

THE SOUFAN CENTER

# ANNUAL REPORT

2021



The Soufan Center is an independent non-profit center offering research, analysis, and strategic dialogue on global security challenges and foreign policy issues.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER	4
II.	LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	6
III.	ABOUT THE CENTER	8
IV.	POLICY ENGAGEMENT: GLOBAL REACH	12
V.	POLICY ENGAGEMENT: LOCAL IMPACT	14
VI.	ENGAGEMENT WITH ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS	16
VII.	RESEARCH AND INTELBRIEFS	18
VIII.	PROJECTS	22
IX.	EVENTS	24
Х.	GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM	26
XI.	TSC ARABIC	28
XII.	IN THE NEWS	30
XIII.	TSC TEAM	34
XIV.	TSC BOARD	35

### LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER



This past year was one of remarkable growth, productivity, and resilience for The Soufan Center (TSC). In the midst of the pandemic, our team continued to produce the type of insightful and broad-ranging research and analysis that has positioned TSC as a trusted resource for policymakers, academics, and the media. It has long been my goal for TSC to serve as a source of independent, nuanced, and non-partisan analysis for those seeking to better understand the world's most complex and urgent security challenges. Reflecting upon 2021 as a culmination of the past five years since our founding, I am confident that TSC has accomplished this.

In the past year alone, TSC produced original research and thought-leadership on topics including transnational jihadist terrorism, the evolution and impact of the violent far-right movement, the influence of conspiracy theories, and the need for accountability for perpetrators of ISIS crimes; all this against the backdrop of an ongoing pandemic and "great power" competition. TSC is able to produce this high-level work thanks to the decades of combined experience that our team possesses. Our experts bring experiences across the U.S. and foreign governments, international organizations, law enforcement, NGOs, academia, and the private sector, and I am proud that our team is able to address issues in counterterrorism, conflict analysis, geopolitics, human rights, climate security, and mis- and disinformation with world-class expertise. Reflecting this, TSC once again convened the Global Security Forum (GSF), bringing together hundreds of attendees in Doha, Qatar and thousands more virtually, for three days of high-level discussion on the need for international cooperation rather than competition in facing myriad global security threats.

2021—not unlike the year prior—was a year of immense global turmoil that saw several world-changing events and trends unfold against the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The beginning of the year was marked by the shocking events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6—an insurrection with reverberations that will undoubtedly continue. The introduction of vaccines against COVID-19 provided a safeguard against the virus to many around the world, but hyper-politicization, disinformation, and geopolitical competition for access precluded their full potential.

"It has long been my goal for TSC to serve as a source of independent, nuanced, and non-partisan analysis for those seeking to better understand the world's most complex and urgent security challenges."

In arguably the most consequential moment of 2021, the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan in a chaotic fashion that ultimately saw the Taliban seize control—an outcome with implications that will affect global security dynamics for years to come. Shortly thereafter, we marked the twentieth anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States. It was, for me and many others, a time of solemn reflection and a somber reminder of the sacrifices made and the challenges we continue to face. The Beijing Olympics shone a light on the chasm between states and the potential for gross abuses of human rights in the name of counterterrorism. Lastly, as the year drew to a close, growing tensions between Russia and Ukraine threatened to unleash renewed conflict. Throughout these developments, TSC endeavored to respond proactively and ensure that our daily IntelBrief continued to offer critical information and nuanced insights.

Looking ahead in 2022, I feel confident that TSC will, once again, be a vital resource for those who wish to better understand the increasingly complex world that surrounds us all.

Sincerely,

Ali Soufan Founder

The Soufan Center

#### LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



This has been a year of tremendous growth and development for The Soufan Center. I am proud to highlight that in 2021, TSC tripled the number of publications produced, developed and strengthened new partnerships, and introduced a series of well attended and highly regarded virtual events. Building on TSC's expertise, we examined the evolution of the violent far-right movement and international responses. At the pivotal moments of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the twentieth anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, we offered analysis on the status of the al-Qaeda threat, adding to our portfolio of work on global jihadist terrorism since our founding in 2017. Our daily IntelBrief, an analytical snapshot of key developments and emerging threats in security and counterterrorism, continued to inform experts and practitioners worldwide through 240 total IntelBriefs last year.

TSC also expanded our engagement with key counterterrorism stakeholders at the United Nations, including officials, delegations, and civil society organizations. Our team expanded our partnerships on our violent far-right extremism portfolio, launching collaborative projects with the German Mission to the United Nations and the Airey Neave Trust (U.K.) in addition to broader analysis of the state of global terrorist threats and trends with Nordic Safe Cities.

We were also proud to continue our work with the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) on our Enabling Witnesses project, for which we hosted two trainings focused on conflict-sensitive reporting for a cohort of storytellers and witnesses to the conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. Marking two decades of the Global War on Terror, TSC partnered with The Fourth Freedom Forum to launch the Securing the Future Initiative (SFI)—the first-ever independent review and assessment of the UN Security Council's counterterrorism activities—with the aim of publishing a report this fall on the Council's efforts since 9/11 and lessons learned in addressing the evolving terrorist threat and including a yearlong series of consultations in New York, Washington, D.C., London, Brussels, Geneva, and Dakar, to name a few locations. Moreover, the SFI team is working with researchers and analysts around the globe to produce a set of publications offering regional and thematic perspectives on the roles and impacts of the Security Council in addressing terrorism. This project has received generous support from the European Union, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany.

"I am proud to highlight that in 2021, TSC tripled the number of publications produced, developed and strengthened new partnerships, and introduced a series of well attended and highly regarded virtual events."

