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Welcome from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume XII, Issue 1 (February 2018) of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, available in both HTML and PDF versions at http://www.terrorismanalysts.com and in PDF version (only) at https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism. Our free and independent online journal is a publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) of Leiden University's Campus The Hague. Now in its twelfth year, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has nearly 7,800 regular subscribers and many more occasional readers and website visitors worldwide. The Articles of its six annual issues are fully peer reviewed by external referees while its Research and Policy Notes, Special Correspondence and other content are subject to internal editorial quality control.

Here is a brief look at the contents of the current issue:

The first article by Bart Schuurman and Max Taylor explores definitional aspects of the terms radicalization and fanaticism, suggesting the latter term might be more appropriate for understanding the drivers behind a person's involvement in terrorist violence. Then Max Abrahms, Matthew Ward and Ryan Kennedy draw on insights from organizational ecology and conflict literature to develop a theory about why some terrorist groups are more likely than others to target civilians. Next, Brian Philips examines the uses of terrorist tactics by criminal organizations in Mexico, particularly bombings, threats of violence and attacks against politicians. And in our final article of this issue Trevor Cloen, Yelena Biberman and Farhan Zahid explore why terrorists and insurgents have used nonviolent means to carry out prison breaks.

This issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* also features a Research Note by Julien van den Elzen, who compares models of religious conversion and radicalization, and another by Ahmad Shehabat and Teodor Mitew that looks at ISIS content distribution tactics using anonymous file sharing services.

In the Resources section readers will find a column of 18 short book reviews by Joshua Sinai, followed by two extensive bibliographies compiled by the journal's Information Resources Editor, Judith Tinnes. These are followed by a detailed list of recent online, open-source publications on terrorism and counterterrorism, compiled by web analyst Berto Jongman. And Ryan Scrivens provides an extensive list of Ph.D. dissertations and M.A. theses on terrorism and counterterrorism.

Finally, the issue concludes with some announcements from the Editorial Board. First, we provide the details of the TRI Award for Best Ph.D. Thesis 2017. And we formally thank and identify (unless they request otherwise) the peer reviewers, editorial board members and other colleagues who have worked with us over the past year to publish quality research in this journal.

The current issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* was jointly prepared by editor James J.F. Forest and associate editor Greg Miller, with assistance from Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid, the editor-in-chief of the journal.

Articles

Reconsidering Radicalization: Fanaticism and the Link Between Ideas and Violence

by Bart Schuurman and Max Taylor

Abstract

A central issue with many interpretations of radicalization remains their tendency to overemphasize the role of extremist beliefs in motivating involvement in terrorism. After elaborating on this critique, the authors propose that 'fanaticism', a concept developed by Taylor in the early 1990s, offers a way of overcoming this deficiency in radicalization-based approaches through its conditional understanding of when radical beliefs can lead to violent behavior. Primary-sources driven empirical analysis supports both the critique of radicalization and the discussion of fanaticism's benefits. Results are relevant to both academics and counterterrorism practitioners working to understand the role of extremist beliefs in motivating involvement in terrorist violence.

Keywords: radicalization; fanaticism; beliefs; ideology; religion; terrorism; concepts; political violence; Hofstadgroup; homegrown jihadism

Introduction

The concept of 'radicalization' has come to dominate debates on the processes leading to involvement in terrorism. Simultaneously, radicalization has attracted considerable criticism on definitional, conceptual and empirical grounds. This article argues that a central shortcoming of radicalization-based thinking remains its tendency to implicitly or explicitly see involvement in terrorism as stemming from the adoption of radical beliefs, even though the vast majority of radicals never become involved in terrorism and not all terrorists are primarily motivated by their beliefs. Two points are made. First, the authors illustrate that the overemphasis on the role of beliefs remains prevalent, despite the recent development of several conceptually and theoretically more nuanced interpretations of radicalization. Second, the concept of 'fanaticism' as developed by Taylor in the early 1990s is revisited precisely because it provides a conditional understanding of when radical beliefs can lead to violent behavior. Through a conceptual discussion supported by primary-sources driven empirical analysis, the authors contribute to the larger debate on the role that convictions can play in motivating involvement in terrorist groups and terrorist violence.

Background

For well over a decade, academics, policy makers, journalists and the general public have been debating involvement in terrorism as a process characterized by 'radicalization'.[1] The concept's obverse, 'deradicalization', has similarly become central to more recent questions about if and how former terrorists can be re-integrated into society.[2] Despite its ubiquitous use, radicalization has also attracted considerable criticism.[3] Skeptics have noted its inherently subjective nature, the lack of agreement on definitional issues and the sometimes linear and deterministic conceptualizations that made radicalization seem like a 'conveyor belt' to involvement in terrorism.[4] Recent years have seen the development of notably more nuanced interpretations that have

considerably advanced insights into how, why and when people may become involved in terrorism. Even so, a central shortcoming of radicalization has continued to exert a detrimental influence; namely, the frequently found assumption that the adoption of radical beliefs precedes and leads to involvement in terrorism.[5]

Ideologies, whether religious or political in nature, are undoubtedly important to understanding individuals' and groups' decisions about committing acts of terrorist violence. The promise of a utopian future (or as is more likely among today's terrorists, afterlife), the identification of obstacles standing in the way of its realization and the rationalization of violent means as the most effective and indeed only way of overcoming them, allow some belief systems to both motivate and justify terrorism.[6] Shared beliefs also form an important part of the social cohesion that keeps terrorist groups together.[7]

Yet, important as they are, the adoption of radical beliefs alone is not a necessary or sufficient condition for involvement in terrorism. As is illustrated by the references found throughout this paper, and the concrete examples given in later segments, many interpretations of radicalization continue to overstate the role of beliefs in bringing about involvement in terrorism. This conflation of ideas and behavior is problematic for several reasons. Terrorists may have *learned* to describe their motivations in ideological terms during their socialization into the group.[8] Secondly, such justifications may obscure other motivating factors that could be of equal or greater significance. Most importantly, the vast majority of 'radicals' never become involved in terrorism and research has shown that not all terrorists are primarily motivated by their convictions.[9]

The goal of this article is to highlight the ongoing and detrimental influence of this 'specificity gap' and to suggest a way to overcome it. To do so effectively, it is crucial to avoid a straw man argument in which the concept of radicalization is presented without any appreciation for its development over time or the many thoughtful interpretations of it that exist. The focus here is on those conceptualizations of radicalization that see it as a cognitive process of increasing adherence to radical views which is then implicitly or explicitly tied to involvement in terrorism. As discussed later on in this paper, not all interpretations of radicalization are so cognitively focused or tie beliefs to behavior quite so strongly. Yet this particular understanding of radicalization remains entrenched among counterterrorism policy makers in particular and still holds strong in the academic debate, despite the development of more nuanced alternatives.[10] Indeed, the conflation of radical beliefs with radical behavior is argued to be the defining feature of radicalization as it is generally understood.

While demonstrating the ongoing influence of that conflation is useful in itself, this article wants to help move the debate forward by suggesting a way in which the potential for radical beliefs to inspire involvement in terrorist violence can be better understood. To do so, this article revisits the concept of 'fanaticism' as it was developed by Taylor in the early 1990s.[11] Although fanaticism might at first glance appear to be merely radicalization under a different name, this concept makes the ability of radical ideas to influence behavior conditional on a number of contextual factors. It also provides a practicable way of assessing the *degree* to which fanatical beliefs influence a particular individual. Taken together, these elements endow 'fanaticism' with the specificity lacking in those interpretations of radicalization that conflate the adoption of radical beliefs with involvement in radical behavior.

Outline

This article was inspired by the first author's PhD thesis on how and why involvement in a Dutch homegrown jihadist group called the 'Hofstadgroup' came about.[12] While researching and writing this project, the utility of the radicalization concept was repeatedly drawn into question. This sparked an interest in critically exploring the concept's origins and development in more detail, both in relation to its use in academia as well as among counterterrorism policymakers. Owing to its origins in the PhD, this article draws on the Hofstadgroup as a case study at two points in these pages: first as a demonstration of radicalization's limited utility and, several pages later, to advocate the benefits of fanaticism as a different conceptualization of the potential for beliefs to inspire terrorist violence.

Before turning to these examples, the study's methodology is briefly outlined and an expanded critique of 'radicalization'-based explanations for involvement in terrorism is provided. This critique first takes a look at the etymology of radicalization to help untangle radicalism from the related concepts extremism and terrorism. [13] Next, a brief overview of the development of the radicalization concept will emphasize that the debate has certainly not been stagnant, nor can it be reduced to one-dimensional perspectives. Still, despite the emergence of more nuanced conceptualizations, the conflation of radical beliefs with involvement in terrorism continues to be dominant among counterterrorism policy makers and practitioners, as well as within significant parts of the academic debate. Using examples from the academic literature and government documents, the last part of the critique will demonstrate this problematic state of affairs to underline the need to develop alternative approaches.

Subsequently, the Hofstadgroup case study is introduced. It provides an example of an act of terrorist violence that, at first glance, epitomizes those interpretations of radicalization which see the adoption of radical beliefs as a precursor to involvement in violent behavior. Closer inspection, however, reveals it to be a practical example of radicalization's tendency to conflate ideas and behavior to an unwarranted degree. Following this first use of the case study as a demonstration of radicalization's limitations, the concept of fanaticism is introduced. Once its contours have been outlined, the Hofstadgroup is brought back in and used to demonstrate fanaticism's considerable utility for addressing why only some of those who hold radical views will act on them. The conclusion summarizes these arguments and briefly discusses the practical utility of fanaticism for the counterterrorism community.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature and draws primarily on a literature review. The critique of radicalization is based upon articles, books and 'grey literature' found through a Google Scholar search that was expanded using snowballing, whereby promising references in the material found on Google Scholar were followed up. The Hofstadgroup case study is based on an in-depth assessment of primary-sources; namely the Dutch police files on the group and semi-structured interviews with former participants. Both of these types of sources were originally studied for the first author's PhD thesis and revisited for the purposes of this study.

A Critique of Radicalization

Epistemology: Radicalism, Extremism and Terrorism

The origins of the contemporary use of radicalization within the policymaker and academic debate on terrorism can be traced to the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The previously popular 'root causes' approach to discussing the origins of terrorism gradually made way for 'radicalization', in part because the former was deemed by some to imply a degree of understanding for the perpetrators' motives.[14] Radicalization began to dominate the debate after the 2004 Madrid attacks and 2005's bombing of London's public transportation system. From the outset, the conflation of ideas and behavior was apparent.[15] The classic example of this early thinking on radicalization is the definition found in an influential 2007 study published by the New York Police Department, which referred to a 'progression of searching, finding, adopting, nurturing, and developing [an] extreme belief system to the point where it acts as a catalyst for a terrorist act' and is subdivided into four distinct stages.[16]

Set within a broader historical context, the alleged links between radical thoughts and violent behavior are far from clear. Etymologically, radicalism stems from the Latin word 'radix', which can be translated as 'root' and which in turn speaks to some of the connotations that radicalism conjures, such as fundamental, thorough, drastic and rigorous. Bötticher finds that, for most of the 19th and 20th centuries, radicalism was associated with anti-establishment political doctrines that were in large part progressive and emancipatory in nature. While opponents often imbued it with negative connotations, this modern radicalism played an important role in bringing about changes such as voting rights for women that are today part and parcel of mainstream thinking in Western democracies.[17]

Throughout its development over the past two centuries, radicalism tended to advocate far-reaching or even fundamental changes without calling for the complete overthrow or destruction of the existing socio-political order. In terms of how to achieve those goals, radicalism is not an intellectual position that is *inherently* in favor of violence as the most suitable means, even though some radicals certainly propagated its use. There is a case to be made for the position that non-violent radicalism could be seen as being part and parcel of healthy democratic societies.[18] The much more recent conflation of radicalism with terrorism is therefore quite problematic, as it lumps together individuals, groups and ideas that can and have advocated for progressive societal change with the motivations and justifications for a widely-deplored form of political violence. This conflation appears to stem, at least in part, from confusion over the related concept of extremism.

The opinions of radicals may be disagreeable or even abhorrent, but as long as radicals retain a basic adherence to the democratic political order, they could be considered a healthy if at times disconcerting part of that order. In contrast, extremism is a way of thinking that accepts no compromise, sees no middle ground and warrants no limitations on its objectives or means for achieving them. As Schmid aptly summarizes and defines extremism, "[w]hile radicals might be violent or not, might be democrats or not, extremists are never democrats. Their state of mind tolerates no diversity. They are also positively in favour of the use of force to obtain and maintain political power (...). Extremists generally tend to have inflexible 'closed minds', adhering to a simplified mono-causal interpretation of the world where you are either with them or against them, part of the problem or part of the solution."[19]

Because it is much more closely tied to a belief in the efficacy of violence, extremism more accurately describes

convictions liable to see terrorism as justified and necessary. Still, it would be inaccurate to argue that extremism necessarily leads to terrorism or that all terrorists are ideological extremists for many of the same reasons that apply to radicalism. Radicalism and extremism are perhaps best seen as different points on a scale that reflects the degree to which violence is seen as legitimate and necessary to achieve far-reaching change. This allows a distinction to be made between those who pursue far-reaching change and *might* see violence as legitimate under certain circumstances (radicals) and those who will *always* favor the use of violence to achieve what they want (extremists). The terms radicalism and extremism are used in this fashion throughout the remainder of this article.

When these concepts influence behavior, they *may* lead to terrorism. Terrorism is a heavily debated concept that suffers from being highly subjective, politicized and frequently used to designate non-state actors only. Because it is careful to avoid these pitfalls, Schmid's 2011 'academic consensus definition' on terrorism recommends itself as a way to further clarify the issues at stake. "Terrorism refers on the one hand to a **doctrine** about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial **practice** of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties."[20]

Seen in this light, terrorism is neither solely the realm of non-state actors or the domain of ideological extremists. It is essentially a type of warfare that any party to a conflict can adopt when they believe it to be in their best interests.[21] Terrorism is a tactic; a particular way of using deadly force that can stem from extremist beliefs just as much as it can be adopted for reasons of expediency.[22] For instance, the strategic bombing campaigns carried out by WWII belligerents in part deliberately targeted civilian populations to hurt and demoralize them to the extent that they would push their governments to sue for peace. Such deliberate use of terror stemmed from a pragmatic perspective on the use air power, rather than from extremist convictions. In short, it is inaccurate to conflate radical or extremist beliefs with involvement in terrorist violence. Not all extremists become terrorists and not all terrorists are ideological extremists. It is this dual disconnect between ideas and behavior that is at the heart of the debate about radicalization.

The Evolution of Radicalization

It would certainly be inaccurate to argue that all researchers simplify the relationship between beliefs and behavior. Over the past decade, various scholars[23] and government agencies[24] have come to see radicalization more broadly as the process leading up to involvement in terrorism. In Horgan's case, for example, "violent radicalisation (…) encompasses the phases of a) becoming involved with a terrorist group and b) remaining involved and engaging in terrorist activity." [25] For Kruglanski et al., radicalization is "a movement in the direction of *supporting* or *enacting* radical behavior."[26] McCauley and Moskalenko view it as "increased preparation for and commitment to intergroup conflict."[27] Several relatively complex models for involvement in terrorism, such as Moghaddam's 'staircase' and McCauley and Moskalenko's 'pyramid' models fit this interpretation of 'radicalization', even though some of their authors never used this terminology. [28] In a way, these authors see radicalization as encompassing everything that happens "before the bomb goes off."[29]

Alongside this broader conceptualization of radicalization as the process of becoming involved in terrorism,

several schools of thought have developed with regard to its potential drivers. Koehler identifies four such approaches. Firstly, sociological perspectives have stressed the influence of environmental conditions. Secondly, social movement theory has emphasized the role of 'radical milieus', small-group dynamics and antagonistic competition with the state as driving forces. Thirdly, empirical approaches have looked at radicalization inductively and drawn attention to the variety of personal characteristics, backgrounds and involvement pathways found among participants in terrorist groups. Psychological perspectives, finally, have turned to the influence of such factors as (relative) deprivation, altruism, identification with the victims of perceived injustice and the various emotional, cognitive and social benefits of group membership to account for involvement pathways.[30] Among psychological factors, the experience of personal crises is particularly interesting as the potential 'spark' that may explain why only some individuals adopt extremist beliefs and violent modes of behavior, even though many more are exposed to similar circumstances.[31]

Moreover, research has highlighted and begun to explore the heterogeneity of involvement processes. Not only can people become involved in terrorism for a variety of reasons, but 'involvement' itself takes a multitude of forms.[32] More participants in terrorist groups are involved with fund-raising, recruitment, propaganda and logistic than are actually planting bombs or shooting people.[33] The factors governing such role allocation, and the reasons why people might adopt, abandon or switch between such roles, form fascinating new areas of study and are a further reminder of the complexity of the issues at stake.

These developments have underlined that involvement in terrorism stems from heterogeneous processes in which a multitude of factors, at various levels of analysis, play a role. This has enabled an analytical scope that extends beyond the narrow confines of the individual and his or her internalization of evermore radical or extremist beliefs. Indeed, the emphasis on the individual found in many approaches to radicalization may have made us underemphasize the many relevant factors found at the group and structural levels of analysis.[34] As Bartlett and Miller argue, involvement in terrorism is not just an intellectual process of adopting extremist beliefs, but one in which social, emotional and status-related factors play an important role.[35]

One particular area in which a nuanced understanding regarding the role of beliefs vis-à-vis involvement in terrorism has developed, concerns research on deradicalization and disengagement. With increasing numbers of returning foreign fighters as well as considerable numbers of homegrown radicals and extremists, many affected governments have been keen to create programs to reduce the chances of terrorism-related recidivism. Many of these initiatives rely in part or entirely on the problematic notion that, as extremist beliefs guide involvement in terrorism, desistance from this form of political violence must be predicated on weaning away individuals from those convictions; 'deradicalizing' them so that they no longer believe that violence is justified and necessary.[36]

Research in this field has repeatedly shown, however, that the reasons why people may choose to abandon terrorism are as diverse as those that led to involvement in the first place. Frequently, they do not (primarily) revolve around a change in beliefs, but may be predicated on disillusionment with the efficacy of violence, strife with other group members, or the desire to build a career or create a family outside of the confines of terrorism. Essentially, terrorist may 'disengage' behaviorally from using or supporting terrorism while remaining committed to their extremist worldviews.[37] Drawing attention to this crucial distinction has had significant consequences for the design, implementation and evaluation of re-integration or rehabilitation

efforts for terrorist and extremists. Such research embodies the considerable strides that have been made in the study of this form of political violence since 'radicalization' was first coined.

Enduring Issues in Research and Practice

Clearly, there are trends in radicalization research that have moved it beyond its conceptually narrow origins. Yet, in addition to interpretations of radicalization that see it as essentially encompassing the processes that can lead to involvement in terrorism, a second and perhaps more prevalent perspective sees radicalization as the internalization of radical or extremist beliefs.[38] Neumann, for instance, argues that "at the most basic level, radicalization can be defined as the process whereby people become extremists."[39] Similarly, Slootman and Tillie, as well as Buijs and Demant, see radicalization as a process centered on the 'delegitimization' of the established societal and political order, leading to a desire for radical change that in its most extreme form could include the use of violence.[40] Horgan distinguishes 'violent radicalization' from 'radicalization', with the latter signifying the "social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist political or religious ideology."[41]

Here the core of the issue becomes apparent. While none of the above authors claim that the adoption of radical or extremist convictions necessarily leads to involvement in terrorist behavior, such a link is often implied[42] and frequently explicated by others in the broader literature on terrorism.[43] The classic example remains Silber and Bhatt's work and their argument that the adoption of extremist beliefs acts as a catalyst for involvement in terrorism.[44] But such a view is not an anachronistic holdover from radicalization's early days. In 2010, Dalgaard-Nielsen wrote of 'violent radicalization' as a "process in which radical ideas are accompanied by the development of a willingness to directly support or engage in violent acts."[45] The same year, Neumann typified it as "the process (or processes) whereby individuals or groups come to approve of and (ultimately) participate in the use of violence for political aims."[46]

Other more recent examples include the multinational EU-funded 'Safire' project, which used a 2002 definition by the European Council and saw radicalization as "the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism."[47] In their 2016 book, Koomen and Van der Pligt add a qualification but still tie beliefs to behavior by arguing that radicalization "is the development of belief in opinions, views and ideas that might well result in a person committing acts of terror."[48]

This problem is more pronounced in government circles, where it is also more pernicious due to the interventions and policies that are actually implemented based on these assumptions.[49] The German Federal Police (BKA) sees it as "the increasing adoption among individuals and groups of an extremist way of thinking and action and the growing willingness to support and / or use illegitimate means, including the use of force, to achieve their objectives."[50] In a 2015 document on the UK government's 'prevent' strategy, radicalization is defined as "the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups."[51]

The Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) outlined a similar perspective on radicalization in 2014, namely as "an attitude that entails the willingness to accept the ultimate consequences of a system of thought and to transmute them into action."[52] For the European Commission, "violent radicalisation' entails people 'embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism."[53]

As a final example, it is interesting to note that some non-governmental organizations operating in the field of radicalization prevention also hold to similar interpretations. For instance, the Montreal based Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization leading to Violence (CPRLV) explicitly states that radicalization entails "[t]he merging of ideology and violent action."[54]

Few of those who have studied radicalization in depth will argue that beliefs alone are sufficient to explain involvement in terrorism. Likewise, not all government definitions directly conflate radicalism with violence. [55] Yet, as the examples given above demonstrate, within the academic as well as the counterterrorism policy maker and practitioner communities, an overemphasis on the role of ideas is still present.[56]

The conflation of ideas with behavior is not only conceptually problematic, as previous sections have discussed, but empirically poorly supported.[57] Opinion surveys have found adherence to radical Islamist beliefs to be unrelated with support for terrorism.[58] Strikingly, research has also shown that not all those who *do* become terrorists are (primarily) motivated by extremist ideologies.[59] This applies even to some instances of suicide terrorism, a form of violence that would at first glance appear to be the archetypal example of extremist beliefs put into practice.[60] Moreover, several scholars have argued that policies and programs intended to counter or prevent radicalization have unduly stigmatized Muslim communities.[61] Radicalization's definitional, conceptual and empirical issues are therefore far from a matter of mere academic importance.

Radicalization's Gap Between Convictions and Behavior in Practice

Having outlined the various concerns with radicalization as a concept, the following paragraphs turn to the Hofstadgroup case to provide a brief illustration of its limitations in practice. The Hofstadgroup was an ambiguously defined group consisting of approximately 40 individuals, centered on smaller hard-core of committed Salafi-Jihadist extremists. Although active in numerous Dutch cities, the group was named by the Dutch security and intelligence agency AIVD using a colloquial reference to The Hague, where many meetings took place.[62]

During the first two years of its existence, the group's most militant participants were focused on traveling to jihadist groups in Chechnya and Afghanistan as foreign fighters. Unlike the more recent generation of jihadist travelers, these Hofstadgroup participants were unable to reach their destinations, in large part because traveling to Chechnya and Afghanistan in 2002-2003 was considerably more difficult than reaching Syria was until relatively recently. In early 2004, after these attempts at joining the jihad abroad had failed, some of the group's inner circle began to conduct preparations for bringing jihad to the Netherlands instead. Several plots were developed, but the one that came to fruition was the November 2004 murder of the controversial filmmaker Theo van Gogh. In the wake of this attack, the police arrested most the group's participants. In 2005, a 'second generation' of the group emerged that once again began developing terrorist plots. This led to a second round of arrests in October 2005 that brought the group to its definite end.[63]

The Hofstadgroup had too many idiosyncratic qualities to truly embody the moniker of a 'quintessential'[64] example of homegrown jihadism it was once given.[65] But although it may not be *the* blueprint for European homegrown jihadism, it still remains an instructive case from which to develop insights into this broader trend.

The group's loose organizational structure and its participants' capacity for terrorist violence despite their lack of (significant) paramilitary training or experience, make it a representative example of a subset of homegrown jihadism that has included numerous groups with similar attributes.[66] Furthermore, the ambitions of the group's militant inner circle to become foreign fighters, tie it directly to one of the most notable aspects of the current jihadist threat. Finally, the murder of Van Gogh arguably was a key influence on the radicalization debate because the perpetrator was indeed strongly influenced by his beliefs.[67]

The case is also interesting because the first author of the present paper was able to study it in-depth using primary sources. These include the extensive files collated by the Dutch police during its various investigations into this group in the 2003-2005 period. Additionally, the first author conducted semi-structured interviews with former participants, one set of which is drawn upon here. Such data remains underutilized in research on terrorism and allows this case to offer detailed and empirically-substantiated insights.[68] Thus, although an older case, the Hofstadgroup is still well-suited to support the arguments made here. The following paragraphs discusses three Hofstadgroup participants whose use, or planned use of, terrorist violence places them squarely in its militant inner-circle and makes them especially well-suited to assessing the potential for extremist beliefs to motivate terrorist attacks.

At first glance, a reconstruction of the process through which Van Gogh's murderer came to embrace violence appears to underline the validity of radicalization-based thinking. His attacker was a 26-years old Dutchman called Mohammed Bouyeri, who had gone from an apparently well-integrated member of society to a violent Islamist extremist in the space of several years. In the early 2000s, Bouyeri was enrolled in higher education, participating in community service and enjoying a lifestyle in which religion did not appear to play a big role. He was, however, prone to violent outbursts. In 2001, this culminated in Bouyeri stabbing a police officer in an Amsterdam park, for which he was sentenced to several months imprisonment later that year.[69]

This turn of events, and in particular the death of Bouyeri's mother later that same year, brought about a self-described 'search for truth' that led to a reorientation on his Islamic faith. Between early 2002 and the murder of Van Gogh in November 2004, Bouyeri rapidly adopted an increasingly fundamentalist, then radical and ultimately clearly extremist interpretation of Islam. Among the tenets of his newfound religious beliefs, was the conviction that the murder of blasphemers was not merely justified and necessary in an abstract sense, but an obligation he had to carry out personally. The many writings and translations left behind by Bouyeri are a further tribute to the key role played by extremist beliefs in motivating his act of terrorist violence.[70] As he told his family in a farewell letter, he had carried out the attack in order to "fulfill my duty to Allah and to trade my soul for paradise."[71]

Radicalization, understood as a cognitive process in which the adoption of extremist beliefs precedes involvement in terrorist violence, therefore appears to offer a convincing explanation for the pathway that led to the filmmaker's death. But although it is highly applicable to this particular individual, radicalization loses much of its explanatory abilities when applied as a framework to study the pathways that led other participants in the Hofstadgroup to become involved. Not only did the majority of the participants in this radical group with an extremist inner-circle never act on their beliefs, the motives of the inner-circle militants who did plan to commit acts of terrorist violence show the influence of a host of factors besides extremist beliefs alone.

One young man's example is particularly revealing with regard to the variety and fluidity of the factors driving

the process that led to involvement in the group and, ultimately, arrest on terrorism-related charges.[72] To ensure his privacy and safety, the following description has been anonymized. His process towards involvement in the Hofstadgroup began when the individual in question was unable to obtain the internship needed to complete his studies, to his mind because of labor-market discrimination against people of Moroccan descent. Interestingly, this experience did not motivate involvement but enabled it; left with an abundance of idle time, he visited mosques more often. This led him to become acquainted with an older Syrian man who convinced him that his failure to get an internship had nothing to do with his Moroccan background, but was instead related his being a Muslim in a land of unbelievers. Seeing he had piqued the individual's interest, this Syrian man then put him in touch with the Hofstadgroup.

At least initially, it was not the radical and extremist discussions being held at Hofstadgroup gatherings that bound this individual to the group. Instead, he simply enjoyed spending time with people who he got along well with. Only gradually did he adopt the Salafi-Jihadist convictions brandished by the group's inner-circle. Group-level factors were thus critical to binding him to the Hofstadgroup and bringing about his internalization of an extremist ideology. His ultimate arrest on terrorism-related charges was similarly influenced by more than convictions alone. First, there was the shock brought about by the chance viewing of a propaganda video in which a Palestinian victim of Israeli aggression closely resembled his own mother. Second, the murder of Van Gogh by Mohammed Bouyeri, who had developed into a friend and role model for the interviewee, proved to be an inspirational event that brought about a desire for emulation.

The experiences of Samir Azzouz, another inner-circle Hofstadgroup participant similarly problematize the role of beliefs in bringing about jihadist terrorism. Just prior to his final arrest in October 2005, Azzouz had recorded a videotaped message that appears to refer to an impending attack. Copying jihadist role models such as Osama bin-Laden in speech and attire, with a weapon beside him, Azzouz delivered an emotional message steeped in religious language and references to the Quran. Clearly, extremist convictions were an important element of both his motivation and justification for what appeared to be the planned use of terrorist violence.

Yet, a look at his broader involvement process reveals that those beliefs may have mostly had the latter function; justifying violence that was primarily motivated by outrage over the perceived injustices committed against Muslims in war zones on the one hand, and a deep and personal hatred for the Dutch authorities on the other. [73] Essentially, his political grievances and his personal animosity towards those he saw as having mistreated him and his family, were catalyzed and justified through the jihadist ideology he adopted. The latter may even have had a primarily enabling, rather than motivating, function in his planned acts of terrorist violence.

Had either of these latter two examples been assessed solely through a 'radicalization' based perspective centered on the role of ideas, many of the crucial elements constituting their involvement pathways would have been missed. While few scholars or authoritative interpretations of radicalization would claim that only beliefs matter, the implicit emphasis put on the role of convictions deserves to be critically examined by examples such as the Hofstadgroup case study from which this paper takes its inspiration. The bigger challenge for radicalization-based approaches remains, however, their inability to explain the discrepancy between the many apparent or alleged adherents of a particular extremist worldview, be it secular or religious in nature, and the much smaller number of individuals who actually translate such views into violent behavior. It is here that the concept of fanaticism can make a difference.

Revisiting Fanaticism[74]

Described as the 'pinnacle of psychological analyses of the terrorist' by a leading terrorism scholar, Taylor's 1991 book *The Fanatic* offers a detailed account of when and how extremist beliefs can lead to the adoption of violent means.[75] Despite this endorsement, citations of the work reveal that its impact has largely been made outside of the boundaries of terrorism research.[76] Although referenced in several publications on terrorism,[77] few authors in this field have engaged with it in-depth[78] and neither has Taylor revisited it in detail in subsequent work.[79] This is unfortunate, given that fanaticism provides a behaviorally-oriented perspective on if and when extremist beliefs can lead to terrorist violence. It is this element of conditionality that sets fanaticism apart from radicalization. The key question that many radicalization interpretations cannot address is why most radicals never become terrorists. Fanaticism's utility lies in its ability to provide at least the beginnings of an answer.

At the outset, it is important to state that fanaticism should not be treated as a pathological state of mind, nor should fanatics be seen as intrinsically 'different' individuals. The fanatic and the 'normal' individual essentially occupy different points on the same behavioral continuum.[80] Instead, fanaticism is defined as behavior that displays 'excessive enthusiasm' for certain religious or political beliefs.[81] Fanatical convictions can influence behavior because they essentially prescribe a variety of rules that link an individual's current action to distant outcomes.[82] For instance, religious belief can motivate specific behavior by connecting distant outcomes, such as salvation in an afterlife, to daily behavior such as prayer. For the vast majority of people, religious or political beliefs are not the only influence on their behavior. But for the fanatic, "the influence of ideology is such that it excludes or attenuates other social, political or personal forces that might be expected to control and influence behavior."[83]

Fanatical behavior encompasses ten qualities. These are, 1) an excessive focusing on issues of concern to the fanatic, 2) a worldview that is solely based on ideological convictions, 3) an insensitivity to others and to 'normal' social pressures, 4) a loss of critical judgment in that the fanatic is apt to pursue ends and utilize means that seem to run contrary to his or her personal interests and 5) a surprising tolerance for inconsistency and incompatibility in the beliefs held. People engaged in fanatical behavior are further apt to display 6) great certainty in the appropriateness of the actions taken, 7) a simplified view of the world, 8) high resistance to facts or interpretations that undermine their convictions, 9) disdain for the victims of the fanatic's behavior and 10) the construction of a social environment that makes it easier to sustain fanatical views.[84]

This operationalization of fanaticism allows researchers and counterterrorism professionals to identify, at least to some extent, individuals who are behaviorally more likely to be strongly influenced by their beliefs. For practitioners, these qualities may offer a useful complement to existing threat assessment procedures; not as a 'profiling' tool, but, for instance, as a means for assessing the relative likeliness for participants in an extremist group to act on their beliefs. The ten factors outlined above make clear that fanatical behavior is based on more than mere adherence to radical or extremist beliefs. Particularly interesting in this regard is the reference to the construction of a supportive social environment, as this fits with the finding that the vast majority of terrorist violence is perpetrated by groups.[85] The radical or extremist group appears to provide catalyzing conditions, increasing the likeliness that convictions will influence behavior.

Like any single factor underlying involvement in terrorism, fanaticism alone is insufficient to explain violent

behavior. The likeliness that fanatical convictions can lead to violent behavior is tied to the presence of three contextual factors.[86] The first is millenarianism, or the belief that the world is facing an impending and apocalyptic disaster or change. The very imminence of millenarian beliefs can strengthen their ideological control over individual behavior, as the consequences of the believer's actions are no longer relegated to a distant future. Additionally, some ideologies advocate violent action as a way of hastening the advent of a new world order.[87] The second factor is the totality of ideological control; when there is little to no 'public space' in which the ideology and its alternatives can be freely debated, or where others are likely to challenge the fanatic's views, the ideology's influence over every aspect of its adherents' lives will increase.[88] The third factor is the militancy of the ideological belief itself, in other words the degree to which it provides, or can be construed to provide, motivations or justifications for the use of force.[89]

Fanaticism in Practice: Returning to the Hofstadgroup

By providing a nuanced understanding of how and when fanatical convictions can lead to violence, fanaticism allows the specificity problem inherent in many radicalization-based approaches to be addressed. The following paragraphs will demonstrate this by returning to the Hofstadgroup case study discussed above. First of all, it is striking that Bouyeri, the man who murdered Van Gogh in 2004, scores highest on the ten qualities of fanaticism. Starting in 2003, this individual's life began to revolve virtually exclusively around his Salafi-Jihadist beliefs, which also became the sole schema through which he interpreted the world around him. The fact that Bouyeri claimed full responsibility in court for murdering Van Gogh, and that at an earlier stage he quit his studies and his job, demonstrate an insensitivity to 'normal' social pressures such as the need for education and employment and appear contrary to his own best interests.[90]

Further signs of fanaticism were the gruesome way in which Bouyeri murdered his victim, almost decapitating him as he lay dead or dying on an Amsterdam street, and the killer's statement in court that he would have done the same had family members been the blasphemers. The latter indicates a high degree of certainty in the justness of his actions, whereas the former speaks of a dismissive attitude towards his victims.[91] Finally, by limiting his social circle to like-minded individuals, Van Gogh's assailant construed precisely the type social environment that reinforced and sustained his extremist views.[92] This application of the qualities of fanaticism enables a structured examination of the beliefs that motivated Bouyeri to violence. Yet, many of these qualities were shared, if not to the same degree, by the assailant's inner-circle compatriots. Addressing this disparity more fully requires turning to the arguments about the circumstances under which fanatical beliefs are more likely to lead to violent behavior.

