

**Question (R3 QL6):** *How will the population in northwest Syria react to future Salafist political institutions?*

**Contributors:** *Dr. Kathleen Reedy (RAND); Dr. Murhaf Jouejati (National Defense University); Dr. Amjed Rasheed (Durham University, UK); Mubin Shaikh (University of Liverpool; independent consultant); Dr. Joshua Landis (University of Oklahoma); Charles Lister (Middle East Institute).*

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## Executive Summary

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI

Similar to points made by other contributors to this SMA Reach-back report, Dr. Kathleen Reedy of Rand includes a caveat in her response to the CENTCOM question. Given international pressure to avoid Salafi expansion in Syria, it is doubtful she argues, that Salafist policies or leaders would be allowed to become dominant over sizeable areas of northwest Syria. Nonetheless, contributors' input on the likely response to future Salafist political institutions in northwest Syria tends to align with one of two viewpoints: 1) Syrians will reject Salafi efforts to establish political institutions (i.e., to govern); or 2) Salafi governance will be accepted under certain circumstances.

In addition, the experts offer a range of key factors to support either the "reject" or "accept with conditions" conclusions. These factors suggest four areas of inquiry: 1) the cultural salience of Salafism in Syria; 2) the degree to which people differentiate among political groups; 3) popular views of, and experience with political groups; and 4) the relative importance of ideology versus provision of public services.<sup>1</sup>

## Questions #1 and #2: The Cultural Acceptability of Salafism & Ideological Differentiation

Professor Murhaf Jouejati of the National Defense University contends that Syrian culture is a more apt foundation for moderate than for extremist Islamic practices. Salafism, which represents the culture of the Arabian Peninsula, is foreign to Levantine culture and as a result Syrians are most likely to reject Salafist institutions or reforms. Jouejati recalls that in the past Syrians living in areas controlled by radical extremists engaged in civil disobedience and

<sup>1</sup> Note that while some of the contributors explicitly considered political institutions (i.e., Salafi governors) others tended to focus on the relevance and/or legitimacy of Salafi groups or members of Salafi groups in Syria.

demonstrations and sees little reason that these types of activities would not occur in areas taken or retaken by ISIL, Al Qaeda or Jabat Fatah al Sham (JFS).<sup>2</sup> Charles Lister, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, adds that even within the opposition there is a preference for the Syrian national movement “initiated by peaceful protesters advocating for moderate ideals, rather than the transnational jihadis like Al-Qaeda.”<sup>3</sup> He warns though that “that dynamic is not necessarily immovable.”

Mubin Shaik of the University of Liverpool provides a variation on this argument. He maintains that in fact Syrians differentiate between Salafists and “Saudi style Wahhabists” so would not necessarily reject all Salafist governors or political institutions.<sup>4</sup> It is the particular Wahhabism of the Islamic State that is countercultural in this area. Finally, Dr. Joshua Landis (University of Oklahoma) warns that the issue of the cultural salience of Salafism in Syria may be becoming moot. While he concedes that many Syrians are “fed up with fundamentalism” because of the harsh treatment they received at the hands of JFS and then ISIL, he argues that over the past six years of conflict the Syrian population has been radicalized as, consciously or not, Salafi ideas and practices have been accepted into their psyches and aspects of their daily lives where they were not necessarily present before.

### **Question #3: Popular Experience with Salafi Groups**

Charles Lister (MEI) argues that the fall of Aleppo, the moderate opposition’s key safe haven in Syria, had the effect of diminishing popular confidence in moderate civil society. However, because in his view JFS failed to demonstrate its military value to the Syrian revolution it is now seen as “impotent” by local populations and enjoys “only minimal respect” in civil affairs. Mubin Shaik (University of Liverpool) on the other hand, believes that Salafist groups like Al Qaeda and Jabat Fatah al Sham have succeeded in building the foundation for public support of their leadership by encouraging locals to see them as defenders of the interests of the Syria people as opposed to other groups who they peg as the flunkies of the regime or of the West. As a result, Shaik expects that Salafist groups will be accepted by local populations as long as they continue their gradualist approach to instituting socially conservative (Salafist) practices.