The virtual world offers both challenges and opportunities. To ensure we continue to engage key policymakers, academics, and practitioners on in our efforts to respond to emerging security challenges, TSC introduced a regular series of webinars throughout 2021 on a range of complex security topics, reaching thousands of participants representing governments, international organizations, think tanks, the private sector, and media. Through several webinars, we were delighted to collaborate with government representatives, including Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Finland, Belgium, Norway, and Tunisia. We have strengthened our relationships with civil society organizations and partnered with Nordic Safe Cities, the RESOLVE Network, and the Global Research Network of the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED). Furthermore, our experts and their analysis were referenced over 1,500 times in prominent national and international media outlets.

Looking ahead in 2022, TSC looks forward to deepening our portfolio of work, addressing security threats globally across the ideological spectrum, strengthening our focus on human rights and humanitarian action, and further building on our collaborative projects with a growing network of partners and supporters.

Sincerely,

Naureen Chowdhury Fink

Executive Director
The Soufan Center

### **ABOUT THE CENTER**

The Soufan Center (TSC) is an independent non-profit center offering research, analysis, and strategic dialogue on global security challenges and foreign policy issues, with a particular focus on counterterrorism, violent extremism, armed conflict, and the rule of law. Our work is underpinned by a recognition that human rights and human security perspectives are critical to developing credible, effective, and sustainable solutions. TSC fills a niche role by producing objective and innovative reports and analyses, and fostering dynamic dialogue and exchanges, to effectively equip governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society with key resources to inform policies and practice.

#### **OUR MISSION**

The Soufan Center's mission is to equip key stakeholders – governments, international organizations, the private sector, media, communities, and individuals – with the knowledge and resources needed to understand and address contemporary global security challenges.

#### **OUR WORK**

The Soufan Center engages in research, projects, and events across a broad spectrum of violent threats including terrorism, counterterrorism, violent extremism, disinformation, geopolitical dynamics, and armed conflict, including the impact on civil society, humanitarian action, and the rule of law. Through our daily **IntelBrief**, we provide focused analysis on specific global security issues. In our comprehensive **Research** reports, we contribute in-depth analysis and evaluate evolving challenges. With our **Events**, we engage diverse audiences to drive changes in policy and practice. Through our **Projects**, we seek to amplify voices and perspectives from the field and build capacities for more nuanced analyses of – and responses to – regional and international challenges. Working closely with a wide range of **Media**, we share our findings and insights on current events, risks, and responses. Through **TSC Arabic**, The Soufan Center ensures critical research and analysis is available to Arabic-speaking audiences in the Middle East, North Africa, and across the globe.

#### **OUR HISTORY**

Founded in 2017 by former FBI special agent Ali Soufan, The Soufan Center is an independent, non-partisan, and registered 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. Led by Executive Director Naureen Chowdhury Fink, our **Team** is strengthened by diverse professional and cultural backgrounds, including experience in human rights; international development; federal, state, and local government; international organizations; law enforcement; and the military. Each year, The Soufan Center organizes the **Global Security Forum**, an annual international conference to address evolving security challenges and bring together senior officials and practitioners for innovative exchanges.

## TSC'S REACH

# 10 RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

#### 240 INTELBRIEFS

**100+ INTERVIEWS** 

HOSTED
9 VIRTUAL EVENTS

1,500+ MEDIA MENTIONS IN OVER 90 COUNTRIES

PARTICIPATED IN
115+ EVENTS & BRIEFINGS

SUBSCRIBE TO TSC NEWSLETTER



## POLICY ENGAGEMENT: GLOBAL REACH

The Soufan Center further expanded our global engagement throughout 2021 to share our research, expertise, and policy recommendations with a broad range of international stakeholders. Particularly expanding our engagement at the **United Nations**, TSC took advantage of our location in New York to grow our collaboration with and briefings for Permanent Missions to the UN, as well as with UN counterterrorism bodies. More broadly, TSC prioritized our global engagement via events, briefings, roundtable discussions, and conferences, both in-person and virtually, across governments; international organizations like the UN, the **European Union** (EU), and the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO); fora like the **Global Counterterrorism Forum** (GCTF), the **International Centre for Counter-Terrorism** (ICCT), the **EU's Radicalisation Awareness Network** (RAN), and the **Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists** (ACAMS); and numerous research organizations. In service to amplifying the breadth of research undertaken last year, our team participated in over 70 events and consultations with global reach in 2021, sharing our research, analysis, and thought leadership on a variety of complex security issues.





ACAMS, Virtual

European Council, Brussels, Belgium

TSC has frequently been called on to advise policymakers, experts, and the media on the escalating violent far-right extremist threat, in the United States and transnationally, as well as the increased use of mis- and dis- information both by conspiracy-driven extremists and state actors. For example, our founder Ali Soufan offered remarks on the rise of far-right terrorism before the **UN Forum of Small States** (FOSS) Vienna Chapter, and our Executive Director Naureen Chowdhury Fink has frequently briefed current and incoming members of the **UN Security Council** and its Counter-Terrorism Committee, as well as the EU's coordination committee for CT in the MENA region. Ms. Fink additionally presented on far-right terrorism for the UK's CT network in Europe, **Royal United Services Institute** (RUSI) conference, and **EU Prevent conference**. She has spoken on emerging terrorist financing threats at ACAMS and also on sanctions and humanitarian impacts at the **International Peace Institute** (IPI). TSC Board President Michael Masters and Senior Research Fellows Colin P. Clarke and Jason Blazakis participated in the inaugural **Eradicate Hate Global Summit** to discuss rule-of-law initiatives to counter hate and extremism globally. TSC Research Fellow Mollie Saltskog presented on the disinformation-terrorism nexus in an event hosted by the **Swedish Center for Preventing Violent Extremism** (CVE), and joined Ms. Fink in briefing the **European Union's Radicalisation Awareness Network** (RAN) on the current state of violent extremism in the U.S. and lessons learned for European practitioners. In addition, Ms. Saltskog was appointed to the jury awarding the 2021 Pioneer Prize hosted by Nordic Safe Cities.







