



TONY BLAIR  
INSTITUTE  
FOR GLOBAL  
CHANGE

# For Caliph and Country

Exploring how  
British jihadis  
join a global  
movement

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CO-EXISTENCE



# Contents

Executive Summary **5**

Policy Recommendations **9**

Findings

British Jihadis in a Global Network **13**

Trends Among British Jihadis **23**

Appendix

Methodology **34**

Note

Research for this report was conducted in November and December 2016 and then subsequently analysed.



# Executive Summary

This report explores what connects jihadis from across the UK and how they made their journey into jihadism.

For more than 30 years, British jihadis have been fighting under the banner of an extreme Islamist ideology in conflicts from Algeria to the Philippines.

For half of that time, the streets of the UK have been seen as a legitimate target, as witnessed most recently in both London and Manchester. Ideologues made their home in Britain, having been rejected from Muslim-majority countries because the ideas they expounded were considered dangerous. From the UK, they influenced many. In the last five years, the conflict in Syria alone has attracted over 800 British fighters.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Who are Britain's Jihadists?", *BBC News*, 10 October 2016. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985).

Their ideology justifies the use of violent jihad to achieve its aims. Its proponents believe in imposing their interpretation of Islam on others as state law, with no tolerance for alternatives. They believe in brutally punishing apostates and subjugating women. It is Muslims who make up the majority of their victims.

The global jihadi network they are a part of goes back decades. The violence it wreaks is felt all over the world. In the final months of 2016, more than 18,000 lives were lost to jihadi violence or efforts against it. In all, some 58 jihadi groups were involved in at least 2,312 violent incidents in 41 countries.<sup>2</sup>

What connects these disaffected individuals from Beeston to Brighton? How has a global, violent ideology captured the minds of so many British citizens and residents? And what can be done to stop others going down this path?

## AIM OF THE REPORT

The research examined the biographies of 113 men who have shaped, or have been shaped by, the British jihadi scene to see how they made their journey into jihadism, as perpetrators, supporters, or abettors.<sup>3</sup> They were selected from across the UK – from senior ideologues to ‘foot soldiers,’ fundraisers, and supporters – to give a cross-section of the British jihadi movement from the 1980s to the Syrian civil war today.

Our sample was randomly selected from open-source material relating to British jihadism, including lists of British jihadis published by media organisations. We then filtered it on the basis of the quantity of available information on each individual.

We examined their networks, ideological influences, and family backgrounds. We looked at their education, criminal histories, and international travel. We looked at where they fought, and for whom. We also looked at the biographies of 18 women connected to British jihadism, to see how their experiences compared with those of the men.<sup>4</sup>

Our sample was diverse – from the very wealthy to the very poor; those raised in Muslim households to converts; ‘straight-laced,’ straight-A students, to drug dealers – but there were some significant trends that can help identify policy to prevent others following suit.

## KEY FINDINGS

- 1 **Over two thirds have ties to just six individuals.** Sixty-seven per cent of our sample had links, direct or indirect, to six individuals: Abu Hamza al-Masri, Abdullah al-Faisal, Abu Qatada al-Filistini, Omar Bakri Mohammad, Anjem Choudary, and Hani al-Sibai.
- 2 **UK Islamist groups serve as recruiting pools.** Seventy-seven per cent of our sample were associated with non-violent Islamist groups and networks before turning to jihadism. Some of the networks behind these groups continue to operate today.
- 3 **Women tend to be radicalised online more than men.** At least 44 per cent of our sample of women were partly radicalised online, for half of whom there were no known Islamist links in person. In contrast, only four per cent of men in our sample had an online element noted in their radicalisation.
- 4 **Most UK jihadis have links to ISIS and al-Qaeda.** Although a total of 24 jihadi groups are represented in our sample, 84 per cent of the sample are associated with just two groups: al-Qaeda and ISIS. Thirty-five per cent have been associated with ISIS; 90 per cent of these became associated after the group’s expansion into Syria in 2013. Forty per cent became associated after ISIS’ declaration of a caliphate in June 2014.
- 5 **British jihadism is inspired by global events.** The conflicts our sample participated in were determined by what was capturing the most attention in the global Islamist movement when they came of age. However, only half of our sample fought in more than one conflict. This contrasts with previous research into prominent jihadis from the Middle East and Africa, three quarters of whom had fought in a number of conflicts.<sup>5</sup>

2 Data from the Centre on Religion & Geopolitics’ Global Extremism Monitor.

3 For a full list, see [http://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC\\_Caliph-Country\\_Full%20Sample.pdf](http://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC_Caliph-Country_Full%20Sample.pdf)

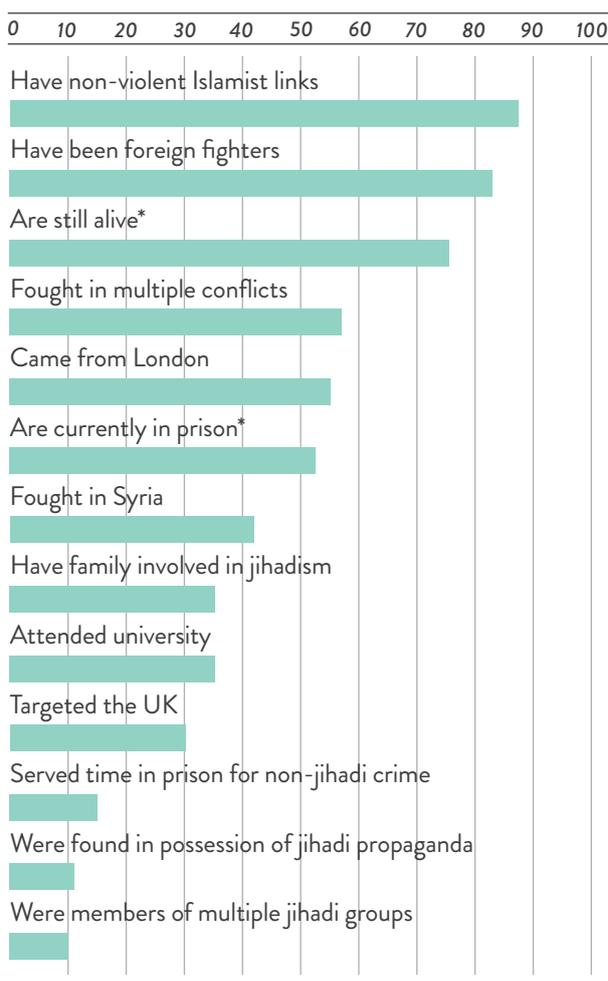
4 For a full list, see [http://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC\\_Caliph-Country\\_Full%20Sample.pdf](http://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC_Caliph-Country_Full%20Sample.pdf)

5 Mubaraz Ahmed, Milo Comerford, and Emman El-Badawy, *Mile-*

- 6 **British fighters are drawn to hubs of conflict.** Sixty-four per cent of our sample fought in one of three major jihadi conflict hubs: Syria/Iraq, Afghanistan/Pakistan, and Somalia/Kenya.
- 7 **But many are parochial.** Over a third of our sample targeted the UK, and half operated from the UK. Twenty-seven per cent never engaged in jihadi activity outside of Britain.
- 8 **London dominates British jihadism.** Forty-nine per cent of our sample were based in London. Of these, 20 individuals came from just five areas of the city: Hammersmith, Willesden, Barking, St John's Wood, and Acton.
- 9 **A minority were involved in non-jihadi crime.** Fifty-eight per cent of our sample have spent time in prison, but only 13 per cent were incarcerated for crimes unrelated to jihadism. Seven individuals served time in young offenders' institutions, and at least four were believed to be radicalised in prison.
- 10 **Many are well-educated.** Thirty-one per cent started a degree, and over half of these studied STEM subjects.<sup>6</sup> Nearly one third of those with degrees studied humanities or social science, and four read Islamic studies. Five dropped out of their course before graduating.
- 11 **UK jihadism is a family affair.** Twenty-three per cent of our sample have siblings engaged in jihadi activity, comprising 14 families. Thirty per cent in total have a family link to jihadism. When it came to women, 61 per cent of our sample had relatives involved in jihadi activity, predominantly husbands or siblings. Family ties also influenced theatres of operation. Forty per cent of our sample were of South Asian descent, and a fifth travelled to fight in Afghanistan or Pakistan. However, since the Arab uprisings of 2011, the proportion travelling to the region has dropped significantly.

FIG.11 British Jihadism in Numbers

Number in sample who...



\*as of 28 February 2017

stones to Militancy: *What the Lives of 100 Jihadis Tell Us About a Global Movement*, London: 2016, 11. <http://institute.global/insight/co-existence/milestones-militancy>.

6 These are: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine.



# Policy Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of our research, we make the following recommendations.

## **1 CREATE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS IN WHICH EXTREMIST IDEAS ARE CHALLENGED**

Universities, colleges, and prisons all appear in our sample as locations in which extremism can flourish. While authorities in such environments are rarely best able to judge between mainstream religious belief and extremist ideas, there are steps that they can take to protect the people in their care. The majority of Muslims in Britain and further afield are able and willing to help.

Educational establishments should equip their students to grapple in a battle of ideas. They should encourage environments in which no opinion can be presented as unchallengeable truth. Just as we have challenged totalitarian ideologies in the past, so must totalitarianism in the name of religion be challenged.

**Universities, colleges, and prisons should:**

Require all Islamic and other religious societies to be affiliated to wider networks in order to gain institutional funding or support. Some such networks already exist. These societies and groups should vet, train, and guide student officers, and be themselves subject to public scrutiny.

Incentivise students from all disciplines, and require all at-risk prisoners, to attend modules and classes that build skills to critically analyse texts on social and political issues.

## 2 TARGET HUBS THAT SPREAD EXTREMIST MESSAGING

Abu Hamza al-Masri had been preaching at the Finsbury Park Mosque for five years before he was suspended in a Charity Commission investigation over the content of his sermons. A police raid the next year discovered that the ricin plot against the UK in 2002 had been planned, in part, on the mosque's premises.

Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque are well-known examples, but multiple members of our

sample were connected to a small number of mosques. Some of these mosques are known to have hosted extremist preachers.

In some cases, Islamist leadership is imposed on mosques after a takeover of the board of trustees by organised groups. The members of the local Muslim community that attend the mosque are the victims of such action.

**Police and regulators should:**

Investigate mosques and religious study centres where links are found to multiple jihadis, examining whether radicalisation is taking place under its auspices.

Harness the registration of charities' trustees to build an alert system for suspicious wholesale changes in governing bodies, to trigger an investigation into intimidatory or unethical practices in elections and appointments.

# Glossary

**Extremism** / The desire to impose a belief, ideology, or values system on others to the exclusion of all other views by indoctrination, by force, or by seeking to control government.

**Islamism** / A modern religious-political ideology requiring a dominant role for an interpretation of Islam as state law.

**Salafism** / A Sunni Muslim school of thought that advocates a return to the early Islam practised by the first generations of Muslims, relying on literalist precepts of the Quran, the Sunnah, and Hadith, as interpreted by its adherents.