One of these contingencies concerns the militancy of the ideological beliefs. Given that Bouyeri shared an adherence to Salafi-Jihadist views with the Hofstadgroup's inner-circle, this factor fails to offer a satisfactory explanation of why only the assailant acted on those beliefs. A more substantial distinction presents itself with regard to millenarianism. Van Gogh's assailant shared with the wider group the belief that a global war against Islam was taking place, yet it is only in the former's writings that this struggle is given an apocalyptic flavor and presented as the violent apogee of a titanic historical struggle between the forces of good and evil, one that demands immediate action from Islam's 'true believers'.[93] By contrast, in the videotaped threat recorded by the other inner-circle participant discussed above, arguably the most militant expression found within the broader group, millenarian motifs are absent.[94]

The most salient difference between Bouyeri and the other extremists in the Hofstadgroup's inner circle, is tied to the notion of the totality of ideological control. Essentially, the less someone is exposed to contrarian points of view, the more likely it is that his or her fanaticism will come to exert behavioral influence.[95] Most Hofstadgroup participants, even those within its militant core, retained at least some connections to the world outside the group through old friends, school, work or because they still lived with their parents. By contrast, Bouyeri's socialization into Salafi-Jihadism had gone hand-in-hand with his withdrawal from society; he lived alone since 2000, quit his part-time job and his studies following the death of his mother in December 2001, and stopped his volunteer work for an Amsterdam community center in July 2003.[96] As he cut off contacts with his old friends, his social circle became limited to fellow Hofstadgroup participants. [97] Bouyeri was "always at home reading and translating."[98] This social setting reinforced and spurred his militancy, while his isolation from non-radical social circles allowed his burgeoning extremism to grow unchecked by counterarguments or simple exposure to different points of views. Within these self-imposed confines, Bouyeri's violent convictions could become all-encompassing and ever-present, exerting influence on his behavior to a degree not found among his compatriots. In short, Van Gogh's killer acted on his beliefs while his fellow extremists in the Hofstadgroup did not, because he was the most fanatical of them, because his views had a notable apocalyptical edge and, most saliently, because they were adopted and nurtured in a social setting characterized by a lack of countervailing opinions not experienced to the same degree by his compatriots.

Conclusion

Since radicalization made its entry into the debate on terrorism in the early 2000s, numerous scholars have developed the concept beyond the shortcomings of its early conceptualizations. Yet in much of the broader literature on terrorism, and particularly among government agencies tasked with preventing and responding to terrorism, radicalization is still too often perceived of as a process in which the adoption of radical beliefs precedes and leads to participation in terrorist violence. Not only are radicalism, extremism and terrorism distinct concepts that are not causally linked to one another, but empirical research has demonstrated that the majority of radical individuals never turn their convictions into violent acts and that even actual terrorists are not necessarily or primarily motivated by their extremist beliefs.

Ideology is without a doubt a key variable to explain involvement in terrorism. Yet as demonstrated by the case study of the Dutch homegrown jihadist 'Hofstadgroup', from which this article drew its inspiration, motives for terrorism are diverse and frequently multicausal, extending beyond the motivating or justifying influence of convictions alone. By raising beliefs as the key element to understanding terrorism, what me might call 'mainstream' radicalization not only incorrectly inflates beliefs with behavior, but overstates the explanatory potential of this variable while leaving others underemphasized.[99] One of the goals of this study was to highlight these issues and their ongoing influence. The authors also wanted to suggest a way to better understand the potential for beliefs to influence violent behavior.

To this end, the second part of the article revisited the concept of 'fanaticism' and used the Hofstadgroup case study to illustrate its ability to inform thinking on the potential for extremist beliefs to inspire terrorist violence. The benefits of fanaticism as a concept, lie in its ability to offer a way for gauging if and when extremist views are likely to inspire violent behavior. It overcomes radicalization's inability to explain why only some radicals

will act on their beliefs by identifying ten qualities of fanaticism as a way of assessing the *degree* to which someone is influenced by their beliefs. Furthermore, it highlights three contextual factors that, when present, will increase the likeliness of fanatical beliefs inspiring violent behavior. This attention to contingent factors in particular recommends fanaticism as an alternative to radicalization for understanding the role of extremist beliefs in bringing about involvement in terrorist violence.

Fanaticism is a practical addition to radicalization-based thinking as far as the role of convictions in inspiring violence is concerned. It is both suited to retrospective analysis of the type academics are likely to conduct and can also be of utility in the context of threat assessment work as a tool to gauge both the degree of fanaticism and the likeliness that a group or particular individuals within that group will turn violence because of it. Police and intelligence agencies are increasingly expected to prevent terrorist attacks from occurring. To do so, they need to carry out the difficult work of allocating limited resources to particular groups or individuals based on their perceived potential for future engagement in violence. As most radicals never become involved in violence, merely looking at indicators of ideological radicalization is a poor way to go about this. Because it provides concrete means for assessing if a certain individual is likely to act on those beliefs, fanaticism can be a particularly useful concept for those working to prevent involvement in terrorism.

A further practical benefit of fanaticism as a concept, is that it can help shift democratic states' counterterrorism policy and practice away from a focus on ideas toward the policing of behavior. The emphasis that 'radicalization' places on the role of ideas as a precursor to potential involvement in terrorist violence, means that efforts to detect and prevent this phenomenon have similarly tended to look at expressions of adherence to radical and extremist beliefs. Beyond questions of efficacy, the legal protections placed on free speech and beliefs in democratic societies make this a controversial practice. Fanaticism stresses *behavioral* indicators that can be used to provide an, albeit rudimentary, assessment of the degree to which someone's actions are influenced by extremist convictions. This makes it a substantively different concept than radicalization, one that can perhaps be acted upon to detect and prevent involvement in terrorism based upon behavioral indicators rather than signs of adherence to radical or extremist beliefs alone.

Our advocacy of the concept of fanaticism is not intended as a replacement for radicalization-based thinking as a whole or an attempt at rebranding it, but as an addition to the debate about how and why participation in terrorist groups and terrorist violence can occur. Revisiting fanaticism will hopefully contribute to the larger discussion about how to attain a more accurate understanding of the role that radical and extremist convictions can play in these processes.

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Notes

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Explaining Civilian Attacks: Terrorist Networks, Principal-Agent Problems and Target Selection

by Max Abrahms, Matthew Ward, and Ryan Kennedy

Abstract

Terrorist groups exhibit variation in their targeting choices. Why do some groups direct their violence against civilians while others limit this occurrence? This study analyzes the network relationships between terrorist groups to elucidate their targeting behavior. Drawing upon insights from the organizational ecology and conflict literatures, we predict that terrorist group affiliates will be significantly more likely than their parent group to attack civilian targets. Our original principal-agent theory consistently outperforms extant explanations in a multi-method analysis of 238 terrorist groups from 1998 to 2005. These results shed new light on why certain terrorist groups are more likely than others to target civilians.

Keywords: terrorism, networks, principal-agent problem, target selection

Introduction

Like governments, terrorist groups exhibit wide variation in their tactical choices.[1] Political scientists often distinguish between indiscriminate violence against civilian targets and more selective violence against government targets. Although clearly an oversimplification, this distinction is nonetheless important for both normative and strategic reasons.[2] This distinction is a fundamental principle in international humanitarian law governing the legal use of force in armed conflict, whereby perpetrators must distinguish between combatants and noncombatants.[3] More relevant for this study, the political effectiveness of violence can hinge on the target. A growing body of research suggests that indiscriminate violence against civilian targets carries substantial downside political risks compared to more selective violence against government targets.[4] When non-state actors attack the population, they risk lowering the odds of government concessions by exacerbating the credible commitment problem, creating a rally-round-the-flag effect, shifting electorates to the political right, and otherwise strengthening the resolve of the target country to resist.[5]

Although all terrorist groups at least occasionally harm civilians, there is considerable variation in the extent. Some groups focus their violence against the population while others exercise targeting restraint. Consider, for example, the difference in target selection between the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) of Algeria and its successor. Upon witnessing the political backlash against the GIA for its brutal assaults on the population, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat was formed in the late 1990s as a more civilian-friendly organizational alternative. This paper helps to elucidate why certain terrorist groups are more likely to attack civilians despite the potential political costs. The most common explanations for civilian targeting are both empirically and theoretically inadequate for answering this question. The standard explanations are that terrorist groups target civilians for structural or ideological reasons. Ever since Crozier coined the adage, scholars have described terrorism as a "weapon of the weak."[6] Lacking the capability of penetrating hardened targets or directly confronting national militaries, weaker groups are supposedly prone to attacking softer targets.[7] Although intuitive, this assumption has found meager empirical support and cannot resolve why weaker groups would be more risk-acceptant about incurring a political backlash.[8] Ideology is often cited as the other key

determinant of civilian targeting. As Drake notes, "A group's ideology is extremely important in determining target selection because it defines how the group's members see the world around them."[9] Religious and ethno-nationalist groups are often believed to gravitate to civilian targets because they may view such violence as a theological imperative or otherwise have lower inhibitions about offending external constituencies.[10] Ideological explanations are also inadequate, though, because they cannot account for why terrorist groups across the ideological spectrum attack civilians and alter their target selection over time.[11]

Increasingly, political scientists are analyzing civilian attacks as a principal-agent problem.[12] At the most basic level, a principal-agent problem occurs whenever a principal delegates decision-making to an agent and the latter exploits this discretion or "slack" to engage in behavior contrary to the interests of the former.[13] When applied to terrorism, this framework typically treats the organizational leader as principal and his foot soldiers as unreliable agents, who exploit their autonomy by striking suboptimal targets due to incompetence or alternative preferences.[14] Abrahms and Potter, for example, demonstrate that terrorist leaders often recognize the political risks of indiscriminate violence, but are too weak to impose their targeting preferences on lower-level members, who have weaker incentives to spare civilians. For this reason, terrorist groups suffering from leadership deficits are more disposed to attack civilians, such as when drone strikes force the leader into hiding or his fighters travel further away from him to mount operations.[15] Our analysis extends this burgeoning research program by showing how civilian targeting arises from principal-agent problems not within terrorist groups, but between them.

Specifically, this study reveals that civilian attacks often result from agency problems between terrorist groups when the parent (viz. principal) spawns affiliates (viz. agents). The creation of terrorist group affiliates is not irrational for the parent group, but carries non-trivial tradeoffs as with any form of delegation.[16] On one hand, affiliates can benefit the parent both offensively and defensively by helping to expand its theater of operations and withstand government opposition through decentralization.[17] Indeed, decentralization is usually described as an unconditional best practice for terrorist groups. As in other types of organizations, the decentralization of decision-making in terrorist organizations can make them more adaptive, flexible, innovative, resilient, and specialized, rendering them harder to infiltrate, isolate, prosecute, and ultimately defeat.[18] In the analysis below, however, we show that affiliates are more likely to engage in politically risky indiscriminate violence than the parent group because the former stands to gain the most from attacking civilians, while the latter disproportionately bears the costs.

The logic underpinning the causal mechanism rests on two research programs, one from the conflict literature within political science and the other from the organizational ecology literature within sociology. The conflict literature points out that terrorist groups are motivated to varying degrees by process goals and outcome goals. The process goals of terrorism are intended to sustain the group by attracting attention, gaining media coverage, and thereby boosting membership through recruitment. Recruitment is essential because there is "power in numbers" for terrorist groups as in other types of organizations.[19] The outcome goals of terrorism, by contrast, are the stated political ends, such as the realization of a Kurdish homeland, the removal of foreign bases from Greece, or the establishment of Islamism in India.[20] Notably, civilian attacks appear to have crosscutting effects on these terrorist priorities. Research suggests that attacks against civilians are more effective at advancing process goals than outcome goals.[21]

The organizational ecology literature implies that terrorist group affiliates are more likely than the parent to prioritize process goals over outcome goals and thus attack civilians. This research program highlights that less mature groups suffer from higher mortality rates, so attach greater priority to organizational survival than more mature groups, which are better positioned to focus on achieving their official goals. Combining these insights from political science and sociology, we theorize that affiliates are less restrained about engaging in indiscriminate violence than the parent because they tend to attach more value to process goals owing to their relative immaturity, whereas the parent is generally more selective in order to reduce the risk of adversely affecting its outcome goals. Although all terrorist groups are concerned with both organizational and strategic goals, we contend that affiliates are more likely than the parent to value the former over the later as reflected in their respective targeting choices.

Several intrinsically important terrorist groups appear to illustrate this dynamic. In July 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaida's number two in command, rebuked the commander of the Iraqi affiliate, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, for killing too many civilians in the country. Declassified letters between them reveal the groups had divergent incentive structures owing to the nature of their relationship. Whereas al-Zarqawi hoped the indiscriminate violence would attract recruits to his nascent affiliate, al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), al-Zawahiri feared the civilian attacks would backfire politically on al-Qaeda by discrediting the parent group as a legitimate international actor.[22] After suffering reputational costs from its Iraqi affiliate, al-Qaida pressured other affiliates into exercising more civilian restraint, tried to conceal its association with wayward affiliates or rejected them altogether depending on their proclivity for indiscriminate bloodshed.[23] Even the most extreme parent groups have bristled when their affiliates committed excessive bloodshed against civilians in their name. In August 2016, Islamic State chiefs fired the leader of Boko Haram, its Nigeria affiliate, for flouting its targeting guidelines by so egregiously attacking the local Muslim population, especially children. According to the Center for Democracy and Development in Abuja, the Islamic State leadership sacked Abubakar Shekau for "indiscriminately" blowing up Nigerian civilians due to the strategic fallout.[24]

These cases are illustrative, but not necessarily generalizable across terrorist groups. It remains unclear whether affiliates are typically less restrained than the parent against civilians, and if so, why? Because a few supporting cases are insufficient to establish a broader theory, we analyze the relationship networks of hundreds of terrorist groups from 1998 to 2005 and systematically compare the attack profiles of parents to affiliates.[25] The analysis yields robust statistical evidence that affiliates are indeed significantly more likely than the parent group to attack civilians even after taking into account the capability of the terrorist organizations, their ideologies, and other relevant factors discussed in the extant conflict literature. The network analysis suggests that affiliates with weaker relationships to the parent are particularly prone to indiscriminate violence, but come to favor more selective violence over time as their concerns about organizational failure recede in accordance with the ecology literature. These empirical results support our contention that terrorist groups suffer agency problems when affiliates are created due to their stronger organizational incentives for harming civilians.

The argument proceeds in four main sections. The first section develops the principal-agent logic behind our theoretical expectations for why affiliates should be more likely than their parents to attack civilians. Combining insights from the social sciences, we present a parsimonious theory for why affiliates stand to gain more than the parent from civilian targeting while suffering fewer costs due to inherent differences in their incentive

structures. The second and third sections describe our research design and report the results. Across model specifications, we consistently find quantitative evidence that affiliates are significantly more disposed than the parents to attack civilian targets due to agency problems intrinsic to the nature of the relationship. The conclusion explores the research and policy implications.

Why Affiliates May Prey on Civilians

A large body of research explores how decentralizing can help terrorist groups.[26] The *9/11 Commission Report* describes terrorist networks as more "agile, quick, and elusive" than centralized terrorist organizations. [27] Hoffman notes that terrorist networks are comparatively "nimble, flexible, and adaptive."[28] Clarke adds that decentralizing enables terrorist groups to be "fluid, mobile, and incredibly resilient."[29] Despite such advantages of decentralization, the application of principal-agent theory predicts inherent tradeoffs to delegation. [30] In this section, we identify a potential downside parent groups face when they decentralize by creating affiliates—their stronger incentives to attack civilians despite the political risks.

For decades, terrorism researchers have questioned the political value of aggrieved groups attacking civilians. In the 1970s, Laqueur published "The Futility of Terrorism" in which he asserted that such attacks fail to redress grievances.[31] Cordes et al. remarked in the 1980s, "Terrorists have been unable to translate the consequences of terrorism into concrete political gains."[32] Crenshaw agreed, "Few organizations actually attain the long-term ideological objectives they claim to seek, and therefore one must conclude that terrorism is objectively a failure."[33] Schelling likewise claimed in the 1990s, "Terrorism almost never appears to accomplish anything politically significant."[34] More recently, several large-n studies confirm that only a tiny portion of terrorist groups have attained their political platforms by attacking civilians.[35] The vast majority of terrorist groups in their samples toiled for years, even decades without any perceptible political progress. If anything, these studies may overstate the political success of terrorism because its victories are more salient than failures.[36] Numerous empirical studies conclude that attacking civilians is not epiphenomenal to political failure, but rather has an independent, negative impact on the likelihood of government concessions.[37] Civilian attacks have been found to shift electorates to the political right, strengthen domestic support for hardliners opposed to concessions, and erode trust in negotiating with the perpetrators.[38]

Why are some terrorist groups more risk-acceptant than others about attacking civilians given the potential political costs? Irrationality is an unsatisfactory answer, as social scientists generally agree that terrorist groups tend to behave as essentially rational actors.[39] Indeed, civilian attacks are not categorically counterproductive.[40] Rather, the utility of them depends on the incentive structure of the perpetrators. One would therefore expect terrorist groups to gravitate to this behavior when it is more apt to serve their specific goals. The conflict literature identifies two main types of terrorist goals: process goals and outcome goals. Process goals are intended to sustain the terrorist organization by attracting media coverage, attention, and thereby recruit, whereas the outcome goals are the stated ends of the organization as reflected in its political platform.[41] Attacks against civilians appear to have crosscutting effects on these goal types. Civilian attacks are remarkably effective at furthering process goals by boosting terrorist recruits, even though such attacks risk restricting bargaining space and hence impeding outcome goals.[42]

The organizational ecology literature implies that terrorist group affiliates are more inclined than their parent to prioritize process goals over outcome goals and thus engage in civilian targeting. An affiliate may be understood as an emergent terrorist group that accepts at least in principle the leadership of a more established terrorist group while remaining organizationally distinct in its operational decision-making.[43] The organizational ecology literature does not directly address terrorist group incentives or behavior, but emphasizes that relatively young, immature organizations suffer higher mortality rates and hence optimize short-term survival over more long-term official goals. Ecologists who study the evolution of organizations have established that "as a general rule, a higher proportion of new organizations fail than old," a robust empirical finding Stinchcombe coined as the "liability of newness."[44] Across a wide variety of industries, ecologists have discovered that younger organizations suffer significantly higher disbanding rates. Studies show, for example, that organizational mortality is negatively related with age in newspaper, automobile, semiconductor, and telephone companies, as well as in both retail firms and machine shops.[45]

Research on the liability of newness underscores the acute risks newer organizations face of disbanding. Mayer and Goldstein found that about half of all businesses in Rhode Island in the 1950s dissolve within the first couple years.[46] In his study of retail stores in Buffalo between 1921 and 1928, McGarry estimated that 60 percent of the grocery stores were discontinued in the first year, 44 percent of the shoe stores, 34 percent of the hardware stores, and 27 percent of the druggists.[47] The odds of disbanding fall as organizations age. Among U.S.-based corporations in 1945 and 1946, for example, Starbuck and Nystrom find that 88 percent died within the first 10 years of existence compared to just 53 percent after the first decade and 44 percent after the second decade.[48] In a precis of this literature, Aldrich and Auster conclude: "These figures show an increasing probability of survival given that a corporation has reached a certain age."[49] In a meta-analysis, Carroll likewise reports: "The most common finding is that organizational death rates decrease with age-dependence.[50] That is, organizations are most likely to die in the first few years of operation." The "liability of newness" is relevant to terrorist organizations, as younger ones also face greater difficulty in surviving beyond even the first year.[51]

Organizational ecologists emphasize that the "liability of newness" is often related to the "liability of smallness." The logic is straightforward: "New organizations tend to be small and small organizations have high death rates."[52] Indeed, a substantial body of empirical research finds that organizations often start small and smaller organizations are prone to dying.[53] This literature stresses the difficulty that new, smaller organizations face of growing. As Aldrich and Auster point out, "The proportion of small firms that actually manage to grow large is remarkably low."[54] In fact, fewer than one in ten organizations manage to expand at all in some industries.[55] Notably, however, the liability of newness cannot be explained entirely by the liability of smallness. Newer groups are more likely to struggle to survive regardless of their initial endowments. The negative age dependence of death rates persists even after taking into account the starting size of the organizations. In other words, the liability of newness is partially due to the liability of smallness, but is not epiphenomenal to it.[56]

Because nascent groups struggle to survive due to the challenge of resource mobilization, they naturally adopt different adaptive strategies.[57] Walker and Brewer explain: "Different strategies are needed for different stages in an organization's life cycle. Young organizations must find a market niche to ensure their survival." [58] Similarly, Hochban concludes that "younger organizations tend to be less well established and thus must work hard both to obtain private donors and to expand their audience bases."[59] In their study of charitable orga-

nizations, Hager, Pollak, and Rooney demonstrate that newer ones devote greater effort to fundraising, recruitment and other methods of resource mobilization for survival.[60] These findings are potentially relevant to terrorist organizations, which use violence to compensate for their organizational weakness.[61]

With their relative maturity, parent groups presumably have weaker incentives than their affiliates to prioritize process goals over outcome goals and thus target civilians. Indeed, terrorism researchers have observed that parents and affiliates may be driven by different incentive structures. As Byman posits, "Interests between the parent organization and affiliate rarely align perfectly."[62] The al-Qaeda network is the most documented parent-affiliate terrorist relationship due to the group's notoriety since the September 11, 2001 attacks and the discovery of private correspondences among the leaders from raiding Osama Bin Laden's Abbottabad compound in May 2011. Declassified by the Combating Terrorism Center at the West Point Military Academy, this trove of letters points to evidence of a severe moral hazard problem from the vantage of Bin Laden, the parent leader.

Consistent with our theory, these letters reveal that affiliate leaders hoped their indiscriminate violence would attract recruits to the incipient organizations, which bin Laden struggled to control.[63] As West Point researchers noted: "Far from being in control of the operational side of regional jihadi groups, the tone in several letters authored by Bin Laden makes it clear that he was struggling to exercise even a minimal influence over them."[64] The letters highlight how "Bin laden enjoyed little control over groups affiliated with al-Qaeda in name," as "the affiliates either did not consult with Bin Laden or were not prepared to follow his directives."[65] More specifically, Bin Laden regarded the Iraqi affiliate's leader as a "liability, not an asset," as "Al-Zarqawi's group launched several indiscriminate attacks" and "the unnecessary deaths of Muslim civilians" by the Iraqi-based agents undermined al-Qaeda Central's political agenda.[66] The researchers conclude: "Far from being pleased with the actions of regional jihadi groups claiming affiliation with or acting in the name of al-Qaeda, Bin Laden was burdened by what he saw as their incompetence. Their lack of political acumen to win public support along with their indiscriminate attacks resulting in the deaths of many Muslims is a subject that dominates Bin Laden's private letters."[67] As Byman notes, bin Laden chaffed at the civilian attacks because he understood that the "unpopular affiliate actions can rebound on the cause as a whole, discrediting the core [group] and hijacking its agenda."[68] The case of al-Qaeda thus serves as a "plausibility probe" for our theory rooted within the conflict and organizational ecology literatures that terrorist affiliates are more inclined than the parent group to engage in civilian targeting due to differences in their incentive structures. In the next section, we begin empirically examining the relationship between affiliates and civilian targeting more systematically.[69]

Data

The main dependent variable for this analysis is the attack profile of the terrorist group – specifically, the percentage of attacks carried out by the group against civilian targets as opposed to governmental targets. We utilize the Global Terrorism Database's (GTD) record of terrorist attacks from 1998 to 2005 because these years include the requisite data to map the global terrorist group networks. Maintained by the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (START), the GTD is particularly well suited for our empirical investigation because it is the longest-running, most comprehensive publicly available database that codes each attack around the world in terms of its target selection.[70] In our

study, civilian attacks include the following types of targets: educational institutions, journalists or the media, private citizens and property, religious figures or institutions, tourists, transportation (other than aviation), non-military airports or aircraft, non-military maritime targets, and non-governmental organizations. Governmental attacks include incidents against the following target-list: government institutions or figures, police, military institutions or personnel, and diplomatic institutions or personnel. To be clear, our main dependent variable is the proportion of all attacks by the terrorist group carried out against civilian targets according to the aforementioned coding criteria.

The main independent variable for this analysis is whether a terrorist group is an affiliate of another group. We map the networks of terrorist group relationships with the Terrorist Organization Profiles (TOPs) data maintained by START. These group profiles are derived from a project sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT). The profiles are stored as webpages on the START website (see Figure 1). We designed a web scraper to derive from these pages a unique numeric identifier for each group (the last four numbers of the URL for each group's page), the group name, the identification numbers of related groups, related groups' names, and relationship type.[71] The results of the scraper were then hand-checked against the TOPs profiles to ensure coding accuracy and consistency. TOPs codes for 20 different types of relationships, including whether a group is a "faction" of another or what are more commonly known as affiliates.

Figure 1: Sample Page from TOPs

Note: Selection from TOPs page ID 4438. A unique group numeric ID is drawn from the web address (http://www.start.umd.edu/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=4438). Network data is drawn from the "Related Groups" section, with a unique group numeric ID drawn from the hyperlinks to their own, similar page.

Graphs of the global terrorist networks are displayed in Figure 2. This Figure plots the network graphs for all relationships between terrorist groups (left) and only those classified as affiliates (right). The graph for all groups is undirected, indicating any of the relationship types coded in our data. The graph of affiliates is directed, drawing a line from the affiliate to other groups. There is clearly more clustering in the all-relationships graph (with the largest component around al-Qaida and other Islamist groups) than in the affiliate graph. This is not surprising as relatively few terrorist groups have multiple affiliates. We are also able to determine the groups that are affiliates of other affiliates by identifying groups for which the shortest directed path to one of parent groups is greater than or equal to two. This is relatively rare, but will be useful for testing the valence of our theory against alternative explanations within the conflict literature.

Figure 2: Network Graphs of Terrorist Group Relationships
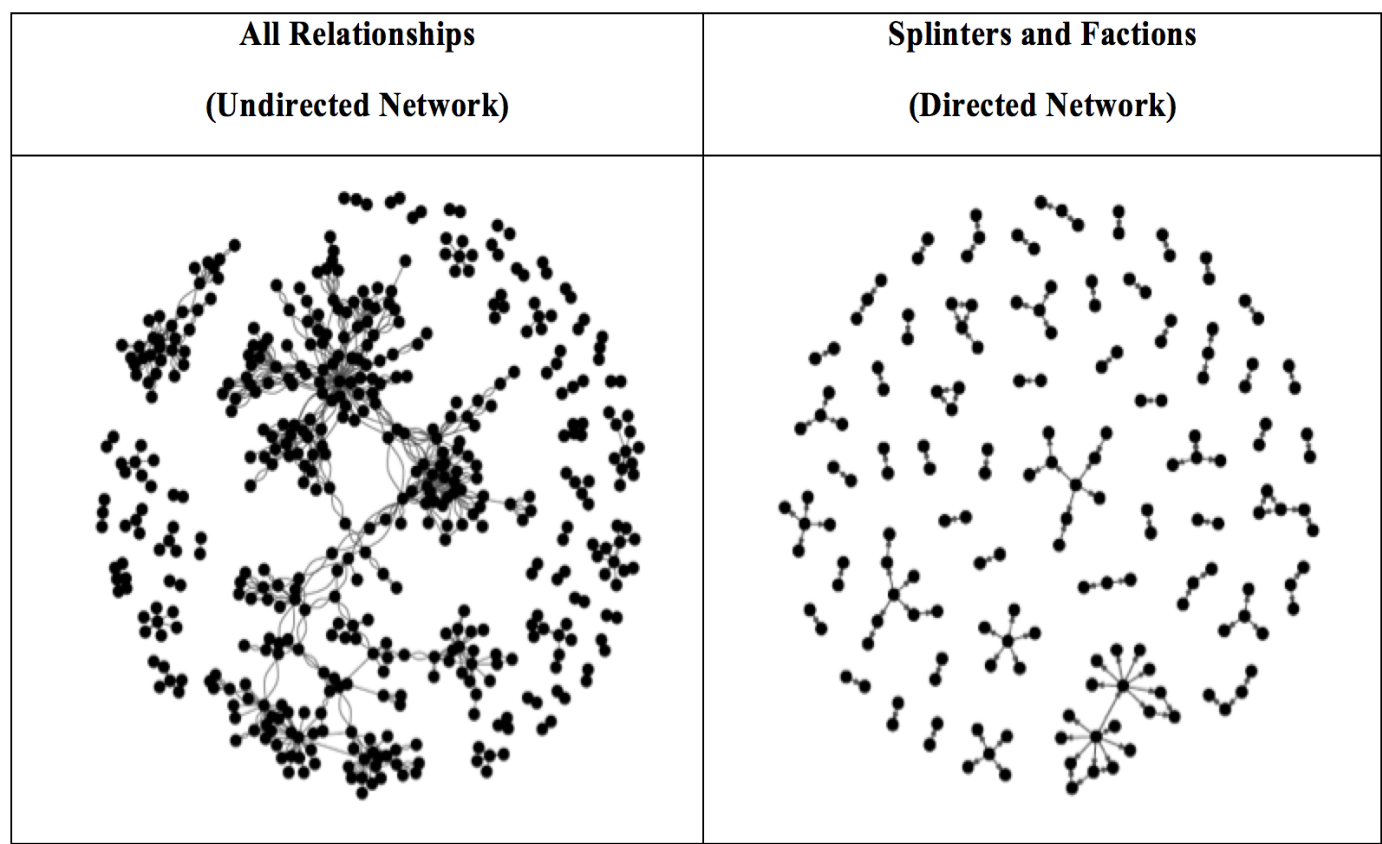
The analysis below includes numerous control variables to help discern how the network relationships of these terrorist groups affect their targeting choices – specifically, whether being an affiliate of a parent group has an independent, positive effect on the odds of attacking civilian targets. Our main control variables center on group ideology and capability because these factors are typically seen as drivers of target selection and may be confounded with our key independent variable of interest. We employ several variables from the BAAD1 Lethality Dataset to account for each group's official ideology because ideological orientation is widely presumed to affect terrorist target selection.[72] As noted, both religiously motivated and ethnonationalist groups are often believed to exhibit less civilian restraint.[73] Groups are coded as having a religious ideology, an ethnonational ideology, a combination of ethnonational and religious ideologies, a leftist ideology, or as lacking any religious, ethnonationalist or leftist components to their official ideologies.

We also control for multiple measures of organizational capability because weaker groups are supposedly prone to striking softer targets.[74] In particular, we account for whether the groups have state sponsorship or hold territory. State sponsors and territorial control are useful for terrorist groups to acquire weapons, money, human capital, and safe-haven.[75] Group size is another standard indicator of terrorist group capability both as a direct measure of human capital and as an indirect measure of resources for attracting recruits.[76] Some research also suggests a network component to terrorist organization strength, with more connections to other groups reflecting and facilitating additional capability, so we control for the number of organizational linkages. [77] Lastly, many political scientists interpret the level of violence generated by international actors as a potential signal of power, so we also include a count of the number of fatalities in the attacks. These models were run both with and without al-Qaida-related groups as these terrorist organizations are sometimes seen as outliers in terms of their connections and lethality among other factors.[78]

Results

Table 1 displays the results of these initial tests. Model 1 presents the zero-order correlation between whether a group is an affiliate and its percentage of attacks against civilians. The results approach standard levels of statistical significance ($p = 0.051$) in a two-tailed test, suggesting that civilian targets make up about 12% more of the attack profile of affiliates as illustrated in Figure 3. Model 2 shows that the relationship between affiliates and civilian attacks becomes stronger both statistically and substantively after including the main control variables. Once we take into account organizational ideology and capability, the anticipated relationship reaches conventional levels of statistical significance ($p = 0.038$). In this improved model, affiliates attack civilian targets about 13% more as a proportion of their total targets. Model 3 re-runs these tests without al-Qaida, confirming that the results from Model 2 hold after removing this potential outlier; being an affiliate is still a significant ($p = 0.036$) predictor a group will target civilians more often. We also conducted a variety of basic robustness checks: VIF ranges are well below conventional thresholds (avg. VIF = 1.78, max VIF = 2.30); affiliates exhibit little multicollinearity with the other variables (VIF = 1.11); and the inclusion of robust standard errors yields essentially the same results. Together, this preliminary analysis strongly supports our theory that affiliates tend to have stronger incentives for targeting civilians. Below, we conduct a battery of additional tests to help discern why affiliates are prone to more indiscriminate violence.

Table 1: Affiliates and Attack Profiles

	Model 1: Percent Civilian	Model 2: Percent Civilian	Model 3: Percent Civilian (No AQ)
Affiliates	0.115	0.130	0.136
	(0.051)	(0.038)	(0.036)
Religious ideology		0.354	0.354
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Ethnonationalist ideology		0.253	0.251
		(0.003)	(0.003)
Ethnonationalist & religious		0.183	0.187
		(0.053)	(0.051)
Leftist ideology		0.042	0.042
		(0.645)	(0.649)
State sponsorship		0.036	0.038
		(0.699)	(0.685)
Size (ordinal)		-0.006	-0.003
		(0.869)	(0.943)
Control of territory		0.123	0.123
		(0.119)	(0.121)
Organizational connections		-0.004	-0.005
		(0.730)	(0.670)
Count, fatalities		-0.000	-0.000
		(0.807)	(0.645)
Intercept	0.434	0.234	0.235
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)
R2	0.016	0.140	0.140
Adjusted R2	0.012	0.095	0.095
N	238	202	201

p-values (2-tailed) in parentheses

Figure 3: Target Selection of Affiliates versus Parents
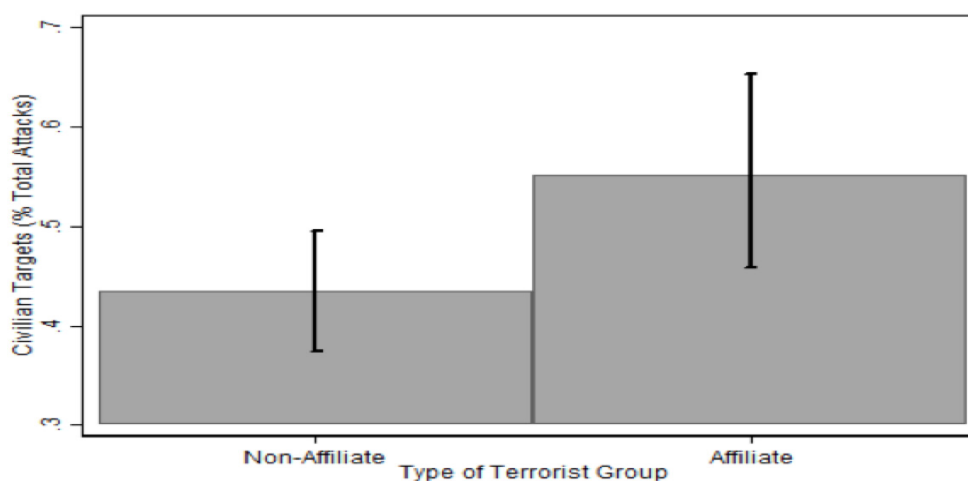
Note: Marginal effects estimated in 1,000 simulations from the variance-covariance matrix of Model 1.

Testing Alternative Explanations

In this section, we provide additional evidence against the two main counterarguments for the observed pattern in the data. The first is that terrorist group affiliates are disposed to engage in civilian targeting because they are too weak to mount more sophisticated operations against hardened targets. In Models 2 and 3, we attempted to account for this potential objection by including several measures of group strength; in neither model do any of these variables reach statistical significance ($p > 0.10$) and several of the coefficients are actually in the opposite direction, further undercutting this rival explanation. To aid in this assessment of whether affiliates lack the capability to strike harder targets, Table 2 regresses each measure of organizational strength against whether the group is an affiliate. Model 4 examines whether affiliates are less likely to have a state sponsor. Since state sponsorship is coded as a dummy variable (1 = group receives state sponsorship), this model utilizes logistic regression. There is apparently no statistically significant relationship between whether a terrorist group affiliate receives state support ($p = 0.831$). Model 5 reports similar results from looking at territorial control (1 = group holds territory), as affiliates are evidently not significantly less likely to control territory either ($p = 0.925$). Group size is operationalized in four levels, with higher values indicating larger groups. As such, Model 6 uses ordered logit. Again, the relationship is not statistically different from zero ($p = 0.386$). Finally, both organizational connections and fatalities are counts with demonstrable signs of over-dispersion ($p < 0.001$), so we utilize a zero-inflated negative binomial model.[79] Models 7 and 8 find a relationship that is differentiable from zero, but it is in the opposite direction of what would be expected from the organizational capability counterargument.

Not only do these results vitiate the claim that affiliates lack the capability to strike harder targets, but the evidence also offers additional support for our principal-agent argument. Model 7 suggests that affiliates have, on average, more organizational connections ($p = 0.015$), which accords with our contention that affiliates prioritize organizational survival by associating with other terrorist groups. Model 8 indicates that affiliates may generate more violence ($p = 0.129$), killing about 51 more people than other groups. The relationship between affiliates and fatalities is even stronger statistically when al-Qaida is removed ($p = 0.001$), suggesting that affiliates have greater incentives to inflict more bloodshed for recruitment purposes, as our theory would anticipate. Indeed, both establishing organizational connections and engaging in more lethal tactics may be understood as part of a rational strategy for affiliates to gain additional human capital given the leadership's heightened concerns over organizational survival.