### **Question #4: The Relative Importance of Goods versus Ideology**

Finally, in line with the conclusions of other SMA Reach-back write-ups (e.g., see R3 QL5, V7), Joshua Landis (University of Oklahoma) argues that local support for one governing structure over another will not be a function of ideology or religious preference as others intimate, but a function of which government can provide goods and services to its constituents. Landis notes that people in northwest Syria are, and will remain, in dire need of employment, security and education and the government that best provides these goods will receive their allegiance. In a specific instance of this argument Lister (MEI) forecasts that continued civil conflict in Syria will eventually bring the people of the Idlib and Hama governates into the regime’s sights and in

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper we will refer to Jabat al Nusrah as Jabat Fatah al Sham for the purpose of simplicity although we recognize that some references to the group are applicable to the period before its re-branding.

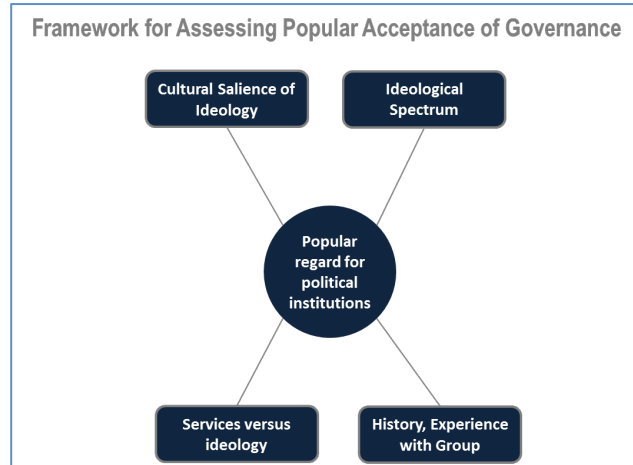
<sup>3</sup> Lister does cite variations in past popular acceptance of Salafi governance in Idlib governorate. Al Nusrah/JFS have faced less resistance in Jisr al-Shughour, Darkush, Salqin, Sarmadeh, Al-Dana and Darat Izzeh then in areas such as Idlib city, Al-Atareb, Saraqeb, Khan Sheikhoun, Marat al-Numan and Kafranabel) in which Salafi attempts to impose control have faced stiffer resistance.

<sup>4</sup> Shaik provides a useful definition of Salafism as “a conservative form of Islamic interpretation, manifested in the deliberate display of religious identity and practice (in all areas of human endeavor), and an appeal to strict, corporal punishments in law.”

urgent need of defense. Lister warns that if the Coalition were to discontinue support for moderate forces, local populations may again see no option but to align with Salafi groups for their defense.