**Jihad** / A religious responsibility on Muslims to serve and uphold the religion, for most Muslims referring primarily to a spiritual struggle. For some Islamist and Salafi groups jihad is viewed primarily as a violent concept used in order to impose their ideologies.

**Jihadi** / An individual who engages in, supports, or abets violent jihad.<sup>7</sup>

**Operational** / Jihadis primarily charged with frontline operations, carrying out attacks, and providing logistical assistance.

**Administrative** / Jihadis whose main function involves working on internal logistics and procedural tasks, as well as fundraising and recruitment.

**Ideologue** / Islamists and jihadis whose primary function entails leading, guiding, and justifying the movement's ideological and strategic activity.

**Theatre of Operation** / A conflict in which an individual has taken part in violent jihad or been associated with a jihadi group.

**Hubs** / Regional clusters of conflict.

**Ummah** / The global Muslim community.

**Sharia** / Islamic law or norms as revealed in the Quran and the practices of the Prophet, interpreted and applied by Islamic jurists through multiple schools of thought. Islamist groups often claim to be implementing their interpretation of Sharia through their action.

**STEMM Subjects** / Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, and Medicine.

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<sup>7</sup> For a full explanation of the term 'jihadi' as used in this report, see page 34.



# British Jihadis in a Global Network

Our sample reveals how the British jihadi network is connected to the global movement, through direct activities overseas and support for international groups from within the UK.

Without knowing the full picture, one might have considered Mohammad Sidique Khan a model citizen. He grew up in a deprived area but went to university. He collaborated with friends to address social problems in his town and engaged in youth work.

But he had a far darker side. As a young man he trained with jihadi groups in Pakistan and radicalised people around him. His 'social work' was directed at shaping the behaviour of his town according to his Islamist interpretation of sharia. He would eventually lead a plot that killed 52 people on the London

transport system in 2005.

Despite occasional appearances on the radar of the British security services, Sidique Khan was not believed to be a threat. But like many others, he was part of a network that regards the UK, and anything other than its own interpretation of Islam, as the enemy, and sees the use of violence against that enemy as legitimate action.

Our sample reveals how the British jihadi movement is connected to the global movement, whether through direct activities overseas or support for international groups from the UK. Many were radicalised or drawn into violence through links, direct or indirect, to global ideologues and senior leaders.

## THEATRES OF OPERATION

Although the individuals in our sample were engaged in wars dating back to the 1980s, the conflict that has attracted the most British fighters is the Syrian civil war, where a number of jihadi and Islamist extremist groups are part of the rebellion. This was confirmed by our sample: 34 per cent first engaged in jihadi activity in that conflict.

Notably, Syria, the largest gathering of jihadis since the Afghan war in the 1980s, has not attracted many British jihadis who were previously engaged in conflicts elsewhere.

Only four of the individuals in our sample fought in the Syrian conflict after having previously been associated with jihadi groups elsewhere.

While 32 per cent of our sample were first operational in the UK, Britain was only a target for 22 per cent. Three first-time jihadis in the sample were arrested while in the process of travelling elsewhere for jihadi activity, and seven faced criminal sanctions for activities in support of jihadi groups in other parts of the world.

A further 18 per cent of our sample were operational in the UK having previously engaged in jihadi activities elsewhere. In total, 50 per cent of the sample were operational in Britain at some point in their jihadi activities.

FIG. 3.1 Number of Theatres of Operation

Number in sample

● First active in theatre ● Active in theatre ▨ Subset of preceding sample

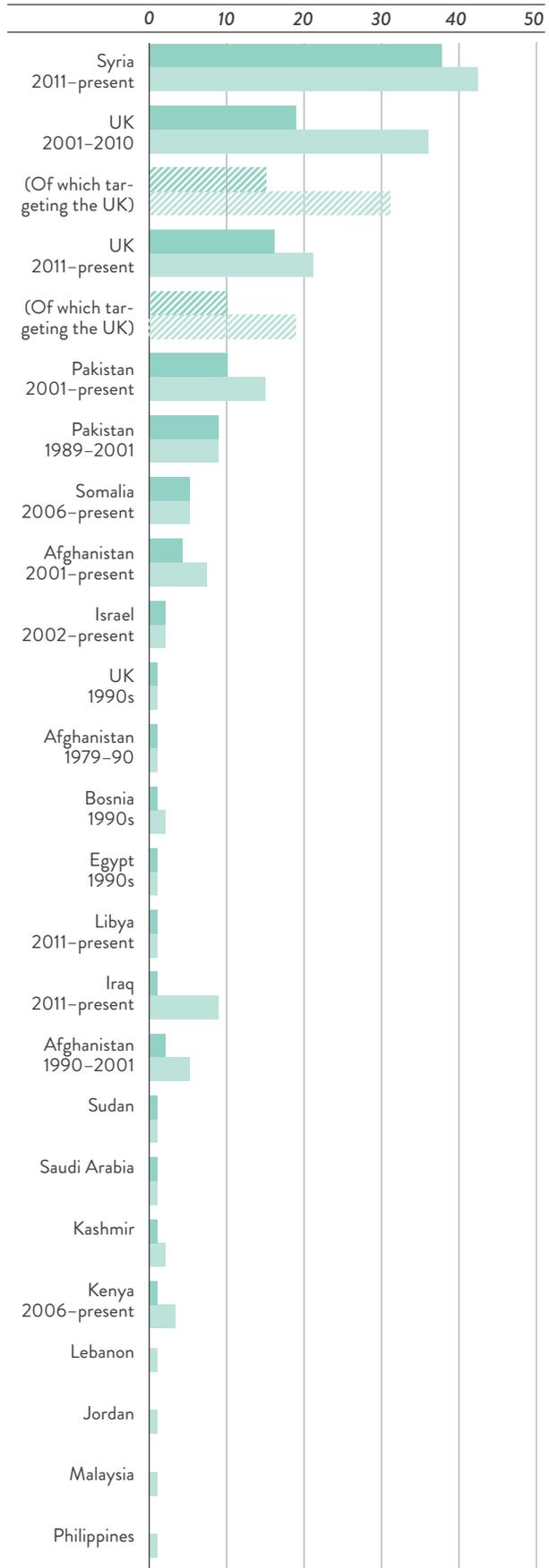


FIG. 3.2 Timeline of Pivotal Events per Decade

1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
Iranian Revolution	Mujahideen fight Soviets in Afghanistan	Algerian Civil War	9/11	Arab Spring
Siege of Mecca's Grand Mosque		Bosnian War	War on Terror	Syrian Civil War
				ISIS declares a caliphate

In all, 36 per cent of the sample actually engaged in plots or activities that targeted the UK, as opposed to operating from the UK for activities abroad. Of those who had engaged in jihad elsewhere prior to operating in the UK, six faced sanction for activities in support of overseas jihadi groups, such as Shabaaz Hussain, a fundraiser for al-Shabaab.

A significant proportion of our sample were operational, including attending jihadi training camps, in Pakistan or Afghanistan: some 22 per cent. This may reflect the proportion that was of South Asian descent.

At 45 per cent, this is a lower proportion than in the British Muslim population as a whole, over 60 per cent of which is of South Asian descent.<sup>8</sup>

### Conflict Hubs

Our previous research has shown that the activities of a sample of prominent jihadis from the Middle East and Africa were dominated by four conflict hubs: the Levant (Syria and Iraq), Khorasan (Afghanistan, Pakistan), the Sahel (Algeria and neighbouring countries), and East Africa (Somalia and Kenya).<sup>9</sup> With the exception of the Sahel, and excluding the understandable concentration of jihadis active in the UK, our sample broadly reflected this trend.

Thirty-nine per cent of our sample fought in the Levant hub; 22 per cent in the Khorasan hub; and five per cent in the East Africa hub. In all, 64 per cent of our sample fought in one of the three major hubs of jihadi conflict over the past 30 years. This demonstrates the extent to which the British jihadi

movement is connected to global jihadi networks.

Nevertheless, the high proportion of our sample who plotted or acted against the UK (36 per cent) also indicates the importance of proximity and access in selecting targets, as well as the expansionist and global nature of the jihadi movement.

**A significant proportion of our sample were operational, including attending jihadi training camps, in Pakistan or Afghanistan.**

Major jihadi conflicts also had a bearing on how our sample were radicalised. Thirty-nine per cent of the sample were born in the 1980s, coming of age in the run up to 9/11, and witnessing its aftermath. Thirty-two per cent were born in the 1990s, coming of age in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the jihadi exploitation of the civil wars that swept the Middle East and North Africa. Twenty-one per cent were born in the 1970s, coming of age in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, the Salman Rushdie fatwa affair, and the conflict in Bosnia. These pivotal events, and the Islamist and jihadi propaganda associated with them, were repeatedly referenced in the biographies

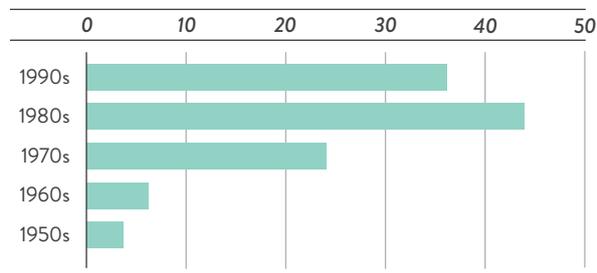
<sup>8</sup> Data limited to England and Wales. See Office of National Statistics, DC2201EW. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/business-transparency/freedom-of-information/what-can-i-request/previous-foi-requests/population/ethnicity-and-religion-by-age/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Ahmed, Comerford, and El-Badawy, *Milestones to Militancy*, 13.

of our sample. They were crucial milestones in their ideological development.

