


INSTITUTE *for* STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

# ISIS and Nusra in Turkey

## Jihadist recruitment and Ankara's response

MONICA MARKS

**About this paper**

This report is part of a four-part series that examines the threats posed to Turkey by regional instability, terrorism and extremism, and how the Turkish government has sought to manage or challenge these threats. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue is grateful to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for supporting the publication of this series.

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# 1 Introduction

Turkey's commitment to combating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has come under scrutiny since the group's rise in early 2014. Critics, including senior members of the United States and European Union administrations, have alleged Ankara adopted an open door policy to jihadists, making the country a "jihadist highway" through which foreign fighters flowed easily into and out of Iraq and Syria.[1] In 2015 the US and EU acknowledged improvement in Turkish cooperation against ISIS.[2] Yet both actors continue to doubt if Ankara's will to fight ISIS matches its determination to subdue the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) or its commitment to constitutionally enshrine the presidential system sought by president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In the midst of these conversations, comparatively few studies have examined jihadist recruitment within Turkey – the push and pull factors spurring Turkish citizens to join jihadist extremist groups in Iraq and Syria or Ankara's attempts to dissuade them. These are critical issues: Turkish citizens claiming ISIS membership perpetrated three of the five major attacks linked to ISIS in Turkey, killing nearly 150 and injuring approximately 650 persons since 2015.[3] Turkish citizens may have provided logistical aid to Russian, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz ISIS members who perpetrated the June 28, 2016 attack at Istanbul's Ataturk airport, which killed another forty-five and injured over 230 persons. Beyond local sleeper cells potentially supporting Turkish and foreign jihadists, veterans of jihad are likely to be more lethal operatives.[4] This means Turkey may face increasingly dangerous blowback as ISIS positions are squeezed in Iraq and Syria and Turkish fighters return home.

This report highlights core contours of jihadist recruitment in Turkey and unpacks key push-pull factors that motivate individuals to fight with jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria. It concludes by offering insight into how Turkey's government is framing the problem. The report draws on leading research about Turkish fighter recruitment, first-hand examination of Turkish language jihadist propaganda from relevant groups, and face-to-face conversations with representatives of the Turkish government.

# 2 How many Turkish jihadists are active?

The Soufan Group (TSG), a security intelligence firm, estimates 2000 to 2200 Turkish nationals have travelled to join jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria.[5] TSG likely based its estimate on figures from Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which handles coordination with international actors to counter violent extremism. The MFA reports that, as of June 2016, five hundred Turkish citizens had died as jihadists in Iraq and Syria and an additional 1100 Turkish citizens are currently fighting there with jihadist groups.[6] The MFA also claims Turkey has arrested approximately nine hundred of its citizens on evidence of involvement with jihadist groups.[7] Combining the government's numbers of Turkish citizens killed, those currently fighting, and those arrested yields a total estimate near TSG's figure. These numbers place Turkey as the fourth highest contributor of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria – behind Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. Turkey's ratio of foreign fighters is far less than Tunisia's, but greater than Russia's.[8]

Turkey has been critical of what it sees as Western preoccupation with jihadists, asserting that ISIS and the PKK are equal threats.[9] Ankara contends discussions of foreign fighters active in Iraq and Syria should also include estimates of PKK-linked terrorists. This report acknowledges the existence of such critiques, but to limit length and sharpen focus exclusively analyses jihadist recruitment in Turkey.

# 3 Which jihadist groups are Turkish nationals joining?

Turkish nationals have tended to affiliate with one of two jihadist extremist groups active in Iraq and Syria: ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra. Smaller numbers have joined Ahrar al-Sham and Nusra-affiliated battalions, including the Turkestan Islam Cemaati (Turkestan Islamic Movement) and Jaysh al-Islam. In 2013 ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra ended a short period of collaboration that took place during the earlier stages of Syria's civil war, and their patterns of recruitment subsequently specialized. Nusra, an al-Qaeda affiliate led by and comprised principally of Syrians, has focused on ousting Assad; ISIS, led mainly by Iraqis but operated by over 30,000 foreign fighters, has concentrated on controlling conquered territories and realising its vision of a transnational caliphate.[10]

In the West, ISIS notoriously attracts foreign recruits using polished publications and propaganda videos that showcase its ruthless acts. This also holds true in Turkey, where savvy propaganda and dramatic military gains likewise manufactured a buzz of fame, flash, and start-up style success around ISIS, helping it attract recruits.[11]

Though Nusra invests less in mediatized recruitment of foreign nationals, Turkish-language websites and social media accounts supporting Nusra are easily accessible.[12] These are considerably less restricted in Turkey than ISIS sites, which the government began closing in summer 2015.[13] This indicates that although Ankara declared Nusra a terrorist

organisation in June 2014, it enjoys more margin of manoeuvre to recruit within Turkey than ISIS, likely because it has not yet perpetrated attacks in Turkey or demonstrated interest in doing so.[14]

ISIS has attracted two thirds more Turkish recruits than Nusra, according to Turkey's MFA.[15] In Turkey, ISIS is known for employing a less rigorous selection process than Nusra and for attracting less ideologically sophisticated recruits. These lower entry barriers may have facilitated ISIS recruitment.

While ISIS has a reputation of welcoming recruits to martyrdom, Nusra – both in and outside Turkey – is perceived as more disciplined, centralized, and pickier about potential recruits. Applicants typically need references from known Nusra members and are encouraged to know some Arabic.[16] According to one source, Nusra recruits must also complete an ideological indoctrination course lasting three weeks at various safe houses in Turkey before being sent to Syria.[17] Potential Nusra recruits are also encouraged to possess skills useful to the group, such as medical know-how or ability to build websites or use a gun.[18]

Historical networks represent another difference in the groups' recruitment. Nusra has relied especially heavily on al-Qaeda networks built from participation in prior waves of jihad. Turkish citizens who joined those jihads predominantly affiliated with al-Qaeda, to which Nusra is linked, and some kept their networks alive. These prior waves of jihad included the fight against Soviets in Afghanistan during the 1980s and the fight against Serbs in Bosnia in the 1990s, conflicts in which hundreds of Turkish citizens participated and were often heralded as heroes by their countrymen.[19] Turkish nationals also participated, albeit in smaller numbers, in subsequent jihads in Somalia and Ogaden in Ethiopia, and against the American occupation of Iraq in the 2000s.[20] Many Chechens who had fought with al-Qaeda also saw Turkey as a country of safe harbour, and some of Nusra's first foreign fighter recruits to Iraq and Syria were Chechens and Uzbeks living in Turkish cities, such as the Zeytinburnu, Basaksehir, and Fatih districts of Istanbul.[21]

ISIS recruitment in Turkey, by contrast, has appeared patchier, more personalised, and less tethered to historical al-Qaeda networks. "ISIS

recruitment is more in patches," said a representative of Turkey's MFA. "Its recruitment patterns are more coincidental than Nusra's which makes it harder to spot."[22] With lower ideological and network entry barriers, and glossier forms of "pop jihadist" propaganda, ISIS has lent itself to more individualised and spontaneous recruitment. Researcher Omer Behram Ozdemir, an expert on Turkish jihadism, described the difference with an unexpected but potentially useful metaphor: "Nusra people are more like jazz lovers," he said. "They know just what they're looking for. But ISIS is more like [the Turkish pop star] Tarkan – people just fall into it. They don't know so much about the lyrics, but the rhythm, the tempo, fills them with excitement."[23]

