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About Perspectives on Terrorism

Welcome from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume XII, Issue 3 (June 2018) of Perspectives on Terrorism, available at our new online home: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/pot>. Please note that the journal's old website (<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com>) will remain online as an archives only site for a while longer, but will eventually be closed down. Readers will want to update bookmarks and reference links accordingly.

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 over 7,900 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 Deven Parekh, Amarnath Amarasingam, Lorne Dawson and Derek Ruths offers a detailed critique of Twitter data collection methods and propose suggestions for improving the collection of data in future research on terrorists use of social media. Then Ariel Koch examines the impact of Islamic State beheading videos among jihadists and other extremists. Next, Adesoji Adelaja, Abdullahi Labo and Eva Penar examine how the Nigerian public's views about the root causes and objectives of Boko Haram differ from those of the government. And in our final article of this issue a team of researchers at the International Center for Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE's) report on their recent Facebook ad-campaign aimed at raising awareness about the realities of living under ISIS and protecting vulnerable potential recruits from considering joining.

This issue of Perspectives on Terrorism also features a Research Note by Kendall Bianchi, examining how Hezbollah uses interpretations of dreams as a source of inspiration and justification for martyrdom. The issue also contains a Special Correspondence by Jacob Zenn, responding to a critique of his work published in the April 2018 issue of the journal.

In the Resources section readers will find a column of 50 short book reviews by Joshua Sinai, followed by an extensive bibliography compiled by the journal's Information Resources Editor, Judith Tinnes. This is followed by a detailed list of recent online, open-source publications on terrorism and counterterrorism, compiled by web analyst Berto Jongman, and a new conference monitor/calendar of events compiled by our new Assistant Editor for Conference Monitoring Reinier Bergema.

The current issue of Perspectives on Terrorism was jointly prepared by Editor James J.F. Forest and Associate Editor Bart Schuurman, with assistance from Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid, the Editor-in-Chief of the journal.

Articles

Studying Jihadists on Social Media: A Critique of Data Collection Methodologies

by Deven Parekh, Amarnath Amarasingam, Lorne Dawson, Derek Ruths

Abstract

In this article, we propose a general model of data collection from social media, in the context of terrorism research, focusing on recent studies of jihadists. By analyzing Twitter data collection methods in the existing research, we show that the methods used are prone to sampling biases, and that the sampled datasets are not sufficiently filtered or validated to ensure reliability of conclusions derived from them. Alternatively, we propose some best practices for the collection of data in future research on jihadist using social media (as well as other kinds of terrorist groups). Given the similarity of the methodological challenges posed by research on almost all social media platforms, in the context of terrorism studies, the critique and recommendations offered remain relevant despite the recent shift of most jihadists from Twitter to Telegram and other forms of social media.

Keywords: jihadist, terrorism, data collection, graph sampling, network sampling, dataset, Twitter, social media

Introduction

In recent years, jihadist terrorist movements have used varying social media platforms to organize, coordinate operations, and spread propaganda. Significant research has focused on understanding these online activities. Such research naturally requires the collection and analysis of social media data produced primarily by jihadist users. The findings of such studies are only as valid as the data they are based on – which is the topic of the present study. In a comprehensive survey of the largest body of research on online jihadist activity – that of jihadist activity on Twitter – we find a wide array of data collection methods. In the majority of cases, we find that these studies fail to acknowledge limitations of the data collection methods, raising serious concerns about the validity of their findings. Similar issues exist in studies that consider other social media platforms. There are known standards of practice and established methodologies for addressing these issues in the field of computer science that it would be useful for scholars of terrorism to become familiar with and apply to future work.

In order to ground our discussion, we first present a generalized framework for data collection, which can be used to understand the methods used by any study of terrorist behavior on a social media platform. We then show how decisions within this framework yield specific kinds of systemic biases in downstream analysis. In this article we extensively consider the case of Twitter – primarily, because it is the platform on which most studies have been run. However, our framework and conclusions are also useful for researchers working and doing research on other platforms, such as Facebook, Gab.ai, or Telegram. The latter, particularly, has been extensively used by a variety of jihadist groups around the world since at least 2015.[1]

In this article, we make three core contributions. First, we identify common methods of data collection found in the existing literature that studies jihadists on Twitter. As part of this exercise, we propose a general framework of data collection that consists of four phases - initialization, expansion, filtering, and validation – which impact the properties (and quality) of data produced. Our second contribution uses this four-phase formalization to analyze limitations of the data collection methods of existing terrorism research and their implications for their results/findings. Finally, based on these analyses, we recommend best practices to improve the quality of sampled social media data, and accordingly derived results, in terrorism research.

We believe that it would be helpful to clarify some of the terminology used throughout this article. First, the research we examine in this article focuses on different groups involved in terrorism, such as ISIS fighters in

Syria, or ISIS foreign fighters from Europe – in this article we use general terms such as “jihadists” to include all groups or entities involved in extremist or radical activities and propaganda related to Islamism on Twitter. “Irrelevant accounts” are non-jihadist accounts, such as news reporters, researchers and ordinary Twitter users that may follow or be related to jihadist accounts on Twitter, but are not jihadists and are not directly involved in jihadist activities.

Social Media Data and Social Graph

Before delving into the substance of our study, here we provide a brief overview of the structure of social media data – with particular attention to the *social graph*.

Data on a social media platform typically consists of user profile information, each user’s published content (such as text, images and other media), as well as details of relationships or interactions between the users on the platform. In the context of Twitter, the platform on which we will focus in this study, most users have public profiles (meaning anyone on the internet can see them). A single piece of published content is called a *tweet*, which can contain text, images, links, and mentions of other users. Finally, relationships are formally declared in the form of *follower-followee pairs* (discussed further below).

In many research studies, particularly in terrorism research, it is important to take into account interactions among social media users. Such interactions are typically modelled using a *social graph*. A social graph, also called a social network, is a mathematical structure consisting of a set of nodes representing social media users and a set of edges representing relationships or interactions among those users. In the context of Twitter, the set of nodes represent Twitter user accounts. The question, of course, is what “counts” as a relationship. One of the common relationships used to build a Twitter social graph – and the primary technique used by the online jihadist literature we consider here – is that of one user *following* another user’s account. Figure 1(a) shows a representation of such a graph, where circles are “nodes” representing Twitter users and arrows are “edges” such that an arrow from node A to node C shows that user C is following user A on Twitter.

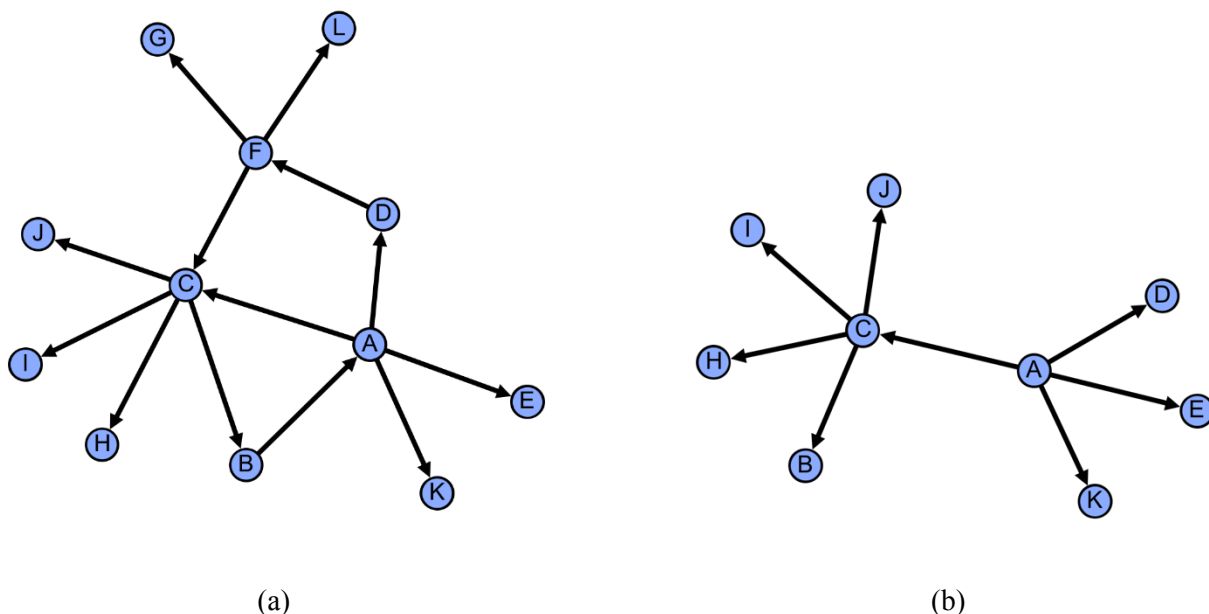


Figure 1. (a) An example of Twitter social graph created using the Follower relationship. Each node represents a Twitter user. An edge or arrow from node A to C, for example, shows that user C is following user A on Twitter. (b) A graph sampled from that in (a) using snowball sampling with starter nodes A and C.

Neighbors of a node A are all the nodes to which there is an edge from the node A. In case of the Twitter example, neighbors of the node A would be all the users following the user A on Twitter.

Twitter has three primary kinds of relationships that are used in terrorism research to build a social graph representing jihadist accounts and their interactions.

1. *Follower*. On Twitter a user A is able to *follow* another user B so that the user A can track latest updates and tweets by the user B. Users that follow a user B are called *followers* of the user B. Followers of a jihadist Twitter account may typically include other jihadist accounts, supporters of jihadist groups, potentially radicalizing individuals, as well as irrelevant accounts such as researchers and news reporters.
2. *Friend*. This is an inverse relationship to that of *Follower*. In other words, if user A is a follower of user B on Twitter, then user B is said to be a *Friend* of the user A. Friends of a user A are all the users that are being followed the user A. Friends of a jihadist account may include other prominent jihadist accounts as well as other irrelevant account if the jihadist accounts is attempting to appear as a normal account or posing as a researcher.
3. *Retweet and Mention*. On Twitter, a user can *retweet* (i.e., share) another user's tweet or can *mention* another user directly in their tweet. Retweets can be considered as passive engagement in jihadist activities: a user may endorse the content of a tweet by retweeting it, without explicitly communicating with other users. On the other hand, mentions can be considered as active communication between users. These relations can be used to build social graphs that highlight the flow of information among jihadist user accounts.

The overarching kinds of relationships on Twitter can also be observed on other social media platforms, albeit in a different form. For example, on Facebook a user sharing other user's post can be considered as similar to retweeting on Twitter. This allows the generalization of our framework and subsequent analysis on Twitter to similar social media platforms.

Sampling from Social Graph

To our knowledge, all data collection methods for detecting jihadist accounts on Twitter involve explicitly sampling from the Twitter social graph. When studying a particular group of users, it's natural to take only the portion of the Twitter social graph (the alternative is collecting many millions of users who have absolutely nothing to do with the study). Selecting only a subset of users and/or edges from a graph (also referred to as a network) is called *graph sampling* (or *network sampling*). Two commonly used sampling methods are:

- *Random Node Sampling*. This is the most basic sampling method where a random subset of nodes is selected from the node set of original graphs. Each node is typically selected independently with a uniform probability. Once the nodes are selected, the sampled graph is constructed by selecting all the edges from the original graph that connect the sampled nodes to each other.
- *Snowball Sampling*. In snowball sampling, we sample a set of *starter nodes*, either manually or randomly from the original graph. For each starter node, we then add all (or a fraction) of its neighbors to the set of sampled nodes. After the nodes are sampled, the sampled graph is constructed by adding the edges connecting the nodes. Figure 1(b) shows a graph sampled from Figure 1(a) using snowball sampling with starter nodes A and C.

A sampled graph is expected to consist of a subset of nodes and edges that are representative of the structure of the original graph. This allows the observations and results obtained from the sampled graph to generalize to the original graph. However, in practice, a crucial and unavoidable issue with sampling (shown in Figure 1(b)) is that any network sample provides a distorted view of the network. From a technical perspective, this distortion can bias various network statistics (e.g., the most highly connected nodes, the number of triangles in the network, the distance between nodes in the network) we might be interested in. It can also bias the

metadata associated with the network (e.g. the topics being posted by users). As has been highlighted in the network science literature, sampling must be done with great care.[2]

The present study can be understood as a critical assessment of the impact of popular network sampling practices within the jihadist research community on the validity of research findings.

Overview of Existing Terrorism Research

We identify two distinct research objectives that, together, characterize the vast majority of existing terrorism research studies analyzing Twitter accounts: (1) qualitative and quantitative descriptions or summaries including social network analyses (SNA), and (2) characterizations of jihadist accounts. Crucially, both of these research objectives involve the collection of Twitter data. For this study, we have selected research articles from both of these categories such that they also employ different types of data collection methods. By doing this, we have assembled a representative sample of collection methods for further analysis in this article. In the rest of this section, we present a brief overview of the research in the selected articles.

Qualitative descriptions include expert analyses and commentaries on a particular jihadist or a group of jihadists, as well as the state of jihadist groups and content on Twitter. Quantitative summaries are overviews, including statistics and graphical plots, which explain the presence, activities, and interactions of the jihadist population on Twitter. Social network analyses involve the use of computational methods and tools to study interaction networks among jihadists, with typical goals such as discovering flows of information in a network or finding the most important or central accounts in a network. The following papers were chosen for this category.

- Klausen, 2015, studied the network of 59 Twitter accounts of Western-origin fighters known to be in Syria, over the period of January to March 2014, to understand the information flow and the extent to which access to, and content of, communications are controlled. The key findings point to the controlling role played by feeder accounts belonging to terrorist groups in the insurgency zones and by Europe-based organizational accounts associated with the banned British organization Al Muhajiroun.[3]
- Berger et al., 2015, created a demographic snapshot of ISIS supporters on Twitter based on data collected from September to December 2014. They proposed a methodology for discovering and characterizing relevant ISIS accounts. Furthermore, they studied ISIS supporting accounts that were suspended by Twitter and the effects of suspension in limiting the reach and scope of ISIS activities.[4]
- Berger et al., 2016, collected and analyzed the list of English-speaking ISIS supporter accounts maintained by a Twitter user “Baqiya Shoutout”, that were active from June to October 2015. Using social network analysis, they found the ISIS English-language social networks are small and insular. The declining number of accounts and limited amount of pro-ISIS content in the networks suggested that suspension of jihadist Twitter accounts was having a devastating effect. In particular, individual users who repeatedly created new accounts after suspension faced a decrease in their follower counts.[5]
- Bodine-Baron et al., 2016, differentiated ISIS supporters and opponents based on whether they refer to ISIS by its full name in Arabic (The Islamic State) or by the acronym “Daesh”. Lexical analysis suggested that the frequent users of Daesh had content that was highly critical of ISIS, while users of “The Islamic State” used glorifying terms. Furthermore, ISIS opponents outnumbered supporters six to one while ISIS supporters routinely out-tweeted ISIS opponents. Social network analysis of ISIS conversations on Twitter revealed identities and prominent content themes categorized as four metacommunities: Shia Muslims, Syrian mujahideen, ISIS supporters, and Sunni Muslims. The metacommunities were further studied to find central communities and their interactions with each other.[6]
- Conway et al., 2017, presented a detailed analysis of disruption (suspension/content takedown) and its effects on pro-IS Twitter accounts, in comparison to other jihadist groups including Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Ahrar al-Sham, the Taliban and al-Shabaa. They observed that pro-IS accounts faced

significantly greater disruption than other jihadist accounts, resulting in sparser pro-IS relationship networks. In addition, they analyzed the presence of IS propaganda on other platforms including content hosting websites by obtaining links to the websites from the jihadist tweets. Significant takedown rate was also observed on those platforms.[7]

Characterization of jihadist accounts refers to the important task of identifying the characteristic features of jihadists Twitter accounts and subsequently using the features to understand behavior of jihadist users, and to discover new potential jihadist accounts. The following are the articles chosen for this category:

- Magdy et al., 2015, classified Twitter accounts as pro- or anti-ISIS by finding whether Arabic tweets posted by the account contained the full name such as “Aldawla Alislamiya” (“Islamic State”) or the acronym “daesh.” They observed a correlation between tweeting trends of such accounts that supported or opposed ISIS with major news or events around the time data was collected (Oct.-Dec. 2014). Based on tweet content, such as hashtags and temporal patterns, they found that ISIS supporters joined Twitter to show their support which, in particular, was motivated by frustration with the failure of the Arab spring revolutions. Furthermore, they built a classifier to predict if Twitter accounts support or oppose ISIS using their tweets from the pre-ISIS period.[8]
- Kaati et al., 2015, trained a machine learning model to detect Twitter accounts that support jihadist groups and disseminate propaganda content. To train the model, they used data dependent features such as most common hashtags, word bigrams and most frequent words, as well as data independent features such as frequency of word length, letters, digits, and emotion words. They showed that their model has significant accuracy for English tweets while for Arabic tweets the performance was worse.[9]
- Klausen et al., 2016, developed a behavioral model of extremist user accounts on Twitter to predict if the accounts would be suspended for extremist activity. They trained the model using Twitter data collected during the year of 2015. Using the model they could identify new extremist accounts as well as link new accounts created by the same user. Based on information about suspended users’ accounts, they also propose a network search model to efficiently find new Twitter accounts created by suspended users.[10]
- Rowe et al., 2016, studied radicalization signals exhibited by European-based Twitter users by characterizing their differences in their behavior before and after they began using pro-ISIS terms and sharing pro-ISIS content. They proposed methods to identify if a user is activated (i.e., exhibiting radicalized behavior), based on content sharing patterns and pro- and anti-ISIS language used by the user. Furthermore, they studied how the behavior of users diverged before and after activation, in terms of language use, content sharing, and interactions with other users. Finally, they show that social homophily in Twitter communities has a strong influence on adoption of pro-ISIS behavior by radicalizing users.[11]
- Wright et al., 2016, proposed quantitative methods to identify resurgent jihadist accounts, which are new accounts created by the original users of accounts that have been suspended. They found that resurgent accounts grow faster (gather more followers) than naturally growing non-resurgent accounts, and that there are significant proportions (20% - 30%) of fast-growing duplicate accounts. Accordingly, they suggest terrorism researchers need to recognize and account for the biases introduced to their datasets by the large number of resurgent accounts.[12]
- Smedt et al., 2018, created a Hate corpus consisting of online jihadist hate speech from tweets posted by manually identified subversive profiles on Twitter. They also created a Safe corpus which consisted of reporters, imams and Muslims, as well as random tweets on general topics such as cooking and sports. Using Natural Language Processing, they performed quantitative analyses such as language and demographics distribution, as well as keyword analysis comparing Hate and Safe corpora. Finally, using Machine Learning techniques, they could predict jihadist hate speech with over 80% accuracy.[13]

Four-Phase Model of Data Collection from Social Graph

The overarching thesis of this study is that the way in which social media data is collected impacts on the quality of the data obtained and, by extension, the quality and validity of the insights gained from analysis of that data. Therefore, as a starting point, in this section, we describe the methods of data collection employed in the existing research on jihadism on Twitter. In order to frame this discussion, we first provide a four-phase model of data collection, which can be generalized to any social media platform similar to Twitter. Using this model, we categorize methods in the existing literature according to specific strategies they employ to implement the phases of data collection.

Phases of Data Collection

Any method for collecting data from a social graph (whether Twitter or other social media platforms) involves four main phases: *Initialization*, *Expansion*, *Filtering* and *Validation*. The first two phases consist of dataset *creation* methods, while the last two phases include methods for improvement and verification of dataset *quality*.

Initialization. This phase involves choosing or obtaining an initial set of Twitter accounts, also called “seed accounts”. Seed accounts can be obtained manually by experts in terrorism research from various sources such as news. Another common way of creating a set of seed accounts is by identifying accounts that have made posts using specific keywords. For example, Bodine-Baron et al. searched for tweets using grammatical variations of “Islamic State” and “Daesh” in Arabic, and obtained a list of users who posted the tweets to form an initial seed set.[14] In Twitter and other similar post-oriented platforms, this keyword searching is done first on tweets – identifying tweets that contain the target words. The initial set of users is then obtained by identifying the authors of all these tweets.

Expansion. In this phase, the dataset is grown to include more accounts that are related to the initial seed accounts with the aim of capturing a bigger group or network of jihadists, and one that has potentially more jihadist accounts than irrelevant accounts. Without exception, related accounts are discovered by exploring a social graph – by which we mean the network of explicit relationships among social media accounts. Graph sampling, as discussed earlier, plays a crucial role in exploring the relationships. Since a social graph corresponding to a social media platform is typically huge, graph sampling allows the researcher to study a smaller part of the graph. The main idea of the expansion phase is, therefore, to form a representative dataset by exploring a social graph.

A dataset resulting from the expansion phase necessarily depends on the choice of initial seed accounts. Therefore, it is important to choose the initial set carefully, depending on research objectives. It is noteworthy that the expansion phase need not necessarily use relations, such as being a follower or a friend, typically found in social graphs. There could be different ways of relating any two users on a social media platform: a user replying to another user’s tweet, retweeting another user’s tweet or sharing similar content in terms of hashtags. Depending on the research objectives, some of these relationship may be more appropriate than others. Follower and Friend relationships are more commonly used in Twitter terrorism research as they suggest direct relations between jihadist accounts.

Filtering. Both the initialization and expansion phases may be followed by a *filtering* phase to improve quality of a dataset. In this phase, accounts from the sample selected using criteria that favor inclusion of jihadist accounts and exclusion of irrelevant accounts. Such criteria include removing inactive user accounts (ones that have not posted any tweets for a reasonably long time period), old accounts that were created a very long time ago, and accounts that have more than a certain number of followers or friends. The criteria for filtering accounts are often informed by domain expertise and intuitive knowledge. For example, Berger et al., 2016, removed all the accounts from their dataset with more than 9,500 followers because such accounts are unlikely to be jihadist accounts.[15]

Validation. In this phase, the final dataset is verified for its quality or reliability. If the research objective is to study the state of jihadist activities on social media, it is expected that a dataset should have a high proportion of jihadist accounts compared to that of irrelevant accounts (or at least that this ratio and bias be well characterized). If the dataset is small, it can be manually assessed. For large datasets, it is standard practice for one or more random samples to be manually assessed.[16] Below, we propose a manual annotation method that we used to validate our dataset.

Figure 2. shows the dataflow between phases of dataset creation. It is worth noting that, based on the nature of a particular study, a collection process may approach the four phases in different ways:

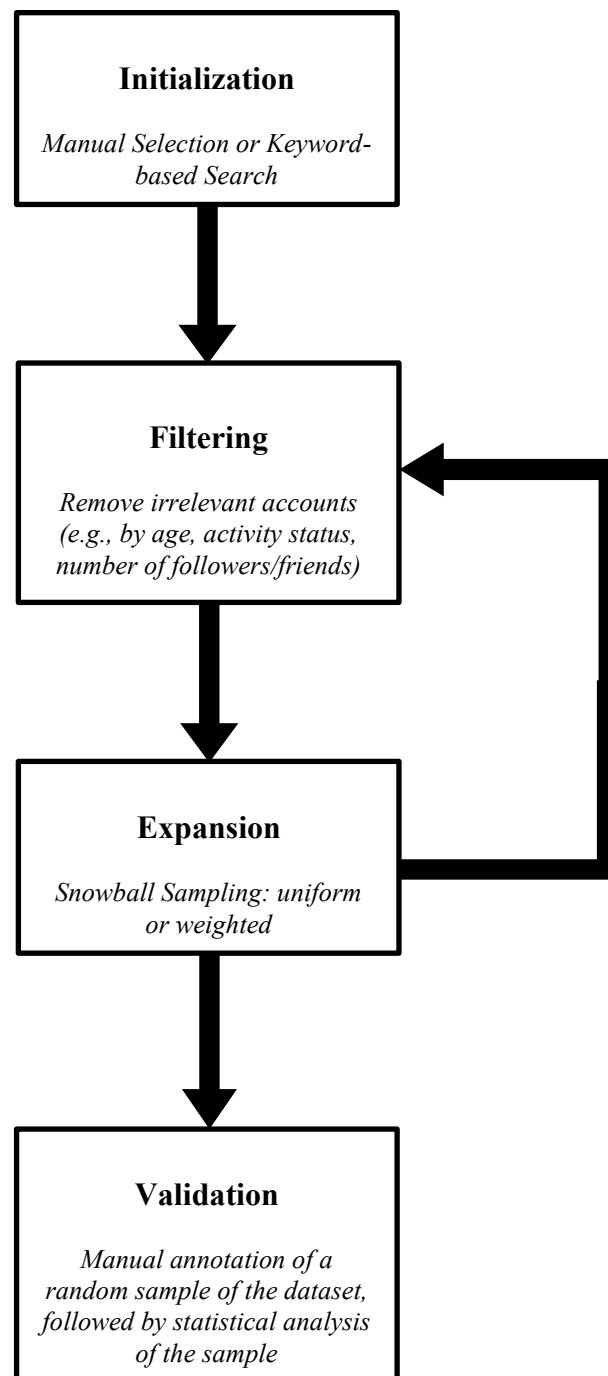


Figure 2: Four-phase Model of Data Collection

- In some cases, the Expansion phase may not be used at all. For example, Magdy et al. constructed a dataset by searching for tweets using Arabic keywords related to ISIS and the dataset was not expanded further.[17]
- In other situations, there can be more than one expansion phase where a dataset is iteratively grown to include accounts related to all the accounts collected in the previous Expansion phase.[18] This includes effectively all the second-level relations of initial seed accounts.

On the Generality of the Proposed Model

When we consider the kind of data typically used in terrorism research, we find that the structure as well as sources of such data are very similar across many social media platforms including Twitter and Telegram. There are three main types of data used in terrorism studies:

1. **User data.** This includes all user profile/account information such as profile description, demographic information and photos. In addition, any content produced by a user such as messages including text, images, videos and other media.
2. **Group data.** If a social media platform facilitates group messaging and broadcasting, it generates group data including group profile information, group member information as well as messages.
3. **Interaction data.** This is essentially network data obtained from relationships and interaction among users on a social media platform.

The data collection process for any of the above types essentially involves choosing a seed set of users or groups - initialization phase, as well as expansion phase if required. In addition, sampling from such datasets, including networks, necessitates the same kind of filtering and validation as applied to the Twitter datasets discussed in the article. As a result, our proposed model naturally extends to a wide array of social media platforms including all those that have been considered by the terrorism research community.

Strategies for Data Collection in the Existing Literature

The general model of data collection from the previous section provides a high-level framework through which we can view the data collection methods in existing literature: considering them in terms of the four phases of the model. By doing this, we can study differences between the methods and identify limitations for each of the phases. In this section, we describe in detail specific strategies, which are employed by researchers, corresponding to the four phases of the model. Table 1 summarizes these strategies for all research articles we study in this paper.

Initialization Strategies

Strategies for the initialization phase include *manual selection* and *keyword-based search*. In manual selection, the seed dataset can be created manually in the following two ways:

1. Experts in terrorism research obtain Twitter accounts of jihadists using various sources such as news stories, blogs, reports released by law enforcement agencies, and data from other terrorism research.[19]
2. From a jihadist account that maintains a list of other jihadist supporter accounts. Berger et al., for example, used an ISIS account “Baqiya Shoutout” to get an initial set of user accounts.[20]

In a keyword-based search, there are two steps:

1. The first step is to collect a set of tweets from Twitter by searching for specific keywords such as ‘The Islamic State’ in the text of the tweets. Keywords are chosen by experts, based on practical knowledge about jihadist groups, and validated by statistical methods, or by manual annotation using human

coders.

- Bodien-Barone , used a log-likelihood based measure of distinctiveness of keywords to validate their choice of variations of “Daesh” and “The Islamic State” in Arabic.[21]
 - Rowe et al. used two coders fluent in Arabic and English to label tweets with pro- and anti-ISIS terms, and selected keywords based on an inter-rater agreement statistic between the coders. [22]
 - Magdy et al. hypothesized that using the full name to refer to the Islamic State indicated ISIS support as opposed to using the abbreviated name, which indicated ISIS opposition. They validated this choice of keywords (ISIS name variations) by having a human annotator judge a sample of tweets obtained using the keywords.[23]
2. In the second step, a set of users, who posted the tweets collected in the first step is obtained. This set of user accounts forms the initial seed set, which can be filtered further and expanded.

Expansion Strategies

Strategies for dataset expansion include variations of the snowball sampling that we discussed above. The user accounts in the seed set obtained from an initialization phase are used as starter nodes for the sampling of the social graph. The commonly used variations of snowball sampling are as follows:

1. *Random snowball sampling.* For each starter node, all of its neighbors are added to the set of sampled nodes and the sampled graph is constructed by taking all the edges that connect to the sampled nodes. The majority of the research papers we have studied use this sampling technique.[24]
2. *Weighted snowball sampling.* In the case of weighted sampling of any given dataset, each neighbor of a starter node is assigned a weight and the sampling process chooses neighbors with a probability that is proportional to its assigned weight. For example, in the case of *degree-weighted snowball sampling*, each neighbor in the social graph is assigned a weight equal to number of its followers or friends. Then, in the sampling process, each neighbor of a node is chosen with a probability that is proportional to its assigned weight. In other words, neighbors with higher number of connections (followers or friends), are more likely to be sampled.[25]

Filtering and Validation Strategies

As shown in Table 1, at least half of the terrorism research studies, except Berger et al. (2015), Wright et al., Conway et al., Kaati et al. and Smedt et al.,[26], either do not perform a filtering phase to improve their datasets or their criteria for filtering are too weak. The most common strategy employed was to remove inactive accounts, but this is not strict enough to ensure that the remaining accounts are mostly jihadists.

Similarly, for the validation phase, datasets are not manually annotated or assessed in many articles shown in Table 1. While Magdy et al. do validate their dataset, it is only with a small random sample size of 50.[27] Some of the research studies do not verify the proportion of jihadist user accounts in their datasets, even though they validate other aspects of their methods. Bodine-Baron et al. and Magdy et al., confirm their choice of pro- and anti-ISIS keywords or terms used to annotate user accounts as pro- or anti-ISIS. In this way, it is effectively assumed that their dataset mostly contains jihadist accounts.[28] Considering the difficulty in tracking jihadist accounts generally, and their clandestine way of operating, it is imperative that researchers do more to validate their samples.

The lack of both a proper criteria for filtering and validating in much of the existing literature is a serious problem. In the next section we describe in detail such limitations in the existing literature.

Limitations of Data Collection Strategies

Based on the analysis of different data collection strategies, we found that there are two recurring high-level problems: (1) a fundamental lack of characterizing account inclusion errors and (2) errors introduced by graph sampling and lack of filtering.

In this section, we describe these problems in the context of Twitter datasets in the literature. In all cases, our observations readily generalize to any study of jihadist use of social media.

Lack of Characterization of Account Inclusion

The majority of studies (6 out of 8) made no clear or credible attempt to characterize the extent to which their account collection process actually did collect jihadist accounts (defined as per the objective of the specific study). Given that these studies then went on to make claims about the activities, relationships among, and fates of jihadist accounts, this omission is surprising and troubling. If we do not know the proportion of accounts in the dataset that *actually* are jihadists, it is impossible to attribute observed trends to jihadist online activity.

Table 1: Data Collection Strategies in Existing Literature

Article	Dataset Initialization & Filtering	Dataset Expansion & Filtering	Validation
Berger et al., 2015	<p><u>Manual selection:</u> tweets of 4700 accounts manually assessed to remove non-ISIS supporters</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> remove accounts 1) with >500 followers, 2) did not tweet within past four months</p>	<p><u>Random Snowball Sampling:</u> Using Friend relationship</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> remove accounts 1) with > 50,000 followers, and 2) that are likely to be bots</p> <p><u>Remarks:</u> Dataset was further expanded to include level 2 and 3 accounts.</p>	<p><u>For Presence of Jihadist users:</u> A random sample of 1000 were manually annotated using a Data Codebook</p>
Kaati et al., 2015	<p><u>Manual Selection:</u> Accounts from Shumukh al-Islam forum and their followers, manually identified</p> <p><u>Keyword-based Search:</u> Tweets containing jihadist propaganda based on hashtags and network of known jihadists.</p>	<p><u>Filtering:</u> Clusters of known Jihadist sympathizers were used to select tweets with hashtags</p>	<p>Validation of accounts: Manual coding</p> <p>Validation of Tweets: None</p>
Klausen, 2015	<p><u>Manual selection:</u> 60 Western foreign fighters in Syria</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> 1 inactive account removed</p>	<p><u>Random Snowball Sampling:</u> Using both Follower and Friend relationships</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> None</p>	None
Magdy et al., 2015	<p><u>Keyword-based search:</u> Search Arabic tweets for full name and acronym of ISIS.</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> remove users: 1) suspended and deleted, 2) posted <10 tweets mentioning ISIS, 3) <70% of tweets strictly using either full name or acronym of ISIS.</p>	None	<p><u>Validation of Keywords:</u> A random sample of 1000 tweets were annotated for pro-, anti-ISIS, or neutral</p> <p><u>For Presence of Jihadist users:</u> a random sample of 50 each from pro- and anti-ISIS groups of users were annotated</p>

Berger et al., 2016	<p><u>Manual selection:</u> List of accounts maintained by user “Baqiya Shoutout”. ~1000 users.</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> remove accounts with >9,500 followers</p>	In the article, it is mentioned that using social network analysis ~2500 English speaking ISIS-supporting accounts were found. But, details are not given.	It is not clear from the article, but it seems the list was assessed manually.
Bodine-Baron et al., 2016	<p><u>Keyword-based search:</u> Search tweets for grammatical variations of “Islamic State” and “Daesh” in Arabic. ~23M tweets and 771K users</p>	<p>Network is formed by Mentions relationship between 771K users. 3.3M mentions or edges.</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> None</p>	<p><u>Validation of Keywords:</u> Using lexical analysis methods such as log likelihood scores and collocates.</p> <p><u>For Presence of Jihadist users:</u> None</p>
Klausen et al., 2016	<p><u>Manual selection:</u> ~5000 seed users</p>	<p><u>Random Snowball Sampling:</u> Using both Follower and Friend relationships</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> Remove suspended accounts. ~647K accounts</p>	<p><u>Validation of prediction model:</u> Using samples of active and suspended accounts, 5000 each.</p> <p><u>For Presence of Jihadist users:</u> None</p>
Rowe et al., 2016	<p><u>Manual selection:</u> 652 seed users from a prior research</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> Select users who are active, not deleted and their timeline visible</p>	<p><u>Random Snowball Sampling:</u> Using Follower relationship</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> Select accounts based in Europe. ~154K users</p>	<p><u>Validation of pro- anti- ISIS Lexicon:</u> Manual annotation of tweets containing pro- and anti-ISIS terms (sample of 1K each)</p> <p><u>For Presence of Jihadist users:</u> None</p>
Wright et al., 2016	<p><u>Manual selection:</u> Publicly known, official media jihadist accounts named by newspapers</p>	<p><u>Weighted Snowball Sampling:</u> Using Follower relationship</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> As a part of sampling process. Sample accounts that: 1) have <1000 followers, 2) are followed by >10% of users in the sampled dataset, 3) are active</p>	<p><u>For Presence of Jihadist users:</u> Visual assessment of accounts to identify resurging accounts</p>
Conway et al., 2017	<p><u>Manual selection:</u> 722 pro-IS and 451 other jihadist accounts obtained using three methods: 1) original seed set of accounts (27%) were manually identified from known jihadist accounts and their followers and friends, 2) second set (30%) was obtained semi-automatically and verified manually, 3) third set (43%) was obtained semi-automatically using known IS propaganda links. Seed accounts were obtained by various methods including Keyword-based search.</p> <p><u>Filtering:</u> Selected only accounts with at least one recent tweet with pro-IS text/images. Manually excluded accounts maintained by journalists</p>	None	<p><u>Validation of accounts:</u> Manual Coding based on content of tweet: keywords in text and images</p>

Smedt et al., 2018	<u>Keyword-based Search:</u> 367 subversive profiles found by searching keywords such as “kuffar”, followed by manual inspection. All tweets for the accounts were obtained	<u>Expansion:</u> None <u>Filtering:</u> Accounts were manually inspected. Tweets are not filtered but it is fine for the research task	<u>Validation of accounts:</u> Manual Coding
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Sources of Error

In the case of the Twitter datasets we examined, we observed four specific and common sources of error: inclusion of irrelevant accounts, exclusion of jihadist accounts, bias in sampling networks, and bias towards jihadist communities.

1. Inclusion of Irrelevant Accounts

This is one of the most common problems we have seen in the methods of the existing literature. It is a central critique in this article that the issue of irrelevant accounts is very prevalent and should not be ignored. Inclusion of irrelevant accounts could happen in two ways:

- a) *Bias in sampling due to choice of relationships.* The bias toward irrelevant accounts occurs due to a particular choice of relationships that are explored in the process of graph sampling. Irrelevant or noisy accounts, such as news reporters and researchers, who are just “listening” to other jihadist accounts, are likely to be included when the datasets are constructed using strategies involving follower relationships in the dataset expansion phase.[29]
- b) *Lack of appropriate Filtering and Validation.* Arguably, using Friend relationships might result in a lesser proportion of irrelevant accounts because jihadists are more likely to follow other jihadists or supporters than irrelevant accounts.[30] Furthermore, when using a keyword-based search, noisy accounts are likely to include those who report news and condemn or oppose jihadists content and happen to use the keywords in tweet content.[31] In these cases, when sampling methods are fixed and cannot be improved but data is still biased, proper criteria for filtering and validation of datasets can help mitigate the problem. As shown in Table 1, however, lack of proper filtering and validation phases in the literature results in the inclusion of irrelevant accounts.

2. Exclusion of Jihadist Accounts

Exclusion of jihadist accounts also happens, due to bias in graph sampling, where particular relationships are chosen to be explored over others, combined with research objectives. For example, on Twitter, when the Friend relationship is chosen, the resulting dataset is likely to exclude the accounts of those who are potentially “radicalizing,” since they have almost no followers and are largely just “listening” to other prominent jihadists. If the research objective is to detect users who are radicalizing or tracing the process of radicalization, then this bias is problematic. Likewise, a keyword-search approach is likely to miss potential jihadist accounts, if such accounts do not post tweets containing the keywords.

Since Friend and Follower networks are generally huge, sampling is performed to get smaller networks that are easier to work with. In such cases, if the proportion of irrelevant accounts compared to that of jihadist accounts is high, there is a significant chance that the sampled dataset will miss many potential jihadist accounts. This substantially decreases the reliability of the statistical results reported for such a dataset. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, choosing appropriate steps in the filtering phase or validating the quality of the dataset using manual annotation is indeed important.

3. Bias in Sampling Networks due to Choice of Sampling Methods

When a large network is sampled to obtain a smaller network for social network analyses, it is important to choose the appropriate sampling method. As discussed earlier, typically in terrorism research, random node

sampling or random snowball sampling is used, both of which are shown to result in a sampled network that has different properties than the original network.[32] This is likely to produce incorrect results in calculating network statistics such as highly connected nodes or distance between two nodes. Alternatives, such as random walk sampling, which sufficiently preserve network properties, should be considered.[33]

4. *Bias towards Jihadist Communities*

During an Expansion phase, relationships of seed accounts are explored to add more accounts to the dataset. Any two different sets of seed accounts are likely to result in different datasets after the Expansion phase depending on whether the sets belong to same network communities or not. Therefore, a specific choice of the initial seed accounts produces a dataset that is biased towards specific communities of jihadist accounts. This bias is acknowledged in the existing literature, and indeed, for some research tasks, it is reasonable to focus on certain jihadist communities.[34] Nonetheless, this bias is an important factor to consider when creating a dataset.

Specific Errors in the Existing Literature

The methodological limitations described above inevitably lead to biased or incorrect results from quantitative and statistical analyses. One common class of errors involves fundamental network statistics. When the presence of irrelevant accounts in a Twitter network is not accounted for, the network does not represent true relationships among jihadists. Klausen et al, 2015, reported popularity ranking of accounts in their network dataset.[35] They used the degree centrality which is a simple measure that counts how many neighbors each node or accounts has. However, if an account has significant proportion of irrelevant accounts as its neighbors, the degree centrality measure would incorrectly assign more popularity to that account.

Another popular network analysis task is to detect structured communities within a network. Bodine-Baron et al., 2016, discovered jihadist metacommunities using a community detection algorithm.[36] Their network dataset was formed using “mention” relationships extracted from 23 million tweets, which resulted in a massive network of 771K nodes and 3.3 million edges. Given the collection methods employed, many of these accounts are likely to be researchers, journalists and other non-jihadist accounts whose relationships span across the metacommunities. Not only would this confuse the community inference task, but any inferred communities would wrongly assign these non-jihadist accounts (since, by definition, they do not belong to *any* jihadist community). As a result, the community detection algorithm would inevitably yield misrepresentative metacommunities – both in terms of content and size.

Finally, we observed lack of validation of linguistic data in Rowe, 2016. In order to study differences in pro- vs. anti-ISIS linguistic characteristics, Rowe, 2016 created a pro- and anti-ISIS lexicon. They validated the lexicon by manual coding the words in tweets as pro- and anti-ISIS. However, they do not validate if the underlying Twitter data comes from jihadist accounts. As a result, it is incorrect to assume that use of pro-ISIS language implies that the account is an ISIS supporter itself.

Recommended Best Practices

Based on the issues identified in the previous section, here we provide several recommendations for standards of practice that should be adopted by the research community. To lend credence to these recommendations, we apply them to a new benchmark dataset to show how they increase the validity and decrease errors.

We identify three practices that would substantively improve the quality of social media datasets and, as a result, enhance the quality and validity of findings derived from them.

Perform manual validation on datasets. The single greatest danger and opportunity for improvement posed

by current data collection practices is the lack of a validation stage in dataset collection – which is to say, a lack of characterization of error in datasets. Without knowing what kind of errors are present in a dataset, it is quite literally impossible to account for those errors in the interpretation of trends discovered in the data. As a result, findings based on data whose errors have not been systematically characterized are at extreme risk of incorrectly crediting features of the data (e.g., the behavior of users, salient structures in social networks, uses of language) to jihadist origins.

Of course, we do assume that researchers are committed to conducting thoughtful and representative analysis. This brings us to the second benefit to characterizing errors: knowing what they are will undoubtedly motivate researchers to address them. We suspect that the widespread lack of filtering and use of biased network sampling techniques are most likely due to ignorance that these practices produce serious biases. Requiring quantitative characterization of the errors in datasets would make researchers keenly aware of any biases and, therefore, more empowered to address them by recollecting data and revising their methods.

One (relatively) easy, established way of characterizing error in datasets is to manually annotate a random sub-sample of the final dataset. In the context of judging the inclusion/exclusion of jihadist accounts, this would involve randomly selecting 100 accounts from the dataset and coding their connection to a jihadist movement (e.g., “jihadist”, “supporter”, “irrelevant”). The distribution of labels in the random sample would provide a strong indication of the quality of the dataset and any biases or errors present in it.

Use Friend Relationships in an Expansion Phase. Berger et al. argue that irrelevant accounts are more likely to follow jihadist accounts than being followed.[37] We have independently confirmed this (see next section) and, therefore, advise that the network-based collection of jihadist accounts gather Friends of jihadist accounts in a dataset, rather than Followers.

Filter Collected Accounts. Based on the statistics related to known jihadist accounts, it is reasonable to assume that such accounts do not usually have a very high number of followers or friends. Moreover, long-dormant or entirely inactive accounts do not provide sufficient information on the current state of jihadist activities and hence can be removed from a dataset. However, many studies do not use any of these filters. Happily, all of these criteria can be implemented using simple filters - placing a threshold on the number of followers, friends and the age of accounts – and can substantially reduce the number of irrelevant accounts.[38]

The Impact of Recommended Practices

In the previous section we provided three recommendations for best practices. In this section, we demonstrate that these do, in fact, substantially improve the quality of datasets. To do this, we conduct a study of the impact of filtering and network expansion on inclusion of irrelevant accounts in collected datasets. We also highlight just how high the number of irrelevant accounts can be, even when applying all best practices.

It would have been ideal to conduct this assessment on datasets from prior work. However, we faced two challenges: 1) datasets for most research studies could not be shared and 2) for those datasets we could obtain, many Twitter accounts are already suspended or deleted. Therefore, we created new datasets employing the standard techniques employed by the jihadist research community. We created four benchmark datasets that serve as proxies for datasets in the literature.