Securing the Future Initiative, New York

Several major developments also amplified the need for updated assessments of the global jihadist terrorism threat, particularly the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and Taliban seizure of control, as well as reaching the twentieth anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001. TSC was particularly well-placed to provide this analysis, prompting Mr. Soufan's remarks for a **European Council** event evaluating achievements and challenges of EU counterterrorism efforts over the past two decades. Engagement with international organizations and multilateral institutions on this front included dialogues hosted by **UN Office of Counter-Terrorism** (UNOCT) and **UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate's** (CTED) **Global Research Network** (GRN), in which our Executive Director Naureen Chowdhury Fink participated. Resident Fellow

Stephanie Foggett and Senior Research Fellow Susan Sim each presented several times to NATO's Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) on intersections of crisis management, counter-narratives, media, and gender in counterterrorism efforts. Further, Ms. Foggett and Ms. Sim both authored chapters for a NATO COE-DAT 2021 book, *Good Practices in Counter-Terrorism*. TSC also participated in dialogues hosted by fellow research institutions, such as the Wilson Center, Institute of War and Peace Studies, Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre (JTIC), and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), discussing the status of Islamic State and al-Qaeda and dynamics in Afghanistan.



United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Wilson Center, Virtual

Addressing countering the financing of terrorism (CFT), Dr. Clarke additionally briefed the ICCT and the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh (UNITAD), and Ms. Fink was invited to present in events hosted by ACAMS and the GCTF. Repatriation and accountability were also increasing relevant discussions last year, as governments debated how to react to foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) detained in Iraq and Syria, prompting Dr. Clarke's participation in an Alliance for Peacebuilding event on the topic.

2021 also marked a busy time for UN mandate renewals for counterterrorism bodies—specifically the "1267 Monitoring Team" and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED)—and transitions on the Council. To this end, TSC contributed to several advisory dialogues, including

GOOD PRACTICES
IN
COUNTER TERRORISM

Control of Excellence Definion Against Terrorism

Stophanle Foogett

NATO Center of Excellence, Defense Against Terrorism (COE-DAT), Virtual

those hosted by the International Peace Institute (IPI) and International Crisis Group, as well as a special session hosted by the Tunisian mission for the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). The Soufan Center is also co-leading the Securing the Future Initiative (SFI), which included extensive discussions with senior policymakers and experts on the roles and impacts of the Security Council in countering terrorism over two decades; the project and consultations will continue throughout 2022. These offer just a sample of the instances of TSC's proactive engagement in global dialogue and fora last year to provide thought leadership on pressing global security issues.

## POLICY ENGAGEMENT: DOMESTIC IMPACT



James W. Foley Freedom Awards, Washington D.C

Throughout 2021, The Soufan Center ensured the impact in policy and practice of our research and analysis by engaging local and national government, law enforcement, intelligence agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and research institutions in the United States. Despite ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on ways of working and convening, TSC ensured that our unique perspective on human rights and rule-of-law driven security policy was communicated to critical stakeholders for maximum impact.

Offering analysis on the state of the terrorism threat, our founder Ali Soufan briefed the **U.S. Department of State** several times, speaking on the state of al-Qaeda's global network of franchises and affiliates today, shifts in tactics and strategy, and the threat posed to U.S. national security moving forward. Mr. Soufan also participated in an event with **U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas marking the twentieth anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001 and assessing the state of the terrorism threat across the ideological spectrum. Executive Director Naureen Fink has also been engaging with DHS on questions relating to the prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration ("PRR") of terrorist offenders. Senior Research Fellow Colin P. Clarke additionally briefed the **U.S. Department of Defense**, in a discussion about Antifa for the Joint Chiefs of Staff analyzing what acts qualify as terrorism and/or politically or ideologically motivated violence. At the state level, Senior Research Fellow Jason Blazakis testified in **California State Assembly's Emergency Management Committee** hearing on state and local strategies to preventing domestic terrorism. Our team continues to regularly brief experts and offices supporting lawmakers in Washington D.C., as well as a range of government and civil society organizations across the country.

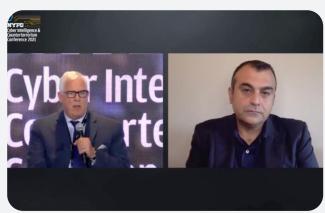


California State Assembly, Sacramento

TSC additionally engaged law enforcement at the state and federal levels on counterterrorism priorities and strategies. During the **New York City Police Department's** (NYPD) fifth annual Cyber Intelligence and Counterterrorism Conference, Mr. Soufan offered his perspective on digital drivers of violence and how law enforcement can best leverage technology and partnerships to protect information, infrastructure, and people. Mr. Soufan also briefed the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** (FBI) on the current status of the evolving terrorism threat landscape. On the local level, Dr. Clarke presented to the Delaware State Police Hometown Security Conference on the threat of salafijihadist violent extremism twenty years after 9/11.

