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Words of Welcome from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume XIV, Issue 1 (February 2020) of *Perspectives on Terrorism* (PoT – ISSN 2334-3745). Our free and independent online journal is a publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), Vienna, and the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) of Leiden University's Campus in The Hague. All PoT issues are available at https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism and indexed by JSTOR, SCOPUS, and GoogleScholar.

Now in its fourteenth year, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has nearly 8,900 registered 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, Resources and other content are subject to internal editorial quality control.

Here is a brief look at the contents of the current issue. The first research article, by Joseph Franco, draws lessons from the 2017 Battle for Marawi in the Philippines that can help identify alternative measures to detect sources of violent extremism, such as the responsiveness of local governments, poverty levels, and the effectiveness of educational institutions. Next, Abhinav Pandya examines how Kashmir is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the influence and operations of transnational terrorist groups. Both articles are based on in-depth field research.

The Articles section is followed by four Research Notes. In the first of these, Michael Fürstenberg and Carolin Görzig apply a conceptual framework of organizational learning to explain the strategic evolution of jihadist groups, particularly Al-Qaeda and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. Next, Linda Wendelberg examines whether the psychological condition known as Existential Anxiety could be a risk factor in radicalization processes. Neil Bowie follows with a Research Note describing 30 new databases on terrorism. And this section concludes with a Research Note by Meili Criezis, examining the ways in which Islamic State supporters on Telegram, an encrypted messaging application, renegotiate gender boundaries.

The Resource section begins with a book review by Alex Schmid of the recently published *Handbook of Terrorism and Counter Terrorism Post 9/11*. Then Joshua Sinai presents more than 60 books by listing their tables of contents, while Associate Editor Judith Tinnes continues her series of extensive hand-searched bibliographies with one on deradicalisation research, and another on terrorism and Iran. These are followed by Associate Editor Berto Jongman's regular survey of new web-based resources on terrorism and related subjects. Brody McDonald (who has taken over the journal's theses surveys from Ryan Scrivens) provides a list of M.A. and Ph.D. theses on terrorism, violent extremism and nationalism, followed by an overview of recent and upcoming conferences, symposia and workshops on terrorism-related subjects by Olivia Kearney (who temporarily took over the work of Reinier Bergema for this section).

Finally, the February issue concludes with an announcement about the annual TRI Thesis Award for the Best Doctoral Dissertation on Terrorism and/or Counter-Terrorism, and a separate Words of Appreciation to all the peer reviewers, Editorial Board members and Editorial Team of *Perspectives on Terrorism* for another successful year as evidenced by its place among the top three journals in the field:

Comparison of Peer Reviewed Journals in Terrorism Studies (Google Scholar Feb. 14, 2020)

Publication	***h5-index***	***h5-median***
Studies in Conflict and Terrorism	32	51
Terrorism and Political Violence	31	48
Perspectives on Terrorism	26	52

The current issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* has been put together by Co-Editor James Forest and Editor-in-Chief, Alex P. Schmid, with the support of Associate Editor for IT Christine Boelema Robertus, and with the help of Editorial Assistant Jodi Moore. The next issue of the journal is tentatively scheduled as a Special Issue on terrorism in the North Caucasus region, guest edited by Julie Wilhelmsen from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

Detecting Future 'Marawis': Considering Alternative Indicators for Assessing the Potential for New Manifestations of Violent Extremism in Mindanao

by Joseph Franco

Abstract

The 2017 Battle for Marawi was the proverbial perfect storm—the Maute Group (MG) and its allies were opportunistic actors who exploited the violent milieu provided by the city. Marawi's prevailing insecurity, its built environment, and alienated population coalesced into a setting conducive for the protracted battle. What are the potential indicators that could detect future 'Marawis'? This article highlights the need to identify alternative measures to detect sources of violent extremism in Mindanao. Greater foresight could be obtained by observing proxy indicators such as the responsiveness of local governments, poverty levels, and the effectiveness of educational institutions. Based on field visits conducted for this article, the hinterlands of Maguindanao may be the most likely enclave for new MG-style groups.

Keywords: Mindanao, Terrorism, Philippines, Countering Violent Extremism, Counter-terrorism

Introduction

The 2017 Battle for Marawi was the proverbial perfect storm—the so-called Maute Group (MG) and its allies were opportunistic actors who exploited the violent milieu provided by the city. Fighting in the Islamic city of Marawi erupted on 23 May 2017 after an operation was launched by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) special operations forces (SOF) to capture Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of Islamic State-pledged (IS) militants in Mindanao. What was planned as a swift raid transformed into a confused running gun battle against hundreds of Maute Group (MG) members, other Filipino militants, and foreign terrorist fighters. The raid preempted the MG's plan to take over Marawi on 26 May 2017. Months before the siege, the MG had planned to time their attack to coincide with the start of the holy month of Ramadan.

After five months of fighting, no more than a dozen of the original 200 or so MG fighters survived. However, similar groups may yet emerge even after the demise of the MG leadership. Given the possibility of a resurgence among jihadist-inspired groups, what are the potential indicators that could detect future 'Marawis'? Reliance on security sector-measures such as the number of previous violent incidents has only limited early-warning utility. It may be more productive to look at other indicators such as the responsiveness of local government units, poverty levels, and the effectiveness of educational institutions.

Based on an initial assessment of potential proxy indicators for violent extremism and field visits to Mindanao, the hinterlands of Maguindanao may be the most likely enclave for new MG-style groups. It is unlikely that another urban centre in Mindanao would experience a protracted battle like the one in Marawi. However, the presence of un- and mis-governed spaces populated by an organised armed and/or criminal group can be a viable recruitment site for foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and other violent extremist organisations (VEOs). There remains the possibility of a VEO similar to the MG emerging in the so-called 'SPMS Box' (see figure 1 below) in the Maguindanao province. The 'SPMS Box' is a 10,000-hectare subregion in Maguindanao province named after the municipalities of **S**hariff Aguak, **P**agatin, **M**amasapano, and Datu **S**alibo.

Methodology

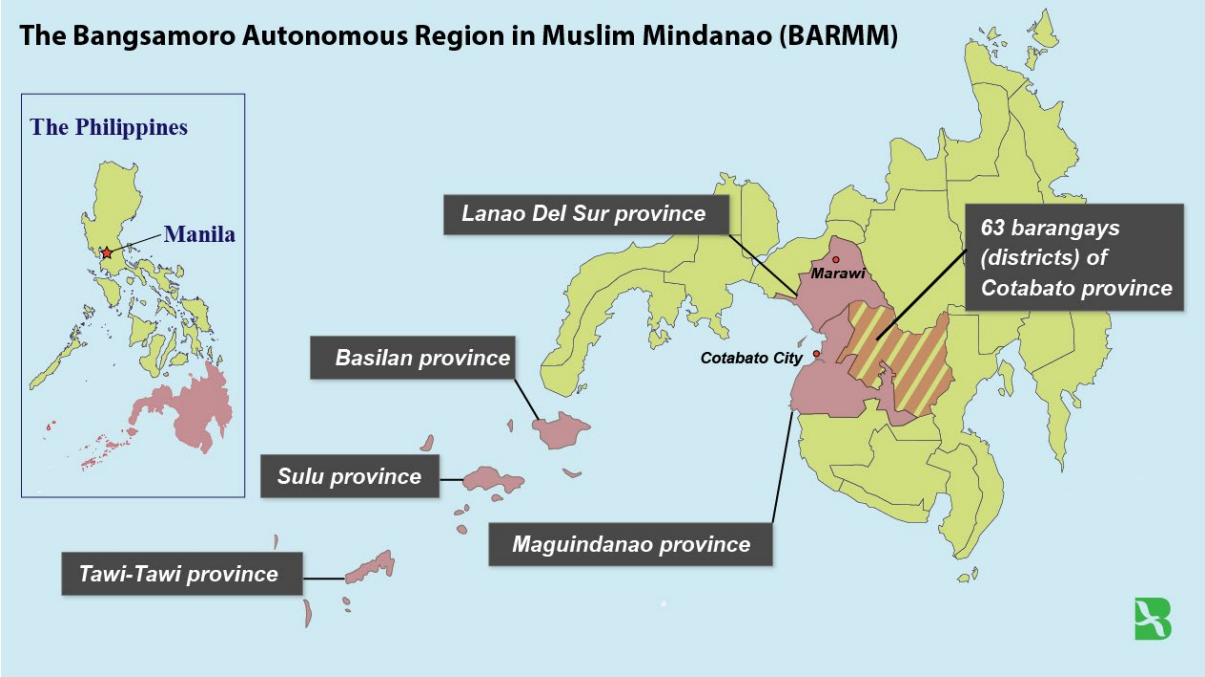
This article intends to shed light on often-overlooked issues, aside from ideological explanations, which contribute to the emergence and persistence of VEOs. During several research trips to Mindanao cities and

municipalities, 30 subject-matter experts were interviewed by the author. Field visits covered the provinces of Misamis Oriental (Cagayan de Oro City), Lanao del Norte (Iligan City), Lanao del Sur (the Islamic City of Marawi and Butig municipality), and Maguindanao. Sites visited include the heavily damaged city of Marawi; the abandoned Butig municipal hall; the ancestral home of the Maute clan; and Cotabato City, the de facto capital of the new BARMM.

Background

More than two years after the Battle for Marawi, over 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are still barred from returning to the city.[1] Frustration over the slow pace of Marawi's rehabilitation has raised concerns that the devastated city may become a symbol for terrorist recruitment not just in the province of Lanao del Sur but also across Mindanao.[2] Zachary Abuza has even remarked that Manila need not look far as botching the rebuilding effort meant "[the] next Marawi will be Marawi."[3]

Map 1: BARMM



(Source: Benar News)

Hopes for peace in Mindanao are now pinned on the 80-persons strong Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA). On March 29, 2019, the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) inaugurated the BTA to take on legislative and executive functions. Under the BARMM, conflict-affected areas were granted enhanced political autonomy and given economic resources to address long-standing issues exploited by VEOs. It was the culmination of a decades-long peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a group that originally sought to carve out an independent state in Muslim Mindanao.

There are two sets of hurdles for the effective implementation to the BARMM. In the short-term, optimism over the ability of the BARMM to deliver results has waned. Implementing guidelines covering the hiring of civil servants, budgeting, and the awarding of contracts is not yet finalised. Lack of clarity over the day-to-day operations of the regional government could stymie much-needed socio-economic interventions. In the long-term, the BARMM needs to confront the persistent challenges of local corruption and illicit economies. The dominance of political clans in Mindanao is the manifestation of such local-level dysfunctions.

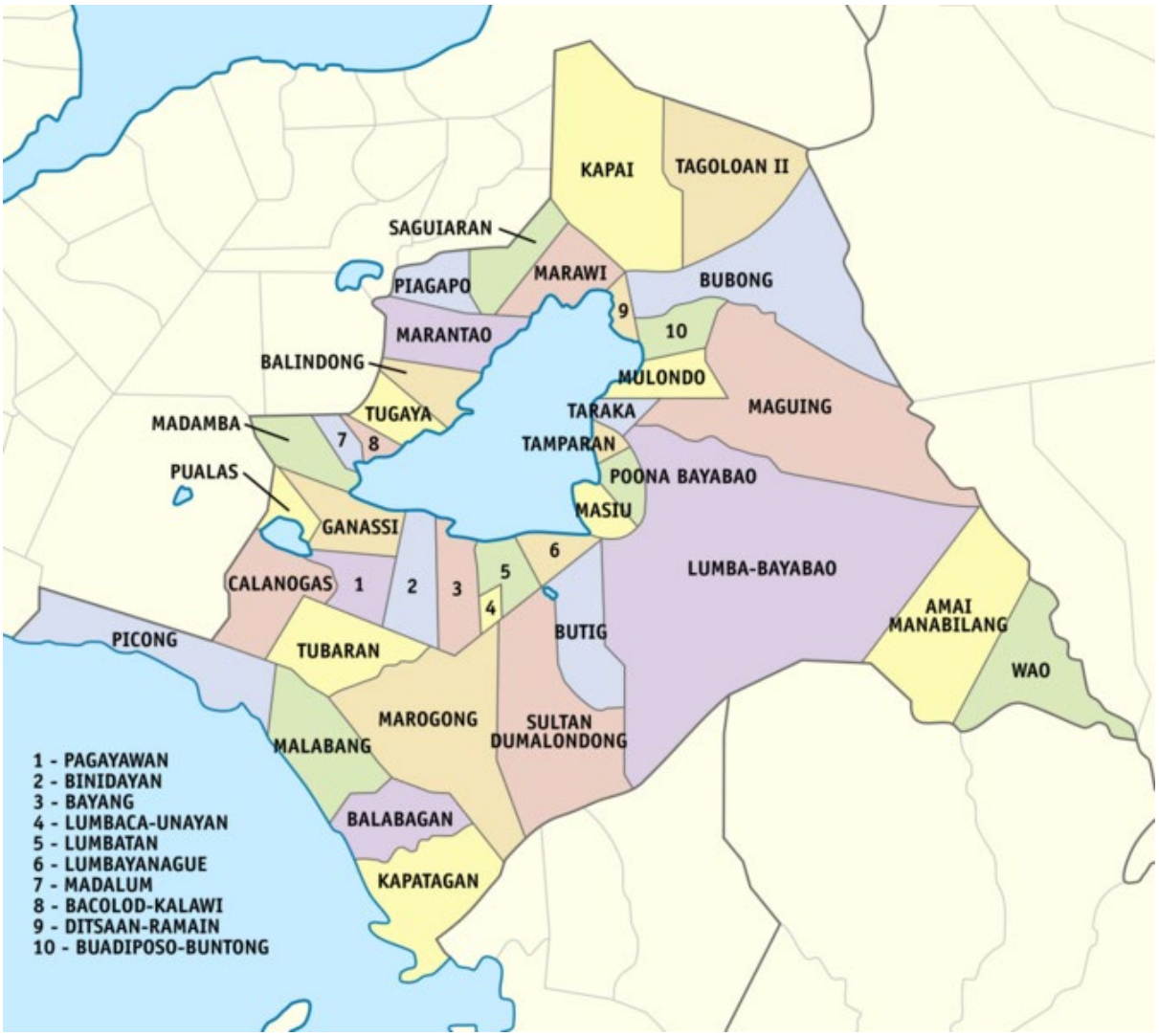
The 2019 Philippine midterm elections saw the continuity of dynastic politics, including the use of violence.

While Mindanao was under martial law, this had not dissuaded clans from 'business-as-usual'—committing illegal acts during the campaign and the polling periods. Even Marawi itself reported brazen vote-buying activities months before the plebiscite that ratified the establishment of the BARMM.[4] Explosions rocked Maguindanao province and Cotabato City on the eve of the plebiscite.[5] Also documented were reports of vote-counting machines either being tampered with or destroyed.[6]

Marawi and the Rise of the Maute Clan

Prior to the Marawi siege, the city was considered as one of the centres of illicit economic activity in Mindanao.[7] The purported exclusivist mindset of the Maranaos residing in Marawi foiled the ability of local law enforcement to build trusting partnerships with its residents.[8] When fighting began in the Marawi's suburbs, local community leaders initially rebuffed assistance from the military; stressing that Maranao problems could only be solved by Maranaos. This sentiment even extended to the widespread belief among Marawi's displaced residents that military forces deliberately razed and looted the city.[9] The recurring narrative among the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Marawi is about how "Manila destroyed Marawi."[10] High levels of criminality in the city also resulted in a built environment where families kept arms caches and fortifications.[11]

Map 2: Lanao del Sur Province



(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Local government officials initially thought that the Maute clan was just bringing in illicit wealth for safekeeping within the city and allegedly tolerated the entry of the MG leadership, specifically the Maute brothers Omar and Abdullah.[12] Aside from financial considerations, Marawi's former mayors facilitated the entry of the MG. Brothers Pre and Solitario Salic who were engaged in a *rido* [clan war] with the incumbent vice governor of Lanao del Sur province, Bombit Adiong. Adiong was able to convince the Philippine Army brigade commander to put pressure on the rival Salic clan. In turn, the Salic clan sought help from their Maute clan relatives in the neighbouring town of Butig.[13]

The evolution of the MG is emblematic of how local conflicts from the provincial to the village level can lead to the emergence of groups like the Islamic State-linked (IS) MG. The MG mimicked IS imagery to differentiate itself from other clans' private armies.[14] Before 2016, the MG started as a private militia of the Romato and Maute clans in the Lanao del Sur province. Abdullah and Omar Maute, scions of the Maute clan, took an extremist turn when the clan's favoured candidate lost the mayoral post in Butig municipality. Butig became associated with the terrorist group after a series of military offensives in late 2016. Troops from the Philippine Army's 49th Infantry Battalion (49IB) now occupy Butig—the birthplace of the MG.

Prior to this escalation, the then-unnamed MG was a private militia for the clan headed by its matriarch Farhana Maute, intimidating other clans that contested it in local elections in the province.[15] Clansmen used coercion to mobilise votes and extort contractors involved in public works projects.[16] In 2016, the MG gained public notoriety after having raised a black flag associated with IS in the abandoned old municipal hall of Butig. What began as an attempt to intimidate local rivals caught the attention of IS-linked personalities beyond the Philippines.[17] This show of force was prompted by the loss of the Maute clan's favoured candidate for the mayoralty of Butig and the subsequent disruption of illicit financing.[18]

What became known only more recently was that the origins of the MG as a militia goes back to a specific clan crisis. Farhana Maute entered the clan into a pyramid scheme in 2012, seeking to launder funds it obtained after skimming off funds from government infrastructure projects. However, the venture failed. For the MG, the combination of financial and electoral losses meant the collapse of a decades-long network of patronage. To protect itself from loan sharks, the clan organised in 2015 an armed group as a "defence measure" in 2015.[19] Had they not taken up arms and organised a militia, the Maute clan would have been very vulnerable to a *rido* waged by their creditors.

The Maute Group During and After the Battle for Marawi

The destruction of the MG as an organised armed group came in the wake of the Battle for Marawi. After five months of fighting, no more than a dozen of the original 200 or so MG fighters who attacked the city had survived.

Different respondents came to the same conclusion that the presence of FTFs in the city was limited. During the initial hours of the siege, an 80-strong band of local gunmen he heard speaking in Maranao seized Father Chito Soganub.[20] Soganub was the only Catholic priest permanently assigned in Marawi since 1995. During Soganub's 116 days in captivity, he recalled that he saw 10–12 FTFs among the 80-strong Maute unit based inside the mosque. He assessed that the FTFs were either Indonesians or Malaysians. In his opinion, the FTFs were "not impressive" and appeared to have "no [combat] experience." They appeared more eager to attain martyrdom and would gleefully explain to him that they wished to die in combat to ascend to heaven.

From a special operator's perspective, the presence of foreign fighters was "negligible."[21] As an illustrative example, one Philippine Army officer recalled how his unit was able to recover the cadaver of one "tall, fair-skinned" fighter but was unable to determine his nationality. One Indonesian straggler was captured, days after the end of major combat operations in the city.

Nonetheless, remnants of the MG were able to evade capture in Marawi and sought refuge in rural municipalities of the Lanao del Sur province. Three "hard-core" MG members remained active.[22] After the Battle of Marawi,

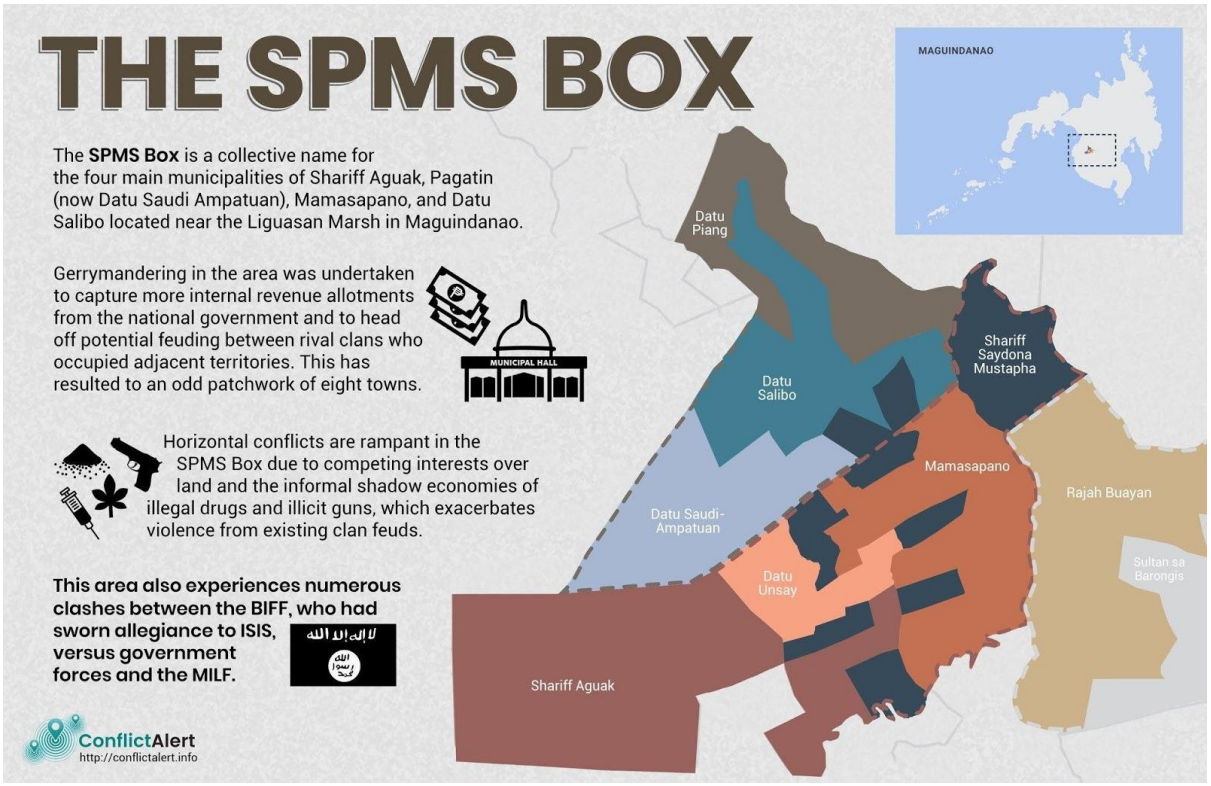
the Philippine Army's 49th Infantry Battalion was involved in two skirmishes in neighbouring municipalities of Masiu and Tubaran, both in the Lanao del Sur province. Contrary to Marawi, Masiu and Tubaran saw no involvement of FTFs. The actual number of armed fighters accompanying the late Abu Dar varied from 10–50 individuals and varied from place to place. In areas where his clan wields more influence, Abu Dar had 50 men to protect him. In villages where his clan's presence is weak, he mustered only 10–15 men. In spite of Abu Dar's efforts, foreign funding remained elusive and the MG lost contact with its foreign supporters.[23] Abu Dar was subsequently killed in a military operation in March 2019.[24]

Where Is the Next Maute Group?

While the MG leadership has been eliminated and its members practically dissolved, similar groups may yet emerge. Maguindanao province is estimated to have around 10 FTFs, according to community leaders.[25] Overall, there are around two dozen FTFs monitored across mainland Mindanao, with a similar number in the island provinces.[26] However, reliable evidence of the emergence of leaders like the Maute brothers, with international connections has yet to surface.

Based on findings from field visits conducted for this article, the most likely enclave for MG-style groups is in the adjoining province of Maguindanao. Maguindanao's is the location of the so-called 'SPMS Box'. The Box has a disproportionately high number of violent incidents in the history of conflict in Mindanao.[27] In 2008, former MILF members launched attacks across the SPMS Box and the adjoining provinces of Lanao del Norte and North Cotabato to protest the collapse of peace talks between the administration of then Philippine president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the MILF. It was the catalyst for the creation of a MILF splinter group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

Figure 1: The SPMS Box



(Source: Conflict Alert)

Present in the Box is a critical mass of armed fighters that could follow the trajectory of the MG.[28] Around 100 members of a private militia, affiliated with the Ampatuan clan, are hiding in the Box.[29] These individuals are in flight from the police after the 2009 Maguindanao Massacre, which saw the killing of 57 journalists by the Ampatuans. These armed individuals often act as mercenaries for other political clans, especially in the run-up to a local election.[30] There are concerns that the Box can provide opportunities for local and FTF groups to converge and exchange terrorist techniques.

However, similar to the Battle for Marawi, the impact of FTFs in the province appear limited at present. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) recovered from the province remained unchanged and do not show indications of foreign influences.[31] A "handful" of FTFs are suspected to be in the SPMS box. Expectations of receiving financial resources from the Middle East, which, however, remain unfulfilled, motivated their local hosts.[32] For the time being, FTFs just provide a degree of prestige to their local hosts.

The Limited Role of Madrasahs

The MG was monitored as it was attempting to "influence" madrasahs and to "take advantage" of lax education accreditation schemes.[33] Nevertheless, these overtures were not successful. Local Islamic teachers in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao were actively contesting jihadist narratives at the village level.[34] In Maguindanao, it was noted that aside from religious instruction, indigenous forms of conciliation mechanisms have successfully mitigated conflict. The so-called 'Iranun corridor" in Northern Maguindanao is bracketed by areas influenced by the Maute Group and the BIFF.[35] Yet, Iranun areas have remained free of jihadist-inspired violence.

In the case of the MG, their recruitment process was premised mostly on financial gain. Young recruits were enticed by cash payments and access to firearms.[36] Parents of recruits were told that their children would be sent to vocational schools in the Marawi and Cotabato City. The MG leadership themselves were products of an elite Christian college in Marawi.[37] It is unclear whether either Omar or Abdullah Maute were educated in the Middle East (Egypt) or South Asia (Pakistan)—such claims may have been part of personal myth-making.[38]

Instead of looking at religious schools, a more accurate indicator of levels of youth radicalisation could perhaps be found in observing secular schools. In Marawi, Mindanao State University (MSU) was exploited by the Maute clan as a recruiting ground for disaffected youths.[39] In Cotabato City, vocational institutions such as the Cotabato City State Polytechnic was the source of recruits that would ultimately be proficient in bomb making.[40]

The New Bangsamoro and Violent Extremism

Monitoring the situation in Cotabato City goes beyond looking at its educational institutions. The effectiveness of governance in Cotabato City, the de facto capital of the new BARMM, could be a bellwether for future trends, including those related to violent extremism.

On January 21, 2019, a plebiscite was held to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). The referendum garnered 1.5 million 'Yes' votes with only 199,000 'No' votes. A new Bangsamoro region replaced the now-defunct Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The BARMM included more than 60 additional villages contiguous to the ARMM, as well as Cotabato City. The BOL was the culmination of the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), which signed by the government of Philippines and the MILF. Both the top leadership of the Philippine government and the MILF have heralded the event as the beginning of meaningful governance.

However, the BTA has had a shaky start. For instance, the appointment process for youth representatives was "haphazard", with some appointees stripped of their designation at the last minute.[41] Another issue raised was the domination of the BTA members from the Maguindanao ethnic group, which was only one out of

13 Filipino Muslim groups.[42] High expectations over what the BARMM can deliver cannot not match the intricate details that need to be resolved in the short-term. The priority for the BTA is on "daily needs" of residents of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).[43] However, the challenges faced by the BTA is the absence of several key policy instruments - namely the Electoral Code, the Administrative Code, and the Budget Code for the BARMM. Without these codes, the BARMM will not be able to recruit and retain members of the civil service, undertake procurement, and conduct BARMM-wide elections.

Delays in infrastructure projects can be the catalyst for frustration among Cotabato City residents and the Bangsamoro as a whole.[44] A pessimistic assessment warned that if there are no meaningful projects completed in six months, residents of the BARMM may take that as a "tipping point" for the resurgence of anti-government sentiments.[45] MILF members are apparently feeling left out of high-level discussions between the Manila and Cotabato-based elites. The advocacy for the BARMM has reversed from a grassroots effort to a more top-down arrangement.

From a security point of view, the multitude of security mechanisms may prove paralysing to the BARMM. The command-and-control arrangements for the Cotabato City police force are one example. Units in the city are under the control of Police Regional Office (PRO) XII, a PRO adjacent to the now-defunct PRO of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. Police officers in Cotabato City were given the option of joining the PRO-BARMM or returning to their 'mother unit'. Some police personnel refused to join the PRO-BARMM for fear that it would be politicised.[46]

If the mood in Cotabato City is to be the gauge, the question is no longer whether there will be frustration and impatience at the grassroots level. Without tangible improvements to peace and development, the Bangsamoro constituency may be disillusioned and trigger another cycle of secessionist-inspired violence. The challenge now for the BTA is to manage frustrations in the short-term while building sustainable institutions by 2022. Mindanao is no stranger to how violent extremist groups can thrive and exploit governance vacuums. As BARMM Chief Minister Murad remarked, "…the success of our [Bangsamoro] government is the best antithesis to violent radicalism."[47]

Proxy Indicators to Detect Future 'Marawis'

This article highlights the need to identify alternative measures to detect more sources of violent extremism in Mindanao. The lack of good governance and the levels of clan conflict appear to be the most promising indicators for future 'Marawis' in central Mindanao. Recruitment remains a clan-based and community-level activity. In turn, weak governance structures can incentivise the creation of private militias as a hedge against uncertainty. At worst, what starts as self-organised groups for communal defence can trigger a security dilemma as clans become inadvertently locked in a spiral of escalation with other militias. More than two years after Marawi, the socio-economic and political context that gave rise to the Maute Group remains largely unchanged.