Turkish nationals also seem engaged at different echelons in the two groups. Nusra frequently employs Turkish nationals at high levels. Umit Yasar Toprak, better known as Abu Yusuf al-Turki, is likely the best-known example of a Turkish national who fought prominently with Nusra. Al-Turki headed an elite Nusra sniper unit in Idlib, Syria, overseeing other Turkish snipers. Following his execution in a US airstrike, Turkish websites close to Nusra produced commemorative films about al-Turki.[24] Many heavy weapons experts in Nusra have also hailed from the city of Bingol in southeast Turkey.[25] ISIS, by contrast, typically employs Turks at lower levels, using them – as it uses many Western recruits – for cannon fodder, and denying them equal spoils of war.[26] Some Turks, most notably Yunus Durmaz, the now-deceased "ISIS emir of Gaziantep," have proven exceptions to this rule, playing a crucial role controlling ISIS smuggling routes through and planning attacks within Turkey.[27] Yet individuals like Durmaz seem to be the exception that proves the rule. Fresh Turkish recruits, however, are often unaware of this difference in how Nusra and ISIS engage Turkish nationals within group ranks – another possible reason ISIS has attracted more Turkish fighters.

Despite differences between Nusra and ISIS, some Turkish nationals have switched their support from one group to the other. Halis Bayancuk, better known as Ebu Hanzala, is one such example. A cleric who began in the al-Qaeda network, Hanzala was widely regarded as a pro-ISIS pundit by July 2015 when he was arrested in Istanbul. Multiple factors, including perceptions of group success and prospects for personal advancement,

motivated certain individuals to switch loyalties. One researcher recalled a man he'd interviewed switching loyalties from ISIS to Nusra because of the former's ban on smoking but said that, in general, ISIS recruits are "more convertible" because of their "weak ideological backgrounds."[28]

The Turkish government says it's aware of crossover between ISIS and Nusra. "That's why we don't distinguish [between the two groups] from a threat perception perspective," said a member of the MFA's jihadism task force. "But from a threat diffusion perspective the distinction becomes useful."[29]

# 4 Which Turkish citizens are joining?

Turkish intelligence has not publicised figures on the demographic breakdown of jihadist recruits, or shared these figures with Turkey's MFA. Such data points would include recruits' ethnicity, the neighbourhoods they are from, and their educational and economic backgrounds.[30]

It is clear, however, that Turkish recruits to both ISIS and Nusra are overwhelmingly young, usually ranging in age from their mid-teens to mid-thirties.[31] Based on data compiled by Aaron Stein, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, the average birth year of Turkish Islamic State fighters is 1990.[32] They are also overwhelmingly male. Turkey's MFA lacks exact figures on gender breakdown, but says ISIS recruits nearly all the Turkish women currently joining jihad. "There are typically fewer female recruits in right-wing radicalisation," said an MFA representative. "But ISIS is different. We're trying to suss out whether they're going to live the caliphate dream as pious women of charity or whether they're going to fight."[33] ISIS has popularised a model of settler colonial recruitment that appeals to both genders in Turkey and elsewhere. This differentiates it from Nusra, which has issued fatwas defining Iraq and Syria as a "*dar al-harb*" (war zone) that women should avoid unless accompanying their husbands.

Regarding their hometowns, Turkish nationals joining jihadist groups have hailed everywhere from Izmir, a prosperous secular city on Turkey's ethnically Turkish Aegean coast, to Adiyaman, a hardscrabble town

in Turkey's more Kurdish-populated southeast. Identifying specific hotspots for jihadist recruitment in Turkey is therefore difficult. Detailed breakdowns exist, however, of the locations across Turkey where ISIS has carried out attacks.[34] These may or may not strongly correlate with areas where ISIS is recruiting.

# 5 What factors are motivating them to join?

Both the push factors sparking violent radicalisation amongst Turkish nationals and the pull factors spurring them to fight in Iraq and Syria follow basic radicalisation patterns observed elsewhere. Personal alienation, socio-economic dislocation, and online recruitment, for example, play important roles in many of their recruitment trajectories. Yet push and pull factors frequently play out in fascinatingly local ways, as socio-economic and political cleavages specific to the Turkish context induce nationals to join.

**Push factors:** Personal and environmental dislocations constitute core push factors in Turkey. The first reflects an axiomatic pattern in push factors, whereas the second reflects more local specificities.

***Personal dislocation:*** Feelings of personal dislocation, like depression and alienation, are common push factors toward violent extremism in Turkey as elsewhere. "Many people fighting with ISIS in Syria want to make a new life," observed Ozdemir. "They've had a bad breakup, a business operation went south, they've been battling depression, or a family member died. They can come to see going to Iraq or Syria as a form of salvation."[35]

***Environmental dislocation:*** Common push factors related to environmental dislocation – like living in a neighbourhood plagued by crime, drug abuse, or high unemployment – are also present in Turkey. These universal push factors play out, however, in locally contextualized ways that distinguish Turkish recruitment from global trends.

For starters, Turkey's relatively high standard of living – its GDP is over sixteen times greater than Tunisia's, the world's largest per capita supplier of jihadists – blunts the impact of recruitment strategies that exploit extreme poverty.[36] Unlike Tunisia, for example, potential recruits in Turkey are rarely so poor that they cannot afford to marry, or that a 400 USD monthly salary from ISIS would in and of itself appear exciting. This means that ISIS's promises of marriage partners and nominal salaries have rarely served as sufficient motivating factors in Turkey.

Instead, anecdotal evidence suggests that other, more context-specific push factors may be at play. Researchers who have conducted first-hand interviews with Turkish jihadists observe, for example, that many seem to have been impacted by the negative fallout of urban renewal and socio-economic dislocation provoked by Turkish-Kurdish unrest in the 1980s and 90s.

Dogu Eroglu, a Turkish researcher who interviewed ISIS and Nusra fighters across Turkey, observed these push factors at work in the Sincan and Hacibayram neighbourhoods of Ankara, places where ISIS has been known to recruit. These traditionally conservative neighbourhoods suffered as a result of urban renewal, facing higher than average levels of unemployment, drug addiction, and limited access to quality education.[37] Similar patterns of environmental dislocation abound in some areas of Istanbul that have produced jihadist recruits, including Bagcilar and Sultanbeyli, according to researchers.[38]

***Disproportionate Kurdish recruitment:*** These structural push factors intersect with another pattern of jihadist participation more specific to Turkey, namely the prevalence of Kurdish recruits, many of whom suffered from socio-economic dislocation as a result of Kurdish-Turkish tensions in the 1980s and 90s.

Although both ISIS and Nusra have recruited Turkish nationals across ethnic Turk, Kurd, and Zaza backgrounds, a disproportionate number of ethnic Kurds have joined.[39] This appears at first glance highly surprising, given the existential enmity between ISIS and PKK-linked Kurdish nationalists – groups that seek to obliterate each other's respective visions of territorially consolidated caliphate and autonomous Kurdish statehood. Researchers who have investigated the topic, however, point

to two push factors that have strongly impacted Kurdish-majority areas: socio-economic dislocation and far right Islamist mobilization.

