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Abstract

Gangs can serve as a "force multiplier" for terrorism; they are a source of recruits, weapons, and local knowledge. Terrorist organizations such as Daesh/ISIS are now skilled at recruiting disaffected youth, many with prior criminal records. Any country with significant numbers of gang members with the potential to be radicalized may therefore be a potential recruiting ground for fundamentalists. Several countries in the Caribbean appear particularly vulnerable, including Trinidad and Tobago, which has already suffered one attempted coup by jihadists, and Jamaica, which has nearly 300 violent gangs and many disadvantaged young men. There is a clear pattern of jihadist attacks on tourists, and the Caribbean is one of the world's leading tourism destinations, so tourists may be the primary targets rather than Caribbean nationals.

The Caribbean

Eight of the ten most violent countries in the world are in Central America and the Caribbean.[1] These exceptionally high homicide rates are the result of interlocking factors, including powerful criminal networks, weak and compromised governments, corruption, and the profits to be made from trafficking narcotics, weapons and people, extortion, and other criminal enterprises. The violence deters investment and spurs migration, which perpetuates the underlying social and economic problems, resulting in a large number of poorly-educated, disaffected, and marginalized youth who see violence as the way to wealth and power.

Recent Trends in Terrorism

Recent terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015 and in Brussels on March 22, 2016 highlighted that the largest source of foreign recruits to international jihadist networks are disaffected young men with prior criminal convictions. From 2001 to 2009, (i.e. before the rise of Daesh) about 25 percent of the known jihadists in Europe had criminal records; mainly for narcotics, car theft, and weapons trafficking. In Belgium, by August 2015, this had risen to about 50 per-

cent of the known jihadists.[2] This suggests that Daesh is particularly skillful at recruiting criminals and gang members, who typically radicalize within a small network of friends.[3] These recruits are often motivated by excitement, power, and a sense of belonging; very few are pious. It is therefore likely that a country with high levels of violence and a large number of disaffected, unemployed youth will now be seen by terrorist organizations as a potential recruiting ground.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the Paris attacks of November 2015 and called them the "First of the Storm." It is clear that Daesh no longer confines its operations to Syria, Iraq, and adjacent states, but now aspires to a much wider conflict. Daesh operates with delegated authority; the Caliphate provides guidance, training, and funding, but the time, place, and manner of the attack is determined by local affiliates. This appears to have been the model followed in recent attacks in Paris, Beirut, and the October 2015 bombing of a Metrojet Flight from Sharm el-Sheikh that killed 224 people.

The nature of the threat has evolved significantly since 2001, and the terrorist attacks in Paris reflect a rapid recent reordering of terrorist structures, alliances, priorities, and capabilities. The threat is now exceptionally fluid and complex, and very difficult to pattern or predict, because the enemy is no longer a single entity. Daesh is simultaneously an organization, a self-proclaimed state, the core of a network of affiliated organizations and sympathetic individuals, a religious and political belief system, and a malignant ideology that is being disseminated around the world on a multiplicity of media and social channels.

The current surge in terrorism is the result of a number of deep and almost intractable problems, including the conflict between the Sunni and Shia faiths, the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and the disbanding of the Iraqi army (many former Baathist soldiers are now with Daesh), Saudi Arabia's support for Wahhabi (fundamentalist) Sunni imams, the complex, multi-sided war in Syria, and a large number of local conflicts and grievances, many of which now find common cause and expression through Daesh. None of these problems are likely to be resolved in the foreseeable future, and many of them are metastasizing, moving into new territories (especially ungovernable provinces and weak states), and evolving into new forms (such as cyberspace). This means that the associated terrorism is likely to persist for decades to come. Daesh is currently the most prominent and advanced

incarnation of these problems. Even if Daesh could be destroyed, the problems would persist and give rise to some new organization. A permanent solution would require resolutions to many issues, including questions of borders, ethnicity, identity, governance, faith, economic development, access to land, water and other resources, climate change, and other environmental impacts. None of these are easy, and there is no comprehensive solution in sight.