Dataset construction

Our datasets were initialized with 47 known jihadist accounts chosen by one of the authors of this article who is an expert in terrorism research. All data was collected during the month of June 2017.

For the Expansion phase, we used Follower and Friend relationships, each creating two separate datasets. This allows us to test the Expansion-related recommendation.

For each of the two datasets, we wanted to compare effects of the filtering phase on the quality of data (the third

recommendation). Therefore, for each expansion method (Friend/Follower), we created a dataset with/without account filters. For the filtering phase, we removed accounts that satisfied two criteria: 1) accounts that were more than one year old (created one year before the time of data collection) and 2) accounts that were highly connected (with more than 1.000 followers or friends).

This process yielded the following four datasets, which we use for further analysis:

1. A dataset that was expanded, using Follower relationships, but a filtering phase was not performed.
2. The same dataset as in (1), but a filtering phase was performed.
3. A dataset that was expanded, using Friend relationships, but a filtering phase was not performed.
4. The same dataset, as in (3), but a filtering phase was performed.

In order to assess the composition of each dataset, we took a random sample of 100 accounts from each of the datasets and manually annotated them. Each Twitter account in our datasets was given one of five different labels. These labels were chosen to simplify the annotation process, so that the accounts could be labelled manually by non-experts in terrorism research. The five labels are:

1. Positive Islamic. These are the accounts that post largely positive tweets about Islam, which include messages of peace, love, equality, and condemn hatred or violence.
2. Radical Islamist. These are the accounts that clearly spread messages of hatred and violence against civilians.
3. Ambiguous accounts. These are accounts that mix both positive and radical comments, making it hard to clearly distinguish if it warrants being placed in one of the first two categories.
4. Irrelevant accounts. These are the accounts that appear to belong to normal twitter users and do not post any content related to Islam or Jihad, in either positive or negative ways.
5. Insufficient Information. This label is used when an account does not have any tweets, or otherwise lacks sufficient information to be classified using the other four categories.

Findings

Figures 3 and 4 show the proportion of account types for each of the four benchmark datasets. There are several noteworthy trends which underscore the importance of our recommendations.

Friend expansion yields more jihadist accounts than ollower expansion. Comparing between Figures 3 and 4, we see that friend expansion yields well over 10% more accounts of interest.

Filtering enriches samples for jihadist accounts. In both Figures 3 and 4, if we compare within labels, we find that filtering substantively increases the proportion of jihadist accounts in the dataset. It appears that filtering has a more dramatic effect on follower-expanded datasets – which stands to reason since follower expansion tends to include more irrelevant accounts.

The majority of accounts are irrelevant. This point cannot be overstressed. We find that in all four of our datasets, the vast majority of accounts are irrelevant. This should give all researchers in this field pause, as it suggests that the majority of accounts involved in previous studies of jihadists online may well also be irrelevant. It would be fair to point out that there are far fewer jihadists active on Twitter than in past years. However, the point still stands that *nobody knows* how many irrelevant accounts are present in past studies—efforts were not made by the researchers to estimate this problem. And, certainly, it would be unprincipled to simply assume that proportions are different without evidence. All this points to two important lessons: first, it may well be that much of what is known from past studies of online jihadist behavior is highly skewed by irrelevant accounts. Second, manual validation should be a required phase in all future research projects, and this validation should be reported and discussed in publications.

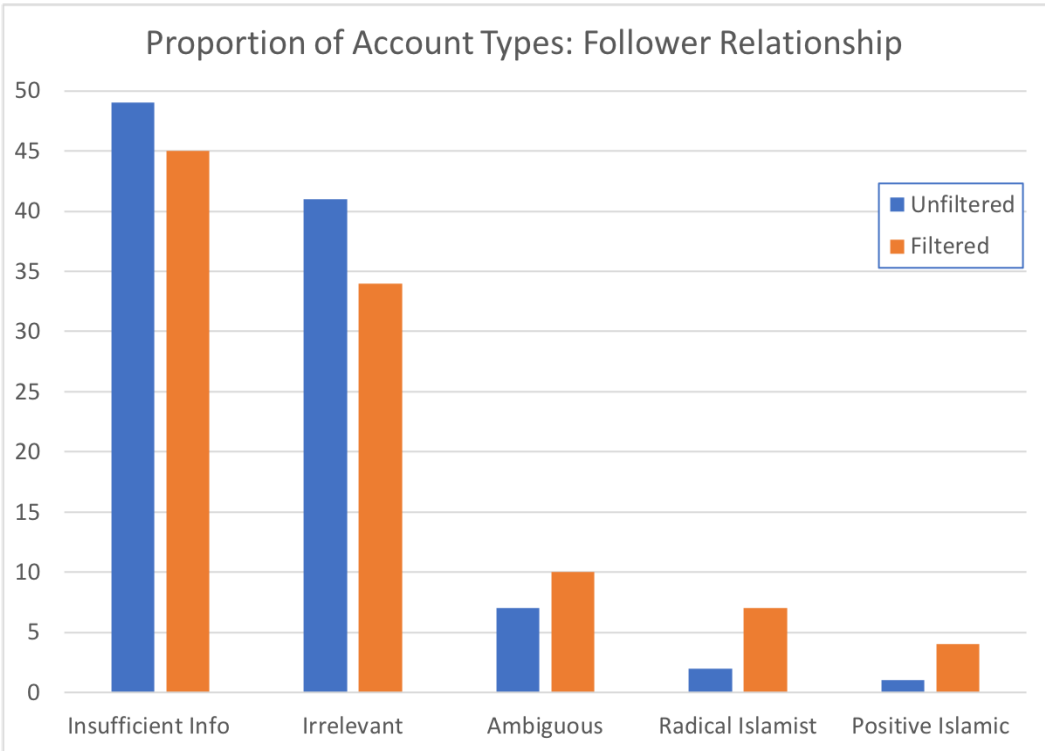


Figure 3. Proportion of different account types/labels in our annotated benchmark dataset created using Follower relationship. Size of the dataset is 100.

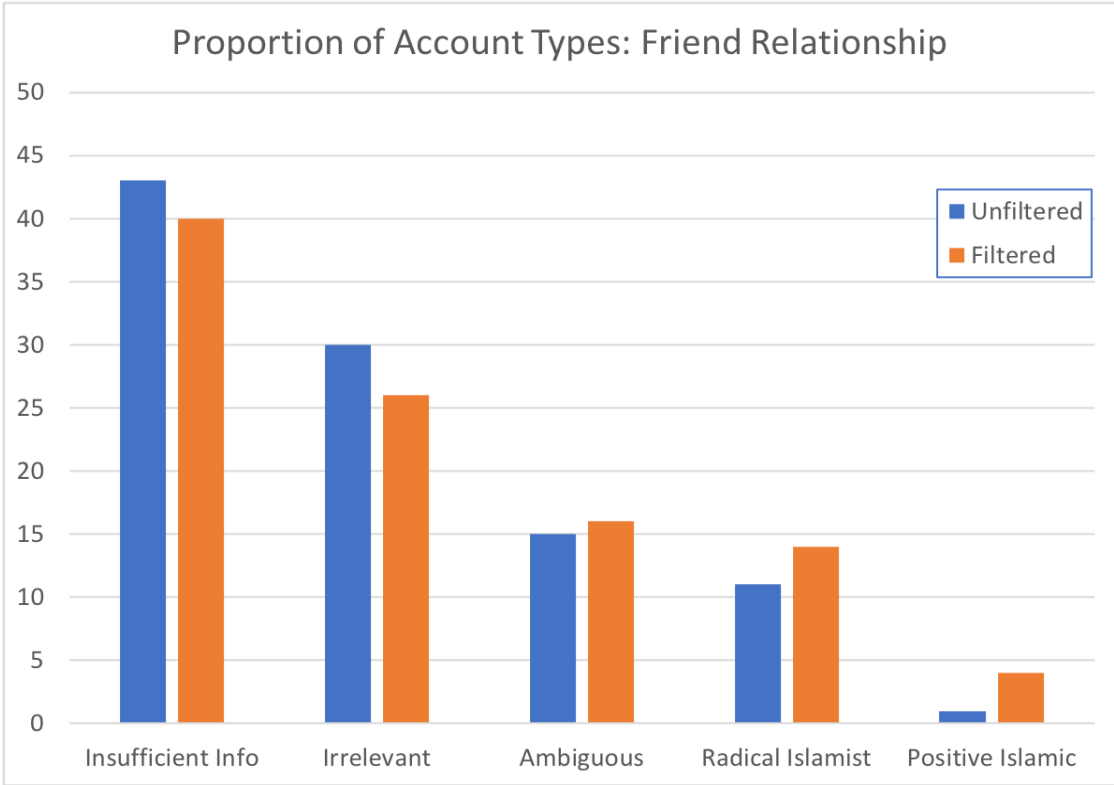


Figure 4. Proportion of different account types/labels in our annotated benchmark dataset created using Friend relationship. Size of the dataset is 100.

Conclusion

In this article, we set out to provide a critical analysis of existing data collection methods on Twitter. In the process of doing so, we have made three distinct contributions.

First, we presented an overview of the structure of social media data and proposed a general model of the data collection processes. We showed how users of social media platforms and their relationships or interactions are modeled using social graph. We highlighted the significance of graph sampling for the process of data collection from social graphs. By analyzing existing data collection methods in Twitter terrorism research, and generalizing them, using social graphs and graph sampling, we devised a four-phase model of data collection from any social media platform similar in structure to Twitter.

Second, applying our proposed model to existing data collection methods, we categorized existing approaches according to the different strategies they implement. To our knowledge, this article is the first to compare data collection practices in the context of social media terrorism research. The comparison enabled us to observe best practices in the literature for different phases, which we justified through the analysis of a set of benchmark datasets.

Finally, as part of the analysis of our datasets, we discovered that current data collection methods (even when using our recommended best practices) have exceptionally high rates of irrelevant account inclusions. Quite alarmingly, we have, at present, no basis to assume that rates are not similarly high in datasets used by prior research studies – raising serious questions about the validity of findings and trends reported in past work.

Our hope is that this work has highlighted key ways in which research on online jihadist behavior can be placed on more solid methodological grounds – and, in doing so, render analyses and findings that propel forward our understanding of the phenomena of jihadism in the modern online world.

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Jihadi Beheading Videos and their Non-Jihadi Echoes

by Ariel Koch

Abstract

In recent years, the Islamic State terror organization has become notorious for its evil brutality. The brutal nature of its propaganda (distributed mostly online) inspires Jihadi sympathizers around the world, encouraging them to use violence against “the enemies of Islam”. This form of violent behavior has also been adopted and imitated by others – including non-Muslim individuals and groups – regardless of their geographic location, worldview, religion, ethnicity, or nationality. Drawing from numerous examples, this article illustrates two processes: first, the “mainstreaming” of beheadings among Jihadists, and second, the imitation of this method (decapitation) by individuals motivated by other kinds of extremism.

Keywords: Beheadings, Contagious Behavior, Copycat Crime, Islamic State, Propaganda, Social Media

Introduction: Mainstreaming Beheadings

The emergence of the Islamic State (IS) organization shocked the West with a wave of terrorism that was accompanied by propaganda campaigns of beheadings,[1] aimed at terrifying “the enemies of Islam” and inspiring its sympathizers to attack the West.[2] Omar Mateen, the Orlando Pulse club shooter, for instance, downloaded and watched IS beheading videos for two years prior to his attack.[3] The assailants of the Rouen church attack recorded themselves slicing the throat of an 84-year-old priest.[4] In the United States as well, a man who was “obsessed with beheadings” beheaded his co-worker.[5]

Beheadings are nothing new these days, and this IS-style gore propaganda,[6] which has been distributed online since early 2000s, is echoed on television, in film, and even in video games.[7] It was also reflected on the *Der Spiegel* cover page of its February 2017 issue, which depicted the United States’ president, Donald Trump as Jihadi John, the notorious British IS executioner.[8] In Belgium, football fans “unfurled a giant banner depicting the severed head of an opponent.”[9] As it seems, in the twenty-first century beheadings have gone mainstream. It is no longer alien to our reality.

While the academic literature on execution videos as Jihadi propaganda focuses on related security issues, or strategic, cultural, political and religious dimensions, little attention is being paid to the manifestations of these videos among non-Muslims. In other words, these videos have a contagious effect. Although Jihadi gore videos attract the world’s attention, Jihadists are definitely not the only violent actors who use this brutal method; and Jihadists’ videos—nowadays produced mainly by IS—have inspired non-Jihadi actors.

As is evident below, these videos affect the youth and are even linked to non-Islamic violent crimes derived from ideological, mental or criminal motives.[10] In other words, this article deals with copycat crimes, as the technique used by Jihadists (beheading) is being imitated by non-Muslims, who were exposed to this very particular method. The academic literature on copycat violence is extensive. Researchers in the United States note that, the “media contagion” effect fuels copycat crimes such as mass shootings.[11]

According to Ray Surette, the perpetrator of copycat crimes “must have been exposed to the media content of the original crime and must have incorporated major elements of that crime in his or her crime.” He added that “[t]he choice of victim, the motivation, or the technique in a copycat crime must have been lifted from an earlier, media-detailed generator crime.”[12] Additionally, Jacqueline B. Helfgott wrote that “[i]mitated crimes have occurred after intense media coverage” of violent incidents, and “after fictional depictions [of crimes][...] on TV, in film, and in video games.”[13]

In regard to the possible effects of IS beheading videos Arie W. Kruglanski said that “the very concept of beheading, that was virtually non-existent in our conscience prior to these events being propagated, is

now there.”[14] Indeed, in the last two decades, with the evolution of the Internet, this genre of videos was epidemically spread to other places, and thus it may bear lethal consequences. Instances for this notion may be found in different places such as Russia, Denmark, Japan, Israel and Brazil. This article argues that the leitmotif of all these instances is Jihadi propaganda, which documents vicious acts of murder and inspires other (non-Islamic) actors who are willing to mimic some techniques for their own purposes.

Although there is nothing new in the idea that terrorists learn from each other,[15] current academic literature on how non-terrorist actors learn from terrorists remains under-researched. This article’s goal is to shed light on the connection between contagious violent behavior and brutal propaganda videos, and to formulate recommendations for dealing with the challenges it poses. The article’s main questions are: (1) Are Jihadi beheadings videos memetic? (2) Can this type of videos inspire violent acts that are executed due to non-Islamic motives? And (3) do violent actors learn from each other’s methods of action?

There is another relevant question: Could this contagious violent behavior be a result of ubiquitous videos rather than driven by IS specifically? Indeed, there are now more videos of everything humans do (for instance, sex) than at any point in history before. The rise in beheading videos is just one manifestation of that broader phenomenon. However, this manifestation of gore has a negative effect, with potentially drastic ramifications.

This article relies on various academic studies and media reports, as well as on primary sources (mainly videos and texts) disseminated by extremists online. This is an interdisciplinary topic, which relates to various fields of research, such as psychology, education, and the terror-crime nexus. Thus, more qualitative and quantitative studies, both on national and international levels, are required to extend the knowledge of this phenomenon and its ramifications beyond the realm of Jihadist research. “Ultimately, we’re talking about contributing to the brutalization of interpersonal and inter-group conflict all over the planet,” said Kruglanski.[16] Accordingly, Justin Hastings also noted that these videos “might inspire some people to prefer that particular way of killing people as opposed to others.”[17]

The Islamic State Execution Videos

Judith Tinnes, who monitors IS execution videos, has shown that from 2015 to early 2018 more than 2,000 people have been executed by the organization.[18] IS members used a variety of ways to execute their prisoners, and its propagandists filmed many of these incidents and disseminated the documentation online. Captives were crushed by tanks, burned alive, drowned, bombed with rocket-launchers, or had explosive devices attached to their bodies.[19] Most of the videos showed executions by either shooting or beheading.[20] Some reports, although undocumented, mentioned the usage of chainsaws.[21]

Although the majority of the killings took place in Iraq and Syria and over 95 percent of the victims were locals,[22] it was the killing of foreigners that attracted global attention and became the focus of several academic publications.[23] Furthermore, it is possible for millions around the world to be exposed to a large number of execution videos due to social media platforms (SMP) such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube,[24] and increasingly Telegram, which “may play a crucial role [for Jihadists] in reaching their desired audience,”[25] with technology that enables them to document incidents and easily distribute the documentation online.

A minority of non-Muslims also see the IS actions (reflected via SMP) in a positive way, without associating themselves with the producer. According to a survey conducted by Jack Cunliffe and Simon Cottee, involving about 2,300 American and British young adults, “a vast majority—93 percent—reported a negative attitude toward the Islamic State, and just 1 percent said they had a positive view of the group.” Moreover, they reported that “six percent were neutral. Of the 34 people who were reported to have had a positive attitude toward the Islamic State, five were Muslims.”[26]

As violence is considered a “contagious disease,”[27] so it can also be applied to “terrorism” and terrorist techniques. The idea that terrorism is contagious is not new; nor is the usage of media by terrorists.[28] However, while the relation of media, contagion and copycat behavior among Islamist terrorists is well researched,[29]

it is important to shed light on the potential contagious effects of Jihadi beheading videos on non-Muslims. Indeed, besides Islamist extremists, “other kinds of ideologies of hate and terror are also disseminated via old and new media and communication technologies,” and thus, “there can be little doubt that the inspirational virus is particularly potent when diffused through media forms.”[30]

Beheadings became synonymous with IS since its days as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), then led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. As Tinnes noted, this method of execution “has emerged as a signature element and key feature of the IS ‘brand’ of terrorism, distinguishing the group from other jihadist and secular terrorist actors throughout the world.”[31] Steven T. Zech and Zane M. Kelly wrote that IS videos “portray gruesome, torturous actions meant to terrorize and intimidate particular audiences,” and to “employ counter-normative violence against symbolic victims to gain compliance from adversaries.” By so doing, IS generates “fear and send[s] signals to international and local audiences.”[32]

According to Simone Molin Friis, “besides the brutality of the acts portrayed, what has made beheading videos of particular concern is their embodiment of a manifest transformation of an image into a ‘weapon’ for agents engaged in warfare.” As he noted, “the fatal injury portrayed in the videos is carried out not for the sake of murder in itself, but with the purpose of being reproduced and watched by an audience far larger than the one directly experiencing it.”[33] Thus, as Lilie Chouliaraki and Angelos Kissas claimed, these videos helped IS to introduce “spectacular thanatopolitics” to the West’s mainstream, and are turning it into a norm.[34]

Execution videos were considered part of the organization’s strategy, dubbed by Aaron Y. Zelin as “The Massacre Strategy”,[35] the goal of which is “not only to scare Iraqi Shiites but to provoke them to radicalize, [...] and then commit similar atrocities against Sunnis.”[36] AQI (and IS presently) wanted to provoke a violent reaction from its enemies, who will eventually strengthen the organization’s image as the protector and savior of Sunnis. These “public displays of violence”, as Friis called it, “have played a central role in the group’s global campaign.”[37]

Online Jihadi Propaganda in the Context of Cumulative Extremism

The use of the Internet by violent extremists is well explored, as it “has become the agent of virtual inspirational contagion.”[38] It is also applied to the Jihadi use of the Internet, which raised some questions about the influence that the Internet has on extremists. Meleagrou-Hitchens and Nick Kaderbhai explained that “Internet alone is not generally a cause of radicalization, but can act as a facilitator and catalyst of an individual’s trajectory towards violent political acts.”[39] Online Jihadism, thus, is contagious; it helps to recruit and mobilize people to perform violent acts. The impacts of these online activities also transcend the Jihadist milieu, as explained below.

This article uses the term “Jihad” in the context of terrorism, the executors of which define themselves as Salafists, who consider this kind of violence to be a necessary part of a sacred struggle against “the enemies of Islam”. These enemies are described as both “inside” the Muslim world – regimes and societies that are seen as “not Islamic enough” and which do not apply the Sharia (the Islamic law) appropriately – and on the “outside”, referring to non-Muslim nations that engage in conflicts with Muslim nations, occupy Islamic territories or otherwise negatively affect them politically, culturally and religiously.[40]

Propaganda “in the most neutral sense means to disseminate or to promote particular ideas.”[41] The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defined this term as “any kind of ideas, doctrines or requests that are distributed [in the purpose of] affecting the opinion, the feelings, the attitudes or the lifestyles of any specified group with the intention of producing gain for the distributor whether directly or obliquely.”[42] Online Jihadi propaganda, which dates back to the 1990s, has become increasingly sophisticated, and is aimed at influencing billions of people, both Muslims and non-Muslims.[43] This is why IS propagandists have used hash tags that are not related to the Jihadi struggle whatsoever. For example, propaganda videos were distributed along with hash tagging the well-known American pop singer Justin Bieber.[44] However, extending the target audience

of Jihadists while using beheading videos creates new challenges: (1) it inspires other Jihadists to copycat the act; (2) it was adopted by non-Muslim political extremists; and, (3) it has been mimicked for criminal purposes.

Al-Qaeda and other Jihadi groups have used (and still use) “formal” and “informal” websites and forums through which Jihadists communicate and publish propaganda.[45] However, these forums suffered from “technical problems” and were closed for a long period.[46] This marked the evolution of “Jihadist social media”,[47] which has had a strong impact on the youth and serves as an uncontrolled and violent sphere.[48] Further, if “in today’s world any incident might easily trigger deep-rooted aggression,”[49] it is possible that gruesome Jihadi propaganda triggers non-Jihadi aggression.

In 2006, Roger Eatwell defined the process in which one extremist group provokes a reaction (“a spiral”) from another extremist group as “cumulative extremism”.[50] In December 2017, Ben Wallace, the British security minister, said that “extremists on all sides of arguments would love to dominate the ground and antagonize their opponents, pushing them to the extreme to ultimately cause some form of conflict.”[51] Peter R. Neumann wrote that there is a risk “that radicals at opposite ends of the political spectrum will drive each other to further extremes.”[52]

Accordingly, there is a risk that brutality by one group will provoke more brutality. Different extremists are not only driving each other to further extremes, they also learn and even copy from each other. For example: in Britain, the neo-Nazi group National Action mimicked IS in its videos and even advocated “White Jihad”.[53] In Italy, the Crusader State group, with a Facebook page with more than 10,000 likes, produced several IS-style videos.[54] In the United States, neo-Nazis planned to attack their anti-fascist rivals with a suicide-bombing.[55]

The Gore as Jihadist Propaganda Tool

Video clips are regarded as catalysts for violence, hence, they are perhaps most significant for Jihadi propaganda.[56] Beheading videos have been used as Jihadi propaganda since the 1990s. This happened for example during the “Caucasus Wars” between Russia and separatists-Jihadists from Chechnya and Dagestan (1994-1996, 1999). One infamous example is a video which shows Chechen Islamist fighters slaughtering six Russians soldiers, one after another.[57]

The first beheading video of a Western captive was of the Jewish-American journalist, Daniel Pearl. Kidnapped in Karachi, Pakistan, in January 2002, he was murdered by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, “the architect” of the September 11 attacks.[58] The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) tried to prevent the distribution of Pearl’s execution video by pressuring Internet service providers, as well as various website owners, to remove the video. However, these days there are designated websites for this type of disturbing content, which continue to spread violent propaganda.[59] For example, Pearl’s murder video was uploaded to the former website Ogrish.com, which collected “snuff” videos of murder, torture, car accidents and so forth. However, the FBI demanded Ogrish.com to remove the video.[60] According to the website, the FBI warned its managers that they would be prosecuted if they allow the publication of Pearl’s murder. “We had no other choice than deleting the video... We live in a censored world.”[61] Today, typing Ogrish.com on a search engine (such as Google) will get you to LiveLeak.com that distributes various videos; including execution videos, disguised as news site without censorship.

Pearl’s murder inspired and was followed by other Jihadists. As Gabriel Weimann noted, “this pattern was later repeated by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the insurgents in Iraq, who beheaded numerous hostages and posted the videotaped executions online.”[62] Beheading videos turned out to be a useful tool for terrorizing the Jihadists’ enemies.[63] In Iraq, the first American who was decapitated in front of a camera was Nicholas Berg, who was abducted by al-Zarqawi’s organization and was beheaded by al-Zarqawi himself.[64]

Similarly to Pearl’s case, the video of Berg’s murder was distributed online, and thus received global attention.[65] According to Nico Prucha, Berg’s video had a significant impact on western and non-western media.[66]

Not only were millions exposed to the propaganda, but it seems that many were interested and “provoked” by it.[67] After Berg’s video was spread online, it became a “viral hit”[68] that reminded the viewers of the murder of Daniel Pearl.[69] Dozens more people of different nationalities eventually shared Berg’s fate.

Effective IS propagandists have inspired several attacks in the West.[70] However, as Charlie Winter argued, exposure to “propaganda alone is not the reason that someone becomes a supporter [of IS]. What propaganda does do, though, is catalyze the individual’s radicalization and concentrate their already-held sympathies.”[71] Therefore, beheading videos serve “as a vehicle by which to convey both vengeance and supremacy.”[72] Yet, it does have a role in the decision to kill, and in a particular way. For example, in November 2017 it was revealed that a British couple planned to behead Paul Goldwin, the leader of Britain First, an extreme right-wing British street movement, as well as Katie Hopkins, a British anti-Islamic media personality.[73]

The influence, first and foremost, manifested itself by the act of decapitation. In September 2014, Australian authorities arrested fifteen Australian-Muslims who planned an attack in the streets of Sydney. The thwarted scheme was to abduct passersby in broad daylight and slaughter them in front of cameras.[74] This plot was dubbed by the Australian prime minister, Tony Abbot, as “demonstration killings”, the sole purpose of which was spreading terror through the streets of Sydney and humiliate Australia.[75] In November 2014, a young British man was arrested for planning to decapitate a soldier or a policeman.[76]

In September 2015, in Denmark, a 15-year-old girl and her 30-year-old “Islamist” boyfriend watched IS videos on YouTube. They later stabbed the girl’s mother to death while she was asleep and decapitated her.[77] In December, a man in London who was inspired by IS tried to decapitate people at a Subway station.[78] In Russia, at the beginning of March 2016, a nanny of Uzbek ethnicity was caught on cameras with the severed head of a 4-year-old girl. After being arrested the nanny stated to Russian media that she learned how to decapitate a person from propaganda videos.[79]

Mimicking the Jihadists’ Technique

A survey of Cunliffe and Cottee about the propaganda videos produced by IS reveals the wide spectrum of people who were exposed to this propaganda. Cottee explains that they were “surprised by respondents” who reported exposure to the Islamic State’s videos. Fifty-seven percent said they had watched an Islamic State video before, beyond clips shown on TV and in online news material.” Furthermore, “[o]f this number, an even more remarkable 46 percent said [that] they had seen more than 10 Islamic State videos.”[80]

Jihadi beheading videos were also mimicked by other extremists who had previously not been associated with this type of gruesome propaganda. For example, in 2007 two neo-Nazis in Russia uploaded a three-minute video clip to YouTube, in which they documented their murder of two migrant workers, allegedly Spaniards. The victims are seen lying with their hands tied and then sitting under a Nazi flag stretched between two trees. One victim was decapitated and the other one was shot in the head. The killers, both of them masked and dressed in black, were standing in front of the camera with their backs to the Nazi flag making the Nazi salute. [81] It is the first recording of decapitation by neo-Nazis in the twenty-first century.

According to Sova, a center for monitoring hate-crimes in Russia, “Neo-Nazi Russian gangs radicalize further and further while borrowing tactics from Islamic extremists.”[82] Approximately a year after the murder of the two Spaniards Sova received an e-mail message with an attached picture of a beheaded Tajik immigrant. The motive for these actions is ideological, although violent Jihadi propaganda also provides inspiration for violence driven by criminal motives or mental illness. In 2008, law enforcement in the United States foiled a neo-Nazi plot to assassinate former president Barack Obama. The plot was to kill 88 African-Americans, 14 by beheading.[83] These numbers are symbolic to neo-Nazis, as “88” stands for “HH” (Hail Hitler) and “14” stands for “14 words”, a popular white supremacist slogan.[84]

Mexican drug cartels (MDCs), for example, are sympathetic with beheadings even more than the IS.[85] Like IS, they are very active on SMP.[86] Are the cartels drawing inspiration by Jihadists, or is it the other way

around? It is very difficult to know for certain, but in the world of SMP it is not baseless to assume that the influence is mutual: the cartels are inspired by IS and vice versa.[87] This type of inspiration is manifested by the actual nickname of Iván Velázquez Caballero, one of the leaders of Los Zetas cartel, who adopted the name (or received it from his peers): “El Talibano” (referencing the Taliban).[88]

Some argue that the influence and inspiration that cartels draw from the Jihadists is expressed by the method of decapitating in front of the camera. For example, according to Ioan Grillo, a journalist who lived in Mexico, “[d]ecapitation was almost unheard of in modern Mexico” until 2006, when the former Mexican president Felipe Calderon declared war on drug cartels.[89] Brian J. Philips wrote that the Mexican government reported “1,303 decapitated bodies in the country between 2007 and 2011.”[90] As Grillo explained, “[s]ome of the first narco snuff videos looked almost frame for frame like Al Qaeda execution videos.”[91]

Philips noted that “the use of this tactic [decapitation] took off around the same time that groups in Iraq were using similar methods to draw attention with Internet videos.”[92] He added that “[i]t 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.”[93] Don Winslow argued the contrary; that IS learned from the MDCs. “This is the ISIS playbook,” he wrote, “social media as a means of intimidation, recruitment, and provocation; mass murder as a means of control – that we now watch with horror and revulsion. In reality, we’ve been seeing it for years. Just across our border. ISIS learned it from the cartels.”[94]

Is it possible that Jihadists draw inspiration from the cartels? In 2011, two cartel members were decapitated by their rivals, one of them with a chainsaw and the other with a knife.[95] Five years later, in the city of Mosul, Iraq, it was reported by an Iraqi News outlet that nine young men were executed by ISIS with chainsaws, after being blamed of espionage.[96] IS videos even showed children chopping off a bound man’s head.[97] In 2012, both IS and the MDCs produced videos with similar scenes of drive-by shootings.[98] Both also recorded execution by explosives more or less at the same time, during 2015.[99]

Beheadings as part of drug wars and crime are not unique to Mexico. For example, in March 2016 the severed head of a Dutch criminal was found inside a burning car in Amsterdam.[100] In December 2014, two kids in Israel attacked a schoolmate because they wanted to steal his bicycle. The attackers hit their victim and threatened him with a knife, declaring that they would “do to him like ISIS.” One of them asked or maybe threatened: “Do you know how it is done by ISIS?”[101]

In February 2015, three kids in Japan were arrested after they beheaded a 13-year-old boy. The killers “watched internet videos showing the execution of hostages by Islamic State fighters and sought to mimic them.”[102] Less than a month later, also in Japan, a 14-year-old boy tried to behead his school’s pet goat, after watching IS videos.[103] It should be noted that in Israel, IS cell members “taught themselves to slaughter sheep, apparently in preparation for slaughtering humans.”[104]

On the same day in which the bicycle theft case inspired by IS was reported in Israel, reports were published about a serial killer arrested in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The murderer, a 23-year-old man called Jonathan Lopes dos Santos, was arrested after decapitating the heads of five prostitutes and seriously injuring others.[105] Dos Santos confessed that these crimes were inspired by the horror videos distributed by IS. To the question of a reporter about why he committed the murder, Dos Santos replied: “I don’t know, I think it’s because I watch a lot of war videos.”[106]

Conclusions

Although some may argue that the case studies reviewed in this analysis are merely a number of incidents of the same sort of violence happening in different places around the world by different groups, scholars and professionals should not neglect the fact that IS beheading videos have an effect on various actors; not only on IS sympathizers or other terrorists, but on criminals as well, and on the youth. IS, it seems, has successfully mainstreamed beheadings and provided a source from which many could be inspired or copy practices.

The examples described throughout this article illustrate how violent Jihadist propaganda, presented in the execution videos, impacts societies and individuals in various regions across the world. It also provides inspiration for brutal acts carried out by non-Jihadists for other reasons, including ideological (as in the case of the neo-Nazis), criminal (as in the case of the cartels) or mentally ill (as in the case of Dos Santos).

This indicates that homicide committed in the name of “religion” may provide inspiration for “non-religious” acts of murder. In other words, Jihadist beheading videos are memetic. Through the Internet, visual depictions of decapitation have been adapted and imitated by an increasing variety of actors. Moreover, the mutual processes of learning among radical entities that use brutality as means of propaganda and adopt the method of decapitation is clearly evident. In this manner, such an act becomes common with its own perceived legitimacy among the perpetrators.

This brief review reflects the broader phenomenon of how these propaganda videos impact our lives in the modern age of social media. Hence, the use of violence after watching Islamic State propaganda videos, or the adoption of the decapitation technique in executions, is not a unique characteristic of Muslim extremists in general nor Jihadists in particular. It is embodied in the brutal cases of violence and physical threats that have occurred in many different places.

The distribution of violent propaganda videos may contribute to radicalization and to the adoption of the beheading technique as a means of intimidation or deterrence. A civilized society cannot afford to be carried away by propaganda, the goal of which is to undermine the order of society, personal security, and thus national security. This is also true regarding the propaganda of IS and other radical entities, from ideological types like the neo-Nazis or criminals like the drugs cartels in Mexico.

Confronting these brutal propaganda videos requires cooperation on different levels, since the repercussions of the distribution of these videos seem to affect many people around the world. For instance, cooperation is required between countries as well as corporations that create technological tools used for distributing propaganda. It is also important for the media to not encourage murderers by providing an audience or contextual resonance. For this reason, the media should consider not publishing the details of murder methods and the murderers’ identities, whatever their motives may be. Furthermore, governments should use diplomatic, legal, and educational tools that help ensure a balance between free speech and restricting the distribution of violent content on the Internet. In addition to security and intelligence organizations, governments should enlist the involvement of educational institutions as well, as an educational system is best equipped to affect young people who can be inspired and influenced more easily by violent propaganda. Therefore, cooperative efforts should be increased in the field of education, both on the national and international levels, especially in view of the intense exposure of young people to today’s violent content openly disseminated via the various SMP, a problem that is not relevant to just one nation, but rather common to all humans and societies that seek life. “Do you know how it is done by ISIS?” a young Israeli kid asked his classmate, and the answer to this question is obvious, not only in Israel but also in many counties around the world; a definite “YES”. This should be a cause for serious concern.

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Public Opinion on the Root Causes of Terrorism and Objectives of Terrorists: A Boko Haram Case Study

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Abstract

Since about the year 2009, Boko Haram, a territorial terrorist organization, has wreaked havoc on communities in Northeast Nigeria and beyond. Significant debate has ensued about the reasons for the Boko Haram insurgency and their objectives. The government's response to Boko Haram has largely focused on the need to stamp out the insurgency through strong military response and heightened activities in intelligence and security agencies. Some have espoused the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) approach of mounting strategies that at least recognize the root causes of the problem and the angst amongst citizens that contribute to their decision to support terrorist organizations. In this article, we investigate public opinion about the root causes of terrorism and the objectives of terrorists. The results suggest that the majority of the public agree with the following: (1) the root causes of Boko Haram are unemployment, poverty and economic problems, dislike for government, extreme political ideology, extreme religious feelings and manipulation by some politicians; and (2) a major objective of Boko Haram is to seek revenge against security forces. However, more respondents disagreed than agreed about the following objectives of Boko Haram: fighting political inequality, fighting economic inequalities, and addressing political imbalance. Given these findings, it appears there is divergence in public opinion about Boko Haram and that some aspects of public opinion differ from perspectives held by government agencies.

Keywords: Terrorism, Perception, Root Causes, Objectives, Boko Haram, Nigeria.

Introduction

Terrorism can be defined as “the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or sub-national groups in order to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of their immediate victims.”[1] Although state agents can engage in terrorist acts against the people, the term “terrorists” is usually used to describe those who act outside the normal framework of society by engaging in illegal and often lethal and destruction activities that compromised state cohesion. [2] We expect their motivations and grievances to be related to the types of attacks that they perpetrate.

Terrorist attacks on people, communities, governments and infrastructure have resulted in tension and panic around the globe. Some terrorist organizations have international ambition while some do not.[3] Some, on the other hand, have territorial ambition and therefore capture territory through force and establish new government-like structures. Given the growing incidence of terrorism around the globe,[4] terrorism is now generally viewed as a leading global security threat.[5] This has spurred broader thinking about its causes, what it entails, and how it impacts on people and society. However, the complexity of terrorist behavior and the diversity of root causes and objectives make it difficult to answer these questions. Also, significant gaps remain in public understanding of terrorism and in the understanding of policymakers about public perception.

Knowledge of what constitutes the root causes and objectives of terrorist organizations continues to evolve in response to the needs of governments, international organizations and security experts to develop strategies to prevent and manage terrorist attacks. For example, regarding root causes, there is growing evidence that terrorism is largely explained by socio-economic, political and religious factors. Although extensive research has been conducted on the various underlying factors on terrorism, one key missing element in the literature is how the public perceives these factors. Especially for Boko Haram, a unique terrorist organization due to its territorial ambition and regional focus, a survey of public opinion is helpful in identifying how the public perceives it. For example, if the public perceives Boko Haram's cause as legitimate, challenges may face government agencies empowered to address the problem. If the public feels that the cause is government

ineffectiveness, it may be difficult for the government to convince the public that its solutions will be effective.

Terrorist organizations tend to recruit from within a pool of sympathizers. It is often argued that terrorists are aware of the importance of public opinion, hence, plan their attacks in order to sway opinion in an intended direction and this is evidenced by the frequency of their attacks, place location, timing and targets of their attacks.[6] This implies that terrorists manipulate public opinions and reactions to their advantage. An understanding of public opinion about terrorists can also enable policymakers to implement programs that have more popular supports and better gauge the effectiveness of government actions.

This study investigates public perceptions about Boko Haram, which has had a devastating impact on the Northeast part of Nigeria. The study focuses on the perceptions of citizens from the immediate areas of Boko Haram attacks,[7] as well as other areas in Northern Nigeria. Drawing on existing literature, we developed and implemented a survey questionnaire to obtain information on the root causes and the objectives of the Boko Haram insurgents. In reporting our results, we highlight where there exist differences between our survey results and common perceptions, as well as findings from existing literature.

We structure the rest of this paper as follows. Next, we summarize the history of Boko Haram and its activities. Next, we present a literature review on the root causes and objectives of terrorists. Then, we present our key research questions. Then, we present our methodology, data collection efforts and results. Finally, we offer some conclusions.

Understanding Boko Haram and Terrorism

Boko Haram, a radical Islamist group, has heightened the state of insecurity and become a major destabilizing force in Nigeria and surrounding countries.[8] Formally known as “Jama’atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda Awati wal Jihad”, its origin can be traced back to 2002 when its members organized around its charismatic leader, Mohammed Yusuf, in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital.[9] Yusuf instilled in the group an extreme Islamic ideology and a high degree of disdain for western principles and culture. Boko Haram, simply translated from Hausa to English, means “western education is forbidden.”[10] It aims to create an Islamic state, impose sharia law in Northern Nigeria, do away with western principles and culture, and rid society of bad governance, corruption and moral depravation. These, they believe, are against the tenets of Islam.[11]

Boko Haram’s violence became palpable in July 2009 when it commenced its attacks, including the killing of police forces and the bombing of government officials, places of worship, public institutions and innocent civilians.[12] Although the movement started with a strong criticism of northern Muslims for engaging in un-Islamic practices, it remained largely non-violent until 2009 when violent crackdown by the Police led to the arrest of some key members, including, Mohammed Yusuf, who was subsequently killed by the police. [13] The killing of Yusuf and other members of the sect spawned anger amongst the group, leading to violent attacks against police forces and innocent victims.[14]

In the aftermath of violent crackdowns, Boko Haram became a highly destructive and lethal group, killing thousands and displacing millions in Northeast Nigeria.[15] Boko Haram vigorously uses brutal tactics such as suicide bombings, assassinations, roadside shooting, car hijacking, kidnapping and bomb explosions to wage war against what it considers as enemy targets.[16] Boko Haram has also wreaked havoc on public institutions, civilians, police forces and government property.[17] The Amnesty International reported that Boko Haram fighters have bombed and killed several civilians, burnt villages and abducted and assaulted teachers and students during their attacks.[18] According to the Global Terrorism Index 2015 report, Nigeria experienced the most significant increase in terrorist deaths ever recorded by any country, from 1,595 in 2013 to 6,118 in 2014. These statistics made Boko Haram, the deadliest terrorist group in the world that year.[19] It is noteworthy that Boko Haram attacks have shifted remarkably from attacks on security forces to attacks on civilians.

Boko Haram attacks have destabilized economic activities, derailed economic development, and caused the worst kind of humanitarian crisis in the Northeast ever, with millions of people displaced from their homes,

jobs and communities.[20] For example, Borno State, which was worst affected by Boko Haram attacks, has 1.3 million people, especially women and children, displaced and in need of humanitarian aid.[21] Terrorism affects a larger spectrum of society than the immediate victims. In the aftermath of Boko Haram attacks, fear and anxiety have heightened not only among the target population but the broader population of people beyond the immediate impact area of Boko Haram. These attacks have drawn large public sentiments and media headlines from around the globe. For example, Boko Haram's kidnapping of schoolgirls from Chibok in 2014 caused international outrage and affected public opinion.[22] Similar outrage surrounded their most recent abduction of schoolgirls from Dapchi in 2018.[23]

Terrorists plan their attacks to "send a message to a certain audiences in an attempt to change their attitudes and opinions." [24] Many people believe that terrorists are irrational. However, their attacks and other strategies suggest that they are highly knowledgeable and organized entities that seek to maximize destruction, based on grievances, and gain public support.[25] Terrorists seek their attacks to influence people's perception in an intended direction.[26]

Amid the growing concern about the large displacement of people from Boko Haram attacks the federal and state governments of Nigeria, as well as international humanitarian agencies, have mounted major humanitarian strategies.[27] The Nigerian government also responded to Boko Haram's threat by using military force, especially in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States where Boko Haram attacks were strongest.[28] For example, in 2015/2016, the deployment of the military troops led to the recapturing of the control of Maiduguri from Boko Haram. Boko Haram found refuge in the Sambisa forest.[29] More recently, Boko Haram continues to launch attacks in several parts of the Northeast.[30]

The effectiveness of the Nigerian government, and its military and security agencies in fighting Boko Haram has come under criticism from both local and International agencies. A report by Transparency International indicated that the Nigerian armies are unable to defeat Boko Haram due to corruption in the Defense Sector and the inadequate supply of equipment and materials to confront Boko Haram. Further, in the report, it was recounted that Nigerian soldiers sometimes fled from Boko Haram attacks due to the shortage of ammunition and fuel, which were withheld by corrupt senior officers.[31] Amnesty International also accused the Nigeria military of committing war crimes against humanity, due to the mass arrest, interrogation and detentions of suspected members and supporters of Boko Haram, specifically detainees with no connection to Boko Haram who are subjected to torture, starvation, malnutrition and thirst, resulting in thousands of deaths at army run detention facilities.[32] The Nigerian government has typically denied these allegations. A study such as this one that is focused on public perception is helpful in understanding whether or not the public is closer to foreign critics or to domestic government officials.

Root Causes of Terrorism and Objectives of Terrorists

Studies have examined the root causes of terrorism and the objectives of terrorists. Identified root causes can be classified as follows: economic, social, religious, ethnic and political. We now examine these studies in more depth.

Economic and Social Root Causes

Poverty and unemployment have been identified by some studies as common causes of terrorism.[33] However, several studies have found no link between poverty, unemployment and terrorism.[34] The general belief of the security and intelligence community is that people who are economically deprived are more likely to resort to violence as a way to express their grievances. That is poverty and unemployment create terrorism.[35] The theory of relative deprivation explains that when people feel deprived of something they are expect to have, they become discontent, hence could use violence to express their grievances.[36] Although, it is argued that poor economic conditions such as lack of employment opportunities and poverty create the condition for people to join terrorist organizations.[37] A study by Kavanagh found that poor but highly educated people were the ones likely to participate in terrorism.

