portfolio, 2015). Gen (Retd) McChrystal is a strong proponent and former practitioner of creating a network to defeat global terrorism.

¹⁰¹ Stewart Bell, "Canadian Government Begins Invalidating Passports of Citizens Who Have Left to Join Extremist Groups," *National Post*, January 25, 2015, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-government-revoking-passports-of-citizens-trying-to-join-extremist-groups>.

there may be a legal requirement to repatriate them.¹⁰² Better understanding of the families of Daesh foreign fighters should be a priority, that to date has received little attention.

The families that are left behind from conflict could provide further understanding to define the problem and create options.¹⁰³ For all the foreign fighters that fought overseas in Iraq and Syria there are thousands of woman and children abandoned either by foreign fighters escaping or through foreign fighter death or detention.¹⁰⁴ Some of these women want to return to the West, while it embitters others as thousands of women and children in refugee camps or detention centers are awaiting resolution of their case or repatriation.¹⁰⁵ Understanding why they left to stay with a violent terrorist organization may be important to defining the problem at home, but could also open options to infiltrate other violent extremist organizations.¹⁰⁶ These individuals lured online may allow understanding to create counter-narratives and online avatars. This could be useful not only to dissuade the young and vulnerable through vignettes but also to entrap Daesh or other extremist predators by understanding the methods they use. There is however little information available on families.

¹⁰² Thomas Walkom, “What to Do with Canadian Daesh Supporters Who Want to Come Home?” *Thestar.com*, February 18, 2019, accessed May 06, 2019, <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/2019/02/18/what-to-do-with-canadian-daesh-supporters-who-want-to-come-home.html>.

¹⁰³ “Canadian Women Who Went to Join ISIS ‘not Willing to Express Regret’,” *CBC News*, February 15, 2019, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-february-15-2019-1.5019984/canadian-women-who-went-to-join-isis-not-willing-to-express-regret-reporter-1.5019999>; Ben Wedeman, “Canadian Women Emerge from ISIS’s Crumbling Caliphate,” *CNN*, February 10, 2019, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/09/middleeast/canadian-women-isis-syria-wedeman-intl/index.html>; Ian Austen, “They Left Canada for ISIS. Should They Be Allowed Home?” *The New York Times*, February 22, 2019, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/22/world/canada/canadian-citizens-isis.html>.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Katrin Bennhold, “Jihad and Girl Power: How ISIS Lured 3 London Girls,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 2015, accessed May 07, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/18/world/europe/jihad-and-girl-power-how-isis-lured-3-london-teenagers.html>.

COUNTER ARGUMENT

There are two arguments against using empathy or the HCD to combat returning foreign fighters: the first is that directing foreign fighters into combat zones is a definitive way to neutralize the problem away from home, and the second is that empathy is subjective, requiring abduction and can be manipulated. The first argument of directing foreign fighters into combat zones has been addressed, as the laws, regulations and strategic approach of Canada are barriers that will not be overcome to make it a viable approach.¹⁰⁷ The second issue on the subjectivity of empathy is concerning, as it means that any one approach to a complex issue like extremist foreign fighters is not a panacea. Empathy has been shown to increase aggression and violent thoughts towards a group that harms something or someone we care for, often with resultant irrational actions.¹⁰⁸

Empathy is prone to biases that can make it detrimental to finding a solution to a problem if these biases are unknown.¹⁰⁹ Inculcating an empathic approach has been shown to have success; however it must be known that many extremists have also been determined to be empathetic individuals.¹¹⁰ Simple approaches like striking a balance at applying empathy to one's own group equally with the group of another has been shown to yield positive results for avoiding blind hatred devoid of understanding. The key then

¹⁰⁷ Craig Forcece and Leah West Sherriff, "Killing Citizens: Core Legal Dilemmas in the Targeted Killing Abroad of Canadian Foreign Fighters," *Canadian Yearbook of International Law/Annuaire Canadien De Droit International* 54 (2017); Stewart Bell and Andrew Russell, "Coalition Forces in Syria, Iraq Targeted Three Canadians, Secret Document Says," *Global News*, May 29, 2018, accessed May 03, 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4232306/exclusive-coalition-forces-in-syria-iraq-targeted-three-canadians-secret-document-says/>.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/09/the-violence-of-empathy/407155/>

¹⁰⁹ Jesse Prinz, "Against Empathy," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 49 (2011); 214-217.

¹¹⁰ Niccola Milnes, "To Counter Terrorism, Inculcate the Right Kind of Empathy," *The East African*, May 10, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2036807598?accountid=9867>.

is the ability to apply empathy beyond just one individual aligned group, but also to the other side of an issue.

CONCLUSION

Know the enemy by being able to see the world through their perspective.¹¹¹ By understanding organizations like Daesh we can better fight them in the physical and psychological domains. Our ability to defeat emerging threats begins at understanding potential recruits to frame the problem that a global extremist movement like Daesh represents. The Stanford HCD process allows for comprehension of the threat remaining after the fall of Daesh's Caliphate, creating a foundation to analyze emerging threats. Violent extremism will again evolve, using the information warfare and social media propaganda blueprint created by Daesh.

To fight this blueprint, multiple and individual dependent approaches are required. It is possible to be both ruthlessly committed to the defeat of an extremist enemy like Daesh, but also to understand the point of view from all sides of a grievance, embracing the non-binary nature of conflict. Daesh propaganda must be showcased as false to defeat the challenge of information warfare and preventing further spread of the contagion when extremism metastasizes again. A counter-narrative should be created to demonstrate the failures of those who left Canada and fought with Daesh and are now dead or detained, targeting those swayed by information warfare. For others, a networked, human centric approach that uses the free and incarcerated Canadian current,

¹¹¹Samuel Griffith, *Sun Tzu the Art of War*, London: Oxford University, 1971. "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle." Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

former and suspected members of Daesh to better infiltrate the underlying recruit base for foreign fighters is necessary. Former and current members of Daesh can be exploited to uncover links to emerging terror networks within and outside Canada.

A third front is the Daesh families now cast off. Compared to male foreign fighters, there is much less information on women who joined Daesh or children born during the rise and fall of the Caliphate. This may be the next front in the battle against extremism, as bitter widows and indoctrinated children who have known nothing but conflict and are stateless are vulnerable. Surviving Canadian Daesh families are worth further analysis to prevent another generation of foreign fighters or domestic terrorists.

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