TSC further contributed to thought leadership on national security issues through engagement with NGOs and research institutions. Mr. Soufan stressed the importance of efforts to bring home Americans held hostage and unlawfully detained abroad through his participation in the **Foley Foundation's** 2021 James W. Foley Freedom Awards—where he was awarded the "James W. Foley Legacy Achievement Award, A Profile in Moral Courage" for his work for Americans held hostage abroad—and Hostage Aid Worldwide's launch event. Furthermore, Mr. Soufan participated

in two events hosted by the 9/11 Memorial Museum to offer his insight on the future leadership of al-Qaeda and the legal action brought against Saudi Arabia by members of the 9/11 community. Addressing the culmination of concerns around Islamic State foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), our Executive Director Naureen Chowdhury Fink was a panelist for an event by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Additionally, Senior Research Fellow Emerita Torres participated in a Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS) event on Latinas in U.S. national security, emphasizing the importance of a diverse and representative workforce in the security sphere. TSC was also delighted to participate in additional national security and foreign policy discussions hosted by the McCain Institute, American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and U.S. Institute of Peace, among others.



New York City Police Department, New York



Eradicate Hate Global Summit, Pittsburgh

# ENGAGEMENT WITH ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

The Soufan Center continued its engagement with a range of academic institutions both in the United States and internationally through a series of events, briefings, and projects in 2021, addressing a range of geopolitical and international security challenges.

Based in New York, TSC maintains engagement and fosters collaboration with academic and student communities in the New York area. In cooperation with the Center on National Security (CNS) at Fordham Law, TSC supported three virtual events with topics ranging from the impact of the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, to the threat of violent extremism in the U.S. and abroad, to the implications of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Karen J. Greenberg, Director at CNS, joined in conversation over the year with Founder Ali Soufan and Senior Research Fellow Colin P. Clarke in a series of collaborative events. In February 2021, Executive Director Naureen Chowdhury Fink participated in a virtual panel discussion hosted by New York University's John Brademas Center and the Brennan Center for Justice on the topic of violent white supremacy in the United States. In April 2021, with the College at Brockport, State University of New York (SUNY), Mr. Soufan offered a keynote lecture series on "Challenging Counterterrorism's Double Standard: An Examination" as part of the Salah & Sarwat Malik Lecture Series. The discussion covered the double standard in U.S. counterterrorism scholarship and practice, including a historical and comparative analysis of violent white supremacy extremists and jihadists. In September 2021, as the world reflected on the



twentieth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, Mr. Soufan and Dr. Clarke contributed to publications with The Combating Terrorism Center at the United States Military Academy in West Point.

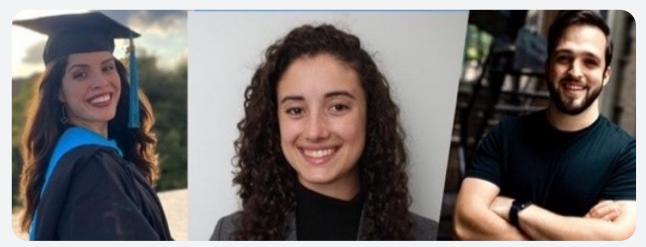
At the national level, TSC's experts engaged with academic communities from the East Coast to the West Coast. In April 2021, Ms. Fink participated in an event on far-right extremism hosted by The University of California's Davis School of Law and United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennoune. In April 2021, Senior Research Fellow Emerita Torres participated in the inaugural "Inclusive Excellence Week: Pathways to Inclusive Excellence in International Affairs" at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University. Other events over the year included Mr. Soufan speaking with students at Yale Law School and Dr. Clarke lecturing on the future of terrorism at The National War College of the United States.



University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, France

TSC was also privileged to welcome three summer interns in 2021 with support from student development programs at the Clements Center for National Security at The University of Texas at Austin and The University of Chicago. We remain grateful for their contributions and engagement throughout their time with TSC.

At the international level, TSC collaborated with academic communities focused on the Middle East in a series of events and discussions. Mr. Soufan, together with Professor Rami Khouri, Global Director of Engagement at the American University of Beirut (AUB), joined to discuss a range of shared security challenges. In February 2021, an event with AUB looked at comparisons between white supremacy extremists and jihadists, including tactics, religion, and radicalization.



Summer Interns: Marigny Kirschke-Schwart, Caitlin O'Hara, David Newman

An event in June 2021 looked at resistance movements in the Arab world, building on TSC's report authored by Rami Khouri, "The Decade of Defiance & Resistance: Reflections on Arab Revolutionary Uprisings and Responses from 2010 – 2020." TSC produced an accompanying virtal event series, "In Conversation with Rami G. Khouri: A Discussion on Protest Movements of the Last Decade in the Middle East and North Africa." These virtual discussions featured conversations between Professoe Khouri with Ms. Fink, along with Dr. Jillian Schwedler, Professor of Political Science at City University of New York's Hunter College and the Graduate Center, and with Dr. Dalia Fahmy, Associate Professor of Political Science at Long Island University. In November 2021, Naureen Fink participated in a roundtable hosted by Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) to launch the publication of a new book, Educate to Eradicate. TSC contributed a chapter focused on terrorist and violent extremist groups learning from one another across the ideological spectrum, including white supremacists, violent far-right groups, and jihadists. In September, Ali Soufan participated in a roundtable discussion '9/11 After The Looming Tower' in Paris, France, hosted by DEMOSERIES, a European Research Council project hosted at University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.



Filming with Rami Khouri, New York

#### RESEARCH AND INTELBRIEFS

#### RESEARCH

In 2021, The Soufan Center further refined our repertoire of analysis on global security challenges, counterterrorism, and foreign policy issues to offer nuanced research on the evolution of the global threat landscape through 10 new publications. To most effectively reach key stakeholders across governments, international organizations, the private sector, and the media, TSC produced a range of publication formats, from our daily, succinct IntelBriefs to longer-form analytical reports. To reach policymakers in a timely and effective manner, we also introduced the new Issue Brief format, tailored to offer crisp analysis and targeted policy recommendations.