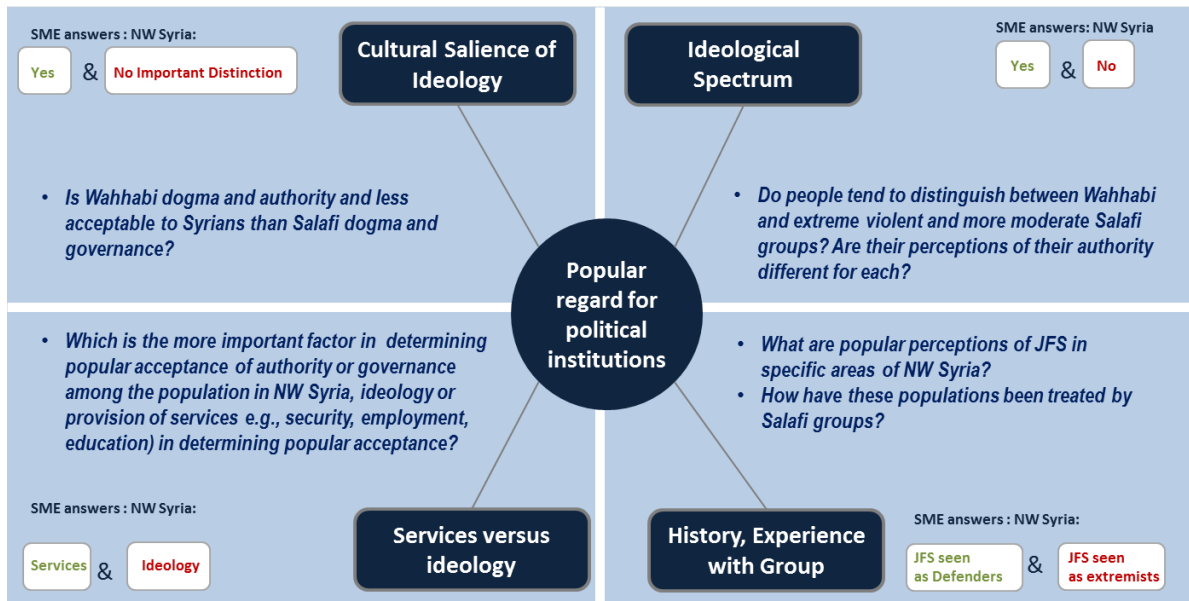
### The Result

As is clear from the review of their arguments, there is no clear consensus on the prospects for Syrian acquiescence to Salafi authority and/or attempts to govern in the northwest of the country. It is also unclear which factors would be the most important determinants of popular support or rejection of Salafi control. Producing a more definitive answer to the CENTCOM question requires further study and data collection on the ground. In short, in both cases – expectations and critical variables – the jury is still out.



What the experts' input does suggest however, is arguably more useful than a single, consensus answer to (any) question of popular desire or preference in such a volatile environment. Taken

## ACCEPT or REJECT? No clear consensus on Salafi Authority in NW Syria



together the experts' contributions to this report imply a series of important questions that provide a template for assessing or engaging with local preferences for governing structures (e.g., Salafi, Assad regime, or moderate Islamist, etc.) in both Syria and Iraq. Specifically,

analysts and planners should tailor and seek to answer the following questions relative to their areas of interest:

- 1. Is the prospective government or governing system salient to, and consistent with local culture?*
- 2. Do opponents/supporters of the prospective government or system differentiate among proposed leaders, or are all elements or factions of the proposed governing authority seen as unacceptable/acceptable?*
- 3. What history or past experiences do local constituents have with the prospective government?*
- 4. What is the relative importance of religious and/or ideological beliefs and government provision of goods and services (e.g., security, employment, etc.) in determining popular acceptance of a governing authority?*

The Accept-Reject figure above shows these generic questions tailored for the question of popular support for Salafi political institutions in NW Syria, and provides a useful roadmap for further study and on-the-ground data collection.

#### **SME Input**

### **Comments on North Syria Population reaction to Salafist Institutions**

Murhaf Jouejati  
National Defense University

... there were several disturbances that took place in territories controlled by radical Islamists. These disturbances took a variety of forms, including civil resistance, demonstrations, and the formation of small groups who documented Da'esh atrocities through film, pictures, etc., and smuggled them to the outside world. In general, the Syrian people adopt a moderate form of Islam - the antithesis of Da'esh and Nusra dogma. Although many have become radicalized by the brutality of the Assad regime, still, the vast majority rejects Salafism, a movement more characteristic of the Arabian Peninsula than of Syria, a Levantine culture.

## **Comments on North Syria Population reaction to Salafist Institutions**

Joshua Landis  
University of Oklahoma

The communities of Northwest Syria have been through the meat grinder. They are destabilized and poor. If a government provides jobs, stability and education, many will be loyal to it. Salafi ideas have been inculcated in many over the last 6 years, no doubt. It will take a great deal of education to provide an alternative world view and set of moral precepts. All the same, many are fed up with fundamentalism because of the rigors and deprivations of living under first Nusra and then ISIS.

## **Comments on North Syria Population reaction to Salafist Institutions**

Charles Lister  
Middle East Institute

Firstly, it should be stated that the future ideological direction of northwest Syria has not necessarily been pre-determined. Since the fall of Aleppo and the displacement of as many as 100,000 people from that city towards Idlib governorate, the levels of confidence felt within moderate civil society and moderate armed opposition groups inside Idlib has risen markedly. Aleppo city had for approximately two years been a powerful safe-haven for northern Syria's moderate opposition groups. Exemplifying this in early-2016, Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (ANF) dispatched a sizeable convoy of hundreds of fighters and armored vehicles into Aleppo city as a show of force, but popular protest by local community groups precipitated a withdrawal of a vast majority of ANF's newly arrived manpower. Many other similar examples exist from the past, demonstrating Aleppo city's aversion to extremism, which had begun to develop in force in early-2014.

The recent transfer of this large group of moderate population into Idlib should therefore be assessed to present a potential immediate-term challenge to ANF successor Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFS) and its project to socialize local populations into welcoming and defending its presence and control in the months and years to come.