**FIG. 3.3** Decade of Birth

Number in sample



The conflicts in which our sample first fought reflect the effect of these major events. Those born in the 1980s, coming of age at a time dominated by high-profile attacks on western targets, and with British troops active in Afghanistan and Iraq in response, were largely first active in the UK. Those born in the 1990s, coming of age around the Arab Spring in 2011, were overwhelmingly first active in the Syrian civil war. Those born in the 1970s, witnessing the Afghan Mujahideen defeating the Soviet Union in a battle that attracted recruits from across the Muslim world under the banner of defending Islam against atheist Communism, were largely active in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

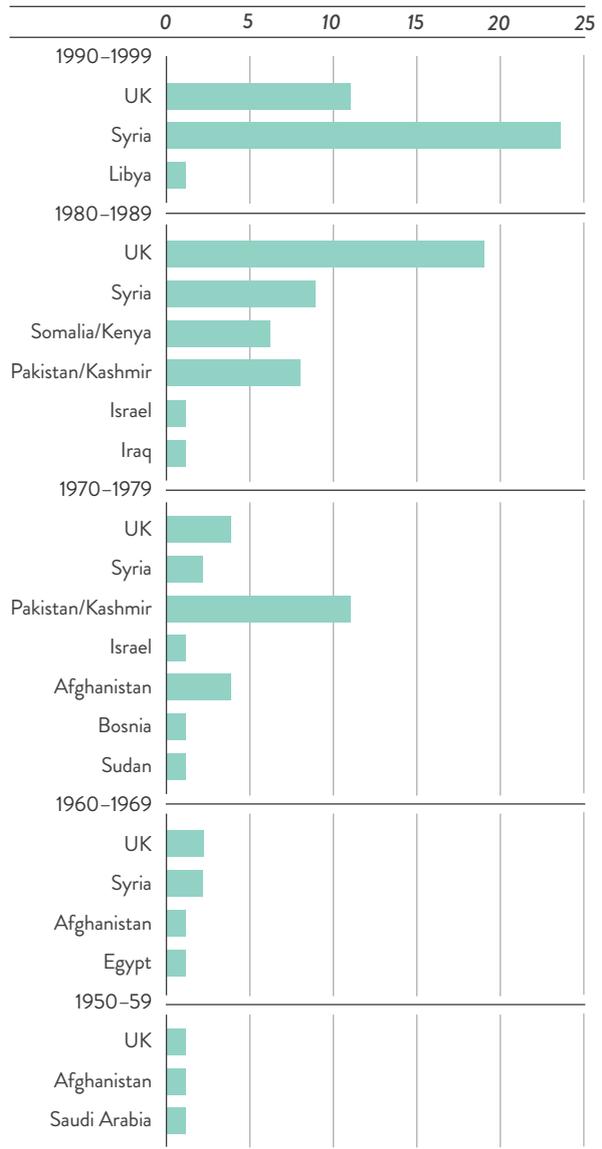


Profile  
**ANDREW ROWE**

Born in 1971 in west London, the former drugdealer reportedly converted to Islam after a drug-fuelled conversation at a rave in the early 1990s. Shortly afterwards, he attended a talk at a mosque in Ladbroke Grove that discussed the civil war in Bosnia, and travelled to join jihadi groups fighting there. He was wounded in a mortar explosion in 1995 and returned to the UK to live on disability benefits. In 1999, he was stopped on his way to Georgia with \$12,000 in cash, and in 2003 was arrested in France with traces of explosives on his clothing. Raids on his flat and on the home of his estranged wife in the UK found a notebook full of information on how to carry out terror attacks, as well as Osama bin Laden sermons and the ‘wills’ of two of the 9/11 attackers.

**FIG. 3.4** First Theatre of Operation by Birth Decade

Number in sample



## INFLUENTIAL IDEOLOGUES

Our research shows that six individuals from our sample had a significant influence on the movement over the past 30 years: Abu Hamza al-Masri, Abu Qatada al-Filistini, Omar Bakri Mohammad, Abdullah al-Faisal, Hani al-Sibai, and Anjem Choudary. At least 67 per cent of our sample are linked to at least one of these individuals, either via their cell, through other radicalisers linked to the six ideologues, or directly.

These six ideologues are, in turn, connected to a global network of Islamist and jihadi leaders and groups.

Despite being acquitted of jihadi offences in Jordan, Abu Qatada continues to voice his support for al-Qaeda, in close association with Jordanian ideologue Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, and was featured in the propaganda magazine of former al-Qaeda affiliate, then known as Jabhat al-Nusra, in 2015. He is also believed to have connections to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Abdullah al-Faisal was imprisoned in the UK for inciting terrorist violence before being deported, but was previously connected to the 7/7 attackers and the 2004 Operation Rhyme plot.<sup>10</sup> Omar Bakri Mohammad (now in prison in Lebanon) and Anjem Choudary (in prison in the UK for advocating support for ISIS) are linked to a large number of plots, attackers, and individuals who have travelled to join ISIS in Syria.

Sitting at the centre of this network, with connections to a significant proportion of British jihadis and to most other ideologues, is Abu Hamza, currently serving a lengthy prison sentence in the United States for jihadi activity around the world. Abu Hamza can be linked to the founder of the modern jihadi movement, Abdullah Azzam. Further, Finsbury Park Mosque, where Abu Hamza served as imam from 1997 to 2002 and preached outside the gates until 2004, was linked to multiple plots and attacks in the UK from 2001 to 2010.<sup>11</sup>

Other global figures have also had an influence on the movement. Mohammad al-Arefe, a Salafi cleric on record describing violent jihad as “an honour” and banned from the UK in 2014, preached in Cardiff in 2012 and 2013, including at a mosque that three of the jihadis in our sample attended.<sup>12</sup> Eight of the individuals in our sample were found to have been influenced by Anwar al-Awlaki, the Yemeni-American ideologue who fought for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Four had connections to Abu Abaida al-Masri, a senior

al-Qaeda fighter in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Not only are the individuals in our sample closely tied to these six ideologues, they are also linked to one another. Of the 13 plots launched in or against the UK that those in our sample were connected to, six had members connected to another plot.<sup>13</sup> Twelve of the plots had members with direct connections to two ideologues: Abu Hamza and Anjem Choudary.<sup>14</sup>



#### Profile

### HANI AL-SIBAI

Born in Egypt in 1961, Hani al-Sibai worked as a lawyer for the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1994 he sought asylum in the UK, claiming he had been tortured by Egyptian authorities for his work with the Muslim Brotherhood. His claim was refused on national security grounds, but the British government was unable to gain assurances from the Egyptian government regarding his deportation, and he was eventually given temporary leave to remain. During this time, it was reported that he had served as the head of Egyptian Islamic Jihad’s media committee. He appeared on TV stations including Al Jazeera on the day after the 7/7 bombings, expressing his support for 9/11.<sup>15</sup> He is on UN, US Treasury, and EU sanctions lists for his support for al-Qaeda.<sup>16</sup> He denies any such links. He is suspected of having been involved in the radicalisation of Mohammed Emwazi, otherwise known as ‘Jihadi John,’ and El Shafee Elsheikh, two of the so-called ‘Beatles’ group of British jihadis in ISIS, and of ties to Seifeddine Rezgui, who gunned down tourists on a beach in Tunisia in 2015. He remains in London.

13 7/7 bombings (2005), 21/7 attempted bombings (2005), the fertiliser bomb plot (2004), the Operation Rhyme plot (2004), the transatlantic airlines plot (2006), and the Richard Reid shoe bombing plot (2001).

14 The Operation Rhyme plot (2004), the 7/7 bombings (2005), the Stock Exchange plot (2010), the 21/7 attempted bombings (2005), the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby (2013), the transatlantic airlines plot (2006), the ricin plot (2002), the Luton TA barracks plot (2012), the fertiliser bomb plot (2004).

15 Duncan Gardham, “The five alleged terrorists whose assets were frozen”, *The Telegraph*, 27 January 2010. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/7084386/The-five-alleged-terrorists-whose-assets-were-frozen.html>.

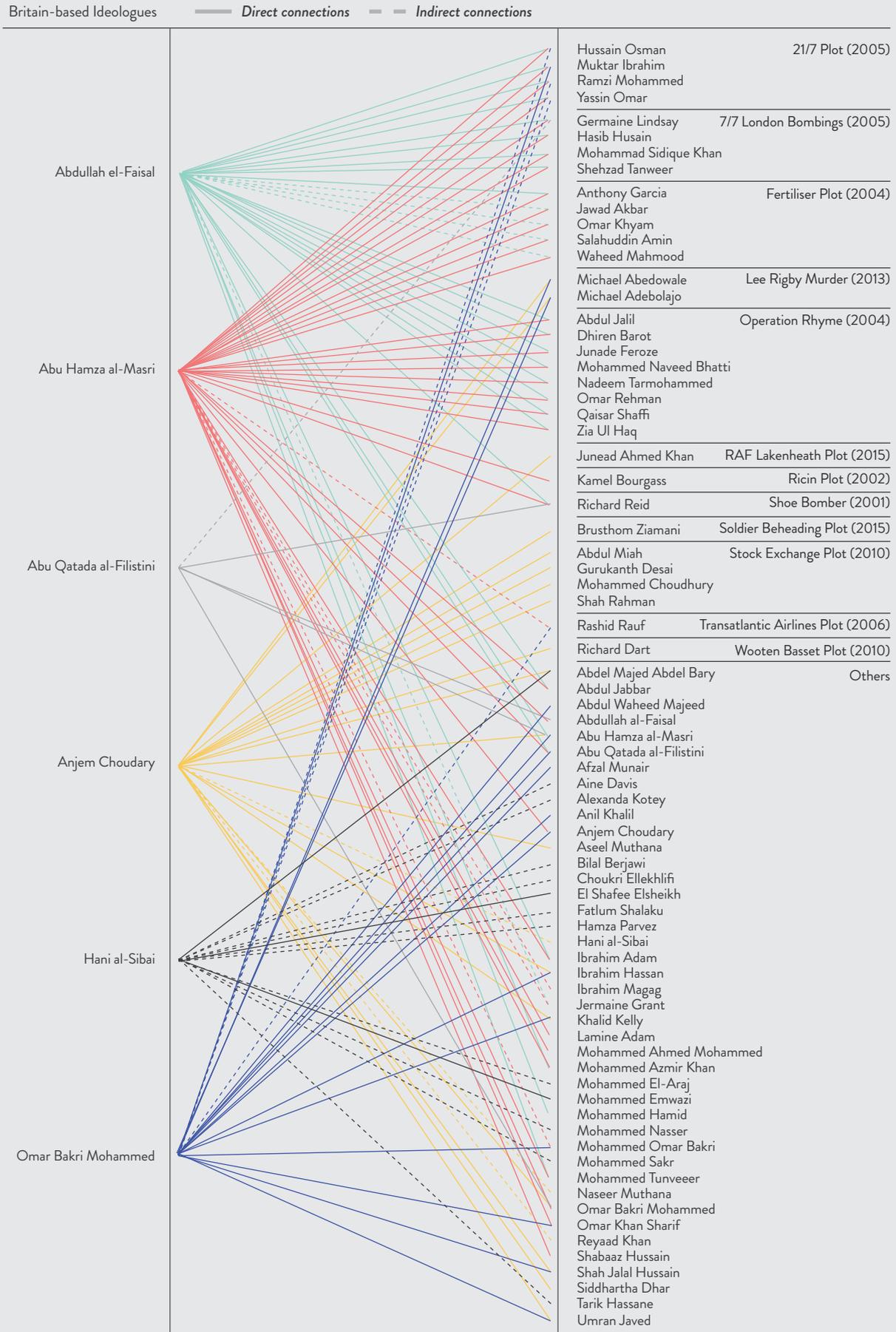
16 In 2014, he went to the European Court of Justice in an attempt to have his status as an al-Qaeda affiliate overturned. The Court found that the European Commission had not followed procedure over reviewing his inclusion on the sanctions list, but Sibai withdrew his claim to have his name removed.

10 7/7 refers to the multiple suicide bombing on the London transport system on 7 July 2005 that killed 52. Operation Rhyme was a police operation in response to a Luton-based cell plotting attacks in the UK and US in 2004.

11 In 2005, a new board of trustees was installed at the mosque. There is no suggestion that the mosque is connected to jihadism under its current leadership.

