When Insularity Becomes a Problem: the Literature on Jihadism in Jordan

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a review of the literature on Jordanian jihadism. While excellent work has been done, particularly on the phenomenon's history and ideologues such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, several topics remain unexplored. The main explanation for the literature's shortcomings is that it has been too inward-looking. I argue that this insularity has led to three problems: first, the literature sometimes recycles observations already made; second, it fails to show how Jordan presents specificities in terms of jihadism; and third and most importantly, it misses insights from the literature on political violence about radicalization and terrorist attack activity. As a result, it fails to address key questions about Jordanian jihadism, such as why, when, and how terrorist attacks happen.

Keywords: jihadism; terrorism; Jordan; review; radicalization

Introduction

After the outbreak of war in Syria, Jordan witnessed an unprecedented jihadist mobilization in the early 2010s. More Jordanians traveled abroad to join jihadist groups than ever before. According to some sources, between 3,000 and 4,000 individuals crossed the border into Syria.[1] Many jihadists also remained in Jordan. While the exact number is not known, an estimate from 2016 put the number at around 7,000.[2] This mobilization fueled a renewed interest among researchers and policymakers in jihadism in Jordan. However, although the phenomenon has received increased attention, several topics remain unexplored. While the general evolution of the Jordanian jihadist movement is well-documented, the research on radicalization and patterns of jihadist violence has significant gaps.

This article offers a review of the state of the literature on Jordanian jihadism. I examine the main articles, books, and reports in English and Arabic published until

2018.[3] I argue that the primary issue facing the research on Jordanian jihadism is a problem of insularity. While similar observations have been made about terrorism studies in general, this problem seems to be more pronounced in the literature on Jordan than, for example, Saudi Arabia (more on this later). The main reason is that most studies on jihadism in Jordan suffer a certain lack of academic rigor. Most studies are not fully peer-reviewed. Their literature reviews, if included at all, tend to be superficial. They seldom build upon existing works or make observations on how Jordanian jihadism compares to jihadism in other countries.

This insularity leads to three main challenges. First, the literature sometimes recycles observations already made by existing works on Jordan and the broader literature on political violence. Researchers would add more value if they instead identified knowledge gaps in the literature on political violence and then used the Jordanian case to address these gaps.

Second, the literature does not show the extent to which Jordan presents specificities in terms of jihadism. By applying more comparative perspectives, it would be possible for researchers to identify particularities of Jordanian jihadism vis-à-vis cases elsewhere that could enhance our understanding of both the Jordanian case itself and perhaps also political violence in general.

Third and most important, it fails to draw on and apply insights from the literature on political violence about radicalization and jihadist violence that would have enhanced our understanding of jihadism in Jordan.

The literature identifies potential socio-political drivers of radicalization, as well as pathways into extremism and characteristics of Jordanian jihadists. However, the insight that it is necessary to distinguish between different forms of radicalization has hardly been applied to the Jordanian case (e.g., extremist beliefs versus extremist

actions).[4] Moreover, there is no in-depth study of terrorist recruitment in the Kingdom even though studies of other countries show that recruitment processes often determine who ends up engaging in terrorism.[5]

Another gap is jihadist attack activity. We know neither the scope of jihadist violence nor what shapes this threat in Jordan, because no study systematically examines the topic. This gap is odd considering that attack data and patterns of violence are the metric most commonly used to measure the intensity of terrorism as well as explain its causes and consequences.[6]

The remaining parts of this article are as follows. Because the literature under review covers terrorism and jihadism, I start by defining what is meant by these terms here. I then, in turn, examine what we know and what we do not know about (1) the evolution of the Jordanian jihadist movement, (2) radicalization and terrorist recruitment, and (3) attack activity in Jordan. Last, I conclude and discuss some implications of my findings.

Definitions

The most defining feature of terrorist groups is their violent nature. Scholars agree that terrorism involves the use (or threat) of violence to instill fear in a population and further a political cause. However, they disagree on several other issues. For example, some hold that only non-state actors such as al-Qaida engage in terrorism. Others argue that some forms of state violence should also be considered terrorism. While recognizing that states also use terrorist tactics, terrorism is here used only to describe non-state actors.[7]

Jihadism is also a contested term. For some, the term includes disparate groups including Shia organizations such as Hezbollah and Sunni groups such as Hamas. Yet

most commonly jihadism denotes Salafi-jihadists such as the Islamic State (IS), and this is how I use the term in this article.

As the label suggests, Salafi-jihadists are part of the broader Salafi-movement. Salafis have in common that they seek to emulate the three first generations of Muslims. They believe the Islamic community has strayed from the religion. They want to return to Islam as revealed by the prophet Muhammad and the sharia to be the sole source of law in Muslim lands.[8]

Salafis disagree on how to achieve these goals, however. Scholars divide them into categories based on which approach they favor. Wiktorowicz's categorization into purists, politicos, and jihadists is perhaps the most common.[9] Purists eschew politics and pursue a non-violent approach. They seek to spread Salafism through *da'wa* (missionary work). Politicos, on the other hand, regard politics as a useful tool to spread Salafism. As for jihadists, they assert that jihad (in the meaning of armed struggle) is the only way to achieve their goals. They want to purify the Muslim world from Western influence and apostate regimes. Whereas some focus primarily on the fight against state authorities in the region, others such as al-Qaida prioritize the fight against the West due to a conviction that regimes in the Muslim world will collapse without Western support.[10]

Still, Wagemakers shows in his excellent work on the Jordanian-Palestinian Salafi-jihadist ideologue Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi that the boundaries between different Salafis are not always clear-cut.[11] Although firm in his belief that jihad is both legitimate and necessary, al-Maqdisi argues that the time for violent struggle has not yet come to Jordan. He claims jihadists must first educate the population through *da'wa* (the method preferred by purists) to create the conditions in which jihad could succeed in the Kingdom. Many Jordanian jihadists disagree with al-Maqdisi, however. Even his

former pupil Abu Musab al-Zarqawi made attacking Jordan a priority. As we will see in the next section, the differing views of al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi concerning what type of strategy to pursue has left an indelible mark on the Jordanian jihadist movement.

The History of the Jordanian Jihadist Movement: a Well-documented Evolution

The general evolution of the Jordanian movement is the best-covered part of the literature on jihadism in the Kingdom. The research on this topic is more academic – with several peer-reviewed articles and books – than the research on radicalization and attack activity.[12]

Jordan has a long history with political violence.[13] In spite of its relatively small population, many top-level jihadist leaders and ideologues are Jordanian. Al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi have already been mentioned. Another prominent example is the Palestinian-Jordanian Abdullah Azzam, regarded by many as the "godfather" of the jihadist movement.[14] His activism contributed to creating a transnational jihadist movement in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Yet it was first in the early 1990s that jihadist networks emerged in Jordan.

Based on diverse sources including documents, fieldwork and interviews, several authors such as Abu Rumman, Abu Hanieh, Shteiwi, al-Shishani, Wagemakers, Warrick, and Sowell examine the evolution of the Jordanian jihadist movement.[15] Among these seven authors, Wagemakers' research and Sowell's article are the only strictly scholarly works. Abu Rumman, Abu Hanieh, Shteiwi, al-Shishani, and Warrick's accounts are more journalistic but provide valuable information about the movement. Together, their works show that the movement has gone through several phases of mobilization and that there are three generations of Jordanian jihadists. The

first includes those who fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s; the second those who fought in Iraq in the 2000s; and the third those who fought in Syria in the 2010s.