This new dynamic notwithstanding, it should be acknowledged from the outset that the population of northwest Syria is already and has long been diverse in its political, religious and otherwise ideological perspectives. In certain areas of the governorate (such as in Jisr al-Shughour, Darkush, Salqin, Sarmadeh, Al-Dana and Darat Izzeh areas) ANF and JFS have faced minimal resistance from local populations, when attempting to impose more conservative and strictly-enforced norms. In other areas of the governorate (such as in Idlib city, Al-Atareb, Saraqeb, Khan Sheikhoun, Marat al-Numan and Kafranabel), ANF and JFS have faced substantial push-back from local communities when their rights and social expectations have been infringed. This latter dynamic has emerged particularly powerfully amid ceasefires and

cessations of hostilities, which have revealed ANF and JFS's intrinsic reliance upon intense levels of conflict to sustain their social-level relevance and legitimacy. Without being able to demonstrate their military value as a component of the broader Syrian revolution, ANF and JFS have more often than not emerged as impotent and as enjoying only minimal respect on a civil level. Conversely, the same conditions have emboldened both civil society and the most moderate armed opposition movements.

Should conflict continue in Syria and should the moderate, or mainstream [civil and military] opposition continue to suffer from a detached West unwilling or politically incapable of providing a determined level of support and protection, these societal-level obstacles to a further strengthening of JFS's control will erode. As civilians and moderate armed opposition groups feel increasingly abandoned by the international community and victimized by a severely oppressive regime backed by Iran, Russia and dozens of sectarian militias, their options for protection decrease and their willingness to entertain, if not protect, extremists will increase. This is perhaps *the* key future challenge that the United States should be looking to prevent. After all, ANF and JFS have attempted to operate and to present themselves to Syrians as much more than merely a militant movement. That strategy has been more successful than unsuccessful, which means a strategy to counter JFS must be holistic in nature, rather than focused solely on traditional, kinetic counter-terrorism measures.

The straightforward answer to this CENTCOM-provided question therefore depends entirely on the broader state of the conflict in Syria, and upon perceptions of its most likely future trajectory at the time. At its core, Syria's opposition movement remains more favorable to the "green" than the "black" – meaning to the indigenous revolution initiated by peaceful protesters advocating for moderate ideals, rather than the transnational jihadis like Al-Qaeda. That dynamic is not necessarily immovable, however. As such, we are faced with two scenarios:

1. Should the international community succeed in tapering off the levels of violence and civilian killing across Syria, while forcing forward a political process aimed genuinely at securing a transition in Damascus, then one should expect populations in northwestern Syria to feel sufficiently emboldened to resist overt attempts by Al-Qaeda/JFS to impose its will or rule on their communities. As has been the case in the past, this would likely begin in the form of popular protest, which if challenged by JFS, would bring in the involvement of locally-rooted Free Syrian Army (FSA) and other mainstream opposition groups – in protest and in protection of the protest. If this dynamic is again challenged by JFS, localized conflict would become a likely scenario, which would then present more conservative but nonetheless nationally-focused Islamic opposition groups with the dilemma: to support their fellow Syrian revolutionaries or to adopt a 'neutral' stance and seek a peaceful solution to the local hostilities. In early-2016 during Syria's first cessation of hostilities, longtime ANF military enabler Ahrar al-Sham dispatched much of its Shura Council leadership to pro-FSA protests in a not so subtle message to ANF to cease its attacks on protesters in Marat al-Numan. Similar conditions could be replicated by the international diplomatic efforts that aimed to sustain ceasefires beyond a period of several weeks.
2. Should diplomatic attempts to freeze Syria's conflict and to push forward a political settlement ultimately fail and were hostilities to resume, Idlib governorate and northern portions of Hama governorate will eventually acquire the determined attention of the Assad regime and its military backers. There are no 'clean' outcomes from such a

scenario. Large parts of Idlib governorate had existed largely or partially out of central government control for many years prior to Syria's uprising that began in 2011. Resistance to a pro-regime assault on the region would be fierce and under such conditions, JFS and other likeminded Al-Qaeda-linked groups would be well-placed to present themselves as existentially necessary allies in defense. If this necessitated adopting or accepting religiously conservative laws and social norms, local communities who have otherwise been resistant to such change would in all likelihood become more amenable, given the dire situation faced.