Illicit economic activities by organised crime groups, whether committed directly or in cooperation with militias, can be considered as an indicator. Another quantifiable proxy indicator is the presence or absence of an entrenched criminal syndicate in a locality. Criminal syndicates when threatened by political and economic stressors can be compelled to embark on more violent trajectories—as seen in the evolution of the MG as an organisation. This implies closer cooperation between government agencies—going beyond combined law enforcement and military operations, to systematic inclusion of financial intelligence organisations. Instead of focusing primarily on tracking down personalities or groups espousing violent extremist ideology, it may be more prudent to include collection and production of intelligence on organised crime groups in proximity to known militant strongholds.

Detecting any future 'Marawis' would also entail monitoring non-traditional measures that may not be directly related to CVE or security initiatives. Statistics on municipal or even village-level economic inequality, out-of-school youth, and even incidents of financial fraud can serve as early-warning indicators. Reliance on security

sector-measures such as the number of violent incidents has limited early-warning utility. An initial test for the validity of these proposed proxy measures of violent extremism could involve comparisons between different localities in the BARMM. For instance, municipal and village-level statistics on income inequality from conflict-affected and conflict areas can be compared. A succeeding test can entail using the presence of armed conflict as a control variable to determine the effect of income inequality. The same two-step process can be repeated for other proposed proxy measures to detect future 'Marawis'.

Conclusion

What needs to be further examined if there are the ideological shifts occurring VEOs in Mindanao. Subject matter experts interviewed expressed surprise at the seemingly minimal use of MG- and IS-inspired groups of social media to recruit new members. Getting individuals to join remains a clan-based and community-level activity in Mindanao. It is also very striking that suicide attacks are not a common fixture in the repertoire of Filipino militants. Even the five-month-long siege in Marawi saw the conspicuous absence of suicide IEDs or vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs). The Battle for Marawi was an existential fight to the finish for the MG and its allies. If Marawi was not enough to prompt the MG to use more lethal measures such as VBIEDs, then it is hard to think of a conflict with even higher stakes.

In short, the apocalyptic ideology of IS has not been fully conveyed to Filipino militants—it was better to try to live to fight another day. Material gains through terrorist means remain the most potent driver that sustain and incentivise non-state armed groups in the Philippines. In such a scenario, ideology justifies and legitimises terrorist tactics. The oft-assumed role of ideology in motivating violence is flipped on its head. Even with the demise of IS and its allies, it is unlikely that violent extremism would disappear overnight in Mindanao or the Philippines as a whole. While not posing an existential threat, VEOs would remain a persistent challenge. Clearly, there are many potential areas of study that can be pursued to head off any future "extremisms."

About the Author: **Joseph Franco** *is a Research Fellow at the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. As Research Fellow with CENS, Joseph examines terrorist networks in Southeast Asia and CVE best practices. Joseph previously worked for the Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and the J3, AFP. He provided consulting services for the enhancement of internal security operations; deployment of peacekeeping forces; and special operations forces. Joseph has also done consulting work in the fields of strategic communications and Asia-Pacific security.*

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The Threat of Transnational Terrorist Groups in Kashmir

by Abhinav Pandya

Abstract

The present analysis is based mainly on personal local observations in Kashmir. The situation on the ground is vulnerable and can facilitate the penetration of transnational terrorist groups (TTGs) in Kashmir as parts of society are going through intense radicalization. Militancy, in ideology and tactics, is increasingly assuming Syria-Iraq-Afghanistan style features, with IED attacks and suicide bombing becoming more widespread. New terrorist organizations like ISJK (Islamic State of Jammu and Kashmir), and AGuH (Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind) fight for the idea of an Islamic Kashmir. The conflict is passing into a new phase of internationalization, and the penetration of TTGs is a part of that process. The recent abolition of Kashmir's special status, addressed in a Postscript, is likely to strengthen the alienation and, hence, create enabling conditions for TTGs to establish a firm foothold in Kashmir.

Keywords: Kashmir conflict, India, TTGs, Al Qaeda, IS, ISJK, radicalization, Wahhabism, AGuH, Political Islam, fidayeen, alienation, Article 370

Introduction

On 9th July, AQ chief Zawahiri released a video message calling Kashmir-based jihadist groups to "single-mindedly focus on inflicting unrelenting blows on the Indian Army and government so as to bleed the Indian economy and make India suffer sustained losses in manpower and equipment."[1] In a video, exclusively focused on Kashmir, he also shunned Pakistan as no longer being a trustworthy ally for the liberation of Kashmir. He accused Pakistan of betraying the cause of jihad and helping the 'crusaders'. Zawahiri also said that Kashmir is a bleeding wound in our heart, "...a tragedy made even direr by the fact that they are caught between Hindu brutality on one hand and the treachery and conspiracies of Pakistan's intelligence agencies on the other hand."[2]

Al Qaeda first stated its ambitions of creating an Islamic emirate in South Asia by obliterating the boundaries created by the British in 2014 when AQIS—the acronym for Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent—began taking entire South Asia in its ambit, thereby showing AQ's disregard for the existing boundaries of sovereign states in South Asia. Since then, AQ has been making attempts to expand in India. While these attempts have so far not resulted in substantial success, according to the author's informed sources in India's intelligence circles, AQ has made inroads in the Indian hinterland and even in South India.[3] Nevertheless, Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGuH), AQ's Kashmir affiliate, is still considered a fledgling one by prominent strategic analysts and the intelligence brass of India.

Kashmir had already figured in AQ videos on South Asia many years ago, although not very prominently. In 2006, Zawahiri had praised the jihadist organizations fighting against the Indian government in Kashmir.[4] More recently, in December 2017, an Urdu-language video clip of *Nasheed* (Islamic chants) titled "Kashmir Lost but not Forgotten," was released by AQ's as-Sahab Media Foundation.[5]

Like in the past, many of India's top terrorism experts and security mandarins in Delhi are likely to treat Zawahiri's most recent video message as another desperate attempt to find a foothold—high on optics and weak on real substance. The Indian intelligence brass is still dominated by the old school of thought, which tends to believe that the possibility of a ramping up of the activities of international terrorist actors in Kashmir theatre is remote. Their views are the result of previous experiences. Their generation had dealt with the Kashmir problem very tactfully so that it quite successfully escaped the spread of Taliban, AQ, and other international actors in the past, thereby largely remaining a localized conflict theatre. Besides, the situation on the ground, of the regional affiliates of AQ and IS, indicates that they are in poor shape, lacking cadres, weapons, and

organizational integrity. Overall, a massive crackdown on militancy since 2016 has neutralized all the top commanders and ushered in a feeling of fatigue among them.[6] Their finances are exhausted, and there is a considerable dearth of weapons. Recruitment has also come down.[7]

However, this author believes that the recent message of AQ was unique in its timing and that it needs to be taken seriously for a variety of reasons that have developed in Kashmir, especially during the violent phase of civil unrest-cum-militancy that trailed after the Security Forces (SFs) neutralized the militant commander Burhan Wani in 2016. These developments, discussed below, have the potential to enable a smoother ride for AQ and other Transnational Terrorist Groups (TTGs) in Kashmir. Furthermore, on August 5, 2019, the government in Delhi abolished the semi-autonomous status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). In a parallel decision, the central government of India bifurcated the state into two Union Territories (UTs) of J&K and Ladakh, directly controlled by the central government in Delhi.[8] Delhi's recent Kashmir move is likely to create favorable conditions for TTGs, enabling them to find a firm foothold or maybe even a leading place among Kashmir's militants. The following analysis seeks to make clear how critical and sensitive the situation in Kashmir is. If not tackled perceptively, it may facilitate the entrenchment of AQ and other TTGs in Kashmir.

The author intends to offer a holistic understanding of the emerging trends in the Kashmir conflict. However, it is pertinent to mention that the article is mainly descriptive in nature and has no theoretical ambitions.

Kashmir Conflict: History in Brief

Given the complex nature of Kashmir's conflict, a critical analysis of the emerging threat of TTGs merits a journey back into its history.[9] The conflict began right after India achieved independence from the British in 1947. Kashmir's king was dreaming of independence and of creating an Asian Switzerland in his Himalayan kingdom.[10] However, his plans were foiled when Pakistan claimed Kashmir because of its Muslim majority and sent tribal "marauders" into Kashmir. These raiders inflicted all kinds of brutalities on the local populace and came within a few miles of the capital city of Srinagar. The king, in haste and under pressure, signed an *Instrument of Accession* (Oct. 26, 1947) in return for India's intervention to push back the invaders. In 1948, the UN recommended a plebiscite to decide the final status of Kashmir, after the complete demilitarization of the region, allowing India to keep a minimum level of troops since Pakistan was the aggressor. The armies never returned to barracks, and the plebiscite never happened. Since then, India and Pakistan have fought three wars over Kashmir. For the last three decades, Pakistan continues to bleed India with its proxy terrorist groups.[11] It is pertinent to mention that separatist militancy is confined to the Kashmir valley with its ten districts. It constitutes 16% of the total area of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and 52% of the population.[12] According to the 2011 census, the Kashmir valley had a population of 6.9 million, out of which 97% were Muslims. 14% of the 6.6 million Muslims of the valley are Shia Muslims who are mostly confined to central Kashmir's Ladakh region and the capital city of Srinagar.[13] Until now, Shias have primarily stayed away from the Sunni-dominated separatist movement.

Ever since the violent separatist militancy began in the early 1990s, the subtext of jihad and Islamism was always there, most explicitly evident when Kashmiri Hindus were threatened and told to leave their homes in 1989–1990. Many of them were killed, and reportedly, 160,000–170,000 Kashmiri Hindus were forced to emigrate by Pakistan-backed terrorist groups.[14] However, over the last decade, Islamist ideology has figured more prominently in Kashmir's separatist movement, eroding its quasi-secular character. In fact, it is rapidly becoming the main driving force of separatism. The narrative of "*Azadi baraye Islam*" (Sharia-ruled Islamic Kashmir or Kashmir as a part of global Islamic caliphate) is fast becoming a dominant narrative, phasing out the previous narratives of "*Azadi baraye Kashmir*" (Independent Kashmir) and "*Azadi baraye Pakistan*" (Kashmir joining Pakistan).[15]

Growth of Pan Islamism and Wahhabi Radicalization in the Last Decade

Over the last decade, Kashmir has gone through a wave of intense religious radicalization accompanied by fundamentalism. The local variant of Islam, mystic Sufism, better known as *Kashmiriyat*, is essentially syncretic and liberal. Amenable to coexistence with diverse faiths, it is now facing an existential threat from the Saudi-sponsored Wahhabism, popular in the shape of the Ahl-i-Hadith sect in Kashmir. Once reviled, Wahhabism has grown exponentially since 2011. According to the latest estimates, out of six million Sunni Muslims in Kashmir valley, 1.6 million are Wahhabis.[16] Ideologically, the essence of the separatist movement has always been the narrative of Jihad against "Hindu India." Against this background, puritanical forms of Islam, like Wahhabism, were bound to find a space, and eventually, did so. Additionally, in the last six centuries, Kashmiris were mostly ruled by foreigners such as the Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs, and Dogras. In the existing conflict milieu, the extremist and fundamentalist clerics blamed the pacifist local Sufi Islam for the ignominious foreign rule. Additionally, they justify the exclusivist and extremist doctrines of Takfirism to purge the local Islam of syncretic and pagan practices. As a result, in much of popular perception, the local Sufi Islam has, over the last three decades, become an apostasy inspired by Hindu practices, depriving Muslims of the martial traits needed for jihad. Hence, the young generation born after militancy emerging in the 1990s has no love left for "*Kashmiriyat*." They grew up with an enhanced exposure to extremist Islamic schools.[17]

Secondly, with massive petrodollar funding, Wahhabis recruited highly qualified Imams, built lavish mosques in Arabic style with huge minarets and luxurious hammams. They also offer generous scholarships to young students so that they can pursue higher studies in Saudi Arabia. They talk at lengths about the jihad in Palestine, Chechnya, and Myanmar, but hardly utter a word about the local Kashmir conflict to avoid the wrath of state authorities. However, they are disseminating puritanical and fundamentalist teachings of Wahhabism, which are at odds with the local pacifist Sufi Islam. Against the overall background of militancy in which Islam has long been a mobilizing factor, such teachings are increasingly being subjected to distorted and extremist interpretations, offering a fertile ground for the spread of violent jihadism combined with an exclusivist Takfiri ideology, as practiced by transnational terrorist groups like ISIS. Wahhabi teachings are drawing a large number of followers, especially from the younger generation, which finds Sufism superstitious and holds its pacifism responsible for the suppression of Kashmir by foreign powers. Salafi missionaries have intensified the religious conversion activities.

In recent years, one can find a sea-change in attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral patterns. Until 2004–2005, it was quite difficult to find a single burqa-clad woman at Kashmir University (KU). Today the situation is the opposite, i.e., it is difficult to find a single woman not wearing a burqa or hijab. A political science professor in KU told this author that when he used the word 'secular' when discussing the Indian Constitution in his class on polity, the students protested that the word "secular" is haram and un-Islamic. Lately, incidents of burning Sufi shrines have occurred. Sectarian conflicts between the local Etaqadi Sunnis and Wahhabis have intensified (Interested readers can turn to this author's book *Radicalization in India: An Exploration* for a detailed analysis of the subject).

Apart from this, the idea of a more political Islam has also made deep inroads in Kashmir. Jamaat-i-Islami, a pro-Pakistani extremist organization, allegedly the backbone of militancy in Kashmir, is founded on the philosophy of Maulana Maududi, an extremist Islamic cleric from Pakistan. JI, a South Asian version of the Muslim Brotherhood, believes in the supremacy of sharia in governing state, society, and the personal lives of people. With a vast network of district coordinators (rukoons) and with sympathizers running in millions, JI has deeply penetrated politics, administration, police, academia, as well as sociocultural and religious domains. It has a robust organizational presence in remote rural areas, controlling hearts and minds through religion, social service, money, and terrorism.

In a random visit to Srinagar's market (the capital city), one can find an ample variety of books on political Islam in small shops as well as with roadside vendors, some of these made to look like proper academic books of political science. It speaks volumes of the popularity of Maududi's ideology. Such Islamism is massively

influencing the educated young generation. For them, Maududi's idea of Sharia-based society has no lesser standing than political theories propounded by Montesquieu, Thomas Hobbes, or Rawls elsewhere. For these students, it is an alternate model of existence, sanctioned by the divine Quran, governing life from one's bedroom to the affairs of the state. Manan Wani, a Ph.D. scholar who joined the militants, invoked Islamism in his letter to the youth of Kashmir.[18] Likewise, Burhan Wani, the poster boy of new-age militancy in Kashmir, glorified the idea of the caliphate and of a sharia-ruled Kashmir. The popularity of Burhan Wani can be gauged from the fact that his death in an encounter with security forces (SFs) in 2016 led to massive civil unrest, engulfing all 10 districts of the valley. In the first week of the protests, 44 people died from police fire. The long-term fallout was the rise of homegrown militancy in South Kashmir in which SFs have so far killed 733 militants.[19]

In interviews with the author, post-graduate students of KU of different departments suggested that when democracy and governance fail, the natural alternative is a political Islam, which has "divine" solutions for running the state and society. In Kashmir, disenchantment with corrupt, arrogant, and elitist mainstream politicians and bureaucrats, bad governance, and tampering with democratic procedures, has pushed many people into the fold of Islamism. Further, students at KU informed the author that the conflict of the last three decades had pushed their society into a state of "collective depression." With so many young lives lost and excesses committed by SFs and militants, this worldly life has, in the eyes of many of them, become meaningless. Many, if not all, of the young generation are going through deep psychological crises, given the fact that they have no opportunities to develop their talents. For them, Islam becomes the best recourse in such a situation. For those searching peace, it becomes a source of anchorage, spiritual strength, and relief through prayers, and for those seeking identity and empowerment, political Islam offers a strong platform and mobilizing narrative.[20] In such a surrounding, vulnerable young minds become an easy target for extremist clerics providing them with religious justifications for engaging in violent jihad. Since 2010, Wahhabism and Maududi's political Islam have been on the rise, paralleled by significant changes in militancy, sociocultural attitudes and behavioral patterns, as well as the collective psychology of the people in Kashmir.

Development of the ISIS Grid

Today following of ISIS is quite entrenched in central Kashmir. This author's investigation included interviews will 300 young boys and girls (aged 15–30) in Down Town, Srinagar, and in the districts of Budgam, Bandipura, and Ganderbal. 90% of the interviewees were studying in schools managed by Jamaat-i-Islami and Ahl-i-Hadith sects. In the unstructured interviews, the interviewees expressed hatred for SFs and a huge belief in the narrative of new-age militants like Burhan Wani and Zakir Musa (who had publicly vowed to establish an Islamic caliphate in Kashmir, disregarding Pakistan). Furthermore, these students also expressed great sympathy for ISIS and AQ. However, they did not approve of the brutality of ISIS towards Muslims. They preferred AQ's model over the one of ISIS for Kashmir. Most alarmingly, almost 80% of them, including 70% of the girls, hailed Adil Dar, the suicide bomber behind the Pulwama Fidayeen attack of February 14, 2019 which led to the death of 44 SFs personnel and brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war, as a hero and a martyr. All of them had Adil's last video message in their phone in which he had urged females to "wear veils," "not fall in love," and urged friends and relatives to "celebrate his martyrdom for Islam."[21]

One of the interviewees, Mushtaq Bandey (name changed), was a former militant of Lashkar-i-Taiba, a UN proscribed terrorist group responsible for the November 29 Mumbai attacks in 2008. Mushtaq is still facing a trial for murdering a policeman. However, he is a reformed man and out on bail. He informed the author that post-2016, the new generation, especially boys above 13 years of age, is immensely inspired by ISIS. Further, he suggested that the most important source of their radicalization was online propaganda material. A loosely structured grid has come up from Budgam to Bandipura where one can witness a massive following for the caliphate ideology—the vision of Kashmir's destiny as a part of the global Islamic Caliphate. Srinagar has become a significant center of it. Every Friday, after prayers, one can witness the waving of several ISIS flags. Recently, the pulpit of Mirwaiz, the chief priest of Jamia Mosque (in downtown Srinagar) and a prominent separatist leader, was vandalized by ISIS supporters.[22] When the author inquired about recent fencing of the

mosque with barbed wire, a close associate of Mirwaiz informed the author that their worst fear these days is that a prayer congregation might get bombed by a fidayeen of the Islamic State of Jammu and Kashmir (ISJK), the self-proclaimed local affiliate of ISIS (no bay'a allegiance) or AGuH. It is pertinent to mention here that Mirwaiz is the follower of local Sufi Islam (Etqadi sect), and an ideological opponent of Wahhabi ideology.

From Srinagar, the caliphate ideology is spreading fast into the remote areas of South Kashmir. Tral, Anantnag, and the Shopian districts in South Kashmir have emerged as new strongholds of jihadi terrorist outfits like Jaish-e-Muhammad (a Maulana Masood Azhar-led Pakistan-based jihadi terrorist organization with expertise in suicide attacks and allegedly responsible for the attack on the Indian parliament in 2001 as well as the recent Pulwama suicide bombing in February 2019), ISJK, and Ansar Ghazwatul Hind. These groups have confirmed ideological links with transnational terror groups like the Taliban, IS, and Al Qaeda, respectively. The Pulwama fidayeen attack, which brought India and Pakistan on the verge of a full-fledged war was planned in the Marhama village of Anantnag.[23]

The new narrative gaining currency is not one of an independent Kashmir or Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. The new narrative of "Azadi" or freedom is that of *Azadi baraye Islam*, i.e., freedom through Islam. Zakir Musa left Hizbul Mujahiddin (HM), the old Pakistan-supported militant organization fighting for the freedom of Kashmir and its accession to Pakistan, and formed a new terrorist organization—Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGuH), the local affiliate and the ideological front of Al Qaeda in Kashmir.[24] The AGuH formation was declared by the Global Islamic Media Front, the online propaganda distribution arm of AQ.[25] On Zakir Musa's death (May 23, 2019), AQIS paid rich tribute to him and welcomed the declaration of the new commander of AGuH in June: Abdul Hamid Lelhari.[26]

Zakir Musa who studied at the elitist Navodaya School and graduated in engineering, categorically stated that the fight in Kashmir is for Allah and Islam. He even threatened to slit the throats of the prominent separatist leaders of the Hurriyat conference for betraying the cause of Allah.[27] Seeing his popularity among the young generation, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the most popular separatist leader, had to acknowledge that he was acting according to the principles of Islam. Zakir Musa's popularity among the teenagers and young generations seemed to know no bounds. He was a celebrity militant and a youth icon. Eight-year-old boys have started participating in stone-pelting on security forces and government officials, and proudly display the symbol of Musa. The author, in his visits to primary and higher secondary schools, found that the classroom walls were marked with graffiti referring to Musa's army. Zakir Musa marks a significant ideological shift from "azadi" to Islamism, though Islamism was there since 1990, but only as a sub-text.

Indian intelligence agencies and security forces realized that Musa could radicalize an entire generation. Neutralizing him became a top priority to save Kashmir from slipping away into the clutches of jihadi forces. However, there were fears of a mass uprising. The fear-stricken state authorities remained extraordinarily vigilant, and nothing severe happened. After his death, Musa's telephonic conversation with a militant Abu Dujana, reflecting his firm belief in Islamic rule, was released by AQ. It put to rest the rumor spread by Pak-supported militant groups like HM that Musa was a brain-child of Indian intelligence.[28]

After his death, Musa is inspiring more young minds to fight for the cause of Allah. Many militants have left HM and joined AGuH. HM commander Riaz Naikoo had to release an audio message that initially accused ISJK and AGuH of having intentions to turn Kashmir into a 'Syria-Iraq.' However, later he appealed them to stop the infighting with Pakistan-supported terrorist groups like HM and LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba). The audio message shows the desperation of HM over the rising popularity of TTGs like ISJK and AGuH.[29] However, the dominant trend now is to join radical Islamist terrorist groups like Jaish-e-Muhammad, ISJK, and AGuH. According to informed sources, there are hundreds of young men willing to join AGuH, but they do not have weapons. Besides, there are thousands of highly radicalized stone-pelters and OGWs who are willing to join outfits like AGuH, Jaish, and ISJK, the moment they get hold of weapons. While it is generally acknowledged that currently, outfits like AGuH and ISJK do not have a very robust structural integrity, an organized cadre, strong leadership, or financial resources and weapons, the sentiment has taken deep roots. In a milieu like

the existing one, TTGs like AQ and IS can fill that leadership vacuum. It can help their local fronts acquire structural integrity and train them in motivating and recruiting impressionable minds.

Disenchantment with Mainstream Politics and Pakistan

Furthermore, in today's Kashmir, there is enormous disenchantment with mainstream politicians and with the democratic system which elected them. This also goes for separatist leaders due to their corruption and due to Pakistan's alleged duplicity. That said, there is a strong likelihood of common folks sympathizing with those who are fighting for the cause of religion rather than, as in the past, for political goals. With such a sentiment dominating hearts and minds, transnational terrorist groups like AQ and ISIS can easily project themselves as dependable warriors of Allah indulging in jihad. Other factors that might induce the Sunni-extremist Wahhabi groups to intensify their activities in the state include Iranian inroads and Shia radicalization, rapidly pacing towards dangerous levels in Kashmir.[30]

Emerging Craze for Suicide Bombing and IEDs

The militancy, in tactics, is also taking on Middle Eastern features. Due to India's strengthening of its counter-infiltration grid, it has become immensely difficult to smuggle weapons from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Pakistan is also under the pressure of international financial action task force (FATF) sanctions while also facing a significant economic crisis. Whether FATF's grey listing of Pakistan has brought any tangible reduction in financially and logistically supporting proxy terrorist groups (HM, LeT and JeM) operating in India, needs more rigorous evidence-based analysis. However, a brief look already points to the complexity of the terrorist-financing system which Pakistan's deep state built over the years in Kashmir (see endnote).[31]

That said, Pakistan is not able to allocate enough financial resources to fuel Kashmir's proxy war. In addition, its government cannot afford losing legitimacy any further by facilitating the smuggling of weapons. Hence, the dearth of weapons has compelled militant organizations to explore fidayeen attacks and use Syria-Iraq styled IEDs and VBIEDs (Vehicle-borne IEDs). In 2018, there were eight IED attempts in Kashmir, but many of them failed to explode.[32] In 2019, the IED system improved in terms of better quality of the explosives and better training of their handlers. In the last months of 2019, 60 foreign terrorists infiltrated from Pakistan.[33] Reportedly, they are training local militants in Kashmir in making IEDs and how best to place them. In the first half of 2019, three successful IED blasts had taken place.[34] After the Pulwama incident, a car-born fidayeen attack was averted on the Banihal pass.[35]

Such attacks have high news value as they brutally strike terror of a much higher magnitude with maximum casualties and with an element of surprise, multiplying people's fears and insecurities. They also have a debilitating effect on the morale of SFs. One can witness an emerging trend of increased fidayeen attacks in Kashmir—a phenomenon until now confined to FTs (foreign terrorists) only. However, it has to be recalled that Jaish and Lashkar have carried out suicide missions in the past as well. As early as 2001, Jaish carried a suicide bombing mission ramming an explosives-laden car into Kashmir's state assembly. After that, Kashmir-centric terrorist groups like Jaish and Lashkar executed suicide missions in their attacks on the Indian parliament in 2001 (Jaish) and in Mumbai in 2008, respectively. However, in most of these attacks, local Kashmiri boys were rarely involved. The groups mentioned above are foreign terrorist groups, presumably controlled by Pakistan-based ISI handlers. The involvement of a local Kashmiri in the 2001 assembly attack was an exception.

However, unlike in the pre-Burhan Wani (that is before 2016) militancy, the post-Burhan Wani suicide missions are linked to the spread of a belief in Islamic Kashmir and a more robust influence of global Islamist movements. Post-Burhan suicide missions have drawn local Kashmiri boys in the dragnet. Already before Pulwama, in January 2018, there was a suicide attack in Tral, involving a local Kashmiri youngster.

After the Pulwama attack, the fidayeen Adil Dar got overnight fame by bringing two countries in possession of nuclear weapons on the brink of war. The fact that Adil Dar, a native Kashmiri, volunteered for a suicide bombing speaks volumes about the psychological, attitudinal, and behavioral changes occurring in Kashmir's society. One can witness a newfound inclination among some youth for making IEDs and VBIEDs. One of the most important reasons for joining militancy in south Kashmir is the desire for recognition, social status, and glory among the jobless youth, which has otherwise nothing to look forward to, except doing drugs. Joining militancy and posting pictures on Facebook in war-like gear gives some of them instant fame and, in their imagination, an entry ticket to the Islamic paradise. Ever since Adil Dar got overnight fame, one can witness a craze among young militants to volunteer for body-strapped suicide bombings and vehicle-based improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs).

Given that Kashmir's Muslim community is traditionally considered as being much more liberal in comparison to Muslims from other parts of the Indian subcontinent, local youth's inclination towards suicide attacks is extremely disturbing. Some astute observers of social trends have told this author that in the future, even girls may be willing to volunteer for such acts. If this is indeed true, TTGs like ISIS and AQ will not face problems in recruiting young people.

TTGs in Kashmir: Impact of the US Withdrawal and Internal Dynamics in Kashmir

The emerging geopolitical scenario also bodes well for TTGs. The late IS chief Baghdadi announced in 2019 Kashmir as IS' new Wilayat, i.e., the province.[36] While Baghdadi is dead now the future trajectory of IS is a matter of strategic forecasting at best and speculation at worst. However, the ideology which ISIS represents has found a foothold in Kashmir, and in the future, it is likely to gain strength. Even if ISIS should decline, any group representing Pan-Islamism will be able to poach upon local ISIS sympathizers. If not IS, then Al Qaeda is likely to make further inroads in Kashmir. In his interviews, this author noted among local youth a preference for AQ over IS.