Fueled by conflicts in Muslim countries, particularly in Iraq and Syria, the movement has grown since the mid-1990s. According to Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, it has gained traction among a broader section of society and women have begun to play more active roles, particularly as propagandists, in the 2010s.[16] The cities of al-Zarqa, Ma'an, al-Ruseifa, and Salt, as well as the Palestinian refugee camp in Irbid and specific areas in East Amman such as al-Wihdat camp, are considered "hotbeds of jihadism" in the country.[17]

While no exact figures exist, Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh estimate that the movement counted approximately 800 members around the millennium. It is unclear how Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh arrived at this figure.[18] Although they often provide more detailed information than other studies of jihadism in Jordan, we, therefore, need to treat some of their claims with caution. The same is true concerning more recent figures. An estimate from 2016 puts the number of jihadists at around 7,000 among whom roughly 2,000 are believed to be IS-sympathizers.[19] While the extent to which these 7,000 are involved in jihadist activity varies, these figures show the movement has grown.

Nevertheless, its members still make up less than one-thousandth of Jordan's population of ten million people. This low share serves as a reminder that the scale of jihadist mobilization in the Kingdom should not be exaggerated even though it has been unprecedented in the 2010s. Moreover, the Jordanian jihadist movement is not a unified movement. During the 2000s, it split into two main currents. Today, one supports al-Qaida, and the other IS.[20]

If we take a closer look at the different phases of jihadist mobilization in Jordan, we find that the most detailed work has been done on the initial period. Researchers agree on the factors explaining why jihadist networks emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, and not earlier. They stress that, as in other Arab countries, veterans returning from the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan played an important role.[21] Many veterans adopted more extreme views during their stay in Afghanistan. Upon their return to Jordan, they arrived in a country whose type of governance differed markedly from the Islamic rule they desired.

Wagemakers and Warrick observe that many struggled to re-integrate into society.[22] The veterans viewed themselves as heroes who had protected fellow Muslims against infidels in Afghanistan but then been let down by Jordanian society after their return. Many veterans could not find jobs and socialized only with others who shared their radical beliefs. Some of these would go on to form the nucleus of militant Islamist groups such as Muhammad's Army in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[23] These groups were precursors to the Jordanian jihadist movement. They had radical views and wanted to overthrow the Hashemites, yet did not espouse a clear jihadist ideology.[24]

The formation of the group known as *Bay'at al-'imām* (Fealty to the Leader) in the media – but whose members referred to themselves as *Jamā'at al-muwaḥḥidīn* (the Society of the Upholders of the Unity of God) – in 1992/1993 marks the beginning of the first jihadist network in Jordan.[25] It was a loosely organized group of perhaps fifteen to twenty members. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi were the most important ones.

The role of al-Maqdisi – who had lived most of his life in Kuwait – exemplifies one way in which the Jordanian case differs slightly from other Arab countries. As several authors note, the influx of Palestinians from Kuwait was also crucial to the

emergence of jihadism in Jordan.[26] Many Palestinians with Jordanian passports had worked as guest workers in Kuwait. Yet Kuwait expelled them as punishment for Jordan's neutrality and the Palestine Liberation Organization's support for Iraq during the first Gulf War. Some of those who came to Jordan – most notably al-Maqdisi – espoused a jihadist ideology.

As Wagemakers shows, al-Maqdisi provided the hitherto mostly leaderless militant Islamist scene in Jordan with a clearer direction.[27] With the help of other Afghanistan veterans such as al-Zarqawi, al-Maqdisi began advocating his ideology. The situation in the Kingdom during the early 1990s was similar to the one today, where a significant part of the population is frustrated due to a weak performing economy and lack of democracy. Many were also angry with the regime for entering peace negotiations with Israel and disillusioned with existing political movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood because they failed to influence the country's political direction. This situation was conducive to jihadist recruitment. As Jordanians looked for alternatives, al-Maqdisi managed to attract some followers.[28]

While researchers agree that *Jamā'at al-muwaḥḥidīn* was the first jihadist network in Jordan, they disagree about its nature. The debate about this topic is the most contentious issue concerning the movement's early history.

Wagemakers has written the most detailed study of the group.[29] He argues it was not a terrorist organization and criticizes others such as Brisard for labeling it as such.[30] To support his claim, Wagemakers demonstrates that *Jamā'at al-muwaḥḥidīn* was not a formal organization and that its members mainly pursued al-Maqdisi's approach emphasizing the need to carry out *da'wa* before a jihad could succeed in Jordan.[31] He correctly points out that *Jamā'at al-muwaḥḥidīn* never carried out an attack in the Kingdom.

However, Wagemakers' claim that the group probably never planned operations against targets inside Jordan is debatable. He concedes there was some disagreement about the group's strategy, and notes that other authors connect its members to plots inside Jordan.[32] Yet Wagemakers discredits this information because it is based on confessions (during torture) or from former General Intelligence Directorate (GID) officers. Partly based on interviews with al-Maqdisi, he concludes that a foiled operation in Israel was the only plot linked to *Jamā'at al-muwaḥḥidīn*.[33]

Although I agree that we should treat information based on Arab government sources with sound skepticism, jihadists such as al-Maqdisi also have agendas. We should be careful about reading too much into their claims as well. A more balanced view is that we still do not know for certain if *Jamā'at al-muwaḥḥidīn* planned attacks inside Jordan, but that it is not unlikely that some of its members did so.

In any case, the group's members ended up in prison. Unlike the debate about their early activities, the authors agree on the significance of their time behind bars.[34] The jihadists stood out in jail. In particular, al-Zarqawi's stature grew because of his defiance against guards and his compassion for other jihadists. The jihadists managed to expand their movement by recruiting other felons.[35]

Still, it was also in prison that the first signs of schism appeared. Disagreements concerning the group's strategy became increasingly apparent. Gradually, al-Zarqawi, who unlike al-Maqdisi favored a re-orientation towards an increased focus on violent activity, took over the leadership of the group. When released under an amnesty in 1999, al-Maqdisi chose to remain in Jordan to continue his peaceful *da'wa* strategy, while al-Zarqawi and several others went abroad to build an armed organization and escape the watchful eye of GID, Jordan's intelligence service.[36]

The literature does not cover the early 2000s in as much detail as the first phase. The few who examine this period focus on the activities of Jordanian jihadists outside the Kingdom.[37] Hundreds of Jordanians - most notably al-Zarqawi – joined jihadist groups in neighboring Iraq. Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh describe how al-Zarqawi influenced Jordanian jihadism from abroad.[38]

Al-Zarqawi still had his eye on Jordan after 1999, and his plotting of attacks against the Kingdom increased the threat level significantly in the 2000s. He first went to Afghanistan where he established a training camp for fighters from the Levant. After the U.S. invasion in 2001, al-Zarqawi fled to Iraq via Iran. Following Saddam's overthrow in 2003, al-Zarqawi's group which eventually came to be known as al-Qaida in Iraq became the most influential jihadist faction in Iraq.[39] Al-Zarqawi sent several attack teams to carry out operations in Jordan. One of these teams was responsible for the Amman hotel bombings in 2005, the deadliest terrorist attack in Jordan's history.

Jihadists were also active inside Jordan in the 2000s, yet the existing research provides little insight into their activities. Based on media reports, we know there were local groups, such as *al-ṭā'ifa al-manṣūra* (the Victorious Sect), which planned some attacks inside the Kingdom and helped Jordanians travel to Iraq.[40] However, knowledge about these groups is scarce.

