

the security apparatus to operate under fewer political constraints.

Underfunded and ill-equipped, the Lebanese military intelligence services, often in coordination with the internal security forces, have so far done a remarkable job in fighting the terrorism threat. Yet the threat is now arguably too big for a small country like Lebanon to handle on its own. The Lebanese government also has a legal responsibility to protect UNIFIL, but it cannot do this crucial job by itself. The newly-shaped Lebanese counterterrorism apparatus needs financial and technical help from its regional friends and from those countries that have a vested interest in preserving the fragile calm along the Lebanese-Israeli border. With a few terrorist leaders still at large and an unknown number of cells actively plotting attacks, UNIFIL continues to be at risk of another terrorist attack, the lethality of which this time could be greater than in the past.³⁹

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The Changing Scene in Londonistan

By Raffaello Pantucci

IN THE FIRST month of 2010, the world was reminded of the terrorism threat in the United Kingdom. Umar Farouk Abdulmuttalab's partial radicalization in London, the decision to finally proscribe the extremist group al-Muhajiroun and the ratcheting up of the terrorism threat level ahead of the Summit on Afghanistan all highlighted once again how the United Kingdom remains the focus of the terrorism threat to the West.¹ The nature of this threat, however, has changed since the days before 9/11, when London was often called "Londonistan" due to the heavy presence of extremist groups in the city.² Today, radicalization and extremist activity in the United Kingdom no longer occurs at the level it once did. Nevertheless, the activity still taking place is harder to legislate against and more difficult to combat.

This article will explain how "Londonistan" has changed during the last decade. Overtly violent extremist preaching has become much more discrete, while the internet has become a major feature in radicalizing young people. The article will also show how old and new threats have melded together to create a threat matrix that presents a new set of legislative challenges for British authorities.

The Banning of Al-Muhajiroun

One of the most visible parts of Londonistan was laid to rest in January 2010 when the British government finally took the step of adding al-Muhajiroun to the list of banned organizations under the UK Terrorism Act of 2000. The decision was officially

made because al-Muhajiroun was "another name for both Al Ghurabaa and The Saved Sect,"³ two descendent groups of al-Muhajiroun that had been banned in July 2006. The reason for the apparently back-to-front nature of the proscription was that al-Muhajiroun had officially disbanded itself in October 2004, likely out of concerns of impending proscription at the time.⁴ It rapidly re-established itself in a series of different groups, most prominent of which were al-Ghurabaa (The Strangers), The Saved Sect, and Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (The Followers of the Sunna). The first two were banned soon after they were linked to protests at the Danish Embassy in London in February 2006, which resulted in some individuals being prosecuted for inciting racial hatred.⁵ The third name, Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah, remains theoretically active, but has not yet been banned.⁶ Al-Muhajiroun, on the other hand, simply went silent, although individuals in the group described al-Muhajiroun as the overarching umbrella under which the other groups operated. More recently, the group marshaled its forces under the banner "Islam4UK," which was among the groups banned under the latest proscription order.

The actual decision to ban al-Muhajiroun was surprisingly controversial. The group had announced its intention to march through Wootton Bassett, a village that has become synonymous with British war dead due to the regular processions of coffins along the high street, and the public perception is that the ban was a reaction to this announcement. The British government, however, claimed that the decision was the product of a review of al-Muhajiroun's status by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Center (JTAC).⁷

1 Sean O'Neill and Giles Whittell, "Al Qaeda 'Groomed Abdulmutallab in London,'" *Times* [London], December 30, 2009; Dominic Casciani, "Analysis: Does Banning Terror Groups Work?" BBC, January 12, 2010; "UK Terrorist Threat Level Raised to 'Severe,'" BBC, January 23, 2010.

2 The term "Londonistan" was coined by the French security services who were angry at the volume of jihadist groups and individuals who found safe sanctuary in the United Kingdom and in its apparently lax legislation to counter radical groups not threatening British soil. Most were in London, hence the term Londonistan.

3 The official proscription order can be found at www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20100034_en_1.

4 Omar Bakri Mohammed, "An Official Declaration Dissolving Al Muhajiroun," www.almuhajiroun.net, October 8, 2004.

5 "Four Men Jailed Over Cartoon Demo," BBC, July 18, 2007.

6 "Theoretically" because the al-Muhajiroun descendent groups tend to operate using many different fronts, making it hard to ascertain which one is behind any particular activity.

7 Casciani.

39 Bilal Y. Saab and Magnus Ranstorp, "Terror Alert: Let Us Protect UNIFIL and Fast," *Daily Star*, February 1, 2010.

Regardless of the true reasons, the impact was minimal. While extremists retired the al-Muhajiroun name and closed down its most widely known website, www.islam4uk.com, they quite openly said that the decision was not going to affect them. "Unless the government can prove that you are ostensibly exactly the same organization, doing the same things at the same time, it's very difficult to clamp down," explained al-Muhajiroun's co-founder.⁸ In fact, new websites are already operating that provide the same sort of services as www.islam4uk.com, including providing speeches, videos and books by radical preachers such as Abu Hamza, Omar Bakri Mohammed and Anwar al-`Awlaqi, alongside the work of new younger preachers who claim to have trained at the feet of such men.⁹

This is the reality of the "new Londonistan," where a group of jihadists continue to espouse extremist rhetoric within the constraints of the British legal system, even if they are not as able to openly support terrorism as before. While to outsiders this might simply seem an extension of previous British policy of placating extremists so that they do not undertake violent actions in the United Kingdom, the truth is that British counterterrorism policy has moved far beyond this. The problem is that the threat has now evolved in a new direction.

