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## **LETTERS**

### **Islam in Australia**

I read with great interest Captain Mona Shindy's article on Islam in Australia [*United Service* **66** (2) 9 – 12, June 2015] but wish to differ with her on two related aspects – the influence of the Sunni-Shiite rivalry; and the association of alienated people to the rise of extremism.

Vali R. Nasr, Dean, School of Advanced International Studies at John Hopkins University, recently stated: "If we want to understand the Middle East and why conflicts are the way they are ... we cannot take our eyes off the Sunni-Shiite conflict". That is not "Western overplaying of the Sunni-Shiite rivalry" as noted by Captain Shindy, but an important fact that requires understanding and attention.

The catastrophic civil war between Allawi and Shiite Muslims versus Sunni Muslims in Syria has generated great loss of life. The Sunni-affiliated Daesh (or ISIS) organisation is wresting territories from Shiite control in Iraq and Syria and is sanctioned by radical Sunni leaders. The Sunni-Shiite rivalry also has led to religious justifications for the actions of Islamic terror groups such as Hezbollah (Shiite) and ISIS (Sunni). It is likely to have a direct impact on respective Australian Muslim communities, leading to the spread of extremism and reinforcing any psychological feeling of alienation or disenfranchisement.

**Jacob Blitman**

Royal United Services Institute, Victoria  
13 August 2015

Like Wing Commander Hedley Thomas [Letters, *United Service* **66** (3) 5, September 2015] I was upset by Captain Shindy's lecture. I served for four years in Muslim countries and my wife, who also attended the lecture, was educated in a part-Muslim country. We were astounded at Captain Shindy's bias and disregard for facts. Many of her arguments were specious.

**David Watts**

Wyong NSW, 8 September 2015