As for al-Maqdisi, he spent much of the 2000s in prison, and this hampered his *da'wa* efforts. While al-Maqdisi had become a theological reference point for jihadists, he played a lesser role than al-Zarqawi in the Jordanian jihadist movement in the early 2000s. Yet al-Maqdisi made a comeback in 2005.

He did not agree with al-Zarqawi's indiscriminate use of violence. While on parole, al-Maqdisi chastised al-Zarqawi for al-Qaida in Iraq's excessive violence. Several authors examine al-Maqdisi's criticism and al-Zarqawi's subsequent rebuttal.[41]

The conflict brought the disagreements between Jordanian jihadists into the open, resulting in a rift between those siding with al-Maqdisi (*al-Maqdisiyyūn*) and those supporting al-Zarqawi (*al-Zarqāwiyyūn)*.

This divide deepened after al-Zarqawi's death in 2006.[42] As discussed by Wagemakers, it turned into a heated debate over whether "fighters" such as al-Zarqawi or ideologues such as al-Maqdisi should lead the movement.[43] *Al-Zarqāwiyyūn* attacked al-Maqdisi for betraying the jihad. They argued al-Maqdisi was unfit for leadership due to his lack of fighting experience.[44] However, Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, and Wagemakers show that most senior Jordanian jihadists took al-Maqdisi's side in the conflict.[45]

Al-Maqdisi's approach of carrying out *da'wa* to lay the foundations for jihad appeared triumphant until April 2011, when Jordan arrested most of the movement's leaders after a demonstration in al-Zarqa turned violent.[46] Shortly thereafter, the history of the Jordanian jihadist movement turned a new page as the outbreak of war in Syria caused a new wave of mobilization.

The Syria-phase has received some scholarly attention. Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, Ma'ayeh, Sowell, and Wagemakers describe how the movement changed its focus from *da'wa* in Jordan to the war in Syria.[47] As government crack-down made activism increasingly difficult in Jordan, unprecedented numbers of jihadists made their way to Syria where they could fight what they deemed a "righteous jihad" against Assad's tyrannical regime.

Both *Maqdisiyyūn* and *Zarqāwiyyūn* joined Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Qaida's former affiliate in Syria).[48] At first, the Syrian war appeared to unite the two rival factions. Yet the unity shattered when the Islamic State in Iraq (al-Qaida in Iraq's successor, known as IS or ISIL since June 2014) unilaterally announced the dissolution and forced merger

of Jabhat al-Nusra in April 2013. When the latter rejected the merger with the Islamic State, internal strife erupted within the jihadist movement. After failing to reconcile the two factions, Ayman al-Zawahiri (al-Qaida's leader) sided with Jabhat al-Nusra. The rupture was made permanent when al-Zawahiri disavowed the Islamic State in February 2014.[49]

Jordanian jihadists were thenceforth divided between those supporting the Islamic State and those backing al-Qaida. The fronts hardened after the Islamic State claimed to have re-established the Caliphate in June 2014. Al-Maqdisi and many of his supporters sided with al-Qaida. Echoing the criticism levelled against al-Zarqawi in the 2000s, they condemned IS for its brutality. More importantly, they also rejected IS's (now deceased) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's claim to the Caliphate.[50]

Based on this criticism, Sowell claims the conflict between IS and al-Qaida "reopened the [old] split between the Maqdisi and Zarqawi wings of the movement."[51] However, Wagemakers shows the new split is only partly based on the old divide.[52] Some former *Maqdisiyyūn* such as Saʻad al-Hunayti sided with IS. There are no exact figures of how many Jordanian jihadists support IS and al-Qaida respectively. Yet indications suggest that many of the movement's traditional leaders remain loyal to al-Qaida, whereas the majority of the new generation mobilized by the war in Syria support IS.[53]

While existing research provides insight into the most recent period, there are unanswered questions related to Jordanian foreign fighters and the movement's members inside Jordan. For instance, many of the most dedicated al-Qaida loyalists in Syria, such as Sami al-Uraydi and Abu al-Qassam,[54] are Jordanians. However, our knowledge of their activities and roles remains limited.[55] The same is true of senior Jordanian members of IS, although researchers such as Bunzel have written about Yusuf

ibn Ahmad Simrin, a Jordanian who was one of IS's senior religious scholars.[56] After the large-scale migration to Syria and the regime's crack-down on jihadist activism, the exact size of the Jordanian movement today is unknown.

In sum, though, the literature covers the history of the Jordanian movement well. It demonstrates how events in the region, particularly the wars in Iraq and Syria, and the general political environment in Jordan have shaped the movement's evolution.

A significant shortcoming, however, is that it does not discuss why many top-level jihadists come from Jordan (e.g., the ideologues Abdullah Azzam, al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatada,[57] al-Uraydi, and Simrin, as well as the "fighters" al-Zarqawi and al-Qassam). That this topic remains unexplored is surprising given that it appears to be one of the most striking features of Jordanian jihadism. Several studies imply, based on anecdotal evidence, that Jordan has contributed a disproportionate number of jihadist leaders.[58] This begs the question if there is something about Jordan vis-à-vis other countries that can explain why a large number of jihadist leaders hail from the Kingdom? Or is the Jordanian case hardly unique? After all, several countries – such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt – have also produced many top-level jihadists.

In general, the research on Jordan would benefit from engaging more with the broader literature. Except for Wagemakers,[59] researchers rarely draw on perspectives from authors examining other cases of terrorism or compare Jordan to other countries hosting jihadist networks. A more comparative approach would allow researchers to explain the extent to which the Jordanian case presents particularities. Comparisons could reveal dynamics that influence the movement but have yet to be discovered because the literature has been too inward-looking.

An example is the significance of the split between IS and al-Qaida. Their conflict has affected jihadist movements across the world, yet in different ways. This

rivalry appears to matter more in Jordan than in Europe. As we have seen, it divided the Jordanian movement. In Europe, on the other hand, jihadist networks switched sides from al-Qaida to IS. The decision of European jihadist leaders such as Anjem Choudary to support IS was a crucial reason why this happened.[60] Is al-Maqdisi's decision to side with al-Qaida similarly the reason why some Jordanians remain loyal to Ayman al-Zawahiri or are other dynamics at play?

Answers to questions such as these would give us a better understanding of the development of the Jordanian jihadist movement. In the next section, I turn to another critical question regarding the inner workings of the movement: what do we know about radicalization and recruitment in Jordan?

Radicalization and Terrorist Recruitment in Jordan: a Developing Literature

For decades scholars have sought to answer the questions of who become terrorists and why. Their work can be divided into four categories. The first includes those who look for causes of terrorism or drivers of radicalization.[61] The second comprises those who attempt to identify terrorist profiles – i.e., whether terrorists are poor, unemployed, politically marginalized, and so forth.[62] The third includes those examining different pathways into terrorism,[63] while the fourth seeks to explain how recruitment happens.[64]

Hundreds of studies examining different cases of terrorism around the world have looked into these topics.[65] Their observations are manifold, but the most robust findings are that terrorists tend to be clinically sane and come from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, most people exposed to general drivers of radicalization do not become terrorists. Usually, social networks, i.e., friends, family, and recruiters, determine who become radicalized and who do not.[66]

In Jordan, researchers have only recently begun examining these topics. Most studies are reports or policy briefs that fall into the first category – general drivers of radicalization.[67] Researchers have used different methods to identify such drivers. Speckhard's work, for instance, is based on interviews with local experts, counter-terrorism practitioners, and jihadists, whereas Bondokji et al. carry out focus group discussions with Jordanian youth to identify factors young people in Jordan believe are causing radicalization among their peers.[68] Although these researchers employ different approaches, they emphasize many of the same drivers of radicalization.

