



STUDY GUIDE

WHY DO PEOPLE BECOME ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS?

KEY TERMS: extremist
narrative

indoctrination
victimhood

corruption

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video.
<p>What did Professor Ullah assume were the two underlying factors of people becoming vulnerable to extremist recruitment?</p> <p>What factors did Professor Ullah find that actually contributed people becoming vulnerable to extremist recruitment?</p> <p>What steps does Professor Ullah outline to mitigate extremist recruitment?</p>	<p>Why do people become Islamic extremists?</p> <p>How do 'outsiders' view religious extremism compared to how residents of Muslim nations view religious extremism?</p>

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Why do you think that extremist ideology appeals so much to some people, especially young males? Professor Ullah explains that, "...teachers and parents cannot assume that just because they reject religious extremism, their children and students will, too." Why do you think that young people in some societies don't always inherit the values of their parents and other authority figures?
- Professor Ullah explains that, "The ignorance lines goes like this: the poor have no chance to get a decent education and thus are susceptible to easy manipulation. Clever people play on their prejudices and superstitions. Once the extremist gets this ignorant poor person in his grasp, indoctrination is easy." Why do you think that so many people assume that religious extremism is caused mainly by poverty and ignorance? Are there any examples from history for these people to draw from to come to this conclusion? What other factors might people assume contributes to the process of religious indoctrination?
- We learn in the video that what actually drives people toward buying into extreme religious indoctrination is "...a desire for meaning and for order," "... a desire for change," and "...a strong sense of victimhood." Where do you think this mentality comes from? Plenty of other examples exist where people felt disenfranchised and all of the above factors without turning to terrorist tactics and violence to try to change their plight. Why do you think so many educated people in Muslim nations choose this reaction to their desire for meaning and change rather than choosing more peaceful and more effective measures (such as demonstrated by Ghandi and Dr. Martin Luther King)?
- As one solution to the problem of people becoming Islamic extremists, Professor Ullah states that, "...politicians have to stop blaming their countries' problems on the West and have to confront the endemic corruption that destroys countries like Pakistan from within." Why do you think that so many of these nations use the West as a scapegoat for their problems? How does blaming the West help those with power and influence in those countries? If the West were to go away, who would they blame then? What could realistically motivate the politicians in these countries to call out and confront the corruption that they all are subject to?
- People generally have it backwards. As Professor Ullah explains at the end of the video, "It is not poverty and misery that creates religious extremism. It is religious extremism that creates poverty and misery. And death," and that, "...extremism only makes things worse. Always and everywhere." Considering that this has been proven over and over again, why do you think that so many people find Islamic extremism worth fighting and dying for? What specific things do you think can be done to help the people most vulnerable to believing the Islamic rhetoric see that extremist movements don't ever actually bring order, meaning, and the better way to govern that they promise and instead only further victimize people?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: ISIS Recruiting

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “ISIS Teen CRISIS: Jihadist Recruitment of American Kids,” then answer the questions that follow.

- Which factors mentioned in the article comport with the explanation Professor Ullah gives in the video?
- What role does social media play in helping ISIS recruit from around the world? What could be done to mitigate the effectiveness of this tactic without impeding on privacy or engaging in unreasonable censorship?
- What can parents do to help their kids, especially boys, deal with the normal urges of rebellion, independence, and search for meaning that affects most youth in a manner that is productive and positive for those young people?



QUIZ

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- 1. Which of the following need to be done to combat Islamic extremism?**
 - a. The media have to stop treating extremists as freedom fighters.
 - b. Teachers and parents cannot assume that just because they reject religious extremism, their children and students will, too.
 - c. Islamic religious figures have to stop looking the other way.
 - d. All of the above.

- 2. Poverty and ignorance are the two overriding reasons people become religious extremists.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

- 3. When Haroon Ullah lived in the world from which extremists recruit, he lived in _____.**
 - a. Iraq
 - b. Iran
 - c. Pakistan
 - d. Panama

- 4. Which of the following is characteristic of a religious extremist?**
 - a. Poverty
 - b. University education
 - c. Ignorance
 - d. Large family

- 5. What drives people to extremism?**
 - a. Desire for meaning and order.
 - b. Desire for change.
 - c. Strong sense of victimhood.
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<http://unitedwithisrael.org/isis-teen-crisis-jihadist-recruitment-of-american-kids/>



ISIS Teen CRISIS: Jihadist Recruitment of American Kids

Oct 29, 2014

The Islamic State targets high school and college kids with Jihadist recruitment campaigns using social media and propaganda. Why do they seem to be succeeding among young people in the West and will things get worse?