Most importantly in reference to the CENTCOM-set question: the current trajectory of Syria's conflict makes scenario 2 above the one already on some people's minds. The arrival of Aleppo's displaced is a fresh development, so the moderating consequences witnessed in recent weeks could erode over time. If that proves to be the case, JFS prospects for imposing more conservative norms upon Idlib societies will improve markedly.

One additional dynamic worth considering in this question is the fate and decisions of Ahrar al-Sham. Despite this group's close military relationship with JFS, recently failed unity negotiations between the groups (and others) and diametrically opposed responses to Turkey's intervention in northern Aleppo have exposed major political differences between the ordinarily close military allies. With a newly elected leadership that retains close ties to the Turkish government, Ahrar al-Sham has proven resistant to JFS's attempts to assume a preeminent influence over the armed opposition movement – whether politically, militarily, or structurally. Should this continue, then JFS will struggle to dramatically expand its unilateral governance efforts. Should Ahrar al-Sham splinter or bend to JFS's will – through military necessity or political weakness – then JFS will have gained a substantial advantage that it has lacked throughout the Syrian crisis thus far.

All of this notwithstanding, JFS will under any conditions face some level of communal resistance to the imposition of increasingly conservative regulations in specific areas of northwestern Syria. For example, areas like Kafranabel and Marat al-Numan are likely to remain extremely challenging environments for JFS and other Al-Qaeda-linked movements. It is hard to imagine any scenario in which they bend to JFS extremist rule without a fight.

## **Comments on North Syria Population reaction to Salafist Institutions**

Mubin Shaikh  
University of Liverpool, UK

“Salafist” political institutions can be understood to mean: a conservative form of Islamic interpretation, manifested in the deliberate display of religious identity and practice (in all areas of human endeavour), and an appeal to strict, corporal punishments in law.

If we work per this definition of the term, this will mean that populations in northwest Syria may bristle at the notion of living under Saudi style Wahhabists. However, Salafist-rooted

organizations like Al Qaeda or its affiliate originally from Iraq under the name Jabhat Al Nusrah (now rebranded Jabhat Fathaam) have long since been working on preparing local populations to view these groups as acting inherently in the interest of the Syrian people. They have exploited the narrative that the West will not assist the Syrian people, make half-hearted attempts to remove Al Assad of Syria, and target those groups which are fighting the regime as well as fighting DAESH.

This narrative by Salafist political groups ensures that some form of political institution will indeed be responded to positively, especially if these groups continue to maintain their gradual approach to corporal punishments and Islamic law, as they have been doing so for the past several years in Syria. Secondly, through their fighting on the ground and the various tactical alliances cemented in the meantime, these groups enjoy the respect of other like-minded Islamists who are not necessarily Salafist but where alliances can be made. This actually allows for the former group to spread themselves within a larger network of the latter, in which it is more difficult to identify which individuals are indeed a threat and which are not.

## **Comments on North Syria Population reaction to Salafist Institutions**

Dr. Amjed Rasheed  
Durham University, UK

Similarly to Afghanistan, the Syrian reaction to the Salafi movement will not be as negative as expected. The Salafi groups fought al-Asad's regime. They enjoy popular support. Therefore, the local salafists will be perceived as heroes immediately post-political transition. Some of those local Salafists may turn to "purists" (Roy and Boubekour, 2012), or those who focus on non-violent *da'wah*. Some might turn to "activists" (Meijer, 2009), those who would actively engage in the political life and seek to establish Shari'a order. Some most likely will turn to criminals. The foreign Salafi fighters will seek another terrain, presumably Libya or Afghanistan.

## **Comments on North Syria Population reaction to Salafist Institutions**

Kathleen Reedy  
Rand

Realistically, there aren't likely to be any future Salafist institutions in Syria, at least not on anything but a local scale and even then, not long-lasting. There is too much local and international pressure to let Salafist policy become dominant.

