



Extremist migration

A foreign jihadist fighter threat assessment

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Engagement opérationnel

Translation proposal - excerpt

Before the end of any conflict, surviving foreign combatants are likely to disperse in many directions. The question is where they are likely to go and whether they will reappear as a threat to the U.S. military and the United States, as well as to Western interests in general.

In attempting to answer this question, it is important to understand the motivations of combatants seeking new battlefields, as well as the factors that enable extremist migration, which includes travel options such as smuggling routes. Knowledge of these potential migration routes will enable the U.S. military to identify possible travel destinations and assess the likely threat that will result from the resettlement of foreign jihadi fighters.

A separate but related problem is that for every jihadist fighter killed, others are recruited. If this jihadist recruitment cycle is to be disrupted, it is essential to understand not only the motivations for becoming a foreign combatant, but also how new jihadist combatants are recruited and how they migrate to the battlefield. In this monograph, British academic and practitioner Shima Keene explores the likely movement of foreign fighters as a result of the shrinking territory under the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

As part of her analysis, Keene dissects the process of jihadist migration, examining factors such as need, opportunities, possible methods of movement, and support mechanisms that enable jihadist migration. In an attempt to address this issue, she calls for a change in mentality and approach that better harnesses the capacities available within the defence and security community.

As a recognized international expert on counter-terrorism, serious organized crime and threat financing, Ms. Keene uses her expertise to consolidate knowledge and assess how terrorism and organized crime collaborate to enable jihadist migration. Dr. Keene also emphasizes the role of threat financing and illicit trade that links the networks together. In addition to his academic research in this area, his work as a civilian adviser to the Standing Joint Force Headquarters and the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Headquarters of the Treaty Organization Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Headquarters based in the United Kingdom (UK), as well as her appointment as Counter-Terrorism Adviser and Adviser on Serious Organized Crime, in particular the illicit finances of Her Majesty's Government, provide further understanding and validation of this important subject.

The Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) believes that this monograph provides a comprehensive assessment of key issues related to the challenges posed by the migration of foreign jihadi fighters and their collective implications for the US military and for security and defence more generally. In addition, this monograph makes a valuable contribution to the debate on how to plan and shape future U.S. military operations in light of the challenges these fighters create.

The jihadist battlefield generally refers to theatres of conflict such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. Some foreign jihadi fighters have become continuous migrants, moving from one conflict to another - for example, from Afghanistan to Bosnia, then to Chechnya, and further to Syria. However, the battlefield can also be in developed and industrialized countries where jihadists are encouraged to carry out attacks against the West.

These attacks may be carried out by foreign jihadist fighters from conflict areas travelling to the West. Alternatively, these attacks may be carried out by foreign jihadi fighters from the West who return home after being radicalized at home or online, and who travel to conflict areas to train and gain combat experience. In other cases, refugees have become recruitment targets.

Recent U.S.-led military successes against ISIS will result in the survival of foreign jihadi fighters who will attempt to disperse. Their loss of territory and resources will also increase the jihadists' desire to perpetrate acts of terrorism abroad as a form of revenge. Some foreign jihadist fighters may travel to provinces governed by ISIS, while others may travel to fragile states.

Once established locally, these individuals may attempt to maintain the status quo through high-profile attacks, kidnappings and ambushes. These measures would perpetuate insecurity in the region, while the deep penetration of smuggling activities into the states would be a major concern. These measures would perpetuate insecurity in the region, while the deep penetration of smuggling activities into local economies through bribes, gainful employment and access to black market goods and weapons would allow smugglers to control the trade throughout the region.

Others may attempt to return home to Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Although the threat of returnees is limited on US soil, US interests in other parts of the world are directly affected, and combating different types of threats from different groups of foreign jihadi fighters will require a range of strategies.

The remaining fighters in Iraq and Syria must be dealt with by the Iraqi security forces and the rest of the coalition fighting ISIS. In response to jihadists who travel to fragile states, it is essential to continue efforts to build the capacity of host country forces to strengthen the rule of law and promote good governance and a host of other medium- and long-

term objectives. With regard to foreign jihadist fighters returning to the West, the United States should ensure that it participates in the international effort to identify and apprehend such fighters, with a view to their prosecution or rehabilitation, depending on individual circumstances.

The U.S. military should familiarize itself with all aspects of the foreign combatant problem, including motivation, recruitment methods, and migration routes, in order to conduct a proactive analysis. To be effective, this analysis should identify future security threats as well as appropriate actions taken in concert with allies and partner agencies to disrupt not only migrating foreign jihadi fighters but also the networks that support them, which would require new thinking and the development of a new approach to counter these threats.

As such, the following recommendations should be considered by commanders and policy makers to begin addressing key issues. This would require a culture change from descriptive to predictive analysis and a change in mindset within the military. The financial benefits of anticipating problems before they materialize can be significant.

This would require a holistic change effort that would bring together front-line staff, intelligence and analysis personnel, and engineering and business personnel who have detailed knowledge of the industries involved. The following recommendations should be adopted by senior U.S. military and other U.S. government officials considering policy responses to the problem of extremist migration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Understanding the Network

- Improve intelligence assessments by broadening the scope of network analysis to include organized crime groups and government officials who allow the migration of foreign jihadi fighters.

Assessments should take into account the main motivations for collaboration and how it occurs. A focus on illicit logistical supply chains, including smuggling and trafficking routes, and how these routes can be disrupted is essential to preventing the movement of foreign combatants.

Recommendation 2: Preventing Recruitment

- Be aware of the humanitarian discourse of enemy information operations and seek ways to address and remedy these messages to prevent the recruitment of foreign fighters.
- Recognize that not all foreign combatants are the same and should not be treated as such. This is particularly relevant with regard to returnees.

Recommendation 3: Fighting corruption

- To better understand how corruption enables partnerships between organized criminal groups, irregular groups and state officials in fragile states, which in turn enables jihadist migration.
- Working with allies and partner agencies to find ways to fight corruption
- Examine how financial intelligence can be used to identify corruption and to disrupt

corrupt individuals and networks.

Recommendation 4: Filling knowledge gaps

- Identifying and filling existing gaps in new battlefields in Africa and the Middle East
- Encourage military intelligence personnel to examine how and where the threat of migration of foreign fighters will re-emerge following the loss of ISIS territory in Syria and Iraq.

Recommendation 5: Provide Training and Education

- Develop training and education programs that enhance personnel's understanding of the potential threat posed by foreign jihadi fighters and its relevance to future U.S. military operations.

Recommendation 6: Adopt an integrated approach

- Engage non-military partners where appropriate to ensure that the broadest possible integrity assessment is made from the counter-terrorism and anti-crime perspectives in addressing the problem of foreign jihadi fighters.

Recommendation 7: Predictive Analysis

- Improve the US military's ability to anticipate future jihadist conflicts through predictive analysis.
- Examine how addressing any of the components of the threat posed by foreign jihadi fighters may have unintended consequences and how best to mitigate them.

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