IS terrorists execute another prisoner. (Photo: freemalysiatoday.com)

Sweden's security service announced last week that up to 150 people have left the country to join [the Islamic State](#) (IS or ISIS) terrorist group in the Middle East, *AP* reports. The service further announced that 23 of them were killed fighting as members of such terror groups.

Similar alarming reports are coming in from the U.S., Canada, Australia and many European countries. Germany has announced a ban on activities supporting IS, and Britain is prosecuting at least 50 British citizens who have returned from Syria.

A CIA report indicates that about 2,000 Westerners are estimated to have joined fighting in Iraq and Syria, with at least 500 from the UK, and more than 700 from France.

The [atrocities committed](#) by IS have produced horrifying headlines, propelling the terror group to an infamous place as a key threat to Western civilization. Furthermore, a fear that terrorists who have gained experience while fighting with IS will return to their countries of origin to establish grassroots terror networks concerns many security agencies around the world. Mehdi Nemmouche, a French citizen who had fought with IS and [shot four people](#) at the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014, provides a stark warning of the potential terrorist threat to the West by people "just like us".

[The Economist writes](#) that the war in Syria has become bloodier and more sectarian, and those drawn to fight there are increasingly radical. "Since IS declared a caliphate on June 29, recruitment has surged," the article says. "Syria has drawn in fighters faster than in any past conflict, including the Afghan war in the 1980's or Iraq after the Americans invaded in 2003."

What Draws Young Westerners to Become ISIS Terrorists?



Islamic State Terrorists. (Photo: news.vice.com)

The wave of young Western people flocking to fight with this notorious organization begs the question – why are they leaving behind comfortable lives of privilege to join one of the most violent terror organizations in history?

Christopher Dickey, a foreign editor of *The Daily Beast*, recently [said on CNN](#) that many recruits are young men in their teens and 20s. What draws them into the fight is a combination that he calls "TNT," which stands for Testosterone, Narrative and Theater.

They are “almost all young guys,...they passionately identify themselves with some oppressed people,” and “they want to project themselves on the world stage,” he explains.

Their drive is a deadly combination of youthful fantasies and aspirations to “be someone.”

The [Christian Science Monitor](#) elaborates on the reasons why young Westerners would become attracted to an Islamic terror group:

1. Appeal to sense of identity and place – According to news and FBI reports, IS typically preys on Western youth who are disillusioned and have no sense of purpose or belonging. Much like criminal gangs, IS offers disaffected teens a chance to join a group that gives them purpose and meaning.

IS offers structure and a defined place in the Caliphite society they have created. Such a surrounding can be appealing for someone who feels he is adrift in the world.

2. Appeal to a sense of religious obligation – IS appeals to a sense of religious duty and a youthful desire to express religious sentiments that make people feel connected to each other.

Many of these young people are new converts to Islam. Fighting a Jihad with IS serves as a proving ground for their new beliefs and, if they survive, a confirmation of the new “higher power” at their extremist fingertips.

Furthermore, IS’s publicized successes and their declared aspirations to dominate the world and impose Sharia law appeals to these young religious zealots.

YouTube Utopia: Glamorizing the Terrorist Lifestyle

IS has developed a sophisticated propaganda machine which they operate through social media. By depicting a perfect world which can be obtained through Jihad, IS lures these youngsters who are in search of a place they can call their own.

One good example of this is the “Ginger Jihadist,” a boy from Australia who is now the star of IS’s YouTube propaganda clips (see below). Clad in bullet belts, toting an AK-47 and hanging out with his Muslim “brothers,” the Ginger Jihadist portrays an image of cool defiance in the face of overwhelming odds, openly challenging the West to send their armies against IS.

Teenaged rebellion of some sort, a common and natural phenomenon most young people experience in their search to find out who they are and where they fit in the world, takes on a whole new level of risk when confronted with glamorized depictions of terror groups. With studies that show [one in three American teenagers experience bullying at school](#), the appeal to break through isolation and find acceptance becomes all the more real, even if it means adopting extremist ideologies. Kids who feel lonely and unimportant are prime targets for terrorist propaganda, and IS welcomes them to join the cause, promising them unity, strength and more meaning in their lives.

The number of recruits is still comparatively low, and yet it appears that these ripples may become a tidal wave. What can the West do to stop this worrisome phenomenon?

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