[38] Bhatia and Ghanem in their study that examined the relationship between education, unemployment and violent extremism, however, found that unemployed educated youth are more likely to be radicalized by terrorist groups due to the unemployment and lack of employment opportunities in Arab countries.[39]

Similarly, the lack of economic opportunities has been found as a root cause of terrorism. A study by Gassebner and Luechinger found a negative relationship between lack of economic opportunities and terrorism. The study further shows that countries that restrict economic freedom are susceptible to more terrorist attacks than countries that promote economic freedom.[40] For example, Mohammad argued, “the deterioration of socio-economic conditions in the Middle Eastern societies has contributed in many ways to the eruption of terrorism.”[41] In his study that examines the relationship between poverty, minority economic discrimination and domestic terrorism, Piazza revealed that countries that subject minority groups to economic discrimination are more likely to experience domestic terrorism than countries where minority groups are not affected by economic discrimination.[42] Lai also found evidence to show that states with greater economic disparities between groups are susceptible to higher terrorist attacks.[43]

Low income and economic inequality are found to be possible causes of terrorism. Pinar Derin-Gure found evidence that the greater the income inequality there is in a country, the greater the incidence of domestic terrorist attacks. [44] Krieger and Meierrieks sampled 114 countries between 1985 and 2012 and found that income inequality is correlated with terrorism.[45] In addition, Enders et al. found a robust nonlinear income-terrorism relationship, which suggests that terrorist attacks are more concentrated in middle-income countries.[46] But, other empirical studies have found no support to suggest that the income distribution of a country is related to terrorism.[47]

In northern Nigeria, there is the common perception that violent extremism is entrenched in the socio-economic problems of the country.[48] For example, Ayegba argued that poverty and unemployment are the driving forces behind the insurgency in Nigeria. Further in the study, Ayegba claimed that the high rate of youth unemployment has resulted in poverty and insecurity in the country.[49] David et al. argued, “socio-economic indices such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, economic underdevelopment, low education, inter alia, underlie the emergence and persistence of Boko Haram terrorism.”[50] These assertions suggest that the pervasive poverty and unemployment in northern Nigeria create the condition for especially young people to be manipulated and recruited by Boko Haram. Although, some studies have found no link between poverty and terrorism, however, the vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment make it easy for people to become prey for Boko Haram recruitment. A study by Botha and Abdile confirmed that, due to adverse economic conditions and unemployment in Somalia, some people viewed al-Shabaab as a potential employer.[51] A recent public opinion study on Boko Haram by Botha et al. revealed that some of the respondents interviewed perceive that people are motivated to join Boko Haram because “they are unemployed and see Boko Haram as a job.”[52]

Religious and Ethnic Causes of Terrorism

It is common belief that religious tension and religious fundamentalism cause terrorism. There is empirical evidence to support this argument.[53] With respect to Boko Haram, religion plays a vital role in their discourse.[54] The group holds extreme religious ideology, which they use as the basis to commit their heinous crimes. Akinola argued that the rise of Boko Haram is embedded in Islamic fundamentalism, which they use to justify their actions.[55] For example, the group aims to promote Sharia law and create an Islamic state in Northern Nigeria. As a result, it has waged war on any group or western idea, which they believe is against Islam. This has created the notion that terrorism is linked to religion fundamentalism.[56] In the study, why do people join Boko Haram? Onuoha found that, “ignorance of religious teaching is the leading factor influencing the adoption of extreme religious views, especially among youth” in all the northern states surveyed.[57]

In addition, religious and ethnic tensions are found to cause terrorism. Historically, Nigeria has experienced intermittent ethno-religious clashes.[58] Although, it is hard to claim that the emergence Boko Haram is related to religious or ethnic conflict, some studies have found a positive relationship between religious and ethnic tensions and terrorism.[59] This implies that

societies experiencing religious tension can become a breeding ground for terrorists to operate.

Political Causes of Terrorism

With respect to the political root causes of terrorism, several studies have indicated that the lack of civil liberties, corruption, weak political institutions, political instability, weak government, high level of repression, civil wars can foment the incidence of terrorism.[60] In addition, a study by Piazza shows that societies with large complex multiparty systems are more prone to terrorist incidence than those with few homogeneous systems.[61] Also, democratic countries, which are assumed to be in a better position to stop terrorist attacks, are more prone to terrorist attacks than autocratic countries.[62] Krieger and Meierrieks argued that democratic countries are prone to terrorist attacks due to the promotion of democratic ideals like respect for civil liberties and free press, which open doors for terrorists to operate and also hinder counter-terrorism measures.[63]

On domestic terrorism in Northeast Nigeria, some studies blamed the emergence of Boko Haram on the country's elite politics.[64] Botha et al. argued that "Boko Haram is a political construct, sponsored by politicians." [65] According to Mbah et al., Boko Haram emerged from the struggle among northern and southern political elites to gain control of state political power, especially after the death of President Yar'Adua. [66] The re-election of Jonathan Goodluck in 2011 then led to the use of Boko Haram as an instrument of destruction by northern political elites.[67] However, these claims cannot fully explain the emergence of Boko Haram, since other political and social phenomenon could contribute to the rise of the group. For instance, some scholars have argued that emergence of the group could be linked to bad governance, corruption and economic deprivation in northern Nigeria, which has fostered the rise radical extremist groups.[68]

Objectives of Terrorists

In general, the literature suggests that terrorists operate with particular goals in mind. Studies have shown that terrorist organizations may have political, religious, social and economic objectives, which inspired their operations.[69] The objectives of a terrorist organization influence its choice of targets and modes of attacks. Like other terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State which has a core goal of establishing a caliphate in the Middle East,[70] Boko Haram has the objective of removing all western and un-Islamic influences and establishing a society built on Islamic law in northern Nigeria. With this goal in mind, Boko Haram insurgents use violence as the acceptable means to bring about the change they want. The objectives of terrorist organizations may play an important role in how they recruit and radicalize people.

Importance of Research on Public Perceptions

The literature on public perception on terrorism is sparse. Only a few studies, if any at all, have studied how the public perceives terrorism or government actions to contain terrorist activities. Krueger examined the public attitude in one country toward another country and its effect on the likelihood of terrorism.[71] His results revealed the greater likelihood of terrorist attacks on one country if another country disapproves of the leadership and policies of that country.[72] A study by the Pew Charitable Trust shows that the majority of Nigerians are concern about the rise of Islamic extremism in the country, with 82% respondents saying they have unfavorable view and 10% said favorable view of Boko Haram.[73] Probably much of the 10% with favorable Boko Haram view (about 20 million) come from areas of the North that have had similar challenges as the Northeast.

Another study by Loschky indicated that 95% of Nigerians see Boko Haram as a major threat to the country's future, whereas, only 3% said minor threat.[74] In a recent study by Poushter on how the public perceives extremism, the result shows that majority of people in Europe and North America are worried about extremism.[75] This implies that the incident of terrorist attacks has increased citizens' fear and stimulated public view about the threat of terrorism. The authors are not aware of any studies that have looked how citizens in countries facing terrorism feel about the perpetrators and the actions of government.

It is important that the efforts of government in tackling terrorism are grounded on four foundations: (1) they are effective in addressing terrorism, (2) they are effective in addressing its root causes, (3) they are efficient and cost

effective, (4) they are supported by a significant segment of the public or enjoy broad-based support. The last has proven important in many countries. Terrorists rely on a pool of sympathizers from within which they recruit. Understanding how the general public perceives terrorism is important because this helps to understand the perspectives of the public concerning the root causes and objectives of terrorists. It also helps to understand how the public feels about the issue and the segment of the public that are sympathizers of terrorist acts. In addition, estimating the relationship between public opinion and terrorism can help government, military, humanitarian agencies and security agencies provide the appropriate services and support to victims of terrorist acts.

Methods & Data

Research Questions

In light of the above, in this study, we explore the following research questions in order to examine consistency between existing literature, general beliefs and public opinion about Boko Haram. Based on our assessment of the key areas of possible divergence, we honed in on the following critical questions related to root causes and objectives of terrorists:

1. What are the primary objectives of terrorists?
2. What are the root causes of terrorism?
3. What existing conditions enable and encourage terrorism?

Survey

We implemented a survey of respondents from eleven (11) states in Northern Nigeria in August 2013, two years into the active phase of the Boko Haram insurgency and a period where some of the most deadly attacks were recorded. Rather than focus only on the states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY states), where the bulk of the Boko Haram attacks occurred, we expanded the survey for several reasons: (1) uncertainty about the ability to collect adequate data from some states during the height of the insurgency, (2) to see if opinions varied between northerners and other northerners and (3) Boko Haram activities have impacted directly or indirectly on residents of most of these states. All selected states have very high Muslim population and it is often claimed that Muslims in the North generally support Boko Haram. In addition to the BAY states, other states surveyed include the other three Northeast states of Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba (BGT); the states of Kaduna, Kano, Kebbi and Sokoto in the Northwest; and the state of Niger in the North-Central Zone. The inclusion of states beyond the primary impact states allowed us to gauge broader public opinion in the Northern regions, vis-à-vis the immediate impact area.

In each state, we organized fieldwork to gauge the perceptions of individuals on terrorism. Our survey targets included the youths, workers, traders, traditional rulers, serving/ex-security personnel, women, etc. We utilized availability sampling in selecting the required number of respondents due to the nature of the insurgency, the associated risks to the lives of enumerators, the scepticism of many potential survey respondent, and the sensitive nature of the surveys. However, we made efforts to ensure a balanced representation and gave opportunities to all groups to be represented in the study.

The primary data collection instrument used in this study is a structured questionnaire. This is available upon request. This instrument was intended to generate answers to our key questions. Due to challenges associated with data collection of this nature, only one hundred (100) questionnaires were administered in each of the eleven states, bringing the total to 1,100. However, only 1,079 were found to be properly completed and usable in further analysis. To supplement our survey results, in each state, we conducted in-depth interviews with three persons; (1) a traditional or religious leader, (2) security personnel (serving or retired), and (3) a prominent citizen in the area. Please note that only the survey results relating to the focus of this particular paper are reported here. That is, there were more survey questions than what we analyse in this paper.

Results and Discussions

In this section, we present survey results from all eleven Northern states. The views and perceptions about terrorism while root causes and terrorists' objectives were relatively consistent across states, with a few exceptions. In our reporting, we focus on the aggregate views of the 1079 respondents from the eleven Northern States, we also highlight areas where the results from specific state deviate from overall findings.

Causes of Terrorism

The root causes of terrorism suggested by the literature appeared in section B. Survey respondents essentially confirm many of these causes, with only a few surprises. The general perceptions of the public about the causes of terrorism for the entire region are summarized in table 1. The strongest opinion centres on the notions that terrorists are typically unemployed people who are easily recruited by sponsors. Survey results also show that respondents believe that terrorists are motivated by poverty and economic problems. Results also suggest that the public feels that terrorists dislike government, harbour extreme political ideology and have extreme religious feelings. Also, strong is the perception that terrorists are manipulated by politicians as a ploy to stay in power and democracy provides greater latitude for terrorists to operate. These last two findings can be considered as somewhat unique about Nigeria. Less than 50% of those surveyed felt that terrorists were driven by the following factors: religious marginalization (42%), dislike for democracy (30%) or ethnicity (27%).

Table 1. Public perceptions on the causes on terrorism

Statements	Strongly agree or Agree	Disagree or Strongly disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree
Terrorists are unemployed people and easily recruited by sponsors	80%	20%	0%
Terrorists are driven by poverty and economic problems	72%	18%	10%
Terrorists are driven by dislike for the government of the day	66%	18%	16%
Terrorists are driven by extreme political ideology	63%	19%	18%
Terrorism is a grand design by politicians to stay in power	62%	20%	18%
Democracy has given room for terrorists to operate	61%	39%	0%
Terrorists are influenced by extreme religious feelings	58%	42%	0%
Terrorists are driven by feelings of regional marginalization	42%	41%	17%
Terrorists are driven by dislike for democracy	30%	46%	24%
Terrorists are driven by ethnicity	27%	50%	23%

Overall, the findings of the survey, particularly the result that suggest that terrorists are motivated by poverty and economic problems, confirm the common perception that the rise of violent extremism in Northern Nigeria is entrenched in socio-economic problems.[76] These findings imply that the prevalence of poverty and unemployment in Northeastern Nigeria create the conditions for people to join Boko Haram. These results, however, contradict the finding by Pizza, and Krueger and Maleckova that poverty and economic conditions do not necessarily cause terrorism.[77] Generally, this study seems to suggest that socio-economic factors are among the drivers of terrorism.[78]

Regarding the political causes of terrorism, the general perception in Nigeria is that Boko Haram dislikes the Nigerian government and unequivocally rejects Nigeria's political system, which they deemed as corrupt and un-Islamic.[79] In addition, since Boko Haram's aims to create an Islamic State in Northern Nigeria, it is not surprising that respondents strongly believe that extreme religion feeling has a role in influencing terrorists. This is corroborated by empirical studies of a link between terrorism and religious fundamentalism.[80] However, a recent opinion survey by Botha et al. showed that the majority of respondents think religion has little or no influence on people's decision to join Boko Haram,

hence the study did not consider religion to be a major reason for people to join Boko Haram.[81]

There is also claim that Boko Haram is supported and financed by some politicians in Nigeria to promote their political agenda.[82] Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's Nobel Laureate, indicated that there are some Nigeria politicians who actually support the activities of Boko Haram "because in their lust for power and pursuit for power, they were ready to sacrifice anything or ally with anything." [83] Interestingly, from the survey, the majority of respondents believe terrorists are manipulated by politicians in order to remain in power.

State-Level Observations

Across all eleven states, there was not much variation in citizens responses about the root causes of terrorism. A significant majority of respondents from all the surveyed states clearly recognize that terrorism is rooted in the socio-economic, political and religious problems of the region. Since a major part of Northern Nigeria is engulfed in poverty, limited economic opportunities and unemployment, it was not surprising that the majority of respondents conflated terrorism to the socio-economic and political challenges facing the region. In particular, respondents from Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, where Boko Haram's attacks have been mostly concentrated were of the strong opinion that (1) unemployment (Yobe, 83%, Borno, 82% and Adamawa, 70%), (2) poverty and economic hardship (Yobe, 73%, Borno, 71% and Adamawa, 70%), (3) extreme political ideology (Borno, 70%, Yobe, 64% and Adamawa, 62%), and dislike for government of the day (Borno, 74%, Yobe, 58% and Adamawa, 57%), (4) extreme religious feelings (Borno, 77%, Adamawa 53% and Yobe, 40%), and (5) hatred for others (Borno, 70%, Yobe, 51% and Adamawa, 51%) were the cause of terrorism in their respective states.

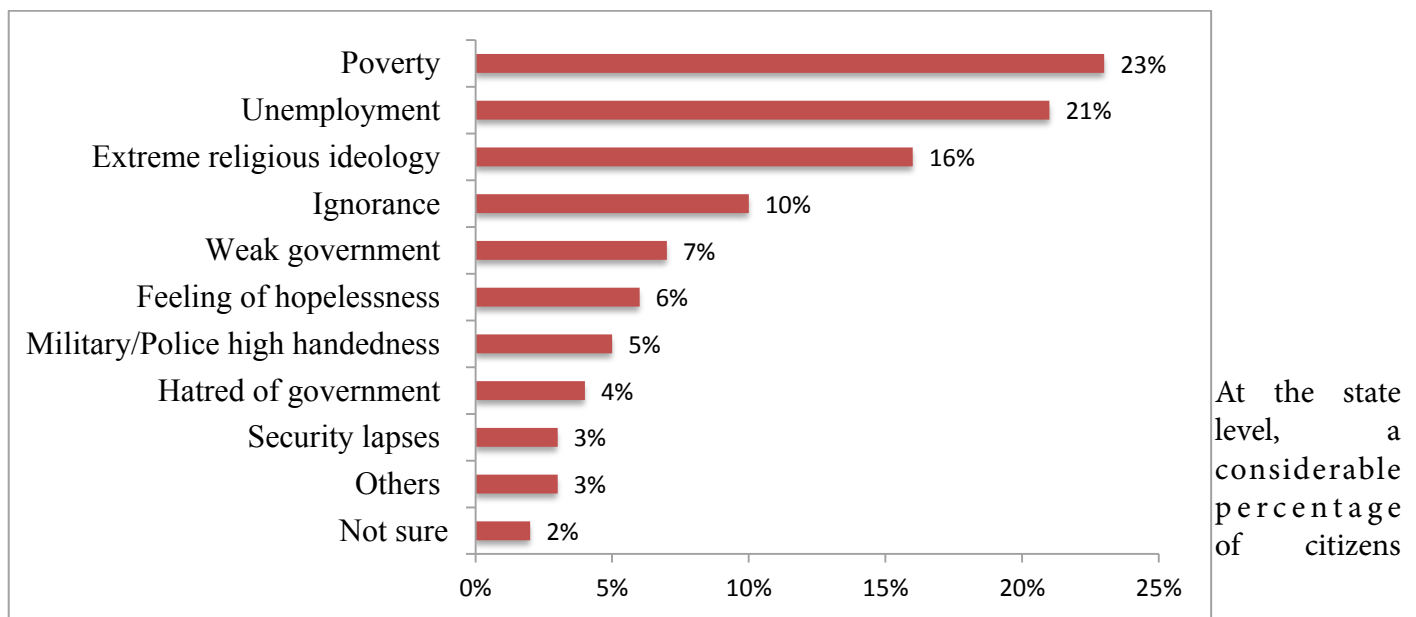
Conversely, while respondents from Yobe, Adamawa, Bauchi and Gombe strongly opposed the statements that terrorism is driven by ethnicity, regional marginalization and dislike for democracy, respondents from Borno in particular, were of the strong opinion that regional marginalization (51%), ethnicity (42%) and dislike for democracy (56%) cause terrorism. Similarly, more respondents from Kano and Kaduna also indicated that dislike for democracy is to be blamed for the rise of Boko Haram in Northern, Nigeria. Finally, a significant majority of respondents from Sokoto state indicated that regional marginalization is a cause of terrorism.

Conditions that Best Explain why People Engage in Terrorism

We further explore the individual level causes of terrorism by asking respondents to identify specific statements that best explain the reason why people engage in terrorism. Noted that respondents were asked to choose the leading one of several alternative statements. Hence the percentages reported in figure 1 are generally low, as the first choices varied. However, the figure presents an ordinal ranking of the personal/micro causes of terrorism.

In popular press, it was often claimed that weak governance, high handedness of security agents and hatred of the Jonathan government were major causes of Boko Haram. As shown in figure 1, from the perspective of the public, the leading personal causes are poverty, unemployment, extreme religious ideology and ignorance. While weak government, feeling of hopelessness, military/police high handedness, hatred of the government and security lapses made the list of causes, they occurred less frequently as the best reasons cited by respondents, suggesting that the public believes that they are only marginal contributing factors, perhaps through the recruitment pool of terrorists. The relative values of these responses are helpful in informing policymakers about the roots of terrorism and the necessary preventative strategies, at least from the perspective of the public bystander.

Figure 1: Conditions that Best Explain why Some People Engage in Terrorism

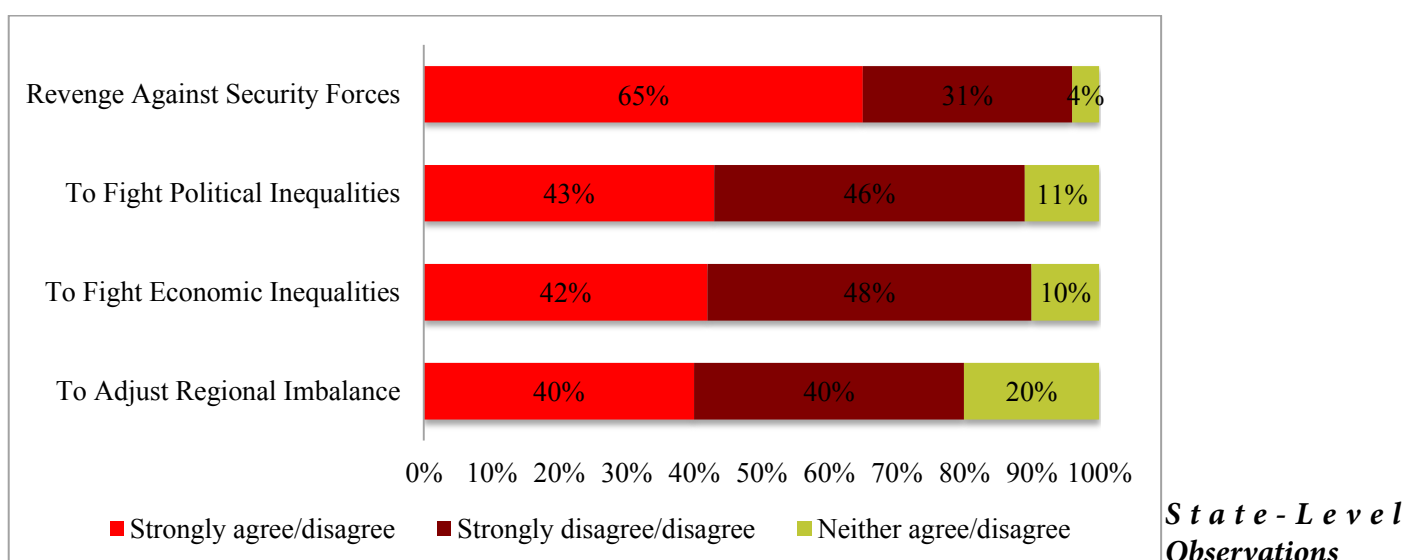


see unemployment as the main cause of terrorism (Taraba = 34%), Yobe = 26%, Kaduna = 22% and Gombe = 20%). Similarly, a considerable percentage of citizens see poverty as the main cause of terrorism (Sokoto = 33%, Kebbi = 28%, Niger = 21%). Only citizens from Borno (46%) indicated that extreme religious ideology is the prime condition that compels people to engage in terrorism in their state.

Objectives of Terrorists

We provided respondents with a list of potential terrorist objective to choose from. Each respondent had the option of choosing as many as possible. Based on the results, the top four responses are as follows: (a) revenge against security forces (65% strongly agree or agree and 31% strongly disagree or disagree); (b) fight economic inequalities (42% strongly agree or agree and 48% strongly disagree or disagree); (c) fight political inequalities (43% strongly agree or agree and 46% strongly disagree or disagree); and (d) adjust the regional imbalances (40% strongly agree or agree and 40% strongly disagree or disagree) (see Figure 2). Respondents felt more strongly about revenge against security forces as their main objective as terrorists than they did about fighting political and economic inequalities. These results may indeed be unique to Boko Haram, given the perception that violent government actions helped spur Boko Haram.⁸⁴

Figure 2: Objectives of Terrorists



A significant number of respondents from Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi, Niger, Kebbi and Sokoto states indicated that the objective of Boko Haram are to destroy the North and revenge against security forces. To the contrary, some respondents from Kebbi (47%) opposed the idea that Boko Haram's objective is to destroy the north, however, the majority of respondents (74%) believed Boko Haram's aim to revenge against the security forces.

While respondents from Borno (46%) and Bauchi (49%) believe Boko Haram has no objectives, some from Gombe (47%), Bauchi (49%), Kebbi (48%) and Sokoto (63%) strongly disagree or disagree that they have no objectives. However, respondents from Yobe (strongly agree [40%] and strongly disagree [40%] and Niger (strongly agree [39%] and strongly disagree [40%] are divided in their opinion about Boko Haram's objectives.

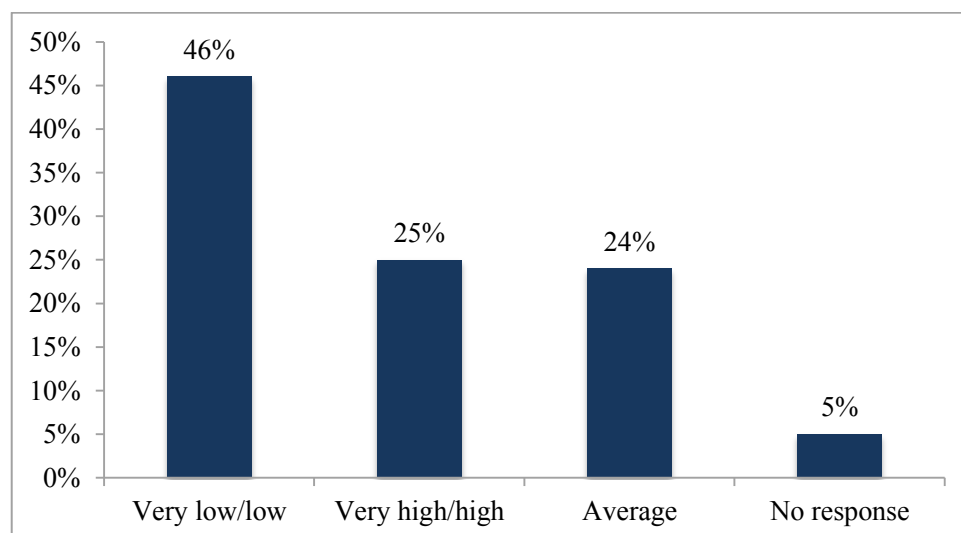
Conversely, while Borno citizens perceive the objectives of Boko Haram are to destroy their opponents (66%), overthrow the government (62%), want to become rich (49%), settle personal scores (48%) and are just common criminals (50%), respondents from Yobe completely opposed these statements. The respondents from Yobe strongly disagree that terrorist group like Boko Haram want to destroy their opponents (50%), overthrow the government (52%), want to become rich (55%), settle personal scores (60%) and are just common criminals (52%).

In addition, a significant number of respondents from Borno, Yobe, Gombe and Bauchi, strongly disagree that Boko Haram aims to fight economic inequalities, fight political inequalities and adjust regional imbalances. However, the majority of citizens from Sokoto and Bauchi strongly validate the statements that Boko Haram aims to fight economic and political inequalities and also adjust the imbalances in the region.

Level of Sympathy for Boko Haram

Many in Nigeria believe in the conspiracy theory that Northerners invented Boko Haram as a mechanism for heightening their political voice and therefore support Boko Haram. If this is true, one should see strong support for Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria. Our survey results suggest that some 46% indicated that they have very low or low sympathy for the Boko Haram. Some 25% of the respondents indicated that they have very high or high sympathy for Boko Haram. Considering that the population of Northern Nigeria approached 100 million, this could mean 25 million people. Additionally, some 24% indicated average sympathy for Boko Haram (see Figure 3 below). Adding the very high and average, one gets 49%. In essence, Northern Nigeria is 50/50 split in the level of sympathy for Boko Haram. That may be as much as 50 million people. Assuming that Christians in the North do not support Boko Haram, it would be the case that the majority of northern Nigerians support Boko Haram.

Figure 3: Level of sympathy for Boko Haram



Summary and Conclusion

To understand public opinion, vis-à-vis the existing knowledge base, we utilize evidence from the

literature and generally available information to develop a survey of public opinion about Boko Haram and their activities in the eleven Northern states of Nigeria, including the six states that have been ravaged more aggressively by Boko Haram. This article covers responses to questions related to terrorism root causes and the objectives of terrorists.

Our results confirm the following about what the public believes are the root causes of terrorism: unemployment, poverty and economic problems, dislike for government, extreme political ideology and religious feelings, and manipulation by politicians. Our results, however, do not confirm that the public feels that dislike for democracy or ethnicity play a role as root causes. Our survey also revealed that the public strongly believes that revenge against security forces is an objective of Boko Haram, as 65 percent of respondents expressed this feeling. However, less than the majority of respondents believe that objectives of terrorists include the goals of fighting political inequalities, fight economic inequalities or adjust regional imbalances.

Some of these findings are consistent with conventional thinking, but some are not. For example, the goals of fighting political inequality, fighting economic inequalities and adjusting regional imbalances are generally believed to be objectives of Boko Haram, but less than a majority of respondents agreed. Our results suggest the importance of considering the views of the general public in the fight against domestic terrorism. The government's response to Boko Haram has largely focused on the need to stamp out the insurgency through strong military response and heightened activities of intelligence and security agencies. Others have espoused the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) approach of mounting strategies that at least recognize the root causes of the problem and the angst amongst citizens that contribute to their decision to support terrorist organizations. Our results at least suggest that the public recognizes the concept of grievances, and may therefore expect greater socioeconomic intervention strategies as a tool for fighting insurgency.

One of the revelations from our survey is that the majority of the respondents (62%) believe Boko Haram was a "grand design" by politicians to stay in power. This perspective is unique in that it suggests that some politicians use terrorism to achieve a political score. The notion that some politicians can create a terrorist group to destabilize the security of the country to their advantage is an intriguing one that needs to be further investigated.

The significant sympathy in the North for Boko Haram obviously is a problem for the government in fighting terrorism. Much more work is required to convert a divided public into one that can support greater resolve in the fight against terrorism. This information uncovered by this study is particularly useful to agencies of government with responsibility for strategic communication and mindset change, especially the National Orientation Agency (NOA).

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Mounting a Facebook Brand Awareness and Safety Ad Campaign to *Break the ISIS Brand* in Iraq

by Anne Speckhard, Ardian Shajkovci, Claire Wooster and Neima Izadi

Abstract

This article reports on the International Center for Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE's) most recent Facebook ad campaign aimed at raising awareness about the realities of living under ISIS and protecting vulnerable potential recruits from considering joining. During the course of 24 days in December of 2017, ICSVE researchers mounted the campaign on Facebook using a counter-narrative video produced by ICSVE. The Facebook ad campaign targeted Iraq, where Facebook is the most widely used social media platform, with ISIS also driving powerful recruiting campaigns on Facebook and enticing youth into joining. The results were promising in terms of driving engagement with our counternarrative video materials, leading close to 1.7 million views and hundreds of specific comments related to both our video content and ISIS in general. In terms of policy implications, in addition to raising awareness about the dangers of joining ISIS and our Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project, the campaign served as an important platform to challenge extremist narratives as well as channel doubt, frustration, and anger into positive exchange of ideas and participation.

Keywords: Counter narrative, radicalization, Internet, violent extremism online, Islamic State, ISIS / ISIL, Facebook

Introduction

In 2014, the so-called Islamic State militants poured over the Syrian border into Iraq, ultimately taking control of up to one third of the country. Iraqi citizens living under ISIS control, including those outside of ISIS territory, were met with a barrage of both in person and over the Internet recruiting messages. ISIS blanketed the Internet with videos of its newly declared "Caliphate" and made use of the immediate feedback mechanisms of social media, allowing them to contact and swarm in on vulnerable persons who shared, retweeted, or otherwise endorsed their products. ISIS is credited with attracting over 30,000 recruits from over 100 countries to the conflict zones in Iraq and Syria, at times attracting entire families to come live under their Caliphate.

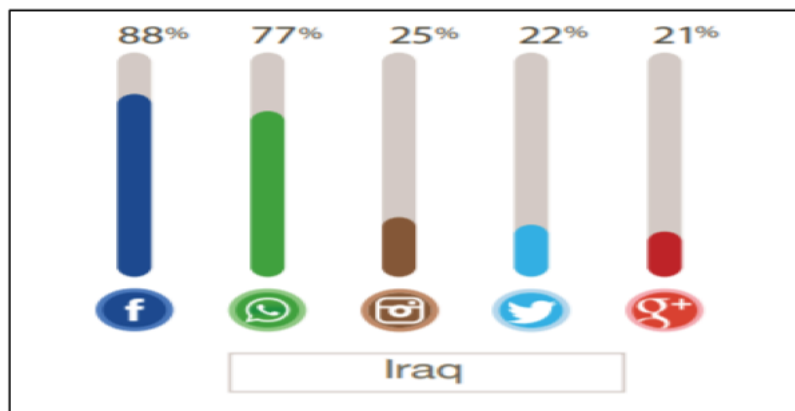
Much of the recruiting in Iraqi territory controlled by ISIS was carried out in mosques and face-to-face encounters. These were areas where local Iraqis often lost their abilities to earn a livelihood and survive without being co-opted into the group. Likewise, at least in the beginning, ISIS cadres we have interviewed in Iraq for the ICSVE *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project* (n=30 out of 78 globally) have stated that Islamic State militants made many promises to local Iraqis. They promised them dignity, justice, freedom and prosperity to the Sunni population of Iraq, which made joining, at least in the beginning, an attractive option.

While most ISIS recruiting inside ISIS-controlled territory occurred by face-to-face interactions, ISIS was also making full use of the Internet to demonstrate and propagate its messages, as well as to expand their reach beyond ISIS-controlled areas in Iraq. ISIS cadres (n=30) interviewed in Iraq for the ICSVE *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project* spoke of watching ISIS-produced videos as well as reading about ISIS battles with the Iraqi security forces on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Moreover, some Iraqi ISIS cadres interviewed were recruited out of Baghdad, including other areas, with the initial outreach occurring via Internet recruitment. Thus, we have learned that even inside conflict zones Internet recruitment over Facebook and other social media platforms occurs, and also serves as important medium of communication to lure in new recruits.

As of June 2017, Iraq had fourteen million Internet users.[1] A 2015 statistical report on the share of Facebook users in Iraq showed that Facebook (see Figure 1) remains an extremely important social media communica-

tion platform, particularly to Iraqi youth between the ages of 16 and 34. In our sample of 78 interviews with ISIS cadres we also found Facebook to be especially popular among the 14-35 age group.

Figure 1: Preferred Social Media Platforms in Iraq



Source: Arab Social Media Report[2]

Even before the US-led coalition invasion of Iraq, ISIS recruiters were active on all the major social media platforms, including Facebook, and continue to be active to this day. While Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have instituted strict take-down policies in recent years, making it difficult to openly recruit on these platforms, such policies are slower in languages other than English, which makes detection and take-downs delayed somewhat. However, Islamic State militants continue to get around these policies by creating fleeting fake accounts that attract recruits on Facebook. It is through such accounts that they manage to quickly lure their new recruits off Facebook onto encrypted sites to further move them along the terrorist trajectory. More recently, ISIS militants and recruiters are also known to take advantage of Facebook's live streaming mechanisms by announcing when they will be live-streaming on encrypted sites such as Telegram. Such work-around makes it hard to detect terrorist recruiting activity until it is too late.

After almost four years of combat operations to drive ISIS (ISIL/Daesh) out of the territory it once held and controlled, Iraqi forces officially declared ISIS' defeat in December of last year. Yet, despite these significant territorial victories against ISIS, the security environment in Iraq remains volatile. The ongoing insecurity posed by ISIS sleeper cells in certain parts of the country and unfolding humanitarian crisis that followed the recapture of Mosul and Fallujah from ISIS remain problematic. There is serious worry among the intelligence community and political elites that ISIS, or similar groups, could reemerge. Political instability and public dissatisfaction with governance and grievances, both real and perceived, over widespread government corruption remain worrisome. These factors are also propagating discontent and spawning a dangerous climate in the country. Indeed, such environments serve as breeding grounds for terrorist organizations like ISIS to reemerge. The ISIS ideology and their dream of building a "Caliphate"—that would deliver dignity, significance, pure living, justice, prosperity and purpose for Sunni Muslims—remains virulent as terrorists position themselves as the antidote to Iraq's socio-political problems.

The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) team have spent the last two years capturing ISIS defectors, returnees, ISIS cadre prisoner, and parents of ISIS fighters, most on video, in their *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narratives Project* interviews. To date, they have conducted seventy-eight interviews, with thirty of these being of Iraqi ISIS cadres. Eighteen short counter-narrative video clips have thus far been produced from the longer videotaped interviews. The interviews are edited down to their most damaging, denouncing, and derisive content. The videos are used to fight against ISIS and its ideology. [3]

During December 2017, the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) ran 19 ad campaigns on Facebook using one or two videos: (1) *Today is the Female Slave Market Day in ad-Dawlah* – a Syrian male, ISIS defector's account of the abuse of women by ISIS—and (2) *Promises of ISIS to Women* – a Belgian

female, ISIS defector's account of how she was lured to Syria from Europe. The campaigns targeted English, Arabic, Russian, Somali, and Albanian speakers from various countries around the world. This report concerns the Iraqi campaign, where Facebook is a prominently used social media platform. ISIS in Syria and Iraq has been especially active on Facebook. They resort to using powerful images and videos of the war in Iraq and Syria—glamorizing ISIS fighters and ISIS ideology—and serving as a virtual playground and echo chamber for ISIS-related extremist viewpoints.

The purpose of the online Facebook intervention in Iraq was to raise awareness of the futility of ISIS' promises of bringing about the desired utopian Caliphate and its failure to deliver any of its promises. This was to be accomplished using our *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative* videos to drive online engagement among the citizens of Iraq over Facebook. The goal of the Facebook video ad campaign was to showcase the realities of belonging to ISIS and offer opportunities for those considering joining to reconsider their decisions. Given Facebook's strong presence and penetration in Iraq, especially among youth, and the fact that ISIS has previously made use of Facebook and may continue to do so again in the future, ICSVE researchers decided that mounting an awareness campaign on Facebook using counter narratives of ISIS insiders denouncing the group would be a protective and preventative action in the fight against ISIS and violent extremism.

Campaign Type and Methodology

Counter narratives serve as important communication strategies to counter and prevent radicalization and violent extremism. Alternative narratives, counter-narratives (sometimes called direct counternarratives), and government strategic communications comprise the three most widely used counter narrative approaches with respect to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).[4] Alternative narratives emphasize positive stories about democratic values, tolerance, and freedom, among others,[5] while government strategic communication campaigns are aimed at clarifying government policies, stances, or actions towards an issue. They also include public safety and awareness activities. Direct counter-narratives, which characterize the work of our organization, are used to target and discredit terrorist groups and their ideologies by deconstructing and demystifying terrorists' messages to demonstrate their lies, hypocrisy, and inconsistencies.[6] We firmly believe that the best counter-narratives are those coming from disillusioned insiders. They must not be labeled as counter-narratives, but instead appear to be in the ISIS video genre, so that those already engaging online with ISIS propaganda will be likely to also encounter our counter narratives and get a very different message. For that reason, we label our *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative* videos with pro-ISIS or ambivalent names and illustrate them with ISIS generated footage. We also promote them with an ISIS-like thumbnail. Government strategic communications and alternative narratives can be particularly useful when used to inoculate innocents against terrorist recruitment but are unlikely to reach those already being seduced by terrorist ideologies and groups. This is partly because those already moving along the terrorist trajectory are already narrowing their focus to messaging only from terrorists and are already disenchanted with government narratives.[7]

The ICSVE awareness campaign ran for 24 days, specifically between December 7, 2017, and December 31, 2017. The purpose of the awareness campaign was to attempt to reach as many Iraqis as possible to drive engagement with our counternarratives. For this campaign, ICSVE ran one of its videos, *The Promises of ad Dawlah*, which features the testimony of a Belgian female ISIS defector who had taken her young son to live in ISIS territory. ICSVE's Facebook ad generated a total reach of 1,287,557, while also leading to 2,339,453 impressions and close to 1.7 million video views, which are further discussed in the ensuing sections.

At the campaign level, we opted for an awareness campaign, as we know that ISIS has been "selling" itself as a group legitimizing violence as a means of reaching a utopian society run by what they claim to be Islamic ideals. Our ISIS insiders know and share that the reality is far different from what ISIS claims. Our insider testimonies can make those vulnerable to the ISIS message aware, so that, in the words of the U.S. State Department recently launched anti-ISIS campaign, they have a chance to "think again and turn away."

Historically speaking, public awareness campaigns have been initiated to raise awareness about domestic abuse, alcohol abuse, depression, gender-based violence, and HIV prevention—to name just a few.[8] They are

used for several reasons. First, they serve to either promote a cause or raise an awareness or knowledge about a certain issue. Secondly, they are strategically tailored to reach and target a specific audience and to deliver a message that is specific, unique, and pertinent to that group. Thirdly, they are powerful if delivered in a format and language that is appealing and understood by the target audience. Lastly, public awareness campaigns are especially useful if the goal is early detection and intervention, meaning if the focus is to explain both what can be gained by changing a specific behavior and what can be lost by not doing so.[9] Awareness campaigns differ from other campaigns (e.g. conversions) in that they focus on the question of “How can we reach the most target users and engage them with our message,” versus driving them to a website or to purchase something.[10]

Strictly speaking in the context of CVE, awareness campaigns (i.e. community, youth, Internet-based, etc.) are crucial to understanding how individuals may become radicalized and mobilized to violence. For instance, as a Department of State led initiative, Peer2Peer (P2P) awareness campaign serves as a platform to raise awareness about violent extremism while also offering an outlet for discussion and exchange of ideas towards collective problem-solving in addressing violent extremism.[11] Similar awareness campaigns continue to be held worldwide among populations deemed vulnerable to recruitment into violent extremism. Our hope was that increased awareness about the dangers of joining ISIS and similar terrorist groups would lead to changes in attitude that we would be able to measure in comments, as well as to changes in offline, real world behaviors, which are beyond our ability to measure using Facebook data alone.

Several important considerations have influenced our decision to initiate an awareness campaign. In line with research on recruitment into violent extremism and terrorism, we considered two important factors: 1) The ability and potential for our target audience (Iraqis) to come into online contact with and be influenced by terrorist groups like ISIS and 2) the level of exposure to environments that are supportive of terrorist ideologies and facilitate recruitment into terrorist organizations.[12] Iraq fits well in both of the categories. Secondly, given different stages in which individuals come to embrace extremist content online—from simple online search to seduction to persuasion to engaging in violence, as we have come to learn in our *Breaking the ISIS Brand* interviews, including in Iraq—we considered the importance of targeting vulnerable individuals at a particular stage in the process. In other words, compared to our recent Facebook studies focused on reaching audiences that were already highly supportive of ISIS ideology and engaged with ISIS material online (e.g. have progressed further in the grooming process),[13] consideration in this campaign was given to individuals ages 18-50 in Iraq who might be engaged with, or simply exposed to for the first time, extremist narratives online and who might continue down the path of sustained engagement and exposure to violent narratives propagated by terrorist groups like ISIS.

Similar to our findings in other regions of the world, this particular age group in Iraq is most active on the Internet and social media platforms. It is on such platforms that they are likely to develop and form their ideas. It is also on such platforms that they are more likely to become susceptible to violent ideologies and narratives, particularly in face of the upcoming elections and discontent currently brewing in Iraqi society. Lastly, although many among the targeted age group in this ad might not favor extremist narratives or succumb to such narratives, the campaign serves as an invaluable opportunity for such target groups to access resources—and to learn of these invaluable resources—that openly target terrorist groups like ISIS. They can also use them to educate and target those who might be vulnerable to such extremist narratives.

We chose demographic targeting based on location, age, and gender. We also attempted to narrow our audience by interest and behavior categories but did not find that possible in Arabic. We are still exploring if narrowing the focus using Facebook interest groups, as we have done in English language campaigns, is also possible on Facebook in Arabic.

Our target group comprised of individuals between the ages of 18-50. Our target areas in Iraq included: al Anbar Governorate, Basra Governorate, Muthanna Governorate, Babil Governorate, Baghdad Governorate, Dohuk Governorate, Diyala Governorate, Erbil Governorate, Nineveh Governorate, and Wasit Governorate.

Table 1: Video Views by Age Group

Ad Name	Age	10-Second Video Views	Video Watches at 25%	Video Watches at 50%	Video Watches at 75%	Video Watches at 95%	Video Watches at 100%
12-2017 Iraq Promises to Women	13-17	4	2	2			
	18-24	124,519	50,408	38,772	27,471	18,226	4,578
	25-34	127,308	52,639	41,572	30,252	21,251	6,414
	35-44	53,896	21,511	17,052	12,592	9,244	3,370
	45-54	18,313	6,951	5,434	4,169	3,228	1,448
	65+	0	0	0	0	0	0

Awareness metrics (i.e. reach, impressions, frequency, video views, video retention, etc.), engagement metrics (i.e. clicks, likes, shares, comments, etc.), and impact metrics (i.e. Indicators of behavioral changes, supportive of our ad comments, negative comments, etc.) were applied as quantitative measures to analyze the data.[14] Comments were also analyzed qualitatively to measure the impact of the awareness campaign.

Awareness Metrics

The content of our video ad in Iraq was shown to 1,287,557 individuals. This denotes the number of unique people targeted who had the content of our video ad enter their screen or newsfeed. A total of 2,339,453 impressions were generated, which indicates the number of times our video content ad was displayed, regardless of whether clicked or not. The demographic breakdown of impressions shows that our ads are generating impressions with the right target group in terms of demographics (See Table 2). Impression frequency of 1.82 indicates the average number of time each individual has seen our ad over the period of 27 days. The relatively low frequency rate suggests that we are not oversaturating our target audience with our ads.[15] This is a significant metric in terms of measuring the rate of exposure to our ad/project. In future interventions, we will exercise more control over the frequency of our ads (e.g. by limiting to max number of days running) to ensure that we do not overwhelm our target audience with ads, but instead use the metric to complement direct responses to our campaign ads (e.g. website clicks, conversion rates, etc.).