To some extent, the researchers' congruence indicates the significance of these drivers. However, it also highlights one of the weaknesses of the literature on radicalization in Jordan. It is that most researchers rarely reference or engage with existing works on the phenomenon in Jordan (not to mention the vast literature on radicalization elsewhere), and some present observations already made by others as new findings.[69]

All stress the importance of socio-political grievances, such as a sense of injustice caused by poverty, corruption, and political exclusion, particularly among Jordanian youth. Another factor highlighted is the combined effect of a lost sense of belonging that many experience, due to a weak national identity in Jordan, and the attraction of a transnational jihadist ideology offering a pan-Islamic identity.[70] By showing how individuals can help restore "the glory of Islam," jihadist ideology can provide a sense of purpose for disgruntled Jordanians who have lost hope in a better future in the country. Moreover, the jihadists' promise to liberate Palestine might also be persuasive, especially for the many Jordanians with Palestinian background.

Most researchers of radicalization in Jordan emphasize the growing sectarianism in the region. Some argue that a sense of duty to protect fellow Sunnis from persecution

is one primary reason why many Jordanians joined jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria.[71] Jordan's historical ties and proximity to these two countries also contributed to the mobilization.[72] In explaining the significant number of Jordanians who joined IS, several stress the emotional pull of the idea of a Caliphate. They argue the perception that IS had created an Islamic state governing by sharia is what caused hundreds of Jordanians to join this particular organization.[73]

Others highlight drivers such as the poor quality of education,[74] intergenerational conflict,[75] and state repression.[76] Bondokji et al., Speckhard, and Proctor also stress the role of personal motives. They argue the opportunity portrayed in jihadist propaganda to improve one's social status by becoming a "hero" is a strong pull factor among marginalized youth.[77] Examples of other personal motivations include financial benefits of joining a jihadist group as well as a desire to get married. The line of reasoning is that the opportunity to find a wife "for free" has led Jordanians to join jihadist groups abroad because marriage has become so expensive in the Kingdom.[78]

There is much to suggest that all these socio-political drivers and personal motives play significant roles in radicalization processes in Jordan. The few studies that take gender into account indicate that they influence both men and women.[79] Still, none of the abovementioned researchers provides much empirical evidence as to exactly how these drivers impact radicalization processes in the country, and which factors are most significant under which circumstances.

Socio-political grievances and personal motives are neither necessary nor sufficient for radicalization to happen. For example, unemployment, corruption, and political exclusion are widespread in Jordan, and they probably affect most of the population.[80] Yet, as discussed in the previous section, only a fraction of Jordanians become radicalized. This type of research – examining general drivers – has improved

our knowledge of the context in which radicalization occurs in the Kingdom, but it does not explain why only a minority of Jordanians experiencing socio-political hardship become terrorists whereas the majority do not.[81]

The few studies that examine terrorist profiles, pathways into terrorism, and terrorist recruitment in Jordan provide some, but not all answers to this puzzle. The most granular work has been done by Abu Hanieh, Abu Rumman, and Shteiwi.[82] Based on information from court sessions, interviews, and social media, they describe terrorist profiles in the Kingdom. While they do not have data on all members of the Jordanian jihadist movement, their sample is broad and includes hundreds of individuals.[83]

We can extract three main findings from their work. First, they show there is no single jihadist profile in Jordan. Individuals from all backgrounds become terrorists. Although most belong to the lower and lower-middle class, the movement's members are diverse. They also include well-educated individuals from the upper and upper-middle class. While most are young men, the movement also counts women and older men among its members. Moreover, radicalization is not exclusively a "Palestinian problem," albeit some refugee camps such as the Irbid camp are deemed "hotbeds of jihadist activity." Both Palestinians and Transjordanians become jihadists. While some previously belonged to Islamist currents such as the Muslim Brotherhood, many were not active in any movements before joining the jihadists.[84]

Second, their work demonstrates differences between the generations of Jordanian jihadists. The first generation (of the Afghanistan-phase) and the second generation (of the Iraq-phase) mainly comprise men from the lower classes. The third generation (of the Syria-phase), by contrast, seems to be more mixed. An increasing number of well-off individuals have become jihadists in the 2010s.[85] A reason for this

development could be that the war in Syria against Assad's regime was (at least initially) deemed a legitimate struggle by most Jordanians.

Third, profiles vary among the "hotbeds" in the country. Whereas jihadists from Amman and Salt are from mixed backgrounds, including both poor and wealthier individuals, those hailing from al-Zarqa, al-Ruseifa, and the Irbid camp tend to be lower class and less educated. This difference does not come as a surprise considering that the population in al-Zarqa, al-Ruseifa, and the Irbid camp, in general, are less affluent than in Amman. Jihadists from Ma'an also tend to be lower class. However, Ma'an differs from the other hotbeds, in that there appears to be a clearer terror-crime-nexus in the city. A larger share of jihadists from Ma'an has criminal backgrounds (often related to smuggling) than elsewhere in the country.[86]

The diversity of Jordanian jihadists suggests there are different pathways into jihadism in the country. Some researchers have begun exploring these pathways. Abu Rumman and Shteiwi identify three main trajectories. The first is prison radicalization. It denotes criminals who became jihadists after coming under the influence of fellow inmates.[87] The second includes individuals who belonged to other Salafist and Islamist currents, including the Muslim Brotherhood before joining the jihadists. A recurrent pattern is that members of the Muslim Brotherhood traveled to Syria to protect fellow Sunnis from Assad's regime. While they were not jihadists at the time of their departure, many ended up joining Jabhat al-Nusra because it was the strongest fighting faction and because their friends had already joined the group. Gradually, they became ardent jihadists.[88] The third trajectory includes those with no background in Islamist activism, who were radicalized by jihadist propaganda and events in the region, particularly media coverage of atrocities against Sunnis.

Warrick, Turcan and McCauley further show how jihadist propaganda can radicalize susceptible individuals in a Jordanian context. They examine how the relatively well-off, medical doctor Humam Khalil al-Balawi first embraced jihadist ideology online before carrying out a suicide attack against U.S. and Jordanian intelligence officers in Afghanistan in 2009.[89] These works demonstrate that radicalization sometimes happens online with little or no real-life contact with other extremists.

Still, this should not be interpreted as evidence that terrorist recruitment is insignificant in the Jordanian context. While there is no in-depth study of how recruitment happens in the Kingdom, virtually all authors who touch upon the subject argue pre-existing social ties is the most decisive factor.[90] They observe that such ties help explain both who might join terrorist groups and which groups they join. Abu Rumman and Shteiwi describe several examples where family members have been part of the same terrorist cells.[91]

There is some disagreement as to whether recruitment today happens through face-to-face interactions or on social media. Cases studied by Abu Rumman and Shteiwi show that Jordanian members of Jabhat al-Nusra and IS have persuaded friends and family back home to join them.[92] Some hold that IS mainly recruits online by seeking out vulnerable individuals on social media, while others claim this is much less common than recruitment in real-life.[93] Anecdotally, prisons, mosques, and gyms are mentioned as places where recruitment happens.[94]

While radicalization in Jordan is understudied, there is a growing body of research and the abovementioned researchers deserve credit for their work to advance our knowledge on the topic.