12 Jonathan Schanzer and Steven Miller, *Facebook Fatwa: Saudi Clerics, Wahhabi Islam and Social Media*, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 2012, 49. [http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/facebook\\_fatwa\\_low\\_res\\_2.pdf](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/facebook_fatwa_low_res_2.pdf).

FIG. 3.5 Ideologues' Links to British Jihadism



The names in this graph relate to our sample. For our full sample, see [http://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC\\_Caliph-Country\\_Full%20Sample.pdf](http://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC_Caliph-Country_Full%20Sample.pdf)

## Profile

## ABU QATADA AL-FILISTINI

Born Omar Mahmoud Mohammed Othman in 1960 in Bethlehem, Abu Qatada al-Filistini's family fled during the Six Day War and he spent the rest of his childhood in Ras al-Ain, Jordan. In the mid-1980s he worked for the Jordanian army as a religious leader for prisoners, before travelling to Pakistan in the early 1990s to teach Afghan refugees in Peshawar. It was at this time that he is said to have met Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qaeda, and Osama Bin Laden, although Abu Qatada denies the latter. In 1993, he travelled to the UK and was recognised as a refugee in 1994. In October 1999, he made a speech in London praising attacks on Americans and calling for the killing of Jews.<sup>17</sup> In addition to his al-Qaeda links, he was associated through the 1990s with Salafi-jihadi groups fighting in the Algerian civil war. In 1999 and 2000, a Jordanian court sentenced him in absentia to life imprisonment for involvement in two plots in the country, and requested his extradition from the UK. After a lengthy legal battle and detention in the UK, during which the British government secured assurances from Jordan over his trial, he was extradited in 2013. After a retrial in Jordan in 2014, he was cleared of involvement and released from prison. His sermons have been linked to multiple plots, including 9/11, and since his retrial he has been featured in al-Qaeda propaganda.

## CASE STUDY: ABU HAMZA AL-MASRI

At the centre of a web of connections that covers nearly 70 per cent of our sample sits Abu Hamza al-Masri, also known as Mustafa Kamel Mustafa, who is currently serving two life sentences and an array of lower terms in the United States for various jihadi activities.

The son of an Egyptian naval officer and a teacher, Abu Hamza studied engineering in Alexandria before coming to the UK in 1979, eventually qualifying as an engineer at Brighton Polytechnic.

17 "Timeline: Abu Qatada", *The Guardian*, 7 July 2013. [www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/jun/18/uksecurity.terrorism](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/jun/18/uksecurity.terrorism).

In 1987, he met Abdullah Azzam, one of the founders of al-Qaeda and a prolific recruiter for the jihadi movement against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. This meeting led him to Afghanistan, and kicked off his long career in the global jihadi movement.

Advocates on Abu Hamza's behalf claim that he was working in reconstruction projects in Afghanistan;<sup>18</sup> critics say he was already participating in violence. At his trial in the United States, he told the court that he had been asked to join al-Qaeda in 1989, but that he refused.<sup>19</sup> In any case, in 1993 an accident cost him both hands and an eye, either while engaged in demining work or while mixing explosives.<sup>20</sup> After treatment in the UK, he travelled to fight with the jihadi movement in Bosnia.

In 1997, Abu Hamza staged a takeover of the Finsbury Park Mosque in north London with his followers and was appointed its imam. From here, he built up an Islamist network with close ties to the global jihadi movement. In 1998, he was implicated in a jihadi plot in the Yemeni port city of Aden. Although he avoided charges, his son, Mohammad Mustafa Kamel, spent three years in a Yemeni prison for the plot.

In a recorded speech in the late 1990s, Abu Hamza said, "We ask Muslims to... bleed the enemies of Allah anywhere, by any means. You can't do it by nuclear weapon, you do it by the kitchen knife, no other solution. You cannot do it by chemical weapons, you have to do it by mice poison."<sup>21</sup>

By 2002, Abu Hamza's Islamist connections and links to global jihadism led the UK Charity Commission to launch an investigation. Following a police raid on Finsbury Park Mosque in relation to the 2002 ricin terror plot, in which extensive jihadi material was found, the building was closed. Nevertheless, Abu Hamza continued to preach outside its gates until his

18 Moazzam Begg, "Abu Hamza al-Masri: Untold Story of the Man Britain Loves to Hate," CAGE, 22 May 2014. <https://cage.ngo/uncategorized/abu-hamza-al-masri-untold-story-man-britain-loves-hate-0>.

19 Josh Halliday, "Abu Hamza: From Egypt to a US prison via Finsbury Park Mosque," *The Guardian*, 20 May 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/20/abu-hamza-profile>.

20 Halliday, "Abu Hamza."

21 "The Preachings of Abu Hamza," *The Guardian*, 7 February 2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/feb/07/terrorism.world>.

arrest for terrorism offences in 2004.

By the time Abu Hamza was convicted for soliciting murder in the UK in 2006, he could be linked to multiple plots against the UK and abroad, including the 7/7 bombings of the London transport system in 2005. Despite his imprisonment, first in the UK and now in the US, his influence has continued.

## DOMINANT GROUPS

Two Salafi-jihadi groups with global ambitions have dominated the British jihadi movement over the past two decades: al-Qaeda and, more recently, ISIS. In all, 84 per cent of our sample were associated with one of these groups, reflecting the dominance of these jihadi brands on the global scene as a whole.

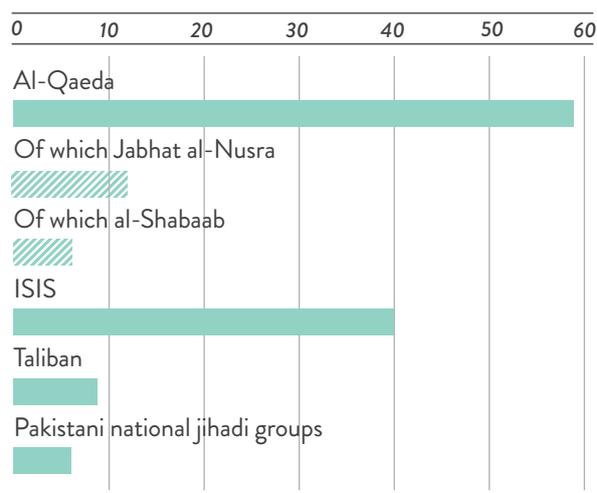
**Eighty-four per cent of our sample were associated with al-Qaeda or ISIS, reflecting the dominance of these jihadi brands on the global scene as a whole.**

Although the different factions that went on to form ISIS have existed in one incarnation or another since 2002, the earliest any individual in our sample became associated with the group was 2010. Thirty-five per cent of the sample have been associated with ISIS. Fourteen per cent became involved with the group after its declaration of a caliphate in June 2014. Of these, nearly half were either arrested before they could join the group or supported its activities from the UK.

Twenty-one per cent of the sample became associated with ISIS between 2010 and June 2014. Only two of these were not fighting in Syria and Iraq.

FIG. 3.6 Ties to Global Jihadi Groups

Number in sample



According to our sample, the declaration of the caliphate did not lead to a substantial increase in British jihadis travelling to join the group in its territory; earlier events in the conflict appear to have had a greater effect. In 2011, ISIS' leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi dispatched a lieutenant to Syria to set up a Salafi-jihadi group in the country: Jabhat al-Nusra (JN). In 2013, Baghdadi decided to openly declare ISIS' participation in the Syrian rebellion and called on Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, JN's leader, to submit Jabhat al-Nusra to Baghdadi's authority. Jolani refused, appealing to al-Qaeda's central leadership, and the resultant dispute shook the Salafi-jihadi groups active in the conflict. ISIS' subsequent successes in battles against its rivals led to a substantial re-alignment in the jihadi movement.

Of the jihadis in our sample who were active with ISIS before June 2014, 90 per cent joined in or after 2013. This includes two brothers, Fatlum and Flamur Shalaku, who defected from JN. The flow of British jihadis to ISIS in Iraq and Syria has dried up substantially since 2015, but it remains to be seen whether the group's more recent battlefield setbacks will lead to a fresh realignment of the estimated 58,000 Salafi-jihadi fighters still active in the conflict.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, not all British jihadis active in Syria

22 Fabrice Balanche, *Status of the Syrian Rebellion: Numbers, Ideologies, and Prospects*, The Washington Institute, 22 November 2016. [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/status-of-the-syrian-rebellion-numbers-ideologies-and-prospects](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/status-of-the-syrian-rebellion-numbers-ideologies-and-prospects).

are fighting for ISIS. Ten per cent of our sample fought for other groups, mostly for JN, the former al-Qaeda affiliate. Many are friends or related, and all travelled to fight in the conflict between 2012 and January 2014.

Away from Syria, al-Qaeda is more dominant in attracting British jihadis. Before the Syrian civil war, al-Shabaab in Somalia attracted four of our sample to fight.

■

Profile

### SIDDHARTHA DHAR

Born to a Hindu family in 1982, former bouncycastle salesman Siddhartha Dhar converted to Islam at the age of 19, before becoming radicalised and joining al-Muhajiroun. He became a prominent figure in the group, frequently appearing at demonstrations, and was a prolific recruiter. In 2014, he was arrested alongside Anjem Choudary for inviting support for ISIS, but after being released on bail fled to Syria. He is since suspected of executing individuals in ISIS propaganda videos.

■

Profile

### ABDEL-MAJED ABDEL BARY

Born in 1991 in Egypt, Abdel Bary travelled to join his father in the UK in 1993. He was homeschooled by his mother, and developed a reputation as a rapper known as L Jinny, whose tracks were played on BBC radio. In 1998, his father, an associate of Hani al-Sibai, was arrested for alleged involvement in the al-Qaeda bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and was extradited to the United States in 2012. From his late teens, Abdel Bary attended protests organised by groups linked to al-Muhajiroun, and in 2013 he travelled to Syria to join ISIS. In June 2015 he deserted the group, allegedly disguising himself as a refugee, and is currently believed to be on the run in Turkey.

■

## CASE STUDY: HOW BRITISH JIHADISM COMPARES WITH THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT

While the 113 individuals in our sample are evidently connected to the global jihadi movement, comparison with previous research shows that they have significant British characteristics.

In April 2016, we published research on the lives and careers of 100 prominent jihadis from the Middle East and Africa.

While the importance of conflict hubs and certain global events is clearly reflected across both studies, our sample of British fighters shows jihadi activity in only 18 countries, compared with the 38 countries represented in the Middle East and Africa sample.<sup>23</sup> Our earlier sample contained senior figures in the jihadi movement, and in part because of their age, the Afghan conflict in the 1980s and '90s dominated the theatres of operation in which they had fought. For the current sample, where the average age is lower, Syria dominates, once the UK itself is discounted.

The sample of senior jihadis from the Middle East and Africa demonstrated the fluidity and change in the movement over the past 30 years: 76 per cent had fought in multiple conflicts,<sup>24</sup> and 51 per cent were members of multiple groups.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, only 50 per cent of the British sample fought in multiple conflicts, and only nine per cent were associated with multiple groups.

