



ITSS
International Team
For the Study of Security
Verona

Summer School Track: The Terrorist Link

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Module Description

Twenty years after 9/11, terrorist-related threats remain concrete. In spite of territorial contraction, Daesh still permeates parts of Syria and Iraq. Boko Haram and al-Shabab keep bringing havoc to vast African regions. The Taliban have returned and, with them, so has fear of new Afghan terrorist havens. Within this picture, Europe cannot deem itself safe either. And yet, we still do not fully get terrorism. Even after all this time, mystery and myth continue to surround the phenomenon in question. What is terrorism? Can we actually define it? What causes terrorism? How can we counter Jihadist ideology? Why are al Qaeda and Daesh alive and kicking? Where do terrorists get their money from? Looking at the 'War on Terror', which were our successes and failures? What is the future of terrorism? Whilst challenging, this is exactly what we wish to explore.

Aims

A combination of frontal lectures, seminars, and live interviews and presentations by world-leading experts, this module has two aims. First, given the potentially charged nature of the topic, we invite participants to **embrace and appreciate complexity**. This is not to argue that individuals cannot mature their own views. Rather, this is to provide members with an in-depth understanding of the main underlying themes in terrorism studies, enhanced by first-hand accounts of terrorist and counterterrorist activity. In doing so, the module's second aim is to **inspire** participants to **think as holistically as possible**. During seminars, we will spark debate. We will challenge common wisdom. We will play the Devil's advocate and force you to put in other people's shoes, rendering this intellectual exercise interactive, stimulating, and thought-provoking.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, participants will be able to demonstrate the following:

Knowledge and understanding of:

- Major dilemmas surrounding definitions, theories, and causes of terrorism
- History of terrorism
- Jihadist ideology and related counternarratives
- Evolution and current status of al-Qaeda and Daesh
- Terrorism financing
- Successes and failure of the War on Terror
- Future trajectories of terrorism

Skills (specific to the module):

- Identification and application of possible counternarratives
- Identification and application of measures against terrorist financing
- Identification and application of parameters to assess counterterrorist strategies

Transferable/employability skills (through the seminars):

- Communication and presentational skills
- Balance in crafting an argument by appreciating complexity, avoiding jumping to uncorroborated conclusions
- Mental flexibility – as explained below, members are to think as critically and as holistically as possible
- Respect – for every actor’s research, work, and overall perspective

Teaching arrangements

The module is divided into **eight lessons** spread across **four weekends** – i.e. one on Friday morning and one Friday afternoon for four consecutive weekends, equalling **12 hours total**. Teaching sessions will be delivered remotely. Lessons feature **frontal lectures** (1 hour) and **short seminars** (30 minutes). Images, videos, online material, as well as live interviews with world-leading experts and former terrorists/extremists, will facilitate interactive and practical lectures. Seminars gravitate around one or two pivotal questions that naturally arise from the underlying themes. **Participants are encouraged to engage**, contribute to scholarly debate, defend their arguments and, ultimately, share potential solutions to concrete problems.

Hence, this is how the module is specifically divided:

Friday, June 10th, 2022

Lesson #1: “Introduction to terrorism and counterterrorism”

What is terrorism? Why is the latter so difficult to conceptualise? What are the main challenges in counterterrorism? Why do we need an internationally shared definition of terrorism? In this session, Dr Michele Groppi and world-leading expert Boaz Ganor (Reichman University) introduce seminal definitional debates in terrorism studies, zooming in on the need for a shared definition of terrorism.

Lesson #2: “History of terrorism”

When has terrorism started? Is the latter new? Which are the parts of the world traditionally affected by terrorism? Which types of terrorism has the world seen? In this session, Dr Groppi and Mr Omri Brinner (ITSS Verona) take on a historical journey from antiquity to modern time, highlighting major trends and differences in the evolution of terrorism.

Friday, June 17th, 2022

Lesson #3: “Causes of terrorism”

What causes terrorism? Why would individuals and groups radicalise and embrace violence in the name of their cause? In this session, Dr Groppi and Ms Adelaide Martelli (ITSS Verona) explore the vast myriad of drivers that trigger terrorism. Emphasis is particularly allocated on social, political, economic, and psychological factors associated to violent radicalisation.

Lesson #4: “Jihadist ideology and recruitment”

Why could extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and Daesh be able to recruit many individuals? What are the key attributes of Jihadist ideology? How can the hijacking of Islamic tenets be ideologically countered? In this session, Dr Groppi conducts a live interview of former extremist Mr Noor

Dahri (Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism), offering theological and practical tools to identify and debunk Jihadist religious justifications for terrorism and political violence.

Friday, June 24th, 2022

Lesson #5: “Anatomy of al-Qaeda and Daesh”

Why has al-Qaeda survived for more than three decades? Why is Daesh still alive and kicking? How do terrorist organisations evolve and adapt? In this session, Mr Francesco Bruno (ITSS Verona) illustrates various operational, organisation, and tactical aspects that explain the longevity and adaptation of terrorist groups, providing theoretical and concrete courses of action for counterterrorism.

Lesson #6: “Terrorist Financing”

Where do terrorists get their money from? Who gives them money? How do they manage it? In this session, Dr Groppi conducts a live interview with world-leading expert and former member of al-Qaeda Aimen Dean, shedding light upon the logic and the methods of terrorist financing, proposing practical ways to identify and counter such illegal activities.

Friday, July 1st, 2022

Lesson #7: “Assessing the War on Terror”

After 20 years, how are we doing? What are the metrics and the parameters that are to be used when assessing counterterrorist strategies? What makes a good counterterrorist strategy? In this session, Dr Groppi, Mr Omri Brinner, and Mr Shahin Modarres (ITSS Verona) discuss premises, objectives, accomplishments, and failures of the War on Terror.

Lesson #8: “Future of terrorism”

What does the future hold? Which type of terrorism are we going to witness? In this session, Mr Carlotta Rinaudo (ITSS Verona) conducts a live interview with world-leading expert Brian Jenkins (RAND) on the future of the terrorist threat, with particular reference to conspiracy theories and far-right movements.

Module requirements

There are no formal requirements for this module. Everyone with an interest in the aforementioned topics is welcome.

Referenced sources/Supplemental materials

A full list of reading/viewing materials will be provided in due course.