An advantage of looking at the frequency rate in the context of an awareness campaign—in this case administered over the course of 24 days—is that an increased frequency number would likely lead to greater recall, or the ability of our target audience to remember the product we are promoting (See Table 2). We plan to keep experimenting with audience sizes and frequency rates through either trying to increase to 3-5 impressions per persons over the course of a month-long campaign or reducing the size of our target audience with interest groups, which would likely also increase ad recall.

Table 2: Key Awareness Metrics

Ad Name	Results	Reach	Impressions	Frequency
12-2017 Iraq Promises to Women	126,400	1,287,557	2,339,453	1.81697

When broken down by age group, the data indicate a higher reach among the 18 to 44-year age group, with 25 to 34-year age group having the second highest reach. The 18 to 44-year age group also generated the highest number of impressions (See Table 3).

Table 3: Key Awareness Metrics by Age Group

Ad Name	Age	Results	Reach	Impressions	Frequency
12-2017 Iraq Promises to Women	13-17	1	0	22	0
	18-24	47,700	479,698	867,074	1.807541
	25-34	50,600	521,422	933,637	1.790559
	35-44	21,400	221,419	408,874	1.846608
	45-54	6,690	65,018	129,845	1.997062
	65+	0	0	1	0
		126,390 Estimated Ad Recall Lift (People)	1,287,557 People	2,339,453 Total	1.82 Per Person

Estimated Ad Recall Lift (People) rate is 126,400, which refers to the number of people in our target audience who are likely to remember the content of our ad within two days of viewing it. The metric is calculated based on “attention and the reach of a campaign being compared with historical data [not related to our campaign] about the correlation between attention and ad recall.”[16] Estimated Ad Recall Lift Rate (calculated as Recall Lift (People)/Reach) is 9.8%. See Tables 4 and 5 for the breakdown of the two by age and gender, respectively.

Table 4: (Estimated Recall Lift (People) and Estimated Ad Recall Lift Rate by Age)

Ad Set Name	Age	Estimated Ad Recall Lift (People)	Estimated Ad Recall Lift Rate
Baghdad, Fallujah, Ramadi, Aski Mosul, Ninawa, Mosul - 18-50	13-17	1	0%
	18-24	47,700	9.94%
	25-34	50,600	9.70%
	35-44	21,400	9.66%
	45-54	6,690	10.29%
	65+		0%
		126,390 (total)	9.82% (average)

Table 5: (Estimated Recall Lift (People) and Estimated Ad Recall Lift Rate by Gender)

Ad Set Name	Gender	Estimated Ad Recall Lift (People)	Estimated Ad Recall Lift Rate
Baghdad, Fallujah, Ramadi, Aski Mosul, Ninawa, Mosul - 18-50	Female	23,200	10.18%
	Male	103,100	9.73%
	Unknown	60	11.72%
		126,360 Estimated Ad Recall Lift (People)	9.82% (average)

As shown in Tables 4 and 5, the metric appears to be relatively uniform across both gender and ages. As a metric used to measure relevance, and not quality, the recall lift metric is based on a Facebook-generated algorithm. As such, it is difficult to know with certainty who in our target audience will remember our content. The number also suggests the need to constantly evaluate and measure the impact of our content by analyzing who saw it, how people interacted with it, and so on, to further adjust our ads and optimize our awareness campaign. This metric also suggests that not all will remember our content after seeing it the first time, despite being aware of it. To strengthen the metric, and by extension our *Breaking the ISIS Brand* awareness campaign,

we will also continue to emphasize our brand personality (e.g. by emphasizing logo, etc.) and repeat and add additional videos in the *Breaking the ISIS Brand* to additional ad campaigns.

Demographic Data and Geographic Location

82 percent of the reached population is male and 18 percent female. A majority of them (78%) were between 18 and 34 years old (See Figure 2 and Table 6 for demographic and reach breakdown across two genders).

Figure 2: Demographic Breakdown

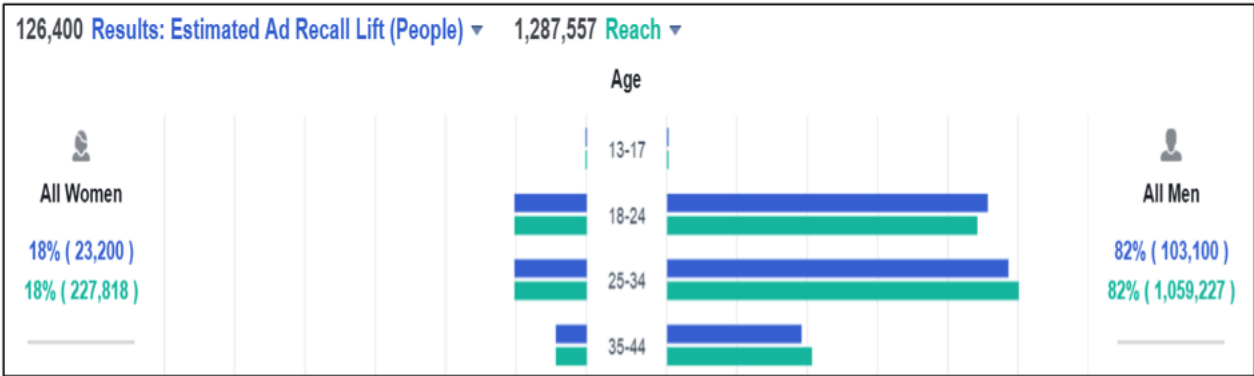


Table 6: Key Awareness Metrics Breakdown by Gender

Ad Name	Gender	Results	Reach	Impressions
12-2017 Iraq Promises to Women	Female	23,200	227,818	394,396
	Male	103,100	1,059,227	1,943,658
	Unknown	60	512	1,399
		126,360 Estimated Ad Recall Lift (People)	1,287,557 People (total)	2,339,453 Impressions (total)

In terms of geographic breakdown, our ad campaign targeted the following areas in Iraq: al Anbar Governorate, Basra Governorate, Muthanna Governorate, Babil Governorate, Baghdad Governorate, Dohuk Governorate, Diyala Governorate, Erbil Governorate, Nineveh Governorate, and Wasit Governorate. As depicted in Table 7, we captured a representative sample of both Shia (e.g. Basra Governorate) and Sunni (e.g. Anbar Governorate) dominated areas for the first ad campaign, although for the most part our main target audience would be Sunni (except in the case of Shia converts to ISIS). Baghdad Governorate has the highest reach (predominantly Shia) while no reach was recorded in Basra Governorate and Babil Governorate.

Table 7: Reach by Geographic Location

Ad Set Name	Region	Reach
Baghdad, Fallujah, Ramadi, Aski Mosul, Ninawa, Mosul - 18-50	Unknown	0
	Al Anbar Governorate	61,946
	Basra Governorate	0
	Muthanna Governorate	26,621
	Babil Governorate	0
	Baghdad Governorate	862,638
	Dohuk Governorate	5,120
	Diyala Governorate	5,887
	Erbil Governorate	161,265
	Nineveh Governorate	164,080
Results from 1 ad set		1,287,557

Video Views

The primary objective of our awareness campaign was to attempt to reach individuals who might be vulnerable to giving support or join terrorist groups like ISIS. In Table 8, we present data on how much of our video content was watched, as both percentage and seconds watched. As the table indicates, most views were recorded at 3-second intervals, though there are also a significant number of views at 25%, 50%, 75%, 95%, and 100 % video watches (117,552).

Table 8: Video Views Across Different Intervals

Ad Name	Gender	Video Percentage Watched	3-Second Video Views	10-Second Video Views	Video Watches at 25%	Video Watches at 50%	Video Watches at 75%	Video Watches at 95%	Video Watches at 100%
12-2017 Iraq Promises to Women	Female	9.56%	145,460	62,571	29,696	23,656	18,400	13,391	3,548
	Male	8.05%	635,484	261,256	101,706	79,094	56,025	38,516	12,249
	Unknown	10.10%	472	213	109	82	59	42	13
		Average: 8.34%	Total: 781,416	Total: 324,040	Total: 131,511	Total: 102,832	Total: 74,484	Total: 51,949	Total: 15,810

Several assumptions can be made about the observed data. Firstly, views include both videos that play due to an auto-play or due to the viewer actively clicking on them. In practice, given that Facebook videos may play automatically, coupled with the fact that Facebook counts as a view any video watched for 3 seconds or more, any passive non-watching would be counted as a view.[17] As shown in Table 9, however, there is a total of 117,552 clicked-to-play recordings shared among 25%, 50%, 75%, 95%, and 100% recorded video watches. Note that % watched indicates one or more watched videos, meaning those who watched the full length of the video and those who skipped to the end of the video.

Table 9: Video Views Auto-played vs. Clicked-to-play

Ad Set Name	Video View Type	3-Second Video Views	10-Second Video Views	30-Second Video Views	Video Watches at 25%	Video Watches at 50%	Video Watches at 75%	Video Watches at 95%	Video Watches at 100%
Baghdad Fallujah, Ramadi, Aski Mosul, Ninawa, Mosul - 18-50	All Impressions	781,416	324,040	186,341	131,511	102,832	74,484	51,949	15,810
	Auto-Played	619,396	232,129	128,947	90,316	70,633	51,041	35,955	11,089
	Clicked-To-Play	162,020	91,911	57,394	41,195	32,199	23,443	15,994	4,721

As the data also suggest, the difference between almost 1.7 million video views and the 266, 857 “clicks- to-play” (at 3- sec, 10- sec, 30- sec, 25%, 50%, 75 %, 95%, and 100 %) are due to auto-play feature. However, it would be wrong to assume that all auto-play videos were unintentional. Also, it is not uncommon for a person on a computer to watch the whole video posted on their screen while it is silent, although this is only likely to be powerful if the video is subtitled, which ours was not. This fact highlights that our future ads will make use of subtitled videos, even though the speaker is in Arabic, to capture those who might watch on auto-play. Secondly, there are approximately 1.7 million views vs. a 1.3 million reach. This could be explained by the fact that views may include multiple views from the same person. For example, one can watch a video on their mobile device and then later watch it on a desktop. This will count as one reach and 2 views.

Video percentage rate for auto-play was 6.98 % while for click-to-play 17.95 %. The video average watch time for females was 19, while for men 16, calculated as the video total watch time/total number of video plays (this includes replays). That the entire video was not watched highlights the usefulness of making shortened versions of the videos for complementary ads, as some will only watch very short videos and may click through a short version once hooked to watch the longer version.[18]

These data represent a way of measuring our campaign awareness, including or audience growth. In the future, given that videos on Facebook often play automatically, it would be also useful to generate a more efficient strategy for measuring these effects. While our counternarrative videos placed on Facebook vary anywhere between 2-3 minutes in length, a majority of our audience spent significantly less time watching them. This may also indicate the need to try a shortened version of our video materials. We will also have to closely follow our viewer retention rate and mark important points where they start dropping off.

Facebook Ad Access

Breakdown under Placement category was used to measure whether our counter-narratives placed better on a mobile device or desktop. As indicated in Table 10, Android Smartphone was the most used device to access our ad. Android Smartphone was followed by iPhone. This data is crucial to further adjust our targeting efforts in terms of device and platform used.

Table 10: Counternarrative Placement Mobile vs. Desktop

Ad Set Name	Platform	Impression Device	Reach
Baghdad, Fallujah, Ramadi, Aski Mosul, Ninawa, Mosul - 18-50	Facebook	Other	768
	Facebook	Desktop	5,375
	Facebook	iPhone	272,614
	Facebook	iPad	1,280
	Facebook	Android Smartphone	994,721
	Facebook	Android Tablet	18,430
	Facebook	iPod	0
			1,293,557 people

Engagement Metrics

In the previous section we presented relevant metrics related to our video views. Awareness and engagement metrics, such as viewer retention rate (% watched) and viewer drop off rates, are helpful in further adjusting our awareness campaign. While the previous section served to mostly explain quantitative data related to our campaign, engagement metrics covered in this section offer a clearer indication as to *if* and *how* our Facebook ad resonated with our audience.

The Facebook ad was responsible for 787,743 ICSVE page engagements, including 700 new ICSVE page likes. In addition to our directly targeted audience, 121,928 people came across the ad by “word-of-mouth” (i.e. the

ad came up in their news feed as something a friend commented on/reacted to/shared, etc.).

Of those 121,928, 64% watched or interacted with the ad. This means our video was seen by nearly 80,000 people simply thanks to the engagement of our initial viewers. Also, there were a total of:

- 338 shares
- 303 original comments, 35 replies
- 4,991 reactions
- 4,500 likes
- 195 love reactions
- 63 wow reactions
- 45 sad reactions
- 31 haha reactions
- 27 angry reactions

Several key points can be deduced from such data. As the qualitative responses (e.g. comments) in the last section of the paper also suggest, the Facebook ad campaign has led to a number of emotional responses to our video content. That being said, we must be careful not to attribute certain observed behaviors online (e.g page likes) as necessarily an indication of supportive behavior in relation to our campaign ad, as some could have also been motivated by curiosity, morbid infatuation, or a number of other factors.

Our Facebook ad generated a relevance score of 8, as calculated on a 1-10 scale. The higher the relevance score, the better in terms of how our audience is responding to our ad. According to Facebook, “a relevance score is calculated based on the positive and negative feedback we expect an ad to receive from its target audience.” [19] In other words, it implies actual feedback and expected feedback. It is calculated based on a number of factors, such as the positive vs. negative feedback it is expected to receive. For instance, video views, shares, and likes constitute positive indicators, whereas the number of times our ad is hidden, or someone clicks “I don’t want to see this” on our ad, represent negative indicators. Before a relevance score is generated, our ad must have been served or shown 500 times (i.e. 500 impressions are received). The relevance score is especially important to better identify our target audiences and use it for our campaign optimization. We must be careful with the interpretation of relevance score, as it is used to measure *relevance* of our Facebook ad campaign and not the *quality* of our campaign. It is generated based on interaction and interest in our ad. However, the metric is useful in discerning the extent to which our target audience is considering our ad and engaging with our material.

Positive feedback and negative feedback were both reportedly “high” (out of the options “low,” “medium,” or “high”). This means a lot of people were estimated to interact with our Iraq-targeted video, but a lot of people also chose *not* to view it. This is typical of all ICSVE ads, especially those that receive higher relevance scores of 8, 9, or 10. It is presumably due to the nature of our polarizing and traumatic subject matter, which will inevitably make many people engage and react, and many turn away, no matter where or how the topic presents itself. While the relevance score is even higher for other ICSVE ads, the Iraqi ad had the greatest success in terms of reaching the most people and therefore generating the most actions taken (note that actions taken measure people and not the number of actions).

While we will continue to work towards increasing or maintaining high relevance scores, we will also reevaluate the relevance score based on how well our Facebook ad campaign is meeting our current objective of raising awareness. Put differently, ad campaigns work just fine even with relatively low relevance scores as long as they meet expected campaign objectives, which, in our case, is raising awareness.

The following section contains a qualitative analysis of comments and discussions generated by our ad. We interpret and analyze our audience’s comments and discussions related to our video and campaign. We also look at the possible changes in online behavior.

Qualitative Impact Analysis

There were a total of 338 comments. Although, not intentionally targeted, most of the Iraqi responses to the ad appear to be Shia, as indicated by many in-comment references to Ali ibn Abi Talib (the cousin and the son-in-law of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, regarded by Shia Muslims as the rightful immediate successor to the prophet). These comments were translated from Arabic to English by an ICSVE translator (as opposed to Facebook's online translation). Generally speaking, comments fell under two main categories: comments about the defector and comments about ISIS. Smaller trends presented themselves under each category.

Comments about the Defector featured in the Counter Narrative Video

The top trends among those who commented were simply remarks of astonishment at, or insult to, the Belgian female ISIS defector (Laura Passoni) featured in the video for having joined ISIS. There were also comments threatening or wishing death upon her. Additionally, most commenters expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that the defector's ISIS cadre husband only received a 4-year prison sentence. This was seen as problematic given that captured and convicted ISIS fighters in Iraq for the most part receive death sentences.

Below are some examples:

"She left safety and all the good things in her country and came here looking for religion with Isis??!!"

"4 years of prison for an Isis member? Are you insane?"

"I swear to Allah if I grabbed you, even if in Belgium, I will put a bullet in your head because you guys have destroyed my life" / "If it was in my hands, I would've burnt you and your husband and your filthy offspring" / "I swear that burning you is not enough" / "The sentence should be #execution to her and her husband"

Several commenters typed out sounds of spitting on someone, sounds of mocking someone, and curses.

There were also those who did not believe the defector, but these remarks only made up 11 of the 338 comments. Some implied that the defector was dishonest, while others implied the entire video was unreliable. Examples include:

"Lies lies" / "Ha ha the biggest liar" / "Fucking liar. She could make a simple search in Google about Syria to know the truth"

A couple commenters referenced TV shows or films to illustrate how the ICSVE video seems exaggerated, unbelievable – like a production.

There were even fewer comments showing sympathy for the defector or seeking to understand her. Below is all there was.

"What brought her to ISIS, poor girl, it's good that she was able to go back to her country with her son"

Some people merely commented sad, crying, or heartbroken emojis, which might be interpreted as sympathy for the defector, but it is unclear.

Overall, comments mentioning the defector directly were overwhelmingly negative. Comments in the second category – ISIS as a greater entity – were equally angry but displayed more diversity in content and delivery. When one considers that these are Iraqis who at one point had one third of its territory overtaken by ISIS and faced tens of thousands of foreign fighters supporting the group, the anger and lack of sympathy for a European ISIS joiner is understandable.

Comments about ISIS

Notably, there were no pro-ISIS statements. (This compares differently to our ICSVE YouTube channel comments in which there are pro-ISIS statements made much more frequently.)

There were very few anti-Islamic (not to be confused with anti-ISIS) comments. Only two commenters engaged in brief conversation where they laughed and said, “She says this is not Islam [...] this is all Islam.”

The lack of anti-Islamic comments is likely due to Iraq being a predominantly Islamic and religiously conservative country. Comparatively speaking, ads which ran in regions with greater non-Muslim populations received significantly more anti-Islamic remarks and generated arguments about competing religions, religious support for terrorism, and definitions of Islam as a violent religion. Still, commenters on the Iraq ad did not need anti-Islamic remarks to spark defense, as many were quick to separate ISIS from Islam on their own (which is very helpful counter-messaging to other Muslims who might be vulnerable to messaging by ISIS). Some commenters mocked ISIS by referring to it as “the myth state” or “the falsehood state.”

Here are some examples:

“They, ISIS, is not an Islamic state and Islam is innocent from them... because Islam is a religion of peace and prophet Mohammed is a mercy to all human beings”

“ISIS members are infidels”

Trends of comments expressing solidarity for the Iraqi people in their fight against ISIS were also present, with fierce refusal to be intimidated and invoking their own fierceness to defeat ISIS once again. In fact, some commenters seemed to think of ISIS as already defeated, daring ISIS to try again. These comments coincide with Iraqi Prime Minister’s recent declaration of territorial victory over ISIS. Other comments refer to the bravery of those living under ISIS and who did not join the group. Some refer to Islamic martyrdom in the fight against ISIS. In doing so, they invoke some of the same narratives that ISIS uses, although from the Shia point of view. Other comments reflected a societal unease and fear in Iraqi society that ISIS could return.

Examples include:

“We beat you and even kicked you out of Syria. Come if you dare. Bastard I swear that we will beat you” / “I dare you to come you fuckers”

“[...] Alhamdulillah we got rid of them due to the efforts of our heroic al Hashd Al Sha’abi, (i.e. the Shiite militias that supported the Iraqi army)”

“We were under their invasion for 3 years and we didn’t join [...]”

Furthermore, there was a trend—common in the Middle East—of political comments and conspiracies about who “really” comprises ISIS and who is helping them (al Maliki was criticized by a couple people). Most often the blame for ISIS/infidels was put on Israel, although in Iraqi society it is not uncommon to refer to Jews as a way of insulting ISIS rather than necessarily seriously attributing cause to Israel. However, there were also assertions that ISIS is a product of America, Europe, and Turkey.

Examples include:

“Terrorism is originally from Europe and America”

“ISIS is an American production, and our stupid people welcomed them”

“This is what you have done to my city and our people [...] so that they facilitate something you’ve prepared which is a plan made by Israel, America, and Europe and it’s one the Cold War’s threads between the Soviet Union and America... do you think we’re not aware of your deeds [...] we will expose all your plans [...]”

“What Muslims, these are Jews that pretend to be Muslim to distort Islam, conspire and separate between Muslims for the sake of tearing Mohammed’s nation”

“The source of terrorism is Turkey”

While not stated enough to be a trend, there were two comments worth noting, as they demonstrate encouragement of critical thought about the bigger picture and the need to generate political solutions to the grievances that originally gave rise to ISIS in Iraq:

“This one repented, but what about the rest? A new organization will appear and they will go and join them because there’s no awareness.”

“They are the hard-minded people, weapons are not enough to kill them. We need a cultural war under the supervision of different programs.”

These comments are also positive sign that our videos have the power to provoke productive thought, and to inspire discussion about why terrorism happens and how to ultimately prevent and stop it.

Finally, miscellaneous comments – comments which were too few and/or insignificant to include as trends – included jokes, sexual remarks about the defector, nonsensical comments, and two statements that Iraq is doomed. Numerous comments were simply Facebook users tagging their friends, which is still good as far as spreading the counter-narrative message.

Limitations of the Study: Content Selection and Ethical Considerations

The *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative* videos are intentionally named with ambiguous titles that could be considered pro-ISIS, so that those already consuming or searching for ISIS content will be more likely to click on them. While misleading to some extent, the intentions are noble. The primary objective is to attempt to redirect those potentially going down the terrorist pathway away from it by offering them an instructive message from someone, who like them, was at first attracted to ISIS—and even joined—but had a bad experience inside the group. While those who are already seriously dedicated to ISIS may be turned away from ISIS by watching the counter narratives, there is also the possibility they may have a negative reaction to finding out the ICSVE video is not an ISIS-produced clip and that they were misled into watching it.

Indeed, some viewers of the counter-narratives who openly support and sympathize with ISIS have expressed anger in their comments by calling the researchers unbelievers, government stooges, and so on. Their anger, however, has been tempered and has up to now—as found in our recent studies or the ones we know about—never led to any direct or indirect threats of violence. We do acknowledge that the feeling of being tricked may lead to angry reactions, but also indicate that we are indeed reaching committed ISIS followers who are usually far angrier at perceived and actual grievances and are unlikely to spend much time on attacking the counter narratives. Most of the attacks and violent responses to counter narratives have been in regard to those groups that directly assault Islamic beliefs, ideals, or mores. The ICSVE videos, despite the ambiguous names may make them initially attractive to a viewer already consuming ISIS materials are always respectful of Islam itself, show true care for the viewer and aim only to discredit the group and its behaviors as corrupt, un-Islamic and highly brutal, but never attack Islamic beliefs themselves.

Strictly speaking from a psychological standpoint, it is important to acknowledge the potential impact when ideologically attenuated individuals view counter-narratives such as ours, primarily cognitive dissonance that may lead them to back away from the group. It is also important to acknowledge the potential impact on those who are unsure of what to believe and are searching for ISIS propaganda material, as it is to discuss if our counter-narratives could impact human cognitive aspects or actions in positive or negative ways. In this regard, we are cognizant of the fact that while our counter-narrative videos have a huge potential to make a positive difference in the fight against ISIS, there is also a small potential for harm, though such a potential for harm remains minimal. For instance, through our counter-narratives we try to underwrite [initial] sympathy towards ISIS, given our defectors were at some point in ISIS as well as the many reasons for wanting to join, without

validating the violent means that the terrorist group propagates. Likewise a dedicated believer may harden his beliefs in the face of our testimonies and become angered by them, however we always try to show sympathy and care for the viewer. We also try to highlight human costs of engaging in terrorism both for the recruit and those harmed by the group, which serves in opposition to sleek and deceitful ISIS propaganda videos. Lastly, our overall objective is to target the terrorist group and discredit them in the eyes of potential recruits—and not intimidate or anger potential recruits—to save potential recruits from the costs, including loss of their own lives and of others, of engaging in terrorism.[20]

In the process of creating counter-narratives, we paid particular attention to the “active ingredients” that are intended to influence the desired campaign outcome, namely:

Characters: ICSVE-produced counter narratives rely on ISIS insiders speaking—the defector, returnee, or actual ISIS cadre prisoner—about their experiences in the group. The insiders may have had similar experiences, grievances, or motivations as [some] viewers for joining the group and also viewed the ISIS ideology and aims as good prior to actually experiencing it. It is our belief that is a strong component of the counter narrative. ISIS defector statements call attention to ISIS brutality, corruption, and un-Islamic nature of their actions, which are all turn-offs from the group. Arguably, the fact that ISIS defectors—or those imprisoned for participating or serving in the group—speak about paying a high price for belonging to the group is a strong evidence that it may not work out well to join.

The emotionally evocative nature of the video: The music, the images, and the emotionally laden aspects of the story being told serve to draw the viewers in and engage their emotions to turn them away from ISIS. This was directly modeled after ISIS propaganda, which is highly emotional in content and often uses images of Muslim victims to draw potential recruits in. In our case we are using revulsion and negative experiences in ISIS to turn the viewers away from ISIS rather than draw them to the group. The aforementioned ingredients interact to influence the desired campaign outcome. One ingredient may be more strongly experienced for one viewer than another.

Acknowledging authorship: The ICSVE branding and final slides are put on the videos so that the viewer may find out about the source of the content created rather than assume they are from government or other entities trying to influence them. ICSVE researchers make it clear via their branding and websites that can be visited, that they have been researching terrorism for years and that these are legitimate research interviews that the viewers can trust as credible, versus fabricated or manipulated interviews.

Show respect and care for the viewer: ICSVE researchers are always careful not to insult Islam and show care through the selected elements of the interviews that make up the counter narratives in which the speaker often shows sympathy for and a desire to protect the viewer.

It should also be noted that this research involved testing with an already constructed counter narrative to attract an audience, engage them, and show evidence of being able to turn viewers away from ISIS. In other words, the new content creation was not a part of the research itself. The hundreds of comments, the 1.7 million video views and other engagement metrics indicate that the counter-narratives could attract attention and result in engagement. While turning individuals away from radicalization or extremism trajectory is harder to measure, there is evidence to suggest that the videos are able to evoke emotions and comments that show disdain for ISIS.

The videos which are not created as part of any experimental process are produced by selecting the most emotionally evocative and delegitimizing material from a longer two-to-five-hour research interview. These selections are made with knowledge rooted in the research evidence already existing of why ISIS cadres defect: disgust over corruption, brutality and the un-Islamic nature of the group, and exhaustion and fear for themselves and their loved ones of continuing in it.[21] The authors selected the content along with the video editor based on years of experience of studying the motivational patterns of terrorists and on how to deradicalize and disengage them.

In our future studies, we will be testing multiple videos in the same audiences allowing comparison of different counter narratives and groups in our research design to more confidently attribute metrics/measurement of outcomes to the counter-narrative and we are also testing them in focus groups to be able to run control groups. This will be done in an effort to more confidently determine causality (i.e. isolating active ingredients and controlling all other variables) and to infer generalizability of the findings. While it may also be possible to also experimentally produce and test the videos themselves for selection of certain elements over others, those experiments are beyond the resources of the current team.

Conclusion

The purpose of this online intervention was to raise awareness about the realities of ISIS and to protect vulnerable potential recruits from considering joining. In this regard, the ICSVE *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative* videos on Facebook were used. Compared to our recent Facebook studies focused on reaching Albanian and English-speaking users who were endorsing, supporting, and engaging with ISIS online material found on Facebook, this Facebook ad campaign focused on individuals ages 18-50 in Iraq who might be engaged with extremist narratives found online and who might continue down the path of sustained engagement and exposure to violent narratives propagated by terrorist groups like ISIS. Moreover, targeting this particular age group was especially important given they are most active on the Internet and social media platforms in Iraq. Equally important, this particular age group remains the same audience that ISIS has been targeting. It is on such platforms that they develop and form their ideas, potentially also becoming susceptible to violent ideologies and narratives.

The results were promising in terms of driving Iraqi engagement with our counter narrative materials. The ICSVE Facebook ad generated a total reach of 1,287,557, while also leading to 2,339,453 impressions and close to 1.7 million video views. Our Facebook campaign generated hundreds of specific comments related to both our video content and ISIS in general. In addition to raising awareness about our *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narratives* and the dangers of joining ISIS, the campaign served as an invaluable resource and platform to channel doubt, frustration, and anger into positive exchange of ideas and participation. Many raised their opinions and, in line with our research objectives, challenged extremist narratives that offer facile solutions to contentious socio-political issues. This is particularly important at a time when Iraq is facing elections and widespread societal perturbation about sectarian rifts, political corruption, and a slow recovery following war and experiences with terrorism. While we could not observe or report any direct cognitive shifts among those who support ISIS and its ideology, we hope that may be occurring without our being able to measure it.

As we continue to experiment with these interventions in the future, we hope to further expand our reach, hone in our Internet targeting, and increase the interest of our target audience, specifically among those who may be willing to act as influencers and magnify our impact. Furthermore, we hope to reach to more vulnerable individuals and provide links to a newly designed call to action website (TheRealJihad.org) and introduce *call to action* buttons and *lead forms*, among others, to expand and strengthen the line of communication with them. We will also attempt to generate enticing leads from those among those who believe in and are convinced of our work and wish to help in the fight against ISIS.

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Notes

- [1] See for example Internet World Stats; URL: <https://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm>
- [2] Arab Social Media Report, 2015; URL: <https://www.wpp.com/govtpractice/~media/wppgov/files/arabsocialmediareport-2015.pdf>
- [3] The decision to use such videos is based on clinical judgement (clinical psychologist) and decades of work in the field by the lead author. Over the past two years, the research team has also consulted with U.S. Department of Defense (Web-ops teams; CENTCOM, MIST, MISO, etc.) teams who work close on this issues on the ground. Equally important, one of our video editors is an Iraqi who also worked in the Detainee Rehabilitation program (applied to 23,000 detainees and over 800 juveniles in Camp Bucca, Iraq) between 2006-07, and is very familiar with what resonates with violent extremists and ISIS terrorists in Iraq.
- [4] Rachel Briggs and Sebastien Feve, "Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism: What Works and What the Implications for Government," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, 2013; p. 6, URL: <https://www.counterextremism.org/download/file/117/134/444/>
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] See RAN for examples of counternarrative and alternative types of messages and campaigns; URL: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_cn_oct2015_en.pdf
- [8] See for example, P2P Depression Awareness Campaign; URL: <http://www.depressioncenter.org/education-outreach/programs/schools/aaps/peer-to-peer/>; Let's Stop HIV Together; URL: <https://www.cdc.gov/actagainstaids/campaigns/lsht/index.html>
- [9] Lacey Mayer, "Are Public Awareness Campaigns Effective?" March 10, 2008; URL: <https://www.curetoday.com/publications/cure/2008/spring2008/are-public-awareness-campaigns-effective>
- [10] Mike Le, "Six Major Differences between Facebook Awareness and Conversion Campaigns," March 9, 2018; URL: <https://searchenginewatch.com/2016/09/09/six-major-differences-between-facebook-awareness-and-conversion-campaigns/>
- [11] See for example Bureau of Educational and Cultural Awareness; URL: <https://eca.state.gov/highlight/p2p-challenging-extremism-together>
- [12] Noemie Bouhana and Per-Olf Wikstrom, "Al- Qai'da- Influenced Radicalisation: A Rapid Evidence Assessment Guided by Situational Action Theory," *Home Office*, 2011; URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116724/occ97.pdf
- [13] The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) Facebook studies targeting ISIS supporters online can be accessed here: <http://www.icsve.org/research-reports/fighting-isis-on-facebook-breaking-the-isis-brand-counter-narratives-project/> and <http://www.icsve.org/research-reports/bringing-down-the-digital-caliphate-a-breaking-the-isis-brand-counter-narratives-intervention-with-albanian-speaking-facebook-accounts/>; See also Anne Speckhard and Ardian Shajkovci, "Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter-Narratives—Part II: Ethical Considerations in Fighting ISIS Online," *VoxPol*, March 7, 2018; URL: <http://www.voxpol.eu/breaking-the-isis-brand-counter-narratives-part-ii-ethical-considerations-in-fighting-isis-online/>
- [14] See Henry Tuck and Tanya Silverman for more detailed discussions on metrics used, available at http://www.isdgloal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf
- [15] Please note that this can also be interpreted as our target audience seeing our ad but deciding to turn away immediately from it. On the other hand, also note that this was a small-scale intervention. In addition, low frequency of exposure does not necessarily mean that our intervention was not persuasive. Ideally, we would want our target audience to see our ads more frequently. The higher the frequency rate, the bigger the payout in terms of clicks, etc. We are also aware of the fact that the lower the number of frequency, the less likely to get our point across. That said, we also are satisfied with low(er) frequency rates so as not to annoy our target audience. Our ongoing targeting efforts are focused on driving our target audience to actually act. Higher frequencies are needed to impact behavior change, though given the limitations of our study, this metric remains positive at this point.
- [16] John Batler, "A Guide to Measuring Brand Lift on Facebook," February 16, 2017; URL: <https://searchenginewatch.com/2016/09/09/six-major-differences-between-facebook-awareness-and-conversion-campaigns/https://www.adgo.io/>

[blog/2017/2/2/guide-to-measuring-brand-lift-on-facebook](https://www.facebook.com/blog/2017/2/2/guide-to-measuring-brand-lift-on-facebook)

[17] Please note that videos will auto play, unless the feature is disabled on Facebook. See for example: <https://www.facebook.com/business/help/community/question/?id=10154935163080944>; See additional discussion on video play <https://www.facebook.com/help/633446180035470>.

[18] Note that our research experience in the field, including consultations with DOD and other entities engaged in producing counternarratives, suggest that shorter videos tend to lead to more consumption and a higher retention rate among our target audience.

[19] Facebook Business, "Showing Relevance Scores for Ads on Facebook," February 11, 2015; URL: <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/relevance-score>

[20] Literature suggests that aggressively and directly targeting potential recruits could potentially be counterproductive. Such an approach could elicit defiance on the part of recruits (e.g. perceived as an insult when trying to contribute to a good cause, for instance, helping to fight against Syrian President Bashar's forces. See for example Infante, D.A., et al., "Initiating and Reciprocating Verbal Aggression: Effects on Credibility and Credited Valid Arguments," *Communication Studies* 43, no. 3 (1992): 182-190.

[21] Anne Speckhard and Ahmet S. Yayla, "Eyewitness Accounts from Recent Defectors from Islamic State: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no.6 (2015): 95-117; Peter R. Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narrative of Islamic State Defectors," *The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, 2015; URL: <https://socialutveckling.goteborg.se/uploads/ICSR-Report-Victims-Perpetrators-Assets-The-Narratives-of-Islamic-State-Defectors.pdf>

Research Note**How Hezbollah Uses Dreams to Inspire Jihad and Sanctify Martyrdom****by Kendall Bianchi****Abstract**

Previous research has shown that Sunni jihadist groups regard dreams as revelatory devices and thus consider them a key source of inspiration for their followers. This article broadens the existing literature by demonstrating that a similar phenomenon holds true for a different category of jihadists: the Shia jihadist group Lebanese Hezbollah. Using evidence drawn from pro-Hezbollah websites, I examine the ways in which the group's online media apparatus strategically wields dream accounts to serve organizational goals. I contend that Hezbollah dream accounts serve primarily to reinforce one critical element of the group's ideology: a belief in martyrdom.

Keywords: Jihadism, dreaming, Hezbollah, martyrdom, messaging, Lebanon

Introduction

In February 2013, an anonymous young woman recounted[1] a recent dream to the pro-Hezbollah news outlet *Arabipress.org*. Her vision featured the martyred Hezbollah fighter Zulfikar Azzadin, who had been tortured and killed[2] by Syrian militants that year in a gruesome video released by the perpetrators. In the dream he stood intact atop a tall building, observing his own funeral procession from above. According to a cleric who interpreted the woman's dream, Azzadin was joyful because many aspire to a martyrdom like his; perhaps his remains—still held by the enemy—would soon be returned and given an extravagant funeral. Indeed, since Azzadin's death in 2013, reports of dreams involving the martyr have been mentioned at least six times in pro-Hezbollah media.[3] Nearly all of these dreams, like the one above, draw attention to the young fighter's eternal triumph as a martyr—effectively rewriting the narrative of his earthly suffering and painful death.

Similar stories of dreams, visions, and premonitions appear frequently in jihadist literature and propaganda. But a reverence for dreams and visions is not limited to jihadist circles; rather, it is rooted in an Islamic tradition that regards dreams as prophetic devices and a portal to the divine. John Lamoreaux (2002) traced the development of dream interpretation in Islam from its roots in the Quran and the Hadiths, to its manifestation in the medieval “dream manuals” of dream interpreters Ibn Sirin and Ibn al Musayyab.[4] Lamoreaux and other scholars including Leah Kinberg (1993) have argued that the Hadiths, in particular, cemented prophetic dream interpretation as legitimate by demonstrating the Prophet Muhammad's endorsement of the practice.[5] According to Lamoreaux, “a good Muslim can expect to receive from God messages in dreams.”[6]

In more recent years, scholars have shown that a range of Sunni Islamist militant groups—including the Taliban, Al Qaeda (AQ), and the Islamic State (IS)—have embraced the Islamic tradition of regarding dreams as divine prophecies. Iain Edgar (2004) explored Al Qaeda and the Taliban's reported reliance on dreams to inspire political action, inform military operations, and claim religious authority. Taliban founder Mullah Omar claimed to have established the movement after the Prophet Mohammed appeared to him in a dream, asking him to save Afghanistan from foreign influence; Osama bin Laden, meanwhile, reportedly worried that the plan for the 9/11 attacks would be leaked due to a number of anticipatory dreams by followers who had not been informed of the plan.[7] In recent years, members of the Islamic State have reportedly attached similar importance to dreams; an April 2016 issue of *Dabiq*, for instance, reported that the 2016 Brussels metro station bomber Khalid El Bakraoui drew inspiration for his attack from a series of three dreams.[8] Edgar and Looijer (2017) further note that dreams often appear to play a powerful role in galvanizing recruits to join jihadist organizations.[9]

It may be impossible for the outside observer to discern the authenticity of these dream accounts, but the frequency with which they appear in jihadist media and discourse indicates that they provide strategic value to these organizations. As Edgar notes in his 2015 study on the dreams of the Islamic State, dreams constitute a form of “metaphysical currency,” that can “confirm and legitimate radical group membership, the path of holy jihad and the destined entry to paradise, with all sins forgiven.”[10] In other words, because dreams are believed to transmit divine guidance, jihadist groups can publicly manipulate them to reinforce their ideology, galvanize supporters, and boost morale.[11]

Hezbollah-affiliated online media content—including the example above—suggests that it, too, harnesses dreams in this way. Dream accounts in pro-Hezbollah media serve primarily to bolster one key aspect of the group’s religious ideology: a belief in martyrdom. This media is replete with descriptions of dreams that relate to and usually foreshadow a fighter’s death in battle. They range from vague premonitions of impending death, to metaphorical dreams requiring interpretation, to full-fledged night visions that point explicitly to imminent martyrdom. In some cases, the martyr’s family members or friends will relate dreams that they claim the martyr described to them before his death; in other cases, they recount their own dreams featuring the martyr. The content of these accounts varies, but frequently involves visits from revered religious figures or previously martyred relatives.

Indeed, the concept of the prognosticatory “martyrdom dream” has been identified in previous research on both mainstream Muslims and jihadists, notably by Cook (2007) and Sirriyeh (2011).[12] According to them, dream accounts such as those described above often seek to confirm the status of the fighter killed in battle as a true martyr—a key ideological objective for Hezbollah and other groups that exploit the appeal of martyrdom to recruit and motivate new fighters. According to Sirriyeh, the significance of these dream accounts lies not only in the comfort they offer the martyr’s associates, but also their role in encouraging others in the larger community to follow in the martyr’s footsteps—in the same way that fatwas by radical clerics may incentivize suicide missions by declaring them to be pathways to martyrdom.

Although scholars have explored the idea of the martyrdom dream, no previous research has examined the role of dreams in the context of Lebanese Hezbollah; to date, research on jihadist dreams has largely been limited to the Sunni groups such as the ones discussed above. While a comparative study of the dreams of Sunni versus Shia jihadist groups is beyond the scope of this paper, the distinction is key. As Thomas Hegghammer notes in his recent edited volume, understanding jihadi culture is key to understanding the mindsets, motivations, and worldviews of such groups.[13] He further observes that the topic remains deeply underexplored, with various research questions yet to be answered—both descriptive and comparative in nature. By broadening the scope of descriptive research on individual jihadist groups, this paper will help enable scholars to begin answering the comparative questions Hegghammer identifies about how jihadist cultural practices differ across time, space, sect, and culture.

There are several limitations to this research worth mentioning. First, this paper discusses only those dream accounts appearing in online media sources. It sheds no light on what members of Hezbollah say about their dreams offline, which may be an important element of jihadi dream culture. Moreover, as mentioned, it may be impossible to discern whether dream accounts appearing in the media are authentic or whether they truly play a role in inspiring other fighters. For this reason, this research limits its focus to the ways in which pro-Hezbollah media sources appear to instrumentalize dream accounts as “strategic currency,” offering no judgment on the validity of the accounts or the effectiveness of the apparent strategy behind them. Of course, the premise of this study also relies upon the assumption that the appearance of dream accounts in Hezbollah-affiliated media reflects a deliberate strategy on the part of group leaders or supporters—although the frequency with which they appear suggests that it is, indeed, deliberate.

The rest of this paper proceeds as follows. First, I explain the significance of martyrdom and dreams to Hezbollah by contextualizing them within the Shia perspective on Islamic history. Then, I delve into the specifics of

how Hezbollah-affiliated media harnesses dreams to promote and validate martyrdom by demonstrating predestination, intent, and parallels with previously-martyred historical figures. Finally, I offer perspectives on the role of martyrs' family members in Hezbollah dream accounts.

The Hezbollah Context

While the concept of martyrdom is present across multiple sects of Islam, it holds special importance in the Shia tradition due to the legacy of the 7th-century Battle of Karbala, when members of the Prophet's family were martyred at the hands of Umayyad leaders. A belief in martyrdom, moreover, is the lifeblood of Hezbollah's military. Not only does the promise of the afterlife help motivate fighters into battle—but the desire to avenge previously martyred fighters helps sustain the “resistance” ideology that underpins the group's existence.[14] Furthermore, martyrdom serves to validate political and military objectives; because only those killed “in the way of God” achieve martyrdom, a sign from God that dead fighters have become martyrs can corroborate the divine legitimacy of the mission for which they sacrificed themselves. As a result, Hezbollah leaders try to instill a belief in martyrdom among their supporters. Dreams, visions, and premonitions help the group accomplish this goal.

The idea mentioned above that dreams may specifically portend martyrdom also has a basis in the events and characters central to the Shia worldview. The Shia narrative, for instance, holds that shortly before the Battle of Karbala, the Imam Husayn had a vision of the Prophet Muhammad, who informed his grandson of his impending martyrdom. Another tradition holds that one of the Prophet's wives, a woman known as Umm Salama, originally learned of Husayn's martyrdom in a dream. Hezbollah's ideology embraces these narratives, and the group's media makes occasional references to them.[15] Given this history and the imperative of propagating a belief in martyrdom, it should come as no surprise that the group would seek to instrumentalize dreams as evidence of the martyr status of its dead fighters.

The Dreams of Hezbollah

Hezbollah media often uses dream accounts to show that fighters killed in battle received a sign of their impending deaths, often in the form of a vague premonition. In videos and articles, friends and family of a martyr will frequently recall that during their last meeting, the fighter had expressed a sense of anticipation. “The last time I saw him, he told me he might not return,” the friend of the martyr Ali Abbas Dahini told[16] the Hezbollah-affiliated TV station Al Manar in a recent documentary, recalling that it was the first time his friend had made such a statement despite having participated in numerous battles. Ali was killed shortly thereafter in the Battle of Qusayr. Another account[17] relates how, on the night before his death in 2014, the martyr Hussein Shaheitli sent his family photographs that his comrades had taken of him praying that night, “as if to tell them, ‘say goodbye to me, for these are my last moments.’”