This difference may be due, in part, to variations in seniority of those in our sample. Of the British sample, 46 per cent of those still living are in prison, many of them for their first jihadi activity, whether fundraising, supporting, or plotting violent action. While several of the British jihadis in the sample have featured in jihadi propaganda, very few held senior positions. Most of the senior figures in our British sample were ideologues.

Further, the majority of the individuals in the British sample came of age after 9/11, at a time when the global movement was dominated by the fight against al-Qaeda-linked groups in various parts of

<sup>23</sup> Ahmed, Comerford, and El-Badawy, *Milestones to Militancy*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

the world. Subsequently, many have fought chiefly in Syria, where global attention is dominated by ISIS, and have not passed through other theatres of operation.

■

Profile

### MOHAMMAD AL-ARAJ

Born on a British Airways flight in 1990, Mohammad al-Araj grew up in Notting Hill, studying Mechanical Engineering at university before being arrested just before his final exams over his part in a violent protest against the Israeli conflict with Gaza outside the Israeli embassy. He served an 18-month sentence, before travelling to Syria to join then-al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra. He was killed fighting for the group in August 2013. In London, he was part of a network that included ISIS executioner Mohammed Emwazi and two jihadis killed fighting in Somalia, Bilal al-Berjawi and Mohammed Sakr.

■

Profile

### GERMAINE LINDSAY

Born in Jamaica in 1985, Lindsay moved to Huddersfield, Yorkshire, at the age of one. His parents separated shortly after his birth, and after his mother converted to Islam he followed suit in 2000. Towards the end of his teens, he started to wear robes to school, and married fellow convert Samantha Lewthwaite, whom he had met at a march by the Stop the War Coalition, in 2002. He was associated with British Islamist group al-Muhajiroun and Salafi cleric Abdullah al-Faisal. He also attended sermons by Abu Hamza al-Masri at the Finsbury Park Mosque. In 2004, he met fellow members of the 7/7 plot, and with them carried out a deadly suicide bombing on the London Underground in July 2005.

■



Individuals encountered this ideology in a variety of locations and through personal connections. Many in our sample were connected to a small number of Islamist and jihadi ideologues (see page 18), or attended a few mosques at which Islamist preachers were hosted. Some of these mosques were used as hubs for building networks and for radicalisation.

At least 17 per cent of our sample attended talks by Islamist preachers at Finsbury Park Mosque in north London. Key among these was Abu Hamza al-Masri, an imam and preacher at the mosque from 1997 until he was suspended in 2002, subsequently preaching outside its gates. He was also a leader of ‘Supporters of Sharia,’ an Islamist group.

## At least 77 per cent of our sample had links to Islamism, either through association with Islamist organisations or by connections to those who spread this extremist ideology.

A number who heard Abu Hamza preach went on to plot against or attack the UK. One notable example is Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the 7/7 bombers. Others include Dhiren Barot, the leader of a cell that planned to attack key financial institutions in the US as well as the London Underground; Ramzi Mohammed, a member of the 21/7 cell that tried to repeat the 7/7 attack; and Anthony Garcia, convicted for his role in the 2004 fertiliser bomb plot.

Abu Hamza’s preaching, which included public support for Osama bin Laden and the establishment of a caliphate, led to his conviction on charges including using threatening, abusive, or insulting words or

behaviour with intent to stir up racial hatred. He was later convicted in the United States for jihadi activities. Our sample indicates that his influence as an ideologue, preacher, and Islamist played a role in leading Britons to become jihadis.

Individuals in our sample have also frequented al-Manaar Mosque in west London, otherwise known as al-Manaar Cultural Heritage Centre. Six per cent of our sample attended, including two who joined ISIS and were later involved in an ISIS cell dubbed the ‘Beatles’: Mohammed Emwazi and Alexandra Kotey. The former, killed in a drone strike in Syria, is better known by the media’s epithet ‘Jihadi John.’ Although there is no evidence that the leadership of the mosque encouraged radicalisation, key connections appear to have been formed here.

Individuals in our sample also had connections to Islamist bookshops or markets that sold Islamist materials. One example comes from the links between the 7/7 cell and the Iqra Bookshop in Beeston, Leeds. Both Mohammad Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer were trustees of the establishment, and, together with Hasib Hussain, they were regular visitors.



### Profile ABDUL WAHEED MAJED

Born in the early 1970s, Crawley-based jihadi Abdul Waheed Majed was killed in a suicide bombing in Aleppo in 2014. He had been associated with the Islamist group al-Muhajiroun in the UK, occasionally serving as a driver for the group’s leader Omar Bakri Mohammad. In the 2000s, he attended an Islamic study circle with Omar Khyam, the ringleader of the 2004 fertiliser bomb plot. In 2013, he travelled with an aid convoy organised by his mosque to Syria, and stayed to join jihadi group Jabhat al-Nusra. The research director of the activist group CAGE, Asim Qureshi, wrote an article after Majed’s death describing it as a “selfless and sacrificial act.”<sup>26</sup>



<sup>26</sup> Asim Qureshi, “On Cylons, Sampson and Sacrifice,” CAGE, 20 February 2014. <https://cage.ngo/uncategorized/cylons-sampson-and-sacrifice>.

## Profile

## ANJEM CHOUDARY

Born in 1967 in Welling, Kent, Choudary studied law at Southampton University before qualifying as a solicitor, eventually becoming chairman of the Society of Muslim Lawyers. Radicalised in the 1990s, he became associated with Abu Hamza al-Masri and Omar Bakri Mohammad, working closely with the latter in the leadership of al-Muhajiroun. He was barred from practising as a solicitor for his activities in 2002. In 2013, Choudary was quoted at a rally threatening Muslim restaurant owners who sold alcohol, and saying “We don’t believe in democracy, as soon as they have authority, Muslims should implement Sharia. This is what we’re trying to teach people.”<sup>27</sup> When ISIS declared its caliphate in 2014, Choudary was vocal in his support, leading to his arrest and ultimate conviction. Choudary has been linked to multiple plots and attacks, and jihadis who have travelled abroad, mostly through membership of al-Muhajiroun and its related groups.

### CASE STUDY: AL-MUHAJIROUN AND ITS SPLINTERS

Of the individuals in our sample associated with Islamist networks, 50 per cent were connected to an Islamist organisation, the majority of whom were linked to the now-banned al-Muhajiroun or its splinters.

Omar Bakri Mohammad, one of the six most influential ideologues in our sample, founded the UK branch of al-Muhajiroun in 1996, having previously set up the group in Saudi Arabia in 1983. From 1987 to 1996, he was the leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, another Islamist group that appears in our sample.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is a global organisation that seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate, ruled by an extreme interpretation of sharia. It was established in 1953 in Jerusalem, and since then has spread to more than 50

countries. Although it is not violent, it seeks to achieve its aims through the infiltration of state institutions, achieving a position that would allow it to reshape the state in its image.

In his book *The Islamic State*, the founder of Hizb ut-Tahrir wrote, “The foreign policy of the Islamic state is the conveying of the Islamic Message to the whole world... [the method for] which is Jihad... Jihad is... the direct fighting in the way of Allah, or the contribution by either money, opinions, or literature.”<sup>28</sup> Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects democracy and secularism, and regards Western civilisation as incompatible with Islam.

Omar Bakri Mohammed left Hizb ut-Tahrir in 1996 and went on to form al-Muhajiroun UK. In August 2005, the latter was banned in the UK, although Hizb ut-Tahrir remains legal. Anjem Choudary, convicted in 2016 for inciting support for ISIS, was also a prominent figure in al-Muhajiroun.

Al-Muhajiroun calls for the removal of secular governments and the establishment of a caliphate in the UK, based on an extreme Islamist interpretation of Sharia law. The organisation has often staged rallies or protests to spread its message.

While it claims to stand against violence, its leaders have shown public support for terrorism abroad and have refused to condemn it in the UK. Some sources suggest that Anjem Choudary is linked to as many as 500 British jihadis in Syria.<sup>29</sup>

After the group was banned, several splinter groups emerged. In 2009, Islam4UK was formed and subsequently proscribed in January 2010. It continued to shape-shift, promoting the same ideology, through organisations including Need4Khilafah, al-Ghurabaa, the Shariah Project, Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama’ah, Muslims Against Crusades, Saviour Sect, and the Islamic Dawah Association. The name may have changed to evade the law, but the ideology and key individuals behind these groups remained the same.

28 Taqiuddin an-Nabahani, *The Islamic State*, Al-Khilafah Publications, 1998, 143–4.

29 Martin Evans, Nicola Harley, Ben Farmer, and Ben Riley-Smith, “Radical Preacher Anjem Choudary Behind Bars as Police Reveal his Links to 500 Isil Jihadists,” *The Telegraph*, 17 August 2016. [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/16/radical-preacher-anjem-choudaryehind-bars-after-drumming-up-su](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/16/radical-preacher-anjem-choudaryehind-bars-after-drumming-up-su).

27 David Churchill, “Anjem Choudary Warns Muslim Restaurateurs They Face Being Flogged if they Sell Booze at Brick Lane Rally,” *Evening Standard*, 16 December 2013. [www.standard.co.uk/news/london/anjem-choudary-warns-muslim-restaurateurs-they-face-beingflogged-if-they-sell-booze-at-brick-lane-9007511.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/anjem-choudary-warns-muslim-restaurateurs-they-face-beingflogged-if-they-sell-booze-at-brick-lane-9007511.html).

■

## Profile

## OMAR BAKRI MOHAMMAD

Born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1958 to a wealthy family, Omar Bakri Mohammad joined the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria before getting an education in Islamic Studies in Damascus, Cairo, and Saudi Arabia. In 1977, he was expelled from Syria and travelled to Beirut, where he joined the international Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir. In the 1980s, he formed the group al-Muhajiroun in Saudi Arabia, coming to the UK in 1986 after the Saudi government expelled him for his Islamist activities. Here he built up the al-Muhajiroun network, eventually splitting entirely from Hizb ut-Tahrir in 1996. He was an associate of Abu Hamza al-Masri, using the basement of Finsbury Park Mosque for meetings while Abu Hamza was the imam. He also recruited and taught Anjem Choudary, a solicitor who took over the leadership of al-Muhajiroun in the UK after Bakri was banned from the UK in 2005. Not only did he praise the 9/11 hijackers as the “magnificent 19,”<sup>30</sup> but he is also linked to the Lee Rigby killers, the 2004 fertiliser bomb plot, and multiple jihadis in Syria and elsewhere. He is currently serving a prison sentence in Lebanon for supporting terrorism. Two of his sons were killed after joining ISIS in Syria, one of them executed by the group.

■

JIHADI PROPAGANDA AND  
ONLINE RADICALISATION

The role of extremist material online in radicalisation is of legitimate concern to security services and policymakers. Of our sample, 12 per cent are known to have had jihadi materials in their possession or to have interacted with jihadis online. For 85 per cent of these, the materials were discovered around the time of their arrest.