Table 2: Affiliates and Organizational Capability

	Model 4: State sponsorship (logit)	Model 5: Control of territory (logit)	Model 6: Size (ordered logit)	Model 7: Connections (negative binomial)	Model 8: Fatalities (negative binomial
Affiliates	0.102	-0.038	0.256	0.502	0.709
	(0.831)	(0.925)	(0.386)	(0.015)	(0.129)
Intercept	-1.985	-1.420		0.564	3.813
	(0.000)	(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)
Cut 1			0.090		
			(0.581)		
Cut 2			1.381		
			(0.000)		
Cut 3			3.028		
			(0.000)		
Log(alpha)				0.223	2.144
				(0.166)	(0.000)
N	202	202	202	202	202

p-values (2-tailed) in parentheses

A potential counterargument related to capability is that affiliates may be more violent especially against civilians to "outbid" their parent group in a competition over finite organizational resources.[80] If outbidding was responsible for the uptick in civilian targeting, however, we would expect the parent group to also become more violent in order to lure supporters from affiliates. Yet Models 9 and 10 in Table 3 show that the zero-order relationship between being a parent group and attacking civilians is not statistically significant with (p = 0.231) or without (p = 0.525) control variables. This lack of empirical support for the outbidding thesis is consistent with other studies employing different methodologies.[81] In sum, the standard capability and associated outbidding argument fail to explain the observed relationship between affiliates and civilian targeting. If anything, these tests lend additional support for our argument that affiliates adhere to a rational strategy based on the relative importance they attach to organizational survival.

Table 3: Parent Group Attack Profile

	Model 9: Percent Civilian	Model 10: Percent Civilian
Source groups	0.081	0.048
	(0.231)	(0.525)
Affiliates		0.129
		(0.039)
Religious ideology		0.354
		(0.000)
Ethnonationalist ideology		0.247
		(0.004)
Ethnonationalist & religious		0.171
		(0.079)
Leftist ideology		0.042
		(0.642)
State sponsorship		0.034
		(0.718)
Size (ordinal)		-0.009
		(0.799)
Control of territory		0.117
		(0.140)
Organizational connections		-0.006
		(0.627)
Count, fatalities		-0.000
		(0.899)
Intercept	0.449	0.236
	(0.000)	(0.001)
R2	0.006	0.141
Adjusted R2	0.002	0.092
N	238	202

p-values (2-tailed) in parentheses

Upon closer inspection, ideology continues to fail to explain why affiliates are prone to civilian targeting. Although Models 2 and 3 show that ethno-nationalist and religious ethno-nationalist groups exhibit less civilian restraint, as the literature would predict [82], our core finding strengthens after controlling for the official ideologies of the groups. Affiliates are significantly more likely than the parent to engage in civilian targeting even after taking into account their official ideologies. And yet another ideological explanation also merits examination. In a seminal study, Stedman describes how radical groups often splinter from the parent during peace processes in order to "spoil" them.[83] An important question then is whether the relationship between affiliates and civilian targeting is due to spoiling as opposed to our principal-agent mechanism.

Stedman notes that "Spoilers exist only when there is a peace process to undermine," so we assess whether affiliates are prone to civilian targeting because they disproportionately operate in nationalist conflicts with opportunities to play spoiler.[84] Comparing the ideologies of affiliates against parents (or non-affiliates), there would seem to be some *prima facie* evidence for the spoiler hypothesis. Figure 4 shows the percentage of the two types of groups that fall into each of the ideological categories utilized above. Clearly, a higher percentage of affiliates fall into the ethno-nationalist groupings.

Figure 4: Ideologies of Affiliate versus Non-Affiliate Groups
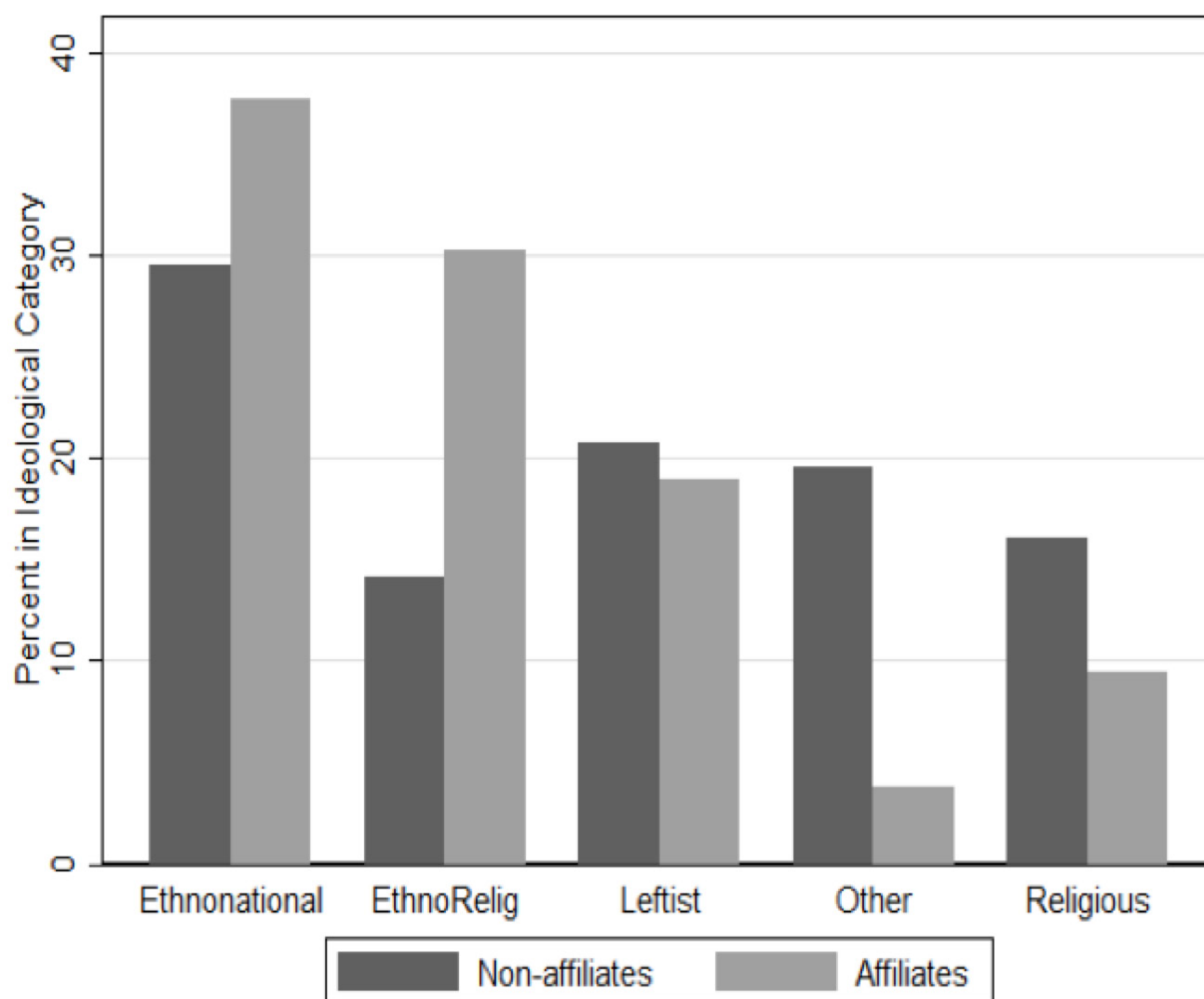
Yet the spoiler explanation wilts upon scrutiny. If the higher proportion of ethnonational ideologies in affiliate groups were responsible for the indiscriminate violence due to spoiling then adding an interaction term between affiliates and ethnonational ideology should reveal a significant increase in civilian targeting. Figure 5 illustrates the results of adding this interaction. The figure shows the simulation results of a regression model that includes a variable indicating whether the group has an ethnonational ideology, an indicator for whether the group is an affiliate, and their interaction. As shown in the chart, groups that are both ethnonational and affiliates have about the same propensity to choose civilian targets as ethnonational non-affiliates and are actually significantly less likely to target civilians than non-ethnonational affiliates ($p < 0.01$).

Figure 5: Interaction between Ethnonational Ideology and Affiliate Groups
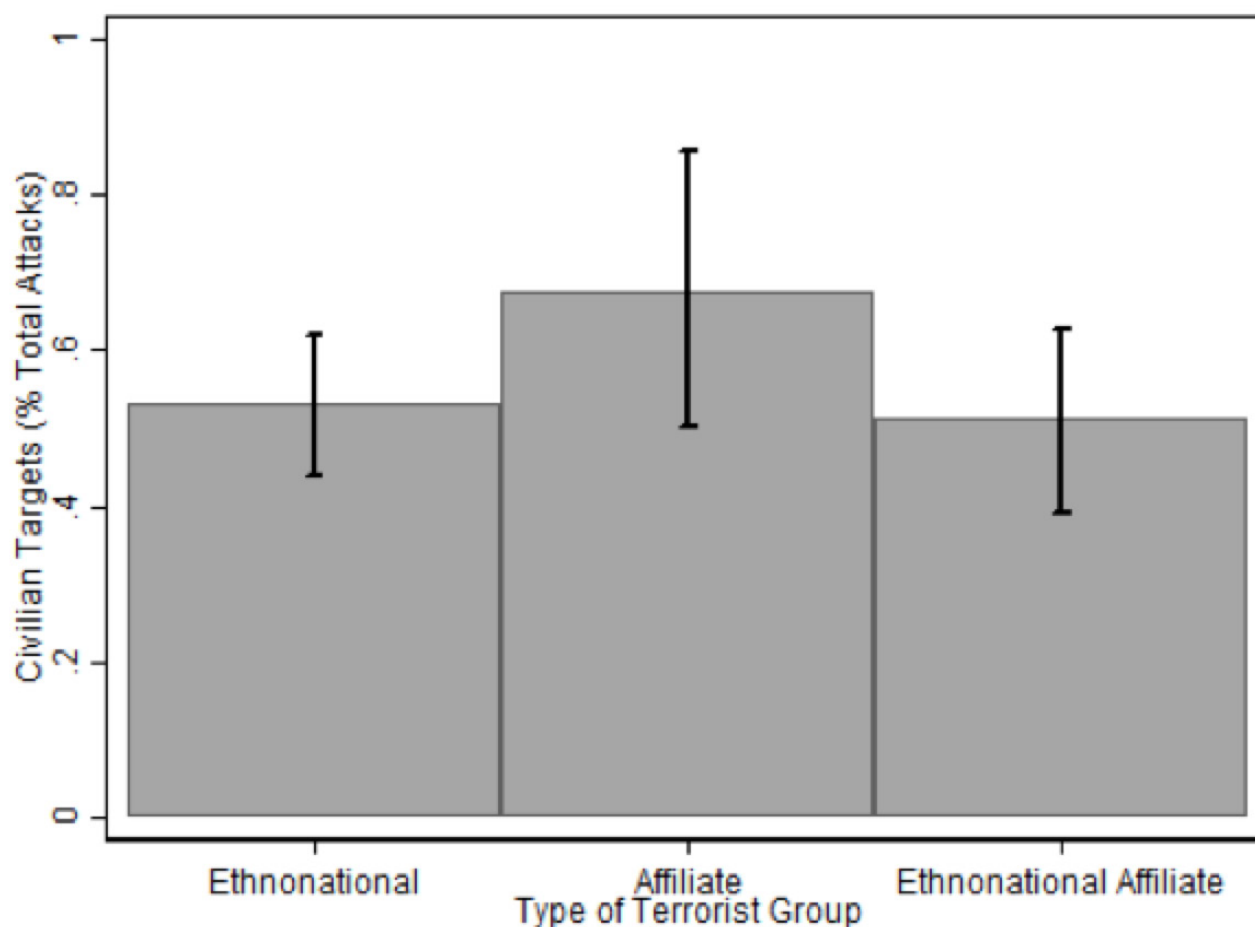
Another way to test the spoiler argument against our principal-agent explanation is to examine the theater of operations. If affiliates are more likely to attack civilians because they are concerned with spoiling domestic policies by their parent group, we would expect the differences in target selection to be restricted to domestic attacks. We do not see this pattern in the data. Affiliates do conduct domestic attacks against civilians about 50.4% of the time compared to 44.4% of the time for parent groups. But affiliates are also more likely than their parents to strike international civilian targets. About 6.5% of attacks by affiliates are against international civilian targets compared to 5.5% for parent groups. While the differences are higher for domestic attacks, civilian attacks against international targets are still a larger proportion of total attacks for affiliates. Model 11 takes this analysis further by looking at the proportion of civilian attacks that are domestic and including the control variables from the earlier analysis. Civilian attacks by affiliates, while higher, are not significantly more likely to be against domestic targets than those of parent groups ($p = 0.840$). Controlling for other differences, affiliates are on average only about 1% more likely to attack civilians domestically than internationally compared to their parents.

For analytical clarity, we also examine whether affiliates of affiliates become even more indiscriminate in their targeting choices. The spoiler argument would not make this prediction, whereas our theory would anticipate that the principal-agent problem grows as the relationship between affiliates and their parent becomes more tenuous. Unfortunately, relatively few terrorist groups have over two degrees of separation in the directed

network as Figure 2 illustrates. Despite the limited sample size for this particular test, however, Model 12 in Table 4 offers some preliminary evidence that affiliates are indeed even more indiscriminate when their network relationship to the parent is weaker. Further splintering increases the percentage of civilian targets by on average about 14% in this data, though his difference is not statistically significant, which is unsurprising as only 12 groups meet the criteria of being affiliates of affiliates. Nonetheless, this finding accords with the view that affiliates have stronger incentives to engage in civilian targeting not because they are spoilers, but due to organizational incentives especially for groups with weaker parental control.

Table 4: Testing the Spoiler Hypothesis

	Model 11: Percent of civilian attacks that are domestic	Model 12: Percent civilian
Affiliates	0.012	0.109
	(0.840)	(0.101)
Affiliates of affiliates		0.140
		(0.338)
Religious ideology	0.205	0.350
	(0.071)	(0.000)
Ethnonationalist ideology	0.111	0.245
	(0.287)	(0.004)
Ethnonationalist & religious	0.059	0.186
	(0.595)	(0.050)
Leftist ideology	0.262	0.046
	(0.027)	(0.616)
State sponsorship	0.038	0.043
	(0.665)	(0.645)
Size (ordinal)	-0.010	-0.005
	(0.782)	(0.891)
Control of territory	-0.107	0.121
	(0.148)	(0.127)
Organizational connections	-0.018	-0.005
	(0.198)	(0.693)
Count, fatalities	0.000	-0.000
	(0.120)	(0.864)
Intercept	0.776	0.236
	(0.000)	(0.001)
R^2	0.098	0.144
Adjusted R^2	0.027	0.094
N	139	202

p-values (2-tailed) in parentheses

Time Dynamics

Together, those quantitative tests support our contention that affiliates disproportionately target civilians. This finding is apparently not driven by organizational weakness, ideology, or the associated arguments of outbidding or spoiling within the conflict literature. Rather, affiliates seem to favor civilian targeting compared to their parents due to organizational imperatives inherent to the nature of their relationship. This analysis make sense in light of the organizational ecology literature, which shows in a wide variety of other contexts that regardless of their initial endowments younger groups tend to prioritize process goals over outcome goals due to the liability of newness. If so, we would expect for the leaders of affiliates to try to modify their behavior as the liability of newness recedes. To this end, we examine whether affiliates evince a stronger appreciation about the risks of appearing too tactically unrestrained as their organizational priorities evolve over time.

For our final quantitative tests, we subset the GTD data to include only those attacks carried out by an affiliate group and then analyze the effect of time on three dependent variables: the proportion of attacks carried out against civilian targets, the proportion of attacks for which the group claims credit, and the proportion of civilian attacks for which the group claims credit. In Table 5, we regress these dependent variables against the age of the group since its first recorded attack and include fixed effects for groups. For each dependent variable, we present the results for all affiliates and only those affiliates that persist for at least 10 years to ensure that groups included have sufficient survival time for dynamic behavior to appear. The results strongly indicate that the leaders of affiliates become more hesitant about appearing too extreme as their priorities evolve with age in accordance with the organizational ecology literature.

Models 13 and 14 offer some evidence that affiliates are more likely to steer clear of civilians over time. Although the results do not reach standard levels of statistical significance, the targeting choices of terrorist members seldom align perfectly with the preferences of the leadership due to agency problems within the group.[85] A more direct test is whether affiliates are less likely over time to claim credit for their bloody attacks, especially against civilians. This is a better test of a terrorist leader's tactical preferences because he wields greater control over which attacks to claim than the particular targets operatives may strike.[86] As Models 15 and 16 reveal, affiliates are significantly less likely to claim credit for attacks over time ($p < 0.05$), and the results are even stronger for groups that survived at least 10 years. Models 17 and 18 demonstrate that the percentage of civilian attacks for which affiliates claim credit also decreases over time. This result is significant for all groups at the $p < 0.1$ level and at the $p < 0.05$ level for groups that have persisted at least 10 years. Affiliates thus behave as rational actors by trying to limit the appearance of being too extreme as survival concerns recede and strategic concerns come to the forefront.

Table 5: Effect of Aging on Attack Behaviors of Affiliates

	% Civilian		% Claimed		% Civilian Claimed	
	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18
Age of Group	-0.002	-0.002	-0.008	-0.008	-0.008	-0.009
	(0.156)	(0.165)	(0.049)	(0.033)	(0.070)	(0.036)
Intercept	0.760	0.759	0.200	0.209	0.227	0.241
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.052)	(0.038)	(0.023)	(0.012)
Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Max Age > 9	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
R2	0.229	0.184	0.562	0.555	0.619	0.629
Adjusted R2	0.146	0.132	0.467	0.494	0.522	0.566
N	594	518	320	260	256	207

p-values (2-tailed) in parentheses

Conclusion

This study advances a novel explanation for why some terrorist groups are more disposed to attacking civilians despite the political risks. We find robust statistical evidence for our theory rooted in both the conflict and organizational ecology literatures that civilian attacks often result from agency problems between terrorist groups, when the parent creates affiliates. Network analysis bolsters our argument that affiliates are more likely to engage in politically risky indiscriminate violence than the parent group because the former stands to gain the most from civilian attacks, while the latter disproportionately bears the costs owing to their different organizational incentives. As our theory would anticipate, affiliates modify their attack behavior over time as they become more established organizations and can prioritize the achievement of outcome goals over process goals by exhibiting greater tactical restraint.

For scholars, this study builds on the widespread assumption that terrorist groups tend to behave as essentially rational actors given their constraints.[87] In recent years, the emerging finding that attacks against civilians carry non-trivial political risks has challenged this assumption.[88] Political scientists have drawn upon the principal-agent framework to help square the circle of why terrorist groups attack civilians given the potential costs.[89] Whereas these studies have tended to attribute the "slack" to agency problems within terrorist groups, our analysis elucidates how ostensibly suboptimal targeting behavior can result from moral hazard problems between terrorist groups, when the parent spawns affiliates.[90]

Moving forward, additional qualitative case studies could bolster our proposed mechanism with detailed evidence that affiliate leaders are indeed more inclined than parent leaders to prioritize process goals over out-

come goals due to different organizational incentives. As new datasets become available, we also hope future studies will map relations between terrorist groups not only to test the valence of our findings, but to uncover other important conflict dynamics. As terrorist actors become increasingly globalized, understanding these networks will only become more important.

For policymakers, our analysis helps to fill an important research lacuna. Most studies on terrorist groups focus on the parent rather than its affiliates. This bias is increasingly problematic as inter-terrorist group relations have become more geographically diffuse and affiliates pose a greater concern internationally. Al-Qaeda illustrates this development, as its affiliates have emerged as a larger threat to the United States and other countries than the parent from which they were spawned. As President Obama noted in a May 2014 speech at West Point: "Today's principal threat no longer comes from a centralized Al Qaeda leadership. Instead, it comes from decentralized Al Qaeda affiliates." The same pattern may also become true of the Islamic State, as its Caliphate disappears and fighters under the black flag exploit new power vacuums such as in Afghanistan, Libya, the northern Sinai, and Yemen. Affiliates might be perceived as the "B-team" in terms of experience, but they are generally at least as extreme in their targeting choices.

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Terrorist Tactics by Criminal Organizations: The Mexican Case in Context

by Brian J. Phillips

Abstract

In the past 10 years in Mexico, more than 100,000 people have been killed in violence related to organized crime. Some attacks have left horrific scenes, meant to send messages to the public or government. Debate continues about how to characterize this violence, and some observers describe it as "terrorism" or its perpetrators as "terrorists." This article emphasizes that Mexico has experienced terrorist tactics by criminal organizations. This implies that while the perpetrators are better thought of (and dealt with) as criminal groups, some of their violence at least partially fulfills the criteria to be defined as terrorism. The use of terrorist tactics by criminal groups is an understudied aspect of the crime-terror nexus because more research examines crime by terrorist groups. The article discusses three tactics seen in Mexico: bombings, violent communication, and attacks against politicians. It then presents comparable examples from other countries, such as Brazil, Colombia, Italy, and Russia. Similarities and differences between criminal groups and terrorist groups are discussed. The violence in Mexico is relatively unique for its scale, for the number of people killed, but in general the use of terrorist tactics by criminal organizations is not new.

Keywords: Terrorist tactics, terrorist groups, organized crime, Mexico

Introduction

Car bombs send shrapnel through crowded urban areas, detonated remotely by cell phone. Tortured bodies displayed with threatening messages to the public or government. Politicians gunned down because of their work.

These scenes might evoke modern-day Syria or Afghanistan, or Northern Ireland during The Troubles, but they have occurred in recent years in Mexico, as criminal organizations fight the government and each other for the lucrative market of US-bound drugs. The violence in Mexico has left more than 100,000 dead, 30,000 disappeared, and is often shocking for its brutality.[1] A growing line of research seeks to understand the causes of the crisis.[2] However, important questions remain regarding how to categorize the violence, especially the most horrifying acts, and how to classify the non-state groups carrying out the carnage.

What is the best way to understand the violence in Mexico? Do we see acts of terrorism, as commonly defined? Is it helpful to describe the violent subnational groups as terrorist organizations? The literature is mixed on these questions. For example, Campbell and Hansen argue that we see "terrorism" in Mexico, while Longmire and Longmire assert that the drug trafficking organizations should be labelled "terrorist groups."[3]. Other scholars, such as Flanigan and Williams, dispute these characterizations.[4] Williams argues that the violence is not terrorism because it lacks a political motivation, and is usually more selective than indiscriminate. He presents several explanations for the extreme criminal violence, including the notion

of strategic competition where violence is a "continuation of business by other means."

These questions are important for reasons beyond the Mexican case. Scholars of political violence increasingly study groups typically characterized as criminals.[5] In the broader "crime-terror nexus" literature, one can identify three main areas of investigation: a substantial line of work on crime by terrorist groups, some research on alliances between criminal and terrorist groups, but less on potential terror by criminal groups. [6] On Makarenko's crime-terror continuum, one of the stages is criminal groups using "terrorist tactics for operational purposes" – but less is written about this topic than other elements on the continuum.[7]

Beyond academic discussions, politicians and the press are inconsistent in their descriptions of such violence. This suggests policymaking challenges. News media accounts sometimes refer to attacks in Mexico as "terrorism" or "narco-terrorism," and the previous Mexican president described perpetrators as "terrorists."[8] The frameworks used by policymakers are important because if a problem is misdiagnosed, it is not likely to receive the appropriate treatment. For example, the Salvadoran government declared groups such as MS-13 "terrorist organizations," authorizing extraordinary judicial powers, which some analysts suggest is problematic.[9] Counterterrorism or counterinsurgency approaches can backfire when used against criminal groups. [10]

This article contributes to these debates by building on work by Williams and others, emphasizing that Mexico is experiencing terrorist tactics by criminal organizations. This implies that the violent groups are not "terrorist organizations" as typically defined, but they use tactics that have a great deal in common with more politically motivated actors. This focus suggests that while full-scale counterterrorism is unlikely to be effective, some lessons from counterterrorism can be carefully employed to address certain tactics. It is also emphasized that terrorist tactics by criminal groups are not unprecedented. After discussing examples of terrorist tactics in Mexico, the article describes similar tactics used by criminal groups in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Italy, and Russia. The Mexican case is unique for the scale of its violence, but most of the tactics are part of a repertoire that appears repeatedly in the history of organized crime.

The next section discusses terrorism, terrorist tactics, and terrorist groups. Then, examples of Mexican criminal groups' terrorist tactics are discussed. Three variations are considered: bombings, violent communication, and attacks on politicians. After this, historical examples are discussed of criminal organizations in other countries using these same tactics. The conclusion presents some policy suggestions, as well as implications for the study of terrorism and crime.

Terrorism, Terrorist Tactics, and Terrorist Groups

The definition of terrorism is of course widely debated. However, there are criteria that appear in many or most definitions. Schmid and Jongman's survey of more than 100 definitions indicates that three elements appear in the majority of terrorism definitions: (1) violence, (2) fear or terror is emphasized, generally toward a wide audience, and (3) a political motivation.[11] Many definitions mention other elements, such as civilian victims (discussed below), but these three elements are the only to appear in the majority of definitions surveyed by Schmid and Jongman.[12]

The first element, violence, is probably the least controversial. Terrorism is violence, perpetrated or threatened. The second element is the notion of fear, or the namesake terror. Terrorism is not only violence to damage or destroy a target but *communicative* violence, to influence third parties. Definitions mention creating an environment of fear, threats, psychological effects, or other related dynamics. For this reason, some definitions explicitly mention civilians as targets of terrorism, while others specify the broader grouping of non-combatants. Terrorism is shocking, in some ways unpredictable, because it is generally designed to strike fear into the wider population. The specific audience is often the general public, which could be at the national or international level. Additional potential audiences include the government or particular ethnic or religious groups.

The third element is crucial to the discussion regarding Mexico and comparable cases: terrorism is *political* violence. Motive is an essential element of the terrorist definition, and violence without such a motive is likely to be considered more common crime. There is something perhaps intuitive, to many scholars at least, that there is a unique category of violence that seeks to disrupt or replace governments, to create nation-states, or to change foreign policy.[13] If the objective of an act of violence is to allow its perpetrators to continue to conduct illegal business, this is more commonly thought of as crime. Political objectives imply a different type of violence. One reason political violence deserves its separate category is that violence with political motivations often has political solutions. Thus, there are policy reasons to focus on terrifying violence with political motivations separately from that which has other motivations, such as pure profit-seeking.

The requirement of a political motive suggests that the violence we see in Mexico is not usually "terrorism" as traditionally defined. The perpetrators do not act with a political motivation – such as imposing a particular ideology or religion on the government – but instead usually a purely criminal motivation. Their primary objective is to make money. Their fundamental relationship with the state is that they want it to leave them alone. Beyond the lack of political motivation, the violent groups in Mexico do not usually direct their communicative violence at the general public, as terrorism typically does. The groups seem to be communicating more to rival groups than other actors, as is discussed below.[14]

While most of the drug-related violence in modern Mexico is not terrorism as usually defined, there are actions that could be considered *terrorist tactics*. I would contend that any actions that have the first two elements are terrorist tactics, violence to strike fear into others beyond the immediate victims. Even if an action is not technically terrorism (according to many authors) because it lacks the political motivation, it still could make sense to categorize it as terrorist-like violence. This is consistent with the characterization that a Mexican international affairs expert, Mauricio Meschoulam, has used for certain shocking acts of criminal violence in Mexico, "quasi-terrorism."[15]

The use of the phrase "terrorist tactics" for violence that does not fully meet the definition of terrorism is found in other contexts. For example, many scholars specify that terrorism is non-governmental or subnational violence – by individuals or groups. This is because similar state violence has other names (e.g., human rights violations, war crimes) and legal structures, and often has diverse causal explanations. Nonetheless, scholars still find it useful to talk about "terrorist tactics by governments" when discussing states intentionally targeting civilians.[16] This is consistent with Tilly's contention that a broad range of actors, including organized crime, use terror as a strategy. He argues: "From Mafiosi to ruthless governments, people who operate

protection rackets intermittently deploy terror against enemies and uncertain clients."[17]

If the Mexican criminal organizations use terrorist tactics, are they terrorist organizations? It is not clear that this label makes sense due to the primary motivations of the groups. This is probably why – although there is debate – many contend that it makes more sense to think of the drug-trafficking groups as criminal organizations, not terrorists or insurgents.[18] Shelley and Picarelli notably argue that it is motives that separate terrorist and criminal groups, even if they sometimes use similar or the same methods.[19] This is consistent with definitions of "terrorist groups" in the literature, which have been defined as "subnational *political* organizations that use terrorism (emphasis added)."[20] Prominent databases of terrorist groups assembled for the study of terrorist group lethality or longevity do *not* includes groups such as the Medellín Cartel or drug-trafficking groups in Mexico.[21] The idea of considering attributes of groups – and not simply their actions – is consistent with Sánchez-Cuenca and De la Calle's argument that there are "actor" and "action" notions of terrorism.[22]

It is true that criminal groups use violence with some political implications, such as killing politicians (discussed below), and many observers describe the Mexican groups as seeking to "control territory." However, violence against the state is usually with the ultimate aim of being left alone – not because the criminal groups want a particular ideology or religion represented in government. Furthermore, "territorial control" when it comes to criminal groups refers to being permitted to freely conduct business, and not a desire to be responsible for public goods provision in a geographic area, for example, or writing legislation about school curricula.

Additionally, in terms of policy, it has been noted that given the distinct motivations across group types, some counterterrorism tactics are unlikely to have the desired effects on criminal groups. This explains why tactics such as leadership removal have distinct consequences depending on whether the target is a criminal group or a more politically motivated group.[23] Overall, for theoretical and policy-based reasons, the label of "terrorist group" is not helpful for these groups. The conclusion discusses more differences between these groups types, but their tactical similarities are worth examining in detail.

Terrorist Tactics by Mexican Criminal Organizations

Criminal organizations in Mexico have used a number of terrorist or terrorist-like tactics. This section focuses on three tactics often associated with terrorism: bombings, violent communication, and violence against politicians. These tactics are chosen because they have been widely observed in Mexico, and seem to match up with behavior commonly used by traditionally-defined terrorist organizations. These are not the only terrorist tactics that exist, of course. However, the three tactics mentioned are those that have occurred most commonly in Mexico.

Bombing in Mexico

Although terror can be wrought with any weapon, perhaps none conjures up the image of "terrorism" as well as a bomb. The invention of dynamite in the 1860s is said to have helped usher in a new type of terrorism, giving a powerful tool to Russian anarchists or nihilists seeking to make a mark.[24] Attacks with explosives

have drawn international headlines after attacks such as Oklahoma City 1995, Omagh (Northern Ireland) 1998, and the London transit system in 2005, to say nothing of countless vehicle-borne and roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan in recent decades. One analyst argued that bombings remain the "most likely terrorist method of inflicting mass casualties."[25]

Car bombs are one type of explosive tactic that Mexican criminal organizations have employed repeatedly over the years, although fortunately the devices have not killed many people. More than 20 car bombs exploded or were disarmed by police between 2010 and 2012, according to Bunker and Sullivan.[26] The most notorious device was in Ciudad Juárez in 2010, which was rigged to kill first responders rushing to a false report of a killed police officer. A dead person was in the car wearing a police uniform, but as emergency personnel approached it, a cell phone-activated device detonated, killing two police officers, one paramedic, and a civilian.[27] Car bombs are not new in Mexican organized crime. Bunker and Sullivan report several car bombings in the 1990s, including one intended to kill "El Chapo" Guzman in 1992, and another in 1994 that killed at least five people and wounded 15. Criminal organizations keep using car bombs, or at least try to. In 2015, in the border city of Ciudad Juárez, authorities found a Volkswagen Beatle containing enough explosives to produce a 40-meter blast radius.[28]

While Mexican criminal organizations use a number of types of explosives, they frequently use hand grenades in particular.[29] One of the most terrorist-like attacks by criminal groups in Mexico, involved cartel members throwing hand grenades into the crowded main square of the city of Morelia during Independence Day celebrations in 2008. The attack killed eight people and wounded more than 100. The precise motive behind the attack is unclear, and two rival criminal organizations blamed each other.[30] The lack of a claim for the massacre makes for an interesting comparison with terrorist organizations, which often claim their attacks. Furthermore, some experts believe the attack was one of many intended to *calentar la plaza* (heat up the turf), where one group carries out an attack to draw authorities' attention on a rival.[31]

Hand grenades have been used in other attacks, as military fragmentation grenades are often stolen from the military. Criminals have used hand grenades during attacks on newspaper offices, and as recently as a 2017 attack in Cancún on the state's attorney general.[32] Beyond hand grenades, in 2015 cartel members used a rocket-propelled grenade to shoot down a Mexican Army helicopter.[33]

Criminal organizations in Mexico, like terrorist organizations, have been prolific with explosives, but is important to note that the targets of criminal group bombings are often different from the typical targets of terrorist groups. Mexican criminal organizations usually target the authorities or rival groups, while terrorist groups are known for attacking random civilians. These distinctions are not completely clear cut, as the grenade attack in Morelia illustrates. Furthermore, many terrorist groups target security forces and rival groups. However, the typical targets of each group type are distinct.

Violent Communication in Mexico

Regardless of the weapon used, a great deal of violence by Mexican criminal groups could be qualified as terrorist tactics because of its public and communicative nature. Violent, public communication by criminal groups is surprising because criminal organizations, unlike terrorists, are said to avoid publicity and not care about affecting public opinion.[34] Yet we see many examples of public messaging. Perhaps the first attack

that put Mexican criminal violence on the radar of the international media was a horrific 2006 spectacle by La Familia, a group in the southern state of Michoacán. About 20 black-clad armed members of the group entered a nightclub after midnight, fired shots into the ceiling, and threw five human heads on the dance floor. Along with the heads, they left a note saying that they were carrying out "divine justice," and asserting that they do not kill women or the innocent.[35] This display is remarkable not only for the deployment of human heads in a crowded establishment, but because the group went to such lengths to send a message, to speak out to the community.

The use of decapitation has been shockingly frequent in the drug war, with the Mexican government reporting 1,303 decapitated bodies in the country between 2007 and 2011.[36] Many of the decapitations led to gruesome public displays, for example when 49 headless bodies were dumped along the highway near the city of Monterrey in 2012. Interestingly, the use of this tactic took off around the same time that groups in Iraq were using similar methods to draw attention with Internet videos.

One author suggested that ISIS learned about publicizing decapitation from Mexican groups.[37] This is unlikely. The first publicized display of heads in 21st century Mexico was apparently in 2006, while ISIS predecessor al Qaeda in Iraq decapitated American Nick Berg in 2004, in a video that was widely distributed online.[38] It is likely that there was some co-evolution, with both types of groups learning from each other's online butchery as the years went on. This emulation and diffusion of terrorist tactics between terrorist groups and criminal groups is worthy of additional research.

Mexican criminal organizations have spread messages in a number of other ways. A prominent tactic has been the *narcomensaje*, or literally "narco-message," the use of banners or signs hung in public places with a note from a criminal group to the public. The banners are sometimes accompanied with a human body, or body parts. The text of the narco-messages can include threats to government officials or rival groups, warnings not to inform to the police, or declarations of territorial control. Thousands of narco-messages have been found since 2006. In an interesting contrast with traditional terrorism, these narco-messages are not usually intended for a national or global audience. One study found that they are addressed to rival groups more than any other type of actor.[39]

The narco-message banners are just one part of criminal group publicity campaigns, as they also have used graffiti and social media to spread their messages to the public.[40] This type of public communication is noteworthy because terrorist organizations use similar types of messenging strategies. For example, terrorist groups in Northern Ireland have painted murals to warn rivals and show control over territory.[41] Both types of groups use public messages such as banners or graffiti for many types of messages, as is discussed below.