If for some reason, though, the Asad or post-Asad transitional government fails and Salafists did manage to take some sort of centralized control or even more widespread localized control, I expect the situation would be highly dynamic. Unlike eastern Syrian, northwest Syria's widely diverse populations and greater proportion of minorities would be less inclined to tolerate



Salafist rule and more likely to resist. The Alawi-centric portions of the coast would receive a great deal of support from both Hezbollah and Iran, and other small, minority groups would like flock to the relative safety that secular group has largely espoused. The Kurdish populations that have already proved themselves capable fighters further north would be inclined to push back against Salafist institutions. The less clear answer is what the people making up the current resistance groups that espouse Salafist or at least Islamist doctrine would do. The two are distinct and that difference is worth noting. Many of the rebel groups outside of Nusra and ISIL have been much more moderate in their claims than their Salafist counterparts. While Salafism is an extreme version of Islamism, I do not think there would be wide popular support even among these groups for that sort of extremism. There may be some that would buy into it, hoping to modify it over the long run, but there would probably be as many who actively opposed Salafist interpretations, especially as a mechanism for ruling over a unified Syrian population, since many of these groups still were vocal advocates of a Syrian nationalist identity and the continued presence and protection of minorities.

The other group that is often under-considered is the general population who never really committed to the fight in an active way on any side. Though less vocal, they still account for the majority of the population. After six years of violence, they may be willing to tolerate any institution that establishes some peace, but Syrians by and large have historically been too cosmopolitan to actively support extremist ideologies, so people putting such institutions in place would probably not be tolerated in the long term. Active and passive resistance would likely become pretty widespread from all quarters.

## Author Biographies



### **Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois**

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois is Executive Vice President at NSI, Inc. She has also served as co-chair of a National Academy of Sciences study on Strategic Deterrence Military Capabilities in the 21st Century, and as a primary author on a study of the Defense and Protection of US Space Assets. Dr. Astorino-Courtois has served as technical lead on a variety of rapid turn-around, Joint Staff-directed Strategic Multi-layer Assessment (SMA) projects in support of US forces and Combatant Commands. These include assessments of key drivers of political, economic and social instability and areas of resilience in South Asia; development of a methodology for conducting provincial assessments for the ISAF Joint Command; production of a "rich contextual understanding" (RCU) to supplement intelligence reporting for the ISAF J2 and Commander; and projects for USSTRATCOM on deterrence assessment methods.

Previously, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a Senior Analyst at SAIC (2004-2007) where she served as a STRATCOM liaison to U.S. and international academic and business communities. Prior to SAIC, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a tenured Associate Professor of International Relations at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX (1994-2003) where her research focused on the cognitive aspects of foreign policy decision making. She has received a number of academic grants and awards and has published articles in multiple peer-reviewed journals. She has also taught at Creighton University and as a visiting instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Dr. Astorino-Courtois earned her Ph.D. in International Relations and MA in and Research Methods from New York University. Her BA is in political science from Boston College. Finally, Dr. Astorino-Courtois also has the distinction of having been awarded both a US Navy Meritorious Service Award and a US Army Commander's Award.



### **Dr. Murhaf Jouejati**

Dr. Murhaf Jouejati is a Professor at the National Defense University's Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies. He is also an adjunct Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the George Washington University and the Former Director of the Middle East Studies Program at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. Dr. Jouejati has previously served as a political advisor to the European Commission delegation in Syria. Additionally, he has worked as a consultant to Bureau of Arab States in New York with the UNDP and served as National Program Officer in Syria. He is also the Former Information Officer at the U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Murhaf Jouejati received a B.S. at Lemania College; M.A. at Georgetown University; and Ph.D. at University of Utah. His countries of expertise are Lebanon and Syria. His issues of expertise are: Political Economy, Peace Process, Middle East Affairs, Economics, Development, Democratization, Culture and Society, Commerce and Investment, Arab-Israeli Relations, Regional Security.

**Dr. Joshua Landis**

Joshua Landis is Director of the Center for Middle East Studies and Professor at the College of International Studies at the University of Oklahoma. He writes “SyriaComment.com,” a daily newsletter on Syrian politics that attracts over 100,000 readers a month. Dr. Landis is a frequent analyst on TV, radio, and in print. He has appeared recently on the PBS News Hour, the Charlie Rose Show, and Front Line. He is a regular on NPR and the BBC. He frequently publishes in leading Foreign Policy journals. He has served as the Syrian Studies Association, won the best teacher prize at his university, and received three Fulbright grants, an SSRC and other prestigious awards to support his research. He has lived for 4 years in Syria and 14 in the Middle East. He is married and has two boys. He was educated at Swarthmore (BA), Harvard (MA), and Princeton (PhD).