Syed Farhan Hussain, a member of an al-Qaeda-affiliated cell that plotted an attack at a Territorial Army base in Luton in 2012, was found in possession of a variety of jihadi propaganda. Police found a hard drive containing a copy of *44 Ways to Support Jihad*,

30 “Police Raid Islamic Group,” *BBC News*, 30 July 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/3110115.stm>.

a publication by al-Qaeda ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki, who used the Internet as a tool for extremist indoctrination. Although he died in a drone strike in 2011, Awlaki’s teachings remain easily accessible online. Hussain had downloaded other jihadi resources, including al-Qaeda’s magazine *Inspire*. Content from these two publications in particular were frequently cited in our sample as materials of which jihadis were found to be in possession.<sup>31</sup>

## LONDON CALLING

At least 58 per cent of the individuals in our research were born in the United Kingdom. At least 49 per cent lived in London prior to, or while, engaging in jihadi activity. Twenty jihadis came from just five areas of the capital.<sup>32</sup>

Our sample indicates that, both inside and outside of London, there are clusters of jihadis in certain geographic areas. At least eight individuals are connected to London’s Ladbroke Grove, eight to Luton, and three to each of the London areas of Acton, St. John’s Wood, and Willesden. The individuals in these places often join forces to form a cell or group, sometimes as Islamist activists prior to engaging in jihadi activity.

The ‘London Boys’ was a network of extremists in the Ladbroke Grove area. Although operating as a unit in the UK, its members split and travelled to join jihadi groups in different parts of the world. Bilal Berjawi and Ibrahim Magag both joined al-Shabaab while Alexandra Kotey, Mohammed Emwazi, and Mohammed Sakr joined ISIS in Syria. This cell connects to another local group, which included Fatlum and Flamur Shalaku, Hamza Parvez, Mohammed Nasser, and Mohammed al-Araj.

London had the highest proportion from our sample. Not only is London the largest population concentration in the UK, but a plethora of key Islamist

31 Our previous research has examined how easy it is to access potentially radicalising Islamist material online. Non-violent Islamist organisations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir also have a strong online presence online, disseminating extremist ideas on their own websites and on mainstream Islamic sites. See Mubaraz Ahmed and Fred Lloyd George, *War of Keywords: How Extremists are Exploiting the Internet and What to Do About It*, London: July 2016. <http://institute.global/insight/co-existence/war-keywords>.

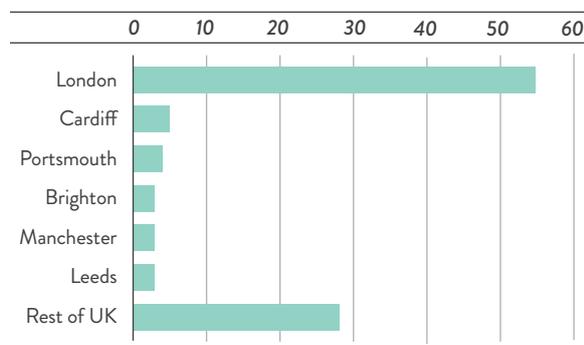
32 The areas were: Hammersmith, Willesden, Barkingside, St John’s Wood, and Acton.

ideologues there has led to the establishment of wide networks that have drawn others in. It was in London that many individuals in our sample interacted with prominent ideologues such as Abu Hamza or Omar Bakri Mohammad. Others, such as Abdullah el-Faisal, travelled around the UK to spread their message further afield.

Outside of London, our sample also found clusters in certain locations, often involving siblings, such as a Cardiff cell that counted the Muthana brothers and Reyaad Khan among its members. For many of the cities outside London, such as Cardiff, Portsmouth, and Brighton, these smaller groups have often travelled to fight overseas together.

FIG. 4.1 UK Locations

Number in sample



## A CRIMINAL PAST

Our sample indicates that a criminal background is no prerequisite for joining jihadi networks.<sup>33</sup> Fifty-eight per cent spent time in prison at some stage of their lives, while 89 per cent of those were jailed after having embarked on jihad. Only 13 per cent were imprisoned before they engaged in jihadi activity, half of whom were in young offenders' institutions. According to our findings, most convictions of British jihadis are for offences related directly to extremist activity; most of our sample were not petty criminals-turned-militants. Where they did have a criminal background, time spent in prison was often a factor in their radicalisation.

33 As this study focuses on a broad cross-section of British jihadism, this finding does not negate research into the links between criminality and jihadism. See, for example, Rajan Basra, Peter R. Neumann, and Claudia Brunner, *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus*, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), 2016. <http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ICSR-Report-Criminal-Pasts-Terrorist-Futures-European-Jihadists-and-the-New-Crime-Terror-Nexus.pdf>.

Prisons are known to be recruiting grounds for Islamist extremists.<sup>34</sup>

■

Profile

### ALEXANDA KOTÉY

Born in London in 1983, Alexandra Kotey converted from Greek Orthodox Christianity to Islam as a teenager, and was a regular attendee at the al-Manaar Mosque in Ladbroke Grove. In 2009 he travelled with Viva Palestine, an aid convoy led by former MP George Galloway, to Gaza, from which it is unclear whether he ever returned home. He subsequently joined ISIS, becoming part of the gang of British jihadis dubbed 'the Beatles.' He is believed to have been killed in the summer of 2015. His Islamist network in London included the so-called 'London Boys,' many of whom travelled to fight in Syria, and he is thought to have been directly involved in the radicalisation of four of those in our sample.

■

Profile

### MUTHANA BROTHERS

Nasser and Aseel Muthana were born in 1994 and 1997 respectively in Cardiff, and attended the al-Manaar Mosque in the city. In 2012 and 2013, they heard sermons by the Saudi Salafi preacher Mohammad al-Arefe, including at his mosque, one of which was advertised by Nasser. Following Nasser's journey to join ISIS in Syria in November 2013, Aseel's passport was confiscated, but with help from a friend he managed to get a new one, and followed in February 2014. Nasser appeared in an ISIS propaganda video in June 2014 with another Cardiff jihadi, Reyaad Khan.

■

In August 2016, the British government announced plans to place convicted extremists who promote terror and violence under isolation from the other inmates in order to reduce prison radicalisation. Of

34 HM Government, "Summary of the Main Findings of the Review of Islamist Extremism in Prisons, Probation and Youth Justice," London: August 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/islamist-extremism-in-prisons-probation-and-youth-justice/summary-of-the-main-findings-of-the-review-of-islamist-extremism-in-prisons-probation-and-youth-justice>.

those in our sample who spent time in prison prior to jihad, over a third show evidence of having been radicalised in prison and a third converted to Islam in prison.

Five of the seven individuals imprisoned during their youth spent time at Feltham Young Offenders' Institution in London. A 2015 report into the prison revealed there was a culture of gang violence in the prison, with inmates representing 48 different gangs.<sup>35</sup> Most of those in our sample who spent time at Feltham reportedly either converted or radicalised at the prison.

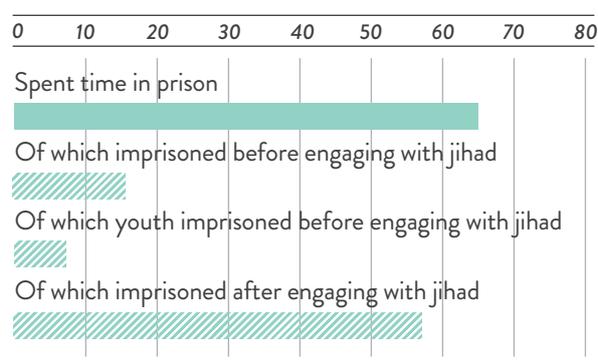
Jermaine Grant was handed a seven-year jail sentence after being convicted of rape when he was 14.<sup>36</sup> He started his sentence at Feltham and Grant's mother has revealed that he converted to Islam while behind bars.<sup>37</sup> Muktar Ibrahim attacked and robbed a 77-year-old woman in April 1995, and, less than a month later, joined in with a gang robbery.<sup>38</sup> He was sentenced to five years in prison and was initially sent to Feltham. While in prison he appears to have turned to Islamism. On release he became more overtly devout, growing a beard, and dressing in a Salafi style.<sup>39</sup> In both of these cases, the experience at Feltham was a key milestone on their journey to jihad.

For some of our sample, authorities recognised the potential danger posed by radicalisation behind bars. An example is the case of Kamel Bourgass. In January 2003, police raided a flat in north London and found a suspected chemical weapons laboratory belonging to him. He had been plotting to use ricin to attack London's transport network, and murdered a police officer in the course of his arrest. In prison, he was held in segregation for extended periods of time to stop him from influencing or dictating the beliefs of the other

prisoners. Bourgass challenged his segregation in court, claiming it was a breach of his human rights. The courts disagreed, although they did find that the segregation was unlawful for other reasons.<sup>40</sup>

Prisons provide fertile ground for jihadi and Islamist recruiters, and vulnerable people, including youths, are susceptible to radicalisation. Prison gang culture, the need for protection, and the desire to search for meaning while serving a sentence all feed into this vulnerability.

**FIG. 4.2** Criminality and Time Spent in Prison  
Number in sample



### CASE STUDY: FEMALE JIHADISM: FROM SMARTPHONE TO SYRIA

Jihadi ideology prescribes very narrow roles for women – typically in the home raising the next generation of militants. More recently, however, women have been increasingly visible in the ranks of jihadi groups. We compiled the biographies of 18 women to test assumptions about what, if any, common factors there are in British female jihadism. Our sample includes one woman born in the 1960s, seven in the 1980s, and nine in or after the 1990s.<sup>41</sup>

We have treated the women as a separate sample because their routes to radicalisation, the laws that apply to women under an Islamist interpretation of Sharia, and their roles within jihad are different from those of men. Examining the women separately also enables comparison with the men, despite the smaller sample size. Further, the total number of women to have joined jihadi groups is believed to be substantially

35 "Feltham Young Offenders' Home 'Rife with Gang Violence,'" *The Guardian*, 13 January 2015. [www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/13/feltham-young-offenders-prisons-report-gangs](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/13/feltham-young-offenders-prisons-report-gangs).

36 John Geoghegan, "Kenya Bomb Charge Briton 'was Normal Schoolboy,'" *Evening Standard*, 9 January 2012. [www.standard.co.uk/news/kenya-bomb-charge-briton-was-normal-schoolboy-7305854.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/news/kenya-bomb-charge-briton-was-normal-schoolboy-7305854.html).

37 Dipesh Gadher, "Britons 'Spearhead Kenya Terror Wave,'" *The Sunday Times*, 8 January 2012. [www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk\\_news/National/Terrorism/article852615.ece](http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/National/Terrorism/article852615.ece).

38 Sandra Laville, "Four Who Turned on Home that Gave Them Refuge," *The Guardian*, 10 July 2007. [www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jul/10/terrorism.world1](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jul/10/terrorism.world1).

39 "Profiles of the Five Men in Custody," *The Guardian*, 30 July 2005. [www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/30/july7.immigrationpolicy2](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/30/july7.immigrationpolicy2).

40 "Terrorists Bourgass and Hussain Win Prison Segregation Appeal," *BBC News*, 29 July 2015. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33699873](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33699873).

41 Dates of birth were not available for every member of the sample.

smaller than that of men; estimates suggest between 10 and 20 per cent.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, additional research into trends in the radicalisation of women is required.