An additional way that criminal groups in Mexico have drawn public attention to send a message is when they simultaneously block multiple main roads or highways in a city. This is referred to as *narcobloqueos,* or narco-road-blocks. The *narcobloqueos* apparently began in 2010 with armed men forcing motorists out of their cars, and leaving the cars blocking the roadway.[42] On many occasions, the cars have been lit on fire. Sometimes this tactic is used simply to slow the arrival of authorities, to allow crime to proceed unimpeded. Frequently, however, crime groups shut down streets to send a message about who controls the city, or as a show of force. In July 2017, a *narcobloqueo* was employed for the first time in Mexico City. After the leader

of a local gang was killed in a shootout with Marines, three buses and a dump truck were set on fire in busy intersections, blocking central streets.[43]

Politicians Attacked in Mexico

In spite of the less-political nature of criminal organizations, compared with insurgents or terrorists, their violence clearly often affects politics and politician. One direct indication of this is attacks on politicians. Like the use of the bomb, attacking politicians is an age-old terrorist tactic. From the Zealots two thousand years ago to the anarchists who attacked Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and U.S. President William McKinley more than 100 years ago, killing politicians is a sure way to draw attention and try to affect politics. Campbell and Hansen mention criminal groups' struggles for regional control as part of the reason that they think that some of the violence in Mexico is "narco-terrorism."[44] Criminal organizations generally kill politicians not to affect politics for the same reasons insurgents do, such as changing the national government or its ideology, but to get the government to not interfere in their business. This has been the case in Mexico.

In 2007, veteran politician Juan Antonio Guajardo Anzaldúa was running for mayor of Río Bravo, a border city near McAllen, Texas. He had already been the municipal president twice before. During this third campaign for municipal president, he accused political rivals of being paid off by organized crime. The area around Río Bravo, lucrative for organized crime given its proximity to the United States, was said to be controlled by the Gulf Cartel. During the campaign, he was threatened repeatedly because of his outspokenness against organized crime. A few weeks after the election, as he stood on a sidewalk, two SUVs pulled up alongside him gunshots rang out. Guarjardo and the five men with him were all shot dead.[45]

The following year, hitmen came for Salvador Vergara Cruz, the mayor of Ixtapan de la Sal, a resort town about 70 miles southwest of Mexico City. He was driving on the highway when another vehicle pulled up next to his and shooting started. Authorities later counted 13 bullet impacts in Vergara Cruz's body. He was reportedly targeted because he was not letting organized crime extort local businesses.[46] On January 1, 2016, Gisela Mota was sworn in as mayor of a city in the southern state of Morelos. In her inaugural speech, she discussed a number of topics, including her goal to root out corruption. The following day, at least four armed men forced their way into her house and executed her in front of her family.[47] These examples are part of a much wider pattern. Between 2006 and 2012, Mexican criminal organizations killed 18 state officials, 67 mayors, and 47 municipal officials, according to Trejo and Ley.[48] Blume counts more than 200 politicians murdered by Mexican criminal groups between 2005 and 2015.[49] Beyond the deaths of these leaders, hundreds of lethal and non-lethal attacks were carried out against politicians, party officials, and activists across the country. Interestingly, most of the attacks have been against local politicians, as opposed to federal or national officials. This is consistent with criminal violence in other countries, as discussed below.

In the section on explosives by Mexican criminal groups, it was noted that the criminal groups usually target authorities or rival groups – as opposed to the random civilians often attacked by terrorist groups. Similarly, while both terrorists and criminals target politicians, they do so in distinct ways. Terrorist groups often target national-level politicians, since their motivation is usually national or international politics. In Mexico, criminal groups have mostly targeted local politicians. Terrorists attack politicians for their specific political views, and for simply representing the government – a symbolic attack expected to destabilize the country. [50] Criminal groups, however, often attack politicians for refusing to be complicit in business.

The Historical Record of Terrorist Tactics by Criminal Organizations

The above evidence intends to make clear that terrorist tactics have been used widely by criminal groups in Mexico. However, the use of such tactics by groups primarily motivated by financial gains is not unusual. This section presents examples of comparable tactics used by criminal organizations in other countries.

Bombings by Criminal Groups

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Medellín Cartel waged a virtual war on the Colombian government and competitor groups to maintain its power as a cocaine producer. Attacks on the government – and the public – were an effort to get the government to stop interfering with its business. The deadliest bombing was the 1989 explosion of a commercial jet, Avianca Flight 203, which killed 110 people.[51] The same year, the Medellín Cartel sent a bus loaded with 500 kilograms of dynamite to the Administrative Department of Security, and the explosion killed 63 people and injured 600.[52] These were some of the more shocking attacks, but the group bombed countless businesses of rival groups, government buildings, and seemingly random targets during the period. There was also a bombing near the U.S. embassy as early as 1984, wounding six people, shortly after the Colombian government announced it would extradite drug traffickers to the United States. [53]

During 1993, the Sicilian Mafia carried out a series of car bombings in Florence, Milan, and Rome, killing 10 people and wounding dozens.[54] Damaged buildings included historic churches and the Uffizi Gallery, the largest repository of Renaissance art.[55] Attacking cultural heritage sites is noteworthy because criminal organizations had used car bomb attacks as an assassination tactic for a long time, but those attacks usually had been directed at single individuals and not random civilians. (Even Youngstown, Ohio, as far back as the 1950s, saw car bombs as an organized crime murder weapon dozens of times.[56]) The Italian attacks in 1993, however, were in tourist-filled areas to coerce the government into stopping their crackdown on organized crime. An anti-Mafia investigator stated at the time, "It is a strategy of terror that is in the Mafia's interest now.[57]

In Russia as well, organized crime groups have employed bombing as a tactic on many occasions. Car bombs, for example, have been widely used. The first car bomb to hit Moscow came in 1994, according to the *New York Times*, with a remotely-detonated device that was intended for a business leader but decapitated his limousine driver instead.[58] The tactic continued into the early 2000s.[59] Beyond car bombs, criminal groups in the 1990s in particular regularly used explosives to eliminate and intimidate their opponents. In 1996, a bomb in a cemetery killed 14 people gathered at a memorial service, and there are reasons to believe the blast was related to organized crime.[60] In 2000, a bomb in a market killed three people and injured 11 others. The interior minister at the time said, "This situation doesn't have any relation to terror in the widely understood sense. This was a local conflict."[61]

Criminal groups have also used explosives in recent years in a perhaps surprising location: Sweden. The city of Malmo witnessed more than 100 grenade explosions between 2014 and 2016. Local authorities attributed the violence to organized crime, and indicated that the devices generally come from the Balkans.[62] Beyond grenades, a local justice center was bombed twice during 2014. Each attack happened at night, not causing major injuries, but the blasts damaged the entryway and shattered windows of nearby buildings.[63] In 2017,

a similar explosion hit the entrance of a justice center in nearby Helsingborg.[64] Fortunately, these attacks generally did not attack the public randomly, but were generally targeted at specific people or government buildings. This marks a difference between most bombings by organized crime and bombings by terrorist organizations.

Violent Communication by Criminal Groups

Criminal organizations outside of Mexico have also used violence including threats as part of overt, public communication. In Brazil, criminal groups have orchestrated deadly prison riots and shut down cities with burning buses – not unlike Mexican *narcobloqueos* – to intimidate the government and rival gangs.[65] Widespread coordinated prison riots first occurred in the country in 2001, when an uprising began in 29 prisons at noon on February 18. This was a response to the planned separation of imprisoned criminal group leaders.[66] A more substantial uprising occurred in 2006, when prison riots were accompanied by bombings, bus-burnings, and attacks on government buildings in Sao Paulo that left more than 100 people dead. Beyond these large-scale operations, criminal groups in Brazil have printed pamphlets explaining their actions, hung banners, and funded music that celebrates themselves. The overall public communication strategy of the groups has been described by Brazilian military sources as "psychological operations."[67]

In Central America, criminal groups have also used expressive or communicative violence in ways usually associated with insurgent or terrorist organizations. In Honduras in 2004, gang members used automatic weapons to kill 28 people on a bus – reportedly to get the government to back off its tough-on-crime policies.[68] The attackers were apparently from the group MS-13. In 2015 in El Salvador, MS-13 and Barrio 18 asked the government to negotiate a peace deal with them. When the state indicated that it would not bargain, and further cracked down on organized crime, the gangs demanded that bus drivers go on strike. Around 1,000 buses stopped running, but gang members still burned two buses and killed seven bus drivers who failed to comply.[69]

Milder forms of criminal public communication are also visible. For decades, street gangs in the United States and beyond have openly expressed themselves with graffiti in public places. Graffiti is used to mark territory, but a range of other reasons exist as well, such as memorializing the dead or indicating enemies and allies.[70] Graffiti often threatens violence, even implicitly, such as when one person crosses out another person's name, or a group's name, which is usually interpreted as a threat or intimidation.[71]

Beyond graffiti, criminal groups have used other methods of threatening public communication, from press releases to claiming their violence. "The Extraditables" was a public relations operation of Colombia's Medellín Cartel to convince the government to not extradite cartel leaders. Either as the Extraditables or on its own, the Medellín Cartel frequently claimed attacks and sent messages to politicians and the public with their violence.[72] For example, when they kidnapped the mayor of Bogotá, they sent an explanation to media outlets. Interestingly, in a move reminiscent of terrorists' indignation about being called "terrorists," the communiqué uses considerable space to expresses anger about being called a "mafia."[73] Overall, the Medellín Cartel was unusual at the time for its public messaging, the communicative nature of its violence, but this behavior would later be replicated and in some ways increased by Mexican criminal organizations.

More recently, the Internet is also frequently used by organized crime to send violent public messages. In

Italy, criminal groups have threatened politicians by delivering an envelope with a bullet in it, or a box with an animal's head. However, a 2011 report outlines the increase in anonymous blog threats to local politicians. One mayor in Southern Italy indicated that the writers on one blog "know my movements." He also said, "I don't feel safe."[74] In another case in Australia, the leader of an outlaw biker gang used a Facebook fan page to insult police and taunt rival gangs.[75] These Internet examples are more subtle than others mentioned above, but overall the public displays discussed in this section contrast with the notion of criminal organizations keeping a low profile.

Politicians Attacked by Criminal Groups

Attacking politicians is a clearly political consequence of organized crime, even if the criminal groups are not primarily motivated by political ambitions. This behavior has been observed around the world. In Italy, more than 130 local elected officials and administrators have been killed since the 1970s.[76] Beyond local politicians, some national or regional leaders were targeted as well. In 1992, three weeks before national elections, a Mafia gunman on a motorcycle assassinated Salvo Lima, a member of the European Parliament and former mayor of Palermo.[77] When the government responded with arrests of Mafia leaders, two of the country's top prosecutors or magistrates were killed. The Cosa Nostra reportedly also planned to assassinate then-New York Governor Mario Cuomo when he visited Italy in 1992, but called off the hit at the last minute when they realized the governor's security detail was bigger than expected.[78]

Criminal groups in El Salvador have also killed politicians. In 2016, at least two mayors were killed, as well as other party officials.[79] In this country, as in other cases, the line between criminal and political becomes blurry, especially at municipal-level politics. One example is when a mayor reportedly had a pact with a criminal group so that they would not extort local businesses. He allegedly ordered several of the group members to assassinate a political rival, and the group was willing because the victim has not been paying them extortion.[80] A more prominent case was when several national legislators from El Salvador were killed in 2007 while in Guatemala. The corpses of the three politicians were found in a burned car, and the bodies had bullet wounds and signs of torture. Various people were arrested for the crime, but no one was ever convicted. It was believed that the attack was related to drug trafficking.[81] "The motive was not robbery," a representative of the Salvadoran president said at the time.[82]

In Russia in the 1990s, many politicians were killed. It is difficult to distinguish politically-motivated killings from those associated with organized crime, but many killings were widely understood to be connected to criminal groups. For example, in 1994, parliament member Andrei Aizderzis was shot to death at his doorstep shortly after his newspaper printed a list of 266 people alleged to be organized crime figures.[83] The following year, legislator Sergei Skorochkin was kidnapped and killed. In a previous incident, he had killed a man who he claimed was a mafia member attacking him. Prosecutors ruled that Skorochkin acted in self-defense in that case.[84]

Conclusion

How should we characterize the violence that has affected Mexico since 2006? This article has argued that there are important differences between actors primarily motivated by political motivations (terrorist or

insurgent organizations) and actors primarily motivated by illicit economic motivations (criminal organizations). However, the latter often use tactics that could at least be described as terrorist tactics. The Mexico case is an important example of this phenomenon. Three tactics seen in Mexico were discussed: bombings, violent communication, and attacks on politicians. It was also emphasized that the Mexico case is not completely unique, because these three types of violence have been used by criminal groups elsewhere. Examples were discussed in Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Italy, and Russia.

Characterizing the Mexican situation as criminal groups using terrorist tactics has implications for policy – in Mexico or in other countries facing similar threats. Labelling the groups as criminal organizations implies that law enforcement approaches are generally the best way to confront them. As noted above, the apparently direct application of counterinsurgency methods has not worked as intended. However, since these groups sometimes use terrorist tactics, some aspects of counterterrorism could be applied to address these specific tactics. For example, a modified version of counter-messaging or counter-narratives could help mitigate the effects of violent communication.[85] Related to this, the roles of the news media and social media should be considered. Such media are essential for spreading the messages desired by those using terrorist tactics.[86] More broadly, research on the challenges of counterterrorism in democracies – and tradeoffs with free speech and other civil liberties, for example – is likely to have important lessons for democratic governments such as Mexico facing criminal groups using terrorist tactics.[87]

While this article focused on similarities between criminal and terrorist groups, it is important to emphasize that there are key differences as well. The notion of economic motives vs. political motives has important implications. As noted earlier, policies such as leadership removal have different consequences depending on group type. In another example, the divergent motivations for groups have consequences for groups' relationships with the news media. Criminal groups are especially likely to attack journalists, trying to silence them.[88] Meanwhile, "traditional" terrorists generally have a symbiotic relationship with the press, and depend on the media's coverage.[89] Additionally, as noted, many of the seemingly terrorist tactics are quite distinct from traditional terrorism in that they are not trying to affect politics. As with the case of the grenade attacks in Morelia, the goal was apparently to draw authorities' attention to a rival group. Other attacks are motivated by the simple goal of wanting to be left alone by law enforcement – not a desire to change legislation or foreign policy.[90] Furthermore, a great deal of criminal violence is related to intergroup rivalries, while only a small percentage of terrorist groups have attacked another terrorist group.[91] Overall, while criminal groups sometimes use terrorist tactics, they also operate in ways that are different from traditionally-defined terrorists.

Future research can take a number of steps. First, there is room for more research on criminal groups using terrorist tactics, whether in Mexico or elsewhere. How does the employment of terrorist tactics by criminal organizations vary from group-to-group? Why do only some criminal groups, in certain times, engage in symbolic and shockingly public violence?[92] How else is this violence similar to or different from that of traditional terrorist groups? Research on the crime-terror nexus is increasing, but there has not been much empirical work on the subject by terrorism scholars beyond single case studies.

Examples in this article come from a small number of countries, but organized crime exists throughout the world. Why does organized crime sometimes become extremely violent? Many experts say criminal groups

try to avoid violence and only use it as a "last resort."[93] Many studies have examined single countries, such as Mexico, but there do not appear to be many cross-national studies looking at why similar patterns emerge in countries as diverse as Italy, Russia, and Brazil. It is also remarkable that the 1990s seemed to have been a critical moment for shocking violence by criminal organizations. These were watershed years for criminal violence in Colombia, Italy, and Russia. Was there a diffusion of tactics? To what extent were these groups learning from each other and/or terrorist organizations? In terrorism studies, it has been argued that terrorism can contribute to certain types of organizational success,[94] so this might explain the usage of tactics by political groups. To what extent can these lessons apply to why criminal groups use terrorist tactics? Why else did terrorist tactics by criminal organizations seem to take off in the 1990s?

Do the determinants of terrorist tactics by criminal organizations compare to the factors that explain terrorism as traditionally defined? The countries examined in this manuscript seem to have some elements in common with countries plagued by terrorism. They are all generally democracies. They tend to have had a history of terrorism proper or civil war. Russia and Colombia experienced terrorism and extreme organized crime violence at the same time. However, these countries also differ in important ways from countries that experience traditionally-defined terrorism. Some of the countries lack a polarized left-right ideological divide, and most lack a great deal of repression against an ethnic or religious minority. Another difference is that these countries all seem to have corruption issues, and corruption has *not* been shown to be important in explaining terrorism.

Regarding the cases discussed, the article examined those with the most visible criminal organization violence. The visibility, however, could be due to the author's location and reliance on English- and Spanish-language news sources. Future research could attempt to examine other contexts, such as the triads in East Asia and beyond, the yakuza groups in Japan, D-Company in South Asia, or groups in Sub-Saharan Africa such as Nigeria's confraternities.

Overall, the boundaries between terrorists and criminals are debatable. Conceptual limits are helpful to avoid concepts becoming overly broad and thus meaningless. Nonetheless, the study of organized crime violence would benefit from drawing on terrorism research. Similarly, terrorism scholars should consider studying organized crime, where many familiar tactics occur regularly. The causes might be distinct from the causes of terrorism, but many of the consequences are unfortunately familiar.

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Notes

[1] E.g., "AI Exhorta a Peña Nieto a Vetar la Ley de Seguridad Interior," *El Universal*, December 18, 2017; Mariana Hernández, Roberto López, and Rafael López, "En 10 Años, La Narcoviolencia Dejó 92 mil 551 Homicidios," Milenio, February 1, 2017; Sergio Ocampo Arista, "Podría Haber Más de 30 mil Desaparecidos en México: ONU," *La Jornada*, August 9, 2017. On counting deaths in Mexico, and comparisons with other countries, see Brian J. Phillips, "Is Mexico the Second-Deadliest 'Conflict Zone' in the World? Probably Not," The Monkey Cage (*Washington Post*) May 18, 2017.

[2] Jorge Chabat, Combatting Drugs in Mexico Under Calderon: The Inevitable War (Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economicas (CIDE), 2010); Viridiana Rios, "Why Did Mexico Become so Violent? A Self-Reinforcing Violent Equilibrium Caused by Competition and Enforcement," *Trends in Organized Crime* 16, no. 2 (2013): 138–55; David Shirk, Joel Wallman, and Javier Osorio, "The Contagion of Drug Violence: Spatiotemporal Dynamics of the Mexican War on Drugs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 8 (December 1, 2015): 1403–32; Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley, "Federalismo, Drogas y Violencia. Por Qué El Conflicto Partidista Intergubernamental Estimuló La Violencia Del Narcotráfico En México," *Política Y Gobierno* 23, no. 1 (2016): 11–56; Zepeda Gil, Raúl, "Seven explanatory approaches about the increasing of violence in Mexico," *Política y Gobierno* 25, 1 (2018).

[3] Campbell, Howard, and Tobin Hansen. "Extreme Violence and Terrorism in Mexico." *Smalll Wars Journal* August 14, 2012; Howard Campbell and Tobin Hansen, "Is Narco-Violence in Mexico Terrorism?," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 33, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 158–73; Sylvia M. Longmire and John P. Longmire IV, "Redefining Terrorism: Why Mexican Drug Trafficking Is More than Just Organized Crime," *Journal of Strategic Security* 1, no. 1 (2008): 35–51. Other examples include Stephen Roy Jackson, "Terror in Mexico: Why Designating Mexican Cartels as Terrorist Organizations Eases Prosecution of Drug Traffickers under the Narcoterrorism Statute." *National Security Law Journal* 4 (2015): 83-124.

[4] Phil Williams, "The Terrorism Debate Over Mexican Drug Trafficking Violence," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (2012): 259–78; Shawn Teresa Flanigan, "Terrorists Next Door? A Comparison of Mexican Drug Cartels and Middle Eastern Terrorist Organizations," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (2012): 279–94. The terrorism debate is related to, but distinct from, the debate about what to describe the overall violent situation, such as a civil war, criminal insurgency, or high-intensity crime. See for example Robert J. Bunker, "Introduction: The Mexican Cartels -- Organized Crime vs. Criminal Insurgency." Trends in *Organized Crime* 16.2 (2013): 129-137; Paul Rexton Kan. *Cartels at War: Mexico's Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to US National Security*. (Potomac Books, 2012).

[5] Nicholas Barnes, "Criminal Politics: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Organized Crime, Politics, and Violence," *Perspectives on Politics* 15, no. 4 (December 2017): 967–87; Jeffrey C. Isaac, "New Approaches to the Study of Violence," *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 2 (June 2012): 235–41.

[6] Chris Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (2001): 43–58; James A. Piazza and Scott Piazza. "Crime Pays: Terrorist Group Engagement in Crime and Survival." *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2017) forthcoming. A fourth (!) dimension of the crime-terror nexus is the criminal background of terrorists. See Rajan Basra and Peter R. Neumann, "Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 no. 6 (2016). Louise I. Shelley and John T. Picarelli, "Methods Not Motives: Implications of the Convergence of International Organized Crime and Terrorism," *Police Practice and Research* 3, no. 4 (2002): 305–18; Louise I. Shelley, *Dirty Entanglements: Corruption, Crime, and Terrorism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[7] Tamara Makarenko, "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay Between Organised Crime and Terrorism," *Global Crime* 6, no. 1 (2004): 129–45. For an updated look at the continuum, see Tamara Makarenko and Michael Mesquita. "Categorising the Crime–Terror Nexus in the European Union." *Global Crime* 15.3-4 (2014): 259-274.

[8] Richard Marosi, "Pope to Visit Mexican State Hit by Narco-Volence: 'You are Living Your Little Piece of War," *Los Angeles Times* February 11, 2016; Jorge Ramos, "Calderón Admite: 'Enfrentamos a Terroristas," *El Universal* August 26, 2011.

[9] Aaron Daughtery, "El Salvador Surpreme Court Labels Street Gangs Terrorist Groups," *InSight Crime*. August 26, 2015.

[10] Brian J. Phillips, "How Does Leadership Decapitation Affect Violence? The Case of Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico," *The Journal of Politics* 77, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 324–36.

[11] Alex P. Schmid and Albert Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature, vol. 2* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2005). The exact phrases the authors use are "violence, force," "political," and "fear,

terror emphasized." While these three attributes are the only to appear in the majority of definitions, many other attributes that are aspects of fear or terror appear in a substantial number of definitions. For example, other common elements are psychological effects and a symbolic aspect.

[12] For example, an assertion of some definitions is that terrorism is only perpetrated by non-state actors; it is subnational or transnational violence. However, according to Schmid and Jongman, this element does not appear in most definitions. This element does not mark a difference between criminal groups and terrorist groups because both are generally considered non-state actors.

[13] Weinberg and coauthors also examined many academic definitions of terrorism, and like Schmid and Jongman found a majority contained a "political" element. Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 4 (January 1, 2004): 777–94.

[14] Laura H. Atuesta. "Narcomessages as a way to analyse the evolution of organised crime in Mexico." *Global Crime* 18 no. 2 (2017): 100-121.

[15] Mauricio Meschoulam, "¿Terrorismo En México? El Debate Continúa," *El Universal*, August 19, 2012, http://www.eluniversalmas.com.mx/editoriales/2012/08/60083.php.

[16] Brian M. Jenkins, "Combatting Terrorism: Some Policy Implications," The RAND Paper Series (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, August 1981), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2008/P6666.pdf.

[17] Charles Tilly, "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists," *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 5-13.

[18] Williams, "The Terrorism Debate Over Mexican Drug Trafficking Violence"; Flanigan, "Terrorists Next Door? A Comparison of Mexican Drug Cartels and Middle Eastern Terrorist Organizations"; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "How Civil Wars Help Explain Organized Crime—and How They Do Not," *Journal of Conflict Resolu*tion 59, no. 8 (December 1, 2015): 1517–40. For dissenting opinions, see Longmire and Longmire IV, "Redefining Terrorism: Why Mexican Drug Trafficking Is More than Just Organized Crime"; Campbell and Hansen, "Is Narco-Violence in Mexico Terrorism?"

[19] Louise I. Shelley and John T. Picarelli, "Methods Not Motives: Implications of the Convergence of International Organized Crime and Terrorism," *Police Practice and Research* 3, no. 4 (2002): 305–18. In later work, Shelley and Picarelli note that there are examples of criminal and terrorist groups sharing similar motives, but this seems to especially be regarding short-term motives, such as a terrorist group having the motive of illegally raising cash. Their long-term or fundamental motives, in terms of organizational goals, remain separate. See Louise I. Shelley and John T. Picarelli. "Methods and Motives: Exploring Links Between Transnational Organized Crime and International Terrorism." *Trends in Organized Crime* 9 no. 2 (2005): 52-67, especially page 62.

[20] Brian J. Phillips, "What Is a Terrorist Group? Conceptual Issues and Empirical Implications," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 2 (March 15, 2015): 225–42. This is similar to other definitions in the literature. See, for example Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al Qa'ida* (Washington, D.C.: RAND, 2008).

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[23] Patrick B Johnston. "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns." *International Security* 36 no. 4 (2012): 47-79. Brian J. Phillips, "How Does Leadership Decapitation Affect Violence? The Case of Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico," *The Journal of Politics* 77, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 324–36.

[24] Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to ISIS* (Univ of California Press, 2016), xxvi. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2001), 92.

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[31] I thank Jorge Chabat for mentioning this.

[32] "Periodistas Asesinados Desde Marzo En México," *El Universal*, May 15, 2017, http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/nacion/seguridad/2017/05/15/periodistas-asesinados-desde-marzo-en-mexico; "Cancún: Código Rojo Por Tiroteos," *El Universal,* January 18, 2017, http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/estados/2017/01/18/cancun-codigo-rojo-por-tiroteos.

[33] José de Córdoba, "Mexican Army Helicopter Was Shot Down With Rocket-Propelled Grenades," *Wall Street Journal,* May 5, 2015, sec. World, http://www.wsj.com/articles/mexican-army-helicopter-was-shot-down-with-rocket-propelled-grenades-1430783784.

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[39] Laura Atuesta, "Narcomessages as a Way to Analyse the Evolution of Organised Crime in Mexico," *Global Crime* 18, no. 2 (2017): 100–121.

[40] Sarah Womer and Robert J. Bunker, "Sureños Gangs and Mexican Cartel Use of Social Networking Sites," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 81–94.

[41] See for example Sluka, Jeffrey A. "The Politics of Painting: Political Murals in Northern Ireland," in *The Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror* (Carolyn Nordstrom and JoAnn Martin, eds.) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

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[48] Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley, "High-Profile Criminal Violence: Why Drug Cartels Murder Government Officials and Party Candidates in Mexico" August 2017. See also Viridiana Rios, "Tendencias Y Explicaciones Al Asesinato de Periodistas Y Alcaldes En México: El Crimen Organizado Y La Violencia de Alto Perfil," in *Las Bases Sociales Y Políticas Del Crimen Organizado Y La Violencia En México* (Jose Antonio Aguilar Rivera, Editor) (Mexico City: SSP, 2012).

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Terrorist Prison Breaks

by Trevor Cloen, Yelena Biberman and Farhan Zahid

Abstract

Why would an insurgent group which employs terrorist tactics intentionally stage a quiet, nonviolent prison break when it could instead carry out a violent spectacle? Insurgent targeting of prisons poses a puzzle to our understanding of security in state-building environments, but it has yet to be explored. This article addresses the question of why terror groups choose to employ nonviolent means for a prison break with a comparative study of prison break attempts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Nigeria. Using an original dataset consisting of all known prison break attempts carried out by a terrorist organization between 2001 and 2015, this article discerns the conditions under which nonviolent tactics are pursued. We argue that insurgents engage in nonviolent tactics when the predominant security authority signals the imminent withdrawal of military assets. This incentivizes them to limit violent activity, thereby encouraging the completion of the withdrawal process.

Keywords: Terrorist tactics, prison, terrorist groups, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Nigeria

Introduction

Most insurgent-staged prison breaks are violent spectacles. On July 21, 2013, Islamic State militants attacked the notorious Abu Ghraib prison west of Baghdad. They used suicide bombers and mortar teams to breach the prison walls and free over 800 inmates. The operation was part of a widely successful plan to free and recruit from Iraq's large prison population, and it significantly undermined the legitimacy of the Iraqi government.[1] But, some prison breaks are markedly nonviolent and unspectacular. On September 2, 2011, thirty-five militants with connections to Al-Qaeda attempted to escape from jail through a sewage drainage pipe.[2] Insurgent groups that employ terrorist tactics,[3] such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, typically free their captured and prospective members from prisons with a spectacular display of power. An act requiring physical force, a prison break offers a chance for an organization pursuing attention through violence to show off its audacity and capacity, and its opponent's impotence. Why, then, would a terrorist organization intentionally stage a quiet, nonviolent prison break when it could instead carry out a violent spectacle?

The existing literature offers several potential explanations to this question. First, some important works have questioned the belief that terrorism pays,[4] thereby suggesting that nonviolent terrorist prison breaks occur because the violent alternatives are simply ineffective. This approach does not, however, explain the variation in the violence of prison breaks, nor does it explain why an insurgent group would resume violent prison breaks after a period of nonviolence. Second, there is compelling work that links violence to organizational factors. Jacob Shapiro, for example, argues that a "terrorist's dilemma"—the problem of managing an organization while maintaining secrecy—makes it difficult for terrorist groups to control violence.[5] Jeremy Weinstein shows that violence can be a product of a group's membership, itself a function of the kind of resources it possesses.[6] These works may help to explain why different groups exhibit different levels of violence, but they do not account for why the same group may engage in different approaches toward the same type of target within a relatively short period of time (i.e. while facing the same "terrorist's dilemma" and maintaining basically the same membership).

This article applies the concept of strategic restraint, which has been used to understand the behavior of states on the international stage,[7] to explain the behavior of insurgent groups. In doing so, it builds on and

contributes to the rationalist scholarship which understands terrorism as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself,[8] and treats nonviolent behavior as strategic.[9]

Drawing on an analysis of an original dataset of 54 prison break attempts across 20 countries,[10] we identify two factors that increase the likelihood that an insurgent group will carry out a nonviolent prison break. The first is the presence of a temporary security authority, such as a foreign occupying power, in an otherwise weak state. The second is the signaling of withdrawal by the temporary authority. The presence of a temporary security authority offers force that bolsters an otherwise weak domestic regime. However, this arrangement is temporary by nature and invites competition for power following the foreign power's exit. When a temporary authority signals intent to exit, oppositional groups limit their visibly aggressive behavior in order to encourage the completion of the withdrawal process. They engage in strategic restraint to reclaim lost assets and to build group capacity. After the foreign military presence is removed, insurgent groups abandon strategic restraint and reemerge as threats to the now-independent domestic authority.

The contribution of this article is twofold. First, it is the first work to systematically analyze prison breaks by terrorism-practicing insurgent groups. Assault on government prisons by insurgent and terrorist organizations have been virtually unexplored to date, and offer insight into the broad range of insurgent tactics. Second, this article carries direct implications for ongoing counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan and other occupied war zones by demonstrating that violence is not a reliable indicator of militant capacity. Nonviolent activities, such as quiet prison breaks, may reflect not weakness but strategic restraint, and should also be taken into account when considering the strength of an insurgency.

Case Selection and Methods

This article addresses the question of why terrorist groups with territorial aspirations choose nonviolent over violent tactics when targeting government prisons. An original dataset of prison break attempts of terrorist organizations between the years 2001 and 2015 was compiled using secondary source material (newspapers, online news services, and the Global Terrorism Database),[11] in conjunction with law enforcement officials in Islamabad.[12] Additional interviews were conducted of U.S. officials who were involved in both the Iraq and Afghanistan counterinsurgency campaigns.[13]

We begin with instances of prison escapes in Iraq and Afghanistan to develop our argument, and then consider its implications in Yemen and Nigeria. The cases of Iraq and Afghanistan were selected because they are "extreme cases," which exemplify extreme values (number of inmates freed) compared to the overall distribution.[14] The strategy of extreme case selection facilitates exploratory research by enabling us to focus on the cases where the issue under examination (prison breaks) is the most pronounced.[15] Yemen and Nigeria were selected because they are also salient cases in terms of the number of inmates freed, yet provide an important contrast: they were not under foreign occupation. This difference allows us to investigate the impact of foreign occupation on violent and nonviolent prison escape strategies.

Strategic Restraint in Iraq

On March 6, 2007, several dozen militants assaulted Badush Prison in Mosul, Iraq. The attackers wielded automatic weapons and approached in a carefully choreographed assault. They quickly overwhelmed the prison authorities. Local guards were forced to call for assistance of U.S. forces, but the assault ceased before reinforcements arrived. Over 140 inmates escaped. The majority of them had been detained in connection to Al-Qaida. Fewer than half were recaptured.[16] The Badush Prison attack was the largest successful prison attack in Iraq to that date, and was a severe blow to the government's security forces.

The next prison break attempt occurred on July 25, 2010. Four high-profile Al-Qaida leaders fled from the U.S.-built Camp Cropper Prison days after the facility was turned over to the Iraqi authorities.[17] The Camp

Cropper incident was the first Iraqi escape attempt since the Badush Prison assault, and stands in stark contrast to its predecessor. Rather than assaulting the compound, Al-Qaida corrupted local prison authorities to assist in the escape. The escapees were personally driven from the base by Omar Hamis Hamadi al-Duleimi, a 34-year-old warden originally trained by U.S. task forces.[18] The escape marked the beginning of a trend towards nonviolence in Al-Qaida's prison break attempts. Five additional attempts occurred between 2010 and 2012. Four of them were nonviolent.

At a glance, this change in tactics seems illogical. The nonviolent prison break attempts carried a greater risk of failure than their violent counterparts for several reasons. First, escape plots had to be planned and kept secret while under the supervision of authorities. To do so is inherently difficult and requires extreme caution. One former escapee recounted that he was unaware of a Taliban-organized escape plan until he was unexpectedly summoned for the attempt by a fellow member.[19] Insurgent groups often attempt to corrupt local authorities to decrease the chance of detection. In the case of the Camp Cropper escape, Al-Qaida affiliates first appealed to sectarian tendencies of al-Duleimi before bribing him to take part in the escape plan. However, success is not guaranteed in this endeavor either. Failure increases the risk of detection, and raises the cost of future action. Finally, nonviolent escape attempts are usually time-consuming. In 2011, Al-Qaida members unsuccessfully attempted to tunnel under the Abu Ghraib Prison walls using a frying pan. The structure took several months to construct, and was eventually detected by prison authorities.[20] Risk of detection increases with the duration of escape attempts, further increasing the risk of failure.

Violent prison assaults lack many of the disadvantages of their nonviolent counterparts. Success is contingent on the attacker's ability to overwhelm prison authorities until the assailant's objective is achieved. Planning is done in secret, reducing the risk of detection, and no external actors are implicated. Furthermore, violent prison assaults offer greater potential rewards to insurgent organizations. In addition to the immediate gain of reclaiming imprisoned assets, successful break attempts further the insurgent goals by undermining public confidence in the incumbent authority.

Experts contend that the Bush Administration's 2007 decision to increase U.S. military presence in Iraq by 30,000 additional troops suppressed insurgent activity in Iraq, thereby stabilizing the security environment. [21] It is tempting to suggest that the increased military presence enabled the Iraqi security forces to establish control, resulting in a period of relative peace during the U.S. withdrawal process. However, repeated prison break attempts between 2010 and 2012 demonstrate otherwise. Al-Qaida freed 62 inmates from Iraqi prisons, including several high-profile leaders, across three escape attempts during this period. All prison break attempts lacked outright violence. Nonetheless, insurgent violence steadily decreased from mid-2008 to December 2011. Then, on January 12, 2012, Al-Qaida attempted its first violent prison break in nearly five years, just twelve days after the withdrawal of American forces. The group used exploding cars and suicide bombers in a brazen but unsuccessful attempt to penetrate a U.S.-built compound.[22] The next year, Iraq witnessed three additional prison break attempts, two of which were violent. All subsequent prison break attempts have been violent since. Four violent attacks occurred between 2013 and 2014 alone, resulting in the escape of over 3,500 detainees. Domestic security concerns continued to grow as well. The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, an offshoot of Al-Qaida in Iraq, brought renewed civil war to Iraq in 2014. By the end of 2015, the group had taken control of several major Iraqi cities from government forces. Iraqi security gains were neither permanent nor substantive, and proved to be fleeting following U.S. withdrawal.

