

PERSPECTIVES ON TERRORISM

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Words of Welcome from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume XV, Issue 2 (April 2021) of *Perspectives on Terrorism* (ISSN 2334-3745). Our independent online journal is an Open Access 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 past and recent issues are freely available online at URL: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism>.

Perspectives on Terrorism (PoT) is indexed by JSTOR, SCOPUS, and Google Scholar where it ranks No. 3 of journals in the field of Terrorism Studies. Now in its fifteenth year, it has over 9,400 registered subscribers and many more occasional readers and website visitors in academia, government and civil society. The *Articles* of its six annual issues are fully peer-reviewed by external referees while its *Research Notes* and other content are subject to internal editorial quality control.

The current issue features seven **Articles**, eight **Resources**, two **Research Notes**, two **Announcements** and one **Special Correspondence**. The last addresses the QAnon movement, a topical security concern in the United States, and explores whether or not it poses an exaggerated threat. It is from the hands of Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley.

The opening article is Part II of a longer text by Lorne Dawson wherein he critically examines whether religious motivations have been misrepresented in relation to religious terrorism (Part I was published in the February issue of our journal). The second article, "The Bathtub Model," by Boaz Ganor offers a better understanding of single actor terrorism, based on the Israeli experience. Next Eline Drury Løvlien introduces her findings from a large N study on some people's willingness to justify terrorism, based on data from the European Values Study. In the fourth article, Jessica Davis, Leah West, and Amarnath Amarasingam offer a citation analysis on women in terrorism. Daphne Alberda and her colleagues introduce the European Database of Terrorists in a fifth article. This is followed by an analysis of extremism on the Telegram messaging application from Samantha Walther and Andrew McCoy. In the last article of this issue, Benjamin V. Allison explores the ethics and politics of terrorism data, based on a sample of U.S. databases.

These *Articles* and the *Special Correspondence* are followed by two **Research Notes** from Neil Bowie and Ishaansh Singh. The first presents Bowie's new inventory of databases and datasets on terrorism while the second does the same for (violent) conflicts.

Our **Resources** section open with a review by the editor of Omar Ashour's study 'How ISIS Fights', and a review by Martijn Kitzen of Mexican Drug Violence by Teun Voeten. These are followed by Joshua Sinai's regular Counter-Terrorism Bookshelf and a series of bibliographies by Judith Tinnes, David Teiner, Sedat Kula and Brody McDonald. The *Resources* section of *Perspectives on Terrorism* concludes with Berto Jongman's overview of new web-based resources on terrorism.

The **Announcements** section features, next to the regular Conference Calendar by Olivia Kearney, an overview of more than 30 doctoral dissertations under way or recently competed, compiled by Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn, the coordinator of one of the national and (sub-) regional networks of Ph.D. thesis writers of the Terrorism Research Initiative.

All the texts of the current issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* have been edited by James Forest and Alex Schmid, the journal's principal editors. Editorial Assistant Jodi Moore handled proof-reading, while the technical online launch of the April 2021 issue of our journal has been in the hands of Associate Editor for IT, Christine Boelema Robertus.

Bringing Religiosity Back In: Critical Reflection on the Explanation of Western Homegrown Religious Terrorism (Part II)

By Lorne Dawson

Abstract

An unusual feature of the social scientific study of religious terrorism is the erasure of religiosity as a significant motivational factor. This article delineates and criticizes the presence of this peculiar interpretive preference, demonstrating that it is methodologically unsound and theoretically and empirically unhelpful. In Part I of the article, published by the same author under the same title in the February 2021 issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*, the foundations of the critique were established. In this article, Part II, three types of arguments commonly used to minimize the role of religiosity in motivating religious terrorism are examined. These arguments are identified by the primary interpretive errors they rely on. Some arguments (1) mistakenly treat the religious background and knowledge of homegrown jihadists as a sound indicator of their religiosity; others (2) inappropriately apply a modern Western normative conception of religion to homegrown jihadists; and some arguments (3) rely on an overly dichotomized conception of the relationship of social processes and ideology in the process of radicalization. The critique argues the need to develop a more refined conception of the role of ideology, and more specifically religiosity, in the determination of the actions of religious terrorists.

Keywords: Al-Qaeda, extremism, ideology, Islamic State (IS), jihadism, radicalization, religion, religious terrorism, salafism

Introduction

Is the primary motivation for religious terrorism political or religious? This issue continues to be a source of controversy in the study of religious terrorism. Of course, one can say it is both, and largely be correct (for diverse reasons). In fact, however, many prominent scholars of terrorism have called into question the significance of religious motivations for “religious terrorism” (see Part I of this analysis and below). The causative role of religiosity is often minimized or dismissed altogether,[1]—but how significant is the role of religiosity in fomenting jihadist terrorism? Consider, for example, the following statement from the martyrdom testimonial of Mohammad Sidique Khan, the leader of the London 7/7 bombers.

I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer. Our religion is Islam—obedience to the one true God, Allah, and following the footsteps of the final prophet and messenger Muhammad.... This is how our ethical stances are dictated. Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets.[2]

Khan is explaining the political rationale for his actions, but the political objectives are framed by, and appear subordinate to, a profession of his religiosity. As a scholar of religion that much is clear to me, but for many other analysts it is not. In terrorism studies, there is a marked tendency to ignore or give short shrift to such motivational statements. Many researchers dismiss them as propagandistic and secondary to other, and often latent, political, social, or economic reasons for engaging in terrorism.

In this essay, I complete an argument begun in Part I of this analysis. I argue that there are no cogent a priori reasons for dismissing the role of religiosity as an authentic and significant motivator of religious terrorism, and

that many of the arguments advanced for doing so are seriously flawed in their premises, logic, and evidence. Here I criticize three very typical ways in which researchers dismiss the religious motivations for religious terrorism in the social scientific literature on terrorism. As indicated in Part I, the arguments provided for eschewing the motivational role of religiosity are not particularly systematic. Consequently, my approach must be somewhat indirect. It involves identifying three types of interpretive mistakes frequently encountered in such studies that are used to justify a minimizing of the role of religious motivations in religious terrorism. First, there are arguments that treat the religious background and knowledge (or lack thereof) of homegrown jihadists as an accurate indicator of their religiosity. Second, there are arguments that implicitly apply a modern Western normative conception of religion to homegrown jihadists. Third, there are arguments that treat the relationship of social processes and ideology in the conceptualization of radicalization as dichotomist. Each argument distorts the interpretation of religious terrorism. In practice, the three types of arguments appear in various combinations and permutations. Here they are analytically distinguished and illustrated with some examples. Having done so, I will discuss some alternative ways of conceptualizing the role of ideology, and more specifically religiosity, in the radicalization of religious terrorists, and thus the explanation of their actions.

Overall, my argument depends on a set of important methodological and theoretical conditions that were carefully specified in Part I of this analysis. To avoid predictable misunderstandings, I encourage readers to keep these considerations in mind.

Arguments Based on the Religious Background of Jihadists

This is the simplest and most pervasive reason for dismissing the significance of religion as a motivation for terrorism. It involves asserting that the religiosity of homegrown jihadist terrorists is superficial, and hence not a primary motivator for their actions. Researchers call on various kinds of data to support this claim: suggesting that homegrown jihadists lack a religious background, do not have a sound grasp of the doctrines of their religion, are recent converts, or have engaged in activities prohibited by their religion. Jessica Stern voices three of these points in the passage quoted in the introduction to Part I of this analysis.[3] She notes that “the majority [of the jihadists in custody in Saudi Arabia] did not have much formal religious instruction and had only a limited understanding of Islam”, and she comments further “only 5 percent had been prayer leaders or had other formal religious roles.” In addition, she states, the Saudi officials report that “one-quarter of the participants in a rehabilitation program for former jihadis had criminal histories, often for drug offences.” A similar point of view is expressed in the conclusions of the British MI5 report discussed in the introduction to Part I as well. The secret service agency is reported to have discovered that few of the recruits to jihadism in the UK “were brought up in religious households” and many, especially converts, “were surprisingly illiterate about Islam.”

At first glance, this information calls into question the religious *bona fides* of the jihadists. A bit of reflection, however, raises doubts about this impression. First, Stern’s information is coming from a problematic source, the Saudi government. With their strong affiliation with Wahhabism (a highly conservative variant of Sunni Islam), the Saudis have an interest in downplaying the prominence of Islamist religious motivations for terrorism. Second, the information she cites is from jihadists participating in a government rehabilitation program. These individuals have a strong incentive to deny the religious motivations for their terrorist activities, if they wish to secure their release from custody and share in the generous material supports offered by the Saudi government for reintegrating into society. Third, and more fundamentally, the emphasis placed on the lack of religious background, education, and knowledge is misplaced. In principle and empirically, what is the relationship between the levels of religious education, religious knowledge, and religiosity?

Measurements of religiosity, of the salience of religion in someone’s life, are notoriously difficult. Sociologists and psychologists have struggled to devise measures, developing scales for multiple dimensions of practice, devotion, belief, knowledge, communality, and experience.[4] In the end, there is little consistent covariation of the variables selected, and individuals and groups can be “religious” in highly different ways, even within the same religious tradition. The standards of religiosity operative at any time tend to be relative, ethnocentric,

and subjective.[5]

Over the centuries, proponents of pietism and theological orthodoxy have struggled over the primacy of religious knowledge in every religious tradition in the world. Sociologists, however, have consistently found a low correlation between levels of religious knowledge and levels of religiosity. Some minimal knowledge of the beliefs and practices of a religion is required to demonstrate commitment to a faith, but as Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle note:

Religious knowledge, that is knowledge of a religion's scripture and tradition, is not considered a good measure of religiosity, simply because the majority of believers surveyed, in Western countries at least, seem to be quite ignorant of what are considered basic elements of (their own) religious tradition.[6]

When information appeared from a cache of 22,000 ISIS recruitment questionnaires smuggled out of Syria, media accounts highlighted that most recruits “knew nothing of Islam.”[7] The sole evidence to support this claim was the fact that a majority of recruits rated their knowledge of Shariah as “basic”. We do not know what this response actually means, and as Andrew Lebovich comments, “[t]he relative weakness of someone's knowledge of the Shariah does not necessarily say much about how religious they are or want to be. For one thing, a depth of knowledge of Shariah is not particularly common for observant Muslims, and it is in many ways a construct of outsiders to think it should be.”[8] Overall, as Lebovich observes, “people join militant movements for a variety of intersecting reasons”, and “limited knowledge of an area of Islam traditionally left to dedicated experts says little about the contours of individual religious belief.”[9]

In media reports on Western foreign fighters, and elsewhere, much is often made of little evidence. It is common, for example, to cite the case of two British foreign fighters, Mahammed Ahmed and Yusef Sarwar, who ordered *The Koran for Dummies* and *Islam for Dummies* in preparation for traveling to Syria to join the jihad. Clearly, it is implied, this demonstrates how little religion factors into the choice to become a foreign fighter. Commentators, however, make little effort to interpret what their purchases actually portend, and we must ask how much stock should be placed in one incident. Many skeptics of the role of religious motivations in jihadism similarly find support in Aly and Striegher's article on the role of religion in becoming an Islamist extremist. This analysis is limited, however, to one Australian convert to Islam who became a jihadist.[10]

Alternatively, Dawson and Amarasingam found that 50% of the 20 Western foreign fighters they entered into dialogue with had received some formal religious education as children (e.g., Quranic studies and Islamic schooling), and in some cases the education was extensive.[11] The vast majority of their sample claims to have undergone a conversion-like experience in their youth, and both, converts and Muslims, stress that they became “much more religious, engaging in intensive study and practice of their faith” prior to radicalizing. [12] In fact, this finding is quite common, and even studies skeptical of the primacy of religiosity in jihadist radicalization[13] acknowledge that a sudden surge in conservative religiosity is the single most consistent indicator of radicalization in their samples.

How, though, should we interpret this finding? The surge in religiosity, so widely reported in studies of homegrown jihadists, is open to different interpretations. Most commonly, the significance of the surge is discounted, because it is interpreted as indicating that the faith of the recruits is recent, and hence, it is assumed, relatively weak. This point of view is often supplemented by noting the prior irreligious behavior of many of these individuals. However, “is a religious commitment of ten years' standing intrinsically (without other evidence) more sincere and influential than one newly undertaken? If so, how so, and how would we go about collecting pertinent evidence? Given the great fervor typically displayed by new converts, one might well argue the reverse is often true.”[14] In principle and practice, neither depth of knowledge of a religion nor the length of time someone has been involved are reliable indicators of the authenticity and effectiveness of someone's commitment.

In most cases, the samples available in the studies casting doubt on the significance of religiosity are too small to support generalizing, and strangely, we have no serious studies of the widely reported turn to religion. It is

repeatedly noted, but the related experiences of the jihadists are largely unexamined. This curious gap in our knowledge bars us from drawing any strong conclusions about the lack of primacy of religiosity in motivating the radicalization of jihadists in the West.

To illustrate this situation, consider a recent study of “Radical Beliefs and Violent Behavior” by Carl Miller and Leah Selig Chauhan.[15] Like many others, they minimize the role of religiosity in Western jihadism. Citing one of the studies cited above,[16] they note that Dutch foreign fighters displayed “an increased interest in religion before they left to join ISIL.” However, they note, a “number of academic studies have ... argued that religion is not necessarily as significant as it was once believed to be and that a causal link between the role of religion, ideology, and narratives with extremist violence has not been empirically established.”[17] In support of this conclusion, they cite Aly and Striegher’s case study of one person, and Perliger and Milton’s study of 1,175 foreign fighters.[18] Perliger and Milton report that less than 15% of the fighters had “any religious backgrounds and many ... were not particularly religious.” Miller and Chauhan also cite a study of 15 former members of al-Shabab, which found “many were not deeply religious”, and two EUROPOL reports stating that many perpetrators of jihadist terrorism in Europe were not strictly practicing their religion, and less than half had a “pertinent understanding about their religion.”[19]

Upon examining the evidence more carefully, however, doubts arise. Perliger and Milton’s findings on the religiosity of foreign fighters is more tenuous than Miller and Chauhan imply. First, they derived their data set of 1,175 foreign fighters, 800 of whom hailed from Western countries, from open sources, and as they acknowledge, such sources are notoriously unreliable. Second, a close reading of their study reveals they were only able to find very limited information on the religiosity of the fighters. They could only find data for a “very small subset of fighters in the data set (n = 262).” They determined that about 68% of this small subset were Muslims, but only about 28% of these individuals “were described as being very religious” in their childhood. Thirty-two percent of the sub-sample appeared to be converts to Islam, but were not necessarily new to the religion. Rather, Perliger and Milton tentatively say, most (21%) “were not generally identified as having recently converted.”[20] Based on an even smaller subset (n = 203), they further determined that only “a small minority of the foreign fighters had any formal religious education (less than 15%), while the majority of them had no religious guidance (or basic guidance) before their travel.”[21] Yet with this very limited and fragmentary information they rather sweepingly conclude, “the majority of the foreign fighters had limited familiarity with the tenets of the Islamic faith.”[22]

In truth, we have to admit that the status of the majority of the Western jihadists is unknown. What is clear is that the vast majority of the sources used to glean data did not bother to report on the religiosity of the jihadists, or were unable to secure reliable information on the religiosity of the individuals investigated. We have some information, of variable reliability, about the religiosity of a nonrepresentative minority of the jihadists captured in the larger, and still nonrepresentative, sample. Yet conclusions are drawn about the majority of jihadist foreign fighters, in the sample, and by implication, the overall population of foreign fighters.

In a similar manner, Stern notes that Saudi officials report “one-quarter of the participants in a rehabilitation program for former jihadis had criminal histories, often for drug offences.” Does this mean, as implied, that the religiosity of most of the jihadists is insincere or inadequate? Seventy-five percent do not have criminal histories, and we must ask, for the unspecified minority guilty of drug offences, in what way is this information relevant to determining their religiosity? Empirically, and not normatively, there is no simple correlation between orthodox behaviors and being sincerely religious. Moreover, as Simon Cottee and others have noted, “religion provides scripts for personal salvation and is thus especially attractive to those whose lives are mired in sin. The more poignant the sense of sin, the more urgent the desire to escape it.”[23] There is no simple correlation between criminality, past and present, and lack of religiosity.

Regrettably, close scrutiny of the existing research on Western foreign fighters reveals a pattern of large claims being made on scarce data.[24] In the Executive Summary of Perliger and Milton’s report, for example, they state, “religiosity is not the strongest explanatory variable” for understanding the radicalization of the foreign fighters.[25] Yet a close look at their own data, let alone other sources, indicates we cannot possibly know this

to be the case. Discovering that there are more data available (in open sources) on the socioeconomic factors that may be driving radicalization is not the same as discovering that religiosity plays a less consequential role. Sufficient amounts of the right kind of data are simply not available, and as Perliger and Milton's analysis reveals, even when more information is available, the socioeconomic data are too complex, inconsistent, and incomplete to unambiguously determine whether they played a key role in the decision to become a foreign fighter. Without better primary data from detailed interviews with jihadists, we simply cannot know what is happening. As things stand, the problem of specificity looms large. All of the socioeconomic variables in question (e.g., high levels of unemployment) affect a demographically larger segment of the population which never radicalizes.

As Perliger and Milton also acknowledge, the data available may reflect the predilections of the journalists "who wrote the news stories that formed the bulk of the data available for this report." The journalists may prefer, they surmise, "stories of unemployed and downtrodden individuals going to fight." [26] Certainly, it is likely that open sources reflect the wider assumptions and biases of their readers, including those about religion (as discussed above and below).

Interestingly, Perliger and Milton's findings about the converts who became foreign fighters undermine the logic of one of the key assumptions underlying the dismissal of the religious motivations for radicalization by MI5, Stern, and Ali Soufan (see Part I of this study). Each implies that the high level of converts recruited to jihadism indicates that religious motivations are less significant because they assume such converts have a weaker knowledge or experience of Islam. Yet Perliger and Milton found that most of the converts were "not recent," whatever that means, and so presumably they would have a better grasp of the faith. Further, in line with other comments by these experts, this lengthier exposure to the practice of Islam should have insulated them from the propaganda of the jihadists. [27]

Again, however, this discrepancy only indicates that we lack the type and the amount of data required to make sound claims about the significance of a religious motivation. Findings from the sociology of new religious movements do suggest that those with "a well-established religious identity," to use Soufan's phrase, are less likely to convert to a new and usually more controversial religious worldview. [28] This does not mean, though, that the religiosity of converts, the intensity and authenticity of their experience and commitment, is less. To say that more knowledge of Islam works to moderate the views of believers is not the same as saying that those with less knowledge are less religious. Everyone familiar with genuinely religious people will know that this is the case. The protection provided by well-established religious identities, moreover, may stem from other factors, such as being older or more engaged in the social networks of the communities.

In fact, a recent study calls into question the entire presumption that the disproportionate number of converts amongst jihadists indicates that religiosity is not a significant factor in their motivation, while also casting doubt on making a simple differentiation between converts and Muslims with "a well-established religious identity." In his study of 25 Canadians who converted to Islam and became violent extremists (a near-complete sample for this nationality), David Jones discovered that the average time between conversion and subsequent involvement in violent extremism was, contrary to the dominant expectation, 3.24 years. [29] Using data from the PIRUS data set (Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States), he also discovered that "roughly 50 per cent of [the American] converts spent upwards of six years in their new faith community ... before being involved in violent extremism." [30] These findings, as he states, "call into question the belief that these individuals lacked a clear understanding of their religious beliefs, as most spent a considerable time living as Muslims prior to involvement." [31]

Overall, we need to recognize that just as most religions operate well with only a small minority of members acquiring a depth of theological understanding, a small cohort of "entrepreneurs" steeped in ideology sustains most jihadist networks. [32] Not all those involved need to be knowledgeable to sustain the passion, commitment, and investment of the movement.

Arguments Based on Modern Western Normative Conceptions of Religion

The second interpretive error is more complex and harder to address. It involves understanding certain things about the history of religion as a social phenomenon, and engaging in the exegesis of studies of the radicalization of Western jihadists to discern the operative logic and assumptions about religion explicitly and implicitly at work in these studies. This kind of critical analysis of texts is not common in terrorism studies. I will seek to illustrate my critique using two exemplary studies, Bart Schuurman and John Horgan's "Rationales for terrorist violence in homegrown jihadist groups: A case study from the Netherlands"[33] and Manni Crone's "Radicalization revisited: violence, politics and the skills of the body." [34] These impressive studies have much to offer that is salutary, but the primary argument advanced in each case depends on accepting implicit claims about the nature of religion that are constitutive of modern Western normative conceptions of religion, and as such antithetical to how religion and religiosity are conceived and function for jihadists. This has a distorting effect on the analyses offered by these researchers. It leads them to employ criteria in their judgments about religious terrorism that inevitably minimize the role of religious motivations. The ways in which this happens are related, yet different, and this situation is indicative of the complicated variations of this interpretive error.

To grasp this critique, the first step is to understand certain basic changes in the scholarly conception of religion. Simplifying a complex state of affairs, the history of religion in Europe culminated in a normative conception of religion and its relationship with the rest of society that separated religion from politics, and the public sphere in general, by identifying religion as a private matter. Over time, this resulted in a practice of religion that reflected the normative stance, and this practice became the empirical subject matter of the academic study of religion in the West, especially in the social sciences. Nonspecialists discussing religion and its role in society, especially in the West, tend to continue to mistake this exceptional European situation, and the resultant understanding of religion, for a generic description of the nature of religion worldwide. The error is understandable, but its consequences are regrettable.

For several decades, scholars of religion have been reflexively examining the ways they conceptualize and then study religion. This process has been complex, multifaceted, and controversial. Here I can only provide a summary sense of the consensus that has emerged from this reflexive process, highlighting the insights that analysts of religious terrorism need to take more systematically into consideration.

First, as long noted, "religion" is inordinately difficult to define,[35] perhaps even more than terrorism. In part, this is because the detailed historical and social scientific study of religious practices globally has led most scholars to realize that "religion" is a social construct. It is more a category of thought and discourse, with specific historical and social roots and implications, than an observable thing. Seminal works have clarified the historical and socio-political context in which the notion of "religion" developed in the European context.[36] They have also elucidated the ideological role of the concepts of "religion," "religions," and the "religious" in diverse social and cultural disputes, including those related to imperialism and the process of globalization, as well as the creation of the academic study of religion.[37]

Second, this reflexive process involved recognizing that there were no "religions" for much of European history. People were just religious or nonreligious. This continued to be the state of affairs outside of Europe long after things changed in Europe. In Europe, a change in this situation followed on encounters with other societies and "religions" around the globe, and the schisms in Christendom and the internecine religious wars brought on by the Protestant Reformation (1517–1648). Overall, people did not think of themselves as belonging to certain "religions". That idea only emerged in the early modern era of exploration, growing international trade, and religious strife. Only then, and later under the critical gaze of Enlightenment philosophers, did the concept of "religion" emerge, as an independent thing whose essence could be studied and to which people belonged.[38]

By that time, however, talk of "religion" was also associated in Europe with efforts to free society from the tyranny of religious authority by differentiating the realms of the state and civil society from that of religion. The Enlightenment's quest for a less religious society established the modern Western notion of religions as sets of beliefs and practices to which people commit voluntarily that are distinct from the rest of society. In other words, the emergence of the modern Western conception of religion is part of the process of secularization, as

marked by the increased functional differentiation of religion from economics, law, science, medicine, education, sexuality, and first and most importantly, politics. This meant the emergence of “religion” and “religions” as concepts, and fields of study, was also concomitant with the progressive “privatization” of religion.[39] To accommodate a plurality of religions and minimize the contention between such religions, religion became essentially apolitical and private.

Third, in the rest of the world there was no systematic segregation of religious activity, either ideationally or in practice. As European and American missionaries and colonial officials found, in other societies there were not even any lexical equivalents to the Western notions of “religion,” “religions,” “religious belief,” and “religious experience.” What the West called religion was intertwined with the rest of social life, and while distinguishable realms of political authority existed, they were still largely legitimated by, and subservient to more pervasive religious views. Eventually, the differentiation of religion occurred in these societies as well, both conceptually and practically, under the influence of the economically and militarily more powerful Western imperialist states. This happened, to varying degrees with the active assistance of local elites,[40] who were seeking to adapt to the new opportunities and the power dynamics of imperialism. Many of these non-Western societies, however, never secularized to the same degree, or in the same way, as their European counterparts. Thus, contrary to the consensus that long prevailed, the model of religion in the modern West, and its delimited engagement with the rest of society, is exceptional rather than paradigmatic.[41]

For scholars aligned with critical studies these insights meant that “religion” is an “empty category” and researchers should confine their analyses to critically discerning how the category is used to serve specific social and political agendas in different social contexts.[42] Less skeptically, most social scientists studying religion continue to apply the term to understanding the set of phenomena subsumed within more operant conceptions of religion. Many of the insights discussed above critically inform this approach, but it remains nominally realist in its ontology with regard to the social phenomenon of religion.[43] Fundamentally, however, all agree that conceptions of the religious and nonreligious are socio-historically variable.

Within this framework, in different yet convergent ways, some argue that the religious can be minimally distinguished in terms of the presence of one factor: reference to the transcendent. That is any ostensive reference to another dimension of reality, which people believe has an impact on what happens in our ordinary consciousness and life. Any thought, statement, or action whose meaning depends on such a reference—interpreted broadly—is religious. The thought, statement, or action may be other things as well: political, moral, dramatic, and so on. If, however, it is semantically dependent on the reference to the transcendent in some significant way, then to a greater or lesser extent (from case to case), it is religious. Religions are the social institutions, again broadly conceived, that specialize in providing access to the transcendent.[44] Working within these kinds of parameters, most scholars of religion have gotten on with the task of studying “religion,” much as others have proceeded with the study of the equally relative phenomenon of “terrorism.”

Analysis of Schuurman and Horgan’s Rationales for Jihadi Terrorist Violence[45]

Overlooking or minimizing the abundant primary data pointing to the religiosity of many terrorists simply because it is incongruent with the dominant Western assumptions about religion and its place in society is a pervasive interpretive proclivity. It aggravates, rather than ameliorates, the explanatory gaps encountered in seeking to explain why so few persons exposed to the conditions associated with terrorism turn to violence. A close reading of Schuurman and Horgan’s article brings this problem to the fore. Their study investigates the rationales for terrorist violence in European homegrown jihadist groups by critically examining the strategic and organizational motives of the Hofstad group in the Netherlands. “Finding that neither rationale adequately explains the group’s planned or perpetrated acts of terrorism”, the authors state, “the analysis concludes by arguing that the turn to violence was instead predicated on predominantly *personal* motives that, moreover, were not strongly tied to extremist religious convictions as is frequently thought.”[46] The analysis focuses on two individuals in the group, one of whom murdered the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh and the other who was involved in several terrorist plots.

Schuurman and Horgan call into question the relevance of strategic rationales for the Hofstad group by examining statements made in court by these two individuals, seven “open letters” by one of them, and a videotaped message and unfinished autobiography by the other one. They find little evidence of “political motives” in this material.[47] Rather they document an idealistic desire to act “out of faith”, “a sense of personal religious duty”, an obligation to “help oppressed Muslims”, the “emulation of jihadist role models”, and “the need to find a release for feelings of anger and revenge.”[48]

They next turn to the analysis of the six well-known organizational motives for engaging in terrorist violence, as delineated by Martha Crenshaw.[49] They find that four of these appear to have some bearing on this case: (1) the group offers a path to redemption; (2) there is the emulation of other terrorists held in high esteem; (3) they are responding to countermeasures taken by authorities; and (4) they are being driven by competition with other extremist groups. They argue, however, closer inspection reveals “that in many cases these motives were *personal* rather than *organizational* in origin.”[50] In coming to this conclusion, it is noteworthy that Schuurman and Horgan call on the strong presence of religious motivations to justify seeing the motives as more personal than organizational. The two figures highlighted in their analysis were driven by a sense of duty to punish blasphemers, wage defensive jihad, obey God’s commands, and satisfy a desire for martyrdom.[51]

More specifically, they argue that the murder of van Gogh “was triggered by two negative personal experiences [in the perpetrator’s life]: time spent in prison in 2001 and the death of his mother that same year.” The crime was not the direct result of the influence of the Hofstad group or jihadist ideology. That is why only this member of the group perpetrated such a violent offence. They characterize him as being “fanatical” because his life “revolved around his beliefs” more than the other members; his beliefs had a “millenarian aspect”; and “he lived the relatively most isolated existence of all the group’s participants.”[52] The discussion of these factors leads them to conclude:

Van Gogh’s murderer was primarily driven by his fanatical beliefs. Yet even in his case, convictions alone only provide part of his rationale for committing an act of terrorism. A farewell letter written to his family reveals that fear of spending an eternity in hell for failing to live up to his god’s commandments, also played a role, underlining what Cottee and Hayward (2011) have labeled “existential” motives for terrorism.[53]

In addition, they state, “by attacking van Gogh in a busy Amsterdam street and trying to decapitate [him], the assailant turned the murder into a gruesome act of theater ... One that underlined his overarching desire to show himself to the world as a ‘true’ Muslim.”[54]

The evidence presented suggests, contrary to supposition of the authors, that religiosity played a prominent role in the motivation of these jihadists. Yet Schuurman and Horgan persist in declaring that the primary motivations were personal and not religious. In this regard, they introduce a number of further factors, such as the influence of authority figures, the desire for revenge, identification with the victims of perceived injustice, fear of death, moral disengagement, and emulating jihadist role models. Undoubtedly, many of these factors may well have played a role in the radicalization of these individuals and further helped prompt them to act on their beliefs. The evidence keeps pivoting back, however, to the desire to become and act like a “true Muslim”. In other words, it was about taking on a shared and public identity (as the perpetrators conceived it), more than the expression of unique personal considerations. As Schuurman and Horgan’s analysis repeatedly highlights, they were seeking to emulate certain revered jihadists. That is what matters most.

Every public act, whether economic, political, sexual, criminal, religious, or whatever, has a personal aspect. How consequential is this truism? In principle and practice, it is hard to see how a rather fuzzy set of speculative personal reasons help us to explain what is happening, even in this case, let alone the larger class of homegrown jihadist attacks and plots. Does that explanation have some greater discernable explanatory power than one referencing religiosity?

Schuurman and Horgan rely heavily on the strong presence of these religious motivations to advance their argument. They strategically use the abundantly religious character of the beliefs and claims of these terrorists

to demonstrate that their motivations were not political, and hence not strategic. Then they further use evidence of the religious character of their motives to help dismiss the relevance of an organizational approach. In both instances, however, the reference to religiosity works because it implicitly references a privatized conception of religion. The religiosity in question is conceptually reduced to the personal, and that is why they assume they can once again use evidence of the primarily religious nature of the claims of the terrorists to underwrite their last conclusion, that the motives of these terrorists are primarily personal. Religiosity plays a key role in the evidence marshalled throughout the analysis, yet in the end it is dissolved, because the authors assume a privatized (i.e., modern Western) conception of religion. They undertake this last step in their analysis, moreover, without much in the way of explicit argumentation.

However, the religious language they keep calling on to make their case persistently indicates, especially to scholars of religion, that something more is at stake. For example, I am not aware of any independent psychology of “redemption.” The term is redolent with religious meaning and its power stems from participating in a shared religious heritage. The fervent wish to be a “true Muslim” is not a private matter; it is not a mere effloresce of personality. It is a public declaration of membership in a group deemed to be specific and special. To achieve the desired status requires public actions and social recognition. In this case in particular, the aspiration to be a “true Muslim” involves demonstrating that one is part of the Salafi-jihadist elect, those who will be saved while all else are damned. In this worldview, there is no separation of the religious and the political, the private and the public. The terrorists are explicitly declaring, if one chooses to listen, that their actions are simultaneously personal and public, as well as political and strategic. We may question the efficacy of the strategy involved, but the differentiation of these things is an instrumental part of the social order that these terrorists were rejecting in striving to set an example. To employ and advocate an interpretive approach that categorically ignores or dismisses their worldview is counterproductive, if our objective is to understand religious terrorists, and hence prevent such actions from happening again.

Analysis of Crone’s Critique of Radicalization Theorizing

In her highly engaging study Crone examines “...what the currently dominant conceptions of radicalization leave out of sight and argues that radicalization is not an individual process driven by religious ideology, but can more precisely be understood as a process of politicization.”[55] My critique of her argument is confined to the first three of the five parts of her analysis: (1) her critique of the view that religious ideology is a precondition for terrorist violence; (2) her argument that prior familiarity with violence is the most significant precondition for terrorist violence; and (3) her argument that “pathways towards terrorism that somehow involve religious ideas are not only religious, but first and foremost political.”[56]

Crone’s discussion of the first point sets the stage for her argument. She highlights the overly simplistic contention, with the emergence of “homegrown terrorism,” that jihadist ideology was “the” factor in the process of radicalization, and the subsequent preoccupation with the “talk to action” problem. This variant of the larger problem of specificity involves recognizing that radical talk alone is a poor predictor of whether someone will engage in terrorist violence. Struggling with this problem led some terrorism scholars, she notes, to draw a distinction between “cognitive” (or “ideological radicalization”) and “behavioral radicalization”,[57] and to question whether the former is a necessary precursor to the latter—which is the real focus of public concern (i.e., violence). Crone aligns her argument with this distinction and suggests that the preoccupation with ideology had created an overly “intellectualist” reading of the process of radicalization. In her view, there was a consensus that the process of radicalization involves “an intellectual transformation and that ideology is somehow the precondition for violent acts.”[58] Like others, she questions the validity of this assumption.

Crone’s own rather unquestioning reliance on the distinction between ideological and behavioral radicalization, however, poses problems for the rest of her argument. While it is common to align the talk to action issue with the differentiation of cognitive/ideological and behavioral radicalization, the two issues are not synonymous. Moreover, both issues are often further confused with John Horgan’s differentiation between the process of radicalization leading to involvement in violent extremist movements and the further process by which a few of those who join become violent.[59] This two-stage process of radicalization to violence may accurately

describe what happens in most cases. In practice, however, it is almost impossible to segregate processes of cognitive and behavioral radicalization, and the tendency to reify this analytical distinction can create an ersatz conundrum, at least when it comes to religious terrorism. Almost all religions are about belief, behavior, and belonging, and one without the other is unimaginable for most practitioners, and a sign, for most sociologists of religion, that something is amiss (i.e., secularization).[60] Certainly, this is the case with most new religious movements. They are often subject to public scorn because they make totalistic demands in this regard. The Salafist new religious movement[61] undergirding jihadist terrorism quite characteristically emphasizes that “true Muslims” must manifest their beliefs in their actions. The behavioral embodiment of faith is the hallmark of authentic religious commitment.[62] In religious conversions, as with radicalization, the ideological, behavioral, and social aspects of the process are intertwined, and they coevolve. In each case, this may happen differently, and to varying degrees, but there is little evidence to support the notion of a strictly ideological or behavioral process of radicalization. A reciprocal process of change in beliefs and behavior is more plausible for most terrorists, especially religious ones.

Having called into question the primacy of ideology in the process of radicalization, Crone proposes the most significant precondition of jihadist radicalization may be experience with violence.

Pathways towards terrorism ... do not necessarily entail a step ‘from talk to action’—from ideology to violence—but could entail a transition from one kind of violence into another. To put the point differently: instead of an ideological radicalization process, one pathway towards terrorism could be a ‘politicization of violence’. ... In contrast to most radicalization theories, which have highlighted the idea of ... a huge step from ideas to violence, this perspective points to a less dramatic step from one form of violence to another.[63]

Crone is speculating, in other words, that the process may largely happen within the behavioral realm.

Crone uses two sources of information to support this alternative view. Her own contact with jihadist extremists, while part of a team carrying out fieldwork in Copenhagen from 2008 to 2011, and the data available on the perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Europe from January 2012 to July 2015. With regard to the latter, she finds support for her view in the fact that 80% of these individuals had a “known criminal background” and 60% had been in prison. Data on the overall crime-terrorism nexus, however, are quite incomplete and fragmentary. Moreover, we lack clarity on the nature of the connection and its significance. Is there a continuum of motivations for the criminal and terrorist activities, as Crone and some other researchers[64] presume, or is the turn to jihadism indicative of an urge to overcome the criminality? Are jihadists seeking redemption from their criminal pasts? The distinction makes a difference in determining if religion has played a role in the process of radicalization. We need a more refined understanding of the pathways of these types of individuals. The best data available, for example, on Western foreign fighters, indicate that the majority, especially from North America, did not have criminal backgrounds.[65] For those that did, we know little about the actual journey from the criminal past to the jihadist future, whether the new religiosity is sincere or sketchy.[66] Other more significant issues arise, however, when we scrutinize the logic of Crone’s supposition about violence as the precondition for radicalization.

The limited data Crone provides only indicate that a prior familiarity with violent milieus may be a precondition for engaging with violence. It cannot tell us, however, whether this factor merely played a role in opening these individuals to the possibility of becoming extremists or, more consequentially, explains why they were the ones who actually were willing to turn to political violence. In other words, the data available cannot help us with Horgan’s distinction, and this means we cannot really determine the nature of their role as a precondition of terrorist violence. Likewise, they lack the specificity to help us with the talk to action problem. Do those who become violent have more of a history of criminal violence than those who merely espouse jihadist views? To the best of my knowledge, we do not know. It is not clear, moreover, whether having a criminal record tells us much about how familiar these individuals were with violence, especially since their criminal records stem preponderantly from petty theft, drug, and fraud charges. If violence were a strong precondition for “engaging with extremist ideology,” as Crone asserts, then surely far more of these individuals should be engaging in

violence as well—but then it is unlikely that the talk to action problem would have attracted so much attention. To say that violence begets violence may be true, but it involves circular reasoning and does not do much to explain why these individuals chose to become jihadists. They could have satisfied their violent proclivities much more readily in the criminal community—a more pervasive subculture that legitimates and rewards violence. More is involved, clearly, in deciding to become a jihadist, and the one thing almost all the jihadist stress is their religious identity and commitments. So why would we favor the incomplete and problematic precondition of violence over the far more substantiated and manifest precondition of ideology (i.e., religiosity) in seeking to develop more specific explanations of radicalization? Crone does not consider this option because the parameters of her argument illogically exclude it.

Speaking of her fieldwork, Crone states that she realized that “extremist milieus are heterogeneous, including people of various kinds: some are interested in Islamism as a visible sign of opposition; others are attracted by action and violence.” “Nevertheless,” she goes on to stress, “the young men ... were neither intellectuals who, through a long theological process, embraced an extremist ideology before eventually turning to violence, nor young people meeting up with a radicalizer who lured them into extremist ideology.”[67] The set of options Crone is asking us to consider are unrealistically restrictive—keeping other possibilities out of sight. Most jihadists are neither theologians nor brainwashed dupes.

It is not surprising, working with these limited options, that Crone found little evidence of religious ideology playing a significant role in how these people radicalized. She has fashioned a straw man argument, one that repeats the problems associated with the “religious knowledge interpretive error” addressed above. Religiosity is neither about depth of knowledge nor length of time studying, and as Crone argues earlier in her article, few researchers assume any longer that jihadists are simply the victims of brainwashing. Ironically, in framing the interpretive options in this artificially restrictive manner, Crone commits the very intellectualist error she chastises others for when they too readily associated radicalization with mere exposure to an extremist ideology. She has reduced religion, and being religious, to the parochial modern Western notion that religion is primarily about consent to a codified and segregated set of beliefs.

Crone next makes a point that I agree with, namely that the “tendency to view radicalization through the prism of religion or religious ideas has often implied the ‘depoliticization’ of radicalization.”[68] As she says, the “idea of a pure, depoliticized form of religion relies on a liberal, secularist ideology of religion as a strictly private ... activity.”[69] Her diagnosis of the problem, however, is incomplete and misleading. In fact, her approach relies on a concomitant aspect of this liberal, secularist ideology of religion that is also problematic. She separates religion from politics and elevates the political over the religious. As she goes on to say, pathways to terrorism “are first and foremost political processes, or, in the case of Islamist extremism, a politico-religious process. In violent extremist milieus ... religion is always already political.”[70]

Here, and elsewhere, Crone prioritizes the political over the religious—the political is somehow more fundamental, even though historically the opposite seems to be the case. In her article, she makes no argument to support this analytical decision, and as her own comments indicate, Islamists would stridently disagree. Here, as elsewhere, we need to pay close attention to how things are stated. In line with modern Western ways of thinking, it is assumed that political processes are “first and foremost”, and that radicalization is a “politico-religious” process. In the midst of using a critical reading of the modern Western conception of religion to pillory other scholars for misreading the radicalization of jihadists as private and hence depoliticized, Crone relies on another assumption of that conception of religion, that religiosity is subordinate to politics, to keep the religious nature of the process at bay. In the Salafi-Jihadists worldview, however, not only is there no separation between religion and politics, but religion is superordinate, and politics is merely a means for achieving religious objectives.[71] It is more accurate to say that radicalization is a “religio-political” process—putting the emphasis where it belongs—at least for the Islamist extremists.

Curiously, when Crone elaborates on the reasons for seeing the process as predominantly political, the religiousness of the evidence she cites comes to the fore and reinforces the opposite conclusion. First, in discussing the political agenda of the jihadists, she states “Islamist extremism proposes a political utopia: a

political fantasy about society, where shari'a is applied to the letter and justice will rule.”[72] This extraordinary situation speaks, however, to the ways in which religious ideas and commitments characteristically influence and distort the normal course of politics. Second, she states that Islamist extremist politics “are extremist precisely because they unfold outside the normal political framework.” Jihadists reject participating in democracy, she notes, because it is “haram”.[73] In other words, for jihadists, politics—at least as conventionally conceived—is secondary and subordinate to fomenting religious revolution. Third, she discusses the issues that are characteristically “political” for the jihadists, focusing on “foreign policy, wars, and atrocities committed against Muslims by authoritarian regimes and western powers in the Middle East.”[74] The unifying theme of these concerns is solidarity with coreligionists, and not a concern with human suffering or the violation of human rights per se. Jihadists are responding to “perceived injustice”, but only with regard to Islam and Muslims. Fourth, in seeking to explain the appeal of these kinds of politics, Crone notes that “extremist Islamist politics offers the possibility of combining heroism with politics: performing great deeds to make one’s name famous and immortal ... they are able to transform themselves from petty criminals, pariahs and outcasts into post-mortem heroes.”[75] Immortality and postmortem heroism are “first and foremost” about religious martyrdom. There are secular political analogs, but there is no need to invoke such analogs in the explication of an explicitly religious political movement. It is what it is—unless we can demonstrate, free of interpretive biases, that there are substantial reasons for doubting the authenticity of the religious motivational claims repeatedly made by those engaged in the action.

Arguments Based on a Dichotomist Conception of the Relationship of Social Processes and Ideology

The third argument for discounting the significance of religiosity in the process of radicalization is the most complex and challenging to delineate. The argument takes many specific forms that appear to differ, but the underlying logic is consistent. In the post-9/11 era, many government officials and analysts, and perhaps some academic researchers, were conceptualizing the process of radicalization, especially in the case of Jihadism, as largely the result of indoctrination to certain ideological narratives.[76] This helped to foster an overly simple and naïve conception of the process of radicalization, one that often results in the stigmatization of Islam and Muslims. In reaction to this too-simple and overly cognitive approach, many scholars of terrorism developed models of the process involving multiple other psychological, social-psychological, and sociological factors. [77] This was done out of sheer recognition that more was involved in this complicated process, and to avoid even inadvertently lending support to Islamophobia.

It was also in response, however, to increased recognition of the specificity problem. As security services came under increasing pressure to protect their citizens from the attacks of homegrown terrorists, they sought help in differentiating who amongst the many espousing extremist views might actually become violent, and hence warrant closer attention. In other words, the talk to action variant of the specificity problem surged to the fore.[78] This helped to support new interest in developing a more fulsome understanding of the process of radicalization. The resultant research was more empirical and sophisticated, though it did little to resolve, practically, the talk to action problem. On the contrary, the models of radicalization that emerged demonstrate how hard it is to predict who will even radicalize, let alone eventually commit acts of violence. While the models show, in somewhat different yet overlapping ways, that there are trans-situational similarities, they also indicated that a great many factors play a role, in different combinations and to differing degrees, in the radicalization of each person. Limitations of data, moreover, leave an element of mystery in every case, and unpredictable contingencies (e.g., happening to meet a coconspirator with certain skills or resources) influence the decisions people make.[79] Overall, with few exceptions, the new perspectives displayed a tendency to overcompensate for the earlier reliance on the simple internalization of beliefs by minimizing the role of ideology (and hence religion) altogether. In most cases, this involved emphasizing the importance of social-psychological processes, as delineated by social identity theory for example, while explicitly stating that the influence of ideological factors is secondary. In a few instances, however, the arguments come close to dismissing the relevance of ideology altogether;[80] though doing so raises a definitional dilemma, since

it is ideological commitments that differentiate terrorists from other types of violent offenders.[81] Overall, discussions of radicalization have displayed a tendency to think about ideology and the social-psychological aspects of radicalization in overly dichotomist terms, especially with regard to jihadism.[82]

Elsewhere I have critically discussed the problems posed by this reactive tendency by examining some of the publications of prominent scholars of terrorism (e.g., Marc Sageman, Andrew Silke, Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, and Bart Schuurman and John Horgan).[83] I will not reiterate those critiques here.[84] Rather, my focus is on the more general logic of these arguments and its inherent limitations. Nevertheless, a brief discussion of some aspects of the earlier analysis helps to set the stage for considering this more fundamental critique.

In their book *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us*,[85] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, for example, provide the first comprehensive application of insights from multiple areas of experimental social psychology to the explanation of terrorist radicalization. In doing so, they make a very significant contribution to terrorism studies. Surprisingly, however, they dedicate fewer than two pages in their concluding chapter to the role of “ideology in political radicalization”. This truncated analysis involves little more than a brief presentation of several variants of the arguments for minimizing the relevance of ideology, as discussed above. As such, the arguments advanced are logically and empirically insufficient to justify simply dismissing the role of beliefs in motivating terrorist violence.[86]

Less categorically, in *Misunderstanding Terrorism*, Marc Sageman advances an argument for replacing “the ideological explanation” for “the turn to political violence” with what he calls a “contextual” social-psychological explanation based on the application of “self-categorization and social identity theory.”[87] Sageman argues that political violence results from “the activation of a politicized social identity, which generates an imagined political protest community.”[88] This process is in turn the natural outgrowth of how social identities form, under conditions of social and political frustration. It is not “a pathological process” per se.[89] The inclination of people to categorize themselves in terms of contrasting in-groups and out-groups, as well established in social psychology, gives rise to prejudice and in-group favoritism and out-group denigration. Under conditions of escalating hostility between groups, the cumulative radicalization of discourse, disillusionment with peaceful means of resolving differences, and mounting “moral outrage” over the aggression of out-groups, some members of an in-group may develop a “martial social identity”. These more-militant members may then set off a process of social encapsulation that heightens the boundaries between groups, narrows their horizons, and escalates hostilities. With time and under certain conditions (e.g., diminished social control), this can result in escalating violence.[90] This process, Sageman stresses repeatedly, “does not usually come as a conscious epiphany or a gradual evolution from careful reasoning or better understanding of an ideology.”[91] Yet, as I demonstrated elsewhere, “in his own account of this process of radicalization he repeatedly points to the instrumental role of ideology and ideologues. This is because his social identity theory cannot, by itself, explain why only some of the people adopting an extreme social identity actually turn to violence, especially the indiscriminate kind associated with jihadist attacks in the West.”[92]

To reduce the impact of the problem of specificity, we need to recognize that ideology matters, at least to some degree, and more, we need to adopt a more integrated, and hence realistic, approach to the interplay of ideology and social processes (i.e., social-psychological and social) throughout the process of radicalization. This is what some researchers are starting to realize.[93] In an even more preliminary sense, this requires that researchers studying the process of radicalization do four things. First, avoid using straw man versions of “the ideological explanation” to frame the discussion.[94] Few scholars of note, or otherwise really, argue that ideology is the only significant factor in determining who radicalizes. Second, recognize the rudimentary evidentiary value of the recurrent and pervasive ideological and/or religious professions of violent extremists.[95] Third, stop working with overly formal conceptions of codified ideologies, and recognize that ideologies, especially the ones that have shaped societies, are living and evolving systems of beliefs (like religions), with variable influence on the actions of individuals.[96] The methodological soundness of these proposals is obvious, yet, as indicated (see the endnotes), arguments were required to drive each point home. Fourth, and in addition, stop thinking that because only a few of those who cognitively radicalized become violent, this means cognitive

radicalization (i.e., ideological radicalization) is not a precursor to violent extremism. Let me comment further on this last additional point.

In setting their argument for an alternative way of conceiving radicalization, for example, Bart Schuurman and Max Taylor quite typically state:

Despite its ubiquitous use, radicalization has also attracted considerable criticism. Skeptics have noted its inherently subjective nature, the lack of agreement on definitional issues and the sometimes linear and deterministic conceptualization that made radicalization seem like a 'conveyor belt' to involvement in terrorism. Recent years have seen the development of notably more nuanced interpretations that have considerably advanced insights into how, why, and when people become involved in terrorism. Even so, a central shortcoming of radicalization has continued to exert a detrimental influence; namely, the frequently found assumption that the adoption of radical beliefs precedes and leads to involvement in terrorism.[97]

The last statement, which sets the grounds for their alternative contribution to understanding radicalization, illogically conflates two disparate claims for which there is variable empirical substantiation. It is one thing to say that extreme beliefs do not necessarily lead to violent behavior, or in other words, to assert that ideological indicators of radicalization alone fail to provide a sound way of assessing the potential for violence. It is another thing to assert that extreme beliefs simply do not precede involvement in terrorism.[98] These are logically distinct propositions, and while there is ample evidence (from polls and survey research) to support the first claim, empirical support for the latter is scarce. On the one hand, large numbers of people appear to share the grievances and some of the radical views of violent extremists, yet few choose to become violent. On the other hand, despite the claim that some individuals become terrorists without adopting extremist worldviews, it is clear that the vast majority of offenders do hold such views. Moreover, they call on these views to explain their behavior. This is especially the case for the most committed terrorists. Consequently, it is hard to see the utility of letting an unknown number of exceptional cases (i.e., where ideological commitments seem absent) to dictate how we explain terrorist violence.[99] Highlighting the cases where the role of ideology seems weak means cognitive radicalization is not a sufficient condition for violence to occur. In the analysis of social phenomena, however, we are dealing with tendencies and probabilities, and in most cases, having such views does precede becoming violent.[100] In most cases, it appears to be a necessary factor. As Jakob Guhl observes, moreover,

...the authors claiming that cognitive extremism is not a necessary precursor to violent extremism usually offer slight caveats, which hint at a (possibly weak) connection between the two. Usually they claim that there are cases in which ideas were not the 'primary incentive' or extremists were not 'fully radicalised' or 'deeply ideological'. Obviously such cases exist, but that does not indicate that in these cases ideas were not an incentive at all or that extremists were not radicalised or ideological in any way.[101]

In examining the role of cognitive extremism as a precursor to violent extremism, Guhl suggests, and I concur (see above and Part I), it is more realistic to think of the relationship between ideas and actions in terms of degrees of influence and to start figuring out how we can detect and measure the level of relevance.[102] Guhl also argues, as I have previously,[103] that we are better off thinking in terms of "collective action frames"—a concept from social movement theory[104]—than in terms of the impact of "stable and coherent sets of values, beliefs, and goals." [105] Donald Holbrook and John Horgan propose much the same in their exacting critique of the ways terrorism scholars have misconceived the relationship between ideology and radicalization.[106]

Using the sociological concept of framing to delineate the pivotal role of ideology in the process of radicalization makes the discussion more concrete. It minimizes the reliance on straw man formulations of ideological explanations, given the extensive analyses available of the nature and operation of such collective action frames,[107] while also minimizing the reliance on too-formal, complicated, and coherent conceptions of the ideological influences at play when most people radicalize. In the case of the radicalization of jihadists, analysts seem to have sensed this state of affairs when they started to recast the jihadist ideology as the jihadist "narrative," and the attendant need to develop "counter-narratives".[108]

Various conditions and experiences create the cognitive opening to radicalization in individuals. As is widely recognized, however, the terrorist narrative (the proto-ideology of jihadism) “connects the dots in a satisfying way, one which offers a simple but definitive explanation for their angst, offers a grand solution, targets a culprit, and prescribes a course of action. Most of all, it sets the individual’s struggles in a transcendent frame of meaning that gives an ultimate and virtuous purpose to their existence. It places their personal troubles in solidarity with those of a whole people.”[109] For most individuals this is the precursor to action.[110]

The collective action frames of revolutionary movements tend to obliterate the distinction between talk and action. These frames may not always mobilize individuals to act, especially violently, but they are the living edge of more systematic, and perhaps even esoteric, bodies of thought that justify such actions, and more often than not they entail a demand to match words with deeds.[111] They intrinsically ignore the analytical distinction scholars may wish to draw between cognitive and behavioral radicalization. They are about the embodiment of ideas, and are inevitably about assuming and asserting certain identities. In their operation, the ideological and social processes of radicalization intertwine, and as Holbrook and Horgan conclude, it is misleading to see ideology as “resting uncomfortably alongside [the social processes of radicalization] as static doctrinal pillars impenetrable to all but dedicated ‘ideologues.’” Rather, “the role of ideology can best be explained through highlighting its social components, the collective maps and shared perspectives that help us make sense of the world and define who is or is not part of our community.”[112] As with religiosity (as argued above), “[o]ne does not need to ‘qualify’ with any level of ‘expertise’ or knowledge in discourses associated with particular ideologies to be affected by them, or for them, to impact on our frames of reference”, and we need to recognize that “ideology is embedded throughout journeys towards terrorism.”[113] Dichotomizing the study and the conceptualization of the social (including social-psychological) and ideological aspects of the process of radicalization is ultimately unrealistic and hence counterproductive.

Conclusion

I am not suggesting, let me stress once again, that religion, or more particularly Islam, is the sole cause or motivator for religious terrorism in general or jihadism in particular. In many cases, however, religiosity—the level of commitment one feels to a religious worldview and practice—may play a significant role, and we have no good reason to discount this fact, especially in the face of the ample evidence from the religious terrorists themselves. As I have argued elsewhere in some detail,[114] jihadist radicalization is the result of a complex ecosystem of interactions between individuals and groups with different social environments, and it involves cascading influences and decisions. No two individuals radicalize in precisely the same way, but there are detectable patterns and typical issues at stake that can guide our examination of each case. In most instances, ideology plays a significant role; it is one of the environmental interactions to take into consideration in every analysis. Ideology, or in the case of jihadism, religion, frames the relatively inchoate worries and wishes of potential recruits, providing them with the specific sense of certainty, identity, and purpose that attracts them to extremist movements in the first place, and at a later stage facilitates the turn of some to political violence. Ideology works in conjunction with other factors, in a constant dialectical dance, as most scholars of terrorism realize, but to date have failed to articulate well.

This may all seem quite unproblematic. Nonetheless, it has been a point of contention in terrorism studies for some time. As a result, many researchers did not take advantage of pertinent insights and findings from the study of religious conversions and religiosity, on the one hand, and the ways ideology fomented and shapes types of collective violence, on the other hand.[115] This is regrettable and it is time to reverse the trend. The relevance of religiosity will vary, but there are no sound reasons for rejecting its relevance in explaining religious terrorism.

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Notes

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- [50] Bart Schuurman and John Horgan, 2016, p. 58.
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- [63] Manni Crone, 2016, p. 593.
- [64] Rik Coolsaet, "Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighter Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case," Egmont—The Royal Institute for International Relations (March 2016); URL: <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/facing-the-fourth-foreign-fighters-wave/>
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[66] Expressing a somewhat skeptical view of the authenticity of these conversions, Cottee (2016, op. cit.) concludes: “These lapsed Muslims were never radical; they were criminal. And then in the Islamic State, and the scripted violence it offers, they found a way of spiritually transcending their badassery, all the while remaining badasses. They found authorized transgression, a hallucinatory vision that simultaneously allowed and redeemed their bad Muslim selves.” But how can we know, no data is provided, just speculation from our own quite different point of view.