Having suffered territorial reverses in the Middle East, IS is likely to beef up its activities in places like Kashmir, Libya, and the Philippines to project its relevance and existence. Sri Lankan agencies' investigations revealed that some of the IS fidayeens who had executed Easter Sunday bombings had travelled to Kashmir for training in explosives.[37] Besides, ISKP (Islamic State in Khorasan Province) has shown a substantial presence in Nangarhar (Afghanistan). A number of Indians from Kerala have already joined them in Afghanistan. It is highly likely that Kashmiri boys are also caught in the IS dragnet. With the US' withdrawal from Afghanistan on the cards now, both AQ and ISKP are likely to find safe havens in Afghanistan, at least in areas under the control of the Taliban. Mr. CD Sahay, former chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's external intelligence service, suggested to the author in a telephonic interview that if TTGs wish to find a strong foothold in Kashmir, then they have to keep Pakistan's deep state in good books. Furthermore, Pakistan's decades of experience and ground network in Kashmir may be immensely helpful to TTGs in terms of logistics, shelter, and other operational requirements. He further opined that, given the fact that Pakistan has sheltered AQ operatives in the past, it is highly likely that Pakistan may support the entrenchment of TTGs in Kashmir. Such an arrangement suits Pakistan also, as it offers its military a semblance of plausible deniability in the event of any major terrorist incident happening in India. According to the high-value sources consulted by the author, Pakistan is already shifting terrorist training camps from PoK (Pak Occupied Kashmir) to Afghanistan.

Transnational terrorist groups like AQ and IS have internal disputes, and many times they are seen at the crossroads. In Kashmir, as mentioned above, AGuH was bitterly opposed by Pak-proxy groups like HM—so much so that they tried to brand Zakir Musa as an Indian asset. That said, one question that puzzles the strategic minds is what if AQ and IS clash with each in Kashmir, through their proxies. However, the author, while researching for this article, found that the majority of the militant groups are on the verge of arriving at a consensus that they must have a tactical compromise keeping aside the ideological differences because they have a common enemy viz. India. Zakir Musa and Riaz Naikoo had earlier appealed to militants to put up a

united front. In Zawahiri's most recent video message, he can be seen urging the mujahids to wage a "united jihad" against India.

Furthermore, it also merits attention that there is a strong likelihood of TTGs using Kashmir as a base to expand their activities into other parts of India. As it is already known, IS-mindset has deeply penetrated part of the society in Kerala, parts of Telangana (mainly Hyderabad), and Maharashtra.[38] We should remember that Kerala contributed to the highest number of IS fighters from India.[39] Besides, in the North Indian heartland, Muslims are getting radicalized—the dominant narrative of Hindu-nationalism is instilling existential fears in their minds. Recent incidents of mob-lynching by Hindu extremists, the Supreme Court's decision in favour of Hindus in the Babri-mosque dispute, and the new citizenship amendment act, which is seen as anti-Muslim, have strengthened their insecurities. A cache of weapons was recovered from a madrasa in district Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh, the heartland of India.[40] The National Investigation Agency (NIA), India's premier counter-terrorist agency, found a Kashmir link to an ISIS cell in the Amroha district of UP.[41] In Delhi, NIA discovered a new ISIS-linked group "Harkat-ul-Harb-e-Islam." [42] NIA also arrested 14 men in Tamil Nadu as they were trying to set up an ISIS cell.[43] That said, such a radicalized youth may be an easy target for AQ and IS. For them, Kashmir might be a new battleground to lay down their lives for a religious cause. If radicalized young Indian men and women can join ISKP in Afghanistan, they are even more likely to come in droves to join a jihad in Kashmir.

Alienation and Depression in Society

Turning to a widespread feeling in society: many people in Kashmir appear to be going through acute depression and alienation and are in a state of mourning. Many local residents feel that Delhi is following a kinetic approach (963 militants neutralized, the majority of which being local militants).[44] Ordinary citizens feel that Delhi is very high-handed and shortsighted in ignoring the impact of extrajudicial killings and civilian deaths in encounters, as well as other human rights violations by security forces—although many of the claims are exaggerated. Adding to the discomforts of routine life are highway closures for civilian traffic and rigorous frisking of people, which includes seizing their mobile phones to make sure that individuals do not store a picture of militant heroes. The general level of alienation can be witnessed by the fact that when Cordon and Search Operations (CASOs) take place to apprehend militants, thousands of people assemble to pelt stones at security forces and seek to rescue stranded militants. In the most recent example in Kulgaam in South Kashmir, one civilian was killed, and 70 were injured in police actions in May 2019 when a crowd was disrupting a security operation undertaken.[45] Unofficial sources of the author informed him that not 70 but 260 civilians were injured in this particular clash. Nevertheless, the crowd was successful in rescuing a Jaish militant from being arrested. Another sign of the times is that voter turnout in the most recent parliamentary elections has been very low, namely, less than 14% in Srinagar. The Anantnag constituency of the militancy-hit South Kashmir registered the lowest voter turnout with just 2.81%.[46] Signs of depression can be noticed everywhere. Mothers happily participate in the funeral processions of their militant-sons, hailing them as martyrs. People assemble by the thousands for funerals, and the dead militants draw such a vast fan-following that people kiss their blood-soaked feet during funeral processions. Behind such celebrations of death lie deep-rooted depression and trauma that the conflict of the last three decades has generated. Young boys joining the militancy are well aware that they will most likely be killed within months, if not days. In spite of that, they join in the hope of finding an identity, recognition, and anchorage. Such a mindset of seeking glory in death is fertile ground for recruitment for TTGs.

Cases of depression and mental illness are reaching major proportions in Kashmir. Drug abuse is one consequence. According to a survey sponsored by the United Nations' Drug Control Program, there are 70,000 drug addicts in the Kashmir Division, including 4,000 women.[47] A recent survey concluded that 65% to 70% of the students are drug users, including 26% of female students, with a significant number doing hard drugs such as heroin which are carrying greater health hazards.[48] Government psychiatric hospital statistics show that 90% of the users belong to the age group of 17–35.[49] A society in depression and people who feel

alienated are more likely to lean towards religious fundamentalism. In a conflict zone like Kashmir, the lines between religious fundamentalism, extremism, and jihadi terrorism are blurred. Further, drug-addicted weak and vulnerable minds with no sense of purpose and a big burden of guilt are easy prey for the recruiters of TTGs, as has also been witnessed in Europe where young Muslims—many of whom having drug problems and/or being petty criminals—were radicalized in prisons and gained a new sense of purpose and seemingly got rid of their baggage of guilt when becoming foreign fighters.[50] [51]

Conclusion

Finally, if the increasing penetration of transnational terrorist groups is not looked at in isolation, it will appear that it is the part of the process of internationalization of Kashmir, a process that is unfolding in various stages. This phenomenon is not entirely new. It began in 2008–2009 when Kashmir saw a Palestinian-intifada styled civil unrest with stone pelting. The Arab Spring of 2011 had also affected the hearts and minds of Kashmir's people. In 2011, after the death of Tufail Mattoo, a civilian, during a police teargas shelling, the protestors were even planning to stage a Tahrir-square-like event in Lal Chowk of Srinagar. The Arab Spring brought two parallel streams of thought into Kashmir. In the first stream, the minuscule minority of secular-cum-left-leaning youth started seeing Kashmir as a major humanitarian crisis. They started seeing Kashmir through a global prism, equating it with Palestine, Myanmar, or Xinjiang. The second stream of thought was one of the global jihad and pan-Islamism. It has had a robust influence on separatists, in addition to the religious-minded people and the religious extremists.

Furthermore, in addition to non-state actors like IS and AQ, many state actors have become active in Kashmir, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, and Turkey. Though Turkey has always sided with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, its contemporary activism is driven by its larger geopolitical ambitions in South Asia.[52] President Erdogan's dubious links with TTGs have come to light time and again. Reportedly, Turkey has supported terrorist groups in Africa and Syria with weapons and logistics.[53] In the future, the possibility of Turkey and Pakistan joining efforts to support TTGs in Kashmir cannot be ruled out.

That said, the conflict is transitioning into its next phase. The passage is holistic, i.e., the changes are visible on multiple fronts in terms of militant tactics, changing sociocultural attitudes, and new ideologies, with Pan-Islamism becoming dominant. Having said that, the changes are subtle; only perceptive and intuitive strategic minds can sense them and foresee probable developments, including that in the next phase of the conflict TTGs are likely to play an important role in Kashmir.

Short Postscript on the Impact of the Abolition of Article 370 [54]

Last but not least, the impact of the abolition of Kashmir's semi-autonomous status on the subject of this article merits a brief discussion. The government in Delhi has purportedly taken such a historic step to change the separatist narrative to an economic-development narrative while creating a new political leadership through local self-governing bodies. India's central government hopes to attract investment, create jobs, and make militancy irrelevant by fully integrating Kashmir into India. However, in local popular perception, Article 370 was a symbol of Kashmir's unique cultural and religious identity. Its abrogation has generated many fears. Local Muslims fear that the Modi government will bring outsiders into Kashmir who might occupy their lands, change the demography, and exploit the natural resources of the state. Most such fears appear to be based on ignorance or are the result of malicious propaganda emanating from Pakistan's deep state, local politicians, or from Islamist organizations. Over the last 30 years, religious radicalization has turned out to be the biggest threat to "Kashmiriryat." However, a detailed exploration of the merits and demerits of article 370 would go beyond the space allocated to this article.

In general, the abrogation of article 370 has not gone down well with most local people. It is likely to strengthen the trust deficit and increase alienation. Earlier, in this article, the author has alluded to the alarming levels of alienation and trust deficit in the last three years due to Delhi's heavy-handed approach in dealing with militancy, human rights violations by its security forces, corruption in the state government, lack of outreach, poor governance, and the entirely bureaucratic nature of governance. While after the decision to abrogate article 370, there has not been massive civil unrest or a significant terrorist strike, this may be the result of the massive security clampdown and a communications lockdown. However, resentment is simmering, and in the future, it may lead to significant civil unrest and a sharp rise in militancy.

Furthermore, with Delhi's Kashmir move, the mainstream political process in Kashmir has more or less come to a halt. Jammu and Kashmir will be directly controlled by the central government, leaving little scope for local politicians. Many of the local politicians facing corruption charges stand discredited and were not well accepted by most of the people. They were the biggest beneficiaries and votaries of article 370, which is dead now.[55] Also, the pro-Pakistan separatist leaders also stand exposed as corrupt (facing inquiries in terrorist financing), and some opportunistic politicians who accepted bribes from the intelligence agencies of India and Pakistan also stand exposed. On the other hand, India does not appear to have a long-term vision for post-article 370 Kashmir. So far, one hardly comes across any genuine outreach and sincere efforts to improve governance. The present attitude of Delhi signals that in the future, its approach towards Kashmir will be bureaucratic and military based.

Pakistan has also failed to do anything significant to compel India to backtrack from the abrogation move and, hence is fast losing credibility. Against this background, transnational terrorist groups are offered bright prospects to flourish in the vacuum created by the separatist movement on the one hand and mainstream Indian politics on the other hand.

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N.B.: The author could not reveal the names of some of his sources because of the security threat to their lives. Most developments discussed in this article are very recent, which explains the lack of much academic research on the subject. Also, the security situation in Kashmir is very challenging, and hence, a researcher faces many limitations and restrictions. The author has lived in Jammu and Kashmir for the last two years. A large part of the research for this article was primarily done for the author's recently published book, "Radicalization in India: An Exploration." During his research work, the author has interacted with a diverse range of interlocutors, including security officials, intelligence officers, militants, ex-militants, OGWs (Over Ground Workers) of militants, religious clerics, members of JI, separatist leaders, mainstream politicians, students of the colleges and universities, ordinary citizens, government servants, as well as some deeply placed informers. In addition, the author has used reputed journalistic sources, as reflected in the endnotes.

Notes

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Research Notes

Learning in a Double Loop: The Strategic Transformation of Al-Qaeda

by Michael Fürstenberg and Carolin Görzig

Abstract

Like any type of organization, terrorist groups learn from their own experiences as well as those of others. These processes of organizational learning have, however, been poorly understood so far, especially regarding deep strategic changes. In this Research Note, we apply a concept developed to understand learning of business organizations to recent transformations of jihadist groups. The question we want to shed light on using this approach is whether, and in which ways, terrorist groups are able to question not only their immediate modus operandi, but also the fundamental assumptions their struggle is built on. More specifically, we focus the inquiry on the development of the Al-Qaeda network. Despite its acknowledged penchant for learning, the ability of the jihadists to transform on a deeper level has often been denied. We seek to reassess these claims from the perspective of a double-loop learning approach by tracing the strategic evolution of Al-Qaeda and its eventual breakaway faction, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

Keywords: Organizational learning, terrorist transformation, strategic change, jihadism, Al-Qaeda, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham

Introduction

Departing from earlier assertions that terrorist organizations are generally conservative and averse to experimentation and change,[1] there is a growing literature dealing with the capacity of militant actors for flexibility, learning and innovative behavior.[2] However, a large part of this research focuses narrowly on tactical advances, or what Singh has termed "bomb and bullet" innovations.[3] We argue that it is equally, if not even more, important to study learning processes that are directed at more profound transformations of the fundamental approaches of groups. Distinguishing this level from tactical and organizational learning, Crenshaw described such strategic innovation as "shifts that change the fundamental pattern of terrorist challenges to political authority."[4] Unfortunately, these processes have so far been mostly neglected in the literature.

Not only do many researchers focus too narrowly on tactical learning, but studies in the field also often suffer from the fact that their central concept is generally undertheorized in favour of case descriptions or typological contributions, and fail to rigorously link back to the extensive literature on learning developed in other fields.[5] Learning—especially that of organizations—is a notoriously difficult concept in any case and the literature has especially struggled with capturing its cognitive dimension and delineating it from related concepts like innovation.[6] Going beyond narrow definitions linking learning explicitly to material improvements, Singh understands it "as the ability of terrorist groups to change their structures, operations, and/or goals over time."[7] One of the rare attempts to systematically study such transformations from an organizational learning perspective was done by the RAND Corporation.[8] However, as those RAND researchers were primarily concerned with using this knowledge for counterterrorism purposes, the authors focused largely on how learning capabilities influenced the capacities of groups for violence, and less on strategic deliberations or the dynamics of interpretation processes within organizations themselves.

We attempt to address these shortcomings by drawing on a well-established theoretical concept developed outside the context of political violence, namely the organizational learning approach created by Argyris and Schön.[9] This perspective offers a coherent and well-established, yet flexible, conceptual framework for understanding organizational learning, which has also been extensively applied and tested in practice.[10] It

integrates both cognition and action as parts of the learning process and is explicitly focused on the forms of higher-level learning that underlie strategic adjustments and fundamental changes.[11] The authors call such transformations "double-loop learning", which "occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying norms, policies, and objectives."[12] As these underlying norms and objectives define the course of action that a group pursues, looking at whether and how modifications of these come about offers important insights into the dynamics of militant campaigns. Crucially, as this approach was originally developed for understanding as well as improving learning processes, it is especially suited for an analysis of learning from the point of view of violent organizations themselves. This allows to better capture the internal reasonings and reflections that determine whether and how a group is able to engage in transformational learning.

Specifically, we apply the concept to a study of the Al-Qaeda network, investigating whether, and in which ways, it was able to question not only its immediate modus operandi, but also the basic assumptions its struggle is built on. Jihadist groups have often been described as particular 'hard cases' in this regard. For example, Hafez argues that jihadists "appear to be incapable of internalizing lessons from past failures."[13] Likewise, McCabe denies these groups the ability to learn on a deeper level, contending that "at the strategic level they are so badly misinformed as to be almost delusional."[14] He notes specifically that necessary reforms "would likely be difficult for al Qaeda."[15] In this text, we seek to reassess these claims from the perspective of a double-loop learning approach by tracing the strategic evolution of Al-Qaeda and its eventual breakaway faction, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

The Concept of Double-Loop Learning

Argyris and Schön start with the assumption that "all deliberate action ha[s] a cognitive basis, that it reflect[s] norms, strategies, and assumptions or models of the world."[16] These mental models work as frames of reference that determine expectations about cause-and-effect relationships between actions and outcomes. Argyris and Schön call these "theories of action", which include "strategies of action, the values that govern the choice of strategies and the assumptions on which they are based."[17] In these models, values—or "governing variables"—set performance parameters that actors strive to achieve through their strategies of action.[18] Argyris and Schön differentiate between "espoused theory", which is advanced to explicitly explain and justify behaviour, and "theory-in-use", which guides actual behaviour.[19] They assume that organizations also have theories of action that inform their behaviour. In fact, they argue that given the constant turnover of actual members, it "is this theory-in-use, an apparently abstract thing, which is most distinctively real about the [organization]."[20] The theory-in-use of the organization is constructed by individual members in a constant collaborative process and embodied in shared descriptions of the organization, such as policy guidelines or standard operating procedures, but also in tacit knowledge, such as informal lines of communication. Organizational learning, in this sense, is an intentional change in the organizational theory-in-use, traceable through such descriptions as well as the observable patterns of organizational action.[21]

According to Argyris and Schön, learning becomes necessary when there is what they call an "error"—a mismatch between the intended outcomes of strategies of action and the actual results. Consequently, they define successful learning in a narrow sense as the "detection and correction of error," i.e., changes in the organizational approach that bring outcomes more in line with expectations.[22] This happens through continuous processes of self-reflective organizational inquiry. Based on the elements of theories-of-action, Argyris and Schön distinguish two types of learning: In *single-loop* learning systems, the detection and correction of error connects the outcome in a single loop only to strategies of action, whereas the governing variables remain unchanged. In *double-loop* learning systems, a double feedback loop "connects the detection of error not only to strategies and assumptions for effective performance, but to the very norms which *define* effective performance."[23] Hence, double-loop learning modifies the governing variables' *underlying* objectives.

Single-loop learning to increase the effectiveness of actions is the dominant response to error and is ingrained in routine procedures in any organization. However, especially in changing environments, single-loop learning may actually lead to long-term ineffectiveness, as well as to a reduced capacity for double-loop learning. This is

the case because, when organizations initiate a process of change in order to correct errors without addressing existing norms, a conflict in the norms themselves can emerge. This results in the paradoxical situation where an increase in effectiveness in relation to one goal can lead to a decrease in effectiveness in relation to another. Due to the fact that in single-loop learning systems the governing variables are not questioned, conflicting requirements remain hidden and even may become undiscussable in organizations. This can lead to dilemma situations that Argyris and Schön term "double binds": If members expose these contradictions, they question norms that are ingrained in everyday operations.[24] If they do not expose an error, they perpetuate a process that inhibits organizational learning. For example, while organizations often officially encourage their members to report mistakes, members often refrain from doing so for fear of being punished as the harbinger of bad news.

In contrast, in double-loop learning systems, people acknowledge when there is a mismatch between intention and outcome, share awareness of organizational dilemmas, engage such conflicts through inquiry and decrease double binds.[25] In this second learning loop, the focus shifts from learning *how to better accomplish tasks* within a given frame of reference to learning *what to do* by questioning the frame of reference itself. In other words, while single-loop learning focuses on improving what an organization already does, or "doing the things right," double-loop learning is concerned with what organizations ought to do, or "doing the right things."[26] It has to be noted in this regard that such learnings may not necessarily be right in a moral sense. Argyris and Schön emphasize that their description of the mechanisms of organizational learning is neutral and that "any particular example of it may prove to be […] downright evil."[27]

Due to organizational inertia and a tendency to become defensive when confronted with failure, organizations have a tendency to produce learning systems that inhibit the sort of learning that would question their governing variables.[28] Argyris and Schön suggest that in order to double-loop learn, leaders first have to recognize the conflict between incompatible requirements. They must become aware that they cannot correct the error by doing better what they already know how to do, but by engaging in deep organizational inquiry. In this process the focus has to shift from learning concerned with improvement in the performance of tasks to inquiry through which an organization explores the values and criteria that define what improved performance *means*. This is often inherently conflictual; in fact, as Argyris and Schön remark, "it is often impossible, in the real-world context of organizational life, to find inquiry cleanly separated from the uses of power."[29] Such inquiry necessitates a capacity for self-criticism, open reflection and tolerance for personal risk in order to overcome double binds and "mak[e] the undiscussable and its undiscussability discussable."[30]

While organizations should strive to develop cultures conducive to double-loop inquiries, Argyris and Schön concede that these systems are empirically rare and an ideal type that can only be approximated.[31] In reality, it is also difficult to speak of an organization having one single learning system. Theories-in-use are systemic structures composed of many interconnected parts on different levels of the organization. These can be more particular and local or more general and global, more fundamental to the structure or more peripheral. Hierarchies of norms, strategies and assumptions are also not always clear-cut. In reality, therefore, it is more useful to speak of organizational learning as *more or less* double loop, with learning being not dichotomous but a "continuous concept of depth of learning."[32] The more organizations inquire into governing variables that are fundamental to their theory of action, the more they approach double-loop learning.

Double-Loop Learning in the Al-Qaeda Network

Given the difficulties described above, terrorist groups should have a particularly hard time establishing double-loop learning systems.[33] Militant groups usually operate in the underground and face an existential security situation, creating a situation of "causal ambiguity" in which it is difficult to link events back to action and strategies.[34] Moreover, closed collectives tend to establish a strong sense of "groupthink" and a "tendency toward self-censorship and consensus building," which is detrimental to deep organizational inquiry.[35] The latter tendency is also aggravated by the often rigid ideologies these groups follow, presumably making jihadi organizations like Al-Qaeda particularly reluctant to question their guiding norms and assumptions.

However, as traditional research has underestimated the ability of terrorist groups to learn in general, the literature might still underestimate their capability for deeper inquiry and learning. In the following, we trace the strategic trajectory of Al-Qaeda to demonstrate that applying the conceptual framework of Argyris and Schön reveals that jihadists were indeed capable of profound organizational change and learning, which ultimately even lead to the split of the Syrian branch of the organization.

From Strategic Revolution to Double Binds

At the end of the 1990s, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri initiated a revolution in jihadist thinking by setting the focus on what they termed the "far enemy" of the United States and the West.[36] Al-Qaeda built this new cohesive theory-of-action on the notion that struggles so far had failed mainly because of the support given to local regimes by the United States. Based on the idea that the downfall of the Soviet Union was the result of its defeat in Afghanistan, which the jihadists claimed as their success, they drew the lesson that America could likewise be forced to withdraw from Muslim countries.[37] From this, Al-Qaeda derived a clear set of governing variables: (1) strike against Western and especially American targets; (2) establish safe havens in Muslim countries; (3) gain the support of the Muslim masses; (4) be the vanguard and leader of the united jihadi movement.[38] Crucially, these building blocks formed the cornerstones of Al-Qaeda's jihad both in espoused theory and theory-in-use in the latter half of the 1990s and throughout the 2000s. The 9/11 attacks can be seen as a clear example of single-loop learning: by escalating the level of violence and directly striking the U.S. homeland, Al-Qaeda innovated their actions within their given framework—doing 'better' what they already knew how to do, addressing the problem that earlier attacks had not compelled America to change its policies.

However, this approach largely failed. Although Al-Qaeda proved to be more resilient than observers expected at the time, the changes the organization underwent in the decade following 9/11 can still be described as single-loop learning: "Unprepared to change their doctrine, they had to adjust their strategy."[39] The main innovation keeping the movement alive was organizational in nature and involved the de-centralization and franchising of the once strictly hierarchical group. This devolution of powers, however, in effect diluted the far enemy strategy, as groups with local roots were focused first and foremost on their local insurgencies.[40] In the terms of Argyris and Schön, this created conflicting requirements for affiliate commanders, as they were encouraged by the leadership to focus their attention on Western targets, while their main interests remained regional. Merely adapting the organizational structure did not resolve the deeper problems that single-loop learning cannot address, and contributed to the undiscussability of governing variables, as Bin Laden was as yet unprepared to admit strategic mistakes. To continue the fight under existing norms perpetuated the inherent contradictions in the governing variables: provoking international intervention made it much harder, if not impossible, to establish territorial safe havens; moreover, the violence and strict interpretation of Sharia—especially exhibited by its most active affiliate, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)—reduced Al-Qaeda's appeal to the majority of Muslim populations.[41] The leadership was aware of these problems; crucially, however, they voiced these concerns only in private communications. As Al-Zawahiri famously noted in a letter from July 2005 to AQI leader Musab al-Zarqawi, "this subject is complicated and detailed. I have brought it up here so as not to address the general public on something they do not know." [42] The franchising strategy had also created conflicting requirements for the leadership: in order to minimize damage to the organization's brand, public rebukes of affiliates' tactics would have been necessary—however, this would have exposed not only the leadership's lack of authority but also discord in the jihadist movement.[43] In the words of Argyris and Schön, this represented a typical double bind.

Engaging in Deep Organizational Inquiry

Consequently, at the beginning of this decade Al-Qaeda seemed to be on the back foot.[44] However, most experts agree that the organization has weathered the storms remarkably well.[45] We argue that this is largely due to the fact that the Al-Qaeda leadership, after the failures of the 2000s, finally started a process of deeper organizational inquiry. In 2010 Bin Laden announced a "new phase of assessing Jihad activities," inviting the reader to "brainstorm" and improve upon his ideas.[46] He expressed the "need [for] an advisory reading, with

constructive criticism to our entire policy and publications," followed by soliciting feedback about the agreed-upon reforms from "the leaders of the regions"; by emphasizing the "importance of secrecy in all of that," Bin Laden made clear that this was an internal investigation, testifying that this was a serious engagement with Al-Qaeda's principles and not merely a propaganda effort.[47] Bin Laden's primary concern was with the inability of Al-Qaeda to generate mass support.[48] Additionally, he acknowledged the weakness of the movement, and warned against attacks when "the power of the brothers is not ready."[49]

The inquiry into its governing variables became even more profound after the death of Bin Laden at the time of the Arab Spring, which, contrary to many Western analysts who interpreted it as the nail in the coffin for Al-Qaeda, leadership member Atiyatullah al-Libi called a "historic opportunity."[50] It precipitated a local turn that married a more conciliatory approach towards ordinary Muslims and independent armed actors with a renewed focus on anti-regime insurgency. Instead of trying to impose its version of Islam immediately, affiliates were advised to be more lenient; instead of trying to take control of insurgencies and sideline other groups, operatives were to integrate into the local scene, establishing relationships and playing down global connections. For example, when Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and their local allies took control of northern Mali in 2012, Al-Qaeda's general manager Nasir al-Wuhayshi advised AQIM emir Abdelmalek Droukdel to take a gradual approach, arguing that "you can't beat people for drinking alcohol when they don't even know the basics of how to pray."[51] Crucially, these efforts were supported by another turn away from earlier practices: Instead of relaying advice only in private, which had proved ineffectual in Iraq, the leadership published explicit guidelines as part of a deliberate "rebranding campaign."[52] The *General Guidelines for Jihad* instruct jihadis not only to "refrain from harming Muslims," but to "generally avoid fighting those who have not raised arms against us."[53] Instead of enforcing its understanding of Sharia law, the focus should be on "spreading awareness amongst the general public."[54] In stark contrast to earlier work where Al-Zawahiri strongly justified the killing of civilians,[55] the 2017 *Code of Conduct* of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) explicitly instructs jihadis to refrain from "attacking even those targets that are permissible in Shari'ah, but [are] not beneficial for the jihadi movement."[56]

These documents were also designed to draw a clear distinction to the extremism of the Islamic State (ISIS), which Al-Qaeda openly criticized, thereby demonstrating its willingness to sacrifice the norm of maintaining the unity of the jihadi movement, while making clear its claim to authority. These contrasting approaches can in fact be seen as different lessons drawn from the experiences in the decade before: while Al-Qaeda focused on regaining public trust and influence in local insurgencies through moderation and tactical cooperation, the direct successor of AQI tried to preempt another "Sunni Awakening" by eliminating any potential rival to its power and ideological interpretation as early as possible. From a learning perspective, therefore, while Al-Qaeda's trajectory can be seen as moving towards double-loop learning, ISIS's represents a form of single-loop learning, in which the group strove to remain on top by means of an even more brutal application of its tactics in Iraq. Al-Qaeda has largely been consistent in its approach, even claiming the moral high ground when it reemphasized its vow to exclude "places of worship" and avoid civilian targets in its call for revenge after the Christchurch attack.[57] Interestingly, this puts the spotlight on another de facto revision of a core norm: while ISIS staged and inspired spectacular terrorist attacks around the world, Al-Qaeda de facto all but abandoned its targeting of the West, relegating fiery attacks on the US and its allies essentially to espoused theory.[58]

Overall, Evans was right when he predicted Al-Qaeda's turn toward "a more Maoist attitude."[59] Al-Qaeda has exhibited a remarkable ability to question its strategic approach and set new priorities in its governing variables in the last decade. The split from what would become ISIS can be interpreted as a logical consequence of this learning process, which ISIS was not following. In contrast, the split that later occurred between Al-Qaeda and its Syrian branch was in a sense precipitated by the unwillingness of the former to go further in its questioning of norms.[60]

A Step Too Far: From Jabhat al-Nusra to Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham

The group that today is known as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham started out as a small expeditionary force sent to Syria 2011 by the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), then still aligned with Al-Qaeda. Led by Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani, this new group, established under the name Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), from the beginning charted a course that was somewhat independent of its nominal Iraqi superiors. It eschewed the latter's brutal tactics and ideological rigidity in favour of presenting a more cooperative image. Ultimately, JN's insubordinations led to the split in the global jihadi movement, when ISI attempted to bring it under its direct control in 2013, but was rebuffed by Al-Jolani and Al-Zawahiri himself.[61] Although temporarily eclipsed by the military successes of ISIS and its subsequent declaration of the Caliphate in mid-2014, "a relatively more restrained Al-Qaeda […] largely doubled down on its approach," with JN exemplifying the modified governing variables.[62] Having weathered the shock of ISIS's expansion, the group's strategy was characterized by an emphasis on "localism, gradualism, and controlled pragmatism."[63] In order to appeal to a local audience, more extreme Salafi-jihadist norms were sidelined in favour of creating a reputation as an indispensable ally of the Syrian revolution. In order to avoid attacks by Western and Russian airpower, JN even took the unprecedented step of declaring its intention "not to use al-Sham as a base to launch attacks on the West or Europe," thereby bringing espoused theory into line with actual theory-in-use.[64]

However, it became increasingly clear that these steps were not enough to secure the group's long-term objectives. Neither did the announcement placate the US or the intervening Russia, nor were rebel factions convinced that they could trust JN. In the Syrian arena, the continued incompatibility between Al-Qaeda's governing variables of localism and a still-espoused global agenda created double binds for local commanders. The allegiance to Al-Qaeda and its reputation was the main obstacle for other Syrian groups in establishing a unified front with JN.[65] In an attempt to break this impasse, Al-Jolani— in an unprecedented move for an Al-Qaeda affiliate [66]—rebranded JN 2016 as the more inclusive Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFS), declaring that it would no longer have any affiliation with an "external entity."[67] This decision was accompanied by extensive internal debates of organizational inquiry, which included senior Al-Qaeda figures.[68] Nevertheless, the move proved to be more controversial than initially thought.[69] Not only did large groups of loyalists defect, but as it turned out, Al-Zawahiri did not agree with the rebranding, calling it an "act of disobedience" and demanding its reversal.[70] This controversy points to an incomplete organizational inquiry—existing double binds were only ostensibly solved and central elements remained undiscussable, so that the parties emerged with different impressions of what the change was about. From the perspective of a unified Al-Qaeda, this essentially amounted to a failure of an attempt to double-loop learn.