Why did Al-Qaida pursue nonviolent tactics when attempting to free prisoners in 2008-2011? Interviews with U.S. officials stationed in the region at the time suggest that Al-Qaida may have pursued two greater strategic objectives. First, it sought control of the Iraqi state by undermining public trust in the government. Second, it tried to force the removal of U.S. military presence by imposing unacceptably high costs on foreign powers. The public breakdown of negotiations over a prolonged Status of Forces agreement between Iraq and the United States governments signaled the coming end of U.S. military presence by early 2008. On

December 4, 2008, both governments ratified an agreement outlining the terms of U.S. withdrawal, set to complete by December 31, 2011.[23] The breakdown in negotiations fulfilled Al-Qaida's second strategic objective in the region. Following the announcement of withdrawal, insurgents had little strategic incentive to continue aggressive operations against foreign troops, as their exit was now imminent. As a result, overall violence decreased between 2008 and 2011.

Evidence of insurgent restraint is available in combat statistics from this period. Figure 1 displays the frequency of attacks on U.S. and Coalition troops from 2004 to 2010.[24] Violence against foreign troops first decreased in late 2007 with the introduction of George W. Bush's "troop surge." However, frequency of violence continued to decrease steadily over the next two years. Figure 2 reflects the number of multiple fatality bombings over the same time period.[25] In both graphs, violence continued to decrease during the period of U.S. withdrawal. Al-Qaida was not inactive during this period. It freed members from as many as three separate prisons. Even in this, however, violence decreased quickly. As stated earlier, all prison break attempts during the withdrawal period were nonviolent in nature.

The rapid decay of security in Iraq immediately following the completion of the withdrawal process indicates that Al-Qaida retained its capacity as a violent organization between 2008 and 2011. The continued decrease in violence during this period suggests that the group made a strategic decision to limit violence against foreign forces. Washington clearly signaled that it was no longer committed to maintaining security in Iraq. Rather than provoking a renewed build-up, insurgents limited targeting of temporary military forces. Continued activity is also reflected in nonviolent prison break attempts, as the group sought to reclaim imprisoned assets. Following the completion of foreign withdrawal, insurgent violence immediately resumed in an effort to destabilize the government. Al-Qaida resumed violence against the Iraqi government to its full capacity, engaging in repeated spectacular events.

Figure 1. Insurgent-Initiated Attacks against U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq
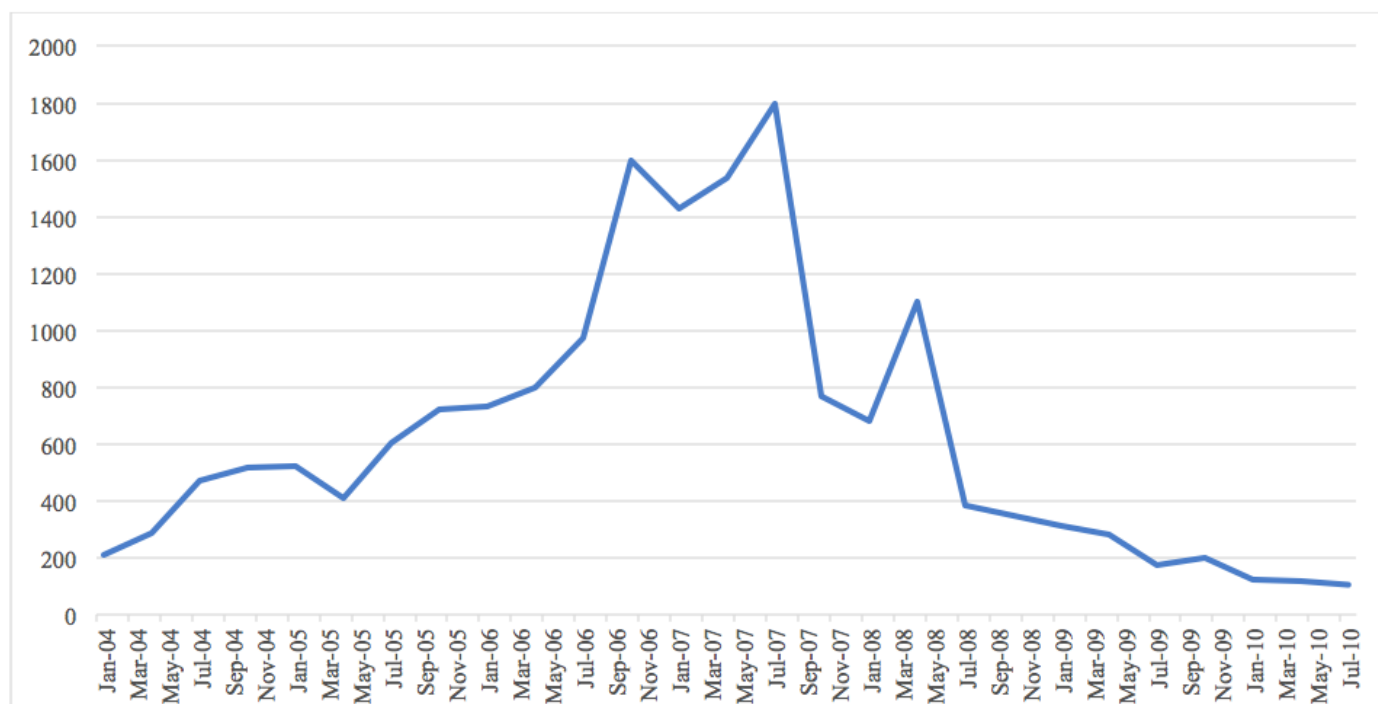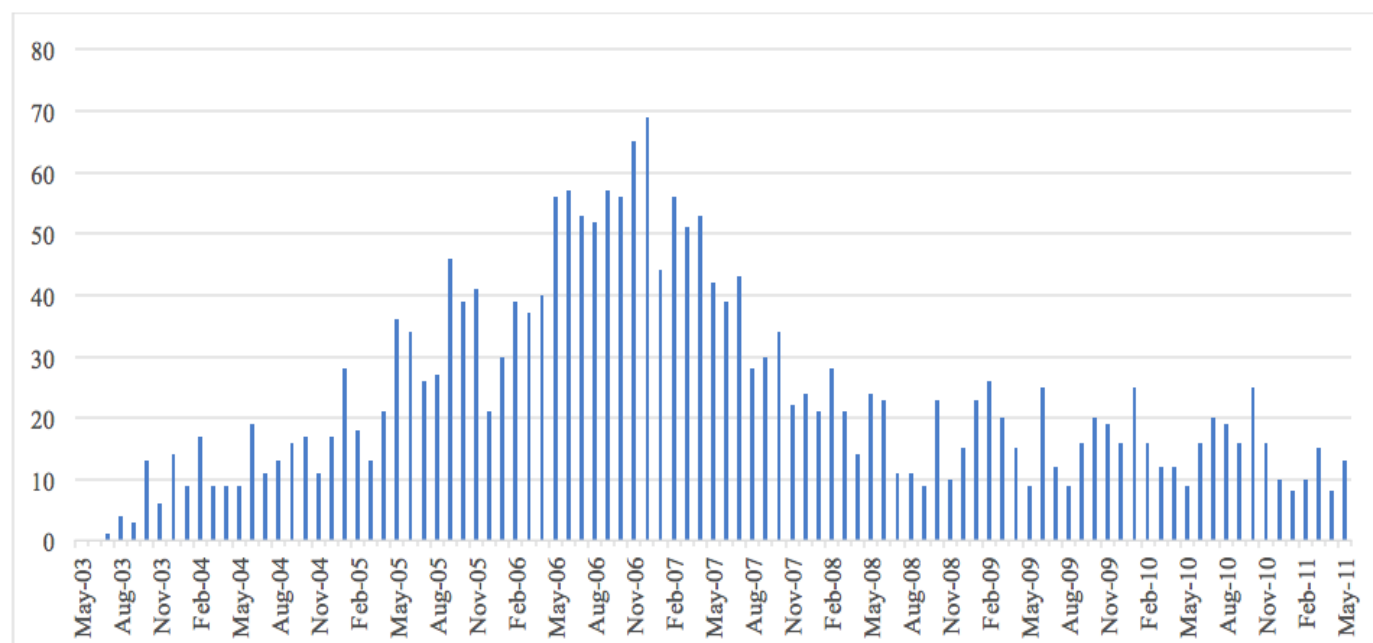
**Figure 2. Multiple Fatality Bombings in Iraq**

Strategic Restraint in Afghanistan

Is this framework applicable to cases of insurgency outside of Iraq? The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan offers a case for comparison. Like Iraq, Afghanistan was occupied by the United States in its War on Terror. The current caretaker government faces a violent insurgency by the Taliban, which was removed from power following the United States invasion. Finally, both Al-Qaida and the Afghan Taliban committed a series of prison break attempts during periods of U.S. occupation and corresponding withdrawals.

Like in Iraq, the United States signaled to insurgents that its commitment to Afghan security was temporary. In mid-June 2011, the Barack Obama administration announced a plan calling for the rapid removal of 30,000 troops in the following year, a reduction of nearly a third, and for continued reduction afterward.[26] Over the next three years, the U.S. military presence dwindled from over 100,000 troops to approximately 10,000, where it stands today. Figure 3 shows the number of occupying U.S. forces over time.[27] Domestic affairs have also signaled a hesitance on the part of policymakers to maintain a presence in Afghanistan. Obama conceded in 2011: "America, it is time to focus on nation-building here at home."[28] Although combat operations were extended through 2017, U.S. commitment grew increasingly limited. Troop numbers currently rest at 9,800 and are set to reduce to 5,500 in the coming year, even as the Afghan government continues to cede ground to the Taliban. The Afghan government currently controls two-thirds of the territory.[29] By failing to allocate renewed resources to the conflict, the U.S. government signaled that it was no longer willing to assume the predominant security role in Afghanistan.

Figure 3. U.S. Troops Deployed in Afghanistan
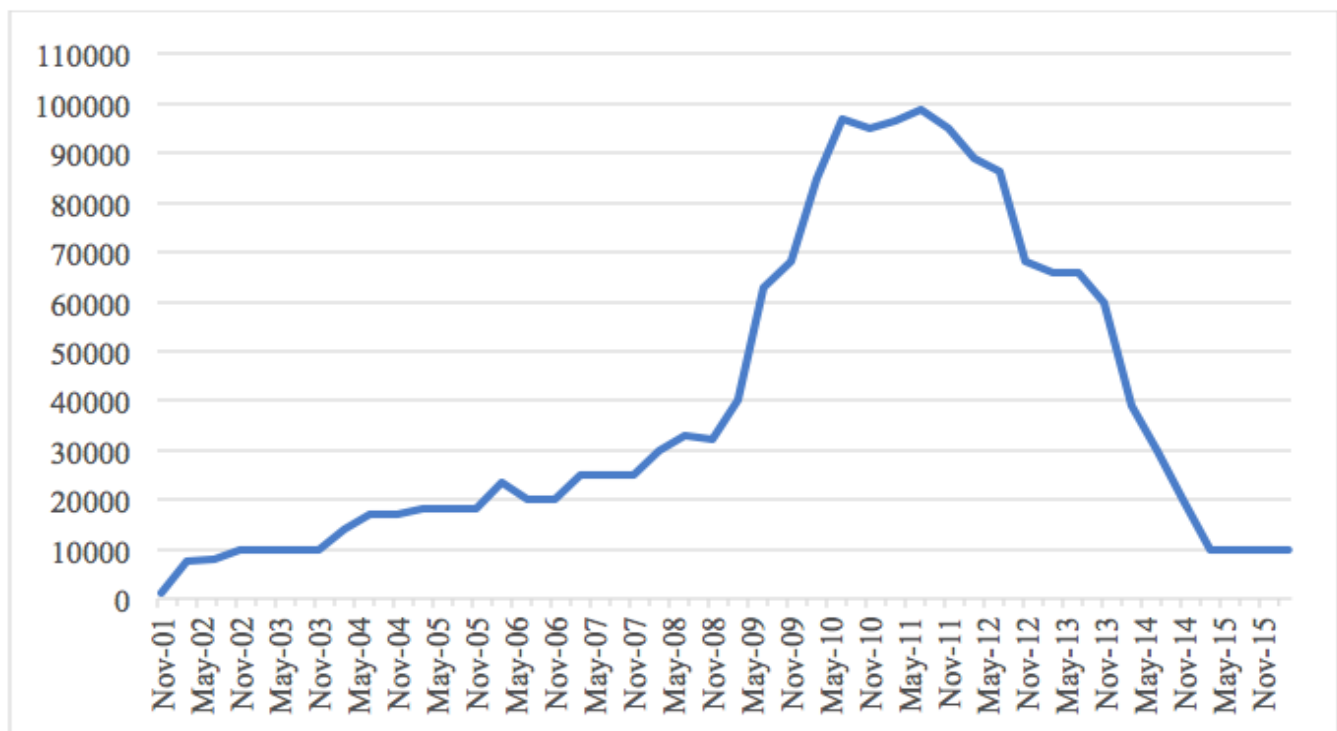
The Taliban has attempted numerous prison breaks over the past decade. On March 2, 2014, ten of "the most prominent insurgents" held at Sarposa Prison walked freely through the front gates. The group exited with 18 recently paroled inmates, in an embarrassing incident for the Afghan security forces. An official ledger was altered by an unknown official, and the militants were permitted to leave unscathed.[30] The incident was not the first Taliban operation at Sarposa. In 2008, Taliban-affiliated militants assaulted the prison, overwhelming the local authorities and indiscriminately freeing over 1,200 inmates.[31] Three years later, 470 militants escaped through a hundred-meter-long tunnel.[32] The operation took several months, and likely relied on the corruption of prison authorities to go unnoticed.

Why did the Taliban choose to free inmates quietly and nonviolently in 2011 and 2014, even after it had successfully infiltrated Sarposa? The 2014 prison break departs drastically from previous measures. The operation was selective, only freeing ten members, and it did not require the use of force. It demonstrated a desire to contain the impact of the operation while still reinforcing the ranks of the Taliban.

Like Al-Qaida in Iraq, the Taliban insurgency has demonstrated a variety of strategies in response to U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. The Taliban initiated a single violent prison escape attempt in 2008, prior to a renewed build-up of U.S. forces. Prison break attempts remained rare during the period of peak U.S. presence. A single peaceful attempt occurred in 2011, when the organization successfully tunneled under the Sarposa Prison walls. Unwilling to engage U.S. and Afghan forces during the peak of the U.S. surge, the Taliban instead resorted to nonviolent means of freeing members. No prison breaks occurred during the subsequent three years, during which the United States removed the majority of its forces. U.S. policymakers' failure to react to Taliban gains between 2014 and 2016 demonstrated an unwillingness to further increase military commitment in the region. Unsurprisingly, violent prison attacks have resumed in response. The Taliban have since committed three prison break attempts, two of which were violent, freeing over 350 inmates in total.

Changes in the Taliban behavior toward foreign soldiers are reflected in combat data as well. Following the withdrawal announcement, the number of attacks on foreign security forces exhibited a steady decrease. It

is possible that this trend reflects the lower probability of foreign troops engaging in combat with insurgents due to a decrease in absolute numbers. In order to account for this possibility, we interviewed U.S. officials stationed in Afghanistan at the time. Their responses suggest that the decrease in violence against security forces was the product of restraint on the part of the Taliban, and not due to a decreasing probability of U.S. troops encountering insurgents. As one officer put it: "It was clear that the Taliban had standing orders to avoid being decisively engaged with American forces. Following the beginning of the withdrawal process, engagement with American troops carried a huge tactical risk to fulfill an already completed strategic goal."[33] The insurgents shifted their focus towards Afghan security forces instead.

These results suggest that the Taliban actively attempted to limit aggression towards foreign fighters during the period of U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Violent prison break attempts ceased during military buildup, and did not resume during the subsequent withdrawal. Subversive tactics were used to regain group assets from the prison population without threatening the security forces. Meanwhile, the targeting of foreign troops decreased in both absolute terms and in proportion to the number of troops present. After Coalition forces signaled that they were unwilling to once again escalate combat operations in Afghanistan, Taliban attacks on Afghan security forces resumed with intensity. Taken together, these trends suggest that the Taliban actively shifted resources away from violence against foreign forces, and towards efforts to undermine the Afghan regime.

Absence of a Credible State Authority

The data suggest that prison break attempts are nearly entirely violent in the absence of a credible state authority. In 2010, Boko Haram assaulted the Bauchi State prison in northern Nigeria, freeing nearly 700 prisoners.[34] The group attacked the prison with automatic weapons, killing four guards and injuring several others, before meticulously freeing inmates cell by cell. The prison was set on fire as the group retreated. Similar violence was observed in Yemen. Al-Qaida in Yemen carried out four violent prison break attempts between 2011 and 2016, freeing nearly 1600 inmates in total.

Both Yemen and Nigeria have experienced consistent, violent attacks against prisons by insurgent organizations. Both states lack sufficient state capacity to suppress insurgency, and they also lack security assistance from foreign powers. As a result, the government and militant groups compete for control of territory and the confidence of the public. In the absence of an occupying power to temporarily boost state capacity, insurgent groups are free to violently undermine state authority. Prisons provide an ideal target for such an objective. In Nigeria and Yemen, insurgent organizations possess the necessary capacity to overwhelm security resources in small encounters, and are thus able to carry out escalated attacks against government prisons. Additionally, neither Boko Haram nor Al-Qaeda in Yemen have proper incentive to nonviolently free members from prison. Corruption of prison authorities is both more time consuming and less effective in undermining confidence in state security. While corruption of a prison official may certainly raise eyebrows, the burning of a prison is far more effective in inciting public fear.

In the absence of an external power to bolster state security, insurgent violence against prisons is likely to continue. The prison security records of Yemen and Nigeria demonstrate the consequences of weak state security. Violent and highly visible prison attacks have repeatedly occurred against government prisons. However, the case in Nigeria also demonstrates that effective state security may properly limit targeting of prisons. In 2014, Boko Haram severely botched an attack on the Giwa Barracks compound, resulting in the deaths of 87 militants. No violent prison attacks have since then been carried out by Boko Haram.[35] By repelling the raid, prison authorities successfully imposed unacceptable costs on Boko Haram, deterring future raids from occurring. Since the Giwa Barracks raid, only one prison break attempt has occurred, at the Koton-Karfe Prison. Unsurprisingly, the attempt was entirely nonviolent. While thirteen inmates escaped

with the assistance of a corrupt guard, the incident was neither as visible nor catastrophic as the Bauchi state prison incident in 2010.

Discussion and Conclusion

Prison break attempts vary in form and frequency across weak states around the world. We show that the presence of a strong state authority or occupying power imposes unacceptably high costs on groups that would otherwise target prison facilities. When the temporary power signals intent to withdraw from the affected region, insurgent groups respond with strategic restraint. They limit violence against foreign forces, instead using nonviolent action to reclaim captured assets from prisons. Violence is likely to resume as insurgent capacity is preserved and reclaimed during the subsequent withdrawal period. In the absence of strong state authority, insurgent action against government prisons is almost entirely violent. The cost of violence is comparatively low compared to prospective gains in public perception.

Understanding the determinants of prison violence carries greater implications for counterinsurgency and state-building measures. Decreases in levels of insurgent violence are often considered to be indicators of success in counterinsurgency operations. Indeed, such indicators were cited in the U.S. decision to withdraw from Iraq beginning in 2008. However, analysis of the type and prevalence of prison break attempts, coupled with other metrics of insurgent violence, suggests that such a judgement was premature. Iraqi and Afghan insurgents responded by limiting the targeting of foreign forces and adopting nonviolent prison break tactics to facilitate foreign exit. The resumption of violence shortly after U.S. exit in Iraq indicates that insurgents retained the capacity for violence, and strategically waited until the end of the U.S. occupation to resume hostile operations.

The results of this paper suggest that alternative metrics are necessary for evaluating the success of counterinsurgency. The prevalence of insurgent violence is not a reliable indicator of insurgent capacity. Additional indicators, such as the prevalence of prison escapes, both nonviolent and otherwise, should be incorporated when evaluating the success of counterinsurgency operations.

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Notes

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[10] They are Afghanistan (5 observations: Taliban, a total of 1,724 freed), Bangladesh (1: Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, 3 freed), Columbia (2: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and National Liberation Army, 141 freed), Egypt (2: Hezbollah and Hamas, 71 freed), India (1: Students Islamic Movement of India, 3 freed), Indonesia (2: unspecified, 151 freed), Iraq (12: Al-Qaeda and ISIS, 3,811 freed), Israel (1: unspecified, 0 freed), Kyrgyzstan (1: Jaish al Mahdi, 4 freed), Libya (1: unspecified, 1,117 freed), Mauritania (1: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, 1 freed), Morocco (1: unspecified, 9 freed), Niger (2: Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda, 0 freed), Nigeria (8: Boko Haram and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, 1,110 freed), Pakistan (2: Taliban, 650 freed), Philippines (3: Jemaah Islamiah, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and Maute, 57 freed), Singapore (1: Jemaah Islamiyah, 1 freed), South Africa (1: unspecified, 0 freed), Ukraine (1: Donetsk People's Republic, 70 freed), and Yemen (6: Al-Qaeda, 1,613 freed). A grand total of 10,536 inmates were freed.

[11] Events were coded as violent when they involved fatalities (or intent to inflict fatalities) or destruction of property (e.g. the burning down of parts of a prison), and nonviolent when they did not. Examples of acts of nonviolence included escaping through a sewage pipe or bribing a guard. Data collection and coding were first completed by David Immerman, an undergraduate researcher, under the supervision of one of the co-authors. Each case was then reviewed by the co-authors, who also conducted additional research to check for incomplete or missing data.

[12] Interviews with the Pakistani law enforcement officials were conducted by one of the co-authors, who is a superintendent of police and course commander at the National Police Academy in Islamabad, Pakistan.

[13] There are inherent limitations in drawing conclusions from a survey of all "known" prison breaks (e.g. selection effects in what gets reported externally), and the interviews helped us to triangulate our findings.

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Research Notes
Radicalisation: A Subtype of Religious Conversion?
by Julien van den Elzen

Abstract

This Research Note starts by evaluating Lofland and Stark's conversion model. By comparing it with several radicalisation models, it was found that conversion and radicalisation processes have much in common. Based on this observation, the idea of a radical-conversion model is formulated. Subsequently, five hypotheses derived from the radical-conversion model are tested with a sample of foreign fighters database (n = 408). It was found that converts and non-converts can be seen as equals. The convert's involvement in suicide missions and perceived trustworthiness are relatively the same as non-converts. However, due to certain predisposition factors, differences for rank, desertion, and the role of women were found. This Research Note suggests that there are strong indications that radicalisation is a sub-type of conversion and that more research is needed on this topic.

Keywords: Conversion, Radicalisation, Syria and Iraq, Foreign Fighters

Introduction

The Soufan Group's December 2015 estimates indicated that between 27.000 and 31.000 foreign fighters worldwide had travelled to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamist groups, in particular the Islamic State.[1] At least 5.000 foreign fighters (FFs) had arrived from Europe.[2] It is difficult to determine the exact number of converted FFs from open source data. However, comparing estimates from Belgium, France, Germany and The Netherlands, it appears that the percentage of converted FFs is respectively 8%, 23%, 12-16%, and 11.8-18.4%.[3] However, it is estimated that less than 2% of the European Muslim community consists of converts. In other words, converts to Islam are relatively over-represented.[4].
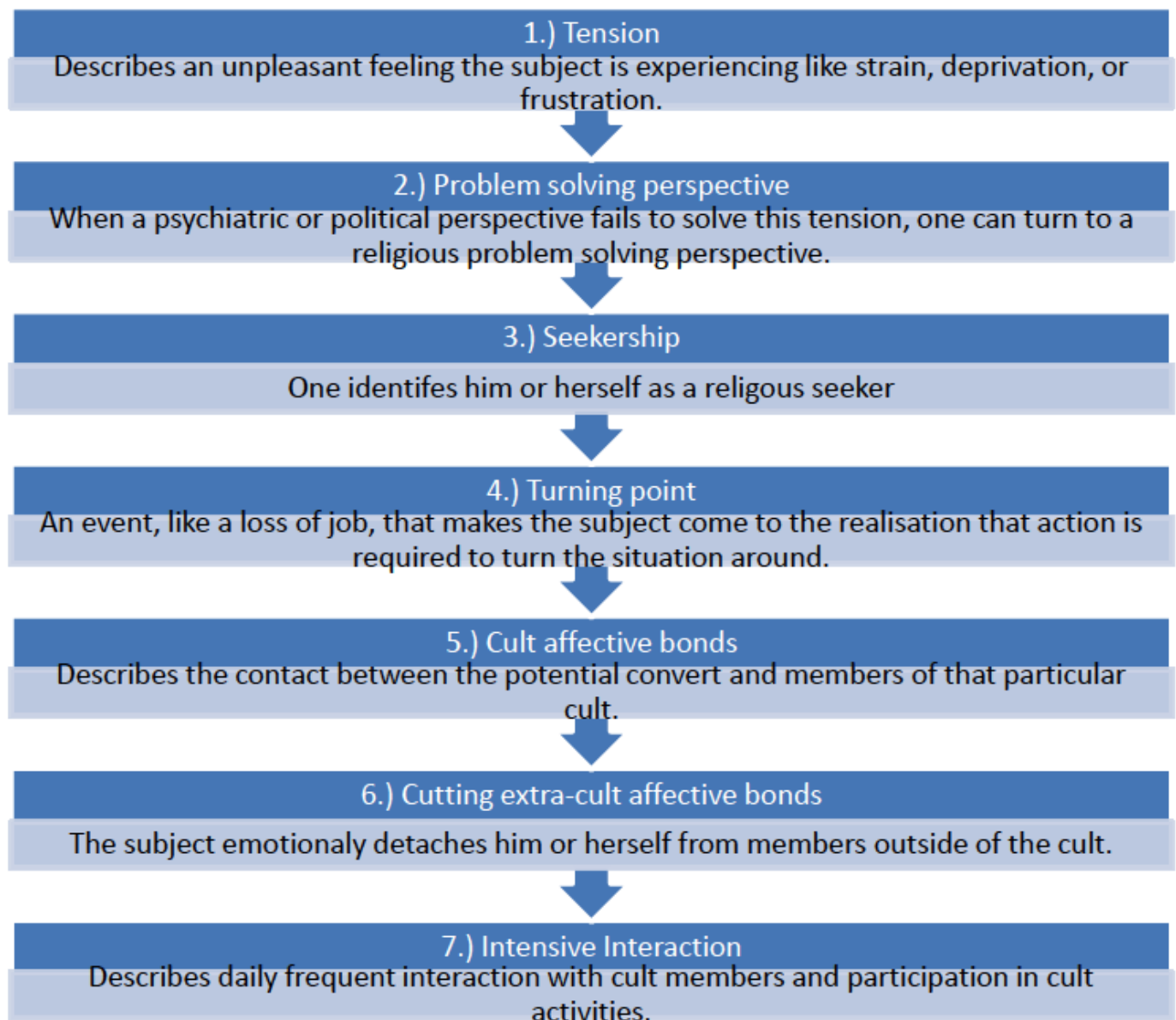
One can wonder why converts tend to radicalise more than born-Muslims do. Is there something about converts that makes them more inclined towards the use of violence? Or is radicalisation a sub-type of conversion, putting inter-faith converts more at risk of going down the radical path?

A Religious Conversion Model

In 1965, Lofland and Stark published a seven-step model to explain the process behind religious conversion. [5] For their research they used a millenarian cult, based in Bay City (USA). Despite the fact that their model is quite rudimentary, the authors suggest that it reveals some of the basic principles that are applicable to a general conversion process towards a deviant perspective. [6] They acknowledged two types of conditions: predisposition conditions, and situational contingencies. Predisposition conditions are comprised of factors like background, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Lofland and Stark argue that especially situational contingencies, for example an existing friendship with a person belonging to the new religion, are among the factors leading up to religious conversion.[7]

Lofland and Stark identified seven steps in the conversion process (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: Lofland and Stark's Model of Religious Conversion

1.) Tension
Describes an unpleasant feeling the subject is experiencing like strain, deprivation, or frustration.

2.) Problem solving perspective
When a psychiatric or political perspective fails to solve this tension, one can turn to a religious problem solving perspective.

3.) Seekership
One identifes him or herself as a religous seeker

4.) Turning point
An event, like a loss of job, that makes the subject come to the realisation that action is required to turn the situation around.

5.) Cult affective bonds
Describes the contact between the potential convert and members of that particular cult.

6.) Cutting extra-cult affective bonds
The subject emotionaly detaches him or herself from members outside of the cult.

7.) Intensive Interaction
Describes daily frequent interaction with cult members and participation in cult activities.

According to Lofland and Stark, religious conversion can only take place when a person goes through all seven steps successfully.

Radicalisation as a Form of Religious Conversion

Reviewing the literature on radicalisation, one finds dozens of theories, mechanisms and models.[8] Focusing on various radicalisation models, one can, however, notice similarities between them. Figure 2 displays the steps of six different radicalisation models (Borum; Wiktorowicz; Moghaddam; Sageman; NYPD; and Precht) and compares these with Lofland and Starks conversion model.

With Borum's model being the exception, almost all the radicalisation models show strong similarities with Lofland and Stark. Observing the resemblance between the conversion model of Lofland and Stark and these radicalisation models can be the first step towards a Radical-Conversion Paradigm (RCP).

It is striking that that the first step in all models involves some form of tension. Whether one considers religious conversion or Islamic radicalisation, it appears that tension acts like the kick-starter of the process.

Figure 2: Comparison of Lofland and Stark 's Conversion Model with several Radicalisation Models.
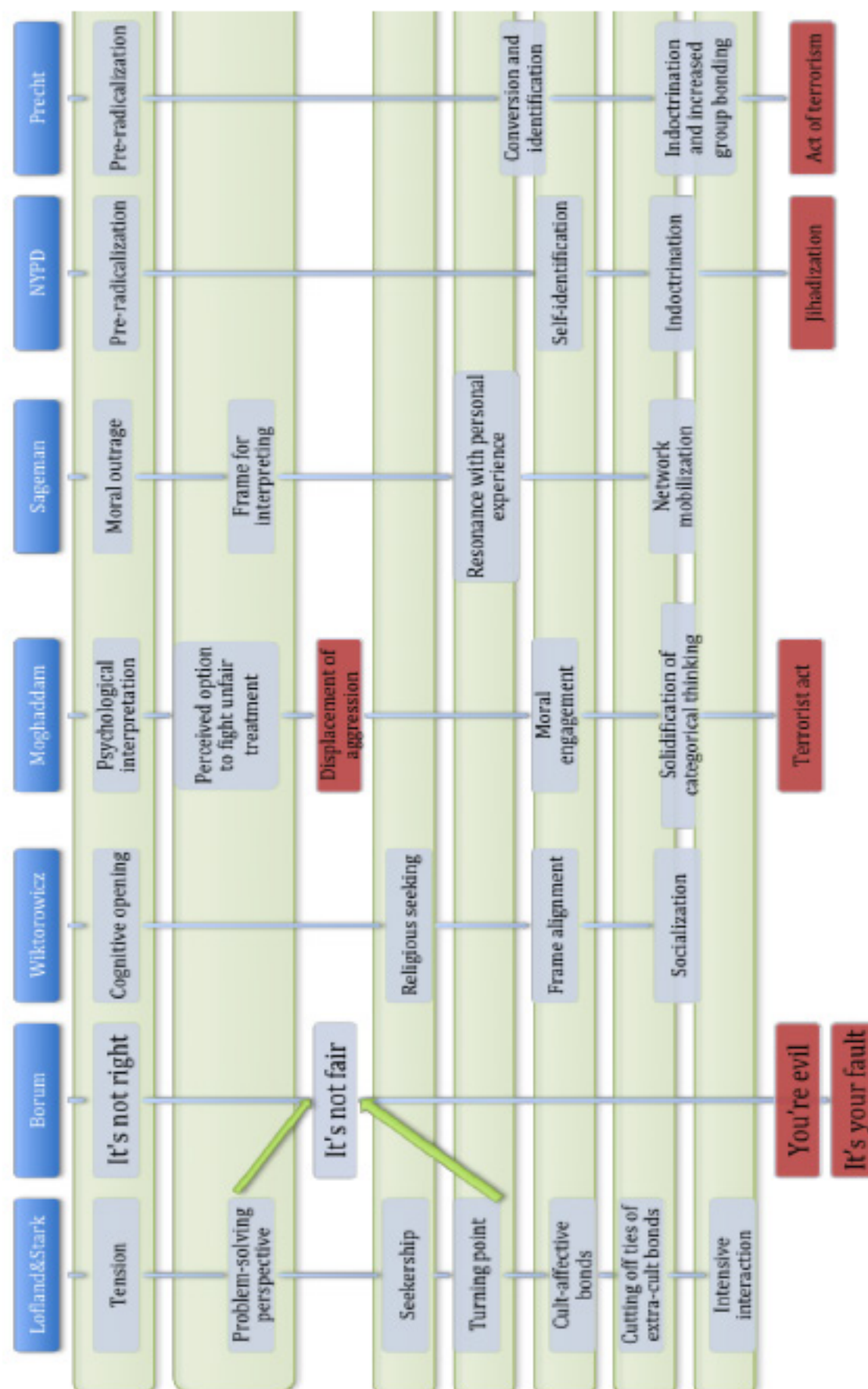
As one can see, not all steps in the radicalisation models fit the conversion model one-on-one. However, after studying the radicalisation models in more depth, one notices that many of the steps in the conversion model are incorporated in the radicalisation models but are not always explicitly mentioned as these are considered to be logical steps; for example, steps like a 'problem-solving perspective' and 'seekership' are not always overtly mentioned. Yet, it is automatically assumed that radicalisation is a result of a problem-solving perspective to deal with the previously mentioned tension that stands at the basis of the process.

The same can be said for 'seekership'. Regarding Islamic terrorists, the adoption of a world-affirming worldview or the aspiration to become a political figure is not observed in terrorist behaviour. Instead, they often turn into devout fundamentalist Muslims that are under the impression that Islamic world domination will be the healing system for all evil in this world. Radicalisation of Islamic terrorists always incorporates steps of a 'problem-solving perspective' and 'seekership'.

Nevertheless, the most remarkable difference between the model of Lofland and Stark and radicalisation models is the presence of violence at the end of the process. We should keep in mind that the conversion model was based on a non-violent millenarian cult; its activities did not contain a violent component. However, Lofland and Stark never suggested that their model could not be applicable to conversion to a violent cult.

In 1980, American psychologist Robert Plutchick produced a wheel-shaped diagram in which he visualised eight basic emotions and other emotions derived from them (see Figure 3). From his diagram, it can be seen that aggressiveness is the result of anticipation in combination with anger: "*anticipation + anger = aggression, revenge, or stubbornness.*"[9]

Figure 3: Diagram of Emotions by Robert Plutchik
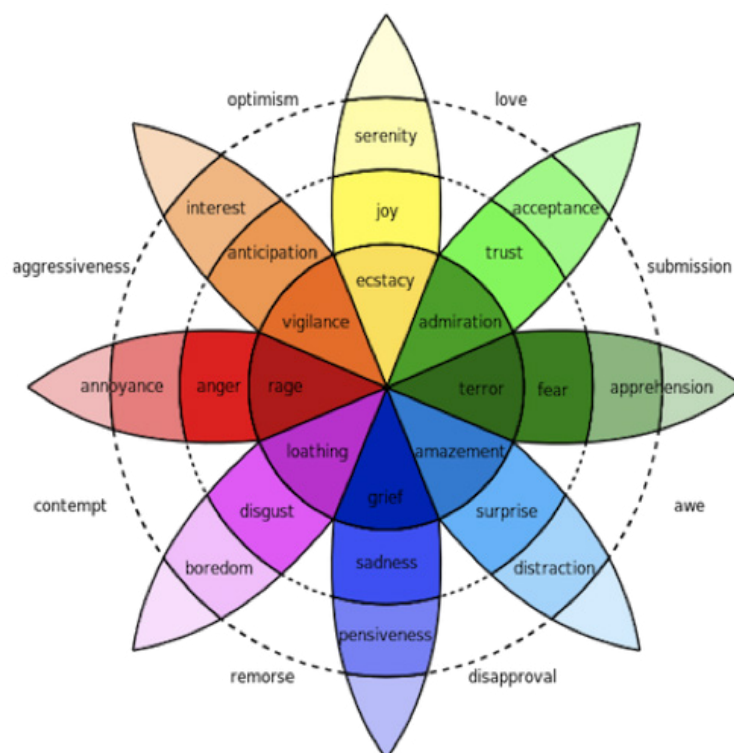
A person will choose the type of perspective that he or she is expecting to provide a solution to existing discontent. From Plutchik's diagram, one can read that anticipation in combination with joy creates optimism. When the newfound religion induces feelings of joy, persons will continue their conversion path with an optimistic outlook.