[67] Manni Crone, 2016, p. 592.

[68] Ibid., p. 595.

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[73] Ibid., p. 595.

[74] Ibid., pp. 595–596.

[75] Ibid., p. 596.

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[78] Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, “The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24 (2012): 1–21; James Khalil, “Radical Beliefs and Violent Actions Are Not Synonymous: How to Place the Key Disjuncture Between Attitudes and Behaviors at the Heart of Our Research into Political Violence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37 (2014): 198–211; Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Toward a Profile of Lone Wolf Terrorists: What Moves an Individual From Radical Opinion to Radical Action,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26 (1) (2014): 69–85; John Horgan, 2014, op. cit.; Bart Schuurman and Quirine Eijkman, “Indicators of terrorist intent and capability: Tools for threat assessment,” *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 8 (3) (2015): 215–231; Marc Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), pp. 80–81, 90.

[79] For example, John Horgan, 2014, op. cit.; Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, “The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38 (2015): 958–975; Lorne L. Dawson, 2017, op. cit.; Arie Kruglanski, David Webber, Katarzyana Jasko, Marina Chernikova, and Erica Molinaro, “The Making of Violent Extremists,” *Review of General Psychology* 22 (1) (2018): 107–120; Noémie Bouhana, “The Moral Ecology of Extremism: A Systemic Perspective,” Research Paper prepared for the UK Commission for Countering Extremism (2019); URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/834354/Bouhana-The-moral-ecology-of-extremism.pdf.

[80] Andrew Silke, “Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization,” *European Journal of Criminology* 5 (2008): 99–123; Randy Borum, 2011, op. cit.; Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Marc Sageman, 2017, op. cit.

[81] A point noted as well by Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, “Terrorism and Ideology: Cracking the Nut,” *Perspectives on*

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[82] For example, Rik Coolsaet, 2016, op. cit.; Lydia Wilson, "Understanding the Appeal of ISIS," *New England Journal of Public Policy* 29 (1) (2017): 1–7; Joel Day and Scott Kleinmann, "Combatting the Cult of ISIS: A Social Approach to Countering Violent Extremism," *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 15 (3) (2017): 14–23; Max Abrahams, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32 (4) (2018): 78–105; Bart Schuurman and Max Taylor, "Reconsidering Radicalization: Fanaticism and the Link Between Ideas and Violence," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12 (1) (2018): 3–22.

[83] Lorne L. Dawson, 2014, op. cit.; Lorne L. Dawson, "Discounting Religion," 2017, op. cit.; Lorne L. Dawson, "Challenging," 2018, op. cit.; Lorne L. Dawson, "Debating the Role of Religion," 2018, op. cit.

[84] Obviously, my critique of aspects of the argument of Schuurman and Horgan is summarized in the previous section of this article.

[85] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, 2011, op. cit.

[86] See Lorne L. Dawson, "Discounting," 2017, op. cit., pp. 38–41.

[87] Marc Sageman, 2017, op. cit., pp. 97, 111–161; the critique summarized here was first and more fully developed in Dawson, "Debating," 2018, op. cit.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

[90] The approach is highly reminiscent of the seminal work of Donatella della Porta (e.g., "Recruitment Process in Clandestine Political Organizations: Italian Left-Wing Terrorism," *International Social Movement Research*, Vol. 1, Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow (Eds.) (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988), pp. 155–169, though she drew on social movement theory and not social identity theory.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

[92] Lorne L. Dawson, "Debating" 2018, pp. 108–109.

[93] For example, Jakob Guhl, "Why beliefs always matter, but rarely help us predict jihadist violence. The role of cognitive extremism as a precursor for violent extremism," *Journal of Deradicalization* 14 (2018): 192–217; Holbrook and Horgan, 2019, op. cit. This is a position I have been advocating for years (e.g., "Giving Religion a Role in the Social Ecology of Homegrown Terrorist Radicalization," PASILE (Psychology and Anthropology Assessment in Security, Intelligence and Law Enforcement) Conference, CSIS Headquarters, Ottawa, May 10, 2012; "The Social Ecology of Homegrown Terrorist Radicalization," RCMP National Security Interviewing Workshop, Calgary, Alberta, April 24, 2015; Lorne L. Dawson, "Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation," The Hague: The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2017; "Religion and the Radicalization of Western Jihadists," Meeting of "Like-Minded" Senior Counter-Terrorism Officials, Global Affairs Canada, Ottawa, Dec. 13, 2018).

[94] Lorne L. Dawson, "Debating," 2018, pp. 105–106 and Lorne L. Dawson, "Discounting," 2017, pp. 38–39. Of course, the same criticism was made of Crone's approach as well.

[95] See Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights into the Motivations for Hijrah to Syria and Iraq," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 40 (3) 2017, pp. 202–205; Lorne L. Dawson, "Debating," 2018, op. cit., pp. 110–113; and Lorne L. Dawson, "Taking Terrorist Accounts of their Motivations Seriously: An Exploration of the Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13 (5), 2019: 65–80.

[96] Lorne L. Dawson, "Debating," 2018, p. 109.

[97] Bart Schuurman and Max Taylor, 2018, op. cit., pp. 3–4.

[98] The latter claim is advanced in varying ways, for example, but with little in the way of specific and substantial empirical evidence, in the following works: Max Abrahams, 2008, op. cit.; Randy Borum, 2011, op. cit.; John Horgan, 2014, op. cit.; Schuurman and Eijkmann, 2015, op. cit.

[99] A view supported by, for example, Alessandro Orsini, "Poverty, Ideology and Terrorism: The STAM Bond," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35 (10) (2012): 665–692; Peter R. Neumann, 2013, op. cit.; Jakob Guhl, 2018, op. cit.; and Arie Kruglanski et al., 2018, op. cit.

[100] Exceptions are the rule in the social sciences, and reversing the onus of this discussion, just because some nonviolent Islamists have become violent Jihadists, does not mean that nonviolent Islamist groups will tend to be gateways to extremist violence. The situation is more complicated (see Lorenzo Vidino, "The Role of Non-Violent Islamists in Europe," *CTC Sentinel* 3

(11–12) (November 2010): 9–11.

[101] Jakob Guhl, 2018, op. cit., pp. 203–204; in the quoted passage Guhl associates these terms, in order, with Bart Schuurman and John Horgan, 2016, op. cit., Lorenzo Vidino, “Sharia4: From Confrontational Activism to Militancy,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9 (2) (2015), and Randy Borum, 2011, op. cit.

[102] Ibid., pp. 204 and 206.

[103] Lorne L. Dawson, “Social Ecology” 2017, op. cit.

[104] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611–639 and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields,” in: David Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, (Eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 380–412.

[105] Ibid., p. 204.

[106] Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, 2019, op. cit., pp. 6–7.

[107] Ibid., p. 7.

[108] Studies into violent radicalisation; Lot 2 The beliefs ideologies and narratives, Change Institute, for the European Commission, Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security (February 2008); Alex P. Schmid, “The Importance of Al-Qaeda’s Single Narrative,” in: E.J.A.M. Kessels, (Ed.), *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives* (The Hague: National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2010), pp. 46–56; Rohan Gunaratna and Orla Hennessy, “Through the Militant Lens: The Power of Ideology and Narratives,” (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, June 2012); Alex P. Schmid, “Challenging the Narrative of the “Islamic State,” (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, June 2015); Kurt Braddock and John Horgan, “Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 39 (5) (2016): 381–404.

[109] Lorne L. Dawson, “Social Ecology” 2017, p. 8.

[110] See, Arie Kruglanski et al., 2018, op. cit. and Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, 2015, op. cit.

[111] As stressed over and again at the very beginning of the jihadist narrative in paradigmatic works such as Sayyid Qutb’s *Milestones*, op. cit.

[112] Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, 2019, op. cit., p. 7.

[113] Ibid., p. 8; see pp. 9 and 10 as well.

[114] Lorne L. Dawson, “Social Ecology” 2017, op. cit. and “The Social Ecology Model of Homegrown Jihadist Radicalisation,” in: Akil N. Awan and James R. Lewis (Eds.), *Radicalisation in Comparative Perspective* (London and New York: Hurst and Oxford University Press. Forthcoming in 2021).

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Understanding the Motivations of “Lone Wolf” Terrorists: The “Bathtub” Model

by Boaz Ganor

Abstract

The phenomenon of “lone wolf” terrorism, which has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars, consists of terror attacks perpetrated without the operational involvement of terrorist organizations in initiating, planning, or executing the attack. This phenomenon lacks a clear center of gravity directing the actions of “lone wolf” terrorists; and as such, it is crucial to understand the system of motivations influencing independent assailants to perpetrate attacks. This article is based on extensive studies conducted on the motivations of “lone wolf” terrorists by the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya. It seeks to contribute to the literature on the topic by proposing a new model. The “Bathtub Model” suggests that the process of the formation of the “lone wolf’s” decision to perpetrate an attack can be akin to a container of water (such as a bath), which would be filled up by various sources of water, each representing groups and subgroups of motivations. The upper threshold of the “bathtub” model represents therefore the maximal level of the “lone wolf’s” ability to contain his motivations, frustrations, and emotions.

Keywords: lone wolf; motive; motivations; terrorism; Israel; bathtub

Introduction

Modern terrorism is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon that keeps morphing. Over the years, terrorists and terrorist organizations around the world have been using a wide range of attacks, sometimes mimicking successful attacks perpetrated by other terrorists in different arenas. In this way, waves of terror attacks (such as suicide bombings, hijackings, and ‘cold’ weapons attacks[1]) may develop and spread from country to country all over the world. The ebb and flow of a terrorism wave may have multiple reasons and explanations, stemming, inter alia, from a change in the terrorists’ set of beliefs, cost-benefit analysis of the perpetrators or their dispatchers, from the level of their communities’ social approval for their attacks, and the availability of operational means at their disposal.[2]

The “lone wolf” phenomenon is not new; throughout history, individual independent terrorists perpetrated attacks without any guidance, operational involvement, or organizational support of terrorist organizations.[3] However, it would appear that the expanding use of the Internet has significantly contributed to the growth of this phenomenon.[4] The Internet has enabled terrorists around the world to be part of virtual communities of like-minded people, contributing to the radicalization of their members, educating one another on planning and executing attacks—all without ever physically meeting one another.[5] It has also enabled terrorist organizations to post and disseminate propaganda, and to offer instructions on how to produce weapons, ammunition, and explosives.[6] Members of such virtual communities and other potential “lone wolves” who are exposed to this material might be inspired to perpetrate terrorist attacks. The ability of the terrorist propagators (organizations and other entities) to directly communicate (locally and internationally) with radical youngsters all over the world enables them to further radicalize and also motivates these individuals to execute “lone wolf” attacks in different countries.[7]

Mark Sageman argues that the Internet has created a new generation of terrorists who carry out a “leaderless jihad”.[8] However, it seems that the prevalence of recent years’ “lone wolf” attacks stems, inter alia, from the objective difficulties faced by terrorist organizations in their attempt to execute “organized attacks” (i.e., attacks that are the culmination of initiative, preparation, and involvement of terrorist organizations). For example, ISIS’s loss of territories in Syria and Iraq, al-Qaeda’s weakness in various theaters around the world, and Hamas’s operational limitations outside the Gaza Strip drove these organizations to call upon independent

lone actors to perpetrate attacks inspired by, or even on behalf of, the above organizations. These organizations seek to create an atmosphere that supports “lone wolf” attacks via incitement and propaganda disseminated online, and encourage their supporters worldwide to attack locally.[9] Within this framework, Bruce Hoffman explains that “this new strategy of al-Qaeda is to empower and motivate individuals to commit acts of violence completely outside any terrorist chain of command.”[10] Ramon Spaaij reinforces Hoffman’s claim, noting that the number of attacks perpetrated by independent individuals inspired by radical Islam has been on the rise, inter alia due to the terrorist organizations’ call to carry out such attacks.[11]

However, the “lone wolf” threat is not limited to global jihadi terrorism. Jeffrey Simon notes that “it would be wrong to assume that lone wolf terrorism is the exclusive domain of Islamic extremists.”[12] As Daniel Byman argues, right-wing supremacists, anti-abortionists, and separatist movements have all used this strategy in various ways and with different levels of success.[13] Most notably, as Bakker and de Graaf suggest, there has been a growing fear of “lone wolf” attacks by right-wing extremists.[14] In a study conducted in 2011, Raffaello Pantucci examined Anders Behring Breivik’s murder of 77 people in Oslo and Utøya (Norway) on 22 July 2011. He argues that Breivik fits the “lone wolf” profile, while having connections to far-right communities around the world.[15] His findings on Breivik reveal the powerful role of the Internet in disseminating extremist ideologies that motivate like-minded individuals to perpetrate terrorist attacks.[16] In addition, a study conducted by Paul Gill and his colleagues on the use of the Internet by lone actors reveals that “extreme-right-wing offenders” are “more likely than Jihadist-inspired offenders in the United Kingdom to learn and communicate online.”[17] Similarly, Florian Hartleb argues that existing typologies of “lone wolf” terrorism should be reconsidered with greater attention given to the new phenomenon of “right-wing single actors.”[18]

Terror attacks are the product of two main variables: (i) motivation to perpetrate an attack and (ii) the operational capability to execute it.[19] Foiling terrorism may therefore be the outcome of limiting the motivations that drive the attackers or, alternatively, curbing their capability to execute these attacks. Terrorism capabilities are usually assembled in a long process of preparations (e.g., procuring weapons, assembling explosive devices, and more) but these preparations have in many cases a clear “radar signature” available for intelligence detection. Therefore, many intelligence agencies focus on locating and identifying the operational preparations for a terror attack, then attempting to foil it. This “signature” is absent in many “lone wolf” attacks which are often perpetrated with a cold weapon.[20] This kind of weapons can be found in every household (e.g., sharp object, knives, screwdrivers, axes, vehicles). Therefore, the importance of understanding the motivation of the “lone wolves” is essential for the prevention of this type of attacks. However, the motivations of “lone wolves” are difficult to locate and to neutralize.

This article examines the motivations that drive lone wolves to perpetrate their attacks. This analysis is generic in nature and it addresses terrorists driven by radical Islamist motives (either global or local), as well as nationalist terrorists, or terrorists acting in the name of other extreme ideologies such as those found on the far right. The article proposes classifying the various motives at the core of these attacks into several categories as well as offering a model to analyze the cross influence of said categories on the decision to perpetrate a “lone wolf” attack. The generic model proposed in the article might serve therefore as a baseline for the formation of new counterterrorism and Counter-Violent Extremism (CVE) strategies in order to prevent or foil this kind of attack.

Defining the Phenomenon

Various scholars, such as Levitt, Byman, and Weimann, argue that the term “lone wolf” is a misnomer, as the “wolf” is not really “lone”. [21] The attacker is influenced by, and operates within, a certain social atmosphere; he or she is in contact with others and shares his or her intentions with them; and s/he is even assisted by them. The “lone wolves” might be inspired by a certain terrorist organization and see themselves as its operatives even if they were never recruited, nor received training, payments, or assistance from that organization. Therefore, upon his or her arrest and interrogation, the “lone wolf” may claim that s/he was an activist of ISIS, al-Qaeda, or other organization s/he identifies with.[22] Moreover, after a “lone wolf” attack, some organizations might

claim responsibility for the attack to boost their position and gain free 'glory'.

Brian M. Jenkins reviewed the 2004 FBI definition which states that a "lone wolf" is an individual who has no nexus to a foreign power or entity.[23] Jenkins argued that the term "lone wolf" does not accurately describe the phenomenon of terrorism, as the concept used to refer to a "hero operating outside the law, doing whatever is necessary to get the job done." [24] He therefore proposed to use the term "stray dog" instead of "lone wolf," noting that it better describes individuals involved in this type of terrorism.[25] According to Jenkins, "...the jihadists' behavior seems to more closely resemble that of stray dogs, who may be found alone or in packs, estranged from but dependent on society, streetwise but lacking social skills, barking defiantly, and potentially dangerous but at the same time, suspicious, fearful, skittish." [26]

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr criticized the quick and sometimes wrongful labeling of perpetrators as "lone wolves" in the aftermath of attacks. They suggested that only a small number of attackers designated as "lone wolf" truly meet that definition.[27] According to Gartenstein-Ross and Barr, "true" lone wolves are "individuals who strike without ever communicating with jihadist networks, either online or in person." On the other hand, Gabriel Weimann suggested that "lone wolf" terrorists are not completely out of contact," as they communicate through the "Dark Web".[28] He argued that similar to "lone wolves" in the animal kingdom, individual terrorists also have their "virtual pack". Online platforms provide them with many opportunities, such as finding instructions on building homemade bombs or mapping potential targets.[29]

Daniel Byman added that the term "lone wolf" does not effectively describe the phenomenon, since most of the time one cannot ascertain how lonely and isolated from other terroristic elements the individual terrorist really was. He therefore suggested "lone-ish wolves," i.e., wolves that sometimes operate independently and sometimes within a very small "pack".[30] Clare Ellis and Raffaello Pantucci used the following definition of the term "lone-actor terrorist":

"The threat or use of violence by a single perpetrator (or small cell), not acting out of purely personal-material reasons, with the aim of influencing a wider audience, and who acts without any direct support in the planning, preparation and execution of the attack, and whose decision to act is not directed by any group or other individuals (although possibly inspired by others)."[31]

In a study conducted in 2020, Clemmow, Bouhana, and Gill concluded that such "cyclical" definitional debates are not necessarily productive, arguing that "lone-actor terrorists do not have to be defined wholly as lone or connected." [32]

In this article, the term "lone wolf" is used to define the phenomenon wherein an individual terrorist perpetrates an attack on his/her own or with the assistance or involvement of others (acquaintances, family) but without any operational connection to any specific terrorist organization.[33] In other words, even if the terrorist was in contact with others (online or in person) and was inspired by a specific terrorist organization, or even if s/he saw himself/herself as its operative, still, as long as no terrorist organization was involved in any of the stages of the attack perpetrated—the initiation, planning, preparation, or logistics of the attack—it will be considered under the suggested definition as a "lone wolf" attack.[34]

The proposed working definition points to the fact that the differential classification between this type of attack and many other attacks is the lack of operational involvement of a terrorist organization in any of the stages of the attack. In that, this definition does not contradict other definitions according to which many lone wolves interact with others, or even with terrorist organizations.

Since a terrorist organization is not involved in the preparatory stage of the attack, the "lone wolf" must independently procure all the required means and equipment to execute the attack. Therefore, the "lone wolf" mostly uses accessible and unsophisticated means and equipment. These include various cold weapons (such as knives, axes, or other sharp objects) for stabbing attacks; vehicles (such as passenger cars, trucks, or other heavy-duty vehicles) for car-ramming attacks; improvised explosives the attacker constructs on his/her own; or any other accessible firearms (such as purchased, stolen, or self-manufactured guns and rifles). In light of the

above, attaining operational capability to execute the attack is usually a rather low hurdle to jump over and not an obstacle in the way of the attack.

The “Bathtub” Model

The range of motivations affecting the decision of the “lone wolf” to perpetrate an attack is wide and varied. In his early typology of “lone wolf” terrorism, Raffaello Pantucci examined terrorists with religious (Islamist) motivations.[35] Other scholars such as Hamm and Spaaij included a wider range of political, religious, and ideological factors in their analysis.[36] In a study conducted in 2019, Jude McCulloch examined the “lone wolf” phenomenon through a gendered lens. Her research revealed that the criminal records and known biographies of numerous “lone wolf” terrorists include significant histories of violence against women.[37] It is therefore hard to isolate a single motive of that entire spectrum as the one that drove the “lone wolf” to attack. In the case of organized attacks, the perpetrating organization usually announces the reasons for the attack, which are practically always associated with the organization’s ideology. Even so, however, it is usually unclear what motivated the individuals who actually executed the attack to join the organization in the first place and then to carry out the particular attack in question. The uncertainty about the motivation for the attack is much greater in the case of “lone wolf” assailants. In any case, a complete and valid assessment of the perpetrator’s motives can only be obtained through a psychological and background investigation, preferably by direct interviews with him/her after arrest.[38]

In a research project conducted by Ariel Merari and Boaz Ganor, the motivations that drove Palestinian terrorists to perpetrate more than 550 “lone wolf” attacks in Israel between 2015–2017 were examined. It was found that the terrorists perpetrated the attacks as a result of widely varied motives, including: revenge for national, religious, or personal humiliation, desire to die or to get to paradise, national struggle, defense of the al Aqsa Mosque, to prove himself/herself, or to gain social esteem.[39] In light of these findings and the motivations’ typologies offered by the above researchers, the “lone wolves” motives may be classified into three groups: (i) ideological[40], (ii) psychopathological[41], and (iii) other personal circumstances.[42] The “lone wolf’s” decision to perpetrate an attack is therefore a unique personal combination of the above which may differ from one attacker to another. Each group of motivations may include several subgroups. For example, the ideological motives group may include, inter alia, devotion to radical ideologies such as nationalist-separatist, communist, anarchist, fascist, or other political motives. The personal motivations group may include economic motives (such as poverty, low socioeconomic status, and acute economic crises); inter-personal motives (such as crises in the “lone wolf’s” relationship with his or her partner or another central figure in his/her life); and familial motives (including hardship within the family, problematic or complex relationship between family members or particular figures such as father, mother, older siblings, as well as the level of appreciation or disrespect the “lone wolf” gets from his or her family) or other personal motives (such as the desire for adventure, self image, or status improvement). The psychological motives group includes the terrorist’s desire to commit suicide, which may be caused by mental instability, harsh experience, despair, or belief in an afterlife. As argued by Ramón Spaaij, lone wolves “tend to have a greater propensity to suffer mental health issues” in comparison to individuals who belong to a terrorist group.[43] Spaaij’s findings on mental disorder seem to be in parallel with Emily Corner’s and Paul Gill’s research[44] on mental illness and lone-actor terrorism.[45]

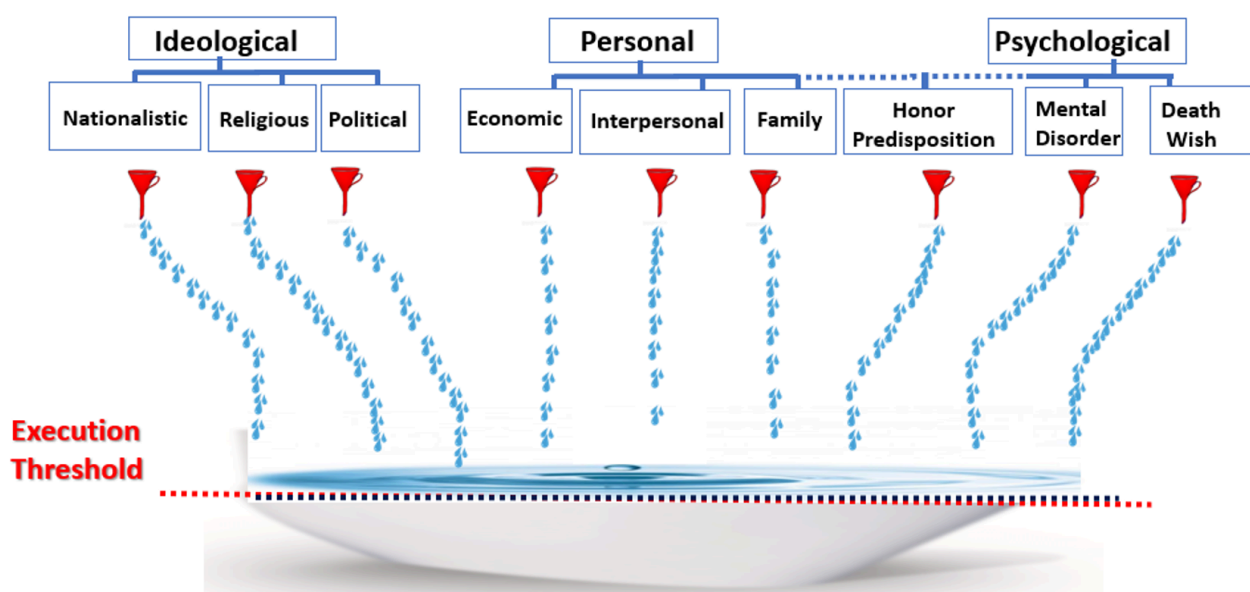
Another psychological motive that the terrorist suffers from may be a psychological instability.[46] In addition, within the above variables, one should include the motives that stem from the terrorist’s predisposition to the value of honor. These may include, among others, the terrorist’s or his/her family’s honor; women’s or a specific female family member’s honor; national, tribal or community honor; as well as the honor of the terrorist’s religion or its religious symbols.

Figure 1: “The Bathtub” Model – Typology of “Lone Wolf” Motives

As depicted in Figure 1, the “lone wolf’s” decision to attack is seldom driven by one sole motive; it is rather the outcome of an aggregate combination of ideological, personal, or psychological motives. Scholars have adopted different methods of classification and there are various ways to group each motive. For example, James Khalil argues that sociopsychological factors (such as the desire for adventure, a higher status, and vengeance) play a role in the individual’s decision to perpetrate an attack.[47] The weight of each motive varies on the merits of every case and the personal circumstances of the terrorist, his/her mental structure, his/her exposure to incitement, and more.

In fact, one may visualize the “lone wolf’s” decision-making process vis-a-vis the attack to a vessel (e.g., a bathtub) being filled up by various sources of water/faucets which are the aforementioned various groups and subgroups of motivations (hereinafter: “The Bathtub Model”). Each of the various motives contributes its part to fill up the “motivation bath” at its own velocity and intensity. When the bathtub is full and cannot contain any more motivations, it overflows, and an attack occurs. This overflow reflects the maturation of the terrorist’s decision to attack. Filling up the bathtub may be a slow process and the decision to attack may take many days; or, the bathtub may quickly be filled, in which case the decision to attack will be made within a very short time.

A decision to attack may be the outcome of one major motive (be it personal, psychological, or ideological) or a combination of motives. In the “Bathtub Model” this is akin to a situation where one faucet fills the tub while others are closed or just dripping. Thus, the different motives and their effects on the terrorist change from one person to another, but each contributes its relative portion to fill up the bathtub (i.e., arrive at a decision to attack).

Figure 2: The “Bathtub Model” – “Lone Wolf” Attack Execution Threshold

The upper threshold of the “bathtub” is therefore the critical variable in the proposed model, as it determines that maximal level of the “lone wolf’s” ability to contain his/her motives, frustrations, emotions, and urges. When this threshold is higher, the terrorist is able to contain more reasons and motives before s/he attacks. When the threshold is lower, the effect of the various “faucets”/motives carry more weight in the decision to attack and arriving at such a decision may be faster. Furthermore, the upper threshold therefore reflects the mental strength of the “lone wolf,” his/her psychological stability, and ability to contain external influences and internal emotions.

It is important to note that the “Bathtub Threshold” is not only unique to each person, but also dynamic and may change, depending on the circumstances, for the very same person, in accordance with his/her level of exposure to “concrete triggers” that might intensify his/her emotions and drive him/her to perpetrate the attack immediately or within a very short time. Those triggers include: (i) an exposure of the terrorist to an earlier attack perpetrated by another “lone wolf” and the desire to follow in that terrorist’s footsteps and mimic him/her; (ii) an exposure to a traumatic event that generated extremely subjective feelings of anger, humiliation, and a desire for revenge. Such traumatic events may be the product of the personal circumstances or experiences of the attacker (such as a family or interpersonal crisis), or an incident which happened to another person that the attacker was exposed to through acquaintance with the individual, or through news or social media; (iii) an exposure to incitement messages from those calling for these types of attacks.

The trigger for action, whether a traumatic event or an exposure to certain information, can actually speed up the filling of the bathtub, release inhibitions, and overcome hesitations; and the extreme emotions that flood the terrorist’s mind as a result of such release may instantly lower the Bathtub Threshold, creating an overflow, that is, a decision to attack sooner rather than later. In psychology, an “inhibition” is defined as the “conscious or unconscious constraint or curtailment of a process or behavior, especially of impulses or desires.”[48] In this study, the “lone wolf’s” inhibitions are the product of his/her mental stability and his/her ability to contain crises, plus his/her value and belief system constrains, as well as his/her cost/benefit analysis. The basic premise in this context is that, apart from mentally ill people, the deliberate infliction of harm on others requires overcoming moral inhibitions stemming from the attacker’s set of values and overcoming possible utilitarian considerations that may curb the desire to perpetrate an attack (such as the risk to the attacker himself/herself and the price s/he may pay if arrested after the attack).

The “lone wolf’s” decision-making process to perpetrate an attack and the effect of the various triggers may therefore be presented in the following formula:

$$TA = (M + T) > I$$

TA) Terror Attack (= **Motivation** (Ideological + Personal + Psychological) + **Triggers** (Imitation + Trauma + Concrete Incitement, etc. (> **Inhibitions** (Psychological Stability + Value and Belief System + Cost/Benefit Analysis)

In other words, the “lone wolf’s” decision to perpetrate the attack is the product of balancing the sum of the various motives (ideological, psychological, personal) and the sum of the various triggers s/he was exposed to (role model, traumatic event, incitement) against the terrorist’s inhibitions (which are the product of his/her mental stability and his/her ability to contain crises, plus his/her value and belief system constrains as well as his/her cost/benefit analysis). When the sum of the triggers and motivations is greater than the inhibitions, then an attack will be perpetrated. If one can collect the relevant data, the above formula enables, prima facie, CT-professionals to calculate the total motivations, triggers, and inhibitions that affect “lone wolves”, prospectively or retrospectively (i.e., before or after the attack). It also enables the analyst to simultaneously examine the “lone wolf’s” basic personality traits, the ideological set of beliefs, the societal effects that are at the core of his/her decision to attack, as well as to evaluate the role of triggers, personal events, and external circumstances that influenced the “lone wolf’s” decision to attack. In that sense, the formula expresses the intensity of the drive to perpetrate the “lone wolf” attack.

The “Bathtub Model” also enables researchers to explore the central role that two other factors may have on

the “lone wolf’s” attack decision-making process: the terrorism incitement factor and government efforts and initiatives to prevent violent extremism.

It should be noted that terrorist organizations, Da’wa organizations, and radical lay leaders might have an important contribution to the “lone wolf’s” decision to attack. Their incitement “fertilizes” over time the volatile atmosphere in the “lone wolves” community and the explicit calls for attacks register in the “lone wolf’s” mind, contributing to the filling of the “motivation bathtub”. Incitement and propaganda have a direct influence on all of the ideological motivations, as well as on motivations based on honor, and also on some of the suicidal motivations (for example, there are cases in which attackers decided that they want to die in an attack in order to receive the heavenly rewards promised posthumously). As noted above, incitement might have a direct impact on the decision to attack, as it intensifies trigger events by praising prior attacks and attackers, or by deepening the attackers’ sense of humiliation. Within this framework, the terrorist organizations may incite “lone wolves” to perpetrate attacks on certain dates (for example, during holidays or anniversaries of past terrorist attacks), under a certain *modus operandi* (including, for example, cold-weapon attacks, car-ramming attacks, shootings, and acts of railway sabotage), or against specific targets (such as “infidels”, Western states, immigrant communities, or ethnic minorities).

On the other hand, one may infer from the “Bathtub Model” that a country dealing with terrorism and violent extremism has an ability to reduce the impact of some of the motivations of the “lone wolves” (these include, for example, ideological motivations, as well as motivations stemming from loss of honor and humiliation). In that sense, every “bathtub” has a “drain”. The “drain” is to a large extent controlled by the government. The government and security forces can open the drain and thus lower the level of “liquid” in the “motivation bathtub”. The “drain” manifests the concrete actions taken by states as part of their Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) efforts and activities. It may include, among others, communication channels with leaders of the “lone wolves” ideological, political, or ethnic communities; political reforms aimed at reducing tensions and appeasing these communities; as well as economic and educational reforms. All of these may be translated into an influence on the array of considerations of potential “lone wolves” and delay or even thwart their decision to attack.

Summary and Conclusions

In summation, understanding the characteristics, scope, and intensity of the “lone wolves” motivations are essential for any attempt to prevent or thwart this kind of attack, even more than with other forms of attacks. The proposed “Bathtub Model” enables one to map out the various motives, motivations, and triggers at the core of the attacks, and to identify the synergy between them.

The Bathtub Model is conceptual; however, it may carry many operational ramifications. As a theoretical model, it can serve as a basis for future research that will contribute to the understanding of the “lone wolves” terrorism phenomenon. Additional research may examine intersections between groups of motivations, such as: personal vs. ideological motives, honor, and humiliation vs. other groups of motivations. Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research that combine psychological, sociological, and political science approaches may use the model to examine a synergetic effect and influence that various types of motivations may have on “lone wolves” decision to perpetrate attacks. The model may also assist with identifying potential triggers that may “lower bathtub walls” significantly and rapidly, (i.e., quick and dangerous reduction of the inhibitions that prevent potential “lone wolves” from perpetrating their attacks). However, this conceptual model may also have operative applications. The model may point out cross-linkages between different types of incitement and certain groups of motivations that generate “lone wolf” attacks and by doing so assist with counteracting and preventing such incitement. Furthermore, the model may point to an elevated likelihood for the occurrence of “lone wolf” attacks in certain time periods when there is an increase in incitement that may trigger an increase in the above motivations, or when statements made by political leaders are perceived by potential attackers as an affront to their culture, ideology, or religion. Another operational insight stemming from the proposed model is the need to put an effort into “lowering the water level in the tub”, (i.e., enable potential lone wolves to contain

harsh sentiments and motivations without acting on them), or alternatively find a way to neutralize some of these sentiments and motivations (“enlarging the drain of the bathtub”). These efforts to prevent the decision of the “lone wolf” to perpetrate an attack might be made via CVE activities within high-risk communities, via educational reforms, during counter-incitement campaigns, by means of social and economic reforms, combined with free psychological services and treatments offered to potential “lone wolves”.

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Notes

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Radical Beings? How Group Identities Impact Willingness to Justify Terrorism

by Eline Drury Løvlien

Abstract

There are many assumptions within terrorism research about the individual characteristics of those who commit or support the use of terrorist tactics, but no larger quantitative study exists on the subject in a European context. To rectify this the article aims to use a group identity framework in a novel way in order to study how group dynamics and group threat impacts individual attitudes toward the use of terrorist tactics. A multilevel research design, using survey data from the European Values Study, is employed to test some of the common explanatory arguments, looking at the role of religion, group identities, and grievances. The findings are mixed, with little support for the argument that religion is a central explanatory factor in understanding radical attitudes. It appears rather that group identities and grievances, as social phenomena, are a more fruitful avenue for understanding why some individuals are more willing to support the use of terrorist tactics. These findings remain robust after controlling for other common explanatory factors and when running alternative model specifications.

Keywords: European Values Study, grievances, group identities, Islam, political violence, radicalization, religion, survey, terrorism

Introduction

In the last three decades, Europe has seen the emergence of religious terrorism. While there has been a general decline in the total number of attacks, the lethality of attacks committed by religiously motivated groups has increased.[1] Post 9/11 has also seen an increased trend of European citizens radicalizing and attacking European targets.[2] Acts of religious terrorism have in Europe, by and large, been committed by Islamic jihadists. This has, in turn, led to an increased academic interest in Muslim attitudes toward the use of political violence.

Some of the earlier studies on the connection between political violence and religion, and Islam in particular, were often based on some fundamental assumptions, where individual attitudes and behavior were seen as best understood through emphasizing their cultural context.[3] This approach viewed Islam as incompatible with Western secularism, whereby radicalization and religious terrorism are portrayed as symptoms of a broader “culture war” between Western and Islamic “civilizations”. [4] This focus on the supposed innate qualities of Islamic culture has been criticized for a lack of empirical evidence. The usefulness of focusing solely on religious qualities as an explanatory factor has also been questioned in more recent research.[5] The present article contributes to this debate by including measures of religious identities to test their role in explaining attitudes toward violence. In addition to this, the article uses civil war literature on group inequality to understand why certain groups appear more vulnerable to mobilization for, or support of, the use of political violence, outside of religious identity explanations.

The article aims to provide three main contributions to the radicalization research. Firstly, it will do so by focusing on individuals with radical attitudes but not necessarily the perpetrators of terrorist acts themselves. The role of supporters has increasingly been seen as a central explanatory factor within civil war and insurgency studies [6], while much of earlier terrorism research had largely ignored the role of supporters and rather focused on the perpetrators in an attempt to understand terrorist events post-hoc.[7] The article will attempt to rectify this by focusing on those willing to support the use of terrorist tactics and, through this, provide further insight into a group that is largely ignored when looking at the radicalization process.

Secondly, the article provides, to our knowledge, one of the first large cross-sectional analyses of attitudes toward terrorism in Europe. Several larger survey studies have been conducted in Muslim-majority countries or within individual European states, but little research exists on attitudes toward terrorism across Europe. One

of the reasons for this lacuna is the lack of updated and new survey data on this politically sensitive topic. The survey data used in this study derive from the 2008 wave of the European Values Study (EVS). This is the only version of the EVS that included questions about attitudes toward the use of terrorist tactics and the only cross-national survey done in Europe with questions on this topic. The article aims to expand on existing knowledge by studying support for terrorist tactics within a very specific context, namely amongst individuals living within highly developed and relatively stable democracies. Europe is both a relatively affluent and politically stable region but at the same time is highly vulnerable to terrorist attacks compared to some other Western countries [8], making it an interesting case for studying attitudes toward the use of terrorism.

Thirdly, the article uses a theoretical framework that combines and tests how group dynamics affect attitudes. Previous attitudinal studies have often focused on majority attitudes, while little research has been done on minority attitudes.[9] The article will seek to rectify this by using a theory on group dynamics in a novel way to highlight how the dynamic between majority and minority groups and group identities in Europe impact attitudes. The inclusion of social psychology theories helps build a framework for explaining how religious group identities potentially function as a driving force in radicalization processes, as well as regarding group identity in general.

The article is structured as follows: First, one of the more contentious terms of the article, radicalization, is briefly discussed. Following this, previous studies done on attitudes toward violence will be presented before developing the theoretical framework and presenting testable hypotheses. The data used for the empirical analysis will then be presented in more detail before the analysis and discussion of findings which conclude the article.

Radicalization Processes

Coolsaet and others have criticized the use of the term “radicalization” as a political construct, rather than functioning as a precise scientific term—and they also pointed out that the concept has garnered new meanings over time.[10] Guhl suggests that it is useful to differentiate between behavioral and cognitive radicalization as two separate phenomena.[11] Behavioral radicalization can also be understood as violent radicalization whereby radical attitudes manifest themselves as actual violence. The European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalization utilized a definition of violent radicalization that described it as “socialization to extremism which manifests itself in terrorism.”[12] This refers specifically to behavioral radicalization, but there exists also cognitive radicalization, which is not necessarily actively violent. Borum, an American researcher, also separates between these, using the terms “radicalization” and “action pathways”, where radicalization refers to “the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs” and action pathways refers to participation in violent extremist actions.[13]

Not all radicalized persons are necessarily willing to commit violent acts themselves but appear still willing to support the violent acts of others. This support for violence or terrorism can be seen as a manifestation of a radicalized mindset.[14] For the purpose of this article, the focus is on those who support groups or individuals who engage in violence or other illegal acts rather than the perpetrators themselves.[15] These individuals are of special interest to policy makers, as they are indicating some degree of cognitive extremism but not necessarily participating in violent acts themselves. Some of the cognitively radicalized individuals might at some later point participate in violence but it is not possible to predict this simply by relying on indicators of cognitive extremist attitudes.

Previous Attitudinal Studies

Many of the previous attitudinal studies done on radicalization or terrorism can be divided into two groups; larger cross-country studies amongst Muslim countries or smaller single-country studies in Western countries that focus on the Muslim minority population. Several larger Pew-funded studies have been conducted in

Muslim majority countries or countries with large Muslim minorities to look at attitudes toward terrorism and religion. Data from the Pew Global Attitudes Project have been used to study Islamist terrorism and its connection to urban poverty in the Middle East, which found a highly significant relationship between urban poverty and support for terrorism.[16] This is theorized to be a result of rural migrants who find themselves in urban settings without job prospects and a high degree of unmet expectations. Two articles based on Pew data from 2002 also look at individual-level support for terrorism in countries with either a Muslim majority or a large Muslim minority.[17] Neither of these finds any connection between low levels of education and support for terrorism, but rather that feelings of threat toward Islam is highly correlated with supporting the use of terrorist violence.

The findings from these studies are of interest but should be treated with certain caveats when it comes to the generalizability of the findings for a European context. These studies all look at countries with low levels of economic development and/or with relatively repressive regimes. Possible comparisons with European nations are therefore limited, though some of the same underlying explanatory factors, such as unmet expectations and threats against in-groups, can potentially be found in European societies, but with their own distinct manifestations. Previous quantitative studies done in Europe have garnered interesting findings, but are often limited to a single country and were initially focused exclusively on Muslims as a group rather than on religion in general.[18] However, some newer studies within psychology and criminology have also been looking more broadly at the general populace.[19]

Within the fields of psychology and criminology, there has also been a concerted effort to develop new ways of measuring radicalization in the general population as well as among minority groups.[20] One study of Dutch Muslim youths found that perceived threats against their religious in-group were an important predictor of a radical belief system, which, in turn, predicted positive attitudes toward the use of violence.[21] These findings were supported by another Dutch study on how collective identities and identity factors influence attitudes toward violence in defense of religion or ethnicity.[22]

These findings indicate that those who report experiencing high levels of collective deprivation, that is, deprivation as member of a specific group, are also more likely to perceive higher levels of threat against their in-group. It is hard to unpack the exact causal relationship, but it seems to indicate that deprivation and threat might function as a feedback loop. Feelings of threat might increase if feelings of group deprivation are present and these feelings of deprivation in turn make one more susceptible to feelings of threat toward one's group. [23] The group identity of an individual, the perceived collective deprivation of this group, and feeling of threat toward this group might therefore be crucial to understand the radicalization process. However, how these group identities manifest might not immediately be as clear as the findings above seem to indicate. Dutch Muslims are mainly of Turkish or Moroccan descent and while there are certain commonalities between these groups when it comes to shared socioeconomic and religious background, there are also certain dissimilarities along the ethnic divide. Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands are more traditional in their values compared to their Moroccan counterparts and are on average less secular than the Moroccan-Dutch population.[24] This shows one of the problems behind referring to a collective "Muslim identity". Such an identity is complicated by many factors, one of them being ethnic identities.

An article by Egger and Magni-Berton looks at the role of religious beliefs and their effect on the willingness to justify terrorism, using, as the present article is, EVS data from 2008.[25] Their article focuses specifically on the demographic context of these attitudes by concentrating on differences in attitudes in Muslim majority countries such as Kosovo versus countries with Muslim minorities. They find that a higher probability of justifying terrorism exists when Muslims form a minority. In general, their study finds that justifying terrorism is strongly associated with increased religious practice across the board. This indicates that there is an effect of group dynamics that remains untested and might be useful to pursue, if at the country level there are differences in attitudes based on a minority-majority context. The article by Egger and Magni-Berton also mentions the possibility of a connection between relative deprivation and attitudes but does not test for group dynamics or economic deprivation at the group level.

Salient Group Identities

There is an increasing body of research on the role of identity in understanding the dynamics of political conflict, pointing to the centrality of identity in creating and maintaining conflict.[26] Group identities function as cognitive structures that individuals use to navigate the sociopolitical world and are therefore crucial for understanding why and how individuals act. Conover and Feldman described group identification as a schema that provides a link between the individual and a larger political community.[27] According to social identity theory, a person's identity requires knowledge of belonging "to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance attached to [their] membership." [28] An individual's concept of self is therefore shaped by membership or categorization into specific social groups. Creating a salient and cohesive group identity consequently requires that membership of a group is incorporated into the concept of self.[29] In turn, any value or prestige connected with these groups are important for an individual's feeling of self-worth.[30] Membership of a social group and individual sense of identity are therefore intrinsically linked.

Individuals can possess multiple social identities simultaneously. This raises the question of why only some of these identities become politically salient. This requires what Miller et al. describes as movement from simple group identification to a salient group consciousness that seeks to change the status quo: in effect, a politicized group identity.[31] This process can also be viewed in Marxist terms, which applies class-based understandings to identify groups, with the aim of reflecting the perspective of the disenfranchised stratum.[32] It can also be understood in more general terms as a result of the existence of a dominant and a subordinate group, where individuals who identify with the latter group accept the belief that their own interests are different from those of the dominant group. This antagonistic relationship between the two groups creates discontent amongst those belonging to the subordinate group. Following this, the stable group membership becomes linked to political participation through collective actions such as voting, demonstrations, or other tactics aimed at changing the social order and bettering the standing of their group.[33] This requires that the individual views it as possible to enact change through these normatively more acceptable tactics.

Religious Identities

Much of the earlier research on group identities focused on social identities based around race, gender, or nationality, rather than religion, and this can perhaps be explained by a view of religious identities as being largely voluntary.[34] This view of religion as non-ascriptive has shifted in recent years and much of the current literature on religious identities underscores the centrality of religious epistemology and ontology in creating strong in-group and out-group dichotomies.[35] Many social identities are malleable and can often be combined in different contexts, but religious identities differ from other social identities in that all the major monotheistic religions traditionally forbid simultaneous memberships in different religions and have ensured strict theological boundaries between the different religions, making religious denomination one of the more exclusive identity markers.[36]

The exact role of religion in promoting or deterring violence is a point of contention amongst scholars [37] but the issue has garnered widespread interest in the years following the 9/11 attack. In particular, there have been attempts at understanding religious terrorism by looking at Islamic culture and texts in an attempt to explain acts of terrorism committed by Muslims.[38] This perspective is most notable in attempts to linking radicalization and willingness to partake in terrorist acts with certain interpretations of Islamic theology. There is an underlying assumption that there exists an ongoing conflict between Muslim youths and the adoption of a Western identity, which can be explained by unique traits inherent to Islam—something many researchers have criticized.[39] Much of this earlier research draws on similar arguments to those found in Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilization*, [40] which posited that Islam was unique in its willingness to use violence—an interpretation which has later been used to argue for policies that have mainly targeted Muslims in post-9/11 Europe.[41] This underlying assumption is not as prevalent in more recent research, but it is still common to connect increased religious beliefs in Islam with more radical views on the use of violence. This approach has

been criticized for viewing Muslim identities as static, and some researchers have highlighted that embracing a Muslim religious identity does not mean that there is a rejection of a broader national identity, with research showing that the self is able to incorporate multiple dimensions of oneself into one's own "identity".[42]

Historical evidence of violent conflicts in the Muslim world has been used to argue for Islam's unique role with regard to violence. This has perhaps been most clearly expressed in Huntington's quote that Islam not only has "bloody borders" but that Islam itself has bloody "innards".[43] While much of the current literature has become increasingly critical of this view of something inherently threatening or dangerous within Muslims and more specifically among Muslim youths, it is still relatively common in many policy and media circles, and even in certain academic circles.[44]

To test the argument that violent attitudes manifest themselves more prominently in Islamic culture, the following hypothesis has been included:

(H_{1a}) Certain religious denominations are more likely to justify the use of terrorist tactics.

According to Robert Pape, a Chicago-based political scientist, it is not necessarily the theological aspect of religion but rather the nature of group dynamics that explains the use of terrorist tactics. Religious identities create clear boundaries between different groups and make it easier for leaders to portray a conflict as a zero-sum game which, in turn, can create increased polarization between groups.[45] Therefore, religious concepts that divide individuals into believers and nonbelievers contribute to strengthening "us-versus-them" thinking.[46] Religious beliefs and religiosity can therefore also create a sharper distinction between in-groups and out-groups. To test the effect of religiosity, the following hypothesis is included:

(H_{1b}) Higher levels of religiosity increase the likelihood of justifying terrorist tactics.

Social identity theory posits that nearly all groups believe, at least to some degree, that they are unique and/or superior to others.[47] Such belief becomes especially potent when combined by religious dogma about being favored by God and that one's religious group is the only one having true faith. Such an interaction between group superiority and a dogmatic belief in one's religion can lead to increased prejudice and violence against those deemed to be unbelievers.[48] It is therefore not just religious denomination and increased religiosity by themselves that matter in this regard but rather the mediating effect between the two that might explain a penchant toward increased radical attitudes. To further test this argument, the following hypothesis is included:

(H_{1c}) Higher degrees of religiosity amongst individuals of certain religious denominations increase the likelihood of justifying the use of terrorist tactics.

Group Grievances and Sociotropic Mobilization

Political actions of individuals have historically been viewed as derived directly from issues that affect the individual personally, with little interest in the group nature of politics.[49] Personal economic grievances have for a long time been seen as a central explanatory factor in understanding the political behavior of individuals, but empirical evidence of a direct link between individual economic concerns and political action has been hard to establish.[50] According to Kinder and Kiewiet, this lack of support for a connection between political action and personal economic grievances can be explained by the fact that individual voters are not acting from a position of economic self-interest, but rather from a broader sociotropic position where they see themselves as part of a larger community or group.[51] This is also the reason why individuals who are not necessarily poor or disadvantaged themselves might still identify with others who are, creating a group frame of reference linking the individual to a political collective. According to Conover, evaluations of economic well-being of the group might in fact have more apparent political relevance compared to the individual actor's own condition, or that of the nation as a whole.[52]

The same phenomenon can be observed in the horizontal inequality literature, which stresses the importance of group inequality in explaining mobilization and the use of political violence.[53] It is not necessarily the

individual respondents' personal experience of inequality that functions as a driver, but rather inequalities that coincide with their group identities that have the greatest potential to increase grievances.[54] Evidence from the civil war literature finds that inequality between groups begets feelings of deprivation, which in turn enhance the sense of grievance and group cohesion amongst those who feel deprived, which in turn leads to conflict mobilization.[55]

Relative deprivation, as opposed to absolute deprivation, refers to the subjective sense of deprivation that stems from a gap between expected gains and actual achieved gains.[56] Absolute and relative deprivation are not isomorphically related; in fact, in many cases the better-off someone is, the worse-off he or she might subjectively feel.[57] Personal-relative deprivation and group-relative deprivation are also assumed to be the source of very different types of behavioral patterns.[58] There is, for example, little evidence of a causal relationship between personal deprivation and increased radicalization, as many radicalized individuals seem to come from relatively advantaged families.[59] Studies on the recruitment patterns and support for the American Black Power movement have found that many of the supporters and backers came from middle or upper income brackets rather than from the poorer (and more individually deprived) strata of American society.[60]

Much of the same has been found in studies on jihadists outside a Western context. Thomas Hegghammer found that jihadi recruits to groups such as Al-Qaeda were "unremarkable in the sense that they were neither society's losers nor winners." [61] Based on the demographic and socioeconomic profiles of these individuals, it was difficult to pinpoint any specific factors that could help explain why individuals radicalize. Stephen Vertigans found the same in his summary of previous research, where individuals who are recruited to jihadist groups appeared to come from a diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds and possessing various levels of educational attainment. In addition to this, there appears to be a presence of upward mobile middle-class individuals both within more moderate groups and within radical Islamist networks.[62]

Studies on the characteristics of those who join jihadist terrorist cells also found that cell members vary in patterns of radicalization and with different functions within the cell.[63] The most pivotal part of a jihadist terrorist cell is the entrepreneurs, who form the political-ideological base for the cell, and who are usually more educated than their cell peers.[64] This lack of a connection between individual-level deprivation and more radical views on the use of violent tactics might be explained by the fact that individuals are able to have a broader sociotropic view of their identity. In this case, it is rather their identity as part of a less well-off group that makes them more likely to challenge the status quo.

Smith and Ortiz found that the strongest predictor for collective behavior was when people feel deprived as members of a salient reference group.[65] Group-relative deprivation is also more likely to lead to political protests and challenges to the status quo.[66] To test whether horizontal inequality and group grievances do in fact influence attitudes toward violence, the following hypothesis will be tested:

(H_{2a}) Individuals belonging to groups that are poorer than the country's average population are more likely to justify the use of terrorist tactics.

There are some indications that the effect of these group grievances affects groups differently, depending on group identity. Individuals who belong to a minority group are more likely to compare themselves to majorities. [67] To test whether belonging to the majority or the minority group has an impact on the effect of being economically disadvantaged and on attitudes toward political violence, the following hypothesis is included:

(H_{2b}) Individuals of minority denominations who are also members of groups that are on average poorer are more likely to justify the use of terrorist tactics.

Minority Identities and Perceptions of Group Threat

Two aspects of group dynamics have been explored so far, with religious identities and group grievances being put forward as important explanatory factors for understanding radicalized attitudes. According to Robert

Pape, factors such as religiosity do not trigger rebellion or conflict by themselves but rather must be seen in context with stronger group identities that might be triggered by outside pressure.[68] Threat perception is therefore also important for understanding the dynamics between groups as well as within them. According to group conflict theory, feelings of threat against an in-group are believed to increase negative attitudes toward an out-group and are therefore an important factor when trying to understand inter-group dynamics.[69] This threat is especially pivotal in understanding the increased polarization between majority and minority groups. Minority groups that are subjected to discrimination at the hands of a majority group are more likely to develop a stronger sense of in-group identity.[70] Members of a deprived group are also more likely to feel alienated from the established societal institutions, which they view as controlled by the dominant group. This distrust might be the result of exclusionary practices by the majority or dominant group but might also still exist in the absence of such practices. This distrust and these feelings of threat leave the door open for more aggressive and non-peaceful alternatives—such as terrorist tactics.[71] To test whether increased threat perceptions are likely to increase support for terrorist tactics within a country, the following hypothesis is included:

(H_{3a}) Countries with higher levels of threat perceptions between majority and minority groups will have higher levels of support for using terrorist tactics.

Laboratory experiments have also found that threats against the group mobilize members of the group in solidarity and increased hostility toward out-groups.[72] In an intergroup conflict situation, it is the group identity that helps the individual overcome concerns about personal safety and motivates them into taking action.[73] As mentioned previously, polarization between subordinate and dominant groups within a country is in general a strong predictor of conflict and increased threat perceptions within a country.[74] Simply belonging to a religious minority would therefore not increase the likelihood of supporting terrorist tactics, but rather belonging to a religious minority under pressure from an outside threat toward the in-group would. To test this, the following hypothesis has been included:

(H_{3b}) Countries with higher levels of threat perceptions between majority and minority groups will have higher levels of support for terrorist tactics amongst minority religious groups.

Data and Methodology

The data used for the main part of our analysis come from the 2008 wave of the European Values Study (EVS). [75] Ideally more updated data should be available, but the question used for the dependent variable has not been included in later waves of the EVS. This reduces the available data, limiting the article to the period in the years preceding the rise of ISIS. The Egger and Magni-Berton article argues that using the 2008 data can be useful for capturing the conditions that underlay the homegrown political violence that would emerge a few years later. At that time Europe was very much a “breeding ground” for Islamic radicalism, but the potential consequences of this radicalization were not yet visible in actual terrorist events.[76]

The 2008 wave covers 47 countries in Europe, including former Soviet states. The data used in the present article is restricted to the 43,999 respondents of European countries that are members of the European Union and/or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Turkey has been excluded because of missing values on the dependent variable. Europe is relatively homogenous, but the historical development and previous experiences of conflict and terrorism vary across Europe, making likely country-level variations between the different states. A chi-squared test of our data confirms this and finds that individuals in certain countries have a greater willingness to justify the use of terrorism on the aggregate level. Willingness to justify terrorism was highest amongst individuals in Finland and Greece, with the highest mean of .11 and .12 respectively (see Table 3). To capture this, the data will be used in multilevel modeling, aiming to capture both country-level and individual-level effects.