Other premonitions are more explicit and appear in the form of dreams or night visions. An article from June 2017 describes how the martyr Hamza Ibrahim Haider stopped in the middle of a battle to tell his comrade Ali Baiz that he would soon be martyred.[18] Two days prior, by Ali's account, Hamza had seen the Imam Mahdi in his dream. The Imam had given him three numbers—the first belonging to a martyr who had been killed the day after the dream, the second belonging to Hamza, and the third belonging to a martyr who would die shortly thereafter. Hamza then reportedly implored Ali to continue on with the others after his martyrdom, lift the banner of victory, and remember him. The prophecy materialized a few minutes later: “Lo and behold, I saw him spread out, tinged with his own blood, an expression of glory on his face,”[19] Ali told *Arabipress*. “He had been martyred... just as he had said.” Taken in the context of the role of dreams in the Muslim martyrdom tradition, such accounts imbue the warrior's demise with sacred meaning and help convey the message that he has died a martyr's death. Moreover, the juxtaposition of Hamza's prophecy with his heroic exploits communicates to the audience his *intent* to sacrifice himself in the way of God—a necessary qualification to become a martyr.

Many visions also involve interactions with previously martyred heroes and other historical figures. These accounts help build continuity between past and present battles—imbuing the latter with greater legitimacy and elevating the status of today's martyrs by placing them in the same category as their glorious predecessors. One article tells the story of the martyr mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Zulfiqar Azzadin, who purportedly dreamt of his own grisly death a week before traveling to Syria and told a friend what he had seen. [20] The Imam Hussein appeared in his dream, comforting him: "Do not fear. The angels took care to lift up my head, and I will take care to lift yours." After Zulfiqar's capture by "takfiris," he reportedly took solace in this vision during a brutal interrogation that ended in his martyrdom as he had envisioned it. "He did not give them any information.... When they cut his head, he took comfort in Hussein, and when they cut his hands, he took comfort in Abbas." The story further cited the fact that he informed a friend of his prescient dream as "proof of the divine custody that protected Zulfiqar." In this instance, a dream account is used to place Azzadin on the same plane as a member of Ahl al Bayt, instantly conferring legitimacy and honor upon him.

Another article served a similar purpose but featured an episode from more recent history, telling the story of a father-son pair who died exactly 15 years apart.[21] It described how on the night before the son Ali's martyrdom in 2015, he told his comrades tales of his father's heroics and rallying cry against the Israelis years prior. "Thus, [Ali's father] was also present on that night," the article continued. During the battle the following day that claimed Ali's life, the story came full circle. "Like he who dreams of his father's face after a long absence, Ali repeated [his father's] call from years before: 'Let's go, onto the criminals!' Ali fought the takfiris as his father fought from his heart against the soldiers of the Israeli occupation." These symbolic connections between past and present-day martyrs lionize the latter's sacrifices, linking them with esteemed historical figures and thereby cementing their status as martyrs for a divine cause.

As discussed above, fostering a belief in martyrdom—and the perception that those dying in Syria are martyrs—is critical because it can inspire others to follow in the same path. Previous research has also pointed out that Hezbollah promotes a culture of martyrdom in part to raise the battlefield morale of its fighters, who may conduct themselves with less inhibition if they view death in battle as the ultimate prize.[22] Nasrallah himself articulated the logic behind this strategy when he argued that "the fighter's strength and superiority does not stem from the type of weapon he carries, inasmuch as it stems from his will... and his advance towards death." [23] But if dream accounts intend to inspire Hezbollah supporters, they also aim to intimidate the group's opponents. Cook and Allison (2007) contend that dream accounts and other symbolic indicators of martyrdom in Al Qaeda literature are intended not only to recruit new fighters, but also to "project to the outer world the image that the *mujahidin* are unstoppable." [24] The same is likely true for Hezbollah. The group sees the spiritual and psychological dimensions as key to military victory, and has therefore developed sophisticated capabilities in that domain; its leaders believe that projecting the reputation of a religiously-motivated fighting force that aspires to death in a holy war may inflict considerable psychological damage on the enemy. Dream accounts in pro-Hezbollah media help foster that image.

Hezbollah Families

Dream accounts in Hezbollah's media also target the families of fighters and martyrs. Families are a key constituency because they may have considerable influence over whether a young man joins the group and goes to Syria. Indeed, previous research on Hezbollah has shed light on the importance of family ties [25] in facilitating recruitment and building unit cohesion; some articles in pro-Hezbollah media have even made reference [26] to recruits asking for their parents' permission to wage jihad in Syria. Even after a fighter is killed in battle, his family is still crucial to Hezbollah's messaging campaign. At best, families can serve as a valuable recruitment tool by encouraging others to sacrifice their sons to the resistance and join the honored ranks of martyr families, as seen in the Al Manar documentary series *Alive with Their God* [27]; at worst, however, they can tarnish the party's reputation by speaking out against it. [28] It is therefore critical that the family believes that they are sending their sons to be martyred—and not to die a meaningless death. Not only will they be

comforted at the fate of their son, but Hezbollah's ideology also emphasizes the fact that the family will reap eternal rewards from the martyrdom of a son (not to mention the earthly rewards they also receive).

The impacts of dream accounts, as a result, also appear to be aimed at families of fighters. Accounts of the fighters' dreams may serve this purpose; but so do accounts of the dreams and premonitions of family members themselves. Not only do these dreams help reassure the family that their loved one has been martyred, but they also connect the family spiritually to the martyr's sacrifice—and to the divine rewards that martyrdom supposedly entails. One article described the dreams of multiple family members of the martyr Habibullah Mazloom—including two brothers and his mother—foreshadowing his death in Aleppo. Habibullah's older brother recalled a series of three dreams leading up to his martyrdom, involving scenes of a speech by Secretary General Nasrallah and a remembrance ceremony for the Imam Ali, as well as a vision of himself chanting a funeral lament.[29] "These dreams convinced me that something would happen to my brother," he concluded. When reports of the young man's martyrdom started to trickle in, according to the article, most of the town's residents "were convinced that the news was just a rumor or a lie... But the family prepared throughout these hours for the worst." In another instance, the father of the martyr Hussein Mounis remembered receiving a call telling him that his son had been injured. "I told him, 'no, my son has been martyred'... I just had a feeling." [30]

Dream accounts may also be used to communicate messages from the martyr. In one article, a dream account is used to communicate the feelings of the martyr Ali Hassan Ibrahim to his family after his death.[31] The story describes how upon hearing the news of Ali's martyrdom, his mother comported herself with dignity and restraint. "That day, the martyr visited his sister in her dream and said to her, 'I am happy because my mother behaved in this way.'"

It is worth noting that while the occurrence of a prophetic dream can help corroborate martyrdom, dreams may also serve as vehicles for other symbols and indications associated with martyrdom or religious commitment. In an article from December 2014, the mother of the martyr Ahmad Wael Raed relates that when she was pregnant with him, she dreamt of seeing a "bright face and a green turban" in a corner of her home, a symbol of strong religious faith.[32] During Ahmad's childhood, according to his mother, he displayed an unusual degree of piety and devotion to his religious education. "He was the oldest [of his siblings] and their guide in all matters, especially religious matters," until he was martyred in May of 2013.

As discussed, this paper offers no comparative analysis of Shia versus Sunni jihadist groups. However, it is worth noting that the prevalence of family members in this dream literature may reflect strategic imperatives specific to Hezbollah. While groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS have in recent years relied more heavily on a diaspora of foreign fighters from abroad and often tend to eschew national borders, Hezbollah professes a more nationalist ethos that is intimately tied with its ability to serve and protect the Lebanese people. As such, cultivating a strong relationship with the communities from which the group draws its fighters is critical to its success. Incorporating fighters' families into dream literature, therefore, is one way to tie the Hezbollah community spiritually to both the blessings that martyrdom incurs and the cause that it purportedly serves.

As all of these examples demonstrate, pro-Hezbollah media strategically wields dreams accounts to influence the beliefs and behavior of Hezbollah recruits, fighters, and families. Against this backdrop, it may be useful to return once more to the case of Zulfikar Azzadin to illustrate the extent to which the group values these dream accounts as a form of strategic capital. The broadcast of Azzadin's brutal murder on Lebanon's LBCI channel provoked a stir within the Hezbollah community, so much so that Arabipress published an article in late 2013 criticizing the station for broadcasting such ghastly images and accusing it of acting as a platform for Salafi-jihadist messaging.[33] Viewed in this context, Azzadin's repeated appearances in dream accounts appear designed to comfort the community and thereby counteract the potentially demoralizing effects of his public and gruesome death. In other words, Hezbollah seemingly views dream accounts as one of its most valuable tools in crafting favorable narratives surrounding its fighters' deaths in battle, and in countering enemy propaganda.

Conclusions

In many ways, Hezbollah's dream literature sheds additional light on well-known aspects of the group's ideology, including the importance of martyrdom, family, and community. Nonetheless, this literature is key to understanding the group's worldview and mindset. Because dreams provide strategic value as portals to the divine, the circumstances of their use in pro-Hezbollah media can provide a window into the organization's psyche.

The current generation of Hezbollah fighters came of age in the context of resistance to Israel; they most likely never imagined that they would one day fight and kill fellow Arabs in Syria. It is no surprise, then, that some members of the community have reportedly begun to question the worth of Hezbollah's role in Syria—and even the martyr status of fighters killed there. Against this backdrop, the use of the “currency” of dreams to reinforce the culture of martyrdom may reflect a certain degree of anxiety—and a tacit recognition of the group's own ideological vulnerabilities in the present day. Alternatively, it may simply reflect a preoccupation with a more perennial and universal dilemma: how can military organizations persuade fighters and their families to pay the ultimate price of self-sacrifice?

Either way, analysts should not dismiss dreams and other elements of jihadi culture as mere religious superstitions or practices unrelated to the military activities of jihadist groups. Rather, culture plays a central role in enhancing motivation, commitment, and military capabilities; to believe otherwise would be to ignore one of their most important assets.

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Notes

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[2] “Syrian opposition member to al Janoubia: ‘We did not execute Zulfiqar Azzadin,’” *Al Janoubia*, September 20, 2013. URL: <https://bit.ly/2JkIO3B> accessed June 4, 2018.

[3] See: Mother of the martyr Zulfiqar Hassan Azzadin holds for him “aroos al qasem,” *Al Manar*, December 24, 2013, <https://bit.ly/2sH7pbj>; “The Martyr Zulfiqar Azzadin,” July 20, 2016, <https://bit.ly/2Jvhu6i>; “A young woman recounts what she saw in her dream about the martyr Zulfiqar Azzadin,” *Arabipress*, February 3, 2014, <https://bit.ly/2Hhyzvl>; “Our martyrs: Karbala continues,” *Arabipress*, November 15, 2014, <https://bit.ly/2LVDc1v>; “The story of the martyr Zulfiqar Azzadin in his mother's words,” *Arabipress*, August 7, 2014, <https://bit.ly/2swT4j4>; “Life in your death is victorious,” *Arabipress*, January 25, 2015, <https://bit.ly/2xRPF3B>; all accessed May 17, 2018.

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Special Correspondence:**A Primer on Boko Haram Sources and Three Heuristics on al-Qaida and Boko Haram in Response to Adam Higazi, Brandon Kendhammer, Kyari Mohammed, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, and Alex Thurston****by Jacob Zenn****Editorial Note**

The April 2018 issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* included a special correspondence by Adam Higazi, Brandon Kendhammer, Kyari Mohammed, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, and Alex Thurston in which the authors were critical of Jacob Zenn's article about Boko Haram that had been published in the December 2017 issue of our journal. The Editorial Board believes that the competing narratives in the research on Boko Haram (predominantly local vs. strongly influenced from abroad) can and should be debated in a healthy manner. However, upon reflection, the Editors acknowledge that the April 2018 piece criticizing Jacob Zenn's article also contained some allegations regarding Mr. Zenn as a person, detracting from the level of scholarly discourse we strive for in *Perspectives on Terrorism*. In the current issue, we provide Mr. Zenn with an opportunity to respond to his critics, focused specifically on how the evidence he has collected supports his analysis. We invite readers to have a look at his evidence and the evidence of his critics and judge for themselves their respective merits.

In the April 2018 issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, five individuals collectively argued against my research finding that al-Qaida, including al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Shabab, had a "significant impact" on three phases of Boko Haram's history: its founding in 2002-2003; its launch of jihad in 2009-2010; and its campaign of suicide bombings in 2011-2012. I made this argument in the article "Demystifying al-Qaida in Nigeria: Cases from Boko Haram's Founding, Launch of Jihad and Suicide Bombings" in a special issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* in December 2017.[1] The article originated from a paper I submitted to a conference called "Al-Qaida at 30" in Oslo, Norway on September 4-5, 2017. The conference organizers at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (*Forsvarets Forskningsinstitutt, FFI*) requested the conference speakers, myself included, write on a theme related to al-Qaida and informed us that the article could then be double peer reviewed and, if accepted, published in *Perspectives on Terrorism*.

As noted above, the editors of *Perspectives on Terrorism* acknowledge that the five individuals' critique included multiple allegations that "detract from the scholarly discourse" they "strive for" in their journal.[2] In a separate article that I published (<http://www.aymennjawad.org/2018/06/jacob-zenn-replies-to-his-critics>), I rebutted 30 allegations made by those five individuals and explained why their critique did not contribute to the scholarly debate on analysis and interpretation of militant groups.[3] In this response for the readers of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, I discuss five key sets of source materials on al-Qaida and Boko Haram that substantiate all three of my arguments from my article in the December 2017 issue. There are other sources that support my arguments, such as Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) leader Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi's 124-page history of Boko Haram published in June 2018, but in this correspondence I evaluate only sources that I previously discussed in my December 2017 article. The three phases in Boko Haram's history that I discuss—its founding in 2002-2003, its launch of jihad in 2009-2010, and its campaign of suicide bombings in 2011-2012—are also all pivotal because they represent the beginning of Boko Haram as a group; the beginning of its mass violence; and the beginning of its tactical sophistication.

Importantly, my 7,000-word article in that December issue did not aim to argue, nor did it have the space to argue, that al-Qaida had a significant impact on *all* phases and events in Boko Haram's history, such as the

period from 2007 to 2009 or Boko Haram's raid on Giwa barracks in 2014, which the five individuals alleged I "omitted" and "shied away from": those are examples of a phase and an event unconnected to my actual argument. Nor did I argue Boko Haram is a "mere" extension of the international jihadist movement, a word which the five authors implied I used: I argued, however, that Boko Haram is *an* extension of the international jihadist movement, which the group's becoming a "province" of the Islamic State in March 2015 proved to be true but was also true as early as 2003. My argument also did not "dismiss" that other factors have mattered aside from al-Qaida in Boko Haram's founding, launch of jihad and campaign of suicide bombings, which the five authors assert it did: an article focused on al-Qaida's "significant impact" on three phases in Boko Haram's history does not mean that religious ideology, geopolitics, corruption, urbanization, desertification, and porous borders or other factors are irrelevant or are not interrelated. In fact, I did not even weigh in on whether al-Qaida was the "dominant" factor in Boko Haram's founding, launch of jihad and campaign of suicide bombings, which the five authors said I did. However, 13 instances in my article specifically stated that al-Qaida had a "significant impact" on the three phases in Boko Haram's history that I discuss, and I never used the word "dominant".

In this correspondence, five sets of source materials on the relationship between al-Qaida and Boko Haram are discussed so that readers can review the evidence and judge for themselves the respective merits of each side's argument. Current and future analysts of Boko Haram can also use this as a 'primer on Boko Haram sources' and refer to the five authors' or my interpretation and analysis of those sources—or, of course, develop their own interpretation and analysis. In the conclusion of this correspondence, I provide three heuristics for analysts evaluating whether al-Qaida had a significant impact on Boko Haram's founding, launch of jihad and campaign of suicide bombings.

Source #1. Letters between AQIM and Boko Haram and AQIM treatise, 2009–2011 (released in April 2017) [4]

These primary sources are in a roughly 70-page Arabic language document called the "Documents of Advice and Sharia Instruction to the Fighters in Nigeria," which was released by al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in April 2017 and included an introduction by Mauritanian AQIM sharia official Abu al-Numan Qutayba al-Shinqiti. He is also a poet and was involved in AQIM's exchange of a Frenchman named Serge Lazarevic who was kidnapped in Mali in 2011. The documents include a series of letters between AQIM and Boko Haram from 2009 to 2011 and a treatise by the late AQIM sharia head Abu al-Hasan Rashid al-Bulaydi.

I strongly encourage analysts to appreciate what these letters have to offer. Such sources are not to be skimmed over and shrugged off. A responsible researcher knows the information we seek is not always blatantly in front of us, and it is our obligation to look closer, dig deeper, and find threads that can be tied together to help explain more comprehensively the subjects we study.

Referring to these letters and the treatise, the five critics of my work have argued that "all that the primary sources have conclusively shown about the post-2009 period is that some training occurred (the numbers are not yet known), and 200,000 euros may have been transferred." However, in my opinion a more careful examination of these primary sources reveals much more than that. These primary sources indicate that AQIM transferred 200,000 euros to Boko Haram because the letters include a first request and then a second reminder from AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel to AQIM southern commander Abu Zeid for Abu Zeid to provide 200,000 euros to Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau. Shekau then wrote a letter thanking Abu Zeid for "the training and financial generosity" after Boko Haram carried out its first attack under his leadership in Nigeria in September 2010.

The five authors are certainly correct where they argue that "No serious historian of Nazi Germany, for example, would hold up Nazi sources as the sole key to understanding pre-war and war-time developments." Nor should anyone hold these primary sources as the "sole" key to understanding Boko Haram from 2009-2011. The fact that these primary sources were *internal letters* – and that some of them were found in Bin Laden's compound in 2011 in Pakistan – does increase their credibility in comparison to public jihadist propaganda. And when they

are evaluated alongside other secondary sources, one finds the information in them is additionally corroborated and enhanced. This is why scholars are encouraged to assess primary and secondary sources together.

Indeed, there are several secondary sources that attest to AQIM transferring the 200,000 euros to Boko Haram. In 2012, for example, a Boko Haram member on trial in Nigeria said Boko Haram received 200,000 euros (41 million Nigerian naira) from an “Algerian group”.[5] Also in 2012 the arrested Boko Haram spokesman for Shekau commented to the Nigerian security forces that this 200,000 euros contributed to infighting, which we can now discern was between Boko Haram and the members who split from Boko Haram to form *Jama’at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad as-Sudan*, or Ansaru, in 2012 and took some of the money with them.[6] In 2012, Nigeria also released an intelligence report confirming it knew Boko Haram received the 200,000 euros and that the money was for kidnapping foreign engineers in Nigeria: this is precisely what Ansaru did with its four kidnappings of 11 foreign engineers in Nigeria from 2011 to 2013.[7] *Africa Confidential* also published in 2013 a report based on its sources confirming the transfer of 200,000 euros from AQIM to Boko Haram.[8] In sum, the 200,000 euros was transferred from AQIM to Boko Haram (not “may have been”) and it mattered enough that Shekau even wrote the letter to Abu Zeid to thank AQIM for the “training and financial generosity.”

These primary sources do not only confirm AQIM’s transfer of 200,000 euros to Boko Haram at a time when Shekau’s emissaries had told AQIM that they were facing major shortages in Nigeria. The primary sources also confirm Boko Haram’s training with AQIM in Algeria and with al-Shabab in Somalia, the latter of which the five authors do not mention in their article as a finding from these primary sources. Khalid al-Barnawi wrote in one of the letters to a Mauritanian AQIM commander, Abdullah al-Shinqiti, that Shekau killed Boko Haram members who trained in Algeria or Somalia without his permission. Al-Barnawi later founded Ansaru, which split from Boko Haram after receiving guidance from AQIM in 2011. His letter substantiates that training in Algeria and Somalia must have taken place and also provides insights on Shekau’s ruthlessness in killing anyone he suspected of being disobedient. If there was no Boko Haram training in Algeria and Somalia, al-Barnawi would not have complained about Shekau killing Boko Haram members who trained there. Al-Barnawi’s letter is, in fact, the first time in primary sources that it is confirmed Boko Haram trained in Somalia. Previously, Boko Haram had only publicly claimed to have trained in Somalia and issued videos praising al-Shabab, while governments and international organizations, such as the U.S., Somalia and the United Nations, had only publicly stated that they had information on Boko Haram members training in Somalia.

According to these primary sources, AQIM also pilfered weapons from the Malian and Mauritanian armies at a barracks in Mali in 2010 and “donated” them to Boko Haram. Droukdel wrote in one of his letters to Abu Zeid that providing “weaponry support [to Boko Haram] is not a problem because of their abundance. The matter will be studied by the specialized leadership as to the amount in stock and the methods of supply.” The documents also say that Nigerians had been fighting with Algerian jihadists since the 1990s, which is earlier than has commonly been acknowledged. The documents also discuss the takfiri ideology of some of the early leaders of Boko Haram who debated Shekau’s predecessor as Boko Haram leader, Muhammed Yusuf, during Yusuf’s lifetime and the books Abubakar Shekau was reading, which inform scholars in greater detail about the ideological origins of the group. The fact that Droukdel uses the word *itisilat* (communications) and then the stronger *irtibat* (ties) to refer to AQIM’s desired relationship with Boko Haram and that Droukdel says that he “accepts as a martyr (*shaheed*)” Muhammed Yusuf also provides insights into Droukdel’s understanding of AQIM’s relationship with Boko Haram.

A close reading of the lengthy treatise in the document, which the five authors do not discuss in their article, also shows that it is not to be ignored either. It is, in fact, a theological explanation from AQIM’s sharia head, al-Bulaydi, in October 2011 about why AQIM finds that it is “necessary” for Ansaru to split from Boko Haram because Khalid al-Barnawi and his *shura* exhausted all other possibilities in trying to stay with Boko Haram, which would have been preferable. Therefore, these primary sources reveal details about the interrelationships between AQIM and Boko Haram (and what became Ansaru), the internal workings of AQIM, whose commanders deferred to al-Bulaydi on matters related to Boko Haram’s internal problems, as well as AQIM’s influence on the first split in Boko Haram in 2011-2012. Five years after al-Bulaydi’s treatise, in 2016, the Islamic State also weighed in on Boko Haram’s internal disputes and, like AQIM, encouraged members to split

from Shekau.[9]

There are also other interesting questions for inquisitive-minded scholars that these primary sources raise, but which are beyond the scope of this correspondence. For example, why did Droukdel have to remind Abu Zeid a second time to provide Shekau with the money? Did Abu Zeid not want to give the money to Shekau (and keep it for himself) or was there simply a gap in AQIM communications? Did Bin Laden know about this money because in a separate letter to one of his couriers he specifically referred to 200,000 euros in AQIM's possession? Why did Khalid al-Barnawi ask his letter to be forwarded to Mokhtar Belmokhtar? Was Belmokhtar out of the mainstream of AQIM communications? When Khalid al-Barnawi compared Shekau to former Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) leader, Anton Zouabri, was al-Barnawi speaking based on his own personal experience in the GIA? When Abu Zeid wrote a letter to Droukdel stating that the Nigerian jihadists who visited him on Shekau's behalf in August 2009 were with Abu Zeid's brigade before 2009, including Khalid al-Barnawi, and stated that they requested financial, training, weapons, and communications support, did that mean Boko Haram had been immersed with AQIM well before July 2009? Indeed, after Boko Haram's clashes with the Nigerian security forces in July 2009, an AQIM letter to Bin Laden that was released by the CIA in January 2018 said that there were "more [Nigerians] than usual" with AQIM. That would indicate that Nigerians had been regulars in the Sahel with AQIM throughout the 2000s but more of them came after the clashes in July 2009.

Lastly, we must ask what other letters might exist between AQIM and Boko Haram that we have not seen? These letters seen so far cannot be the whole corpus of letters and communications between AQIM and Boko Haram about financial, training, weapons, and communications support. Moreover, the letters show that Abu Zeid and Shekau's emissaries, including Khalid al-Barnawi, discussed setting up an intermediary between them in Niger, which Droukdel approved. What was the outcome of this? In addition, the letter from Abu Zeid to Droukdel explained to Droukdel what Shekau's emissaries, including al-Barnawi, reported to him when they met in August 2009 in Mali. One can only imagine how not all of what they discussed after the clashes between the security forces and Boko Haram in Nigeria in July 2009 could fit in the confines of only several pages of the letter from Abu Zeid to Droukdel about that meeting. The fact that Shekau was able to send high-level emissaries like Khalid al-Barnawi to meet with Abu Zeid so soon after the clashes in Nigeria in July 2009 also shows that Boko Haram's relationship with AQIM must have been close *before* July 2009, or else such a meeting could not have happened so quickly. The existence of AQIM members on Muhammed Yusuf's *shura* before Yusuf's death in July 2009—probably Nigerian AQIM members—must have facilitated the upgrade in AQIM and Boko Haram coordination after July 2009.

Before closing the discussion of these primary sources it is relevant to point out that my five critical colleagues' collective interpretation of these primary sources presents a contradiction in terms where they write that the 200,000 euros from AQIM to Boko Haram "conclusively... may have been transferred." The words "conclusively" and "may have been" cannot function together in this way: either a terrorist group conclusively did something, or it may have done it. Further, their linguistic contradiction illustrates how the study of violent non-state actors, which are by their nature clandestine, rarely offers black-and-white, clear cut and "conclusive" answers. In fact, most findings in this field will tend to be somewhere in the grey area. This is why it is important when studying Boko Haram and AQIM (or other clandestine violent non-state actors) that scholars seek to find conclusive answers but should not stop there: they must also find and highlight information from the relevant sources that leads to a greater overall understanding of these militant groups, especially so when findings are *not* sufficiently conclusive. Therefore, where the five authors write that "all that the primary sources have conclusively shown..." their interpretation over-focuses on only "conclusive" findings while under-representing and, in fact, ignoring in their article other findings that provide a broader and deeper understanding of these militant groups even though such findings are not conclusive.

In addition, where my five detractors write that "some training" of Boko Haram members with AQIM occurred but that "the numbers are not yet known", it is quite an oversight if they are claiming that the "numbers are not yet known" makes the training of Boko Haram with AQIM somehow insignificant or unreliable information. The statement "numbers are not yet known" is not sustainable because such numbers *can never* be precisely known. It can never be known beyond rough estimates how many French people trained with the Islamic State

in Syria and Iraq, how many Russians fought in eastern Ukraine, or how many Boko Haram members trained with AQIM. But focusing on the fact in their conclusion that “some training occurred (the numbers are not yet known)” makes the mistake of implying that the numbers *can* one day be known (by using the word “yet”), and it avoids assessing the impact and significance of the training that does exist.

To estimate the number of Boko Haram members who trained with AQIM one could note the U.S. has found that 90 Boko Haram members trained in Somalia after July 2009.[10] If, as is probable, there were at least as many Boko Haram members who trained with AQIM as al-Shabab after July 2009, then around 100 Boko Haram members would have trained with AQIM. According to a document found in Bin Laden’s compound, Abu Zeid reported to Droukdel that Boko Haram wanted “200 brothers” to train with AQIM.[11] In some terrorist groups only a few members with specialized training in bomb-making can have a major impact on the group’s operations.[12] In the case of Boko Haram, the specialized training of only a dozen or so members with AQIM (and al-Shabab) could have had a major impact on the group’s campaign of suicide bombings in 2011-2012, let alone 100 to 200 members. (This will be discussed in greater detail under Source #5 in this correspondence.)

The letters also provide additional details that help us estimate how many Boko Haram members trained with AQIM even though we cannot know exactly how many did. Khalid al-Barnawi requested “waves” of Boko Haram members to receive trainings with AQIM, and AQIM said that “the waves of youths coming from Nigeria to the Sahara for training were in the tens (*‘asharat*)... and the cadres of Nigerian brothers who returned [to Nigeria] came under the commandship of Abubakar Shekau.” The letters also state that the trainings “continued in this manner with delegations coming and training, and then returning, and with weapons, money and support, until it was first noticed that Abubakar Shekau permitted taking the possessions of Muslims under the rationale that they lived under the rule of unbelievers by choice.” Evidently this training of at least several dozen, if not 100 to 200 Boko Haram members, therefore, stopped in mid-2011 when Khalid al-Barnawi alerted his AQIM comrades in his letter about the dangers of Shekau’s *takfirism*, which is why he split to form Ansaru in 2012.[13]

In the case of the primary sources discussed here – and the secondary sources that corroborate them – we can *conclusively* say, among other findings, that:

- AQIM transferred 200,000 euros to Boko Haram;
- Dozens of Boko Haram fighters trained with AQIM, especially after July 2009;
- Boko Haram members trained not only in Algeria but also in Somalia after July 2009;
- Doukdel sought to establish not only communications (*itisilat*) but also ties (*irtibat*) with Boko Haram in 2010; and
- AQIM intervened in Boko Haram’s internal organization in 2011 to endorse Khalid al-Barnawi’s decision to split from Shekau and form Ansaru by 2012.

Some of the other information provided by the letters about communications, ideology, weapons and the groups’ histories also help us to better understand the relationship between AQIM and Boko Haram and both groups individually from 2009 to 2011. These primary sources also support the argument that AQIM had a significant enough impact on Boko Haram that Abubakar Shekau, of all people, actually thanked them for “training and financial generosity”.

Source #2. International Crisis Group (ICG) Report on Boko Haram, 2014 [14]

In their critique, my five detractors collectively write that “if the issue of funding transfers from al-Qaida to one individual, Muhammad Ali, is murky, then the issue of what occurred in Yobe State in 2003 is exponentially murkier.” They also write “*Al-Risalah*, then, neither recognizes Ali as Boko Haram’s founder nor says that the money from al-Qaida members ever reached him.”

The *al-Risalah* article is discussed in Source #3 in this correspondence, but for now the ICG report is important because it provides numerous insights that are essential background reading on Boko Haram. I disagree with the five authors' description of Muhammed Ali, whom they refer to as "an individual" but do not assess the full range of primary and secondary sources about him that establish he was, in fact, the *founder* and first leader of Boko Haram. This is in spite of the fact that some of the five individuals themselves have claimed Muhammed Ali to be the founder of Boko Haram in their previous work.[15]

A colleague at Voice of America interviewed a Boko Haram member from the 2002-2003 period who knew Muhammed Ali and Muhammed Yusuf and confirmed that Ali was the "emir (commander)" of the group and was in Sudan in the 1990s where he studied with "Bin Laden's scholars".[16] Nigerian news reports about Boko Haram from 2004 after the group's first clashes with the security forces in Yobe State in 2003 also confirmed that Ali was the "leader" or "commander" of the group.[17] The Nigerian journalist Ahmed Salkida, who Abdul Raufu Mustapha described as the "journalist with the closest connections to the sect", has also written that Muhammed Ali was Boko Haram's co-founder with Muhammed Yusuf in 2002-2003.[18] Various other Nigerian Salafi scholars familiar with Boko Haram in 2002-2003 also recognize Muhammed Ali as the group's founder. By context the *al-Risalah* article discussed in Source #3 in this correspondence also confirms that Muhammed Ali was the founder.

Muhammed Ali, according to the ICG report, received a promise of up to \$3 million from Usama bin Laden in Sudan to start a jihadi movement in Nigeria while Ali was a student at the Islamic university in Khartoum, Sudan and Bin Laden was living in Khartoum in the mid-1990s. Ali then trained in Afghanistan and returned to Nigeria to found Boko Haram in 2002 and provided money from al-Qaida to Muhammed Yusuf. This establishes that al-Qaida had a significant impact on Boko Haram's founding because *Boko Haram's founder/leader/commander was an al-Qaida operative*.

If Boko Haram's founder was an al-Qaida operative, one then needs to reexamine what the purpose of Boko Haram was at the time of its founding in 2002-2003. Abubakar Shekau, another Boko Haram leader, an Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) video prologue on the group's history, and ISWAP leader Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi, among other sources, affirm those were the group's two founding years.[19] Could a group with an al-Qaida operative like Muhammed Ali as a founder (or co-founder) have been "peaceful"? And were the clashes between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces in Yobe State in 2003 unanticipated, as has been commonly believed, or were the clashes an expectation for a group whose founder was an al-Qaida operative living in a "land of *kufr* (infidelity)" like Nigeria? I argue for the latter.

Other questions also arise: How close was Muhammed Ali not only to Muhammed Yusuf (Boko Haram's other co-founder/leader) but also to Yusuf's mentor, Nigeria's most prominent Salafi/*Wahhabi* cleric in the 1990s and early 2000s, Shaykh Jaafar Adam Mahmoud? If, according to the ICG report (and other sources), both Ali and Shaykh Jaafar attended the Islamic University in Khartoum at a similar time in the 1990s and Shaykh Jaafar was involved in the killing of Muhammed Ali in 2003, then they must have had a relationship and subsequently fallen out. Moreover, Shaykh Jaafar was known in the 1990s for calling *takfir* on various Nigerian Muslim scholars after he returned to Nigeria from his other studies at the Islamic University in Medina, Saudi Arabia; he later praised bin Laden and al-Qaida after 9/11. It is reasonable to conclude that Shaykh Jaafar was knowledgeable about Boko Haram's founding in 2002-2003 and could have initially supported the group, especially considering Muhammed Ali's co-founder was Shaykh Jaafar's own mentee, Muhammed Yusuf.

This issue is important because it highlights another key question about Boko Haram: whether the Nigerian Salafi/*Wahhabi* clerics are only victims of Boko Haram's wrath; or whether they are victims but some of them are also reaping what they sowed from the ideology they promoted and their support for Boko Haram at the time of its origins. This involved bigotry towards Sufis and Sunni Muslims who accepted secular laws, Christians and, in some cases, also women during the 1990s.[20] According to the latter interpretation, they provided initial support to Muhammed Ali's jihadi movement but pulled back just before Muhammed Ali finally launched the jihad in December 2003.[21] If some clerics in the Salafi/*Wahhabi* establishment was complicit in Boko Haram's founding in 2002-2003 – whether for turning a blind eye to the group or actively supporting the

group – then it also supports the argument that international factors contributed to Boko Haram’s founding. This is because Shaykh Jaafar and many of the leading Salafi/*Wahhabi* clerics around him cultivated their religious ideology, funding and credibility through associations primarily to Saudi organizations and Saudi-funded universities in Saudi Arabia or other countries, such as the Islamic University in Khartoum, Sudan. As the scholar Muhammed Mustapha Gwadabe of Ahmadu Bello University argues:

the disruption of the “normal” evolution of Islam (as result of *Wahabiyyah* interventions) created dangerous tensions across much of the Muslim world and provided for increase radicalism among Islamist movements, and produced the Boko Haram culture in Nigeria.[22]

Quoting Kyari Muhammed, Gwadabe added as an epitaph in his article that “Virtually every member of the Boko Haram moved from the Izala, making it the transit point for graduation into Boko Haram.”[23] Izala (an acronym for “Society of Removal of Innovation and Reestablishment of the Sunna”) is the largest Salafi/*Wahhabi* movement in Nigeria, was funded through contributions from Saudi Arabia, and was the group from which Shaykh Jaafar and Muhammed Yusuf emerged as prominent Salafi/*Wahhabi* clerics in the 1990s and early 2000s.[24]

Lastly, the veracity of the ICG report as a source must be considered. Two of the Nigerian journalists and researchers involved in preparing the report are well respected and also well connected, one of them with extensive reporting experience on Boko Haram and a record of interviews with Boko Haram members for an international news agency. More generally, ICG is credible. The report should be considered authoritative.

In sum, with a founder who was an al-Qaida operative like Muhammed Ali, it becomes clear that al-Qaida had a significant impact on Boko Haram’s founding in 2002-2003. The *al-Risalah* article below further corroborates the depths of al-Qaida’s relationship with Boko Haram at the time of its founding in 2002-2003.

Source #3. *Al-Risalah* Article, January 2017 [25]

Having established that Muhammed Ali was an al-Qaida operative and the founder (or co-founder/leader) of Boko Haram in 2002-2003, it is now relevant to turn to an article about Boko Haram’s and Ansaru’s history as written by the Ansaru leader, Abu Usama al-Ansari, in the al-Qaida magazine, *al-Risalah*, in January 2017. The purpose of the article itself and the publication of *al-Risalah* from its first issue in 2015 was for al-Qaida to emphasize that it opposes excessive *takfiri* ideology, which was represented by Abubakar Shekau and the Islamic State more generally. This was likely the same purpose for AQIM’s release of the letters and treatise in Source #1 in April 2017: to show that AQIM initially supported Boko Haram but dropped that support because it opposed Shekau’s excessive *takfirism*.

I do not disagree that, according to Abu Usama al-Ansari, “members of al-Qaida residing in the Arabian Peninsula” provided “financial assistance” to Muhammed Ali’s “shaykh and mentor”, Abu al-Bara al-Dourawi, but that Abu al-Bara al-Dourawi fled with the money from Nigeria to Saudi Arabia after 9/11. No amount of money is specified but al-Ansari describes it as “immense wealth” that al-Qaida intended for the “*jihad* in Nigeria”. It may have been all or a portion of the \$3 million that Bin Laden had promised to Muhammed Ali in the 1990s.

Where I differ from the five individuals’ collective analysis is that they are primarily concerned with the fact that the “money from al-Qaida members never reached” Muhammed Ali. While I recognize that most, if not all, of the money did not reach Muhammed Ali, what I am primarily concerned with is why al-Qaida would have wanted to provide Muhammed Ali with so much money – “immense wealth” – at the time of Boko Haram’s founding if al-Qaida was an insignificant player in Boko Haram’s founding. That al-Qaida *intended* to provide Muhammed Ali with this “immense wealth” is sufficient to assume that al-Qaida had vetted Muhammed Ali and the relationship between al-Qaida and Muhammed Ali was substantial enough that al-Qaida wanted him to have this money for the “*jihad* in Nigeria” in 2002-2003. Al-Qaida would not have intended to give this money to Muhammed Ali if not for a pre-existing relationship with Boko Haram and its leaders, such as Ali

and his deputies, and its recognition that Ali's goals were in accord with al-Qaida's.

Moreover, the implication of the transfer of money (even though it was stolen) is that there was a broader financial and logistics infrastructure in Nigeria for al-Qaida to fund Muhammed Ali and the “*jihād* in Nigeria” in 2002-2003. This further establishes that al-Qaida had a deeper level of trust and ties to Boko Haram than has been previously acknowledged in 2002-2003 and that Boko Haram was not “peaceful” at the time of its founding. One can also hypothesize that the loss of this money is among the reasons why Boko Haram's jihadi project stalled after the group's founding in 2002 and only revived in the months before the group's clashes with the security forces in Yobe State took place in December 2003 in which around 20 Boko Haram members were killed.

The *al-Risalah* article also raises additional questions, such as why did Abu al-Bara al-Dourawi flee to Saudi Arabia? Why did Muhammed Yusuf also flee to Saudi Arabia after the clashes with the security forces in December 2003 and stay there for nearly a year? Why did another one of Muhammed Ali's deputies, Abu Umar, flee to Saudi Arabia several weeks before the clashes with the security forces in Yobe in December 2003 where Interpol reportedly tried to track him down?[26] What relationships did Muhammed Ali have in Saudi Arabia, where, according to Kyari Muhammed, he was originally radicalized? What role, if any, did a Saudi-funded charity that funded the construction of Shaykh Jaafar's mosque in Kano have in Boko Haram's uprising in Yobe State or its members' escape to Saudi Arabia?[27] Did any of those Saudi funders meet with Muhammed Yusuf in Saudi Arabia during the roughly one year he spent there following the December 2003 clashes in Yobe State? Who funded and arranged the visa and housing and other logistics for Muhammed Yusuf in Saudi Arabia for that long period in 2004? In addition, if Shaykh Jaafar knew Muhammed Ali, which is almost certainly the case, did Shaykh Jaafar also know about Abu al-Bara al-Dourawi? During Boko Haram's founding years Saudi Arabia was a place for Boko Haram members to seek refuge and served as a negotiation and “diplomacy” grounds for the group, if not also a source of the group's funding and ideology: this reflects another international angle to Boko Haram history that has not been commonly covered.[28]

Lastly, the *al-Risalah* article is important because Abu Usama al-Ansari also mentions how after the clashes in Yobe State in December 2003 the “Algerian brothers” – a reference to AQIM's predecessor, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) – provided haven to Boko Haram members so that they could flee from Nigeria to the Sahel. This is also documented in other primary sources from al-Qaida and news reports by journalists in West Africa in 2004. The GSPC could not have helped Boko Haram in this way in 2004 if not for a pre-existing relationship with Boko Haram (then known publicly as the “Nigerian Taliban” and the “Nigerian brothers” to the GSPC). Abu Usama al-Ansari also confirmed in his article what the letters from 2009 to 2011 between AQIM and Boko Haram indicated: Ansaru “consulted” with the “Algerian brothers” before announcing its formation in 2012.

In sum, the *al-Risalah* article is important because it shows that al-Qaida trusted Muhammed Ali enough to provide him with “immense wealth” for Boko Haram and that al-Qaida must have had close and longstanding communications with Ali and his inner circle as well as a strategic plan for how that money would benefit al-Qaida's objectives in Nigeria. The article also establishes that Boko Haram was not peaceful when it was founded in 2002-2003 and that Boko Haram's relationship with AQIM, or its predecessor, the GSPC, dates not to 2009 but at least to 2004 and, in fact, earlier than that, as Source #4 will show below.

Source #4. Court Documents from the Case of Ibrahim Harun, 2017 [29]

The five authors ask in their article “what did Harun accomplish? Harun was arrested before he could perpetrate any of the terrorist attacks that Zenn describes him plotting. Told from one angle, the story of Harun is the story of Nigeria's close call with a master terrorist. But viewed from another angle, Harun's impact was negligible: a few plots, a few trips, minimal contact with the most influential Boko Haram leaders on the ground in northern Nigeria, and then a flight to Libya where he was soon caught.”

Imagine if a few days before September 11, 2001, the FBI arrested some of the hijackers based on complaints

from flight schools, disrupted the entire plot, and the attacks never happened. It would not be analytically useful to write their plot off as having a “negligible impact” because it did not happen. Rather, investigators would seek to understand how al-Qaida built this network in the U.S and what the network indicated about al-Qaida’s intentions and other capabilities in the U.S.

Similarly, Ibrahim Harun’s failed plots against the U.S. embassy and other Western targets in Nigeria in 2003 are not cases of a vaguely defined “master terrorist” but of an al-Qaida member who pledged *baya’* to Usama bin Laden in Pakistan through Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, lived with Abu Faraj al-Libi in Pakistan, trained under the supervision of Abu Zubaydah in Afghanistan and met various other East African al-Qaida members in Pakistan. The question I ask is *how* and *why* did al-Qaida arrange for Ibrahim Harun travel to Nigeria in 2003 and meet with Muhammed Ali’s deputy in Boko Haram in 2003 even if his plots failed? Harun’s case again challenges the idea that Boko Haram was “peaceful” in 2003: if the group was “peaceful” why would the group welcome and host Harun in Nigeria, as discussed in the documents from his court trial in the U.S. in 2017 where he was convicted of killing two U.S. troops in Afghanistan before his mission in Nigeria in 2003 and of plotting to attack the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria in 2003-2004?

Harun’s mission in Nigeria also raises questions about the logistics infrastructure for al-Qaida in Nigeria in 2003. Someone in Boko Haram had to know from al-Qaida that he was coming, someone from Boko Haram had to receive him, and someone from Boko Haram had to escort him around the country and lodge him in Kano. Harun, who was Saudi but had parents from Niger, knew Hausa, so he did not need translation in northern Nigeria, and al-Qaida leaders also cautioned him to avoid being seen reading publicly in Arabic for operational security reasons.[30] While in Nigeria, Harun was also receiving letters from the GSPC. He even sent a Boko Haram courier who had lodged with him in Kano to train in Pakistan with al-Qaida, and Harun arranged trainings for Boko Haram youths with the GSPC in Niger. The Boko Haram courier whom Harun sent to Pakistan was returning to Nigeria with money from al-Qaida before his arrest in Pakistan in 2004. The letters from the GSPC to al-Qaida, which were passed through Harun and the courier he sent from Nigeria to Pakistan, and the letters from al-Qaida to Harun, which were also passed through that courier, also reveal information about al-Qaida strategy in Nigeria, the reasons why al-Qaida wanted to target Nigeria in 2003, and the reasons why al-Qaida wanted Harun and Boko Haram to coordinate with the GSPC to set up a West African hub for allied jihadist groups. The documents from Harun’s court trial, therefore, show al-Qaida was already working with Boko Haram and the GSPC strategically in 2003, as the *al-Risalah* article corroborates.