Highlighting socio-economic dislocation as a causal mechanism, Eroglu observed that most recruits from Konya, a mid-sized central Anatolian city, come from predominantly Kurdish neighbourhoods on the city's outskirts whose inhabitants often moved there as internal migrants displaced during 1980s. "They were very easy targets," said Eroglu, "because they were conservative, poorer, and didn't have any Kurdish nationalist identity."[40] Similarly Kurdish-majority cities in Turkey's southeast, like Bingol and Adiyaman, have been targeted for recruitment "because there's a lot of conservatism and poverty, but not much else going on," according to Noah Blaser, an American journalist who has interviewed jihadist recruits in Turkey's southeast.[41]

At the heart of such trends lay shared experiences of underdevelopment and socio-economic dislocation, both of which have hit Kurdish majority areas hardest. Mehmet Kurt, an associate researcher at London's Queen Mary University, attributes outsized Kurdish participation in jihadist groups to these socio-economic push factors. "If you take human development indicators into account," he said, "whether in terms of education, access to healthcare or poverty.. it is easy to distinguish the Kurdish region of Turkey as [the place] where [those] indicators are at their lowest."[42] Kurt illustrated his point with the example of Bingol, a city that has one of Turkey's highest suicide rates.[43] "Here, young people are looking for something," said Kurt. "This quest for oneself can lead a drug addict to become Salafist [a strictly orthodox Sunni Muslim] or a member of the PKK."[44]

These patterns in Turkish push factors may represent recent variations on a decades-old theme, in which socio-economic dislocations amongst Turkey's Kurds have exacerbated both Islamist extremism and PKK recruitment – dynamics that oppose, and reinforce, one another.[45] Dr. Haldun Yalcinkaya, Coordinator of Security Studies at the Ankara-based Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM), characterises Kurdish Islamist and ethno-nationalist extremisms as "mutually reinforcing hostilities." "If we manage to improve one, we fight the other," he said. "But conversely if we fail, we fail on both fronts."[46]

Despite evidence indicating an intersection between structural patterns of dislocation and Kurdish recruitment, comparatively little research seeks to verify or explore the implications of these trends. Researchers have hesitated to write about possible connections between Turkey's Kurds and jihadism for two reasons. Firstly, official government statistics on fighters' ethnicity are not available, so evidence remains mainly anecdotal. Secondly, some researchers are wary lest jihadism become labelled a Kurdish problem in Turkey.[47] Social displacement, many stress – not ethnicity – is the key environmental push factor propelling Turkish citizens toward jihad. "The typical ISIS recruit," says Blaser, "is someone who lives in a community that's had its fabric ripped out, targeted for urban renewal, or disrupted in some other important way – regardless of religion or ethnicity."[48]

**Pull factors:** To persuade Turkish citizens to travel to Syria and Iraq as jihadist fighters, ISIS and Nusra employ a range of discursive and networking techniques. Aspirational and antagonistic narratives, disseminated powerfully through online Turkish language propaganda, as well as personalised recruitment networks function as pull factors that entice Turkish nationals to physically join the current Iraq-Syria jihad.

***Online propaganda:*** Online propaganda in Turkish has been central to recruitment efforts of Nusra and ISIS. Forms of propaganda include videos and *nasheedat* (jihadi songs) with Turkish translations, as well as Turkish-language jihadist magazines, websites, and social media accounts. ISIS supportive websites and social media accounts were readily accessible before March 2015, when Istanbul's Third High Criminal Court ordered the closure of Takva Haber, Turkey's leading ISIS website.[49] Turkey's principal ISIS websites, including Takva Tube, a video sharing website, and EnfalMedya, which opened following the closure of Takva Haber, were subsequently shuttered. On the other hand, sites linked to Nusra have remained largely unaffected by government crackdown. A range of Nusra supporting websites, Facebook pages, YouTube pages, and Twitter accounts are as active today in 2016 as they were in 2014.[50]

Despite the crackdown on ISIS media in Turkey, sympathetic Turkish-language websites that repeat favourite ISIS themes without explicitly declaring support remain accessible.[51] ISIS's glossy Turkish-language

magazine, *Konstantiniyye*, is also available to download online. Al-Hayat Media Center, the foreign language media division of ISIS, began producing *Konstantiniyye* in summer 2015. The publication released its sixth issue in April 2016. Turkish translations of some issues of *Dabiq*, ISIS's English language magazine, also exist.

***Opposition to Assad:*** ISIS and Nusra mobilise online propaganda to disseminate aspirational and antagonistic narratives that pull potential recruits toward the battlefield. Turkish-language propaganda supporting both Nusra and ISIS, for example, spun outrage at the atrocities committed by Bashar al-Assad's regime – an early prime motivator that pulled jihadists worldwide to fight in Syria – into an aspirational discourse that inspired recruits to demonstrate their valour by bravely defending their Muslim brothers and sisters in Syria against an unjust tyrant.

***'Halife' (caliphate) as manifest destiny:*** ISIS took aspirational discourse a step further, rousing would-be recruits to establish a settler colonial caliphate – one that promised utopia and excited a sense of manifest destiny. ISIS's territorial wins, ideational resonance, and ability to style itself as a forceful theological start-up the likes of which the modern world has not seen persuaded individuals in and outside Turkey to join the Iraq-Syria jihad. In Turkish language ISIS propaganda, the discourse of a universal *halife* (caliphate) also functions to draw recruits' attention away from the Turkish-Arabic linguistic barrier and toward a transcendental vision of global *ümmet* (Muslim community) that promises powerful, purposeful inclusion.

For Turkish jihadists, as for jihadist recruits coming from other countries, ISIS's aspirational discourse – reflected in utopic yearnings, the thrill of epic battle, and Islamist-tinged revenge fantasies – has replaced deep knowledge of Sunni or Salafi ideology. While this is also a characteristic of Nusra, ISIS's Turkish language propaganda has crafted an especially direct and illustrative vision of Islamist conquest. The title of ISIS's Turkish magazine *Konstantiniyye*, for example, invokes the Ottoman word for Istanbul to suggest that the pearl of westernised Turkey – Istanbul itself – will be wrested both ideologically and territorially into the caliphate. The magazine's first issue, titled "The Conquest of Konstantiniyye," took a comparatively non-confrontational stance toward the Turkish state vis-à-vis

subsequent issues of the publication. Yet even it featured articles, spread out against beautiful photos of Istanbul's sixteenth century mosques and old city walls, which suggested Turkey should be aggressively incorporated into an ISIS-led caliphate.[52]

Such aspirational discourses are powerful, and have inspired even highly educated young Turkish citizens to join the Iraq-Syria jihad. A twenty-six year old astrophysics student at Ankara's top school, the elite Middle East Technical University, for example, joined ISIS in 2014 after being inspired by subtitled jihadist sermons he watched on You Tube accounts like Talha Musa, which has since been closed.[53] Cases like his underscore that in Turkey, as elsewhere, no single profile fully predicts who will join jihadist groups. While structural and personal push factors are important, powerful pull factors – including aspirational discourses, outrage at Assad's regime, and the very existence of seemingly successful jihadist groups – can, alone or in conjunction with push factors, draw a wide variety of recruits.[54]

Like structural push factors related to environmental dislocation, pull factors – in the forms of Turkish language propaganda created by ISIS and Nusra – also feature fascinatingly local dimensions. Both ISIS and Nusra weave aspirational recruitment discourses together with more locally textured, antagonistic goals like fighting Kurdish nationalists. ISIS, unlike Nusra, also uses its propaganda to express vehement opposition to the Turkish state, including the government, army, and security forces.