How do the findings on radicalization in Jordan relate to the broader literature? Overall, they are in tune with findings elsewhere. The role of sectarianism and the pull of the Caliphate have been important motives for jihadists traveling to Syria and Iraq from a range of countries.[95] If we look outside the context of jihadism, we also find striking similarities with other forms of terrorism. For instance, Crenshaw also emphasizes the role of state repression and political exclusion in her seminal article on causes of terrorism.[96] Moreover, several scholars show there is no single terrorist profile, but that there are multiple pathways into terrorism.[97] The phenomenon of prison radicalization and the significance of social ties for recruitment are also found in numerous cases such as Irish republican nationalism.[98]

Still, the research on radicalization in Jordan has not come as far as the literature on the phenomenon in the West and, for example, Saudi Arabia. For instance, research shows that most individuals who hold extremist beliefs and support the use of violence are not willing to carry out violence themselves.[99] Terrorism scholars, therefore, stress the importance of distinguishing between "cognitive radicalization" (extremist beliefs) and "behavioral radicalization" (extremist actions).[100] Yet researchers focusing on Jordan do not make this distinction. They tend not to specify what kind of radicalization is under investigation.[101] Most examine radicalization related to the jihadist movement in general. They do not, for instance, differentiate between jihadists willing to carry out attacks inside Jordan and those who do not believe attacks are legitimate in the Kingdom.

Terrorism recruitment is another topic where the literature on Jordan lags behind. Recruitment strategies often determine who end up engaging in terrorism. However, it is not known if recruitment in Jordan usually happens according to bottom-up or top-down processes where recruiters seek out potential members. Due to fears of

infiltration by government agents, recruiters tend to be careful when recruiting members. Hegghammer, for example, shows how al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula's recruiters screened potential members.[102] They did not recruit online. They looked for costly signs of trustworthiness such as emotional investment in real-life to distinguish legitimate recruits from imposters.

The Internet probably plays a more significant role in recruitment processes today than the case examined by Hegghammer in the 2000s. Yet because there is no in-depth study of recruitment in Jordan, there is no way of knowing if this is actually the case. To understand why a minority of Jordanians join terrorist groups, more research is needed on the mechanisms through which they become recruited by jihadists.

So why does the literature on radicalization in Jordan come across as less developed than analogous cases in the broader literature? Part of the reason is that the existing work on Jordan is not strictly academic in nature. I found only one study on this topic that appears to be fully peer-reviewed.[103] Although peer-review does not always guarantee quality, the process of academic publishing generally improves the end-result as it ensures that researchers build upon existing literature and add new knowledge on a topic.[104] However, the literature on Jordan does not engage much with the broader literature on radicalization. As a result, it misses crucial insights from this literature such as the necessity to explore the roles played by recruiters in radicalization processes.

Similar to the research on the history of the Jordanian movement, studies focusing on radicalization do not identify specificities to Jordanian jihadism vis-à-vis cases elsewhere. The same is true for the scarce literature on attack activity in the Kingdom, to which I now turn.

Jihadist Attack Activity in Jordan: a Poorly Documented Threat

As mentioned, attack data and patterns of violence are perhaps the most used metric by scholars attempting to measure and explain the manifestations and drivers of terrorism.[105] Despite that, this metric has not been used to study the Jordanian case. Compared to the movement's history and radicalization, jihadist attack activity in Jordan is understudied. Our knowledge of the questions of why, when, and how attacks happen remains limited.

Next to nothing is known about terrorist plotting in the Kingdom in the 1990s. As we have seen, researchers disagree on whether *Jamā'at al-muwaḥḥidīn* planned attacks inside Jordan. Some media reports describe three non-lethal bomb-attacks against a former security officer's car, an Israeli car, and an American school in 1998.[106] The attacks have not received any particular attention by researchers even though a group connected to the Palestinian-Jordanian jihadist ideologue Abu Qatada might have been responsible.[107]

More is known about terrorist plotting in the 2000s. The jihadists' preferred targets appear to have been Jordanian security forces and Westerners. Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh examine the extent to which attacks inside Jordan during this period were tied to jihadists outside the country. They argue that terrorist operations became more professional in the early 2000s and identify three patterns of terrorist cell formation in Jordan. The first consists of local cells that were inspired by jihadists such as al-Zarqawi but planned attacks without being in contact with groups abroad. The second pattern is cells whose members include both local jihadists and members of al-Zarqawi's group, an example being the cell responsible for the assassination of the U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley in 2002. The third pattern comprises attack teams sent by al-Zarqawi to carry out attacks in Jordan, such as the Amman hotel bombings.[108]

Al-Shishani shows how al-Zarqawi's influence continued after his death. His supporters, *al-Zarqāwiyyūn*, were responsible for several plots in the second half of the 2000s.[109] These plots often targeted the Christian minority in Jordan. Based on the existing research, it appears that the share of plots against Jordanian Christians was at its highest in the late 2000s.[110]

I found only a couple of researchers who provide information about plots in the 2010s. Maʻayeh describes a plot involving more than ten jihadists connected to al-Qaida in Iraq. The plot is referred to as the "Second 9/11" because the terrorists intended to attack on November 9, 2012, the seventh anniversary of the Amman hotel bombings. The plan was to launch coordinated attacks against different targets, including shopping malls and Western embassies in Amman. Although GID managed to foil the plot, it was a bad omen. It was the first of several plots linked to the Syrian conflict. Weapons were supposed to be smuggled into Jordan across the Syrian-Jordanian border.[111]

After IS established its Caliphate in 2014, pundits feared the group would spread its violence to Jordan.[112] However, these worries appear to have been mostly unwarranted. Muhafaza, Speckhard, and Sharp describe only six attacks that might have been connected to IS inside Jordan.[113] These incidents include the Muwaqqar shooting in 2015, a single-actor attack against GID in al-Baq'a in 2016, an attack against U.S. soldiers at Prince Faisal Air Base in 2016, the attack on several targets in the Kerak-area in 2016, an IS-attack on a Jordanian soldier in 2017, and the IED-attack against a Gendarmerie checkpoint in 2018. Together these attacks suggest most plots have targeted military or police forces after 2014.

While the existing research sheds some light on jihadist attack activity in the Kingdom, it leaves many questions unanswered. The absence of studies examining the total number of plots and attacks since the jihadist threat emerged in Jordan in the early

1990s means that we have no clear understanding of how the phenomenon has developed over time. This is a significant gap because variation in threat levels and nature of plots can reveal much about what shapes the threat.

The literature does not, for example, explore why there have been fewer jihadist attacks than expected since 2014. The relationship between terrorism and counter-terrorism is usually a decisive factor in shaping threats in all contexts.[114] Considering GID's reputation as one of the most adept anti-terrorism agencies in the region, it is safe to assume that its efforts are one reason why relatively few attacks have occurred after 2014. However, exactly how important GID has been is not known at this point because no research has examined how many plots the agency has disrupted.[115]

Due to lack of event data, trends in modus operandi are also understudied. The literature does not provide convincing answers as to whether jihadist plots in Jordan continue to be orchestrated from abroad as in the 2000s, or if today's threat mainly consists of local cells.

That jihadist violence in Jordan is understudied becomes even clearer when we compare it with studies on jihadism in the West. Scholars focusing on the West have highlighted the need to not only study launched attacks but also foiled plots. The reason is that launched attacks comprise only the net output of terrorist activity. They argue that foiled plots must also be taken into account to get more accurate pictures of the scope and nature of threats. Nesser and Stenersen, for example, examine more than a hundred foiled and launched attacks in Europe dating back to the 1990s.[116] Crenshaw et al. have presented similar analyses.[117]

Still, it is not only the literature on Jordan that compares poorly to the research on terrorism in the West. It seems that unsuccessful attacks, in general, receive little attention in studies of terrorism in non-Western countries. A telling example is the

edited book by Hoffman and Reinares.[118] Their book examines how the global jihadist movement has evolved since 9/11. It consists of two parts. The first examines threats in the West and the second examines threats elsewhere. While several authors who focus on the West in this volume look at both foiled and launched plots, those writing about cases in the rest of the world focus exclusively on launched attacks.