Many of the women in our sample were engaged in fundraising or recruitment activities, rather than in operational roles in jihadi groups. However, some, such as Samantha Lewthwaite, have been accused of involvement in violent activities, too.

## The Journey to Radicalisation

While there were multiple contributing factors in the radicalisation of the women in our sample, three aspects stood out: Islamism, the online space, and family ties.

### Islamism

Forty-four per cent of the women in our sample were known to be linked to British Islamist networks prior to jihad. This proportion is considerably lower than that for the men in our sample, 77 per cent of whom had a connection of some sort.

For Amira Abase, Kadiza Sultana, and Shareema Begum – often referred to as the Bethnal Green girls – much of the discourse around their radicalisation focused on their wish to be jihadi brides and serve their militant husbands or their radicalisation online. What is not covered as much is their exposure to an extreme version of political Islam before travelling to Syria.

We know that Islamism was discussed by a family member of at least one of the Bethnal Green girls. Amira's father, Abase Hussen, was seen chanting at a rally led by Anjem Choudary in 2012. At the protest, American and Israeli flags were burned next to signs reading "The followers of Muhammad will conquer America." One of the murderers of Fusilier Lee Rigby, Michael Adebolajo, was also at the rally.<sup>43</sup> Although Hussen's Islamist stance does not directly categorise his daughter in the same ideological bracket, she may

have been exposed to Islamist ideas at her home.

### Online Radicalisation

At least 44 per cent of our sample of women were partly radicalised online, for half of whom there were no known Islamist links in person. Many more women than men (four per cent of whom are known to have accessed extremist material online) from our sample had an online element noted in their radicalisation.

Treena Shakil took her son to join ISIS in Syria in 2014 before encouraging acts of terror through social media. Prior to leaving, she had spoken online with Fabio Pocas, a prominent ISIS member believed to have been behind the footage of Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh being burned to death. Treena had also been in communication with Sally Jones, the British widow of Birmingham jihadi Junaid Husain and active ISIS online propagandist. These online interactions, alongside watching videos of Anwar al-Awlaki's preachings available on the web, radicalised her in the confines of her own home.

### Family

Sixty-one per cent of the women in our sample had relatives involved in jihadi activity, predominantly husbands or siblings. As leaving the home and meeting strangers is more challenging for women from conservative Muslim backgrounds than it is for men, face-to-face radicalisation by anyone who is not a family member or female friend is far less common.

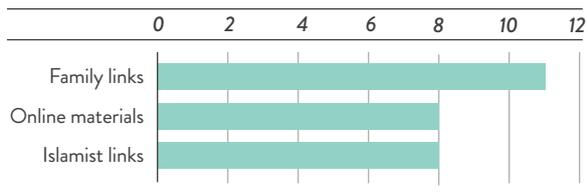
In the Halane family, Ahmed blazed a trail to ISIS in 2013, and his sisters, Zahra and Salma, followed the next year. As he went ahead and tested the terrain, Raphael Hostey, an ISIS recruiter, worked online to lure his sisters. The story of the Halane twins shows how multiple factors combine in the radicalisation process. For them, both family connections and online interaction played a role. Our sample shows that none of these influences work in isolation, with 44 per cent of individuals demonstrating at least two of our explored factors: family links, online interaction, and links to Islamism.

42 Edwin Bakker and Seran de Leede, *European Female Jihadists in Syria: Exploring an Under-Researched Topic*, ICCT, April 2015. [https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Bakker-de-Leede-European-Female-Jihadists-In-Syria-Exploring-An-Under-Researched-Topic-April2015\(1\).pdf](https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Bakker-de-Leede-European-Female-Jihadists-In-Syria-Exploring-An-Under-Researched-Topic-April2015(1).pdf).

43 Ben Morgan, "Jihadi Schoolgirl's Father Marched at Flag-Burning Rally," *Evening Standard*, 27 March 2015. [www.standard.co.uk/news/london/jihadi-schoolgirl-s-father-marched-at-flag-burning-rally-anjem-choudary-10138591.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/jihadi-schoolgirl-s-father-marched-at-flag-burning-rally-anjem-choudary-10138591.html).

**FIG. 4.3** Influences on Female Radicalisation

Number in sample



### Not Going Solo

While it is common for jihadis to travel in groups, some of the men travelled alone. In contrast, none of the women who travelled abroad to engage with jihadi activity went by themselves.

Of those who travelled abroad, 62 per cent of our sample made the journey with family members (including husbands), and 38 per cent travelled with friends. Although this can be seen as both a display of unity and one of reliance, the ideological constraints on women contribute too.

Our data also showed that, while most men did not take children abroad to join jihadi groups, women did. From our sample, 16 children were taken abroad by seven women. The vast majority went to ISIS-controlled areas where the group indoctrinates the children through a strict system of ideological schooling. The two men in our sample who did take children also travelled with their wives.

### Destination

Of the women in our sample, 15 travelled to Syria, two remained in the UK, and one went to East Africa. All those who went to Syria joined ISIS. These patterns highlight the power of ISIS' propaganda campaigns, specifically those targeted at women.

ISIS draws women by offering them a key role within the group's so-called 'caliphate,' giving them a sense of belonging and responsibility. ISIS' ideological vision of 'remaining and expanding' requires that in addition to securing new recruits, its jihadis need to have children.

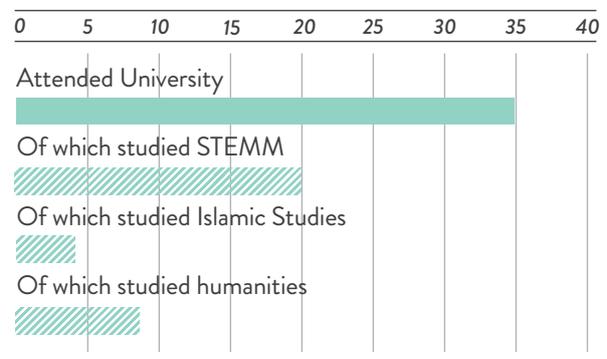
## EDUCATION

Our previous research shows that the global jihadi movement's leaders and ideologues are often highly educated, with 46 per cent having attended university, 22 per cent of whom dropped out.<sup>44</sup> At least 31 per cent of our sample attended university, and 14 per cent of those who started a degree dropped out.

The universities with the most individuals from our sample are predominantly based in London. Of those who attended university, 23 per cent went to the University of Westminster, Greenwich University, and Brunel University.

**FIG. 4.4** Subjects Studied at University

Number in sample



Our sample shows that 57 per cent of those who attended university studied STEMM subjects. As explored in our previous research *Milestones to Militancy*, this finding reinforces a theory that certain educational mindsets are more vulnerable to extremism: those that are attracted to simple, black and white answers and desires to avoid ambiguity.<sup>45</sup>

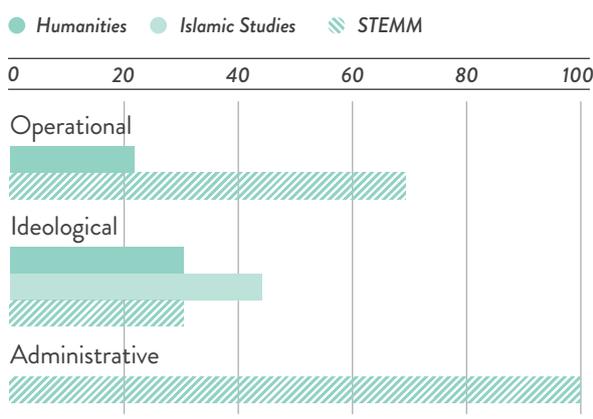
Considerably fewer individuals studied humanities, and only four individuals in our sample read Islamic studies, including Abdullah al-Faisal, Abu Qatada, and Omar Bakri Mohammad, all of whom studied abroad. These three ideologues have had a major influence on the Islamist movement within the UK. Abdullah al-Faisal spent years travelling the UK, preaching hatred and urging his listeners to kill Jews, Hindus, and Westerners, while Abu Qatada's influence as

44 Ahmed, Comerford, and El-Badaway, *Milestones to Militancy*, 21, 24.

45 Ahmed, Comerford, and El-Badaway, *Milestones to Militancy*, 24; Martin Rose, *Immunising the Mind*, British Council, November 2015, [www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/immunising\\_the\\_mind\\_working\\_paper.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/immunising_the_mind_working_paper.pdf).

**FIG. 4.5** Education by Primary Role

Number in sample



an extremist cleric was bolstered by his credentials as a scholar. All three clerics used their academic credentials to radicalise and recruit others.

Some in our sample were also radicalised on university campuses. Anthony Garcia, for instance, a member of al-Muhajiroun, was jailed in 2007 for his role in the 2004 fertiliser bomb plot. Though Garcia did not attend the university, he went to religious talks at the University of East London's Islamic Society with his brother Ibrahim Adam. In Garcia's trial, it became apparent that his radicalisation began after he watched a video at the society that showed atrocities committed against Muslims in Kashmir.

Islamic societies are created to serve the social, spiritual, and academic needs of Muslim students. In some instances, however, individuals from our sample used Islamic societies as a forum for disseminating Islamist ideology.

Mohammed Fakhri al-Khabass, a British medical student studying in Sudan, is said to have played a role in recruiting 16 students to ISIS in Syria and Iraq from a university in Khartoum, nine of whom were British medical students who flew out for studies abroad in March 2015. In 2011 he was president of the university's Islamic Cultural Association (ICA), which became considerably more extreme under his leadership. While many of ICA's meetings were uncontroversial, there are reports of closed meetings held off campus in which footage of victims in Syria were shown. Fakhri's influence on the cell of students was a significant factor in their radicalisation and eventual pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

– all of it aided by his ability to use the ICA as a vehicle to spread his message.<sup>46</sup>

## Profile

### ABDULLAH EL-FAISAL

Born in 1963 in Jamaica to an evangelical Christian family, Faisal, originally William Trevor Forest, converted to Islam in his mid-teens. He received a scholarship from the Saudi government to read Islamic studies in Riyadh, where he was influenced by the teachings of Osama bin Laden. After travelling to the UK in 1992, he started preaching at the Salafi Brixton Mosque, but was expelled a year later after falling out with the mosque's leadership. He then conducted preaching tours around Britain. He was closely associated with ideologue Abu Hamza al-Masri, with whom he shared speaking platforms, and Abu Qatada al-Filistini, his teacher. In 2003, he was sentenced to seven years in prison for soliciting murder and incitement to racial hatred in his sermons, including telling his audience "Those who want to go to Jennah [paradise] it's easy just kill a Kaffar [unbeliever]."<sup>47</sup> He has ties to at least six of the individuals in our sample, including Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza.

## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Thirty-four per cent of our sample have family links to jihad. Twenty-three per cent have siblings engaged in jihadi activity, forming 14 family units.<sup>48</sup>

Siblings from the same family tended to join the same jihadi groups and support each other's jihadi activity. They often either travelled together, or one would prepare the ground for his siblings. The Deghayes family is an example of both. Amer Deghayes left for Syria in October 2013 and his best friend, Ibrahim Kamara, soon followed with Amer's two younger brothers, Abdullah and Jaffar.