***Anti-PKK discourse:*** Opposition to the PKK is a central plank of both groups' Turkish-language recruitment. ORSAM recently conducted a study of sixty thousand Turkish Twitter accounts sympathetic to, or explicitly supportive of, ISIS.[55] Strikingly, the study found that the agenda of Turkish ISIS supporters looks different than that of many other countries' jihadists. "Elsewhere the words ISIS supporters use most frequently on Twitter are religious words such as 'Allah,' or God," said Haldun Yalcinkaya, who oversaw the study. "Amongst Turkish ISIS supporters, however, religious words are the second most frequently used words. The first is 'PKK.'"[56]

Focus on the PKK is likewise visible throughout the six issues of *Konstantiniyye*, which constantly rails against the PKK and its alleged political ally, the People's Democratic Party (HDP). The publication

typically slurs the PKK and HDP as atheist enemies of Islam, denigrating them as part of the same "*ateist çete*" (atheist gang), or *ateist örgüt* (atheist organisation).[57] Such antagonistic language casts the PKK and HDP – and, by extension, individuals sympathetic to Kurdish nationalism – as disbelievers and enemies of Islam, and is commonly used in both ISIS and Nusra propaganda.

The importance of opposition to the PKK in Turkish language jihadist recruitment materials highlights the franchising potential of jihadist sectarianism. When classic Sunni-Shiite sectarian splits don't exist in a country context, jihadist recruiters may hammer on local cleavages to create "us-against-them" sectarian-style divisions, where "us" represents pious jihadists and "them" represents variously the Syrian regime and PKK (in the case of Nusra) and the Syrian regime, PKK, and the Turkish government (in the case of ISIS).

***Opposition to the Turkish state:*** Though both ISIS and Nusra both employ antagonistic discourse against the PKK, important thematic differences in their Turkish language recruitment materials exist. The most central of these differences is whether the groups' propaganda positions them in a conflictual relationship with the Turkish state. Since summer 2015 ISIS has manifested an increasingly confrontational stance against the Turkish state in its propaganda, vocally and virulently criticising the Turkish government as un-Islamic and illegitimate. Nusra, on the other hand, has cautiously avoided hostile talk against the Turkish state. Instead, it has concentrated its anti-state discourse on toppling Assad and avoided inciting the Turkish government to tighten oversight.

ISIS propaganda has criticised the Turkish state blatantly and consistently since summer 2015. ISIS-linked websites and magazines have cast Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, including president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as *tagutlar* (impious idolaters or non-Muslims). Accusations that the Turkish state is comprised of treacherous infidels constitute a dominant theme of Turkish language ISIS propaganda. This antagonistic theme is arguably more dominant, even, than opposition to the PKK and so-called "atheist" Kurdish nationalists. Fascinatingly, while Erdogan's critics in and outside Turkey have often described him as an Islamist indulgent toward ISIS's ideology

and have heavily criticized the Turkish state's heavy-handed approach to combatting the PKK, ISIS itself has painted Erdogan as a *tagut* traitor seated atop a *laik* (secular) government that it lambasts for supposedly helping the PKK.[58]

*Konstantiniyye*'s six issues employ the adjective *tagut* relentlessly, applying it to the Turkish government, president, and armed forces. Just as ISIS's publications almost always preface references to Kurds with the label *ateist* (atheist), they preface references to Erdogan and Turkey's government with the label *tagut*. ISIS's English magazine *Dabiq*, which also has escalated criticism of Turkey since summer 2015, also uses this word to describe the Turkish government. Easily accessible websites like Tevhid Dergisi, while not explicitly mentioning ISIS, repeat similar criticisms.

ISIS's position toward the Turkish state has evolved. ISIS sharply increased its criticism of the Turkish government after July 2015, when Ankara granted the United States access to Incirlik airbase as a staging ground for airstrikes against ISIS and agreed to conduct some airstrikes against ISIS itself. Likely in response to these developments, the second edition of *Konstantiniyye*, released in early August 2015, contained a three page feature titled "Erdogan's Kurdish State" which accused Erdogan of closely partnering with the United States, Israel, and Turkey's secular opposition party the CHP to construct an autonomous Kurdish state in northern Iraq and Syria. "Thanks to Erdogan this atheist organisation [the PKK] is substantially gaining strength," it said.[59] The September 2015 issue of *Dabiq* similarly featured a cover photo of Erdogan shaking U.S. President Barack Obama's hand – characterising Turkey as blatantly complicit in the anti-ISIS coalition.

In ISIS's view, Ankara is not just insufficiently opposed to but directly supportive of Kurdish nationalism. ISIS's perspective, therefore, differs vastly from many analyses of Turkish politics, some of which contend that Ankara delivered lukewarm cooperation against ISIS in summer 2015 to distract potential critics from its military escalation against the PKK. Some observers have noted, for example, that Turkey began a robust airstrike campaign against the PKK on the same day it committed to helping the US-led anti-ISIS coalition.[60] By contrast, though Nusra affiliated publications share ISIS's opposition to the PKK they do not

accuse the Turkish government of supporting it. Nusra similarly avoids alleging Turkey has allied with powers currently opposed to jihadists, such as the United States and Israel.

Antagonistic discourses against the PKK and Turkish government prop up ISIS as the sole actor defending the righteous *ümmet* against the PKK and Western-led *fitne* (division of the Muslim community), thereby pulling recruits toward jihad. Unlike the *kafir* (apostate) Turkish government whose alliances with enemies of ISIS, such as the PKK the United States, are weakening and carving up the region, ISIS is, it claims, actively reconstructing the caliphate. By delegitimising Erdogan's claims to religious conservatism, ISIS seeks to position itself as the only Islamist actor worthy of the name – replacing Erdogan's abstract promises of revived neo-Ottomanism with the territorial reality of a pure, proud Islamic caliphate.

***Recent evolution in ISIS's stance vis-à-vis the Turkish state:*** ISIS has defined itself through increasingly direct opposition to the Turkish government. *Konstantiniyye*'s sixth issue, released April 2016, opens for instance with an article emblazoned across a photo of Turkish soldiers. The article's title, "People who are disbelievers fight on the side of the Tagut," is a clear reference to the so-called *tagut* Turkish government. The same issue contains another article titled "A message to the Turkish Armed Forces," which rebukes the forces as disbelievers in the service of a fundamentally *tagut* regime. The article's contents include barely veiled threats against the Turkish state. "The apostate Turkish government is sacrificing its soldiers.. for its war against Islamic State," it says.

> *No one should suppose bombs against the Islamic state will go unanswered. As our caliph, God protect him, said: "Vallahi [by God], we will take revenge. Even if it is after awhile we will take revenge, by God!"*[61]

Such threats highlight both the depth of ISIS's growing conflict with the Turkish state and the localised manner in which Turkish recruits conceive classic jihadist "us vs. them" antagonisms. By stirring resentment and feelings of righteous self-justification against the Turkish state, these antagonistic narratives can function as pull factors that motivate recruits

to fight jihad in Iraq and Syria, or – perhaps even more ominously – to execute violent attacks against the Turkish state itself.