Sometimes it makes sense to focus only on launched attacks. For instance, it is probably neither feasible nor reasonable to examine foiled terrorist plots in countries embroiled in civil wars such as Syria, Iraq, and Libya.[119] However, why should we not include foiled plots when examining terrorism trends in relatively stable Arab countries such as Jordan?

Jordanian media often reports on disrupted plots in the Kingdom.[120] Usually, these reports include information about how jihadists planned to carry out attacks. One could argue that semi-independent media in countries such as Jordan is unreliable and that one cannot completely trust their reports. To some extent, that is true. Being certain that information is "correct" is impossible. There is a risk that Arab regimes might spread false information to serve their political interests.

However, media reporting in the West can also be biased. Although the problem is less acute, Western media sometimes misrepresents and gets stories wrong. The risk that sources provide erroneous or incomplete information will always be there.[121] Ultimately, there is no way around this problem, except to evaluate each source critically and triangulate with other sources and data. Detailed knowledge of context and previous patterns can help researchers distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources. As there probably is no better method to get the most accurate picture of a threat, researchers focusing on terrorism in Arab countries may benefit from applying the same methods as those examining terrorist attack activity in the West.

Conclusion

In this article, I have reviewed the literature on jihadist mobilization and terrorism in Jordan. While excellent work has been done on Jordanian jihadism - particularly on the history of the phenomenon and ideologues such as al-Maqdisi, more work needs to be done on radicalization and recruitment processes, as well as patterns of jihadist violence.

I have argued that the main explanation for the literature's shortcomings is that it suffers a problem of insularity. This issue is not unique to Jordan, however. It seems to be a challenge for terrorism studies in general. Youngman and Schuurman, for example, have raised similar criticism against the entire field.[122]

So what lessons can be drawn from the Jordanian case? At the most basic level, my review stresses the importance of rigorous and systematic research that engages with the existing literature in a meaningful way. Because the literature has been too inward-looking, it has failed to draw on crucial insights from the literature on political violence. The point here is not to dismiss the value of previous scholarship, but to show that there is an opportunity for future studies to apply lessons from the broader field that would enhance our understanding of the drivers of jihadism in Jordan.

It is outside the scope of this article to draw definitive conclusions about how the state of the literature on Jordan compares to the literature on jihadism in other Arab countries. However, my review suggests that research on radicalization and recruitment in Saudi Arabia has engaged more actively with the relevant literature. It seems to have come substantially further than the research on Jordan, due to the excellent work of Hegghammer, al-Saud and others.[123] A possible avenue for future studies is to examine whether the literature on radicalization in other countries in the region such as Egypt suffers from the same shortcomings as the literature on Jordan.

As for the lack of systematic studies on terrorist attack activity, it seems to represent a broader issue in terrorism studies, which is that detailed terrorist attack and plot data is lacking for most Arab countries. In general, this topic has been examined with more scrutiny in the West. Researchers focusing on Western countries have argued that both launched attacks and foiled plots should be examined when gauging the scope and nature of terrorist threats. However, the research on Arab countries tends only to look at limited selections of launched attacks.[124] The literature on terrorism in relatively stable countries such as Jordan would benefit from applying the method used to study attack activity in the West. More precise measurements of threats are necessary if we are to better understand what drives jihadist terrorism in Jordan and the broader region.

Notes

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[1] E.g., Anne Speckhard, "the Jihad in Jordan: Drivers of Radicalization into Violent Extremism in Jordan" (ICSVE, March 25, 2017): 14-16; Ali Muhafaza, *al-ḥarakāt al-'islāmiyya al-mutaṭarrifa fī al-waṭan al-ʿarabiyy: al-judhūr al-fikriyya wal-taḥawwul 'ilā al-ʿunf wal-'irhāb* [Extremist Islamist Movements in the Arab Nation: Intellectual Roots and the Change to Violence and Terrorism] (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research & Publishing, 2018), 329.

[2] Sean Yom and Katrina Sammour, "Counterterrorism and Youth Radicalization in Jordan: Social and Political Dimensions," *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 4 (2017): 27.

[3] I have identified sixty-one studies. Five books are in Arabic, the remaining fifty-six are in English. For more information, see Appendix I "Bibliography on Jihadism in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." The overview only includes research that goes into some depth about jihadism or jihadists in the Kingdom. It does not include work focusing on other forms of Salafism and Islamism. The list might be incomplete, however. If readers know about studies that have not been included, please contact the author at henrik.gratrud@ffi.no.

[4] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model," *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017): 205-216.

[5] See, e.g., Thomas Hegghammer, "The recruiter's dilemma: Signalling and rebel recruitment tactics," *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 1 (2013): 3-16.

[6] Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Losing the plot: The limits of attack data in terrorism research" (coming). For an excellent study on the importance of examining patterns of political violence, see Francisco Gutiérrez-Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood, "What should we mean by "pattern of political violence"? Repertoire, targeting, frequency, and technique," *Perspectives on Politics* 15, no.1 (2017): 20-41.

[7] For more on definitions, see Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 1–41.

[8] For more on Salafism, see Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

[9] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3: 207-239.

[10] For more on jihadism, see Anne Stenersen, "Jihadism after the "Caliphate": Toward a New Typology," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (forthcoming): 1-20.

[11] Joas Wagemakers, "A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 281-297; Joas Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[12] See Appendix I.

[13] In 1970–71, for example, Jordan's future was at stake during the conflict known as "Black September," which pitted Palestinian guerrillas against the Hashemite regime. See Avi Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 315-345.

[14] For more about Azzam, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Abdallāh ʿAzzām and Palestine," *Die Welt des Islams* 53, no. 3-4 (2013): 353-387.

[15] Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya" fī al-'urdunn ba'd maqtal al-Zarqāwiyy: Muqārabat al-huwiyya, 'azmat al-qiyāda wa-ḍabābiyyat al-ru'ya* ["Jihadist Salafism" in Jordan after the Killing of al-Zarqawi: Identity, Crisis of Leadership, and Blurred Vision] (Jordan: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2009); Mohammad Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *"Al-ḥall al-'islāmiyy" fī al-'urdunn: al-'islāmiyyūn wal-dawla wa-rihanāt al-dimuqrāṭiyya wal-'amn* ["The Islamic Solution" in Jordan: the Islamists, the State, and the Ventures of Democracy and Security] (Jordan: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012), 281-394; Mohammad Abu Rumman and Musa Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf wal-'irhāb fī al-'urdunn* [The Sociology of Extremism and Terrorism in Jordan] (Jordan: Center for Strategic Studies, 2018); Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Salafi Jihadis in Jordan and the Effects of the Conflict in Syria," in Mohammad Abu Rumman, ed., *the Rise of Religious Radicalism in the Arab World: Significance, Implications and Counter Strategies* (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2015), 61-66; Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*; Joas Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 177-200; Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* (New York: Doubleday, 2015): 15-98; Kirk H. Sowell, "Jordanian Salafism and the Jihad in Syria," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 18 (2015): 41-71.

[16] Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf,* 28.

[17] Ibid, 37-40.

[18] Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 86.

[19] Yom and Sammour, "Counterterrorism and Youth Radicalization in Jordan."