My data point about Harun was not, as the five individuals claimed, me “presenting failures as successes in order to paint the most distressing possible picture of al-Qaida and AQIM.” Rather, it was intended as further evidence that Boko Haram’s cooperation with al-Qaida to receive Harun in Nigeria demonstrates the group was not “peaceful” in 2003, had violent intentions in 2003, and had a logistics and communications relationship with al-Qaida and its regional allies in West Africa (such as the GSPC) as early as 2003, if not earlier. In addition, this data point about Harun is not what I built much of my analysis around, as they claim, but rather it was one data point among others, such as the three sources mentioned above, that reveal al-Qaida had a relationship with and significant impact on Boko Haram at the time of its founding in 2002-2003. In order for Harun’s mission to take place and for al-Qaida to have intended to provide the “immense wealth” to Muhammed Ali, it logically follows that other clandestine interactions between Boko Haram, the GSPC and al-Qaida had to take place aside from the evidence provided in the sources presently available.

The five individuals in their collective analysis also describe the members of Boko Haram in 2003, based on their interviews with anonymous “local informants”, as a “heterogeneous group who engaged in activities as diverse as fishing, providing wage labor on nearby farms, and meeting with local authorities”. This is an innocuous portrayal of the group compared to what we know about the way the group’s leaders were communicating and strategizing with al-Qaida and the GSPC. In addition, according to ICG, Muhammed Ali did not even tell Muhammed Yusuf that his money came from al-Qaida, so one should not expect “local informants”, such as villagers in the area near Boko Haram’s encampment in Yobe State in 2003, to have known about Boko Haram’s dealings with al-Qaida.

Moreover, the “local informant” my colleague at Voice of America interviewed for a project we collaborated on together in 2017 made clear that both Muhammed Ali and Muhammed Yusuf planned for jihad but that Ali was much less patient about engaging in jihad than Yusuf. Moreover, this local informant was an *actual member* of Boko Haram’s encampment in Yobe State in 2002-2003 and was introduced to us by a psychologist in Nigeria’s de-radicalization program. Aspects of the dispute between Muhammed Ali and Muhammed Yusuf are detailed in an article written by Abdulbasit Kassim.[31] Moreover, Ahmed Salkida—a so-called “local informant” and is as close to Boko Haram as anyone who is not a member of the group—wrote in 2014 that Muhammed Yusuf “never hid the desire to carry out jihad and ultimately secure *Daula* (State)”; that “Yusuf orchestrated the script Shekau is playing out today”; and that the difference between Ali and Yusuf was that Ali opted for a “more extreme version” of *takfir wal-hijra* (*excommunication of Muslims and migration*)."

Even if some Boko Haram members in 2003 were fishermen and wage laborers and met with local authorities, this does not rule them out as violent jihadists as well. Indeed, one of the new disciplines in terrorism studies – Jihadi Culture – finds that poetry, sports, and other hobbies can all coexist at a terrorist camp even while terrorists are preparing for attacks. In the case of the “London Bridge attackers” in 2017, for example, they were known by “local informants” around their neighborhood to be working at local gyms, Islamic television channels and bakeries, to have taught youth about Islam, attended swimming pools and barbecues, and to have occasionally run into the law for fraud and assault.[32] That was part of their “jihadi culture”. At the same time, the London Bridge attackers were communicating with the Islamic State online, reading Islamic State materials and preparing for a violent attack in the name of the Islamic State, which took place in June 2017 and led to seven deaths at the London Bridge. This is similar to how Boko Haram members to the villagers close to the group in 2003 may have been seen as “fishermen and wage laborers” in their non-combat time, while at the same time they were training, amassing weapons and preparing for violent jihad, especially if they sided with Muhammed Ali.

In sum, if Boko Haram formed primarily to address or respond to corruption, poverty, or marginalization, the fact that it became violent in 2003 could be considered exceptional and unanticipated. But the evidence at hand indicates that the group was founded by an al-Qaida operative, Muhammed Ali, whose co-leaders in 2003 were in contact with al-Qaida and the GSPC logistically, financially, and operationally. The fact that the group engaged in violence in Yobe State in 2003 was no accident: it was woven into the purposes of the group from the beginning.

Lastly, the case of Harun fits into another underdeveloped genre in scholarship on violent non-state actors: “unsuccessful attacks.”[33] Such unsuccessful attacks are rarely studied because they are considered to be “negligible.” But because al-Qaida and other terrorist groups are learning organizations, “unsuccessful attacks” often provide groups with knowledge so that future attacks will be more precise and likely to succeed. Boko Haram’s suicide car bombing at the United Nations building in Abuja in 2011, for example, which will be discussed in greater depth in Source #5 below, has been an aberration in the group’s targeting since the start of the most recent iteration of the insurgency in 2009. It is beyond the scope of this correspondence, but I argue that the network masterminding that suicide car bombing at the United Nations in 2011 was similar to the network of Boko Haram members coordinating with Ibrahim Harun on his plot on the U.S. and others embassies in 2003. Studying his plot, therefore, could have raised awareness of the potentiality of the United Nations attack in 2011.

Source #5. News Reports and Academic Article about Suicide Bombings, 2010-2011

I now turn to news reports about Boko Haram’s first two suicide bombings in June 2011 and August 2011 and an academic article by Michael C. Horowitz from Winter 2010 for International Organization about the “diffusion of innovations” between terrorist groups with a focus on suicide bombings.[34]

There were many suicide bombings (person-borne) and car bombings (vehicle-borne) and some suicide car bombings (person in vehicle-borne) in Nigeria starting with Boko Haram’s first suicide car bombing at the Federal Police headquarters in Abuja in June 2011. My dataset (found in Appendix A at the end of this

correspondence) reflects 36 total suicide bombings, car bombings and suicide car bombings in Nigeria from June 2011 until the end of December 2012. According to that dataset, 31 of those 36 attacks were suicide bombings (person-borne or person-in-vehicle borne) and five were only car bombings (without a person inside).

The five individuals say in their collective analysis that “some of these attacks were claimed by Boko Haram, but can Zenn prove that every attack was carried out by Boko Haram or Ansaru?” Indeed, a portion of these 36 attacks may have been misreported, but that does not affect the representativeness or conclusions that can be drawn from the data. The key is to understand that there had been virtually no reports of suicide bombings or car bombings in northern Nigeria ever until Boko Haram’s first suicide car bombing at the Federal Police headquarters in Abuja on June 16, 2011. Considering that the tactics of suicide bombings, car bombings, and suicide car bombings require some expertise (unlike, for example, arson), and that these attacks started exactly one day after Boko Haram warned the press that its members returned from Somalia on June 15, 2011, and that these attacks continued after June 2011 at a rapid pace (36 attacks until the end of December 2012), it is likely that Boko Haram was responsible for most, if not all, of the suicide bombings, car bombings, and suicide car bombings from June 2011 until the end of 2012. The five individuals also provided no evidence of alternatives about who conducted these attacks if not Boko Haram. It is highly doubtful it could have been Boko Haram members in the Nigerian army in false flag operations, as Thurston has suggested (without any sources)[35]; “Christian elements” who attacked their own churches after “being paid by Boko Haram” or “in the name of Boko Haram”, as Kyari Muhammed and Adam Higazi have suggested (without any sources)[36]; or some other (non-existent) terrorist group in northern Nigeria.

A review of the data also shows that the targets were predominantly churches, rival Muslim leaders of Boko Haram, military or government facilities, media houses and telecommunications facilities, which are all consistent with Boko Haram’s overall targeting strategy. These targets are also similar to the ones that AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel suggested Boko Haram should target in his letters to Boko Haram in the previously mentioned Source #1. As such, I maintain that my dataset (in Appendix A, which is based on news reports) is fundamentally accurate and that Boko Haram or Ansaru – not some other unspecified entity – were responsible for most of these approximately 36 attacks in the period from June 2011 until the end of 2012.

Michael C. Horowitz’ article is relevant to understanding these attacks because his article shows how suicide bombings are a tactic that tends to be transferred from group to group because of the skills, ideology and internal group organization it requires. Horowitz finds two hubs have been primarily responsible for the diffusion of suicide bombings:

the first hub is Hezbollah, through which the Palestinian organizations and the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam in Sri Lanka] adopted. The second hub comes from al-Qaida, which learned from Hezbollah but then became a central node through which multiple Jihadi groups around the world appear to have learned. Having links to one of these hubs seems to play a major role in predicting which groups will adopt.[37]

Horowitz’ model explains why the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), Basque Fatherland and Freedom Group (ETA) or Shining Path in Peru did not adopt suicide bombings: they were not connected to any of these hubs. In addition, Horowitz argues the organizational changes involved in preparing a group for suicide bombings weighs towards new groups with less established “bureaucracies” like Boko Haram becoming more likely to adopt suicide bombings, whereas “older” groups like the PIRA are less likely to undergo the necessary internal organizational restructuring to adopt suicide bombings.[38] Boko Haram’s insurgent attacks began in September 2010 and suicide bombings began less than one year later. Because Boko Haram was a “new” group, it was more likely than an “old” group to launch suicide bombings, according to Horowitz’ hypothesis.

In addition, Boko Haram’s key link to the suicide bombing hubs were to AQIM and al-Shabab. AQIM’s first major suicide bombing campaign began in 2007, right after its leader Abdelmalek Droukdel pledged loyalty to Usama bin Laden and the group became an al-Qaida affiliate. That same year an AQIM member wrote a letter that was found in Bin Laden’s compound, which also reflected AQIM’s own need for external support (just as

Boko Haram would later request from AQIM) where he wrote that “The brothers [in AQIM] require oversight, guidance, and expert instructors with Iraqi and Afghani experience in all arenas.”[39] AQIM’s inspiration – as reflected in its first videos celebrating its suicide bombings – was al-Qaida and the knowledge transfer for the suicide bombings likely came at least in part from Algerians who fought with al-Qaida in Iraq and returned to Algeria by 2007.[40]

The two news articles I reference here in Source #5 describe the first two suicide bombings in Nigeria’s history at the Federal Police headquarters in Abuja in June 2011, which killed three people, and the United Nations building in Abuja in August 2011, which killed more than 20 people. Ahmed Salkida reported on the first suicide bomber in June 2011, Muhammed Manga, who he described as “someone who began to travel to Cotonou in Benin Republic and later Dubai frequently in order to buy all kinds of goods. He was a major contributor to the Boko Haram’s arms build-up.”[41] The Boko Haram spokesman described the bomb that was used in that first suicide bombing as a “ready-made one, which [Boko Haram] acquired from abroad”, which was most likely from AQIM.[42] One day before that suicide car bombing Boko Haram also warned the press that their “brothers returned from Somalia” and would soon launch attacks.[43] One day after that suicide bombing, Abu Fatima, who would later join Ansaru and become its commander for suicide bombings, claimed the suicide car bombing.[44] The evidence clearly weighs towards AQIM and al-Shabab involvement in that first suicide bombing.

The second suicide car bombing at the United Nations building in Abuja was widely reported by the U.S., United Nations and Nigerian government sources to have been masterminded by Mamman Nur, who (according to the U.S.) brought 90 Nigerians to Somalia after July 2009 and trained with AQIM.[45] The target of that attack was also consistent with AQIM, al-Qaida in Iraq, al-Shabab and other al-Qaida-affiliated groups, which regularly have targeted United Nations facilities. Several days prior to that suicide car bombing at the United Nations building, a Boko Haram member named Babagana Ismail Kwaljima was arrested for plotting a major attack. Kwaljima had trained with AQIM and was arrested in Nigeria in 2007 alongside future Ansaru commander Adam Kamar.[46] However, Kwaljima and Kamar were released from custody for the same reasons as Ibrahim Harun’s courier in Boko Haram, who was arrested after training with al-Qaida in Pakistan and then deported back to Nigeria in 2004, such as pressure from Islamist groups in Nigeria that considered the trials to be Islamophobic, a lack of terrorism legislation in Nigeria, and Nigeria’s desire to avoid being seen as a “terrorist safe haven”.[47] The major attack that Kwaljima was plotting was, in fact, the United Nations building attack. Boko Haram also for the first time in its history made a jihadi “martyrdom video” of the suicide bomber in the United Nations building attack with a nasheed and Shekau also saying that the “United Nations is the forum for global evil,” which reflects the group’s inspiration from international jihadist groups.[48]

In my December 2017 *Perspectives on Terrorism* article, I detailed how Boko Haram’s first two suicide car bombings in June 2011 and August 2011 (discussed earlier) and the seventh suicide car bombing in Nigeria on Christmas Day 2011 – the three attacks with the most information for case studies to be made about them – weigh heavily in favor of AQIM and al-Shabab supporting those attacks. I also provided and elaborated on other reasons why not only those three suicide car bombings involved AQIM and al-Shabab support, but also how most of the suicide bombings from June 2011 until the end of 2012 in Nigeria were outside of Shekau’s main area of operations in northeastern Nigeria and were similar to the area of operations of Ansaru attacks and cells. This is why I argued that it was not necessarily Ansaru carrying out the suicide bombings in Nigeria from June 2011 until the end of December 2012, but that “Ansaru-leaning” or “Ansaru-aligned” Boko Haram members were behind the suicide bombing campaign. As such, they heeded AQIM’s advice on targeting, trained abroad with AQIM and al-Shabab, including Mamman Nur and Kwaljima, or received some of the 200,000 euros from AQIM, including the mastermind of the seventh suicide bombing. I also argued that the masterminds of the suicide bombings stayed with Boko Haram and did not join Ansaru despite “leaning” towards Ansaru operationally (in targeting Christians, the security forces and Westerners) and ideologically (in avoiding Muslim civilian casualties). Since Shekau killed many Ansaru members who formally defected from Boko Haram, this likely influenced their decision to remain with Boko Haram.

At some point, Boko Haram probably internalized suicide bombings and no longer benefitted from outside

support to launch suicide attacks. Until that point I maintain that AQIM and al-Shabab—and al-Qaida as a suicide bombing “hub”—had a “significant impact” on Boko Haram’s suicide bombing campaign from June 2011 until the end of December 2012. After that point the impact can be described as residual.

Conclusion

This correspondence to *Perspectives on Terrorism* has provided five sets of sources about Boko Haram and AQIM, clarifying why I argue that al-Qaida had a “significant impact” on Boko Haram’s founding in 2002-2003, launch of jihad in 2009-2010 and campaign of suicide bombings in 2011-2012 and why I disagree with my five colleagues’ analysis that al-Qaida did not have a significant impact on these three phases in Boko Haram’s history.

This debate on the impact of AQIM (and al-Shabab) on Boko Haram dates back to as early as 2011,[49] and therefore this correspondence is the most updated addition to scholarship on that issue, which more broadly relates to the study of knowledge transfer between terrorist groups. The debate on al-Qaida’s role, specifically in Boko Haram’s founding in 2002-2003, is much newer and emerged as a result of analysis and primary sources that only became available about Boko Haram and al-Qaida since 2014, including the aforementioned ICG report and especially an article by Andrea Brigaglia in 2015 that first hypothesized Boko Haram’s encampment in Yobe State in 2003 was in fact “a training camp for (al-Qaida’s?) militants” [*sic*].[50] However, prior to Brigaglia’s article in 2015, and my own *Perspectives on Terrorism* article in December 2017, the narrative that Boko Haram was “homegrown” and a group of fishermen and radicals with no ties to al-Qaida at the time of its founding was largely unchallenged. This re-examination of Boko Haram’s founding should be seen as an opportunity to better understand the group’s origins and how its origins helps us to understand the group’s composition and trajectory today. The next addition to the discussion on Boko Haram’s origins will be in “The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian Politics”, which is edited by A. Carl LeVan and Patrick Ukata and will be available in November 2018. The Handbook includes a chapter written by Kyari Muhammed, who is one of the five individuals who wrote the collective analysis disagreeing with me and arguing that al-Qaida did not have a significant impact on Boko Haram’s founding, launch of jihad or campaign of suicide bombings.[51] His chapter will be called “The Origins of Boko Haram,” and it will be interesting to see how he engages, interprets, and analyzes these sources in his chapter.

Finally, I provide three heuristics for evaluating AQIM’s impact on Boko Haram’s founding, launch of jihad and suicide bombing campaign.

1. Founding (2002-2003)

If:

- A Nigerian al-Qaida operative meets Usama Bin Laden in Sudan in the 1990s;
- receives a promise of up to \$3 million from Bin Laden to start a jihadi group in Nigeria; and
- engages in military training in Afghanistan; and
- al-Qaida intends to provide this operative with “immense wealth” to found a jihadi group in Nigeria;
- sends an al-Qaida member from Pakistan to coordinate attacks on Western targets in Nigeria with this founder’s new jihadi group; and
- this group claims allegiance to the Taliban and communicates with al-Qaida’s regional allies in West Africa;

Then:

- al-Qaida is likely to have had a significant impact on the group’s founding. (This is distinct from addressing the geopolitical and inspirational significance of al-Qaida’s attacks in 2001 on Boko Haram’s

founding in 2002).

2. *Launch of Jihad (2009-2010)*

If:

- A Nigerian jihadi group engages in clashes with Nigerian security forces and within two weeks its leaders deploy three operatives to meet with AQIM's top commander in Mali; and
- that commander reports to AQIM's leader that he knows those operatives well; and
- AQIM's leader provides 200,000 euros to that group in Nigeria and increases AQIM trainings for dozens of the group's members; and
- that Nigerian jihadi group's leader writes a letter thanking AQIM for the "training and financial generosity" after its first successful attack in Nigeria;

Then:

- AQIM is likely to have had a significant impact on that Nigerian group's launch of jihad. (This does not even touch on the impact of al-Shabab).

3. *Suicide Bombing Campaign (2011-2012)*

If:

- A region of a country has never experienced a suicide attack but after a Nigerian jihadi group announces a jihad there is a rapid increase in suicide attacks; and
- the group that announced the jihad claims some of those suicide attacks and there is no evidence that another militant outfit launched those attacks; and
- some of the masterminds of those attacks trained with AQIM or al-Shabab and received money from AQIM; and
- the targets of those attacks are consistent with AQIM's recommendations to that Nigerian jihadi group;

Then:

- Al-Qaida is likely to have had a significant impact on that suicide bombing campaign.

All responsible researchers invite and appreciate constructive criticism and lively debate, especially when it is done with an open mind based on a careful reading of sources. This response to the April 2018 critique of my work is meant to inform and encourage a more balanced and nuanced assessment of the debate over al-Qaida's relationship with Boko Haram.

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Appendix A

Boko Haram suicide bombings, car bombings and suicide car bombings - 2012					Deaths
7-Feb-12	Kaduna	Kaduna	Military Barracks	SVBIED	3
10-Feb-12	Borno	Maiduguri	Customs Building	IED, VBIED	4
26-Feb-12	Plateau	Jos	Church of Christ	VBIED	5
11-Mar-12	Plateau	Jos	St. Finbar Catholic Church	VBIED	20
24-Mar-12	Kano	Kano	Joint Task Force (during a raid)	VBIED	2
1-Apr-12	Kaduna	Kaduna	Unknown	Suicide bomber	1
8-Apr-12	Kaduna	Kaduna	All Nations Christian Assembly & ECWA Good News Church	SVBIED	39
26-Apr-12	Kaduna	Kaduna	Media Offices	Attempted SVBIED	4
26-Apr-12	FCT	Abuja	Media Offices	SVBIED	5
30-Apr-12	Taraba	Jalingo	Police Commander Mamman Sule	Attempted Targeted Assassination; Suicide bomber	11
3-Jun-12	Bauchi	Bauchi	Living Christ Church/Harvest Field Church	SVBIED	16
8-Jun-12	Borno	Maiduguri	Borno Police Command	SVBIED	8
10-Jun-12	Plateau	Jos	Christ Chosen Church	SVBIED	3
17-Jun-12	Kaduna	Zaria	ECWA Church	SVBIED	4
17-Jun-12	Kaduna	Zaria	Kings Catholic Church	SVBIED	11
17-Jun-12	Kaduna	Kaduna	Shalom Church	SVBIED	11
15-Jul-12	Kogi	Okene	Living Faith Church	VBIED	0
29-Jul-12	Kano	Kano	Mosque	SVBIED, Armed Assault	4
30-Jul-12	Sokoto	Sokoto	Unguwar Rogo and Marina Police Stations	SVBIEDs (2)	4
2-Aug-12	Kaduna	Kaduna	Abduwahab Aliyu	Attempted Targeted Assassination; Suicide bomber	1
3-Aug-12	Yobe	Potiskum	Emir of Fika	Attempted Targeted Assassination; Suicide bomber	1
5-Aug-12	Yobe	Damaturu	Military Convoy	SVBIED	9
15-Aug-12	Borno	Maiduguri	Joint Task Force Patrol Vehicle	Suicide bomber	2
23-Sep-12	Bauchi	Bauchi	St John's Catholic Church	SVBIED	5
8-Oct-12	Gombe	Gombe	Colonel John Iwara	Attempted Targeted Assassination; Suicide bomber	0
28-Oct-12	Kaduna	Kaduna	St. Rita's Catholic Church	SVBIED	8
25-Nov-12	Kaduna	Jaji	St. Andrew's Church at Armed Forces Command and Staff College	SVBIEDs (2)	13
22-Dec-12	Kano	Kano	South Africa's MTN facility	SVBIED	1
22-Dec-12	Kano	Kano	India's Airtel facility	SVBIED	1
Boko Haram suicide bombings, car bombings and suicide car bombings - 2011					Deaths
16-Jun-11	FCT	Abuja	National Police Headquarters	SVBIED	2
15-Aug-11	Borno	Maiduguri	Borno State Police Command	Failed SVBIED	1
26-Aug-11	FCT	Abuja	UN Headquarters	SVBIED	18
4-Nov-11	Borno	Maiduguri	Military base	SVBIED	N/A
25-Dec-11	Niger St	Madalla	St. Theresa's Catholic Church	SVBIED	44
25-Dec-11	Plateau	Jos	Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church	SVBIED	N/A
25-Dec-11	Gombe	Gadaka	Unidentified church	SVBIED	N/A

SVBIED = Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improved Explosive Device;

VBIED = Vehicle-Borne Improved Explosive Device

Notes

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- [2] Adam Higazi, Brandon Kendhammer, Kyari Mohammed, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, and Alex Thurston, "A Response to Jacob Zenn on Boko Haram and al-Qa'ida", Volume 12, Issue 2, April 2018; URL: <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/703/1374>.
- [3] Jacob Zenn, "The Folly of Crowds: Jacob Zenn Rebuts Adam Higazi, Brandon Kendhammer, Kyari Mohammed, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, and Alex Thurston," aymennjawad.org (22 June 2018); URL: <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2018/06/jacob-zenn-replies-to-his-critics>.
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- [7] "Exclusive: Boko Haram Targets Julius Berger, Dantata & Sawoe Expatriates"; "Boko Haram Gets N40million Donation From Algeria," *Premium Times*, 13 May 2012; URL: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/5079-boko-haram-gets-n40million-donation-from-algeria.html>.
- [8] "Taking the hostage road," *Africa Confidential*, 16 March 2013.
- [9] See Abdulbasit Kassim, "Boko Haram's Internal Civil War: Stealth Takfir and Jihad as Recipes for Schism." In Jacob Zenn (Ed.), *Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency*, West Point CTC, New York, May 2018; URL: <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2018/05/Boko-Haram-Beyond-the-Headlines.pdf>.
- [10] U.S. Department of The Treasury Press Center, "Treasury Sanctions Senior Boko Haram Leaders Treasury Sanctions Senior Boko Haram Leaders," 1 December 2015; URL: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0290.aspx>.
- [11] The document is available at [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2017/arabic/Letter%20from%20Abdallah%20Abu%20Zayd%20E2%80%98Abd-al-Hamid%20to%20Abu%20Mus%20E2%80%99ab%20E2%80%98Abd-al-Wadud%20\(Arabic\).pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2017/arabic/Letter%20from%20Abdallah%20Abu%20Zayd%20E2%80%98Abd-al-Hamid%20to%20Abu%20Mus%20E2%80%99ab%20E2%80%98Abd-al-Wadud%20(Arabic).pdf).
- [12] See, for example, Bruce Riedel, "Ibrahim al Asiri: al Qaeda's 'Genius' Bomb Maker," *Brookings Institution*, May 8, 2012; URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/ibrahim-al-asiri-al-qaedas-genius-bomb-maker/>.
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- [17] See, for example, "The Big Haunt," *Tell* [Lagos], Apr 26, 2004, pp. 22, 26. Malachy Uzendu, "Police arrest Taliban leader," *Daily Champion* [Lagos], September 30, 2004 pg. 20.
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- [20] Abubakar Gumi, for example, who is considered to be the "originator" of Salafism in Nigeria and Nigeria's "key link to the

Saudis” said before his death in 1992 that only Muslim men – not Christians and not women – should be leaders and declared Sufi practices as “infidelity”. He also argued that Muslim women should vote only so that Muslim men could become leaders.

[21] For a discussion of the paradigms on Boko Haram’s founding in which Kassim sides with Brigaglia’s paradigm over Thurston’s paradigm, see Abdulbasit Kassim, “Boko Haram’s Internal Civil War: Stealth Takfir and Jihad as Recipes for Schism.”

[22] This quote features in his article titled, “Islam, Izala and Boko Haram Dispute in Northern Nigeria: A Historical Perspective.”

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[28] Ibid. For an opposing view about Saudi Arabia’s “extremely weak organizational ties” to Boko Haram, see Alex Thurston, “How far does Saudi Arabia’s influence go? Look at Nigeria,” *Washington Post*, October 31, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/10/31/how-far-does-saudi-arabias-influence-go-look-at-nigeria/?utm_term=.b0d20c54687c.

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[30] See the letter (translated into English) from al-Qaeda in Pakistan to Harun, provided as an exhibit at Ibrahim Harun’s court trial, *United States of America against Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Adam Harun*. Case 1:12-cr-00134-BMC-MDG, Eastern District of New York, August 2016–March 2017.

[31] Abdulbasit Kassim, “Boko Haram’s Internal Civil War: Stealth Takfir and Jihad as Recipes for Schism.” In Jacob Zenn (Ed.), *Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa’s Enduring Insurgency*, West Point CTC, New York, May 2018; URL: <https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2018/05/Boko-Haram-Beyond-the-Headlines.pdf>.

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[33] See, for example, the discussion with Petter Nesser on the #talkingterror podcast, <https://soundcloud.com/user-366747443/petter-nesser>.

[34] Michael C. Horowitz, “Non-State Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations: The Case of Suicide Terrorism,” *International Organization*, Vol. 64, No.1 (Winter 2010), pp. 33–64.

[35] Alex Thurston, “Response to NYT Article on Boko Haram,” *Sahelblog*, 19 August 2011; URL: <https://sahelblog.wordpress.com/2011/08/19/response-to-nyt-article-on-boko-haram/>.

[36] Kyari Mohammed, “The message and methods of Boko Haram,” Pg. 20. Adam Higazi, “Mobilisation into and against Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria,” in M. Cahen, M.E. Pommerolle, K. Tall (Eds.), *Collective Mobilisations in Africa: Contestation, Resistance, Revolt*. Leiden: Brill, 2015., Pg. 35.

[37] Horowitz, “Non-State Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations: The Case of Suicide Terrorism”.

[38] Ibid.

[39] The document is available at <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2017/english/Addendum%20to%20the%20report%20of%20the%20Islamic%20Maghreb.pdf>.

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[41] Ahmed Salkida, “The Story Of Nigeria’s First Suicide Bomber,” *BluePrint Magazine*, June 26, 2011; URL: <http://saharareporters.com/2011/06/26/story-nigerias-first-suicide-bomber-blueprint-magazine>.

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[44] "Nigerian Islamists vow 'fiercer' attacks," *AFP*, 15 June 2011. "Another Islamic Sect Emerges to Counter Boko Haram?" *Desert Herald*, 2 June 2012.

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[47] Zenn, "Demystifying al-Qaida in Nigeria: Cases from Boko Haram's Founding, Launch of Jihad and Suicide Bombings."

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Resources

Counterterrorism Bookshelf: 50 Books on Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects

Reviewed by Joshua Sinai

The books reviewed in this column are arranged according to the following topics: root causes, radicalization, and countering violent extremism; anarchism; Ku Klux Klan; foreign fighters; terrorism and organized crime; terrorism and weapons of mass destruction; terrorism and the media; terrorism – legal issues; counterterrorism; Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India; the Muslim Brotherhood, global Jihad and Muslim reformers; and the Middle East.

Root Causes, Radicalization, and Countering Violent Extremism

Valerie L. Greenfeld, *Backyard Jihad: How Parents Can Detect the Invisible Threat of Radicalization* (Phoenix, AZ: Jones Media Publishing, 2018), 250 pp., US \$15.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-9458-4954-1.

This handbook aims to protect American communities from Islamist terrorist threats by their own radicalized youths by educating parents and community leaders about the nature of violent extremist ideologies, how the process of radicalization into violent extremism occurs, how extremist ideas appeal to susceptible youth, how recruitment takes place online and in personal encounters, and how understanding these issues will empower citizens to identify the warning signs of radicalization by those in their midst and take steps to preempt them at the early as possible pre-incident stages. What is especially interesting about this book is that it uses past cases of radicalized American youths as examples to explain how the warning signs of academic theories of radicalization and recruitment can be identified in the ‘real world.’ These cases include the three Denver high school students who were radicalized to leave the U.S. and join the Islamic State (IS) in Syria, but were apprehended at Frankfurt Airport, following a tip from their families to the FBI; Hoda Muthana, a University of Alabama business student who joined IS in Syria; Carlos Bledsoe, who had converted to Islam and carried out an attack against a U.S. military recruiting center in Arkansas, as well as others.

Each of the book’s fourteen chapters concludes with a “What Can You Do?” section, which provides practical measures for parents and community officials to counter the visible manifestations along the potential trajectory into violent extremism. These include discussing subjects such as “extreme ideologies and how to recognize them,” “the psychological processes of justifying barbarism (at the appropriate age),” recognizing “the signs and stages of radicalization,” becoming “familiar with the concepts of groupthink, contagion, and polarization,” becoming “aware of the differences between conversion to Islam the religion, and to Islamism as a political ideology,” becoming “aware of the internal and external elements of the recruitment process,” and teaching “students to look for ‘hidden agendas’ when listening to lectures.” The author concludes that “If nothing else, the take-away from this book is the importance of close relationships with our children and opening discussions about all kinds of extremist groups, predators online and on campus” (p. 223). While the book’s focus is on the Islamist threat within the American context, its tool kit can be applied to identifying the radicalization and indoctrination processes that affect potential recruits into other types of violent extremist movements, such as those populated by white supremacists or by far-right wing religiously fundamentalist Jewish extremists. The appendix includes a listing of organizations to assist families in countering radicalization and recruitment into terrorism. The Maryland-based author is a veteran analyst on terrorism who has worked for organizations such as The Investigative Project on Terrorism.

Michael Kimmel, *Healing from Hate: How Young Men Get Into - and Out of - Violent Extremism* (Berkeley,

CA: University of California Press, 2018), 280 pp., US \$29.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-5202-9263-5.

This book is about how young men can become involved in three types of violent extremist movements in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe: neo-Nazi skinheads, white supremacist nationalists, and Islamist jihadists. Based on his study of the literature on the psychology and sociology of radicalization into terrorism and his own extensive field research, which included interviewing former extremists as well as several organizations that have established programs to attempt to de-radicalize and disengage such extremists from terrorism (in the U.S., Canada, Britain, Sweden, and Norway), the author formulates a theory based on commonalities in the way disparate types of extremist young men turn to violent extremism. One of the paramount drivers in their radicalization and recruitment process is, according to the author, “the issue of masculinity – of [lacking – JS] feelings like a real man, proving one’s manhood.” (p. xiv). The author is critical of approaches in the discipline that “tend to overlook masculinity because most of the research on extremism focuses on the political and economic sources of participants’ discontent, or their psychological and familial backgrounds. That research is vital, necessary – and incomplete”. The author, in talking with these guys, realized “that adherence to extremist ideology came rather late to the recruitment process, and that their experiences of camaraderie and community with their brothers, their sense of purpose, of sacred mission, and their sense that their lives, as men, actually mattered in the world were far more salient motivations for both entering the movement and staying in it. The movement was their family, and in their family, the band of brothers, they felt validated as men.” (pp. xiv-xv). While the author maintains that he is not offering a “single-variable explanation” because it is still necessary to “analyze the structural, the political and economic forces that marginalize so many” (p. xv), nevertheless, much of his account emphasizes the “gendered quest” in the way mostly young men become attracted to violent extremist movements in order to redress their “emasculatation and humiliation, and the physicality of masculinity’s restoration” (p. 8). The author even argues that, in the case of jihadism, “Central to their political ideology was the recovery of manhood from the devastatingly emasculating politics of globalization” (p. 195). He writes sympathetically that in Afghanistan the Taliban’s policies aimed to “reaffirm natural biological differences between men and women” by “remasculinizing” men” by requiring them to grow beards and to “refeminizing” women by prohibiting them from revealing any part of their body in public” (p. 195). While the “remasculinization” might constitute one of the secondary variables in the mobilization process for males to join violent extremist movements, it is, in the view of this reviewer, so much played up in the author’s argument that it severely underestimates the role of militant, supra-nationalist ideologies in mobilizing vulnerable young men – and some women too. The author also unfairly critiques Western democracy and secularism that attempt to promote full equality between men and women. In the end, the problems experienced by some young Muslim men in Western societies might be caused by their own traditional, paternalistic cultures that makes it more difficult to assimilate in modern society. There are, nevertheless, other parts of the book that are insightful. This includes the author’s profiling of neo-Nazi and jihadist individuals and their exits from violent extremism, his discussion of the conceptual and practical approaches in countering violent extremism programs, such as those of the British Quilliam Foundation, the Swedish and German EXIT initiatives, and the American Life After Hate initiative, as well as his discussion of disengagement strategies in general. The author is the State University of New York Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Stony Brook University.

Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* [10th Anniversary Edition] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 232 pp., US \$27.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-6911-7782-3.

This new edition includes a 21-pages long Prologue. In the 2008 edition, which is reproduced in this edition, the author, an influential American economist at Princeton University (who, following the publication of the book became Chairman of President Barack Obama’s Council of Economic Advisers, after which he returned to his university), discusses what he considers to be some of the root causes underlying terrorist insurgencies and the factors that motivate individuals to become terrorists – all of which need to be addressed in order to resolve them. Using empirically derived data, his inferences are drawn from terrorists’ own backgrounds and the economic, social, and political conditions in the societies from which they originate. Based on micro level

data (i.e., the level of individuals), he finds that “As a group, terrorists are better educated and from wealthier families than the typical person in the same age” (p. 5), but that “although lack of education and income are not important root causes of terrorism, they can be part of the solution” (p. 51). At the macro level, he finds that lack of “civil liberties are an important determinant of terrorism,” and that “Wealthier countries are more likely to protect their residents’ civil liberties and political freedoms, so extremists in these countries might be less inclined to turn to terrorism to pursue their agendas” (pp. 89-90). With this thesis disproven by numerous terrorist attacks that originate primarily in Western countries, how does the author address it in his new Prologue? He acknowledges that, with regard to their profiles, “It is certainly possible that terrorism and terrorists are morphing” (p. xiii) with lone wolves carrying out attacks on behalf of foreign-based terrorist groups. As a result, a “broader array of individuals” are engaging in terrorism, although he still insists that the “profiles of terrorists are typically quite different from those of common criminals” (p. xi). With regard to the role of civil liberties as a determinant of terrorism, he still argues, as he did in the first edition, that “Curtailling civil liberties...may inspire more people to resort to violent means than are prevented from carrying out terrorist attacks.” (p. xxiv). Thus, the independent variable of being attracted to extremist ideologies that advocate engaging in violence (the dependent variable) against their perceived adversaries plays only a small role in the author’s largely one-dimensional conceptualization of the root causes of terrorism, as opposed to his over-emphasis on Western governments’ coercive responses to the threats posed by violent extremists in the first place. For this and other reasons, this is a flawed account of “What Makes a Terrorist” in 2018.

Anarchism

Daniel Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA: The George Jackson Brigade and the Anticapitalist Underground of the 1970s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 358 pp., US \$34.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-5202-6429-8.

The George Jackson Brigade was a seven-member revolutionary group based in Seattle, Washington State, which operated between March 1975 and December 1977. It was named after George Jackson, a Black Panther member and prisoner who was killed during an escape attempt from San Quentin Prison in 1971. During the height of their terrorist activities the Seattle Brigade robbed banks and liquor stores, and detonated pipe bombs at government buildings, electric power facilities, supermarkets, banks, a Department of Corrections headquarters, and other targets they had accused of engaging in racism. In this revealing and extensively researched account of the group and its activities (which are listed in detail at the beginning of the book), the author explains how such a small terrorist group could hope that its violent activities and communiques would foment a larger left-wing revolution in the United States. Several demographic characteristics distinguished this group from other extremist left-wing groups, as the author points out. These included the fact that their “members had served more time in prison cells than in college classrooms,” that “Five of the seven were gay or bisexual, a reflection of the loosened limits on gender-orientation in a movement dominated by straight white men up to the close of the 1960s,” and “by virtue of one black member, Brigade membership spanned the racial divide, in contrast to the separatism prominent among radicals at the end of the 1960s” (p. 3). The group’s violent activities came to an end once its members were arrested and incarcerated. In an interesting observation, the author concludes his introductory overview by noting that “Ironically, one of the greatest errors conceded by former Brigade members is, in [Ed] Mead’s words, that ‘we were out of touch with the times.’” (p. 5). The book’s four parts discuss the group’s origins within the wider context of revolutionary movements in the United States, how its members became radicalized, including their involvement in criminal activities, and their underground activities. The author is a Post-Doctoral Teaching Scholar at the Department of History at North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

Daniel Burton-Rose (Ed.), *Creating a Movement with Teeth: A Documentary History of the George Jackson Brigade* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010), 320 pp., US \$24.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-6048-6223-2.

This companion volume is a comprehensive compilation of the original documents in the form of statements, communiques, and other materials published by and about the George Jackson Brigade. This collection, as the editor explains, is intended as a companion volume to his account of the group (see above review). Following the editor's introductory overview, it is divided into five parts. Part I, "Profiles of the George Jackson Brigade" (law enforcement perspectives, media accounts, and community accounts); Part II, "Communiques" (letters and community responses); Part III, "The Power of the People is the Source of Life" (political statements and community responses); and Part IV, "When is the Time? Seattle's Left Community Debates Armed Action" (accounts by others about the group), and Part V, "Processing" (the editor's interview with several group members). The Appendix includes selected newspaper articles about the group, as well as a selected bibliography.

Ruth Kinna (Ed.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury/Continuum, 2014), 480 pp., US \$180.00 [Hardcover], US \$38.66 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-6289-2430-5.

This companion provides a comprehensive reference resource for the study of anarchism. Its contributors include leading academic experts in the field. The volume is divided into four parts. Part I, "Research on Anarchism," consists of the editor's introductory overview on research on anarchism. Part II, "Approaches to Anarchist Research," covers topics such as post-anarchism, anarchism and art history, participant observation, and anarchism and international relations. Part III, "Current Research in Anarchist Studies," examines twentieth-century Anglo-American anarchist thought, an anarchist perspective on the fields of sociology and anthropology, anarchism and literature, a Latin American perspective on anarchism, ethnicity and anarchism, and the editor's conclusions. Part IV, "Materials for Further Research," provides the volume's reference resource sections in the form of key terms (which are encyclopedic in detail and arranged alphabetically), resources (such as listings of groups, associations, blogs, archives and libraries, films, videos and DVDs, publishers and bookstores, journals, and conferences), and bibliographies, reference materials and reading lists. With anarchism constituting an important component of terrorism studies (as well as the study of international relations and political philosophy), this companion is highly recommended as a useful resource for analyzing and understanding these issues. The editor is a Professor of Political History at the Department of Politics, History and International Relations at Loughborough University, UK.

Ku Klux Klan

Glenn Feldman, *Politics, Society and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 472 pp., US \$44.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-8173-0984-8.

The Ku Klux Klan (called the KKK or the Klan) was a White Supremacist, anti-immigration, Christian fundamentalist, and xenophobic terrorist movement that primarily operated in the American South, although it had branches in other states, such as in the Midwest and the West. Its various configurations operated during the periods of 1865 to 1871, 1915 to 1944, and 1946 to the present. Although it re-emerged "as a full-blown entity in response to the South's looming crisis over segregation" as a result of the 1954 Supreme Court Brown desegregation decision, it was drastically reduced in size and influence following the 1964 Civil Rights Act, when the federal government and its law enforcement agencies used proactive measures to defeat it. This book focuses on the Klan's operations in the State of Alabama, which the author breaks down into the three periods of the 1860s, the 1920's, and the post-1954 timeframe. Although other periods are discussed, the book's primary focus is on the 1915 to 1949 period. The Klan eventually declined as a full-blown entity in states such as Alabama, when its segregationist and terrorist activities, as the author writes, "presented an obstacle to the courting of outside capital and federal relief or because its excesses threatened to prompt federal intrusion into the race issue" (p. 9). What makes this book especially pertinent to the current period is the author's explanation of its wide appeal during the eras of its strength. He writes, "it represented a political mouthpiece for plain folk in their struggle against entrenched elites" and believed that the targets of their wrath "somehow had it 'coming to them' anyway." (p. 7). Moreover, like today's Islamists and White Supremacists, the Klan's "mass support found echoes in religion," with "most of its religious supporters [coming] from fundamentalist sects" (p. 322).

Of particular importance for countering such extremist movements, the author points out, was its loss of mass support because “Klan activity was a dangerous double-edged sword. While it certainly perpetuated Southern racial customs, excessive Ku Kluxism increased the likelihood of a federal invasion that might disrupt those very customs” (p. 327). At the time of the book’s publication, the author was Assistant Professor at the Center for Labor Education and Research in the School of Business at the University of Alabama, Birmingham, AL.

Stetson Kennedy, *The Klan Unmasked* [With a New Introduction by David Pilgrim and a New Author’s Notes] (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1990/2011), 302 pp., US \$34.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-8173-5674-3.

Stetson Kennedy (1916 – 2011) was an American author and human rights activist. Among his most noteworthy activities was his infiltration of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1940s, which led to his exposing its secretive inner workings to law enforcement authorities. This important book is his account of his infiltration activities, which, as Charlie Patton writes in his introduction, “is not a straightforward work of nonfiction” with some of the narrative embellished and a number of incidents witnessed by others or coming from third-party accounts (p. xii). This is, nevertheless, as David Pilgrim, Curator of the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, observes, “a heroic tale where he, posing as a racist encyclopedia salesman named John S. Perkins, infiltrated a Klan organization in Atlanta, Georgia. Risking his life, he donned the Klan hood and robe, burned crosses, gave racist speeches, and clandestinely collected information about Klan activities” (p. xvii). In addition to Stetson’s dramatic account of life inside the Klan, also noteworthy is his prologue, “How to Kan the Klan: A Handbook for Counterterrorist Actions,” which proposes a series of counter-measures, such as revocating the Klan’s corporate charter, passing laws to outlaw wearing masks (such as during demonstrations), registering members and officers in an organization (so as to hold them accountable), disqualifying them from serving as law enforcement officers, outlawing private armies, designating them as traitors and terrorists, outlawing them, removing their tax-exempt status for engaging in terrorism, and preventing them from inciting to riot and expressing racist sentiments. In other measures that the author considers highly effective, he recommends “discounting the Klan’s public and self-image” by jeering them at their marches and “tracking down license numbers, publishing members’ names, and bringing employer, creditor, and boycott pressure to bear” (285).

Foreign Fighters

Nir Arielli, *From Byron to bin Laden: A History of Foreign War Volunteers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 304 pp., US \$35.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-6749-7956-7.