Analyses that suggested the June 28, 2016 Istanbul airport attack was a direct response to Erdogan's attempts at resuming diplomatic ties with Russia and Israel were therefore implausible for two reasons. Firstly, though Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim sent reconciliatory messages to Israel, Syria, Russia, and Egypt on June 18, 2016, news of resumption in relations with Israel and Russia was not widely publicised in Turkish and foreign news outlets until June 27, when Erdogan himself issued an apology to Russia and, on the same day, announced full restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel. It is unlikely that ISIS would have reacted quickly enough to initiate the airport attack – a logistically complex endeavour involving coordination between attackers of at least three separate nationalities – as a direct response. Secondly, this explanation disregards the sharp spike in ISIS's anti-state discourse, along with ISIS's increasingly pointed threats against the Turkish government and security forces since summer 2015, not to mention the fact that ISIS members already perpetrated four major attacks in Turkey in 2015 and 2016 before the Istanbul airport bombing.

***Personalised recruitment networks:*** A final factor pulling Turkish recruits into jihadist groups has been personalised recruitment networks. This has been a feature of Turkish jihadist recruitment, shared both by Nusra, which has tapped most heavily into historic al-Qaeda networks and ISIS, whose recruitment patterns have relied on historical networks in conjunction with patchier familial and communal networks. Turkish government representatives estimate most Turkish nationals fighting with both groups have been recruited through family, co-worker, and friend networks, the difference being that in Nusra's case these networks are likelier to have participated in prior waves of jihad.[62]

Personalised networks represent an especially clear pull factor in southeastern Turkish cities, such as Akcakale in Sanliurfa province where an estimated 70% of Jabhat al-Nusra recruits hailed from the same extended family.[63] But they have characterised recruitment in other cities as well. North Caucasus Caucus, an expert on Turkish foreign fighters who prefers to remain anonymous, observed that in Ankara's Sincan neighbourhood

"it wasn't religious preachers or imams doing the recruiting, it was more personal networks.. you'd see clusters of families go, then younger guys would follow."[64] According to one source, almost half the ISIS fighters from Sincan were recruited by a man named Abdulkadir Ercan, who made repeated trips back from the front to recruit relatives and friends.[65]

Turkey's traditionally Sufi-oriented *sohbet halkalari* (religious discussion circles) have also played a role in personalised recruitment patterns. Some jihadists have transformed these local circles into extremist gatherings where violent jihad replaces spiritual salvation as the main topic of discussion. Such social gatherings, typically held in local teahouses, have reportedly mobilised family and community networks in places like Adiyaman to join jihad in Syria and Iraq.[66]

# 6 Ankara's approach: CT, CVE, and framing of jihadist recruitment

Ankara's approach to the problem of jihadist recruitment in Turkey has been hotly debated. In 2015, when ISIS members began launching high-profile attacks within Turkey, many commentators framed these attacks as representing tragically predictable blowback from Ankara's allegedly lax border policy.[67] Similar comments were made in the wake of the June 28 Istanbul airport attacks, when former US ambassador to Turkey James Jeffrey labelled Ankara a "somewhat ambivalent warrior" against ISIS.[68] A substantial body of writing in Turkish and English has explored Ankara's response to the Syrian crisis and rise of ISIS, much of it critiquing Turkey for adopting a short-sighted foreign policy toward the Syrian crisis and negligence towards the recruitment and movement of jihadist fighters.[69]

Far fewer studies, however, have addressed how Ankara itself has framed and responded to the problem of domestic jihadist recruitment – possibly because of difficulties that researchers often face identifying and accessing members of the Turkish government who work directly on the issue. Understanding Ankara's framing is vital for researchers who want to document empirically reliable accounts of jihadist recruitment in Turkey, and for actors – both Turkish and international – who are striving to partner with the Turkish government to construct policies that prevent and combat jihadist activity.

# 7 Efforts to counter violent extremism (CVE) and counter terrorism (CT)

Turkey currently has two principal programs to counter violent extremism (CVE). The first is an outreach program coordinated by the Turkish National Police, which aims to prevent recruitment in vulnerable communities. The United States Embassy in Ankara describes this program as "similar to anti-gang activities in the United States."[70]

The second program belongs to Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which oversees the country's mosques and works with some populations of Turkish diaspora. This program focuses on countering jihadist messaging. As part of the program, the Diyanet released a sermon in November 2015 countering ISIS propaganda. The sermon, titled "Islam: the Religion Targeted by Global Terror," denounced terrorism, emphasising that Islam asserts killing one person is the same as killing the entire world.[71] It was read at over 80,000 mosques in Turkey and in more than 2,000 mosques in the Turkish diaspora.[72] Whether the message reached Turkish jihadists and would-be jihadist recruits, many of whom already boycott Turkish mosques because of their control by the Diyanet, is highly uncertain.

Some government representatives have observed that crafting well-targeted CVE approaches would be easier if there were better inter-departmental data sharing between, for instance, Turkey's police and intelligence forces, which reportedly have access to key demographic and biographical data on Turkish jihadists that they are not always sharing

with other governmental departments bodies active in jihadist monitoring and de-radicalisation.

Conflict between supporters of the Pennsylvania-based imam Fetullah Gulen and AKP have also complicated counter-terrorism (CT) and CVE efforts. Gulen's movement brought far-reaching corruption allegations against the AKP-led government in late 2013, precipitating a dramatic split between the two groups. That split reverberated across elements of the Turkish administration that dealt directly with CT including the judiciary, intelligence, and law enforcement – sectors in which members of Gulen's organisation were allegedly very active.

AKP accused the Gulenists of conspiracy to create a coup and began purging them from the government. The conflict and its related purges were heavily disruptive. Some researchers have speculated the purges cost Turkey's government valuable CT capacity, since many Gulenists were allegedly involved directly in CT-related work.[73] Some current representatives of the Turkish government emphasise instead that Gulenists' alleged attempts to create a parallel state and discredit key AKP-linked CT figures were the real source of disruption. "Gulenists' meddling in CT work costs us a lot," said an MFA representative, stressing that Cemaat has been to blame. "They've prosecuted the chief of staff of the National Intelligence Organisation [MIT].. of course this makes it harder to work efficiently."[74]

Regarding international cooperation in developing programs to counter violent extremism, the MFA has expressed interest in Norway and Sweden's Exit programs, which help individuals leave white supremacist organisations. Representatives of the MFA have observed that radicalisation in the form of abusing religion in Turkey is "much more comparable" to right-wing extremist radicalisation in Europe. "We need to think more," said one MFA representative, "about marginalisation of a very small yet still harmful number of individuals belonging to a majority, both in terms of their religious denomination and ethnicity."[75]

# 8 How Ankara frames jihadist recruitment

While Ankara asserts its commitment to countering violent extremism and expresses interest in developing stronger international cooperation to combat the problem, it also stresses that jihadist recruitment remains a symptom of one primary pull factor: Bashar al-Assad's presence at the helm of Syria's regime. Ankara asserts that the brutality of Assad and existence of ISIS, in particular, are interwoven problems that the West cannot and should not separate.[76] "Addressing the push factors without eliminating the [primary] pull factors won't solve the problem," said one government representative, reflecting a view commonly shared by representatives of Turkish government.[77] Ankara believes that, like a geopolitical Cassandra, its prior warnings have often gone unheeded to the West's chagrin. The West, it says, declined to follow Ankara's advice against both the 2003 American invasion of Iraq and the subsequent Shiite triumphalism of former Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki – core factors that opened the door to ISIS in the first place.[78]