On the other hand, when the newfound religion or religious group is provoking and nurturing feelings of anger, persons will continue their path of conversion with feelings of aggression.

Religious conversion as well as radicalisation both involve emotions of expectancy. Deducing from the similarities between the conversion model and the radicalisation models, it is suggested here that conversion and radicalisation are similar processes. However, especially the type of emotion that goes along with the emotion of expectancy differs. Therefore, radicalisation could be seen as a type of radical conversion. Instead of a person converting to peaceful Islam, due to situational contingencies, as described by Lofland and Stark, he or she converts to a violent form of Islam.

Figure 4 shows the proposed radical-conversion model (RCM), with the left side being Lofland and Stark's conversion model. It is not suggested here that the radical-conversion model is a novelty. However, many of the steps of the reviewed radicalisation models have strong similarities with most of the steps of the conversion model of Lofland and Stark. The novelty is that the steps in most radicalisation models are linked to a religious conversion model. Verifying the validity of the proposed radical-conversion process is not the aim of this Research Note. Nevertheless, assuming this premise to be true allows the formulation of a set of hypotheses about converted Islamic radicals and born-again Muslim radicals.

If the radical-conversion paradigm holds for Islamic radicalisation, it would mean that the general view of converted-Muslim radicals in comparison with born-Muslim radicals is incorrect, or at least incomplete. The radical-conversion model suggests that all Islamic radicals are in fact converts, as in converted to a more extreme form of Islam. No distinction is made between inter-faith converts and intra-faith converts since every radical is a type of convert on its own, in spite of his or her original background. This implies that one should not find significant behavioural differences between the intra- and inter-faith converts.

Comparing Inter-faith Converts to Islam to Intra-faith (born-again) Converts

Fanaticism

Converts appear to be overrepresented in the European foreign fighter statistics. Silber and Bhatt, discussing converts, noted: "*Their need to prove their religious convictions to their companions often makes them the most aggressive.*"[10] If true, this would suggest that converts tend to be involved to a greater degree in ruthless acts like suicide bombings than non-converts.

However, the radical-conversion model suggests that every radical extremist can be considered a convert and therefore it would be logical that all radicals experience the need to prove their religious convictions.

Precht distinguishes three types of conversion of which inter-faith conversion and increased observance (born-again intra-faith conversion) are two [11].The idea to consider these two as conversion, together with the radical-conversion model, leads us to believe that individuals from both groups will feel the need to prove themselves to fellow companions to the same degree. This leads to the following hypothesis:

HA:1: **Converted FFs and non-converted FFs are relatively equally involved in suicide missions.**

Figure 4: The Radical-Conversion Model (RCM)
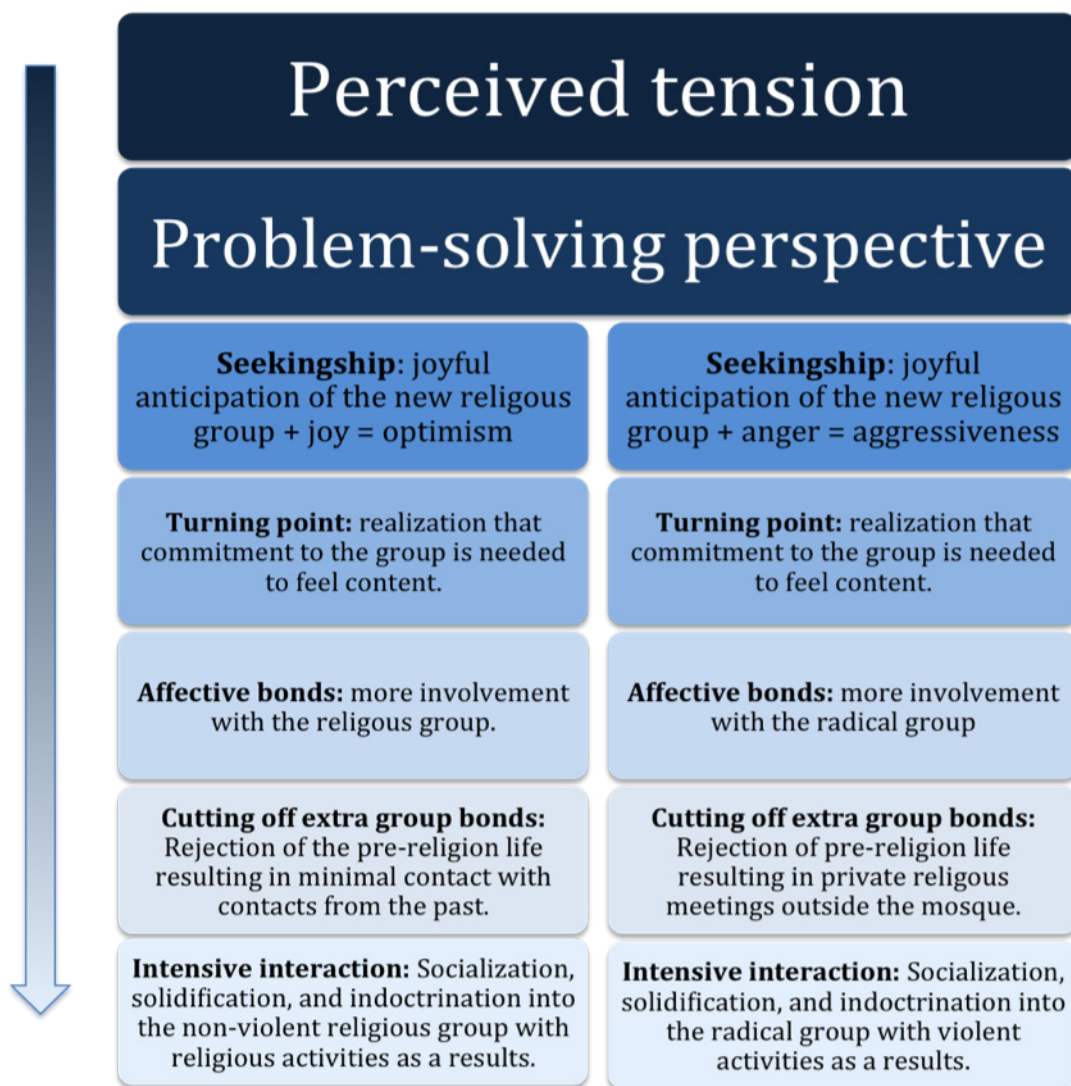
Trustworthiness

One can imagine that the inter-faith converted foreign fighter is not a trusted subject within the ISIS organization. There is the general idea that Muslim converts need to prove their Muslim identity to fellow Muslims, which can lead to an enhanced religious zeal. However, the radical-conversion model suggests that all FFs coming to Syria need to prove their trustworthiness. This leads us to the following hypothesis:

> Hₐ:₂: **Converted FFs and non-converted FFs both experience suspicions of being foreign spies relatively equally.**

Position in Hierarchy

Looking at past and present al-Qaeda or Taliban commanders, one notices that it is very rare to find converts holding high-ranking positions. Although it has been assumed so far that converted and non-converted FFs can be treated equally, a great deal can be said to negate this when it comes to hierarchical ranking.

It is very likely that born-Muslim radicals have greater affinity with the Arabic language and therefore have a clear advantage over inter-faith converts. On the other hand, factors like low socio-economic status and education are often mentioned as reasons for radicalisation among second and third generation non-Western immigrants in Europe. It is very likely that converts with a Western background experience these problems to a lesser extent. Converted FFs can therefore possess valued skills that are welcomed by ISIS. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hᴀ:3: The converted foreign fighter cannot rise high in rank, with the exception of some highly skilled individuals.

Desertion

It is not uncommon that ISIS members desert the organization. The radical-conversion model predicts that converts and non-converts can be treated equally when it comes to fanaticism and trustworthiness. Yet, converts and non-converts have different predisposition conditions that need to be taken into account. One has to consider the influence of non-Muslim family members on the return of converts who are attempting to desert. The question is whether this same influence by family members applies to non-converts. According to a report from the Gatestone Institute, there are more than 100.000 British citizens who sympathise with perpetrators of suicide bombings and other terrorist acts. Radicals are often influenced by family members and close friends. It is more likely for a non-convert to radicalise through other radical family members than converts would. Therefore, deserting to be reunited with family could be much harder for non-converts than it is for inter-faith converts. This leads us to the following hypothesis:

Hᴀ:4: Converted FFs tend to desert relatively more than non-converted FFs.

The Role of Women

When looking at conversion motives, it appears that an affectional motive is often found in female conversion. [13] They manifest strong emotional feelings of affection for a significant other, but not necessarily because the religion itself is appealing. According to Strømmen, women who join ISIS are often referred to as "jihadi brides" and not as female fighters.[14] It would appear that their motivation to join ISIS are intrinsically linked to male fighters. Furthermore, according to Bakker and De Bont, the primary role for ISIS women is to get married, get children, and obey their husbands.[15] Only a select few can join the fighting ranks of the all-female al-Khansaa brigade. One of the prerequisites to join is fluency in Arabic.[16] It is probably harder for a female convert to acquire a paramilitary position than it is for non-converts.

Although the radical-conversion model would suggest that converts and non-converts would both fulfil the same roles, predisposition conditions for non-converts are different than for converts. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hᴀ:5: Converted female FFs are fulfilling domestic roles relatively more frequent than non-converted female FFs.

Methodology

In order to test these five hypotheses, a database was built, containing 408 European FFs that have left for the ISIS caliphate. The database contains only individuals about whom enough information was available – variables like gender, age, country of origin, convert status, their role, and whether they are dead or alive.

Subsequently, the hypotheses were tested with the help of statistical analysis. Whenever insufficient data was available, case-study research was done in order to make at least rudimentary observations about the group. This means that certain hypotheses could not be statistically rejected. Nevertheless, the analysis does serve as a step into providing insights into the phenomenon.

Results

Converts and Suicide Bombings

Table 1 shows that 16,2% of all the individuals in the dataset (66 out of 408 FFs) were inter-faith converts. From the 408 FFs, 43 were found to be involved in suicide bombings. Of the 43 suicide bombers, 20,9% (9 individuals) were converts. Using a 5% statistical significance (Critical Z-score = 1,645) we find a Z-score score of 0,842. Based on this, the hypothesis that converts are relatively equally involved in suicide missions remains under consideration.

Table 1: Data on Inter-Faith Converts vs. Non-Inter-Faith Converts

	Number of individuals	Percentage
Total	408	
of which converts	66	16.2%
of which non-converts	342	83.8%
Suicide bombers	43	
of which converts	9	20.9%
of which non-converts	34	79.1%

However, 8 out of the 43 suicide bombers went back to attempt attacks in Europe. For the scope of this research, they should not be included. All of them were non-converts, leaving the number of inter-faith convert suicide bombers at 9 individuals. Using a statistical significance of 5%, one finds a Z-score of 1,528, which again means that the hypothesis remains under consideration.

Although the dataset is limited, no evidence has been provided to prove otherwise. The result is in line with the radical-conversion model and goes against mainstream ideas about converts and their supposedly greater fanaticism.

Converts and Trustworthiness

Unfortunately (in terms of statistical desiderata), only four out of the 408 FFs in the database were accused of spying.

Mario Sciannimanica, a.k.a. Abu Zubayr al Almani, was a German foreign fighter that had recently converted to Islam prior to joining the ISIS ranks.[17] Before his conversion he was an aspiring rapper pursuing wealth and chasing girls.[18]

In Syria he stayed in touch with his parents, whom he made swear allegiance to Islam. Although this meant nothing to them, they agreed and regularly sent him money in the hope of staying in touch with him.[19] According to an ISIS source, Mario was put through a hurried trial and subsequently sentenced to death by his former comrades.[20]

Mohammed Amine Boutahar, a.k.a. Abu Ubaida al-Maghribi, was a Dutch foreign fighter from a Muslim Moroccan family.[21] He reportedly spoke fluent Arabic and was the prison chief of James Foley. Nevertheless, his powers and responsibilities went far beyond that. He was accused of passing on information to foreign intelligence agencies after negotiations about several Western hostages held in one of his prisons. He was executed by a shot in the head in the presence of other ISIS members.[22]

Iliass Azaouaj was a Belgian preacher of Moroccan descent. He left for Syria in 2013 and posted on Facebook a call to the "mujahedeen brothers" to join the fight in Syria.[23] However, a few days later he posted a photo of

himself with the Belgian Minister of Interior. This raised the suspicion of him having connections within the Belgian government. The jihadist group distrusted his loyalty and accused him of espionage - with decapitation as a result.[24]

Jejoen Bontinck is a Belgian converted foreign fighter who came under the influence of Sharia teachings and decided to join the fight in Syria.[25] When he arrived, he was accused of spying and was locked up together with James Foley. When Jejoen's father, Dimitri Bontinck, found out his son had been imprisoned, he left for Syria to get him back. After Dimitri gained the militant's trust and following negotiations, both father and son were allowed to return home together.[26]

Evidently not enough data was available to reject the second hypothesis. However, these four cases do give us some insights in their differences and commonalities. Out of the four individuals, two were non-converts and it shows that both groups experience suspicions of spying. It also seems that age is irrelevant. The oldest of the four, Mohammed Boutahar, was born in 1983 while the youngest, Jejoen Bontinck, was born in 1995. Furthermore, role and rank appear unrelated as well. A regular fighter, a knowledgeable imam, and an eminent security chief, all faced accusations of spying. However, one of the most profound commonalities between the four individuals was their continued contact with the outside world. Whether this meant staying in touch with one's parents or being suspected of being in touch with foreign governments, all individuals were seen as untrustworthy because of it.

Looking at the conversion model of Lofland and Stark and the radical-conversion model, cutting off ties with the outside world seems an inevitable step towards full (radical) conversion. Those that do not follow this last step are not considered trustworthy, which is in line with the observations made regarding these four individual cases.

Converts and Rank

Although the radical-conversion model suggests that converts and non-converts can be treated as equals when it comes to radicalisation, the hypothesis that converts cannot raise high in rank is based on the notion that factors like language deficiencies prevent them from holding important positions. Only six FFs were identified holding such ranks.

- Reyaad Khan was a 21-year-old born-Muslim from the U.K. in the position of an attack planner.

- Junaid Hussain was a 21-year-old born-Muslim from the U.K., holding a key position as a hacker in the ISIS organisation.[27]

- Haitham Rahma is a Swedish born Muslim from Syrian descent. He is the leader of a 2000-member-counting armed militia that is working closely with ISIS.

- Mohammed Amine Boutahar was a Dutch born-Muslim from Moroccan descent fulfilling the role of security chief in Aleppo.

- Aqsa Mahmood is a British born-Muslim fulfilling the role of leader in the al-Khansaa brigade.

- Sally Jones is a 46-year-old British convert and wife of Junaid Hussain, fulfilling the role of leader of an all-female militia.

Of the six individuals, only one individual was a convert. Unfortunately, not enough data was available for statistical hypothesis testing. The hypothesis that converts cannot raise high in rank is based on the assumption that factors like language deficiencies will be the limiting factor. Nevertheless, the case of Sally Jones shows us that this line of thinking is probably too limited. She did not have Arabic skills prior to her coming to the caliphate or any other skills that made her valuable. It remains unclear how she acquired a position as such but

it is not unthinkable that her husband had a positive influence in that regard. She can be the ultimate example that more factors than just the convert-status determine the role one holds in the caliphate, or could also be the proverbial exception to the rule.

Converts and Desertions

It was suggested earlier that converts tend to desert more than non-converts because of their connections to non-Muslim family members and friends, but not because of their convert status in itself. Of the 408 FFs, 27 of them deserted the organisation. Of the 27 individuals who are counted as deserters, 9 of them are converts. Unfortunately the group of deserters is rather small for a reliable statistical analysis. Nevertheless, the outcome can be seen as a step in the right direction in formulating the connection between converts and deserters.

A one-sided Binomial analysis with a significance level of 5% provides a Z-score of 2,416 (critical z score 1,645), i.e. the number of converted foreign fighters does exceed the expected value, meaning there is an over-representation of converted deserters among the total number of deserters.

Although the radical-conversion model would predict that non-converts would desert just as much as converts, the results indicate that converts do tend to desert more. Looking closer at these 9 converts, parental help appeared to be paramount in the escape from the caliphate for 6 of them. Just as with converts and their rank, the result of converts and desertion can again be explained by predisposition factors but not because of the fact that they have converted to Islam.

Converted Women and Violence

It was hypothesised that converted women are found in domestic roles relatively more often than born-Muslim women. This premise was based on the idea that it is harder for converted women to gain a fighting role and therefore have no other option than to fulfil a domestic role.

Of the 408 FFs in the database, 21 women were found to fulfil a domestic role. Of those 21, 7 women were converts. Although the group is small, applying statistical analysis on the 7 women and a 5% significance level, it was found that converted women do tend to fulfil a domestic role more often than non-converts.

Even though the hypothesis was not rejected, the dataset was too small to offer a conclusive answer. Furthermore, looking at the individual female cases of all the FFs in the database, one does find examples where converts do fulfil non-domestic roles. For example, Sally Jones who is not fluent in Arabic, converted under the influence of her husband, and still ended up in a fighting role.

It was suggested earlier that women tend to convert for affectional motives. The hypothesis was based on the notion that women also further radicalise for this reason. However, looking at the individual cases and theories on radicalisation, radicalisation always contains a component of violence and aggression, whether this is active participation or passive support. That means that even converted radicalised women can certainly have aspirations for violent jihad but have fewer opportunities to put these ambitions actively into practice. More research with a larger group of female FF is needed to provide a more conclusive answer to this hypothesis.

Conclusion

Comparing Lofland and Starks model of conversion with several radicalisation models, revealed similarities. The radical-conversion model suggests that all radicals are converts – inter-faith or intra-faith (born again) converts. The significant difference from ordinary religious conversion is the accompaniment of violence and aggression in radicalisation to Islamist jihadism. Radicalisation can, in our view, be seen as merely a sub-type of religious conversion but not as an entirely different process.

Although there is a general view of inter-faith converts being more fanatical than (intra-faith) non-converts, our analysis indicates that converts are equally involved in suicide missions as non-converts – something that is

in line with the radical-conversion model. However, the introduction of this Research Note noted an overrepresentation of converts in Foreign Fighter statistics. This raises the question whether or not this discrepancy speaks against the radical-conversion model.

As noted in Figure 2, radicalisation as well as conversion starts with a perceived tension in the future convert. Lofland and Stark proposed that situational contingencies are imminent in the conversion process. One finds that situational contingencies are essential in the radicalisation process as well. It seems that the crossroad between conversion and radicalisation all lie in those situational contingencies. When an uncertain and vulnerable person experiences positive feelings such as joy, he or she is likely to go further in an ordinary conversion process. When that person undergoes at the critical moment emotions such as hate and anger, he or she is likely to go down the radicalisation path.

To come back to the question raised above: is the overrepresentation of converts in foreign fighters a phenomenon that goes against the radical-conversion paradigm? On the contrary, it only enforces the idea even more. Because radicalisation can be seen as a sub-type of conversion, individuals who start the (radical)-conversion process reach the junction between ordinary conversion and radicalisation more often than born-Muslims that do not need to convert to Islam anymore. As can be seen from the radical-conversion model, the first two steps are the same as in the model of Lofland and Stark. It is what happens after the problem-solving perspective that determines whether the person embraces in his or her conversion a violent perspective.

The radical-conversion thesis suggests that inter-faith converts and intra-faith (born again) Muslims could all be considered converts. Nevertheless, this research based on more than 400 individuals did find differences in rank, desertion, and the role of women. Although the data set is very rudimentary, the individual cases cited were showcasing a substantial number of other factors that make converted and born-Muslims different. The most important observation here is that this difference is not so much determined by the convert status itself, but by factors that come along with being a convert having a non-Muslim background. (e.g. family ties, education, etc.)

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Black-boxing the Black Flag: Anonymous Sharing Platforms and ISIS Content Distribution Tactics

by Ahmad Shehabat & Teodor Mitew

Abstract

The study examines three anonymous sharing portals employed strategically by the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) to achieve its political ends. This study argues that anonymous sharing portals such as Sendvid.com, Justpast.it, and Dump.to have been instrumental in allowing individual jihadists to generate content, disseminate propaganda and communicate freely while routing around filtering practiced by popular social media networks. The study draws on Actor Network Theory (ANT) in examining the relationship between ISIS jihadists and the emergence of anonymous sharing portals. The study suggests that, even though used prior to the massive degrading operation across social media, anonymous sharing portals were instrumental in allowing ISIS to maintain its networking structure in the face of coordinated disruption.

Keywords: Anonymous sharing portals, Actor Network Theory, black boxing, Islamic State, degrading operation, Sendvid, Justpaste, Dump.to.

Introduction

The rise of distributed communication networks has offered new possibilities for the emergence and expansion of terror networks. Since its emergence in 2013, the so called Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS)[1] managed to utilise sophisticated digital media communication technologies to disseminate globally its propaganda content and foster communication between its members. In particular, images and video footage aimed to generate fear have been successfully broadcasted globally by the ISIS propaganda network. Noticing a correlation between the growing spread of ISIS propaganda videos on social media platforms, anonymous sharing portals, and the rise of terrorist activity in the Middle East and Europe, in 2015 the US government established countermeasures aimed to degrade and hinder the spread of ISIS propaganda online. These efforts included deletion of ISIS online content, suspension of social media accounts, as well as hacker attacks against the websites used by ISIS affiliates, and were largely successful in suppressing ISIS propaganda across popular social media platforms.[1]

In a clear effort to adapt to these countermeasures and sustain its information flows ISIS moved the core of its propaganda network to other online platforms substituting for popular sites such as Twitter and YouTube. These were primarily encrypted communication channels such as Telegram, Signal, and WhatsApp, as well as anonymous sharing portals such as Justpaste.it, Sendvid.com and Dump.to. We refer to them as 'anonymous' because they protected the anonymity of their users and were at the time little known to a wider internet audience. It is important to emphasise that ISIS used these channels even before the network degrading countermeasures it faced, however at the time they arguably played an auxiliary role in the overall communication strategy of

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1 Also known as IS, ISIL, and Daesh.

the organisation.

The aim of this article is to propose an examination of ISIS's use of these portals as a response to the countermeasures against its online propaganda operations. We suggest that anonymous sharing portals such as Sendvid.com, Justpaste.it, and Dump.to have been instrumental in allowing jihadi groups to generate content, disseminate propaganda, and communicate freely by diminishing the effects of the broad jihadi propaganda filtering efforts of popular social media networks. Crucially, while the majority of research attention has been concentrated on analysing the role of encrypted communication channels such as Telegram, little attention has been paid to anonymous sharing portals acting as black boxes for ISIS-related propaganda. Accordingly, we argue that in order to conceptualise the dynamic role played by anonymous sharing portals in the ISIS network we can use the conceptual toolkit developed by Actor Network Theory (ANT).

The key value that ANT brings to our analysis is an understanding of networks as dynamic phenomena that have to be continuously rebuilt and maintained by the actors performing them. Furthermore, ANT posits that both humans and nonhumans are network actors equally entangled in the flow of agency, and focuses on the dynamic relations between the entities performing the network. This is of fundamental analytical importance as it allows us to understand the agencies and "normative principles […] that build, maintain, and transform networks".[2] Ever since ANT's particular methodological approach to studying networks was proposed by Bruno Latour, its aim has been "to follow the actors […] and describe how they make associations connections, relations, and assemblies".[3] The ANT perspective allows researchers to develop digital methods of high sensitivity for an online problematic, leading to the development of "'natively digital' research tools that 'take advantage of the analytic and empirical capacities that are 'embedded in online media".[4] In the context of this paper, the use of ANT therefore signifies an awareness of the complexity of ISIS's network assemblage, as well as a perspective allowing us to conceptualise the role played by anonymous sharing platforms in ISIS's propaganda networks.

Due to their unique characteristics, anonymous sharing platforms play an important role in ISIS's online strategy, demanding a specific framework of analysis. The ease of sharing content and the anonymity of the users create a dynamic where platforms act as automated message amplifiers, playing the role of black-boxes in the wider information network. Virtually all users on these platforms fall in one of three often overlapping roles: they either dynamically produce and aggregate content, act as intermediaries retranslating and curating content across multiple platforms, or passively consume the information flowing across the network. In other words, the content flowing through these platforms is highly dynamic and visual, lending itself to visual data gathering and ethnographic observation. As Christopher Moore has argued, screenshots are a useful research method in that context because "as digital tools, they diminish permanence in exchange for malleability and performativity. As media objects, they can be dynamically traced across the networks of their dissemination and require a re-evaluation of the axioms of cultural production that considers texts independently of experience". [5]

We first examine the broad online effects of the countermeasures aimed at the ISIS propaganda network. Using the notion of a black box drawn from ANT, we then examine the relationship between ISIS jihadists and the emergence of anonymous sharing platforms. Finally, we look at three anonymous sharing portals in an effort

to understand how they could have contributed to ISIS's information operations.

The Rise of ISIS on Social Media

Since its appearance in 2013, ISIS quickly gained notoriety as a terror network, arguably due to the savagery it demonstrated against its enemies and people under its control. Concurrently, ISIS appeared to quickly recognize the importance of digital communication tools in its self-proclaimed goal to establish a global Caliphate. Images of savagery were broadcasted virally through social media networks and global media, and were clearly intended to frighten enemies and lead to further gains on the ground in both Syria and Iraq. Twitter, YouTube and Justpaste were extensively utilized by ISIS to conduct its information operations, for the purpose of producing and disseminating propaganda videos for potential recruits and spread its radical views among Muslim youth globally.

The role of social media platforms in aiding terror organizations has been examined extensively by scholars, journalists and think tanks. For example, the former Google CEO Eric Schmitt pointed out that ISIS and its supporters are "producing as many as 90,000 tweets and other social media responses every day".[6] The importance of utilizing media by terror networks was highlighted by Philip Sieb and Dana Janbek, who argued that media are the oxygen of terrorism.[7] Furthermore, Abdel Bari Atwan argues that the internet helped ISIS to achieve its recruiting objectives and territorial ambitions in short time.[8] That is, digital communication tools "allow terrorist groups to become regional or even global players […] [they] also allow terrorists to work more effectively […] to protect communications".[9]

However, the social media activities of ISIS were monitored closely by the U.S and proprietors of social media platforms,[10] and were met by a series of countermeasures intended to degrade ISIS's online presence.[11] In our opinion, the efforts to deploy countermeasures against ISIS's online offensive by the US and anti-ISIS powers have demonstrated three distinct phases of development.

Phase one: *Degrade and Destroy*. The US government requested Twitter and Google to delete ISIS's active accounts on their platforms.[12] This measure resulted in deleting thousands of accounts and messages, in effect leading to a global cyberwarfare campaign against ISIS affiliates.

Phase two: *Countering ISIS propaganda.* To compete with ISIS propaganda online, the US government directed the efforts of the Centre of Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC),[13] which debuted with a video production titled "Welcome to ISIS Land". According to Scott Higham, "the video became a viral phenomenon — viewed more than 844,000 times on YouTube — and a cause of significant irritation to its target".[14] In addition, the CSCC launched the "Turn Away Think Again"[2] page on Twitter to stop foreign fighters joining ISIS and documenting atrocities committed by ISIS jihadists. In return, ISIS launched the "Run Do Not Walk to U.S. Terrorist State" page on Twitter to recruit potential members from the West.

Phase three: *Hacking and Information warfare.* Part of the less overt efforts at suppressing jihadist propaganda online, the hacktivist group *Anonymous* declared 'Operation ISIS'. Andrew Griffin suggests that this operation

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2 Now called DOS team, operating in both Arabic and English it produces videos showing the brutality of ISIS and raising awareness among Arab and Muslim youth.

concentrated its efforts on searching and neutralising ISIS online content on both social media platforms and websites using Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attacks.[15] Known as #Op-ice-ISIS, this operation succeeded in paralysing hundreds of ISIS-related channels of information dissemination, such as the 'The Dawn of Glad Tidings' app (#op_Isis, 2015). This app, according to Jim Berger (2015) was the official mobile phone application disseminating the latest news about ISIS operations.[16]

The online war against ISIS has reached a point where the US coalition forces, Anonymous hackers and other anti-ISIS actors have managed to seriously degrade ISIS information dissemination capabilities across popular social media networks. The consequences of countering ISIS propaganda on popular social media platforms enforced ISIS to shift the emphasis of its information operation to anonymous digital portals and encrypted communication channels such as Justpaste.it, Sendvid.com, Dump.to, Share.it, Woodvid.com, Archive.org, as well as Telegram, WordPress, Pinterest and Tumblr.

Many scholars have observed the relation between the emergence of anonymous sharing portals and the wide spread of terror narratives. For instance, Alvares and Dahlgern have highlighted the role played by web 2.0 platforms in the pervasiveness of terror narratives by creating space for uncensored violent content.[17] File-sharing portals, videos, and personal spaces are used to target different audiences, namely, supporters, public opinion and enemies. This observation is also corroborated by Klausen, when he argues that the "jihadist insurgents in Syria and Iraq use all manner of social media apps and file-sharing platforms, most prominently Ask.fm, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Pal Talk, kik, viper, JustPaste.it, and Tumblr".[18]

That being said, it is important to note that anonymous sharing portals such as Telegram, Justpaste.it, Sendvid.com, and Dump.to were already used by ISIS as auxiliary communication channels prior to the degrading operation. However, as we aim to demonstrate, coordinated filtering across popular social media forced ISIS to switch its primary information operations to these platforms and to leverage them as communication black-boxes, thus circumventing the primary vector of the campaign against its operations.

Telegram in particular, largely due to its native support of encrypted one-to-one and one-to-many communications, has been widely adopted by ISIS and its affiliates globally following the start of the filtering campaign against it in the fall of 2014. The significance of ISIS' use of the platform lies in the ability to establish multi-purpose channels strengthening its propaganda machine. Crucially, this allows for ISIS affiliates, only latently connected to the central hubs of the organization, to both receive and share a coherent centralized propaganda message as well as establish encrypted communication channels with each other. Such anonymous channels therefore act as systems of coordination, message reinforcement, and activity planning.

A separate analysis by the authors of this paper, published elsewhere, suggests that ISIS-related Telegram channels play a critical role in personal communication between potential recruits and the dissemination of propaganda encouraging 'lone wolf' attacks.[19] This study, however, focuses on the less known anonymous sharing platforms Justpaste.it, Sendvid.com, and Dump.to, used by ISIS in furthering its information operations and communication objectives.

Degrading ISIS Online Activities

Popular social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are using their terms of service (TOS) to exercise control over the type of information produced and disseminated through their networks. For example, YouTube's TOS state in relation to hateful, violent and graphic content that, "it's not okay to post violent or gory content that's primarily intended to be shocking, sensational or disrespectful. If a video is particularly graphic or disturbing, it should be balanced with additional context and information".[3] Jacob Silverman observed that YouTube acts robustly when dealing with terror content. It only takes couple of clicks to delete content and suspend associated accounts.[20] Under YouTube's TOS, the platform reserves the right to remove content and in some instances, suspend accounts. According to a YouTube spokesperson, "YouTube has clear policies prohibiting content intended to incite violence, and we remove videos violating these policies when flagged by our users. We also terminate any account registered by a member of a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and used in an official capacity to further its interests".

Berger and Strathearn indicated that when it comes to freedom of speech, social media platforms are biased. They suggest that these platforms should make it clear that freedom of speech is limited when it comes to using their service.[21] In a similar vein, Twitter governs what is posted against its TOS policies. With rising international pressure on these social network platforms, particularly from the US government over ISIS's online materials, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have acted swiftly and imposed harsh policies targeting gruesome content generated by ISIS. Twitter, for instance, waged a 'Twitter war' against pro-ISIS accounts and managed to suspend many thousands of accounts which resulted in significant degradation of ISIS' Twitter presence.

In their report, *The ISIS Twitter Census*, Jim Berger and Johnathan Morgan collected Twitter data in an attempt to map ISIS's activities on that platform.[22] The study was based on a sample of 20,000 ISIS supporter accounts, and it established, among others, that in October through November 2014 "at least 46,000 Twitter accounts were used by ISIS supporters".[23] The study also revealed that 20,000 confirmed ISIS supporters are residing in the territories controlled by the Islamic State. Saudi Arabia was the second-most common location for ISIS supporters. In addition, one fifth of ISIS supporters used English and almost three quarters selected Arabic as their primary language. It also appeared that the broad countermeasures aimed at degrading ISIS propaganda was successful, at least in part because of wide Twitter account suspensions. The authors concluded that the mass account suspension strategy – known as "whack-a-mole"— is highly successful as a network degrading tool, and that ISIS finds it challenging to keep up with replacing suspended accounts without suffering any negative consequences.

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3 YouTube TOS page: https://www.youtube.com/static?gl=AU&template=terms

Figure 1: A tweet posted by J.M. Berger on 20 September 2014.

In other words, the latter study offers conclusive evidence that when account suspensions are carried out on a consistent basis across a range of platforms they have an adverse effect on the targeted network. While Twitter has been largely successful in suppressing ISIS propaganda, Silverman suggests that hosting extreme content poses long-term challenges for all social media platforms,[24] and that YouTube and Facebook in particular must keep updating their tools in order to dynamically trace and report graphic materials disseminated by potential terrorists. In this respect, proactive monitoring of platforms and targeted account removals have noticeably harmed ISIS' content distribution and propaganda tactics on social media.

Interestingly, and in an apparent effort to resist such persistent network degrading operations, ISIS has tried to recruit personnel tasked with mitigating the effects of network attacks and sustaining their information operation. As Atwan observed in 2015, "most of Islamic state commanders and recruits are tech-savvy; coding (writing software programs putting information in html) is as familiar to them as their mother tongue. Most of the digital caliphate business is conducted online, from recruitment to propaganda to battlefield strategy and instructions".[25] ISIS members and sympathizers have specifically targeted unpoliced, anonymous, and safe sharing platforms allowing the anonymous dissemination of uncensored content. Often, such platforms are also relatively obscure and unknown to the wider public, a factor contributing to their anonymity.

Ironically, and in a development reminiscent of the network-centric warfare theories of John Boyd, the overall success of the strategy of degrading any overt social media presence by ISIS appears to have led to the rapid changing of media dissemination tactics by ISIS, and the fast adoption of anonymous alternatives. Specifically, it appears that the ISIS switch to anonymous and obscure alternatives to popular social media platforms was made possible through the adoption of storage and sharing portals such as justpaste.it, dump.to, sendvid.com, archive.org, dailymotion.com and liveleak.com. As John Boyd (1976) famously argued, "generating a rapidly changing environment—that is, engaging in activity that is so quick it is disorienting and appears uncertain or ambiguous to the enemy—inhibits the adversary's ability to adapt and causes confusion and disorder that, in turn, causes an adversary to overreact or underreact... [T]he message is that whoever can handle the quickest rate of change is the one who survives".[26] Boyd famously suggested that to win in an environment of high information density one has to manoeuvre at speed and therefore operate inside the Observe, Orient, Decide and Act (OODA) loop of your adversary. The weaponization of anonymous sharing platforms has arguably enabled ISIS to mass-disseminate propaganda while avoiding suppressive actions, an information equivalent of manoeuvre at speed, and therefore operate inside the OODA loop of its adversaries. Furthermore, as the authors have argued elsewhere, ISIS has successfully trialled using stigmergic swarming operations harnessing

multiple anonymous platforms to maintain its network structure.[27]

Below, we focus on three case studies of anonymous online portals in order to illustrate their use by ISIS in establishing new channels of content dissemination and communication, as well as examine how these portals allowed ISIS to maintain an operational network structure.