Since its founding, TSC has consistently endeavored to produce timely, impactful, and action-oriented research and rigorous analysis that can both articulate emerging threats and offer actionable recommendations for global policymakers. The range of 2021 publications significantly advanced this objective, cultivated interest in our research as go-to resources on terrorism and violent extremism, and set the stage for further research on these themes in the coming year.

#### **VIOLENT FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM**

In the wake of the January 6, 2021 U.S. Capitol insurrection, TSC responded to the need for greater contextualization of the U.S. domestic violent extremist threat, across a "salad bar" of ideologies, and offered analysis on the impacts of violent far-right extremism in the U.S. on transnational networks, particularly in the U.K. and Europe. Building on our prior work on white supremacy extremism, our research proved influential in deepening policymakers' understanding of the threat and responses. Drawing from our work on combatting jihadist terrorism, our analysis compared and contrasted the tactics employed by jihadists and violent far-right extremists to inform the policy responses; furthermore, we examined lessons learned in the Global War on Terror to recommend the most effective tools to counter violence across the ideological spectrum, particularly for countering terrorist financing and counter-narrative efforts. Our work additionally addressed the nexus of disinformation with violent extremism, particularly relevant to conspiracy-based movements like QAnon, and the exploitation of such rhetoric by state actors to geopolitical ends. The Soufan Center greatly appreciated the support of the Airey Neave Trust (U.K.) and the German Mission to the United Nations on this portfolio.









#### JIHADIST TERRORISM





As the United States marked the twentieth anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, TSC offered renewed analysis on the current state of the threat posed by global jihadist groups, as well as a reality check to the efficacy and impact of two decades of the Global War on Terror. Our work emphasized the persistence of the global jihadist threat, examining the shifts in both al-Qaeda and Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) operations globally. TSC research tackled the evolution in the organizational structure and strategy of al-Qaeda, particularly poignant as the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan and the Taliban seized control. Our work also delved into regional trends in terrorism and counterterrorism, integrating considerations of gender and changing tactics

of violence. TSC additionally expanded our work on justice and accountability for terrorism, addressing questions surrounding prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters affiliated with ISIS. Our team also joined several podcasts, including SpyTalk and The Global Coalition's Taking Apart Terror, to contribute to critical discussions on gender and terrorism, terrorist financing, developments in Afghanistan, and the evolution of al-Qaeda.







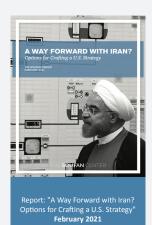


#### SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

TSC furthered longstanding focus on security, governance, and foreign policy in the Middle East and North Africa, with an eye to escalating so-called "great power" competition prompting geopolitical maneuvering for influence. As the Biden administration took office in January 2021, negotiations for the resumption of the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) were, and have remained, a key foreign policy priority, prompting our examination of the history of the U.S.-Iran relationship and recommendations for the new administration. Following a decade of popular uprisings in Arab states from 2010 - 2020, TSC additionally explored common themes and grievances across the revolutionary protest movements, highlighting four case studies from Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Sudan.



Report: "The Decade of Defiance and Resistance: Reflections on Arab Revolutionary Uprisings and Responses from 2010 – 2020" May 2021



#### RESEARCH AND INTELBRIEFS



#### **INTELBRIEFS**

In 2021, The Soufan Center's flagship daily product, the IntelBrief, continued to focus on the critical analysis of security and geopolitical dynamics, reaffirming TSC's unique platform for offering key stakeholders crisp, timely, and nuanced analyses. TSC IntelBriefs were consistently picked up or covered by news and media outlets worldwide and are widely referenced by partners in government, security, and civil society spaces.

The U.S. Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021, set the stage for a volatile year on the U.S. domestic terrorism front. TSC IntelBriefs highlighted multiple dimensions of the emergent challenges associated with the violent far-right movement and disinformation or conspiracy theories, as well as the increased prevalence of individuals motivated to perpetrate violence shaped by a "salad bar" of ideologies. These include conspiracy-driven, white supremacist, anti-government, and anti-technology extremists. Following the inauguration of President Joseph Biden, TSC published a series of IntelBriefs offering policy recommendations to the new administration across issues of geopolitics and foreign policy, counterterrorism, climate security, and human rights and democracy promotion.

Leading up to and upon the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban's seizure of control in August, our IntelBriefs tackled myriad considerations across foreign policy, geopolitics, counterterrorism strategy, and human security in Afghanistan, including the impact of the withdrawal on the humanitarian crises and on women and girls, in particular. We continued our analysis of affiliates of al-Qaeda and Islamic State across the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa, as jihadist operations globally became increasingly decentralized and capitalized on this propaganda win in Afghanistan.

As the U.S. marked the twenty-year anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, TSC took this opportunity to reflect on the last two decades of the Global War on Terror. A special guest-authored series of IntelBriefs highlighted views from experts and practitioners around the world on the global impacts of 9/11 and the ensuing response, as well as the evolution of terrorist threats. The special series complemented TSC's ongoing focus on the evolution of the terrorist threat that led to those tragic events and on their implications for current security dynamics.

Our 2021 IntelBriefs additionally addressed the escalation of great power competition, including related defense and military considerations, and offered increased analysis on international multilateral counterterrorism infrastructure and the impact of the United Nations Security Council on issues ranging from Myanmar to Afghanistan, from counterterrorism to sanctions. TSC endeavored to further incorporate gender and human security considerations as cross-cutting threads throughout our analyses.

#### **TOP 5 INTELBRIEFS 2021**



AUGUST 20, 2021

The Past, Present, and Future of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan



AUGUST 6, 2021

Negotiating out of Counterterrorism in the Sahel



JULY 30, 2021

The Evolution of the Global Jihadist Movement from a One-Headed Monster to a Hydra



AUGUST 17, 2021

Implications of the Fall of Kabul and the Taliban Takeover of Afghanistan



FEBRUARY 16, 2021

The Future of QAnon: Fringe Conspiracy or Acute Security Threat?

#### **PROJECTS**

Complementing and supporting our research portfolio, The Soufan Center's 2021 projects strove to address a range of complex security issues, to include: tracking U.S. domestic violent extremism; analyzing transnational violent far-right extremism in the U.K., Europe, and U.S.; applying lessons learned from countering jihadist terrorism to combatting the violent far-right internationally; assessing United Nations Security Council counterterrorism efforts; and supporting conflict-sensitive journalism in the Middle East. TSC looks forward to continuing to working on many of these themes through 2022.





#### **SECURING THE FUTURE INITIATIVE**

In September 2021, TSC and The Fourth Freedom Forum launched the first-ever independent review and assessment of the UN Security Council's counterterrorism activities, under the leadership of TSC Executive Director Naureen Chowdhury Fink, President of the Fourth Freedom Forum Alistair Millar, and TSC Senior Visiting Fellow Eric Rosand. Through 2022, the Securing the Future Initiative (SFI) will convene multistakeholder roundtables, consultations, and interviews to produce a report on the Security Council's efforts since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as lessons learned in addressing the evolving terrorist threat. In late 2021, TSC helped to convene the inaugural roundtable discussions, which occurred at the Greentree conference center, the German Mission to the United Nations, and virtually. TSC greatly appreciates the support of the European Union and the Governments of Germany, The Netherlands, and Switzerland on SFI.



## ENABLING WITNESSES TO INFORM THE WORLD ABOUT CONFLICT IN IRAQ, SYRIA, AND YEMEN

Supported by United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

TSC's Enabling Witnesses project selected a cadre of storytellers and witnesses to the conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen—made up of local journalists and humanitarian aid workers—to receive additional skills building. Expert trainers worked closely with these storytellers to support their accurate and conflict-sensitive reporting and increase their knowledge of journalistic tactics, multimedia options, and writing skills. In addition to ongoing engagement and coaching, TSC hosted two virtual trainings in May and October 2021. TSC greatly appreciates the support of UNDEF for this project, which continues in 2022 with intensive mentoring sessions.



Airey Neave Trust

## THE TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENT FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM, AND REYOND

Supported by the Airey Neave Trust

TSC developed a research project to assess transnational dimensions of violent far-right extremism, with a particular focus on the United States and the United Kingdom. Our research indicated that the U.S. Capitol insurrection has the potential to serve as inspiration for violent far-right extremists in Europe, the U.K., and globally. Through this project, TSC produced the report, "A Perfect Storm: Insurrection, Incitement, And The Violent Far-Right Movement," and hosted two related webinars in June and October 2021. The project was generously supported by the Airey Neave Trust (UK).



#### MAPPING INSECURITY: TRACKING VIOLENT DOMESTIC EXTREMISM

In response to the January 6, 2021 U.S. Capitol Insurrection, TSC developed the Mapping Insecurity project, which includes: I) an interactive map of arrests following the law enforcement response to the insurrection; and II) a resource library on domestic violent extremism in the U.S. and transnational violent farright extremism.

## EXTREME RIGHT-WING VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM: TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS AND NARRATIVES

Supported by the German Mission to the United Nations

TSC developed a research project to explore lessons learned from counterterrorism efforts targeting jihadist terrorism for countering violent far-right extremism, particularly assessing terrorist narratives and financing, as well as the role of the United Nations. Through this project, TSC produced two Issue Briefs on "Countering Terrorist Financing: Lessons Learned for Tackling Far-Right Terrorism" and "Countering Terrorist Narratives & Strategic Communications: Lessons Learned for Tackling Far-Right Terrorism," and hosted two related webinars in April and May 2021. The project was generously supported by the German government.



**New York** 

#### **GLOBAL TERRORISM THREAT BRIEFINGS**

Supported by Nordic Safe Cities

TSC provided a series of five briefings and analytical products to the Nordic Safe Cities network on the state of global terrorist threats and trends. Our analyses covered critical news and trends in the global extremist landscape and best practices within the preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) space, including emerging technology and policy globally. TSC greatly appreciates the support of Nordic Safe Cities on this project.



### **EVENTS**

The Soufan Center was proud to host nine virtual events throughout 2021, adapting to the operating needs of the COVID-19 pandemic while leveraging opportunities to engage with a wider variety of stakeholders and audiences. Our webinars reached thousands of participants representing governments, international organizations, think tanks, the private sector, and media.



INSURRECTION & INSECURITY:
IMPLICATIONS OF THE CAPITOL ATTACK
JANUARY 19, 2021



A WAY FORWARD WITH IRAN? A
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON CRAFTING
A U.S. STRATEGY
MARCH 17, 2021



ISIS & AL-QAEDA: WHAT'S THE STATE OF
GLOBAL TERRORISM?
FEBRUARY 9, 2021



COUNTERING TERRORIST NARRATIVES
& STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS:
COMPARING THE VIOLENT FAR-RIGHT
WITH ISIL/DA'ESH AND AL-QAIDA

In partnership with the Permanent Missions of Germany, Belgium, Norway, and Tunisia to the United Nations APRIL 28, 2021



#### COUNTERING THE FINANCING OF TERRORISM: LESSONS LEARNED FOR TACKLING VIOLENT FAR-RIGHT GROUPS

In partnership with the Permanent Missions of Germany, Norway, Tunisia, and the United Kingdom to the United Nations

MAY 18, 2021



## A PERFECT STORM: INSURRECTION, INCITEMENT AND THE VIOLENT FARRIGHT MOVEMENT

In partnership with the Airey Neave Trust
OCTOBER 4, 2021

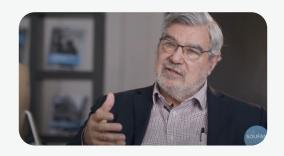


PROMISE AND PERIL IN AFGHANISTAN?

TALIBAN, IS-K, AND THE HUMAN

SECURITY DIMENSION

DECEMBER 7, 2021



# PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: CONVERSATIONS WITH RAMI G. KHOURI JUNE 8, 2021



# A PERFECT STORM: WHITE SUPREMACISTS, CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM UN High Level Counterterrorism Conference Side Event

In partnership with the Airey Neave Trust and co-hosted with the Permanent Missions of the United States, the United Kingdom, Finland, and Germany to the United Nations

JUNE 30, 2021

## **GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM**





The 2021 Global Security Forum (GSF) on "Cooperation or Competition? Changing Dynamics of Global Security" took place from October 12–14, 2021, in Doha, Qatar, bringing together both virtual and in-person participants. Hundreds of attendees representing governments, international organizations, academia, media, and the private sector joined us in Doha, and thousands more tuned in to GSF 2021 virtually. Over three days, the discussions stressed the need for the international community to recognize the breadth of issues which are best addressed through cooperation, including the ongoing global pandemic, climate crisis, humanitarian crises, the protection of human rights, and transnational security challenges. The crisis in Afghanistan, navigating "great power" competition, and the escalating violent far-right extremist threat were themes repeatedly raised over the series of discussions.

At GSF 2021, we were honored with the presence of H.E. Sheikh Khalid Bin Khalifa Bin Abdulaziz Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of Qatar, during the opening ceremony. It was our privilege to additionally open the forum with insights from H.E. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda. We gratefully welcomed H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, who discussed Qatar's role in diplomacy to respond to developments in Afghanistan.

In addition to many other esteemed participants and experts, we were honored to include commentary from Greek Minister of Justice Kostas Tsiaras, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, Singaporean Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean, Maldivian Minister of Home Affairs Sheikh Imran Abdulla, Nigerian National Intelligence Agency Director- General Ahmed Rufai Abubakar, as well as UN Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx and Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason, representing Ireland at the United Nations in New York.

Established in 2018, the Global Security Forum is an annual international gathering organized by The Soufan Center (TSC) and the Qatar International Academy for Security Studies (QIASS). In 2021, the Global Security Forum welcomed partnerships with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the Airey Neave Trust, Defense One, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), New America Foundation, Nordic Safe Cities, The Soufan Group, and Qatar Airways.

#### **2021 PARTNERS**



































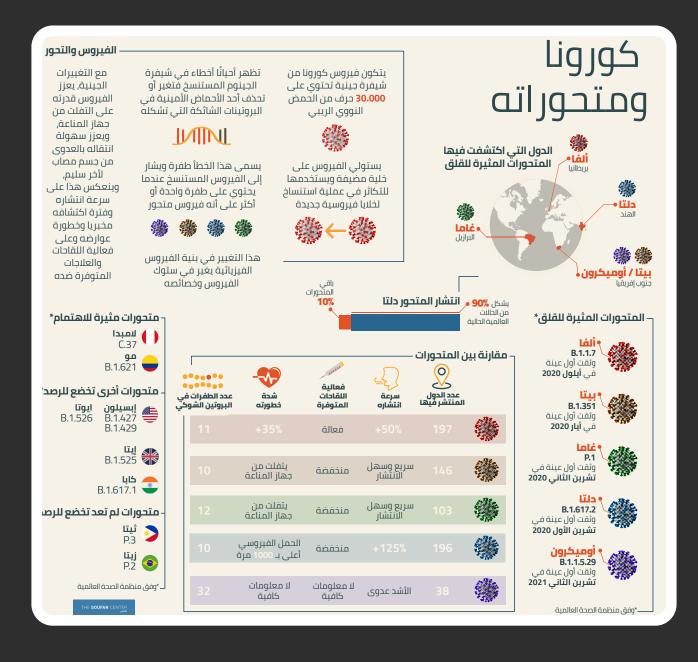
## TSC ARABIC

THE **SOUFAN** CENTER بالعربي

Through TSC Arabic, The Soufan Center ensures critical research and analysis is available to Arabic-speaking audiences in the Middle East, North Africa, and across the globe. TSC Arabic shares TSC analytical content in Arabic across a unique website, newsletter, and social media accounts to reach a broader global audience.

Currently, we offer translations of our IntelBriefs in Arabic, as well as translations of select research publications, to include our February report on "A Way Forward with Iran? Options for Crafting a U.S. Strategy."

TSC Arabic additionally offers unique content in Arabic. Each week, we develop analytical infographics covering a variety of complex security issues, including elections, protest movements, economic shifts, and conflict dynamics. TSC Arabic also produces one video each week that expounds on one IntelBrief to offer additional historical background and context analysis. TSC Arabic is a growing component of The Soufan Center's work, and we look forward to bringing you more content in Arabic moving forward.



**VISIT TSC ARABIC WEBSITE** 



## IN THE NEWS

The Soufan Center is proud to share its knowledge and expertise with national and international news outlets from across the world. TSC's experts provide commentary on a range of global security challenges, working with journalists and news outlets throughout the year. In 2021, TSC's research, projects, and experts were featured in premier news and media outlets, including the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, New Yorker, CNN, MSNBC, BBC, Voice of America, Defense One, NPR, The Guardian, Newsweek, and Al Jazeera, among other outlets. TSC's research, products, and experts were mentioned over 1,500 times in media mentions in over 90 countries around the world.















#### **OPINION PIECES & COMMENTARY**

TSC's experts authored over 50 opinion and commentary pieces in major national and international newspapers, magazines, and policy publications. TSC experts contributed pieces to the *New York Times, Washington Post, The Atlantic, Politico, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, TIME, Defence One, South China Morning Post, Los Angeles Times,* and *Lawfare*, among many others.



What Can the United Nations Do About Counterterrorism?

Washington Post Opinions 🤣

@PostOpinions











11:03 PM · Oct 12, 2021 · Buffer

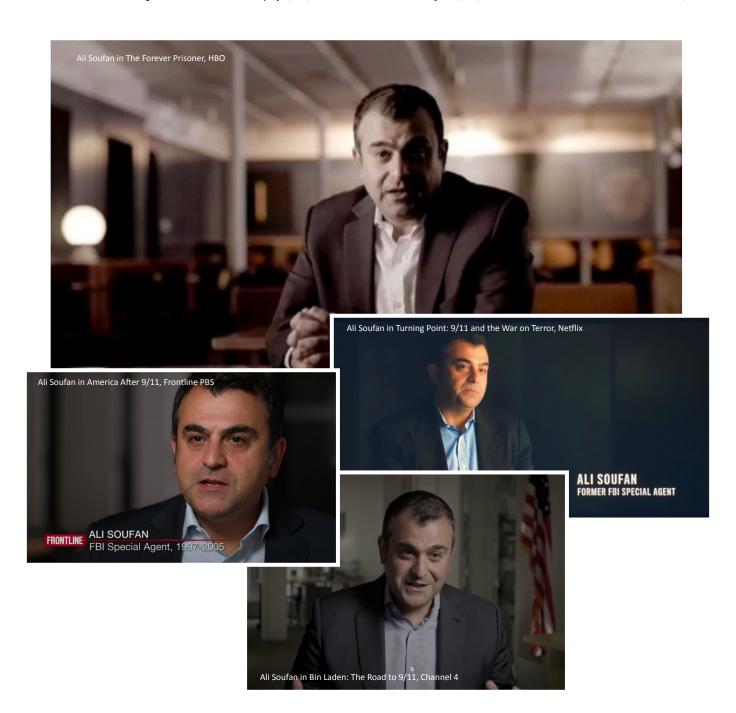
#### **PODCASTS & RADIO**

The Soufan Center ensured a variety of mediums in our media engagement, to include participation in myriad podcasts and radio segments. Sharing analysis on an array of complex security and foreign policy issues, TSC experts participated in a range of podcast series, including Taking Apart Terror, SpyTalk, Critical Line Item with Tom Ravlic, Conversation Six, Back Story with Dana Lewis, Finding Humanity, FOX News Rewind: 9/11, and Stand Up! with Pete Dominick, among others. Our team additionally participated in segments on BBC Newshour, NPR, Voice of America, and Times Radio.

## IN THE NEWS

#### **FILM & TELEVISION**

The Soufan Center's experts were featured in multiple documentaries and films over the year. TSC's Founder Ali Soufan appeared in *HBO's*The Forever Prisoner by acclaimed film-maker Alex Gibney. The film tells the story of Abu Zubaydah, the first high-value detainee subjected to Enhanced Interrogation Techniques, later identified as torture. Mr. Soufan was also featured in *Netflix's* Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror which looked at the events leading up to September 11, as well as the aftermath. Other appearances over the year included *CBS*News' 26th Street Garage: The FBI's Untold Story of 9/11, PBS Frontline's America after 9/11, and Channel 4's Bin Laden: The Road to 9/11.



Research Fellow Mollie Saltskog appeared in *ITV's* After the Storm: America's Enemy Within? which looked at the repercussions of the January 6 attack on the U.S Capitol. She also appeared in an episode of *National Geographic's* latest season of *Trafficked with Mariana van Zeller* in an episode exposing the global violent white supremacist movement.





Senior Research Fellows Colin P. Clarke and Jason Blazakis were featured in German public television **ZDF's** documentary series *Shadow World*, which looks at areas in which powerful states are losing out to non-state actors and criminal entities.





TSC also joined the set of a documentary covering the rise of al-Qaeda and its impact, speaking on the evolution of the group and its impact on communities and individual mobilization, with a focus on the roles of women. The finalized film is anticipated out in 2022.



## TSC TEAM



Richard Barrett
SENIOR FELLOW



Jason Blazakis SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW



Colin P. Clarke
SENIOR RESEARCH
FELLOW



Jessica Davis
VISITING SENIOR
FELLOW



Carlos Fernandez
SENIOR FELLOW



Naureen Chowdhury Fink EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Stephanie Foggett
RESIDENT FELLOW



Richard M. Frankel
SENIOR FELLOW



Michael G. Masters

PRESIDENT



Michaela Millender

SFI PROJECT
COORDINATOR



Caitlin O'Hara

SFI PROJECT
COORDINATOR



Eric Rosand
VISITING SENIOR
FELLOW



Nathan Sales SENIOR FELLOW



Mollie Saltskog
RESEARCH FELLOW



Amanda Schmitt

PROGRAM AND
COMMUNICATIONS
OFFICER



Susan Sim
SENIOR RESEARCH
FELLOW



Ali Soufan



Meredith Stricker
SENIOR FELLOW



Emerita Torres
SENIOR RESEARCH
FELLOW

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