Ankara frames the problem of jihadist recruitment as a global phenomenon triggered and worsened in part by ineffective Western cooperation. Western countries, it says, have traditionally sought to shift the burden of controlling both refugees and radicals onto others, including Turkey. "Countries have needed to tell a story to their people about why these phenomena are happening," said one MFA official, referring

primarily to the European Union and United States. "They wanted us to be the bad guys, so we would be the ones to cope with the political pressure and the blowback, and supply money and logistical resources to deal with these problems."[79]

Representatives of the Turkish government have acknowledged that Western countries are now cooperating with Turkey more effectively, but assert such cooperation did not come until after the United Nations Security Council decision 2178, a September 2014 resolution which addressed member states' cooperation on foreign terrorist fighters, and the first ISIS attack against Paris in January 2015.[80] Without adequate intelligence from Western countries, Ankara asserts, it often lacked knowledge of terrorists crossing its border or the legal justification to stop them. "Border security isn't just a Turkish issue, it is a matter of collective responsibility," said one Turkish government representative. "We don't want to be held responsible for other countries' oversights."[81]

Interviews with Turkish government representatives have similarly indicated Ankara sees Western concern with Syrian refugees as largely a product of self-interested fears that they will radicalise. "We did not see Westerners paying attention to the refugee issue before 2015," said one government representative. Turkey's MFA says there is so far no evidence that Syrian refugees in or outside refugee camps in Turkey are radicalising, saying most Syrian jihadists – like the man who perpetrated the January 2016 Sultanahmet attack, which killed twelve tourists – are residing in or coming directly from Syria and Iraq, rather than residents of Turkey.[82]

The Turkish government has also criticised Westerners' focus on ISIS more broadly, arguing PKK-supported terrorism threatens Turkey just as much as jihadist groups. It resents the United States' readiness to partner with the PKK's Syrian affiliates to combat ISIS, recently decrying, for instance, some American special forces' wearing insignias of the People's Protection Units (YPG), a Syrian affiliate of the PKK, on their uniforms.[83] Government representatives endeavour to portray ISIS and the PKK as terrorist groups of equal magnitude, often mentioning the PKK when discussing ISIS and vice versa. When questioned about the ideological background of Ebu Hanzala, the pro-jihadist cleric arrested in 2015, for example, one government representative replied that Hanzala had likely

recruited others under the radar – much like HDP parliamentarian Faysal Sariyildiz, whom they described as also "ideologically committed to the use of violence."[84]

Against accusations that the government has turned a blind eye to jihadist groups' activities in Turkey, Ankara asserts it has closely followed radicalisation and domestic recruitment of Turkish jihadist fighters for years. The MFA claims at least 1797 Turkish nationals have been detained on suspicion of joining ISIS and other jihadist groups active in Iraq and Syria. Of those, it says, "approximately nine hundred have been arrested, so there's strong evidence and an intelligence case against them."[85] The Turkish government also asserts it has tightened control of pro-jihadist websites considerably since 2015.[86] But, regarding online jihadist propaganda, Ankara stresses the challenge "goes beyond closing websites" since jihadist supporters "will constantly be opening another." The real trick, it claims, is "figuring out who the website creator is, his relationship to jihadist networks, then arresting or working with the person so he'll disengage."[87]

Overall, Ankara maintains it has worked hard to counter jihadist recruitment of Turkish nationals, but that its efforts have been under-acknowledged by Western media. Citing just one of many alleged examples, the government claims a September 2014 *New York Times* article that reported Ankara's Hacibayram neighbourhood had "morphed into an ISIS recruitment hub over the past year" failed to add that the entire neighbourhood was already under Turkish government surveillance.[88]

For their part, journalists often claim that obtaining the government's point of view is difficult since, they say, Ankara regards the press with suspicion and invests little planning in proactive public relations.[89] Erdogan's willingness to forcefully pursue critics – ranging from a beauty queen who insulted him, to academics who signed a peace petition, to a pair of journalists who accused the government of shipping arms to jihadists – have also fostered an atmosphere of antagonism toward the press and fuelled accusations that the Turkish government possesses the capacity but lacks the will to decisively combat jihadists.[90] Government representatives, though, typically counter that – regardless of Erdogan's alleged missteps – claims that Turkey has been lax on jihadist activity have been unfair and unsubstantiated.[91]

# 9 Conclusion

This report has aimed to unpack key contours of jihadist recruitment in Turkey and shed light on how Ankara is viewing the problem, two interconnected issues that remain under-explored in existing studies on Turkey. Given the high percentage of Turkish nationals now perpetrating major terrorist attacks in Turkey, understanding these issues is critical.

As coalition gains squeeze ISIS's territory in Iraq and Syria, more fighters will likely come home, increasing the likelihood of blowback. Though ISIS and Nusra have both recruited actively in Turkey, it is ISIS which has recruited the majority of Turkish nationals, and which has positioned itself in increasingly sharp opposition to the Turkish state. Turkish nationals affiliated with ISIS have perpetrated three of the five major ISIS-linked terrorist attacks in Turkey since 2015. ISIS clearly represents the most serious jihadist threat to Turkish today, and will likely foment more violence in Turkey as its fighters eventually return home. Nusra, though it has not yet adopted an antagonistic stance against the Turkish state, may also contribute to a blowback effect in Turkey as its fighters, radicalised from years of fighting, trickle home.

Breaking down the core patterns of jihadist recruitment in Turkey, including global and more contextually specific push and pull factors, is therefore crucial for the Turkish government, along with domestic and international actors who strive to partner with the government

to curb the jihadist threat. Understanding the factors motivating Turkish nationals to join jihadists groups in Iraq and Syria – and how Ankara is framing the problem of jihadist recruitment – is similarly also critical, both for researchers who seek to grasp the contours of jihadist recruitment and government response in Turkey, and for actors committed to working with Turkey to combat violent jihadist extremism. By marshalling evidence from field-based researchers, reviewing Turkish-language jihadist recruitment materials, and drawing on interviews with relevant government representatives in Ankara, this report has aimed to make a small but salient contribution to those critical discussions.