Anonymous Platforms as Black Boxes

As discussed above, we believe that in order to understand how ISIS has managed to route around extensive account suspension operations waged against it on popular social media platforms it is necessary to examine the role played by anonymous sharing platforms with a conceptual toolkit informed by ANT.[28] From an ANT perspective, networks are populated by entities conceptualised as *actants* because they simultaneously *act* and are *acted upon*. Actants, whether human or nonhuman, always have agency, which here stands for the ability to force change, a *detour*, in the interactions between networks.[29] Agency, and action in turn, are always already the property of associations of human and nonhuman elements.[30] Accordingly, one of the main strengths of ANT is that it allows the tracing of actors in a network, based on their actual role in the flow of agency.[31]

When examining the role played by an anonymous sharing platform within the wider ISIS network an ANT-informed perspective makes no a priori difference between social or technical nodes in the network. All that it sees are entities actively performing a network. However, anonymous sharing platforms immediately stand out because they act as accelerators of information flows while making it harder to trace the logistics of how these flows are performed. In effect, they black-box certain elements of the network. In this context, the black box is a conceptual metaphor developed in ANT to describe network assemblages which function so well that their internal logistics are *opaque from the outside.*[32] Black boxes are created through what ANT terms as 'acts of translation', in which actors are first enrolled in the network, and then work to stabilise it from the inside thus creating the appearance of a monolithic assemblage.[33] From the perspective of our case studies, the black box concept helps to understand how ISIS maintains its networking structure by adaptively shifting operations to less known online sharing portals.

Opening a black box allows us to examine the ways in which "a variety of social aspects and technical elements are associated and come together as a durable whole".[34] The notion of opening and examining a black box is possible, because when focusing on a black-boxed entity seemingly homogenous from the outside, ANT sees "processes, performances, socio-technical rituals, and enactments […] driven by the dynamics of making connections, of binding things together, of extending associations, of 'translating' and 'enrolling' actors into networks".[35] The same could be said for the role of online sharing portals, mobile phone apps, and other technical assemblages enrolled in the networks of ISIS affiliates.

When analysing the case studies below, it appears that ISIS is leveraging the stability and distributed nature of their relatively established communication networks to enlist new actants which in turn help in the emergence of new networks. Crucially, the relative opacity of less known cloud portals such as Justpaste.it and Sendvid. com, coupled with the migration of already established distributed networks of ISIS affiliates, drawn to these platforms by their TOS, creates a black-boxing dynamic. Ironically, the operations degrading ISIS's overt digital

capabilities on popular social media sites have resulted in the migration and development of this dynamic. That is, ISIS networks seem to have reacted to the degradation of their capabilities on popular social media networks and rapidly migrated to new anonymous portals. As Stern and Modi have pointed out, "terrorists respond to changes in their environments by changing their mission and changing their shape. What is important in such events is that information logistics is essential in disseminating messages of terror".[36]

ISIS's Black Boxes

   1.   *Justpaste.it*

Justpaste.it is a free content sharing portal providing document storage and file sharing services under the motto of 'sharing text and images the easy way'. The site is hosted by Cloud Flare and owned by Polish entrepreneur Mariusz Zurawek, who sums up justpaste.it as follows: "You are able to do what you want with almost two clicks. It doesn't require registration, it isn't searchable and access to specific content is only available via a link or if it makes the 'most popular' page".[37] However, early 2014 ISIS has harnessed this service to disseminate its online videos, brutal images of beheadings, texts that aim to spread its radical ideology, and most importantly the controversial digital edition of the ISIS online magazine 'Dabiq'. Since its emergence in July 2014, Dabiq was hosted by justpaste.it, and archive.org. The English language magazine ostensibly targets Western audiences to garner new recruits [Figures 2-4].

Figure 2: Dabiq Magazine issue hosted by justpaste.it [full url is obfuscated]

Figure 3: Tweet with extreme content posted by ISIS members on justpaste.it [full url is obfuscated]

Figure 4: Tweet with material advertising migration to ISIS-held territory posted on justpaste.it [full url is obfuscated]

Justpaste.it not only allows ISIS to host the magazine but also offers a free folder share option which ISIS's networked affiliates can use to share, store and disseminate information to global audiences. The platform offers advanced features such as pasting text directly from a word processor or a webpage, formatting and exporting to PDF, automatic importing of images, secure content publishing, secure SSL connection, and password-protected access. To protect the contents of text notes from web crawlers the site allows the use of [encrypt] tags. Indeed, one of the most valuable options Justpaste.it offers is password protection for disseminated content which makes it a uniquely secure environment for exchanging messages or files.

Describing the site's appeal to users, Carmen Fishwick also pointed out the easy to use template working well even on slow internet connections.[38] Justpaste.it, also has a mobile phone app with no interruptions from pop-ups or other advertising materials. [4] Leveraging these features, ISIS members and affiliates have utilized Justpaste.it to send encrypted messages, upload videos and files (such as jihadi materials, books, instructions), share information and upload online magazines. Links to content uploaded on the site have been shared via Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, and other social media platforms to increase participation for potential recruits, propaganda, and other logistical support. Overall, Justpaste.it appears to have proved helpful to ISIS affiliates, as folders and files can be widely shared by only copying a hybrid link allowing the file to be printed or read online.

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4   Writing formatting tools are also available for right-to-left languages (e.g. Arabic). No logon credentials are needed and the platform works on mobile phone devices (justpaste.it, 2014).

Arguably, the pervasiveness of ISIS' Dabiq and Romyiah magazines is indebted to the existence of this sharing portal. Interestingly, files uploaded to justpaste.it can be deleted under the TOS agreement, according to Justpaste TOS:

- Any material posted anonymously will be deleted after five days.

- Any content that may spread hate or cause harm will be removed instantly.

Fishwick underlines how the anonymity of justpaste.it served ISIS, noting that "JustPaste.it's role in Islamic state's propaganda machine has largely gone unnoticed".[39] All the images uploaded to the service by ISIS members have details of a related Twitter account stamped on them. The user's Twitter handle is also printed at the bottom of each image, so reporters have been crediting the images to Twitter. The use of justpaste.it by ISIS members has brought international attention to the site as the traffic approached 10 million page views a month [Figure 5].

Figure 5: Justpaste.it traffic. Source: http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/justpaste.it

JustPaste.it traffic by country Nov 2015

According to Google Analytics (2015), "the platform has about 2.5 million unique users a month, which works out at about 10 million views every month".[5] Zurawek, the site's founder, started seeing what he called "a large growth" of traffic to his website from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria. The site makes it easy to publish text, photos or PDFs, and at the beginning of 2014 rebels and civilians in Syria discovered JustPaste.it and began using it to post news. But sometime over the summer of 2014, Jacob Silverman notes, "jihadists discovered it as well, and the site soon became one of the favoured tools of the Islamic State for sharing news, official communiques, and graphic propaganda".[40]

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5   As justpaste.it tweeted on 12/Aug/2014. See, https://twitter.com/justpasteit/status/499153334377660417

As stated by its founder, the site "does not compete with advanced online text editors, such as Google Docs or Microsoft Office 365, but rather creates a place that is extremely easy and simple to use. It's similar to Pastebin, the service popular with hackers, but with image files too".[41] As the activity of ISIS on Justpaste.it drew the attention of authorities in the United Kingdom, the police requested the site delete content including all videos showing graphic executions at the hands of ISIS, as well as all pro-ISIS propaganda. In combating ISIS' use of his service, Zurawek commented: "It's not my choice that ISIS has selected my site [...] As long as I'm cooperating with the police, removing content, and not allowing ISIS to make propaganda, I think it's good for the site that many people will know about it".[42]

The architecture of justpaste.it, coupled with the possibility of using VPNs and TOR to obfuscate IP addresses makes it hard to ban specific users.[43] Nevertheless, the site appears to have made an effort to police the content uploaded by users and actively remove extremist materials. In response, an ISIS affiliate - Abo-Taloot al-Khrasani - messaged Zurawek to condemn the site's efforts to police uploaded content. This demonstrates how significant the platform is to ISIS in maintaining its communication and dissemination structure. In the letter below the author claims that 70% of justpase.it traffic is ISIS content [Figure 6].

Figure 6: A copy of letter sent by Abo Talout al-Khurasani to Zurawek (source: justpaste.it)
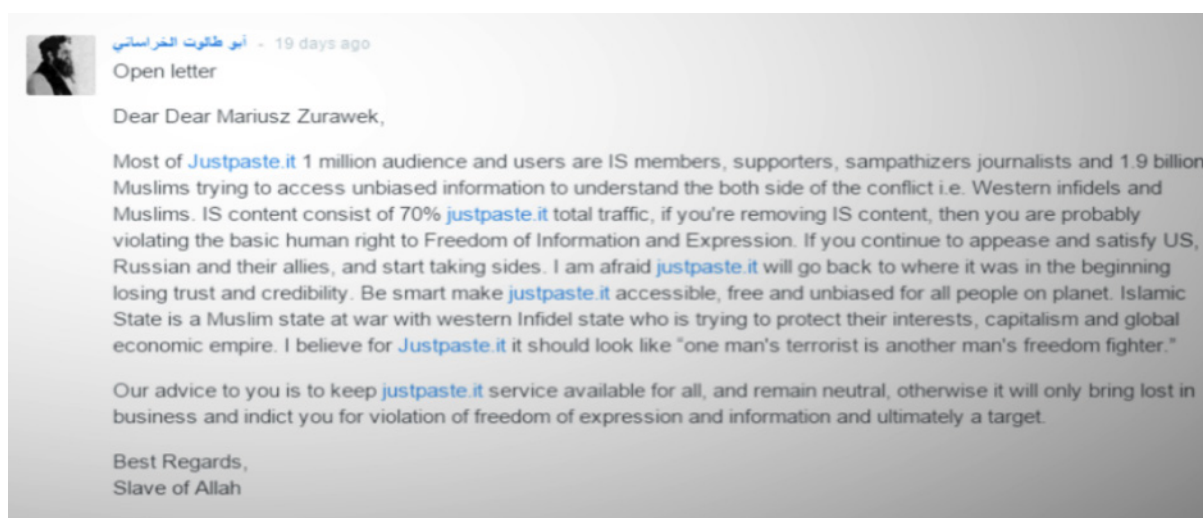
2. *Sendvid.com*

Sendvid is an instant video upload portal used by ISIS to route around wide account suspension and content deletion on YouTube and Daily Motion. Specifically, ISIS media production outlets such as Al-Hayat, al-Furqan, and al-Etisam extensively used the video uploading portal in their propaganda dissemination. High-definition quality videos such as *Flames of War, Message Covered with Blood*, and *Healing of the Hearts* were first uploaded to Sendvid, and then popularized virally through Twitter follower networks. A simple search for Sendvid on Twitter returns mostly links to ISIS propaganda videos. Sendvid is a crucial element of ISIS's information logistics as videos linked to Sendvid can also be shared via other social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, archive.org, Tumblr, Telegram, dump.to and e-mail, or can be stored in users' Google drive or Dropbox for future retrieval.

Sendvid has been used by ISIS affiliates early 2015 to widely copy and aggregate propaganda materials, thus building publicly available collections of terrorist-related content. As Remzy Mahzam points out, "the electronic digitisation of the extremist identity of ISIS has been made effective through its frequent injection of videos, incessant release of periodicals and downloading of visual reports in multiple languages, eventually building up a digital compendium that will remain accessible for future generations for reference".[44] Furthermore, unlike YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, where admins are alerted to remove both jihadi content and the associated accounts, Sendvid is a safely unpoliced archiving platform where data can be uploaded anonymously even under false Facebook, Twitter or Google accounts.

The following appears to be the standard reply to enquiries regarding jihadi content by the Sendvid Support Team: "Thank you for contacting us regarding this matter. As a service provider, we try to promote freedom of speech and remain as neutral as possible to all groups regardless of their views. With that being said, we do work with several foreign and domestic agencies in removing videos that we deem to be in violation of our Terms of Service. If you encounter any videos that violate our TOS, we encourage you to report them to our abuse department at: abuse@sendvid.com". In theory, all online sharing portals have very much the same TOS in regard to removing videos or documents promoting violence. Sendvid's TOS are quite clear that the service does not allow "adult, obscene, illegal or objectionable content", and that "accounts and content that violate this will be removed without warning". In practice, Sendvid host these videos unless explicitly notified of breach of TOS. Most of the gruesome videos uploaded by ISIS are in fact still available on the Sendvid service, and are freely shared on Twitter [Figure7 - 8].

Figure 7: Video titled 'The happiness of almojahideen' posted to Sendvid.

Figure 8: Sendvid links to ISIS content, titled: message to the tyrants of Jordan.

Interestingly, recently Sendvid has become a preferred site for pornographic materials, which appears to have caused ISIS affiliates to reduce their presence as this contradicts with Islamic Sharia values.

3. *Dump.to*

Dump.to is an online sharing platform with no login credentials,[6] using archive.is as a web carrier. The sharing portal also has no clear TOS policies that govern dissemination of content. The importance of this service in the context of ISIS is that it allows users to share, upload and converge links from similar sharing sites such as *justpast.it* and *sendvid.com* where all types of data can be stored and shared via link to ISIS' affiliate networks. Dump.to allows documents, video, voice messages, and music to be stored and shared, which in turn allows ISIS affiliates to aggregate, edit, curate, re-classify, and re-publish jihadi propaganda content. In addition, content shared on the site can be protected by password, and be commented on and edited by anyone using a pseudonym or anonymously. Most importantly, the lack of policing and governance makes Dump.to a vital medium for information sharing among jihadists, who can communicate in the open through encrypted messages posted directly through the site's interface.

The site hosts most of ISIS' online video propaganda content, as well as jihadi music (nasheed), Dabiq magazine links, and extreme jihadi books. For example, most of ISIS's controversial books such as *Hijra to the Islamic state* (migrating to ISIS land) and *How to Survive in the West* were available to download for free, arguably helping ISIS to recruit western affiliates and encouraging migration to ISIS-controlled territories (Figures 9-14).

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6   Dump.to is registered to a German company operating behind the kasserver.com domain

Figure 9: iBRABO highlights the use of dump.to by ISIS

Figure 10: Jihadi training materials, books, and propaganda

Figure 11: Dabiq propaganda magazine on Dump.to web addresses

Figure 12: Dump.to hosts Welayat news

Figure 13: Some significant dumps by Al Hayat media centre (news reports, breaking news)
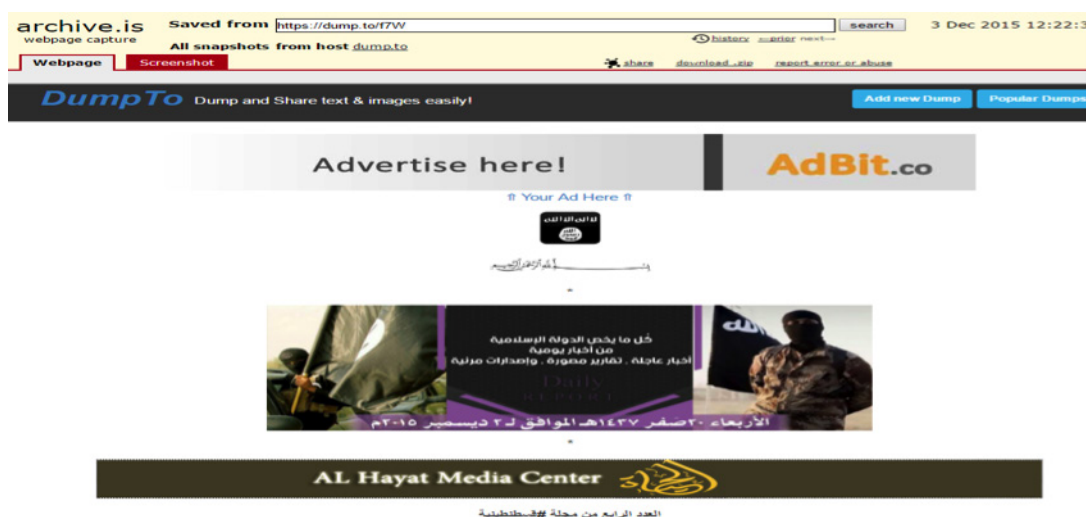

**Figure 14: ISIS breaking news shared instantly on Dump.to**

Dump.to considers itself a free and anonymous publishing platform that never takes responsibility for content being published. Typical of similar sharing portals, Dump.to TOS claim to prevent content or material containing child pornography, phishing & malware, violent threats, spam campaigns, private and confidential information, invasion of privacy.[7]

Discussion

As their presence started to fade on Twitter and YouTube as a result of the globally coordinated filtering campaign, ISIS decided to move the primary hub of their information operations to anonymous sharing portals such as Telegram, Justpaste.it, Sendvid.com, and Dump.to. This was a strategic decision, as these sites transitioned from being auxiliary platforms to primary communication and dissemination channels in ISIS's strategy. The characteristics and typology of these anonymous sharing portals, ready templates, easy video uploads and mobile phone supported applications created participatory media environments where information can be accessed across multiple social media networks. It is estimated that Justpaste.it, Sendvid.com and Dump.to portals have contributed around 20% of information disseminated by ISIS to Twitter alone (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Detrimental Use of Social Media by Daesh. An Information Warfare Perspective
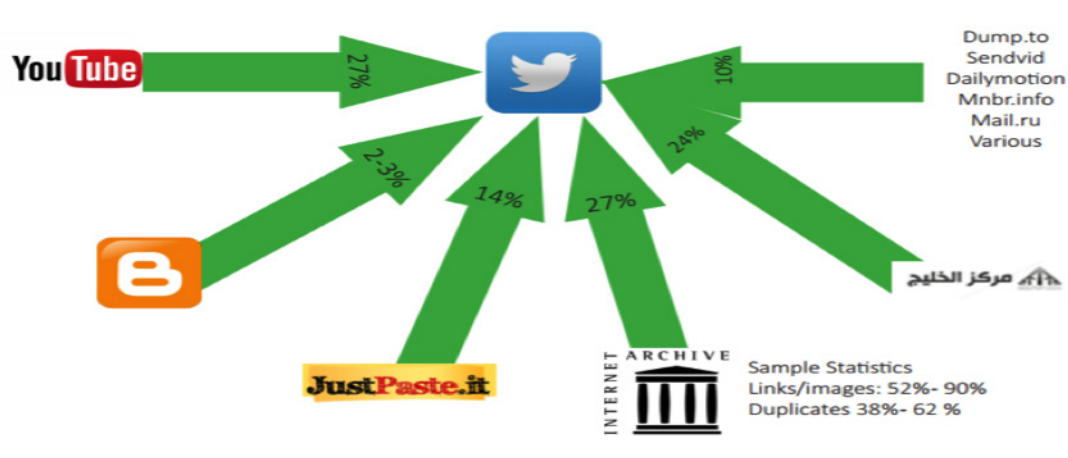
Source: Joseph Shasheen, 'Detrimental Use of Social Media and the Case of Daesh: An Information Warfare Perspective', *Riga Strategic Communication Dialogue: Perception Matters,* August 2015.

7 An enquiry about ISIS' use of Dump.to services leads to the following standard reply from the company:

Dear visitor,

We are sorry that you have found improper content in our network. Please note that in order to process your abuse report and protect our users' privacy and integrity, we request that you provide a photo ID (ID/Driving License/Passport/...) within 24 hours by replying to this email.

NOTE: Your report will automatically be rejected if you do not submit the requested documents

Dump.To team.

To an extent, these new sharing portals empower ISIS's message by enhancing connectivity in the network and by adding more actors to its structure. From an ANT perspective, these new sharing portals serve as information intermediaries, allowing for fluid and anonymous information aggregation, curation, and dispersal. Publicly available, no-login anonymity allows links and content to be aggregated and mass-distributed continuously and with variable dynamic intensity based on ad-hoc requirements. These platform architectures allowed ISIS to maintain its flow of information, enlist new actors, and leverage its distributed affiliate and sympathizer networks to reach and mobilize potential jihadists around the world. Furthermore, as we suggested above, anonymous sharing platforms play a key role in the ongoing information warfare waged by ISIS. By using anonymous sharing platforms as black boxes in its information network, ISIS was able to route around social media account suspensions, and leverage these platforms as strategic information weapons serving its information operation objectives.

Importantly, as Krieger and Belliger point out, enhancing connectivity across the network generates information flows that are "increasingly difficult to control and steer".[45] It can be argued that anonymous sharing portals such as Sendvid.com, Justpast.it and Dump.to, "consisting neither of objects nor subjects, but actors and mediators",[46] act as enabling black box media hubs in ISIS' sinformation operation strategy.

In examining the TOS policies of social media networks and anonymous sharing portals in relation to ISIS use of their services, we found out that the financial capabilities and reputation of Twitter, Facebook and Google motivated them to take immediate actions against jihadi content. Meanwhile, the three anonymous sharing portals we examined have the overriding aim of expanding their user-base, and seem to have extremely limited resources to track down content disseminated by ISIS or other extremist networks who seek an easy, secure and fast medium of communication. The lack of resources makes policing and active removal of ISIS content prohibitively expensive to the proprietors of these platforms.

Moreover, as already mentioned, the coordinated campaign to police Twitter and YouTube for jihadist content has forced ISIS to shift its focus towards using anonymous sharing portals as primary tools for aggregation and dissemination of propaganda content. The anonymous functionality of these portals acts as a black box, obfuscating the logistics of ISIS's global propaganda network. When coupled with the ability to create hybrid weblinks and PDF files, which then can be disseminated across most social media, these platforms enable the rapid redistribution of content even under conditions of drastic policing and filtering. Even though anonymous sharing portals seem to have intensified their efforts to remove ISIS-related content, this does not solve the underlying problem as ISIS affiliates can still use these services as aggregators for content advertised on other anonymous social media platforms such as Telegram.

Conclusion

This article is a first step in examining the role of anonymous sharing portals in relation to the dissemination of ISIS propaganda and network communication in the aftermath of the global ISIS-related content degrading operation orchestrated by the most popular social media platforms. Our aim was to highlight the significance of anonymous sharing portals in terms of ISIS's propaganda campaign. We argued that anonymous sharing portals acted as black boxes for ISIS-related propaganda content, helping terror networks to sustain high-

intensity information flows and maintain global communication channels. The emergence of these portals has fundamentally changed the way ISIS distributes its propaganda globally, in that these platforms allow terror networks safe aggregation and the ability to disseminate content links rapidly across popular social media without suffering from efforts to degrade the network. This in turn has enabled terror networks to maintain global information operations even in the face of coordinated efforts at policing and filtering.

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Resources

Counterterrorism Bookshelf: 18 Books on Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects

Reviewed by Joshua Sinai

This column consists of two parts: an account of this reviewer's attendance at the books exhibit of the 132ⁿᵈ Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association in Washington, DC, which was held in early January 2018, and 18 capsule reviews of books from various publishers.

American Historical Association's 132ⁿᵈ Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, January 4-7, 2018.

The American Historical Association (www.historians.org) is the world's largest association of historians, with more than 12,000 members at universities, museums, libraries and archives, government agencies and historical organizations. The conference's speaker and paper presenter panels were of interest, but I chose to attend its books exhibition to find out about publishers and new books on terrorism- and counterterrorism-related subjects I may not have been aware of, including forthcoming books. Some 80 publishers, including academic journals and digital-based archival libraries, exhibited at the conference, which featured a wealth of books on display and catalogues to browse through, including meeting the publishers' manuscript acquisition editors and marketing staff. Especially interesting was the historical overview covered in the books – which also distinguish this conference from others that focus on current events from an academic perspective – which is crucial in understanding many of the issues that play out in current conflicts that have their origins in their predecessor historical periods.

Numerous well-known publishers were present, such as Harvard University Press, which featured an interesting book by Upinder Singh on *Political Violence in Ancient India* that examines the period from 600 BCE to 600 CE. Of special interest were publishers that I was not previously aware of their extensive listing of books that are relevant for providing an historical background for terrorism and counterterrorism studies. These include the University of Toronto Press (with books about the Canadian intelligence services' historical surveillance of subversives – a forerunner to their current counter-terrorism activities); McGill-Queen's University Press (which I found out had published a book by Brian Jenkins in 2008 on *The Fenian Problem: Insurgency and Terrorism in a Liberal State, 1858-1874*); Edinburgh University Press (which publishes numerous books on Islamic-related subjects such as a series edited by Robert Gleave and István Kristó-Nagy on *Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence in Islamic Thought* and Carool Kersten's *A History of Islam in Indonesia: Unity in Diversity*); Ohio University Press (which has an extensive publishing program on Africa-related topics such as Keren Weitzberg's *We Do Not Have Borders: Greater Somalia and the Predicaments of Belonging in Kenya* and *Dedan Kimathi on Trial: Colonial Justice and Popular Memory in Kenya's Mau Mau Rebellion*, edited by Julie MacArthur); the University Press of Kansas (which has an extensive publication program on military books, with titles such as Mervyn Edwin Roberts III's *The Psychological War for Vietnam, 1960-1968*, Ali Ahmad Jalali's *A Military History of Afghanistan: From the Great Game to the Global War on Terror* and Andrew M. Roe's *Waging War in Waziristan: The British Struggle in the Land of Bin Laden, 1849-1947*); and the University of Nebraska Press, whose backlist of books on terrorism and counterterrorism is enhanced by its absorption of the previously Washington, DC-based Potomac Books, which specializes in military and national security topics.

I was also interested in finding more out about books that discuss methods to conduct historical research. At its booth, Hackett Publishing Company, of Indianapolis, IN, featured a useful book by Stanley Chodorow on *Writing a Successful Research Paper: A Simple Approach*, which presents a strategy for conceptualizing and writing a research paper in the humanities and social sciences, including formulating a research question, developing

a thesis, and selecting materials from a range of disciplines.

Also of interest to researchers are archival research libraries that exhibited at the conference, such as "The Center for Research Libraries" (www.crl.edu), which enables researchers to conduct reviews of publications and analyses from thousands of sources; JSTOR (https://about.jstor.org/), which provides access to more than 10 million academic journal articles, books, and primary sources in some 75 disciplines, and "Top Hat" (www.tophat.com), which provides a software tool that enables instructors to create customized, interactive text-books and a framework for engaging students in a course, which would be useful for courses on terrorism- and counterterrorism- related subjects.

Books on Terrorism and Counterterrorism

Jeffrey M. Bale, *The Darkest Sides of Politics, I: Postwar Fascism, Covert Operations, and Terrorism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 516 pp., US $ 130.00 [Hardcover], US $ 44.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1387-8561-8.

In this collection, most of the chapters were previously published and represent the author's prodigious writings on these issues over the years. The collection's aim is to examine anti-democratic aspects of international politics, which the author terms the "dark sides" of politics. The volume's nine chapters present an overview of extremist ideologies and their relation to terrorism (with political ideologies claiming to provide the answers to the three interrelated questions of "what is wrong with the world," "who is responsible for those wrongs?," and "what needs to be done to correct those wrongs?") (p. 26); the phenomenon of political paranoia and its differentiation from political realism; post-World War II neo-fascist movements in Europe, such as the Nazi escape networks, the Mouvement Social Europeenne, Europäische Neu-Ordnung, Jeune Europe, Aginter Presse and the "strategy of tension" in Italy; the December 1970 "Borghese coup" in Rome; the May 1973 terrorist attack at Milan police's headquarters; an assessment of the terrorist "strategy of tension" in Italy; the ultranationalist right-wing in Turkey and the attempted assassination by Mehmet ali Agca of Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1981; and France's Nouvelle Resistance as an example of 'national revolutionary' groupuscules and the resurgence of 'left-wing fascism." The chapters are extensively footnoted. This collection is highly recommended for scholars who work on these issues. The author is Professor in the Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, CA.

Jeffrey M. Bale, *The Darkest Sides of Politics, II: State Terrorism, "Weapons of Mass Destruction," Religious Extremism, and Organized Crime* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 404 pp., US $ 130.00 [Hardcover], US $ 44.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1387-8563-2.

As in Volume I, most of this volume's chapters were previously published. Unlike the first volume, however, these chapters cover wider issues such as proposing a methodology to study the extent of terrorist groups' use by states as "proxies" through a seven-level degree of involvement (e.g., ranging from state-directed terrorism to state-sanctioned terrorism); a discussion of South Africa's previous involvement in the development of chemical and biological weapons; the previous covert involvement of the Unification Church in front organizations that promoted anti-Communist and other causes; identifying the pre-incident indicators that might throw light on the likelihood of apocalyptic groups resorting to conducting biological terrorist-type warfare (e.g., rhetorical indicators, expressions of interest, financial indicators, demographic indicators, such as the recruitment of specialists with scientific, military and intelligence capabilities; and behavioral indicators, such as the stockpiling of weapons); the strategy and possible employment by jihadist groups of weapons of mass destruction, which would be based on a combination of "fantasy ideology" and operational capability); an assessment of the relationship between Islamism and totalitarianism, based on the writings of leading Islamist ideologues; a critique of the denial by some academics of the link between Islamist ideology and jihadist terrorism, including denial of the role of Islam in justifying the atrocities committed by the Islamic State; an overview of Ahmad Hassan's involvement in the December 1999 plot to bomb the Los Angeles International Airport; and the author's critique of the notion of a "nexus" between terrorists and criminals. While most of the

volume's chapters are excellently analyzed and sourced, and can be considered as "best in breed," this reviewer found the last chapter to be the volume's weakest. First, while it is true, as the author claims, that, at least in theory, the motivational drivers of terrorists and criminals differ, in reality there are numerous examples of criminals who shared the extremist ideology of the terrorist groups they became involved with, as well as terrorist leaders, such as in the Lebanese Hizballah or Palestinian Hamas, who not only directed criminal enterprises, but personally "benefited from the spoils" to enrich themselves. In another criticism, the author is unfair, in this reviewer's opinion, when he criticizes the U.S. and its allies for "creating and maintaining distorted, overly simplistic images of sometimes phantom menaces" regarding the nexus between terrorism and criminality. (p. 365).

Richard J. Chasdi, *Corporate Security Crossroads: Responding to Terrorism, Cyberthreats, and Other Hazards in the Global Business Environment* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger/An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2018), 242 pp., US $ 48.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4408-3285-7.

With business corporations, especially those with multinational operations, threatened by physical terrorism and cyberattacks, this conceptually innovative book examines how their leaders can mitigate their risks by developing an infrastructure that is able to detect and thwart such risks before they occur. To accomplish these preventative measures, the author provides a political and historical context for understanding the terrorism and cyber threat, the nature of terrorist actors, whether as groups or lone wolves, and the environments in which terrorists operate worldwide, which also represent the regions where corporations operate. To examine these issues, the book is organized into seven chapters. The first three chapters provide a conceptual framework for understanding the evolution of terrorism throughout history and the risk it poses to corporations, which represent high order targets for terrorist attacks. The third chapter, in particular, presents an interesting methodology, which is based on conceptualizing a "terrorist system" as "composed of terrorist attacks, stressors (i.e., political events), political institutional responses to stressors and associated processes, stakeholders and their reactions, and other by-product political and economic effects associated with those interactive processes" (p. 55). This is followed by a risk management formula to enable a corporate security planners to assess the threat level of the environments in which they operate and how upgrading their security posture would lessen their overall vulnerability to attack. The impact of these security enhancements can be operationalized in what the author terms a "Total Security Measure" (TSM) index, which is capable of scoring "the total number of security points" on a scale of 10 to 150 points. (p. 58). In the fourth and fifth chapters, this "complexity systems analysis" is then applied to the cases of the mid-January 2013 attack against the Tigantourine gas plant attack in Amenas, Algeria, and the late November 2002 assaults in Mombasa, Kenya. The sixth chapter examines the spectrum of radicalization, which is accompanied by a valuable diagram on the continuum of radicalization types that range from what the author terms "apolitical radicalization" (i.e., common criminal activity) on the left, "political industrial espionage" in the middle, and "terrorism/cyberterrorism" on the right. (p. 119). This is followed by an examination of 15 hypotheses on the likelihood of different types of terrorist actors (including lone wolves and Islamist actors) to conduct attacks in various locations, their targeting types, and the extent to which some lone wolves had been previously known to law authorities, for example, through their prior involvement in criminal activities. In the concluding chapter, the author makes the useful recommendation that "business executives should compile a portfolio of past attacks in various environments where firms operate and organize and cross reference portfolio cases based on terrorist type, geographical/topography characteristics, resource endowments, and time interval to provide appraisals of terrorist group activities in international enterprise locales. Once such a portfolio of cases is produced, it should be possible to determine areas of multinational security vulnerability based on regular and discernible patterns that appear." (p. 154). The book's appendices include a quantitative analysis of business targets in terrorist attacks in Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger, and data on lone wolf terrorists in terms of their ideology and age. The author is professor of management and associate director of the Center for Complex and Strategic Decisions at Walsh College, in North Canton, Ohio.

Cynthia C. Combs, *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* [Eighth Edition] (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 430 pp., US $ 175.00 [Hardcover], US $ 79.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1386-7139-3.

This textbook provides an authoritative and comprehensive overview of terrorism and counter-terrorism. Building on the volume's previous editions, with the first edition published in 1997 and the last edition appearing in 2012, this edition provides new case studies and updated information on significant developments. The volume is divided into five thematic parts: Part I: "Terrorism in Perspective" (defining terrorism and the objectives of terrorist groups; types of terrorists, such as organized groups and lone wolves; the distinction between terrorism and guerrilla warfare; and the ideology of terrorist groups); Part II: "Who Are the Terrorists?" (profiling terrorists; radicalization into violent extremism; and state terrorism); Part III: "How Do they Operate?" (recruitment into terrorism; terrorism as "big business"; terrorism and criminality; training activities; tactics and weaponry, including weapons of mass destruction; phases of a terrorist attack; terrorism and media of communications; and types of terrorist groups that operate in the United States); Part IV: "Responses to Terrorism" (legal responses; the use of military force; protecting a country's critical infrastructure; and conducting risk assessment in estimating the terrorist threat); and Part V: "Current Trends and Future Prospects" (new trends such as the likelihood of the resort to weapons of mass destruction and cyber-weapons, and what the author terms "The Counterterrorism Learning Curve" in applying new technologies to deter and defeat the latest manifestations of terrorism). As a textbook, the chapters are pedagogically structured with an overview, conclusion, key terms, discussion, "analysis challenge," and suggested readings and resources. This volume is recommended as a highly useful primary textbook in courses on terrorism and counter-terrorism. The author is a Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte.

Fergal F. Davis and Fiona de Londras (Eds.), *Critical Debates on Counter-Terrorism Judicial Review* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 388 pp., US $ 129.00 [Hardcover], US $ 35.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1076-6296-4.

The contributors to this edited volume examine the important question whether a country's judicial review is an effective and appropriate way to regulate governmental counter-terrorism measures, especially during a period of emergency when a country is facing a terrorist threat. This question needs to be resolved because some believe that the judiciary lacks the expertise to examine such measures, while others believe that counter-terrorism measures need to be subjected to judicial review to maintain the principles of constitutionalism in a democracy. To examine these issues, following the editors' introductory overview, the book is divided into four parts: Part 1: "Judging Counter-Terrorism Judicial Review" (e.g., the role of regulatory constitutionalism in counter-terrorism judicial review, judicial review by a traditionally weak judiciary, the unintended consequences of right-friendly judgments, and the United States experience in counter-terrorism judicial review); Part 2: "Beyond Counter-Terrorism Judicial Review" (e.g., emergency law as administrative law, creating effective parliamentary scrutiny, the roles of independent reviewers in Australia and the United States, and public inquiries to fill accountability gaps that might be left by judicial and legislative review); Part 3: "Counter-terrorism Judicial Review in the Political Constitution" (e.g., balancing constitutional juridification and national security in the United Kingdom, and deference in counter-terrorism judicial review); and Part IV: "Internationalised Counter-terrorism Judicial Review" (e.g., the challenge for the Court of Justice of the European Union, post-9/11 UK counter-terrorism cases in the European Court of Human Rights, and challenges for accountability for counter-terrorism in the courts). Fergal F. Davis is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Law at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, and Fiona De Londras is a Professor of Law at Durham University, where she is also Co-Director of the Durham Human Rights Centre.