The New Londonistan

Unlike the 1990s, today London is not a hub of openly jihadist international activity. The Finsbury Park Mosque is no longer a training ground and supply shop where terrorists can come and equip themselves with fake identification papers, currency and invitation letters to go to military training camps in Afghanistan.¹⁰ The wide Algerian network that used to operate with impunity from British shores has been for the most part chased

away, while the radical preachers who poisoned the minds of Britain's youth have been expelled from the country (such as Omar Bakri Mohammed) or are behind bars (such as Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada). The younger men who aspire to fill these individuals' shoes are also facing legal trouble and lack the experience on the battlefield or religious credibility that made the earlier generations so inspirational.

This has dulled one of the primary functions of Londonistan as a global threat: the United Kingdom is no longer an environment in which extremist ideologies can flourish and active recruiters can easily find individuals to rally to the cause. For example, Djamel Beghal, who allegedly operated out of the Finsbury Park Mosque and recruited Richard Reid, Zacarias Moussaoui and Nizar Trablesi,¹¹ and Abu Munthir, who allegedly played a critical role in the formation of the cell codenamed "Crevice,"¹² used the networks fostered by radical preachers to seek recruits. Some individuals who make up this shadow network continue to live in the United Kingdom and appear on the periphery of counterterrorism operations, and a few are under controversial "control orders."

Either way, the pools from which they might attempt to fish for recruits have been dried up to some extent. Previously, sessions organized by radical clerics would have provided fertile ground from which they might find excitable young men interested in graduating from vacuous preaching into physical violence. An openly radical fringe remains—as was mentioned earlier, al-Muhajiroun has merely morphed under new nomenclature—but the attention they attract from the security services and media makes it hard to imagine that serious terrorist elements would be drawn to their meetings.¹³

11 Steve Bird, "Quiet Existence in Leicester Suburb Masked a Complex Terrorist Network," *Times*, April 2, 2003.

12 Emily Flynn Vencatt and Mark Hosenball, "Pyrrhic Victory?" *Newsweek*, May 1, 2007. For more on Abu Munthir's role, see *Regina v. Mohammed Momin Khwaja*, Ontario Superior Court, October 29, 2008.

13 This is not to discount them altogether, aside from the fact that the government believes they are involved in terrorism and has hence proscribed them. In late 2009, the *Sunday Times* ran an interview from Pakistan with a for-

mer head of al-Muhajiroun in Ireland, Khalid Kelly, who claimed to be training in Pakistan's Swat to kill foreign soldiers. See "Irishman Wants to Kill for Islam," *Sunday Times*, November 15, 2009. Furthermore, a number of members have been arrested for various breaches of the peace and for charges linked to terrorism legislation.

14 Quoted in Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad* (London: Hurst & Co., 2007), p. 121.

15 Ibid.

Londonistan Goes Viral

The biggest threat from Londonistan, however, was the incubation of extremist ideologies that it provided. According to al-Qa`ida theorist Abu Mus`ab al-Suri, in the 1990s "being in London would place you at the centre of the events."¹⁴ The concentration of extremists, according to al-Suri, meant that he "found that there was an opportunity to resume my contribution [to jihad], and my participation in writing, by staying in London."¹⁵ This function still exists in some form, with openly radical and influential individuals still operating within the United Kingdom, but much of the dangerous rhetoric and radicalization has migrated online.

It is in the online world that individuals such as Aabid Khan and Younis Tsouli operated; both young men were

8 Fiona Hamilton, "Islam4UK's Radical Spokesman Anjem Choudary Pledges to Keep Preaching," *Times*, January 16, 2010.

9 One of these websites, for example, can be found at www.salafimedia.com.

10 Sean O'Neill and Daniel McGrory, *The Suicide Factory* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006) provides a comprehensive account of Abu Hamza and his activities at the Finsbury Park Mosque.

convicted of involvement in terrorism and were key instigators in a global terrorist network operating from the internet in the United Kingdom.¹⁶ Other individuals such as Nicky Reilly¹⁷ and Isa Ibrahim¹⁸ were instead apparently drawn in by material they found online and tried to build explosive devices on their own. Ibrahim was interdicted before he could execute his plot, but Reilly was only prevented by his own incompetence when his bomb failed to detonate properly in the middle of a restaurant in Exeter in May 2008.