46 Daniel Sandford, "UK Medical Student 'Recruited for IS' at University in Sudan," *BBC News*, 17 July 2015. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33502534](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33502534).

47 "Judgement in Appeal of Crown v. El-Faisal, Supreme Court of Judicature, Court of Appeal", 4 March 2004. Archived from the original PDF on 19 May 2012.

48 Not every sibling is represented in our sample.

Recruiters make use of the power of family. Radicalisation is a journey that takes time and commitment from a radicaliser. When someone is able to spend time recruiting one person and manages to indoctrinate more family members in the process, the rewards for their investment are clearly higher. Their influence can then flow into the surrounding friendship group among other friends or family members who may wish to follow suit. In the case of the Deghayes brothers, police identified at least 20 people in the brothers' circles who were likely to travel to Syria. Most of them were under 18.<sup>49</sup>

Hussain Osman is another example of how wider family networks can be drawn into jihadi activity. He was a member of the 21/7 cell that conspired to attack London. At least four of his brothers and sisters-in-law were co-conspirators, helping him hide from the authorities.

■

Profile

### THE SHALAKU BROTHERS

Fatlum and Flamur Shalaku, born in 1995 and 1992 respectively, grew up in Ladbroke Grove and were two of at least seven British jihadis who attended Holland Park school. They also went to the al-Manaar Mosque and were radicalised in part by Alexandra Kotey, one of the gang of ISIS jihadis known as 'the Beatles.' In 2013, the brothers travelled to Syria to fight for former al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, before defecting to ISIS. Flamur was killed in combat in March 2015. Fatlum was killed carrying out a suicide bombing in May that year.

■

49 Mark Townsend, "From Brighton to the Battlefield: How Four Young Britons were Drawn to Jihad," *The Guardian*, 31 March 2016. [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/31/brighton-to-battlefield-how-four-young-britons-drawn-to-jihad-syria](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/31/brighton-to-battlefield-how-four-young-britons-drawn-to-jihad-syria).



# Methodology

## OVERVIEW

This research is based on the biographies of 113 British men, both citizens and residents, who had engaged in, supported, or abetted violent jihad. Information on each individual was gathered using open-source data. We used a wide range of online and offline sources to collect a comprehensive account of each individual's background and journey to violent extremism. We examined socio-economic indicators, educational background, and international travel, among other factors, in order to build a picture of an individual's life before and after their involvement with jihadism. The biographies were later coded according to recurring themes or traits across the sample. This allowed researchers to quantify the data and conduct more detailed analysis.

For our full sample, please see: [http://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC\\_Caliph-Country\\_Full%20Sample.pdf](http://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC_Caliph-Country_Full%20Sample.pdf)

## SELECTING OUR SAMPLE

Our selection was limited to men whose actions were of particular concern to Britain's security services through their citizenship, residency, or desire to target the UK. We also compiled the biographies of 18 women, but they have been excluded from the main sample (for more detail on the findings relating to the women in our sample, see page 28).

We restricted our examination to male jihadis for two reasons: 1) we had access to a larger sample for men, and 2) we considered it likely that the trends for women would be substantially different, due to the ideologies regarding women of the jihadi groups that we examined.

Our selection of 113 individuals was chosen to represent a broad spread of jihadism from across the UK, including a range of time periods, membership of

groups, participation in conflicts, as well as providing a reasonable proportion of the total number of British residents or citizens to have engaged in, supported, or abetted jihadi activity. While a precise account of how many British figures have been involved with the jihadi movement is unavailable, we are able to make estimates on the basis of prior research. As of October 2016, it was believed that at least 850 British residents or citizens had travelled to Syria or Iraq to join jihadi groups since 2011.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, research by Thomas Hegghammer in 2013 estimated that 700 European jihadis engaged in foreign activity and 263 in domestic activity in Europe from 1990 to 2010.<sup>51</sup> Using the assumption that the proportion of British fighters over this period was similar to that of the approximately 5,000 fighters to have travelled from the European Union between 2011 and December 2015 (15 per cent),<sup>52</sup> we reached an estimate that over 1,000 individuals have engaged in foreign or domestic jihadi activity from Britain over the past 36 years. As such, we judged a sample of 113 to be a reasonable proportion from which to gauge trends.

There has been less research into women joining or travelling to join jihadi groups. Estimates suggest that the numbers represented are significantly lower than for men (ranging between 10 and 20 per cent),<sup>53</sup> and available information on women who have engaged in jihadi activity is also limited. While we consider further research necessary, we believe that a sample of 18 is sufficient, given the constraints, for broad comparison

50 "Who are Britain's Jihadists?", *BBC News*, 10 October 2016. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985).

51 Thomas Hegghammer, 'Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting,' *American Political Science Review*, February 2013. [http://hegghammer.com/\\_files/Hegghammer\\_-\\_Should\\_I\\_stay\\_or\\_should\\_I\\_go.pdf](http://hegghammer.com/_files/Hegghammer_-_Should_I_stay_or_should_I_go.pdf).

52 The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, December 2015. [http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG\\_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf](http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf) – page 12.

53 Bakker and de Leede, *European Female Jihadists*, 1.

with the men in our sample.

## DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE

Individuals were selected if they had engaged in jihadi activity at some stage, whether perpetrating, supporting, or abetting violence, or if they gained criminal records for either intending to engage or encouraging others to do so. Individuals who do not have a criminal conviction but have been publicly identified by official bodies as subject to sanctions or other restrictions as a result of association with jihadi groups were also selected. The majority of our sample belong to the broader Salafi-jihadi movement, and 93 per cent were members of a jihadi group. The remaining members of the sample shared the ideology, but their actions could not be tied to a specific group. For these people, their support was manifested in partaking, intending to partake, or encouraging others to partake in violence inspired by the same Salafi-jihadi ideology.

Our selection was spread across generations, with the oldest members of the sample born in the 1950s, while the majority were born in the 1980s or 1990s and are associated with ongoing conflicts.

Within our selection criteria, our sampling was based only on the availability of open-source information. As such, our findings are representative of British jihadism. Some individuals for whom we had compiled biographies were subsequently excluded from the analysis on the basis of the weakness of available information compared to others in the sample.

## WHY ONLY BRITISH JIHADISM?

Conducting research on only British jihadism gives us the opportunity to hone in on a specific geographical area, mapping connections both domestically and globally to the wider movement. It allows us to examine the influence of global incidents, such as the start of a conflict, declaration of a so-called caliphate, or a foreign policy decision, on individuals within the UK's borders. It also permits us to analyse the specific local factors that drive the development of individuals and groups. Furthermore, we are able to yield specific results that feed directly into the British government's policies and approaches to counter-extremism.

In April 2016, we conducted research into a sample of 100 prominent jihadis from the Middle East and Africa, and this research is intended to be comparable to the previous sample.

## COLLECTION OF DATA

We used open-source material in English. This ranged from eulogies produced by groups, published biographies, academic research, grey literature, and journalistic material.<sup>54</sup> From these sources, our researchers looked for relevant information according to set categories. The following is a comprehensive list of the categories included:

- Name, legal and nom de guerre;
- Life dates;
- Place of birth, including town, city, or village;
- Descent;
- Place of upbringing;
- Death dates, including place and cause;
- Poverty level;
- Employment status prior to jihad, including type;
- Educational background, including level and content;
- Family background;
- Religious upbringing, including any relevant information on level of religious literacy;
- Notable influences on childhood. This could include significant events in a person's life, influential people in their lives, or influential literature;
- Criminal record, before and after engaging in jihad;
- Membership of a gang or cell;
- Islamist groups or networks joined;
- Jihadi groups or networks joined;
- Positions held within all networks or groups;
- Latest group or position held;
- International travel and influences. Alongside the data on specific travel destinations, any information of people the individual might have met during his travels was noted;
- Theatres of operation (i.e. what conflicts was the individual directly involved in?);

<sup>54</sup> Particular aids to the research came from previous studies in the field, most notably: Raffaello Pantucci, "We love death as you love life"; Robin Simcox, Hannah Stuart, Houriya Ahmed and Douglas Murray, *Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections*, Second Edition, Henry Jackson Society and Centre for Social Cohesion, 2011.

- Notable contacts, influencers, or known allies;
- Other notable facts.

All efforts were made to find information on each of these categories for each of the individuals in our sample. However, due to the nature of open-source material, gaps in the available data were a limiting factor. This factor was minimised by excluding biographies where background information was limited.

We took into consideration that subjectivity was a factor in collecting data, particularly in some categories. For example, it became apparent during the data gathering that the 'poverty' category relied too heavily on subjective accounts, and in any case, could only be stated with reasonable confidence for 18 per cent of the sample. As a result, we did not include the data collected in this category in our final analysis.

Problems also arose when gathering information on periods of conversion or radicalisation. When drawing from secondary sources, the time frame of radicalisation is difficult to clearly demarcate. Anecdotes from family members, friends, or onlookers are not always accurate and often details are amplified when reported. Where there was a lack of clarity, researchers were careful to report it with caution.

On occasion, the research revealed conflicting accounts on details of individuals. In each case where there were contradictions between sources of information, these were flagged and the validity of the various sources was assessed. We accounted for potential biases, and favoured formally published and academic material over grey literature or eulogies.

While every care was taken to ensure the accuracy of the final data analysed, on occasion the judgement of the authors was required to clarify disputed information.

## CODING OF DATA

In order to quantify the findings, the biographies of the 113 men and 18 women were coded manually using qualitative data analysis software, Nvivo.<sup>55</sup> Recurring trends and themes were flagged for potential significance. We followed this first layer of analysis with a more targeted qualitative analysis, taking into account the most recurring trends across the sample. We then assessed the significance of the results and contextualised findings according to the criteria laid out above.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Alexandra Frost, Najah al-Osaimi, and Rachael Garner for their research support.

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<sup>55</sup> See: <http://www.qsrinternational.com/what-is-nvivo>.



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For more than 30 years, British jihadis have been fighting under the banner of an extreme Islamist ideology in conflicts from Algeria to the Philippines. For half of that time, the streets of the UK have been seen as a legitimate target. Ideologues made their home in Britain, having been rejected from Muslim-majority countries because the ideas they expounded were considered dangerous. From the UK, they influenced many. In the last five years, the conflict in Syria alone has attracted over 800 British fighters.

Their ideology justifies the use of violent jihad to achieve its aims. Its proponents believe in imposing their interpretation of Islam on others as state law, with no tolerance for alternatives. They believe in brutally punishing apostates and subjugating women. It is Muslims who make up the majority of their victims.

The global jihadi network they are a part of goes back decades. The violence it wreaks is felt all over the world. In the final months of 2016, more than 18,000 lives were lost to jihadi violence or efforts against it. In all, some 58 jihadi groups were involved in at least 2,312 violent incidents in 41 countries.

What connects these disaffected individuals from Beeston to Brighton? How has a global, violent ideology captured the minds of so many British citizens and residents? And what can be done to stop others going down this path?

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