[20] Joas Wagemakers, "Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan and the Syrian Conflict: Divisions Overcome Unity," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41, no. 3 (2018): 191-212.

[21] See, e.g., Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 17-21.

[22] Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi,* 199; Warrick, *Black Flags,* 53-56.

[23] Beverley Milton-Edwards, "Climate of Change in Jordan's Islamist Movement," in Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami ed., *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 123-142.

[24] Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf,* 17-18.

[25] Ibid.

[26] See, e.g., Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 15-16; Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*.

[27] Ibid, 200-212.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Joas Wagemakers, "A Terrorist Organization that Never Was: The Jordanian "Bay'at al-Imam" Group," *Middle East Journal* 8, no. 1 (2014): 59-75.

[30] Ibid: 62-63. For Brisard's study, see Jean-Charles Brisard with Damien Martinez, *Zarqawi: The New Face of al-Qaeda* (New York: Other Press, 2005).

[31] Wagemakers, "A Terrorist Organization that Never Was."

[32] For information about these plots, see Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 19-21.

[33] Wagemakers, "A Terrorist Organization that Never Was": 65-66.

[34] See, e.g., Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 23-26; Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihad,* 214-217; Warrick, *Black Flags,* 15-61.

[35] "Jordan's 9/11: Dealing with *Jihadi* Islamism" (International Crisis Group, 23 November, 2005): 9.

[36] Ibid.

[37] See, e.g., Warrick, *Black Flags;* Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya"*.

[38] Ibid, 27-38.

[39] For more about the group, see Truls H. Tønnessen, "Al-Qaida in Iraq: The Rise, the Fall and the Comeback," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oslo, 2015.

[40] "Al-'urdunn: 'iḥbāṭ Mukhaṭṭaṭ al-ṭā'ifa al-Manṣūra" [Jordan: Foiling of al-ṭā'ifa al-Manṣūra's Plot], *Al-Qabas*, March 16, 2006.

[41] E.g., Nibras Kazimi, "A virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 2 (2005): 59-73; Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 43-51; Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*, 41-52; Eli Alsech, "The Doctrinal Crisis within the Salafi-Jihadi Ranks and the Emergence of Neo-Takfirism," *Islamic Law and Society* 21, no. 4: 419-452.

[42] Alsech, "The Doctrinal Crisis within the Salafi-Jihadi Ranks and the Emergence of Neo-Takfirism"; Murad Batal al-Shishani, "The Dangerous Ideas of the Neo-Zarqawist Movement," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 9 (2009): 18-20.

[43] Joas Wagemakers, "Reclaiming Scholarly Authority: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Critique of *Jihadi* Practices," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 7 (2011): 529-534.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 113-114; Wagemakers, *Salafism in Jordan*, 186.

[46] Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf,* 22-29

[47] Ibid; Suha Ma'ayeh, "Jordanian Jihadists Active in Syria," *CTC Sentinel* 6, no. 10 (2013): 10-12; Sowell, "Jordanian Salafism and the Jihad in Syria"; Wagemakers, "Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan and the Syrian Conflict."

[48] Ibid.

[49] Aaron Y. Zelin, "The war between ISIS and al-Qaeda for supremacy of the global jihadist movement," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (2014): 4-6.

[50] Sowell, "Jordanian Salafism and the Jihad in Syria."

[51] Ibid, 14.

[52] Wagemakers, “Jihadi-Salafism in Jordan and the Syrian Conflict.”

[53] Sowell, “Jordanian Salafism and the Jihad in Syria”: 18; Al-Shishani, “Salafi Jihadis in Jordan,” 64.

[54] Al-Qassam was a childhood friend and one of al-Zarqawi’s trusted deputies. That he remained loyal to al-Qaida is another example that the divide between IS- and al-Qaida supporters is not simply a continuation of the conflict between *al-Zarqāwiyyūn* and *al-Maqdisiyyūn*.

[55] There is no in-depth study about Jordanians in Syria. Most of what we know is from blogs such as Tore Hamming, “Abu al-Qassam: Zarqawi’s right-hand man who stayed loyal to al-Qaida,” *Jihadica*, November 20, 2017.

[56] Cole Bunzel, “Death of a Mufti: The Execution of the Islamic State’s Abu Ya‘qub al-Maqdisi,” *Jihadica*, January 4, 2019.

[57] For more about him, see Petter Nesser, "Abū Qatāda and Palestine," *Die Welt des Islams* 53, no. 3-4 (2013): 416-448.

[58] E.g., Kirk H. Sowell, “Downplaying Jihad in Jordan’s Educational Curriculum, 2013-2017,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 6 (2017): 154.

[59] See, in particular, Wagemakers, *A Quietist Jihadi*.

[60] Petter Nesser, “Military Interventions, Jihadi Networks, and Terrorist Entrepreneurs: How the Islamic State Terror Wave Rose So High in Europe,” *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 3 (2019): 15-21.

[61] See, e.g., Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981): 379-399; Brynjar Lia and Katja Skjølberg, “Causes of Terrorism: An Expanded and Updated Review of the Literature,” FFI-Report-2004/04307, *Norwegian Defence Research Establishment* (Kjeller, 2004).

[62] See, e.g., Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups: Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 4

(1980): 423-453; Thomas Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 4 (2006): 39-60.

[63] See, e.g., Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008): 415-433; John Horgan, "From Profiles to *Pathways* and Roots to *Routes*: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no. 1 (2008): 80-94.

[64] See, e.g., Hegghammer, "The recruiter's dilemma"; Scott Gates and Sukanya Podder, "Social Media, Recruitment, Allegiance and the Islamic State," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015): 107-116; Mia Bloom, "Constructing Expertise: Terrorist Recruitment and "Talent Spotting" in the PIRA, Al Qaeda, and ISIS," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 7 (2017): 603-623.

[65] For an overview, see Alex P. Schmid, "Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review," *ICCT* (2013): 1-91.

[66] Ibid: 20-31.

[67] See Neven Bondokji, Kim Wilkinson and Leen Aghabi, "Trapped between Destructive Choices: Radicalisation Drivers Affecting Youth in Jordan" (West Asia-North Africa Institute, January 2017): 1:31; Speckhard, "The Jihad in Jordan"; Erica Harper, "Examining Psychological Drivers of Radicalisation in Jordan" (West Asia-North Africa Institute, May 2017): 1-34; Yom and Sammour, "Counterterrorism and Youth Radicalization in Jordan"; "Violent Extremism in Jordan: Local Governance, Tribal Dynamics and Forced Migration" (International Republican Institute, Fall, 2018): 1-19.

[68] Speckhard, "The Jihad in Jordan": 5; Bondokji et al., "Trapped between Destructive Choices": 4-5.

[69] An example is the otherwise insightful report by Harper. See "Examining Psychological Drivers of Radicalisation in Jordan." Harper notes the report's findings are largely based on

data collected by Speckhard. However, Harper does not cite Speckhard's report, "The Jihad in Jordan." It follows that she does not explain that Speckhard already had presented substantial parts of this data in her report.

[70] See, in particular, Yom and Sammour, "Counterterrorism and Youth Radicalization in Jordan": 28-29.

[71] E.g., Keith Proctor, "From Jordan to Jihad: The Lure of Syria's Violent Extremist Groups" (Mercy Corps, 2015): 5-6; "Violent Extremism in Jordan: Local Governance, Tribal Dynamics and Forced Migration": 12; Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf,* 73-76.

[72] Al-Shishani, "Salafi Jihadis in Jordan," 64.