**Charles Lister**

Charles Lister is a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, where his work focuses primarily on the conflict in Syria and on issues of terrorism and insurgency across the Levant. Since September 2016, Lister has managed the Middle East Institute’s Countering Terrorism project. Prior to this, Lister also managed nearly three years of intensive face-to-face engagement with the leaderships of over 100 Syrian armed opposition groups, on behalf of the multinationally-backed Syria Track II Dialogue Initiative.

Lister is a frequent source of briefings on the Syrian insurgency to political, military and intelligence leaderships in the United States and across Europe and the Middle East. He appears regularly on television media, including CNN, the BBC and Al-Jazeera, and his articles have been widely published in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the BBC, CNN, Foreign Affairs and Foreign Policy, among others.

Lister has previously held positions as a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution’s Doha Center in Qatar and as head of MENA at IHS Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Center in London, UK. Lister’s critically-acclaimed book, “The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency,” was published in February 2016 by Oxford University Press. He has also published “The Islamic State: A Brief Introduction” (Brookings Press, 2015) and he is now working on a third book on Syria, commissioned by Oxford University Press. Lister received 1st Class MA Honours in International Relations from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

**Dr. Amjed Rasheed**

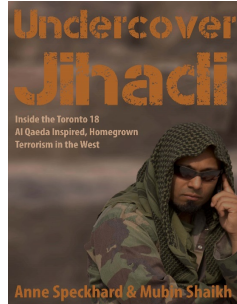
Amjed Rasheed is a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, Durham University. His research focuses on Muslim and Arab World politics, Syria, Iraq and Kurdistan in particular. The title of his recent work is *Syro-Iraqi Relations: The Puzzle of the Perpetual Rivalry*.

**Dr. Kathleen Reedy**

Kathleen Reedy is an anthropologist and mixed methods researcher at the RAND Corporation. Her background is in Middle Eastern culture and politics. In particular, her research has focused on nationalism, political identities, governance, rule of law, and the gaps between policy and practice in war zones. Prior to joining RAND, she served as a CENTCOM SME for the USAF and as a social scientist for the Army’s Human Terrain System, embedding with BCTs in Iraq and

Afghanistan. Her graduate fieldwork included 13 months of ethnographic research in Syria, and she has also worked in and on Egypt, the Gulf, China, and Japan.

Since joining RAND in 2014, Dr. Reedy has led or participated in studies on strategic posture and presence; Islamic extremism; right-wing nationalism; the human domain in remote sensing operations; policy options for Syria, Yemen, and Iran; military education and training; and military gender integration. Dr. Reedy received her Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh, and her undergraduate degree from Penn State.



### **Mubin Shaikh**

Born and raised in Canada, Mubin Shaikh grew up with two conflicting and competing cultures. At the age of 19, he went to India and Pakistan where he had a chance encounter with the Taliban prior to their takeover of Afghanistan in 1995. Mubin became fully radicalized as a supporter of the global Jihadist culture, recruiting

others and establishing his network in the extremist milieu. He was affected by the 9/11 attacks which forced to him reconsider his views. He then spent 2 years in Syria, continuing his study of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Rejecting terrorism from Islam, he would go through a period of full deradicalization.

Returning to Canada in 2004, he became an undercover operator with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and worked several CLASSIFIED infiltration operations on the internet and on the ground. In late 2005, one of those intelligence files moved to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) for investigation. The "Toronto 18" terrorism case resulted in the conviction of 11 aspiring violent extremists after Mubin testified over 4 years and 5 legal hearings in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

He now has a Master of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (MPICT) and is a PhD candidate in Psychological Sciences studying radicalization, deradicalization and violent extremism at the University of Liverpool, Tactical Decision Making Research Group. Mr. Shaikh is considered a SME (Subject Matter Expert) in radicalization, violent extremism and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) to: United Nations Center for Counter Terrorism, Interpol, Europol, Hedayah Center, U.S. Department of State - Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, National Counterterrorism Center, U.S. DOD Strategic Multilayer Assessment Team, U.S. Central Command - Special Operations Command (as an expert on ISIS), International Special Training Center, NATO (Defence Against Terrorism) and many others. He has appeared on multiple U.S., British and Canadian media outlets as a commentator and is extensively involved with the ISIS Social Media and Foreign Fighter file. He is also co-author of the acclaimed book, *Undercover Jihadi*.