# Endnotes

1. See the comments of former EU ambassador to Turkey Marc Pierini and US Secretary of State John Kerry in John Vandiver, "Europe's Fear: Turkey's porous border serves as gateway for ISIL's spread," *Stars and Stripes*, July 5, 2014 and US Vice President Joe Biden's comments in Deborah Amos, "A Smuggler Explains How He Helped Fighters Along 'Jihadi Highway'," NPR, October 7, 2014. See also Michael McCaul, "Europe Has a Jihadi Superhighway Problem," *Time*, November 11, 2014; Tim Arango and Eric Schmitt, "A Path to ISIS, Through a Porous Turkish Border," *New York Times*, March 9, 2015; Emrullah Uslu, "Jihadist Highway to Jihadist Haven: Turkey's Jihadi Policies and Western Security," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 2015; Hardin Lang and Muath Al Wari, *The Flow of Foreign Fighters to the Islamic State*, Center for American Progress, March 2016.
2. See Eli Lake &Josh Rogin, "Turkey Angers the Jihadists it Once Tolerated," *Bloomberg View*, October 13, 2015.
3. The three major ISIS attacks perpetrated by Turkish citizens occurred in Suruc (July 20, 2015), Ankara (October 10, 2015), and Beyoglu, Istanbul (March 19, 2016). For more background on the attacks see Haldun Yalcinkaya, "Analysing the ISIS attacks in Turkey and Turkey's Struggle," ORSAM, March 22, 2016 and Noah Blaser and Aaron Stein, "The Islamic State's Network in Turkey," Turkey Wonk, October 30, 2015.
4. For more on the so-called "veteran effect," see Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107:1, 2013 and Charles Lister, "Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration?" Brookings Doha Center, August 2015.
5. See The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: an Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters to Syria and Iraq*, December 2015. TSG's estimates are as of November 2015.
6. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
7. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
8. With a population of nearly 80 million, the ratio of Turkish fighters to the country's overall population in Turkey pales in comparison to Tunisia (a population of nearly 11 million which has sent an estimated 6,000 fighters), but is greater than Russia (a population of approximately 143.5 million that has sent an estimated 2,000 fighters). See The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: an Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters to Syria and Iraq*, December 2015.

9. See for example Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu's comments in Esra Kaymak Avdi, "World must show 'zero tolerance' for terrorism: Turkey FM," *Anadolu Agency*, March 29, 2016 and president Erdogan's comments in "You can't say the PKK are terrorists and the PYD are not," *Daily Sabah*, February 2, 2016.
10. See Sarah Birke, "How al-Qaeda Changed the Syrian War," *The New York Review of Books*, December 27, 2013.
11. Scholar Quinn Meacham has said ISIS has appealed to potential recruits as "the most successful start-up in the Middle East." See Quinn Mecham, "How Much of a State is the Islamic State?" in POMEPS Studies, *Islamism in the IS Age*, March 17, 2015.
12. See for example the websites http://kureselanaliz.com/, www.yonelishaber.com/, www.ummetislam.org/, and www.elmukaveme.com/, accessed June 2016, all of which have corresponding Facebook pages and Twitter accounts currently active.
13. See S.G. Grimaldi and Selim Koru, "Is the Islamic State Trying to Draw Turkey into Syria?" War on the Rocks, May 13, 2016.
14. Researchers specialising on jihadism in Turkey also note that a variety of Turkish charities are legally aiding Nusra-affiliated groups, lending further support to the notion that Ankara's 2015 tightening up on jihadist groups mainly targeted ISIS.
15. The MFA claims that of 1100 Turkish citizens currently fighting as jihadists in Iraq and Syria, nine hundred have fought with ISIS vs. three hundred with Nusra. Author interview, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
16. Author interviews. See also Mary Anne Weaver, "Her Majesty's Jihadists," *New York Times*, April 14, 2015.
17. Author interview, anonymous source, June 2016.
18. Author interview, Omer Behram Ozdemir, January 2016.
19. Author interviews. See also podcast featuring blogger and analyst North Caucasus Caucus: "Turkey's Jihadists," Turkey Wonk, April 28, 2015.
20. See OS Mahmood and North Caucasus Caucus, "Turkish Foreign Fighters and the Ogaden," Jihadology.net, January 12, 2015.
21. Author interviews, North Caucasus Caucus, January 2016; Omer Behram Ozdemir, January 2016; anonymous source, June 2016. See also Haksoz Haber, "Suriye Şehitlerimiz Serder ve Şişani İçin Fatih Camiinde Dua," September 12, 2014.
22. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
23. Author interview, Omer Behram Ozdemir, January 2016.
24. See for example "Nusret Cephesi Sniper Eğitmeni Ebu Yusuf et-Türki ABD Saldırısıyla Şehid Edildi," Ümmet-i Islam, September 23, 2014 and "Şehid Nusra Komutanı Ebu Yusuf et Turki'nin Gıyabi Cenaze Namazı ve Kardeşinin Şiiri," Küresel Analiz, September 29, 2015.
25. Author interview, Omer Behram Ozdemir, January 2016.
26. Author interviews, Omer Behram Ozdemir, January 2016 and Dogu Eroglu, January and June 2016. See also Matt Bradley, "Rift Grows in Islamic State between Foreign, Local Fighters," *Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2016. www.wsj.com/articles/rift-grows-in-islamic-state-between-foreign-local-fighters-1458930063.
27. See Aaron Stein, "Turkey did nothing about the jihadists in its midst – until it was too late," *Foreign Policy*, July 1, 2016.
28. Author interviews, Omer Behram Ozdemir, January and June 2016.
29. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
30. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
31. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.

32. See Stein, *Foreign Policy*, July 1, 2016.
33. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
34. See Murat Yesiltas, Omer Behram Ozdemir, Rifat Oncel, Sibel Duz, and Bilgehan Ozturk, "Sınırdaki Düşman : Türkiye'nin DAİŞ İle Mücadelesi," SETA, June 2016.
35. Author interview, Omer Behram Ozdemir, January 2016.
36. See World Bank's 2014 Gross Domestic Product rankings.
37. Author interview, DoguEroglu, January 2016.
38. Author interviews, Dogu Eroglu and North Caucasus Caucus, January 2016.
39. See for example Emmanuel Haddad, "Rival brothers: the Kurds who join the Islamic State," *Middle East Eye*, December 11, 2015; Ayla Albayrak, "Islamic State Woos Kurdish Attackers in Turkey," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 2, 2015; Noah Blaser, "Trench Warfare in Turkey," Foreign Policy, January 29, 2015.
40. Author interview, Dogu Eroglu, January 2016.
41. Author interview, Noah Blaser, January 2016.
42. See interview with Mehmet Kurt in Emmanuel Haddad, "Rival brothers: the Kurds who join the Islamic State," *Middle East Eye*, December 11, 2015.
43. For more on Bingöl and ISIS recruitment, see Al Jazeera Turk, "Bingöl'ün Derdi Işid'e Götürdü," 2015; Haber7, Türkiye'den IŞİD'e en çok Kürtler katılıyor," June 12, 2015; YurtGazetesi, "Kürtler IŞiD'e neden katılıyor?," March 2, 2015.
44. Haddad, "Rival brothers: the Kurds who join the Islamic State," 2015.
45. Far right Sunni Islamist groups (like the Kurdish Hezbollah and its more recently created offshoot, Huda-Par), for example, oppose the PKK by espousing an Islamist, rather than secular ethno-nationalist, orientation. The PKK, in turn, describes these groups as creatures of the Turkish state designed to divide and discredit Kurdish nationalism.For more on the Kurdish Hezbollah and Huda-Par, see Aykan Erdemir and Merve Tahiroglu, "The ISIS attack and Turkey's Islamist Kurds," *Now*, July 27, 2015; Asli Elitsoy, "A lose-lose game: the internal conflict amongst Kurds in Turkey," *Your Middle East*, October 15, 2014; Mustafa Akyol, "Turkey's Internal Kurdish Tenions Flare," *Al-Monitor*, December 31, 2014; Fahim Tastekin, "Turkey's AKP Pits Kurd against Kurd," *Al-Monitor*, January 7, 2015.
46. Author interview, Haldun Yalcinkaya, June 2016.
47. Author interviews.
48. Author interview, Noah Blaser, January 2016.
49. See Tim Arango, "Islamist Websites in Turkey Manage to Evade Strict Internet Censorship," *New York Times*, March 13, 2015; CeylanYeginsu, "Court Blocks Jihadist Website Used to Recruit Turks to Islamic State," *New York Times*, March 25, 2015.
50. See for example the websites listed in footnote 12 of this report.
51. See for instance http://tevhiddergisi.net/.
52. See *Konstantiniyye Dergisi*, issue 1.
53. See Noah Blaser and Dogu Eroglu, "Journey to ISIS: from Astrophysicist Student to Shell-Shocked Islamist Fighter," *Newsweek*, May 3, 2015.
54. The Turkish government goes further: "If someone comes up to you and says there is an easy pattern," said a representative of Turkey's MFA, "they're either mistaken or they're manipulating information." Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
55. Haldun Yalçınkaya, Şaban Kardaş, Tanzel Özyer, and Bedii Çelik, "ORSAM Social Network Analysis Project for Turkish Speaking Twitter accounts," forthcoming from ORSAM in July, 2016.