[73] See, e.g., Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf*; Wael Ali al-Batiri, "The case of Jordan," in Mohammad Abu Rumman, ed., *The Secret of Attraction: ISIS Propaganda and Recruitment* (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2016), 51-62.

[74] See, in particular, Sowell, "Downplaying Jihad in Jordan's Educational Curriculum."

[75] Bondokji et al., "Trapped between Destructive Choices": 11-14; Speckhard, "The Jihad in Jordan": 60.

[76] Ibid: 50; "Violent Extremism in Jordan: Local Governance, Tribal Dynamics and Forced Migration": 12-13.

[77] Bondokji et al., "Trapped between Destructive Choices": 26; Speckhard, "The Jihad in Jordan": 53-55; Proctor, "From Jordan to Jihad": 6-7.

[78] Ibid.

[79] "Women, U. N. Women and Violent Radicalization in Jordan" (UN Women, 2016): 1-31; Bondokji et al., "Trapped between Destructive Choices": 18-19; Speckhard, "The Jihad in Jordan": 62.

[80] Although these issues appear to be more pronounced in other countries in the region such as Lebanon, Jordan's challenges should not be underestimated. For example, as much as

eighty-six per cent of Jordanian respondents in a survey by Transparency International reported that they "think corruption is a big problem." See Roberto Martinez B. Kukutschka, and Jon Vrushi, "Global Corruption Barometer Middle East & North Africa 2019" (Transparency International, December, 2019): 10.

[81] Others have also made similar observations. See, e.g., Speckhard, "The Jihad in Jordan": 63.

[82] Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya";* Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf.*

[83] Ibid, 10-11.

[84]Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 90-91; Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf,* 49-52, 68-76. While other studies do not examine jihadist profiles in as much detail, anecdotal evidence supports their finding that members of the Jordanian jihadist movement are diverse. See "Women, U. N. Women and Violent Radicalization in Jordan": 17-18. Preliminary findings from al-Shishani's unpublished study about seventy-five sentenced jihadists also suggest the same. He mentions this in "Salafi Jihadis in Jordan," 64-66.

[85] Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 89-90; Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf,* 49-52.

[86] Ibid, 37-49.

[87] Ibid, 111-113.

[88] Ibid, 191-192.

[89] Joby Warrick, *The Triple Agent: The al-Qaeda Mole who Infiltrated the CIA* (New York: First Anchor Books, 2012); Metin Turcan and Clark McCauley, "Boomerang: Opinion versus action in the radicalization of Abu-Mulal al-Balawi," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 3, no. 1 (2010): 14-31.

[90] See, e.g., Proctor, "From Jordan to Jihad": 4; "Women, U. N. Women and Violent Radicalization in Jordan": 18; Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf,* 64-68.

[91] Ibid, 53-57.

[92] Ibid, 115-137.

[93] See interviews conducted by Speckhard in "The Jihad in Jordan":22, 61.

[94] Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, *Sūsiyulūjiyyā al-taṭarruf,* 64-68.

[95] See, e.g., Jakob Sheikh, ""I Just Said It. The State": Examining the Motivations for Danish Foreign Fighting in Syria," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 6 (2016): 59-67.

[96] Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism."

[97] See, e.g., Horgan, "From Profiles to *Pathways* and Roots to *Routes.*"

[98] Richard English, "The Future Study of Terrorism," *European Journal of International Security* 1, no. 2 (2016): 138-139.

[99] McCauley and Moskalenko, "Understanding Political Radicalization."

[100] Peter Neumann, "The trouble with radicalization," *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013): 873-878.

[101] An exception is Turcan and McCauley, "Boomerang: Opinion versus action in the radicalization of Abu-Mulal al-Balawi."

[102] Hegghammer, "The recruiter's dilemma."

[103] It is Turcan and McCauley, "Boomerang: Opinion versus action in the radicalization of Abu-Mulal al-Balawi."

[104] All do not share this view on peer-reviewing. There is a scholarly debate about whether the system should be reformed, replaced, or remain as is. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss this topic in detail, especially because the process of peer-reviewing varies across journals and disciplines. Yet among political scientists, for example, the belief in the value-added of peer-review seems to be very high. See Paul A. Djupe, "Peer reviewing in political science: New survey results," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 48, no. 2 (2015): 349-350.

[105] Hegghammer and Nesser, "Losing the plot."

[106] "Maqtal al-Diblūmāsiyy al-ʾamrikiyy fī ʻammān wa-Siyāq al-ʻunf fī al-ʾurdunn" [The killing of the American diplomat in Amman and the Context of Violence in Jordan], *Al-Jazeera*, October 3, 2004.

[107] Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, for example, mention these attacks only in passing, see *"Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 88.

[108] Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh, *Al-Salafiyya al-Jihādiyya",* 87-88. Warrick also describes the attacks in detail. See *Black Flags*, 138-150, 193-205.

[109] Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Al-Zarqawi's Legacy Seen in Trial of Jordanian Al-Qaeda Cell," *Terrorism Focus* 6, No. 4 (2009).

[110] Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Neo-Zarqawists Target the Arab Christians of Jordan," *Terrorism Monitor* 7, no. 34 (2009).

[111] Maʻayeh, "Jordanian Jihadists Active in Syria."

[112] E.g., Chris Rothe, "Jordan and the New Front in the Fight against ISIS" (Herzliya: International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2015).

[113] Muhafaza, *al-ḥarakāt al-ʾislāmiyya al-mutaṭarrifa fī al-waṭan al-ʿarabiyy,* 338-441; Speckhard, "The Jihad in Jordan": 18-21; Jeremy M. Sharp, "Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations" (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, October 2018): 7.

[114] See Daniel Byman, "'Death Solves All Problems': The Authoritarian Model of Counterinsurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2016): 62-93.

[115] For more on this topic, see Petter Nesser and Henrik Gråtrud, "When Conflicts Do Not Overspill: The Case of Jordan," *Perspectives on Politics* (forthcoming).

[116] Petter Nesser and Anne Stenersen, "The Modus Operandi of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 6 (2014): 2-24.

[117] Martha Crenshaw, Erik Dahl, and Margaret A. Wilson, "Comparing Failed, Foiled, Completed and Successful Terrorist Attacks: Year 5 Final Report" (College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2017): 1-43.

[118] Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares, eds. *The evolution of the global terrorist threat: From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[119] For studies of attack activity in these countries, see, e.g., Mohammed M. Hafez, "Suicide terrorism in Iraq: A preliminary assessment of the quantitative data and documentary evidence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no.6 (2006): 591-619; Henrik Gråtrud and Vidar Benjamin Skretting, "Ansar al-Sharia in Libya: An Enduring Threat," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 1 (2017): 40-53.

[120] See, e.g., "Three Sentenced to Life for Plotting Terror Attacks," *Jordan Times*, April 12, 2017.

[121] For more on risks involved when using media sources to study terrorism, see, e.g., Andrew Silke, "The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 4 (2001): 5-7.

[122] Mark Youngman, "Building "Terrorism Studies" as an Interdisciplinary Space: Addressing Recurring Issues in the Study of Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (forthcoming): 9-11; Bart Schuurman, "Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (forthcoming): 11.

[123] See, e.g., Hegghammer, "The recruiter's dilemma;" Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia;" Abdullah bin Khaled Al-Saud, "Saudi Foreign Fighters: Analysis of Leaked Islamic State Entry Documents" (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, 2019).

[124] The only exception to my knowledge is a brief study by Ellen Chapin. See "Beyond the Caliphate: Islamic State Activity outside the Group's Defined Wilayat – Morocco" (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2018): 1-7.