From the perspective of JFS, however, it marked the starting point of its independent existence. Al-Jolani insisted on the break, as he realized that in order to adapt to the increasingly difficult environment of the conflict, he had to prioritize among conflicting norms in order to create a more durable, unified jihadi military front. Initially, however, this hope was disappointed, as other rebel factions remained wary of JFS. Tensions escalated into open fighting, while at the same time pressure increased with the military intervention of Turkey, forcing JFS to go further in its pragmatism. Although unable to secure a broad Sunni alliance under its hegemony, in January 2017 it announced a merger with smaller Islamist groups and rebranded again as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham.[71] Al-Zawahiri again strongly criticized the apparent strategy of decoupling the Syrian jihad from the global struggle, announcing that "the jihad in ash Sham is a jihad of the entire Muslim Ummah, […] not a jihad of the people of Syria," as well as accusing HTS of "seek[ing] not to be hostile to America" and "planning to evade the pledges of bayat."[72] Although HTS attempted to refute these accusations—sometimes rather half-heartedly—it seems clear that the group went further in its pragmatic re-evaluation of the governing variables that emerged from Al-Qaeda's learning process than the central leadership was prepared to do.

This becomes especially apparent in light of how HTS has dealt with the increased role that Turkey has played in the Syrian conflict since 2017. While Al-Qaeda sees Erdogan as not much better than the Arab apostate regimes,[73] HTS officials argued that "different opinions existed on […] the legitimacy of Turkey's President Erdogan and relationships with foreign governments."[74] In late 2017 HTS even accepted a Turkish military presence in Idlib, the last opposition stronghold, and the establishment of a demilitarized zone, indirectly

also submitting to the Astana negotiations, a format universally rejected by jihadists.[75] The ensuing furious criticism by Al-Qaeda-aligned ideologues forced HTS to engage in further inquiry.[76] In a subtle, but within the rigid framework of Salafi-jihadism relatively far-reaching, reinterpretation of core norms, HTS claims that it does not violate the ban on cooperation with apostate regimes when certain minimal conditions are met.[77] In a pragmatic recognition of power realities on the ground, HTS media official Muhammad Nazzal argued: "No one says that the Turks' entrance to these points is some desirable interest; rather, it's the lesser of two evils."[78] With this, HTS effectively subscribed to a logic of ends justifying the means, potentially open to further compromises, implying a focus on wartime strategy above methodological purity. In the terms of Argyris and Schön, these changes seem clearly indicative of a form of double-loop learning, reacting to mismatches between the original approach and realities on the battlefield.

Given that there is no imminent military solution to the Syrian conflict, the organizational learning of HTS could potentially evolve the group even farther into a kind of "Neo-Qaeda",[79] transitioning into a quasi-recognized political actor "akin to Hamas in Gaza or Hezbollah in Lebanon."[80] While it would retain most of its hard-line religious beliefs, the norms underlying its political strategies would have to be more flexible. This does not mean that its actions would be any less violent—in fact, despite its moderation, HTS has aggressively asserted itself as the dominant player in Idlib. From a double-loop learning perspective, however, the group has clearly shown a willingness to inquire into its founding norms, confronting the realities of its situation and correcting the "errors" of mixing global and national jihad or remaining ideologically pure in the face of overwhelming opposition.

Conclusion

In this Research Note, we attempted to enhance the understanding of the learning of terrorist groups beyond the tactical and organizational levels usually focused on in the literature. We did so by drawing on a theoretical approach to organizational learning developed outside of the context of political violence. Changes to fundamental strategic approaches and underlying norms are generally seen as difficult for militant actors, and especially for jihadist organizations. In 2010 McCabe outlined five elemental changes that a future jihadist group would have to undertake compared to the then state of Al-Qaeda in order to become successful: adopting a more limited agenda of defensive jihad, stopping attacks overseas, concentrating on military and security targets, avoiding conflicts with other Muslims, and minimizing Muslim civilian casualties.[81]

As this Research Note has demonstrated, Al-Qaeda in fact fulfilled or approximated all of these elements. In a process of organizational inquiry, the organization revised its strategy and prioritized a more local, less brutal and ostensibly conciliatory approach over its global agenda and claim to superiority. Of course, as Stenersen remarks, strategic flexibility "does not mean: 'anything goes.'"[82] This became apparent in the conflict between the Al-Qaeda leadership and its Syrian affiliate, which was prepared to inquire even more in its governing norms, essentially rejecting global terrorism and pragmatically concentrating on its national setting. With the open entry of Turkey into the Syrian arena, the group now rebranded as HTS went even further, explicitly reinterpreting key aspects of its Salafi-jihadi credentials in order to be able to negotiate with the supposedly apostate power.

Whether the described changes qualify as double-loop learning is ultimately a question of interpretation. As Argyris and Schön have stated, in reality there is no dichotomy of learning but a continuum, and organizations consistently and fully committed to double-loop learning systems are essentially an ideal type. Clearly, Al-Qaeda is far from changing its core Salafi-jihadi convictions and some of its modifications can be seen as essentially representing strategic adjustments, generally in line with the spirit of most of its original governing variables. However, as Argyris and Schön note, changing strategies can in effect be almost as important as changing norms, when those strategies are "fundamental to the [organization's] theory of action."[83] As the evolution of HTS shows, what start out as modifications of strategies due to external pressure may entail more fundamental changes of norms down the line.[84]

The approach by Argyris and Schön helps to understand the learning process of terrorist groups as a process in which incompatible requirements and double binds are tackled in organizational inquiries and solved by prioritizing objectives in theories-in-use. More research is necessary to situate this framework squarely in the existing theories on learning in terrorist organizations. In order to learn more about the conditions that facilitate or inhibit organizational learning, future research should therefore explore the ways in which the internal and external conditions of organizations affect the capacity for such inquiry, and how the lessons of double-loop learning are implemented. Moreover, double-loop learning does not necessarily have to be correlated with moderation. Radicalization can also be seen as a process of revising one's norms, for example when so far non-violent protestors conclude, in the face of repression, that their pacifist governing variables is inhibiting rather than precipitating change. Applying this framework to such cases could therefore also yield important insights.

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Notes

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[7] R. Singh, "Preliminary Typology," pp. 626–627.

[8] Jackson et al, "Aptitude for Destruction Vol 1," p. 10.

[9] Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1978).; Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Methods, and Practice* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1996).; Mohamed Chatti, Matthias Jarke, and Ulrik Schroeder, "Double-Loop Learning," *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning*, edited by Norbert M. Seel (Boston, MA: Springer, 2012), pp. 1035–1037. This approach has been employed before to study a radical group in Carolin Görzig, "Deradicalization through Double-Loop Learning? How the Egyptian Gamaa Islamiya Renounced Violence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2019); URL: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1680193.

[10] Matthias Finger and José M. Asún, *Adult Education at the Crossroads: Learning Our Way Out. Global Perspectives on Adult Education and Training* (London: Zed Books, 2001), p. 45.; Viviane M.J. Robinson, "Descriptive and Normative Research on Organizational Learning: Locating the Contribution of Argyris and Schön," *International Journal of Educational Management* 15, 2 (2001): pp. 58–67. Argyris and Schön draw their empirical examples largely from the world of business, and Argyris in particular has been engaged in interventions attempting to improve the organizational learning of companies. Although there are of course important differences between private-sector companies and violent non-state actors, as Jackson et al. remark "terrorist groups *are* organizations" (Jackson et al., "Aptitude for Destruction Vol 1," p. 9). Analogies between business organizations and violent actors have also been drawn in Ray Takeyh and Nikolas Gvosdev, "Do Terrorist Networks Need a Home?" *The Washington Quarterly* 25, 3 (2010): pp. 97–108, and in Jacob Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[11] Anders Örtenblad, "Learning, Double-Loop," *International Encyclopedia of Organization Studies*, edited by Stewart Clegg and James R. Bailey (Thousand Oaks CAL: SAGE, 2008), pp. 805–806.

[12] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning," pp. 2–3.

[13] Mohammed M. Hafez, "Fratricidal Jihadists: Why Islamists Keep Losing their Civil Wars," *Middle East Policy* 25, 2 (2018): pp. 86–99.

[14] Thomas R. McCabe, "The Strategic Failures of al Qaeda," *Parameters* 40, 1 (2010): pp. 60–71, at p. 60.

[15] Ibid, p. 69.

[16] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning," p. 10.

[17] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning II," p. 13.

[18] Ibid., p. 92; Argyris and Schön are somewhat ambiguous with their terminology, speaking of "values", "norms", "policies" "objectives" or "governing variables" largely interchangeably.

[19] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning," p. 11.

[20] Ibid., p. 16.

[21] Ibid., p. 28.

[22] Ibid., p. 2. This is arguably a somewhat limited interpretation of learning compared to other definitions. For a brief overview, see M. Leann Brown and Michael Kenny, "Organizational Learning: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations," *Organizational Learning in the Global Context,* edited by M. Leann Brown, Michael Kenney and Michael Zarkin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 1–21, at pp. 3–5. We contend, however, that the explicit focus of this conceptualization on actual change and (subjective) improvement allows us to better capture and trace processes that organizations themselves consider as learning.

[23] Ibid., p. 22.

[24] Ibid., pp. 3–4.

[25] Ibid., pp. 312–313.

[26] Chatti, Jarke, and Schroeder, "Double-Loop Learning," p. 1035.

[27] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning II," p. 20.

[28] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning," pp. 3–4.

[29] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning," p. 24.

[30] Chris Argyris, "Making the Undiscussable and Its Undiscussability Discussable." *Public Administration Review* 40, 3 (1980): pp. 205–213.

[31] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning II," p. 111–112.

[32] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning," p. 26.

[33] Görzig, "Terrorist Learning in Context," p. 7.

[34] Jackson et al., "Aptitude for Destruction Vol 1," pp. 58–59.

[35] Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorist Decision Making," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6, 1 (2003): pp. 473–507, at pp. 488–489.

[36] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[37] This view was seemingly validated when the U.S. left Somalia after the killing of 18 soldiers, leading Bin Laden to the misguided assumption that American power was a mere "paper tiger." - Daniel Byman, *Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist movement: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 51.

[38] In his *Knights under the Prophet's Banner*, Ayman Al-Zawahiri set out the goals of the movement in no unclear terms: (1) "[M]ove the battle to the enemy's ground"; (2) "Armies achieve victory only when the infantry takes hold of land. Likewise, the mujahid Islamic movement will not triumph against the world coalition unless it possesses a fundamentalist base in the heart of the Islamic world"; (3) "[M]ust come closer to the masses […]; The Muslim nation will not participate [in jihad] unless the slogans of the Mujahideen are understood by the masses"; (4) "Loyalty to the leadership and the acknowledgement of its precedence and merit represents a duty that must be emphasized and a value that must be consolidated"; "need for a scientific, struggling, and rational leadership that could guide the nation." Ayman Al-Zawahiri *Knights under the Prophet's Banner* (London: Asharq al-Awsat, 2001), pp. 60–63; URL: https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/1507027/2001-12-02-knights-under-the-prophets-banner-en.pdf.

[39] Michael W. S. Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's strategy: The Deep Battle against America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 57.

[40] Mendelsohn, "The al-Qaeda Franchise," pp. 67–68.

[41] Brian Fishman, *Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside Al-Qa`ida in Iraq* (Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, 2009); URL: https://ctc.usma.edu/dysfunction-and-decline-lessons-learned-from-inside-al-qaida-in-iraq/.

[42] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Letter to al-Zarqawi" (Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2005); URL: https://fas.org/irp/news/2005/10/letter_in_english.pdf, p. 8.

[43] Tricia Bacon, and Elizabeth G. Arsenault 2017. "Al Qaeda and the Islamic State's Break: Strategic Strife or Lackluster Leadership?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, 3 (2019), pp. 229–263.

[44] A sentiment seemingly shared even by the influential jihadist ideologies Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada.- Shiv Malik, Mustafa Khalili, Spencer Ackerman, and Ali Younis, "How Isis Crippled al-Qaida: The Inside Story of the Coup that Has Brought the World's Most Feared Terrorist Network to the Brink of Collapse," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2015: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/10/how-isis-crippled-al-qaida. It has since been suggested that their interviews were a deliberate ruse to divert attention from Al-Qaeda. See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr, "How al-Qaeda Survived the Islamic State Challenge," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 21 (2017): pp. 50–68, at p. 58; URL: https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/files/publications/20170331CurrentTrends21.pdf.

[45] Colin P. Clarke and Assaf Moghadam, "Mapping Today's Jihadi Landscape and Threat," *Orbis* 62, 3 (2018): pp. 347–371, at pp. 349–350; Bruce Hoffman, "Al-Qaeda's Resurrection" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018); URL: https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/al-qaedas-resurrection.

[46] Osama Bin Laden, "Letter to `Atiyya," *Abbotabad Document SOCOM-2012-0000019*, 2010, p. 3; URL: http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/SOCOM-2012-0000019-Trans.pdf.

[47] Ibid., p. 15.

[48] Undoubtedly under the impression of the experiences in Iraq: "Amongst the mistakes made were the killing of some, the Muslims did not understand the justification behind allowing their killing [leading] to the loss of the Muslims sympathetic approach towards the Mujahidin" (ibid., p. 4).

[49] Ibid., pp. 5–6.

[50] Atiyatullah al-Libi, "The People's Revolt… the Fall of the Corrupt Arab Regime… the Demolishment of the Idol of Stability… and the New Beginning," *The Global Media Islamic Front*, 2011; URL: http://gtrp.haverford.edu/statement/ATI20110216/.

[51] Bill Roggio, "Wuhayshi Imparted Lessons of AQAP Operations in Yemen to AQIM," *The Long War Journal*, August 12, 2013; URL: https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/08/wuhayshi_imparts_les.php.

[52] Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr, "Extreme Makeover, Jihadist Edition: Al-Qaeda's Rebranding Campaign," *War on the Rocks*, September 3, 2015; URL: https://warontherocks.com/2015/09/extreme-makeover-jihadist-edition-al-qaedas-rebranding-campaign/.

[53] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "General Guidelines for Jihad," *As-Sahab Media*, September 2013, p. 5.; URL: https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/dr-ayman-al-e1ba93awc481hirc4ab-22general-guidelines-for-the-work-of-a-jihc481dc4ab22-en.pdf.

[54] Ibid., p. 3; The document is indicative of its genesis – in some parts, it still shows the old preferences, emphasizing that "[militarily], focus should be maintained on constantly weakening the head of international unbelief" while "entering into an armed clash with the local regimes" should be avoided (ibid, pp. 3–4). Because at the time of its publication the reality on the ground had already shifted to insurgent warfare, this necessitates some awkward balancing acts, where al-Zawahiri lists exceptions to the latter rule to accommodate essentially all countries in which jihadist groups were already fighting (ibid, p. 2) and maintains that "focusing on the head of disbelief (America) does not conflict with the right of the Muslim masses to wage jihad […] against those who oppress them" (ibid). Events on the ground also demonstrated that strategic revisions need time to be implemented: although AQIM's emir Droukdel relayed the advice to take a gradual approach to the local commanders, many of them nevertheless implemented a harsh form of Sharia, alienating the population and paving the way for the French counteroffensive. As Gartenstein-Ross and Barr remark, "uneven implementation often undercut Al-Qaeda's early rebranding efforts"; Gartenstein-Ross and Barr, "Extreme Makeover."

[55] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, *The Exoneration: A Treatise on the Exoneration of the Nation of the Pen and Sword of the Denigrating Charge of Being Irresolute and Weak*, (2008); URL: https://fas.org/irp/dni/osc/exoneration.pdf. In this angry reaction to the criticisms of his former mentor, Sayid Imam Abdel-Aziz Al-Sharif, he argued, based on a selective reading of Hadiths, that "women and young boys, that is, those who may not be killed separately, may be killed if they are mixed with others," drawing an analogy to the historic use of catapults, which were permitted to use "even if young boys, women, old people, and monks are killed along with the others because it is permitted to attack them collectively" (ibid, p. 39). He explicitly applied this logic also to Muslims "if they mix with others and one cannot avoid killing them along with the others" (ibid., p. 41).

[56] Al-Qaeda in the Subcontinent, "Code of Conduct," *As-Sahab Media Subcontinent,* June 2017, p. 2; URL: https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/al-qacc84_idah-in-the-indian-subcontinent-22code-of-conduct22-en.pdf.

[57] Al-Qaeda General Command, "Let Our Mothers Trust Is If We Do Not Win the Blood of the Worshipers," *As-Sahab Media*, March 23, 2019; URL: https://jihadology.net/2019/03/23/new-statement-from-al-qaidahs-general-command-let-our-mothers-trust-is-if-we-do-not-win-the-blood-of-the-worshipers/. The full passage reads: "Target the crusader fighters in their bases and places of gathering, not in their churches and places of worship. And avoid targeting who God and his messenger ask you to not target them. Based on […] our noble morals of war."

[58] Tore R. Hamming, "Jihadi Competition and Political Preference," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, 6 (2017): pp. 63–88; Hassan Hassan, "Sunni Jihad Is Going Local: Future Extremists Will Focus Not on Exporting Violence to the West, but on Building Influence in Their Own Communities," *The Atlantic*, February 15, 2019; URL: https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/02/sunni-jihad-turns-away-transnational-terrorism/582745/. Undoubtedly, this was to a large degree the result of the ascension of al-Zawahiri to Al-Qaeda's number one, as the Egyptian had a long-standing preference for fighting the near enemy; see Sajjan Gohel, "Deciphering Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Al-Qaeda's Strategic and Ideological Imperatives," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, 1 (2017): pp. 54–67; Michael Scheuer, "The Zawahiri Era," *The National Interest* 115 (2011): pp. 18–26. However, this is not unusual in learning processes, where "it is often impossible, in the real-world context of organizational life, to find inquiry cleanly separated from the uses of power" (Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning," op. cit., p. 24).

[59] Ryan Evans, "From Iraq to Yemen: Al-Qa`ida's Shifting Strategies," *CTC Sentinel* 3, 10 (2010): pp. 11–14, at p. 14.

[60] Charles Lister, "The Syria Effect: Al-Qaeda Fractures" (Hudson Institute, 2019): https://www.hudson.org/research/15533-the-syria-effect-al-qaeda-fractures.

[61] John Turner, "Strategic Differences: Al Qaeda's Split with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26, 2 (2015): pp. 208–25.

[62] Hassan, "Two Houses Divided," p. 5.

[63] Charles Lister, "The Dawn of Mass Jihad: Success in Syria Fuels al-Qa'ida's Evolution," *CTC Sentinel* 9, 9 (2016): pp. 13–20, at p. 15.

[64] The Guardian, "Syria Not a Launching Pad for Attacks on West Says al-Nusra Chief in TV Interview," May 28, 2015; URL: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/28/syria-not-a-launching-pad-for-attacks-on-west-says-al-nusra-chief-in-tv-interview.

[65] Sam Heller, "The Strategic Logic of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, 6 (2017): pp. 140–53, at p. 141.

[66] Jerome Drevon, "Renouncing al-Qaeda and the Prospect for Engagement" (Middle East Institute, 2019); URL: https://www.mei.edu/publications/renouncing-al-qaeda-and-prospects-engagement.

[67] Abu Mohammad Al-Jolani, "New Video Message from Jabhat Fatah al-Shām's Abū Muḥammad al-Jawlānī: 'Announcing Its Formation,'" *Jihadology*, July 28, 2016; URL: https://jihadology.net/2016/07/28/new-video-message-from-jabhat-fata%E1%B8%A5-al-shams-abu-mu%E1%B8%A5ammad-al-jawlani-announcing-its-formation/.

[68] Charles Lister, "How al-Qa`ida Lost Control of its Syrian Affiliate: The Inside Story," *CTC Sentinel* 11, 1 (2018): pp. 1–9, at pp. 2–3.

[69] Including most Western terrorism analysts, who generally concluded that the split was largely an exercise in public relations; Daniel Byman, "What's in a Name? The New Jabhat al-Nusra and the Future of Al Qaeda," *Lawfare*, October 24, 2016; URL: https://www.lawfareblog.com/whats-name-new-jabhat-al-nusra-and-future-al-qaeda.

[70] Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "The Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham-al-Qaeda Dispute: Primary Texts (I)," *Jihad Intel*, December 6, 2017; URL: https://jihadintel.meforum.org/210/the-hayat-tahrir-al-sham-al-qaeda-dispute-primary.

[71] Thomas Joscelyn, "Al Qaeda and Allies Announce 'New Entity' in Syria." *The Long War Journal*, January 28, 2017; URL: https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/01/al-qaeda-and-allies-announce-new-entity-in-syria.php.

[72] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Let Us Fight Them As A Solid Structure," *As-Sahab Media*, December 2017: https://kyleorton1991.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/ayman-al-zawahiri-2017-11-28-so-let-us-fight-them-as-a-solid-cemented-structure.pdf; He had made similar points in an earlier video communique, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, "Shaam Will Submit to None except Allah," *As-Sahab Media*, April 2017; URL: https://jihadology.net/wp-content/uploads/_pda/2017/04/dr-ayman-al-zcca3awacc84hiricc84-22al-shacc84m-will-submit-to-none-except-god22.pdf.

[73] Lister, "The Syria Effect."

[74] Abu Abdullah Al-Shami, "Comments Sincerely Advising Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi," February 10, 2017; URL: https://justpaste.it/13ied. [Translation from Lister, How al-Qa`ida Lost Control, p. 6].

[75] Akil Hussein, "Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham's Deal With Turkey Further Alienates It From Other Jihadists" *Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, November 2017; URL: https://syria.chathamhouse.org/research/hayat-tahrir-al-shams-deal-with-turkey-further-alienates-it-from-other-jihadists. In fact, according to local sources, "the Turkish move into Idlib was the result of an intensive negotiation process between HTS and Turkey. The talks had been initiated by HTS, at the request of its leader Jolani, whose delegates had mentioned to Russia during separate face-to-face bilateral negotiations that HTS was interested in a negotiated agreement to prevent a new conflict in Idlib"; Charles Lister, "Turkey's Idlib Incursion and the HTS Question: Understanding the Long Game in Syria," *War on the Rocks*, October 31, 2017: URL: https://warontherocks.com/2017/10/turkeys-idlib-incursion-and-the-hts-question-understanding-the-long-game-in-syria/.

[76] E.g. Adnan Hadid, "The Fig Leaf Has Fallen," May 13, 2018; URL: https://www.memri.org/reports/following-hts-decision-grant-turkey-military-presence-idlib-al-qaeda-supporters-accuse-it#_edn4; see also: Cole Bunzel, "Diluting Jihad: Tahrir al-Sham and the Concerns of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," *Jihadica*, March 29, 2017; URL: http://www.jihadica.com/diluting-jihad; Bailey Ulbricht, *Justifying Relations with an Apostate During a Jihad: A Salafi-Jihadist Group's Relations with Turkey in Syria* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute, 2019); URL: https://www.mei.edu/publications/justifying-relations-apostate-during-jihad-salafi-jihadist-groups-relations-turkey.

[77] Abu al-Fatah Al-Farghali, "On Deployment of Turkish Military Observation Points in the Northwest of Syria," May 2018; URL: http://www.aymennjawad.org/2018/06/hayat-tahrir-al-sham-relationship-with-turkey.

[78] Telegram Post by Muhammad Nazzal, October 13, 2017; URL: https://abujamajem.wordpress.com/2017/10/15/tahrir-al-sham-official-on-turkeys-intervention-to-implement-astana-thats-not-the-reality/.

[79] Mona Alami, "Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham is Evolving into a 'Neo-Qaeda,'" *Atlantic Council*, June 9, 2017; URL: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/hay-at-tahrir-al-sham-is-evolving-into-a-neo-qaeda.

[80] Kyle Orton, "The Best Bad Outcome for Idlib," *Ahval*, December 8, 2018; URL: https://ahvalnews.com/syrian-war/best-bad-outcome-idlib.; Lister, "The Syria Effect."

[81] McCabe, "The Strategic Failures," p. 69.

[82] Anne Stenersen, "Thirty Years After its Foundation – Where is al-Qaida Going?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, 6 (2017): pp. 5–16, at p. 13.

[83] Argyris and Schön, "Organizational Learning," pp. 25–26.

[84] For example, in a long process of pragmatic self-reflection, the Egyptian Gamaa Islamyia transformed from a jihadist terrorist group into a political party. - Paul Kamolnick, "The Egyptian Islamic Group's Critique of Al-Qaeda's Interpretation of Jihad," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7, 5 (2013): 93–106; Görzig, "Deradicalization through Double-Loop Learning?."

Brain and Body "Fingerprints" of Existential Anxiety and Their Relevance for the Identification of Potential Terrorists: A Research Note

by Linda Wendelberg

Abstract

The literature on radicalization documents that the identification of individuals who might take part in terrorist acts is difficult. In the field of terrorism studies, there is a lack of research on how the mind of individuals would present itself in conditions that are supposed to be related to radicalization processes. On the other hand, in the fields of crime prevention and forensic investigations, knowledge about brain processing and behavior is used to a greater degree. The lack of major longitudinal studies which focus on the period before vulnerable individuals become radicalized is noticeable—as are studies covering later stages of radicalization. Such studies would, however, be of vital importance to explain some of the mechanisms behind radicalization processes. By investigating already-radicalized individuals it is no longer possible to separate what was rooted in the radicalization process and what was rooted in prior life characteristics. By experimentally investigating non-radicalized subjects it is, on the other hand, not possible to make the link to heavy radicalization or actual terrorist acts. A new window to explore this link can possibly be found in investigations of Existential Anxiety [EA]. It has been shown that the condition of Existential Anxiety shares similarities with profiles found in some radicalized individuals—but a physical link to terrorist acts or severe radicalization has not yet been made. However, recent findings on EA could hypothetically explain the highly variable profiles found among terrorists. At present, there is a lack of knowledge about how this condition translates into actual behavior, which makes it difficult to use such information for the purpose of prevention. This review summarizes available evidence indicating that EA could be a risk factor in radicalization processes.

Keywords: Existential anxiety, behavior, vulnerability, brain, radicalization, profiling, terrorism

Introduction

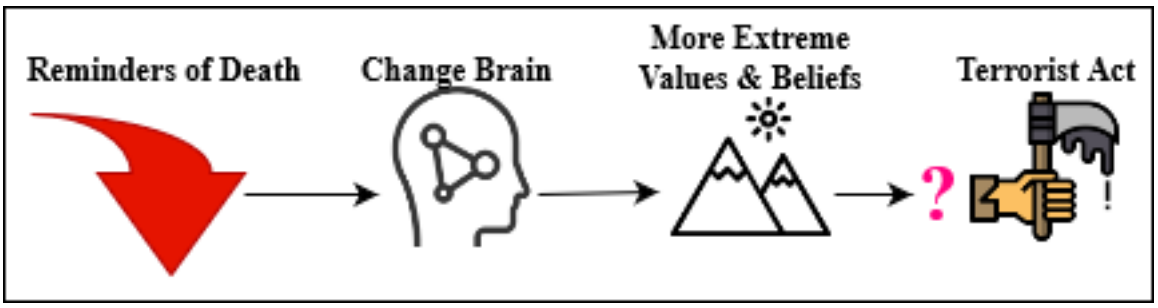
For a long time, the assumption that terrorists are shockingly normal has dominated the field of terrorism studies. This is beginning to change. Yet the study of the etiology of terrorism is still lacking robust indicators for high-quality risk assessments of potential perpetrators. [1][2] It has been credibly asserted that some types of radicalization are precipitated by certain personal experiences. Moskalenko and McCauley describe this in the following way: "The common denominator is that something happened to make the political personal."[3] Radicalization is defined as a process where individuals or groups undergo a transformation process characterized by increased support for the use of violence and coercion to promote political or social objectives and goals.[4][5] The radicalization process is also characterized by increased support for and/or use of illegal means.[6][7] However, the content and composition of the radicalization process is still unknown and even the definition of terrorism is still debated.[8] Existing findings related to terrorists show that such individuals manifest considerable diversity. These include individuals with and without known vulnerabilities, individuals who are suggested to have a very high level of psychological function along with apparently great prospects for a successful career in their society.[9][10] From media reports we know that even if the police or other parties have received warnings about possible serious radicalization, there seems to be a high degree of difficulty in identifying those who will actually commit violent acts. It is suggested that the reason for this may be that we might be searching for the wrong characteristics and also fail to consider some of the ways people may change.

Existential Anxiety

Mortality salience, also called death anxiety, is one of the more prevalent theories about Existential Anxiety [EA].[11][12][13][14] EA is defined as apprehension about the ultimate meaning of life and (fear of) death.[15] Within the perspective of the Terror Management Theory (TMT), "the something that happened" could be subconscious reminders of death.[16] TMT proposes that reminders of death trigger a worldview defense to protect individuals against their fear of death.[17] Extreme behavior and/or attitudes could be part of the defense as well as part of an eventual radicalization process.[18] Fear of death is only one type of existential concern and different types of existential concern can be related to different types of psychological states.[19] For example, social exclusion is related to a perception of life as less meaningful.[20] Human beings are social creatures with a need for social inclusion or integration, which is one aspect that is suggested to be an important factor related to radicalization processes.[21] Existential concern can be considered as a universal basic feature of mankind that can be filled with different meanings closely tied to individual differences and collective cultures.[22][23] The TMT argues that EA is the fundament for many types of existential concerns—which is the reason why TMT is often viewed as a biological theory. Figure 1 shows the change process related to existential anxiety: reminders of death subconsciously influence an individual's brain and contribute to changed behavior as well as the strengthening of already existing values and beliefs. EA might also contribute to the radicalization of already existing values and beliefs. Whether EA is involved in the process leading to the perpetration of a terrorist act is, however, still an open question. The issue which is debated is whether there is a path going from reminders of death to the execution of terrorist acts. This question [the question mark in Figure 1 below] will be discussed in a later section.

Figure 1: Process of Change due to Activation of Death Anxiety

[Reminders of death contribute to changed brain processing. This changed brain processing is related to the radicalization of values and beliefs. Change in brain activation patterns could be driven "mechanically" by sensitivity for repetition of stimuli—described below].



The phenomenon of EA can be investigated experimentally. However, it is difficult to measure existential anxiety during real-world events (as opposed to controlled laboratory environments where subjects are experimentally primed with subtle mortality reminders). Nor do we know whether it is possible to measure the priming effect of EA in already-radicalized subjects, which, after all, would not give us information about an individual's condition before radicalization. However, if we hypothesize that some experiments related to EA might also describe the start of a radicalization process, there exists a great amount of potentially useful knowledge. This holds true despite the fact that there are few studies about how this condition manifests itself in actual behavior.

The following short literature review aims to present a few physiological findings that suggest that EA may be able to explain at least parts of radicalization processes. This review is limited to findings related to the Terror Management Theory (TMT). Since this is a short Research Note, the different subjects are not described exhaustively but rather briefly highlighted in terms of their potential relevance to the study of radicalization, extremism and terrorism, inviting interested readers to further explore a probable connection by following the notes.

Political Radicalization and Religiosity—Shared Aspects

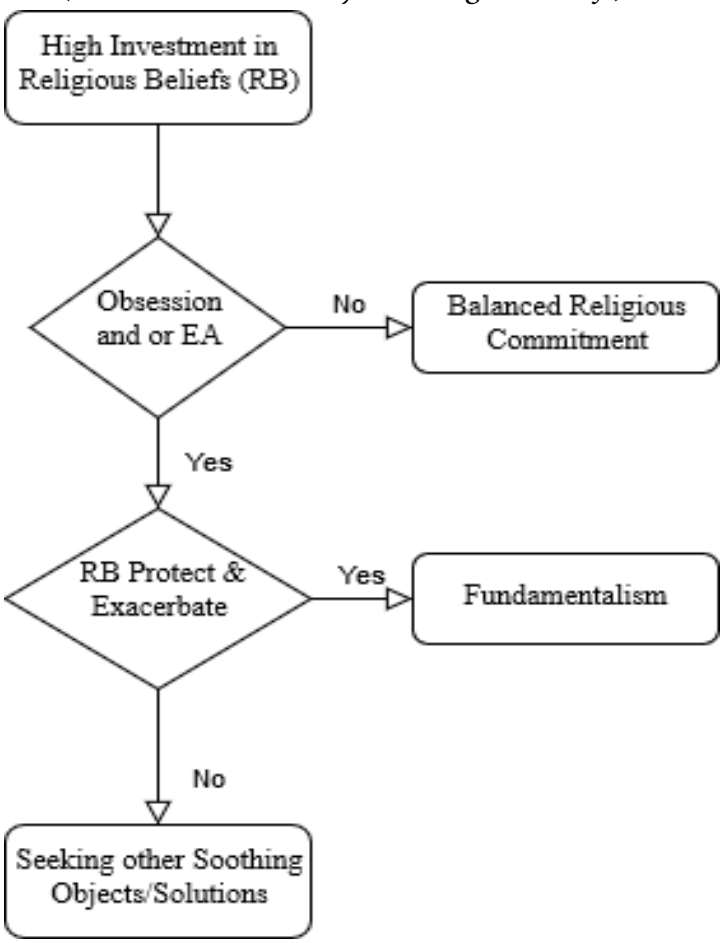
Existing research has shown that EA is related to political radicalization as well as to extreme forms of behavior.[24][25][26][27] However, due to the experimental conditions used in this type of research, a direct link to radicalization to extremism has been difficult to establish.[28]

The link between radicalization and deep religiosity has also been questioned. It has been found that religiosity can be, but does not necessarily need to be, a protective factor against EA.[29][30][31][32] The field of terrorism studies and the field of existential anxiety studies may, however, reach some similar findings. Some research findings suggest that religious fundamentalism is related to changes in the brain's prefrontal region which is responsible for cognitive flexibility and openness.[33] The research literature in the field of EA suggests that change in the form of a brain lesion may not be necessary to develop fundamentalism. Religiosity may protect vulnerable individuals with respect to becoming radicalized.[34] However, some research studies have also found that subjects with strong religious beliefs may be more obsessional.[35][36] EA is related to the strengthening of obsessional symptoms in already-vulnerable subjects.[37] This suggests that religiosity among extremists can be related to obsessional patterns and not necessarily to religiosity [see Figure 2]. Research has shown that religiosity only mitigates EA for people who already have invested much in their religious beliefs.[38] This suggests that religion could hypothetically be replaced with something else.

This also suggests that radicalization tends to be based on already-existing beliefs and values (as in the case of 're-born believers') and that a radicalization process is (also) driven by psychological needs (e.g., obsessional, sexual, need for closure) activated by psychological vulnerabilities in combination with external factors. In short, the radicalization process in an individual often tends to be an exacerbation of already-existing values and beliefs.

Figure 2: Path for the Development of Fundamentalist Religious Beliefs

(EA=existential anxiety, RB=religious beliefs).



Brain Regions

Neurophysiology deals with physiological observations of the nervous system while neuropsychology combines information about behavior and mind, based on neurological observations. Neurophysiology and neuropsychology contribute to information about brain functioning and are frequently used in safety and security evaluations as well as in psychological and medical evaluations.[39][40][41][42][43][44] For example, functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), which is one of the neurophysiological methods, has contributed to new information about brain functioning in situations of EA. Extremism has been related to increased activity in the left inferior frontal gyrus (IFG) and to heightened activity in the same region as well as in surrounding areas linked to EA.[45][46][47] Overall, EA seems to affect one or more circuits in the brain, which may have far-reaching significance for sensorimotor function, motivation and behavior. Evidence that EA contributes to changed processing in the brain's insula is well documented. This region is strongly related to sensorimotor function.[48][49] Alteration of sensorimotor function can be observed or measured by neuropsychological and or neurophysiological testing as well as by computer systems related to human-computer interaction.[50][51] The brain regions found to be altered as a result of priming with EA stimuli (e.g., in the form of verbal reminders of a person's mortality), are related to aggressive and violent behavior.[52][53]

Brain Visual Paths

The dorsal and ventral pathways of the human brain are referred to respectively as the thalamic path and the hypothalamic path.[54] Alterations in the dorsal and ventral pathways are related to changes in an individual's psychological condition and include his or her sexual problems.[55] Older published research data[56] (and new research data to be published by the current author) suggest that the ventral and dorsal visual paths are affected when subjects are primed with a fear of death and might also be related to different types of vulnerability. In mainstream psychology, vulnerability is often related to high neuroticism, psychopathic traits and low self-esteem, while research on EA suggests that there may be also other vulnerability paths.[57] What if vulnerability traits could be changed as part of the radicalization process? It may well be that a high focus on the more common vulnerability factors may reduce the ability to detect that there may also be common traits or common processes in extreme radicalization. On the other hand, it is possible that detection of change can be of greater importance than the identification of vulnerability factors. Repeated testing shows that subjects primed with EA have a higher degree of variability in data even if the self-reported personality profiles in themselves are not different. This suggests that a focal view on the more general vulnerability factors and a high focus on generalizability may not track the diversity. Moreover, behavior and cognition seem to be altered in specific patterns that can be identified. It suggests that cognition, emotion and motor function are all influenced by EA. Such information could be obtained by researchers working with radicalized individuals. For example, the ventral path is related to sexuality (see below).[58] Published research data [59] and new research data to be published by the current author support the thesis that EA influences the ventral path in a more complex way—rather than only in one direction. Decreased activity in the ventral hypothalamic pathway could, for example, indicate hyposexuality while increased activity could indicate hypersexuality.[60] However, brain activation patterns and cognition for EA are documented at a wider scope than behavioral measures. This restricts the possible use of such findings in counterterrorism work, because concrete behavioral *measures* can be more easily directly implemented in computer algorithms or used in fieldwork.

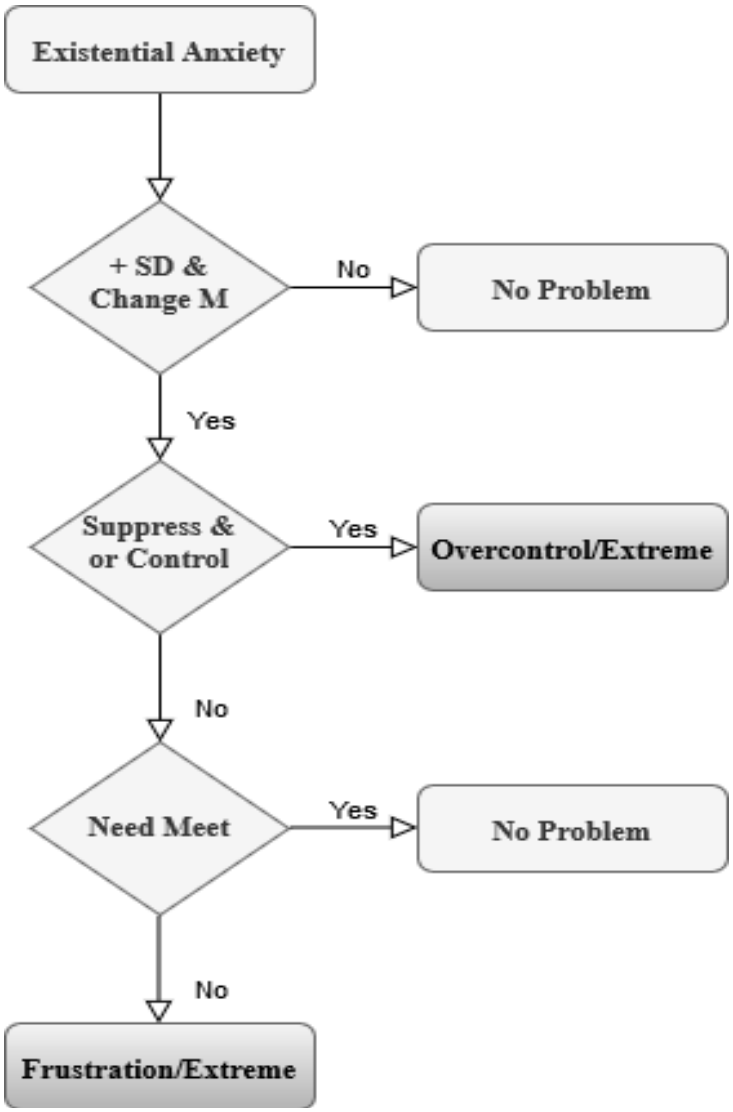
Sexuality and Radicalization

Law enforcement agencies (LEA) and academic research have repeatedly suggested that sexuality is part of the complex that has been linked to radicalization and terrorist acts.[61][62] A large number of studies document that EA contributes to a change in sexual behavior. This change is thought to be part of the psychological defense that is activated when an individual is facing reminders of death.[63][64] However, even though anecdotal observations as well as qualitative studies have described that sexuality appears to be related to

radicalization, few, if any, studies have shown how such issues can be measured. Moreover, researchers have questioned the lack of focus on the existential perspective in studies on sexual dysfunction and other sexual problems, including lack of access to a partner.[65] The existential perspective on sexual problems can be viewed as the deeper psychological reason(s) for sexual distress, including etiological psychological conflicts.[66] This perspective goes far beyond the physiological sexual function and addresses some of the deeper layers of the human mind. Sexual problems cover the entire range from total abstinence of sex to hypersexuality. However, existing research suggests that radicalization appears to be related to more restricted attitudes and motivation towards sexual matters, as well as linked to a higher degree of guilt when exposed to sexual stimuli.[67] On the other hand, the literature indicates that the effect of reminders of death on sexual attitudes and behavior can be related to different paths, including hypersexuality, depending on individual characteristics and circumstances related to, for example, civil status.[68][69] This is illustrated in Figure 3, showing two possible paths that both may be part of the radicalization process. The model is based on the presumption that EA contribute to alteration of sexual needs as also documented in a large quantity of studies.[70][71][72] Blocking of possibilities to fulfil biological needs and self-inflicted punishment by restrict fulfilment of own biological needs can be seen as two sides to the same story. In summary the research suggests that EA increases sexual desire but the motivation (pursuing sexual matters) may go in different directions.

Figure 3: EA's Contribution to Increased Sexual Desire

[These may develop in different paths. The path leading to suppression and the path leading to frustration may be associated with the risk of developing extremism. (+SD=increased sexual desire, M=motivation). Suppression and/or control is based on findings with respect to the behavioral inhibition system (BIS)—see section on avoidance below].



Ventrolateral Prefrontal Cortex (VPC) Connectivity

Self-esteem has repeatedly been found to moderate EA, and high levels of self-esteem are related to resilience towards effects that can be evoked by reminders of death.[73][74] Human beings with high self-esteem, compared to individuals with low self-esteem, have been found to develop increased amygdala-Ventrolateral Prefrontal Cortex (VPC) connectivity after priming with EA.[75] Research suggests that the VPC activation is stronger for death-related words for young adults while older people have been found to display an activation pattern in the opposite direction.[76] Changes in the VPC region are related to psychopathy and to religious fundamentalism.[77][78][79]

Avoidance and Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia (RSA)

Existential Anxiety has been shown to be related to the inhibition (avoidance) system (BIS) and to a decrease in Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia (RSA).[80][81][82] RSA is defined as an increase in heart rate during inhalation, and a diminished heart rate during exhalation (or heart rate variability related to respiration).[83][84] Low RSA is related to internalization and externalizing behavior, which have been suggested to be risk factors for violent acts, including acts of terrorism.[85][86][87] Moreover, it is found that hostile individuals have a reduced parasympathetic activity (lower RSA) compared to less hostile individuals.[88]

The Serotonin Transporter Polymorphism (5-HTTLPR)

Existential Anxiety is also related to the serotonin transporter polymorphism (5-HTTLPR) [89] in the human brain. The 5-HTTLPR describes biological genotypes and certain types have been related to psychological vulnerability and aggression.[90][91] The 5-HTTLPR is part of the serotonin deficiency hypothesis, which has been associated with human aggression. For example, there are differences in the 5-HTTLPR genotype related to criminal convictions.[92] It is argued, however, that this hypothesis lacks confirmatory evidence or is at least uncertain due to contradictory findings, unreliable measurements and high levels of complexity.[93]

Novelty and Familiarity

EA is related to the avoidance of novelty and to reduced variety seeking.[94] Human reactions towards novel as well as familiar stimuli have been thoroughly tested because such processing contributes to better information about memory processing and motivation.[95][96][97] Preference for novelty or familiarity activates in different ways in the human brain and can be associated with different types of behavior such as, for example, repetitive restricted responses versus search for novelty.[98][99] Individual patterns of activation related to familiarity and novelty can be a potentially important tool in criminal investigations and crime prevention.[100][101]

Findings from the Field of Eye Tracking

Data gathered by an individual's eye tracking can contribute direct information about behavior as well as indirect information about the human brain; such data can, for instance, be used in relation to human-computer interaction.[102][103] Existing findings suggest that individuals who experience EA avoid threatening stimuli and are avoidant in general.[104][105] Priming a person with EA stimuli is found to influence frequency of update (time between eye movements), length of fixations as well as some other eye-tracking measurements linked with intersubjective differences.[106] EA is, as mentioned above, additionally related to changes in ambient and focal processing and with familiarity versus novelty. Current information about eye-tracking measures is drawn from only a limited number of studies (so far, such studies are noticeably scarce). Behavioral indicators gathered by eye tracking can be used to perform observations, including observations related to

human-computer interaction, while information about body states (e.g., RSA, levels of serotonin and brain connectivity) cannot directly be used as robust indicators. Eye tracking is one of many neurophysiology methods with a potential to discover neuropsychological phenomena generally and cognitive processes that affect behavior in particular.[107]

The Missing Link

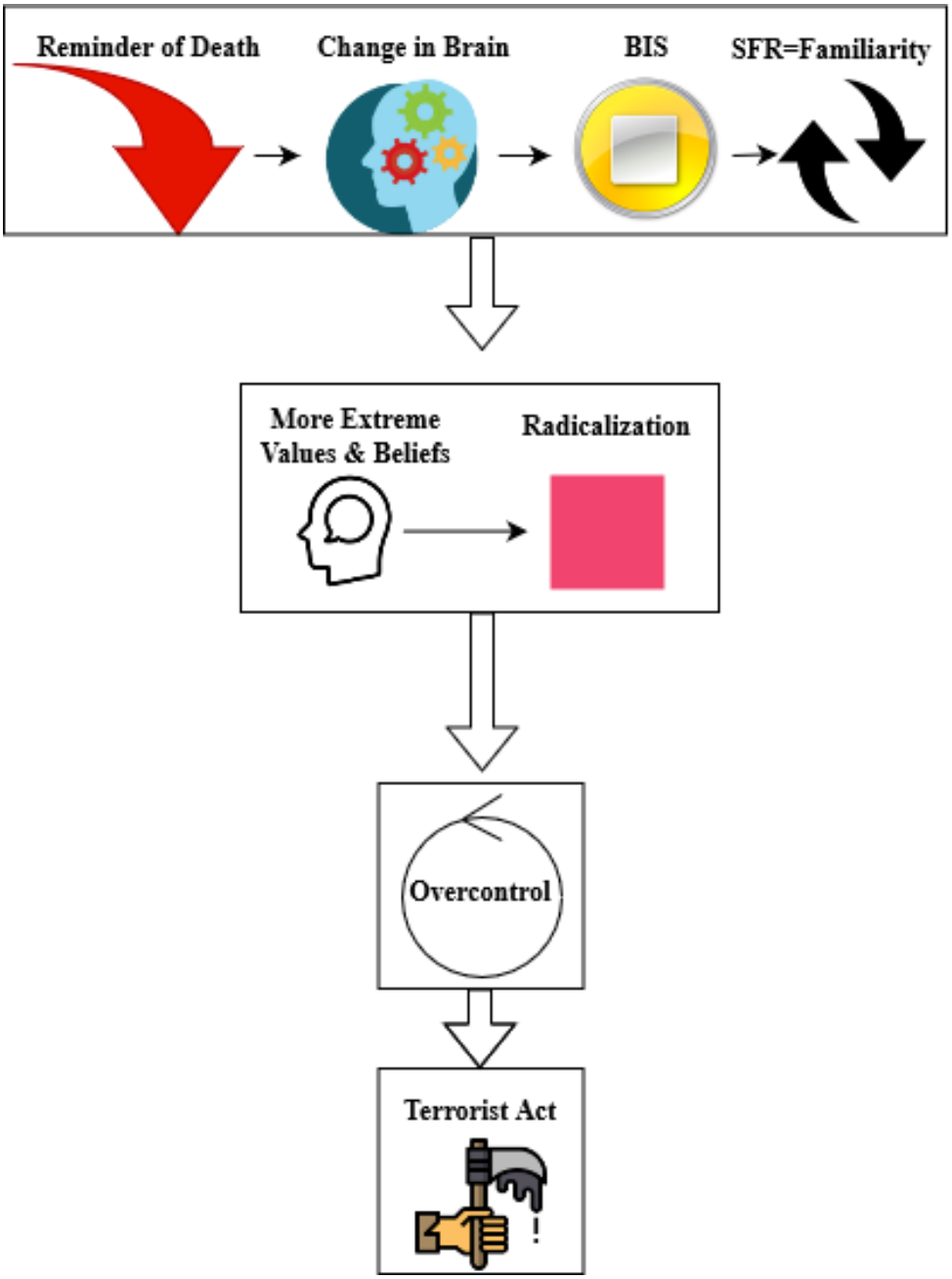
In research achieving simplicity is frequently one of the most difficult tasks. With respect to Existential Anxiety it is well documented that this condition is related to the behavior inhibition system. It is not obvious to associate avoidance with the extreme aggression shown in terrorist acts. However, research has shown that the behavior inhibition system predicts overcontrol.[108] Since the 1960s, overcontrol has been related to more extreme violence.[109] To the best of the author's knowledge, no studies have investigated overcontrol related to EA. However, the author has by means of an experiment discovered how others interpret behavior based on data from EA (results to be published in a separate paper). A simplified summarization of the main findings of importance as drivers for the radicalization process can be found in Figure 4. This model assumes that Sensitivity for Repetition of Stimuli (SFR) is a driver of the radicalization process. Moreover, it assumes that BIS predicts overcontrol, which is a possible connection to violent terrorist acts.

Main Drivers of the Radicalization Process

Existential Anxiety is frequently referred to as a special kind of anxiety. Recent findings about brain activation patterns during EA may, however, contradict any resemblance with common anxiety, especially for high-self-esteem individuals.[110] Research has shown that high neuroticism may be a vulnerability factor, and the EA is assumed to play a significant role in the development and severity of a range of anxiety disorders.[111] [112] Recent research in this direction shows promising results, which may lead to findings that can contribute positively to psychological health, for example with respect to anxiety and obsessions.[113][114] However, we do not know whether this may contribute to a better treatment of radicalization. Moreover, to offer treatment to subjects that may be unaware of their own challenges demands that society is capable to detect how people change. A model of the main drivers of the radicalization process with respect to EA is presented below.

Figure 4: Main Drivers in the Radicalization Process and Reason Why EA Can Contribute to the Execution of Acts of Terrorism (L.W.)

(BIS=behavior inhibition system, SFR=sensitivity for repetition of stimuli).



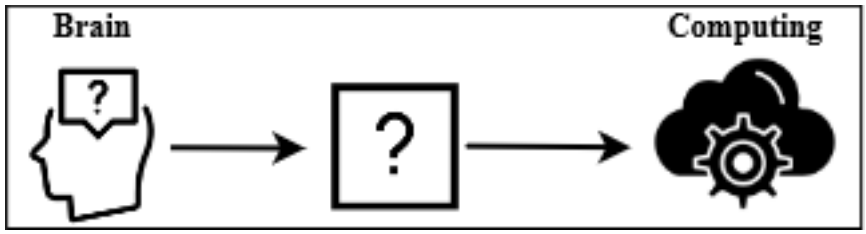
However, it is important to continue working on therapeutic solutions for already-radicalized subjects—an area where much work remains to be done.[115]

On Current State of Profiling

In the past, the field of profiling has been frequently criticized for producing inaccurate outcomes, e.g., false positives.[116][117] Digital forensics have, however, made advances in recent years and almost replaced the conventional profiling/investigation field due to its potential for higher levels of accuracy.[118][119][120] The paradigm of digital forensics changes our understanding of the type of knowledge that can offer extra value. It has been argued that digital forensics is more about detection than prevention; however, in the field of terrorism, detection *is* prevention.[121] Profiling is, according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Article 22, not allowed without consent from the subject. However, it is permissible when cases fall within the parameters of national security or international criminal law.[122] Information about brain processing and behavior can be used to detect risk factors and to profile individuals or groups, based on new and highly sophisticated technological tools and methods. Today's profiling focuses to a larger degree on measures that can be transformed and does not, as in the past, focus on static human traits. The field of terrorism studies has, in recent years, documented that individuals may radicalize more quickly than previously assumed.[123] To keep up with this acceleration, we need to link brain research with computing. For this, we need an intermediate variable that can connect the inside of the brain to the outer world.[124] The intermediating variable [the question mark in Figure 5 below] can be behavior but can also be exact measures related to brain activity, personality profiles, or other knowledge that can be transformed for use in the field of computing.

Figure 5: From Brain to Computing



Under normal circumstances, responsible citizens are all obliged to intervene when someone is a danger to themselves or to others. However, with respect to radicalization it is difficult to know when this is should be the case. Changes related to EA are subtle and difficult to detect and often operate at a subconscious level. This raises ethical and legal dilemmas because individuals influenced by EA may themselves not be aware of this influence while those in their environment may have difficulties in detecting relevant but subtle changes. Imaging and artificial intelligence (AI) technology can, to a larger degree than human beings, detect subtle changes but only if consolidated knowledge about behavior and behavioral change already exists. At present, we lack robust indicators for radicalization processes that can be used by human profilers and in technological (AI) systems within existing legal frameworks. At present, indicators do not offer full answers in the field of terrorism detection due to the complexity of pathways to radicalization. However, in domains of uncertainty, neurophysiological and neuropsychological decision support can be important.

Conclusion

Findings related to behavior and brain activation in the field of Existential Anxiety may share similarities with findings about terrorists within the field of radicalization studies. This could apply to patterns of brain activation, findings related to the main visual processing paths in the human brain, activation in the brain's Ventrolateral Prefrontal Cortex (VPC) region, lower Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia (RSA), avoidance behavior and preference for familiarity. However, even if we now have access to sophisticated brain-scanning technology that can contribute to more accurate profiling, the field currently lacks measurements to build robust indicators and systems. Studies that document measures and observable behavior for diagnosing the condition of EA are still limited in number. The brief overview presented here suggests, however, that the fields of radicalization-, extremism- and terrorism studies could benefit from including knowledge gathered by neurophysiological and neuropsychological methods about EA in efforts to develop better instruments for risk assessments and prevention efforts.

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Previously, she worked as a manager for healthcare at St. Olav's Hospital division of psychiatry, and also dealt with occupational health (Labor Inspection, Norway). Her current research interests include organizational psychology, criminal profiling, political terrorism, cognitive neuropsychology, information security, as well as risk and risk perception. She is currently affiliated with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Department of Information Security and Communication Technology and with the Inland Norway University of Applied Science, Department of Psychology.

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A New Inventory of 30 Terrorism Databases and Data Sets

by Neil G. Bowie

Abstract

This Research Note is a follow-up from two previously published Research Notes by the author in this journal titled: 'Terrorism Events Data: An Inventory of Databases and Data Sets, 1968–2017' [URL: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/622/1226] and '30 Terrorism Databases and Data Sets: A New Inventory' [URL: http://universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2018/issue-5/bowie.pdf].

Together, the previous inventories covered 90 databases and data sets. This Research Note describes 30 more databases and data sets in the same three categories:

i. Academic, Think Tank and Independent Databases (n=19)

ii. Commercial Databases (n=3) and

iii. Governmental Databases (n=8).

Most of these data refer to terrorism, yet a few are broader, covering other forms of political violence as well as armed conflicts.

Keywords: terrorism, counter-terrorism, databases, data sets, chronologies, political violence, armed conflict

Introduction

This inventory of mainly open source databases and data sets on terrorism, adds to an ever-increasing body of terrorism data now accessible to both the academic research community and other interested parties. North America and Europe still dominate the institutions hosting openly accessible databases and data sets on terrorism, political violence and related armed conflict. The costs involved in establishing databases on terrorism, maintaining them and the commitment to future running operations can be daunting.

Universities, think tanks and committed scholars have often given generously of money, time and commitment to projects that by their nature can potentially be open-ended. However, even well-funded Government projects such as the U.S. National Counter Terrorism Centre's WITS database (World-Wide Incidents Tracking System) and the MIPT Knowledge Base were eventually disbanded. A mixture of funding issues and political decisions affected their fate. In addition, data credibility, potential pressure from database funders and controversial issues of under- and over-reporting of terrorism incidents add to complex challenges.[1] Finances and politics are never far away from any publicly funded terrorism database project.

Despite these many challenges, the terrorism databases and data sets presented in the inventory below illustrate the breadth and diversity of quantitative data available to researchers. These include, for example, traditional chronologies on terrorism (items 3 and 12), databases on terrorism and violent extremism on the continent of Africa (item 1), and niche data sets on how terrorism ends (item 9). The newly established *Eurojust* cross-judicial terrorism database in Europe (item 28) and future database projects including violent deaths worldwide (item 8) and a domestic security and counter-terrorism database in the state of Florida (item 25), indicate the universe of data is increasing.

Commercial organisations also make their contribution to terrorism data and analysis. Specialist areas such as the terrorism (re-) insurance market (item 22), risk consultancy services (item 20) and terrorism facial recognition databases (item 21) have all added to the expanding selection of terrorism databases and data sets. The common denominator between many of these diverse databases and data sets is the use of web-based

technologies to source, manage and provide access to a wider audience.

As the diversity of data grows larger, there is a risk of creating a silo or 'stove-pipe' corpus of terrorism data. Cross-integration of some terrorism data sets may be possible. However, complex factors are involved, including: data analysis and design, institutional agreement, technology, interoperability, definitional criteria, and meaningful cross-linkage.[2]

This inventory is not a definitive list of data sets and databases on terrorism. Additional terrorism databases and data sets will be listed in a future Research Note in this journal by the same compiler. While many of the data sets and databases are accessible, some require registration, access permission or, given the sensitive nature of the data, are not directly accessible to the general public or researchers. All website hyperlinks have been validated as of 31 January 2020.

(i) Academic, Think Tank and Independent Databases

1. ACSRT Database on Terrorism and Africa Terrorism Bulletin (ATB)

Host Institution: African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), Algiers, Algeria.

Scope: Trends on Terrorism on the Continent of Africa.

Access: Free.

Website: https://caert.org.dz

E-Mail: admin@acsrt.org

Summary: The African Terrorism Bulletin (ATB) is a fortnightly publication providing an assessment of terrorism and violent extremism on the African continent. The Bulletin's data is sourced from the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) Database on Terrorism. It provides data, statistics and analysis on terrorist groups, terrorist activities and terrorist leadership and membership within Africa. The African Terrorism Bulletin is principally produced to provide data and analysis to African Union (AU) member states. Data for the African Terrorism Bulletin (ATB) is sourced from the ACSRT's Database. The database is not publicly accessible.

2. Bias Incidents and Actors Study (BIAS)

Host Institution: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: U.S. violent and non-violent crime 1990–2018.

Access: Contact START.

Website: https://www.start.umd.edu/search/content/Bias

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The Bias Incidents and Actors Study data set (BIAS) is a quantitative dataset on US-based individuals who have committed violent and non-violent crime between 1990 and 2018. The BIAS data set is a cross-sectional de-identified dataset. Criteria for entry is that individuals have been 'at least partially motivated by some form of identity-based prejudice'. These biases can include race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and age, among others.

3. Chronologies of Modern Terrorism

Host Institution: [Book Publication] Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Chronologies of Modern Terrorism*. Routledge, New York, (2015).

Scope: Origin and developments in terrorism from the French Revolution until the modern day, with accompanying chronologies.

Access: N/A.

Website: https://www.routledge.com/Chronologies-of Modern-Terrorism/Rubin-Rubin/p/book/9780765620477

E-Mail: N/A.

Summary: *The Chronologies of Modern Terrorism* covers major developments and incidents of terrorism from the French Revolution until the present day. Core topics include a history of terrorism, ideology and counter terrorist policy. Regional coverage of Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East with accompanying chronologies of terrorism incidents and groups are included.

4. CNS Global Incidents and Trafficking Database

Host Institution: Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), Washington D.C. United States / James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) Monterey, (CA) United States.

Scope: Global incidents of nuclear and radioactive material lost, stolen or outside regulatory control.

Access: Free.

Website: https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/cns-global-incidents-and-trafficking-database/

E-Mail: contact@nti.org

Summary: The CNS Global Incidents and Trafficking Database is an open-access database recording incidents of nuclear material (including other types of radioactive material that has been lost or stolen). This also includes nuclear/radioactive material that is not, but should be covered by regulatory control. To date, the database holds 1,156 incidents (2015–2019). An interactive searchable map permits researchers to find all nuclear/radioactive theft/loss incidents from 2013–2018. Source data for the database comes from official regulatory agencies and media reports. The annual report for the database is prepared by the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) Monterey, (CA) United States.

5. Customary IHL Database

Host Institution: International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, Switzerland.

Scope: International Humanitarian Law.

Access: Free.

Website: https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl-search.nsf/home.xsp

E-Mail: https://www.icrc.org/en/contact

Summary: The Customary IHL (International Humanitarian Law) Database holds the rules of customary IHL outlined in the International Committee of the Red Cross's study on Customary IHL (Cambridge University Press: 2005). There are 161 rules. Although not a dedicated database on terrorism, the Customary IHL Database contains references to terrorism in the wider context of International Humanitarian Law. See also the Treaties,

States Parties and Commentaries Database and the ICRC National Implementation Database.

6. Explosive Violence Monitoring Project [Database]

Host Institution: Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Impact of explosive weapons.

Access: Free.

Website: https://aoav.org.uk

E-Mail: See website.

Summary: The Explosive Violence Monitoring Project database provides researchers with data on explosive device incidents, including terrorism and other forms of conflict and low-intensity conflict. The project is hosted by Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), an independently funded research organisation. The database search criteria permit differentiation between deaths and injuries as well as civilian and armed actors. Perpetrators within the database include state and non-state actors. Explosive violence perpetrators within the database include for example, terrorist groups, militia, criminal gangs, internal security forces and specific countries.

7. Foreign Fighters Tab of the International Crimes Database (ICD)

Host Institution: T.M.C. Asser Instituut, The Hague, Netherlands.

Scope: Foreign Fighters Case Law.

Access: Free.

Website: http://www.internationalcrimesdatabase.org/ForeignFighters

E-Mail: editors@internationalcrimesdatabase.org

Summary: The Foreign Fighters Tab deals exclusively with foreign fighter case law. Specifically, it '...collect[s] cases of (individuals related to) (potential) foreign fighters, who could be defined as "individuals, driven mainly by ideology, religion and/or kinship, who leave their country of origin or their country of habitual residence to join a party engaged in an armed conflict."[3] Each Foreign Fighters Tab presents a detailed outline of foreign fighter case law event[s]. Details include procedural history, relevant legal facts, courts holdings and analysis, instruments cited and related cases. The Foreign Fighters Tab is sponsored by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) and the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice. It is hosted and maintained by the T.M.C. Asser Instituut, The Hague, The Netherlands.

8. Global Registry of Violent Deaths (GReVD) [*Forthcoming*]

Host Institution: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Stockholm, Sweden.

Scope: Annual number of violent deaths worldwide.

Access: N/A.

Website: https://www.sipri.org/news/2019/new-initiative-measuring-violent-deaths-worldwide

E-Mail: https://www.sipri.org/about/contact

Summary: The forthcoming Global Registry of Violent Deaths (GReVD) will be a database of all violent deaths. It will be possible to query data on violent deaths based on global, national, regional levels and will drill down

to provincial city and municipality level. Key variables will include: location, time, victim, perpetrator and the type of violence. The GReVD source data will be derived from verifiable news and media reports.

9. How Terrorism Ends

Host Institution: [Book publication and data set] Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. Princeton University Press: New Jersey (NJ), United States. (2009).

Scope: Data sets on terrorist groups that have ended their use of violence.

Access: Book publication (requires purchase) with free access to associated website and data sets (see below).

Website: https://www.howterrorismends.com/data

E-Mail: cronin@american.edu

Summary: The data sets to support the book publication '*How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*' provide 457 instances of terrorism groups that have ended, based on the author's definition of what constitutes a terrorist organisation. The data sets are available in .html format, STATA file, and .XLS format (MS Excel), and come with an accompanying codebook (MS Word). The data used to generate the data sets were sourced from the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (TKB) hosted by the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism in Oklahoma City, United States. The MIPT Knowledge Base was disbanded and ceased operating in March 2008.

10. PICSS Database of Anti-State Violence

Host Institution: Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), Islamabad, Pakistan.

Scope: Anti-state violence Pakistan.

Access: Partly free, partly access on request.

Website: https://www.picss.net/picss-database-of-anti-state-violence-in-pakistan

E-Mail: info@picss.net

Summary: The PICSS Database of Anti-State Violence is a chronological database which includes incidents of suicide attacks, IED blasts, terrorism incidents and militant attacks, among others, in Pakistan. Data sets freely available from the database include terror trends within Pakistan, militant attacks, drone attacks and suicide attacks. The PICSS Database focuses mainly on violent militant attacks and the security forces' response actions. The PICSS database provides data for the *Pakistan Annual Security Assessment*.

11. RTV Dataset

Host Institution: Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo, Norway.

Scope: Right-wing terrorism and violence events data in Western Europe (1990–2018).

Access: Full data set – on application. Limited data set version free to download from website.

Website: https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/topics/online-resources/rtv-dataset/

E-Mail: j.a.ravndal@c-rex.uio.no

Summary: The RTV dataset contains acts of right-wing terrorism and violence within Western Europe, covering the period 1990–2018. A total of 757 events are recorded. The data set includes only the most severe types of right-wing terrorism and violence. Specifically, this includes 'attacks with a deadly or near-deadly outcome', 'attacks involving the active use of deadly weapons' and 'extensive plots and preparations for armed struggle'.[4]

12. Security Council Report – Chronology of Events (Afghanistan)

Host Institution: Security Council Report, New York (NY), United States.

Scope: UN Security Council press statements, briefings, resolutions, meetings and debates on Afghanistan 1953–2019.

Access: Free.

Website: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/afghanistan.php

E-Mail: contact@securitycouncilreport.org

Summary: The Chronology of Events (Afghanistan) is produced by the Security Council Report, an independent organisation based in New York City, United States. The Chronology logs United Nation's Security Council issues relating to Afghanistan from 1953–2019. While covering the ongoing conflicts and wars within Afghanistan, the Chronology lists terrorist events in Afghanistan and consequent actions undertaken by the Security Council. These include press statements condemning terrorist attacks by the Taliban, such as suicide bombings and terrorist attacks. The Chronology of Events (Afghanistan) also provides links to Security Council briefings, UN Resolutions, meetings and debates relating to terrorist activity within Afghanistan.

13. Sources of Blame Attribution: Citizen Attitudes Towards Public Officials after 9/11 [Data Set]

Host Institution: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: Study to evaluate citizen attitudes towards U.S. public officials post 9/11.

Access: Free.

Website: https://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/sources-blame-attribution-citizen-attitudes-towards-public-officials-after-911

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: With the use of an Internet-based survey, this study and accompanying data set looks at U.S. citizen attitudes and blame towards three United States intelligence officials and their responsibility in relation to the terrorism events of 11 September 2001.

14. The Global CVE Data set

Host Institution: Caitin Ambrozik, United States. [Data set author]

Scope: Data set of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) efforts in 84 countries.

Access: Free.

Website: https://caitlinambrozik.com/database/

E-Mail: cem324@cornell.edu

Summary: The Global Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Data set[5] records CVE efforts and practices over a period of seven years (2010–2017), in 84 countries. Data to construct the data set is sourced from the *U.S. State Department Country Reports on Terrorism*. The Global CVE Data set uses eight indictors, including CVE National Strategy, CVE Programming and Government Participation, among others. An interactive CVE story map permits users to access city-level CVE programme information.

15. The International Crimes Database (ICD)

Host Institution: T.M.C. Asser Instituut, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Scope: International crimes adjudicated by national, international and internationalized courts.

Access: Free.

Website: http://www.internationalcrimesdatabase.org/Home

E-Mail: editors@internationalcrimesdatabase.org

Summary: The International Crimes Database (ICD) contains records on International Crimes determined by national, international and internationalized courts. Whereas the Foreign Fighters Tab (see above) focuses exclusively on foreign fighter case law, the International Crimes Database covers a broader range of international crimes such as genocide, war crimes, torture, piracy and terrorism.

16. xSub

Host Institution: [Journal publication and data-set] See: Zhukov, Yuri M., Christian Davenport, and Nadiya Kostyuk. 2019. "xSub: A New Portal for Cross-National Data on sub-national Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* (forthcoming).

Scope: Cross-national data on sub-national violence (1969–2017).

Access: Free.

Website: http://cross-sub.org

E-Mail: xsub-project@umich.edu

Summary: The xSub repository is a 'database of databases'. It is focussed on micro-level sub-national violence event data on armed conflict and contention worldwide. A small amount of references also relates to terrorism. The repository is generated from 21 data sources covering substantial data collections, but also data provided by individual scholars from 156 countries. The xSub project is supported by the Center for Political Studies and Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan, United States.

17. Terrorism – Our World in Data

Host Institution: Our World in Data, University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Scope: Broad range of quantitative data on terrorism worldwide.

Access: Free.

Website: https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism

E-Mail: info@ourworldindata.org

Summary: 'Terrorism – Our World in Data' is an online publication produced at the University of Oxford. It forms part of a wider range of social, economic, political, environmental and scientific issues covered by this website. The Terrorism section provides a series of narrative, graphical and quantitative data derived from various sources, including, among others, the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), Aviation Security Network (ASN), Gallup Polls and Gallup Analytics and the World Values Survey.

18. 1993 Terrorism and Political Violence Data set

Host Institution: [Publication and data set] Acosta, Benjamin and Kristen Ramos, "Introducing the 1993 Terrorism and Political Violence Dataset." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 40 (3), 232–247.

Scope: Universe of terrorism events data 1993.

Access: Free.

Website: http://www.1993terrorismdata.org

E-Mail: binyaminacosta@gmail.com

Summary: The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), was developed and hosted by START—The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Reponses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland, United States. Covering the period 1970–2014, the GTD digitised previously held terrorism event data sources that were either manually held or part computerised. Despite strenuous search efforts, source data previously held for the year 1993 was never found and consequently never included in the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). *The 1993 Terrorism and Political Violence Dataset* developed by Acosta and Ramos, seeks to fill the void created by the loss of a year's worth of data sources. The data set contains 4,206 unique terror attack incidents. The data set is available in both .XLS (MS Excel) and .PDF format.

19. Terrorism Threat Assessment 2018–2019 [Publication - Liesbeth van der Heide & Reinier Bergema]

Host Institution: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), The Hague, The Netherlands.

Scope: Baseline Terrorism Threat Assessment 2018–2019.

Access: Free.

Website: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ICCT_Terrorism_Threat_Assessment.pdf

E-Mail: info@icct.nl

Summary: *The Terrorism Threat Assessment 2018–2019* is a situational report providing both quantitative data and qualitative analysis. The report covers 32 countries and uses open-source data from a range of publicly accessible data sets and databases. These include, among others, the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), EUROPOL'S TE-SAT, Government statistics and media sources. The authors categorise their assessment of terrorism into four categories: Terrorist Attacks, (Returning) Foreign Terrorist Fighters (RFTF), Prison & Prosecution and Terrorism Threat Assessments.

(ii) Commercial Databases

20. CORE Political Violence and Violent Organised Crime Report

Host Institution: Control Risks, London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Global incidents of war, terrorism, unrest and violent organised crime, with commercial relevance.

Access: Free. [Requires web-based form completion.]

Website: https://www.controlrisks.com/our-thinking/insights/reports/core-incident-report-q1-2019

E-Mail: https://www.controlrisks.com/contact-us

Summary: *The CORE Political Violence and Violent Organised Crime Report* is a new quarterly report produced by the specialist risk consultancy service Control Risks, London. The CORE Report provides data of commercial interest and relevance related to significant political violence incidents, terrorism, war and violent organised crime. A mixture of narrative commentary and graphical incident mapping data is presented. These cover, for example, number of incidents by category, regional and target distribution and tactics employed.

21. IntelCenter Identity Terrorist Facial Recognition (TFR)

Host Institution: IntelCenter, Alexandria, Virginia (VA), United States.

Scope: Terrorist Facial Recognition.

Access: Restricted subscription service.

Website: https://intelcenter.com/identity/index.html

E-Mail: info@intelcenter.com

Summary: The IntelCenter's Terrorist Facial Recognition (TFR) service is a commercially operating enterprise. Its services are restricted to government clients within the military, law enforcement and intelligence services. The TFR facial identity database holds in excess of 830,000 facial recognition entries.

22. Terrorism Frequency Report

Host Institution: POOL RE (Pool Reinsurance Company Limited) London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Significant acts of terrorism relevant to the terrorism (re-) insurance market.

Access: Free.

Website: https://www.poolre.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Terrorism-Frequency-Report-March-2019.pdf

E-Mail: enquiries@poolre.co.uk

Summary: The Terrorism Frequency Report is a quarterly report presenting significant acts of terrorism relevant to the terrorism (re-) insurance market. Important terrorism trends and themes are identified in the reports. POOL RE also operates the TRAC (Terrorism Risk and Analysis Centre) Database. The TRAC Database provides data for the Terrorism Frequency Reports, in addition to the use of subject specialists and open-source material.

(iii) Governmental Databases

23. Anti-Money Laundering International Database (AMLID)

Host Institution: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna, Austria.

Scope: Anti-money laundering and financing of terrorism laws and regulations.

Access: Free/Restricted.

Website: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/money-laundering/imolin-amlid.html?ref=menuside

E-Mail: gpml@unodc.org

Summary: The Anti-Money Laundering International Database (AMLID), was established by the International Money Laundering Information Network (IMoLIN), under the auspices of the United Nations in 1998. AMLID is essentially a 'compendium of analysis of anti-money laundering laws and regulations'. Closely linked to anti-money laundering, the database also covers texts and materials related to terrorist financing and countering the financing of terrorism (CFT). Part of the database is freely accessible, providing terrorism-related legislation and regulations. The database is supported by a partnership of 11 governmental, non-governmental and anti-money laundering organisations.

24. Database and Assessment of Risks of Violent Extremists (DARE) project

Host Institution: Netherlands Institute for Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology (NIFP)—project lead.

Scope: The analysis of judicial data relating to terrorists and terrorist acts.

Access: Restricted.

Website: https://www.vera-2r.nl/research-and-development/dare/index.aspx

E-Mail: https://www.vera-2r.nl/contact/

Summary: The Database and Assessment of Risks of Violent Extremists (DARE) is a risk assessment database designed to train and support European judiciary in the use of VERA-2R, a risk assessment instrument. The DARE database uses a mixture of personal, psychosocial and contextual information underpinned by available judicial data on terrorists and the acts they commit. VERA-2R assesses risks related to terrorism and extremism. Used by six member states, professionals within their respective criminal justice systems apply VERA-2R to differing judicial contexts. As a risk tool member states are able to share relevant risk information. The DARE database was funded by the European Commission and continues in part to be funded by the Dutch Ministry for Justice and Security as well as other partners.

25. Florida Domestic Security and Counter-Terrorism Database [*Forthcoming*]

Host Institution: The Florida Domestic Security and Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Center, Florida (FL), United States.

Scope: Active criminal intelligence and criminal investigative information related to terrorism within the State of Florida, United States.

Access: Restricted.

Website: http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0900-0999/0943/Sections/0943.0321.html

E-Mail: N/A.

Summary: The forthcoming Florida Domestic Security and Counter-Terrorism Database, established under 2019 State of Florida statutes, will be hosted and developed by The Florida Domestic Security and Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Center. The Intelligence Center will collect terrorism-related information, criminal intelligence and investigative information. This will be used to populate the Florida Domestic Security and Counter-Terrorism Database. Other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies will feed into and draw from the database. Key variables include: individuals/group plots, plans and coordination of terrorism acts. The database will be providing information on trends, patterns and correlations for both potential and actual terrorist activity that impacts upon, or affects, the State of Florida.

26. IMoLIN Case Law Database

Host Institution: International Money Laundering Information Network (IMoLIN), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna, Austria.

Scope: International Money Laundering Case Law.

Access: Free.

Website: https://www.imolin.org/imolin/cld/search.jspx

E-Mail: https://www.imolin.org/imolin/contact_form.html

Summary: The IMoLIN Case Law Database has been developed by the International Money Laundering Information Network. The IMoLIN Case Law Database contains some case law entries directly related to money laundering and terrorist financing.

27. NATO 9/11 – Chronology of Events

Host Institution: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Brussels, Belgium.

Scope: NATO press releases, press conferences, statement updates 11 September 2001–11 September 2011.

Access: Free.

Website: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/events_77648.htm

E-Mail: N/A.

Summary: The NATO 9/11 Chronology of Events presents a series of NATO responses to the terrorism events of 11 September 2001. The responses cover the period September 11 2001 to the tenth anniversary of 9/11. The Chronology includes a mixture of statements, NATO updates, press conferences, audio recordings and photographs. The Chronology is available in English and French with select documents also available in German, Russian and Ukrainian.

28. The Counter-Terrorism Register (CTR)

Host Institution: Eurojust, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Scope: EU-wide database for judicial information on all types of terrorist attacks.

Access: Restricted.

Website: http://www.eurojust.europa.eu/press/PressReleases/Pages/2019/2019-09-05.aspx

E-Mail: tvanlierop@eurojust.europa.eu

Summary: The Counter-Terrorism Register (CTR) is a centralised database developed by the European Union's Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation Eurojust, which focuses exclusively on judicial proceedings linked to terrorism. The CTR is able to establish links in proceedings against terrorist suspects across the European Union. In particular, the CTR is designed to allow the sharing of information on current terrorist investigations. It alerts authorities to prosecutions of individuals or terrorist groups and networks and acts as a centralised system registering terrorist convictions on an EU-wide basis.

29. The European Database of Terrorists

Host Institution: NIFP Custodial Institutions Agency of the Dutch Ministry of Justice, IKG Institute, University of Bielefeld, Germany and the Penitentiary Services of the Belgium Ministry of Justice.

Scope: The database maps factors related to engagement in terrorist activities.

Access: Restricted.

Website: https://www.vera-2r.nl/news/factsheet-european-database-terrorists.aspx

E-Mail: n.duits@dji.minjus.nl

Summary: The European Database of Terrorism specifically 'map[s] factors related to engagement in terrorist activities'. The database is a derivative of the EU-funded DARE project (see: The Database and Assessment of Risks of violent Extremists (DARE) above). The European Database of Terrorism is sourced from judicial documents from European trials of terrorists who have been convicted. The judicial documents consist of a mixture of personal and contextual information and information about specific terrorist act[s], all adhering to strict privacy requirements. Covering six European countries and 16 domains, the European Database of Terrorists contains a control group of non-terrorist violent offenders. This allows researchers to test the factors that relate to engaging in terrorist acts compared with non-terrorist criminal activity. EU funding for the European Database of Terrorists ended in October 2019. The project is currently seeking funding.

30. Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme Cases Resolved (CICA)

Host Institution: Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Scope: United Kingdom victims of terrorism compensation scheme data.

Access: Data not released—may require Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

Website: https://data.gov.uk/dataset/7cf413d8-f911-4477-bbcd-4cab57ac6523/victims-of-overseas-terrorism-compensation-scheme-cases-resolved-cica

E-Mail: N/A.

Summary: The data set 'Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme Cases Resolved (CICA)' is produced by the United Kingdom's Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. The data set provides information relating to the outcome compensation applications for victims affected by an incident of terrorism overseas.

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Notes

[1] See Gary Ackerman and Lauren E. Pinson, "Speaking Truth to Sources: Introducing a Method for the Quantitative Evaluation of Open Sources in Event Data," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 39, nos. 7–8 (2016): p. 618.

[2] For further discussion on the issues of terrorism data and analysis, see: Omi Hodwitz, "Recognizing & Resolving Issues in Terrorism Research, Data Collection & Analysis", *RESOLVE,* October 2019; URL: https://resolvenet.org/. Also see: Sheehan, Ivan Sascha, "Assessing and Comparing Data Sources for Terrorism Research", in *Evidence-based Counterterrorism Policy,* edited by Cynthia Lum and Leslie W. Kennedy. New York: Springer, 2012, pp. 13–40.

[3] See: URL: http://internationalcrimesdatabase.org/ForeignFighters [accessed 29/01/2020].

[4] See: Ravndal, Jacob Aasland, "Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe: Introducing the RTV Dataset," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 10, Issue 3 (June 2016). Online at: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism/archives/2016#volume-x-issue-3

[5] See: Ambrozik, Caitlin, "Countering Violent Extremism Globally: A New Global CVE Data set," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 13, Issue 5 (October 2018). Online at: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism/archives/2019#volume-xiii-issue-5

Online Deceptions: Renegotiating Gender Boundaries on ISIS Telegram

by Meili Criezis

Abstract

This research note examines the ways in which Islamic State supporters on Telegram, an encrypted messaging app, renegotiate gender boundaries. The introduction positions receptions of female ISIS accounts in the online space within the context of the roles that women are expected to fill and ISIS's tentative acceptance of women fighting on the battlefield. An overview of Telegram gender social norms is provided before discussing the methodology used to gather supporting archival data to analyze the renegotiation of gender boundaries on Telegram. This section is followed by an analysis of a case study that considers the wider implications of what this says about women's agency and involvement in terrorist groups online. The conclusion addresses the policy implications of possible shifts in gender social norms and the shape that women's engagement in violent jihadist groups might take in the future.

Keywords: Islamic State, women, Telegram, propaganda, gender

Introduction

Substantial research has examined women's participation and membership in terrorist groups—particularly in the Islamic State.[1] While findings suggest that ISIS's approach concerning women's roles within the organization have not greatly diverged from its predecessor and other violent jihadist groups, the unique set of challenges ISIS faced during its period of territorial decline forced it to deal with existential threats head-on and utilize more unconventional means.[2] One such solution was to tentatively push the boundaries of the permissibility of women's engagement in active combat. These shifts emanating from ISIS's core[3] were gradual and female members continued to remain largely restricted. In contrast, the online environment has provided unique opportunities for women to become increasingly autonomous and there is evidence that suggests that the social dynamics among online supporters may be shifting away from the stricter gender segregation rules that have continued, and in many cases continue, to determine social behavior on ISIS Telegram. In order to understand the significance of these shifts taking place online, it is important to first contextualize them against the wider backdrop of ISIS's policies on women.

In "The Mujahidat Dilemma: Female Combatants and the Islamic State" (2017), Charlie Winter and Devorah Margolin provide an overview of documents that have specifically addressed women's roles which emphasized non-combatant positions in normal conditions but deemed direct participation in fighting as valid under certain circumstances such as a shortage of male fighters or territorial losses.[4] The documents discussed were: the Khansa Brigade manifesto, "Valuable Advice and Important Analysis on the Rules for Women's Participation in Jihad" from the Zawra' Foundation, and continued discussions featured in Dabiq, Rumiyah and al-Naba'.[5] In fact, "women are referenced in the 28 issues of Dabiq and Rumiyah more than 1,500 times."[6]

Additionally, firsthand accounts from women who joined ISIS verify that the organization maintained strict gender segregation and emphasized the importance of motherhood and being a supportive wife along with domestic duties.[7] This gender segregation "practically reduced mixing between opposite sexes and has provided a functioning environment to utilize women in different roles."[8] Nonetheless, some women still expressed the desire to fight on the front lines but were corrected in their misunderstanding that they would be allowed to join men on the battlefield.[9] Then in February 2018, al Hayat Media Center released a video titled

"Inside the Caliphate 7" showing women engaged in combat:

Figure 1: Image of Women Engaged in Combat [10]

More photos and videos of this nature appeared during the period of the battle of Baghouz where women were permitted to pick up a weapon and fight side by side with men:

Figures 2–5: Photos and Social Media Posts on Female Fighters [11]

Baghouz represented the lingering remnant of a so-called caliphate that once encompassed a population of almost 12 million people in a territory the size of Britain.[12] Although the images presented above are not from ISIS's official media outlets, the fact that supporters circulated them among themselves suggests that images of women fighting had an impact but again, this only came to fruition under the conditions produced by such dire circumstances. However online, women have had significantly more influence in mixed gendered spaces long before ISIS's decline. For example, Aqsa Mahmood, who went by Umm Layth, was an influential female ISIS propagandist.[13] In the following screenshots from Tooba Gonadal, another female propagandist who went by "Umm Muthana", it is apparent that her messages were available to a wider public audience but the images and texts highlighted her female identity in order to demonstrate what female empowerment looked like in the Islamic State:

Figures 6-7: Social Media Posts of Female Fighter "Tooba Gonadal"[14]

It could be argued that a portion of the generic propaganda produced by these women is aimed at a wide audience regardless of gender, but the messenger's female identity remained strategically relevant and integral to the message itself. This is for several reasons: women have been able to directly recruit other women without encountering gender barriers via targeted propaganda, women's efforts in supporting the Islamic State have been used to criticize men who do not display enough dedication to the cause, and their presence as ISIS supporters has played a crucial role in constructing an alternative narrative that directly challenges what ISIS supporters view as the falsehoods of "Western" feminism.[15]

While it is tempting to interpret the presence of these female propagandists as evidence that women are exercising their agency, the ways in which they frame their propaganda and their decision to take on the role of propagandists tend to abide by ISIS's gender norms and expectations. As Elizabeth Pearson explains, "work on women's political violence is often focused on the assertion of women's ability to exercise agency, while neglecting analysis of the structures and norms that often seek to limit that agency."[16] Despite certain limitations, women have been able to level the playing field. The case study of two female admins who ran a predominant unofficial pro-ISIS English language Telegram channel, called "GreenB1rds," serves as an example.

Before discussing the methodology with which data concerning this case was gathered and the background details of GreenB1rds, it is helpful to provide a brief overview of the ISIS Telegram community's approach to female accounts. Chelsea Daymon describes her observations of how various rules are enforced to maintain gender segregation:

> On pro-ISIS Telegram, overtly female accounts have limited access. Some channels or groups even post rules of engagement, specifying that "sisters are not allowed." When joining channels or groups with a female themed account, many administrators (admins) will eventually if not quickly, kick female accounts out of the large majority of channels or groups on the platform. Additionally, admins will sometimes send a private message chastising a female account for joining the group before restricting entry. Thus, pro-ISIS Telegram provides limited access to female accounts. There are specific channels and groups for female ISIS supporters, but these tend to discuss issues like being a good wife, proper dress codes, and more "female oriented" discussions. In this way, pro-ISIS Telegram creates a segregated online ecosystem, unless women conceal their gender online by using gender-neutral accounts or posing as males.[17]

Daymon's last point about women entering groups under gender-neutral names to circumvent restricted access is discussed by Telegram ISIS supporters.[18] There is no doubt that women employ these evasive methods in order to gain full access to groups, but it would be impossible to analyze the percentage of 'false' male accounts due to the anonymous nature of the online world. This further highlights the significance of the GreenB1rds case because the individuals connected to that channel and account have been publicly verified as women.

Methodology

The author acquired access to a wide array of ISIS channels and groups by joining them through links that were periodically posted in channels and groups that she was already in. Telegram monitoring took place from mid-October, when the news first announced the arrests, until late November. Various ISIS accounts shared URLs to the news articles shortly after the articles appeared online and it generated conversations on gender. Any mentioning of GreenB1rds, the female admins, and references to gender from both channels and individual accounts in groups were documented and archived for later reference. Keywords the author kept in mind while looking for evidence included "GreenB1rds", "women", "sisters" "haram". While the news caused concern among supporters, discussions about the GreenB1rds arrests did not last past a couple of weeks at most and the ISIS Telegram ecosystem quickly moved onto other topics. However, it is important to mention that GreenB1rds propaganda continued, and still continues, to be shared widely by supporters and pro-ISIS channels demonstrating a long-lasting impact.

Given the anonymity of online accounts, particularly with supporters of terrorist organizations, several factors could skew the conclusions taken from the archival data:

- The accounts are undercover law enforcement or online ISIS hunters and are, therefore, not representative of feedback from true ISIS supporters[19]
- Male commenters responding to the news of the GreenB1rds are women concealing their identities with male account names
- The author did not access other channels and accounts that discussed GreenB1rds during the aggregation of archival data and missed opportunities to include a wider variety of responses

Case Study: GreenB1rds

In October 2019, police in the Netherlands and in the UK arrested two individuals responsible for running a popular English language pro-ISIS Telegram channel and account called "GreenB1rds."[20] Although news articles did not provide many details, the woman in the UK "allegedly created a false persona of herself as a man…and instructed a number of administrators so that they could continue after her suicide bombing."[21]

ISIS supporters' reactions to the revelation that two GreenB1rds admins were female reveals how the nature of the online echo chamber shifts when real identities are disclosed. Once the news of the GreenB1rds arrests became known, supporters reacted in several ways: They warned others to be cautious about operational security, they made supplications for the women's protection, and a supporter specifically addressed gender by responding, "Please ikhwan (*brothers)* in the future can u not allow our precious pearls to run such delicate groups/channels."[22] Another pro-ISIS channel shared a message asserting that "many sisters wish they were men" and simultaneously shamed men for not taking action while women could only dream of such a chance. [23]

The fact that GreenB1rds received gender-based feedback indicates a number of points:

- Women, who undoubtedly had a hand in spreading ISIS propaganda and plotting attacks, were nonetheless criticized regardless of their contributions to 'the cause' because of a single factor: their gender which, in turn, made them delicate "precious pearls" who were ultimately unfit to take on a leadership role in the eyes of the male critic.
- The individual who refers to the female admins as "precious pearls" is under the impression that the male accounts would somehow be able to enforce gender-based rules that would apply in offline contexts and maintain control in online spaces. In other words, his response reflects an attempt to directly translate real-world social norms to Telegram.
- Women, in this case, the GreenB1rds admins, were used to shame men who had not taken action: the implication being that men were not fulfilling their masculine duty in their failure to contribute.
- The individual who posted "many sisters wish they were men" understands the inherently limiting nature of being a female ISIS supporter and acknowledges that this sentiment may be widely shared among other women. The comment speaks to a certain level of self-awareness on the part of the original poster and it attempts to shame male ISIS supporters by addressing a certain male "privilege"—a male privilege that allows them to fully engage in violent jihad while women often face numerous restrictions.

Responses from accounts with male usernames[24] who expressed concern and support reveal an equally important point: The lack of gender-based feedback, in many of the responses, signifies a willingness to fully accept the female GreenB1rds admins' efforts regardless of their gender and their attempts to deliberately deceive fellow ISIS supporters into thinking that they were men. This indicates an increasing flexibility regarding the acceptance of women which reflects the increasing pressures on ISIS's online ecosystem, as demonstrated by

one commenter in a chat group, "…many sisters help with media now akhi. We are short many brothers."[25]

There is no single consensus on the matter of women's engagement, but debates centered on women's inclusion or exclusion continue to organically develop within these private groups which demonstrates that at least some supporters themselves are willing to be more flexible in their ideology, regardless of positions expressed in ISIS's official media outlets. These complicated and shifting internal dynamics explain why some women choose to avoid mentioning their gender altogether and, in the case of the female GreenB1rds admin from the UK, may go one step further by allegedly deceiving other online ISIS supporters into thinking that they are men. Despite the looser parameters online, passing as a man ensures that the individual is able to fully participate without facing possible obstacles that they might otherwise encounter if they had chosen to reveal their gender. Interestingly, the GreenB1rds channel had previously posted a message asking "sisters" in groups to avoid sharing photos, using overtly feminine names and "strictly no free-mixing in chats".[26] It intentionally encouraged deception in quite explicit terms. The emphasis on "no free-mixing in chats" is somewhat ironic given that the female admins engaged in conversation in groups that were supposed to be all-male. To the author's knowledge, ISIS has not solidly addressed the permissibility of lying about one's identity online in order to enter groups, participate in the so-called 'media jihad', or the actual plotting of attacks under non-dire circumstances.

It would be interesting to consider how receptions to GreenB1rds might have differed if the female admins had disclosed their gender openly. What *is* known is that they passed as male to obtain unquestioned access to all parts of the ISIS Telegram community and exert influence through their channel. This level of agency and equalizing the space depended solely on these women's ability to hide their female identities. The degree of impact that the original GreenB1rds had on the ISIS echo-chamber is difficult to measure but the nature of the content it produced, which ranged from bomb making instructions to threats to more generic propaganda, was widely shared.[27] The fact that the content was produced in English added to its relevancy among English-speaking supporters and by extension, widened accessibility to a larger audience.

Online channels, such as GreenB1rds, challenge conceptions of the ways in which women's participation and engagement in terrorist activities may take shape. Katherine E. Brown states that it is important to recognize "women's agency as extending beyond the private sphere challenges many of our inherited gender images…"[28] Observing how parts[29] of the online ISIS ecosystem renegotiate gender boundaries offers numerous important insights: understanding how terrorist groups across ideologies may re-evaluate women's participation, following the possibly evolving nature of gender dynamics and how various contexts can force supporters to inconsistently move the line, and recognizing the ways in which Islamic State supporters attempt to frame varying narratives of women's empowerment—even if some of these narratives conflict with one another.

Conclusion and Further Research Opportunities

ISIS has lost most of its territorial claims but, as countless terrorism researchers have pointed out, their online presence remains strong despite attempts to disrupt their networks.[30] Late November of 2019 saw a major crackdown on ISIS accounts, channels, and groups as part of a coordinated effort between Telegram and Europol.[31] However, according to Amarnath Amarasingam, "Playing a role in ISIS's cyber frontline was hugely rewarding…the very act of getting suspended, collectively strategizing ways to get back online, helping fellow supporters prop up their accounts and networks all became personally, emotionally, and socially significant…The results of deplatforming are now playing out in real time before our eyes, as ISIS supporters shop around for a new and stable home."[32] As the online battle against ISIS continues, female ISIS supporters will remain engaged and, as demonstrated by GreenB1rds, they have the ability to simultaneously take on the multiple roles of propagandists, recruiters, facilitators, planners, and attackers.[33]

More data would need to be gathered to definitively determine if a shift in acceptance of what women can or cannot do as members of ISIS's online echo-chambers is occurring but *if* it is, this development would have significant policy implications. ISIS's ability to establish itself as a proto-state meant that it entered untested waters and the diverging points that distanced it from its predecessor, al Qa'ida, provided it with opportunities for re-creation. Part of that process included an acceptance, albeit minimal and limited, of women on the battlefield as soldiers. David Cook highlights that legal sources deemed it permissible: "According to the legal sources, if the necessity for *jihad* is incumbent on the entire Muslim community, then women do have the option of fighting. But most still say that even in extreme circumstances women fighting remains an option, not an obligation."[34]

On the other hand, online supporters are distanced from direct control by ISIS's administration which allows for the organic development of discussions that might not have happened under physical proximity to ISIS's territorial so-called caliphate. While supporters' online social patterns mirror official edicts from ISIS in many ways, shifts in official propaganda create an atmosphere that is open to change. When thinking about potential terrorism trends in the next decade, it is necessary to ask if ISIS's policies could undergo more radical policy shifts and if future violent jihadist groups might incorporate women as soldiers by citing ISIS as a precedent. If this does occur, it will be crucial to consider how such a stance could be portrayed in both official and unofficial online propaganda and to what degree that message would resonate with female supporters globally.

Note: The author would like to thank, in no specific order, Dr. Victor Asal, Dr. Matthew Ward, Chardon Murray, Chelsea Daymon, and Dr. Amarnath Amarasingam for their input and comments.

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Notes

[1] Jessica Davis, *Women in Modern Terrorism*: *From Liberation Wars to Global Jihad and the Islamic State*, Maryland: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group Inc., 2017; Edited by Laura Sjoberg & Caron E. Gentry, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism*, Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2011.

[2] Charlie Winter, "ISIS Women and Jihad Breaking with Convention," *ISIS, Women and Jihad: Breaking With Convention*, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, September 13, 2019, p. 9.

[3] The term "core" refers to both ISIS's territorial caliphate and its official propaganda outlets

[4] Charlie Winter and Devorah Margolin, "The Mujahidat Dilemma: Female Combatants and the Islamic State," CTC Sentinel Volume 10 Issue 7, August 2017, p. 26: https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2017/08/CTC-Sentinel_Vol10Iss7-9.pdf

[5] Charlie Winter and Devorah Margolin, "The Mujahidat Dilemma: Female Combatants and the Islamic State," p. 26.

[6] Stephane J. Baele, Katharine A. Boyd and Travis G. Coan, *ISIS Propaganda: A Full-Spectrum Extremist Message,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 119.

[7] Erin M. Saltman and Melanie Smith, "'Till Martyrdom Do Us Part' Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, 2015, p. 14.

[8] Hamoon Khelghat-Doost, "Women of the Caliphate: The Mechanism for Women's Incorporation into the Islamic State (IS)," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Volume 11 Issue 1, February 2017, p. 21.

[9] Michael Martinez, Ana Cabrera and Sara Weisfeldt, "Colorado Woman Gets 4 Years for Wanting to Join ISIS," CNN, January 24, 2015: https://www.cnn.com/2015/01/23/us/colorado-woman-isis-sentencing/index.html; Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford, and Ross Frenett, "Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS," Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2015, p. 32.

[10] Europol Specialist Reporting, "Women in Islamic State Propaganda: Roles and Incentives," Europol, p. 26.

[11] From personal archives, March 23, 2019.

[12] Rukmini Callimachi, "ISIS Caliphate Crumbles as Last Village in Syria Falls," *The New York Times*, March 23, 2019: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/23/world/middleeast/isis-syria-caliphate.html

[13] Farhana Qazi, *Invisible Martyrs: Inside the Secret World of Female Islamic Radicals*, Oakland: Brett-Koehler Publishers Inc., 2018, p. 125.

[14] Simon Cottee, "Tracking the Online Life of a Female ISIS Recruiter from the UK," *Vice*, January 15, 2016: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/jma4wk/umm-muthanna-al-britania-syria-828; Lizzie Dearden, "Tooba Gondal: Female British ISIS recruiter asks to return to the UK saying 'we just want a normal life'", Independent, April 2, 2019: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/tooba-gondal-isis-bride-women-syria-british-jihadi-uk-a8851656.html

[15] Mia Bloom with John Horgan, *Small Arms: Children and Terrorism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2019, p. 51. Bidisha Biswas & Shirin Dylami, "Radicalizing female empowerment: gender, agency, and affective appeals in Islamic State propaganda," *Small Wars & Insurgencies,* 2019: https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2019.1649831

[16] Elizabeth Pearson, "Why Men Fight and Women Don't: Masculinity and Extremist Violence," Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, September 13, 2018, p. 7.

[17] Email communication with Chelsea Daymon on December 12, 2019.

[18] From personal archives, July 2018.

[19] It is highly unlikely that accounts making pro-ISIS comments are academics or journalists given the ethical standards by which they must abide.

[20] "Woman arrested in Uithoorn for running IS support Telegram service," *DutchNews*, October 11, 2019: https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2019/10/woman-arrested-in-uithoorn-for-running-is-support-telegram-service/

[21] Richard Spillett, "Female 'ISIS supporter', 36, appears in court accused of plotting to bomb St Paul's Cathedral and a London hotel after 'pledging support for terrorist group,'" *Daily* Mail, October 16, 2019: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7580413/Woman-court-alleged-ISIS-plot-bomb-St-Pauls-Cathedral.html

[22] Telegram screenshot from personal archives. October 17, 2019.

[23] Telegram screenshot from personal archives. October 17, 2019.

[24] Caveat: It is impossible to confirm if the people behind these accounts are male or female but this conclusion is based on the assumption that they are male as presented by their usernames.

[25] From personal archives, July 2018.

[26] Telegram screenshot from personal archives. September 2019.

[27] Imitation accounts and channels calling themselves "GreenB1rds" have appeared since the arrests of the original female admins.

[28] Edited by Laura Sjoberg & Caron E. Gentry, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism,* p. 214

[29] While GreenB1rds and the various commenters compose a tiny fraction of ISIS Telegram, their actions and reactions reveal the ways in which gender boundaries are being renegotiated.

[30] Michael Krona and Rosemary Pennington, *The Media World of ISIS*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019, p. 6.

[31] Amarnath Amarasingam, "Telegram Deplatforming ISIS Has Given Them Something to Fight For," *Vice*, December 5, 2019: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/vb55bd/telegram-deplatforming-isis-has-given-them-something-to-fight-for

[32] Amarnath Amarasingam, "Telegram Deplatforming ISIS Has Given Them Something to Fight For," https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/vb55bd/telegram-deplatforming-isis-has-given-them-something-to-fight-for

[33] Seran de Leede, "Women in Jihad: A Historical Perspective," The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, May 2018: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ICCT-deLeede-Women-in-Jihad-Sept2018.pdf

[34] David Cook, "Women Fighting in *Jihad*?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 28:275-384, 2005, p. 379.

David M. Jones, Paul Schulte, Carl Ungerer, and M.L. R. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Terrorism and Counter Terrorism Post 9/11.* (Cheltenham, Glos., UK: Edward Elgar, 2019), 447 pp., £ 185.-/US $ 243.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-7864-3801-0;/ £ 166.50 .00 [Web Edition], ISBN: 978-1-7864-3802-7.

Reviewed by Alex P. Schmid

As most of those interested in terrorism and counter-terrorism find themselves unable to absorb the thousands of new papers, reports, articles, book chapters and monographs that become available every year, there has been a growing demand for handbooks on these subjects, driven by the hope that they would separate wheat from chaff. Recent handbooks include *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, edited by Erica Chenoweth et al (Oxford: OUP, 2019, 795 pp.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism Policy,* edited by Scott N. Romaniuk et al (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 1098 pp.), and *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism,* edited by Andrew Silke (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019, 694 pp.). The most recent addition is the *Handbook of Terrorism and Counter Terrorism Post 9/11* by two Australia-based (D.M. Jones & C. Ungerer) and two UK -based editors (P. Schulte & M.L.R. Smith), published in December 2019. One third of the authors are associated with London's King's College while one fifth are from various Australian universities. Some of the contributors (e.g. Rajan Basra, Michele Groppi, Annamaria Kiss and Gina Vale) are promising newcomers to the field of terrorism studies while others (e.g. William Rosenau, Seamus Hughes and Andrew T.H. Tan) are old hands. The volume contains 13 chapters in Part I, focusing on general themes, and 18 chapters in Part II, focusing on regional and country studies, plus one introductory and two concluding chapters.

The editors admit that the contributors to this volume cannot "....resolve any of the extant theoretical, definitional and practical policy dilemmas that they highlight". Rather, they seek to "....outline the various directions in which informed scholarship and research is advancing" (p.9). This book addresses relatively underexplored topics like 'Counter-terrorism with Chinese characteristics' (chapter 28 by Rosita Dellios) and 'Future war, AI, drones, terrorism and counterterror' (chapter 34 by Paul Schulte), but is largely silent on new developments in Africa (except for John Maska's 'A tale of two strategies: the enduring African legacies of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb – chapter 21). Latin America also receives scant attention, except for Markus-Michael Müller's chapter 30 'Terrorism and insurgency in post-9/11Latin America'. South Asia also has only one chapter (Prem Mahadevan's chapter 26 'South Asia: from terrorism to radicalism'). There is, however, another chapter (chapt. 27) on Southeast Asia from the hand of Andrew T.H. Tan. On the other hand, there is plenty of attention for the communicative aspects of terrorism: Tim Stevens has a chapter (chapt. 4) on 'Strategic cyberterrorism: problems of ends, ways and means', while Jonathan R. Woodier and Andreas Zingerle focus in chapter 6 on 'The Internet and cybersecurity: taking the virtual fight to cybercrime and cyberwarfare'. Joshua Rovner addresses hischapter 9 on 'Intelligence in the age of Twitter', while Jonathan R. Woodier is the author of 'The media and terror: undermining information asymmetry' (chapter 8).

The authors of this volume represent mainstream, and mostly realist, perspectives on terrorism rather than the critical terrorism studies school. About the latter, two of the four editors of the volume, D. M. Jones and M.L.R. Smith, in chapter 10, titled 'Critical theory and terrorism', note that '….critical terrorism studies requires no research into the history, ideology, or strategic thinking of transnational non-state actors like al-Qaeda or its regional affiliates. Instead, critical engagement is a euphemism for an assault on the Australian, British and US government responses to terrorism…." (p.117). This is not to say that the editors themselves are not critical in their own way about US and UK government responses to terrorism after 9/11. Indeed, in their introductory chapter 1, they take issue with "…the incoherence that characterized the Western response to 9/11" (p.1). They also refer to '[t]he intellectual confusion surrounding how to think about what the events of 9/11 signified…." (p.1).

However, in their attempt to cut through the Gordian knot of existing confusions, in one of the final chapters (chapt. 33 - ' Strategy and terrorism: discourse and analysis'), M.L.R. Smith and David Martin Jones come up with a dozen items some of which are themselves, at least to this reviewer, debatable or confusing: "1.Terrorism is not hard to define; 2.Terrorism is not an independent social reality; 3.Terrorism has no causes; 4. Terrorism can only be a practice (a tactic); 5.Terrorism is a rational tool of policy; 6.Terrorism is not indicative of behavioural or mental problems; 7. Terrorism is not a coherent means of applying moral judgment; 8. Terrorism does not possess any intrinsic link with non-state actors; 9.Terrorism is not a weapon of the weak;10. There are no such things as terrorist organizations; 11. The notion of a 'terrorist' is equally erroneous; 12. One person's terrorist is not another person's freedom fighter" (pp. 409-411). The editors try to make their case for these propositions in some detail which, however, cannot be reproduced here in the framework of a book review.

All in all, this *Handbook of Terrorism and Counter Terrorism Post 9/11* is a welcome addition to existing efforts to survey the field of (counter-)terrorism studies. No university library should be without it.

About the Reviewer: **Alex P. Schmid** *is Editor-in-Chief of 'Perspectives on Terrorism'.*

Counterterrorism Bookshelf: 62 Books on Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects

Reviewed by Joshua Sinai

So many books are published on terrorism- and counterterrorism-related subjects that it is difficult to catch up on a large backlog of monographs and edited volumes received for review. In order to deal with this backlog, this column consists of capsule Tables of Contents of 62 books, including also several books published less recently but still meriting attention. Some of the new books will be reviewed in future issues of 'Perspectives on Terrorism' as stand-alone reviews. The books are listed topically.

General

Paul Ashley, The Complete Encyclopedia of Terrorist Organisations – Concise Edition (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2012), 396 pp., US $ 16.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-6120-0118-0.

*Table of Contents***:** Terrorist Encyclopedia; Numerical, A-Z; Web Sites used to collate the information in this book; Appendix A: Organisations Banned by the United Kingdom; Appendix B: Organisations Banned by the United States of America.

Jean-Paul Azam and Véronique Thelen, Fighting Terrorism at Source: Using Foreign Aid to Delegate Global Security (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018), 200 pp., US $ 99.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-7864-3216-2.

Table of Contents: Introduction and Overview; **Part 1**: Getting the Questions Right; Targets and Perpetrators of Transnational Terrorist Attacks; Why Suicide Terrorists Get Educated; Aid and Military Intervention in a Model of Delegated Protection; **Part 2**: Empirical Answers; Testing the Impacts of Foreign Aid and Military Interventions; Estimating the Speed of Terrorist Responses; The Problem of Imported Attacks; General Conclusion.

Ofer Fridman, Russian 'Hybrid Warfare': Resurgence and Politicisation (London, England, UK: Hurst/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 288 pp., US $ 40.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-1908-7737-8.

Table of Contents: Introduction; **Part I:** The Rise of Hybrid Warfare; The Conceptual Foundations of 'Hybrid Warfare'; The Birth of 'Hybrid Warfare'; **Part II:** The Rise of Gibridnaya Voyna – The Russian Theory of Hybrid Warfare; Reading Evgeny Messner: The Theory of 'Subversion-War' (Myatezhevoyna); Net-Centric and Information Wars: Modern Theories of Subversion; The Rise of Gibridnaya Voyna; **Part III:** The Politicisation of Hybrid War and Gibridnaya Voyna; 'The Russians Are Coming' – The Politicisation of Russian Hybrid Warfare; 'Gibridnaya Voyna Against Us Is Coming' – The Politicisation of Western Gibridnaya Voyna; Conclusions: The Rise of Russian 'Hybrid War': Lessons for the West; P.S. – A Lesson for Russia.

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, The Historical Roots of Political Violence: Revolutionary Terrorism in Affluent Countries (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 296 pp., US $ 39.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-1084-8276-9.

*Table of Contents***:** Introduction (A Long-Term Approach, Revolutionary Terrorism, Sparks); The Argument: From Development Paths in the Interwar Years to Revolutionary Terrorism in the 1970s (The (Re-)Emergence of Radicalism in the "Golden Age" Period, Radicalism and Extremism, Paths of Development); Revolutionary Terrorism and Its Ideological Roots (The Ideology of Violence, Havana-Montevideo-Buenos Aires-Berlin, A

Profile of Revolutionary Terrorism in the Developed World); The Major Cases of Revolutionary Terrorism (Introduction, Italy, Spain, Germany, Japan, Greece and Portugal); Contemporary Effects and Background Conditions (Introduction, State Efficacy and Social Support, Hypotheses, Data and Measurement, Contemporary Variables, Background Conditions); The Long-Term Determinants of Revolutionary Terrorism (The main Hypothesis Restated, Measuring Development Paths, Liberal and Non-Liberal Countries, Statistical Analysis, Summary); Historical Mechanisms: Radicalism and Repression (Mechanisms Based on State Legitimacy and Support for Extremism, The Strength of the Radical Left, Negative Cases: The Non-Lethal Terrorist Groups, Repression and Past Authoritarianism, Conclusion); Individualism, Modernization, and Violence (Introduction, Individualism, Measuring Individualism, Remote Culture: Family and Language, Revolutionary Terrorism, Development Paths, and Remote Culture, Conclusions: The Long-Term Determinants of Development and Violence).

Philip Seib, As Terrorism Evolves: Media, Religion, and Governance (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 202 pp., US $ 99.99 [Hardcover], US $ 24.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1084-1169-1.

Table of Contents: Preface; Introduction; The Nature of the Beast; In God's Name; Organizing Terrorism; Media Weaponry; What Lies Ahead?

Terrorism – Psychology

Steven Hassan, Freedom of Mind: Helping Loved Ones Leave Controlling People, Cults and Beliefs (Newton, MA: Freedom of Mind Press, 2013), 268 pp., US $ 16.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-9670-6881-7.

Table of Contents: Introduction; Cult Common Denominators; What Is Destructive Social Influence; Strategic Interactive Approach; Evaluating the Situation; Building the Team; Empowering Members of the Team; Understanding Cult/Person's Beliefs and Tactics; Interacting with Dual Identities; Communication Strategies; Unlocking Phobias; Promoting Freedom of Mind: the Prep Meeting and Beyond; Planning and Holding an Intervention; A Call to Action.

Steven Hassan, Combating Cult Mind Control [30th Anniversary Edition] (Newton, MA: Freedom of Mind Press, 2018), 392 pp., US $ 18.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-0-9670-6882-4.

Table of Contents: Introduction to the 2018 Edition; Foreword to the 1988 Edition; Preface to the 2016 Edition; My Work as a Cult Expert; My Life in the Unification Church; The Threat: Mind Control Today; Understanding Mind Control; Cult Psychology; Courageous Survivor Stories; How to Protect Yourself and People You Care About; Curing the Mind Control Virus; How to Help; Unlocking Mind Control; Strategies for Recovery; Next Steps; Appendix: Lifton's Eight Criteria of Mind Control.

Rex Hudson, Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?: The Psychology and Sociology of Terrorism [Reprint Edition] (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2018), 192 pp., $ 9.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-5107-2612-3.

Table of Contents: Preface; Executive Summary: Mindsets of Mass Destruction; Introduction; Terms of Analysis; Approaches to Terrorism Analysis; General Hypotheses of Terrorism; The Psychology of the Terrorist; Terrorist Profiling; Conclusion; Appendix: Sociopsychological Profiles: Case Studies (Exemplars of International Terrorists in the Early 1970s; Exemplars of International Terrorists in the Early 1990s; Ethnic Separatist Groups; Social Revolutionary Groups, Religious Fundamentalist Groups; New Religious Groups); Tables; Glossary. [This volume is a reprint of the 1999 edition published by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress].

Donnatella Marazziti and Stephen M. Stahl (Eds.), Evil, Terrorism & Psychiatry (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 188 pp., US $ 29.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1084-6776-6.

Table of Contents: Foreword; Preface; To Die to Kill: Suicide as a Weapon. Some Historical Antecedents of Suicide Terrorism; the Philosophy of Hate and Anger; Identity, Alienation, and Violent Radicalization; The Mind of Suicide Terrorists; Psychopathology of Terrorists; Why is Terrorism a Man's Business?; Religion, Violence, and the Brain: A Neuroethical Perspective; Brain Alterations Potentially Associated with Aggression and Terrorism; Political Terrorism and Affective Polarization in "Black" and "Red" Terrorists in Italy During the Years 1968-1988; Conditions of Life and Death of Psychiatric Patients in France During World War II: Euthanasia or Collateral Casualties?; Neuropsychiatric Characteristics of Antiterrorist Operation Combatants in the Donbass (Ukraine); The International Scenario of Terrorism; Identification and Prevention of Radicalization, Practice and Experiences with a Multidisciplinary Working Model; How to Fight Terrorism? Political and Strategic Aspects.

Alexander T. Vazsounyi, Daniel J. Flannery, and Matt DeLisi (Eds.), The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression [Second Edition] (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 824 pp., US $ 185.00 [Hardcover], US $ 56.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-3166-3221-5.

Table of Contents: Introduction; **Part I**: Introduction and Overview; Origins of Violent Behavior over the Life Span; Longitudinal Study of Personality and Social Development: Insights about Aggression after Five Decades; A Life-Course Model for the Development of Intimate Partner Violence; The Dark Violence Hybrid: The Cross-Cultural Validation of an Integrated Model; **Part II:** Biosocial Foundations of Violence and Aggression; The Behavioral Genetics of Aggression and Violent Behavior; Neuroimaging Evidence of Violence and Aggression; Biosocial Bases of Aggression and Antisocial Behavior; the Neuropsychology of Violence; The Interaction of Nature and Nurture in Antisocial Behavior; The Neurobiology of Bullying Victimization; Molecular Genetics of Aggression and Violent Crime; Biosocial Foundations of Drug Abuse and Violent Delinquency; Personality and Aggression: A General Trait Perspective; **Part III:** Individual and Interpersonal Factors for Violence and Aggression; Applying Empirically-based Trait Models to an Understanding of Personality and Violence; Social-Cognitive Processes in the Development of Antisocial and Violent Behavior; Violent Juvenile Offenders: A Psychiatric and Mental Health Perspective; Self-Control Theory and Criminal Violence; Peers and Aggression: From Description to Prevention; Developmental Processes of Resilience and Risk for Aggression and Conduct Problems; Child Abuse and Neglect; The Role of Gender in Violent and Aggressive Behaviors; Lessons Learned: Serial Sex Offenders Identified from Backlogged Sexual Assault Kits (SAKs); Research on Social Structure and Cross-National Homicide Rates; Preventing Violent Crimes by Reducing Wrongful Convictions; Strain Theory and Violent Behavior; On Cumulative Childhood Traumatic Exposure and Violence/Aggression: The Implications of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE); **Part IV**: Contextual Factors for Violence and Aggression; Youth Gangs and Violent Behavior; Social Networks and Violence; The Contagion of Violence; School Violence; Violence and Culture in the United States; Violence Prevention in a Global Context: Progress and Priorities for Moving Forward; Terrorism as a Form of Violence; Psychopharmacology of Violence; Individual, Family, Neighborhood and Regional Poverty/Socioeconomic Status and Exposure to Violence in the Lives of Children and Adolescents: Considering the Global North and South; Firearms and Violence; **Part V**: Looking Toward the Future; The Interrelationship of Self-Control and Violent Behavior: Pathways and Policies; The New Frontier: Leveraging Innovative Technologies to Prevent Bullying; Neural Substrates of Youth and Adult Antisocial Behavior; Research Designs and Methods for Evaluating and Refining Interventions for Youth Violence Prevention; New Directions in Research on Violence: Bridging Science, Practice, and Policy.

Terrorism – Religion

Radhamim Emanuilov and Andrey Yashlavsky [Translated from Russian by Michael Sigal], Terror in the Name of Faith: Religion and Political Violence (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011), 270 pp., US $ 99.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-9362-3580-3.

Table of Contents: Introduction; Islamist Terrorism: A Perversion or the Norm?; The Ideological Roots of Religious Terrorism: Salafism and Jihadism; Palestine: From Left-Wing Nationalism to Islamism; The Islamic Revolution: The Export Version; Al-Qaeda: Terrorist Franchising; Afghanistan: From Mujahideen to Taliban; Jihadism in the Post-Soviet Landscape; Resisting Religious Extremism and Terrorism: What Should Be Done?

Nilay Saiya, Weapon of Peace: How Religious Liberty Combats Terrorism (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 240 pp., US $ 110.00 [Hardcover], US $ 32.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1084-6411-6.

Table of Contents: Introduction; Religious Resurgence, Repression and Resistance; A Global View of Religious Discrimination and Terrorism across Faith Traditions; Majority Religious Cooptation, Terrorism and the Arab Spring; A Weapon of Peace; Religious Liberty and American Foreign Policy; Appendix.

Al Qaida, ISIS, and Jihad

Patrick Desbois and Costel Nastasie, The Terrorist Factory: ISIS, The Yazidi Genocide, and Exporting Terror (New York, NY: Arcade/Skyhorse Publishing, 2018), 272 pp., $ 24.99 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-6287-2946-7.

Table of Contents: Foreword; Preface to the English-Language Edition; Taking Up My Pen; The Lion Cubs of the Caliphate; The Children Back from the Camps; The Mass Graves; The Islamic Judge's Wife; Not Pretty Enough; The Tailor of Raqqa; Filming ISIS; Leaving; The Brothels of Mosul; The Suicide Bombers' Garage; Sinjar Liberated; Epilogue.

Seth J. Frantzman, After ISIS: America, Iran and the Struggle for the Middle East (New York, NY: Gefen, 2019), 386 pp., $ 16.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-9-6570-2309-9.

Table of Contents: Preface; Prologue; Introduction; **Part I:** Holding the Line, 2014-2015; A Band-Aid for Sykes-Picot; The Bubble; The Eastern Front, The Long Road to Europe; Securing Kirkuk; The Road to Sinjar; The Hell of Sinjar; **Part II:** The War Against Chaos, 2016; By, with and through; Turkey's Bad Memories; ISIS Comes to Africa; Europe Confronts Terror; **Part III:** The Struggle for Iraq, 2016; The Road to Qayarrah; Marching Orders; A Coup in Turkey; Zero Hour; The Battle for Mosul; The Hot Summer of 2017; Kurdistan's Referendum; The Struggle for Kirkuk; Liberating Raqqa; **Part IV:** The Rise of Iran, 2017-2019; The Southern Flank; Searching for Justice; Shifting Gears to Iran; The Great Withdrawal; The Final Chapter; The Middle East at a Crossroads; A Way Forward; Epilogue: Coming Home.

Mathieu Guidere, Historical Dictionary of Islamic Fundamentalism (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 650 pp., US $ 147.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-5381-0669-3.

Table of Contents: Illustrations; Editor's Foreword; Preface: The Muslim Wars of Religion; Reader's Notes; Acronyms and Abbreviations; Map; Chronology; Introduction; THE DICTIONARY; Glossary; Appendix; Bibliography.

Pete Lentini, Neojihadism: Towards a New Understanding of Terrorism and Extremism? (Northampton, MA: Edward Edgar Publishers, 2013), 256 pp., US $ 115.20 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-8472-0744-9.

Table of Contents: Introduction; On the Movement; On Jihadism; On the Movement's Global Dimensions: Bin Laden as a Political and Spiritual Commentator; On the Movement's Local Dimensions: The Politics and Theology of a Melbourne Cell Leader; On Attempting to Name the Enemy: Islamo-Fascism and Islamo-Totalitarianism(s); On Fascism and Totalitarianism; Conclusion: On Neojihadism – A New Understanding of Terrorism and Extremism?

Darryl Li, The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 384 pp., US $ 90.00 [Hardcover], US $ 30.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-5036-1087-3.

Table of Contents: Terms of Engagement; Dramatis Personae; **Introduction**; **Part I:** Jihad; Migrations, Locations, Authorities; Groundings; Interlude; Exchanging Arabs; **Part II:** Other Universalisms; Non-Alignment; Peacekeeping, The Global War on Terror.

Laurence Louër, Sunnis and Shi'a: A Political History (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 240 pp., US $ 29.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-0-6911-8661-0.

Table of Contents: Introduction; **Part I:** Between Politics and Religion; Caliphate and Imamate; Rivalry and Convergence; Islam as Ideology: Sunni and Shi'a Islamism; An Islamist International?; From Pan-Islamism to Sectarianism; **Part II:** Managing Sectarian Difference; Iraq: On the Frontier of Sunnism and Shi'ism; Bahrain: The Legacy of a Conquest; Pakistan: From Muslim State to Islamic State; Pragmatic Sectarianism? Sunnis and Shi'a in Saudi Arabia and Iran; Yemen: Zaydism between Sunnism and Shi'ism; Lebanon: The Search for a New Sectarian Pact; Conclusion; Chronology.

Per-Erik Nilsson, Open Source Jihad: Problematizing the Academic Discourse on Islamic Terrorism in Contemporary Europe [Cambridge Elements] (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 116 pp., US $ 18.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-1084-4874-1.

Table of Contents: The Looming Specter of 9/11; "Holy Rage"; European Jihad(ism); Fighting Tomorrow's Terrorists Today; What about Violence?

Elena Pokalova, Returning Islamist Foreign Fighters: Threats and Challenges to the West (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 242 pp., US $ 74.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-3-0303-3147-4.

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Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

[Bibliographic Series of Perspectives on Terrorism – BSPT-JT-2020-1]

Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on deradicalization. It focuses on recent publications (up to January 2020) and should not be considered as exhaustive. 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, deradicalization, counter-radicalization, methods, programs

NB: All websites were last visited on 18.01.2020. - See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

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Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

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Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on terrorism affecting Iran. It covers both terrorist activity within the country's borders (regardless of the perpetrators' nationality) and terrorist activity by Iranian nationals abroad, and also includes relevant publications dealing with the broader political and religious context of Iran. It focuses on recent publications (up to January 2020) and should not be considered as exhaustive. 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, Iran, Shia militias, Hezbollah, proxy war

NB: All websites were last visited on 11.02.2020. – See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

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Note

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

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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 became available online between December 2019 and February 2020. They are categorized under twelve headings (as well as sub-headings, not listed below):

1. Non-Religious Terrorism
2. Religious Terrorism
3. Terrorist Strategies and Tactics
4. Conflict, Crime and Political Violence other than Terrorism
5. Extremism, Radicalization
6. Counterterrorism Strategies, Tactics and Operations
7. Specific Operations and/or Specific Policy Measures
8. Prevention, Preparedness and Resilience Studies
9. State Repression, Civil War and Clandestine Warfare
10. Intelligence Operations
11. Cyber Operations
12. Risk and Threat Assessments, Forecasts an Analytical Studies
13. Also Worth Reading/Watching

N.B. *Recent Online Resources for the Analysis of Terrorism and Related Subjects* is a regular feature in 'Perspectives on Terrorism'. For past listings, search under 'Archive' at www.universiteitleiden.nl/PoT

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60+ Full-Text Academic Theses (Ph.D. and M.A.) on Terrorism, Violent Extremism, and Nationalism written in English between 2000 and 2020

Compiled and selected by Brody McDonald

Abstract: *This bibliography contains Doctoral Dissertations (Ph.D.) and Master Theses (M.A.) on issues relating to national liberation, secessionism, terrorism and extremism. Titles were retrieved manually by searching the Open Access Theses and Dissertations Database (OATD), using various combinations of search terms, including – but not limited to – 'Terrorism', 'Violent Extremism', 'Nationalism' and 'Secessionist'. More than 800 entries were evaluated, of which 63 were ultimately selected for this list. All theses are open source. However, readers should observe possible copyright restrictions. The title entries below are hyperlinked, or 'clickable', allowing access to full texts.*

Keywords: bibliography, theses, nationalism, national liberation, secessionism, terrorism, violent extremism, political violence

Bibliographic entries are divided into the following sub-sections:

1. *Terrorist Organizations and National Identity*
2. *Representations of Terrorism, Violent Extremism, and Nationalism*

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About the Compiler: **Brody McDonald** *is Assistant Editor with 'Perspectives on Terrorism'. He is an Intercultural Fellow with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and also a Member of the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism and Society (TSAS).*

Conference Monitor/Calendar of Events

(February 2020 – May 2020)

Compiled by Olivia J. Kearney

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), in its mission to provide a platform for academics and practitioners in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism, compiles an 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. The listed events are organised by a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental institutions, including several key (counter) terrorism research centres and institutes.

We encourage readers to contact the journal's Assistant Editor for Conference Monitoring, Reinier Bergema, or Olivia Kearney, Editorial Assistant, and provide them with relevant information, preferably in the same format as the items listed below. Reinier Bergema can be reached at <r.bergema@icct.nl> or via Twitter: @reinierbergema and Olivia Kearney can be reached at <oliviaj.kearney@gmail.com> or via Twitter: @oliviajkearney.

February 2020

Preventing Violent Extremism in the Balkans and the MENA
Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS)
3 February, Brussels, Belgium
Website: visit | Twitter: *@CEPS_thinktank*

The Vicious Cycle of Islamophobia and Radicalisation
University of Oslo – Center for Research on Extremism (UiO C-REX)
4 February, Oslo, Norway
Website: visit | Twitter: *@CrexUiO*

A Book Talk with Joanna Cook - A Woman's Place: U.S. Counterterrorism Since 9/11
George Washington Program on Extremism (GWPoE)
4 February, Washington (DC), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@gwupoe*

Cyber Security Summit: Protect Your Business from Cyber Attacks
Cyber Security Summit
5 February, Atlanta (GA), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@CyberSummitUSA*

Iran: Beyond the Headlines
Clingendael - Leiden University Centre for the Study on Islam and Society
5 February, Leiden, Netherlands
Website: visit | Twitter: *@Clingendaelorg*

The Persistent Threat from the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda: The View from the UN
The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
6 February, Washington (DC), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@WashInstitute*

Edlis Neeson Great Decisions: Red Sea Security
The Aspen Institute
6 February, Aspen (CO), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@aspeninstitute*

Pakistan: The Changing Security Dimension
Centre for Land Warfare Studies
7 February, Delhi, India
Website: visit | Twitter: *@OfficialCLAWSIN*

Aaron Zelin and Rukmini Callimachi Book Launch: Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad
The Washington Institute
11 February, Online Webcast
Website: visit | Twitter: *@WashInstitute*

Joint Regional High-level Conference on "Foreign Terrorist Fighters" – Addressing Current Challenges
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
11 - 12 February, Hofburg, Vienna
Website: visit | Twitter: *@OSCE*

The Middle East Post-Soleimani: An Intelligence Assessment
Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs
12 February, Cambridge (MA), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@BelferCenter*

Iran: Propaganda and Perception 41 Years after the Revolution
Atlantic Council
12 February, Washington (DC), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@AtlanticCouncil*

Global Security and the US
Chatham House
12 February, London, United Kingdom
Website: visit | Twitter: *@ChathamHouse*

Understand the Cyber Threats Facing Your Business: 2020 Cyber Threat Landscape
StaySafeOnline
13 February, Virtual
Website: visit | Twitter: *@StaySafeOnline*

The Internet and AI: Security, Safety, and Governance
Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs
13 February, Cambridge (MA), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@BelferCenter*

9th Annual Homeland Security Symposium & Expo: Tech Innovation and Homeland Security
Center for American Studies
13 February, Newport News (VA), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *N/A*

Discussing the Middle East in English
Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM)
15 February, Ankara, Turkey
Website: visit | Twitter: *@orsamtr*

Munich Security Conference
Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)
15 - 17 February, Munich, Germany
Website: visit | Twitter: *@ISDGlobal*

OSINT Workshop
Bellingcat
17 – 21 February, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Website: visit | Twitter: *@bellingcat*

Defector Militias as Tools of Social Fragmentation: Evidence from Ba'thist Iraq and Sudan
Center for International Security and Cooperation
18 February, Stanford (CA), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@FSIStanford*

Islamist Terrorism in the UK: A Seminar by Raffaello Pantucci
International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (RSIS)

18 February, Nanyang, Singapore
Website: visit | Twitter: *@RSIS_NTU*

Open-Source Intelligence Summit
SANS Institute
18 - 24 February, Alexandria (VA), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@SANSEMEA*

Warkeeping: Intervention in Lebanon, 1982 - 1984
Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs
20 February, Cambridge (MA), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@BelferCenter*

The Human Hacking Conference
StaySafeOnline
20 - 22 February, Buena Vista (FL), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@StaySafeOnline*

The Bomb: Presidents, Generals, and the Secret History of Nuclear War
New America
21 February, Washington (DC), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@NewAmerica*

The European Union's Foreign and Security Policy: Challenges for the Next Five Years
GLOBSEC
24 February, Vienna, Austria
Website: visit | Twitter: *@GLOBSEC*

Terrorism 101: What we have learned since 9/11?
University of Maryland
27 February, Silver Spring (MD), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@bsosumd*

On Dignity and Humiliation
UiO Department of Psychology
27 February, Oslo, Norway
Website: visit | Twitter: *N/A*

Tackling Extremism in the UK Conference: Prevention, Response, and Victim Support
Westminster Insight
28 February, Central London, United Kingdom
Website: visit | Twitter: *@WMInsightUK*

Strategy Building for Small States in European Security and Defence
Institute of International & European Affairs (IIEA)
28 February, Dublin, Ireland
Website: visit | Twitter: *@IIEA*

March 2020

OSINT Workshop
Bellingcat
2 – 6 March, London, United Kingdom
Website: visit | Twitter: *@bellingcat*

Terrorism Analyst Training Course 2020
International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (RSIS)
2 – 6 March, Nanyang, Singapore
Website: visit | Twitter: *@RSIS_NTU*

Security Technologies in Weak States: How Security Technologies impact State-Society Relations
Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)
3 March, Copenhagen, Denmark
Website: visit | Twitter: *@diisdk*

Threat Financing and Emerging Risk
START UMD
4 March, Baltimore (MD), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@START_UMD*

CBRNe World Jakarta: Indonesia Security Landscape 4.0
CBRNe in association with HLS Indonesia
4 - 6 March, Jakarta, Indonesia
Website: visit | Twitter: *@cbrneworld*

Security in a Post-Nuclear Age
Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC)
5 March, Stanford (CA), United States

Website: visit | Twitter: @StanfordCISAC

Masterclass: Combatting Terrorism
University of Cumbria
9 March, Lancaster, United Kingdom
Website: visit | Twitter: @CumbriaUni

Prevention Work in Digital Living Environments: Islamist and Anti-Muslim Agitation as an Object of Digital Education and Online Streetwork
Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (BPB)
9 - 10 March, Kassel, Germany
Website: visit | Twitter: @bpb_de

Cybersecurity for Small to Medium-Sized Governments: What You Should Know
StaySafeOnline
10 March, Virtual
Website: visit | Twitter: @StaySafeOnline

18 Years of Reconstruction: Lessons from the US Experience in Afghanistan, with John Sopko
Syracuse University – Institute for Security Policy and Law
10 March, Syracuse (NY), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: @StaySafeOnline

A Tale of Two Caliphates
START UMD
10 March, Baltimore (MD), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: @START_UMD

Ethics on the Radar: Exploring the Relevance of Ethics Support in Counterterrorism
Leiden University
12 March, Leiden, Netherlands
Website: visit | Twitter: @ISGA_TheHague

21st Asian Security Conference: National Security and Defence Planning in an Era of Strategic Uncertainty
Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
12 – 13 March, New Delhi, India
Website: visit | Twitter: @IDSAIndia

Joint Meeting RAN EDU and RAN LOCAL
Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)
12 – 13 March, Brussels, Belgium
Website: visit | Twitter: @RANEurope

Breakfast Briefing: UK Security Policy after Brexit
Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)
18 March, London, United Kingdom
Website: visit | Twitter: @RUSI_org

"75 Years of Freedom: where are we now?" Who guarantees the Freedom of Europe and what are the Current Threats?
Atlantische Commissie
18 March, Utrecht, Netherlands

Website: visit | Twitter: *@JongeAtlantici*

Joint Meeting RAN YF&C and RAN C&N
Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)
19 - 20 March, Brussels, Belgium
Website: visit | Twitter: *@RANEurope*

Cyber Security Summit: Protect Your Business from Cyber Attacks
Cyber Security Summit
20 March, Tampa (FL), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@CyberSummitUSA*

ISA Annual Conference 2020
International Studies Association (ISA)
25 – 28 March, Honolulu (HI), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *N/A*

OSINT Workshop
Bellingcat
30 March – 3 April, Berlin, Germany
Website: visit | Twitter: *@bellingcat*

Professional Certificate in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism
International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (iCPS)
30 March – 3 April, London, United Kingdom
Website: visit | Twitter: *@parlicentre*

April 2020

Book Launch: Human Dignity and Human Security in Times of Terrorism
TMC Asser Institute
7 April, The Hague, Netherlands
Website: visit | Twitter: *@TMCAsser*

CVE in Practice: An Ecosystem Approach to Countering Violent Extremism in the United States
START UMD
20 April, Baltimore (MD), United States
Website: visit | Twitter: *@START_UMD*

Book Talk: "Your Sons Are at Your Service: Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad"
The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
22 April, Online Webcast
Website: visit | Twitter: *@WashInstitute*

11th Israeli Transportation Security Solutions Delegation
Green Light
20 – 26 April, Eilat, Israel
Website: visit | Twitter: *@GreenLightLtd*

14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
20 – 27 April, Kyoto, Japan
Website: visit | Twitter: *@UNODC*

Joint Meeting RAN H&SC and RAN POL
Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)
25 - 26 March, Budapest, Hungary
Website: visit | Twitter: *@RANEurope*

OSINT Workshop
Bellingcat
27 April – 1 May, Toronto, Canada
Website: visit | Twitter: *@bellingcat*

German Prevention Congress - DPT
Deutscher Präventionstag
27 – 28 April, Kassel, Germany
Website: visit | Twitter: *@praeventionstag*

May 2020

Dr. Joanna Cook, Women and Violent Extremism: Considering Contemporary Challenges
Policing Institute for the Eastern Region
6 May, Chelmsford, United Kingdom
Website: visit | Twitter: *@AngliaRuskin*

Terrorism Studies '20 / IV. International Conference on Terrorism and Political Violence
DAKAM
8 May, Istanbul, Turkey
Website: visit | Twitter: *N/A*

2020 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development: The Geopolitics of Peacebuilding
Stockholm International Peach Research Institute (SIPRI)
11 - 13 May, Stockholm, Sweden
Website: visit | Twitter: *@SIPRIorg*

Dealing with Tensions, Crisis, and War in accordance with International Law and Humanitarian Principles

International Society for Military Law and the Law of War (ISMLLW)
12 – 16 May, Aix-en-Provence, France
Website: visit | Twitter: *@ISMLLW*

Counterterrorism and Intelligence Course – Applied Analysis on Compliance, Crime, and Wider Security Threats
DAEL
13 - 15 May, The Hague, Netherlands
Website: visit | Twitter: *N/A*

Developing Strategies for the Defeat of International Terrorism
Counter Terror Expo
19 – 20 May, London, United Kingdom
Website: visit | Twitter: *@CTX_Event*

Make Germany and Europe Safer!
The Berlin Congress for Defensive Democracy
26 - 27 May, Berlin, Germany
Website: visit | Twitter: *N/A*

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About the Compiler: **Olivia Kearney** *is a recent graduate of Leiden University's Crime and Criminal Justice Masters Program. Following an internship with the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), she now works as Research Assistant for NextGen 5.0. Her research interests include prison reform, rehabilitation, deradicalisation, C/PVE, counterterrorism, and game theory amongst others subjects.*

Award for Best Ph.D. Thesis Submitted and/or Defended in 2019 31 March 2020 Deadline for Submissions Approaching Fast

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) seeks to enhance the quality of research in the field of Terrorism Studies. For this purpose, TRI established in 2014 an Annual Award for the Best Doctoral Dissertation on Terrorism and/or Counter-Terrorism. Among the incoming submissions of Ph.D. theses, the TRI Award jury identifies three finalists and from these the winner. With the present announcement, a call is being made for sending to the jury Ph.D. theses submitted or defended at an academic institution in the calendar year 2019.

Doctoral theses in the field of terrorism- and counterterrorism studies can be submitted either by the author or by the academic supervisor. Theses should be sent in electronic form as a Word document to the chairman of the jury at < apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com >, together with a cover letter (1-3 pp.), highlighting the merits of the submitted Ph.D. thesis. Submissions must be in English (or translated into English). The deadline for entries is 31 March, 2020.

The TRI Award jury— consisting of Prof. Edwin Bakker, Prof. Clark McCauley, Prof. James Forest and Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid—will compare and evaluate the submissions, based on criteria such as originality in terms of introducing new data, theory or methodology, novelty and uniqueness of findings as well as degree of in-depth research.

The chairman of the jury will inform the three finalists identified by the jury's evaluation process before the end of July 2020. The winner among them will be announced during the summer of 2020 and can expect an Award of US $1,000, plus a Certificate of Achievement, signed by the chairman of the jury, acknowledging the granting of the TRI Thesis Award. The other two finalists will receive a Certificate of Achievement. For all three finalist theses, TRI will assist the authors in finding a publisher for their theses. The winner of the 2019 TRI Thesis Award will also be invited to submit an article for publication in an issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, summarising the winning thesis' main findings.

Words of Appreciation from Alex Schmid and James Forest

Perspectives on Terrorism is entirely the product of volunteers – academics, professionals and practitioners – who for thirteen consecutive years have been giving their time and providing their expertise to keep this free and independent scholarly online journal alive and increasing in circulation to over 8,800 subscriptions today. While the main burden of producing six issues per year rests on the shoulders of the Editorial Team and those of the Editorial Board members who do most of the reviewing, there are many others who assist us in producing timely Articles and Research Notes six times a year. The more than a dozen members of the Editorial Team and the twenty-four Editorial Board members alone would not be able to handle and review the growing number of submissions that reach us now on an almost daily basis. We could not function without the selfless help of our esteemed external reviewers who read and critique the articles submitted to us. Once a year we wish to thank these anonymous reviewers publicly by listing here their names.

For reviewing article submitted to *Perspectives on Terrorism* in 2019, we sincerely thank the individuals listed here:

> Max Abrahms, Amarnath Amarasingam, Tricia Bacon, J.M. Berger, Noemie Bouhana, Frank Bovenkerk, Neil Bowie, Cole Bunzel, Colin Clarke, Christina Cliff, Maura Conway, Luis de la Corte, O.; Shawn Cupp, Bert-Jan Doosje, Ken Duncan, Sajjan Gohel, Boaz Ganor, Michele Gropi, Rohan Gunaratna, Phil Gurski, William Hansen, Aaron Hoffman, Donald Holbrook, John Horgan, Lee Jarvis, Ely Karmon, Erin Kearns, Elisabeth Kendall, Ariel Koch, Daniel Koehler, Peter Lehr, Russell Lundberg, James Lutz, Leena Malkki, David Malet, Clark McCauley, Erin Miller, Assaf Moghadam, Feyyaz Muhammad, Sam Mullins, Andrew Mumford, Brigitte Nacos, Petter Nesser, Jesse Norris, Brian Nussbaum, Christophe Paulussen, Annelies Pauwels, Brian J. Phillips, Muhammad Rahim, Kumar Ramakrishna, Fernando Reinares, Tobias Risse, Peter Romaniuk, Thomas Samuels, Neo Loo Seng, Andrew Silke, Ekaterina Stepanova, Ian David Turner, Teun van Dongen, Carlos Vazquez, Fabian Virchow, Diane Webber, Doug Weeks, Daan Weggemans, Gabriel Weimann, James Wirtz, and Ahmet Yayla.

THANK YOU, Peer Reviewers for *Perspectives on Terrorism* (2019)!

We also wish to thank our not so anonymous regular members of the Editorial Board:

> Shazad Ali, Joost Augusteijn, Jeff Bale, Michael Boyle, Jarret Brachman, Richard J. Chasdi, James 'Chip' O. Ellis, Leah Farrall, Paul Gill, Jennifer Giroux, M.J. Gohel, Beatrice de Graaf, Thomas Hegghammer, Jeffrey Kaplan, Bradley McAllister, John Morrison, Assaf Moghadam, Sam Mullins, Brian J. Phillips, Thomas Riegler, Peter Romaniuk, Simon Shen, and Anne Speckhard.

These members of the Editorial Board were approached most often and asked again and again to give us their professional assessment on the quality of submissions reaching our journal. And of course, our team of Associate Editors also served as peer reviewers many times throughout the year:

> Tore Bjørgo, Christine Boelema Robertus, Gregory Miller, John Morrison, Bart Schuurman, Rashmi Singh, and Aaron Y. Zelin. Thanks also go to our other Associate Editors, Assistant Editors and Editorial Assistants: Reinier Bergema, Berto Jongman, Brody McDonald, Ryan Scrivens, Joshua Sinai, Judith Tinnes, and Jodi Moore.

They were also crucial in making our Resources Section what it is – an indispensable resource in the field of Terrorism Studies.

Altogether, many authors submitting manuscripts have benefitted from the reviews, constructive criticism, editing, formatting and proof-reading provided by everyone listed above.

Again, THANK YOU to all!

Alex Schmid & James Forest (Editor-in-Chief & Co-Editor)

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 the following URL:

https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism.

PoT has over 8,800 subscribers and 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 on terrorism;
- use the journal as a forum for debate and commentary on issues related to the above.

Perspectives on Terrorism has sometimes been characterised as 'non-traditional' 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 online 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 Team, while its Articles are peer-reviewed by outside academic experts and professionals.

While aiming to be policy-relevant, PoT 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.

The Editorial Team of *Perspectives on Terrorism* consists of:

Prof. em. Alex P. Schmid, Editor-in-Chief

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