56. Author interview, Haldun Yalcinkaya, June 2016.
57. See *Konstantiniyye Dergisi*, issues 1–6.
58. See *Konstantiniyye Dergisi*, issues 1–6. See Sertac Korkmaz, "Konstantiniyye Dergisi ve DAEŞ Terör Örgütünün Söylemleri," report forthcoming for ORSAM in 2016.
59. See *Konstantiniyye Dergisi*, issue 2.
60. See for instance Sarah Almukhtar and Tim Wallace, "Why Turkey is Fighting the Kurds who are Fighting ISIS," *New York Times*, August 12, 2015.
61. See *Konstantiniyye Dergisi*, issue 6. Also see Murat Yesiltas, Omer Behram Ozdemir, Rifat Oncel, Sibel Duz, and Bilgehan Ozturk, "Sınırdaki Düşman : Türkiye'nin DAİŞ İle Mücadelesi," SETA, June 2016; S.G. Grimaldi and Selim Koru, "Is the Islamic State Trying to Draw Turkey into Syria?" War on the Rocks, May 13, 2016.
62. See Murat Yesiltas, Omer Behram Ozdemir, Rifat Oncel, Sibel Duz, and Bilgehan Ozturk, "Sınırdaki Düşman : Türkiye'nin DAİŞ İle Mücadelesi," SETA, June 2016.
63. Author interview, Omer Behram Ozdemir, January 2016.
64. Author interview, North Caucasus Caucus, January 2016.
65. Author interview, anonymous source, June 2016. See also Dogu Eroglu, "El Kaide sanığı serbest kalıp onlarca kişiyi IŞİD'e götürdü," *BirGün*, April 14, 2015.
66. See Metin Boyutu, "İşte IŞİD bombacılarının yollarının kesiştiği Adıyaman'daki İslam Çay Ocağı," CNN Turk, July 23, 2015; Çagıl Kasapoglu, "IŞİD neden Adıyaman'da örgütlendi?" BBC Turkce, September 22, 2015.
67. See Eli Lake and Josh Rogin, "Turkey Angers the Jihadists it Once Tolerated," *Bloomberg View*, October 13, 2015; Stephen Kinzer, "Turkey's meddling in Syria brings terror to Istanbul," *Boston Globe*, January 12, 2016.
68. See Elise Labott and Ryan Browne, "US hopes Turkey will step up ISIS fight after airport attack," *CNN*, July 1, 2016.
69. See David Phillips, "Research Paper: ISIS-Turkey Links," *Huffington Post*, September 11, 2014. Ahmet Kuru, "Turkey's Failed Policy toward the Arab Spring: Three Levels of Analysis," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 26:3, 2015; Bill Park, "Turkey's isolated stance: an ally no more, or just the usual turbulence?" *International Affairs*, 91:3, 2015; Emrullah Uslu, "Jihadist Highway to Jihadist Haven: Turkey's Jihadi Policies and Western Security," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 2015.
70. Embassy of the United States, Ankara, "Country Report on Terrorism 2014 – Turkey," June 2015.
71. See Diyanet, "Küresel Terörün Hedef Aldığı Din: İslam," November 2015.
72. See *Hurriyet Daily News*, "Turkey's top religious body likens ISIL activity to rampage by Crusaders," November 20, 2015.
73. See for example Emrullah Uslu, "Jihadist Highway to Jihadist Haven: Turkey's Jihadi Policies and Western Security," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 2015.
74. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016. The MFA representative was referring to Hakan Fidan, head of the MIT, whom the Turkish government alleges Gulenists attempted to force out of his role. See Ibrahim Kalin, "The state and the question of multiple loyalties," *Daily Sabah*, December 16, 2014.
75. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
76. President Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu have made numerous statements to this effect. See for instance Bulent Alireza, "The Vice President's Difficult Trip to Turkey," CSIS, November 20, 2014.

77. Author interview with Turkish government representatives, June 2016. See also TGRT Haber, "Erdoğan, 'Esad ve DEAŞ aynı sakat anlayışın iki farklı tezahürü'," March 14, 2015; Insan Haber, "Davutoğlu: Şerlerin kaynağı Esad," January 10, 2014.
78. Author interviews. See also Bill Park, "Turkey's isolated stance: an ally no more, or just the usual turbulence?" *International Affairs*, 91:3, 2015.
79. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
80. For more on UNSC 2178, see BBC, "UNSC Resolution 2178: How easily can it be enforced?" September 26, 2014.
81. Author interview with Turkish government representative, February 2016.
82. Author interview with Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
83. "US ignores Turkish concerns, pledges to back YPG-affiliated SDF," Anadolu Agency, June 1, 2016. For more on Turkey's relationship with Kurdish groups fighting ISIS, see Cale Salih, "Turkey, the Kurds, and the Fight Against Islamic State," European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2015.
84. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016.
85. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016. The Soufan Group says that, as of November 2015 Turkey's government had imprisoned five hundred Turkish citizens for participation in ISIS, and one hundred for participation in Nusra. See The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: an Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters to Syria and Iraq*, December 2015.
86. For a flavour of these accusations, see Tim Arango, "Islamist Websites in Turkey Manage to Avoid Strict Censorship," *New York Times*, March 13, 2015.
87. Author interview, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2016. The MFA points to the Takva Haber case an example of this approach.
88. See Ceylan Yeginsu, "ISIS Draws a Steady Stream of Recruits from Turkey," *New York Times*, September 15, 2014.
89. Author conversations with journalists who prefer not to be identified.
90. See "Ex-Miss Turkey found guilty of insulting Recep Tayyip Erdogan," *The Guardian*, May 31, 2016 and Can Dundar, "I revealed the truth about President Erdogan and Syria. For that he had me jailed," *The Guardian*, December 28, 2015.
91. Author interviews with Turkish government representatives, January to June, 2016.

**Amendment**

This report has been amended to remove the name of the Turkish news site Mepa News from Endnote 12. This was incorrectly included in the original publication, suggesting wrongly that Mepa News supported Nusra.

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