This is a comprehensive account of the factors that drive certain people to volunteer to fight and risk their lives on behalf of the militaries of foreign countries or at the side of insurgent movements throughout history and into the current period. What is especially noteworthy is the author’s historical approach which examines the activities of foreign war volunteers not merely as a current problem but as a phenomenon that can be traced to the late eighteenth century. Similar to David C. Rapoport’s four historical waves of modern terrorism, the author formulates his own broad historical waves theory of foreign fighters. These consist of the first wave from the late eighteenth century until 1917, which he describes as pitting “liberty” against “tyranny,” and included the wars of independence in Spanish America and the wars between the Ottoman Empire and the Greeks and other peoples. The second wave, lasting from the 1917 October revolution in Russia until the early 1980s, pitted the Left against the Right, and included the Russian Civil War, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and the protracted Cold War conflicts in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The third wave, started in the 1980s until the current period, and included supporting sides in the Yugoslav Wars, as well as joining militant and terrorist groups that fought in the conflicts in Chechnya, the post-2001 war in Afghanistan, the post-2003 war in Iraq, and the civil war in Syria. There are several problems with the author’s framing of these periods. A first problem is that it took this reviewer a while to differentiate even these three broad waves into their respective years, which the author does not clearly do himself. Secondly, they are overly broad, as the second wave, in particular, also involved a distinct post-colonial conflict wave following the Second World War that

had nothing to do with the Cold War, such as the Israel's 1947-49 War of Independence, which attracted a large flow of Western volunteer fighters (which the author does discuss, in fairness). Finally, a last historical wave should have been demarcated, beginning in the early 1980s and continuing into the current period. It was distinguished by the flow of foreign fighter volunteers into Afghanistan to join the Islamist insurgents that fought the Soviet-ruled regime, as well as the Taliban-allied terrorist groups, such as al-Qaida, and later, the Islamic State, since this period significantly differs in its characteristics from the third historical wave.

The book's chapters explain the phenomenon of the proliferation of foreign volunteer fighters during these historical waves through processes and drivers such as their recruitment mechanisms, the role of ideologies, personal motivations, social as well as cultural backgrounds in driving them into becoming such volunteer fighters. In addition, the author elaborates different categories in terms of how such fighters position themselves in relation to their home countries. He also identifies the legal responses of their home countries and of the international community to the threats that are posed by the departure and return of such fighters. He also discusses the military significance of the capabilities that such foreign fighters bring to their host militaries' battle effectiveness (which the author considers to be primarily "in the realms of politics and propaganda rather than on the battlefield"). Additional themes discussed are negative aspects of this phenomenon, such as the presence of criminality by some of these volunteers and how such foreign military services play a role in further radicalizing such volunteers. He also discusses the recurring ways in which foreign volunteers are remembered, for instance, in turning some of them into iconic historical figures (such as the Marquis de Lafayette, a Frenchman who fought in the American Revolution, the British poet Lord Byron, who fought in the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, and, more recently, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and Usama bin Laden).

By examining these issues within their respective historical waves (although one can find fault with the author's periodization of these waves) and by generating cross-historical period findings, this book is a valuable contribution to the literature on volunteer fighters in foreign conflicts. The author is Associate Professor of International History at the University of Leeds, West Yorkshire, England, UK.

Andrea De Guttry, Francesca, Capone, and Christophe Paulussen (Eds.), *Foreign Fighters Under International Law and Beyond* (New York, NY: Asser Press/Springer, 2016), 533 pp., US \$219.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-9-4626-5098-5.

The contributors to this comprehensive edited volume examine the spectrum of issues involved in the foreign fighter phenomenon, from Western and non-Western countries to destinations such as the Iraqi and Syrian civil wars, within the context of legal responses at the international, regional, and national levels. Within this overall context, specific issues are examined such as motivations, the role of social media in recruitment, their military impact on the battlefield, governmental countermeasures, and their legal status. Following the editors' introductory overview, these issues are discussed in the book's four parts. Part I, "Foreign Fighters: A Multidisciplinary Overview of New Challenges for an Old Phenomenon," presents this phenomenon's statistics and characteristics, an historical survey, their motivations, the role of social media in their recruitment, the involvement of women, and the challenge they present for international relations theory. Part II, "The Legal Dimension: The Status of the Foreign Fighters," discusses their status under international humanitarian, criminal, and humanitarian legal instruments. Part III, "Tackling the Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters at the Supranational Level," covers the roles of international law, the United Nations, human rights obligations in managing their status; and regional approaches, such as the European Union, OSCE and African Union governance structures for dealing with them. Part IV, "Tackling the Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters at the National Level," examines the responses at the national level of selected countries such as in Europe, Canada, the United States, Australia, as well as the Middle East; the international legal implications of depriving such fighters' home country citizenship; and the impact of managing the problem of foreign fighters on refugees from Syria and Iraq. In the concluding chapter, the editors summarize the volume's findings.

David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*. [Reprint Edition]
(New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 280 pp., US \$59.00 [Hardcover], US \$29.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-1906-9189-9.

In this account, the author points out that the involvement of volunteer foreign fighters in other countries' conflicts, such as the contemporary conflicts in Syria and Somalia, are not a new phenomenon, but that over the past two centuries such volunteer fighters have fought on behalf of causes ranging from international communism to aggrieved ethnic groups wishing to be free from foreign domination. Viewing this phenomenon in a broader historical context, the author points out, contributes to a better understanding why and how they join foreign insurgencies, what drives their behavior, and what government policymakers can do in response. Following the author's introductory overview on "Why Foreign Fighters?" and chapters on the factors that drive such volunteers to fight "elsewhere" and a history of their involvement in foreign conflicts, the book then presents a series of case studies on their involvement in conflicts such as the Texas Revolution (1835-1836), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the Israeli War of Independence (1947-1949), Afghanistan (1979-1992) and beyond 1992 and the Iraqi Civil War (2003-2011). In the concluding chapter, the author finds that "little is novel about the recruitment of foreign fighters in contemporary civil conflicts, except perhaps that the use of the Internet has shifted the importance of social organization from recruitment venues to means of facilitating mobilization" (p. 206). Other findings are that "insurgencies use the same type of messaging for all types of foreign fighters," that an effective response measure is to prevent their recruitment and mobilization process, and, most importantly, "to diminish the salience of the transnational groups through which recruitment is conducted" (pp. 211-212). One of the reasons for this book's importance is that - when it was first published in 2013 - it was one of the first studies on the phenomenon of volunteer foreign fighters, with its findings still relevant to understanding how this problem has evolved since then. The author is Visiting Associate Professor of International Affairs, and Director, Security Policy Studies Program, at George Washington University, in Washington, DC.

Terrorism and Organized Crime

Louise I. Shelley, *Dirty Entanglements: Corruption, Crime, and Terrorism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 386 pp., US \$82.00 [Hardcover], US \$29.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1076-8930-5.

This is a comprehensive account of the inter-relationship between corruption, crime and terrorism which has led to a more robust, well-funded and lethal category of terrorism. With many terrorist leaders and operatives also engaging in criminal activities, this "entanglement," as the author explains, has also produced new types of terrorist leaders such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar, AQIM's leader, who is also known as the "jihadi gangster" (p. 4). Cumulatively, this intersection has larger implications, as the author writes that its impacts on countries' legitimate economies affect their "economic growth, employment, security, development, and sustainability..." (pp. 4-5). These issues are examined in the book's chapters, which are divided into two parts. Following the introductory overview, Part I, "The Logic of Corruption, Crime, and Terrorism," covers the roles of crime and corruption behind mass terrorist attacks, such as 9/11, Bali (October 2002), Madrid (March 2004), Beslan (September 2004), and Mumbai (November 2008); the role of corruption as an incubator of organized crime and terrorism; and locating the criminal pipelines into terrorism, such as in prison. Part II, "The Diverse Businesses of Terrorism," covers the criminal financing of terrorism, the linkages between narco-traffickers and terrorists, and what the author terms the "Ultimate Fears" arising from the crime-terror connections resulting in the acquisition by terrorists of weapons of mass destruction. In the conclusion, the author finds that future trends at this intersection will be affected by "the growth of megacities; rising economic inequality globally and within countries and regions; political forces, poor governance, and retreat of the state; civil wars and conflict; sectarian conflicts; climate change; demographic change, including migration and displacement; food insecurity; evolution of dirty entanglements; and technological change" (p. 324). It is such insights and the volume's comprehensiveness that make it an important contribution to the literature on the nexus between corruption, crime and terrorism. The author is a University Professor at the School of Public Policy, George

Mason University.

James Windle, John F. Morrison, Aaron Winter, and Andrew Silke (Eds.), *Historical Perspectives on Organized Crime and Terrorism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 208 pp., US \$112.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-1386-5265-1.

The contributors to this volume apply historical research methods to examine the causes and nature of past cases of linkages between terrorism and organized crime. This topic is significant because the contemporary linkages between current terrorism and criminality are largely an outgrowth of their past interactions. As explained in the editors' excellent introductory overview, there are significant similarities and differences between terrorism and organized crime, with terrorists (altruistically) generally seeking to bring about social or political change, while criminals (selfishly) seeking personal profit (pp. 3-4). They add: "Consequently, the terrorist courts publicity to further their cause, while most criminals avoid the limelight" (p. 4). With both terrorists and criminals learning from each other's modus operandi, the authors also point out that "Terrorists have developed in-house criminal enterprises in order to raise funds or resources, move goods or people and build political capital" (p. 5). The note that while the use of the car bomb (and horse drawn wagon bomb), was first used by anarchist terrorists in the early 1920s, this method "was soon taken up by Al Capone in Chicago", adding that "Since then the technique has been used by groups ranging from PIRA to Cosa Nostra, Al Qaeda to the Medellin Cartel" (p. 7).

These issues are discussed in the book's various chapters, which, following the editors' introductory overview, are divided into three parts. Part I, "Organized Crime," covers police corruption in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in the early 1900s; organized crime in Chicago and New York; the narco-trafficking network between France and New York City, known as the "French Connection"; and a British organized crime network that operated between the 1980s and 1995. Part II, "Terrorism," examines two terrorist groups: the Provisional IRA during the 1975 truce in Northern Ireland, and the Ku Klux Klan in America. Part III, "Terrorism and Organized Crime?," discusses linkages between terrorism and criminal groups in the cases of Somali piracy, narco-terrorism in Colombia, illicit opium trade in Burma from 1800 to 1961, as well as the case of Jamaat-al-Muslimeen as an example of organized crime and terrorism in Trinidad and Tobago. John Morrison, Aaron Winter and James Windle are criminal justice lecturers at the University of East London, England, with Windle also a lecturer in Criminology at University College Cork, Ireland. Andrew Silke is Professor of Terrorism, Risk and Resilience at Cranfield University, Shrivenham, UK.

Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction

Alethia H. Cook, *Terrorist Organizations and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 226 pp., US \$65.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4422-7662-8.

This is a comprehensive and well-organized examination of the likelihood of terrorist groups (and lone wolves) to acquire and employ weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in their warfare and the U.S. Government's programs to address this threat. WMD refers to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. To examine these issues, the book is divided into three parts. The chapters in Part I, "Introduction to WMDs and Interested Groups," present an overview of the four types of WMD weapons; the probability and impact of employing such weapons, including hurdles to their acquisition and use in attacks; cases of terrorist group interest and efforts to acquire and use WMDs; and U.S. Government policy and programmatic responses to WMD threats. The chapters in Part II, "CBRN: Agents, Threats, and Responses," discuss the key characteristics of each type of weapon; the processes involved in each of these weapons' acquisition and use; the debate in the literature on whether, as the author terms it "Anyone Could Do It!" and "Then Why Haven't They?," government responses, and conclusions about "Knowns" and "Unknowns" about their future potential use in terrorist warfare. Part III's concluding chapter summarizes the author's findings in terms of probability and impact of the use of WMDs by terrorist groups as "low probability" because "Both desire to cause mass casualties and the

capacity to do so using WMDs are relatively rare characteristics of terrorist groups.” (p. 201). Nevertheless, the author cautions, there remains a “significant potential for a surprise attack,” although “where it would occur or with which specific agent is unclear.” (p. 208). It is also possible, the author adds, “that there are groups that are considering alternative means of creating mass destruction that have nothing to do with WMDs.” (p. 208). Thus, the author concludes, “Because there are a number of WMD-related factors that we know we don’t know, as well as some unknown quantity of things we don’t know we don’t know, it is prudent for governments to continue a layered approach to the problem.” (p. 209). With numerous books published over the years about this threat, this book is highly recommended for updating our understanding on these issues in a systematic and well-reasoned manner. The author is Chair of the Department of Political Science and Director of the Security Studies program at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

Terrorism and Media

David L. Altheide, *Terrorism and the Politics of Fear* [Second Edition] (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 288 pp., US \$96.00 [Hardcover], US \$42.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4422-7451-8.

This book is about the American governing elite’s use of fear, particularly the terrorist threat, to manipulate mass media in “constructing social life” (p. ix). The author argues that such “symbolic meanings about safety, danger, and fear can lead to major institutional changes and even war” (p. x). This is because “the politics of fear trades on audience beliefs, expectations, and taken-for-granted meanings about social reality, threats, and the nature of those who pose the threats – namely, ‘outsiders’ or ‘the other’” (p. 14). This has had a deleterious impact on American society, the author holds, as “the politics of fear that were promoted by mass media communication and entertainment formats after the 9/11 attacks paved the way for Donald Trump’s presidential victory in 2016” (p. ix). These issues are discussed in the book’s chapters on the mass media as a social institution, how crime and terrorism are covered, how the Internet is used (including by terrorists, such as the Islamic State) to promote the “propaganda of fear,” and how Pat Tilman and Chris Kyle, American military soldiers who had, respectively, served in Afghanistan and Iraq, had their “living accomplishments...recast to promote their reputations in death, and in general, to maintain a propaganda narrative about sacrifice to keep us safe” (p. 228). In the concluding chapter, the author sums up his findings about America’s moving “from war programming to terrorism programming, which promotes the terrorism narrative that the war against terror is never ending, against actual and suspected global terrorists” (p. 230). While one may disagree with the author’s argument as overly dismissive of the actual terrorism threat levels facing America and its allies, his thesis is still worth noting. The author is Regents’ Professor Emeritus on the faculty of Justice and Society Inquiry in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University in Tempe.

Anna M. Wittmann, *Talking Conflict: The Loaded Language of Genocide, Political Violence, Terrorism, and Warfare* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017), 386 pp., US \$89.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4408-3424-0.

This is a comprehensive handbook of some 300 alphabetically listed A-Z entries discussing how language is used to describe aspects of armed conflict and genocide. The author’s approach, as outlined in the introductory overview, is that “loaded” language is used to designate conflict in the current period, with words “used not to clarify meaning, but instead to conceal it, or even to transmit outright falsehoods, often based on the ideological stance of their users” (p. xv). The handbook’s entries cover terms such as asymmetric warfare, conventional warfare, counterinsurgency (COIN), covert operations, cyber warfare, decapitation strike, deterrence, enemy combatant (unlawful/lawful), enhanced interrogation, escalating sectarian violence, hybrid warfare, insurgency, irregular warfare, jihad/jihadism, kinetic military actions, low-intensity conflict, narcoterrorism, preemptive war, proxy war, psychological operations (PSYOP), special operations, state sponsors of terrorism, terrorism, unconventional warfare, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and ‘winning hearts and minds’. Each entry is accompanied by a list of cross references and suggestions for further reading. Some of the entries might be criticized as unfair in certain terms are covered, but they are still worth noting for alternative perspectives on how they can be defined. The author teaches English at the University of Alberta and at Concordia University

of Edmonton, Canada.

Terrorism – Legal Issues

Paul Lauritzen, *The Ethics of Interrogation: Professional Responsibility in an Age of Terror* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 227 pp., US \$26.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-5890-1972-0.

This book examines the impact of new counterterrorism-focused judicial practices implemented by the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks regarding the interrogation of detained terrorist suspects. Specifically, it focuses on the issue of what kind of interrogation technique is defensible. To discuss this issue, following the author's introductory overview, the book is divided into two parts. The first part examines issues such as how the professions of psychology and law approach the issue of harsh interrogation methods; the controversy among psychologists about the role they should play in the interrogation of detainees; and the debates in the legal profession about the role of attorneys in sanctioning harsh interrogation, including whether abusive interrogation tactics are fundamentally incompatible with the rule of law. The author also questions whether "terror warrants" should be granted in cases where terrorists have information that needs to be accessed in order to save lives. The second part focuses on the roles of other professions, such as medical physicians, psychologists, and military legal counselors, in facilitating harsh interrogation methods, and the ethical responsibilities in terms of codes their professions need to regulate such involvement. In the concluding chapter, the author also discusses the need to apply just war standards and the laws of armed conflict when it comes to targeted killings of terrorist adversaries. Although a full discussion of these issues should also include an examination of how the terrorist adversary violates the laws of armed conflict by deliberately targeting civilians and other practices amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, which might induce responding governments to use "extra-legal" measures in response, this book provides an important and informed coverage of the legal and ethical issues that need to be considered in assessing the involvement of medical and legal professionals in the management and administration of harsh interrogation techniques bordering on, or amount to, torture against terrorist detainees. The author is Professor of Religious Ethics at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio.

David Lowe, *Terrorism: Law and Policy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 250 pp., US \$120.00[Hardcover], US \$31.96 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1386-5531-7.

This is an excellent, practitioner-oriented, comprehensive and authoritative textbook enabling the reader to understand the nature of terrorist threats facing the international community and the law enforcement, intelligence, and policy components involved in countering terrorism in several states. The counter-measures employed by Australia, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States receive special attention. The book's eight chapters cover the nature of the terrorist threat (e.g., the threats presented by groups such as al-Qaida, al-Shabaab, the Islamic State, with a special case study on the IRA); the legal definition of terrorism (e.g., how different governments, including the European Union, define terrorism, as well as how to ensure that a legal definition of terrorism can assist governmental response measures); government policies and statutory preventative measures (e.g., the use of preemption, proscribing terrorist groups, and border controls); the use of surveillance of electronic communications (e.g. terrorist groups' use of electronic communications and surveillance powers used in terrorism investigations) ; the exchange of terrorism-related intelligence information among allies (e.g. cooperation policies between EU Member States' policing agencies, concerns over the emergence of "the surveillance society" and the impact of breaches, such as Edward Snowden's disclosure of NSA methods of internet surveillance); handling informants in terrorist investigations (e.g., laws and policies in handling informants, including the use of their information and granting them immunity from prosecution, if necessary); countering the funding of terrorism and freezing terrorist assets (e.g., the use of statutory provisions to freeze assets); and government preventative strategies (e.g., countering violent extremism programs, and defining extremism to make it possible to differentiate between non-violent activism and violent extremism). Due to its textbook character, each chapter of the volume consists of an outline of "Topics covered in this chapter," a listing of chapter objectives, an introduction, text, a listing of "Points for

reflection,” case studies, a conclusion, suggestions for further reading, and citations. This textbook is highly recommended for courses on terrorism and counter-terrorism. The author, a veteran police officer in the United Kingdom, who had retired as a Detective Sergeant, had served as a principal lecturer at Liverpool John Moore University’s Law School until 2017. He currently runs a terrorism and security consultancy firm.

Manfred Nowak, *Torture: An Expert’s Confrontation with an Everyday Evil* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 208 pp., US \$69.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-8122-4991-0.

This well-informed book is based on the author’s extensive practitioner experience as United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture from 2004 to 2010. As he explains, “In this capacity I, along with several different teams, was able to visit a significant number of states and their prisons and police stations. I interviewed perpetrators, witnesses, and victims of torture (in particular those in detention) on the subject of torture and conditions of detention, and then documented my findings and reported them to the United Nations (p. 5). This experience provides this book unique insight on “the causes and dynamics of the routine nature of torture” (p. 5). To discuss these issues, the book is divided into two parts. Part I, “The Phenomenon of Torture in the Twenty-First Century,” examines the nature of torture; the role of a United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture; methods used in the independent investigation of torture; methods used by states to impede objective investigations; the spectrum of torture (e.g., inhuman detention conditions, corporal punishment, capital punishment, enforced disappearance, and domestic violence and female mutilation); motivations and justification for torture; and an assessment of the U.S. counterterrorism campaign during the George W. Bush Administration. Part II, “Torture in Individual States,” covers the author’s personal experience while on official mission for the United Nations in investigating torture in eighteen countries around the world, including China, Georgia, Greece, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Uruguay. In the conclusion, the author commends Denmark for providing “the best example of how torture can be eradicated if the authorities treat detainees with empathy and consider them as clients rather than inmates” (p. 185). His concluding sentence is worth noting: “Let’s hope that the trend toward abolition of corporal and capital punishment will also lead to the gradual elimination of torture, one of the most brutal human rights violations of our time” (p. 188). The author is Professor of International Law and Human Rights at the University of Vienna, Austria.

Dean Reuter and John Yoo (Eds.), *Confronting Terror: 9/11 and the Future of American National Security* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2011), 320 pp., US \$19.16 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-5940-3562-3.

The contributors to this volume examine the legal and policy components in United States’ counterterrorism in the aftermath of 9/11. The contributors, who are prominent American legal and intelligence experts, many with high level government experience (such as Michael Chertoff, former Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, and Michael B. Mukasey, former Attorney-General), present differing views on topics such as the nature of the threats presented by al Qaida-type terrorist adversaries, how the U.S. intelligence establishment needs to adjust organizationally to respond to such threats, the circumstances under which harsh interrogation techniques, including torture can or have be used against detained terrorists, how to balance the requirement for security and civil liberties (including the benefits of the Patriot Act), the use of civilian and military courts in trying terrorists, and the role of the executive branch in managing the counterterrorism campaign. Dean Reuter is Vice President & Director of the Practice Groups of the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy. John Yoo is the Emanuel Heller Professor of Law at the University of California at Berkeley, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, and a former Justice Department official during the George W. Bush administration.

Counterterrorism

Eli Berman, Joseph H. Felter, and Jacob N. Shapiro, with Vestal McIntyre, *Small Wars, Big Data: The Information Revolution in Modern Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 408 pp., US \$29.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-6911-7707-6.

With intrastate “small wars” involving governmental responses to terrorist and guerrilla insurgencies, as opposed to conventional large-scale inter-state wars, becoming the predominant form of warfare, how can conventional militaries employ response measures that are effective against such asymmetric adversaries? This book attempts to provide a new conceptual framework to analyze asymmetric confrontations, how they should be fought militarily and through other means, such as reconstruction efforts to solve local socio-economic problems, and how big data derived from the application of qualitative and quantitative tools can generate insights into “what is or is not likely to work” in military engagements between larger militaries and their smaller insurgent adversaries. An important theme running through this account is that such warfare is not necessarily about controlling insurgent dominated territory but about winning the support of the local people who inhabit such territory because “winning hearts and minds” involves obtaining their cooperation to provide information about the insurgents in their midst that can help turn the tide of such battles in favor of a military’s counterinsurgency campaign.

As the authors write, “Information and how it is leveraged... plays a key role in governments’ efforts to defeat or contain insurgencies” (p. xiii). Such information superiority, the authors explain, involving the “knowledge citizens possess about insurgent activities – is the key factor determining which side has the upper hand in an asymmetric conflict. If governments have information, they can use their greater power to target insurgents and remove from the battlefield. If governments lack that information, then insurgents can get away with a range of attacks that continue to impose costs on the government, from IEDs and ambushes of government forces to violence against civilians supporting the government” (p. 16). Big data then comes into play as it provides an accurate means to gain situational awareness of the area of operations, including identifying “cause-and-effect relationships in ways we never could before” (p. 15). To apply the authors’ framework on the use of big data to analyze the three-way interaction of rebels, government and civilians, the book’s chapters explain the authors’ information-centric way of thinking about insurgency, the types of information needed by civilians to assist a military campaign, the role of suppression in defeating rebel activity, how civilians respond to rebel coercion and violence, whether rebel violence is caused by poverty, and policies that enable government forces to gain information from civilians and win their “hearts and minds.” Among the authors’ conclusions is that, in terms of political strategies and development assistance, what “is important is *where* and *how* material resources are applied, the sequencing of these activities, the degree of collateral damage incurred in that process, and how they set the stage for political settlement” (p. 297). The application of such a structured methodology and empirical approach makes this book a valuable contribution to the study of the information-centric components involved in “small wars” conflict termination.

Vanda Felbab-Brown, Harold Trinkunas, and Shadi Hamid, *Militants, Criminals and Warlords: The Challenge of Local Governance in an Age of Disorder* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 192 pp., US \$34.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-8157-3189-4.

With numerous states around the world characterized by weak and fragile central governments and lawless conditions within their societies, armed non-state actors, whether terrorist or guerrilla groups, as well as criminal networks, have filled these power vacuums in a number of countries. This book is an account of the authors’ examination of how non-state actors “that are not recognized as legitimate by the international community” have come to exercise “governance functions across large swathes of territory” in some places. (p. 2). The authors examine cases such as Hizballah in Lebanon, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, the Taliban in Afghanistan, pirate clans and al Shabaab in Somalia, the FARC in Colombia, narco-trafficking cartels in Mexico. They also discuss other examples in which governance is delivered by non-state actors, in order to answer questions such as: how should the international community “respond to local orders dominated by armed non-state actors? Should it treat all such orders as a threat? Should it engage in direct relations with unsavory or violent (but sometimes relatively legitimate) governance providers in the hope of promoting peace and security? Or should it respond, as it has done so far with mixed results, by strengthening the capacity and building up the legitimacy of the nominal sovereign, the central state?” (pp. 2-3).

These questions are examined in the book’s seven chapters. The authors begin by presenting a framework

on the conditions that enable armed non-state actors to engage in the provision of governance and then examine the nature of such governance. They also offer case studies of armed non-state actor governance and conclude the volume with generalized findings. In the concluding chapter's section on "Ungoverned Spaces and Governance Gaps," the authors note that "A central dilemma that emerges from these cases is that armed non-state actors are often more effective than the state at delivering a predictable local order, even if their governance is not particularly democratic or respectful of individual rights" (p. 121). They also note that "you cannot effectively fight terrorism merely by fighting terrorism" because it is necessary to invest "in local legitimacy and state building" (p. 130). Otherwise, as demonstrated by these examples, intervention efforts will be "replete with unintended consequences and costs of short-sighted or poorly conceptualized efforts by the international community to address alternatively governed local orders" (pp. 141-142). This book is an important contribution to the literature on the issues that need to be considered in the international community's efforts to stabilize countries experiencing internal disorder and non-state actor governance in parts of their territories. The volume is the product of the Brookings Institution's Seminar on Reconstructing Local Orders.

Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2017: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* [IEP Report 55] [Fifth Edition] (New York, NY: Institute for Economics & Peace, November 2017), 120 pp., no cost [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-6480-6446-6. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2017.pdf>.

Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Peace Index 2018: Measuring Peace in a Complex World* [IEP Report 58] [Twelfth Edition] (New York, NY: Institute for Economics & Peace, June 2018), 100 pp., no cost [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-6483-0480-7. URL: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2018/06/Global-Peace-Index-2018-2.pdf>.

Both publications, which are updates of previous editions, provide valuable, systematically organized, analyses and empirical data on trends in global terrorism incidents, societal stability/instability, and prospects for peace, which are essential ingredients in understanding the terrorism landscape and how to formulate counter-terrorism campaigns to resolve such conflicts.

The *Global Terrorism Index 2017 (GTI)* covers the period from 2000 to the end of 2016. Its data is derived from the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism's (START) Global Terrorism Database's (GTD) datasets on terrorism. Following an Executive Summary and Key Findings, the publication's analysis consists of six sections: "Results" (e.g. maps of terrorist incidents, terrorism in 2016, and the ten countries most impacted by terrorism); "Trends" (e.g. the conflict-terrorism nexus, the distribution of terrorism, and regional trends); "Terrorism in OECD Member Countries" (e.g. trends since 2014 and the impact of the proclamation of the Islamic State); "Characteristics of Terrorists" (e.g. the drivers of terrorist recruitment, foreign fighters, and lone actor terrorism); "Terrorist Groups" (e.g., the four deadliest terrorist groups, and how terrorist groups end); "Economics of Terrorism" (the cost of terrorism and financing terror). The seventh section, "Expert Contributions," consists of five analyses by external contributors on leaderless jihad, rehabilitating and reintegrating terrorism offenders, lessons learned in countering violent extremism in general and, more specifically, in Asia, and the Indian experience in counter-terrorism strategies. The Appendices include the GTI's listing of the ranks and scores of 134 countries; a listing of the "50 Worst Terrorist Attacks in 2016;" the GTI's methodology, including the "Thwarted Attacks Methodology"; a table on "Correlates of Terrorism"; and an explanation of the methodology used to assess the economic costs of terrorism.

The *Global Peace Index 2018* ranks 163 independent states and territories according to their level of "peacefulness." The GPI utilizes 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators, and measures the state of peace by employing three thematic domains: the level of "Societal Safety and Security," the extent of "Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict," and the degree of "Militarization." In addition to their qualitative scores, the degrees of the "state of peace" characterizing the GPI's country rankings are also qualitatively grouped as "very

high,” “high,” “medium,” “low,” “very low,” or “not included.” To examine these issues, following an executive summary, the publication consists of four analytic sections: “Results” (e.g. highlights of the 2018 GPI, regional overview, and examples of improvements and deteriorations); “Trends” (e.g. a ten year trend in the GPI, as well as a “100 year trends in peace”); “Economic Impact of Violence” (e.g. the macro-economic impact of peace); and “Positive Peace” (e.g., defining “positive peace,” trends, the factors that precede a change in peacefulness, and the relationship between “positive peace” and a country’s state of the economy). The appendices provide an explanation of the indicators used in the GPI’s methodology; the methodology used in the index’s weighting criteria; the sources, definitions and scoring criteria used in the GPI; a listing of the GPI’s scores applied to ranking the 163 states and territories; and a ranking of the economic cost of violence per countries listed in the index.

IISS, *The Military Balance: The Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defence Economics* (New York, NY: Routledge for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018), 504 pp., US \$675.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-8574-3955-7.

The annual *The Military Balance*, which is published by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), is considered the most authoritative, comprehensive and detailed assessment of the military capabilities and defense economics of 171 countries. It is widely used as an unclassified reference resource by governments’ military and intelligence agencies, as well as by academic institutions and public policy research institutes, around the world. The volume is divided into two parts. Part One, “Capabilities, Trends and Economics,” consists of 10 chapters. They cover general topics such as defense and military analysis, comparative defense statistics, and country comparisons and defense data. The volume’s primary section, consisting of 471 pages, provides data on national military capabilities in terms of orders of battle (units, formations, and equipment of a military force) and defense economics of the 171 covered countries. These are divided into the seven regions of North America, Europe, Russia and Eurasia, Asia, Middle East and North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The volume’s second part, “References,” provides explanatory notes, definitions, and an index of countries and territories.

In a disappointment to this reviewer, unlike the volume’s previous editions, this one does not include any coverage of terrorist groups, such as al Qaida and the Islamic State. However, there is one exception, an entry on “Palestinian Territories”. Here we are informed that Hamas’s Izz al-Din-Qassam Brigades consists of 15,000 to 20,000 personnel. (p. 356). The entry on Lebanon, on the other hand, makes no mention of Hizballah, while the Taliban is also not listed in the entry on Afghanistan. Al Shabaab is not listed in the entry on Somalia (although IISS does list the militia-units’ strengths of Somaliland and Puntland), with Boko Haram also not mentioned in the entry on Nigeria. The only exception is the entry on Syria, which provides the estimated sizes of the insurgent groups in what it terms the “Territory Where the Government Does Not Exercise Effective Control” (pp. 364-365).

The volume’s entries on the conventional and special forces’ military capabilities of the countries it covers are, nevertheless, of interest to the counterterrorism community for several reasons. One is that terrorist groups, especially major ones such as Hamas, Hizballah, and the Islamic State, use at least some types of conventional military systems. For example, the level of sophistication of such terrorist groups also requires them to adapt from countries’ militaries’ surveillance and intelligence capabilities, so their own military planners are likely aware of the capabilities listed for their adversaries’ order-of-battle. Another area of interest for the counterterrorism analytic community is the volume’s detailing of countries’ combating terrorism forces. Thus, for example, it details that the United States’ Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) consists of 63,150 active forces and 6,550 civilians (p. 57); France has 3 Special Forces groups (p. 106); Norway’s Army has 2 Special Forces groups and one Naval Special Forces group (p. 134); Sweden has one special operations group and one combat support group (p. 154); the United Kingdom has a large contingent of Royal Navy, Army and RAF Special Forces regiments and squadrons (p. 164); Russia has 554,000 Paramilitary forces, consisting of 40,000-50,000 Federal Guard Service’s forces, and 340,000 National Guard forces (p. 205); China’s paramilitary’s People’s Armed Police consists of 660,000 forces, with the Internal Security Forces consisting of 400,000 forces; India has 1,585,950 Paramilitary Forces and 12,000 National Security Guards (p. 265). Israel has 3 Army Special Forces battalions

and 1 Special Operations brigade, 300 Naval Commandos, and 8,000 Border Police forces (pp. 340- 342); while Jordan has 14,000 forces in its Joint Special Operations Command and 15,000 in paramilitary forces such as the Gendarmerie (p. 344) .

Also valuable is the first chapter's section on "Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and Defence." It discusses how big-data analysis, machine learning, and artificial intelligence (IA) are providing, "In the military context, the opportunities for remote-sensing, situational awareness, battlefield-manoeuve and other AI applications [that] seem promising. IISS notes that for the time being it remains unclear whether these new technical capabilities will ultimately shift the balance in favour of offensive or defensive actions" (p. 10). With cyber warfare becoming a crucial component in a country's military capability, each country entry includes a section on its capacity for cyber operations.

Emma Leonard and Gilbert Ramsay (Eds.), *Globalizing Somalia: Multilateral, International, and Transnational Repercussions of Conflict* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), 240 pp., US \$130.00 [Hardcover], US \$34.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-7809-3569-0.

The contributors to this volume examine how chronic state failure in Somalia, which is exacerbated by the jihadi insurgency by al Shabaab, and involvement by local elements in criminal maritime piracy, has made it difficult for the international community to play a role in resolving this multifaceted conflict which has regional and transnational repercussions. To analyze these issues, following the editors' introductory overview, the volume is divided into four sections. Section One, "The Failure of the International," covers the involvement of the United Nations peacekeeping, NGO humanitarian assistance, and conflict resolution missions in Somalia. Section Two, "The Rise of the Transnational," discusses the role of local jihadi insurgents and the involvement of foreign fighters in their warfare as well as Somali maritime piracy and involvement in international crimes. Section Three, "The New Multipolar Politics as a Response to Transnational Disorder," examines United States policy toward Somalia during the period 1994 to 2012, Somalia – China relations, Japan's involvement in Somalia, the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa, and the European Union's intervention in Somalia. Section Four, "Reimagining Intervention – Must History Repeat Itself in Somalia?" discusses the factors leading to the success of Puntland and Somaliland in securing greater stability than its southern neighbor. In the concluding chapter, the editors observe that the book's contribution goes beyond its discussion of Somalia, since it also covers themes that affect other conflicts around the world, including "new wars," the "war on terror," as well as theories of peacebuilding, piracy, and the impact of globalized communications on local conflicts. Emma Leonard is Assistant Professor of Political Science at La Salle University, Philadelphia. Gilbert Ramsey is a Lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St Andrews, Scotland.

Paul Moorcraft, *The Jihadist Threat: The Re-Conquest of the West?* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire, England, UK: Pen & Sword/Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 256 pp., US \$39.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4738-5679-0.

This is an interesting examination by a veteran British national security expert of the international and domestic threats presented by jihadism to Western societies, with a particular focus on how these threats affect the United Kingdom. These issues are discussed in the book's chapters on the origins and evolution of jihadism; the nature of the "War on Terror," particularly how the United States responded to al Qaida's 9/11 attacks, including its fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, with the author criticizing the Iraqi intervention as achieving the opposite of what had been planned: "sectarian war, terrorism and Islamism took off in a way that not even the gloomiest analysts at Langley or Vauxhall could have imagined" (p. 73). The next chapters discuss the origins and impacts of the Arab Spring; the rise of the Islamic State and how it operated; and the impact of jihadism on the British home front, including counterterrorism failures, such as, at least at the initial stages, failing to keep track of the hundreds of British Muslims who became foreign fighters in Syria. In a provocative chapter entitled "Elephants in the Room," the author criticizes British counterterrorism with "playing catch-up" and "fighting the last war" with regard to the threats presented by the Islamic State, as he writes that "We are spending billions of pounds building aircraft carriers (and probably sharing them with France), and buying attack aircraft while we have been outflanked by Islamic State's asymmetrical Internet and social media blitzkrieg" (p. 148).

In a follow-up chapter on “Future Options” for the “inevitably long war with Jihadism,” the author examines seven options which he terms as “surrender/defeat,” “compromise,” “status quo,” “full-spectrum intervention,” “An Arab solution,” “The Garrison State,” and “Mix and match,” which he characterizes as “a combination of coalition-building, plus a joined-up strategy of much more kinetic activity on the ground and in the air, and maybe even the offer of a deal to recognize IS” (p. 162). In the concluding chapter, the author proposes a solution to the Jihadist threat which “must come primarily from Muslims themselves both in the US, Europe and in the Middle East” (p. 165). In his final paragraph, he warns that just as the Islamic State’s “beheadings and crucifixions are intended to spread panic among local Arab foes,” if it “gets hold of WMD it will use them in the name of faith,” so the West will need “to resist the caliphate with every device it can....” (p. 166). The author is Visiting Professor at Cardiff University and Director of the Centre for Foreign Policy Analysis, London, UK.

Andrew Mumford, *Counterinsurgency Wars and the Anglo-American Alliance* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 248 pp., US \$104.95 [Hardcover], US \$34.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-6261-6492-5.

This account addresses the nature and effectiveness of the American and British cooperation over the years in waging irregular warfare against insurgent movements as part of fluctuations in their “special relationship,” which, the author argues “allowed the two nations to pursue strikingly dissonant policies during frequent counterinsurgency wars” (p. 3). The author examines three themes that underpin the relationship: “political attitudes toward specific conflicts,” “the reciprocity of military assistance,” and the “level of intelligence cooperation as a means of ensuring military success and securing strategic goals” (p. 3). Following the author’s introductory overview on the origins of the “special relationship” between the two countries and an explanation of the nature of counterinsurgency, these themes are applied to historical and current cases such as the British counterinsurgency campaigns in Mandatory Palestine, the Malayan Emergency, Cyprus, South Arabia (i.e. South Yemen), and Northern Ireland. The other cases involve American-led counterinsurgency campaigns in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In the final chapter, the author concludes on a critical note that British involvement in the cases of counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan “left the impression that when at war, the British political management of such conflicts lacks long-term commitment, coherent planning, a convincing strategic narrative, and a fundamental willingness to financial support the war effort to a sufficient level” (p. 204).

With the American military’s advances in counterinsurgency doctrine, the author writes that the American military no longer needs to look to lessons from British-led campaigns in Malaya or Northern Ireland “as exemplars of counterinsurgency conduct” because of its own success in the Iraqi Anbar Province’s “tribal awakening” campaign (p. 205). As a result of American advances in counterinsurgency, the author concludes, the cooperation between the two countries is now “asymmetrical at heart” in favor of American preeminence (p. 205). While this asymmetric imbalance may hold in the counterinsurgency cooperation between the two countries, a major flaw in the author’s account is that in the field of counterterrorism, especially against Islamist terrorists that threaten the two countries, there is reportedly a strong cooperative relationship between the two countries’ law enforcement and intelligence services. This is a significantly more important area of cooperation because it directly affects the security of their homelands. If this cooperation in counterterrorism had been included in the author’s account, it would have added success stories that would have presented a more nuanced picture of the effectiveness of their cooperation in addressing common threats against the two countries. The author is Associate Professor in the School of Politics and International Relations and co-director of the Centre for Conflict, Security and Terrorism, both at the University of Nottingham, UK.

Greg C. Reeson, *Stalemate: Why We Can’t Win the War on Terror and What We Should Do Instead* (Lanham, MD: Government Institutes/An Imprint of The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 242 pp., US \$40.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-6059-0771-0.

This is an argument in favor of employing the full range of instruments of American national power to win the war on Islamist terrorism. To the DIME acronym (Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic elements of state power which can be used in countering terrorism,) to succeed in countering the terrorist threat, the author adds “IL,” (which stands for Intelligence and Law enforcement measures). How these elements of state

power are best to be used in countering terrorism is discussed in the book's ten chapters. The author covers topics such as the impact of globalization in producing a new type of terrorism war; understanding the terrorist threat and its evolving structure, including the role of state sponsors of terrorism; the components of U.S. grand strategy and the role of allies in countering terrorism; the roles of diplomacy, information, military, economic (or finance), intelligence, as well as law enforcement elements in countering terrorism. The ninth chapter examines the impact of significant conflicts that have produced what the author terms a "complex and dangerous world," such as in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, but also the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran, Lebanon, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, as well as Africa as well as failed and failing states in general. The final chapter, "The Long Road Ahead," presents the author's recommendations for the full application of the DIMEIL's "comprehensive strategic framework that allows America and its allies and partners to reduce the threat of extremist violence to a level that minimizes the disruption of daily life and reduces as much as possible the risk to U.S. and allied interests abroad" (p. 174). The metric of effectiveness in counterterrorism, the author concludes, "is to stop as many plots and attacks as possible while minimizing the damage done from those that cannot be prevented. When Islamic terrorism becomes nothing more than a nuisance requiring minimal containment action and occasional military strikes, the United States will finally be able to say it has prevailed" (p. 195). Although this book was published prior to the emergence of the Islamic State as preeminent terrorist threat facing the United States, the author's comprehensive DIMEIL's counterterrorism framework is worth examining. At the time of this book's publication, the author, a U.S. Army Major, served as a strategic plans and policy officer for the U.S. Army.

Christine Sixta Rinehart, *Drones and Targeted Killings in the Middle East and Africa* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 196 pp., US \$85.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4985-2647-0.

This book examines the effectiveness of the United States' use of drones in its overall "War on Terror" within the context of the targeted killings of jihadi terrorist adversaries in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. The jihadi terrorist groups targeted by such drones include al Qaida, the Taliban, the Islamic State, and al Shabaab. Effectiveness in counterterrorism is defined by the author as "a decrease in terrorism in the countries where drone strikes occur, not creating "blowback in which radicalization occurs, anti-Americanism is created, and terrorist group recruitment and empathy increases," and "a collateral damage rate of less than 10 percent...for every ten terrorists that are killed, approximately one civilian is killed" (pp. xxix-xxx). This framework is applied to the seven countries in which the United States has employed drones in the targeted killings of its terrorist adversaries. In the concluding chapter, the author finds that the use of drones in targeted killings of terrorist operatives "are not working" in these seven countries for six reasons: "terrorist attacks and suicide bombings have increased;" the number of civilians killed as collateral damage has increased; drone strikes have not decreased the strength of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; while the number of people being radicalized by drone strikes is "unknown," they are creating an increase in anti-Americanism; some high-level terrorists have been killed, but "many of the terrorists that are killed are low-level people"; and "Drone strikes are not producing better outcomes for the countries in any of these case studies" (pp. 117-119). The concluding chapter also discusses the fiscal costs of drone warfare to the U.S. military. In this reviewer's view, the book's assessment of the effectiveness of drones in targeted killings is overly unidimensional because it overlooks the roles of other U.S. military forces, such as airstrikes by combat aircraft and the use of Special Forces in counterterrorism. Targeted killings and other forms of warfare have, in fact, succeeded in degrading the military effectiveness and presence of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Prior to that, the killing of Anwar al-Awlaki, al Qaida's primary ideologue in Yemen (together with Samir Khan, *Inspire* magazine's publisher) on September 30, 2011, substantially degraded the group's ideological appeal. Nevertheless, the author's discussion of the use of drones in targeted killings in the seven countries is still insightful and a contribution to the literature on the use of drones in military warfare. The author is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of South Carolina, Palmetto College.

Geoffrey B. Robinson, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 456 pp., US \$35.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-6911-6138-9.