The key target audience for Daesh ideology consists of troubled and disaffected youth. Many of those who have been recruited in Western countries to kill for Daesh were not particularly religious; some were only recent converts to Islam. For example, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the "mastermind" of the Paris attacks on November 13th, was a student at a Catholic school, and did not attend a mosque. He became involved in petty crime before travelling to Syria in 2014.[4] His actions appear to have been motivated by a desire for power, violence, and unaccountability, rather than religion. Similarly, Salah Abdeslam and his elder brother Ibrahim, a suicide bomber in the Paris attacks, used to run a cafe in Molenbeek that sold alcohol and was closed down for drug offenses. Their network of support was based on personal loyalty, disenchantment, and petty crime, rather than radical ideology. Khalid and Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, the suicide bombers who carried out the attacks in Brussels on March 22, 2016, had multiple prior convictions. Khalid was sentenced in 2011 to five years for criminal conspiracy, armed robbery, possession of stolen cars, and weapons; Ibrahim was sentenced in 2010 to nine years in prison for attempted murder (both were paroled).[5]

This is a common pattern; many recent recruits have a history of personal or psychological problems, petty crime and gang membership, and a sense of alienation. Daesh offers these people a very powerful message of glamor, violence and a sense of belonging to a great cause. Any country with a large number of troubled and/or disaffected youth is therefore a fertile potential recruiting ground.

Daesh: The Social Media Generation Terrorists

Daesh originated as an affiliate of Al-Qaeda but has now largely supplanted them. Daesh claims to be the sole legitimate jihadi organization active today (this is a part of their image and recruiting strategy); Al-Qaeda is still a significant threat, but no longer has the image, momentum, recruits, operatives, financing, or

equipment to compete with Daesh.[6]

The Paris and Brussels attacks represent a major escalation of Daesh's global campaign. Their publications were exultant, and they have promised more such attacks around the world. Many potential recruits will be motivated by these exceptionally high-impact, high-visibility attacks.

The main recruiting channels for Daesh are existing networks of disaffected youth accessed via prisons, charismatic preachers, leaders, and other opinion-formers. Daesh is also highly skilled at psychological manipulation on social media. Their media presence and ability to control the narrative are technically competent and skillful. Individual Daesh "mentors" will spend hundreds of hours patiently grooming valuable potential recruits over the Internet. They reach out to troubled and/or disaffected youth, with a message of glamor, violence, and comradeship. They offer a simple, uncompromising, radical, and compelling vision to those who find life difficult and confusing, to those who do not feel that they have the life that they want, to those that feel that they are not given the "respect" they deserve, and to those who feel that they want to be more than a loser or low-level gang member. Their method is essentially the same as that used by every totalitarian movement; to set life's petty miseries in a grand historical context, to blame another group for these problems, and to extol the use of violence against that group. In this way, disaffected youth can feel that they are part of a great movement to reclaim their rightful place in the world.

The extraordinary and rapid success of Daesh reflects its ability to appeal to the disaffected with a compelling narrative and to sell this with exceptional skill. European jihadists come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and areas, and from both immigrant and native backgrounds; but the largest group consists of young men with criminal records from urban areas, some of whom also have prior mental health issues.[7]

In 2006, the average age of European jihadists (at the time of their arrest) was 27.3, with the youngest aged 16 years old.[8] The average age may now be slightly lower, as a result of an increase in the number of very young recruits, some just 15, so a typical jihadi foreign fighter is now a male between 18 and 29 years old.[9] The average speed of radicalization appears to have accelerated, with the process generally taking weeks rather than months, and there is increasing

evidence that jihadist recruitment tends to spread through previously-established networks (communities, families, mosques, and gangs), where groups of acquaintances already identify with each other.[10] Given that recent immigrants may be easier to track, the main threat in most European countries is now from young, home-grown terrorists, typically radicalized through contact with others or, in some cases, via social media, who are usually "off the radar" until they commit their first serious action.

The Threat to Caribbean Nations

In 2015, U.S. Southern Command said that about 100 Caribbean nationals had travelled to Syria to train with Daesh.[11] In addition, a total of 337, 802 nationals from terrorist-linked countries (Afghanistan, Algeria, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen) transited Caribbean nations over the period 2007-2014, indicating the ease with which jihadists could enter the Caribbean. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is probably the most exposed to risk, partly because some eight to nine percent of the population are Muslims; most of them are moderates, but they also have the fundamentalist group Jamaat al-Muslimeen, led by Yasin Abu Bakr, which attempted a coup on July 27, 1990, seized the parliament building, the main TV and radio stations, and killed 24 people.[12]

Jamaica is less obviously exposed to terrorist recruitment than Trinidad and Tobago, but has even higher levels of violent crime, with a homicide rate that is currently sixth in the world. This is the result of a complex set of interlocking problems; Jamaica's National Security Policy notes that the Tier 1 threats to the nation include "transnational organized crime, including trafficking in narcotics, weapons, ammunition, money and people, money laundering and cyber-crime…gangs and domestic organized crime…contract killing, intimidation and extortion, kidnapping, dealing in narcotics and illegal weapons and money laundering…a political system that is still compromised by links to organized crime…corruption in key institutions of state, including the security forces, police, prison and justice systems, and gang-dominated communities."[13]