Sensitive Survey Questions

Self-reported attitudes are not ideal for predicting behavior but can still give an idea of what influences people's self-declared willingness to justify terrorism. Attitudinal studies are famously difficult to conduct and obtaining adequate measurements of attitudes is more error-prone than other types of data. This is especially true when asking questions on sensitive issues, as these topics tend to yield higher nonresponse rates and can lead to systematic misreporting when individuals seek to avoid giving *socially undesirable* answers.[77] Most individuals are aware of the normative ideas related to the use of terrorist acts and the social undesirability of expressing support for such acts. These types of questions therefore run the risk of producing larger measurement errors than questions on nonsensitive topics. Attempts at softening or formulating more "forgiving" wording have become increasingly popular to combat these issues, but testing the validity of these attempts has given mixed results.[78]

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable aims to study respondents' willingness to justify the use of terrorism. This is measured with the following survey question which asked the respondents which of the following statement they agreed with: The first being "*there may be certain circumstances where terrorism is justified*" or "*terrorism for whatever motive must always be condemned*." There is also a category of respondents who answered "neither" if they expressed unwillingness to support the above-mentioned statements. Of the total number of respondents, 3,612 answered that terrorism under specific circumstances could be justified, constituting nearly 6% of all respondents. Unsurprisingly, the support of terrorism was low across all European states, as seen in Table 3, with a sample mean of only 0.1. The topic of the dependent variable is highly sensitive, which might result in individuals being predisposed to answering in terms of full condemnation. To counteract this, the empirical analysis will attempt to control for contextual or individual-level characteristics that might be impacting this.

For the purpose of this article, these categories have been recoded into a binary variable (0= always condemn/neither; 1= willing to justify terrorism). As the main interest of our inquiry are those individuals who agree that terrorism can be justified in some instances, the 1,543 respondents in the "neither" category have been included amongst those who always condemn the use of terrorism. Doing this runs the risk of not capturing individuals within the neither group who are willing to justify terrorism, but this will be further tested when looking at the robustness of the initial results [78] and running the sensitivity analysis at the end (tolerance tests show that multicollinearity does not pose a significant problem to the main independent variables. The stepwise inclusion of independent variables should also help uncover any collinearity issues).

Table 1 includes a descriptive summary of all included independent variables. The table first presents all the individual-level factors and then the country factors at the second level of the models. All variables are described in more detail below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Female	0.52	0.50	0	1
Age	46.85	17.90	16	108
Education	3.08	1.34	0	6
Religiosity	2.50	1.05	1	4
Minority	.04	.19	0	1
Income percentiles				
25pt	0.25	.43	0	1
50pt	0.27	.45	0	1
75pt	0.23	.43	0	1
100pt*	0.24	.43	0	1
Religious denominations				
Muslim	0.02	0.11	0	1
Nondenominational	0.28	0.45	0	1
Believers*	0.71	0.14	0	1
Marital Status				
Married*	0.73	0.44	0	1
Unmarried	0.27	0.44	0	1
Level 2				
Previous terrorist events	208.54	397.68	3	1511
Vote percentage (far-right)	8.85	10.79	0	44.2
*=Reference category				

Hypotheses Variables

Several religious variables from the EVS data set have also been included. A religious denominations variable has been used to test the argument that there will be differences between specific religious cultures when it comes to attitudes toward the use of violence. The dummy variables are coded for *Muslims* and *Nondenominational*. Those in the nondenominational group are most likely both individuals who view themselves as nonreligious or agnostic, as well as nondenominational religious individuals. All other religious groups, such as Christians and individuals adhering to Southeast Asian religions, are used as the reference category (*Believers*). *Religiosity* is often defined as religious commitment, which can be viewed as the degree of adherence a person displays toward their religious values and beliefs. As religiosity reflects the level of adherence to religious values and beliefs, it is likely that highly religious individuals are more likely to abide by the religious codes set forth by their religious doctrines.[79] The measurement used for this is self-reported levels of religious belief. The scale measures to which degree an individual sees themselves as religious, from ‘not religious at all’ at the lower end of the scale to ‘highly religious’ on the other end.

As we are interested in testing the economic grievance argument, the income variable has been aggregated to the group level. This is done by taking the individual income variable (*25–100pt*) and aggregating it to the (religious) group level by country. This gives each individual a group average income based on their religious denomination for each of the 31 countries included in our sample. These have been coded into percentile dummies to make it possible to test the economic grievance argument and hypotheses related to this. A binary measurement of whether the individual belongs to a majority or minority religion is also included (*Minority*).

To test in-country polarization and feelings of group threat, a contextual level proxy measurement has been included at Level 2. The *Far-right percentage* variable is a contextual variable that captures the percentage of votes for far-right parties in the last election prior to, or during, 2008.[80] An important caveat is the issue of the degree to which these parties are comparable across Europe. Few of the parties would classify themselves as

far-right parties, but common to them is a clear anti-immigration rhetoric.[81] According to previous research on far-right groups' growth in Europe, countries where far-right parties are successful are on average more unfavorable toward out-groups. There is also evidence that people who view out-groups such as immigrants as a threat are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties.[82] Measuring the percentage of the population that voted for these parties should therefore give us an indication about the levels of in-group and out-group threat perception.

Control Variables

Several individual-level variables have also been included as controls as they are flagged as theoretically important by previous literature.[83] The first is a continuous measurement of the respondent's *Age*, which is included because the Muslim population in Europe is on average younger than the majority population. A dummy is also included for gender (*Female*) which is based on previous research and findings indicating a gender gap when it comes to attitudes toward violence. An ordinal variable for education level (*Education*) which is measured on a 6-point scale from no education to graduate degree has been added. The marital status of respondents is also controlled for, using a dummy variable (*Unmarried*), as there is an assumption in the literature, and amongst security services, that finds that more radical individuals are often unmarried and childless.[84] It is not necessarily the presence of these factors that makes individuals more vulnerable to radicalization but rather the lack of attachments it implies.[85]

Lastly, a Level 2 control has been included for the number of *previous terrorist events* within a country. Having experienced terrorist events can influence how individual respondents react to the topic of terrorism, which necessitates a count variable that looks at the number of terrorist events within a given country since 1990.[86] Excluding events from the Cold War period is done as the reporting and coding of the data become less reliable in certain countries as we go further back in time. In addition to this, older events are also less likely to shape respondents' current attitudes.

Empirical Analysis

The empirical analysis is presented below, starting with less complex bivariate models (Table 4). The bivariate models test for association between the main independent variables and attitudes toward the use of terrorism. The bivariate regressions find that all the main independent variables are significantly associated with attitudes toward terrorism, with the exception of religious denomination and whether the respondent belonged to a minority religion. The religiosity measure is negatively associated with the dependent. While there is a lack of any significant difference between religious denominations such as Muslims and believers in general, the dummy for nondenominational is significant and positively associated with support for terrorism. This finding weakens any argument for any group-level differences amongst major religious groups and is further tested in the baseline model (Table 2).

Table 2: Exponentiated Coefficients and Standard Errors from a Multilevel Logistic Regression of Willingness to Justify Terrorism

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Age	0.990***	0.990***	0.990***	0.990***	0.990***	0.990***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	0.553***	0.553***	0.553***	0.553***	0.553***	0.553***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Education	1.025	1.024	1.025	1.025	1.025	1.025
	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Unmarried	1.279**	1.281**	1.279**	1.279**	1.279**	1.279**
	(0.091)	(0.092)	(0.091)	(0.091)	(0.091)	(0.091)
25th percentile	0.898	0.899	0.917	0.898	0.899	0.898
	(0.080)	(0.081)	(0.083)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)
50th percentile	0.956	0.974	0.958	0.956	0.954	0.956
	(0.115)	(0.116)	(0.119)	(0.115)	(0.114)	(0.115)
75th percentile	0.959	0.967	0.969	0.959	0.961	0.959
	(0.074)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.074)	(0.073)	(0.074)
Religiosity	0.942	0.901	0.942	0.942	0.942	0.942
	(0.050)	(0.054)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)
Muslim	1.388	0.717	1.547	1.389	1.412	1.388
	(0.319)	(0.381)	(0.389)	(0.319)	(0.330)	(0.318)
Nondenominational	1.189*	0.896	1.197*	1.189*	1.189*	1.189*
	(0.077)	(0.141)	(0.079)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.076)
Minority	0.902	0.922	1.088	0.902	0.130	0.902
	(0.132)	(0.135)	(0.235)	(0.132)	(0.224)	(0.132)
Muslim*religiosity		1.344				
		(0.291)				
Nondenominational*religiosity		1.167				
		(0.091)				
Minority*25 th			0.707			
			(0.178)			
Minority*50 th			3.889***			
			(1.022)			
Minority*75 th			0.708			
			(0.277)			
Far-right percentage				0.998	0.998	
				(0.005)	(0.005)	
Minority*far-right percentage					0.990	
					(0.009)	
Previous events						1.000
						(0.000)
Intercept	0.128***	0.142***	0.127***	0.0854**	0.0899*	0.128***
	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.032)	(0.074)	(0.079)	(0.031)
Random intercept	1.177**	1.181**	1.178**	1.176**	1.176**	1.177**
	(0.060)	(0.063)	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.060)
N	42776	42776	42776	42776	42776	42776
Level 2 N	31	31	31	31	31	31

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The first two models in Table 2 test the religious identity hypotheses formulated in H_{1a} – H_{1c} . Models 3 and 4 test the hypotheses related to the economic group grievances argument (H_{2a} – H_{2b}), before testing the group threat hypotheses (H_{3a} – H_{3b}). The multilevel setup creates certain constraints on the number of Level 2 variables that can be included in each model, which necessitates incremental inclusion of the country-level variables over several models (Models 4–6).

Turning to the baseline model in Table 2, the control variables are all largely in accordance with previous research on attitudes toward political violence, with the exception of the educational attainment variable. The odds of expressing support for the use of terrorist tactics decrease by 1% for each year of age, supporting the idea that radical attitudes decrease with age. Gender is also significantly associated with attitudes toward the use of terrorist tactics, with men being nearly twice as likely to express support. Unmarried individuals are also more likely to support the use of violence compared to individuals who are or have been in long-term relationships. This corresponds with some previous research on how radicalized individuals are often young, unmarried males.

There is little support for the first hypothesis, H_{1a} , in any of the initial models. The religious group dummies do not significantly differ from each other, disproving the assumptions of H_{1a} . Comparing Muslims with religious individuals in general finds no significant difference between the groups. Having tested both separately and together, there is no support for the notion that justifying terrorism is more prevalent amongst specific religious groupings, such as Muslims. This does not lend support to the hypotheses that individuals belonging to certain religious groups are more likely to endorse the use of terrorist tactics. On the other hand, nondenominational or nonreligious individuals are significantly different from the reference category and 24% more likely to support the use of terrorist tactics, compared to believers in general. This is the case across the models; but drawing any conclusion about this group is difficult as it is likely to include not only a large subsection of nonbelievers/nondenominational but also individuals who view themselves as nondenominational but spiritual. The lack of significance for Muslims must also be seen in light of the slight under-sampling of Muslims in the survey. The standard error is much higher for Muslims, compared to nondenominational respondents, which makes it more difficult to garner significant results. However, the sample should still be large enough to garner reliable findings that can be generalized from.

There is no evidence of religiosity emboldening individuals to support terrorist tactics. There is rather a negative association between religiosity and the dependent in the bivariate model, but the significance disappears once other factors are taken into account. The religiosity measure is negative across all models, though not significantly so, which does not lend support to H_{1b} . Model 2 further tests some of the assumptions about religious identities by studying the effect of religiosity on specific religious denominations. The interaction variable is positive but not significant, suggesting that the effect of religiosity on Muslims does not differ from the effect of religiosity on believers in general.

Moving to economic group grievances hypotheses, H_{2a} – H_{2b} , we initially include the income percentiles in the baseline model. The 50th percentile was significant in the bivariate models (see Table 4 in Appendix) but there is no significant difference between the income percentiles in our main models in Table 2. All percentiles are negatively related to the dependent, but not significantly so, indicating that there are no differences between the income groups once other causal factors are taken into account. This indicates that political violence, as some of the previous literature suggests, is not a poverty-driven phenomenon or supported by those belonging to the lower socioeconomic strata. This goes against the assumption in H_{2a} , indicating that there is no connection between endorsing radicalized attitudes toward terrorism and economic group identity by itself.

Model 3 tests for possible interaction effects between minority identity and income percentile, to further explore the group grievance argument. The interaction term is significantly different from the reference category, while the lowest percentile and the top 75th do not significantly differ. This suggests that the effect of belonging to a below-average income group has a stronger effect if one also belongs to a religious minority. As the income percentiles are the main effect variables, they indicate the effect on those belonging to a majority, while the interaction term captures the effect of the different income percentiles on individuals belonging to a religious minority, versus those belonging to a country's majority.

Those belonging to the poorer-than-average, but not to the bottom 25th percentile, are significantly more likely to justify the use of terrorism. Those belonging to a religious minority are significantly more likely to justify the use of terrorism if they belong to the group that is between the 25th–50th percentile. This corresponds well with theoretical assumptions and previous studies that show it is not the poorest that are more likely to express

radicalized attitudes toward the use of terrorism but rather those belonging to groups that are economically slightly below average.

While minority identities or belonging to a religious denomination on the lower-income percentiles are not significant factors in themselves, there seems to be a mediating effect between the two factors. This gives some credence to the economic grievance argument, that belonging to an on average poorer income group and a minority group strengthen a sense of outsidership that might factor into more radical attitudes giving support to H_{2b} .

Because of the constraints put on the number of Level 2 variables in each model, the far-right vote percentage variable is included by itself in Model 5. If a country has a high voter turnout for far-right parties, this indicates higher levels of felt group threat and indicates that certain religious groups would be under increased pressure from far-right attitudes. This Level 2 variable is not significant, lending no support to H_{3a} .

Model 5 tests a cross-level interaction between minority affiliation and country-level measure of vote percentage for far-right parties. The interaction term has been constructed to test H_{3b} . The hypothesis assumes that the effect of minority identities might vary, depending on certain contextual factors in Level 2, namely the experience of group threat within a given country. It is difficult to say how much emphasis should be placed on this non-finding. Tolerance tests for this model show an issue of slight multicollinearity in this specific interaction model. Model 7 controls for previous terrorist events within a country since 1990. This contextual variable was included to control for the possibility that the number of terrorist events can potentially color the attitudes of the respondents. Its inclusion does not significantly change the individual-level coefficients and is not significant by itself.

To test the robustness of the initial findings, several alternative models are introduced in Tables 5–7 (see Appendix). In the original models the “neither” category was included amongst those not supporting the use of terrorist tactics. It is difficult to parse out where these individuals in actuality place themselves, which necessitates some further testing of the category. Table 5 shows the results after running the models with the “neither” category included in the same category as those willing to justify the use of terrorism. In Table 6 the “neither” category has been excluded from the analysis, resulting in no significant changes to the models as a whole. The last models (Table 7 in Appendix) have excluded all young males between 15–35 from the analysis. In most of the literature on violence, this group is often seen as the one most vulnerable to participating in violent actions, making it necessary to test whether this group is skewing the initial results. The results from these alternative specifications do not significantly differ from the initial results, with a few exceptions, and the main findings remain mainly unchanged across all models. The only significant change is the interaction variable between nondenominational and religiosity, which becomes significant in Tables 5 and 7, when the “neither” category is given different specifications. It is difficult to interpret this change, but respondents within the larger catchall of nondenominational and nonreligious individuals seem more willing to justify the use of terrorism when they are also experiencing higher levels of religiosity.

Discussion and Conclusions

The main aim of this article has been to study the support for terrorism within Europe and how group identities help explain this support. The findings are mixed, but with some support for the argument that more radical attitudes are not simply the result of religious or cultural factors, but rather stemming from an interplay between grievances and salient group identities.

Firstly, much of the previous literature on the effect of group dynamics on attitudes focuses on geographical areas with more volatile and unstable contexts, where the effects of group dynamics and identities might seem to have a stronger and clearer effect. The mixed findings of the present study indicate that the European context is less clear, perhaps because of fewer salient group identities which impact on group dynamics and reduce some of its explanatory power. There are some indications that there are underlying group dynamics at

play, but capturing them fully might require even more fine-grained measures or a mixed-methods approach where the survey data are combined with more qualitative data. Secondly, the empirical analysis garners little support for the idea that religious identities affect attitudes toward terrorism. The study finds no direct link between terrorism and religious identities and framing of religious radicalism as stemming from theological determinants within specific religions does not find support in the present study.

Lastly, it seems that it is rather group identities and grievances that have the strongest impact. Belonging to an on average poorer religious group is not significantly associated with the dependent variable by itself, but rather a mediating effect of belonging to a minority group as well. There is some evidence that belonging to a minority group that is also below the income average makes it significantly more likely to support a more radical view of terrorist tactics. Economic group grievances therefore seem to make respondents more willing to support radical action. This fits well with the assumptions of relative deprivation theory, which posits that a certain degree of prosperity and raised expectations play an important part in understanding why certain individuals are more at risk for developing radical attitudes. These findings fit well with the horizontal inequality literature and open up an interesting avenue for future research on group-level inequality in stable and relatively equal societies without the presence of larger conflict patterns. As some of the models also show, some of the other assumed mechanisms on the country level are not found to be present. This might necessitate the development of more accurate measurements for inequality or group dynamics within this specific context. Broader inequality measurements such as expressed with the GINI index vary little across Western Europe and are not able to capture the group level, which has been the goal of the present study.

Attempts at capturing feelings of group threat at the country level—in this case through far-right voting percentage—proved to be relatively fruitless. The lack of significance might perhaps be explained by the fact that the variable is trying to capture a phenomenon at the country level that perhaps would have been easier to measure, if the right instrument existed, at the individual or group level.

Some caveats about the data are also necessary, namely the use of the 2008 wave of the EVS. As mentioned in the introduction, the use of data from several waves would have been beneficial but as the questions related to terrorism were only included in the 2008 wave—the only cross-national survey done in Europe that has attempted to include questions on the topic of terrorism and the permissibility of its use.

Another data-related concern is the reliability of the results, when considering the sensitive nature of the survey questions. In addition to the difficulty in obtaining truthful responses, which should be alleviated by sensitivity analysis, there is also the potential that response rates might be skewed across Europe, depending on factors such as freedom of expression or willingness to express norm-breaking attitudes. Looking at Table 3, this does not seem to present a major issue as the mean values vary across Europe without any specific patterns. The lowest mean (.021) can be found in Slovakia but is followed closely by Spain (.027) indicating that there is no regional or geographical pattern that is unduly influencing the results.

The relatively high standard errors for Muslims as a religious group are an issue and ideally the data set should have a larger sample of subgroups. The issues of sampling minority groups and potential under-sampling is discussed extensively in the literature.[87] But the religious sub-samples in the data set should still prove large enough to make the findings, or lack thereof, reliable.

In conclusion, the article has studied an often overlooked group, namely people with radical attitudes who most likely have not participated in acts of terrorism, but who are willing to justify the use of terrorist tactics. By looking at this phenomenon across Europe, the article has provided insights into radicalization in a region that in recent years has seen a spike in radical groups and individuals who support them. The findings as a whole disqualify some of the initial theoretical assumptions about religious identities' role, while supporting some of the others that relate to broader group identities and grievances.

About the Author: *Eline Drury Løvlien obtained her Ph.D. from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim. Applying a quantitative approach, her dissertation aims to study the phenomenon of radicalization from both a micro and macro perspective. Using novel data from different sources, the dissertation*

combines individual-level survey data with country-level data on terrorist plots to study how group dynamics and grievances intersect in Europe to increase terrorist threats. She is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher in international relations at the University of Mannheim, Germany.

Appendix

Table 3: Dependent Variable Mean by Country

Country	Mean	SD	n
Austria	.073	.261	1,489
Belgium	.047	.211	1,504
Bulgaria	.035	.183	1,472
Croatia	.058	.233	1,475
Cyprus	.082	.274	977
Czech Republic	.062	.240	1,771
Denmark	.049	.216	1,487
Estonia	.065	.247	1,481
Finland	.109	.311	1,068
France	.061	.239	1,495
Germany	.056	.230	2,018
Greece	.123	.329	1,486
Hungary	.052	.223	1,489
Iceland	.051	.221	798
Ireland	.062	.241	925
Italy	.036	.185	1,487
Latvia	.053	.224	1,494
Lithuania	.029	.168	1,445
Luxembourg	.067	.250	1,572
Malta	.042	.200	1,482
Netherlands	.068	.252	1,539
Norway	.086	.280	1,084
Poland	.050	.217	1,471
Portugal	.041	.199	1,481
Romania	.088	.283	1,405
Slovakia	.021	.142	1,450
Slovenia	.073	.260	1,341
Spain	.027	.161	1,491
Sweden	.077	.266	1,082
Switzerland	.055	.228	1,235
United Kingdom	.067	.250	2,005
Total sample	.084	.277	43,999

Table 4: Bivariate Models for Main Independent Variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Intercept	0.056***	0.106***	0.078***	0.064***	0.045***
	(0.004)	(0.017)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.038)
Muslim	1.328				
	(0.302)				
Nondenominational	1.535***				
	(0.102)				
Religiosity		0.812***			
		(0.043)			
25th percentile (25pt)			0.744		
			(0.112)		
50th percentile (50pt)			0.737**		
			(0.092)		
75th percentile (75pt)			0.820		
			(0.138)		
Minority				0.930	
				(0.126)	
Far-right percentage					0.998
					(0.005)
Random intercept	1.174**	1.180**	1.162**	1.159**	1.159**
	(0.057)	(0.066)	(0.059)	(0.051)	(0.052)
<i>N</i>	43840	43383	43840	43840	43840
Level 2 <i>N</i>	31	31	31	31	31

Odds ratio reported; Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5: Robustness Model I: Multilevel Logistic Regression of Willingness to Justify Terrorism with the “Neither” Respondents Included with Those Willing to Justify Terrorism

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Age	0.992***	0.992**	0.992***	0.992***	0.992***	0.992***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	0.631***	0.632***	0.631***	0.631***	0.631***	0.631***
	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Education	1.014	1.014	1.014	1.015	1.015	1.014
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Unmarried	1.313***	1.314***	1.312***	1.313***	1.312***	1.313***
	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.089)
25th percentile	0.986	0.986	1.017	0.985	0.986	0.986
	(0.067)	(0.069)	(0.068)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.068)
50th percentile	0.998	1.019	0.997	0.998	0.997	0.993
	(0.115)	(0.120)	(0.113)	(0.115)	(0.115)	(0.114)
75th percentile	1.002	1.013	1.007	1.002	1.004	1.002
	(0.078)	(0.085)	(0.081)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.078)
Religiosity	0.934	0.890*	0.934	0.934	0.935	0.934
	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)
Muslim	1.360	0.972	1.619	1.362	1.382	1.359
	(0.387)	(0.502)	(0.470)	(0.387)	(0.403)	(0.386)
Nondenominational	1.248**	0.899	1.260***	1.248**	1.248**	1.247**
	(0.077)	(0.132)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.077)	(0.076)
Minority	0.972	0.995	1.225	0.972	0.269	0.973
	(0.146)	(0.149)	(0.306)	(0.145)	(0.562)	(0.146)
Muslim*religiosity		1.173				
		(0.246)				
Nondenominational*religiosity		1.197*				
		(0.080)				
Minority*25 th			0.608			
			(0.182)			
Minority*50th			5.195***			
			(1.557)			
Minority*75th			0.746			
			(0.302)			
Far-right percentage				0.994	0.994	
				(0.005)	(0.005)	
Minority*far-right percentage					0.993	
					(0.011)	
Previous events						1.000
						(0.000)
Intercept	0.161***	0.179***	0.159***	0.0484**	0.0502**	0.166***
	(0.036)	(0.040)	(0.035)	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.036)
Random intercept	1.183***	1.189***	1.186***	1.178***	1.179***	1.179***
	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.055)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.050)
N	42776	42776	42776	42776	42776	42776
Level 2 N	31	31	31	31	31	31

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 6: Robustness Model II: Multilevel Logistic Regression of Willingness to Justify Terrorism with “Neither” Respondents Excluded from the Analysis

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Age	0.990***	0.990***	0.990***	0.990***	0.990***	0.990***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	0.551***	0.551***	0.551***	0.551***	0.551***	0.551***
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)
Education	1.025	1.024	1.025	1.025	1.025	1.025
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Unmarried	1.289**	1.291**	1.289**	1.289**	1.289**	1.289**
	(0.093)	(0.094)	(0.093)	(0.093)	(0.093)	(0.093)
25th percentile	0.907	0.907	0.928	0.906	0.908	0.907
	(0.080)	(0.081)	(0.083)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)
50th percentile	0.959	0.977	0.961	0.959	0.957	0.958
	(0.117)	(0.119)	(0.121)	(0.117)	(0.117)	(0.117)
75th percentile	0.969	0.977	0.978	0.969	0.971	0.969
	(0.075)	(0.080)	(0.079)	(0.075)	(0.074)	(0.075)
Religiosity	0.941	0.899	0.941	0.941	0.941	0.941
	(0.050)	(0.054)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)
Muslim	1.399	0.724	1.577	1.401	1.426	1.399
	(0.333)	(0.393)	(0.410)	(0.333)	(0.346)	(0.332)
Nondenominational	1.201**	0.897	1.211**	1.201**	1.202**	1.201**
	(0.078)	(0.140)	(0.080)	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.078)
Minority	0.904	0.923	1.112	0.903	0.125	0.904
	(0.133)	(0.136)	(0.241)	(0.133)	(0.219)	(0.133)
Muslim*religiosity		1.343				
		(0.298)				
Nondenominational*religiosity		1.173*				
		(0.090)				
Minority*25th			0.679			
			(0.173)			
Minority*50th			4.957***			
			(1.349)			
Minority*75th			0.704			
			(0.282)			
Far-right percentage				0.997	0.998	
				(0.005)	(0.005)	
Minority*far-right percentage					0.990	
					(0.009)	
Previous events						1.000
						(0.000)
Intercept	0.132***	0.146***	0.131***	0.0796**	0.0838**	0.132***
	(0.033)	(0.038)	(0.033)	(0.069)	(0.074)	(0.032)
Random intercept	1.181**	1.186**	1.183**	1.180**	1.180**	1.181**
	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.060)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.059)
N	41755	41755	41755	41755	41755	41755
Level 2 N	31	31	31	31	31	31

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7: Robustness Model III: Multilevel Logistic Regression of Willingness to Justify Terrorism with Young Men (15–35) Excluded from the Analysis

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Age	0.992**	0.992**	0.992**	0.992**	0.992**	0.992**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	0.580***	0.581***	0.579***	0.580***	0.579***	0.580***
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Education	1.015	1.014	1.015	1.015	1.014	1.015
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Unmarried	1.334***	1.336***	1.334***	1.334***	1.332***	1.334***
	(0.096)	(0.097)	(0.097)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)
25th percentile	0.877	0.877	0.906	0.877	0.880	0.877
	(0.098)	(0.099)	(0.104)	(0.098)	(0.098)	(0.099)
50th percentile	0.903	0.918	0.917	0.903	0.901	0.900
	(0.130)	(0.129)	(0.138)	(0.130)	(0.129)	(0.130)
75th percentile	0.970	0.980	0.982	0.970	0.973	0.970
	(0.094)	(0.099)	(0.096)	(0.094)	(0.092)	(0.094)
Religiosity	0.974	0.933	0.974	0.974	0.974	0.974
	(0.050)	(0.052)	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.049)
Muslim	1.498	0.364	1.702	1.498	1.536	1.497
	(0.446)	(0.372)	(0.509)	(0.446)	(0.458)	(0.446)
Nondenominational	1.195*	0.913	1.209*	1.195*	1.197*	1.194*
	(0.099)	(0.175)	(0.104)	(0.099)	(0.100)	(0.099)
Minority	1.016	1.041	1.343	1.016	0.0323	1.017
	(0.178)	(0.179)	(0.296)	(0.178)	(0.060)	(0.179)
Muslim*religiosity		1.810				
		(0.704)				
Nondenominational*religiosity		1.151				
		(0.113)				
Minority*25th			0.615			
			(0.148)			
Minority*50th			2.763***			
			(0.740)			
Minority*75th			0.699			
			(0.322)			
Far-right percentage				1.000	1.001	
				(0.005)	(0.005)	
Minority*far-right percentage					0.982	
					(0.010)	
Previous events						1.000
						(0.000)
Intercept	0.107***	0.118***	0.105***	0.110*	0.120*	0.109***
	(0.025)	(0.029)	(0.025)	(0.105)	(0.116)	(0.025)
Random intercept	1.157**	1.161**	1.160**	1.157**	1.158**	1.156**
	(0.050)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.049)
N	42914	42914	42914	42914	42914	42914
Level 2 N	31	31	31	31	31	31

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

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Measuring Impact, Uncovering Bias? Citation Analysis of Literature on Women in Terrorism

by Jessica Davis, Leah West, and Amarnath Amarasingam

Abstract

This article examines the research literature on women and terrorism and tries to determine whether there is a lack of research on women and terrorism, and whether this research is well-integrated into the broader research literature in terrorism studies. Literature on women and terrorism was identified using citation chaining and Google Scholar. From there, we categorized this scholarship to evaluate the breadth of the subjects under study. We also counted the citations that each publication received. Our findings suggest that there is a tendency for the literature on women in terrorism to be well cited within the subfield, but that the topic is much less well referenced in other parts of the literature, and is thus poorly integrated into the broader terrorism literature.

Keywords: Women and terrorism, terrorism studies, gender and political violence, literature review

Introduction

Year after year, conflict after conflict, members of the public and the media greet the phenomenon of women engaging in terrorism with surprise, concern, and in some cases, denial.[1] To a lesser extent, counterterrorism practitioners and scholars also view female terrorism as novel.[2] And yet, women have engaged in political violence and specifically terrorism for decades, if not centuries.[3] What accounts for this persistent surprise? Some have argued that there is a lack of research on the topic of women engaging in terrorism, and that is why it is a surprise every time there is a new iteration of it.[4] Or perhaps the surprise relates to the ongoing shock of women breaking traditional gender roles, demonstrating how entrenched those roles are. Of course, men are far more likely to perpetrate acts of terrorist violence and support terrorist groups, although, as more research is done on the role of women, they are being found to be involved in terrorism and violent extremism in numbers and roles that have previously been overlooked.[5] Alternatively, the surprise may be related to another issue, which is the focus of this article: a lack of integration of the literature on women and gender into the broader research on terrorism and political violence.[6] This possible lack of integration has the potential to significantly impact how we understand terrorism and extremism, and how we counter it. Practitioners rely on academic literature to provide a foundation for their counterterrorism and counter-extremism activities. As a result, a lack of integration of this literature into the main terrorism literature may influence how practitioners interpret women as potential perpetrators of violence.

A robust body of literature on women's involvement in terrorism and political violence exists, some of which predates the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent explosion in terrorism studies. Particularly notable are the works by Sjoberg & Gentry,[7] Cunningham,[8] Alison,[9] Nacos,[10] and McKay[11] (the most-cited works on the subject). The subfield of women in terrorism has also been studied by Jacques and Taylor.[12] This research article aims to update and expand existing research and demonstrate the depth and breadth of research on women in terrorism, and investigate whether it is indeed a neglected field, or perhaps one that is only ignored.

The Problem

The state of terrorism studies has been written about at some length, notably and recently by Schuurman[13] and Silke and Schmidt-Petersen.[14] However, few systematic reviews have been conducted on the subfield of women and terrorism, and none have measured the impact or influence of the subfield. While some might argue that this is a peripheral issue, noting that terrorism is largely dominated by men, recent research demonstrates

that women play a role in most terrorist groups and that their participation is likely under-reported.[15] As a result, the study of women in terrorism is an increasingly relevant field, and worthy of its own review as a subfield within terrorism studies. Building on earlier meta studies of terrorism literature, this review seeks to track changes in debates on women's roles in terrorism, and understand how research on women in terrorism has been integrated (or not) into the broader terrorism literature. Identifying how women's roles in terrorism have changed (or how our understanding has changed) is important for better understanding and countering terrorism in general, as women's participation can influence terrorist tactics (women are often deployed as suicide bombers), terrorist recruitment, and propaganda, and organizational structures and support roles (such as financing and logistics, areas where women make contributions to terrorist groups), to name a few areas of potential impact.

Methods

In order to understand the state of the subfield on women in terrorism, we undertook a literature review[16] and citation-counting exercise of terrorism research that engages with gender, focusing specifically on the role of women in terrorist groups. We sought to determine if there was: a) an actual lack of research on the topic of women and terrorism, b) what the breadth of that existing research is, and c) whether or not it is integrated into the broader literature on terrorism. We conceptualize the literature on women in terrorism as a subfield of terrorism studies,[17] and one that has considerable overlap with other areas such as studies on masculinities and femininities, as well as other forms of political violence such as civil war. Some of the works included in this study also deal with broader gender issues, and in some cases, women as victims of political violence, but to be included the works had to have a clear nexus to women as perpetrators or supporters of violence.

We identified literature in the subfield on women in terrorism using citation chaining and Google Scholar. From there, we categorized this scholarship to evaluate the breadth of the subjects under study. We also counted the citations that each publication received, focusing on citations within the broader literature on terrorism. We then compared these findings to extant research on the state of the literature on terrorism and women, notably articles by Schuurman,[18] Silke and Schmidt-Petersen,[19] and Jacques and Taylor.[20]

Given our collective familiarity with both the field and subfield, we suspected that the limited consideration of women in the broader literature was not due to a lack of research on the topic, but rather that the subject of women in terrorism is generally excluded from the main field of study, broadly defined as any literature dealing with terrorism. This issue has considerable overlap with other literature on conflict/civil war that has terrorism as a component. The broader field of political violence (particularly in civil wars) also considers the effects of political violence on women. This literature was excluded from this analysis if it only dealt with women as victims of violence (and not as perpetrators). To explore this topic, we hypothesized that:

- 1) The broader literature does not integrate research on women in terrorism.
- 2) A few thematic and topical issues dominate research in this subfield, which therefore lacks breadth (and potentially explains the lack of integration).

To explore these hypotheses, we sought to measure the integration and breadth of the literature on women in terrorism. To measure integration, we undertook a citation analysis for publications pertaining to women in terrorism. To measure breadth, we categorized those publications by topic, group/ideology, and region of study.

Ultimately, one of the main questions we sought to answer is how influential the scholarly literature on women in terrorism is in relation to the broader literature on terrorism. In seeking out empirical measures of influence, we chose citation counts as opposed to surveys of influence or other potential impact measures.[21] While citations are an imperfect measure, they are critical in terms of understanding and measuring the impact and importance of a topic, and specific scholarly work. As Ponce and Lozano argue, the number of times an article is cited provides a measure of its impact.[22] Citation analysis is important as a scientific, objective, quantitative technique, and is used to evaluate the state of a field or subfield of research.[23]

Defining Scholarship

This article examines the body of scholarly literature about women in terrorism. In our analysis, we focused on books, articles, and papers published in journals, or through academic or semi-academic publishers, both within the core terrorism journals and more broadly. Publications in French, English, and Spanish were considered—those in other languages were excluded from this study due to the first author's linguistic capabilities (or lack thereof).

There is a significant body of more popular literature, as well as grey literature and unpublished theses and dissertations that form the broader literature on women in terrorism. However, the research questions in this study are concerned with scholarly influence, and therefore necessitated a focus on the scholarly literature. As such, popular accounts and narratives were excluded from this study. Excluding some of these works creates a smaller range of literature to review, which is both a detraction and benefit of this study.

Moreover, as the main focus of this research is a concern about citations, and by extension influence, we decided that theses and dissertations would have little of either. Excluding theses and dissertations also significantly reduced the data that needed to be collected to cover a small (and, we assume) less influential body of work.

Defining the Subfield of Women in Terrorism

This research is primarily concerned with literature that deals with women in terrorism. However, because that literature often deals with more than one topic per publication, this subfield also includes a wider variety of topics, including gendered experiences in terrorism and political violence. Some of this literature also includes the role of masculinities and femininities in terrorist groups (and recruitment) and the manipulation of gender roles. However, to be included in our characterization of the “women in terrorism” subfield, the publication had to incorporate at least some data or analysis on women in terrorism. The bulk of this literature deals with women's roles, involvement, and participation in terrorist activity.

We conceive of terrorism as any tactic that meets the definition of terrorism developed for the first author's book[24] which draws heavily on the work of Crenshaw[25], Hoffman[26], and other work.[27] Thus, for this study, we define terrorism as “an act, tactical in nature, that targets civilians, infrastructure, and sometimes military forces.” Military targets are included in this definition because the psychological target of these attacks can be the civilian population and because in the modern age of terrorism, military targets are also attacked in their home countries in acts of “domestic” or homegrown terrorism. Groups that employ terrorism as a tactic are not exclusively terrorist groups, however. These groups may fall into the category of insurgent or guerrilla groups, even though they commit acts that are widely perceived as terrorist in nature.[28] As a result, this definition also incorporates work on insurgent or guerrilla groups. While this definition may be overly broad for some forms of research on terrorism, creating significant (and perhaps unhelpful) overlap with insurgencies and civil wars, our intention was to use a broad definition to capture the full extent of the literature on women in terrorism, and to broadly conceive of the field of terrorism studies in order to accurately capture and reflect the influence and impact that the subfield has within the broader field, regardless of how specific authors define terrorism.

A critical emphasis in this research is on the use of violence and support for violence. To maintain methodological clarity and a link to terrorism, this research excludes other forms of nonviolent extremism. Of course, this is not to suggest that gender aspects of non-violent extremism are not important—this definition simply bounds the research conducted at this time.

While defining terrorism helps shape our understanding of what we might be looking for, in practice, most scholars use other definitions of terrorism, so this cannot be the sole criteria for identifying the literature on women in terrorism. Instead, we consider literature part of this subfield if it is research about women in terrorist groups, or about women in insurgent groups that use or have used terrorism as a tactic, research about gender and the role of masculinity in terrorism/insurgency, and women in other forms of political violence (with an emphasis on violence). It specifically excluded research on women in conventional militaries and

conventional armed conflicts.

Identifying the Relevant Literature

Determining the influence of scholarly contributions is difficult—influence can be subtle and diffuse. One measure of this is citation counts, a bibliometric indicator of influence. Citation counts can provide an overview of the influence of particular research or the subfield writ large; in this case, terrorism literature. This exercise focused on our definition of scholarly contributions, meaning books, articles, and papers published in journals, or through academic or semi-academic publishers.

To identify relevant scholarly works, we began with a preliminary search in Google Scholar for terms such as “women and terrorism,” “female terrorist,” and “female and suicide and bomber.” These search terms yielded more than 100 references that we analyzed to determine whether these fit into the criteria of being both scholarly and part of the literature. This search did not capture some of what constitutes the main literature in this field, which was quickly identified as missing due to the authors’ existing familiarity with the field, or through additional group/ideology-specific search terms. Once deemed to meet the criteria, we undertook citation tracing:[29] we examined the references in the works for potential inclusion into the data set. All of the identified works were again searched in Google Scholar to determine who had cited it, and we once again examined the generated list for additional works for inclusion.

Once we generated this literature list, we collected additional variables, such as year of publication, author, full reference, and what other publications cited the original publication. We then categorized the publications for further analysis (see findings section for a discussion on the categorizations). The publication’s citations were then also categorized as being part of the women in terrorism literature, the main terrorism literature, or something else (other).

To illustrate any potential gaps in integration of the subfield into the main terrorism literature, this study employed three core categories to capture citations. The first category outlined the publications that form the subfield of women in terrorism, described above. The second categorization captures literature on terrorism/political violence that cites these works yet is not gender focused. The third captures citations of the women in terrorism subfield found in literature outside of those categories. While it was beyond the scope of this research article to examine this outside category in depth, there was significant breadth in the literature pulling from the study of women in terrorism that spanned a wide variety of scholarly disciplines.

The citation chaining, data collection, and categorizations took place between September 2019 and March 2020; it does not account for anything published after this date, representing a snapshot in time. While this snapshot may quickly become dated, the data nevertheless allows us to draw some conclusions about the state of the literature on women in terrorism in the near term, as well as the broader research question that deals with the issue of whether or not the main terrorism studies literature integrates this scholarship.

We decided on Google Scholar as our primary tool for data collection. The merits of Google Scholar are well articulated by Martín-Martín et al:

“Web of Science and Scopus rely on a set of source selection criteria, applied by expert editors, to decide which journals, conference proceedings, and books the database should index...Google Scholar follows an inclusive and automated approach, indexing any (apparently) scholarly document that its robot crawlers are able to find on the academic web.”[30]

For thoroughness, Google Scholar is also superior to Web of Science and Scopus. According to those same authors, “Google Scholar was able to find most of the citations to Social Sciences articles (94%), while Web of Science and Scopus found 35% and 43%, respectively.”[31] Indeed, we verified this finding by looking at a selection of articles and books and what works they cited, and comparing that selection to the citations found in Web of Science and Scopus. These tools indexed few of the publications. Because a primary driver of this research was to evaluate the breadth of influence of the women in terrorism subfield, use of the most inclusive tool is necessary. Google Scholar was particularly useful for “sectors of scholarly communication that were

previously hidden from view,”[32] a particular area of concern for this literature review.

Web of Science and Scopus provides curated collections, but is sensitive to bias in selection criteria, and in particular, these databases have limited coverage in social sciences and humanities.[33] For its part, Google Scholar provides inclusive and unsupervised citations but is also prone to technical errors such as duplicate entries, incorrect/incomplete information, and non-scholarly references.[34] Indeed, these were the exact challenges encountered in this research. To overcome them, we undertook a manual verification of the references and citations. We searched each contribution to the field in Google Scholar; we then examined the works that reference it to determine:

- a) if these were scholarly;
- b) that these had full and accurate references; and
- c) the field or subfield to which these belong.

As noted, citation analysis is an imperfect measure of influence and importance, and is susceptible to biases. Some of these biases include powerful person bias (as when a powerful academic is most likely to be cited more than less well-known scholars), in-house or journal bias, as well as bias towards publications in the English language.[35] Indeed, French or Spanish publications received far fewer citations (almost none) than publications in English. Some of these other biases may also be present in the citations of particular publications despite the work being dated or lacking conventional or identifiable research methods. For instance, Bloom’s publication *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists*[36] offers a possible demonstration of powerful-person bias. This work is well cited (the 10th–most cited publication in scholarly work in the field of women in terrorism), despite the fact that this text does not provide a robust description of the author’s research methods. These citations may also demonstrate a reluctance to delve deeper into the academic literature on women in terrorism, including into Bloom’s more scholarly work.[37]

Another bias that may exist in this literature is a bias against citing women or people from nonwhite ethnic and racial groups. While beyond the scope of this research (which only captured the names of the authors), an anecdotal review of the topics suggests that this potential bias is worth investigating. Indeed, prior research in this area suggests that women are generally cited less than men[38] and that nonwhite academics are also cited less frequently in academic work.[39] Given the extensive additional research that would be required to explore this possibility, the authors wish to offer the data set compiled for this study to any scholar interested in exploring that question.

Findings

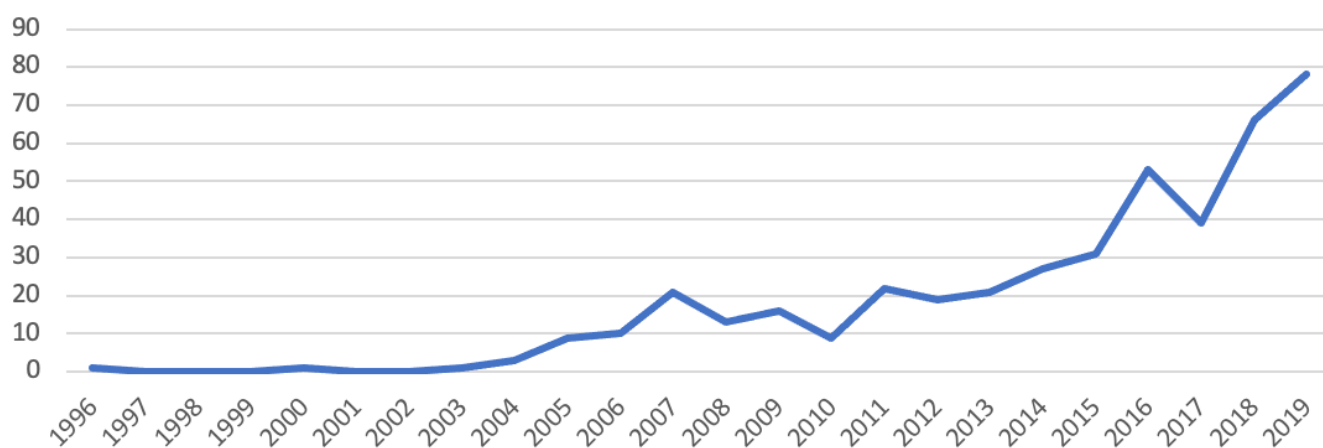
Literature Development

There has been tremendous growth in research on women and gender in terrorism and political violence over the last two and a half decades. Much of that growth coincided with the overall growth in the terrorism literature following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. It also mirrors the increasingly visible role of women in terrorism.

Between 1983 and 2000, Jacques and Taylor identified a handful of publications about women in terrorism. On average, less than one publication was produced in the subfield every year.[40] From 1996 to 2004, the subfield’s rate of production increased to approximately one piece of research per year, with foundational publications from Talbot,[41] Cunningham,[42], Patkin,[43] Gentry,[44] and West.[45] From 2005 onward, there was a significant increase in the amount of research done on women in terrorism every year, illustrated in Figure 1. The year 2005 also coincided with the publication of a seminal journal edition of *Studies in Conflict in Terrorism* dedicated to the phenomenon of women in terrorism, edited by Cindy Ness.[46] The increase also closely followed the 2003 spike in female engagement in terrorist activity in Iraq, in which over 20 women engaged in suicide attacks.[47] It is interesting to note, however, that similar spikes in scholarship did not occur with the rise of female terrorism related to the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (1985–1987)

and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (1991–1999 and onward).[48] This difference may be due to these conflicts largely predating the explosion of terrorism studies following the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks. Alternatively, it may also demonstrate a distinct lack of interest in the topic of women in terrorism at that time.

Figure 1: Literature Development, 1996–2019



Note: The data for this chart are drawn from the citation collection data used for this research. The data cover 1996–March 2020 and illustrate an increase in scholarly research on the topic of women in terrorism. The Y-axis denotes the number of publications produced, while the X-axis indicates time. (year).

Significant spikes in research also occurred in 2007, 2011, and 2016, reflecting the overall increased visibility of women in terrorist activities, but specifically women's role as suicide bombers in a variety of conflicts, including the Israel-Palestinian conflict, Iraq, and Nigeria. The most significant development to affect the literature is the rise of the IS/Daesh. Because of the length of time it takes to publish scholarly literature, the effect of increased terrorist attacks perpetrated by women (or a visible increase in their role in terrorist groups) often lags the actual phenomenon by 1–3 years.

To further understand the development of the subfield of women in terrorism in relation to the broader field of terrorism studies, it is useful to compare these data with other studies. For instance, between 2007 and 2016, Schuurman identified 3,442 articles on terrorism.[49] For the same period, 232 publications on women in terrorism were produced (including but not limited to articles). While the subfield represents a small part of the terrorism literature (about 7%), the true figure is likely smaller when accounting for books and other categories of publications not included in Schuurman's survey. Regardless, these data illustrate that the subfield is far from the neglected area of study that some suggest it is.

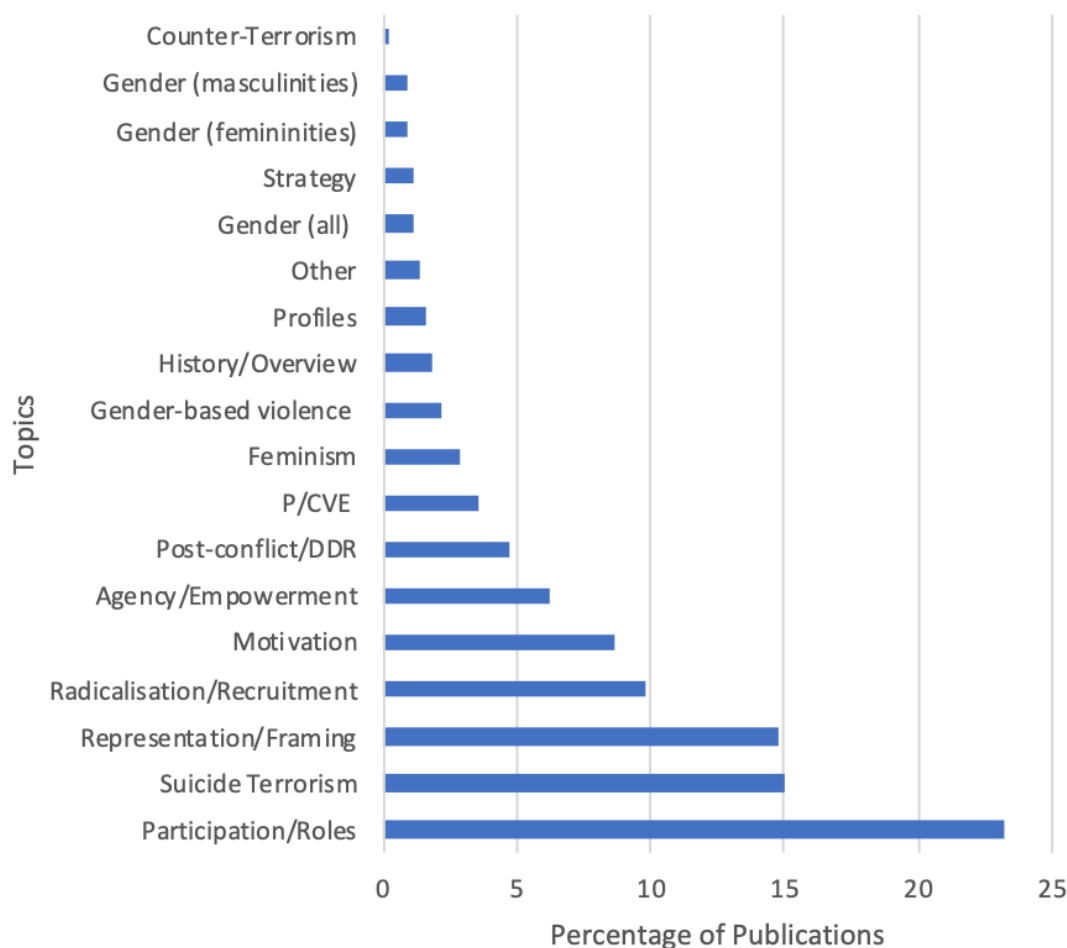
Our own survey identified 448 unique pieces of scholarly research in the subfield of women in terrorism produced between 1996 and 2020. Growth has been significant, particularly following the attacks of 9/11, and mirrors the developments of the broader field. Of course, quantity is not everything. Understanding the breadth of the literature is also crucial in terms of addressing its impact and influence within the terrorism field.

Breadth of Study

The quantity of scholarly publications dealing with the subfield of women in terrorism has increased dramatically over the last two decades, demonstrating interest and uptake in the topic. However, this study is also concerned with how broad the subfield is, and particularly with potential oversaturation of certain topics or gaps that may exist in the women-in-terrorism literature.

To determine how the field has advanced, we looked at the Jacques and Taylor study that covered the period from 1983–2006.[50] This study looked at 54 publications on female terrorism and used qualitative and quantitative analysis to examine a range of theoretical and methodological approaches in the literature. Their work identified six research foci: portrayal in the media, feminism, interviews with terrorists, group roles, motivation and recruitment, and environmental enablers.[51] These categorizations reflect analytic and research methods, general research topics, as well as group and individual motivations for joining a terrorist group. Their categorizations also included article focus.[52]

Figure 2: Topics in the Subfield



Note: The data for this chart are drawn from the citation collection data used for this research. Each publication was categorized according to its main topic. The topics themselves were developed through categorization and recategorization of various themes and issues that arose in the literature, and ultimately refined. The Y-axis denotes the categories, while the X-axis denotes the percentage of publications in each category.

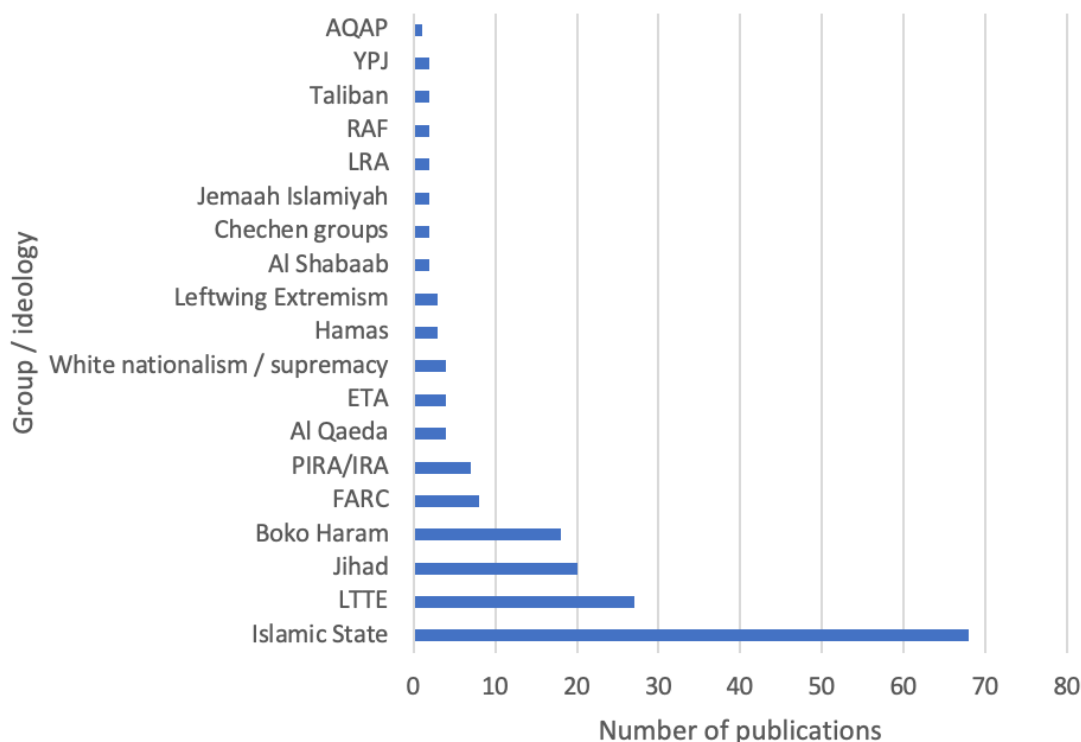
This study categorized the 448 publications into 18 subcategories. Categorizations began with the main

themes in the extant literature, then subdivided those themes into 18 categories, specifically looking for areas that may be over- or under-researched. As with the Jacques and Taylor study, this exercise revealed that participation / roles and representation / framing of women in the media were common subjects of research. Feminism has become a more marginal subject in the subfield (as an explicit and main area of focus), while motivation and recruitment have both increased as subjects of study. Other new topics of study in the subfield include prevention and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), as well as agency and empowerment.

The distribution of topics studied in the subfield may be, in part, the result of the availability of information. This distribution also likely reflects broader terrorism studies areas of interest and where research funding is allocated. In other cases, ease of access to primary-source material may frame research approaches. For instance, examining media representations allows for primary-source research on women in terrorism, while tactics and roles of women in terrorism are also observable phenomena. The distribution of these topics demonstrates the dominance of the positivist approach in much of this literature.

Each publication in this study was also categorized by group or ideology, followed by geographic location. When classified in this way, the most-studied topic in the subfield is IS/Daesh (47% of publications dealt with this topic), followed by LTTE, jihad (general), Boko Haram, FARC, IRA/PIRA, and Al Qaeda. There are significant gaps in terms of studying the role of women in other terrorist organizations such as Hizballah, some of the Al Qaeda or Daesh-affiliated groups particularly in North Africa, and groups in South East Asia. Some of these topics have been covered to some extent in more thematic and comparative work, but were not the main focus of the work and were therefore not captured in these categorizations. In many cases, some of these neglected topics only received a few paragraphs of exposition in a small fraction of the literature. The limited number of topics covered in the women-in-terrorism literature also reflects similar trends in the broader field of terrorism studies.