This is an important and extensively researched account about the activities and consequences of state

terrorism, using the Indonesian experience as its case study. As the author writes, over more than six months, from late 1965 to mid-1966, an estimated half a million members of the Indonesian Community Party and its affiliated organizations were killed, with another million or so detained without charge. The consequences of state violence were far-reaching, the author explains, with the largest non-governing Communist party in the world crushed, with Sukarno, the country's popular left-nationalist president deposed, and "a virulently anticommunist army leadership seized power, signaling the start of more than three decades of military-backed authoritarian rule" (p. 3). In another consequence, in what became known as the New Order, the state that emerged "became notorious for its systematic violation of human rights, especially in areas outside the heartland, including East Timor (Timor Leste), Aceh, and West Papua, where hundreds of thousands of people died or were killed by government forces over the next few decades" (p. 5). These gross human rights violations led to pro-independence insurgent movements whose legacy continues to the present day.

To explain these issues, the author seeks to count how many people were killed and detained in the 1965-1966 period, who the victims and perpetrators were and motivated them. He explores what happened to the victims and their families and investigates the consequences of the violence for Indonesian society since then. One of its legacies, according to the author, which is significant in understanding contemporary Indonesian society as well, is that religious life and affiliation in society was substantially realigned. He writes: "Under official pressure, and out of fear of being accused of atheism, after 1965 many Indonesians abandoned their old animist religious belief systems....while doing little to enhance the vitality of the major religions" such as Islam" (p. 302). Of greatest concern is that "by enforcing notions of religious orthodoxy, the New Order arguably paved the way for a pattern of discrimination, persecution, and violence against ostensibly heterodox groups..." (p. 302). This also led to the derailment of "women's political and social empowerment..." (p. 302). The author is Professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles.

James A. Sheppard, *Countering Heedless Jihad: Toward a Field Manual for Intellectual Sabotage* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 194 pp., US \$90.00 [Hardcover], US \$40.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4422-7125-8.

This volume offers an innovative counterterrorism approach. It seeks to break the religious zeal of jihadi militants through what the author terms "intellectual sabotage." As the author explains, "The effectiveness of the proposed stratagem depends heavily on the ability to magnify the effects of a theological message that undermines jihadist ideology from within its own framework." This requires multiple lines of attack, with "the collective impact of the simultaneously delivered actions that will be corrosive" (p. xxvi). As the book's organizing principle, the names of the Prophet Muhammad's most immediate caliph successors are used as cyphers for the campaign's "various operations." The second chapter, "Abu Bakr and Black Propaganda," focuses on formal and information methods of communication. The third chapter, "Umar and Electronic Delivery," attempts to correct the messages of violent groups and deliver the "right messages" through the Internet. The fourth chapter, "Uthman and Citizen Saboteurs," seeks to recruit "violent anti-rationalists and then turning them into saboteurs who can sow various levels of discord within the communities in which they are already a part" (p. xxvii). The fifth chapter, "Ali and Stability Operations," involves subduing "marginal groups," for instance, through foreign assistance funding which can also be used to track militants and their sympathizers. Cumulatively, this campaign aims to weave "theology into military strategy and covert operations..." (p. xxix). As the author explains in the conclusion, while jihadist ideology on the Internet "is not something that needs to be eliminated," like peeling an onion, "it should be subverted by organizing the nonobvious ideas that help to comprise it. When done correctly, members of violent organizations will sell their friends for an onion peel." (p. 119). The author is President of Thomas University, Thomasville, Georgia.

Liam P.D. Stockdale, *Taming an Uncertain Future: Temporality, Sovereignty, and the Politics of Anticipatory Governance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 198 pp., US \$130.00 [Hardcover], US \$43.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-7834-8501-7.

This book's focus, as explained in the introductory chapter, is to examine the "importance of foregrounding temporality and futurity in political analysis and more specifically exploring what is at stake with the rise of

anticipatory governance rationalities...through an in-depth critique of how the problem of temporal contingency has been prioritized within the global security imagination and responded to through the development of security strategies premised upon governing the future through preemptive intervention in the present” (p. 6). This is, according to the author, accomplished through “a comprehensive critical interrogation of one particular manifestation of such rationalities in practice – namely, the preemptive regime(s) of (in)security governance that have emerged within the context of the post-9/11 War on Terror” (p. 6). An example of the “preemptive regime(s)” “(in)security governance” is the Obama administration’s “use of ‘predictive assessments’ in the creation of flight ‘watchlists’ that ban individuals from traveling by air in the United States” (pp. 6-7). Another example is the “2011 targeted killing via drone strike of Anwar al-Awlaki” which, according to the author, is illustrative of “the precarious subjectivities enacted under a preemptive security regime” (p. 10). With these issues discussed in the book’s next five chapters, the final chapter presents the author’s findings in which he criticizes U.S. counterterrorism for “attempting to preempt modes of (in)security governance [by – JS] actively manipulate[ing] our relation to time by ‘making the future present.’ This, in turn, has the effect of compressing the timescale of political decision-making and requiring ‘affective facts’ or ‘gut feelings’ rather than verifiable evidence to serve as the primary basis for such decisions.” (p. 158). In another finding, the author writes that “the originary link between preemption and exceptionalism...was expounded by unpacking the political temporality of preemption and considering how its prioritization of the future inscribes the imagination as the epistemic foundation for anticipatory political action” (p. 164). Those who are trained in the philosophies of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, both cited in the book, might appreciate such jargon-heavy reasoning. Most others, however, may not. At the time this book was published, the author was a postdoctoral Fellow at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Philip W. Travis, *Reagan’s War on Terrorism in Nicaragua: The Outlaw State* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 232 pp., US \$85.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4985-3719-3.

This is a revealing account of how the Reagan Administration’s war on terrorism against the Nicaraguan Sandinista regime in the mid-1980s was conducted and how, in the author’s view, it came to influence the development of U.S. counterterrorism ever since up to the current period. Although one may not necessarily share the author’s view that in the U.S. war on terrorism, a “terrorist” referred to “enemies of the United States in a new global irregular war,” that “counterterrorist forces” were a “more positive connotation” that referenced “allies,” or that “A war on terrorism was a new way of justifying the application of the power of the United States abroad in offensive conflicts against and within other sovereign nations” (p. 8), the extensively researched and balanced case study on the Reagan Administration’s counter-measures against the Nicaraguan Sandinista regime makes this study an important contribution to the literature on this subject. The author is Assistant Professor of History at the State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota.

Moeed Yusuf (Ed.), *Pakistan’s Counterterrorism Challenge* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press/United States Institute of Peace, 2014), 272 pp., US \$27.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-6261-6045-3.

The contributors to this volume examine significant counterterrorism challenges facing Pakistan and offer suggestions how the country can best address these. The problems that Pakistan’s counterterrorism campaign needs to resolve, the volume’s editor explains, include “the weakness of political institutions, the role of policing, problems within the criminal justice system, efforts to choke financing for militancy, and regulation on the use of media and technology by militants” (p. 2). Otherwise, as the editor writes in the conclusion, “The result would still be a country that is riddled with violence and periodic acts of terrorism even as it remains strong enough to prevent any concerted insurgency that could lead to its collapse.” The editor is director of South Asia Programs at the United States Institute of Peace, in Washington, DC.

Afghanistan, Pakistan and India

Madiha Afzal, *Pakistan Under Siege: Extremism, Society, and the State* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 208 pp., US \$36.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-8157-2945-7.

As explained by the author, this is an examination of “the imperatives facing the Pakistani state, its strategic (mis) calculations, the attitudes of Pakistani society, and the country’s turn toward extremism”. He shows “...how the Pakistani state has helped foster militancy in the country and how the exclusionary nature of Pakistan’s Islamization – undertaken by the state more for strategic than ideological reasons, as part of its nationalist project – has mainstreamed extremist narratives. The Pakistani state has done this through manipulating the country’s laws and education system. The state could not have imagined the enormous ramifications of these choices on Pakistan’s society and on its security” (p. x).

These issues are examined in the book’s six chapters, which cover topics such as a brief primer on the four main terrorist groups that operate in Pakistan (the Pakistan Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and al Qaida); the Pakistani public’s views of these terrorist groups, based on public opinion polling and the responses of the Pakistani government to the challenges posed by these terrorist groups; Pakistan’s legalization of Islamization in the country, including legalizing extremism and blasphemy laws; the Islamization of the country’s educational system, including promoting a “conspiracy-tinged” view of the world, and the students’ attitudes towards such indoctrination; and the roles of madrassas (Islamic schools) in the country and their links to extremism. In the concluding chapter, the author explains that while many nations indoctrinate their citizens in “an explicitly nationalistic narrative,” what sets Pakistan apart is the “role played by the Pakistani state and its official institutions, which validate not only paranoia and hatred but also violence in the name of religion. The Pakistani state points the finger at its eastern neighbor for the terror that strikes it. The army justifies its wars as jihad and uses the jihadi narrative to support militants behind the scenes. The state’s support of violence in the name of religion extends to a pass for ordinary citizens who respond violently – based on the country’s blasphemy laws and anti-Ahmadi laws – to perceived religious intransigence by their fellow citizens. This means cases of vigilante and mob violence that go unpunished, with the notable exception of Mumtaz Qadri’s case” (p. 149).

The author concludes that “Nothing less than a conscious ideological shift – a shedding of both the insecurity felt from India and the repressive nature of its commitment to religion – will ultimately change the course for Pakistan” (p. 153). It is such insights that make this book a valuable guide to understanding some of the major problems and challenges facing Pakistani society and the measures required to resolve them. The author, originally from Pakistan, is a Nonresident Fellow at the Brookings Institution, in Washington, DC.

Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi (Eds.), *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 448 pp., US \$23.50 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-6740-3224-8.

The contributors to this volume examine the Taliban movement from its inception in 1994, the nature of its governance in Afghanistan, and, following its overthrow in late 2001 by the American military intervention, its reformulation into a constellation of guerrilla fighters in Pakistan and Afghanistan. As explained by the volume’s editors, the contributors focus on three overlapping themes: “the underlying historical patterns that gave rise to the Taliban and placed limits on the possibilities of Taliban rule”; the crisis of state power in Afghanistan, particularly Kabul’s inability to rule the country; and how the country’s diverse Pashtun and non-Pashtun communities have “contended with state power” (pp. 11-12). To examine these issues, the volume’s chapters cover topics such as the ability to manage the Pashtun community as the “historic key” to ruling Afghanistan; the linkages forged during the civil war between the Afghan political parties based in Pakistan and Iran and the localized anti-Soviet resistance within Afghanistan; the repressive gender policies of the Taliban when and where in power; how the elites from the Pashtun tribes have attempted to consolidate their Pashtun-dominant state power; how the Baluch communities interacted with local Pashtuns under different Taliban governments; the emergence of new Islamist identities among Afghanistan’s Muslims and the surrounding region; the Taliban’s interactions with foreign states and organizations; and how the Taliban movement fragmented following its overthrow in late 2001. In the epilogue, the editors discuss how the U.S.-allied post-Taliban Afghan government “failed to create alternatives to the vision of order offered by the Taliban” (p. 57). The editors write: “The Pax Americana promised development but only expanded the wide fissures cutting through Afghan society and, in mobilizing diverse foes against the center, rekindled memories of grievances feeding thirty years of war” (p. 355). Although much of this discussion is dated, it provides a useful historical

background for understanding many of the problems that still beset Afghanistan. Robert D. Crews is currently Professor of History at Stanford University in California. Amin Tarzi is Director of Middle East Studies at the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia.

Haley Duschinsky, Mona Bhan, Ather Zia, and Cynthia Mahmood (Eds.), *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 312 pp., US \$79.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-8122-4978-1.

The contributors to this volume examine the political, social and legal aspects of India's occupation of Kashmir from the perspective of academic experts who have conducted field research in the region. The volume's chapters cover issues such as the state jurisdictional authority of the Majlis-e-Mushawarat in Kashmir; race, religion, and sexuality, including the committing of sexual crimes in Indian-occupied Kashmir; a profile of Mohammad Afzal Guru, a 32-year old Kashmiri, who was implicated and convicted in the armed attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001; how Indian state repression has traumatized the population under occupation in Kashmir; a critique of Indian policing in Kashmir; an account of the *azadi* independence movement's mobilization in Kashmir from 1930 to 1975 and beyond. The book also includes an examination of the relationship between commemoration of martyrdom and the formation of symbolic places such as martyrs' graveyards in Kashmir. As explained by Cynthia Mahmood in the concluding chapter, the authors "write from positions of solidarity with the people we study and learn from" (p. 286). Although highly critical of the Indian occupation of Kashmir, with alternative perspectives not included in these accounts, readers will still benefit from the authors' extensive first-hand familiarity with Kashmir.

C. Christine Fair and Sarah J. Watso (Eds.), *Pakistan's Enduring Challenges* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 320 pp., US \$69.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-8122-4690-2.

The contributors to this volume examine political and national security issues as well as the economic landscape of Pakistan and explore how it will impact on the country's post-2014 trajectory. As explained in the editors' introduction, three clusters of concerns and events are examined: Pakistan's domestic security situation, including the rise of Islamist militant groups; the inability to resolve internal conflicts over the role and nature of Islam in the state, including the sectarian conflicts between Sunni and Shia; and the "rapidly degrading security environment" caused by exogenous factors, particularly the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, "antagonistic" U.S. policies such as the drone campaign against the Taliban and al Qaida in Pakistan, and fluctuations in the Indo-Pakistan rivalry.

These issues are examined in the volume's eleven chapters, which are divided into three parts: Part I: "Security Challenges" (e.g. the militant groups in Pakistan and their implications for domestic and regional stability, efforts at collaboration among various Sunni Islamic movements in Pakistan, assessing the effectiveness and impact of the American armed drone campaign in Pakistan's northwest province, and prospects for the safety of the Pakistani nuclear arsenal). The chapters in Part II: "Domestic Political and Economic Issues," cover issues such as prospects for greater democracy in terms of civil-military relations and the rule of law, the new media landscape in terms of the use of social media, and economic challenges (particularly Pakistan's weak energy sector and inefficient and inequitable taxation system). The chapters in Part III: "Foreign Relations," examine the contentious relations between America and Pakistan and explore prospects for a "more normal" relationship between the two countries, the Pakistani public's attitudes towards America, Pakistan's diversification of its relations with countries such as China and Saudi Arabia, and the impact of the legacy in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan of Pakistan's harboring of militant groups in what the authors term "Pashtunistan." C. Christine Fair is Associate Professor in the Security Studies Program within the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, and Sarah J. Watson is an intelligence research specialist for the Counterterrorism Bureau of the New York City Police Department.

James P. Farwell, *The Pakistan Cauldron: Conspiracy, Assassination & Instability* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011), 360 pp., US \$29.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-5979-7982-5.

This is a highly informed account of the careers of A.Q. Khan (and his activities to build Pakistan's nuclear

capability), former prime minister Benazir Bhutto (who had attempted to reform Pakistan's politics, but was assassinated while campaigning to return to power), and former president Pervez Musharraf (who had attempted to "retain the government's credibility in the aftermath"), in terms of "what they did – and why and how" as these issues offer "critical insights into Pakistan's secretive, paranoid, dysfunctional government and politics" (p. xv). This is accomplished by applying the principles of strategic communication, which the author defines as "the use of words, actions, images, and symbols to mold or shape the attitudes and opinions of target audiences to influence behavior and advance interests, policies, and objectives. What politicians do not do – giving rise to strategic ambivalence – can matter as much as their actions" (p. xix). This framework, the author writes, is intended to provide American policy-makers and action officers an understanding of Pakistani politics, its leaders' perceptions of their national interests, including "how to force a viable partnership in combating al Qaeda and the Taliban," as well as other issues (p. xx). The author is a veteran U.S. Department of Defense consultant and academic scholar.

Khuram Iqbal, *The Making of Pakistani Human Bombs* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 232 pp., US \$89.00 [Hardcover], US \$44.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4985-1650-1.

This is an excellent conceptual and empirical examination of the causes, nature and manifestations of suicide bombings in Pakistan. To analyze these issues within the context of Pakistan, the author tests five causal factors found in the literature on suicide terrorism: nationalism or resistance to occupation; Islamist fundamentalism or Salafism; presumed effectiveness of the tactic; absolute or relative deprivation; and revenge. Following a chapter on the history of suicide attacks as a tactic of terrorism, these causal factors and the study's primary and secondary research questions are then applied to examining the landscape of suicide terrorism in Pakistan at the environmental level (Jihadism in Kashmir beginning in 1947, insurrection in East Pakistan beginning in 1971, Jihad in Afghanistan beginning in 1979, the emergence of the Afghan Taliban, the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan beginning in late 2001, and the Neo-Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the current period). The author also explores these issues on the organizational level (al Qaida, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Islam, and Ansar-ul-Islam) as well as the individual level, with the suicide bombers analyzed in terms of their origins, age, gender, education, economic, and marital status. In terms of their profiles, the author finds that "Suicide bombers significantly differ from non-suicidal militants, who tend to be in their late-20s, married, more educated and urban in their origins," with most suicide bombers "either illiterate or semi-illiterate..." (p. 115). In the conclusion, the author suggests that such a multilevel framework generates findings such as that "the campaign of self-immolation attacks in Pakistan is primarily driven by vengeance, with religious fundamentalism, poverty and perceived effectiveness of the tactic playing varying roles at the levels of individuals, organizations and environment" (p. 147). The author recommends that to counter suicide terrorism, whether in Pakistan or in other regions, "there is a need to create an environment that counteracts militants' radical ideologies and misinterpretation of Islam". Yet he concludes that "hard measures" are also required, "especially in view of ideological rigidity and uncompromising nature of the terrorist groups operating in Pakistan" (pp. 148-149). The book's appendices include a chronology of suicide attacks in Pakistan from 1995 to 2012 and a table profiling the suicide bombers involved. This book is a major contribution to the academic literature on suicide terrorism. The author is Assistant Professor of Counter-Terrorism at the National Defense University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Samina Yasmeen, *Jihad and Dawah: Exploring Narratives of Lashka-e-Taiba and Jamat ud Dawah* (London: Hurst & Company/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 256 pp., US \$45.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-8490-4710-4.

This is a sympathetic account of the emergence and transformation of the narratives of Lashkar-e-Taiba (Let) and its political arm, Jamat ud Dawah (JuD), since the early 1990s. Utilizing the author's extensive study of the movement's primary documents, it links the group's theologically-infused narratives to the process of increasing Islamization in Pakistan, with a particular focus on its conception of *da'wah* (proselytizing) and jihad within the Pakistani context. The role of women within this narrative is also discussed, as is the movement's attitude to the Pakistani government and military. The chapter on the "JUD and the Mumbai Attacks" on November 26, 2008, is especially interesting in demonstrating the JuD's obfuscatory-like denial of involvement with the

LeT, the attack's perpetrator, with a claim by Hafiz Saeed, its leader, that the JuD "was not affiliated" with the LeT, "but had instead been engaged in providing humanitarian assistance to millions of people in Pakistan and promoting Islamic teachings" (p. 165). In the concluding chapter, the author provides an interesting comparison of the JuD's narrative (with the movement also referred to as MDI – Markaz Ad-Da'awa Wal Irshad, the Center for Proselytization and Preaching) with those formulated by other jihadi groups such as al Qaida, Hizballah and Hamas in terms of their opposition to Western-influenced norms and rules, with the JuD's "preference for accommodation with domestic power structures [suggesting – JS] some similarities with Hizbullah..." (p. 235). The author is Director of the Centre for Muslim States and Societies and teaches Political Science and International Relations at the University of Western Australia, in Perth, Australia.

The Muslim Brotherhood, Global Jihad and Muslim Reformers

J. Bowyer Bell, *Murders on the Nile: The World Trade Center and Global Terror* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2003), 206 pp., US \$21.56 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-8935-5463-4.

In this book, the author, a veteran academic expert on terrorism, who passed away at age 71 around when this book was published, provides one of the finest accounts of the historical genealogy of terrorism that culminated in al Qaida's 9/11 attacks against the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon. Focusing primarily on Islamist terrorism's Egyptian origins, the author's account begins with the evolution of violent militant activities around the First World War and in its aftermath. It then continues with the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1920s, the writings of Sayyid Qutb in the 1950s, and the assassination of President Anwar Sadat on October 6, 1981, by al-Gama Islamiyya (and Ayman al-Zawahiri's involvement in the plot). Bell details how Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, the Islamist extremist who was associated with these groups, was able to enter the United States under false pretenses to set up the cell that carried out the first World Trade Center bombing on February 26, 1993. Other notorious terrorist figures are also discussed, such as el-Sayyid Nosair, who assassinated the Jewish militant rabbi Meir Kahane in New York on October 5, 1990. It was a time when the Islamist terrorist threat was still considered a primarily foreign, not an American problem. In an effort to balance his account, the author also discusses militant right-wing Jewish terrorism in Palestine in the 1940s, the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas attack against the Tokyo subway system on March 20, 1995, and Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. The author's conclusion is still pertinent: "The *jihadi* goal is absolute and cannot be accommodated by the elimination of grievance, through negotiation or by repression. The cause and core of *jihadi* terror is the conviction that only violence can assure the triumph of Islam and that such a triumph is possible" (p. 178). The book includes a useful glossary as well as a bibliographic essay.

Gerhard Bowering (Ed.), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 704 pp., US \$95.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-0691-3484-0.

This is a comprehensive and authoritative encyclopedia of Islamic political thought from the birth of Islam in the seventh century to the current period. More than 400, alphabetically arranged, entries, which are written by international specialists, address central themes, historical developments, sects and schools, regions and dynasties, modern concepts, institutions, movements, and parties, Islamic law and traditional Islamic societies, thinkers, personalities, and statesmen. Following the editor's introductory overview on "The Islamic World Today in Historical Perspective," for the terrorism and counterterrorism analytic community, topics of special interest include the entries on Afghanistan, anarchism, apocalypse, apostasy, Arab nationalism, Yasir Arafat, authority, ayatollah, Hasan al-Banna, Usama bin Laden, colonialism, communism, coup d'état, crusaders, dissent, opposition, and resistance, dissimulation, excommunication, fatwa, fundamentalism, grievance, Hamas, Hizballah, ideology, imperialism, Islamic Jihad, Islamization, *jahiliyya*, jihad, Ayatollah Khomeini, liberalism, liberation theology, martyrdom, messianism, modernism, modernity, Muslim Brotherhood, nationalism, Nation of Islam, nation-state, nonviolence, oath of allegiance, Palestine, Palestine Liberation Organization, Pan-Islamism, patrimonial state, patronage, philosophy, Pillars of Islam, pluralism and tolerance, police,

political ritual, preaching, propaganda, prophecy, al Qaida, racism, rebellion, revival and reform, revolutions, Salafis, Sayyid Qutb, secularism, shari'a, Shi'ism, socialism, sources of emulation, succession, suicide, Sunnism, terrorism, torture, treason, tribalism, Uighurs, 'ulama, usurper, utopia, violence, Westernization, and women.

The entry on terrorism, which is written by Thomas Hegghammer, describes it as “a politically charged concept with no commonly accepted definition” and that “The label ‘terrorist’ has pejorative connotations and is used by political actors, usually states, to delegitimize their militant opponents” (p. 545). He then makes the interesting point that “Terrorism as such is not treated in the Islamic legal tradition. The root of the modern Arabic word for terrorism (*irhab*) features in the Qur'an (8:60) in the general sense of ‘striking fear in the enemy,’ but *irhab* never emerged as a distinct conception of warfare or as a legal category (although many contemporary Muslim states have Western-inspired antiterrorist legislation). However, the rich Islamic legal tradition on warfare considered certain forms of violent activism and certain military tactics as illegitimate” (p. 545). While one might not necessarily agree with such a conceptual approach to defining terrorism, it is worth noting as an alternative interpretation of what others define as a military concept that is devoid of any “politically charged” or “delegitimizing” characterizations of groups and individuals that engage in this type of warfare. This encyclopedia is highly recommended as an indispensable reference resource on Islamic political thought in general and on terrorism-related subjects in particular.

Christine Douglass-Williams, *The Challenge of Modernizing Islam: Reformers Speak Out and the Obstacles They Face* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2017), 312 pp., US \$20.79 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-5940-3939-3.

This volume provides arguments for the need to reform and modernize Islam, particularly as it is practiced in the West. The author, a Canadian journalist and civil rights activist, bases her argument on a series of interviews with eight leading North American Islamic modernizers, such as Ahmed Subhy Mansour, Shireen Qudosi, Jalal Zuberi, Tawfik Hamid, Qanta Ahmed, Zuhdi Jasser, and Raheel Raza. These forms the basis for the discussion in the book's second half on the commonalities of their views. What are these modernizers' objectives? As the author explains, they seek to establish an alternative vision, in contra-distinction to the dogmatic literalism advocated by the Islamist extremists, in which the Quran's violent passages and other problematic Islamic texts are re-interpreted in a reformist manner. As the author writes, “For the purposes of this book, the word ‘moderate’ means a form of Islam that accepts pluralism and is compatible with modernity and Western democracy” (p. 8). As the author elaborates, “Reformists support the contention that Islam must undergo a transformation through the process of critical thinking and independent judgment, which is ‘ijtihad,’ to create a modernized translation or interpretation of the Quran. This means abrogating the violent or problematic texts of the Quran in favor of peaceful verses and new interpretation...” (pp. 181-182). It also implies rejecting “the right of the clergy’ to determine the meaning of difficult passages” (p. 182). In the conclusion, the author summarizes the book's main argument: “Reformists seek a modernized Islam in which mosque and state are separated, where diversity and pluralism – including discussions and criticisms of Islam – are collectively accepted, and where adherents of the faith do not risk physical danger if they choose to exercise the freedoms stipulated under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (p. 242). This approach to reforming Islam represents a minority within the Muslim world, but it is worth considering as one of the measures required in countering the theology/ideology driving militant Islamist terrorism.

Martyn Frampton, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the West: A History of Enmity and Entanglement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 672 pp., US \$35.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-6749-7070-0.

This is a comprehensive history of the 80-year long relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Western powers, particularly Britain and the United States, since the MB's establishment in Egypt in 1928. The period since the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011 is, however, not covered. This account's strength is that it is highly detailed and extensively researched, providing a fascinating window into the views and, on occasion, interactions between American and British diplomats and scholars, the various Egyptian governments, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The book is divided into two parts. The first part, “In the Shadow of Empire,” discusses the first encounters, primarily by the British and Egyptian governments with the MB during the

periods of 1928 to 1939, 1940 to 1944, 1944 to 1949, and 1950 to 1952. The second part, “In the Age of America,” covers the interactions between the United States, the Egyptian governments, and the MB during periods of upheaval in Egyptian history, such as from 1952 to 1954 (when the Army overthrew the monarchy), 1955 to 1970 (the age of Gamal Abdul Nasser); 1970 to 1989 (Anwar Sadat, the revival of Islamist fundamentalism, and the Mubarak regime); and from 1989 to 2010 (the strengthening of Islamist extremism).

In the view of this reviewer, this book offers a flawed account due to the author’s pro-MB biases, such as his portrayal of it as a primarily pragmatic organization whose “belief system” was a reaction towards “perpetual Western antagonism for Islam,” (p. 19) rather than, as seen by others, as a Middle Eastern-based fundamentalist religious theology/ideology that prefers the domination of authoritarian and harsh religious institutions and beliefs on society to begin with. Thus, it would be natural for such a traditional religious movement to feel threatened by Western values, which promote greater democracy, pluralism and secularism. An example of the author’s bias is his disparagement of Western criticism of the MB in the late 1940s as comprising “ultra-conservative, or rather, reactionary religious fanatics,” which was “opposed to ‘social progress,’” (p. 102) when this might have been an accurate characterization of the movement not only during that period, but also in the late 1950s during the period of Sayyid Qutb’s inflammatory writings. Despite this criticism, this book is still recommended for its detailed account of how Britain and the United States attempted to understand and deal with the MB, including how the Brothers were perceived by some Westerners as a “moderate” alternative, first to Communism (especially in the 1950s), and later to the Islamist extremism being spread by the Ayatollahs’ Iranian Revolution. The author is Reader in Modern History at Queen Mary University of London, England.

Hazem Kandil, *Inside the Brotherhood* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2015), 240 pp., US \$25.00 [Hardcover], US \$16.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-7456-8291-4.

This well-informed book examines several related questions: who are the Egyptian Muslim Brothers, what is the nature of their theology/ideology, how are their members recruited and socialized, how are their social networks constructed and sustained, how do they interact with each other, and how are their ideas about governing formulated and implemented in practice. The answers to these questions are the product of the author’s multi-year field study of the Muslim Brotherhood, especially in Egypt, where he interviewed and studied them from a close vantage point. With regard to the last question, on governing, the Muslim Brotherhood’s short period in power in Egypt is described by the author as one of “incompetence in government,” with “religion manipulated to explain away this incompetence. In a word, many began to suspect that Brothers flaunted Islam to excuse their bankruptcy and lurking authoritarianism” (p. 143). The fifth chapter, on “Islamism in Egypt and Beyond,” is especially interesting for its discussion of the impact of the Muslim Brotherhood theology/ideology on Egyptian militants, including al Qaida’s current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, as well as how its branches have interacted in revolutionary situations such as in Palestine, Syria, and Libya; in monarchies such as Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco; and as participants in government in Sudan and Tunisia. An Appendix explains the author’s theoretical framework in studying “how organizations employ ideas in macro-level power struggles” (p. 179). The author is University Lecturer in Political Sociology at the University of Cambridge, England, UK.

The Middle East

Scott Anderson, *Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2017), pp., US \$15.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-5254-3443-6.

This is an interesting account by a veteran American journalist of the causes of the Middle East’s unraveling, which began with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq in 2003 and was further exacerbated by the way the forces unleashed by the early 2011 Arab Spring led to further turmoil, fragmentation, and, in the cases of Libya, Syria, and Yemen, to state failure. The unleashing of such forces, the author observes, “helped call into question the very legitimacy of the modern Arab nation-state” (p. xxii). Also discussed are the rise

of the Islamic State and the catastrophic outflow of millions of Syrians who became refugees in neighboring countries and Europe. This also had repercussions for global jihadi terrorism, with the Islamic State's "cause being invoked by mass murderers in San Bernardino and Orlando and Munich," and "the issues of immigration and terrorism have become conjoined in many Westerners minds" as "key flash points in both the June 2016 Brexit vote in Great Britain and the 2016 American presidential election" (p. xxiii). To explain these issues, the author focuses on six individuals from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kurdistan, Libya, Syria, whose personal narratives are woven within the larger strands of the historical period covered in the book. Scott Anderson is a veteran war correspondent who has reported from Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Sudan and many other strife-torn countries.

Jill N. Claster, *Sacred Violence: The European Crusaders to the Middle East, 1095-1396* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 376 pp., US \$36.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4426-0060-7.

This is a comprehensive account of the history of the European Crusades in the Middle East, which began with the First Crusade called for by Pope Urban II in 1095 and extended to 1396, when the Christian forces were overwhelmingly defeated by the Ottoman Turks at Nicopolis, on the lower Danube River. As the author explains, the first crusaders "went as pilgrims to the Holy Land," with pilgrimage perceived as a "form of penance, usually imposed by a priest, undertaken as a way to seek forgiveness for sin; for some it was the path to martyrdom" (p. xvii). Later, the crusades became a component of the Christian "just war" "to recover Jerusalem, to right the wrong that was believed had been done to Christianity...and morally defensible" (p. xvii). It also became a "holy war, the war fought in the cause of religion..." (p. xviii). What makes the history of the crusades important to the current era, the author explains, are three factors. First, it paralleled the idea of holy war in Islam, particularly the ideology of the *jihad* as an inner personal struggle and an outward struggle to "preserve Islam from its enemies" (p. xviii). During the crusades the outward *jihad* was used "to rally the Muslims against the Christian invaders and reclaim the Holy Land" (p. xviii). Second, the author explains that "'Crusade' has become a battle cry for the American war against terror, and '*jihad*' has entered our vocabulary as a pejorative for the Islamic movements in the Middle East. Once again, the presenting cause is religion" (p. xviii). Finally, Jerusalem, as the Holy City, has remained the "chief protagonist" in the conflict, which is "why the holy sites were then – as now – so central to the religious beliefs of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and why so many thousands of people, for many hundreds of years, have willingly give up their lives to possess the Holy City" (p. xix). With the book's nine chapters providing an extensively researched narrative history of the crusades, it also includes an 8-page color insert of illustrations, more than 25 black-and-white illustrations, 12 maps, a chronology of the crusades, and a list of rulers. At the time the book was published, the author, who had passed away in November 2014, was Professor Emerita of Medieval History at New York University.

Eli Galia, *George Habash – Political Biography: Ideology and Politics in the Struggle for Palestine* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Resling, 2017), 450 pp., US \$24.91; ILS (Israeli Shekels) 89.00 [Paperback], no ISBN. In Hebrew. The book's ordering information is located at: http://www.resling.co.il/book.asp?series_id=&book_id=1002&back=catalog.

Dr. George Habash (1925 – 2008) was a Christian Palestinian who established the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in December 1967, and served as its Secretary-General until 2000, when he resigned due to ill-health. In this political biography, which is the only biography written about him, the author considers Habash as one of the central figures in Palestinian history and its Pan-Arab nationalist secular and "Marxist-Socialist" camp. The author divides Habash's political life into 9 historical periods: 1925 to 1951 (especially his early life in pre-Israeli independence Lydda and the formative impact of the Palestinian "Nakba" on his political views); 1952 to 1961 (when he received his medical degree in Beirut and his early political activism emerged when he founded the Arab Nationalist Movement and aligned it with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Arab nationalist ideology); 1961 to 1966 (when he shifted his focus towards Palestinian nationalism, and left Syria for Lebanon); 1967 (the impact of the defeat of Arab military forces by Israel in the June 1967 War and Israel's conquest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip); 1969 to 1970 (when George Habash led the "Popular National Marxist-Leninist Front"); 1971 to 1981 (his rivalry with the Yasir Arafat-led Fatah); 1982 to 1988 (the impacts of the Lebanese civil war and the beginning of the first Palestinian intifada against Israel); 1989 to 1993 (the achievements of the intifada and his opposition to the Oslo Agreement); and 1994 to

2000 (his opposition role in the Palestinian Authority and the end of his political activity).

In the conclusion, the author observes that one of the contradictions of Habash's political objectives was that his intellectual-led Marxist-Leninist movement was never able to build a bridge to the Palestinian masses, thus failing to become the "progressive vanguard of the Palestinian proletariat" (p. 397). The biography's focus is on George Habash's political activities, rather than his involvement in terrorism (the PFLP became notorious for its spectacular aircraft hijackings and bombings), so this is an incomplete biography. Nevertheless, it presents important insights into his political outlook over the years and, especially, his more secular approach to Palestinian nationalism which took a more religious turn in recent years. Hopefully, this biography will be translated into English so that it can be read more widely. The author is an Israeli-based historian on Middle Eastern studies.

Nikolaos Van Dam, *Destroying a Nation: The Civil War in Syria* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 336 pp., US \$15.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-7845-3797-5.

This is a balanced and well-informed account of the causes of the civil war in Syria, which began in early 2011, including a discussion of the prospects for its resolution. The account begins with an overview of the country's political history prior to the 2011 revolution, such as the basis for the Syrian sectarian-based national identity, the rise of the minority Alawite-dominated Ba'athist state and its relations with the Sunni majority, and the long-term rule by Hafiz al-Assad and his son, Bashar Hafiz al-Assad. In the second chapter, "Could the War in Syria Have Been Avoided?" the author observes that given the regime's superior military capabilities it believed that "with a militarization of its confrontation with the opposition, it would stand a much better chance of surviving..." (p. 81). Another reason for the regime's interest in pursuing the military option was its belief that political compromise with the opposition would have involved decentralizing the state, which would have implied that the Alawi-dominated regime would lose control over the entire country. (p. 95). The third chapter, "Confrontation Between the Military of the Regime and the Opposition," includes a useful account of the armed jihadi groups. The fourth chapter, "The Ambivalent Western Approach to the Syria Conflict," and the fifth chapter, "Intra-Syrian Talks But No Negotiations," provide a valuable roadmap of the Western, Arab League, Saudi Arabian, and Turkish initiatives to resolve the civil war. All of these ended in failure because, as the author writes, "the al-Asad regime turned out not to be serious about negotiations insofar as these would imply real power-sharing" (p. 167). In the conclusion, the author observes that "As long as no political compromise can be found, the Syrian War is bound to continue, and Syria may be divided into various zones of influence, until a political solution transpires" (p. 183). The author is a former Dutch Special Envoy for Syria, who, operating from Istanbul, maintained intensive contacts with most of the parties in the Syrian conflict.

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Bibliography: Terrorism and Ideology

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

[Bibliographic Series of Perspectives on Terrorism - BSPT-JT-2018-4]

Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on terrorism and ideology. It covers a broad spectrum of ideological aspects on the individual and organizational level (such as ideological foundations, concepts, and evolution of terrorist groups, ideological differences between terrorist organizations/ideologues, or ideology as a radicalization factor). Though focusing on recent literature, the bibliography is not restricted to a particular time period and covers publications up to May 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 broaden the search.

Keywords: bibliography; resources; literature; terrorism; ideology, ideological aspects, ideologues, Salafism, Wahhabism, Jihadism, doctrine, theory

NB: All websites were last visited on 25.05.2018. See also: Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

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Note

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Recent Online Resources for the Analysis of Terrorism and Related Subjects

Compiled and selected by Berto Jongman

Most of the items included below became available online in May and June 2018. They are categorised under these 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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About the Compiler: **Berto Jongman** is Assistant Editor of 'Perspectives on Terrorism'. He is a former Senior Military Intelligence Analyst and currently an International Consultant on CBRN issues. A sociologist by training, he also worked in the civilian sector for Swedish and Dutch research institutes. Drs. Jongman was the recipient of the Golden Candle Award for his *World Conflict & Human Rights Maps*, published by PIOOM. He is editor of the volume 'Contemporary Genocides' and has also contributed to various editions of 'Political Terrorism', the award-winning handbook of terrorism research, edited by Alex P. Schmid.

Conference Monitor/Calendar of Events

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), in its mission to provide a platform for academics and practitioners in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism, introduces a new online calendar, listing recent and upcoming academic and professional conferences, symposia and similar events that are directly or indirectly relevant to the readers of *Perspectives on Terrorism*. The calendar includes academic and (inter-) governmental conferences, professional expert meetings, civil society events and educational programs.

Starting with the June 2018 issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, the Conference Monitor will become a regular feature of our journal. We encourage readers to contact the journal's new Assistant Editor for Conference Monitoring, Reinier Bergema, and provide him with relevant information, preferably in the same format as the items listed below. He can be reached at < R.Bergema@terrorismanalysts.com >.

June 2018

3rd Annual Postgraduate Conference: Future Trends in Terrorism & Counterterrorism

Society for Terrorism Research

8 June, Swansea, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@SocTerRes](#)

Tech Against Terrorism & GIFCT (San Francisco Workshop)

Tech Against Terrorism & Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism

8 June, San Francisco, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@techvsterrorism](#)

Youth Radicalisation in Europe: A discussion with award-winning author Åsne Seierstad

Egmont Institute

11 June, Brussels, Belgium

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@Egmontinstitute](#)

Combating Transnational Threats: Policing Crime and Terrorism in a Borderless World

Center for Strategic & International Studies

14 June, Washington DC, United States

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@csis](#)

Counter Terrorism Conference

Salford University

19 June, Salford, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@SalfordUni_SPD](#)

Tech Against Terrorism & GIFCT - Australia Launch

Tech Against Terrorism & Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism

20 June, Sydney, Australia

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@techvsterrorism](#)

Winchester Peace Conference: Religion and Culture in Conflict and Peace

University of Winchester, Centre of Religion, Reconciliation and Peace

20-21 June, Winchester, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@_UoW](#)

ICSACT 2018: 20th International Conference on Strategic Approach to Countering Terrorism

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET)

25-26 June, Paris, France

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@wasetorg](#)

21st INTERPOL Police Training Symposium

INTERPOL & Korean National Police Agency

26-28 June, Asan, the Republic of Korea

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@INTERPOL_HQ](#)

Terrorism and Social Media International Conference

The Cyberterrorism Project

27-28 June, Swansea, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ctp_swansea](#)

July 2018

International Course on Jihadi Terrorism: Post-Caliphate Scenarios [Spanish]

Universidad Pablo Olavide

2-4 July, Seville, Spain

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: *n/a*

RAN Expert Meeting:

Resilience of Children against Radicalisation

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) EDU - HS&C

4 July, Warsaw, Poland

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

ICCWT 2018: 20th International Conference on Civil War and Terrorism

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET)

5-6 July, Singapore, Singapore

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@wasetorg](#)

ICT Executive Certificate Program in Counter-Terrorism Studies

International Institute for Counter-Terrorism

8-27 July, Herzliya, Israel

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ICT_org](#)

BASS18:

From Inspiration to Impact: Research into Understanding, Countering and Mitigating Security Threats

Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats

10-12 July, Lancaster, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@crest_research](#)

5th International Conference on Security Studies

Political Science Association of Kasetsart University

25-26 July, Bangkok, Thailand

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: *n/a*

ICNTP 2018: 20th International Conference on Nuclear Terrorism and Prevention*World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET)*

26-27 July, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@wasetorg](#)**August 2018****ICTR 2018: 20th International Conference on Terrorism and Radicalization***World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET)*

13-14 August, Prague, Czech Republic

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@wasetorg](#)**Violent Extremism, Terrorism, and the Internet: Present and Future Trends***VOX-Pol*

20-22 August, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@VOX_Pol](#)**Advanced Summer Programme: Preventing, Detecting and Responding to the Violent Extremist Threat***Leiden University Centre for Professional Learning*

20-24 August, The Hague, The Netherlands

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@UniLeidenCPL](#)**Advanced Summer Programme on Countering Terrorism within a Rule of Law Framework***International Centre for Counter Terrorism; Asser Instituut*

27-31 August, The Hague, The Netherlands

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ICCT_TheHague](#); [@TMCAsser](#)**September 2018****18th World Summit on Counter-Terrorism***The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT)*

3-6 September, Herzliya, Israel

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@ICT_org](#)**The Dynamics of Change in the Pakistan-Afghanistan Region: Politics, (Dis)integration and Reformation in the Borderland***University of Peshawar*

4-5 September, Peshawar, Pakistan

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: *n/a***12th Annual International Conference: Trauma, Cohesion and Security: Ongoing and Emerging Themes on Political Violence and Terrorism***Society for Terrorism Research*

6-7 September, Liverpool, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@SocTerRes](#)**RAN Expert Meeting: Learning from Adjacent Fields: Gangs***Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) EXIT*

10-11 September, Copenhagen, Denmark

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

RAN Study Visit:**Prevention of Radicalisation in Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities**

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)

11-12 September, Malmö, Sweden

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

RAN Expert Meeting:**Optimising Triple P: Police – Prison – Probation**

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) POL, RAN P&P

20-21 September, Dublin, Ireland

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

RAN Expert Meeting:**The Role of “Informal Actors” in Preventing Violent Extremism**

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) C&N

20-21 September, Helsinki, Finland

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

RAN Expert Meeting:**Delivering Testimonials Effectively**

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) NVT

20-21 September, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

Tackling Radicalisation in Education Conference 2018

Inside Government

27 September, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: n/a

RAN Expert Meeting:**Working with Local Communities in CVE**

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) LOCAL, RAN YFC

28 September, Berlin, Germany

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)

About the Compiler: Reinier Bergema is a Strategic Analyst at The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS). His research focus includes radicalisation and Dutch (jihadist) foreign fighters. He is project leader of HCSS' *Jihadist Foreign Fighter Monitor* (JihFFMON).

About *Perspectives on Terrorism*

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 at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com>.

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.

Perspectives on Terrorism has sometimes been characterised as ‘nontraditional’ in that it dispenses with some of the rigidities associated with commercial print journals. Topical articles can be published at short notice and reach, through the Internet, a much larger audience than subscription-fee based paper journals. Our on-line journal also offers contributors a higher degree of flexibility in terms of content, style and length of articles – but without compromising professional scholarly standards.

The journal’s Research Notes, Special Correspondence, Op-Eds and other content are reviewed by members of the Editorial Board, while its Articles are peer-reviewed by outside academic experts and professionals. While aiming to be policy-relevant, PT does not support any partisan policies regarding (counter-) terrorism and waging conflicts. Impartiality, objectivity and accuracy are guiding principles that we require contributors to adhere to. They are responsible for the content of their contributions and retain the copyright of their publication.

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