As this suggests, Jamaica has deeper social, political, and economic problems than the marginalized communities in Paris and Brussels. Jamaica is also home to Abdullah el-Faisal (born Trevor William Forrest in 1963). He was raised as a Christian, but converted to Islam at the age of 16, studied in Saudi Arabia, and moved to the UK to preach during the 1980s. He appears to have been effective in radicalizing others; his congregation included "shoe bomber" Richard Reid, 9/11 plot member Zacarias Moussaoui, and Muhammad Sidique Khan and Germaine Lindsay, suicide bombers in the July 7th London attack in 2005. He was convicted in the UK in 2002 on five charges of soliciting murder, served four years and was deported to Jamaica in 2007.

Potential Target: Tourists in The Caribbean

A single point of contact in any Caribbean island could be the nucleus of a devastating terrorist incident. Recent terrorist incidents have involved small numbers, typically from one to ten individuals, who can inflict serious harm in a single or coordinated set of attacks. There is a low level of awareness in the Caribbean of the potential threat from terrorism, but a number of recent attacks have focused specifically on tourist and leisure areas. For example:

- In 1997, members of al-Gama'a al-Islamiya killed 58 tourists at Luxor. Egypt's tourism earnings fell that year by $1.17 billion, about 25 percent of Egypt's revenue from the industry.

- In 2002, members of Jemaah Islamiyah bombed a nightclub in Bali, killing 201 tourists. The event was planned to maximize civilian casualties.[14] The nightclub was known to cater largely to tourists, and was targeted as a result; members of Jemaah Islamiyah stated in court that their goal was to cripple the tourism industry. Bali's visitor arrivals fell that year by 22 percent; some 300,000 jobs were lost.

- On September 21, 2013, al-Shabaab militants based in Somalia attacked the Westgate shopping center in Nairobi, Kenya, and killed 68 people. The shopping center catered mainly to the middle-class, UN workers, and tourists.

- On January 7, 2015, members of Al-Qaeda in Yemen attacked the offices of the satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher market in Paris. They killed a total of 17 people and injured 22. Over the following nine days France's revenues from tourism fell by 25 percent and then fell by another 26 percent over the subsequent 10 days. Occupancy rates in

Paris hotels fell by about three percent, but reservations for restaurants and bars experienced a cancellation rate of 68 percent, which suggests that people were not cancelling visits to Paris, but were far more reluctant to go out into public spaces.[15]

■ On November 13, 2015, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris killed 130 people and 368 people were injured, some 80-100 seriously. The venues attacked were all social hubs, including a music venue and a restaurant. The occupancy rate at Paris hotels fell 21 percent on the Saturday following the attacks and 23 percent the next day, far more than the three percent fall after the Charlie Hebdo attack, which suggests that the cumulative impact of two terrorist incidents had a far bigger impact on tourist arrivals.[16]

■ On June 26, 2015, Islamists attacked the tourist resort at Port El Kantaoui in Tunisia. They killed 38 people, 30 of whom were UK nationals.

■ The bomb that destroyed Metrojet Flight 9268 over the Sinai on October 31, 2015 and killed all 224 people on board was probably placed on the aircraft at Sharm el-Sheikh. As a result, a number of countries advised against travel to that area. Egypt's tourism receipts fell by almost 50 percent, and many of the hotels in Sharm el-Sheikh closed.

Jamaica's tourism industry has already suffered as a result of terrorism. After 9/11, global tourism volumes fell by 10 percent. Visitor arrivals to some countries fell by 30 percent, Caribbean arrivals fell by 15 percent, and Jamaica's arrivals declined by 20 percent. Many Caribbean destinations had to discount heavily to try to maintain room occupancy, and found it difficult to revert to their former prices for years afterwards.[17] In spite of this, a survey of the tourism industry in Jamaica carried out in 2011 found that senior operatives in the industry did not think that Jamaica was at serious risk of terrorism because "we're not quarrelling with anyone."[18] If, however, the intended targets are U.S. or European citizens, Jamaica might be chosen as the scene of the attack, rather than the primary target (as with the Bali nightclub bombing).

Jamaica's tourism industry now attracts over 3 million arrivals. The industry generates some 13 percent of Jamaica's GDP; and 30-40 percent of all employment in the country is directly or indirectly related to tourism. Any terrorist incident that damages confidence in Jamaica's tourism industry would therefore have immediate and widespread consequences to the nation—even if Jamaica was only the chosen location for the attack.[19] The deliberate sinking of a cruise ship, for example, could result in over twice as many fatalities as the 9/11 incident, in which some 3,000 people died, as a large modern cruise ship can carry over 6,000 passengers and over 2,000 crew members. Any such incident would probably have a long-term impact on the world cruise industry, which would affect the Caribbean more than any other region, as the Caribbean currently accounts for over half of the world market share of cruise ship destinations.[20]

The tourism industry does demonstrate remarkable resilience, and eventually recovers. After a major terrorist incident, however, tourism volumes typically fall by 25-75 percent and do not recover for some years, while the countries affected also have to invest in additional security, spend heavily on advertising, and offer steep discounts in order to rebuild their customer base. During that time, a number of the relatively fragile tourism-dependent Caribbean economies could collapse.

Conclusion

Several Caribbean nations have a number of attributes that make them potentially fertile ground for terrorist networks, including:

■ A large number of disaffected, disadvantaged youth with very poor prospects.

■ Serious corruption among public officials, political patronage, and a democratic system compromised by links with organized crime, which fosters cynicism and despair of the prospects of legitimate change.

■ A large number of criminal gangs.

■ Availability of illegal weapons.

■ Existing fundamentalists, with contacts with jihadists.

■ Extensive in-bound travel from nations with active terrorist networks.

■ A small but growing number of Caribbean nationals who have travelled to Syria.

■ A large number of soft targets, such as tour

ism resorts and cruise ships, catering predominantly to North American and European nations, where it would be relatively easy to mount a "spectacular" attack resulting in a large number of fatalities.

The nations of the Caribbean are predominantly Christian, but this is unlikely to provide protection, as many recruits in other countries were only recent converts to Islam. All the information presented here is in the public domain, and therefore accessible to terrorist organizations. It is therefore likely that terrorist organizations will come to the same conclusions, if they have not already done so.

Recommendations

There are a few key steps that would help to increase the resilience and preparedness of the Caribbean nations. The first line of defense, as always, is to be better informed. Thus, it is important to establish the protocols and mechanisms for faster and deeper intelligence-sharing and cooperation both within the Caribbean and with key partners overseas. This in turn will require the better management of bilateral and multilateral partnerships towards joint security goals, and the removal of internal silos (Jamaica has already integrated the counter-terrorism and organized crime branches of the Jamaican Constabulary Force). More effective immigration and border security can start simply by training staff. More serious investment would be required in order to improve the security of transport and shipping infrastructure, especially as most of the Caribbean nations have highly permeable marine borders. However, new technologies (e.g. as fixed-wing drones) are increasingly affordable, and would give a significant increase in regional air and maritime domain awareness. Regional resource-pooling would rapidly enhance rapid response and search and rescue capability, and address some of the most significant resource and capability gaps in regional defense and security systems.

The most important step, however, is to resolve the deep social and economic problems in the Caribbean that create pools of disaffected youth that can then be recruited by either criminal or terrorist networks. A combination of better-targeted policing and social interventions will be required; the normalization and reintegration of the high-crime, gang-dominated communities and informal settlements will require a transition to intelligence-led proximity and community policing supported by both social and private in-

vestment. This must be accompanied by steps to end the political culture of corruption and patronage, so that people can trust their governments, and by reforms to the dysfunctional legal systems so that the people can have faith in law, order, and justice. This combination of measures represents the best way to 'inorculate' a population against the spread of virulent and malignant ideologies.

Notes

1 The nations with the highest homicide rates are as follows: Honduras: 90.4 per 100,000; Venezuela: 53.7; Belize: 44.7; El Salvador: 41.2; Guatemala: 39.9; Jamaica: 39.3; Swaziland: 33.8; Saint Kitts and Nevis: 33.6; Republic of South Africa: 31.0; Colombia: 30.8. Swaziland and the Republic of South Africa are the only two countries not in the region.; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Homicide 2013* (New York, N.Y.: UNODC, 2014), https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf.

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4 "Abdelhamid Abaaoud: Paris attacks 'mastermind' never attended mosque, family says," *The Independent*, November 18, 2015.

5 "The men in the top floor flat who sowed terror in Brussels," *The Guardian*, March 24 2016; "Ibrahim and Khalid el-Bakraoui: From Bank Robbers to Brussels Bombers," *The New York Times*, March 24, 2016.

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