It is also on the internet that security services are increasingly concentrating their efforts, attempting to identify threats through the internet or finding legal ways of charging people who step beyond the boundary with online extremism. These include individuals such as Krenar Lusha, who was identified through a network of online extremists and later convicted while in possession of an assortment of radical material as well as 71.8 liters of petrol and potassium nitrate,¹⁹ or Bilal Mohammed and Rizwan Ditta who both pled guilty to charges of distributing extremist material obtained online.²⁰ Other cases have proved more difficult, however, with a group of cases linked to the internet in Lancashire largely dropping off the radar for legal reasons.²¹ Moreover, part of the case against Mohammed Atif Siddique that stated he was involved in actual terrorist planning was overturned and he was released from prison, although other charges against him stood.²²

16 For more on this network, please see Evan Kohlmann, "Anatomy of a Modern Homegrown Terror Cell: Aabid Khan et al," NEFA Foundation, September 2008; Raffaello Pantucci, "Operation Praline: The Realization of Al-Suri's Nizam la Tanzim?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2:12 (2008).

17 Adam Fresno, "Nicky Reilly, Muslim Convert, Jailed for 18 Years for Exeter Bomb Attack," *Times*, January 31, 2009.

18 Raffaello Pantucci, "Britain Jails 'Lone Wolf' Terrorist Isa Ibrahim," *Terrorism Monitor* 7:23 (2009).

19 "Man Sentenced to Seven Years for Terrorism Offences," *Derbyshire Constabulary*, December 15, 2009.

20 "Muslim Man Who Sold DVDs Glorifying the 9/11 Atrocities Jailed Under New Terror Laws," *Daily Mail*, March 20, 2008.

21 "PM Death Plot Suspects in Court," *Derby Evening Telegraph*, October 4, 2008; "Jury in Blackburn Terrorist Trial Discharged," *Lancashire Telegraph*, July 27, 2009.

22 The charges that held include spreading extremist

material online, as he was linked into the broader Khan/Tsouli network. See "Siddique Terrorism Charges in Detail," BBC, February 9, 2010.

Conclusion

Radicalization remains an issue in the United Kingdom, although the threat has evolved away from the old structures that used to make up the infamous Londonistan. Radicalization today is more difficult for policymakers to legislate against. Dangerous extremist activities online are hard to distinguish from the vast mass of meaningless extremism on the internet, while parts of the real-world portion have melded into the mainstream of British political discourse. This makes it difficult to craft legislation that targets groups specifically that does not also catch harmless and legitimate forms of political discourse.

Physical jihad continues to hold sway, with events in Afghanistan and East Africa drawing young men into their thrall,²⁴ but the networks and extremist rhetoric that were previously responsible for the stream of individuals going to training camps have been forced into a less prominent position. Unfortunately, however, a hardcore of jihadist thinking remains, making what happens in the United Kingdom still relevant for the global fight against terrorism.

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material online, as he was linked into the broader Khan/Tsouli network. See "Siddique Terrorism Charges in Detail," BBC, February 9, 2010.

23 "Man Charged With Sending Terrorist Material by Email," *Daily Mail*, February 24, 2009.

24 The case of Mohammed Abushamma is instructive in the case of Afghanistan. See "Student Jailed for Trying to Fight British in Afghanistan," *London Evening Standard*, June 18, 2009. The Somali case is increasingly a concern. See Richard Kerbaj, "UK Students Recruited for Somali Jihad," *Sunday Times*, January 24, 2010.

Political Islam in Central Asia: The Role of Hizb al-Tahrir

By Emmanuel Karagiannis

ONE OF THE fastest growing global, Sunni Islamic political organizations is Hizb al-Tahrir (the Islamic Liberation Party, HT).¹ HT often escapes in-depth analysis because the group itself does not use violence to seek political change. As a result, it is not on the U.S. government's list of terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, HT is pursuing an agenda at odds with the West, and eventually the group could pose an active threat to the United States and its allies.

Profiling HT is important as the group is one of the most popular pan-Islamic organizations, counting tens of thousands of members.² While it rejects violence at this time, it is open to waging jihad once a proper Islamic state is established with the purpose of creating a global Islamic caliphate. To establish this initial Islamic state, HT is pursuing an agenda to make society more "Islamist" so that such a state can be established peacefully. Nevertheless, the group ascribes to a little discussed strategy called *nusra*, which means it could support a coup d'état by an armed force if that force is pursuing an Islamist agenda.

This article will provide background on HT, including its strategy to establish an Islamic caliphate. It will then profile HT's role in Central Asia, the region in which it is most active.

Background on Hizb al-Tahrir

HT was founded in East Jerusalem in 1953 by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, an Islamic scholar of Palestinian origin. In the decades since its establishment, HT

1 Hizb al-Tahrir is more commonly transliterated as Hizb ut-Tahrir.

2 HT's total numbers in Central Asia are not known because the group operates clandestinely. There are, however, some 6,000 HT members and sympathizers serving time in Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Tajik prisons. The U.S. State Department claims, for example, that as many as 4,500 HT members are currently jailed in Uzbekistan alone. See the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Uzbekistan - International Religious Freedom Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2007).