Possible explanations for the lack of analysis on the aforementioned topics include a lack of visibility of women in combat/kinetic roles within these specific groups or conflicts, a lack of field research that could potentially identify women embedded with, or supporting, terrorist groups in these regions, as well as a lack of study of these regions in the overall terrorism studies field. Figure 3 illustrates the uneven distribution of scholarship across groups/ideologies and women. Notably, there is little scholarship on groups like the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) that had a significant female component, at least in terms of terrorist operations. [53] As scholarly work in the subfield tends to focus on operational roles for women (which are typically more visible) rather than support roles, some groups and ideologies may also be ignored because women lack visibility within the organizations.

Figure 3: Publications by Group/Ideology

Note: The data for this chart are drawn from the citation collection data used for this research. Each publication was categorized according to the main group under study. The groups represent an exhaustive list of the subjects of the publications.

In Figure 3, some works are included in two (or more) categories because the publication involved comparative work. Other works did not focus on a particular group or ideology, but instead adopted a regional focus. For this reason, the number of publications depicted in Figure 3 does not represent every publication identified in this study, and in some cases overlap exists.

The most-studied regions in the sub-field of women in terrorism include Israel/Palestine, Chechnya, and the West (writ large), as well as Northern Ireland, Iraq, and Nigeria. The numerous groups operating in some of these regions makes identifying a single group under study challenging from a methodological perspective. Unsurprisingly, when examining South East Asia and Africa and comparing it to our findings on group/ideology, it is clear that there is a lack of research on terrorism in these regions. There has been little (if any) academic literature on women's roles in terrorism in Tunisia, or in Algeria, which also reflects a lack of research on this topic more broadly within the main terrorism literature. This lacuna exists despite women's role in terrorism in both countries, including as suicide bombers.[54]

While researchers have studied women's roles in extreme right-wing violence, including in white supremacist and neo-Nazi organizations and movements,[55] this also represents a significant gap in the literature. Popular media accounts of this type of violence regularly discount women's roles due to the inherent misogyny in groups adopting this ideology.[56] Discounting women's involvement in extreme-right groups demonstrates an analytic blind spot, which we have also seen with other types of terrorism such as Al Qaeda. Women's participation has been under-studied or ignored due to assumptions about women's desire to participate in a particular group/movement and the organization's willingness to include women.

While the breadth of the women in terrorism subfield has increased significantly since the mid 2000s, there is still much work to be done. There are many under-studied conflicts, and most notably, conflicts that do not seem to involve women. However, as Schmidt reminds us, everyone has a gender[57]; as such, studying every

conflict with an eye to gender, even to note the absence of women, is a useful endeavour and will enhance our understanding of the role of women in terrorism, but also of gender more broadly in terrorism and political violence of all types.

Measuring Impact

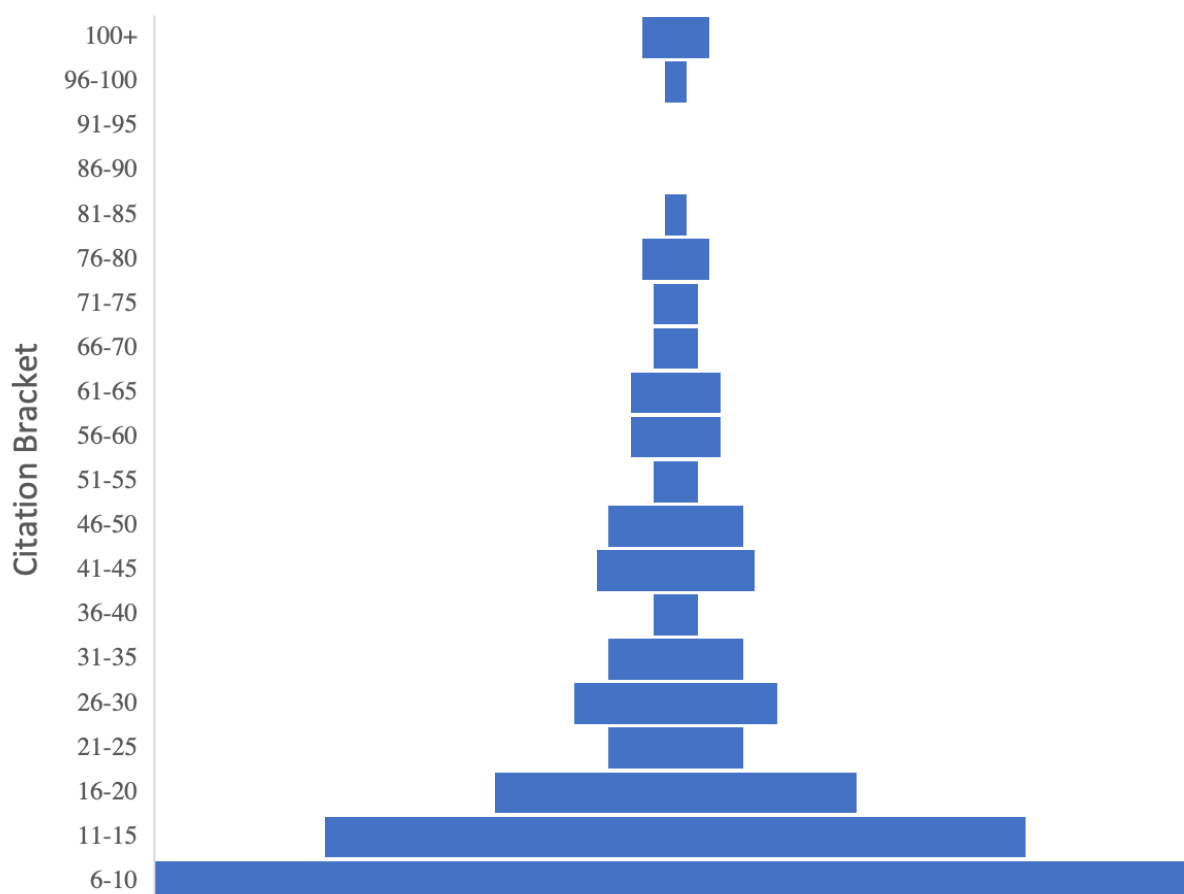
Impact and importance of scholarly work are difficult concepts to measure objectively, but one tool that we have at our disposal is citation counts. While imperfect, the frequency of citation can begin to demonstrate what publications are most relevant and influential. This accounting can also attune us to possible gaps in terms of integration of a subfield into a broader field, which is what this study aims to understand.

What Are the Most Cited Works on Women in Terrorism?

In their research, Silke and Schmidt-Petersen identified the 100 most-cited articles in terrorism studies, some of which had thousands of citations,[58] although their work did not explicitly exclude non-scholarly citations. The literature on women in terrorism is much less well cited than the 100 most-cited articles in the Silke and Schmidt-Petersen study, which, given its relatively niche topic area, is unsurprising. There are only three publications with more than 100 scholarly citations: Sjoberg & Gentry,[59] Cunningham,[60] and Alison.[61] While the least influential article in the Silke and Schmidt-Petersen study had 177 citations,[62] only Sjoberg & Gentry's article met or exceeded that number of citations. However, directly comparing these two measures does not produce an accurate evaluation because of methodological differences between the Silke and Schmidt-Petersen study and our own. Silke and Schmidt-Petersen did not validate the citations for each of the articles in their study to exclude citations that were not scholarly, including dissertations, theses, popular accounts, etc. They also only considered articles, while we also include books and edited volumes. Despite these methodological differences, comparing these two studies demonstrates the "niche" status of research on women in terrorism, even when that work is foundational or relatively well cited outside of terrorism studies. It is also worth noting that none of the top 100 articles on terrorism in the Silke and Schmidt-Petersen article dealt with women in terrorism as their primary subject.[63]

Indeed, the literature on women in terrorism is more well cited outside of the main field of terrorism studies than within it, although many publications remain uncited (which may also be true for the terrorism field writ large). Breaking down the literature roughly into thirds yields interesting results. Approximately 31% of all the publications on women in terrorism had no scholarly citations at all. It is worth noting that many of these works were published relatively recently (2018—2020), which may explain a lack of citations. Thirty-five percent of the publications in the subfield had between one and five scholarly citations, while 34% had between six and 437 citations, the majority of which had between 15 and 80 citations. The mean number of citations of women in terrorism literature in all fields is 10.2 citations, with a median of two, which illustrates that a few highly cited publications skew the number of citations upwards, but that the majority of publications in the subfield receive few citations. Only four publications in this tier had more than 100 citations, illustrated in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Citation Analysis of the Most Well-Cited Articles (All Fields), by Citation Bracket (Increments of Five Citations)

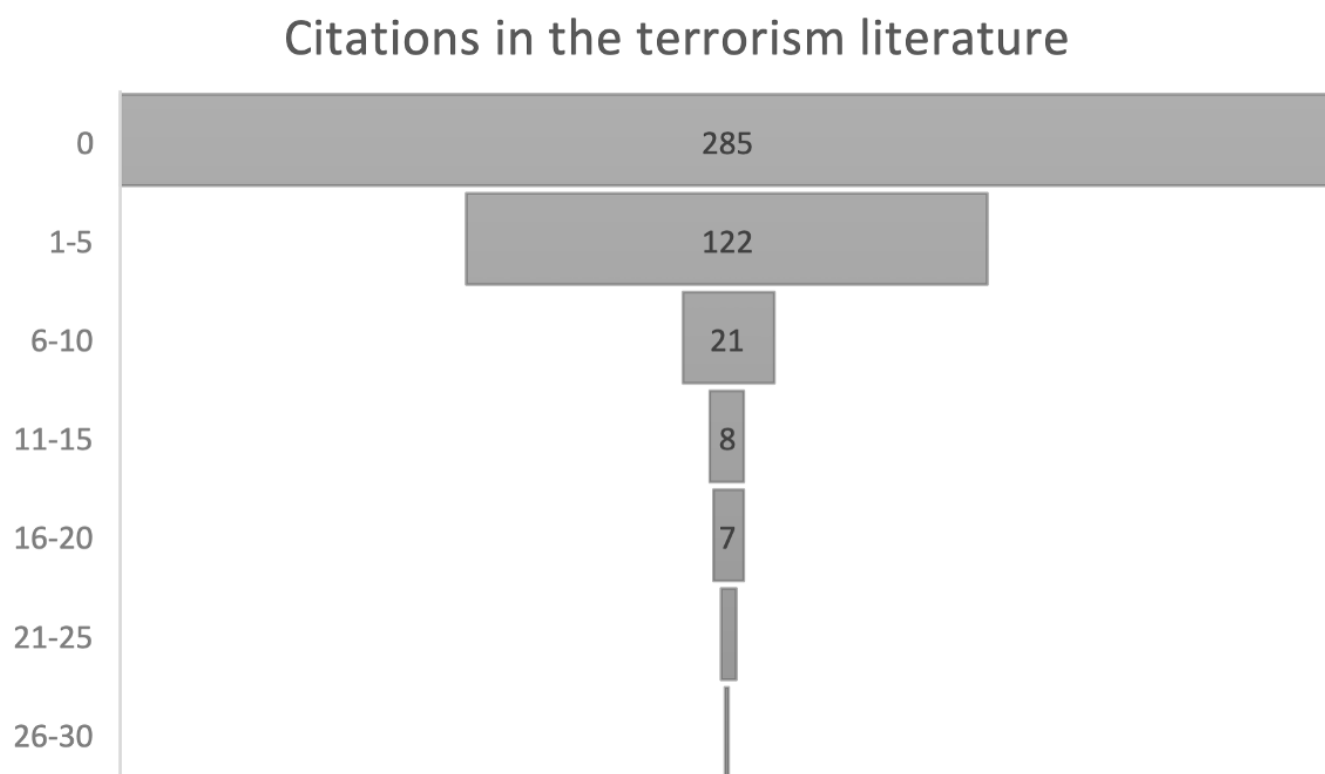


Note: Figure 4 illustrates the number of citations that every publication on women in terrorism has received, regardless of the field in which it was cited.

Figure 4 illustrates the number of citations for each bracket (i.e., grouping of citation counts by increments of five), demonstrating how few of the publications in the field of women in terrorism achieve “top” status of influence. Comparing these citation counts to the work of Silke and Schmidt-Petersen, where the “top” publications all had over 100 citations, it becomes clear that very few of these publications achieve similar influence. Figure 4 illustrates that only three publications have received more than 100 citations (in all fields of literature). Instead, most of the publications are uncited or lightly cited within scholarly literature.

Paradoxically, the more citations an article in the subfield had, the less likely those citations were to be in the field of terrorism studies. The middle tier of publications (those with 1–5 citations) generally had 21% of their citations within the broader literature on terrorism and political violence. The more influential publications (those in the top tier, with more than six citations), had only 18% of their citations in the main field. While this difference is not particularly significant, it does demonstrate that the study of women in terrorism has purchase outside the main field of study (terrorism studies), but also that it may be perceived as quite separate from the main field, and better suited to incorporation in women’s studies or feminist studies fields of research.

The literature on women in terrorism is less well cited within terrorism studies itself. Only 13% of citations of women in terrorism publications were in the main terrorism literature, as is illustrated in Figure 5. The mean number of citations within terrorism literature was 1.7, with a median of zero. Removing the publications that had yet to receive any citations, the average rate of citation in the main terrorism literature was only three citations per publication.

Figure 5: Citations of Works on Women in Terrorism within Broader Terrorism Literature

Note: Figure 5 illustrates the lack of citations of the sub-field of studies on women in terrorism within the broader field of terrorism studies. The vast majority of research on women in terrorism (285 publications) has never been cited in terrorism research. Only a very small proportion of the research in the subfield is cited more than 10 times.

Without a direct comparison between all the publications in the terrorism field, and without understanding how many citations these receive, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about bias or lack of influence of the subfield of research. However, given the breadth of the literature on women in terrorism, it is surprising that the main body of terrorism literature cites so little of it.

What Works Get Cited?

The publications with the most citations in terrorism literature were those that address women's participation and roles in terrorism, which is also one of the most-studied subfields. The citations for this topic accounted for 25% of all the citations in terrorism literature. Other topics with significant numbers of citations include representation/framing of women in terrorism in the media (17%), and suicide terrorism (15%).

Publications on the IS/Daesh are by far some of the most-cited texts in terrorism literature, accounting for almost 39% of all the citations. Studies on Boko Haram are also well-cited in terrorism literature, with 16% of the citations. Broader topics like jihad also account for a significant number of citations (14%). Other relatively well-cited topics include the LTTE, Chechen terrorism, and Al Qaeda. In essence, the citations of particular topics are those where it is difficult, if not impossible, to ignore the role of women in terrorism.

Publications in our subfield data set that were less likely to be cited in terrorism literature but more likely to be cited in other scholarly literature include works that include feminism or feminist analysis of terrorism and political violence. These publications likely had significant crossover with other fields (namely: feminist studies) but may have also used language or systems of analysis that were unfamiliar to terrorism studies scholars.

It is also useful to note that while most recent works in the subfield reference much of the preexisting work on women in terrorism, there does seem to be a lack of knowledge about the depth of the subfield. This deficiency exists even amongst those working on women in terrorism, demonstrated through the repetitive nature of

dissertations and theses exploring the subject and the justifications frequently offered for this work.[64] The repetitive nature of some of this research may also be a symptom of the lack of integration into the main terrorism literature. If the main field does not cite the extant research, new scholars may suffer from the illusion that little work has been done on the topic. It is difficult to accurately reflect the subfield literature when that literature is not accurately reflected in the broader field.

Conclusion

The study of women in terrorism is a growing subfield of terrorism studies as evidenced by the increasing number of publications each year. This literature makes important contributions to a holistic understanding of terrorism at various levels of analysis such as the organizational, cell, and individual level. The subfield examines factors such as radicalization and recruitment, roles for women, media representation and framing of women/gender, agency and empowerment of women, and of course suicide terrorism, amongst other topics. Despite the breadth of study of the subfield (an area that still requires some improvement for it to be truly exhaustive and authoritative), it is poorly cited in the main literature.

At the same time, the literature may well have more influence than mere citation counts can demonstrate. In some cases, the topic of women in terrorism is discussed in studies on terrorism, but is not referenced.[65] Unfortunately, when this occurs, it does a disservice to both the subfield of study as well as the authors of these publications who are not engaging with the broader field in a meaningful way.

The state of the terrorism studies field, and how well it is integrating all types of information and analysis, is of interest not just from an academic perspective. Practitioners rely on this literature to provide context and information for their counterterrorism and counter-extremism activities. Indeed, a lack of information within this main literature on gender may influence how practitioners interpret women in acts of terrorism. Preliminary research suggests that there is a bias in counterterrorism practice at least in Canada,[66] the US,[67] and Europe.[68] Initial research undertaken by the second author demonstrates that in Canada, the few women who have been charged with terrorism offenses came to the attention of authorities alongside their male partners. The sole woman not tried alongside her partner was only arrested after having committed a terrorist attack in Canada, despite family members reporting her previous attempt to travel to Syria to join ISIS to law enforcement.[69] The number of Canadian women who, for example, traveled to Syria in apparent support of ISIS versus the number of women arrested for terrorism seems to indicate some level of oversight at the investigative level.[70]

It is clear that counterterrorism practitioners consult terrorism literature,[71] so any bias in this literature may influence practitioners. Of course, demonstrating a causal relationship between the literature (and omissions therein) and bias in counterterrorism is not possible due to the many factors that influence the work of practitioners. However, a relationship may be possible to establish, laying the foundation for future empirical studies on the impact of scholarly research on terrorism and its influence on practitioners.

Throughout the course of this research, we came across a significant number of theses and dissertations on the topic of women in terrorism. Much of this remains unpublished. A cursory review of these works also reflects the common assumption that little has been written on women in terrorism. This is not to say that these works did not do a sufficient literature review, but rather to point out that this assumption is commonplace. It is also critical to note that much of the literature in this subfield has been published outside the main terrorism studies journals, which means that a review of the literature needs to survey well beyond the most influential terrorism studies journals. This issue also reflects another possibility: because of a potential lack of integration of this subfield into the primary literature, students and their advisors think there is more of a gap than there is. A consequence of this presumption may be that the field is not advancing to the extent that it could. If the main field of terrorism studies better reflected the literature in the subfield of women in terrorism, students and their supervisors would be more aware of the breadth and depth of the literature.

Our initial suspicion was that the research in this subfield was poorly cited in the main literature. Indeed, insights on gender dynamics likely remain largely peripheral to ongoing conversations about terrorist violence. The lack of citation (and by extension, integration) of the subfield into the main field of terrorism studies is detrimental to the scholarship on terrorism because similar research topics are examined over and over again, while other forms of analysis are incomplete without the integration of gender analysis (incorporating discussion of women in terrorism, but also topics well beyond that). This exclusion is also detrimental to practitioners seeking to understand the phenomenon of terrorism, or grappling with the issue of women in terrorism. A few key areas where this impacts our understanding of terrorism includes terrorist tactics, organizational effectiveness, and bureaucracy, as well as terrorist recruitment and propaganda. The lack of integration of the study of women in terrorism into the broader field of terrorism studies may represent a pervasive conceptual and methodological problem.[72] By our count, the 450 scholarly works on the subject of women in terrorism demonstrate that this subfield is an area of interest for many scholars. Yet the main scholarly literature excludes the role of women in terrorism, a lacuna that may well have significant repercussions for counterterrorism practitioners.

When we began this research, we hypothesized that the subfield of women in terrorism was held separately from that of the rest of the literature and lacked integration. Bearing in mind the limitations of citation counting, our analysis proved that hypothesis. The reason for this segregation within the literature may be due to what one of Schmidt's interview subjects referred to as the "gender ghetto" in a recent analysis of practitioner responses to women in terrorism.[73] Greater integration of the literature on women in terrorism is required to advance the field of terrorism studies. Ignoring this research, and the role and impact of gender roles and identities in terrorist recruitment, operations, and propaganda leaves significant gaps in our understanding of terrorism as well as our abilities to counter and prevent terrorist activity.

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Appendix

Directions for Future Research

The subfield of women in terrorism is, despite the increasing number of publications, still developing, and is overly focused on particular subjects. Significant gaps exist in the subfield, and the main terrorism literature has yet to integrate this work in any meaningful way. This section highlights some areas of potential research that could enhance the subfield and encourage fuller integration of this work into the main literature.

Male-only Case Studies: While much is written about groups that employ women in operational roles, groups that exclude women, or that women themselves refuse to join, are just as intriguing. Studying why and under which conditions terrorist groups choose not to include women, and similarly the conditions under which women do not join or support particular groups could add useful context for understanding some elements of gender dynamics within terrorist groups. This work could also help to articulate a theory of women's involvement in future terrorist groups or movements.

Enhanced Focus on Non-kinetic Roles: Women engaging in violence has attracted significant attention over the last several decades. This trend is likely to continue, as shifting popular opinion about women's participation in violence as relatively normal (rather than aberrant) behavior will take time. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that this work is overemphasized in the subfield of study regarding women in terrorism. Equally important but under-studied is the role of women in support/non-kinetic roles in organizations and movements that employ terrorism as a tactic. The role of women as radicalizers, recruiters, financiers, logisticians, intelligence operatives,[A1] etc., are all areas where more research could be done.

Research on Nonbinary Gender: To date, the study of women in terrorism treats gender as binary (male or female). Research into how recruitment and radicalization practices appeal to or impact nonbinary individuals would be a welcome addition to the study of terrorist and political violence. Additional research in this area could potentially identify how and why terrorists address nonbinary individuals (if at all), and which groups are likely to appeal to individuals with nonbinary identities.

Research on Masculinities and Femininities: The study of masculinities and femininities within terrorist groups, and their influence on terrorist recruitment and ideology, is a nascent subfield of study.[A2] Increasingly, and particularly with the rise of extreme-right groups, the role of masculinities and femininities is receiving increased attention. Broadening this study across the ideological spectrum is crucial to furthering our understanding of why and how different genders engage in terrorist activity.

Other Measures of Impact: This study is limited to a single measure of impact and influence with regards to the subfield of women in terrorism. Other measures exist that could yield different results. For instance, a study of syllabi on terrorism might reveal different results in terms of how terrorism and political violence are taught, a significantly different measure of influence and impact than citation counts. An analysis of major conferences that have a terrorism or political violence panel, such as the International Studies Association, and panels that have a women/gender component to their terrorism/political violence panels could also provide additional insights.[A3]

Comparison with Other Subfields: While the subfield of women in terrorism is relatively under-cited within terrorism literature (although conversely, well cited outside of it), other subfields are also worth studying, and would provide a useful comparison. For instance, studying the subfield of suicide bombings, terrorist financing, or terrorist propaganda, and seeing how well cited and integrated these are into the main terrorism literature would be a useful point of comparison. This could help to determine if the subfield of women in terrorism is actually neglected and poorly integrated, or if many subfields suffer from this same lack of integration.

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The European Database of Terrorist Offenders (EDT): Development, Usability and Options

by Daphne Alberda, Nils Duits, Kees van den Bos, Arin H. Ayanian, Andreas Zick & Maaike Kempes

Abstract

The European Database of Terrorist offenders (EDT) is based on comprehensive judicial information of convicted or deceased terrorist offenders, including social, psychological and psychiatric reports. This new empirical database is the result of a European cross-border collaboration between judicial organizations and scientists within the European Union. The EDT dataset comprises developmental, individual, biographical and contextual factors, which are potentially related to engagement in violent extremism and terrorism. It supports research seeking to identify critical risk and protective factors for violent extremism and terrorism. The EDT dataset could be used to conduct studies aimed at the identification of significant personal and contextual risk and protective factors for terrorism and violent extremism, improving and validating risk assessments, as well as identifying pathways into terrorism and radicalization. Moreover, this data can assist in the design of effective policy, prevention and intervention practices regarding potential violent extremist and terrorist offenders in Europe and elsewhere. The aim of this article is twofold: firstly, it seeks to present the EDT, along with discussing its development and methodology. To this end, the inclusion criteria and coding principles are discussed, alongside quality-, privacy- and security issues associated with the gathering and processing of judicial data, together with some preliminary statistics. Secondly, it aims to discuss potentials for research based on EDT data. Accordingly, potential applications and future developments of the EDT are discussed as well as urgent needs to use and further develop this comprehensive and unique database.

Keywords: countering violent extremism, empirical validation, European database, extremism, profiling, protective factors, psychopathology, risk factors, terrorism

Introduction

Since the terrorist attacks in New York, Paris, London, Brussels, as well as many other cities there has been an increased focus on countering violent extremism and terrorism. In 2020, there were again Islamist attacks in Europe as well as right-wing extremist terrorist acts. Empirical research was and is required to gain better insight into risk factors for terrorism, accompanied by methods for assessing and managing these risks. Despite the marked increase in research on terrorism in recent years, there remains a relative dearth of terrorist offender datasets based on reliable information that can be used to verify existing theories about risk factors for terrorism. [1] To address this problem and other related issues (including privacy), we developed the European Database of Terrorist offenders (EDT). The EDT contains information on the developmental, individual and contextual factors that may underlie people's engagement in violent extremism and terrorism. The data in the EDT could be used to support research, associated with shedding light on the personal and contextual risk and protective factors for terrorism and violent extremism, based on primary source information, as well as to understand the pathways into terrorism, i.e., the factors which contribute significantly to radicalization into violence. The outcomes of these studies could then subsequently inform policy makers' decision-making about key risk- and protective factors related to violent extremism and terrorism. In addition, the development of EDT fills a noted gap in research and application: it enables empirical analyses of personal and social/contextual risk factors and their interactions, using primary data. Extremism and terrorism research have lamented this data deficit for many years.[2]

Specific aspects distinguish the EDT from other existing databases. These are: (i) The EDT was created

through cooperation with several European Union (EU) Member States and aims to involve all EU Member States; (ii) EDT data can facilitate empirical quantitative research, subject to the regular criteria of objectivity and statistical validity as well as security; (iii) Once it comprises sufficient data, the EDT will be able to validate risk and protective factors for terrorist behavior and validate violent extremism risk assessment tools such as the VERA-2R; (iv) The EDT is in compliance with the strict privacy regulations of the EU.

The aim of this article is twofold, namely: to present the EDT and trace its development, and to delineate its potential for future empirical research and outline options for applied research and evidence-based policies. We begin by providing an overview of the database before proceeding to discuss its development and the organizations that were involved in its creation. Next, we outline the methodology, inclusion criteria, data collection process, coding principles and methods of measuring data quality. We then explain the privacy and security measures that were adopted to ensure that the EDT is compliant with security requirements and applicable legislation, followed by preliminary descriptive statistics. Finally, we evaluate the strengths and limitations of the EDT before concluding by providing avenues for future research and elucidating how the database can contribute to the field of terrorism and counterterrorism research.

The European Database of Terrorist Offenders (EDT)

The EDT is a research database comprising information on European terrorist and violent extremist offenders who have been convicted from 2012 onward. The EDT also includes a control group of persons who have been convicted of violent offenses unrelated to terrorism or extremism. The coded EDT data consists of personal and contextual offender information, which derives from comprehensive judicial files of the participating EU Member States. A large number of potential risk factors, protective factors, and indicators for terrorism have been included, encompassing demographic data, childhood circumstances, trigger factors, ideologies, motives, mental health issues, and the nature of the terrorist offense and type of sentence. Moreover, information from forensic mental health assessments is included to provide insight into mental health issues. All qualitative information from judicial files is converted into quantitative codes prior to being entered into the database in order to enable quantitative analyses.

Both the design of the EDT and the European cooperation have important advantages. Firstly, primary data on terrorist offenders and their acts is generally only accessible to governmental organizations, thus condemning most academics to extrapolate data from studies in other fields and apply these insights to terrorism research. The cooperation between judicial organizations allows for access to comprehensive judicial files, including forensic mental health assessments, which hitherto have scarcely been used in the field of terrorism research. [3] The inclusion of information from normally unavailable judicial files, including forensic mental health assessments, affords a comprehensive overview of both the personal characteristics and the political and social context of the terrorist offender. Therefore, these files constitute valuable sources for the study into personal risk factors for terrorism, including psychopathology and contextual factors, which, despite the importance of examining them in combination with one another, have hitherto infrequently been studied together.[4]

Secondly, many EU Member States either have few cases of terrorist offenders in their country [5], and/or simply do not have the research capacity. This in turn hinders researchers' attempts to empirically investigate the risks and drivers for violent extremist engagement and terrorist action, as well as protective factors preventing persons from engaging in terrorist action. One major benefit of the cooperation between different EU Member States is the possibility of establishing a sufficiently large sample that allows for statistical and possibly inferential analyses.

Finally, a further notable strength of the EDT design is the inclusion of a control group, and the possibility to include multiple control groups. Extant knowledge of risk factors for terrorism is predominantly based on studies that lack a control group.[6] Although we cannot establish causal relations with the EDT dataset, the

inclusion of a control group of violent offenders does mean that we can provide a stronger substantiation for those risk factors that are specifically associated with terrorism and violent extremism and potential overlapping characteristics with non-terrorist violent offenders. Additionally, the EDT comprises possible comparison groups (e.g., left, right, Islamism ideologies, male vs. female offenders, lone actors and groups). This allows for the analysis and comparison of risk and protective factors of engagement in terrorist and violent extremist offenses between different offender groups.

Development and Organizations Involved

To generate scientific knowledge about personal and contextual risk and protective factors for terrorist and violent extremist offenders, the European Union funded DARE-project (Database and Assessment of Risk of violent Extremists) was established. The project launched in October 2017 in collaboration with research institutes and judicial organizations from several EU Member States.[7] The project group members are the Netherlands Institute of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology (NIFP) as coordinator, the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research (IKG) at Bielefeld University, and the Belgium Prison organization. Decisions regarding the EDT are discussed in the project group, which has extensive experience in research and evaluation, as well as forensic professional diagnostic practice through close collaboration with law enforcement agencies, prisons and probation services. The benefits from this collaboration encompass three key areas: it increases the financial means, which results in greater coding capacity and allows for a larger research group; it enables a broader area of research to be examined; it provides a distinct intellectual advantage through cooperation and knowledge sharing. The long-term cooperation and ongoing process of data collection that underpins the EDT enables follow-up research into judicial interventions and post-conviction offender trajectories related to disengagement or recidivism.

Definitions

Radicalization, terrorism and violent extremism are continually evolving concepts, which in part accounts for the heterogeneity of the available definitions.[8] In order to fully comprehend the meaning of the results of the prospective studies that will use the EDT data, it is above all important to know which definitions were used to obtain the data. Therefore, we will now discuss the definitions of key concepts that underpinned the data collection upon which the EDT is based. To clarify potential differences between the types of terrorist offenders across EU Member States, we will compare the types of violent extremist and terrorist offenses, group or single offenses, criminal codes, motives for the crime, and ideology, data of which were subsequently entered into the EDT.

Radicalization

Radicalization is often used to describe the process of adopting an extremist belief system that may result in the acceptance, legitimization and/or use of violence.[9] In accordance with both the Dutch Intelligence Service (AIVD) and the National Coordinator of Terrorism and Security (NCTV) we defined radicalization in the EDT as: “The active pursuit of and/or support for fundamental changes in society that may endanger the continued existence of the democratic order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic order (effect).”

Terrorism

There are many definitions of terrorism.[10] Terrorism can be driven by a range of (political, social, religious or other) ideologies or motivations, can take different forms and can be associated with different types of individuals and groups.[11] One unequivocal feature of terrorism is that it is always a premeditated act (rather than a brief period of anger or impulsivity). Although regularly assumed that for an act to be classified as a terrorist act, it must be driven by a political, social, religious or other ideologically based motivation, [12] this may not

always be the case.[13] For example, motivations can also be driven by monetary gain, status seeking, group belonging or excitement.[14] For the EDT, we followed the definition of the NCTV, which defines terrorism as: “the threat of, the preparation of, or the committing of, serious violence based on ideological motives against people, or deeds aimed at causing socially disruptive material damage with the goal to cause social change, to instil fear among the population or to influence political decision-making.”[15] The decision to use this specific definition means that all types of terrorism are included in the EDT: jihadist and other religious-based forms of terrorism, as well as ethno-nationalistic, right-wing, left-wing and single-issue terrorism.

Violent Extremism

Violent extremism is often considered as unlawful violence in furtherance of a religious, political, social or other ideology.[16] It can be described as the beliefs and actions of people who either support or themselves use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals.[17] This is why the American FBI defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”[18] We took these definitions into account when developing the EDT, including the definition of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which defines violent extremism as: “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives.”[19]

Procedure

Cases

Currently, the EDT includes terrorist and violent extremist offenders from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Sweden who were convicted from 2012 onward. The selection of cases was made by the judicial organization in each EU Member State. All kinds of terrorist and violent extremist deeds are included, such as, for example, jihadism and other religious-based forms of terrorism, as well as nationalistic, right- and left-wing, and single-issue terrorism. These cases also include convictions for *involvement* in terrorist acts, even in the absence of ideological motives of the offenders themselves. To avoid potential stigmatization, those persons who are indicted or suspected of terrorist or violent extremist crimes, but are not (yet) convicted, are not included.

The target group of ETD research consists of persons who have been convicted of a terrorist act. This also includes cases of violent extremist acts, if these fall under the Member State’s terrorism legislation. However, terrorism legislation differs between countries. For example, right-wing extremists in Germany might not be convicted under existing terrorism legislation. Since our aim was to include all violent offenders acting on extremist and/or ideological views and motives within each EU Member State, a separate research group of violent extremists was added. This group consists of violent extremist offenders who have not been convicted of terrorism since their court files state that the offense is based on violent extremism. To this end, participating EU Member States are instructed to select convicted persons engaged in ideologically motivated crimes. Additionally, given that terrorist attackers frequently die during the course of their act, deceased terrorist attackers are included as a separate group to be researched. Even though these individuals can no longer be convicted, it is beyond dispute that they were involved in terrorism.

Due to the tremendous effort involved in entering a case into the database, during the two-year duration of the initial project only a limited number of cases could be entered. In May 2020 the EDT contained 194 cases of terrorist and violent extremist offenders, which included 168 convicted terrorist offenders, 16 convicted extremist offenders, and 10 deceased terrorist offenders. Given that convicted terrorist offenders are the main focus of the EDT, they took priority in the data entry process. As a result, convicted terrorist offenders are overrepresented in the current sample, compared to the separate group of violent extremist and deceased

terrorist offenders.

To enable the identification of risk and protective factors for violent extremism and terrorism rather than risk and protective factors for 'common violence', in each participating EU Member State, a control group of other violent offenders is selected. The control group is based on a random sample of violent offenders who were convicted for comparable but ultimately not extremist violent crimes, such as murder, manslaughter, crimes against public order or authority or violence against property or arson (see Table 1 for a list of all included types of crimes). The same information is included in the entries for the control group as for the other researched groups, e.g., demographic data, historical risk factors, trigger factors for committing a terrorist offense, indicators for terroristic acts, and psychopathology. The inclusion of a control group of violent offenders allows for gaining insights into the specific risk factors for terrorist and extremist deeds. The consequence of choosing this control group is that we are able to differentiate between ideologically- and nonideologically motivated violent offenders, but not to compare the violent and nonviolent extremists.

In light of the fact that data entry started with the inclusion of convicted terrorist offenders, by May 2020, merely 33 control group cases of violent offenders had been entered into the EDT. The original intention was to include as many control group cases as there were terrorist cases. This means that the majority of control group cases still have to be entered into the EDT. This is important because sufficient control group cases are required to be able to compare the two groups and conduct inferential analyses. However, the research is ongoing and in the coming years far more cases from both the research and control group will be entered.

In the future, a control group of nonviolent extremists can be added to the EDT, considering the following comparability issues. Firstly, a different setup is required to reach nonviolent extremists, because of the absence of judicial file information, making it necessary to gather their personal information in alternative ways, for example with interviews. Secondly, legal and mental health information is missing about nonviolent extremists.

Thirdly, it is always uncertain whether nonviolent extremists can truly be classified as nonviolent, for the simple fact that they often conceal it.

Table 1: Typology Crime EDT

Type of violent crime *	Involvement violent (extremist/terrorist) crime
1= Murder	1= Financing
2= Manslaughter	2= Threatening
3= Aggravated assault	3= Recruiting
4= Aggravated robbery	4= Training
5= Crime against public order/authority	5= Supporting
6= Violence against property/arson	6= Unlawful possession of material
7= War crime	7= Preparation
8= Foreign military service	8= Member criminal organization
9= Human trafficking	9= Member terrorist organization
10= Kidnapping	10= Participating in activities terrorist organization
11= Involvement violent crime	11= Incitement
12= Involvement violent extremist/terrorist crime	88= Other involvement
88= Other violent crime	

* with or without terrorist or violent extremist intent

Data Collection

Until now, government agencies have formally granted access to the judicial documents for the case file research of violent extremists in participating EU Member States to one or two researchers in each Member State with the relevant expertise (see Table 2). The data are entered into the EDT in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Sweden. The involved researchers have the necessary authorization and security clearance for processing the judicial data from their own Member State. Bielefeld University has permission to conduct research on the judicial files from the participating German States. The Federal Public Service Justice – Belgian Prison Service conducts research on the Belgian judicial files. NIFP researchers conduct the data collection of the Dutch judicial files. Furthermore, the Austrian Institute for International Affairs and the Swedish Prison and Probation Service collect relevant data in Austria and Sweden. The data entry takes place at the judicial organizations in which the judicial files are located. In the Netherlands these are located in the different districts of the Public Prosecution Service. The researchers plan to follow similar procedures for other Member States that wish to contribute in the future to this EDT research project.

Table 2: Requirements for Researchers Involved in Coding EDT Data

- Coders have successfully completed the NIFP coding training program. In this program experience is acquired with carrying out objective coding and knowledge of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism
- Coders have signed an agreement for secrecy
- Coders have sufficient expertise in carrying out research in the field of criminal justice and/or psychology or criminology
- Coders hold a position at a government agency, security service, international agency, university or other research organization
- Coders understand the Codebook criterion definitions
- Coders must be familiar with the research into and operational knowledge of violent extremism and its accompanying characteristics

Data Sources

The information in the EDT originates from qualitative judicial files and includes data from the police, public prosecution, detention, forensic mental health assessment reports, and probation reports. With relatively few exceptions, the same information sources were available in each of the participating EU Member States (see Table 3). One advantage of using judicial files is the extensive legal and mental health information contained in them. This information allows for a comprehensive overview of the relationship between personal and contextual characteristics of violent (extremist) and terrorist offenders and their acts.

Table 3: Available Information Sources per Member State (MS)

<i>Information source</i>	<i>MS1</i>	<i>MS2</i>	<i>MS3</i>	<i>MS4</i>	<i>MS5</i>
1= Police investigation/indictment	x	x	x	x	x
2= Subject's history / development	x	x	x	x	x
3= Transcript of verdict (conviction and sentence)	x	x	x	x	x
4= Judicial history	x	x	x	x	x
5= Psychiatric information and/or forensic report by psychiatrist	x	x	x	x	x
6= Psychological information and/or forensic report by psychologist	x	x	x	x	x
7= Documentation subject / group concerning case		x	x	x	x
8= Documentation and/or a report of probation	x	x			x
9= Documentation and/or a report of prison	x	x	x	x	x
10= Documentation and/or a report of intelligence service	x	x	x		x
88= Other source(s) of information*	x	x		x	

*Child protection board, Open sources, Protocols of the trial

EDT Codebook

To minimize systematic bias in data collection across the participating organizations, methods and procedures of information exchange and data coding were established. As part of this procedure, an English-language Codebook was developed. The Codebook contains explicit coding instructions about how items entered should be used and interpreted, in order to ensure that items are coded in a consistent and unambiguous manner. The descriptions of the items were developed by the NIFP in agreement with other members of the project group and the participating EU Member States. Expertise from several EU Member States was also utilized to further define the items. An independent advisory board of national and international experts in the field of terrorism was consulted in order to ensure that the content and methodology of the Codebook was sound. This advisory board also serves to minimize potential conflicts of interest.

DataSet

The EDT dataset includes items about the individual person, the context, the terrorist act, as well as information about the judicial interventions in each case. Overall, it consists of 16 domains and 379 items (see Table 4). These items are derived from a NIFP codebook on lone actors, which has been adapted to violent extremists and terrorists in exchange with other researchers [20], the VERA-2R manual and extant literature on violent extremism, terrorism and ordinary forms of violent crime.[21] Furthermore, a number of items are explorative in nature. For quality and follow-up purposes, a number of personal data fields were added, such as, for example, name, date of birth, and criminal reference number. The variables in the dataset consist of open text fields, dates, numbers or categories. The number of text fields was reduced as much as possible to minimize the identifiability of a person behind the data. Each item is accompanied by a description with the meaning of the item. For nominal or ordinal variables, category descriptions are also sometimes included (see Figures 1 and 2).

Table 4: EDT Domains

<i>Domains</i>	
1. Compilation Case File	9. Prior to Crime: Personal Acts
2. Demographic data	10. Preoccupation with Weapons
3. Crime & Conviction	11. Radicalization/Ideology
4. Criminal History	12. Beliefs & Attitudes (VERA-2R)
5. Personal History	13. Social Context & Intention (VERA-2R)
6. Personality Disorder and Traits	14. History, Action & Capacity (VERA-2R)
7. Psychiatric Disorder and Symptoms	15. Commitment & Motivation (VERA-2R)
8. Prior to Crime: Incidents	16. Protective & Risk Mitigation (VERA-2R)

Note: the number of items including personal encrypted data fields is 408.

Figure 1: EDT Data-Entry Page

Progress: 17%

In Progress

Case file

In Progress

Compilation case file

In Progress

Demographic data

In Progress

Aspects crime

In Progress

Criminal History

In Progress

Personal History

In Progress

Personality disorder and traits

In Progress

Psychiatric symptoms subject

In Progress

Prior to Crime: Incidents

In Progress

2. Demographic data

2.16 Birth country	This field is encrypted. Click the key icon to view or enter data.	
2.17 [NOT FOR CONTROLS] Birth place	This field is encrypted. Click the key icon to view or enter data.	
2.18 Birth country father	This field is encrypted. Click the key icon to view or enter data.	
2.19 Birth country mother	This field is encrypted. Click the key icon to view or enter data.	
2.20 Subject is migrant in country of conviction		

Subject lives temporary or permanently in a country where he or she was not born.

1= Subject born in foreign country (First generation)

2= Subject born in Member State, one or both parents born in foreign country (Second generation)

3= Subject + parents born in Member State, one or both grandparents born in foreign country (Third generation).

2.21 Subject is an asylum seeker	No
2.22 Subject's asylum is refused	
2.23 Religion father subject	
2.24 Religion mother subject	

Previous

Next

Note: by clicking on the (i) button, the description appears below the item.

Figure 2: Extract of EDT Codebook

Personal History (PH)

- PH3 Has been rejected and/or bullied by others prior to crime

Variable Type: Ordinal

Source: Target

Description: Subject was rejected and/or bullied by others prior to crime. Rejected: not being accepted by others by being ignored, or being the only one not invited for a social event etc. Bullied: others repeatedly use force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate or aggressively dominated the subject. This can be by verbal harassment or threat, physical assault or coercion. The bullying can be emotional, verbal, physical, and/or cyber if it took place on social media.

Enter 2=Yes, Likely is perspective of the person. Enter 3=Yes, documented if confirmed by others or other information.

0= No, documented

1= No, unlikely

2= Yes, likely

3= Yes, documented

-99= Information fails

- PH6 Subject mentioned discrimination

Variable Type: Dichotomous

Source: DARE

Description: Specify discrimination subject mentioned (=perceived by subject). Discrimination = Unjust or prejudicial treatment / behavior on the grounds of ethnicity and nationality, age, sex or sexual identity, political opinion or belief, religion, disability or illness, civil or working status.

0= No

1= Yes

-99= Information fails

Personality disorder and traits (PT) (DSM 5)

This domain covers the personality disorder and traits or characteristics that are diagnosed by a psychiatrist or psychologist before, during or after the crime.

0 = No, documented: Personality disorder or traits of a personality disorder are not diagnosed or mentioned by psychiatrist or psychologist.

1= No, unlikely: Personality disorder or traits of a personality disorder considered unlikely by psychiatrist or psychologist or other expert

2= Yes likely: Personality disorder or traits of a personality disorder considered likely by psychiatrist or psychologist or other expert.

3= Yes, documented: Diagnosis of personality disorder or traits of a personality disorder by psychiatrist or psychologist.

-99= Information fails: Personality disorder or traits of a personality disorder could not be diagnosed by psychiatrist or psychologist or other expert, due to non-cooperation of subject or other reason.

- PT1 Personality disorder and/or traits

Variable Type: Ordinal

Source: DARE, DSM5

Description: Subject has a personality disorder: Paranoid -, Schizoid -, Schizotypal -, Antisocial -, Borderline -, Histrionic -, Narcissistic -, Avoidant -, Dependent -, Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder and/or associated traits, see appendix 1.

0= No, documented

1= No, unlikely

2= Yes, likely

3= Yes, documented

-99= Information fails

The first domain 'Compilation Case File' provides administrative information, such as the case file number, research group and the available sources of information. The second domain 'Demographic Data' describes the last-known situation prior to the terrorist crime being committed, such as education, relational status, living situation and socioeconomic status. In the third domain, termed 'Aspects Crime', various aspects of the terrorist 'index' crime are documented, including among other things, the type of crime, location, target, potential victims, weaponry used, involvement of other persons, as well as the subject's emotional state. Next, in the 'Criminal History' domain, both the number and types of prior crimes are documented, because prior violence is regarded as a strong predictor of future violence.[22]

The 'Personal History' domain includes items about victimization and trauma, work and school problems, and family situation during childhood including somatic illnesses or disabilities. Domains 6 'Personality Disorder and Traits' and 7 'Psychiatric Disorder and Symptoms' include information from forensic mental health assessments. The documented disorders and/or traits or symptoms are documented alongside information about the period in which these were present (prior, during and/or after the crime) and their potential relation to the crime.

Trigger factors for committing a terrorist offense, such as, for example, the loss of a loved one or the loss of employment are documented in domain 8 'Prior to Crime Incidents'. Domain 9 'Prior to Crime Personal Acts' includes various indicators for terroristic acts, such as self-isolation or a farewell letter. Domain 10 'Preoccupation with Weapons' registers if the person has a fascination for weapons, as well as specifying the precise nature of this interest, such as, for example, wearing firearms and/or idealizing the use of firearms. The radicalization period, which encompasses violent extremist contacts or networks and preoccupation with an extremist ideology, is documented in domain 11 'Radicalization/Ideology'.

Finally, domains 12–16 are derived from the VERA-2R risk assessment instrument for violent extremism. These domains not only outline risk- and motivational indicators but also several protective factors, due to the fact that the absence of protective factors has been found to be a significant predictor of violent outcomes, while also improving the accuracy of predictive models.[23] Protective factors could help to distinguish between those who are at lower or at a higher end within a risk group.[24] Protective factors include both individual characteristics such as a change in ideological values and a willingness to participate in programs against violent extremism, as well as external positive influences, such as receiving support from one's family or friends to disengage from extremist violence.

Coding and Quality Control

Given that the information in the EDT is based on comprehensive qualitative reports, some items can sometimes not be found explicitly in the judicial files. To ensure that all the available and possibly relevant information is used, the categories 'No, unlikely' and 'Yes, likely' were added to the coding categories. These categories are used for information, which is not explicitly mentioned in the judicial file. For example, the item 'subject consumed alcohol before or during crime' should be coded as 'No, unlikely' in the event that the subject disapproved of alcohol consumption on the grounds of his or her religious beliefs. Or, to cite another example, the item 'Subject used weapons killing or wounding other(s) during crime' should be coded as 'Yes, likely' in the event that contextual judicial information on the case clearly indicated that weapon use was likely, e.g., in the case of a foreign fighter who went to Syria. For each item, a description is included in the database, along with definitions and illustrative examples of when to code 'Yes, likely' or 'No, unlikely'. Moreover, there are also coding rules for nonjudicial sources (e.g., information from the offender and his/her family). Researchers were instructed to code these sources with caution due to the possibility of either withholding information or providing socially desirable answers in police interviews. For this reason, 'Yes, likely' and 'No, unlikely' categories also must be used for nonjudicial information sources. This allows researchers to distinguish between those answers that are based on explicit and judicial information and those that are derived from contextual information and/or nonjudicial sources.

To provide the involved researchers with firsthand experience of objective coding, they participated in a two-day training course in which general coding instructions were provided (e.g., how to code as objectively as possible and be cognizant of the levels of credibility of various sources) as well as coding instructions, explanations of the meaning of specific items, in combination with illustrative examples. As part of the training, researchers independently coded all items of the codebook using five anonymized vignettes which were based on real terrorist cases. After the researchers finished these training cases, inter-rater reliability analyses were calculated based on the percentage of coding agreement between new researchers and the gold standard coding developed by the NIFP DARE team.

Since the distributions of the observed ratings frequently fell under one category of ratings, kappa estimates appeared to be unrepresentatively low.[25] Therefore, an alternative kappa was calculated, based on the percentage of agreement between the evaluators, and corrected for agreement based merely on chance, which depends on the number of answer options available. To establish the strength of the agreement, Landis & Koch's cutoff points were used.[26] Prior to the actual data entry an agreement of .7, which corresponds with a substantial kappa, had to be reached for each of the items.

For items with a lower percentage of agreement, additional coding instructions were sent to the researchers prior to entering the real terrorist cases. Moreover, researchers were instructed to clarify their answers in the database for each of these items. These explanations were evaluated by the NIFP DARE team to ensure that items were coded correctly in light of the available contextual information. If wrong interpretations were made, the researcher was approached and invited to change his or her coding if necessary.

Security and Privacy

The EDT was developed and is hosted by an external independent and certified Dutch IT organization. The inclusion of personal data allows for longitudinal research, in which follow-up trajectories can be linked to those subjects already entered in the database. Therefore, the database is designed to be adapted and expanded, so that researchers of the team can continue to collect data and develop new data fields. Having introduced some key features of the EDT, we now turn to a description of the current descriptive statistics of the EDT data.

Since the EDT contains personal data and mental health information, which is collected in the judicial domain and, hence, not readily available to outside researchers, it is of great importance to protect this data as much as possible. Processing personal data and, in particular, information about individual mental and physical health places these individuals at significant risk in terms of the potential harm caused by either a data breach or the abuse or misuse of their personal information.

To protect the personal data included in the EDT, we ensured that the database both meets the security requirements for IT services set by the Dutch government and complies with the new European privacy legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The number of text fields was reduced as much as possible to minimize the identifiability of the individual person behind the data. Access to the database is strictly limited to those researchers involved in the project, and, even then, researchers only have direct insight into the data which they entered themselves. Prior to data entry, a confidentiality statement was signed by the participating organizations and researchers.

Based on the European GDPR, one of the safety measures employed in this project is the encryption of personal data by a Trusted Third Party. This means that personal data fields are not accessible or visible after having been entered. The database information can only be updated by means of a two-way encryption procedure, which allows the pseudonymized personal data to be decrypted from the database to request new (case) information about the concerned data subject if required. The NIFP project administrator periodically checks all entries for the purposes of monitoring the quality of the data based on distributions, outliers, inconsistencies, missing values and logical errors.

In order to assess the extent to which the data processing is compliant with GDPR and the EU Directive 2016/680, a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) was carried out before the data entry started. The document was discussed by a committee of Dutch privacy and security advisors and presented to the Data Protection Officer of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice. Furthermore, a risk analysis was carried out by the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counter Terrorism (NCTV), who concluded that the study design posed no disproportionate risks to the privacy of the subjects.

Descriptive Statistics

Given that the number of cases and variables included in the EDT is continually expanding, preliminary statistics are provided here only for the group that was available in the EDT at the time of the data analyses. Once enough control group cases are entered to allow for statistical analyses, comparisons will in the future be made between the research's principal target group and the control group. If, in the future, other control groups are included, then comparisons with these groups can also be made and additional research questions can be answered.

Characteristics of the Main Group Researched

Table 5 shows some basic characteristics of the research's target group of terrorist offenders. A large majority of the offenders are male (91%) with a mean age of 27 years ($SD=7$). The youngest offender is 15 years old, while the oldest is 60 years old. Almost 3 out of 4 offenders are either first- or second-generation migrants. Ninety percent of the offenders are adherents of Islam.

Outcomes related to education are derived from the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Almost half of the group is educated only to a lower primary school or middle school level (41%), while the other half is educated to an upper secondary or higher education level (47%), with information on 12% of the cases missing. At least half of the terrorist offenders did not finish their education. Prior to the terrorist crime, more than a third of the offenders were unemployed. Furthermore, the results show that just over half of the group (52%) had a prior criminal conviction.

The most often committed index crime is 'participating in activities of a terrorist organization' (35%), followed by 'membership of a terrorist organization' (25%). The next most prevalent crime categories are preparation, financing, training, supporting, and murder. The majority of the offenders committed the terrorist act alongside other offenders (68%).

In addition to these demographics, the EDT data also focus on examined psychopathology and a number of psychosocial factors as potential risk factors for terrorism. Results regarding these risk factors will be published in a separate article.

Since the main focus of the EDT is on convicted terrorist offenders rather than violent extremists, a majority of jihadists is included. This could explain the current overrepresentation of members of the Islamic religion and first- or second-generation migrants. This also applies to the results regarding the characteristics of the terrorist act. While jihadi attacks are mostly organised by terrorist groups and networks, far-right extremist acts are relatively often carried out by gangs, lone actors and unorganized perpetrators.[27] Therefore, in the current sample convictions for membership of and participation in a terrorist organization may be overrepresented. More importantly, the EDT is meant to grow continuously and an effort is made to include all types of extremists. After the inclusion of more cases of violent extremists with left- and right-wing ideologies, background characteristics may alter with respect to age, gender or socioeconomic factors.

Table 5: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of 194 Terrorist Offenders Convicted in Different European Member States Between 2012 and 2020

		N	%
Gender	Male	176	90.7
	Female	16	8.2
	Missing	2	1.0
Age	<= 17	7	3.6
	18-21	41	21.1
	22-25	37	19.1
	26-29	46	23.7
	30-39	33	17.0
	>=40	11	5.7
	Missing	19	9.8
Migrant	No	37	19.1
	Yes. subject	77	39.7
	Yes. one or both (grand) parents	67	34.5
	Missing	13	6.7
Religion	No religion	5	2.6
	Islamic	174	89.7
	Other (Christianity/other East-Asian region)	2	1.0
	Missing	13	6.7
Highest education	Primary or lower secondary education	79	40.7
	Upper secondary or higher education	92	47.4
	Missing	23	11.9
Subject finished school	No	100	51.5
	Yes	70	36.1
	Missing	24	12.4
Occupation	Unemployed	71	36.6
	Student	24	12.4
	Work	70	36.1
	Incapacitated	2	1.0
	Other	3	1.5
	Missing	24	12.4
Former crimes	No	75	38.7
	Yes	116	59.8
	Missing	3	1.5
Former conviction	No	89	45.9
	Yes	100	51.5
	Missing	5	2.6
Most occurrent terrorist crime(s)	Participating in activities terrorist organization	67	34.5
	Member terrorist organization	49	25.3
	Preparation	26	13.4
	Financing	22	11.3
	Supporting	21	10.8
	Murder	20	10.3
	Recruiting	17	8.8
	Incitement	16	8.2
	Threatening	14	7.2
	Training	10	5.2
Involvement other persons in crime(s)	No	51	26.3
	Yes	132	68
	Missing	11	5.7
Total		194	100

Note: Since persons can be involved in more than one terrorist crime, the frequencies of the most occurrent terrorist crime(s) add up to 262 in total.

Missing Values

As one can discern from Table 3, the judicial cases in each of the participating EU Member States derive from different information sources. The original information in the main sources was gathered in a prosecutorial context, as opposed to information collected for scientific purposes. Consequently, items in the EDT which are of lesser relevance for criminal trials have a higher percentage of missing information.

