Terror Recruitment of Younger Population

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Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism

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Actions taken by the US-led coalition against ISIS in recent months have led to a reduction in the territory in which ISIS are operating in, thus causing a decreased presence of terrorist members (as the foreign fighters return to their home countries), but a significant number of terrorist supporters persist within the narrow limits of ISIS operational activities. Many of them are men, but there are also a large number of women and children living as part of ISIS. ISIS leaders see children as a means of carrying out various combat and non-combat activities. In many conflict zones around the world, given their readiness and number, they are a key resource. Children are used as soldiers, human shields, intelligence, couriers and security guards.[1]

For terrorist organizations like ISIS, children are a far cheaper military force than adults. ISIS leaders pay close attention to children under their control, as they are aware that the future of each community depends on the generations to come. The terrorist groups invest heavily in indoctrinating children into militant ideology and from as early an age as possible. By indoctrinating children at an early age, it is believed that all practices of militant Islamic ideology are likely to be considered normal. Such indoctrination has tactical and strategic value for ISIS. Not only will the children help meet the current needs, but they will continue to propagate its existence and its expansion, thereby ensuring its long-term survival.[2]

ISIS relies on two recruitment methods: voluntary and forced recruitment. Voluntary recruitment is made through public events called "da'wah" where ISIS member enhance recruitment by providing food and beverages specifically designed for the young population in order to make recruiting more attractive. Some of the young individuals will voluntarily join because they are constantly looking somewhere to belong, where in war-torn countries, the sense of group identity belonging will make them feel safe. Others will join due to a vastly different motivator; some of them see joining ISIS as a favorable opportunity for fame, glory or respect, something that they never had in their own lives.[3]

Despite the reasons of why some young individuals are voluntarily joining ISIS, there are also reasons where these young individuals don't have a choice (as is the case when children are forced to join). Paying high wages for participation is one of the key factors in terrorist recruit of children. The relatively

[1]At least 250,000 children being used in wars around the world, *News Corp Australia Network,* 01/23/2015, https://www.news.com.au/world/at-least-250000-children-being-used-in-wars-around-the-world/news-story/e1d2b4f3334f4888afb4749630749a85

[2]Raising Tomorrow's Mujahideen': The Horrific World of ISIS Child Soldiers, *The Guardian,* 03/10/2015 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/10/horror-of-isis-child-soldiers-state-of-terror

[3] Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory, *New York: General Learning Press* , 1977.

high cash benefits represent a strong motivation for children and their parents, especially because of the poor military-economic conditions in which they live. At times, through personal connections, including family and/or friend networks, young people are already part of terrorist groups long before they knew about the situations in which they belong.[4]

The ideological struggle is one of the primary motives for children to become involved in terrorist activities. In their early adolescence, the attractiveness of ideological affiliation is particularly attractive, as these young people develop their identity and seek to be socially accepted. In the context of the war (and their participation in the war), it is difficult for them to identify and perceive the truth at first since they are surrounded by highly organized separate militant and political groups that promote their goals and tactics.[5]

However, within ISIS, where militant ideology is clearly defined, it represents a powerful impetus for children as it explicitly sets the goal in their lives. Children are attracted to the opportunity for each of them to have a specific role that fulfills them, makes them valued and needed in the group. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics that provide them with a sense of power is the strong military structure and organization of life. That feeling is a powerful stimulus in war-torn societies, where many feel disenfranchised and powerless, especially when compared to their peers in conflict zones in uncertain conditions.[6]

The socialization of children initially takes place through interaction in public spaces and religious buildings, which encourages their engagement in ISIS ranks. Children are offered free toys and candy, in parallel acquainting them with the ISIS flag and the weapons they will fight in the future. At this stage, children are exposed to constant ideological pressure, through the ISIS narrative and military successes, its utopian society and the benefits of those already part of it. The recruitment of children into the terrorist ranks is greatly facilitated by their parents and their family members. By recruiting children, ISIS strives to create not only loyal soldiers but also citizens of society tailored to their needs. This type of recruitment is a long-term strategy that introduces not only young people, but their families as well. The mothers of these children receive instruction books on how to raise children in jihad fighters, telling

[4] *Center Sentinel 11*, no. 6 (2018): 14
[5] William Bloom, Personal Identity, National Identity, and International Relations, *New York: Cambridge University Press*, 1990.
[6] Cubs to Lions: What's Next for ISIL's Child Soldiers? *Al Jazeera* ,10/10/2017,
https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/11/cubs-lions-isil-child-soldiers-171109125013897.html?xif=.

stories of martyrs, exposing children to jihad graphic content through web pages, and encouraging them to play games that improve their physical fitness and coordination. In this way, children are exposed to indoctrination by people they trust and love, and thus the guarantee of joining the ranks is greater. Socialization is also carried out with previously recruited and engaged children. Children who are already part of ISIS are giving speeches, attracting them with their status and function, to the delight of recruits.[7]