Dave Dilegge and Robert J. Bunker (Eds.), *Jihadi Terrorism, Insurgency, and the Islamic State: A Small Wars Journal Anthology* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2017), 706 pages, US $ 23.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-5245-7772-8.

This is the third volume in the *Small Wars Journal's* anthologies of articles that examine extremist Sunni Islamist terrorist and guerrilla insurgent groups. The volume, which is comprehensive in scope, consists of 49 chapters, a Foreword by Gary Anderson, a retired Marine Corps colonel and an expert on insurgency, an introductory overview by the two editors on "Jihadi Terrorism, Insurgency, and the Islamic State," and this reviewer's Postscript on "Ten Endgames of an Effective Counter-Insurgency Against IS." The chapters, which are written by leading military and civilian experts, cover topics such as the attempted democratization of Iraq by the United States from 2003 to 2014; "Confusing a 'Revolution' with 'Terrorism'"; the nature of the ISIL threat; the Islamists' political front in Afghanistan; the resilience of the insurgency by Boko Haram in Nigeria; Al Shabaab's resurgence in Somalia; the challenges presented by irregular war to the United States; the need to wage an ideological battle against ISIS; Turkey's battle with Kurdish militants instead of fighting ISIS; the resurgence of ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula; ISIS's military strategy for success; confronting ISIS in Libya; utilizing a "rational war strategy" and information campaign to defeat ISIS; and defeating ISIS by identifying its center-of-gravity (COG). Dave Dilegge is Editor-in-Chief of *Small Wars Journal* and Robert Bunker is an Adjunct Research Professor, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA.

Edward Dunbar, Amalio Blanco, and Desiree A. Crevecoeur-MacPhail, Eds., *The Psychology of Hate Crimes as Domestic Terrorism – U.S. and Global Issues. Three Volumes – Volume 1: Theoretical, Legal, and Cultural Factors; Volume 2: Assessment Issues with Victims and Offenders; Volume 3: Interventions, Treatment, and Management]* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger/An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2017), 1080 pp., US $ 194.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4408-3906-1 (set).

The contributors to this important three-volume handbook examine the theoretical, legal, and cultural factors associated with the psychology of hate crimes. Of particular interest to studies on terrorism are chapters such as, in the first volume, by Megan Sullaway on "Hate Crime, Violent Extremism, Domestic Terrorism – Distinctions without Difference," which discusses how psychoanalytic, cognitive behavioral, and other psychological theories have been applied to understand the role of hate crimes in terrorist warfare. In the second volume, the chapter by Edward Dunbar, Harry Krop, and Megan Sullaway on "Behavioral, Psychometric, and Diagnostic Characteristics of Bias-Motivated Homicide Offenders," provides a valuable coverage of diagnostic tools that can be used to assess the characteristics of bias-motivated offenders, such as MMPI-2 (Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory), PCL-R (Robert Hare's Psychopathy Checklist – Revised), HCR-20 (the 20-item Historical, Clinical, and Risk Scale), and BMP-SF (the Bias-Motivation Profile Screening Form). An interesting finding by this chapter's authors is that, as applied to many terrorists, "Victims were selected because they were members of a social group toward whom the offender held a discernible animus." (p. 212). The third volume's coverage of terrorism and hate crimes includes chapters such as by Edward Dunbar and Anneli Svensson on "Psychotherapeutic Treatment with Victims of Bias Aggression and Hate Violence: Identity, Coping, and 'Dealing with the Nonsense," which includes a valuable checklist-based survey to assess an individual's proclivity to engage in hate crimes; the chapter by Luis de la Corte Ibanez on "The Jihadi Path to hate and Terrorism: Questions and Answers for Risk Management," which also discusses factors that immunize a susceptible individual from becoming radicalized; the chapter by Michael Fingerle and Caroline Bonnes on "What Victims and Support Groups Say about Coping Successfully with Hate Crime on an Individual and a Social Level: Results of a Survey in Germany," which includes a useful diagram that outlines the "waves of harm" generated by hate crimes that extend from the initial victim to other targeted communities and societal norms and values (p. 228); and the chapter by Anthony J. Marsella on "The Paradoxical Consequences of U.S. Counterterrorism Programs: Jihadist Terrorist-Perceived Motives and Successes," which includes a valuable listing of jihadist terrorist perceptions of their successes, such as in "instilling high levels of fear and anxiety," compelling governments and businesses to expend resources on protective measures, reducing trust by populations against their governments, "fostering new meaning and pride for Islamic causes," and "encouraging global communities based on religion" (pp. 356-357). The insights by these and the other contributors to this three-volume set make it a valuable contribution to the literature on the role of the psychology of hate crimes in modern-day terrorism and the methods required to counter this phenomenon.

Christopher C. Harmon and Randall G. Bowdish, *The Terrorist Argument: Modern Advocacy and Propaganda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 352 pp., US $ 35.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-8157-3218-1.

This is a comprehensive account of how terrorists and other types of insurgents utilize a variety of communications techniques in their propaganda to spread their messages, radicalize and motivate their adherents, and demonize their adversaries. The communications technologies include old and new media such as radio and television broadcasts, newspapers, songs, books, e-magazines, the Internet and social media websites. Also discussed is how their messages are crafted in the digital age, often using the latest communications techniques to appeal to their adherents. To examine these issues, following the authors' introductory overview, a series of case studies are presented that are organized chronologically, based on the evolution of communications technologies utilized by terrorist groups over the years. The authors point out that such evolution is not linear, with even contemporary groups such as ISIS, who use Twitter, still "also run a radio station, as did Algeria's National Liberation Front in the late 1950s." (p. 3). In examining the evolution of the communications technologies employed over the years, the authors employ a valuable methodology with each case study, highlighting a specific technology terrorist groups had utilized during the period of its activity. Thus, the communications technology of radio is exemplified by Algeria's National Liberation Front (FLN); voice and lyrics by the Philippines-based New People's Army (NPA); newspapers by Irish Republican Army (IRA) type insurgents in Northern Ireland; television by the Lebanese Hizballah; the Internet by eco-terrorism groups such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF); books by jihadi ideologues - such as Abu Musab al-Suri's volume, *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance*. There is also advertising by the Iranian opposition group, The People's Mujahideen e Khalq (MEK); e-magazines by al Qaida's *Inspire* online publication; and social media by the Islamic State's multimedia websites. In the concluding chapter, the authors offer important insights such as "how much ideas matter. As do the ways they are communicated and the purposes they serve." (p. 249). As a result, they conclude, "We must study and analyze the modes and construction of terrorist communications, so as most effectively to counter terrorists' arguments." (p. 249). Christopher Harmon, a veteran academic expert on terrorism, had held the Horner Chair at the Marine Corps University Foundation, in Quantico, Virginia, and Randall Bowdish, a retired Navy captain, currently teaches at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Beatrice Heuser and Eitan Shamir (Eds.), *Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies: National Styles and Strategic Cultures* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 396 pp., US $ 99.99 [Hardcover], US $ 34.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-3165-0100-9.

As described by this volume's editors, its objective is to examine whether, in the case of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies, "national mentalities, martial preferences or strictures born of climate and geography compel a level of persistence in national style despite acknowledgment of lessons learned from others' experience in countering insurgents?" (p. 1). The volume's contributors examine how this thesis applies to their respective cases of insurgency and counterinsurgency. The volume is divided into three parts. Following an introductory overview by Beatrice Heuser and Jeannie Johnson on national styles and strategic culture, the first part, "COIN Strategies," covers topics such as the British counterinsurgency tradition, French counterinsurgency in the Algerian wars of 1830-1962, the nature of Russian counterinsurgency, insurgency and counterinsurgency in modern China, the United States experience in counterinsurgency (COIN) over 250 years of irregular war, German counterinsurgency in the Second World War, and Israel's counterinsurgency experiences from 1920 to 2013. The second part, "Insurgency Strategies," examines the national 'styles' of the Algerian National Liberation Army (ALN), the Irish Republican insurgency and terrorism from 1969 to 2007, the evolution of Palestinian resistance from the late 1950s to 2014, and the Taliban, particularly from 2001 to 2013. The final part, "Interaction," examines the cases of guerrilla and counter-guerrilla campaigns in Greece during the period of 1946 to 1949, insurrection and suppression in Syria between 2011 and 2016, and the nature of counterinsurgency during the Cold War. The concluding chapter by Beatrice Heuser and Eitan Shamir, "Universal Toolbox, National Styles or Divergence of Civilizations," synthesizes the contributors' findings into what they term a "toolbox" of "tools that are common to COIN and to insurgent movements." (p. 332). These tools consist of a

"brutal use of force – not only against the other side, collaborators with the other side, their dependents, but at times against neutral populations to frighten them into co-operation;" "burning villages and 'scorched earth' tactics; "rounding up and executing leaders: targeted assassinations"; "mutilations and rape"; "hostage taking and hostage execution"; "forced population transfers ('ethnic cleansing')"; "quadrillage versus external sanctuaries and external support"; "destruction of symbolic buildings or sites"; "bands', and 'counter-bands' and 'bandit-hunters.'" (pp. 332-356). To these largely historical tools, the authors highlight new tools by insurgents and counterinsurgents in the form of "air strikes (including by drones) and ground-to-air missiles, mobile phones, the use of the Internet (cyber) and other new technology." (p. 363). The authors conclude their chapter with the insightful caution that, in terms of national mentalities and styles, "how capable even advanced civilizations are of turning their backs on reason and progress, and towards more credulous, emotion-, dogma- and superstitious-driven world views. The resilience of habits and rules, excused by reference to religious, and their immunity to arguments of practicality, health, not to mention human rights, should serve as a warning: different approaches to violence and the value of the individual human being, and his or her essential rights, persist." (p. 370). This book's focus on how such national mentalities and styles have played out over the years in insurgencies and counterinsurgency campaigns around the world make it essential reading for understanding the wider context in which insurgents and their government adversaries battle each other. Beatrice Heuser occupies a Chair in International Relations at the University of Reading, Berkshire, UK. Eitan Shamir is a Senior Research Fellow at the Begin Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA) at Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel.

Sara Yael Hirschhorn, *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 368 pp., US $ 39.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-6749-7505-7.

In this revealing account, the author utilizes the interdisciplinary literature on Jewish-American immigration to Israel and her extensive field research in Israel, to examine how the "process of social and ideological acculturation, and the translation of concepts of frontiers across borders" applies to the origins and evolution of the largely right-wing ultra-nationalist Israeli settler enterprise in Israel's contentious West Bank since the June 1967 Six-Day War. The book's central theme is "the clash between Jewish-American settlers' liberal personas and their illiberal project." (p. 20). This theme is examined by answering questions such as who are they (largely previously secular Jews who became increasingly religious and believers in right-wing orthodox religious Zionism), how many live in the occupied territories (approximately 60,000, constituting 15 percent of the 400,000 Israeli citizens in the West Bank); where did they come from and settle (an estimated 66.2 percent came from America's East Coast, and primarily from the New York City region, 12.8 percent from the Midwest, and 11.3 percent from California and the West); and what roles have they played within the Israeli settler movement over the past five decades and what motivated their activity (some were settler 'entrepreneurs' who played important roles in establishing new settlements, such as Efrat and Tekoa, others became leading ideologues, while a small minority engaged in terrorist activity, such as Rabbi Meir Kahane, the founder of the *Kach* movement, Baruch Goldstein, the mass shooter of Muslim worshippers at Hebron, Yaakov "Jack" Teitel, who had bombed Muslim, Christian, and Jewish targets, and others). These issues are examined within the wider context of political developments since the 1967 War, including how these American Israelis regarded watershed events such as the Oslo Accords and the two Palestinian intifadas in the late 1980s and early 2000s. The author's conclusions include the following important finding: "while scholarship on U.S. ethnic lobbies has emphasized their role as net exporters of liberal ideology and as stabilizing influences both at home and abroad, American-Israeli immigrants within the settlement movement have contributed to making Israel less democratic while increasing conflict in the United States." (p. 228). This book is an important contribution to the scholarship on the radicalization of such individuals into extremism, with some of them being radicalized into terrorism. The author is University Research Lecturer and a Fellow in Israel Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies and Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

Michael B. Kraft and Edward Marks, *U.S. Counterterrorism: From Nixon to Trump – Key Challenges, Issues, and Responses* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2018), 216 pp., US $ 69.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4987-0615-5.

This is an excellent and authoritative overview of the evolution of the United States' Government's "war on terrorism," beginning with the Nixon administration and ending with the Obama administration, including a brief account of the Trump administration's first year. As described by the authors, "We begin with an overview of the issues, including the evolution in policy and programs as each administration faced the changing terrorist challenge, and a chronological review of the changing and evolving character of the terrorist challenges, U.S. policies, response, and programs during this period." (p. xvi). Significant themes in the evolution of the terrorist threat include the transformation of the nature of terrorism from groups that were "secular with relatively narrow goals, to those such as ISIS, which had broader religious cum nationalist goals, including restoring an Islamist caliphate,"(p. xvi). There is also attention paid to transformative technological innovations such as the Internet, which plays an important role in radicalization, recruitment, modus operandi, and the rise of lone-wolf adherents. These issues are discussed in the books six chapters, which cover topics such as an overview of the evolution of the terrorist threat over the years; how the U.S. Government defined and legislated its approach to countering terrorism, including imposing sanctions on terrorism sponsoring nations and individual entities; the reforms and reorganization of the U.S. government's approach by the Bush administration in the aftermath of 9/11's attacks; policy and program approaches by the Obama administration, such as its countering violent extremism (CVE) program; and policy challenges facing the Trump administration. Both authors are retired high-level U.S. State Department officials in counterterrorism, which is reflected in their practitioner-based insights throughout the book. This includes their recommendation that best practices in counterterrorism include "the need for continuing strengthening international cooperation, intelligence-gathering and sharing (both domestically and internationally) and continued use and refinement of the practical measures tool kit, such as the Antiterrorism Assistance Programs to help train foreign civilian law enforcement officials, and domestic training programs for U.S. law enforcement, CVE outreach to local communities, especially Muslim communities, without alienating them by harsh rhetoric…." (pp. 121-122). Especially valuable for researchers is the inclusion, in illustrating the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism policy over the years, of original texts, an extensive list of key documents, speeches, and testimony on counterterrorism issues. This reviewer is listed in the book's acknowledgments as helping the authors with their bibliography.

Ronit Marzan, *Yasser Arafat: Rhetoric of Alone Leader* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Resling Publishing, 2016), 350 pp., US $ 22.00 [Paperback], www.resling.co.il/http://www.resling.co.il/book.asp?series_id=&book_id=918&back=catalog.

This conceptually innovative and extensively researched account addresses the importance of the need to comprehend the language and culture of an adversary, in order for Israelis to understand the nature of the Palestinian leadership and society, as embodied by Yasir Arafat, the late Palestinian leader. In the case of the Palestinians, the author adds, such an approach will explain the Palestinian leadership's need to use religious symbols to legitimize its leadership and enable them to move from armed struggle to peace negotiations without losing their base of support. To examine this thesis, the book's chapters discuss the historical background of the Islamic reform movements that influenced Arafat's political-nationalist outlook, the relations between Arafat and his Muslim Arab environment, the relations between Arafat and the Western world, which he had sought to win over to support the Palestinian national movement, and the complex relations between Arafat and the Islamic and the secular nationalist factions that operated among the Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian Diaspora. Also covered are the discussions on the role of religion in Palestinian society (including in schools and educational materials, books, and movies), the role of religion within Palestinian military factions, including Arafat's Fatah armed wing, and how this evolved until the first Palestinian intifada in the late 1980s, and, finally, the nature of the various rhetoric, semantics, and languages used by Arafat to express himself in presenting the case of the Palestinians for independence and nationhood to his various audiences, including Israelis. The concluding chapter synthesizes the author's findings, offering insights such as that despite Arafat's early indoctrination at his home in Cairo in the teachings of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,

he was always ambivalent about jihadism as warfare, which enabled him to become the only Palestinian leader at the time to agree to far-reaching concessions as part of a political settlement with Israel. This was due, the author explains, because the "big jihad" (also termed the "peace of the brave") of establishing a Palestinian state was preferable to the "small jihad" of armed struggle. Despite these important accomplishments, the author concludes, Arafat's tragic failure was his over-use of religious symbolism, which caused him to fail in his transition from a leader of a national liberation movement, who can afford to use such symbolism, to the different requirements a leader of a state, who had "difficulty distinguishing between dream and reality, and remained a prisoner of symbols that excited the masses instead of agreeing to receive part of the Palestinian nation on which he had dreamed." (p. 220). Hopefully the academic and practitioner insights shaping Arafat's political biography (which also affect many of the Palestinians' current leaders) that are presented in this important book, which currently is only available in its Hebrew edition, will eventually be available in an English-language publication. The author, a retired analyst on Palestinian affairs in Israeli intelligence services, teaches at Haifa University and other educational institutions.

Hilary Matfess and Michael Miklaucic (Eds.), *Beyond Convergence: World Without Order* (Washington, DC: Center for Complex Operations/Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University, 2016/U.S. Government Publishing Office), 397 pp., No price listed [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-1609-3613-5. Available as a pdf copy at: http://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/books/Beyond%20Convergence/BEYOND%20CONVERGENCE%20%20World%20Without%20Order%20.pdf?ver=2016-10-25-125406-170.

The contributors to this edited volume examine the impact of the convergence of the disparate threats of terrorism, criminality, corrupt economies, exploitation of cyberspace for illicit purposes, and other problem areas in producing a "global crisis of governance." To examine these issues, the book is divided into four sections: I. "Slouching Toward Dystopia" (e.g., the global crisis of governance, how "plutocrats and criminals" are challenging the Westphalian State, the nature of the revolution introduced by the Islamic State, the volatility of financial markets); II. "One Network" (e.g., the dynamics of cooperation between terrorists and criminal organizations, Hizballah's criminal networks, and how the Islamic State has created an organizational base for its survival); III. "Pandora" (e.g., the exploitation of social media in a "hyper-connected world," the intersection of protection economics, financial flows, and violence, illicit trade; and the evolution of cybercrime); and IV. "A Toolbox for the 21st Century" (e.g., frameworks to facilitate cooperation among countries, countering the convergence of illicit networks through public-private partnerships, adapting to the new battlefield against asymmetric actors "who do not play by the Clausewitzian rule book" (p. 354) and whose information operations need to be countered strategically, and the need by governments for a network-of-networks to counter their asymmetric adversaries' own networks). As this volume was produced by a defense university, it would have been useful for the editors to have added a concluding chapter to summarize the contributors' findings into a single tool kit to enable military campaign planners and action officers to see how the convergence of these disparate threats might play out in the foreign operational environments in which they operate.

Gerry Nagtzaam, *From Environmental Action to Ecoterrorism? Towards a Process Theory of Environmental and Animal Rights Oriented Political Violence* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), 368 pp., $ US 135.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-8498-0119-5.

This book attempts to use the case of eco-terrorists to examine the various trigger points for moving from one stage of radicalism to the next, how they select their targets for attack, and the likelihood for an escalation in their environmental political action if "ecological consciousness" becomes widespread among a larger public. The account primarily focuses on eco-militant organizations and groups in three countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. To examine these issues, the author discusses how to define terrorism; the categories of left-wing/right-wing and "special interest" terrorist groups; defining eco-terrorism; and examines whether "ecotage" violence in destroying property qualifies as a terrorist act. Also interesting is the discussion of leading theories to explain the process of radicalization, especially Ehud Sprinzak's delegitimization theory,

which consists of a crisis of confidence stage, a conflict of legitimacy stage, an upswing in political action (i.e. violence) stage, and the final stage, the crisis of legitimacy, in which the activists make a complete transformation into violence. This theory is then applied by the author to examine whether and how the eco-militant organizations and groups followed the Sprinzak trajectory into violence. To examine this thesis, following the introductory overview, the book discusses the nature and trajectories of groups such as the Animal Liberation Front, Earth First!, the Earth Liberation Front, and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. The author concludes that "While time will tell if Sprinzak's conception of political violence is correct and ecoterrorist groups will progress to the third 'crisis of legitimacy' stage, with the exception of the ALF there appears little evidence to date that the groups examined, except in isolated instances, have reached that threshold." (p. 308). He ends the book on a warning note that if these activists perceive an imminent "global environmental catastrophe or a perception that the problem of anthropomorphic climate change is not being suitably addressed, and despairing of mainstream political solutions, they may choose to adopt violence against fellow humans as a legitimate tactic." (p. 308). This book is an important contribution to the literature on eco-terrorism and the application of radicalization theories to explaining possible trajectories into violence. The author is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law at Monash University, Australia.

Richard A. Nielsen, *Deadly Clerics: Blocked Ambition and the Paths to Jihad* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp., US $ 94.99 [Hardcover], US $ 29.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1084-0405-1.

This account explores the academic culture of jihadist clerics in general, and the factors that drive them to turn to such a religiously extremist theology at early points in their careers. To explain their pathway to becoming leading advocates of extremist violence, the author tests the hypothesis, which is adapted from Ted Robert Gurr's notion of "relative deprivation," that, for clerics turned jihadists, the mechanism of blocked academic ambition early on in their careers within established Muslim religious institutions plays a major role in their adopting militant jihadism. As the author writes in the book's blurb, which well summarizes his argument, "As long as clerics' academic ambitions remain attainable, they are unlikely to espouse violent jihad. Clerics who are forced out of academia are more likely to turn to jihad for two reasons: jihadist ideas are attractive to those who see the system as turning against them, and preaching a jihad ideology can help these outsider clerics attract supporters and funds." To test this hypothesis, the author utilizes evidence from sources such as large-scale statistical analysis of texts and network data obtained from the Internet, case studies of clerics' lives, and ethnographic participant observations at sites in Cairo, Egypt. Despite the book's excellent application of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to generate new findings, the author's thesis can be questioned, since it ignores the fact that some of the clerics under examination may have been blocked academically due to their own professional shortcomings and that their turn to jihadist militancy was due to their susceptibility to be drawn to extremism in the form of such imperialistic ideologies to begin with. The author's conclusion can also be questioned as utopian when he writes that a successful counter-radicalization program should be based on co-opting such extremist-inclined clerics as opposed to arresting and imprisoning them, since it would provide them "with access to better educational networks and, ultimately, the possibility for fulfilling and secure career prospects." (p. 177). The book's appendices include valuable syllabi of instructional materials on jihadi theology and the methodology used by the author to conduct his empirical research. The author is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA.

Donald Rooum [Vernon Richards, editor], *What is Anarchism: An Introduction* [Second Edition] (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016), 160 pp., US $ 14.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-6296-3146-2.

This is an important selection of writings by leading anarchist theorists over the past 150 years. As explained by the volume's original editor, anarchists believe "in a society in which all individuals can do whatever they choose, except interfere with the ability of other individuals to do what they choose. This ideal is called *anarchy*, from the Greek *anarchia*, meaning absence of government" (p. 2). Besides this meaning, anarchy "is also used to mean unsettled government, disorderly government, or government at its crudest in the form of intimida-

tion by marauding gangs ("military anarchy")" (p. 3). Anarchism is also associated with terrorism, with the tactic of terrorism used anarchists, with the editor pointing out that "Only a small minority of terrorists have ever been anarchists, and only a small minority of anarchists have ever been terrorists" (p. 5). In another important distinction, the editor points out that anarchists include pacifists, advocates of class violence, atheists, and mystics. The rest of the volume consists of selections by leading anarchists ideologues such as Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta, Emma Goldman, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon as well as others.

Deepak Tripathi, *Breeding Ground: Afghanistan and the Origins of Islamist Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2011), 256 pp., US $ 26.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-5979-7530-8.

This book's objective is to trace the origins of Islamist violence during the Afghan conflict and explore its impact on the phenomenon of such terrorism abroad. To examine these issues, the author first discusses three leading theoretical driving forces behind terrorism in terms of rational choice (e.g., the adoption of violence as a chosen strategy to achieve a group's goals), psychological factors (e.g., the choice of violence is rooted in an individual's psychological system), and structural factors (e.g., external causes in the environment, such as political, cultural, social, and economic factors are, crucial in driving individuals to embark on terrorist warfare). Following a discussion of Afghanistan under pro-Soviet rule and its overthrow by the United States-backed *mujahideen,* the account shifts into an analysis of the nature of the Taliban, the evolution of the Taliban – Pakistani ISI alliance, Taliban rule over Afghanistan, and the evolution of al Qaida in Afghanistan. The concluding chapter discusses how the three theoretical driving forces behind terrorism played out in Afghanistan, with an insightful observation that all three were not only present, but cumulatively produced a deteriorating society characterized by a violent culture "in which violence permeates all levels of society and becomes part of human thinking, behavior, and way of life." (p. 137). These driving forces need to be understood, the author points out that "Effective counterterrorism efforts require an understanding of the culture, society, and local conditions, together with an institutional arrangement that enjoys broad consent in society." (p. 141). In a prescient observation, the author concludes that "In the absence of a coordinated strategy, the thought of victory in the war against terror is a triumph of hope over reality." (p. 141). The book's appendices include a useful chronology of the Afghan conflicts from 1978 to 2001 and a bibliographical essay on leading books that cover the Afghan conflicts. The author is a former BBC journalist who was based in Afghanistan in the early 1990s, who has also reported from Pakistan, Syria, Sri Lanka, and India. He currently lives near London, England.

Charles Webel and Mark Tomass (Eds.), *Assessing the War on Terror: Western and Middle Eastern Perspectives* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 308 pp., US $ 155.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-1382-0456-0.

The contributors to this edited volume examine the effectiveness and ethical basis of the Western governments' strategies and tactics in the global war on terrorism (GWOT) since 9/11 within the framework of "official mainstream constructions of 'terrorists,' 'terrorism,' and "counterterrorism' as powerful rhetorical frames used to sell the GWOT and the justifications for initiating and continuing it." (p. 1). Within this context, some of the key questions examined by the volume's contributors include how terrorism is defined, how and why individuals in the West are radicalized, what are effective counterterrorism and antiterrorism strategies, what have been the "human and financial costs" of the GWOT, is it possible to negotiate with terrorist groups such as the Taliban, al Qaida, and ISIS, and how do terrorist groups end. To examine these issues, the volume is divided into four parts, with each part introduced by a short chapter by Mark Tomass, the co-editor. The four parts discuss topics such as Part I's "Framing and Assessing the War on Terror" (including a chapter by Noam Chomsky on "The Evil Scourge of Terrorism"); Part II's "Hearing From the Victims of Terror-Inflicted Regions" (including a chapter by Sher Mohammed Khan on "Winning the Hearts and Minds of the Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Northwest Pakistan with Altruism, Public Health and Development, Not by Terrorism and Counterterrorism"); Part III's "Calculating the Costs of the War on Terror" (including chapters on how ethical and effective is the GWOT and Laurie Calhoun's "Terror From Above and Within: The Hidden Cultural and Political Costs of Lethal Drones"); and Part IV's "Analyzing, Negotiating With, and Ending Terror Groups"

(with chapters by Scott Atran and Mark Tomass on "A Dialogue on Why Western Youth Are Attracted to ISIS," Johan Galtung on "Negotiating with the Taliban: Not War on Terrorism, But Dialogue for Solutions," Casey Douglas Carr on a Belgian approach to counter-terrorism measures, and Audrey Kurth Cronin's "The 'War on Terrorism': What Does it Mean to Win?"). This reviewer found Cronin's chapter especially noteworthy as it discussed, within the context of the United States' military campaign against al Qaida, four symptoms that are "common to all prolonged wars: means became ends, tactics became strategy, boundaries were blurred, and the search for a perfect peace replaced reality." (p. 256). In the concluding chapter, on "Ending the War of the World: Antiterrorism as a Viable Alternative to the GWOT," Charles Webel appears to misunderstand the definition of anti-terrorism when he writes that "Antiterrorism is an ethical and possibly effective alternative to the largely unethical and ineffective counterterrorism strategy of the GWOT." (p. 282). This is because in the military discipline of combating terrorism, counterterrorism consists of offensive measures, while antiterrorism consists of defensive measures – which can be similarly [and justifiably, in this reviewer's judgment] coercive in the sense that they involve law enforcement and intelligence components – but not, as Webel argues, in any way an "ethical" alternative to counterterrorism, although both types of measures can be executed with an appropriate degree of ethical underpinning. As illustrated by the chapters' topics, much of this volume can be considered highly polemical, with the exception of Cronin's insightful analysis. Charles Webel is Chair and Professor of Peace Studies at Chapman University, in Orange, CA. Mark Tomass is an economist and instructor at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

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Bibliography: Social Aspects of Terrorism

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

[Bibliographic Series of Perspectives on Terrorism - BSPT-JT-2018-1]

Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on the social aspects of terrorism. Individual-, organizational-, and community-level aspects are considered. Though focusing on recent literature, the bibliography is not restricted to a particular time period and covers publications up to January 2018. The literature has been retrieved by manually browsing more than 200 core and periphery sources in the field of Terrorism Studies. Additionally, full-text and reference retrieval systems have been employed to expand the search.

Keywords: bibliography; resources; literature; terrorism; social aspects; individuals; social networks; organizations; communities; demographics; social network analysis

NB: All websites were last visited on 21.01.2018. - See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

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Note

Whenever retrievable, URLs for freely available versions of subscription-based publications have been provided. Thanks to the Open Access movement, self-archiving of publications in institutional repositories or on author homepages for free public use (so-called Green Open Access) has become more common. Please note, that the content of Green Open Access documents is not necessarily identical to the officially published versions (e.g., in case of pre-prints); it might therefore not have passed through all editorial stages publishers employ to ensure quality control (peer review, copy and layout editing etc.). In some cases, articles may only be cited after getting consent by the author(s).

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Bibliography: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Part 2)

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To keep up with the rapidly changing political events, more recent publications have been prioritised during the selection process. The literature has been retrieved by manually browsing more than 200 core and periphery sources in the field of Terrorism Studies. Additionally, full-text and reference retrieval systems have been employed to expand the search.

Keywords: bibliography; resources; literature; terrorism; Israel; Palestine; Gaza; Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Arab-Israeli conflict; peace process

NB: All websites were last visited on 21.01.2018. This subject bibliography is the second part of a two-part bibliography (Part 1 was published in Issue 8[5]). To avoid duplication, this compilation only includes literature not contained in Part 1. However, meta-resources, such as bibliographies, were included in both parts. - See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

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Note

Whenever retrievable, URLs for freely available versions of subscription-based publications have been provided. Thanks to the Open Access movement, self-archiving of publications in institutional repositories or on author homepages for free public use (so-called Green Open Access) has become more common. Please note, that the content of Green Open Access documents is not necessarily identical to the officially published versions (e.g., in case of pre-prints); it might therefore not have passed through all editorial stages publishers employ to ensure quality control (peer review, copy and layout editing etc.). In some cases, articles may only be cited after getting consent by the author(s).

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Recent Online Resources for the Analysis of Terrorism and Related Subjects

Complied and selected by Berto Jongman

Most of the items included below became available online in January and February 2018. They are categorised under twelve headings:

1. Non-Religious Terrorism: Actors, Groups, Incidents and Campaigns

2. Religious (mainly Jihadi) Terrorism: Actors, Groups, Incidents and Campaigns

3. Terrorist Strategies and Tactics

4. Conflict, Crime and Political Violence other than Terrorism

5. Counter-Terrorism – General

6. Counter-Terrorist Strategies, Tactics and Operations

7. State Repression and Civil War at Home and Clandestine & Open Warfare Abroad

8. Prevention and Preparedness Studies (including Countering Violent Extremism, De-Radicalization, Counter-Narratives)

9. Intelligence

10. Cyber Operations and Information Warfare

11. Risk & Threat Assessments, Forecasts, Analytical Studies

12. Also Worth Reading

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200+ Academic Theses (Ph.D. and MA) on Terrorism- and Counter-Terrorism - related Issues, written in French, Spanish, Italian, German, Dutch, and Norwegian

Compiled and selected by Ryan Scrivens

Abstract

This bibliography contains doctoral dissertations (Ph.D.) and Master's (MA) Theses on issues relating to terrorism and counter-terrorism. Titles were retrieved manually by browsing the Open Access Theses and Dissertations (OATD) database, using the search terms 'terrorisme', 'terrorismo', and 'Terrorismus'. More than 1,000 entries were evaluated, of which slightly more than 200 were ultimately selected for this list. All theses are open source. However, readers should observe possible copyright restrictions. The title entries are 'clickable', allowing access to full texts.

Bibliographic entries are divided into the following sub-sections:

1. *Terrorism Actors, Groups, Incidents, Campaigns, and Consequences*

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3. *Counter-Terrorism Policy, Legislation, Law, and Prosecution*

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the title of his doctoral dissertation is Understanding the collective identity of the radical Right online: A mixed-methods approach. He has since been awarded a Horizon Postdoctoral Fellowship at Concordia University, working with Project SOMEONE to develop ways to build resilience against radicalization leading to violent extremism and hatred.

Announcement: Award for Best Ph.D. Thesis 2017

31 March 2018 Deadline for Submissions Approaching Fast

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) seeks to enhance the quality of research in the field of Terrorism Studies. For this purpose, TRI established in 2014 an Annual Award for the Best Doctoral Dissertation on Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism. Among the incoming submissions of Ph.D. theses, the TRI Award jury identifies three finalists and from these the winner. With the present announcement, a call is being made for sending to the jury Ph.D. theses submitted or defended at an academic institution in the calendar year 2017. Doctoral theses in the field of terrorism- and counterterrorism studies can be submitted either by the author or by the academic supervisor. Theses should be sent in electronic form as a Word document to the chairman of the jury at < apschmid@ terrorismanalysts.com >, together with a cover letter (1-3 pp.), highlighting the merits of the submitted Ph.D. thesis. Submissions must be in English (or translated into English).

The deadline for entries is 31 March, 2018. The TRI Award jury - consisting of Prof. Edwin Bakker, Prof. Clark McCauley, Prof. James Forest and Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid - will evaluate and compare the submissions, based on criteria such as originality in terms of introducing new data, theory or methodology, novelty and uniqueness of findings as well as degree of in-depth research. The chairman of the jury will inform the three finalists identified by the jury's evaluation process before the end of July 2018. The winner among them will be announced during the summer of 2018 and can expect an Award of US $1,000.- plus a certificate of achievement, signed by the President of the Terrorism Research Initiative, Robert Wesley, acknowledging the granting of the TRI thesis Award. The other two finalists will receive a certificate of achievement. For all three finalist theses, TRI will assist the authors in finding a publisher for their theses. The winner of the 2017 TRI Award will also be invited to submit an article for publication in *Perspectives on Terrorism*, summarising the winning thesis' main findings.

Words of Appreciation from the Editors

Perspectives on Terrorism is entirely the product of volunteers – academics, professionals and practitioners who for eleven consecutive years have been donating their time and providing their expertise to keep this free and independent online journal alive and increasing in circulation to nearly 8,000 subscribers today. While the main burden of producing six issues per year rests on the shoulders of the Editorial Team and those of the Editorial Board members, who do much of the reviewing, there are many others who assist us in producing timely Articles and Research Notes every two months. The members of the Editorial Team and the Editorial Board alone would not be able to handle and review the growing number of articles that reach us now on an almost daily basis. We could not cope without the selfless help of our esteemed external reviewers who read and critique the articles that reach us. Once a year we wish to thank these anonymous reviewers publicly by listing their names. For reviewing articles submitted to *Perspectives on Terrorism* in 2017, we sincerely thank the more than 60 individuals listed here:

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Perspectives on Terrorism (PoT) is a joint publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), headquartered in Vienna, Austria, and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) of Leiden University, Campus The Hague. PoT is published six times per year as a free, independent, scholarly peer-reviewed online journal available in both HTML and PDF versions at http://www.terrorismanalysts.com and in PDF version (only) at https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism.

PoT seeks to provide a platform for established scholars as well as academics and professionals entering the interdisciplinary fields of Terrorism-, Political Violence- and Conflict Studies.

The editors invite researchers and readers to:

- present their perspectives on the prevention of, and response to, terrorism and related forms of violent conflict;

- submit to the journal accounts of evidence-based, empirical scientific research and analyses;

- use the journal as a forum for debate and commentary on issues related to the above.

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