Table 6 shows the average number of missing values for items within each domain, together with the minimum and maximum percentage of missing values. For all 379 items, the average percentage of missing values is 16%. Items in domain 9: 'Prior to Crime Personal Acts' contain the highest percentage of missing values (27%), followed by the domains 'Personal History' (25%), 'Protective and Risk Mitigation' (25%), and 'Preoccupation with Weapons' (24%). The items with the most missing values (67% or more) originate from the 'Personal History' domain. These items are all related to parenting (e.g., 'Parent did not have clear rules about how subject should behave' or 'Parents were not emotionally supportive').

Table 6: Average Percentage of Missing Values in Items per EDT Domain

<i>Domain</i>	<i>% Missing</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Nr items</i>
1. Compilation Case File	0	0	0	2
2. Demographic data	17	0	59	43
3. Crime & Conviction	5	0	42	82
4. Criminal History	3	0	16	8
5. Personal History	25	0	77	47
6. Personality Disorder and Traits	15	0	55	29
7. Psychiatric Disorder and Symptoms	21	0	54	37
8. Prior to Crime: Incidents	19	0	53	10
9. Prior to Crime: Personal Acts	27	0	68	12
10. Preoccupation with Weapons	24	1	48	2
11. Radicalization/Ideology	17	0	40	15
12. Beliefs & Attitudes (VERA-2R)	20	2	52	16
13. Social Context & Intention (VERA-2R)	17	0	47	22
14. History, Action & Capacity (VERA-2R)	17	2	40	11
15. Commitment & Motivation (VERA-2R)	20	0	47	18
16. Protective & Risk Mitigation (VERA-2R)	25	0	67	25
Total	16	0	77	379

Note: the number of items including personal encrypted data fields is 408.

Data-Sharing Principles

The key issue with many governmental data is their limited availability to academic researchers. This applies, in part, to the EDT dataset, insofar as the judicial information sources cited in the database are not publicly available in the participating EU Member States. However, after completing the necessary data quality checks, anonymized datasets comprising a selection of items can be made available for the purposes of publication, replication or validation. One condition for external publication is that at least one of the EDT partners participates in the study and is a coauthor. Additional conditions for data sharing are described in an EDT data-processing agreement.

The starting point for sharing EDT data is compliance with European privacy regulations, which state that personal data may be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and may not be further processed

in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes. Furthermore, according to these principles, the dataset has to be relevant and limited to the purposes for which it was originally processed.

To comply with the privacy regulations, data requests will be assessed based on their societal, scientific, or policy relevance. Only a selection of the EDT dataset will be shared, depending on the specific research goals and subsequent approval of the EDT project board. In the case of data transfer, the receiving party must complete and sign a data-sharing form comprising an overview of the purpose of the research and intended usage of the received data, alongside security safeguards. Additionally, the external party must sign a nondisclosure agreement. Thus, in time, data from the EDT could be shared with researchers or other stakeholders, such as judicial organizations, provided they adhere to the aforesaid privacy and security guidelines.

Discussion

While terrorism research is increasingly based on primary sources, the use of databases remains relatively low, with few collaborations between researchers and a relative dearth of studies based on clinical assessment.[28] To address these issues, the EDT was developed. It has a number of strengths. The first strength is that we were able to access judicial information that is ordinarily not available to researchers due to privacy issues. The database comprises a European cross-border collaboration between scholars and governmental judicial organizations which grants participating researchers access to comprehensive judicial sources. These sources provide insight into a large number of personal and contextual risk factors for engagement in terrorism across national boundaries. Although biases in judicial file information cannot be ruled out, one benefit compared to open source information is that judicial information is verified and, in turn, less influenced by biases.[29]

A second strength of the EDT is the inclusion of a large number of both contextual and personal data, including, among other things, mental health information. By analysing these data, studies can meet the desire to empirically validate existing theories of risk factors for terrorism, as well as analyze the role of psychopathology, based on reliable mental health data, while simultaneously taking into account situational and contextual risk factors.[30]

A third strength of the EDT is its design and methodology. To facilitate objective coding by a wide range of European researchers, we developed a codebook and training program and we evaluated the objectivity of the data with inter-rater reliability analyses. Furthermore, due to the inclusion of a control group of violent offenders, it is possible to distinguish between risk and protective factors for violence and risk and protective factors for violent extremist deeds. A next important step could be to shed light on the risk factors for terrorism that are not present and protective factors that are present amongst extremists who do not engage in violent behavior.[31] This requires clarification of what information can be compared.

A fourth strength of the EDT is the security and privacy by design, including the encryption of personal data by a 'Trusted Third Party'. The risk of individual data subjects being identified is decreased by analysing terrorist cases at an international level, which also enables us to disclose information for research that would otherwise not be available. This combination serves to make the EDT a secure storage location for the personal data of terrorist offenders. Thereby, any subsequent sharing of this important knowledge will not be hampered by privacy issues, insofar as EDT data-sharing procedures allow for sharing anonymized subsets under strict privacy and security conditions.

Challenges, Limitations, Options and Needs

Methodological Issues

While, on the one hand, the large number of items in the EDT dataset enables the validation of a wide range of assumed risk factors for terrorism, on the other hand, the size of the dataset also has some negative consequences. Firstly, the large number of items makes the coding process complex and time consuming. Approximately one day is needed to enter a single terrorist case into the EDT. Consequently, it takes considerable time to

enter enough cases to be able to conduct inferential analyses. Therefore, more EU Member States will have to participate in the EDT to increase the size of the research group.

Secondly, in the event that an offender denies any involvement in a crime and refuses to take part in a mental health investigation, this results in incomplete information. Additionally, the large number of items and various formats and contents of European judicial files further increases the number of missing values. For example, the 'Personal History' domain appeared to have a relatively large number of missing values, which may suggest that information in this domain was not deemed to be necessary for the prosecution. However, coding of most of the items could still be completed using all the available judicial information including forensic mental health reports.

Thirdly, the large number of researchers from different participating EU Member States, who have different research backgrounds, makes it difficult to consistently interpret items. Combined with the large number of items, it was hard for researchers to reach a sufficient inter-rater reliability for all items, resulting in items with low inter-rater reliability. To deal with this issue, items measuring the same construct could be analysed together. For example, 'victimhood' is a construct that relates to risk factors in items measuring victim of violence, misrecognition, or discrimination.

To improve the inter-rater reliability, we aim to develop a revised version of the codebook with additional descriptions of items, based on insights gathered in the past four years. Nevertheless, it will be nearly impossible to achieve complete agreement, because it is simply unfeasible to develop all-encompassing descriptions for every single situation. Therefore, to prevent too much missing data, we propose steering a middle course between using contextual information and striving to avoid coding differences stemming from subjective interpretations by the coders.

Financial Issues

To maintain a European Database is time consuming and costly, and, indeed, several databases previously were discontinued, in part due to a lack of funding.[32] As aforesaid, more cases from different EU Member States have to be entered over the course of the next years in order to be able to conduct meaningful inferential analyses. In this respect, perhaps the biggest challenge concerns continuing to find financial resources so as to be able to host and maintain the EDT and enter more cases. The Dutch NCTV and Dutch ministry of Security and Justice currently fund the EDT, and might continue to do so for the coming years. The NIFP and partners have an open policy when it comes to collaborating with more EU Member States in the near future. Notwithstanding our current funding situation, new requests are being made for European and national funding, and one European funding has recently been granted. The EDT requires both a long-term perspective and continued cooperation between partners, participants and funders.

Future Research Directions

The EDT is designed to support longitudinal research, which makes it both expedient over a longer period of time and flexible to adapt, depending on the actual research interests of EU Member States. By spring 2021, almost 250 cases from five EU countries have been entered in the EDT. We will continue to enter data for at least 850 convicted European terrorist and violent extremist offenders, as well as a matching number of convicted violent offenders for the control group. This data will open up several future research directions. Here, we present the main research directions that can be studied using data from the EDT. Depending on the needs and priorities of academia, judicial organizations and national and European Justice organizations, other research directions will also be explored.

Identification of Critical Risk and Protective Factors for Terrorism

When enough control group cases of violent offenders have been entered into the EDT to enable statistical analyses, it will be possible to examine whether the assumed risk and protective factors for terrorism are able to distinguish between extremist violence and ordinary violence. Although the EDT dataset is not able to establish

causal relations with any degree of certainty, it can empirically show the presence or absence of specific risk and protective factors.

Group Comparisons

Comparisons between different terrorist offender groups can be analysed. Offender groups in the EDT differ regarding their ideology (e.g., left, right, Islamist, ethno-nationalist, idiosyncratic individual causes), membership to groups (lone actor versus group member; leaders versus followers), age or gender. Analysis can focus on the comparison of risk and protective factors for engagement in terrorist and violent extremist offenses between these different offender groups. Such comparisons and insights are much needed.[33]

Risk Patterns

Interactions between risk factors can be examined, which in turn can lead to the identification of subgroups characterized by specific 'risk patterns': clusters of risk factors, related to subgroups of the terrorist offender group, since each subgroup can possibly be defined by a specific combination of risk factors. For example, striving toward a sense of group belonging combined with problems with existing relationships may only represent risk factors for younger groups of terrorist offenders. Another distinction in terms of risk patterns can be made with respect to the type of terrorist crime committed and the role of the offender in the terrorist group. Traditionally, terrorism research focused on terrorist attacks, leaving intragroup differences largely understudied.[34] However, besides executing acts of violence, engagement in terrorism encompasses a wide spectrum of terrorist behavior, such as, for example, involvement in the preparation, financing or recruitment of terrorist activities—behaviors which are changing and developing over time. To effectively assess the risk of (and therefore manage) individuals involved in terrorism, it is important to have clarity over the type of risk that is being assessed. Therefore, one important research direction will be to distinguish between the various risk patterns that may be related to different types of terrorist crimes and to distinguish significant from nonsignificant factors on an empirical basis.

Terrorism Pathways

The EDT dataset allows for the examination of global pathways of risk factors related to childhood circumstances, the period of radicalization, as well as the year prior to the criminal act. Although the EDT variables cannot define specific *linear* pathways to terrorism nor identify causal relationships, they can nevertheless be arranged and linked together in order to identify potential paths that lead an individual to committing an act of terrorism. This allows us to gain better insights into the importance of different biographical and socialization risk factors at different periods of a person's life cycle. These can include risk factors in childhood, such as violence in the family, risk factors in the very sensitive adolescent period and/or in the year prior to the crime, like losing a job or a loved one, and factors related to the radicalization phase, such as self-isolation from friends and family and becoming preoccupied with a violent ideology. Therefore, with the large number of historical risk factors occurring at different periods of a person's life cycle, different stages of progression toward extremist violence can be explored.

Although it may be possible to find indications of potential critical (clusters of) risk factors for offenders or offender groups with EDT data, it is not possible to control for all possible influences persons face in their life spans, [35] leading to individual, cultural and situational sources of variance in statistical analyses. This being noted, the risk and protective factors identified here could well serve to support models for (pathways to) terrorist engagement, approaching real life as an important step for a better understanding of the important issues our EDT focuses on.

Terrorism and Role Psychopathology

One line of research the EDT can provide is the potential role of psychopathology in committing terrorist crimes, in association with meaningful environmental risk factors. Several scholars have underlined the importance of examining the relationship between psychopathology and terrorism, in conjunction with personal, social and contextual circumstances.[36] With this in mind, the EDT dataset can be used to examine psychopathology

as potential risk factor for engagement in terrorism, considering contextual risk factors. This could not only involve research into mental disorders, but also the diagnosis of underlying traits or symptoms that lack an specific mental disorder diagnosis. It is important to take these traits and symptoms into account, also because a differentiated psychopathological approach is considered best practice for forensic experts.

Validation of Risk Assessments for Terrorism

Another line of research possible with the EDT dataset is to validate risk assessment instruments like the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment instrument (VERA-2R), which is used all over the world.[37] This structured professional violent extremism judgment tool was originally developed to achieve a more focused form of violent extremism risk management.[38] The instrument is based on professional and theoretical knowledge about risk factors for violent extremism. However, further scientific research is needed to evaluate and validate the risk factors for violent extremism in order to subsequently improve the ability of the VERA-2R to assess and manage the risks for violent extremism. Given that all of the VERA-2R indicators are included in the EDT as separate items, the relative importance of each indicator can be examined. By acquiring additional insight into the risk patterns of terrorist subgroups, risk assessments can be made more accurate for specific subgroups.

Effectiveness Judicial Interventions for Terrorist Offenders

Finally, the EDT data could be used to study the effectiveness of interventions targeted at terrorist offender groups, based on specific data related to the intervention, such as the duration and focus of the intervention and future recidivism data. This is of importance for evidence-based risk prioritization, risk targeting, and risk-based rehabilitation of terrorist offenders.

Policy Implications

The EDT dataset can be used for high-quality quantitative research, which can directly inform policy makers' decisions vis-à-vis key personal and contextual risk and protective factors for terrorism.[39] The longitudinal design makes it possible to develop a European terrorist monitor for policy purposes, such as monitoring of prevention and intervention programs. The continuation of the EDT as a monitoring instrument in coming years would enable the development of an expertise hub, as well as education and training programs, which, in turn, could bridge knowledge gaps between researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the field of countering terrorism and violent extremism. Providing insights into the key personal and contextual risk and protective factors for terrorism can serve several policy purposes.

Knowledge from the EDT could be used to empirically substantiate and validate violent extremism risk assessments, such as the VERA-2R. Output from the EDT could also enhance extant understanding of the distinct risks for various types of offenders and types of terrorist involvement. In so doing, this could support judicial organizations to make informed decisions regarding risk assessment, treatment and management.[40] Moreover, the identification of subgroups with different risk patterns could help to make interventions and risk-assessment tools, such as the VERA-2R, more tailored and based on individual needs, risks and responsiveness, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of such instruments and interventions. Furthermore, insight into the role played by psychopathology in relation to terrorist activities, including the presence of traits or symptoms of a mental disorder, could have added value for forensic mental health assessments, where a differentiated psychopathological approach combined with risk management is considered best practice.

Although the EDT data can help professionals to map the possible risks posed by a person, individual circumstances could elevate or strengthen certain risk factors. Therefore, the ultimate weighting of the unique specific personal and contextual circumstances ought to be done by professionals in their structured violent extremism risk assessments.

The long-term design of the EDT makes it possible to investigate the effectiveness of interventions by measuring recidivism rates and other outcome measures, such as, for example, disengagement and/or the psychosocial functioning of a terrorist offender. This knowledge will take on even greater importance in the coming years,

as convicted terrorist offenders begin to be released from prisons in several European countries.

However, the knowledge to be gained from utilizing the EDT in future research does not only have relevance in a forensic setting. Rather, given that a large part of the codebook deals with personal history items, negative life events and personal experiences prior to committing the crime that brought the individual in contact with the criminal justice system, this information also has relevance outside a correctional setting. For example, parents, teachers, neighborhood watches, youth centers, mosques, municipalities, or police officers could benefit from information derived from the EDT. Depending on the specific setting, the relevant information could be observed, questioned, verified or monitored. For example, if the combination of early school dropout and experiencing violence within the family situation appear to be precursors for radicalization into terrorism, then this information could be used to develop or refine early interventions, such as parenting programs or prevention programs to reduce school drop-out rates.

Conclusion

Although the methodological designs of terrorism research have improved markedly in recent years, to the best of our knowledge the EDT constitutes the first European offender-focused database with a control group, which is based on primary data from judicial sources. The data included in the EDT enable research on key personal risk and protective factors for violent extremism and terrorism. Consequently, the results from research utilizing the data in the EDT will be of critical relevance for security organizations and policy makers alike, insofar as it will provide them with more reliable risk assessments and risk management instruments for terrorist offenders, including much-needed information on the effectiveness of judicial interventions for this offender group.

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US Extremism on Telegram: Fueling Disinformation, Conspiracy Theories, and Accelerationism

by Samantha Walther and Andrew McCoy

Abstract

Several alternative social media platforms have emerged in response to perceptions that mainstream platforms are censoring traditional conservative ideologies. However, many of these alternative social media platforms have evolved to be outlets for hate speech and violent extremism. This study examines hate-based channels on Telegram from a US perspective. While Telegram has often been studied in relation to ISIS, less is known about its usage by US extremist users and movements. The authors used OSINT and observational methods on a sample of 125 Telegram channels containing hate speech and violent extremist content from far-right and far-left perspectives. The authors hypothesized that there would be a greater and growing presence of far-right activity compared to far-left activity due to current migration trends away from mainstream social media by the far-right. The authors also sought to observe the presence of disinformation campaigns, conspiracy theories, and accelerationism on Telegram. This study had four major findings: (1) the findings supported the hypothesis that more channels were host to far-right dialogues, yet there were several far-left channels present, (2) 64.8% of the channels grew in size over a one-week period, (3) 47 of the 125 channels were connected to well-known violent extremist movements or hate groups, and (4) QAnon and the COVID-19 pandemic were the most prominent sources of disinformation and conspiracy theories on Telegram. The findings of this study highlight that alternative social media platforms are a growing environment for a range of hateful ideologies and are aiding the spread of disinformation campaigns. This study concludes with a discussion on future strategies to combat the influence of the Internet on radicalization outcomes.

Keywords: accelerationism, alternative media, conspiracy theories, disinformation, Telegram, US domestic extremism.

Introduction

Alternative media is theorized as those sources and platforms that challenge traditional media due to perceptions that the traditional media has become biased, or concealed and distorting the reality of information being disseminated.[1] Alternative media producers, at the core, seek to give a voice to groups who feel marginalized in the political landscape.[2] As a result, the alternative media platforms become a “self-perceived corrective” tool of traditional media and often become biased in nature.[3]

Social media platforms such as BitChute, Gab, Parler, and Telegram were largely created due to grievances felt by conservative users on mainstream platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. A recent report by Vogels, Perrin & Anderson (2020) found that US Republicans feel at an increasing rate, and more so than liberals, that large social media companies are censoring political dialogue.[4] The study found that 69% of Republicans feel that these same companies hold a liberal bias.[5] Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have also undertaken significant efforts to remove users and content that promotes white nationalism, anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, hate groups, or other alt-right ideologies.[6]

Consequently, conservative social media users have shifted away from mainstream platforms to sites that promote greater free speech policies and do not enforce extensive content removal guidelines.[7] Many US conservative activists, politicians, and celebrities have recently endorsed the migration of their supporters to alternative platforms.[8] For example, a report by Politico found that over the summer of 2020, at least 23 GOP members of Congress had moved to Parler in protest of Twitter takedown policies.[9] California Congressman Devin Nunes has been particularly outspoken about Parler and Rumble, often tweeting to his 1.3 million Twitter followers, encouraging them to move to those spaces.[10] Other influential figures, such as Laura Loomer, who endorsed her own Telegram channel after having content removed on other mainstream sites, have encouraged

users to do the same.[11]

Research shows that online communities can often produce similar characteristics of offline communities—they become strong and increasingly supportive of each other's views.[12] Thus, the spaces become oriented toward that particular community, sharing information on topics that target the interest of the specific audience.[13] Alternative social media platforms enable the building of strong and nearly impenetrable virtual communities that can produce echo chambers of hate speech and violent extremist dialogue that would otherwise be removed by mainstream platforms. Further, de la Brosse, Holt & Haller (2019) argued that research on alternative conservative media is becoming increasingly necessary as there is a growing interdependent relationship between right-wing populist politicians and conservative media sources, which are becoming more professionalized overall.[14] This professionalism and support by politicians can further legitimize biased media sources which are then spread to social media and influence the masses. Continued spread and acceptance of disinformation campaigns, conspiracies, hate, and extremism threaten to de-legitimize and build distrust of mainstream media and democratic institutions.[15]

Telegram specifically has been identified as one of the most influential recruitment and planning tools used by ISIS.[16] However, less is known about Telegram activity and usage by US-based users and movements. Thus, this article seeks to examine the nature of Telegram as an alternative social media platform and outlet for hate speech and violent extremism for far-right movements in the US. With a rise in platform migration and far-right activity globally, the authors hypothesized that far-right activity would be more prominent than far-left on Telegram. Further, it is hypothesized that those channels dedicated to current political trends, such as the election or COVID-19, would be actively attracting new followers. The authors also utilized observational methods to examine the types of communication occurring on the Telegram channels, including disinformation campaigns, conspiracy theories, and accelerationism. It is hypothesized that these themes would be significant facilitators of activity on Telegram, considering current extremist trends and political polarization in the United States.

Literature Review

The Role of the Internet in Radicalization Outcomes

There is scholarly debate over the true effect of the Internet, and specifically social media, on radicalization outcomes. As stated by Conway (2016), no single article, including the one at hand, has the capacity to determine the effect of the Internet on violent extremism and terrorism as a whole. However, this current article attempts to address some of the scholarly concerns about research on the Internet and radicalization presented by previous studies.[17] Particularly, Conway (2016) and Scrivens (2020) noted that in terms of the Internet as a facilitator of radicalization, research has to extend beyond the scope of violent jihadist trends and analyze data across multiple ideologies. Further, researchers must engage in more descriptive and comparative analysis, as opposed to explanatory research. Before scholars can determine *why* the Internet is facilitating radicalization in contemporary terrorism, there needs to be a larger focus on descriptive data that could serve to inform scholars on what type of role the Internet is playing.[18] Scrivens (2020) also contended that much of terrorism research tends to focus on individual-level risk factors and there is a need to step outside this trend to collect more data across different types of frameworks and populations, as well as seek different scopes of studies. While the question of the Internet being a factor of radicalization does influence online users at the individual level, the main question of this study is to take a broader look at what parts of Telegram and what content on Telegram is attractive to a broader audience.

The literature is particularly thin when it comes to engaging with former right-wing extremists' firsthand accounts regarding their radicalization pathways and processes. However, some recent findings have shed light on how former extremists feel about the Internet as a factor in their radicalization process. Research by Koehler (2014) found during in-depth interviews with former right-wing extremists in Germany that they personally

felt that the role of the Internet was the single most important factor in their radicalization process.[19] These firsthand insights are important as they allow researchers to gain an introspective analysis that can only be understood through someone who has radicalized. Similar findings were repeated in a study by Sieckelinck et al. (2019) who interviewed former extremists from Denmark and the Netherlands. The subjects of this study also highlighted the importance of the mass exposure to online propaganda in their radicalization process.[20] Gaudette, Scrivens & Venkatesh (2020) interviewed 10 former right-wing extremists, during which the majority of participants heavily pointed to the important role of the Internet when radicalizing toward violence. They largely acknowledged that the Internet allowed constant and mass exposure to violent extremist content at any time and allowed them to create a community of like-minded individuals.[21] With this type of information in mind, it is important to look more analytically at specific online communities to further understand how each platform can uniquely drive engagement and influence radicalization.

Research across different social media platforms outside of Twitter and Facebook is key to understanding the comparative differences between how different platforms are used.[22] The current article seeks to add to the foundation of understanding how smaller social media platforms may be playing a role in far-right radicalization. Specifically, Telegram can be extremely informational and resourceful for researchers who seek to collect big data, as well as conduct more in-depth analyses of extreme online behavior. By engaging on a smaller platform, the current study also could encourage future research to utilize Telegram, as it is a relatively user-friendly platform with relevant data access.[23] The far-right, in the United States and abroad, is rising in prominence in contemporary politics and everyday society. Factor the rise of the far-right with its long history of Internet usage dating back to the early 1990s when Stormfront was created,[24] it is worthwhile to understand how this particular set of ideologies utilizes the Internet as a modern tool. While this article will not single-handedly explain all the factors as to why specific aspects of Telegram are able to radicalize or engage individuals in extremist content, it can add to the literature about the basic nature of user online experiences on Telegram. By understanding the type of content that is most engaging for users within the far-right community, scholars can begin to understand the foundation of how the Internet is a factor in contemporary radicalization.

Telegram's Role as Alternative Social Media

Initially developed in 2013, Telegram is a cloud-based messaging application accessible by computer, tablet, and mobile device. Telegram offers several options for engagement, including private one-on-one conversations, group chats, and both private and public channels controlled by admins. Telegram does not partake in extensive content takedown policies compared to apps like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, only removing pornographic material and some violent rhetoric on its public channels.[25] Telegram creators boast about the multiplicity of security measures taken to protect user data and conversations, including several encryption software and offers of secret-chats, which automatically self-destruct all content.[26] While the company has maintained a strict stance to not share secret-chat information with any third parties, including government and police officials, it did change its terms of service in 2018.[27] The terms of service update stated that if served with a court order that a user was in fact a terror suspect, the company may release IP addresses and phone numbers.[28]

Mazzoni (2019) determined that there are three main categories of Telegram channels: image channels, news channels, and discussion channels.[29] Image channels often feature video propaganda, memes, and infographics to generally inspire viewers.[30] News channels may often be closed for public discussion, but allow admins to provide real-time updates on current events by providing links to other sources and captions that fit their narrative.[31] The discussion channels are open groups where all can participate in open conversation.[32] The type of channels being utilized is important data to collect to understand how information and hate spread and influence users. Similarly, there is also a range of user types on Telegram. There are many online users who are simply seeking information and passively engaging with the content on the channels.[33] Then, there are two more actively involved groups: 1) those who want to engage more fully with militant and violent groups and the other users on the channels and 2) propagandists who are both seeking information and engaging with other users on channels.[34]

The privacy guidelines continue to attract extreme users across a range of hate-based and violent extremist ideologies that are otherwise being banned from mainstream platforms.[35] Much like the migration of conservative Internet users in the United States to alternative social media, ISIS operatives initiated a strategic shift to less public-facing online spaces to conduct information dissemination—and Telegram became the standard.[36] Research by Shehabat, Mites & Alzoubi (2017) found that increased Telegram communications by ISIS, particularly by spreading propaganda, played a role in an uptick in lone-actor-inspired attacks in Europe between 2015 and 2016.[37] ISIS' 'virtual entrepreneurs' were also responsible for "directing 19 out of the 38 IS-related attacks in Western Europe from 2014 to 2016" by hosting conversations with recruits on alternative social media including Telegram.[38]

Far-right movements have also expanded across Telegram channels, notably spiking after the 2019 Christchurch Attack in New Zealand.[39] Research by the SITE Intelligence Group found that following the Christchurch shootings, far-right channels experienced a 117% increase in membership by October.[40] Further, of the 374 far-right channels identified by SITE Intelligence Group, 80% of them had been formed after the Christchurch attack. Unlike ISIS channels, the far-right channels have been largely public facing, granting access to any users seeking hate-based and violent extremist conversations.[41] Also, unlike the highly organized ISIS networks that have both an online and offline presence, white supremacist networks online are often much more loosely connected and highly decentralized networks.[42] Further, Guhl & Davey (2020) analyzed 208 white supremacist Telegram channels and found that the platform was largely being used to glorify terrorist and past lone-actors, call for violence, spread white supremacist material, and degrade minority groups.[43]

In addition to the security protections being particularly attractive, other research has contended that Telegram has some unique and inherently addictive qualities as well.[44] Telegram chats appeal to individuals who want to engage with like-minded individuals. Research on ISIS-Telegram channels found that recruiters and propagandists can function similarly to a "seller of a product," but in this case the product being a photo, video, link, or other propaganda.[45] With links expiring quickly and channels filling up quickly with discussion, users have to be present and logged on to not miss content or the opportunity to engage with others.[46] Engagement with the content and the group can lead to feelings of fulfillment or being part of a community, influencing the likelihood that vulnerable viewers will keep coming back.[47]

Holbrook (2019) also found that there are different types of material and differences in severity of extremism in terms of media material being disseminated online.[48] Holbrook analyzed the types of media material related to 50 individuals and groups connected to plans or acts of terrorism in the UK between 2004 and 2017. He concluded that the majority of content was ideological in nature, such as religious materials, as opposed to facilitative, such as instructions on how to build an Improvised Explosive Device (IED).[49] While his study analyzed Islamist-inspired extremists and did not specify any specific platforms that the media content was found on, it highlights the importance of understanding the different types of material online and what is most influential. Holbrook defined the material as moderate, fringe, and extreme, suggesting a scaled and a nuanced ecosystem of extreme information being distributed. Further, as suggested by Guhl & Davey (2020), there is evidence of a shift in the organizational paradigm, whereby online connection to even loose extreme-right culture and ideology can be equally influential and inspirational for violence as on-the-ground operations and groups.[50] While most online users may be passively engaging with this content and will never act off-line, increased exposure to pro-terrorist channels and the regular calls for violence made to these large audiences increases the risk that one or more of the viewers may eventually act off-line.[51] With rates of engagement increasing on Telegram, it is timely to understand how Telegram is being used as a tool for furthering hate, radicalization, and potentially influencing off-line violence.

Far-Right and Far-Left Online Communities

The theoretical framework on alternative media suggests that it aims to serve a specific community while at the same time forming an antagonist relationship with traditional media sources.[52] Online communities are formed and strengthened through shared opinions, creating a collective identity that is often strengthened in

the face of intergroup conflict.[53] Online hate is typically targeted toward different social groups.[54] There have been both formal and informal hate groups disseminating hateful speech or ideology online with a variety of targets.[55] Far-right communities largely derive from shared ideals about national identity that justify white privilege and racism.[56] Far-left communities derive from a range of ideals, including opposition to capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism, or support for decentralized forms of government, including anarchy.[57] Far-left ideologies have also included animal rights and environmental extremism.[58]

When discussing far-right and far-left extremist movements, it should be noted that these do not align with traditional scopes of political parties but comprise a fraction of individuals that espouse extreme and sometimes violent beliefs. For the purposes of this article, the authors used the terms “far-right” and “far-left” to identify those individuals and groups who are espousing ideologies that justify hate speech and violence. The terms “conservative” and “traditionally liberal” or “liberal” are used when referring to mainstream political parties that are not extreme or violent in their nature. We often differentiate between hate speech and violent extremist content in the results section, as the two terms imply different levels of extreme thought and speech. While hate speech is pejorative and discriminatory in its manner, it does not justify violence in the same way that violent extremist speech does.[59] Hate speech does not reach the threshold of inciting hostility and violence, while violent extremist speech does.[60]

Both far-right and far-left extremists are similar to one another in that they often hold a simplistic “black-and-white” perception of the world, are overconfident in their judgments, and are less tolerant of out-group opinions.[61] While they are based on similar psychological frameworks, far-right and far-left movements may diverge in the spaces they choose to be active online. Research by Freelon, Marwick & Kreiss (2020) found that popular social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are most often consumed by hashtag activism movements by traditional liberal activists.[62] Traditional liberal activists are also more likely to take to the streets in protest for very public displays of off-line activity. Conversely, conservative users increasingly feel that their beliefs and rights to free speech are being interfered with by content removal policies on popular platforms.[63] Conservative users feel platforms like Twitter and Instagram remove conservative-leaning content at greater rates than liberal-leaning content.[64] Freelon, Marwick, and Kreiss (2020) also found that conservative activists and the far-right are more likely to manipulate traditional media and migrate to alternative platforms, as well as work with partisan media sources to spread their message.[65] Further Krzysztof Wasilewski (2019) argued that far-right media manipulates traditional liberal language to form an “ethnically exclusive collective memory” that presents a version of history that counters the current social-political state.[66] This collective memory is “exclusive for white Americans leaning toward the alt-right or far-right movement.”[67]

Although many alternative platforms have small followings, some have had a larger influence, reach, and circulation.[68] While public-facing platforms like Twitter attract and allow individuals to counter hateful and violent rhetoric, the same pattern may not hold true for alternative platforms with more privatized channels of dialogue. Alternative platforms are not as public facing, popular, or visible to the majority of Americans. In regard to Telegram, a recent study by Urman & Katz (2020) found that Telegram activity began to proliferate with mass bans of far-right actors on other mainstream social media platforms.[69] This trend isolates the far-right dialogue from the rest of the political discourse, forming an asymmetric polarization online.[70] These trends set the framework for the first hypothesis of this article. As conservative activists ‘social media users traditionally shift to alternative social media more so than liberal users, the authors of this study hypothesized that:

H¹: Due to current grievances, the Telegram channels in this study would largely stem from far-right extremism. While there may be evidence of far-left channels, they may be much harder to access than far-right spaces or may be more prevalent on traditional social media platforms, which is outside the scope of this study.

Disinformation and Conspiracies

Previous studies have also found that the far-right uses disinformation campaigns and conspiracy theories more than the far-left.[71] Social media platforms are used to react to real-world events in a multitude of ways.

Social media can help mobilize support and assistance in the aftermath of tragedy, share truthful information, as well as serve as a platform for the “socially disruptive” to spread misinformation and antagonist commentary.[72] Research on media manipulation by Marwick & Lewis (2017) contended that the far-right has become apt at exploiting vulnerable young men who have an inclination for rebellion and dislike of political correctness in order to spread violent ideologies, create distrust of legitimate media sources, and further help to radicalize individuals.[73] Large and influential Telegram channels can quickly spread false information to hundreds if not thousands of vulnerable followers, thereby increasing the influence that disinformation and conspiracies have on online users.

Conspiracy theories are often developed in response to major events in order to allow people to better accept the unpredictability of these events.[74] Furthermore, conspiracies are more likely to circulate in reaction to government mistrust, weakening institutions, and when groups feel they are excluded from the democratic-process.[75] Presently, the United States and the global community are facing two of the most dangerous and adaptive conspiracy sources and disinformation campaigns in history: the QAnon conspiracy and another referring to the origins and nature of COVID-19. In the wake of these two societal factors, the authors’ second hypothesis in this study regarded the content within the Telegram channels, specifically:

H²: The public-facing Telegram channels the authors could access in this study would not necessarily be used for planning future attacks or specific violent encounters, but would be filled with general dialogue of disinformation and conspiracies, especially considering the current environment in the US. With the 2020 Presidential Election, COVID-19, grievances, real or perceived, over police brutality, gun rights, and race at the forefront of the national conversation, tensions are high, and individuals will use disinformation and conspiracies to not only cope with but also to further their indoctrinated beliefs.

A New “Accelerationism”

The term accelerationism is largely understood as a fringe philosophy relating to Marxist views on capitalism.[76] It is meant to suggest that intensification of capitalism will eventually lead to its collapse. However, the use of the term, being so recently adapted by members of the far-right, has not been studied in depth. In the far-right movement, accelerationism has come to mean that the far-right must increase civil disorder, or accelerate violence and aggression, in order to create further polarization and bring about a societal collapse that fits their agenda.[77] Several high-profile white supremacist perpetrators have used the term in their manifestos and other writings, including Brenton Tarrant, John Earnest, and neo-Nazi James Mason.[78] Accelerationists see violence as a chain reaction that can ignite, or “fan the fire,” creating chaos, collapse, and revolutionary change that promotes white power.[79]

Telegram recently came under scrutiny as Black Lives Matter protests erupted throughout the United States in the summer of 2020. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) warned intelligence officials of a white supremacist Telegram channel that was encouraging its followers to infiltrate and start a “boogaloo” at the protests.[80] Analysis of far-right social media activity reveals that many white supremacists also believe a civil war is inevitable and that individuals should train, arm themselves, and prepare to incite violence.[81] Accelerationism has also expanded out of the COVID-19 pandemic, with some white supremacists accusing Jews and migrants of creating and spreading the virus.[82]

H³: The most extreme users would argue the effectiveness of accelerationist tactics. The authors strove to discern which movements are most embracing of accelerationism.

Methodology

Channel Access

Accessing the virtual spaces which host hate speech and violent extremism on Telegram can initially be challenging. Semenzin & Bainotti (2019) developed two methodological approaches to access channels when studying Telegram: a cross-platform (external) approach and an in-platform (internal) approach.[83] The cross-platform approach uses links from other sites and blogs to enter into Telegram spaces, while the in-platform approach relies on creating a list of topic-related words based on previous literature.[84] Once the list of access words is created, researchers simply use the search bar on Telegram to locate channels relating to the topic and then can use a snowball sampling logic to locate more similar and connected channels.[85] The authors employed the in-platform approach in this study, creating a list of 59 initial keywords. The authors applied the keywords related to far-right and far-left ideologies and movements, as well as focusing on general topics that are popular in the US discourse that could evoke extreme views. These general topics included terms such as “coronavirus,” relevant conspiracy theories such as “QAnon,” racial and religious terminology, and alternative media sites previously studied within the field. In total, 34 of the words related to the far-right, 9 words related to the far-left, and 16 words related to general topics were applied. The full list of access words is available in Appendix A.

Initial search results using the keywords returned 79 channels across a range of extreme ideologies. The authors then extended the database of channels through a snowball technique. Since white supremacist Telegram channels have been found to be highly networked with much of the content being shared from one channel to another, they easily link researchers to more and more channels.[86] The snowball technique gained access to another 46 channels for a total of 125 Telegram channels analyzed in the final data set. The scope of this project was to look at channels relevant to current extremism trends in the United States. The authors determined channels were related to domestic extremism and hate-based ideologies on the basis of a number of factors.

Firstly, channels were included if their names were associated with US-based movements, even if they have grown to have a global presence. For example, several channels contained “Atomwaffen,” “Proud Boys,” and “QAnon” in their channel names. While movements such as Atomwaffen and QAnon have gained global traction, they originated in the United States and the Telegram audience was largely US-based.

Secondly, many channels that did not directly name extremist movements in their titles did so in their channel bios or profile images. For example, a channel titled “The Great Awakening” wrote in their bio “Safe place for all things Q and Trump related,” with several American flags. Their profile picture also depicted the “Where We Go One, We Go All” phrase with the letter “Q,” to represent affiliation with the QAnon conspiracy theory movement.

Thirdly, some channels were connected to movements that did not originate in the United States, such as the racist Skinhead movement. However, channels relating to international movements were included if they hosted conversations or shared symbols relating to the movement’s factions in the United States. For example, one racist Skinhead channel included several memes depicting the US confederate flag, among other American-oriented images.

Lastly, some channels did not elucidate their affiliation to US movements and ideologies so clearly, but that could be determined based on simple analysis of the recent content in the channels. For example, a group called “Great Kingdom of Zombe” was found through snowball techniques but had no clear affiliation to any movements based on its profile description. However, the most recent conversations suggested that the channel was aimed at discussing the Proud Boy movement and was connected with several other Proud Boy-affiliated channels. Several channels were found in this manner, as they had ambiguous titles and bios. However, the channel was clearly dedicated to share hate-based beliefs based on recent dialogue.

Descriptive Data Collection

Using open-source intelligence readily available on the Telegram channels, the authors collected a range of descriptive data from each channel. The channel name, channel function (news, image, or discussion), and follower size were recorded at the time the channel was first located. One of the hypotheses of this study was that Telegram channels would be growing in audience and engagement due to migration away from popular platforms. The authors also recorded the follower size seven days after locating each channel. Although this is a small period, it is useful to gain a preliminary understanding of which channels may be attractive to new followers and understand which channels are producing consistent content, as opposed to channels that may be more dormant.

Secondly, the authors examined each channel for underlying ideologies based on channel names, bio information, as well as recent content. For the purposes of this article, the authors considered ideologies to be the simplistic belief system that each Telegram channel was predominately embracing. The authors broke down the far-right and far-left to better capture the presence of unique belief systems. In total, 13 categories were created: *Alt-Right*; *Anti-Fascist/Far-Left/Anarchist*; *Anti-Government*; *Black Nationalist*; *Cybercrime*; *Eco-Fascist*; *General Far-Right/Hate*; *Glorifying Violent Extremism*; *Neo-Confederate*; *Neo-Nazi*; *Racist Skinhead*; *White Nationalist*; and *White Supremacist*.

Lastly, the authors examined each Telegram channel to determine if they were in connection with specific hate-based or violent extremist movements that are currently operating in the United States. The authors differentiated between ideology and movement affiliation, as the former gives a basic understanding of content on channels, while the latter elucidates in more specificity which known movement may be operating on alternative platforms. While each channel in the data set had ideologies that were driving the conversations, not every channel was connected to any specific movement. Many channels were simply host to general ideologically based hate without propagating the agenda of an established movement. While the QAnon conspiracy following and the “Boogaloo bois” have not been officially named violent extremist groups, their ideologies have been driving the creation of violent extremist propaganda and raising security concerns in recent months. Therefore, QAnon and Boogaloo were both included as respective categories. Other movements found were Atomwaffen, Proud Boys, Antifa, Patriot Front, Skinhead Nation, National Alliance, League of the South, National Vanguard, New Black Panther Party, the NSDAP, Pine Tree Party, Sparrows Crew, the Base, the Right Stuff, and Vinlanders Club.

Content Observations

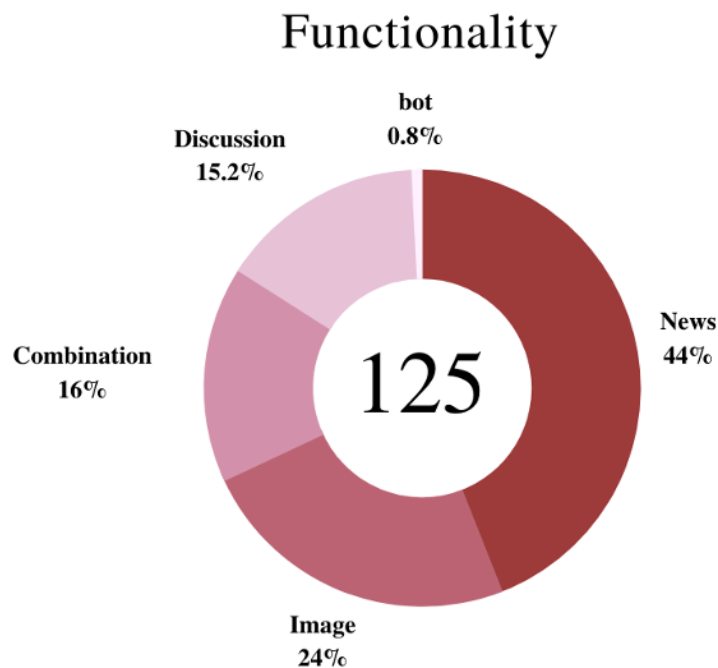
In addition to the quantitative descriptive statistics collected, the authors also observed recurring topics and themes in the Telegram channels. While the authors hypothesized that there would be disinformation and conspiracy theories amidst the Telegram channels, such observations were intended to elucidate which particular conspiracies are currently most influential. In regard to observational research methods, the authors used a full-observer approach, meaning they did not interact with any users or discussions in the Telegram channels in order to not manipulate the subjects and topics of conversation.[87] This approach negates the possibility of reactivity, which could skew our perceptions of user beliefs and language used (i.e., how extreme they are).[88] While there are certainly hundreds of topics of conversations across the channels, the results were focused on the key themes that were most often recurring.

Results*Channel Type: Discussion, News, and Image*

Each channel in the data set was categorized by its function either as a discussion channel, image channel, or news channel. While most channels in the data set were defined as one of the three categories, 20 (16%) of the

channels did display characteristics of multiple functions. These channels were characterized as combination channels, which would share both large quantities of news articles and original content, including images and videos. Image channels made up a slightly larger proportion of the data set, with 24% (30 channels) being solely image and video messages. The image channels were hubs for original content largely in the forms of memes. Discussion channels made up 15.2% (19 channels) of the data set. Discussion channels were those that were filled with original content by several subscribers, as opposed to admins, creating original dialogues about politics, current events, and their ideologies.

Figure 1: Pie chart representing the breakdown of channels by functionality type.



Finally, the majority (44%) of the channels were news based. However, the news that was being shared ranged in its validity. Some channels would repost articles from actual news sources, while others, especially in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and QAnon, would post news links to unreliable and unchecked sources. This elucidates a strong connection between alternative news media and alternative social media. The social media channels would echo disinformation from alternative new sources, revealing active participation in disinformation campaigns and conspiracy theories. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of channels by functionality.

Channel Size

The channel size ranged throughout the data set. One channel was not able to be measured since it was a bot channel and did not have subscribers. The minimum number of subscribers was 2 and the maximum was 22,368. However, these two counts can be considered extremes, as the average number of subscribers was 1664.79 and the median number of subscribers was 473.5.

Only 4 (3.2%) of the channels had large followings of more than 10,000 subscribers. Each channel was news-based or news/image-based with no chat option available for subscribers. These channels shared news relating to their specific ideology or beliefs, oftentimes spreading conspiracy theories or misinformation from unreliable or unchecked sources. One of these channels was a QAnon-driven channel, which provided updates to followers with every single piece of QAnon content that gets posted to the official QAlerts website. The QAnon channel further supports evidence that far-right movements continue to engage in large-scale conspiracy theories and disinformation campaigns. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of all the channels in the data set based on subscriber count.

Channel Size Change

Due to recent migration trends of the far-right leaving popular social media platforms, the authors hypothesized that some channels with particularly relevant ideologies, such as QAnon, may be actively engaging new followers even over short periods of time. In total, 81 of the 125 channels gained followers during a one-week period (see Figure 3). Twenty-one channels saw decreases in subscriber counts while 22 remained the same size. Changes in subscriber count, both positively and negatively, were not necessarily drastic, with the exception of one QAnon channel. The average size change was 23.11 followers, with some channels only gaining one or two subscribers over the week. Similarly, channels that decreased in size were not decreasing by significant numbers either. One QAnon channel was an outlier, gaining 566 followers in just one week—a much larger change than the 21.11 average gain. This pushed the subscriber count to more than 15K globally for that specific channel. For comparison, the next highest gain was 186 followers over the course of the week. A channel which was categorized as a cybercrime channel for its abundance of financial scams lost 102 followers—the largest size decrease in the data set. Another pattern worth mentioning was that all seven of the Proud Boys-affiliated channels increased membership over the course of one week. While this time period is small and may not be representative of large fluctuation patterns, it suggests that channels related to the most trending movements, such as QAnon and Proud Boys, may garner interest quickly. This may especially hold true as media coverage has increased drastically when reporting on Proud Boys and QAnon. With more coverage and more spotlight on these lines of thinking, more online users may seek information relating to the movements. Future studies should consider a more profound analysis into channel growth over longer periods of time, as well as seek to analyze which ideologies remain prominent and which ones have the longest lifespans on Telegram channels.

Figure 2: Chart showing the percentage breakdown of the Telegram channel sizes, based on number of subscribers (subs).

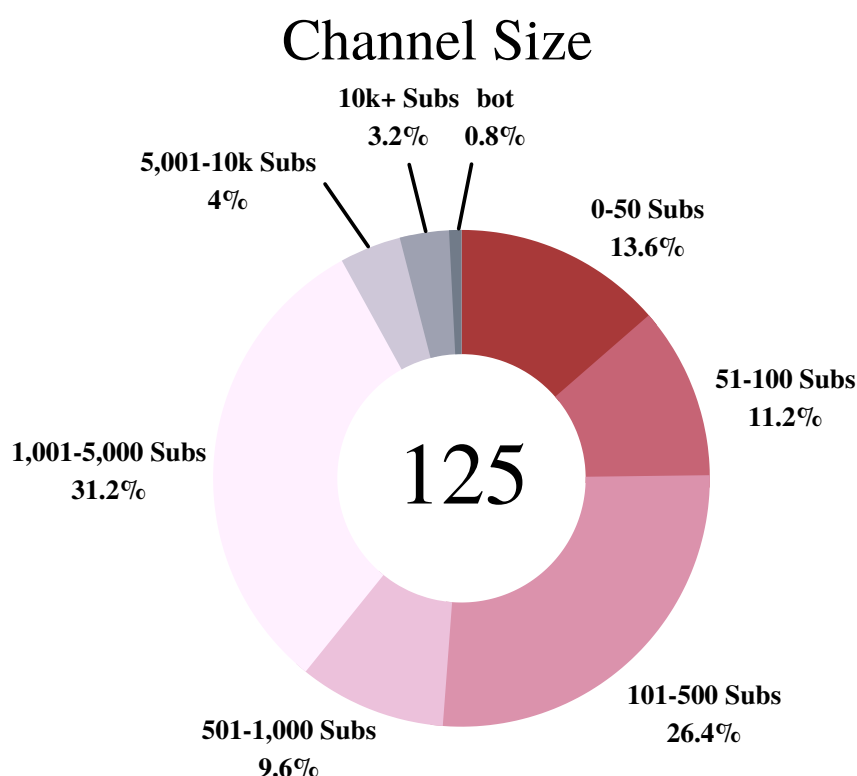
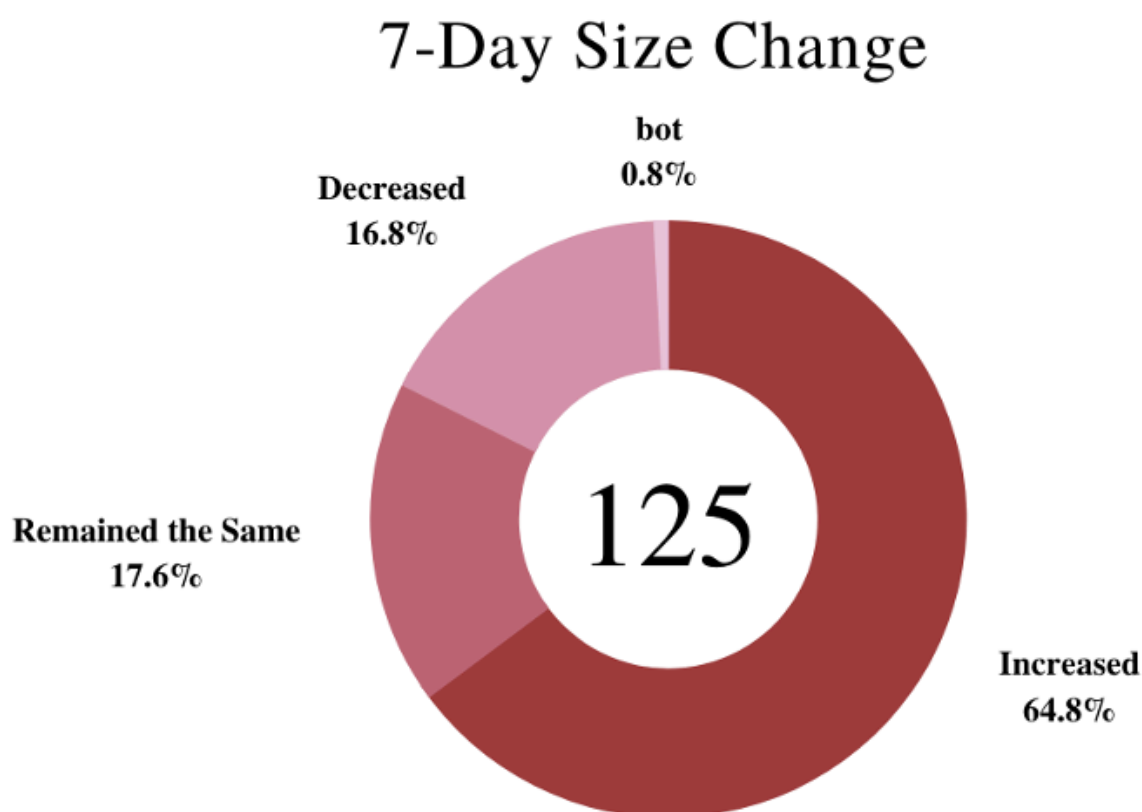


Figure 3: Chart showing how channel subscriber counts fluctuated over a seven-day period.



Ideology

The majority of the 125 channels in the dataset were host to far-right content as opposed to far-left. While it is important to acknowledge that the far-right may be more prevalent on Telegram than the far-left, the more important takeaway is understanding which ideologies are currently popular in the US discourse and on alternative social media.

Alt-Right, Neo-Nazi, and White Nationalist ideologies accounted for more than half of the channels with a combined 69 (55.2%) of the channels in the data set. White supremacist, neo-confederate, and racist Skinhead channels were also present; however, at a much smaller percentage, amounting to 22 channels (17.6%) of the data set. Another eight channels (6.4%) were considered to host general far-right/hate content.

It was common to see a combination of ideologies and symbology on the Telegram channels. Several channels had many neo-Nazi symbols present, but also called for a separate nation for the White race, leaning toward a White separatist ideology. Further, it was common to see channels reposting from other far-right channels even if they did not necessarily share exactly the same ideologies. Popular propaganda pieces and original content would often be posted across many of the channels. The same trend occurred with many news articles. The same stories, images, and memes would continuously appear across many of the channels. Therefore, many channels fed off one another, despite the far-right being made up of a vast range of movements and ideologies. Future studies should consider examining the social movement of Telegram channels further.

Far-left movements, specifically those with anti-fascist ideologies, are a major topic of discussion with the current protests taking shape across the United States. These channels accounted for seven (5.6%) of the 125 channels in the data set. While there were certainly not as many easily accessible far-left channels, this finding does not simply imply that the far-left does not represent a violent extremist threat. This finding is in line with previous literature suggesting that the far-left may be less likely to utilize alternative social media platforms for recruiting but is more likely to participate in hashtag activism on popular platforms or off-line activities.

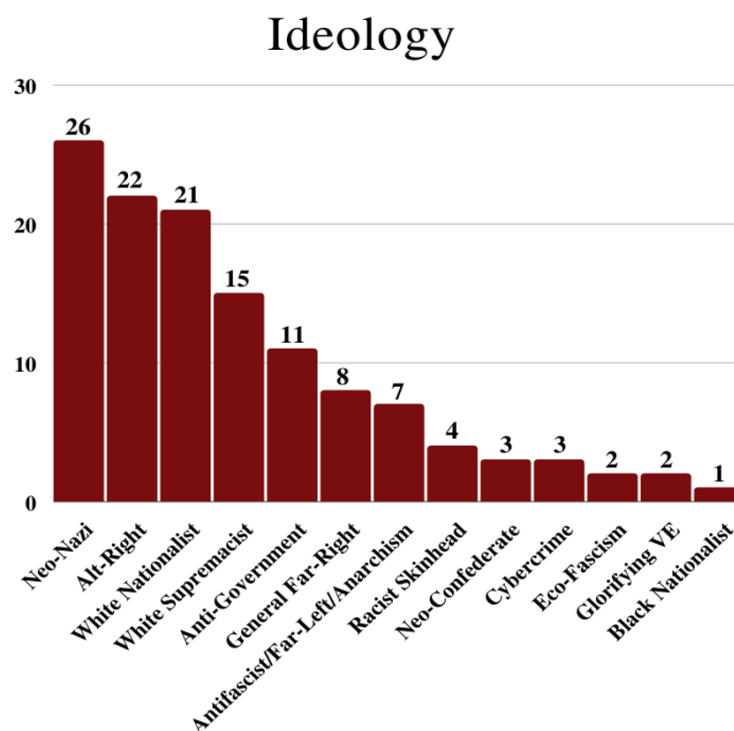
The lack of finding far-left channels is an important finding in the sense that it supports claims that alternative platforms still largely remain hubs for far-right activity and that far-left activity takes place elsewhere. Figure 4 shows the specific breakdown of different ideologies that defined each of the Telegram channels.

The analysis also revealed evidence of a few ideologies that are often under-studied. One important finding was the discovery of a channel that fell under the category of Black Nationalism. While the channel was not very active, it does suggest that there is a diverse range of ideologies on Telegram. With heightened race tensions in the United States, it is also important to consider how Black Nationalist movements may be escalating and reacting to the rise of far-right movements.

Three of the channels in the data set were not given traditional ideologies but were rather labeled as “cybercrime” channels. These channels were originally found through the terminology search because of their titles, which included violent extremist terms. While they did not show significant evidence of violent extremist discussions, they did all have a range of financial scams under the guise of a channel name that was connected to other violent extremist channels. This finding also points to the dangers of alternative platforms that are not as public facing, which can provide a haven for a range of criminal online activity.

Two channels were related to a rising eco-fascist movement known as the Pine Tree Party. The rise of the Pine Tree Party and its influence on Telegram suggests a recent revival in eco-fascist thought. The first public surfacing of the Pine Tree Party was through an Instagram post by Mike Ma on November 3, 2017.[89] Ma, a potential leader of the Pine Tree Party, has stated in previous interviews that his ideal form of government would be “no government, but obviously that would require a way smaller population”.[90] Eco-fascism rests on the idea that in order to restore a higher natural order, the human population must be reduced dramatically, and this would ideally mean removing immigrants to form a higher population of White people who can then live in solitude and produce more eco-sustainable patterns of life.[91] Eco-fascism has historically been a large driver of violence, inspiring several recent major violent extremists, including Patrick Crusius, Brenton Tarrant, and Anders Breivik.[92]

Figure 4: Bar graph showing the breakdown of ideology type across the data set of Telegram channels.



Movement Affiliations

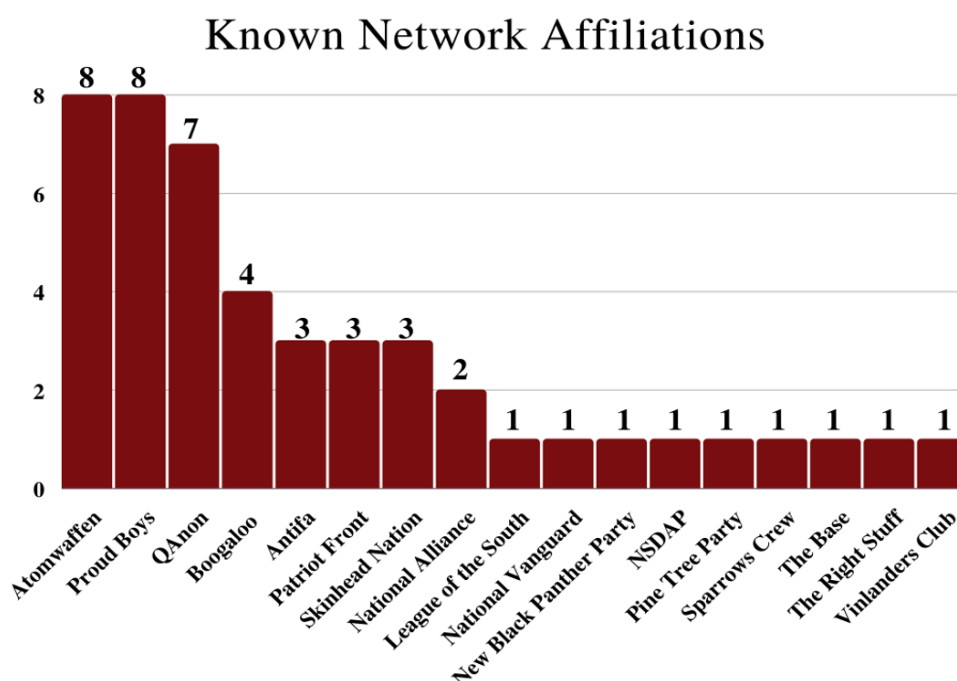
In total, 47 of the 125 channels in the data set were found to be associated with known hate-based movements (see Figure 5).

The Proud Boys movement, which continued to make national news as protests erupted in Portland, WA, was one of the most prominent movements active on Telegram, with eight channels connected to the group. Atomwaffen, a widely followed neo-Nazi accelerationist movement that originated in Texas, was also represented with 8 channels.[93] While Atomwaffen had a relatively large number of channels, not all of them were highly active or had large followings. In fact, the Atomwaffen channel with the largest following of 898 subscribers has not been active since November 29, 2019.

However, 10 days prior to ceasing activity, another Atomwaffen channel was created under the same name. The bio of this channel reads, “New archive because the old one is going to be deleted”. It is not uncommon for admins to create new pages and re-share content from the old channel to the new channel if they suspect the original has been infiltrated by “feds” or was flagged by Telegram. This behavior elucidates the “whack-a-mole” problem with violent extremist activity on social media. Just as quickly as one account can cease activity or be shut down, another with the exact same content and propaganda can be created. This pattern was continuously noted in this Telegram study, as many channels that were found to be inactive would link followers to their new channel names before going dark. Simply removing a channel does not necessarily cut off access to an audience.

QAnon-related channels closely followed in frequency with seven channels dedicated to new Q “drops” and conversations regarding the conspiracy. The QAnon channels with discussion capabilities were often engaged in disinformation campaigns and with news articles being posted from fake or unreliable sources. The Boogaloo movement, Skinhead Nation, and Patriot Front all had operating channels that were actively creating original content to attract new members. Other movements represented include National Alliance, Antifa, Pine Tree Party, League of the South, Aryan Nations, New Black Panther Party, Stormfront, National Vanguard, National Socialist Movement, National Justice Party, the Vinlanders Social Club, and the Base.

Figure 5: Figure showing the number of Telegram channels that were found to be affiliated with known hate groups, conspiracy followings, and violent extremist movements in the United States. Forty-seven of the 125 channels in the data set were found to be associated with known movements.



Disinformation Campaigns and Conspiracy Theories

In line with findings by Guhl & Davey (2020), explicit anti-minority ideas, hostility toward minorities, and racist slurs were abundantly present in our data set. The study also supported Holbrook's (2019) analysis, which found that the majority of content online may not be facilitative in nature but rather more ideological and part of a larger discussion that justifies future violence without actually making any definite plans or means to commit acts of violence.[94] Specifically in relation to the far-right network on Telegram, the authors found that there were very explicit racist ideas present, as well as influential disinformation campaigns that were particularly engaging. QAnon was the most popular conspiracy theory to surface on the channels; however, some of the channels simply shared the latest "Q drop" without a chat function. QAnon channels often aimed to discredit traditional liberal politicians, claiming they were members of a deep state cabal of pedophiles. Further, Q-adherents expressed the belief that former President Trump was the only savior combatting the deep-state and was communicating with "Q" through tweets.

There was also a dangerous intersection between QAnon and COVID-19 conspiracies. Many users on Telegram spread anti-vaccination propaganda in regard to COVID-19, urging followers not to participate in social distancing or adhere to mask guidelines, claiming the virus was not real, or urging followers to not follow guidelines as these allegedly infringe on their human rights.

The largest source of disinformation surrounded the COVID-19 pandemic. The far-right has been the most active influencer of misinformation and propaganda sharing, especially online. When combined with how the pandemic itself fuels more online activity, as thousands are laid off and more likely to find themselves sitting at home facing a computer screen, it becomes a great deal easier for online recruiters to attract more people and expose them to disinformation campaigns.[95] Miranda Christou (2020) argued that "the radical right does not simply reject science; it invents its own scientific rhetoric to provide an 'alternative interpretation'", and that is exactly what is happening due to the coronavirus on Telegram channels.[96] Telegram is overwhelmed with conversations about how the virus is a deep state control tactic, a control tactic used by elites like Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos to wipe out the population and train individuals into obedient slaves, that masks are ineffective, or that nobody has actually died from the virus. Oftentimes links to fringe healthcare sites are shared on Telegram channels. Others are using memes and videos to delegitimize the actual health guidelines necessary to control the spread of the virus. These belief systems continue to threaten public health and build distrust of science, political institutions, and health-care institutions.

With QAnon and COVID-19 dominating the majority of the conspiracy conversations, the "boogaloo" beliefs did not come up as much as the authors of the study had expected. However, there were certainly still many users who expected a civil war was coming. One anti-government channel shared several audiobook-style downloads explaining exactly how the breakup of America was going to happen. Many other channels shared this sentiment and directly predicted that the 2020 presidential election was going to increase violence, and potentially spiral into a civil conflict.

Accelerationism

Proud Boys, Pine Tree Party, and many of the White supremacist-related channels expressed that accelerationism of chaos, conflict, and violence is a goal of many of their off-line actions. Posts included propaganda with the caption "an appeal to acceleration" and users explaining how they wanted to see former President Trump win the 2020 presidential election "because of the apocalyptic meltdowns from shitlibs, which would result in them becoming more openly radical, and their radicalism gives us more justification to resist and counter them". Several channels continue to discuss which presidential candidate is the "acceleration option." Many channels are spreading messages and sharing information such as "the more people realize that there is no political solution, the more of them will start acting accordingly". While these messages are not discrete plans for attacks, they elucidate a potential desire for future conflict as more and more users are beginning to believe that no politics can solve the tensions in the United States.

The most notable calls to action were in the Proud Boys channels after the first presidential debate, namely when former President Donald Trump made reference to the group. Channels quickly responded by making t-shirts and symbols quoting the former President, warning followers to “get ready” and “prepare” for a looming war, as well as users suggesting “Let’s go back to Portland”. Other comments included users suggesting that individuals conduct actions as they see fit, either alone or with a small group of friends in order to avoid increased surveillance by federal agents. This call for lone-actor violence is one that ought to be monitored. As public awareness of some violent extremist movements heightens, movements may attempt to move underground further. Some Proud Boys chapters released statements saying that they were not racist or violent; however, the channel’s actual content suggests otherwise. While some followers may have originally joined the group when it was considered a chauvinist drinking club, it is evident that the movement has evolved and gained followers with racist and violent ideologies.

A common theme of channels was to glorify past lone-actors, calling them “Heroes” and “Saints” of the greater White supremacist movement. A list circulated on many channels, dubbed many violent domestic terrorists and mass murders, such as Charles Ray, the assassin of Martin Luther King Jr., Theodore Kaczynski, Eric Rudolph, Anders Breivik, Dylann Roof, and Tobias Rathjen, as “saints” (see Appendix B). The authors of this study believe this is the same list identified by Guhl & Davey (2020) in their report on White supremacist Telegram channels. While this repeated finding is not surprising considering the interconnectedness of Telegram channels, it does suggest that this content continues to be circulated unabatedly, despite potentially breaching Telegram’s terms of service.

Many of the contemporary violent extremists on the list utilized alternative platforms such as Telegram, 8chan, and 4chan to espouse their hate for the groups or individuals that they ended up targeting in their attacks.[97] These perpetrators are seen as inspiration for new extremists. There is a pattern of online activity inspiring one individual to take action, who then inspires the next perpetrator. Examples include the Unabomber, whose manifesto was published in the Washington Post, later being used as inspiration for Brenton Tarrant, who in turn inspired Patrick Crusius.[98] Glorification of violence is playing a large role in the radicalization of new violent extremists and must continue to be analyzed to better understand what type of potential counter messages can be utilized to stop this cycle.

Discussion

The findings of this study largely supported the authors hypotheses that Telegram is an actively growing environment for US-based hate speech and extremism with a range of ideologies present. While more far-right content was present in this study, the radicalization is occurring on both sides of the political spectrum.

Perhaps the most critical finding of this study is that the United States is facing a pressing disinformation crisis which is being exponentially furthered by the increased usage of alternative social media platforms such as Telegram. There is an underlying connection by alt-right news media sources and far-right social media users. The biased news being produced is shared on social media platforms such as Telegram, introducing it into the daily lives of users. By questioning the authority of traditional media, the alternative platforms not only build their own sense of legitimacy but also create distrust of mainstream media that share truthful information.[99] This has led to a widespread decline in media trust and gives rise to alternative conservative media, disinformation, and conspiracies gaining influence in national politics.

QAnon best exemplifies how disinformation is delegitimizing democratic institutions and gaining influence in politics. The conspiracy has effectively seeped into the United States government, with more than a dozen US House and Senate candidates who have openly endorsed the conspiracy running for office.[100] There have also been several criminal and/or violent incidents related to QAnon beliefs, including several kidnappings and threats to prominent politicians.[101]

Further, the spread of disinformation is having detrimental effects on public health. The far-right has continued

to undermine and discredit mainstream medical science, education, and public policies in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rhetoric online, contending that the virus was created by politicians to control citizens, has convinced many Americans not to follow social distancing and mask use guidelines and spread anti-vaccination beliefs. Some far-right members have gone so far as to weaponize COVID-19. Reports from the United Kingdom noted that far-right movements operating online had been encouraging followers to “intentionally infect Jews and Muslims”.[102] In this sense, the virus is exploited to further a xenophobic, racist, and violent ideological agenda. In March 2020, a Missouri man with racist and anti-government beliefs went so far as to plan to bomb a hospital that was facing full capacity with COVID-19 patients.[103] Another man in Massachusetts with White supremacist views also planned on bombing a Jewish assisted living community that had reached capacity due to COVID-19.[104] Hate crimes against Asian-Americans have also increased since the onset of the pandemic.[105]

The growing distrust of experts and political leaders and the momentum that conspiracy theories are gaining in the United States is one of the most pressing threats to its democracy and national security. Alternative social media, when used for the purposes of extremist dialogues and movements, are accelerating this distrust through echo chambers of hate, disinformation, conspiracies, and accelerationism. The solution is not necessarily to censor speech and political dialogue further, but to focus efforts on building trust of traditional media sources that are spreading information based on science and empirical facts and not on mere opinions and beliefs. Further, the country as a whole needs to examine factors contributing to its increased polarization, which limits the political middle ground and the public space for tolerant bipartisan dialogue.

Limitations

While there was a large percentage of far-right channels in this study, it should be taken into account that there are other keywords that could be used to find channels related to far-right activity. One of the limitations of this study was the lack of knowledge surrounding similar keywords and catchphrases used by far-left movements. Many far-right movements have been well studied and patterns such as phrases, hate symbols and numbers, and even clothes and music choices have been well documented. While it is known that many far-left ideologies consist of anti-fascist and anarchism-related ideas, their evolving phrases and symbols are less well known. Future studies should continue to identify and analyze the speech patterns, symbology, and code words of far-left movements. Many of the channels were found through the snowball technique, revealing the connectedness among the far-right channels. The far-left channels found in this study did not reveal the same connectivity or lead the authors to more channels with similar ideologies.

Further, the authors only tracked a seven-day growth change, and while there was higher engagement, increased longitudinal measures should be considered. By measuring channel size over greater periods of time, researchers can gain further insight into the rates at which certain ideologies are growing. Longer time intervals may also reveal insights into the lifespan of hate-based Telegram channels, as channels may be removed or become inactive over time.

While it is important for P/CVE stakeholders to understand how Telegram influences the spread of far-right ideologies, far-left online behavior must be examined further, especially as tensions continue to rise between anti-fascist groups and far-right groups in the United States. If far-left conversations are not widely taking place in spaces such as Telegram, they are taking place elsewhere. Understanding differences in patterns of behavior across different ideologies is necessary to understand how different movements will recruit, mobilize, and create potential violence, and in turn allow P/CVE stakeholders to thwart those efforts.

Conclusion

This study situated Telegram into continuing debates over the constitutionality of free speech versus content removal by social media platforms, the latter of which leads to deplatforming and gives rise to alternative platforms. The formation of alternative media is reactive to the increased polarization within the United States,

both off-line and on mainstream platforms that censor specific content.[106] The authors' findings support previous literature suggesting that grievances by prominent far-right actors over being banned from mainstream platforms has an impact on the number of users, activity, and effectiveness of propaganda on alternative sites like Telegram.[107] This has led to further deplatforming by masses of far-right users of mainstream sites and also led to an overall network evolution to alternative spaces that may be less detectable or conducive for counter-narratives. Overall, the study reported in this article supports the idea that de-platforming has a limited effect on decreasing the presence of extremist content online and its effects on radicalization; it simply shifts the problem to a different space. Therefore, in order to curb the migration trends and its detrimental effects, greater inclusivity and tolerance is needed within the mainstream dialogue online. While counter-narrative options for Telegram and other alternative platforms should be explored, the magnitude of echo chambers and groupthink patterns on Telegram may perhaps already be too much for counter-narratives to make a significant impact. This, in part, is due to the fact that by the time individuals turn to alternative platform channels that are clearly extreme, their ideologies and views are generally fixed. These users have shown that they do not want to hear an alternative narrative and chose to move to spaces that only propagate their viewpoints through echo chambers. Without motivation to change their minds, the messages of any counter-narrative may simply be removed or disregarded.

In terms of solutions to stop the spread of disinformation and terrorist content, the authors of the study recommend a hybrid cascading strategy, as described by van der Vegt (2019) for content-takedown to be implemented within Telegram.[108] Automated detection infrastructure that can target material related to violent White supremacist content can help to mitigate widespread sharing.[109] However, there are major concerns over the accuracy of fully automated approaches to content removal. While automated content-removal strategies may be great for detecting masses of content, human decision-making cannot be understated as an integral part to combating terrorist and extremist content online. Humans are better able to understand nuances in speech and the context of content, better informing decisions over content takedown that protect against terrorism while at the same time protect rights to free speech.[110] However, smaller platforms may not have the resources to put together large teams of human-based content-review boards. This is where a hybrid between human and automated strategies is going to be most beneficial.[111] Automation can detect content as long as it is up to date on terminology trends, while human beings can make the final decision, based on language, context, and other pieces of the behavior surrounding a particular case.[112]

Further, when utilizing databases to detect and remove content, there should be a broader set of terms in the database to include more borderline content.[113] Databases should also be consistently updated as new movements arise. For example, the QAnon conspiracy theory movement has brought out many unique phrases that do not seem violent on the surface level but that point to adherence to the conspiracy and future off-line actions. Van der Vegt (2019) found that some Internet review units (IRU), which are select teams established by law enforcement agencies dedicated to content moderation, are mostly concerned with removing propaganda that bears the 'brand' of a terrorist organization. IRUs do not decide whether a social media platform removes content, but flag questionable content and relay their findings to the social media platform for the final say. While it is important to remove terrorist propaganda that is connected to a specific brand of a terrorist organization, this literature points to an evolution where the network is decentralized and disconnected and may not relate to specific terrorist organizations. In this sense the automated and human-based decisions on content removal must take into consideration that these networks are less organized than traditional transnational groups. When it comes to far-right content, the networks may be sharing a great deal of content with each other, but they span a range of ideologies and specific organization connections. Thus, the content-removal strategies have to be able to target content even when it is not as easily identifiable in connection with a specific organization.

There is also a clear need for greater global consensus and information sharing between large and small tech companies to combat terrorist content. The push to strengthen Telegram's enforcement of its terms of service should come from large companies in the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), which is tasked with assisting smaller companies. This forum was founded by major digital platforms—Facebook,

Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube—in 2017 to foster collaboration among companies to counter terrorists and violent extremists from exploiting the digital ecosystem, as well as share relevant information with smaller platforms.[114] As disinformation online becomes more of a threat, it is necessary to consider how important these global collaborations are for maintaining a standard across all types of digital platforms. When terrorist organizations and other extreme movements identify a platform as a convenient space to spread content, smaller platforms can produce an even larger risk than major platforms.

As emphasized by Conway et al. (2019), consistent content takedown strategies and constant enforcement of terms of service on Twitter has produced significant effects in terms of disrupting the ISIS community on Twitter, to the point that the ISIS Twitter English-language community is nearly nonexistent. Accounts get taken down often within minutes or days, highlighting the importance of content removal across time.[115] However, the same study noted that as Twitter was able to curb its ISIS community, Telegram became the new home. This again highlights the need to target stricter guidelines on Telegram specifically, as it is becoming the desired digital environment across extremist networks and ideologies. Similar findings were made by Amarasingam (2021) in a study that specifically sought to disrupt ISIS ecology on Telegram. The study found that while disruption attempts in 2019 may not completely remove the entire ecology, they did have a profound effect on the reach and their lifespan.[116] In the 30 days following the coordinated takedown Action Day, there was a 65.5% drop in organic ISIS posts, a 94.7% drop in forwarded posts, and new channels in 2019 had a significantly shorter lifespan.[117] While Telegram has notably stepped up its game with regard to ISIS-specific content removal and account suspension, it is evident that it ought to take the same steps for extreme far-right movements.

Solution attempts also need to target the cyclical nature of content removal, migration to alternative platforms, and early forms of radicalization. While violent videos, images, and targeted violent extremist speech should be removed from online platforms, moderators also need to ensure that spaces are made available for intergroup contact and perspective taking.[118] When individuals are able to remove political blinders and consider the perspectives of others more openly, many, perhaps most, people are able to accept more moderate views.[119] By targeting the political polarization in the United States, P/CVE and political experts can decrease the likelihood of falling victim to disinformation, conspiracy theories, and alternative platforms in the first place. Countermeasures are certainly necessary, but it is even more critical to take preventative measures when combating the migration to alternative social media and its consequences.

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Appendix A: Access Words Used to Locate Telegram Channels

	Far-Right	Far-Left	General Topics
All Lives Matter	Nazi	Alt-Left	4chan
Amerika	New Patriot	Antifa	America
Aryan	Patriot Front	Anti-fascist	Black
Atomwaffen	Pine Tree***	Black Lives Matter	Catholic
Based	Proud Boys	Black Panther*	Christianity
Black-Pilled	Red-Pilled	Left	Civil War
Boogaloo	Rhodesia	Leftist	Corona
Brenton Tarrant	Roof	Lib	Coronavirus
Brotherhood	Skinhead/Skinhead Nation	Marxism	COVID-19
Great Awakening	Stormfront		Diversity
Hitler	Ted Kaczynski/The Unabomber		Fascist
League of the South	The Base		Hate
Libtard	Vinlanders		Immigration
Make America	White		Q
National Alliance	White Lives Matter		QAnon
National Socialism**	White Supremacy		Shitpost
National Vanguard	WWG1WGA****		

*Used in reference to the extreme Black Nationalist New Black Panther Party and not related to the original and non-extreme Black Panther Party

**Used in reference to the German Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), otherwise known as the Nazi Party

***Used in reference to the novel eco-fascist Pine Tree Party

****Refers to the QAnon-related phrase "Where We Go One, We Go All"

Appendix B: List of “Saints” Used to Accelerate and Inspire Violence

The Bowlcast

The Bowl Patrol Pantheon as of 6/14/20:

St. Ray ♠ (1) - 4/4/68
 St. Cowan ♠ (6) - 2/14/77
 St. Franklin ♠ (22) - 8/7/77 - 8/20/80
 St. Kaczynski (3) - 5/25/78 -- 4/24/95
 St. Jones ♠ (917) - 11/18/78
 St. Kahl ♠ (3) - 2/13/83 -- 6/3/83
 St. Snell ♠ (2) - 11/3/83 -- 6/30/84
 St. Huberty ♠ (21) - 7/18/84
 St. Ausonius (2) - 8/3/91 -- 1/30/92
 St. McVeigh ♠ (168) - 4/19/95
 St. Shoemaker ♠ (1) - 4/12/96
 St. Rudolph (2) - 7/27/96 -- 1/29/98
 St. Brannan ♠ (1) - 1/12/98
 St. Kopp (1) - 10/23/98
 St. Copeland (3) - 4/17 -- 4/30/99
 St. Smith ♠ (2) - 7/2 -- 7/4/99
 St. Furrow (1) - 8/10/99
 St. Baumhammers (6) - 4/28/00
 St. Mangs (3) - 6/13/03 -- 10/21/10
 St. Adkisson (2) - 7/27/08
 St. Luke ♠ (2) - 1/21/09
 St. Poplawski (3) - 4/4/09
 St. Cartwright ♠ (2) - 4/25/09
 St. Roeder (1) - 5/31/09
 St. von Brunn ♠ (1) - 6/10/09
 St. Stack ♠ (1) - 2/18/10
 St. Breivik (77) - 7/22/11

St. Breivik (77) - 7/22/11
 St. Pedersen (4) - 9/26 -- 10/3/11
 St. Page ♠ (7) - 8/5/12
 St. Bourque (3) - 6/4/14
 St. Frein (1) - 9/12/14
 St. Hicks (3) - 2/10/15
 St. Roof (9) - 6/17/15
 St. Houser ♠ (2) - 7/23/15
 St. Pettersson ♠ (3) - 10/22/15
 St. Dear (3) - 11/27/15
 St. Mair (1) - 6/16/16
 St. Greene (2) - 11/2/16
 St. Bissonnette (6) - 1/29/17
 St. Purinton (1) - 2/22/17
 St. Selis ♠ (1) - 4/30/17
 St. Christian (2) - 5/26/17
 St. Reinking (4) - 4/22/18
 St. Bush (2) - 10/24/18
 St. Bowers (11) - 10/27/18
 St. Tarrant (51) - 3/15/19
 St. Earnest (1) - 4/27/19
 St. Ernst (1) - 6/2/19
 St. Crusius (23) - 8/3/19
 St. Luther ♠ (1) - 8/12/19
 St. Rathjen ♠ (10) - 2/19/20

Hail the Saints 2796 2:22 AM

Source: Screenshot from Telegram Channel 'The Bowlcast'

The Devil's in the Details—or Is He? The Ethics and Politics of Terrorism Data

by Benjamin V. Allison

Abstract

In the United States, domestic political violence has become a focal point of discourse among scholars, policy makers, journalists, politicians, and the public. This is largely due not only to the recent increase in domestic terrorist plots and attacks by ideological extremists, but also to the recent civil unrest surrounding the COVID-19 lockdowns, Black Lives Matter protests, and the 2020 presidential election. As think tanks like New America and the Center for Strategic and International Studies have compiled data and produced reports to inform this discourse, they have made some serious missteps in their coding of data. Between omitting conflict events and miscoding the ideology of perpetrators in such a way as to obscure the violence of left-wing, Black separatist/nationalist/supremacist, and anti-White extremists, they unintentionally give the impression of political bias in their coding, thereby undermining their credibility in the eyes of a public that is increasingly skeptical of experts. This article identifies some of these data problems and discusses their implications.

Keywords: data, ethics, politics, Black Lives Matter, left-wing extremism, right-wing extremism

NB: This article discusses police brutality and the Black Lives Matter organization, and identifies as terrorism some actions by those affiliated with or influenced by the struggle for racial justice in the United States. This is not to suggest that BLM is a terrorist group (it is not), or that protesting and rectifying inequality is not important (it is). Rather than making normative claims about social movements, the author identifies problems in data collection and presentation, and uses objective criteria to assess events' status as terrorism.

Introduction

Studying terrorism is, in many ways, a numbers game: How many casualties? How many attacks? How many members in a group? Policy makers and academic experts rely on data to guide their thinking about terrorist threats.

But what if the data is wrong or incomplete?[1] This can have implications for both counterterrorism funding and efforts to counter violent extremism. In fact, in 2019, the US Senate's Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs heard proposed legislation, passed by the House of Representatives, "to require a joint domestic and international terrorism report" involving the collection of such data because of its importance to policy making.[2] Furthermore, skewed data can decrease the value of expert analysis and harm the credibility of terrorism experts.

Two recent reports on terrorism in the United States contain several serious flaws that, while not deflecting from the most pressing terrorist threat facing the country—namely right-wing extremism—obscure the picture and risk undermining public confidence in terrorism experts.[3]

First, in June 2020, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) released "The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States," in which Seth Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington argue that right-wing extremism is the greatest terrorist threat to the United States.[4] Central to their analysis is a data set of 893 *attacks and foiled plots* in the United States between January 1994 and May 8, 2020. They categorize the perpetrators' ideologies as right-wing (511 incidents), left-wing (222), religious (129), ethnonationalist (22), and other (6).

A few months later, the policy think tank New America, previously the New America Foundation (NAF), updated its running report on "Terrorism in America after 9/11," which includes an interactive chart tracking

fatal terrorist attacks in the US since September 11, 2001. Peter Bergen and David Sterman (and previously Albert Ford and Alyssa Sims) maintain(ed) the report, which groups terrorists' ideologies into five categories: Far Right Wing (43 incidents), Jihadist (19), Black Separatist/Nationalist/Supremacist (3), Ideological Misogyny/Incel (Involuntary Celibate) Ideology (3), and Far Left Wing (1).[5]

Both reports exhibit several serious problems in their data selection and coding. Aside from the inherent drawbacks of choosing to only record fatal terrorist attacks (e.g., not capturing the full scope of terrorist activity), the New America data appears to omit disproportionately more left-wing attacks than right-wing or jihadist attacks and contains several miscoded events. The CSIS data on plots and attacks—a far more comprehensive methodology than “just” fatal incidents—also miscodes numerous cases, includes incidents whose status as “terrorism” is dubious, and excludes several right-wing and jihadist cases.

Such flaws, though unnoticeable to the casual observer, are problematic, not least because they violate research norms and erode public trust in expert analysis. These examples also illustrate the need for all experts working with data to be cautious not only in their own data collection but also in their use of curated data sets.[6]

Gaps and Miscoding in New America's Data

The New America report excludes several fatal terrorist attacks in the United States that could be considered left wing. Although it also excludes numerous right-wing and ideological misogynist/incel attacks, the omission of potential left-wing (LWE), anti-White (AWE), and Black separatist/nationalist/supremacist (BSNS) attacks is disproportionately larger than the omission of others. These omissions and the miscoding of ideology raise questions about, at best, methodological rigor, and at worst, the implicit ideological biases of the data collectors, thereby undermining experts' credibility and playing into public mistrust of specialists.

Bergen et al., who describe their data as “comprehensive” and “up-to-date,” claim that “those with Far-Left views have killed one person” in the United States since 9/11; based on their own data, they are correct—their data set only includes one such incident.[7]

Their data, however, do not reflect reality. Instead, several relevant cases of left-wing, anti-White, and Black separatist/nationalist/supremacist extremism have been completely excluded from the data set. Furthermore, a number of cases are miscoded as right-wing extremism.

While a substantial number of right-wing and incel incidents were also excluded from the NAF data, and these cases were, in terms of real numbers, more than double the number of excluded LWE, AWE, or BSNS incidents, the latter categories were disproportionately underrepresented when compared with the number already included in the data. With only four total incidents of LWE, AWE, and BSNS in the original NAF data, the addition of up to seven missing cases represents a 175% increase, whereas introducing about 18 RWE incidents (depending on how one counts them) into the data, which already had 43 such cases, represents a 41.86% increase. A disproportionate number of incel attacks are also excluded from the NAF data, but their exclusion does not carry the same potential impression of political bias; as such, these and the missing RWE cases are detailed in the Appendix.

Because of both their disproportionate underrepresentation in the data, and the need to consider these incidents' status as terrorism, we examine relevant cases of left-wing, anti-White, or BSNS violence that are excluded from the NAF data here:

In a “one-man war” against police, **Christopher Monfort**, a “left-wing constitutionalist,” firebombed four police cars on October 22, 2009, and shot two officers, killing one on October 31 in Seattle, Washington.[8] He sought to avenge victims of police brutality, warning in a note left at the scene of the firebombing that law enforcement should “Start policing each other or get ready to attend a lot of police funerals.”[9] Despite his insanity plea, Monfort was found guilty of aggravated first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison, where he committed suicide in January 2017.[10]

On December 20, 2014, **Ismaaiyl Brinsley** shot his ex-girlfriend in Baltimore, Maryland, took a bus to Brooklyn, New York, and shot and killed two on-duty New York City Police Department officers “execution style” before killing himself.[11] Earlier that day, Brinsley posted on Instagram that “I’m putting wings on pigs today. They take 1 of ours, let’s take 2 of theirs,” followed by the hashtags “#Shootthepolice,” “#RIPerivGarner” (sic.), and “#RIPMikeBrown.”[12] Brinsley reportedly was never an activist, but his post suggests he was motivated by some form of anti-police ideology.[13]

Lakeem Scott, a Black man, went on a shooting spree in Bristol, Tennessee on July 7, 2016, killing one and injuring four others, including himself and a police officer. Witnesses claimed to hear Scott shouting “Police suck! Black lives matter!” during the attack.[14] He later admitted that “It was nothing personal. I am just tired of seeing my people killed.”[15]

Former US Marine **Gavin Long** ambushed police officers on July 17, 2016 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He killed three officers and wounded three more before they killed him.[16] Long, a person of color, wrote before the attack that “I must bring the same destruction that bad cops continue to inflict upon my people, upon bad cops as well as good cops,” to force the system to change. He characterized his attack as “a sacrifice for my people.”[17] Long had previously expressed revolutionary ideas, praising the killing of police officers in Dallas 10 days prior and asserting on video that “it’s going to take . . . Revenue and blood” to change the system, dismissing protestors as unserious.[18] Prior to the attack, Long publicly denied affiliation with any group.[19] He appears, however, to have considered himself a Sovereign Citizen, part of the Washitaw Nation (Washitaw de Dugdahmoundyah [Washitaw Moorish Nation]), despite denials by the Black separatist group’s leadership.[20]

On August 18, 2017, **Everett Miller** shot and killed two Kissimmee, Florida police officers. Miller, a former Marine, had repeatedly posted anti-police and anti-White messages on social media under an alias.[21] Hours before the shooting, Miller wrote “Am I the only one. [Expletive] a Cop...Racist [Expletive],”[22] and urged his fellow African Americans to “Shoot back!”[23] Although Miller was in poor mental health at the time of the killing, he was found guilty.[24]

Fredrick Demond Scott, a Black man, was charged in a string of six murders of White people between 2016 and 2017 in Kansas City, Missouri.[25] Scott, who suffers from schizophrenia, threatened in 2014 to commit a school shooting and “kill all white people.”[26] Investigators have yet to announce a motive in the killings.[27]

While driving his father’s pickup truck on July 3, 2020 in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, **Daniel Navarro**, a Mexican-American man, intentionally struck a white motorcyclist, killing him. Navarro explained to police that he believed all Harley drivers were white and racist, and that, as he told one law enforcement officer, “if President Donald Trump and white people are going to create the world we are living in, he [Navarro] has no choice and people are going to have to die.”[28] He has been charged with hate crimes, but he was found mentally incompetent to stand trial in January 2021, though he is considered “likely to regain competency.”[29]

Why might these cases have been excluded from the New America data? The coders may not view some of them as terrorist attacks on grounds of the perpetrators’ mental health, but this seems inconsistent, as they include several such cases (e.g., Dylann Roof).[30] Given that a number of these cases have clear motives—at least in terms of their targets, even if the exact ideology remains unclear—they are just as worthy of inclusion as Roof’s massacre.

It is also worth noting that, although Roof’s attack is included, some other apparent hate crimes, like the alleged murder of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, are not, perhaps because the coders do not consider them terrorist acts.[31] While the reasons for this are not entirely clear, it could explain the exclusion of some of the aforementioned anti-White attacks, especially those by Fredrick Scott and Daniel Navarro.

Even with these caveats, most of these cases are clear terrorist attacks.

The Global Terrorism Database’s (GTD) three terrorism criteria are useful here. Although New America does not explicitly employ GTD’s criteria, it fails to provide *any* explanation of its methodology. By GTD standards,

at least two of these criteria must be present for an event to count as terrorism.[32]

First, “the act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal.” Monfort, Brinsley, Lakeem Scott, Long, and Miller all indicated a clear desire to kill police officers in response to police brutality. Navarro (and possibly Fredrick Scott) sought to kill White people on behalf of people of color.

Second, “there must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims.” Their various statements indicate that Monfort, Brinsley, Long, and Miller intended to communicate a message of resistance to the police and to fellow people of color.

Third, “the action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities.” Each attack targeted noncombatants, and therefore were not legitimate warfare activities.

These cases clearly should have been included in the data, with the possible exception of Fredrick Scott, given the confused nature of his case.

While some of the attacks were not explicitly left-wing and may be considered racial violence, several are certainly examples of left-wing extremism. For example, Monfort was a “left-wing constitutionalist” whose attack lacked an apparent racial motive.[33] Brinsley, Lakeem Scott, and Gavin Long’s actions were explicitly tied to race and policing, and occurred during the first stage of the Black Lives Matter movement, which is essentially left wing, whether one considers that the broad movement is inherently progressive or that the Black Lives Matter organization’s leaders are self-described “trained Marxists”.[34] In fact, because of what some saw as a connection between the movement and the killings, the BLM organization explicitly condemned Ismaaiyl Brinsley’s murder-suicide in 2014 and Micah Johnson’s attack on Dallas police officers in July 2016 (discussed below).[35] Furthermore, a spate of ambushes on police officers in 2016 caused the group no small deal of anxiety.[36]

Though of course the BLM organization cannot be held responsible for violence it explicitly condemns and to which it is not directly linked, it is difficult to dissociate the attacks from the sociopolitical atmosphere in which they occurred, especially since several of the killers stated their motives.[37] It is possible, therefore, to consider Ismaaiyl Brinsley and Lakeem Scott’s attacks left-wing extremism, though these might fall under the label of single-issue terrorism, given their retaliatory nature.

Regardless of whether those attacks should have been considered left-wing extremism or racial violence, they were not even coded in the NAF data. Why they were not remains unclear, though we will consider this further below.

Beyond these missing cases, Bergen et al.’s coding is inconsistent. While they define right-wing extremism as “anti-government, militia, White supremacist, and anti-abortion violence,” the data set considers Black separatist/nationalist/supremacist extremism and left-wing extremism to be separate categories.

This creates two problems. First is nuance. On the one hand, parsing Black nationalism from left-wing extremism is a good distinction, as not all Black nationalists or supremacists are left-leaning (e.g., Louis Farrakhan).[38] On the other hand, Bergen et al. fail to provide similar nuance when examining right-wing extremists, lumping them together instead.

Although they are usually on the Right of the political spectrum, White supremacists, anti-government extremists, militia members, and anti-abortion terrorists often have vastly different and sometimes contradictory motivations and should not be conflated.

This is especially evident in the case of **Eric Frein**, who killed a Pennsylvania state trooper and wounded another in 2014.[39] In a letter to his parents, Frein wrote that:

Our nation is far from what it was and what it should be. I have seen so many *depressing changes made in my time that I cannot imagine what it must be like for you*. There is so much wrong and on so many levels only passing through the crucible of another revolution *can get us back the*

liberties we once had. I do not pretend to know what that revolution will look like or even if it would be successful.[40]

The NAF records Frein's attack as right-wing. While this is certainly possible given his reference to "depressing changes made in my time" and his pining for "the liberties we once had," this is the only publicly available evidence that suggests—but does not confirm—an ideological leaning; after all, he might be a left-leaning libertarian, given his lack of specificity as to *which* changes were "depressing," but we simply cannot tell based on his letter.

Other cases of anti-government extremists, like that of anti-tax terrorist Joseph Andrew Slack, are not clear-cut in terms of where a perpetrator falls on the politico-ideological spectrum.[41] While NAF codes Slack as a right-wing extremist, the manifesto he left behind expressed a litany of views that could, as a whole, not be classified as clearly left or right wing. For example, he railed against corporations, the Roman Catholic Church, and the American legal system, while also roundly criticizing the government and its tax code, all of which, he wrote, constituted "the real American nightmare." [42] Automatically recording such attacks as right-wing draws an ideological distinction where there is none.

Similarly, Bergen et al. miscode Roy Den Hollander's attack on the family of Judge Esther Salas in July 2020 as right wing, when it appears to have been motivated by his ideological misogyny.[43] Furthermore, the NAF data records Hesham Mohamed Hadayet's attack on the El Al ticket counter at Los Angeles International Airport in July 2002 as jihadist, when he was really motivated by a desire to influence American policy toward the Palestinian people.[44] His attack would be better coded as ethnonationalist, since there was no apparent jihadist motive behind it.

Second, one of the three cases classified in the NAF data as Black separatist/nationalist/supremacist extremism could also be coded as left-wing extremism. On July 7, 2016, **Micah Johnson**, a Black man and former Army reservist, launched an attack at a Black Lives Matter protest in Dallas, Texas, killing five police officers and wounding nine others and two civilians.[45] Johnson demonstrated an affinity for Black Power groups like the New Black Panther Party,[46] which is technically leftist, given its condemnation of capitalism and its aim of implementing an *ujamaa* (cooperative economics) system.[47] Though he was not affiliated with any group and it is not entirely clear which, if any, radicalized him, Johnson's interest in Black Lives Matter, the New Black Panthers, and the Black Riders Liberation Party indicates some leftist influence, though it is possible that he only drew the anti-police elements from each.

The ambiguity in this and other cases starkly highlights the need for greater nuance in the NAF's coding scheme for terrorist ideology. Creating more nuanced ideological categories would generate a more detailed and comprehensive view of terrorism in the United States. Furthermore, this would keep other attacks by ideological outliers from falling through the cracks. For example, **Connor Betts**, the perpetrator of a mass killing in Dayton, Ohio in August 2019, openly exhibited leftist beliefs, but was also profoundly misogynistic. [48] He allegedly kept a "hit list" and a "rape list," and sang about sexual violence and murdering women in a porngrind band.[49] Investigators have yet to determine a clear motive.[50] While it would be wrong to code Betts's ideology without knowing all the facts, it seems it could be recorded as "mixed" or "unknown" for the time being, rather than excluding the attack entirely.

Miscoding in the CSIS Data

Whereas the NAF's data are, in part, miscoded and have significant omissions, the CSIS data (obtained by request) are fairly thorough—indeed, they include most of the aforementioned attacks—but have numerous miscoded incidents and employ some questionable definitions of what constitutes terrorism. The miscoding seems to be largely the result of the coders' reliance upon other data sets, often without cross-checking those sources.[51]

First, despite the expansiveness of the CSIS data, Jones et al. excluded a total of 19 incidents that should have been included, 17 of which were driven by right-wing ideologies (the other two were jihadist). See the Appendix

to this article for more.

Second, although CSIS is more consistent than NAF, in that its left-wing and right-wing categories are equally broad, it clearly miscodes the ideology of more than forty incidents, and includes scores of events whose characterization as terrorist actions is dubious. Although we cannot review all the miscodings here (see this article's data file for the full list),[52] a few examples will suffice.

In March 1994, the office of the *Cincinnati Herald*, a Black newspaper, was firebombed after publishing a guest column that criticized African American Muslims. The day prior to the attack, the newspaper received a phone call explicitly threatening violence over the piece. No arrest was ever made, but the details of the case suggest an Islamist or jihadist (i.e., religious) motive behind the attack, and yet the CSIS data considers it a right-wing incident.[53]

As noted above, Eric Frein lacked a clear ideology beyond his broadly anti-government stance; but while NAF coded him as right-wing, CSIS considered him left-wing, citing his aim of “revolution.” Nothing about his letter, however, suggests leftist sentiments.

Similarly, Jones et al.'s data miscodes the 2001 Amerithrax attacks as right-wing terrorism, even though the accused (but unproven) perpetrator, **Dr. Bruce Ivins**, displayed no discernible ideological motive.[54] Such a clear motive was also lacking in the case of two letters with unidentified powder mailed to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offices—both coded as right-wing extremism, despite a lack of publicly available detail regarding the contents of said letters—and in the case of a ricin-tainted letter sent to then-Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) in 2004, which could not be clearly connected to a discrete ideology, but which CSIS coded as left-wing.[55]

Given their lack of clear ideological affiliation, Ivins and Frein would have been better coded as “other” or “unknown/unclear,” rather than as left or right wing. Indeed, in a more recent brief, Jones et al. categorize anti-government groups like the Boogaloo movement as “other,” which is far more responsible, given that the movement attracts adherents from across the ideological spectrum.[56]

There are several other notable examples of miscoding in the CSIS data. For example, **Naveed Haq** attacked a Jewish organization's headquarters in Seattle in July 2006. The event is coded as right-wing extremism, even though Haq declared the attack made him a “jihadi,” explaining to a 911 dispatcher that “These are Jews and I'm tired of . . . [Muslims] getting pushed around . . . in the Middle East.”[57] Similarly, **Christopher Monfort's** 2009 attacks on police were also coded as right wing, even though Monfort was a “left-wing constitutionalist.”[58] Six cases best classified as driven by ideological misogyny and/or incel ideology were coded as right-wing in the CSIS data, even though the data set had an incel classification available. While many of these individuals also held racist views, their online postings, manifestos, and target selection imply that incel ideology and/or ideological misogyny, not right-wing ideology, drove them to their acts.[59]

Bizarrely, some perpetrators' ideology was coded as directly the opposite of what the data set's description of the attack indicates. For example, in 2012, Floyd Corkins attacked the headquarters of the Family Research Council because of the group's opposition to gay marriage and gay rights, yet this was coded as right-wing extremism.[60] In another case, four Black assailants kidnapped and tortured a mentally ill adolescent, livestreaming the act while yelling “fuck Trump” and “fuck White people,” only to be coded as right-wing extremism.[61] Conversely, Marshall Leonard bombed a Wal-Mart in Mississippi because it *stopped* selling the state flag that, until 2020, contained the Confederate battle flag, yet the attack is coded as left-wing extremism.[62]

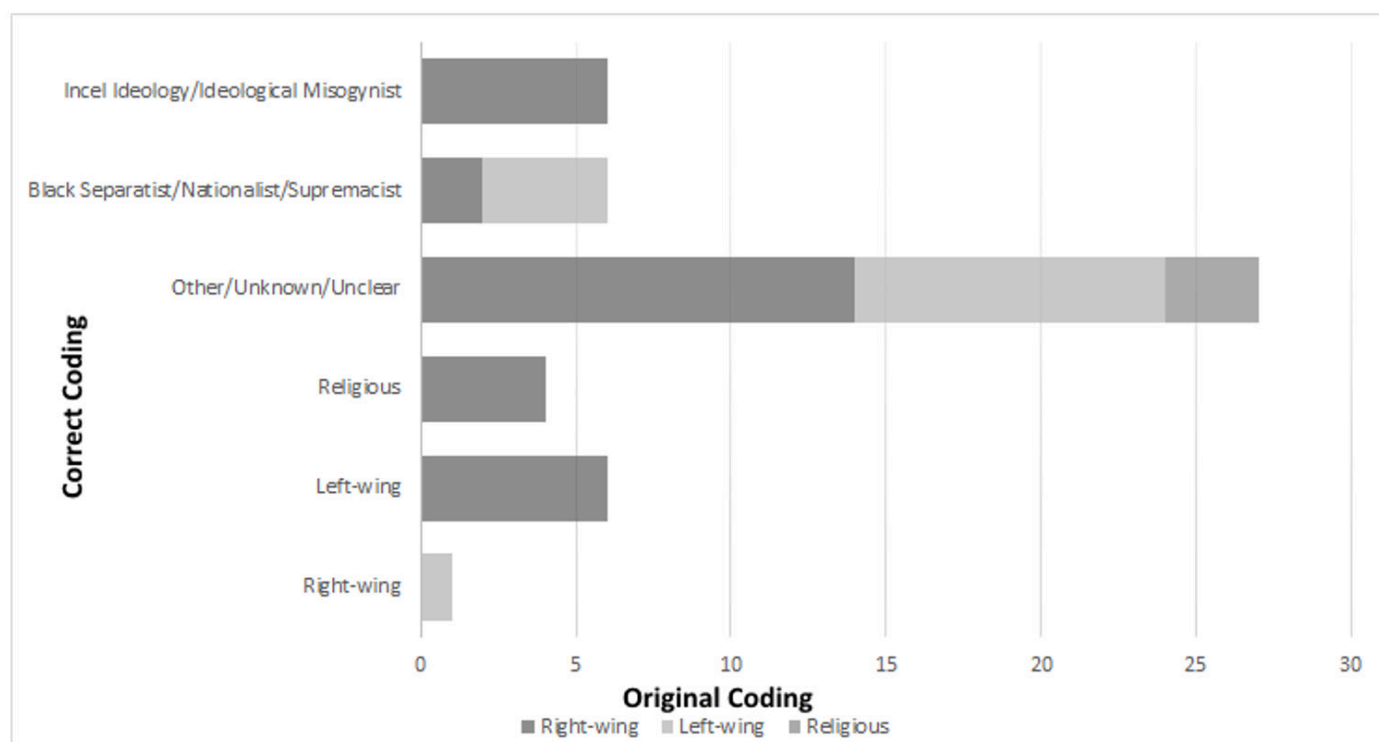
Overall, of the 43 cases of apparently miscoded ideology, 32 were misreported as right-wing extremism (accounting for 6.26% of right-wing events in the CSIS data), 15 as left-wing extremism (6.75%), and three as religious extremism (2.33%) (see Figure 1). Taken as a proportion of all miscoded cases, 64% of events were miscoded as right wing, 30% as left wing, and 6% as religious.

Although events were miscoded as left-wing extremism at a slightly higher rate than those events miscoded as right-wing extremism, this is due to the low number of left-wing attacks included in the data and the high

number of right-wing incidents. Right-wing cases, however, are somewhat inflated by the inclusion of hate crimes, scores of which lack an identified perpetrator (let alone their ideological inclinations), and yet most are reflexively coded as right-wing extremism. Even those few cases in which the perpetrators left some indication of their ideological inclinations can only reveal so much; for example, graffiti left at the scene of an arson of a predominantly Black church in Florida included a swastika and the words “Allahu Akbar,” Arabic for “God is great.”[63] The inclusion of what is popularly perceived as a jihadist slogan suggests the potential for false-flag attacks, especially in cases where the actors remain unknown.[64] Conversely, a jihadist might burn a synagogue and leave racist symbology at the scene, in hopes of throwing authorities off his trail. As such, even potential ideological markers left at the scene must be cautiously interpreted. Where no strong evidence of ideological motive can be found, it is best not to assume one.

This is especially important considering that some acts that might qualify as hate crimes are simply cases of vandalism unmotivated by ideology or are even unintentional. For example, members of a band blew up the newspaper box of the *Rainbow Times*, an LGBTQ publication in Salem, Massachusetts, in August 2016. Although never charged with hate crimes, and despite the fact that the defendants simply sought to commit an act of vandalism, not to target that specific publication—choosing that newspaper box simply because it was unlocked—Jones et al. code this event as right-wing extremism.[65] Earlier that year, a woman in a Target store restroom set off an explosion when she attempted to mix a volatile combination of chemicals together in an attempt to get high. The blast, however, was initially assumed to be retaliation for the corporation’s new policy allowing transgender customers to use the lavatory of their choice, and was therefore coded as right-wing extremism, even though the real story behind the explosion, demonstrating that it was not terrorism of any sort, came out within months of the event.[66]

Figure 1: *Miscoding in the CSIS Data*



Note: “Original Coding” indicates what these events were *miscoded* as in the CSIS data, whereas “Correct Coding” indicates what they should have been coded as. There is also no “Black Separatist/Nationalist/Supremacist” category in the CSIS data set. Although the data set contains “Incel” as an ideological category, the graphics in the CSIS brief do not show these cases. Similarly, there is an “Other” category in the CSIS data, and while this could be used for “Unknown/Unclear,” this has its own problems, as “Other” does not provide the same degree of uncertainty that “Unknown/Unclear” does. I have combined these last two categories for simplicity here, but they are distinguished in the data on which this chart is based. The data on which this chart is based is archived at <https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/DTEJOC>.

The CSIS data also includes several incidents that some have interpreted as hate crimes, but which law enforcement has not confirmed as such, as in the killing of a Sikh businessman in 2015, an alleged assault on two gay men in 2016 (later countered by claims that one of them started the fight), and the murder of a transgender sex worker in 2018.[67] While hate crimes certainly *can* be terrorist acts, the fact that none of these incidents have been officially declared hate crimes—nor, more importantly, have the perpetrators or their motives been identified—belies their classification as right-wing extremism.

Even if an attack is a hate crime, that does not necessarily make it terrorism. For example, there are several cases in the CSIS data that involve racially motivated assault and battery, but which one would normally be hard-pressed to define as terrorism. While the CSIS brief's methodology paper explicitly includes hate crimes involving actual physical violence or the threat thereof, its definition of "terrorist incidents as those in which non-state actors used real or threatened violence to achieve a political goal and produce broad psychological impact" raises the question of how some of the hate crimes included in the data set meet that standard, when a political goal is often unclear.[68] In any case, one wonders how violent hate crimes (an overwhelmingly right-wing phenomenon) are treated as terrorism, when other cases of more explicitly political violence—like the 2014 riots in Ferguson, Missouri or the alleged assault on a conservative journalist in Portland, Oregon by Antifa adherents in 2019—are excluded from the data.[69]

While one could argue that some of this violence is more spontaneous than several of the hate crimes in the data, there are several flaws in such reasoning: (a) the CSIS methodology paper makes no reference to intent or planning as factors in coding decisions; (b) several of the incidents that are obvious hate crimes (e.g., the beating to death of a Hispanic man by drunk high school football players) are also spontaneous in nature, and yet are included; and (c) there are some events, like the throwing of a smoke grenade at the White House during an Occupy protest, which are included in the data.

At any rate, even if hate crimes should be included in data sets on terrorism—and it is not clear that this is the case—those which are not directly traceable to a perpetrator or an ideology should not be coded as one ideology or the other.[70] Such assumptions inject an inappropriate degree of subjectivity into the data, creating new "facts" that are subsequently cited and propagated in other work on the subject.

Why It Matters and What Comes Next

One might argue that this is all mere academic navel-gazing. Who cares about a few differences in attack coding?

It is important to code these events properly for several reasons. First and foremost, it is wrong to do otherwise because it is false. Analysts, policy makers, and the public rely on such data, often taking them at face value. It is incumbent upon data curators to be scrupulous in their collection and coding, particularly when building a data set classifying attacks by ideology, which is an inherently political exercise (though not necessarily a *politicized* one). Even if an attack cannot be clearly identified as fitting cleanly into an ideology, that ambiguity does not mean it should be excluded—rather, it should be coded as "unclear," "unknown," or perhaps "mixed," as suggested above. These examples, furthermore, serve to remind terrorism experts and others working with data to approach curated data sets critically.

Second, it seems that left-wing, anti-White, and Black separatist/nationalist/supremacist attacks have been on the rise, as political violence has increased in the American context.[71] Perpetrators have recently targeted police officers and White civilians more frequently and explicitly, as seen in the ambush of two Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies on September 12, 2020, an attack on a Lancaster, Pennsylvania officer earlier that day, and the shooting of two policemen during protests in Louisville, Kentucky two weeks later.[72]

Finally, excluding or miscoding events undermines public trust in terrorism experts by erasing nuance and suggesting bias. While the coding decisions of Bergen et al. and Jones et al. are not necessarily the result

of partisanship, the miscoding and exclusion of relevant events draws attention to right-wing extremism—which is a serious problem—but deflects attention from left-wing extremism, anti-White extremism, and Black separatism/nationalism/supremacism, giving the impression of biased data.

This impression of bias—inadvertent though it may be—is heightened by the fact that Bergen is an analyst at CNN and his coauthor, David Sterman, has been critical of former President Donald Trump.[73] As an academic who has rightly highlighted Trump's connection to the increase in right-wing extremism, Seth Jones is also likely to be dismissed by conservatives (especially of the anti-intellectual variety) as simply another example of liberal bias in academia.[74] Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with criticizing the president or being affiliated with a particular news outlet or university. But when coupled with inaccuracies like those detailed in this article, such affiliations and criticisms can inadvertently buttress claims by those who would rather dismiss experts as political hacks than take their warnings about right-wing extremism seriously.

None of this means that the NAF and CSIS reports' overarching conclusions are wrong; indeed, they are correct to label right-wing extremism as the greatest domestic terrorist threat in the United States. The disproportionate under- and miscoding of left-wing attacks and the tendency to overrepresent right-wing attacks, however, highlights analysts' duty to guard against bad data and personal bias.

How can analysts of terrorism—academic or otherwise—avoid some of the problems outlined above?

First, using broad ideological categories may be politically savvy, but it ultimately obscures important nuances, lumping together groups of actors who otherwise might not associate with one another. For example, an anti-abortion extremist would not necessarily identify with the Aryan Brotherhood, just as a Black Hebrew Israelite might not consider himself part of the Antifa movement. There was, rightly, uproar when the FBI began grouping all racially motivated terrorism together, effectively equating Black separatist/nationalist/supremacist extremism with White supremacism—why then should other unrelated ideologies be lumped together?[75]

Second, data collection practices should be rigorous. While it is acceptable to borrow from other data sets, as the CSIS report did extensively, we should not assume that all such data are correct. Instead, other curated data sets should be used as a foundation, and checked to ensure accuracy, especially because the initial reporting on a case may not always be right. Court documents and perpetrator manifestos are especially helpful in gaining insight into the motives behind an attack, and tend to be more reliable than media reporting.

Additionally, this article suggests the difficulties and dangers of coding perpetrators' ideology, which is best assessed qualitatively. Not only is ideology often complex and not always easily determined, but it can also be unclear or mixed; for example, many incels and ideological misogynists are also racist, sometimes even against their own ethnicity.[76] A terrorist's motive also might not fit into one's preconceived notions of how ideologies should be delineated (e.g., the Left-Right political binary). [77] We would do well to code ideologies with as much nuance as possible.

Furthermore, in cases where a perpetrator's ideology is unclear or mixed—and especially in which the perpetrator is unknown or an attack goes unclaimed, as is the case with many attacks globally—it is not appropriate to speculate.[78] The CSIS data set, for example, is rife with speculation in scores (if not hundreds) of cases where the identity of the attacker remains unknown, but the ideology is inferred from the target. While this is understandable, it assumes too much—for example, is an unidentified anti-abortion extremist motivated by right-wing beliefs, his religion, or both? Did someone firebomb a synagogue because he is a Neo-Nazi, a Christian extremist, or a jihadist? Is an attack on a mosque motivated by militant secularism, nativism, traditionalism, radical Jewish beliefs, or something else? Every case like this in the CSIS data is reflexively coded as right-wing extremism. While the majority of such coding decisions are probably correct, so many of them are made in cases where the perpetrator is unknown that the coding of ideology is often based on assumption rather than on legitimate indicators of motive.

Third and finally, applying the label “terrorism” to racial or political violence carries substantial rhetorical baggage. One should therefore strive to clearly explain how terrorism is defined. If one considers violent hate

crimes to be terrorism, why? If one considers verbal or written threats to be terrorism, why? Does one include verbal threats from all actors, or just from those on the Right—and why? Is all violent action associated with extremists automatically terrorism? For example, if White supremacists kill someone while robbing a bank to fund their group, that does not necessarily fit definitions of terrorism that require an audience beyond the immediate victims.[79] Similarly, one would not usually consider the murder of a sexual predator to constitute terrorism—but if the perpetrator did it for extreme ideological reasons, like being a White supremacist, does that make it terrorism? After all, they likely see such violence as making them more acceptable to the public, enhancing their movement's legitimacy by removing some of the most reviled individuals from society.[80] These are questions one must address in a methodology section or an addendum to a report like NAF's which claims to be "comprehensive," and yet does not even include a basic discussion of selection criteria.

New America and the Center for Strategic and International Studies are among the most reputable think tanks in the security studies community, and their publications have significant cachet with academics, government officials, the news media, and the general public. Unfortunately, as this article has demonstrated, such trust is violated when some of the data used in major reports prove faulty. No data set is perfect, nor will one ever be, simply because they are made by flawed humans, or by programs designed by those same humans. But that does not mean we should not do our best to check our biases at the door and do our due diligence to ensure that our data are as accurate and honest as possible.

Just as it is best for judges to "avoid all . . . appearance of impropriety," so too should subject matter experts shun such appearances, especially in discussing such a politically charged topic as terrorism.[81] Our credibility depends on it.

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Appendix: Missing Right-Wing, Incel and Jihadist Cases from CSIS and NAF Data Sets

<u>Attack Name/s</u>	<u>Date/s</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Perpetrator/s</u>	<u>Ideology</u>	<u>Missing In</u>
9/11 Revenge*	9/15– 10/4/2001	Dallas, TX	Mark Anthony Stroman	right-wing	CSIS
Tulsa Bank Robbery	5/24/2004	Tulsa, OK	Wade Lay, Christopher Lay	right-wing	CSIS
New Bedford Rampage	2/2/2006	New Bedford, MA	Jacob D. Robida	right-wing	NAF
John Ditullio	3/23/2006	New Port Richey, FL	John Ditullio	right-wing	CSIS
Reno Homeless Killing	9/3/2007	Reno, NV	Christopher Maciolek, Findley Fultz	right-wing	CSIS
Murder of Marcelo Lucero	11/8/2008	Patchogue, NY	Multiple (7)	right-wing	NAF
Woodburn Bank Robbery	12/12/2008	Woodburn, OR	Joshua Turnidge, Bruce Turnidge	right-wing	CSIS
George Sodini	8/4/2009	Collier Township, PA	George Sodini	incel	NAF
Pittsburgh Police Ambush	4/4/2009	Pittsburgh, PA	Robert Poplawski	right-wing	CSIS
Murder of Neil Hayes†	6/30/2009	Carmichael, CA	Charles Francis Gaskins	right-wing	CSIS
Murder of Edward Keeley†	8/28/2009	North Palm Springs, CA	Steven Banister, Travis Cody	right-wing	CSIS
Gun Range Murder	7/21/2010	Carlisle, PA	Raymond Peake	right-wing	CSIS
Ross Muehlberger	4/20/2010	Wichita Falls, TX	Ross Muehlberger	right-wing	CSIS
Peter Avsenew	12/23/2010	Wilton Manors, FL	Peter Avsenew	right-wing	CSIS
Murder of James Craig Anderson	6/26/2011	Jackson, MS	Multiple (10)	right-wing	CSIS
St. John Deputy Killings	8/16/2012	LaPlace, LA	Multiple (6)	right-wing	CSIS
LAX Shooting	11/01/2013	Los Angeles, CA	Paul Ciania	right-wing	NAF
Murder of Charles Parker†	7/21/2013	Jonesville, NC	Jeremy Moody, Christine Moody	right-wing	CSIS
Vaughn Foods Attack	9/24/2014	Moore, OK	Alton Nolen	jihadist	CSIS
Wayne Comm. College Attack	4/13/2015	Goldsboro, NC	Kenneth M. Stan- cil III	right-wing	NAF
Erick Shute	6/13/2015	Great Cacapon, WV	Erick Shute	right-wing	NAF
Umpqua Comm. College Massacre	10/1/2015	Roseburg, OR	Chris Harper	incel	NAF
Dan J. Popp	3/6/2016	Milwaukee, WI	Dan J. Popp	right-wing	NAF
Murder of Khalid Jabara	8/12/2016	Tulsa, OK	Stanley Majors	right-wing	NAF
Wasil Farooqui	8/20/2016	Roanoke, VA	Wasil Farooqui	jihadist	CSIS
Murder of Samuel Hardrix	8/21/2016	Fort Wayne, IN	Aaryn Snyder	right-wing	NAF
Olathe Bar Attack	2/22/2017	Olathe, KS	Adam W. Purinton	right-wing	NAF
Montana Traffic Stop Attack	5/16/2017	Three Forks, MT	Lloyd Barrus, Marshall Barrus	right-wing	NAF/CSIS
Baton Rouge Attacks	9/12/2017	Baton Rouge, LA	Kenneth J. Gleason	right-wing	NAF

Veterans Affairs Home Attack	5/16/2017	Murfreesboro, TN	John D. Carothers	right-wing	NAF
Joden Rocco	8/19/2018	Pittsburgh, PA	Joden Rocco	right-wing	NAF
Ronald Lee Kidwell	7/6/2018	Shawnee, KS	Ronald Lee Kidwell	right-wing	CSIS
Venezuela Plot Murder-Robbery	4/3/2018	Estero, FL	Alex J. Zwiefelhofer, Craig A. Lang	right-wing	CSIS
QAnon Mafia Murder	3/13/2019	Staten Island, NY	Anthony Comello	right-wing	NAF
William Shutt†	3/27/2019	St. Petersburg, FL	William Shutt	right-wing	NAF
Gilroy Garlic Festival Massacre	7/28/2019	Gilroy, CA	Santino W. Legan	right-wing	NAF

Note: This appendix was created by cross-referencing the NAF and CSIS data sets with one another; as such, this is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list of the attacks excluded from both, but rather gives a sense of missing cases.

*Three separate attacks on September 15, September 21, and October 4, 2001. Would be coded as three incidents in CSIS, whereas NAF only coded it as one.

†Killing of registered/alleged sex offender(s) by White supremacists for ideological reasons.

‡Dubious connection—a police officer claimed in court that Shutt had Alt-Right ties, but the judge did not permit them to explain.

Special Correspondence

QAnon: Radical Opinion versus Radical Action

by Sophia Moskalenko & Clark McCauley

Abstract

QAnon is a baseless and debunked conspiracy theory propagated through Internet social media, with bizarre beliefs that are nevertheless shared by millions of Americans. After the 1/6/2021 Capitol Hill riot, QAnon followers were identified among those breaching the Capitol Hill building, spurring comparisons with ISIS and debates about how to deradicalize QAnon followers. Using the Two-Pyramids model of radicalization in conjunction with polling data, this Research Note highlights the relatively small threat of radical action from QAnon. We argue that deradicalization efforts aimed at QAnon opinions are a waste of resources and potentially dangerous in exaggerating the QAnon threat and increasing Right-Wing perception of government over-reach.

Keywords: Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), QAnon, radical action, radical opinion, radicalization, Two-Pyramids model, United States.

On January, 6, 2021, a crowd stormed the Capitol Building in Washington, DC, intent on stopping the count of electoral votes cast in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election. The Capitol breach was a watershed moment, revealing deep cultural divisions in the USA and exposing the radical means that some Americans are willing to use to advance their political views. In the days that followed, the news media scrambled to make sense of the event; articles, television broadcasts and radio interviews featured QAnon as one of the movements responsible for the Capitol invasion.

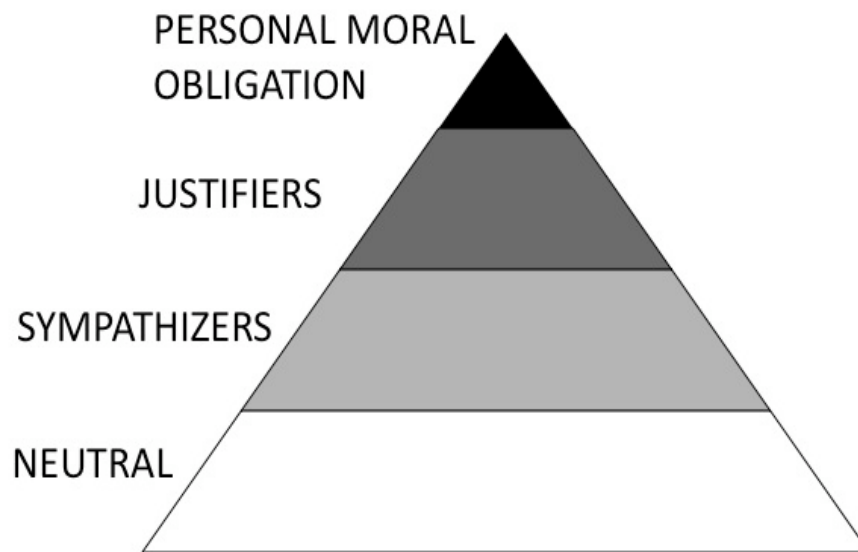
A baseless and debunked conspiracy theory, QAnon has a loose Internet-based following numbering in the millions in the U.S.[1] QAnon believers claim that a satanic cabal of pedophiles and cannibals controls world governments and the media. This cabal, QAnon claims, includes Bill and Hillary Clinton, George Soros, Tom Hanks and Lady Gaga, among others, while Donald Trump is believed to be working behind the scenes to bring it down.[2] The list of elements building up the conspiracy theory goes on and on, evolving with new facts and fiction. QAnon internet forums encourage followers to “do the research” and “connect the dots” - in other words to function as collective myth-making platforms. It is on these platforms that QAnon discussed and planned “the Storm” of January 6th, designed to regain the “stolen” presidency for Donald Trump.[3]

Given the role of QAnon in the insurrectionists’ radical action, radicalization experts have weighed in, to help the public and the government to understand the threat. Some scholars of terrorism have compared QAnon to ISIS.[4; 5] Others have suggested new deradicalizing efforts to guide people out of QAnon.[6; 7]

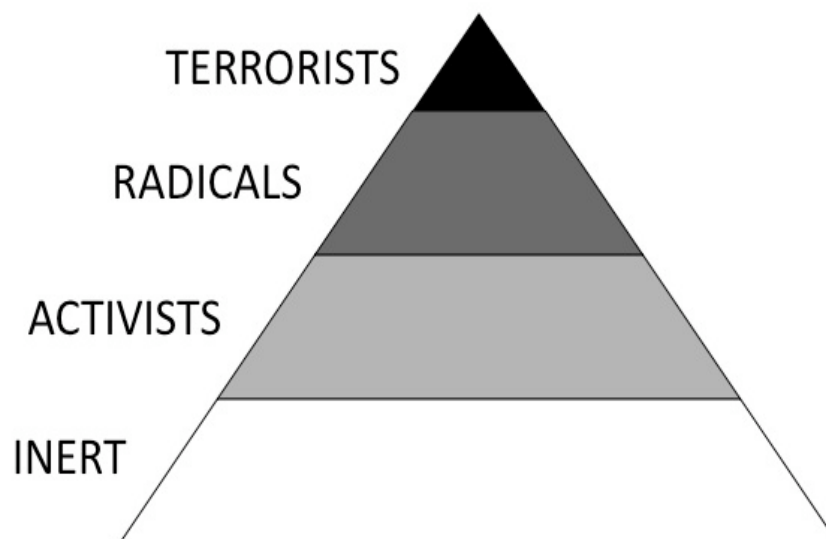
We want to sound an alarm against categorizing QAnon as a terrorist group akin to ISIS, and to warn that efforts at deradicalization of QAnon followers are likely to do more harm than good.

Radicalization involves an increased support for one side of a political conflict.[8] For some, increased support for conflict is a matter of opinion only. For others, radicalization involves radical action in support of a political conflict, such as participation in rallies and protests, destruction of property and attacks on people.

We have proposed the Two Pyramids Model of radicalization to represent this distinction.[9] The Opinion Radicalization pyramid has four layers, with politically neutral individuals at the bottom layer. At the next level up are those who sympathize with radical action. Third level from the bottom are those who justify radical action. Finally, at the apex of the pyramid are those who consider radical action a personal moral obligation.

Figure 1: Radicalization in Opinion Pyramid

The Action Radicalization pyramid also has four layers, with politically inert individuals in the bottom layer, then activists who are ready to do something for “the cause”, as long as it is legal and non-violent, then radicals who are willing to break the laws in advancing their cause, with terrorists at the apex ready to kill even un-armed civilians.

Figure 2: Radicalization in Action Pyramid

The two pyramids are not stage models. Our own and others’ research demonstrated that individuals can be moved to the highest level of action pyramid (becoming terrorists) without ever engaging in activism before. [10]

The two kinds of radicalization - in opinion and in action - are not directly related. In fact, most people with radical opinion will never do anything radical. For example, in repeated polls of U.S. Muslims, about 3

percent agreed that jihad is a personal moral obligation.[11] Thus, the number of U.S. Muslims at the apex of the radical opinion pyramid projects to about 75,000 people (3% of about 2.15 million adult Muslims in the U.S.[12]). Compare this number with fewer than 100 U.S. Muslims who were found to be associated with terrorism between 2016 and 2018.[13] The difference between 75,000 at the apex of the opinion pyramid of radicalization and fewer than 100 at the apex of the action pyramid of radicalization highlights the importance of differentiating between radicalization of opinion and action.

Because of the disparity between the number of people holding radical opinions and the number likely to engage in radical action, we have argued for policing based on action, instead of policing based on opinion. Trying to police opinion exaggerates the threat a hundredfold and wastes resources. Additionally, attempts to clamp down on radical opinions can backfire - by creating real or perceived grievances in the targeted population, which can then radicalize people who would have otherwise remained neutral.

The history of opposing radical opinions is not inspiring. Some of these opinions, like franchise for women, desegregated schools and, more recently, legalized marijuana, have become mainstream. Political extremism, like terrorism, is difficult to define.

More recent is the effort to counter sympathy and support for terrorism. A major initiative against political radicalization was introduced by President Obama in February 2015 as an initiative for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): “to discuss concrete steps the United States and its partners can take to develop community-oriented approaches to counter hateful extremist ideologies that radicalize, recruit or incite to violence.”[14] The focus on opinion rather than action was already signaled by targeting “ideologies.”

Millions of dollars of federal support were granted to community-based programs in over a dozen U.S. cities, notably including Los Angeles, Boston, Minneapolis, and Montgomery County (next to Washington, D.C.). These programs involved faith leaders, educators, and local NGOs. The programs have been evaluated, and two major problems have been identified.[15] First, the programs focused on Muslims rather than Right Wing (RW) extremists, thus stigmatizing Muslims while ignoring the RW origins of most recent terrorist activity in the U.S. Second, there is no evidence that these programs reduced extremist ideas, extremist activism, or extremist terrorism.

One indication of the failure of CVE programs appears in polling data. About a third of U.S. Muslims believe that “the war on terrorism is a war on Islam.”[16] Fighting radical opinions, which often include disapproval of U.S. foreign policies in relation to predominantly Muslim countries[17], has not been successful. In short, rather than fighting radical opinions, it is radical action we should prioritize and try to mitigate, focusing on a much smaller group that poses a much greater threat.

In this light, the discussion of QAnon’s threat now unfolding among researchers and lay public seems to be once again focusing too much on radical opinions and not enough on radical action. Consider a recent NPR/Ipsos poll of U.S. Adults[18], which found that 17% endorsed the QAnon belief that “A group of Satan-worshipping elites who run a child sex ring are trying to control our politics and media”. This 17% projects to about 36 million U.S. adults who seem to share QAnon’s radical opinions. By contrast, as of 2/24/2021, only 56 QAnon followers have committed any ideologically-motivated crime in the U.S. - including the 1/6/2021 breach of the Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.[19]

Compared with the threat of jihadist terrorism in recent years, the number of QAnoners with radical opinions is much higher (36 million versus 75 thousand), but the number of QAnoners implicated in radical action is actually smaller (56 versus 100). However bizarre their beliefs, QAnon presents a very small threat of radical action. Government response to QAnon should avoid exaggerating that threat, and avoid the predictable Right Wing reaction to a government trying to police public opinion.

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Research Notes

40 Terrorism Databases and Data Sets: A New Inventory

by Neil G. Bowie

Abstract

This Research Note is a follow up from three 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>], '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>] and 'A New Inventory of 30 Terrorism Databases and Data Sets' [URL: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2020/issue-1/bowie.pdf>].

Together, the previous inventories covered 120 databases and data sets. This Research Note describes 40 more databases and data sets in the same three categories:

- i. Academic, Think Tank and Independent Databases (n =32)*
- ii. Commercial Databases (n =2) and*
- iii. Governmental Databases (n =6).*

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

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

Introduction

This new inventory of forty terrorism databases and datasets adds to an eclectic range of topics connected with the study of terrorism. Since the early and on-going recording of terrorism incidents, actors and attack types in the late 1960's, the diversity of the units of analysis in terrorism databases and datasets has grown enormously.

These databases reflect some of the complexity and ramifications that acts of terrorism visit upon individuals, society, the state and international communities. Funding criteria may, in part, reflect the type of terrorism databases and datasets that are developed. However, recent funding challenges by the highly respected START Global Terrorism Database (GTD) illustrate that even the most established databases are not immune from funding worries or even political oversight.[1]

While there is a paucity of databases on state terrorism and domestic terrorism, the subject coverage and breadth of diversity in quantitative terrorism databases and datasets is growing. The relational linkage of terrorism data, source material and sophisticated mapping visualisation provide researchers with a rich synthesised body of work (e.g., items 14, 15, 25). Niche databases and datasets covering Water (e.g., item 31), Prisons and Terrorism (e.g., item 18), Lone-Actor Terrorism (e.g., item 6) and Journalists (e.g., item 5) are a reflection of how incidents of terrorism impact upon society. Even insurance policies covering incidents of terrorism would have been a rarity pre 9/11; acts of terrorism are now factored in as a mainstream insurance risk, requiring resultant data (e.g., item 34).

This inventory is by no means 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 academic researchers.

N.B.: All website hyper-links have been validated as of 11th of April 2021.

(i) Academic, Think Tank and Independent Databases

1. ACLED Dashboard

Host Institution: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). Executive Director: Professor Clionadh Raleigh, University of Sussex, United Kingdom.

Scope: Political violence and protest worldwide.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard>

E-Mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: The ACLED Dashboard interactively maps acts of political violence against civilians, riots, protests, explosions, and abductions among other variables, worldwide. In addition to graphs and quantitative data, the dashboard provides country layers of intensity and can drill down to specific incidents using advanced software features.

2. ACLED-Religion

Host Institution: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). Executive Director: Professor Clionadh Raleigh, University of Sussex, United Kingdom.

Scope: Religious repression and disorder in the Middle East and North Africa.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://acleddata.com/acled-religion>

E-Mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: The ACLED-Religion datasets collect real-time data on both religious repression and disorder. It is a pilot project, focussed on the Middle East and North Africa. The dataset covers Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine and Yemen. Data within ACLED-Religion can be compared to the ACLED datasets, using consistent methodological coding. New event variables, including religion-related violence and harassment, enhance existing data and information on religious dynamics and actors. The project commenced coverage at the end of January 2021. Updated weekly, it also provides an ACLED-Religion dashboard: <https://acleddata.com/acled-religion-dashboard/> For further information see: https://acleddata.com/acledatanew/wp-content/content/uploads/2021/03/ACLED-Religion_Announcement_March2021.pdf

3. ADL H.E.A.T. Map (Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism)

Host Institution: Anti-Defamation League (ADL), New York (NY), United States.

Scope: Hate, extremist and antisemitic incidents in the United States.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resource-knowledge-base/adl-heat-map>

E-Mail: <https://www.adl.org/contact>

Summary: The ADL H.E.A.T. Map visualises interactively hate, extremist and antisemitic incidents both

at state and national level within the United States. The dataset maps terrorist plots and attacks, extremist murders, white supremacist and antisemitic incidents, among others. Classification on the type of incident, ideology and narrative is also provided. Spatial mapping data points allow users to drill down in geographic areas with heightened activity. Data used to populate the ADL H.E.A.T. maps is sourced from a mixture of police reports, victims reports and extremism-related/focused sources.

4. Basel AML Index – Ranking money laundering and terrorist risks around the world

Host Institution: [Publication] Basel Institute on Governance, Basel, Switzerland.

Scope: Risk of money laundering and terrorist finance.

Access: Public Edition (Free), Expert Edition and Expert Edition Plus (Payment required).

Website: <https://baselgovernance.org/basel-aml-index>

E-Mail: info@baselgovernance.org

Summary: The Basel AML Index, established in 2012, is an annual publication of the Basel Institute on Governance. It assesses the risk of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing (ML/TF) globally. The index and data are generated from 16 separate sources, including The World Bank, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the World Economic Forum. *The Basel AML Index: 9th Public Edition* (2020) is available from their website. The institute also provides an [Interactive Map](#) of the *Basel AML Index* based on high to low risk of ML/TF. The index can be filtered based on geographic regions and income criteria. Datasets can be downloaded in .XLS and .CSV format.

5. Committee to Protect Journalists [Database]

Host Institution: Committee to Protect Journalists, New York, NY, United States.

Scope: Journalists killed between 1992-2021.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://cpj.org>

E-Mail: info@cpj.org

Summary: The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is an independent non-profit organisation based in the United States. The CPJ maintains a database of attacks on the press. This includes: journalists killed, imprisoned and missing. The database lists suspected sources of fire in the killing of journalists, including terrorist groups, insurgents, paramilitary groups and military groups among other entities. In addition, the CPJ database provides information and data on journalists arrested, charged, and convicted on terrorism related allegations.

6. Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism: Database

Host Institution: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), The Hague, The Netherlands.[2]

Scope: Instances of lone-actor terrorism across 30 European countries.

Access: Contact ICCT.

Website: <https://icct.nl/project/lone-actor-terrorism-database/>

E-Mail: <https://icct.nl/contact/>

Summary: The Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism: Database (CLAT) recorded incidents of lone-actor terrorism in thirty European countries (EU, Norway and Switzerland). The temporal period for the database

is January 2000 - 31st December 2014. The incidents include lone-actor plots and actual attacks. The CLAT database has 120 lone actor entries. It is not exhaustive in recording every lone actor plot during the period 2000-2014. *The Lone-Actor Terrorism Final Report*, provides a detailed and comprehensive background to the CLAT Database and research project.

7. Database of Legislation on the Definition of Terrorism

Host Institution: Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), Washington D.C. United States.

Scope: Counterterrorism legislation, criminal codes, NGO laws, relevant domestic legislation.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.csis.org/programs/international-consortium-closing-civic-space-icon/aligning-security-and-civic-space-0>

E-Mail: aschwartz@csis.org

Summary: The Database of Legislation on the Definition of Terrorism has been developed by an international consortium of scholars ([iCon](#)) under the auspices of the Human Rights Initiative (HRI) at the CSIS, Washington D.C. The database records countries' legislation defining terrorism. Consequential penalties for committing or supporting acts of terrorism are also recorded. Further variables and information in the database include counterterrorism legislation, combatting financing of terrorism legislation, non-governmental (NGO) legislation, anti-money legislation and criminal codes. In addition, the database holds domestic legislation that potentially impacts how each country defines an act of terrorism and consequential punishment. A Matrix of the database is freely accessible via the CSIS website.

8. GLOBSEC Database

Host Institution: GLOBSEC, Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

Scope: European jihadist incidents 2015.

Access: Request required.

Website: <https://www.globsec.org/events/what-makes-a-crime-terror-nexus-evidence-from-11-eu-countries/>

E-Mail: info@globsec.org

Summary: GLOBSEC, a Central European think-tank, based in Bratislava, has developed a terrorism database logging 326 individuals connected to European jihadist events in 2015. This was a collaborative database project involving 11 European Union countries. The database recorded individuals who were arrested for terrorism events, fugitives from criminal justice or those perpetrators who died while conducting acts of terrorism in 2015. GLOBSEC has also published data from the database in a series of quarterly reports. See: *'From Criminals to Terrorists and Back?'*.

9. HLS PILAC Database of States' Statements (August 2011 – November 2016) concerning Use of Force in relation to Syria. Shorthand title: Database on States' Statements concerning Syria (DSSS).

Host Institution: Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict (HLS PILAC), Harvard University, Massachusetts (MT), United States.

Scope: States' statements concerning use of force in relation to Syria (2011-2016).

Access: Free.

Website: <https://pilac.law.harvard.edu/dsss#database-of-states-statements>

E-Mail: pilac@law.harvard.edu

Summary: The DSSS database contains statements made by states or on behalf of states, as well as state officials, in relation to the use of force in Syria. Although primarily designed for legal practitioners, the DSSS database contains a large array of statements referring to terrorism and Syria. The primary focus of the database's statements relates to legal parameters in relation to the use of force in Syria. It is freely available in .XLSX, Google spreadsheet and .PDF format.

10. Internal Violence Index (IVI)

Host Institution: FERDI – Foundation Pour Les Études et Recherches Sur le Développement International, Clermont-Ferrand, France.

Scope: Internal armed conflict, criminality, terrorism and political violence.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://ferdi.fr/en/indicators/internal-violence-index-ivi>

E-Mail: contact@ferdi.fr

Summary: The Internal Violence Index (IVI) is a composite dataset focussed around 4 clusters: internal armed conflict, criminality, terrorism and political violence. Covering the period 2008-2012, the IVI dataset compares violence of 130 developing countries at the country level. The terrorism cluster records terrorist incidents, deaths from terrorism and injuries due to terrorism. Data is exclusively quantitative and does not use subjective indicators of fragility. The Internal Violence Index (IVI) is sourced from a range of well-established open-source databases and is free to download.

11. Introducing a Dataset of Multi-Scale Geographies of ISIS Ideology from ISIS Sources

Host Institution: [Academic Publication] Christopher Fuhriman, Richard M. Medina & Simon Brewer (2020). Introducing a Dataset of Multi-Scale Geographies of ISIS Ideology from ISIS Sources, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Taylor and Frances Online. Published (Online) 18 May 2020.

Scope: Multi-Scale Geographies of ISIS Ideology derived from ISIS Sources.

Access: Subscription Required.

Website: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09546553.2020.1742707>

E-Mail: christopher.fuhriman@westpoint.edu

Summary: The Dataset of Multi-Scale Geographies of ISIS Ideology from ISIS Sources is generated from 'computer-aided content analysis, manual content analysis, and cartographic visualization applied to ISIS's Dabiq magazine'. [3] The dataset analyses the geographical perspectives of ISIS terrorists and insurgents gathered from online textual media.

12. Introducing Transnational Terrorist Hostage Event (TTHE) Data Set, 1978-2018

Host Institution: [Academic Publication] *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol 65, Issue 2-3, 2021.

Scope: Transnational Terrorist Hostage Events (1978-2018).

Access: Institutional Access/Subscription.

Website: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022002720957714>

E-Mail: N/A

Summary: The Transnational Terrorist Hostage Event (TTHE) Data Set codifies four types of hostage incidents: barricade missions, kidnappings, skyjackings and non-aerial hijackings. The dataset contains 1,974

incidents covering the temporal period 1978-2018. Source data for the TTHE Data Set is linked to the International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events (ITERATE) datasets.

13. Islamist Terror Attacks in the World 1979-2019

Host Institution: Foundation pour L'innovation politique (Fondapol), Paris, France.

Scope: Islamist terror attacks worldwide, 1979-2019.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.fondapol.org/en/study/islamist-terrorist-attacks-in-the-world-1979-2019/>

E-Mail: <https://www.fondapol.org/en/contact>

Summary: The Islamist Terror Attacks in the World 1979-2019 dataset attempts to quantify Islamist terrorism, identify the forms it takes, classifies the acts and provides quantifiable data on the number of victims over a temporal period of 40 years. The principal source data for the dataset is derived from START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD), in addition to other sources. The complete dataset is available in .XLS format.

14. Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activities Interactive Map and Timeline

Host Institution: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington D.C., United States.

Scope: Hezbollah's worldwide activities, 1982 – Present.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/lebanese-hezbollah-select-worldwide-activities-interactive-map-and-timeline>

E-Mail: press@washingtoninstitute.org

Summary: The Lebanese Hezbollah Interactive Map and Timeline is a highly interactive multimedia tool, providing an extensive database of primary and secondary source material on the Lebanese Hezbollah's activities globally. The timeline dates back to 1982. The interactive map links to videos, photographs, government reports, congressional reports, court documents and research reports. The database uses both open-source materials and declassified government reports. Using multimedia, the Interactive Map and Timeline is able to provide visual relational linkage between Hezbollah activities and associated other individuals/groups and related events and documentation.

15. The Mapping Militants Project (MMP)

Host Institution: Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, California (CA), United States.

Scope: Patterns in the evolution of militant organizations.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants>

E-Mail: mappingmilitants@lists.stanford.edu

Summary: The Mapping Militants Project (MMP) provides interactive “maps” which trace the evolution of violent extremist groups over time. In particular, the MMP visualises changing relationships temporally. This in turn is linked to a database of militant group profiles including a narrative summary, organizational structure, strategy and interactions. Data from the Mapping Militants Project (MMP) is available to download via the project's website.

16. NTI Nuclear Security Index

Host Institution: [Publication] Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), Washington D.C., United States / Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

Scope: Monitors countries nuclear security progress.

Access: Free.

Website: https://www.ntiindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_NTI-Index_Report_Final.pdf

E-Mail: contact@nti.org

Summary: *The NTI Nuclear Security Index* monitors and provides commentary on 176 countries and their level of progress (and gaps) on nuclear security. The index is sourced from publicly available information. It includes two theft rankings on secure material and global nuclear security efforts as well as a sabotage ranking on protection of nuclear facilities. Radiological tables and data are also presented. References to terrorism and nuclear terrorism are made throughout the NTI index in addition to theft, smuggling and sabotage. The [NTI website](#) also provides interactive Maps and data tables. Datasets from the *NTI Nuclear Security Index* are free to download via their website.

17. OSCE/ODIHR Hate Crime Reports

Host Institution: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Warsaw, Poland.

Scope: Hate crime reports covering fifty-seven countries.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://hatecrime.osce.org/austria?year=2019>

E-Mail: tndinfo@odihr.pl

Summary: The OSCE/ODIHR Hate Crime Reports is an interactive site covering hate crime incidents in fifty-seven countries. The criteria for inclusion in the reports is that an act must be deemed to be a criminal offence in law and that acts are motivated by bias. Acts classified as bias against Christians, bias against Muslims and Racism and xenophobia are among several variables. The Hate Crime Reports provides statistical data, interactive graphics and downloadable data on incidents. Accompanying narrative also provides information on hate crime and linkage to domestic police and Federal/State counter-terrorism agencies respective policies and procedures.

18. Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries

Host Institution: [Publication] Rajan Basra and Peter R. Neumann, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), King's College London, London, United Kingdom (2020).

Scope: Management of extremist prisoner offenders.

Access: Free.

Website: [ICSR-Report-Prisons-and-Terrorism-Extremist-Offender-Management-in-10-European-Countries_V2.pdf](#)

E-Mail: mail@icsr.info

Summary: The *Prisons and Terrorism: Extremist Offender Management in 10 European Countries* study produced by the ICSR, Kings College London, outlines the policies and practices of each country in relation to extremist offender management. This study contains a series of statistics as well as data analysis, including number of prisoners in custody for terrorism-related offences and prisoners monitored for radicalisation. In

addition, a chronological ‘List of Prison-related Terrorist Attacks and Plots, 2015-20’ is provided. The study analyses how prison environments can both radicalise extremist offenders, while also offering the opportunity to reform radicalised prisoners.

19. QAnon Offenders in the United States

Host Institution: [Publication] Jensen, Michael and Sheehan Kane. 2021. “*QAnon Offenders in the United States*”, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: QAnon offenders in the United States.

Access: Free.

Website: https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_PIRUS_QAnon_Feb2021_0.pdf

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The *QAnon Offenders in the United States* research brief provides data on the characteristics and offences committed by QAnon members. Data is compiled from auxiliary data from [START’s Profiles of Radicalization in the United States \(PIRUS\)](#) project. The data deals with individuals who have radicalized in the United States. Characteristic variables include among others: age, marital status, employment status and whether or not individuals have a military or law enforcement background. The data also codes characteristics of the crime, for example terrorist threats/acts, kidnapping (conspiracy) and weapons possession and murder.

20. Radiological and Nuclear Non-State Adversaries Database (RANNSAD)

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

Scope: Profiles of all former non-state users and attempted users of radiological and nuclear weapons.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/radiological-and-nuclear-non-state-adversaries-database-rannsad>

E-Mail: infostart@umd.edu

Summary: The RANNSAD database codes data on Radiological and Nuclear Adversary Profiles including information on events ‘perpetrated by a specific actor/organization’. Established in 2011, the RANNSAD dataset variables include event type, agent type, perpetrator type, ideology type, individual demographics as well as perpetrator success level. The RANNSAD database was developed to answer the research question: “Who are the most likely radiological or nuclear non-state threat actors?”. Both the RANNSAD database and codebook are freely accessible to download.[4]

21. Reputation of Terror Groups Dataset: Measuring Popularity of Terror Groups

Host Institution: [Academic Publication] Tokdemir, Efe, and Seden Akcinaroglu. 2016. “Reputation of Terror Groups Dataset: Measuring Popularity of Terror Groups” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 53(2) 268-277.

Scope: Different strategies by terror groups measuring the groups popularity or public support.

Access: Institutional Access/Subscription.

Website: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0022343315626506>

E-Mail: N/A

Summary: The Reputation of Terror Groups (RTG) dataset codes quantitatively terror group strategies which can be measured in relation to terror groups popularity or public support. From this data, the concept of reputation in relation to terror groups is assessed. The RTG records 443 terror groups over a temporal period of 31 years.

22. Since 9/11 - Timeline

Host Institution: Since 9/11 (Educational Charity) in association with University College London (UCL) Institute of Education. London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Timeline of key terrorism events focussed on 9/11.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://since911.com/explore-911/timeline>

E-Mail: info@since911.com

Summary: The 'Since 9/11' interactive Timeline has been developed as an educational tool to inform young people of the events of 9/11. The timeline focuses predominantly on the events leading to the attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York, Washington DC and Shanksville, Penn., with a series of chronological interactive events that offer narrative, pictorial and multimedia film.

23. Suicide Attacks Database (2020)

Host Institution: Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), Tel Aviv University, Israel.

Scope: Suicide attacks worldwide during 2020.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/suicide-attacks-2020>

E-Mail: info@inss.org.il

Summary: The Suicide Attacks Database, compiled by the Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, Israel, covers the year 2020. It records incidents in Asia, the Middle East and Afghanistan, among other regions. Two independent sources are used to validate data. Key variables include: attack style, attack complexity, destination and organization responsible. The database is freely available to download in an .XLS format.

24. Terrorism Content Analytics Platform (TCAP) Database

Host Institution: Database developed by *Tech Against Terrorism* and supported by Public Safety Canada.[5]

Scope: Verified terrorist online content.

Access: Registration required. This site is restricted to 'Tech companies, academic researchers and civil society representatives who have legitimate justification for accessing terrorist content'.[6]

Website: <https://www.terrorismanalytics.org/>

E-Mail: <https://www.terrorismanalytics.org/contact>

Summary: The Terrorist Content Analytics Platform (TCAP) is an automated database tool that detects and analyses verified terrorist content found on smaller internet platforms. Data is collected in real-time. The resultant dataset allows informed judgements to be made by content moderators running smaller internet platforms, including messaging platforms, terrorist channels and mobile apps. In addition, the datasets generated can be used for academic research and analysis. The TCAP database can also be used for automated terrorist content analysis including symbolism, detecting narratives and metadata.

25. Terrorists and Extremists Database (TED)

Host Institution: Counter Extremism Project, New York, London and Berlin (Online Project).

Scope: Global database of extremists and terrorist leaders and operatives.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists>

E-Mail: <https://www.counterextremism.com/contact-us>

Summary: The Terrorists and Extremists Database (TED) is an interactive database on terrorist leaders, operatives and extremists. The database generates Featured Reports on individuals. These Featured Reports provides a narrative overview of the individual terrorist, extremist or operative as well as biographical information and known aliases. Linked to each record is an interactive History Timeline, which in turn hyperlinks media reports, Government documents and UN publications. The website has extensive downloadable Threat Reports on terrorist groups.

26. The Terrorism and Foreign Fighters Database

Host Institution: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Scope: All convictions for domestic terrorism in the Balkan's as well as judicial verdicts in the case of foreign fighters who went to Syria and the Ukraine.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://terorizam.detektor.ba>

E-Mail: urednik@birn.eu.com

Summary: The Terrorism and Foreign Fighters Database is an interactive resource centre developed by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN). The database records all convictions for domestic terrorism in the Balkans. Its coverage includes domestic terrorism convictions in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. In addition, the database contains judicial verdicts of individuals fighting in conflicts in Syria and Ukraine (2010-2020). Variables include location of trial, total number of cases, location of crime and total figures per country in sentencing years. Individual case narratives and trial video is provided.

27. Terrorist and Insurgent Organization Social Services (TIOS) Dataset

Host Institution: One Earth Future, Broomfield, Colorado (CO), United States.

Scope: Tracks non-state services by sector undertaken by terrorists, rebels and insurgents.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://oefresearch.org/datasets/tios>

E-Mail: lheger@oneearthfuture.org or danielle.jung@emory.edu

Summary: The Terrorist and Insurgent Organization Social Services (TIOS) Dataset provides key indicators of goods and social service provided by terrorists, rebels and insurgents in fragile and failed states. The public good variables within the dataset include welfare, education, health security, natural disaster response and religious services, among others. Covering more than 400 hundred organisations, the TIOS dataset is available in .CSV and .DTA download format.

28. Terrorist and Organized Criminal Search Data Base (TOC)

Host Institution: Faculty of Security Studies and Faculty of Mathematics, University of Belgrade, Republic of Serbia.

Scope: Terrorist incidents and organised criminal activity.

Access: Free – Requires Registration.

Website: <http://www.tocsearch.com/>

E-Mail: <http://www.tocsearch.com/index.php?action=contact>

Summary: The TOC-search database provides data and information on terrorist incidents, terrorist groups, members and group leaders. It also contains information on organised crime. The TOC-search project was established in 2007. The database has a two-tier accessibility level. The 'blue key' is for students and researchers while the 'red key' is for institutional and government agencies' access.

29. Typology of Terror

Host Institution: Lowy Institute, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Scope: Characteristics of Australian's contribution to global jihad in Islamic State era.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/features/typology-of-terror/>

E-Mail: reception@lowyinstitute.org

Summary: The Typology of Terror is an interactive live database of the characteristics of Australian citizens' and Australian residents' contribution to global jihad since the beginning of the Syrian civil war and the start of the Islamic State era. The database is sourced from media reports, official court documents, interviews with journalists, interviews with Australian government law enforcement officials, as well as social media profiles. The Typology of Terror gathers data on convicted terrorist offenders, those charged with terrorism offences or known to have joined radical Islamist terrorist organisations. It also provides a high level of visual interactive data with accompanying quantitative data.

30. United States Counterterrorism Operations 2018-2020 [Map]

Host Institution: Costs of War Project, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, Providence (RI), United States.

Scope: United States Government conducted counterterrorism operations 2018–2020.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2021/USCounterterrorismOperations>

E-Mail: costsofwar@brown.edu

Summary: The United States Counterterrorism Operations 2018-2020 map indicates 85 countries where the U.S. Government specifically carried out counterterrorism operations between 2018 and 2020. The projects authors identify 'operations the U.S. explicitly justifies using the language of counterterrorism'. The U.S. counterterrorism activities are classified into 4 key areas: 1. Training and / or assistance, 2. U.S. Military Exercises, 3. Combat 4. Air and Drone Strikes.

31. Water Conflict Chronology - Map

Host Institution: Pacific Institute, Oakland, CA, United States.

Scope: Chronology of conflict with incidents linked to water.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.worldwater.org/conflict/map/>

E-Mail: info@pacinst.org

Summary: The Water Conflict Chronology is an interactive global map indicating incidents of conflict with specific involvement of water. While covering a broad array of conflict terms, users are able to refine the interactive chronology map to filter specific incidents relating to acts of terrorism that has some fight for access to water element involved. The chronology with more than 900 incidents/events has been developed to provide insight into the relationship between water systems, water resources and conflict. Each incident is linked to source data displayed on the map.

32. The Western Jihadism Project [Database]

Host Institution: Project Lead: Dr. Jytte Klausen, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts (MT), United States.

Scope: Western nationals linked to terrorist plots related to Al Qaeda.

Access: Upon request.

Website: <https://www.brandeis.edu/klausen-jihadism/index.html>

E-Mail: klausen@brandeis.edu

Summary: Established in 2006 and formally launched in 2009, the Western Jihadism Project is a database archive of the evolution and growth of 'Jihadism within Western Europe, North America and Australia'. Dating back to the early 1990's, this open-source database records terrorist plots carried out by Western nationals and Al Qaeda-inspired terrorist offenders.

(ii) Commercial Databases

33. Statista – Data on Terrorism and Political Violence

Host Institution: Statista, Hamburg, Germany.

Scope: Broad range of terrorism and political violence data.

Access: Basic Account (Free), Single/Project/Corporate/Enterprise Accounts (Subscription Required).

Website: <https://www.statista.com/>

E-Mail: support@statista.com

Summary: Statista - founded in Germany (2007), with worldwide offices, provides commercially available datasets on a wide range of topics, including terrorism and political violence. Their database provides tiered levels of access. This includes free basic data and graphs on terrorism and political violence, to subscription-based services, allowing users to drill down on terrorism and political violence statistics. Topics covered include terrorism in the Nordics, country specific terrorism indexes with commentary, country dossiers, and economic costs of terrorism. Bespoke research projects can be developed. Depending on subscription level, statistical datasets are downloadable in MS Excel, MS PowerPoint and various graphical formats.

34. Terrorism Pool Index: Review of terrorism insurance programs in selected countries 2018/19

Host Institution: [Publication] Willis Towers Watson, New York (NY), United States.

Scope: Index of terrorism insurance programs 2018/19.

Access: Free (2018/19 Edition). 2020 Edition requires registration.

Website: <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-GB/Insights/2019/10/the-terrorism-pool-index-2019>

E-Mail: <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-US/Contact-Us>

Summary: Covering 24 countries, The Terrorism Pool Index (2018/19) contains statistical data and accompanying narrative of key terrorism insurance pools, financial funds and compensation schemes. The first section covering 14 countries includes definitions of terrorism for each country (this has consequences for insurance pay-outs). In addition, scope of coverage, data on insurance indemnity and summary of exclusions are given, e.g., for nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological attacks. Where available, the index publishes financial data on maximum scheme paid losses and reinsurance rates resulting from terrorist incidents.

(iii) Governmental Databases**35. Annex of Statistical Information – Country Reports on Terrorism 2019**

Host Institution: Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State, Washington D.C. United States.

Scope: Statistical information on terrorism incidents worldwide 2019.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Annex-of-Statistical-Information.pdf>

E-Mail: <https://register.state.gov/contactus/contactusform>

Summary: *The Annex of Statistical Information* provides statistical data and analysis for the U.S. Department of States annual *Country Reports on Terrorism*. Under the United States Code (Title 22, Section 2656f) the U.S. Department of State is required by law to present annually to Congress both the *Country Reports on Terrorism* and *The Annex of Statistical Information*. The annex details: number of individuals killed by acts of terrorism, injured and kidnapped by terrorist groups pertaining to the previous calendar year. The data includes United States citizens, dual nationals and non-US citizens. Data for *The Annex of Statistical Information* is prepared for the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism by Development Services Group (DSG), Inc., Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center (GTTAC), Bethesda, MD, United States. DSG subcontracted the data collection and analysis effort to the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, operated by the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University (GMU).

36. Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTO's) List

Host Institution: Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State, Washington D.C. United States.

Scope: Designated foreign terrorist organisations by the United States Government (USG).

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

E-Mail: <https://register.state.gov/contactus/contactusform>

Summary: The Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) List catalogues foreign organisations designated by

the United States' Secretary of State, under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). The list contains the year the group was designated and the organization's name. In addition, the list also contains 'Delisted Foreign Terrorist Organizations' by the U.S. Department of State. This details the 'Date Removed', 'Name' and the 'Date originally Designated'.

37. National Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Capabilities Analysis Database (NCCAD)

Host Institution: Office for Bombing Prevention (OBP) Cyber & Infrastructure Security Agency, Arlington, Virginia (VA), United States.

Scope: Analyses the capabilities of United States counter-IED missions.

Access: Restricted.

Website: <https://www.cisa.gov/nccad>

E-Mail: nccad@cisa.dhs.gov

Summary: National Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Capabilities Analysis Database (NCCAD) analyses types of IED incident, geographic area and incident-specific resources to provide response capabilities nationally and sub-nationally, in countering IEDs. The database is used for planning and crisis decision making as a result of IED threats or incidents. For further information see: <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/NCCAD%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

38. Northern Ireland Terrorism Legislation: Annual Statistics 2019/20

Host Institution: [Publication] Security and Protection Group, Northern Ireland Office, Belfast, United Kingdom.

Scope: Northern Ireland terrorism legislation.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/northern-ireland-terrorism-legislation-annual-statistics-201920--2>

E-Mail: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/northern-ireland-office-nio>

Summary: The *Northern Ireland Terrorism Legislation: Annual Statistics 2019/20* is produced by the Northern Ireland Office. The report produces statistical datasets and commentary in relation to powers contained within four key pieces of legislation. These powers relate to the Terrorism Act (2000), the Terrorism (Northern Ireland) Act 2006, the Counter-Terrorism Act (2008) and the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007. Key data includes terrorism statistics on stop and search, arrests, detentions, convictions and compensation, among other data.

39. Security Situation Statistics (Northern Ireland)

Host Institution: The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Belfast, United Kingdom.

Scope: Trends in statistics on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/security-situation-statistics/>

E-Mail: zCSUwebstats@psni.pnn.police.uk

Summary: Dating back to the late 1960's, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) have collated data on the security situation in Northern Ireland. Key statistical data include: security related deaths, casualties

from the security situation, bombing incidents, shooting incidents, paramilitary style shooting casualties and paramilitary style assaults. Other variables in the datasets include finds of ammunition or explosives, incendiaries and persons that have been arrested under the Terrorism Act (Section 41) and subsequently charged. Statistical validation is provided by the PSNI Statistics Branch. The PSNI produce a monthly *Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics* bulletin as well as an *Accompanying excel spreadsheet* (.XLXS).

40. Terrorism in Africa – A Quantitative Analysis

Host Institution: [Publication] Adriana Lins De Albuquerque, Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut - Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, Sweden. (2017).

Scope: Quantitative analysis of terrorism in Africa 1997-2015.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--4398--SE>

E-Mail: N/A

Summary: This quantitative analysis of terrorism in Africa, by the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), provides data on terrorism over an eighteen year period (1997-2015). The study uses data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), BAAD datasets and the United Nations, among other datasets. It assesses whether terrorism is on the rise in Africa, and which terrorist groups are responsible for this rise. The study also explores whether there are Islamist links to these attacks and what association al-Qaeda and Daesh (IS/ISIL) have in relation to terrorist attacks in Africa.

About the Compiler: *Neil G. Bowie is an independent scholar, specialising in the analysis of terrorism and counterterrorism. He holds a Ph.D. from the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV) at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Neil Bowie also holds degrees from the universities of Aberdeen, Strathclyde and from Edinburgh's Napier University. He can be reached at: neil.bowie1@btinternet.com*

Notes

[1] See: [‘START resumes Global Terrorism Database collection; 1970 - 2019 data file now available to researchers’](#). START GTD website [Accessed 11/04/21]

[2] Project partners include: Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Chatham House, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV) and Association of Chief Police Officers.

[3] See: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09546553.2020.1742707>

[4] See: Gary Ackerman; Charles Blair; Maranda Sorrells, 2011, “Radiological and Nuclear Non-State Adversaries Database (RANNSAD)”, <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SCGOJE>, Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:5:1S4k29WvGinRZA8JYm9zfg== [fileUNF]

[5] See: [Tech Against Terrorism](#) and [Public Safety Canada](#)

[6] See: <https://www.terrorismanalytics.org/faq>

Conflicts Databases

Editor's Note

There are close links between conflict and terrorism.[1] Predicting conflict escalation is helpful for assessing risks of greater use of terrorist tactics for conflict waging. Databases on conflict that are maintained over many years are especially useful for forecasting the escalation or de-escalation of acts of terrorism and other manifestations of political violence. An example is the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK) whose *Conflict Barometer* (Item No. 4 below) has looked at conflict dynamics since 1991. Its latest issue, covering the year 2020, counted 40 wars – 21 full scale wars and 19 limited wars. Short of war, the research team from Heidelberg university monitors also violent crises and non-violent conflicts. For last year (2020), it recorded a total of 359 conflicts worldwide, noting that “About 60 percent, 220, were fought violently, while 139 were on a non-violent level.”[2] HIIK’s respective figures for 2019 were: 358 conflicts worldwide of which 196 fought violently and 162 non-violently. This indicates an increase in violent conflicts which might also affect the level of terrorism in the active conflict zone and beyond (e.g., in diasporas). Combining and comparing databases on conflict with databases on terrorism can offer useful insights. One report (No. 17) directly seeks to integrate terrorism and conflict data.

Perspectives on Terrorism has asked Ishaansh Singh, who interns with the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), to make an inventory of databases on conflicts paralleling the one of Neil Bowie’s new list on terrorism databases.

20 Databases on (Violent and Armed) Conflicts

by Ishaansh Singh

Abstract

This Research Note introduces 20 databases and datasets on violent and armed conflicts. It identifies some of their key features and their background. There is one overlap with one of the databases introduced by Neil Bowie in this issue of Perspectives on Terrorism - but different aspects of the available data are highlighted when reporting on ACLED.

N.B.: All website hyper-links have been validated as of 6th of April, 2021.

Keywords: armed conflict, civil wars, conflict, database, dataset, violent conflict

Introduction

This inventory lists twenty databases covering events ranging from violent protests to civil wars and mass killings. Some of these databases only look at events of the recent past whereas others have data going back to the late twentieth century. While some take the form of simple chronologies (e.g., items 12 and 18), others contain sophisticated variables (e.g., item 5). Some databases are country- or region-specific while others cover conflicts across multiple countries (e.g., item 14) or are global in scope.

At the time of research (early 2021), most of these databases were freely accessible. Most of them originate in the Western world and focus on domestic as well as international conflicts. Despite shortcomings of some of these databases due to reduction or termination of funding leading to lack of regular updating, they still contain valuable data which might be useful for some readers of *Perspectives on Terrorism*.

1. Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

a. ACLED 2019: The Year in Review

Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Scope: Data on political violence and demonstration activities in 2019.

Access: Free

Website: <https://acleddata.com/2020/03/02/aced-2019-the-year-in-review/>

E-mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: ACLED's annual report for the year 2019 presents data on political violence and protest across Africa, West Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and South-Eastern and Eastern Europe that took place in the year 2019.

b. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) 2018 Dataset

Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Scope: The decline and rise of political violence and conflict-affected areas.

Access: Free

Website: <https://acleddata.com/2019/01/11/aced-2018-the-year-in-review/>

E-mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: The dataset registers distinct threat patterns across each region of its coverage. The dataset lists numbers and types of organized violence and protest events; the volume of reported fatalities; the proliferation of armed actors; and the geographic footprint of violence across time and location. In doing so, it surveys and contextualizes these trends, providing a fairly comprehensive survey.

c. Global Conflict and Disorder Patterns: 2020

Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Scope: Evolution of disorder.

Access: Free

Website: <https://acleddata.com/2020/02/14/global-conflict-and-disorder-patterns-2020/>

E-mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: The report draws on the ACLED dataset of nearly a million events of political violence and events in over 100 countries. Based on these data, it recognises four broad categories that characterize the conflict landscape of 2020.

d. Political Violence and Protest in Europe: 2020

Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Scope: Political violence and demonstration events in 52 countries and territories in Europe.

Access: Free

Website: <https://acleddata.com/2021/01/14/aced-expands-to-all-of-europe/>

E-mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: This dataset includes data on political violence and demonstration events in 37 new countries and territories in Europe, thereby bringing the total number of countries and territories covered to 52. The dataset allows for data-driven analysis of disorder trends across Europe such as the Yellow Vest demonstrations in France, abortion related protests in Poland, climate change strikes in Sweden, prison unrest in Italy, manifestations by separatists in Spain, and far-right activity in Germany.

2. Host Institution: Center for Systemic Peace

a. Global Report 2017

Host Institution: [Publication] Marshall, M.G. & Elzinga-Marshall, G. (2017). *Global Report 2017: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility*. Center for Systemic Peace, Vienna, USA.

Scope: Global system performance and fragility in the era of globalisation

Access: Free

Website: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/vlibrary/GlobalReport2017.pdf>

E-mail: contact@systemicpeace.org

Summary: The report monitors key trends in armed conflicts and governance along with societal-system development. The empirical analysis of current data highlights threats to the global system through environmental degradation and political violence, with particular emphasis on West Asia and North Africa.

b. Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946-201

Host Institution: Center for Systemic Peace.

Scope: Inter-state, societal, and communal warfare.

Access: Free

Website: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/MEPVv2018.xls>

E-mail: contact@systemicpeace.org

Summary: The dataset lists annual, time-series, and cross-national data on societal, interstate, and communal warfare and scores their magnitude for all countries, based on variables such as ethnicity, interstate dimension, civil violence and warfare.

3. Conflict, Violent Extremism, and Development

Host Institution: [Book Publication] Andrew Glazzard, Sasha Jespersen, Thomas Maguire, and Emily Winterbotham. *Conflict, Violent Extremism, and Development: New Challenges, New Responses*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, (2018).

Scope: The nature of new challenges in civil conflicts to development practice.

Access: Free

Website: https://www.academia.edu/34901610/CONFLICT_VIOLENT_EXTREMISM_AND_DEVELOPMENT_New_Challenges_New_Responses?email_work_card=view-paper

E-mail: N/A

Summary: The report examines the implications for international development actors of the new kinds of terrorism that takes place in civil conflicts. The study aims to address and answer questions about the difference in the nature of conflict actors through a combination of theoretical inquiry and investigation of three case studies. It further aims to identify the challenges posed by those groups to development practices and to propose a way forward for meeting these challenges.

4. Conflict Barometer 2019

Host Institution: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIK)

Scope: Political conflict dynamics and developments worldwide.

Access: Free

Website: <https://hiik.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CoBa-Final-%C3%BCberarbeitet.pdf>

E-mail: info@hiik.de

Summary: HIIK in 2019 observed a total of 358 conflicts worldwide covering political conflict dynamics and developments worldwide. This publication described the trends in global conflict developments, escalations, de-escalations, and settlements in the same year. HIIK has been monitoring conflicts since 1991.

5. Contemporary Slavery in Armed Conflict (CSAC)

Host Institution: The University of Nottingham

Scope: Various types of enslavement within modern armed conflicts.

Access: Free

Website: <https://www.csac.org.uk/>

E-mail: rightslab@nottingham.ac.uk

Summary: The *Contemporary Slavery in Armed Conflict (CSAC)* dataset measures incidents of human trafficking, enslavement, child soldering, forced marriage, forced labour, and related violations which were committed by armed actors from 1989 to 2016. It includes cases across 171 conflicts and wars fought during that time period. Additionally, the database records information on the forms of slavery present; one of the variables assesses whether the use of slavery by an armed actor was in pursuit of tactical or strategic aims or both.

6. Host Institution: Council on Foreign Relations

a. Conflicts to Watch in 2020

Home Institution: Council on Foreign Relations

Scope: The likelihood and impact of thirty potential conflicts in the year 2020.

Access: Free

Website: https://www.cfr.org/report/conflicts-watch-2020?utm_content=121819&utm_source=tw&utm_medium=social_owned&utm_campaign=pps-2020

E-mail: pstares@cfr.org

Summary: The dataset analyses and ranks thirty ongoing or potentially escalating conflicts, based on their likelihood to occur or expand in the following year and assessing their possible impact on U.S. interests. The dataset identified thirteen conflicts as top priorities for the United States in the year 2020, based on impact and likelihood and classified them into three tiers: high, moderate, and low priority.

b. Global Conflict Tracker

Host Institution: Council on Foreign Relations

Scope: Conflicts of concern to the United States

Access: Free

Website: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/?category=us>

E-mail: communications@cfr.org

Summary: The Global Conflict Tracker (last updated February 9, 2021) serves as an interactive guide to ongoing conflicts throughout the world and their relevance to the interests of the United States. It includes almost thirty conflicts and offers background information on each conflict.

7. Countries at Risk for Mass Killing 2020-2021

Host Institution: [Report] Early Warning Project

Scope: Genocide and crimes against humanity.

Access: Free

Website: <https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/reports/countries-at-risk-for-mass-killings-2020-2021-early-warning-project-statistical-risk-assessment-results>

E-mail: ewp@ushmm.org

Summary: The report assesses and identifies the risk and the possibility of mass killings taking place. It uses publicly available data and statistical modelling to create a list of countries based on their estimated risk of experiencing new episodes or onset of mass killings. The report further highlights findings related to the countries with the highest estimated risks of (new) mass killings in 2020 or 2021, countries that have experienced high risks consistently for multiple years, countries where the estimated risk has increased or decreased, and countries with unexpected results.

8. Current Trends in Violent Conflict

Host Institution: [Report] Avis, W. (2019). *Current Trends in Violent Conflict*. K4D Helpdesk Report 565. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

Scope: Drivers, responses, and themes of violent conflict and the reason for changes over time.

Access: Free

Website: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5cf669ace5274a07692466db/565_Trends_in_Violent_Conflict.pdf

E-mail: helpdesk@k4d.info

Summary: A report based on seven days of desk research, summarizing findings from various databases in a report for the British government. It draws on grey and academic literature and includes qualitative and quantitative analyses of conflict datasets. It is divided into two sections where the first section provides a summary of conflict trends and the second section provides an annotated bibliography that highlights key studies and their findings.

9. Economic Value of Peace 2021

Home Institution: Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)

Scope: Measure of the global economic impact of violence and conflict.

Access: Free

Website: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EVP-2021-web.pdf>

E-mail: info@economicsandpeace.org

Summary: This report by the Australian Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) evaluates the im-

part of conflict and violence on the global economy. The economic model is broken down into three domains: violence containment, armed conflict related costs, and consequential costs of violence.

10. Event Data on Armed Conflict and Security (EDACS)

Host Institution: [Publication] Chojnacki, S. (2012). Event Data on Armed Conflict and Security: New Perspectives, Old Challenges, and Some Solutions. *International Interactions*.

Scope: Discussing problems and solutions of the EDACS event data set

Access: Free

Website: https://www.conflict-data.org/publications/EDACS/EDACS_Naked/index.html

E-mail: N/A

Summary: The article presents the dataset on Event Data on Conflict and Security (EDACS) and discusses the inherent problems of event data, in addition to showing how the challenges identified were met within EDACS. It further demonstrates how the dataset enables the analyst to deal with issues such as - but not limited to - bias arising due to the selection of certain news sources and use of secondary data.

11. Getting Religion Right in Civil Wars

Host Institution: [Publication] Toft, M. D. (2021). Getting Religion Right in Civil Wars. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

Scope: Civil wars, religions, and armed conflicts.

Access: Paid subscription

Website: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002721997895>

E-mail: monica.toft@tufts.edu

Summary: The article examines the increasing influence of religious cleavages and grievances in civil wars and armed conflicts. It seeks to understand how the causes and outcomes of religious civil wars differ from other civil wars. The first section of the text reviews literature and sheds light on the importance of religion. The author then introduces a dataset and describes key trends in religious civil war. It is followed by tests of whether Muslim or Arab Muslim societies in particular are more prone to religious strife.

12. Host Institution: International Crisis Group

a. 10 Conflicts to Watch in 2021

Scope: Conflicts to lookout for in 2021.

Access: Free

Website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/10-conflicts-watch-2021>

E-mail: brussels@crisisgroup.org

Summary: The report focuses on possible conflicts and their consequences in 2021, covering, inter alia, the impact of COVID-19 climate changes, recent incidents in American politics, the Armenian-Azerbaijani war, and the Ethiopian conflict in the Tigray region.

b. Crisis Watch: October Trends and November Alerts

Scope: Dangers of escalating conflicts.

Access: Free

Website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/november-alerts-october-trends-2019>

E-mail: brussels@crisisgroup.org

Summary: This edition of the conflict tracker highlights the dangers of escalating conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Syria, Iraq, and South Sudan. Additionally, it also looks at conflict resolution opportunities in Yemen.

c. Diverse Global Protests

Scope: Diverse protests taking place in West Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Access: Free

Website: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/diverse-global-protests-share-common-target-status-quo>

E-mail: brussels@crisisgroup.org

Summary: The dataset indicates that protests across the globe, while having their own dynamic, have yet something in common. The dataset further analyses the impact particular events will have on conflicts in the Middle East, Latin America and Asia.

13. MAR Data

Host Institution: Minorities at Risk

Scope: The suffering or benefits a group collectively experiences and its systematic discriminatory treatment vis-a-vis other groups in society.

Access: Free

Website: http://www.mar.umd.edu/mar_data.asp

E-mail: amar-cidcm@umd.edu

Summary: The Minorities at Risk data tracks 284 politically active ethnic groups across the world from 1945 to the present. The data is organised qualitatively and quantitatively and includes minority group assessments and chronologies.

14. Massive Atrocities: Dataset and Typology

Host Institution: [Publication and dataset] Conley, Bridget and Hazlett, Chad (July 2020) "How Very Massive Atrocities End: A Dataset and Typology." *Journal of Peace Research*. DOI:10.1177/0022343319900912

Scope: Mass atrocities since 1945 with more than 50,000 fatalities.

Access: Restricted subscription service.

Website: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343319900912>

E-mail: chazlett@ucla.edu

Summary: The article uses a dataset that covers a total of forty-three mass atrocities perpetrated by state or non-state actors since 1945 with at least 50,000 civilian fatalities. Additionally, it provides an inductively generated typology of three major ending types: (i) carrying out violence to its intended conclusion (ii) militarily driving the perpetrator out of power, and (iii) shift to strategies that no lon-

ger involve mass atrocities against civilians.

15. Re-Describing Transnational Conflict in Africa

Host Institution: [Publication] Twagiramungu, N., Duursma, A., Berhe, M., De Waal, A. (2019). Re-describing transnational conflict in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 57(3), 377-391. DOI:10.1017/S0022278X19000107 as presented by Department for International Development, U.K.

Scope: Presentation of main findings from a new integrated dataset of transnational armed conflict in Africa.

Access: Free

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/re-describing-transnational-conflict-in-africa>

E-mail: N/A

Summary: The data indicate that a major feature of armed conflict in Africa is transnationality, that 'civil wars' have an international character. Existing definitions of 'civil war' and 'interstate conflict' do not capture the particularities of many wars in Africa.

16. Small Arms Survey

Host Institution: [Briefing Paper] Hideg, Gergely & Alvazzi del Frate, Anna (2021). *Still Not There: Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019-30*. Security Assessment in North Africa.

Scope: Global violent deaths and trends in Northern Africa and G5 Sahel region.

Access: Free

Website: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-SA-NA-BP-GVD-scenarios.pdf>

E-mail: info@smallarmssurvey.org

Summary: The paper provides an updated trend analysis of violent deaths based on data from 2018. It presents scenarios that reflect possible trends in violent deaths in Northern Africa, the G5 Sahel regions, as well as globally in the period leading to 2030.

17. Terrorism in Armed Conflict Project

Host Institution: Conflict Management and Peace Science Journal. Report by Fortna, V. P., Lotito, N. J., & Rubin, M. A. (2020). *Terrorism in Armed Conflict: New Data Attributing Terrorism to Rebel Organizations*.

Scope: Civil conflict, civil war, political violence, terrorism.

Access: Paid subscription

Website: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894220972996>

E-mail: nicholas.lotito@yale.edu

Summary: This project integrates Uppsala Conflict Data Project sample of rebel organizations with the University of Maryland's START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD), covering 409 organisations for the period of 1970-2013. The dataset provides attribution to specific rebel groups with coding for uncertainty due to missing or ambiguous information of the perpetrators. This enables researchers to address 'description bias' in media-based terrorism data, model uncertainty about perpetrator attribution, and adjust the manner in which terrorism can be counted. The dataset also provides a measure of deliberately indiscriminate terrorism.

18. The Expanding Reach of Transnational Organized Crime

Host Institution: Global Initiative Against International Organized Crime, Geneva, Switzerland.

Scope: Show rise in the global illicit economy since 2000 and its threat to security, development, and justice. While not offering a dataset of its own, the report *'The Global Illicit Economy: Trajectories of Transnational Organized Crime'* (2021) integrates data from various datasets.

Access: Free

Website: <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Global-Illicit-Economy-GI-TOC-Low.pdf>

E-mail: secretariat@globalinitiative.net

Summary: The report is based on data in the public domain and provides an analysis on the threat posed to security, development, and justice by the illicit global economy that has boomed in the past twenty years. The report shows interdependencies between crime and conflict.

19. Host Institution: Uppsala Conflict Data Program

a. Armed Conflict Dataset

Host Institution: Uppsala Conflict Data Program and Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway.

Scope: Internal and external armed conflicts in the period from 1946 to 2019.

Access: Free

Website: <https://ucdp.uu.se/exploratory>

E-mail: info@prio.org

Summary: This dataset is a collaborative project which lists internal and external armed conflicts in the period from 1946 to 2019. The dataset is categorised in terms of actors, conflicts, and countries and provides numerical data related to state-based violence, non-state violence, and one-sided violence.

b. Battle-Related Deaths Dataset

Host Institution: Uppsala Conflict Data Program and Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway.

Scope: Battle-related deaths in conflicts from 1989-2019.

Access: Free

Website: <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/index.html#battlerelated>

E-mail: info@pcr.uu.se

Summary: The UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset version 20.1 contains a dyad-year dataset where each individual pair of two fighting actors has its individual entry in the year the conflict dyad was active. It offers information on the number of battle-related deaths in the conflicts that appear in the UCDP/ PRIO Conflict Dataset from 1989 to 2019.

c. Non-State Conflict Dataset

Host Institution: Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP), Oslo, Norway.

Scope: Communal and organised armed conflict

Access: Free

Website: <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/index.html#nonstate>

Email: info@pcr.uu.se

Summary: This dataset covers individual events of organised violence occurring at a given time and place from 1989 to 2019. These events can be geo-coded to the levels of individual villages, with temporal durations listed under individual days.

20. War and Peace

Home Institution: Visual Capitalist

Scope: Effects of violence on the global economy

Access: Free

Website: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/violence-disrupting-global-economy/>

E-mail: info@visualcapitalist.com

Summary: The *War and Peace* info-graph provides insights into the role of violence in the disruption of the global economy. It visualises data estimates from the Global Peace Index 2019 on the costs of violence and its geographical spread. It further lists the ten worst-affected countries, based on the cost incurred due to higher than average death toll, and sizable military expenditures.

***About the Compiler:** Ishaansh Singh is studying at the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, Pune, India since 2018. His major and minor fields of specialisation are International Relations and Peace and Conflict Studies. Additionally, he serves as an intern at the Terrorism Research Initiative, Vienna. He is also working on a thesis on the factors that led to Brexit. He can be reached at: s.ishaansh@gmail.com*

Notes

[1] According to a study by the Institute for Economics & Peace, “The internal conflict indicator has the highest overall correlation with terrorism, for both advanced and non-advanced economies. (...) Over the past two decades, conflict has been one of the strongest predictors of the impact of terrorism, with just under 95 per cent of deaths from terrorism occurring in countries involved in conflict.” - Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, November 2020, p.68. URL: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>

[2] The figures for 2019 were: 358 conflicts worldwide, of which 196 violent and 162 non-violent. - Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK), Conflict Barometer 2020. Heidelberg: HIIK, 2021, pp. 15-16; URL: <https://hiik.de/>

Resources

Omar Ashour. *How ISIS Fights. Military Tactics in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt*. (Edinburgh, Scotland, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2021). 243 pp. US \$ 123.99 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-4744-3821-6; US \$ 29.42 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-4744-3822-3; ISBN: 978-1-4744-3824-7 (E-publ).

Reviewed by Alex P. Schmid

Omar Ashour's book seeks to explain the puzzle of how the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (known as ISIS or IS) was able to control millions of people around the world for more than a thousand days since its coming into pre-eminence in 2014 against overwhelming odds and without consistent state support and with very limited uncoerced local popular assistance. It is a masterly work that actually manages to unravel this puzzle by a detailed, in-depth study of how a massively outgunned and ludicrously outnumbered IS fought, won rapid victories and continues to endure to this day. The author's clinical analysis is, as he himself admits, "often going against the tide of conventional wisdom regarding insurgencies" (p.28). He does so by looking mainly at the tactical innovations employed on the insurgents' side, leaving out the policies, strategies and blunders of the incumbents in their counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism campaigns. This might be considered a shortcoming but this limitation is more than compensated by the tour de force of his quasi-anatomical dissection how IS's tactical skills could stand up for so long against overwhelming military forces from more than twenty countries.

Combining urban terrorism, guerrilla operations and conventional warfare tactics in ingenious ways, the current Islamic State, which operates worldwide, and its predecessors (IS in Syria) and ISI (IS in Iraq) achieved almost miraculous victories with looted but also homemade arms and—something which the author strange enough hardly mentions—the help of tens of thousands of foreign fighters.

Omar Ashour combines field work (incl. 58 personal interviews) and use of IS primary sources (incl. the analysis of 228 issues of IS' *al-Naba'* newsletter) to cover developments from its early activities in October 2002 up to March 2020. He focuses mainly on IS combat performance in 17 battles (incl. Fallujah, Mosul, Ramadi, Raqqa and Sheikh Zuweid) across ten war zones (including Derna, Sirte and North Sinai), where IS fought over 80 armed nonstate actors and at least 22 armed state actors who engaged with it on the ground and/or from the air (pp.23-24). Ashour describes one recurring tactical modus operandi of IS on the town/city-level that was successful in Iraq (and copied elsewhere): softening other armed rebel units by targeted assassinations and absorbing them and creeping into their territories (**SC**), coalition-building (**C**), and liquidating-consolidating (**LC**) when IS was on the offensive - with the third phase of these **SCCLC** (pronounced as 'skulls') operations involving the treacherous murder of 'frenemies'—its former local militant allies (pp. 47-48).

Another modus operandi the author identifies goes under the acronym **iALLTR**. It involves building up intelligence capabilities (**i**), absorbing like-minded organisations and recruit youth (**A/R**), looting regime arsenals and stocks of other armed groups (**L**), leading operations by relying on battle-hardened commanders (**L**), and transferring know-how of tactical and military skills to other theatres of war (**TR**) (p.83). Ashour discussed in detail IS' 15 categories of tactics (including IED tactics, tunnel tactics, assassination tactics, drone tactics, sniping tactics as well as various suicide tactics) in changing combinations of terrorism, guerrilla and conventional warfare operations. These gave IS the edge, especially in 2014 and 2015 when its enemies were still surprising by IS' shock tactics (pp.206 ff).

ISIS is still a significant terrorist actor worldwide despite former president Donald J. Trump's premature boast on 7 October 2019: "Over 100 percent of the caliphate. I took over quickly. Nobody else...I took it over..." (cit. p.195). Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi, who took over as caliph from Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on 31 October 2019, can still claim to rule over 14 'provinces' (down from the 35 'provinces' IS claimed in July 2016) in conflict zones ranging from the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger and Yemen to Afghanistan where IS groups continue using innovative tactics developed by the parent organisation in Iraq

and Syria.

How will this end? Omar Ashour notes: “At the strategic level, IS has no *viable* grand strategy. Simply put, the organisation’s resources are way too limited to achieve its ultimate objective (a Wahhabist-style ‘Caliphate’ with political-military dominance over some or all Muslim-majority states, and with the capacity to ‘invade’ others) [p.204].

This study’s meticulous and detailed examination stands out among the many books that have been written on IS. By going narrow and deep in its discussion of tactics, *How ISIS Fights* is mandatory reading for all those studying and practicing urban warfare in the 21st century.

The author, Omar Ashour, is Associate Professor of Security and Military Studies and Founding Director of the Critical Security Studies Programme at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and the Strategic Studies Unit in the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies.

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

Teun Voeten, *Mexican Drug Violence: Hybrid Warfare, Predatory Capitalism and the Logic of Cruelty*, N.p: Small Wars Journal - El Centro, 2020 (438 pp.), ISBN : 978-1-6641-3415 - 7 (Softcover, US \$ 23.99); ISBN : 978-1-6641-3416 -4 (E-book, US \$ 7.99).

Reviewed by Martijn Kitzen

What happens when a veteran war photographer enters the realm of academia in order to share his observations on one of the most vicious conflicts in the Western hemisphere? *Mexican Drug Violence* provides an exciting answer to this question as it convincingly demonstrates that Teun Voeten's more than 30-year long career of covering conflicts in the Middle East, Africa and the Americas allows him to arrive at unique insights into the complicated dynamics of Mexico's drug wars which cost between 120,000 and 230,000 lives between 2006 and 2019.

On the basis of research work conducted for a PhD in cultural anthropology at Leiden University, Voeten sets out to develop an analytical model for understanding the nature of the Mexican drug wars, their economic background and their hyper-violence. For this purpose, the author adopted both a macro-perspective and micro-level analysis which benefit from the combination of rich empirical data obtained during extensive field research in Mexico as well as from a wealth of insights gained in other conflicts he observed at close quarters. Voeten characterizes Mexican drug violence as hybrid warfare in which actors are driven by a predatory form of capitalism leading to circumstances wherein participants see merit in committing atrocities. This review will briefly highlight the three themes of the volume's subtitle.

First, the Mexican drug wars can, according to the author, best be understood as an example of hybrid warfare—a merger of organized crime, irregular guerrilla conflict and terrorism, fought for mainly economic reasons thriving under circumstances of ongoing violence. While this resembles to some extent the *New Wars* paradigm introduced by Mary Kaldor and Herfried Münkler, the author of the present study argues that the situation in Mexico has evolved beyond that idea. Voeten, therefore, opts for applying hybrid warfare as a concept for analyzing what he labels 'new wars on steroids', i.e. multidimensional conflicts characterized by blurred distinctions between various actors and their (brutal) activities (pp.194-195). In this particular case, the hybrid character can best be understood through not less than seven different, interconnected layers that capture the dynamics between various competing cartels and the state. Voeten's hybrid warfare perspective proves useful for understanding both conflicts and actors involved. The author seeks to demonstrate the general value of his analytical categories by exploring their applicability also in other conflict theatres where he gained first-hand experience, including in Iraq and Syria.

Second, Voeten explores the economic dimension, that is, how Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTO's) are functioning in a hyper-capitalist economy. He sees the cartels as enterprises operating at the predatory end of capitalism, offering an explanation for the emergence and persistence of the cartels. The author sees a connection between neo-liberalist policies and growing inequality. As the have-nots of neo-liberalism are increasingly confronted with the wealth of the upper class, an expectations gap develops. This triggers what has euphemistically been called alternative modes of redistribution – crime. It is widely accepted that some forms of crime are a self-help strategy in a hyper-capitalist environment; in fact, the cartels themselves legitimize their actions in this way. Over the last decades globalization has acted as a catalyst in this process, as it enhances the perception of inequality, while also enabling criminal organizations to exploit new opportunities in an increasingly interconnected world.

Third, even seemingly "senseless" atrocities can, according to the author, be understood as serving a specific purpose. Although extreme violence is typically dismissed as irrational, in reality the motives of individual killers are often the result of rational calculations that seek to optimize the perpetrators' chances of survival in a hostile environment. Here Voeten's international experience as a war reporter again serves him to illustrate that this is not only true for the *sicarios* [hired killers] he interviewed in Mexico's prisons, but also pertains to American gang members and West African Child soldiers. At the micro-level, the act of killing is enabled by

cross-cultural mechanisms that reveal a disturbing logic underlying cruelty.

In sum, *Mexican Drug Violence* provides both a unique analysis of the Mexican case and offers an original threefold model for better understanding similar conflicts. Voeten's analytical approach is highly useful in applying the same framework to other cases. The author's additional sixth chapter on drug trafficking and crime in the Netherlands and Belgium can indeed be considered as Voeten's own attempt to do so. The creation of a new analytical model is the volume's main merit, demonstrating, in this reviewer's opinion, that he is as proficient in utilizing an anthropological academic lens as the war reporter's photographic lens to his objects of study.

About the Reviewer: Martijn Kitzen, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of War Studies, Faculty of Military Sciences, Netherlands Defence Academy, Breda.

Counterterrorism Bookshelf: Five 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 reviews, including tables of contents of five recently published books.

Louis A. Del Monte, ***War at the Speed of Light: Directed-Energy Weapons and the Future of Twenty-First-Century Warfare*** (Lincoln, NB: Potomac Books/An Imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 280 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-6401-2330-4.

Innovations in military technology are transforming the way warfare is being conducted at a breakneck speed. A significant revolutionary innovation that is the focus of this informative volume is the introduction of directed-energy weapons in what is now termed “hyper-warfare,” such as laser, microwave, electromagnetic pulse, and cyberspace weapons. The advantages that such weapons present to contending warring sides, particularly the United States, Russia, and China, are driving them to continuously innovative in these weapons systems to such an extent that they are disrupting what was previously a relatively stable deterrence doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction, which had prevented them from engaging in nuclear warfare in the past. Increasingly less-than-nuclear weapons can be quickly deployed to cause catastrophic damages on their adversaries. These directed-energy weapons can also destroy an adversary’s hypersonic missiles and drones – even when they are deployed in swarm attacks. As these new warfare technologies are being deployed by leading states, the nature of national security threats is changing. According to the U.S. 2018 National Defense Strategy “Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, [is – JS] now the primary concern in U.S. national security”, as the author points out (p. 60). He cautions, however, that the terrorist threat should not be discounted, because a rogue state or an organized terrorist group, using a truck or a car, could launch a non-nuclear electromagnetic pulse (EMP) warhead against vulnerable infrastructure targets (pp. 157-158). With the concern about worst case scenarios in terrorists’ resort to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the author’s account of the use of directed-energy weapons in warfare is an important contribution to the literature on advanced military technologies and how they can be used and how they need to be countered. The author is CEO of Del Monte and Associates and has more than thirty years of experience in physics, technology, and engineering.

Table of Contents: Introduction; Part 1. The Game of Cat and Mouse; Tilting the Balance of Terror; The Quest for Global Dominance Using Conventional Weapons; The Coming Fourth U.S. Offset Strategy; Part 2. Directed-Energy Weapons; Laser Weapons; Microwave Weapons; EMP Weapons; Cyberspace Weapons; Part 3. “Shields Up, Mr. Sulu”; Directed-Energy Countermeasures; Force Fields; Part 4. The Coming New Reality; Autonomous Directed-Energy Weapons; The Full-Scale Weaponization of Space; Not Gambling with the Fate of Humanity; Appendix A: U.S. and Chinese Defense Budgets Adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity and Labor Costs; Appendix B: The Design and Operation of a Laser; Appendix C: Radiation-Hardened Electronics and System Shielding Resources; Appendix D: Articles Describing the Operation of Nonnuclear EMP Devices.

Jack Devine, ***Spymaster’s Prism: The Fight Against Russian Aggression*** (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books/An Imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 304 pp., US \$ 34.95 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-6401-2378-6.

Espionage is the practice of spying and using spies to covertly obtain information about current and future plans and activities of a foreign government or non-state actor, such as a terrorist group. In this fascinating and revealing volume, the author, a legendary former CIA spymaster, provides an insider’s insight about the CIA’s competition with its Russian intelligence service counterparts, including famous spy cases and the recent attempts by the Russian government to interfere on behalf of former President Donald Trump’s presidential

campaigns. With regard to the CIA and counter-terrorism, readers will find especially interesting the author's account of the attacks by Iran and Hizballah in 1983 and 1984 against American intelligence operatives, the bombing attack against the Marine Corps barracks, as well as their hostage-taking campaign against foreigners in Lebanon, and the CIA's involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair's "arms for hostages" covert operations. The author criticizes the Iran-Contra Affair as misguided, as it violated the U.S. "long-standing foreign policy against negotiating with terrorists [which – JS] had repercussions that endure today" (p. 208). He adds: "Terrorists took solid note that mass casualty attacks prompt military withdrawals and that kidnapping can extract extraordinary bounty for a single American life" (p. 208). This reviewer, however, does not agree with the author's observation that the CIA's focus after 9/11 on countering terrorist groups such as al Qaida and ISIS led to sidelining the "agency's original mandate of espionage and covert action abroad targeting some of our 'big power' adversaries and their spheres of influence" (p. 156) – especially during the Trump Administration. In this reviewer's view, former President Trump was not interested in pursuing such covert activities against Russia, because of his "close" relations with President Vladimir Putin. Overall, this book offers lots of terrifically insightful lessons by a seasoned intelligence practitioner about American intelligence successes and failures over the past seventy-five years, making it an indispensable resource on these issues. Following his decades-long service in the CIA, the author is currently president of the Arkin Group, a New York City-based international risk consulting and intelligence firm.

Table of Contents: Preamble; Introduction; Our Strategic Intelligence Shortfall – Then and Now; Shaping and Reshaping the CIA; A Study in Russian Spycraft; A Spymaster Present; Spies Among Us; A Spymaster's Rules in Counterintelligence; Limits of Counterintelligence; Agents-in-Place; Policy Spies; An American Covert Action Playbook; Best Practice; A Cautionary Tale; Onward; Appendix: Russia's Known Elicitation Attempts in Trump's Inner Circle.

Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Airpower in the War Against ISIS* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press/Published in Cooperation with the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies, 2021), 352 pp., US \$ 55.00 [Hardcover], ISBN: 978-1-6824-7557-7.

Although it would have been interesting for the author to discuss the bases in the Middle East (such as Turkey or from the nearby deployed U.S. Navy's aircraft carriers) from which the U.S. fighter aircraft were launched to bomb the ISIS targets, as well as the role of the U.S. Navy's fighter aircraft on these missions in Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), these are barely discussed in the book, which focuses on the effectiveness of the U.S. Air Force's fighter aircraft bombing campaign, as it was led by the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) from August 2014 to mid-2018. The author argues that during this period the U.S. airpower's precision air assets were initially under-employed against ISIS's most vital center-of-gravity targets in Syria, although they were used more effectively in the latter period, especially in conjunction with the ground-based U.S. Special Forces in the country. Towards the end of the air campaign, the author explains, "by early February 2018, OIR had reportedly liberated more than 7.7 million inhabitants and 98 percent of the territory formerly held by ISIS in Iraq and Syria since the movement's rise starting in 2012" (p. 247). Overall, this is an important and highly detailed examination of the effectiveness of the role of airpower in fighting terrorist groups that control territory in largely ungoverned states, such as Syria. The author is a Senior Fellow with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a position he assumed in 2011 following a 37-year career at the RAND Corporation. His earlier book on *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom*, was published by the Rand Corporation in 2005.

Table of Contents: Foreword; Preface; Introduction; America's Air Posture before Inherent Resolve; How the ISIS Challenge First Arose; The Air War's Slow Start; Toward a More Effective Air Effort; On a Winning Streak at Long Last; Consolidating a Successful Endgame; Some Notable Air War Achievements; The Russian Intervention; Issues in U.S. Leadership and Strategy; Conclusion.

Edward M. Spiers, *Agents of War: A History of Chemical and Biological Weapons* [Expanded Second Edition] (London, England, UK: Reaktion Books, 2020), 224 pp., US \$ 14.00 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-7891-4298-3.

With a biological agent in the form of COVID-19 currently disrupting the international community, national security planners are concerned about potential further outbreaks of viral pandemics and other types of weapons of mass destruction such as chemical agents. This comprehensive and detailed account of the history of the use of such weapons worldwide, is an expanded and updated second edition of the author's 2010 book. It includes two new chapters on the recurrence of chemical warfare in the Middle East by the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, and later by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and the use of poisons in the form of chemical, biological and radiological weapons in political assassinations, with the latest attempt the killing by a VX nerve agent by North Korean agents of Kim Jong-nam at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, in Malaysia, on February 13, 2017. The author concludes that while turning the aspirations by rogue actors, such as terrorists, to acquire and deploy chemical and biological agents in their warfare "may still prove problematic," the use of these weapons remains a "low probability but high consequence" event. He adds, however, that "Nevertheless, aspirations to acquire these weapons are likely to endure as long as the technology keeps opening up new possibilities for their development and usage" (p. 221). The author, an Emeritus Professor at the University of Leeds, England, is the author of several books on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Table of Contents: Preface; Introduction; The Legacy of Gas Warfare in the First World War; Deterrence and Disarmament: Responses to Chemical and Biological Warfare, 1919-93; Chemical Warfare in Third World Conflicts; The Proliferation of Chemical and Biological Weapons; Iraq's Chemical and Biological Warfare Programmes; Chemical and Biological Terrorism; The Recurrence of Chemical Warfare in the Middle East; Political Assassination by Poisoning; Conclusion: The Evolving Nature of Chemical and Biological Warfare.

Joseph Weber, *Divided Loyalties: Young Somali Americans and the Lure of Extremism* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2020), 230 pp., US \$ 29.95 [Paperback], ISBN: 978-1-6118-6372-7.

This is an important case study of the attempts by some 50 young Somali Americans, mostly from Minnesota, who were radicalized into joining groups like al-Shabab, al-Qaida, and the Islamic State in conflict-ridden countries such as Somalia and Syria. To examine these issues, the author, a veteran journalist and professor of journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, draws on extensive interviews to focus on Abdirahman Abdirashid Bashir, an American-born son of a couple who had fled Somalia for Minneapolis. He had attempted to join ISIS in Syria with several friends during the period of 2014 to 2016. While some of his friends succeeded in making their way to Syria, Bashir ended up reversing himself and worked with the FBI to spy on his friends and testified against them in court. The author concludes that "understanding the appeal the militant ideology can have for young, culturally alienated young people will remain important – as will understanding the challenging process of uprooting it" (p. 167).

Table of Contents: Introduction The Seeds of Jihad; A Land of Chaos; The First Wave; Blind Devotion; A Cautionary Tale; Don't Let the Caravan Leave You; Why ISIS?; A Special Case; Peer to Peer; A Woman's Place?; Brotherhood; The Caravan Beckons Again; The Glory of the Shahid; Breaking Down; A Very Real Threat; Straight Out of Hollywood; The Backlash; The Judge; A Closed World?; Taking a Hard Look; Moving On.

About the Reviewer: Dr. Joshua Sinai is the Book Reviews Editor of 'Perspectives on Terrorism'. He can be reached at: Joshua.sinai@comcast.net.

Bibliography: Terrorism and the Media (including the Internet) (Part 5)

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes

[Bibliographic Series of Perspectives on Terrorism – BSPT-JT-2021-2]

Abstract

This bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, grey literature, bibliographies and other resources on the multi-faceted relationship between terrorism and the media, including the Internet. To keep up with the rapidly changing media landscape (particularly social media) and the technological developments in the online environment, the most recent publications have been prioritized during the selection process. The literature has been retrieved by manually browsing through 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, counter-narratives, cyberterrorism, extremists, Internet, jihadists, literature, mass media, media, narratives, resources, right-wing extremists, social media, terrorism.

NB: All websites were last visited on 26.03.2021. This subject bibliography is conceptualised as a multi-part series (for earlier bibliographies, see: [Part 1](#) , [Part 2](#) , [Part 3](#) and [Part 4](#)). To avoid duplication, this compilation only includes literature not contained in the previous parts. However, meta-resources, such as bibliographies, were also included in the sequels. - See also Note for the Reader at the end of this literature list.

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Note for the Reader

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 phases 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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Bibliography: Al-Shabaab

Compiled and selected by David Teiner

Abstract

This bibliography contains books, edited volumes, journal articles, book chapters, theses, grey literature, bibliographies, and other resources on the Harakat ash-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn, also referred to in short as al-Shabaab. The publications compiled in this bibliography primarily focus on al-Shabaab's organizational evolution, attacks, military successes and drawbacks, national and international recruitment efforts, ideology, and territorial expansion, predominantly in Somalia and Kenya. Moreover, many of the publications examine PVE and CVE strategies to contain al-Shabaab's influence or assess the achievements and shortcomings of the African Union's stabilization mission in Somalia AMISOM.

Keywords: Al-Shabaab; Salafi-Jihadism; Somalia; Kenya; East Africa; Diaspora; Foreign Fighters; Westgate; al-Qaeda; AMISOM

NB: All websites were last visited on 27.03.2021. Whenever retrievable, URLs for freely available versions of subscription-based publications have been provided. In some cases, articles may only be cited after obtaining permission by the author(s).

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Bibliography: Fear and Terror

Compiled and selected by Sedat Kula

Abstract

This brief bibliography contains journal articles, book chapters, books, edited volumes, theses, and grey literature studying terror and fear of terrorism.

Keywords: bibliography, fear, terrorism

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60+ Full-Text Academic Theses (Ph.D. and M.A.) on Rebel Governance by Non-State Actors written in English between 2011 and 2021

Compiled and selected by Brody McDonald

Abstract

This bibliography contains both Ph. D. Dissertations (Ph.D.) and Master Theses (M.A.). 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 – ‘Rebel Governance’, ‘Non-State Actors’, ‘Insurgents’, ‘Terrorism’. More than 900 entries were evaluated, of which 61 were ultimately selected for this list. All theses are open source. However, readers should be aware of possible copyright restrictions. The title entries below are hyperlinked (‘clickable’), allowing access to full texts. Bibliographic entries are sorted alphabetically.

Keywords: governance, non-state actors, rebel governance, state-building, terrorism, terrorist groups, theses

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Recent Online Resources for the Analysis of Terrorism and Related Subjects

by Berto Jongman

Most of the clickable items included below became available online between February and April 2021. They are categorized under thirteen 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 - General
7. Counterterrorism: Specific Operations and/or Specific Policy Measures
8. Prevention, Preparedness and Resilience and Rehabilitation Studies
9. State Repression, Civil War and Clandestine Warfare
10. Intelligence Operations
11. Cyber Operations
12. Risk and Threat Assessments, Forecasts and Analytical Studies
13. Also Worth the Time to Read/Listen/Watch

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

1. Non-Religious Terrorism

J. Zenn. Colombia faces mixed futures in negotiations with FARC and ELN. *TerrorismMonitor*, 19(6), March 26, 2021. URL: https://jamestown.org/program/briefs-346/?mc_cid=aa3dc9f76&mc_eid=9942bc67e0

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2. Religious Terrorism

2.1. Al Qaeda and its Affiliates

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12.1. Terrorism Databases

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12.3. Forecasts and Trend Studies

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13. Also Worth the Time to Read/Listen/Watch

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About the Compiler: **Berto Jongman** is Associate Editor of 'Perspectives on Terrorism'. He is a former senior Military Intelligence Analyst and currently serves as an International Consultant on CBRN issues. A sociologist by training, he previously worked for Swedish and Dutch civilian research institutes. Drs. Jongman was the recipient of the Golden Candle Award for his *World Conflict & Human Rights Maps*, published by PIOOM. He is editor of the volume 'Contemporary Genocides' (1996) and has also contributed to various editions of 'Political Terrorism', the award-winning handbook of terrorism research edited by Alex P. Schmid.

Announcements

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), maintains a number of national and (sub-) regional networks of post-graduate students working on their doctoral dissertations. Here is an update on the Ph.D. theses in progress or recently completed by the Flemish network in Belgium and the Dutch Network in the Netherlands, compiled by its coordinator.

From TRI's National Networks of Ph.D. Thesis Writers: List of 30+ Dutch and Flemish Ph.D. Theses in Progress and Completed

Prepared by Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn

Note: Each entry contains information on the (working) title of the doctoral dissertation, its author, the academic institution where the thesis is being written (including name of supervisor where provided) and the expected date of completion.

Recently completed Ph.D. Theses:

Geerts, Evelien

- Materialist Philosophies Grounded in the Here and Now: Critical New Materialist Constellations & Interventions in Times of Terror(ism)
- Evelien Geerts, e.m.l.geerts@bham.ac.uk
- University of California, Santa Cruz, Feminist Studies & History of Consciousness + Utrecht University; em. prof. dr. Bettina Aptheker, prof. dr. Iris van der Tuin
- Date of defense: 13 December 2019

Godefroidt, Amélie

- How the Idea of Terrorism Is Changing Us
- Amélie Godefroidt, amelie.godefroidt@ntnu.no
- KU Leuven, Faculty of Social Sciences, Centre for Research on Peace and Development; prof. dr. Arnim Langer; prof. dr. Bart Meuleman
- Date of defense: 18 September 2020
- [Link](#) to dissertation

Klem, Wouter

- Founded on Fear: Transnational Police Cooperation against the Anarchist 'Conspiracy', 1880s-1914
- Wouter Klem, w.m.klem@minjenv.nl
- Universiteit Utrecht, Department of History and Art History; prof. dr. Beatrice de Graaf; prof. dr. Richard Bach Jensen
- Date of defense: 10 February 2020
- [Link](#) to dissertation

Kowalski, Michael

- Ethics on the Radar: Exploring the Relevance of Ethics Support in Counterterrorism
- Michael Kowalski, m.kowalski@inspectie-jenv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker, prof.dr. A.C. Molewijk, dr. Patrick Overeem
- Date of defense: 12 March 2020

Renard, Thomas

- 20 Years of counter-terrorism in Belgium: Explaining Change in CT Policy-making through the Evolution of the Belgian CT Doctrine and Practice since 2001
- Thomas Renard, t.renard@egmontinstitute.be
- Ghent University, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences; prof. dr. Sven Biscop
- Date of defense: 27 January 2021

Roy van Zuijdewijn, Jeanine de

- The Aftermath: Meaning-making after Terrorist Attacks in Western Europe
- Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn; j.h.de.roy.van.zuijdewijn@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker; dr. Sanneke Kuipers
- Date of defense: June 2021

Sterkenburg, Nikki

- From Action to Self-realisation. Routes of Entry into Far-right Extremism
- Nikki Sterkenburg, nikkisterkenburg@gmail.com
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker, dr. Jelle van Buuren
- Date of defense: 19 May 2021

Terpstra, Niels

- Why do Civilians Comply with a Rebel Group? Towards a Better Understanding of Rebel Governance and Legitimation Processes During Civil War
- Niels Terpstra, n.m.terpstra@uu.nl
- Universiteit Utrecht, Department of History and Art History; prof. dr. ir. Georg Frerks
- Date of defense: 23 April 2021

Ph.D. Theses in Progress:**Aerds, Willemijn**

- Residual Threat in the Context of Security and Intelligence
- Willemijn Aerds, w.j.m.aerds@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs
- Expected date of completion: unknown

Berge, Wietse van den

- Examining Decision-making within the Conflict between Islamic State and the Kurdistan Region in Iraq by using Graham Allison's Paradigms of Foreign Policy Analysis
- Wietse van den Berge, w.van.den.berge@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker, prof. dr. Beatrijke de Graaf
- Expected date of completion: unknown

Boeke, Sergei

- Al Qaeda in the Sahel: Insurgent Strategies and Terrorist Tactics
- Sergei Boeke, s.boeke@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker
- Expected date of completion: December 2021

Capano, Francesca

- How did the Terrorist Threat Influence the Evolution of Prison Policies and Prison Regimes: Comparative Analysis of Italy and the United Kingdom from 1960 to Today
- Francesca Capano, francesca.capano@vub.be
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Department of Criminology; prof. dr. Kristel Beyens
- Expected date of completion: December 2022

Dokter, Annemieke

- Indonesia in Historical Perspective - Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Darul Islam and Jemaah Islamiyah and the Waves of Rapoport
- Annemieke Dokter, adannemiek14@gmail.com
- Universiteit Utrecht; de Nederlandse Defensie Academie; prof. dr. Bob de Graaff
- Expected date of completion: unknown

Dowling, Jennifer

- Understanding Non-Involvement in Terrorism
- Jennifer Dowling, j.m.dowling@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker; dr. Bart Schuurman
- Expected date of completion: 2024

Dijk, Anne

- The Ideal Woman: A Comparative Analysis of Theoretical Concepts and Arguments about Women in Fundamentalist Worldviews
- Anne Dijk, a.j.f.dijk@vu.nl
- Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Religion and Theology & Faculty of Philosophy, Extreme Beliefs & Strong Religion Research group; dr. Rik Peels, dr. Pieter Coppens, prof. dr. Pieterella van Doorn-Harder
- Expected date of completion: August 2025

Dijk, Daan

- A Comparative Study of Jewish Fundamentalism and Extreme Beliefs in Israel
- Daan Dijk, daniel.d.dijk@gmail.com
- Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Religion and Theology, Extreme Beliefs & Strong Religion Research group; dr. Rik Peels, dr. Bart Wallet
- Expected date of completion: December 2024

Frens, Isabelle

- Understanding the Group Identity of Anti-governmental Extremists
- Isabelle Frens, i.j.frens@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker; dr. Jelle van Buuren
- Expected date of completion: March 2026

Guendouzi, Yassine el

- A Comparative Study of Salafism and Radicalization in the Netherlands and Belgium: Religion, Identity, and Social Conflict.
- Yassine el Guendouzi, y.el.guendouzi@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Joachim Koops, dr. Tahir Abbas
- Expected date of completion: January 2024

Gruber, Barbara

- The Radicalisation-Resilience Complex - Prevention Practices in Germany and the Netherlands
- Barbara Gruber, b.a.gruber@rug.nl
- Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Faculty of Arts, Department of International Relations and International Organization (IRIO); prof. dr. Jaap de Wilde, dr. Caitlin Ryan, prof. Jana Hönke
- Expected date of completion: December 2021

Gustafson, Scott

- Church in a Hostile Milieu: World View Change and Deradicalization among Fundamentalist Muslims in the Levant
- Scott D. Gustafson, s.g.gustafson@vu.nl
- Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Religion and Theology, Extreme Beliefs & Strong Religion Research group; dr. Rik Peels, dr. Timothy Noble
- Expected date of completion: December 2024

Hanselman, Berrie

- Action and Reaction - Violence as a Divisive Issue for the Left-wing (extremist) Movement in the Netherlands (1965-2015)
- Berrie Hanselman; b.t.g.hanselman@fgga.leidenuniv.nl, berrie17.04@gmail.com
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. P.H.A.M. Abels, dr. Jelle van Buuren
- Expected date of completion: late 2021/early 2022

Heide, Liesbeth van der

- Explaining Processes of Involvement in Terrorism
- Liesbeth van der Heide, e.j.van.der.heide@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker, dr. Marieke Liem
- Expected date of completion: 2021

Horlings, Tess

- Integrating Data Science for the Intelligence Community in an Age of Big Data and Complex Threats
- Tess Horlings, TS.Horlings@mindef.nl
- Netherlands Defence Academy, War Studies Research Center; prof. dr. ir. Sebastiaan Rietjens and dr. ir. Roy Lindelauf
- Expected date of completion: September 2023

Janse, Annelotte

- The Pursuit of White Security. Transnational Ties of the Extreme Right in Germany and Sweden, 1970-2015
- Annelotte Janse, j.c.janse@uu.nl
- Universiteit Utrecht, Department of History and Art History; prof. dr. Beatrice de Graaf
- Expected date of completion: September 2023

Jansma, Amarins

- Left-wing Radicalization in the Netherlands: Framing and Historicizing Perceived Unfairness
- Amarins Jansma, a.jansma@uu.nl
- Utrecht University, Department of Social, Health & Organization Psychology; prof. dr. Kees van den Bos, prof. dr. Beatrice de Graaf
- Expected date of completion: August 2024

Kindermann, Nora

- The Epistemology of Individual Fundamentalist Belief
- Nora Kindermann, n.n.kindermann@vu.nl
- Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Religion and Theology, Research Group Extreme Beliefs & Strong Religion; dr. Rik Peels
- Expected date of completion: June 2024

König, Magdalena

- Understanding EU-Western Balkans Integration in Counter-Terrorism
- Magdalena König, m.c.koenig@rug.nl
- University of Groningen, Department of International Relations and International Organization; prof. dr. Jaap de Wilde, dr. Senka Neuman-Stanivukovic, dr. Nadine Voelkner
- Expected date of completion: August 2023

Mansoury, Elly

- The Role of Education in the Polarization of Society
- Elly Mansoury, elly.mansoury@vub.ac.be
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Department of Political Science; prof. dr. Dimokritos Kavadias
- Expected date of completion: June 2021

Missier, Clyde

- Extreme Beliefs in a Digital Age
- Clyde A. Missier, a.missier@hva.nl
- Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Religion and Theology, Research Group Extreme Beliefs & Strong Religion; dr. Rik Peels
- Expected date of completion: June 2025

Romagna, Marco

- Hacktivism: Honourable Cause or Serious Threat?
- Marco Romagna, m.romagna@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Edwin Bakker, dr. Bibi van den Berg
- Expected date of completion: unknown

Si Amer, Latifa

- Conspiracy Beliefs, Radicalization, Psychopathology and Psychological Vulnerabilities
- Latifa Si Amer, L.SiAmer_1@tilburguniversity.edu
- Tilburg University, School for Social and Behavioral Sciences, Department of Medical & Clinical Psychology, Tranzo; prof. dr. Arno van Dam, prof. dr. Mario Braakman
- Expected date of completion: January 2026

Spiegel, Carla

- From Threat to Policy: European Security Practices against Online Disinformation in Historical Perspective
- Carla Spiegel, c.spiegel@uu.nl
- Universiteit Utrecht, Department of History and Art History; prof. dr. Beatrice de Graaf
- Expected date of completion: Spring 2023

Thijs, Fabienne

- From Extreme Beliefs to Actual Violence: the Missing Link in Radicalization Research
- Fabienne Thijs, f.thijs@vu.nl
- Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Law and Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR); prof. dr. Edward R. Kleemans, dr. Elanie Rodermond
- Expected date of completion: 2022

Van Ostaeyen, Pieter

- A Study of The Islamic State's English Magazine Dabiq, Analysis and Exegesis
- Pieter Van Ostaeyen, pieter.vanostaeyen@gmail.com

- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Faculty of Arts, Near Eastern Studies; prof. dr. John Nawas
- Expected date of completion: 2022

Vernimmen, Jonas

- Accommodating Religious and Linguistic Diversity in Education – a Human Rights Law Perspective
- Jonas Vernimmen, Jonas.vernimmen@kuleuven.be
- KU Leuven, Leuven Centre for Public Law, Education Law; prof. dr. Kurt Willems, prof. dr. Koen Lemmens
- Expected date of completion: Fall 2021

Weggemans, Daan

- Digital Risk Profiling
- Daan Weggemans, d.j.weggemans@fgga.leidenuniv.nl
- Universiteit Leiden, Institute of Security and Global Affairs; prof. dr. Bibi van den Berg, dr. Quirine Eijkman, prof. dr. Edwin Bakker
- Expected date of completion: 2021

Whittaker, Joe

- Online Radicalisation
- Joe Whittaker, j.j.whittaker@swansea.ac.uk
- Swansea University, Universiteit Leiden; prof. dr. Stuart MacDonald, dr. Lella Nouri, prof. dr. Edwin Bakker, dr. Alastair Reed
- Expected date of completion: 2021

Wittendorp, Stef

- European Union and Counter-terrorism, 1975-present
- Stef Wittendorp, s.wittendorp@rug.nl
- Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Department of International Relations and International Organization; prof. dr. J.H. de Wilde, prof. dr. A.J. Zwitter
- Expected date of completion: unknown

About the Compiler: *Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn is the Coordinator of the Dutch-Flemish Network of Ph.D. Thesis Writers of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) and a board member of the European Expert Network on Terrorism (EENeT). She has assisted Prof. dr. Edwin Bakker in developing the massive open online course (MOOC) "Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Comparing Theory & Practice" which has attracted over 170.000 participants from more than 80 countries. She is a Research Fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) in The Hague, and a Researcher at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) of Leiden University.*

Conference Monitor/Calendar of Events (April 2021)

Compiled by Olivia 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 organised between April and June 2021 (with a few shortly thereafter). The listed events are organised by a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental institutions, including several key (counter) terrorism research centres and institutes identified in this issue.

We encourage readers to contact the journal's Associate Editor for Conference Monitoring, Olivia Kearney, and provide her with relevant information, preferably in the same format as the items listed below. Olivia Kearney can be reached at <oliviaj.kearney@gmail.com> or via Twitter: [@oliviajkearney](https://twitter.com/oliviajkearney).

April 2021

ISA Conference 2021

The International Studies Association (ISA), Connecticut

31 March - 7 April, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: N.A.

Extremism Meets Paramilitarism in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe

Counter Extremism Project (CEP), New York/London

1 April, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@FightExtremism](https://twitter.com/FightExtremism)

Terrorism and Counterterrorism in Somalia

Global Terrorism Trend and Analysis Center (GTTAC), Maryland

1 April, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@DSGNow](https://twitter.com/DSGNow)

Webinar on the Far Right in South Africa

Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Oslo

7 April, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CrexUiO](https://twitter.com/CrexUiO)

The Islamic State in Africa: History, Trends, & Attribution

George Washington Program on Extremism (GWPOE), Washington D.C.

7 April, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@gwupoe](https://twitter.com/gwupoe)

UCF-NCITE Seminar Series: Aisha Javed Qureshi

National Counterterrorism, Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE), Nebraska

7 April, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@unomaha](https://twitter.com/unomaha)

Cashing in on Guns: Identifying the Nexus Between Small Arms, Light Weapons and Terrorist Financing

International Centre for Counter Terrorism (ICCT), The Hague

7 April, *online*

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

Counterterrorism Programme Webinar

Cranfield University, Cranfield

9 April, *online*

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

Evolving Terrorism Threat in Southeast Asia

International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (CSTPV), Singapore

9 April, *online*

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

The January 6 Capitol Hill Siege and Extremism in the Military

George Washington Program on Extremism (GWPOE), Washington, DC

12 April, *online*

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

Exploring Violent Extremism in Africa

Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), Philadelphia

12 April, *online*

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

Conflict in Mozambique: Grievances, Foreign Interests and Regional Implications

Institute for International & Strategic Studies (IISS), Washington DC/London

14 April, *online*

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

Gender in Conflict and Security Webinar Series – Countering Violent Extremism: Making Gender Matter

Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), London

14 April, *online*

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

The Arab Spring: 10 Year On

Kings College (KCL), London

14 April, *online*

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

ISIS and the Crime-Terror Nexus in America a Counterpoint to Europe

The Center on National Security at Fordham Law, New York

15 April, *online*

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

Media Development Aid and Preventing Violent Extremism

Handa Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV), St. Andrews

15 April, *online*

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

UCF-NCITE Seminar Series: Catrina Doxsee

National Counterterrorism, Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE), Nebraska

21 April, *online*

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

Al-Qaeda's Next Leader?

9/11 Memorial & Museum, New York
21 April, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@Sept11Memorial](#)
Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP)

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Belgium
21 April, online

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

RAN Cross-Cutting Thematic Event ‘Lone Actors – Jointly Taking Stock of Recent Developments & Combining Knowledge’

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Belgium
21-22 April, online

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

Children in Violent Extremist Organizations

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Oslo
22 April, online

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

International Online Conference on Terrorism and Political Violence

Eastern Mediterranean Academic Research Center (DAKAM), Beyoğlu
23 April, online

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

Online Seminar: Cyber Terrorism

The Institute of World Politics, Washington, DC
28 April, online

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

Conspiracy Theories-Violent Extremism Nexus

American CT Targeting & Resilience Institute (ACTRI), Massachusetts
28 April, online

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

Disengaging Violent Extremists

Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSRT), Washington, DC
29 April, online

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

May 2021

2021 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Stockholm
4-6 May, online

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

Webinar on the Far Right in Australia

Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Oslo
5 May, online

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

26th German Prevention Congress/ 14th Annual International Forum

German Prevention Congress
10-11 May 2021, Cologne, Germany

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

Studying Local Context to Fathom Far Right Mobilization*Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Oslo*

13 May, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CrexUiO](#)**Department of Homeland Security Centers of Excellence Summit***National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), College Park, Maryland*

17 May, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@START_umd](#)**Civil Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP)***Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Belgium*

18 May, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@RANEurope](#)**Measuring the Impact of Wikipedia: Mapping and Tracking Anti-Muslim Online Mobilization***Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Oslo*

27 May, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CrexUiO](#)**The Psychology of Riots, Mob Mentality, and Mass Mobilization in the Digital Age***American CT Targeting & Resilience Institute (ACTRI), Massachusetts*

27 May, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@AmericanCTRI](#)**June 2021****Webinar on the Far Right in Georgia***Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Oslo*

2 June, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CrexUiO](#)**Online Seminar: Counterintelligence and Cyber Technology***The Institute of World Politics, Washington, DC*

9 June, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@theIWP](#)**Overcoming Racialization in the Field***Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Oslo*

10 June, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@CrexUiO](#)**Summer Law Programme on International Criminal Law & International Legal & Comparative Approaches to Counter-Terrorism***Asser Institute, The Hague*

01 – 25 June, online

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@TMCAsser](#)**The 20th Jan Tinbergen European Peace Science Conference***European Peace Scientists*

29 June – 1 July 2021, London, United Kingdom

Website: [visit](#) | Twitter: [@NEPS01](#)

July & Beyond 2021**Webinar on the Far Right in India**

Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), Oslo

7 July, online

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

Online Summer Programme: Preventing, Detecting and Responding to Violent Extremism

Institute for Security and Global Affairs (ISGA), The Hague

16-18 August, online

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

Acknowledgement

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About the Compiler: *Olivia Kearney is an Associate Editor of Perspectives on Terrorism as well as a member of the Editorial Board for the ICTR Journal. She is the Community Building Officer for Project CRAAFT led by RUSI Europe. Before that, she worked as a Project Assistant for the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) after having obtained a Master's degree in Crime and Criminal Justice at Leiden University.*

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. Now in its 15th year, PoT is published six times annually as a free, independent, scholarly peer-reviewed online journal available at the URL: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism>.

Perspectives on Terrorism has recently been ranked by Google Scholars again as No. 3 in ‘Terrorism Studies’ (as well as No. 5 in ‘Military Studies’). PoT has over 9,400 subscribers and many more occasional readers. Our journal seeks to provide a platform for established scholars as well as academics and professionals entering the interdisciplinary fields of (Counter-)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 (double-blind) by outside academic experts and professionals. Due to the hundreds of submissions we receive every year, only the most promising and original ones can be sent for external peer-review.

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:

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