

The Strategic Logic of Large Militant Alliance Networks

Description

Episode 148 of the Irregular Warfare Podcast explores why militant groups form alliances, and what the content of those alliances can tell us about their organizational capacity.

Based on research by Professor Chris Blair and Phillip Potter, this episode explores why militant groups form alliances. Rather than signaling strength, these networks often help groups compensate for key weaknesses. After 9/11, al-Qaeda used alliances to expand its global reach. The Islamic State, after splitting from al-Qaeda, built partnerships to boost its ideological credibility. We unpack how these strategies shaped both groups' networks and what the findings mean for disrupting militant alliances today, especially as attention shifts toward great power competition.

The article is here: [The Strategic Logic of Large Militant Alliance Networks](#).

General Joseph Votel is the current distinguished chair of West Point's Combatting Terrorism Center. He is a retired Army 4-star officer who in his last active duty assignment served as the commanding general of U.S. Central Command. During his 39 years in the military he commanded Special Operations and conventional military forces at every level.

Dr. Chris Blair is an Assistant Professor at Princeton University in the Department of Politics. Professor Blair's research mainly engages with questions of how counterinsurgency policies affect civilian and rebel behavior and how prospective host countries respond to forcibly displaced people. He has published prolifically in top academic journals as well as publications such as Foreign Affairs and the Washington Post.

Alisa Laufer hosts this episode. Please reach out to the Irregular Warfare Podcast team with any questions about the episode or the broader mission of the show.

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Intro music: "Unsilenced" by Ketsa

Outro music: "Launch" by Ketsa

Photo: Cover image generated using AI-assisted digital art tools.

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