The indoctrination begins in schools that are intensified in training camps, where children between the ages of 10 and 15 are exposed to Sharia l aw and rules, become immune to violence, and are trained in specific skills to better serve ISIS ideals and its flag.[8]

Girls are taught how to cook, clean, and support their husbands so they can be good wives and mothers, while boys prepare to struggle with l earning military skills. Children also receive rigorous training in self-defense and martial arts. However, the living conditions in which the training is being conducted are at a very low level.[9]

They are isolated from their families, their loyalty to the caliphate is guaranteed, and they share common problems and difficulties with their comrades who are slowly becoming their new family. Their parents often say that children recruited by ISIS refuse to return home because they are Jihad fighters of the caliphate.[10] Upon completion of the training, a public graduation ceremony is held, in which children are dressed in uniform and carrying weapons, demonstrating strength and discipline. Children are indoctrinated and practically unconsciously forced to become fighters. After graduation they become part of the unstoppable recruiting cycle.

[7] Almohammad, Asaad. " ISIS Child Soldiers in Syria: The Structural and Predatory Recruitment, Enlistment, Pre-Training Indoctrination, Training and Deployment." *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague 8* , no. 14 (2018), Accessed November 21, 2019 https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ICCT-Almohammad-ISIS-Child-Soldiers-In-Syria-Feb2018-2.pdf

[8] Motaparthy, Priyanka (2014) "Maybe We Live and Maybe We Die" *Human Rights Watch* , Accessed November 20, 2019https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/06/22/maybe-we-live-and-maybe-we-die/recruitment-and-use-children-armed-groups-syria

[9] Wyke, Tom. "ISIS Release Shocking New Video of Child Soldiers from Kazakhstan Being Trained with AK47s." *Mail Online* . November 23, 2014. Accessed November 21, 2015. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2845531/ISIS-release-shocking-new-videochild-soldiers-Kazakhstan-trained-AK47 s.html.

[10] Damon, Arwa. "Child Fighter Tormented by ISIS." *CNN* . November 13, 2014. Accessed November 22, 2019. https://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/12/world/meast/syria-isis-child-fighter/index.html

U.S. Data Representation of youth who were subject of ISIS Recruitment

In 2017, researchers from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) reviewed data from the Profiles of Individual Radicalization i n the United States (PIRUS) database. From January 2012 to January 2018, there were 29 young individuals between the age from 10 to 20, who were subject to recruitment by ISIS.

From the PIRUS data, the countries with the highest percentage of initial citizenship – the country where the individual was born and subject to ISIS recruitment - are the United States of America with 71.42% or 21 individual, 6.89% are from Somalia (n=2) and 6.89 % (n=2) are from Sudan.[11]

Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism - (START) CHART 1

One individual is from Morocco, Bangladesh, Iran and Kazakhstan. The highest number n=13 (44.82%) are individuals from Black/African-American ethnicity background, n=7 (24.13%) are from Middle Eastern/North African ethnicity, and 17.24% (n=5) have Asian ethnicity background including Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. 2 young individuals have a White/Caucasian ethnicity and for 2 other individuals there was no known information about their ethnicity.[12]

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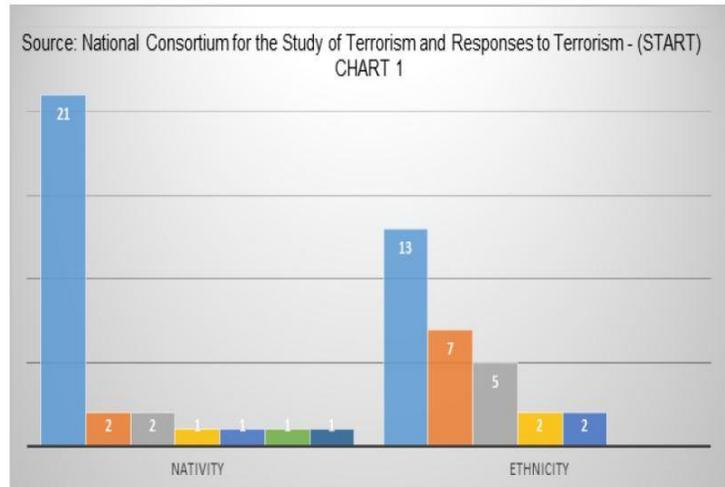
[11] Chart 1 - National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland. (2017) . Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus

[12] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland. (2017) . Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus

Another major component in recruitment process is family peer association, someone who offer guidance throughout the recruitment process. Three individuals were recruited by associate(s) or member(s) of a terrorist or violent extremist group, 3 other individuals were recruited by friends and 2 others were recruited by a family member.[13]


Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism - (START) CHART 2
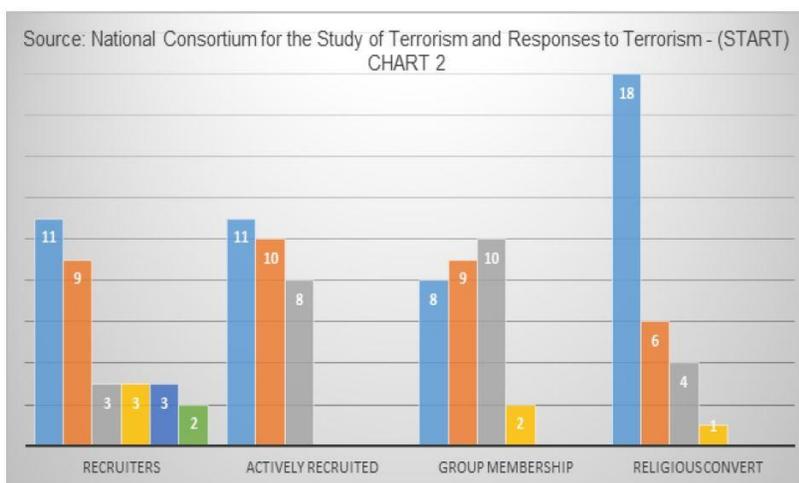
11 individuals were unsuccessful in the recruitment process, for 9 individuals there is no known information, and 3 other individuals were recruited by "other". The recruitment process was successful for 8 individuals, and unsuccessful for 10 young individuals. For the other 11 individuals there is no known information. Four of the eight individuals who were recruited successfully were part of a formal extremist organization/extremist movement. The other 2 from the successful recruitment process were members of an informal group of fellow extremists (n=2) and 2 others were not members of a group. From total 29 young individuals who were part of the recruitment process (either successful or unsuccessful), 34.48% (n=10) were not members of a group, 31.03% (n=9) were members of an informal group of fellow extremists, 27.58% (n=8) were members of formal extremist organization/extremist movement and 6.89% (n=2) were members of an above-ground political movement or activist group. At the time of terrorist recruitment exposure, 62.06% (n=18) did not change their religion, 13,79% (n=4) did change their religion prior to the radicalization process and only one (3.44%) individual changed the religion during the radicalization process. For the 20.68% (n=6) there is no known information.[14]

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[13]Chart 2 - National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland. (2017) . Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) [Data file]. Retrieved from
http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus

[14]National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland.
(2017) . Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) [Data file]. Retrieved from
http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus

According to PIRUS, 37.93% (n=11) of the total 29 individuals are currently under arrest and awaiting trial for their connection to the terrorist organization ISIS. 34.48% (n=10) of the involved young individuals in the ISIS's recruitment process are already convicted, 10.34% (n=3) of the individuals have already been

Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism - (START)
CHART 3
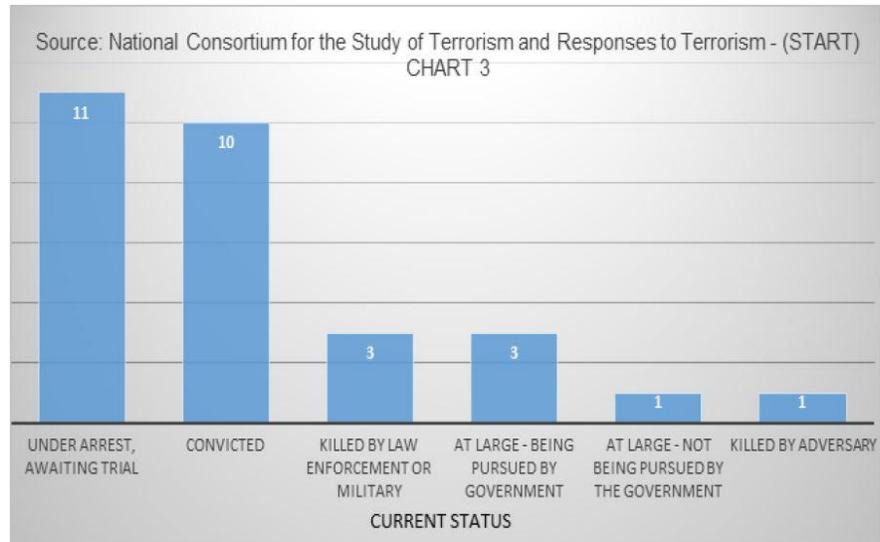
killed by law enforcement agencies or by the military, and only 1 individual has been killed by an adversary (e.g. by other extremist/terrorist group).[15]

Four young individuals from the total 29 subjects of interest are at large, with 3 of the individuals (10.34%) currently being pursued by the US Government and 3.44% (n=1) currently on the run (this individual is at large, but at the time of the PIRUS report, he or she was not being pursued by the government).[16]

[15]Chart 3 - National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland. (2017) . Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) [Data file]. Retrieved from
http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus

[16]National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland. (2017) . Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) [Data file]. Retrieved from
http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus