

## SMA Reach-back

**Question (LR 4):** What is the strategic framework for undermining ISIL's "Virtual Caliphate?"

**Contributors:** Hassan Abbas (National Defense University), Larry Kuznar (NSI, Inc. and Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne), MAJ Patrick Taylor (7th Military Information Support, USASOC)

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### Executive Summary

#### *Shifting to a Virtual Caliphate*

As ISIS loses ground in Syria and Iraq, the organization seems to be evolving to emphasize the information battlefield to both maintain and gain support from sympathetic Sunni Muslims across the globe and open a new front against its far enemies. Research conducted by Dr. Larry Kuznar, NSI, showed a marked shift in Abu Bakr al Baghdadi's and Abu Mohammed al Adnani's (before his death) speeches in 2016 indicating a shift towards the virtual caliphate. Adnani's speech first signaled a turn towards virtual caliphate in May 2016. Baghdadi, whose speeches have traditionally focused on the near enemy, signaled a turn toward the virtual caliphate in November 2016 as indicated by more frequent mentions of Libya and Tunisia, decreased mentions of an apocalyptic showdown in Dabiq, and the beginning of the expression of an alternative conceptualization of the caliphate.

#### *Strategies to Undermine the Virtual Caliphate*

ISIS has adeptly used social media, information operations, and propaganda to recruit foreign fighters, to encourage skilled individuals to migrate to ISIS-held Iraq and Syria, and to gain sympathy and support. But the Virtual Caliphate implies more than just an impressive command of cyber-based information tools—it sows the irretrievable ideas of violent jihad that will be accessible on the internet for generations, inspiring others long after ISIS has ceased to hold territory. Contributors to this write up suggested a number of ideas that do not easily combine into a seamless strategic framework for undermining the virtual caliphate, but present components for consideration.

Dr. Hassan Abbas, a professor at National Defense University, suggested that the most powerful thing the coalition can do is to support the development of a legitimate, credible Sunni Muslim voice—such as the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC)—to provide a counterweight to ISIS. “For many Muslims, especially those vulnerable to ISIL recruitment, lack of Muslim unity and weak ‘Ummah’ is seen as the biggest challenge,” he argued. Furthermore, Muslim collaboration on a larger scale (e.g., economic, educational, etc.) is likely to be very well received globally, particularly by young Muslims. This would also help counter the narrative that Muslims are weak and have been humiliated by the West, which drives support for ISIS.

Dr. Kuznar suggested five lines of effort that focus on increasing pressure on ISIS as it transitions from the physical to virtual caliphate to reduce its chance of lasting success.

1. Continue to defeat ISIS militarily to discredit them and to force them to force a new narrative

2. Continue to target top ISIS leadership, especially ideologues who are responsible for narrative generation
3. Work with and enable credible alternative voices in Islamic world that can divert vulnerable recruits away from violent jihadist movements and inspiration
4. Beware of alternate jihadists capturing ISIS's market share of the virtual Caliphate as ISIS is further discredited
5. Plan for cooperation with DHS and allies to mitigate persistent effects of lingering ISIS messaging in cyberspace

MAJ Patrick Taylor, 7<sup>th</sup> Military Information Support Battalion, USASOC, suggested that a new framework for undermining ISIS's virtual caliphate is not needed. "[W]e do not require new doctrine or a new approach, we must simply apply current doctrine in creative ways as a framework for response. This is a return to first principles," MAJ Taylor concluded. He argued that Psychological Operations is uniquely positioned to operate in the virtual battlespace using Cyber Enabled Special Warfare (CE-SW). He suggested thinking of the virtual domain as contested borderland filled with neighboring states, tribes, and communities with various competing interests. Successful operations require developing relationships with online digital natives to enable the USG and its allies to compete for functional capability in the information environment. As in other domains, It is essential to understand the viewpoints of these online tribes and communities in order to understand and combat the interests the drive mobilization.

#### *Conclusion*

ISIS's shift from physical to virtual caliphate is extremely dangerous as it is a threat that will continue in perpetuity even after ISIS, the organization, is defeated. Violence seekers will be inspired by ISIS's hateful rhetoric, other insurgent groups can learn from ISIS's successes and failures, and the threat of homegrown violence may continue to rise. These conditions are unlikely to change, but we can perhaps limit the scope of the threat by considering some of the suggestions proposed here among others.

## SME Input

### Response to Literature Review 4

**Dr. Hassan Abbas**  
**National Defense University**

1. What is the strategic framework for undermining ISIL's "Virtual Caliphate?"

*ANSWER: By projecting a counter idea – such as empowering Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) etc. as a counter weight to ISIL led Caliphate. For many Muslims, especially those vulnerable to ISIL recruitment, lack of Muslim unity and weak “Ummah” is seen as the biggest challenge. An evidence of Muslim collaboration at a wider scale (for economic or educational purposes) is likely to receive huge support among young Muslims globally. Muslims in most countries are routinely fed the narrative that overall Muslims are weak and being humiliated by the West, etc. etc. Muslim leaders have failed to come up with a counter argument to this. That’s why ISIL idea to build a Caliphate (to regain lost Muslim glory) gains currency.*

### Daesh Discourse Analysis for Review Question 4: Strategic Framework of ISIL’s “Virtual Caliphate”

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#### Summary

#### The Strategic Framework of ISIL’s “Virtual Caliphate”

- Abu Bakr al Baghdadi continues to focus his attention on near enemies (apostates, Shia, Kurds, Middle Eastern leaders, especially Saudis, Alawites), but mentions Libya and Tunisia more often in 2016.
  - Earlier research identified a significant shift in Baghdadi and Abu Muhammed al Adnani’s focus on enemies during the summer of 2014, with Baghdadi concentrating on near enemies in the Middle East region, and Adnani focusing on far enemies in the West and Russia. Baghdadi’s focus on near enemies continues, despite Adnani’s announced death 30 Aug 2016.
- Baghdadi’s use of judgment day themes actually declines in past year, possibly indicating a pivot away from the narrative of an apocalyptic showdown at Dabiq and toward and alternative conceptualization of the Caliphate.
  - This contrasts with an increase in judgment day themes in 2015, and appears to be a response to the Turkish / FSA capture of Dabiq on 16 Oct 2016.
- Adnani signals a significant pivot away from a Syria/Iraq physical Caliphate and to a virtual Caliphate in May of 2016.

- Baghdadi signals a similar pivot away from Syria/Iraq and toward North Africa in November 2016.
- Daesh online messaging, despite its overwhelmingly greater volume, has been no more influential in inspiring attacks on the U.S. homeland.
- However, the persistence of messages in cyberspace means that the threat they represent will continue to in perpetuity, and therefore Daesh will continue to inspire long after it ceases to exist in any physical way.

### Undermining the Strategic Framework

- Continue to defeat Daesh militarily to discredit them and to force them to force a new narrative
- Continue to target top Daesh leadership, especially ideologues who are responsible for narrative generation
- Work with and enable credible alternative voices in Islamic world that can divert vulnerable recruits away from violent jihadist movements and inspiration
- Beware of alternate jihadists capturing Daesh's market share of the virtual Caliphate as Daesh is further discredited
- Plan for cooperation with DHS and allies to mitigate persistent effects of lingering Daesh messaging in cyberspace

### Introduction

CENTCOM posed Literature Review Question # 4:

*LR 4 What is the strategic framework for **undermining ISIL's "Virtual Caliphate"**?*

CENTCOM provided further guidance: "the virtual caliphate is any and all virtual means of influencing potential recruits and sympathizers...internet chat rooms, videos, social media, email, apps, online training. It would be useful to get a response that casts a wide net across all virtual areas, and it would also be useful for a more targeted study on a specific topic. We don't want to restrict responses, but allow the author to use their expertise and experience to answer as they see fit."

This report provides information based on primary research on Daesh messaging over the past three years, and includes the most recent major speeches by Abu Muhammed al Adnani (killed 30 Aug 2016) and Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Shifts in key themes in the past year provide insight into a pivot away from a physical and toward a virtual Caliphate that would exist in distributed form around the world, as well as in cyberspace.<sup>1</sup>

The "Virtual Caliphate" entails many manifestations, both in physical forms as well as online, and this report focuses on specific aspects of message content and its online persistence.

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<sup>1</sup> Cyberspace refers to a combination of social media, standard websites, and less accessible websites in the dark web, or through mobile devices connected through cellular networks.

## 2016 Trends

### Adnani

Adnani's last major speech (That They Live by Proof) was released by al Hayat media arm of Daesh in May of 2016. The speech was primarily a call to faith in the Caliphate and the jihad, and an indictment of Western policy as well as an indictment of U.S. decapitation strategies of killing leaders.

Adnani performs his role as a predominant organizer and inspirer of attacks against the West, which in light of his death is now largely academic.

If one of you wishes and strives to reach the lands of the Islamic State, then each of us wishes to be in your place to make examples of the crusaders, day and night, scaring them and terrorizing them, until every neighbor fears his neighbor. If one of you is unable, then do not make light of throwing a stone at a crusader in his land, and do not underestimate any deed, as its consequences are great for the mujahidin and its effect is noxious to the disbelievers.

However, he also signals an **important pivot** by generalizing how a hypothetical loss of Mosul or even Raqqa would not stop the Caliphate.

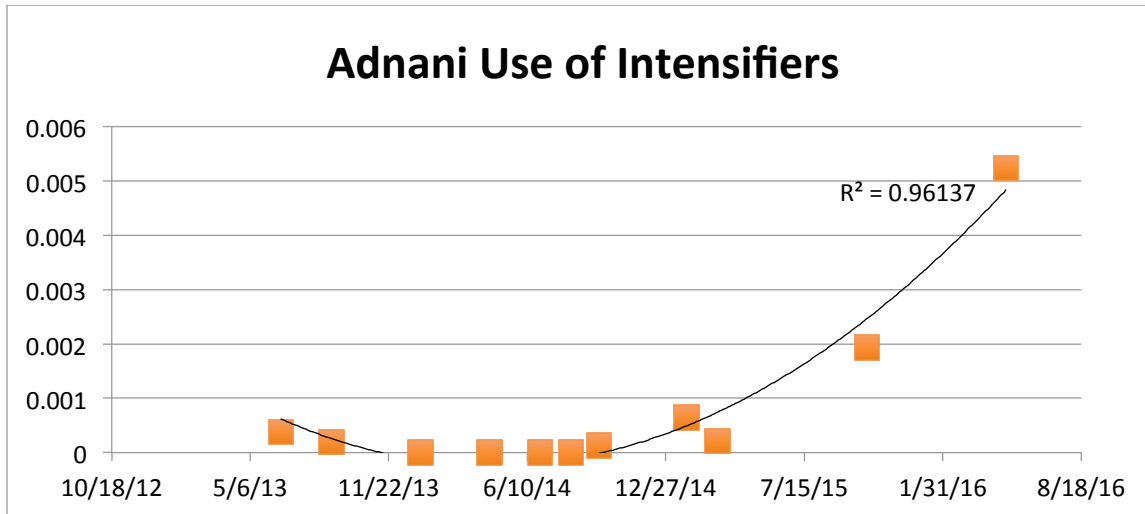
"Would you be victorious if you were to kill ash-Shishani, Abu Bakr, Abu Zayd, or Abu 'Amr? No. Indeed, victory is the defeat of one's opponent. Or do you, O America, consider defeat to be the loss of a city or the loss of land? Were we defeated when we lost the cities in Iraq and were in the desert without any city or land [referring to AQI's losses 2006 - 2010]? **And would we be defeated and you be victorious if you were to take Mosul or Sirte or Raqqa or even take all the cities and we were to return to our initial condition?** [Emphasis added] Certainly not!"

We fight in obedience to Allah and to become closer to Him. And victory is that we live in the might of our religion or die upon it. It is the same, whether Allah blesses us with consolidation **or we move into the bare, open desert, displaced and pursued** [emphasis added].

Adnani exhibits only two shifts in language use in 2016.

In his last major missive, he introduces the concept that their difficulties are **tests** of faith sent by Allah.

His use of intensifying language (measured as Density = # intensifiers/words) increases exponentially in the past year, indicating that he was in an **increasingly emotional state, which could have been influencing his decision calculus.**



## Baghdadi

Baghdadi exhibits a few qualitative shifts in his use of language, even though the majority of his language use exhibits no statistically significant change.

Within the past year (26 Dec 2016, 2 Nov 2016), a topic that never surfaced in his speeches before, **fitna**, begins emerging as a relatively common concern. **Fitna** refers to internal discord among Muslims, and carries deep religious significance, associated with historic periods of disarray and collapse of unified Muslim rule (especially with regard to the original schism between Shia and Sunni Muslims in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century). Fitna is not a concept taken lightly in Islam and Baghdadi's reference to fitna may signal serious concerns with internal divisions within Daesh.

Since March of 2015, the theme that Daesh's **difficulties are tests sent by Allah** is introduced, and becomes persistent in 2016. This could very well be a response designed to bolster morale in light of the past year's losses and especially to the assault on Mosul. Some Muslim clerics regard **fitna as an actual test from Allah**, therefore these two concepts could be interrelated in Baghdadi's use of them.

In Baghdadi's most recent major speech, delivered 2 Nov 2016, he calls for continued patience on the behalf of Daesh fighters everywhere, but **singles out Libya in particular**, praising them as the basis of the Caliphate and encouraging them to fight on in the face of opposition.

"To the soldiers of the caliphate in Khurasan [Afghanistan, Pakistan region], Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Caucasus, the Philippines, Yemen, the [Arabian] Peninsula, Sinai, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Somalia, and West Africa: Know that you are the pillars of Islam on earth, the tent stands of the caliphate upon it. ....

"To the mujahideen who are patient with war and adversity in Surt: With your patience you have forced lessons upon your enemies; you have written pages of glory and perseverance with your pure blood. Europe was Crusader and remains so, avariciously seeking to invade the cradle of the caliphate and fortress of Islam in Iraq and the Levant, until your activity shook its security and your jihad flipped their political calculations. You became an insurmountable obstacle, the solid stone against which their will broke and agendas shattered. Your enemy hurts, as you do;

but you have hope from your Lord that they do not. Beware of departing your battle stations and posts, for your enemy is on the verge of flagging, or being driven back and fleeing.

### The Persistence of the Virtual Caliphate

The trends and shifts in messaging from Daesh leaders detailed above can inform anticipation of Daesh's shorter-term strategic goals and operational concerns such as likely targets and methods. However, in a world of tweets and social media reposts, these immediate concerns are easily swamped by the persistence of messages in cyberspace. The following cases illustrate the point.

	2014 Queens Hatchet Attack	2015 Dallas Prophet Cartoon Attack	2015 US Merced Stabbing	2015 San Bernardino Shooting	2016 Orlando Pulse Nightclub Shooting
Incident	Man attacks police with a hatchet	Two men try to open fire on a Prophet Muhammed Cartoon context sponsored by American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) also known as Stop Islamicization of America	Student stabbed 2 students, an employee and a construction worker	Couple enters their workplace during Xmas party and kill 14 people with AR-15s	Gunman enters Gay bar and kills down 49 people with an AR-15
Date	23 Oct 2016	3 May 2015	4 Nov 2015	2 Dec 2015	12 Jun 2016
Perp(s)	Zale H. Thomson (Zaim Farouq Abdul-Malik) shot dead by police	Elton Simpson, Nadir Soofi, shot dead by police	Faisal Mohammed, shot dead by police	Syed Farook, Tashfeen Malik, shot dead by police	Omar Mateen, commits suicide during attack
Details	1 officer critically wounded, another cut, woman shot in cross-fire	1 Wounded school security officer; Daesh takes credit for inspiration, for first time	4 people stabbed, Wanted to murder study group and cut a head off	14 killed, 22 injured. Radicalized couple, wife possibly radicalized in PAK, husband possibly radicalized by wife, no	49 killed, 50 wounded. Security officer, domestic abuse, allegations of mental instability, may have had

				previous criminal record, afterward, Daesh claims them as soldiers	sexual identity issues, would get drunk and allegedly try to pick up men at Pulse
Inspiration	Black power movement, al Qaeda, al Shabab, Daesh	Simpson: teenage convert, ties to jihadist Navy leakers, previously investigated, cyberlinks to Awlaki, al Shabab, and Daesh Soofi: Child of immigrant father, raised Muslim, lived in Pakistan, issues w alcohol and drugs	Anger over being excluded from a study group, and Daesh propaganda	Various jihadist websites, incl. Daesh and Awlaki	Motivated by death of Abu Waheeb, Daesh, Awlaki, Hezbollah
Pledge of Bayah	None	None	None	Pledged to Baghdadi during/immediately before the attack	Pledges to Baghdadi during attack

There has been no case of a directly Daesh-organized attack upon the U.S. homeland. There have been five cases of Daesh inspired attacks, however, the details of these attacks shed light both on Daesh’s irrelevance as an organization and their likely persistence as a meme, even long after their destruction.

As we often warn young people, “Be careful what you post, because it will be there forever.” Messages live on forever in cyberspace, and because of the cut-and-paste nature of reposting, specific themes, or memes, can take on a life of their own forever.

### Daesh’s Irrelevance

In the three first Daesh-inspired attacks on the U.S., the perpetrators did not even pledge allegiance to Daesh. In each case, other jihadist online influences, and personal issues (personal discrimination, substance abuse, social exclusion) were probably at least as influential.



In the other two incidents, which are among the worst terrorist attacks in recent U.S. history, the perpetrators only pledged their allegiance to Daesh immediate to or during their attacks (hardly premeditation). And in both cases, other online jihadist inspirations were probably as influential. In the case of Omar Mateen (Orlando shooter), he even sought inspiration from Hezbollah, a Shia group that represents Daesh's most mortal enemy (Kuznar & Moon, 2014), completely contradicting his stance viz. Daesh.

In this sense, Daesh's rhetoric is irrelevant, since those inspired by Daesh are inspired by *any* hateful rhetoric that fuels their hatred. However, the lack of logical connection for any sustained and supported argument also represents the ability for messages that inspire hate and violence to persist.

### Daesh's Persistence in the Virtual Caliphate

Daesh's massive volume of hateful messages (measured in 100s of thousands of messages per day and reposts compared to 10s of thousands per day from Awlaki, or less from Zawahiri) will persist in cyberspace and, along with messages from other jihadists, past, present and future, will continue to inspire those vulnerable to jihadist recruitment. The persistent influence of messages from Anwar al Awlaki (killed 2011) is testimony to the persistence of jihadist messages, well after the death of their generators.

### Undermining the Strategic Pivot

Continued physical losses undermine Daesh's legitimacy since they continue to rely on their record of and imagery of successes to bolster their claim that they are the only true jihadists.

Continued loss of top leadership undermines Daesh's administrative capability to effect a shift to a virtual Caliphate.

A central theme in Daesh messaging is that they are the only legitimate jihadist movement and therefore the only true Muslims, and they have viciously attacked their jihadist market-share competitors such as AQC, AQAP, al Nusra. pointing out that other jihadists have been as and more successful at inspiring attacks undermines Daesh's legitimacy. Daesh's insistence that they are the only legitimate alternative boxes them into a rhetorical corner.

### A Caution

All extremist organizations rationalize failures, changes in policy, and even whole scale strategic shifts. Daesh is particularly well-suited to make this shift in light of their end-times eschatology: They have explicitly stated that the establishment of the Caliphate, and even its near-destruction and deaths of nearly all of its fighters are necessary prerequisites to the final apocalypse. Therefore, those who want to believe in Daesh, will have a ready explanation for failures. However, this placed Daesh's virtual existence on the horns of a dilemma: the recent losses are foretold, but if the Mahdi and Isa (Jesus) do not return and fight the final battle of good versus evil, then their narrative will sound hollow to those not already committed to Daesh, allowing alternative organizations to soak up Daesh's market share. This logically leads to two cautions:

The demise of Daesh creates opportunities for other jihadist organizations if valid alternatives to violent jihad are not provided by credible sources in cyberspace. Therefore, USG must identify and enable those non-violent alternatives that can guide the disgruntled, oppressed, or perhaps just plain bored away from violent ideologies and organizations and toward more peaceful alternatives.

Finally, cyber objects potentially exist in cyberspace indefinitely. Therefore, messages of hate and violence that can inspire will never be completely eliminated from cyberspace and the threat will always exist, even if at a lower level than is experienced today.

A further consideration is that Daesh membership is not monolithic and this analysis focuses on the ideologically committed leadership. Less-ideologically committed members' resolve and allegiance may be eroded if counter-messaging is effectively directed at drawing them away from the central messages upon which Daesh has based its narrative (Ligon & Spitaletta, 2016).

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## **We do it for the LOLZ: Cyber Enabled Special Warfare to Counter the Virtual Caliphate**

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### Abstract:

A revolutionary state for the purpose of this discussion will be defined as a result of a state which is, “hostile to prevailing international norms and uses ruthless violence to eliminate or intimidate rivals and demonstrate their power to a wider world.”(Walt, 2015)

The urgent question is how do we counter or disrupt this revolutionary state, specifically its ability to contextualize its positions and actions? The virtual domain is “contested borderland” with neighboring states. This contested area is filled with “tribes” and communities opposed to the action of the current revolutionary state and in some cases view it is an occupying power, which is antithetical to the interests and objectives of their own communities.

US Special Operations Forces and specifically the Psychological Operations Regiment, is uniquely suited to apply current Special Warfare and its subset Unconventional Warfare to the virtual domain through the application of Cyber Enabled Special Warfare (CE-SW). “CE-SW can use information and psychological means as a coercive tactic to change, modify, and punish an adversary’s behavior.” (Dugan, 2014) Using Cyber enabled Special Warfare will allow US Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) to force the Islamic state, via the virtual caliphate, to compete for functional capability in the information environment. In order to effectively do this, Special Operations Forces must develop relationships with “online digital natives.” We must view these relationships as meetings with the underground portions of a nascent resistance movement. Psychological Operations should have the lead role in developing, cultivating, and advising the underground portion of these actions. In short, we do not require new doctrine or a new approach, we must simply apply current doctrine in creative ways as a framework for response. This is a return to first principles.

### Introduction:

Jürgen Todenhöfer, a German journalist who visited territory in Iraq and Syria controlled by ISIS, said in 2014, “We have to understand that ISIS is a country now.” As mentioned before, a revolutionary state will be defined as a result of a state which is “hostile to prevailing international norms and uses ruthless violence to eliminate or intimidate rivals and demonstrate their power to a wider world.”(Walt, 2015) Key in this definition are two elements, the ruthless use of violence and demonstrations of power to the wider world. These elements push IS into a unique position predicated on narratively contextualized violence. This predilection presents an overmatch based the US military’s preference for competitions of violence and decisive action. Within this competitive space we must define the area of operations, concentrated around the epicenters of Raqqa and Mosul, and the area of interest which has in part centralized around the “virtual caliphate.” The Islamic state has consistently lost in the area of

operations in terms of land, resources and ability to govern, however they continue to maintain relevance in the area of interest. This allows them to contextualize and export their violence for the purpose of support and recruitment.

Understanding Special Warfare:

How do we counter or disrupt this area of interest for a revolutionary state such as IS? We must view the virtual domain as “contested borderland” with neighboring states. This contested area is filled with “tribes” and communities opposed to the action of the current revolutionary state. These conditions closely resemble Special Warfare and more specifically Unconventional Warfare (UW). US Special Operations is uniquely suited to apply current doctrine to the virtual domain. In order to apply this doctrine effectively, we must understand the nature of this type of warfare. The Tompkins model, popularized by United States Special Operations Command (USASOC) G3X division Chief Paul Tompkins, provides a pictorial model to clearly do just that.

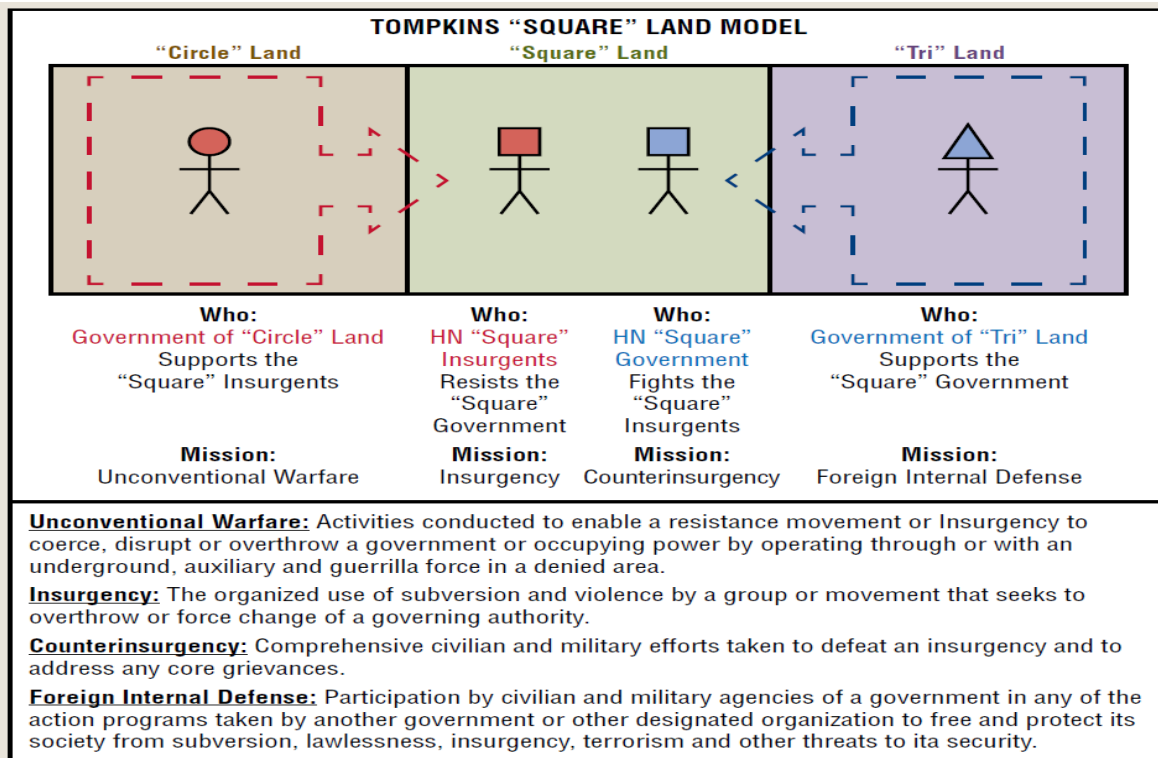


Figure 1: Tompkins Model

The Tompkins model provides a clear understanding of key tactical and operational concepts at the strategic level, allowing multiple organizations, agencies, and more importantly, the Special Operations Force Solider to understand their roles, missions, and authorities in a potential conflict.

Cyber Enabled Special Warfare

With this basic understanding of Special Warfare, we can apply these concepts to affect the Cyber domain and specifically, the “borderland” of the Islamic State, which exists in the virtual caliphate. The goal is to utilize cyber capabilities coupled with Special Warfare doctrine to degrade the adversary’s ability to effectively use the information environment to support their objectives. COL Patrick Dugan

addresses this concept in his Small Wars Journal article “Man, Computers and Special Warfare.” He states:

“The Cyber Enabled Special Warfare (CE-SW) pyramid (figure below) borrows under-utilized tactics, capabilities, and tools from previously labeled conflicts, and unexpectedly fuses them together to open new ‘attack surfaces’ against an adversary. The new opportunities target humans, networks, and narratives in decentralized and disaggregated operations and uses a mix of both virtual and physical practice.” (Dugan, 2014)

The Cyber-Enabled Special Warfare Pyramid

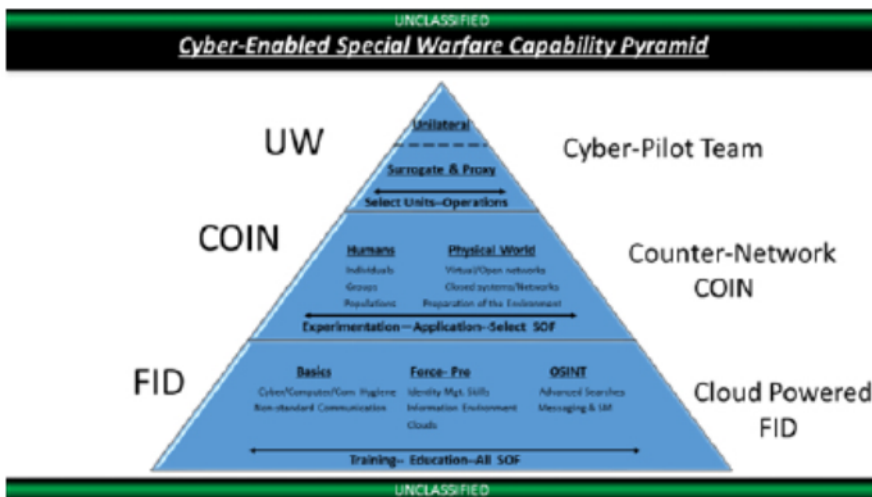


Figure 1. Cyber-Enabled Special Warfare Pyramid

FIG 2: Dugan’s Cyber-Enabled Special Warfare Pyramid

Allies and Potential Actions

Col Dugan goes on to state unequivocally, “CE-SW can use information and psychological means as a coercive tactic to change, modify, and punish an adversary’s behavior.” (Dugan, 2014) Using Cyber enabled Special Warfare will allow US Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) to force the Islamic state, via the virtual caliphate, to compete for functional capability by providing and developing access to information and a narrative that is counter to the interest of the adversary. The ability to impact the access to and amount of information that key target audiences have access to will directly impact the functional defeat of the information capability of the virtual caliphate. This can be accomplished through the traditional application of Special Warfare techniques by developing and influencing the interpersonal relationships of those “tribes” such as GHOSTSEC, or other like-minded online personae in order to support our goals and objectives and share the digital domain that borders the Islamic State. The building of these relationships with “online digital natives” will be key to the success of defeating the virtual caliphate. We must view these relationships as meetings with the underground portions of a resistance movement.

These “digital tribes” understand local languages, such as ‘lite speak, and have essential placement and access to further develop an online proxy force, as well as execute their own actions. These actions, as outlined by COL Dugan, could include,

“Coordinating sit-ins, directing ‘swarm stream attacks,’ or spreading social media whisper campaigns, CE-SW can use ‘cyber-smash mouth tactics’ to amplify its physical and virtual activities. CE-SW can vet and leverage sympathetic ‘privateers’, vigilante, crowd-sourced, as well as, employ false flag efforts to “create believable deceptions in cyberspace over a protracted period of time.” (Dugan, 2015)

The actions defined above are the preview of the underground in a classic Unconventional Warfare scenario. Of all the ARSOF “tribes,” only one owns the underground’s propaganda and messaging function: Psychological Operations. PSYOP planners must be integrated into the planning and execution of any type of “underground” action. This will help to ensure that the informational effect is exploited for wider success and directly advances the operational narrative.

ARSOF’s ability effects these systems of personal relationships to manipulate and develop permissive, pressure (adversarial/conflicting) and neutral viewpoints. Key to understand these viewpoints is to identify the component factors behind mobilization. Jesse Kirkpatrick and Mary Kate Schneider discuss these factors in their article, “ISM: Interest, Identification, Indoctrination, and Mobilization.” Their article lays out four key factors that make up the potential active or passive mobilization of support; they are identification, interest, and indoctrination. Of the four factors the most important, is Interest: which can be defined as the emotional motivation or incentive to participate. As stated by Mancur Olsen in his seminal work “The Logic of Collective Action “Simply put without interest there is no group.” The ability to effect the emotional motivations is the ability to effect the “WILL” and directly relates to influencing a target audience desire to act. ARSOF will utilize the target audience, increasing access to information to encourage and exploit the dissolution of a hostile narrative via saturation of neutral and pressure narratives, which widens the aperture of information available. Propagation of neutral narratives will start to break down the head-to-head narrative competition, which currently exists, and force the adversary into a competitive marketplace. Choice and competition will degrade the overall capability of the Islamic State to promote their narrative. Permissive and pressure viewpoints directly affect the will of neutral parties to align with IS ideology by providing a mechanism to question it.

#### Conclusion:

Through effecting the components of will and capability via Cyber Enabled Special Warfare, we achieve functional defeat of the Virtual Caliphate. Line for line, countering of this hostile narrative is a losing battle because the virtual caliphate understands the audience better than we could hope to, but by joining forces with a cyber-underground, we can dilute the impact of their narrative by increasing the scope of the information environment.

#### Recommendations

- Cyberspace domain should be viewed as an “exposed flank” and an area of interest to the overall battlefield geometry.
- Developing a competitive marketplace is essential.
- Relationships are a key aspect of Special Warfare.
- PSYOP is the force of choice to develop and support underground in Unconventional Warfare.
- The virtual domain may alter application but does not always alter principles. .

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## Biographies

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- Politics, Security and Religion in South Asia
- Politics, Islam, and U.S. Relations with Muslim States
- Law Enforcement and Police Reforms in Developing States

Hassan Abbas is Professor of International Security Studies and Chair of the Department of Regional and Analytical Studies at National Defense University's College of International Security Affairs (CISA). He serves as a Carnegie Fellow 2016-2017 at New America where he is focusing on a book project on Islam's internal struggles and spirituality narrated through the lens of his travels to Islam's holy sites across the world. He is also currently a Senior Advisor at Asia Society. He remained a Senior Advisor at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (2009-2011), after having been a Research Fellow at the Center from 2005-2009. He was the Distinguished Quaid-i-Azam Chair Professor at Columbia University before joining CISA and has previously held fellowships at Harvard Law School and Asia Society in New York.

He regularly appears as an analyst on media including CNN, ABC, BBC, C-Span, Al Jazeera and GEO TV (Pakistan). His opinion pieces and research articles have been published in various leading international newspapers and academic publications. His latest book titled [\*The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier\*](#) (Yale University Press, 2014) was profiled on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart in August 2014. Abbas' earlier well acclaimed book *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army and America's War on Terror* (M E Sharpe, 2004) remains on bestseller lists in Pakistan and India. He also runs WATANDOST, a blog on Pakistan and its neighbors' related affairs. His other publications include an Asia Society report titled [\*Stabilizing Pakistan Through Police Reform\*](#) (2012) and [\*Pakistan 2020: A Vision for Building a Better Future\*](#) (Asia Society, 2011).

A detailed list of his publications is [available here](#).





**Dr. Lawrence Kuznar** has a background in discourse analysis, decision theory, and mathematical and computational modeling. He has supported many SMA projects, as well as work for AFRL, the Army Corps of Engineers, and our private customers. His discourse work has been used to provide anticipatory insights into violent non-state actors such as ISIL and the Taliban, and state actors as varied as Iran, Pakistan, India and North Korea. He also contributed to NSI's computational modeling of social conflict. In addition to his position at NSI, he is also a professor of anthropology at Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne, and

his published work can be found in journals such as *American Anthropologist*, *Political Studies*, *Current Anthropology*, *Evolution and Human Behavior* and *Social Science Computer Review*.

**Major Patrick B. Taylor** graduated from the University of Maine in 2004 and was commissioned a 2LT in the U.S. Army as an Air Defense Artillery (ADA) Officer.

In 2004, he graduated the ADA Officer Basic Course and was assigned to Bravo battery 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 44<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) as a Stinger/Avenger Platoon Leader. In early 2005, he deployed to Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and redeployed in 2006. During his tour in Iraq, Major Taylor was approved for a branch transfer to the Military Intelligence corps. Upon his return to Fort Campbell he served as the assistant battalion intelligence officer before moving to 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron 17<sup>th</sup> US Cavalry (AIR) of the 159<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault)

Major Taylor became the Squadron Intelligence officer, and deployed with his squadron to El Centro, California in support of Joint Task Force-North in 2008. While deployed, he assisted US Border Patrol intelligence units, and helped develop an integrated intelligence support plan which was key in the success of the squadron's mission.

Major Taylor was selected by the ARSOF board to become a Psychological Operations Officer in 2007, then attended the Maneuver Captains Career Course in 2008. He graduated from the Psychological Operations Qualification Course in November 2009 as a 37A and was assigned to A Co., 8th Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Psychological Operations Group (Airborne) as a Detachment Commander for detachment 8A30. He deployed his detachment to Pakistan from 2010 to 2011 in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, then redeployed and was assigned as the detachment commander for 8A20. In 2011, he deployed to Egypt to support US Embassy Cairo. Upon his return, he then transitioned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Military Information Support Group and served as the Future and Current Operations officer. He then deployed in support of the Joint Information Support Task Force from July 2013 to February 2014 and served as the Special Operations Command-Central Liaison to US Central Command's Web Operations program. Upon graduation from the US Army Command and General Staff College, MAJ Taylor was then assigned to 7<sup>th</sup> Psychological Operations Battalion as the Operations officer. He is currently the Executive officer of 7<sup>th</sup> Psychological Operations battalion (Airborne).

Major Taylor's military schooling includes Airborne School, Unconventional Warfare Operational Design Course, Psychological Operations Qualification Course, Military Deception Planner Course, Joint and Army Cyber Planner Courses, Information Environment Advanced Analysis Course, Mobile Force Protection Course, Advanced Pistol Marksmanship Course, Advanced Rifle Marksmanship Course, US

Army Combatives Program, Air Defense Artillery Officers Basic Course, Maneuver Captains Career Course and US Army Command and General Staff College.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with V device, the Army Commendation Medal with four OLCs, the Army Achievement Medal with three OLCs, the Joint Meritorious Unit Citation, the Meritorious Unit Citation with one Oak leaf, the National Defense Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon with numeral 2, the Combat Action Badge, the Parachutist Badge, and the German, and Italian Army Parachutist Badges.



**Sarah Canna** applies her open source analytic skills to regions of vital concern to US Combatant Commands, particularly the Middle East and South Asia. To help military planners understand the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play in evolving conflict situations, she developed a Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) tool, which is designed to rapidly respond to emergent crises by pulsing NSI's extensive subject matter expert (SME) network to provide deep, customized, multidisciplinary analysis for defense and industry clients. Prior to joining NSI, she completed her Master's degree from Georgetown University in Technology and Security Studies. She holds a translation certificate in Spanish from American University and has been learning Dari for three years.